

BILLINGS/POMPEYS PILLAR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

The Billings Field Office is preparing a resource management plan (RMP) that will address public lands managed by the Billings Field Office. One environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared. Currently, lands within the Billings Field Office, including Pompeys Pillar National Monument, are managed according to the 1984 Billings Resource Area RMP, as amended.

ISSUES:

Preparation of an RMP affords many opportunities for collaboration with local, state, federal and tribal governments and land management agencies, public interest groups, and public land users. Planning issues and management concerns are based on some of the foremost issues currently facing the Billings Field Office. Preliminary planning issues were identified early in the process during the preparation plan for the RMP, and then were subsequently refined by the inter-disciplinary team based on the scoping comments.

The planning issues include: vegetation; wildlife and fisheries; special status species; commercial uses (energy development, livestock grazing, forest products and areas within community wildlife protection plans, rights-of-way and land use authorizations, locatable and saleable minerals, and commercial special recreation permits); recreation management; travel management and access; and special management area designations (including areas of critical environmental concern). Based on the level of interest in travel management and access, the Billings/Pompeys Pillar RMP will address site-specific travel planning by alternative in 11 Travel Management Areas.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

The Billings/Pompeys Pillar RMP will guide management for the approximately 427,000 acres of federally managed surface and about 1.8 million subsurface (mineral estate) acres administered by the Billings Field Office in Big Horn, Carbon, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Wheatland and Yellowstone counties. The planning area also includes administration of 6,340 acres of public land inside the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range in Big Horn County, Wyo. The Billings/Pompeys Pillar RMP will also include the 51 acres of public land designated as a national monument on January 17, 2001.

In October 2007, the Montana State Office approved a preparation plan for the Billings/Pompeys Pillar RMP. Public scoping was initiated May 15, 2008, with the publication of the notice of intent in the *Federal Register*. Formal scoping ended August 22, 2008; however, public comments will be considered throughout the planning process. Seven public open houses were held across the planning area and about 600 specific comments were provided by agencies and interested parties. In June 2009, the Billings Field Office hosted a series of Travel Management Workshops. The objective of the workshops was to collect feedback from the public on our travel route layers (data) and where they visit public lands for motorized and/or non-motorized recreation opportunities.

The BLM is working with 15 cooperating agencies on the RMP, including: Carbon, Golden Valley, Wheatland, Musselshell, and Yellowstone counties; Big Horn County, Wyo.; Musselshell Planning Project; Northern Cheyenne Tribe; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Montana State Historic Preservation Office; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation - Northeastern Land Office and Southern Land Office; Montana Association of Conservation Districts; Bureau of Indian Affairs; and the Bureau of Reclamation. In addition, the Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC) has designated two committee members to participate in the planning process and has established two RAC sub-committees to focus on travel management and special designations.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Public interest is moderate to high because the RMP will establish management direction for the field office for the next 10-15 years. There is increased interest in energy development, travel management, and special area designations.

CONTACT:

Jim Sparks, Billings Field Manager, (406) 896-5241; or Kim Prill, RMP Project Leader, (406) 896-5199.