



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Wyoming State Office

Rock Springs Field Office

January 2003



Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan/Draft Green River Resource Management Plan Amendment

Volume 1 of 2



MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

BLM/WY/PL-03/008+1610



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Wyoming State Office
P.O. Box 1828
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82003-1828

JAN 21 2003

In Reply Refer To:
1610 (930)
Jack Morrow Hills CAP

Dear Reader:

Attached for your review and comment is the supplemental draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan (JMHCAP). The alternative coordinated activity plans described in this document have been designed to resolve land management issues that were identified in the early stages of the activity planning process and to provide a basis for comparison of the impacts associated with each alternative. The analyses of the environmental consequences of implementing each of the alternatives are also included in the document.

Public open houses to discuss the supplemental draft EIS will be held at a time and date to be determined. The time and location of these open houses will be provided through media notices and internet postings. Public hearings will also be held and notifications will also be provided through media notices and internet postings. The purpose of these hearings will be to give the public the opportunity to verbalize their comments on the supplemental draft EIS. Written comments will also be accepted at the hearings. Future meetings or hearings and any other public involvement activities will be announced at least 15 days in advance through public notices, media news releases, or mailings.

We invite you to comment on the alternatives presented and on the adequacy of the impact analyses. A 90-day comment period will begin with the date the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes the filing of this supplemental draft EIS in the Federal Register. Please send your written comments to Renée Dana, Team Leader, 280 Highway 191 North, Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901. Written comments must include your complete name and address. Comments may also be made via the Internet. Such comments must also contain your complete name, address, and phone number. This information is being requested in the event we need clarification of messages that are not legible or we have questions about your comments. Incomplete comments, or comments from unidentified sources, will not be considered or included as part of the official comment record. For a link to submit internet comments visit the following site:

www.wy.blm.gov/jmhcap/jmhindex.htm.

Comments, including the names and street addresses of respondents, will be made available for review by the public at the address listed above during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and will be published as part of the Final EIS. However, individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name and/or street address, and private phone number from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals representing, or who are officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Comments on the alternatives and on the adequacy of the impact analyses will be fully considered and evaluated in development of the proposed CAP and final EIS. Through your participation in this effort, we can move forward together toward a common goal of improved public land management in the Jack Morrow Hills area.

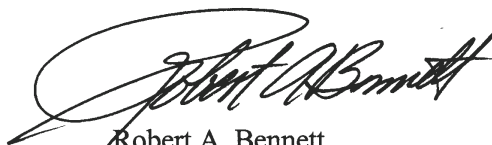
Please retain this copy of the supplemental draft EIS for future reference as the final EIS may be published in abbreviated format. A copy of this supplemental draft EIS has been sent to affected Federal, State, and local Government agencies and to those persons who indicated they wished to receive a copy of the supplemental draft EIS. Copies of the supplemental draft EIS are available for public inspection at the following BLM locations:

Bureau of Land Management
Wyoming State Office
5353 Yellowstone Road
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009

Bureau of Land Management
Rock Springs Field Office
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901

Bureau of Land Management
Lander Field Office
1335 Main Street
Lander, Wyoming 82520

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert A. Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long tail.

Robert A. Bennett
State Director

**SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT
Environmental Impact Statement
for the
Jack Morrow Hills
Coordinated Activity Plan/
Draft Green River Resource
Management Plan Amendment
for
Public Lands Administered**

by the

**Bureau of Land Management
Rock Springs Field Office
Rock Springs, Wyoming**

Prepared by

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Rock Springs Field Office**

In cooperation with

**The State of Wyoming (including Sublette County,
Popo Agie Conservation District, Sublette County Conservation District,
and Sweetwater County Conservation District)
Fremont County
Sweetwater County**

January 2003

SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE JACK MORROW HILLS COORDINATED ACTIVITY PLAN ROCK SPRINGS, WYOMING

Lead Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Type of Action: Administrative

Jurisdiction: Portions of Sweetwater, Fremont, and Sublette Counties

Abstract: This supplemental draft environmental impact statement (EIS) addresses alternative coordinated activity plans (CAP) for the Jack Morrow Hills (JMH) planning area. When completed, the JMH CAP will provide more specific management direction to prevent or address conflicts among potential development of energy resources, recreational activities and facilities, wildlife and wildlife habitat and provide more specific management direction for other land and resource uses in the planning area, including livestock grazing, important wildlife habitat, and other important resources. The planning area comprises about 574,800 acres of federal land and federal mineral estate in the JMH area in southwestern Wyoming. This supplemental draft EIS contains five alternative coordinated activity plans, including a preferred alternative plan, that provide management direction for the protection of certain resources (e.g., desert elk and other big game habitat, unique sand dune-mountain shrub habitat, unstabilized and stabilized sand dunes, cultural sites) and allow leasing and development of energy resources, recreational activities, grazing practices, and other activities at varying levels.

When the JMH CAP planning effort is completed, it will provide an integrated multiple use activity plan for a balanced level of resource uses and provide protection for sensitive and important resource values on the BLM-administered public lands in the area. The fluid minerals leasing decisions and locatable mineral decisions for the JMH area, which were deferred in the Green River Resource Management Plan (RMP), will be determined in the JMH CAP, which will result in amending the Green River RMP. Other management prescriptions resulting from this planning effort include some refinement of designations of roads for use, grazing practices, recreational activities and facilities, identification of right-of-way windows and concentration areas, and prescriptions for managing wildlife habitat. Determining some of these prescriptions may also result in amending to the Green River RMP.

Five alternatives that address the issues in the JMH planning area have been considered. They are continuation of present management (No Action Alternative) and four other alternatives, including a Preferred Alternative, that provide a variety of management choices ranging from restricting management actions or development, to actively mitigating the effects of resource management actions or development. The Preferred Alternative is a combination of the No Action Alternative and Alternatives 1, 2, and 3. The five alternatives presented in Chapter 2 of the supplemental draft EIS focus on allocating public lands and resources among the uses and prescribing general management actions that would be taken. The various impacts that would be expected from implementing each of the alternatives are documented in Chapter 4.

When the JMH CAP is completed, it will provide a comprehensive framework for managing the BLM-administered public lands and resources and allocating their uses in the planning area. Further information regarding this supplemental draft EIS can be obtained from the address below. Comments will be accepted for 90 days following the date that the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of filing of this supplemental draft EIS in the Federal Register. Comments should be sent to the following address:

Renée Dana, Team Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Rock Springs Field Office
280 Highway 191 North
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82901

(307) 352-0256

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This supplemental draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and coordinated activity plan (CAP) will provide more specific management direction to address potential conflicts among development of energy resources, recreational activities and facilities, and land uses in the Jack Morrow Hills (JMH) planning area (Map 1). The planning area includes approximately 574,800 acres of public land surface and federal mineral estate administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) through its Rock Springs Field Office (RSFO) in Rock Springs, Wyoming.

The JMH CAP planning area encompasses the Steamboat Mountain, Greater Sand Dunes, White Mountain Petroglyphs, and Oregon Buttes Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); a portion of the South Pass Historic Landscape ACEC; the Oregon Buttes, Honeycomb Buttes, Greater Sand Dunes, Buffalo Hump, Whitehorse Creek, South Pinnacles, and Alkali Draw Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs); and three special recreation management areas (Greater Sand Dunes, Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, and the Oregon/Mormon Pioneer/Pony Express/California National Historic Trails). Parts of Fremont, Sweetwater, and Sublette counties in southwest Wyoming are within the planning area.

When completed, the JMH CAP will provide a framework for managing the BLM-administered public lands and resources and allocating some of these uses in the planning area. Specifically, this CAP is focused on resolving four resource management issues: minerals resource management and related rights-of-way; resource uses affecting vegetation, soils, air, and watershed values; recreation and heritage resources management; and special management areas.

The JMH CAP will make land and resource management decisions for fluid mineral leasing and some for mineral location in the core area and related affected areas. Because of concerns raised by the public and BLM personnel on these decisions during preparation of the Green River Resource Management Plan (RMP) in 1997, the decisions were deferred to the JMH CAP. Thus, this effort will make the Green River RMP fluid minerals leasing decisions (and modify some existing decisions) and mineral location decisions for the JMH CAP planning area and determine the appropriate levels and timing of leasing and development of energy resources, while sustaining the other important land and resource uses in the area. These deferred Green River RMP decisions will result in amending the Green River RMP. Other management prescriptions resulting from this planning effort include some refinement of designations of roads for use, grazing practices, recreational activities and facilities, identification of right-of-way windows and concentration areas, and prescriptions for managing wildlife habitat.

ALTERNATIVES

Five alternatives are analyzed in detail and documented within. All the alternatives are multiple-use oriented. Each alternative provides for resource production and environmental protection. The management prescriptions of the five alternatives are described in Chapter 2 and summarized and compared in Table 2-1, Summary Comparison of Alternatives (found at the end of Chapter 2).

Alternatives developed for this analysis were formulated to address the full range of management actions that could be implemented for the planning area, and included a No Action Alternative, three additional alternatives and the Preferred Alternative. The previous planning actions and alternatives developed for the Green River RMP and the original draft EIS for the JMH CAP

were reviewed, along with consideration of management and resource issues identified by BLM technical staff in the RSFO. New information on the resources in the planning area obtained since preparation of the original draft EIS was also considered in the development of alternatives, along with public comments and input from cooperating agencies and users of the lands and resources in the JMH planning area.

The No Action Alternative is defined as a continuation of the present course of management until that management is changed. Ongoing programs initiated under existing legislation and regulations, and the Green River RMP would continue, even as new plans are developed or new planning efforts are being conducted within the RMP area. Thus, this alternative describes the current resource and land management direction in the JMH CAP planning area, represented by the decisions stated in the Green River RMP (October 1997), that provides for multiple use management of public lands and resources to meet foreseeable needs. The No Action Alternative recognizes valid existing rights. No additional lands would be considered for leasing for fluid minerals in what is known as the “core” area, no additional areas would be considered for WSAs, and there would not be any changes proposed for ACECs. The No Action Alternative is the baseline to which other alternatives are compared.

Alternative 1 provides for expanded opportunities to use and develop the planning area. Resources would still be protected to the extent required by applicable laws and regulations. Alternative 1 would allow new leases and permits for oil, gas, and mineral development throughout the planning area, to the degree possible, consistent with existing regulatory requirements and statutory withdrawals and closures. Additional lands would be considered for fluid mineral leasing in the core area, no additional areas would be considered for WSAs, and there would not be any changes proposed for ACECs. This alternative could result in modifications or amendments to previous land management decisions represented by the decisions stated in the Green River RMP.

Alternative 2 reduces opportunities to use and develop the planning area. The alternative focuses on improving and protecting habitat for wildlife and sensitive plant and animal species; improving riparian areas and water quality; and protecting historic, cultural, and Native American sites. Boundaries of existing ACECs would be expanded as necessary to protect sensitive resources and Research Natural Area designations would be pursued as appropriate. Additional lands would not be considered for fluid mineral leasing in the core area. Additional areas would be considered as WSAs. Alternative 2 would not allow development in areas with competing resource uses and would close or designate portions of the planning area to restrict land uses. Development or activities could occur in specific portions of the planning area with appropriate mitigation measures.

Alternative 3 provides opportunities to use and develop the planning area while ensuring resource protection. The alternative would allow development and activities to occur throughout the planning area provided sensitive resource values are protected and mitigation requirements are met. Mitigation requirements necessary to ensure the stability of the sensitive resource indicators would be determined through an adaptive management approach to resource use and protection. Additional lands would be considered for fluid mineral leasing in the core area. Boundaries of existing ACECs would be expanded as necessary to protect sensitive resources.

The BLM’s Preferred Alternative provides opportunities for uses and developments by providing a balance of uses through timing and sequencing of events. It is generally a complimentary culmination of appropriate elements from each alternative, but the Preferred Alternative also contains management actions not included in any of the other alternatives. Portions of the

planning area would be available for development activities, with appropriate mitigation. Other areas would not be available for development activities until it could be ensured that adequate protection of resources would occur. An implementation strategy would be initiated, and monitoring and evaluation of activities would occur.

The environmental consequences that could result from the management prescriptions of the five alternatives are described in Chapter 4 and summarized and compared in Table 2-4, Summary of Impacts.