

**PREPARATION PLAN
FOR
MODIFICATION OF THE
PINEDALE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

PINEDALE FIELD OFFICE

WYOMING

August 2001

Concurred: _____
Field Manager

Date

Approved: _____

State Director

Date

PREPARATION PLAN FOR MODIFICATION OF THE PINEDALE RMP

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Preparation Plan is to identify the needs for updating the Pinedale Resource Management Plan (RMP) through modification (maintenance, amendment, or revision). Plan modification work will be coordinated with ongoing Planning Support Projects (PSPs). The PSPs address planning needs by issue or resource on a statewide basis rather than plan by plan. Tackling these issues on a statewide basis will yield efficiencies and shorten the time to modify all of Wyoming's RMPs. Integration of PSPs and the Pinedale RMP modification are identified in the Issues Section of this Preparation Plan.

Other specific objectives of the Preparation Plan are to:

Identify the process for conducting the Pinedale RMP planning review and modification.

Identify data, information, or decision needs, and recommend tasks and approaches to efficiently collect necessary data.

Identify schedules and budgets for the plan modification work.

Make staffing and workload evaluations and identify potential shortages.

Identify participants in the planning project and prepare a public participation plan.

The majority of the plan review and modification, including National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance, will be performed by a contractor, with oversight provided by Pinedale Field Office personnel.

BACKGROUND

The Pinedale RMP provides guidance and direction for management of approximately 931,000 acres of BLM-administered public land surface and 1,185,000 acres of BLM-administered federal mineral estate in Sublette, Lincoln, and Fremont counties. Approximately 919,000 acres are both federal surface and federal mineral estate (Map 1, Table 1). The Pinedale planning area includes two wilderness study areas (WSA--Scab Creek and Lake Mountain), two areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC--Rock

Creek and Beaver Creek), and three special recreation management areas (SRMAs -- Scab Creek, Upper Green River, and Boulder Lake).

Areas administered by other federal agencies within the planning area are the Bridger-Teton National Forest and the Seedskafee Reclamation Project, administered by the Bureau of Reclamation, and very small withdrawals associated with the U.S. Air Force Detachment 489. BLM land use plan decisions, for either surface or mineral estate, do not apply to these areas.

TABLE 1

LAND AND MINERAL OWNERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE JURISDICTIONS WITHIN THE PINEDALE RMP PLANNING AREA

Jurisdiction	Acres
Areas the Pinedale RMP Decisions Will Cover:	
A. Federal land/Federal minerals	918,137
B. Federal land/Non-federal minerals	10,648
C. Non-federal land/federal minerals	226,340
Total BLM-administered federal land surface to be covered by RMP decisions	928,137
Total BLM-administered federal mineral estate to be covered by RMP decisions	1,144,477
Areas the Pinedale RMP Decisions Will NOT Cover:	
D. USFS land/BLM minerals	1,009
E. BOR land/BLM minerals	1,494
F. USFWS land/BLM minerals	0

Total BLM-administered federal mineral estate that will NOT be covered by RMP decisions	2,503
G. Private land/private minerals	396,699
Total land surface areas in the Pinedale RMP planning area (all ownerships)	1,324,836

The Record of Decision (ROD) for the Pinedale RMP was signed on December 12, 1988. Seven maintenance actions have been completed since the ROD was signed. New issues and concerns identified during the recent preliminary RMP evaluations conducted throughout the state have necessitated a planning review of the Pinedale RMP to determine modification needs (see Issues section). Note -- As used in this Prep plan, "planning review" means a detailed evaluation of the existing Pinedale RMP. The preliminary evaluations have helped to clarify the planning issues and have pointed to some possible solutions. The recommendations in this Preparation Plan are related directly to these preliminary RMP evaluations. The final report for the Pinedale RMP preliminary evaluation will be completed by September 2001. The boom in mineral development activity, combined with the age of the RMP, made the timing of the preliminary evaluation urgent, and the evaluation findings are indispensable to this Preparation Plan. When the preliminary evaluations are completed, the Pinedale evaluation report will be added to this Preparation Plan as an appendix.

Recent studies on the adequacy of Wyoming RMPs contributed to the recent evaluation findings. Those other studies have included:

Southwest Wyoming Resource Evaluation Report and Recommendations (February 1999) Addressing the Green River, **Pinedale**, Kemmerer, and Great Divide RMPs, it was determined that: (1) Oil and gas-related decisions in the four resource management plans are uniformly consistent with only minor technical differences in the application of mitigation measures. (2) BLM's methods and practices of both assessing impacts from oil and gas development in southwest Wyoming and complying with NEPA are reasonable and appropriate. (3) The number of oil and gas wells in each of the four field office areas is below the level of development projected in the RMP EISs. However, the number of wells in the four field offices could exceed the projected development levels in the near future. (4) The **Pinedale RMP** should be evaluated to determine whether there have been any unacceptable environmental effects during plan implementation. The evaluation should focus on multiple use decisions including resource allocations and planned mitigation measures.

Plan Maintenance Needs Identified in the Wyoming Planning and Environmental Coordination Core Group Workshop (June 1999) The participants of this workshop recommended that: (1) Wild and Scenic river (WSR) reviews need to be conducted in the Kemmerer, **Pinedale**, Washakie, Great Divide, Lander, and Platte River RMP planning areas. This may involve amendments to some plans if the reviews identify any BLM-administered lands that meet the WSR eligibility criteria and suitability factors. (2) When completed, national policy on the management of off-highway vehicles (OHV) needs to be incorporated into Wyoming RMPs. (3) A withdrawal

review of lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation will be needed for Washakie, Grass Creek, Great Divide (possibly with Little Snake RMP), Green River, **Pinedale**, and Kemmerer RMPs. (4) Several field offices need to address the revocation of oil shale, coal, and phosphate withdrawals on an estimated 11.5 million acres.

Report to Congress, Land Use Planning for Sustainable Resource Decisions (February 2000) This report indicated the need for planning and NEPA actions in Wyoming, to include during FY 2001: (1) Southwest Wyoming resource assessment and subsequent plan amendments identified for the Rawlins, Kemmerer, **Pinedale**, Lander, and Rock Springs field offices to address oil and gas leasing, air and water quality, wildlife habitat, vegetation, and special status species. (2) Wyoming and other state resource assessments and conservation strategies for special status species (for example, mountain plover, prairie dog, and sage grouse). (3) BLM-wide land use plan evaluations for OHV decisions.

The following are ongoing and future planning and NEPA actions in the Pinedale planning area:

- Pinedale Anticline Natural Gas Project EIS (ROD: Appeal period closed 09/06/00. Lawsuit filed on decision).
- Planning for mineral leasing along the Wind River Front (now subject to a leasing moratorium).
- Collaborative Planning with Counties (counties are starting land use plan revisions).
- Environmental analysis for fire fuels reduction along Hoback Rim.
- Pinedale Off-Highway Vehicle use plan.
- New Fork/Green River Recreation Plan (Expected DR June 2004).
- Bench Corral CAP (At scoping phase. Expected DR June 2006).
- Other agency planning efforts in or near the planning area include the development of an oil and gas leasing EIS for the Bridger-Teton National Forest (DEIS published in December 2000), and a Bridger-Teton forest plan update.
- Consistency review of decisions across BLM Field Office administrative boundaries.

ANTICIPATED PLANNING ISSUES AND MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

The process for developing, amending, or revising an RMP begins with identifying the issues (40 CFR 1501.7; 43 CFR 1610.4-1).

Issues express concerns, conflicts, and problems associated with the management of public lands. Issues are related to how some land and resource uses affect other land and resource uses. Issues also reflect new data, new or revised policies, and changes in resource uses affecting the planning area.

The proposed schedule (Table 2) for the Pinedale RMP Modification will result in completion of the proposed RMP and Final EIS, including the 30-day protest period, in less than 36 months (completion date October 2004). The schedule includes all steps necessary to complete a plan review from Preparation Plan development through Protest of the Proposed RMP Decisions. An additional undetermined time period will be required to resolve any protests before issuing the ROD and RMP decisions for State Director approval.

TABLE 2

PINEDALE RMP MODIFICATION SCHEDULE

(Note that dates of actions prior to February 2002 are not current of accurate. While some in-house work on the project is in progress, some of the following dates may adjust accordingly. However, the completion date of October 2004 is fixed.)

DATE

Nov 01	NOI; SOW
Dec 01	NOI; Contract let
Jan 02	Scoping; No Action Alt
Feb 02	Scoping; No Action Alt
Mar 02	Impact Analysis of No Action; Assumptions for Analysis; Existing Environment; No Action alt
April 02	Impact Analysis of No Action; Assumptions for Analysis; Existing Environment; Planning Criteria
May 02	Impact Analysis of No Action; Assumptions for Analysis; Existing Environment; Planning Criteria
June 02	Prepare MSA; SD brief
July 02	NOI for MSA
Aug 02	Scoping on MSA
Sept 02	Scoping; summarize scoping comments
Oct 02	Summarize scoping comments

Nov 02	Alternative formulation
Dec 02	Alternative formulation
Jan 03	Alternative formulation
Feb 03	Analyze alternatives
Mar 03	Analyze alternatives
April 03	Public review of alts
May 03	Public review of alts
June 03	BA; Preferred alt and analysis
July 03	BA; Preferred alt and analysis; SO review
Aug 03	Typeset
Sept 03	Print; NOA
Oct 03	NOA
Nov 03	DEIS comment period
Dec 03	DEIS comment period
Jan 04	DEIS comment period; review, respond to comments
Feb 04	Review, respond to comments
Mar 04	Review, respond to comments; New info into FEIS
April 04	Typeset; Print
May 04	Governor's review; NOA
June 04	Governor's review; NOA
July 04	FEIS/Proposed RMP protest period
Aug 04	FEIS/Proposed RMP protest period
Sept 04	Resolve protests
Oct 04	Publish ROD and Approved RMP

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACEC	area of critical environmental concern	MSA	management situation analysis
BA	biological assessment	NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
BLM	Bureau of Land Management	NOI	notice of intent
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation	NRCS	National Resource Conservation Service
CAP	coordinated activity plan	OEPC	Office of Environmental Project Coordination
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality	OHV	off highway vehicle
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations	PSP	planning support project
DEIS	draft environmental impact statement	R&PP	Recreation and Public Purposes Act
DM	Departmental Manual (U.S. Department of the Interior)	RFA	reasonably foreseeable action or activity
EA	environmental assessment	RFD	reasonably foreseeable development
EIS	environmental impact statement	RMP	resource management plan
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	ROD	record of decision
ERMA	extensive recreation management area	ROW	right-of-way
ESI	ecological site inventory	S&G	standards and guidelines
FEIS	final environmental impact statement	SO	State Office
FGDC	Federal Geographic Data Committee	SRMA	special recreation management area
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act	T&E	threatened and endangered
FWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	USAF	United States Air Force
FY	fiscal year	VRM	visual resource management
GIS	geographic information system	WSR	wild and scenic river
H₂S	hydrogen sulfide	WARMS	Wyoming Air Resources Monitoring System
ID	interdisciplinary (team)	WO	Washington Office
IMP	interim management policy	WSA	wilderness study area
IMPLAN™	an economic impact assessment modeling system	WSO	Wyoming State Office
LUP	land use plan		

