

February 2006

BLM

**Draft
Resource Management Plan
and
Environmental Impact Statement**

**Bureau of Land Management
Surprise Field Office
Cedarville, California**



Public Lands USA; Use Share, Appreciate



The Bureau of Land Management Today

Our Vision

To enhance the quality of life for all citizens through the balanced stewardship of America's public lands and resources.

Our Mission

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Our Values

To serve with honesty, integrity, accountability, respect, courage, and commitment to make a difference.

Our Priorities

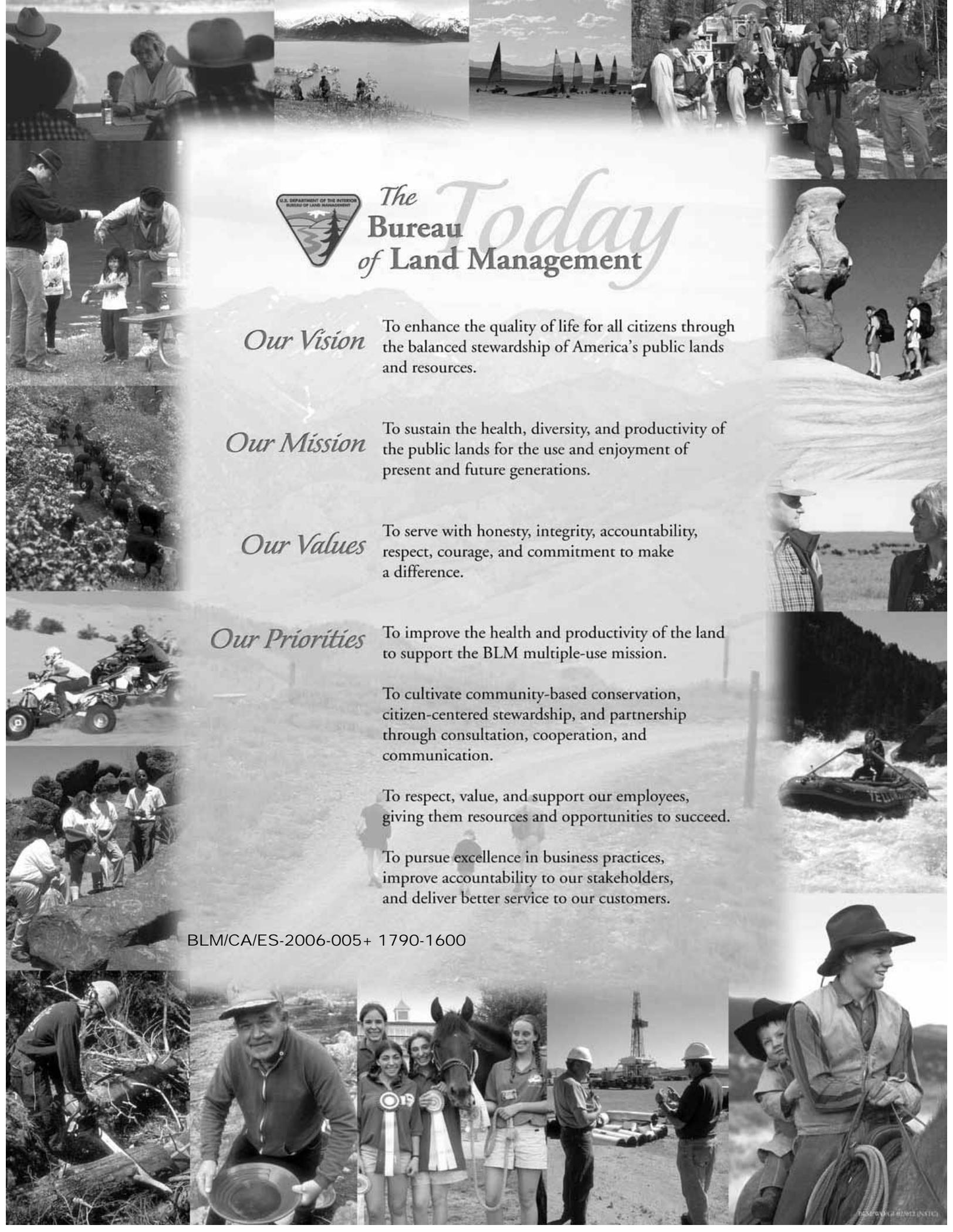
To improve the health and productivity of the land to support the BLM multiple-use mission.

To cultivate community-based conservation, citizen-centered stewardship, and partnership through consultation, cooperation, and communication.

To respect, value, and support our employees, giving them resources and opportunities to succeed.

To pursue excellence in business practices, improve accountability to our stakeholders, and deliver better service to our customers.

BLM/CA/ES-2006-005+ 1790-1600





United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Field Office
602 Cressler Street
Cedarville, California 96104
(530) 279-6101
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Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the Draft Resource Management Plan (DRMP) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Surprise Field Office. This document was prepared by the BLM in concert with eight cooperating agencies, as well as from public comments received during the scoping phase of this planning effort.

The geographic planning area includes BLM managed public lands within the counties of Modoc and Lassen, California, and Washoe and Humboldt, Nevada. The overall intent of this RMP is to develop a comprehensive management strategy that will guide the management of public lands administered by the Surprise Field Office into the future. This RMP combines three land use plans (Tuledad-Home Camp Management Framework Plan (MFP), 1979; Cowhead-Massacre MFP, 1981, and Alturas RMP, 1984) into a single, unified Surprise Field Office RMP.

A Reader's Guide is included to help you navigate through the chapters of this document, and is located directly after the Abstract. BLM is interested in seeking your comments on the adequacy and accuracy of all five proposed alternatives and the analysis of their respective management decisions. The Proposed RMP/Final EIS, which is the next phase of the planning process, could select various aspects of each of the alternatives as the management strategy that best meets the needs of the many resources and values being planned for in this area.

The announcement in the Federal Register that the Surprise Draft Resource Management Plan and EIS is available will start a 90-day public comment period during which members of the public are encouraged to review the document and provide comments. During this period, comments may be submitted using several methods:

Written comments should be sent to:

Surprise RMP Comments
Attention: Planning Coordinator
Bureau of Land Management
Eagle Lake Field Office
2950 Riverside Drive
Susanville, California 96130

E-mail comments to:

necarmp@ca.blm.gov

Comments may also be made electronically at: www.ca.blm.gov/eaglelake

Comments, including names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the BLM Eagle Lake Field Office, 2950 Riverside Drive, Susanville, California 96130, during normal business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except weekends and holidays). All submissions from organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety. Individuals may request confidentiality with respect to their name, address, and phone number. If you wish to have your name or

street address withheld from public review, or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, the first line of the comment should start with the words "CONFIDENTIALITY REQUESTED" in uppercase letters in order for BLM to comply with your request. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. Comment contents will not be kept confidential.

BLM would like to thank our cooperating agency partners that have worked so hard to help us complete this document. They have provided support and expertise to facilitate focusing the issues and developing alternatives to help resolve the many compelling resource concerns that face the Surprise Field Office. We would like to particularly recognize Lassen, Modoc, and Washoe Counties, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Nevada Department of Wildlife, and Nevada and California State Historic Preservation Offices as cooperating agencies on this document. Their experience and dedication has made this a better process and BLM looks forward to continuing to work with them to complete this planning effort. We also extend thanks to those individuals and organizations that have provided extensive information and many excellent ideas that have been considered during this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Owen Billingsley".

Owen Billingsley
Field Manager
Surprise Field Office

SURPRISE FIELD OFFICE

DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
AND
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SURPRISE FIELD OFFICE
CEDARVILLE, CALIFORNIA

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
California State Office

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Pool", written over a horizontal line.

Mike Pool
State Director

February 2006

SURPRISE FIELD OFFICE

Draft Resource Management Plan

And Environmental Impact Statement

Prepared by:

U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management
Surprise Field Office, Cedarville, California

February 2006

**SUPRISE FIELD OFFICE
DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN/ ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT STATEMENT**

[X] Draft Environmental Impact Statement [] Final Environmental Impact Statement

Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Type of Action: [X] Administrative [] Legislative

Abstract:

This Draft Resource Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement describes and analyzes the impacts of five alternatives for managing the public lands administered by the Surprise Field Office in northeast California and northwest Nevada. The alternatives provide management recommendations to guide the multiple use management of all resources. Proposed areas of critical environmental concern, suitable wild and scenic river segments, and cultural resource management areas are also recommended.

Comments:

Comments on this document are requested from all interested and/or affected agencies, organizations, and individuals. Comments must be received within 90 days of the Federal Register notice of availability. Comments being mailed must be post-marked by close of business on the 90th day.

For further information contact:

Planning Coordinator
Bureau of Land Management
Eagle Lake Field Office
2950 Riverside Drive
Susanville, California 96130
(530) 257-0456
FAX (530) 257-4831

Readers' Guide

Introduction

The Surprise Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is divided into 5 chapters, and includes maps (of the planning area and the different management approaches considered), an executive summary, appendices, a glossary and acronyms list, and a bibliography.

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary addresses the entire document and highlights the key issues brought forth in the planning process.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 identifies the purpose and need for the plan, defines the planning area, and explains public participation in the planning process. This chapter identifies the planning criteria used as guidelines influencing all aspects of the process. These guidelines are based on law, regulation, and policy. Also included in this chapter is a description of the involvement of state, local, federal governments and tribal agencies. The issues developed through public participation and the planning processes are described herein.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 (Description of the Alternatives) presents the various management strategies for achieving the desired range of conditions. There is also an overview of the alternatives and a description of the theme of each alternative. Five alternatives are identified with different intensities of resource uses and management directions to resolve identified conflicts and achieve the desired range of conditions. The alternatives in this Draft RMP/EIS are designed to provide general management guidance in most cases. Specific projects for a given area or resource will be detailed in future activity plans or site-specific proposals developed as part of interdisciplinary project planning or other means. These plans and processes address more precisely how a particular area or resource is to be managed and additional National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and documentation would be conducted as needed.

An *Alternatives Summary Table* is included in this chapter. This table provides the reader a general summary of the key management actions within the alternatives. For a complete description of each alternative, the reader must refer to the text of Chapter 2 under each resource subject.

An *Impacts Summary Table* is also included at the end of Chapter 2. This table provides the reader a comparison summary of the main adverse and beneficial impacts that would result from implementing the various alternatives.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 (Affected Environment) provides an overview of the planning area and describes the existing situation for each of the resource programs. It describes both the biological and physical components that may be affected by the alternatives. Other components of the environment that will not be affected by the proposed actions such as climate are also described. Current management direction is briefly summarized for each program.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 (Environmental Consequences) analyzes the beneficial and adverse effects of the alternatives. There are assumptions at the beginning of each specific resource programs to help guide the reader

through the thought process. At the end of the analysis of each resource subject a summary of the effects is provided, along with a discussion of the cumulative effects.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 summarizes key events in the consultation and coordination process prior to and during preparation of the Draft RMP/EIS. It also lists those agencies, organizations, and individuals who were contacted or provided input into the planning process. Also listed are the technical specialists and editors who prepared this plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared this Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to provide direction for managing public lands within the Surprise Field Office planning area and to analyze the environmental effects resulting from implementing the alternatives addressed in this Draft RMP.

The Surprise Field Office includes approximately 1,220,644 acres of BLM-managed surface acres in northeastern California and northwest Nevada. The geographic area includes all BLM managed public lands within the counties of Modoc and Lassen, California, and Washoe and Humboldt, Nevada. BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands it manages for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Surprise Draft RMP was developed in coordination with the Alturas and Eagle Lake Field Office RMPs to provide a consistent framework for managing public lands and resource uses in northeast California and northwest Nevada.

The RMP is being prepared using BLM's planning regulations and guidance issued under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. An EIS is also included in this document to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508), and requirements of BLM's NEPA Handbook, H-1790-1.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Surprise Resource Management Plan (RMP) is to provide guidance in the management of the lands and resources administered by the Surprise Field Office of the BLM that will address major resource issues identified during scoping, and through internal and cooperating agency meetings. The Surprise RMP is meant to be comprehensive in nature, providing guidance for management of all uses and resources administered by BLM in the planning area.

Current management direction for the Surprise Field Office is included in three land use plans and later amendments prepared in the 1970s and early 1980s: Tuledad-Home Camp Management Framework Plan (MFP), 1979; Cowhead-Massacre MFP, 1981, and Alturas RMP, 1984. New information, changed circumstances and resource conditions since these plans were prepared require the revision of these existing plans into a single updated RMP.

Population growth near Klamath Falls and Lakeview, Oregon, and the metropolitan areas of Reno, Nevada, and Redding, California, has increased the demand for use of public lands to support community needs and provide low-impact recreation. In addition to traditional consumptive uses, public interest has expanded in uses that emphasize aesthetic values such as open space and low-impact recreational opportunities. Changes in the type of recreation uses and the demand for diversified recreational opportunities can result in conflicts between uses and resource concerns that the old land use plans were not designed to address. Concerns include how these uses affect ecosystem health; local communities; and state, regional, and tribal interests.

Vegetation communities continue to be threatened by both the encroachment of western juniper into sagebrush-grasslands and from the invasion of annual exotic grasses and noxious weeds. The number of plant and animal species recognized by California and Nevada as special-status species has increased. In addition, the decline of sage-grouse populations in the western United States has triggered BLM national, state, and local strategies with new guidance to address habitat requirements of the species.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New protocol agreements between BLM and State Historic Preservation Offices guide the protection, inventory, and conservation of cultural resources as they relate to other resources and land uses. Emphasis is being placed on finding and managing traditional cultural properties in accord with local tribes.

PLANNING AND SCOPING PROCESS

BLM officially initiated the planning process for the Surprise Resource Management Plan (RMP) with publication of a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* on July 22, 2003 (Volume 68, Number 140). Issues related to resource management in the Surprise planning area were assembled during the scoping process consisting of public scoping meetings, field tours, socioeconomic workshops, and interactions with federal, state, tribal, and county collaborators.

BLM hosted six public scoping meetings in August and September 2003. A total of 205 people attended these meetings. Four meetings were held within the planning area. Other meetings were held in Redding, California, and Reno, Nevada, to ensure that BLM heard the concerns of user groups residing outside the planning area. BLM also conducted a scoping meeting in the field in August 2003. A community workshop was conducted to discuss economics and social values in December 2003.

The scoping process generated 15 key issues to be addressed in the RMP. These issues, listed below, and summarized in Chapter 1, were used to develop alternatives and are addressed in other sections of the resource management plan (e.g. effects on local economies).

- 1. How should upland ecosystems be managed?**
- 2. How will forestry issues be managed, and how will forest resources be utilized?**
- 3. How will water resources be managed and utilized?**
- 4. How will visual resources be managed and preserved?**
- 5. How should riparian areas and wetlands be managed?**
- 6. How will wildland fire and prescribed fire be managed and utilized?**
- 7. How should vehicular access and travel be managed on public lands?**
- 8. How should the public lands be managed to sustain the traditional practices and traditional cultural properties of Native American cultures?**
- 9. How should the public lands be managed to meet the needs of local communities?**
- 10. How will grazing and rangelands be managed?**
- 11. What lands are available for energy and mineral development?**
- 12. What lands will be identified for retention, exchange, disposal and acquisition?**
- 13. How will recreation opportunities be managed?**
- 14. How will fish, wildlife, and special status species be managed?**
- 15. How should special resource values and special management areas be designated and managed?**

COLLABORATION

BLM approaches planning with community-based collaboration, in which interested groups and people—often with varied or opposing interests—work together to devise solutions with broad public support for managing BLM-administered lands. Cooperating local, state, tribal, and federal agencies have been part of the planning team for the RMPs to the fullest extent possible. During plan implementation BLM will continue partnerships with these public and local, state, and tribal governments and agencies to select high priority projects and to resolve emerging issues.

The Council of Environmental Quality defines a cooperating agency as any agency that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise for proposals covered by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1501.6). Any federal, state, or local government jurisdiction with such qualifications may become a cooperating agency by agreement with the lead agency. The following are formal cooperating agencies for this RMP:

- Lassen and Modoc Counties, California;
- Washoe County, Nevada;
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- California Department of Fish and Game;
- Nevada Department of Wildlife; and
- Nevada and California State Historic Preservation Offices.

The Northeast California Resource Advisory Council (RAC) contributed issues and reviewed goals, objectives, and management alternatives. Other groups that participated in the planning process include Humboldt County, Nevada; Fort Bidwell Community Council; and Modoc-Washoe Experimental Stewardship Group.

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) developed management alternatives for the Surprise Field Office Draft Resource Management Plan using input and comments from public scoping meetings, written comments, as well as from staffs of BLM and other cooperating agency partners. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations and BLM resource management planning regulations require the formulation of a reasonable range of alternatives that seek to address identified planning issues and management concerns. Each alternative must be evaluated to ensure that it would be consistent with resource goals and objectives, and current laws, regulations, and policy.

Alternatives are developed to establish a framework to evaluate the potential impacts on the planning area that might occur as a result of implemented management decisions. The five management alternatives developed for the Surprise RMP are detailed in this section, including:

No Action Alternative (required by NEPA): Retains current management through guidance and direction from current policies, and existing management plans.

Alternative 1. Resource / Economic Development: Emphasizes commodity production from BLM resources in accordance with local economies and land use plans from local communities and counties.

Alternative 2. Ecosystem Restoration or Protection: Maximizes efforts to maintain, restore, or improve components of the ecosystem using natural ecosystem processes.

Alternative 3. Traditional or Historical Uses: Emphasizes traditional community uses of resources and/or emphasizes historical uses and values.

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Preferred Alternative: The Preferred Alternative was “crafted” from all of the other alternatives and combines management actions from all four of the above listed alternatives. This alternative has been designed and selected to best meet the purpose and need of the plan as described in Chapter 1; and to meet desired future conditions, goals, and objectives of individual and combined resources and resource uses.

Each alternative listed above has a somewhat different concept and emphasis on how natural resources and resource uses would be managed. The Surprise Draft RMP provides a detailed description of alternative management actions for 22 resource subjects. The desired future condition, goals, objectives, and management actions for each major resource area are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The highlights of management actions under the Preferred Alternative for each resource subject are listed below.

Air Quality

- Manage prescribed fires (500 – 5000 acres per year) to reduce impacts to air quality.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources

- Develop three on-site cultural interpretive areas.
- Designate three archeological areas of critical environmental concern.
- Develop two cultural resource management areas.

Energy & Minerals

- Manage 977,564 acres as ‘Open’ to mineral leasing under standard terms and conditions.
- Manage 1,220,644 acres as ‘Open’ to locatable minerals.
- Manage 1,037,063 acres as ‘Open’ to saleable minerals.

Fire Management

- The NorCal Fire Management Plan identifies aggressive, full suppression as the appropriate management response (AMR) under conditions of severe fire intensity, especially in the wildland urban interface. However, exceptions may be made where resource objectives could safely be achieved.
- Under conditions of low fire intensity, a less aggressive AMR, such as containment/confinement, would be implemented in previously identified areas likely to benefit from wildland fire use.
- Manage wildland fires using the Appropriate Management Response (AMR):
 - Full suppression AMR - 891,695 acres
 - Full range of AMR suppression options - 328,949 acres

Forestry Resources

- Restore forestland health on commercial forestlands through fuels reduction treatments using mechanical and prescribed fire treatments at a rate of 25 to 150 acres per year.
- Implement reforestation projects on commercial forestlands and allow post-fire timber salvage sales.
- Manage low-site forestlands and woodlands for fuelwood removal, removal of invasive juniper to improve land health, and for biomass production.
- Allow public harvest of juniper on 50 acres per year for a total harvest of 200 cords per year.
- Close sensitive resource areas to public woodcutting of invasive juniper, e.g. wilderness

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

study areas (WSAs), research natural areas (RNAs), and areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs).

Fuels Management

- Implement fuels treatments through mechanical, prescribed fire, and biological methods to reduce build-up of hazardous fuels, provide fuel breaks, and create defensible space in communities at risk.
- Teach classes in local schools and fire safety council meetings regarding fire protection and hazard reduction, and the natural role of fire in the ecosystem.
- Implement hazardous fuels reduction treatments using various methods:
 - Prescribed fire and mechanical treatments: 500 – 5,000 acres/year
 - Biological treatments: 0 – 25 acres/year
 - Chemical treatments: 0 – 500 acres/year

Lands and Realty

- Prioritize acquisition of lands within and adjacent to wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, areas of critical environmental concern, and conservation and scenic easements. Also acquire lands with high resource values.
- Prioritize retention of BLM lands that have high public resource values. Allow exchanges when private parcels have higher resource values than BLM lands.
- Prioritize potential disposal of BLM administered lands that are small tracts, difficult to manage, or do not contain high resource values.

Livestock Grazing

- Maintain livestock grazing within 49 allotments on 1,445,443 acres.
- Authorize 92,465 animal unit months annually.
- Comply with the Approved Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing.
- Areas burned by wild or prescribed fire would be rested from livestock grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons.
- Livestock salting will not be allowed within or adjacent to springs, streams, meadows, archaeological sites, and aspen stands. Location of salting stations would be determined in consultation with livestock permittees.
- Maintain 5,500 acres of existing livestock exclosures. Meadows and aspen stands of significant value to wildlife will receive priority for additional livestock exclusion. When fencing natural water sources, water would be provided outside fences for livestock, wildlife, and wild horses.
- The needs of wildlife and wild horses would be considered in water developments for livestock grazing. Raptor perch sites would be minimized on fences and water developments in important sage grouse habitat. Water would be retained and provided at ground level in all livestock water developments. Natural riparian habitat, and a substantial portion of the surrounding cover, would be protected for wildlife use where water is developed from natural sources.
- Target utilization levels (livestock, wild horses, and wildlife) will not exceed 40%–60% on key species of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Guideline number 16 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing* would be implemented on allotments not meeting Standards for Rangeland Health at current forage utilization levels.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A grazing permittee may voluntarily relinquish their grazing preference and allotment permit, thereby initiating action by the BLM to allocate those lands to another use.
- Maintain domestic sheep permits in specific grazing allotments (Tuledad, Selic-Alaska, and Red Rock Lake), but convert sheep permits to cattle permits if there is evidence of disease transmission to bighorn sheep.
- Allow trailing of domestic sheep in Tuledad, Selic Alaska, and Red Rock Lake Allotments and in areas that are ≥ 9 miles from occupied bighorn sheep habitat.

Recreation and Visitor Services

- All areas not managed under a special designation would be managed as the extensive recreation management area, and managed for low impact activities.
- Special recreation permits would be allowed for events provided there is adequate resource protection.
- Develop two seasonal facilities for public viewing of wild horses.
- Throughout the Surprise Field Office area, recreational camping is limited to fourteen consecutive days. Campfires are allowed on all lands except when fire restrictions are in effect. Campfire permits are required on public lands in California, but not in Nevada.
- The existing Barrel Springs and Buckhorn scenic byway designations would remain unaltered. Designation of additional scenic byways or vehicle routes would be considered provided they are consistent with OHV designations and resource concerns are addressed.
- Collection of petrified wood would be managed under existing policy.
- Assign Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes to all lands to provide a diversity of recreational experiences:
 - Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized 450,636 acres
 - Semi-Primitive Motorized 636,018 acres
 - Roaded Natural 127,038 acres
 - Rural 6,952 acres

Soils

- Implement management practices to promote recovery of 49,894 acres of upland soils not meeting Standards for Rangeland Health.
- Ensure all management activities result in no net loss of soil mass or productivity within the management area.
- Consumptive uses and developments would be restricted to soils which are considered unproductive or most suitable for construction purposes.
- Livestock grazing would be managed to promote healthy watersheds; this necessitates productive soils, natural hydrologic function, biological integrity, and the preservation of biological crusts.
- Employ bio-engineering projects to improve soil condition and achieve proper functioning condition (PFC).
- Apply sediment intrusion buffer zones around sensitive resources on a case-by-case basis.
- Implement mitigation actions to offset soil and productivity losses within the same fifth-level watershed area (conceptually 40,000 – 250,000 acres).

Special Area Designation: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

- Designate and manage 957 acres of the Rahilly-Gravelly ACEC to conform to the Lakeview Resource Management Plan, 2004.
- Designate the Massacre Rim Area of Critical Environmental Concern, 44,870 acres.
- Designate the Bitner Area of Critical Environmental Concern, 1,921 acres.
- New right-of-trails would be avoided in ACECs, except where no reasonable option exists.
- Livestock grazing would continue according to permit stipulations and allotment management plans.
- Noxious weeds would be aggressively controlled in all ACECs.
- Firewood, post, or pole cutting for commercial or domestic use will not be allowed in any proposed/designated ACEC.
- An approved plan of operation is required for locatable minerals in an ACEC; other restrictions may apply for leasable or salable minerals. Where ACECs overlap WSAs, further constraints on mineral activities apply under the Wilderness IMP.
- Traditional uses by Native Americans would be protected and tribal collecting of plants allowed within proposed/designated ACECs.

Special Area Designation: Wild & Scenic Rivers (WSR)

- A 22 mile section (457 acres) of Twelvemile Creek would be managed to protect and retain suitability for designation as a 'wild and scenic river.'
- Manage this section of Twelvemile Creek as VRM class II to protect the scenic quality of the area.
- Pursue acquisition of non-federal lands along Twelvemile Creek to enlarge the eligible and suitable portion of this stream. This would be done on a voluntarily basis from willing sellers and/or exchange proponents.

Special Area Designation: Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)

- The existing wilderness study areas (WSAs) and any proposed WSAs would be managed under the "Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review" (Wilderness IMP) (USDIBLM 1995b, as amended):

Sheldon Contiguous	23,700 acres
South Warner Contiguous	4,500 acres
Massacre Rim	101,290 acres
Wall Canyon	46,305 acres
Buffalo Hill	47,315 acres

- Prioritize acquisition of land parcels within and adjacent to wilderness study areas (on a willing-seller basis).
- Existing and new mining operations under the 1872 mining law would be regulated under 43 CFR 3802 only.
- Any new roads or trails that have been created or discovered would be closed to vehicle use, with the exception of approved right-of-trails.
- All proposals for uses and/or facilities within WSAs would be reviewed to determine whether the proposal meets the nonimpairment criteria or a permitted exception.

Travel Management

- Manage off-highway vehicle (OHV) use to protect resource values, promote public safety, provide OHV use opportunities where appropriate, and minimize conflicts among various users.
- Manage 1,809 miles of routes designated for use for access to BLM-administered lands.
- Implement closures on 92 miles of routes.
- Assign off-highway vehicle use area designations:
 - Open 0 acres
 - Limited to designated routes 1,208,670 acres
 - Closed 11,994 acres
- An OHV special recreation management area would be developed in the Lower Lake Sand Dunes if the need arises.
- Commercial, competitive, and other organized OHV activities would be managed with special recreation permits.

Utilities, Transportation, and Telecommunications

- Wilderness study areas would be designated as rights-of-way exclusion zones. All proposals must meet non-impairment criteria, which prohibit permanent facilities unless they are grandfathered, they have valid existing rights, or they provide access to private inholdings.
- Create rights-of-way “avoidance” zones in all special area designations and important wildlife habitat areas.
- Allow development of existing utility corridors for expanded use up to 1 mile wide.
- Restrict development of existing communication sites to areas previously disturbed.
- Development of new utility corridors or communications sites would not be allowed, except where needed for BLM management and upgrade.

Vegetation

- Vegetation manipulation would be prioritized to sagebrush-steppe communities with juniper encroachment, decadent big sagebrush and greasewood stands, and low elevation brush communities dominated by exotic annual grasses.
- Vegetation manipulation will seek to restore natural ecosystems, establish wildfire fuel breaks, and increase forage production for livestock and wild horses.
- Native juniper woodlands would be maintained on approximately 17,500 acres.
- Quaking aspen woodlands would be maintained on at least 1,800 acres. Remove invasive juniper within quaking aspen stands on 10 – 100 acres/year. Restore 20 acres of historic aspen stands using seeds, roots, or saplings.
- Prioritize restoration of sagebrush–steppe communities on 500 – 4000 acres/year.
- Restore native grassland communities on 50 – 100 acres/year.
- Restoration of communities encroached by invasive juniper would be treated using prescribed fire, mechanical, chemical, and manual treatments.
- Prioritize restoration treatment methods for removal of invasive juniper within riparian areas on 50 – 100 acres/year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Maintain 36,740 acres of existing crested wheatgrass seedings in good condition. Restore 8,400 acres of existing crested wheatgrass seedings in poor condition to native species.

Noxious Weeds & Invasive Species

- Integrated Weed Management (IWM) will continue to promote education and prevention as well as cultural, physical, biological, and chemical treatments.
- All hay, straw, or mulch used on BLM-administered lands must be certified as free from noxious weed seed.
- Cooperative weed control programs will continue on the Upper Alkali Lake restoration project, the Snake Lake experimental medusahead project and on watershed restoration projects in Wall Canyon.
- Conduct IWM inventories in coordination with adjacent weed management areas for early detection of new infestations.

Special Status Plants

- Manage all special status species habitats or occurrences (populations) so that BLM actions do not contribute to the need to list these species as federally threatened or endangered.
- Allow for no more than 20% (by plant species) elimination of occupied habitat and no greater than 20% total decrease in any plant species occurrence, except as directed in biological assessments, biological evaluations, habitat management plans, and conservation strategies/species management guides for specific species.
- Reduce or eliminate impacts to special status species and their habitat when conducting ground disturbing activities.
- Acquire lands from willing sellers that support unprotected populations of special status plants.
- Provide additional protection measures to 'special interest' species to prevent them from becoming listed as special status plants.

Visual Resources

- Manage all wilderness study areas and the Madeline Plains Watershed as VRM Class I.
- Assign VRM Class designations to all BLM-administered lands, and manage lands according to these class requirements, to protect scenic quality:
 - VRM Class I 183,587 acres
 - VRM Class II 437,553 acres
 - VRM Class III 227,134 acres
 - VRM Class IV 372,390 acres

Water Resources

- Achieve measurable progress toward proper functioning condition (PFC) or desired future condition (DFC) on 53 miles of perennial and intermittent streams and 2,500 acres of riparian/wetland areas.
- Implement restorative measures to improve water quality and progress toward meeting state standards within 20–50 years on non-compliant streams.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Apply restoration treatments to improve hydrologic function and water quality, including bio-engineering treatments, improved livestock grazing strategies, planting woody riparian vegetation, and installing in-stream structures.**
- **Maintain existing water sources and manage to promote wildlife habitat, improve distribution of livestock and wild horses, and provide for recreational uses.**
- **Prioritize development of new water sources to extend seasonal water availability for wildlife, and to benefit desired ecosystems.**
- **Withdraw state-appropriated water rights on waters that are not ‘waters of the state’.**
- **Assert in-stream flow rights in Nevada and riparian rights in California on all perennial and important intermittent streams.**
- **Projects that involve inter-basin transfer of water would be coordinated with local and regional governments.**

Wild Horses and Burros

- **Manage wild horses within 8 established herd management areas (HMAs), on 493,821 acres.**
- **Enlarge the Fox-Hog HMA boundary to 145,244 acres, so that it extends to the actual area of use by wild horses.**
- **Manage Nut Mountain, Bitner, Wall Canyon and Massacre Lakes HMAs as a complex.**
- **Prioritize selection of animals returned to BLM-administered lands after gathers based on traits desirable by public for adoption (color, size and conformance), and for historical traits in the Carter Reservoir HMA only.**
- **Maintain herd management area (HMA) populations within established appropriate management levels (AMLs) by conducting periodic gathers.**
- **Eliminate unnecessary fences and minimize construction of new fences in HMAs that prevent seasonal wild horse movement or migration.**
- **Implement fertility control in some or all of the HMAs (based on funding) to assist in maintaining populations at AMLs.**
- **Adjust AMLs when monitoring data indicates wild horse populations are not achieving a thriving natural ecological balance.**
- **Remove wild horses found outside HMAs.**

Wildlife and Fisheries

- **Design and locate new livestock water developments to avoid dewatering natural springs or wetland areas. Outfit all livestock troughs with wildlife access ramps. Strive to provide water at ground level for wildlife at all developments, as feasible.**
- **Retain vegetation buffers for wildlife cover at water sources, wetlands, and riparian sites.**
- **Limited operating periods (LOPs) and buffer zones would be implemented as necessary to reduce disturbances to wildlife.**
- **Follow management guidelines within the biological opinion and conservation strategies for the Warner sucker and the Cowhead Lake tui chub.**
- **Acquire lands from willing sellers that contain important habitat for special status and special interest species. Retain lands with important breeding habitats.**
- **Implement treatments to remove invasive juniper from important wildlife habitats on 250 – 2,500 acres/year. Reduce invasive juniper where it threatens meadow systems and**

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quaking aspen stands, to improve ungulate habitat. Implement juniper reduction to enhance sagebrush ecosystems; focus on providing diverse composition and age classes of shrubs and healthy understory vegetation.

- Remove invasive juniper from bighorn lambing habitat.
- Coordinate bighorn sheep augmentation and reintroduction efforts with game agencies. Provide appropriate habitat throughout the planning area except for the Warner Mountains and Coppersmith Hills.
- If Rocky Mountain elk become established within the field office area, coordinate with state wildlife agencies and other cooperators, including livestock operators, to develop and implement management plans.
- Locally developed conservation strategies or plans developed for sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, burrowing owl and other special status species would be used to identify high-priority treatment and fire suppression areas.
- Retain and protect caves identified as important to bats. Limit disturbances near identified bat hibernacula and maternity colonies.
- Maintain existing waterfowl nesting islands and structures.
- Protect known raptor nesting trees from removal during project activities.
- Manage migratory birds in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Migratory Bird Executive Order 13186, *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*.
- Coordinate with game agencies in maintenance and construction of wildlife guzzlers.
- Continue cooperative efforts to reintroduce native fauna back into the planning area and do not encourage non-native species introductions.
- Improve fishing opportunities and fish habitat along the east slope of the Warner Mountains (20-25 miles).
- Remove non-native fishes where they are found to be severely impacting native fish.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The potential environmental consequences (or impacts) of the five alternatives were analyzed for each natural resource, resource use, and social and economic conditions. Detailed descriptions of the direct and indirect impacts of resource management under all five alternatives are provided in Chapter 4, along with a discussion of the possible cumulative impacts that could result from actions taken in this RMP. A comparison summary of these impacts is described in the Impacts Summary Table in Chapter 2.

The Preferred Alternative would enhance the ability of BLM to achieve the purpose and need of this document, as outlined in Chapter 1, as well as meet desired future conditions, goals and objectives of specific resources as outlined in Chapter 2. Alternatives 1, 3 and No Action lack the degree of management emphasis required to restore degraded sagebrush steppe communities and habitats, in relation to the encroachment of juniper.

The Preferred Alternative would result in overall minor to moderate adverse impacts to resources, and these impacts would continue to be mitigated. Management actions under the Preferred Alternative would result in moderate to major beneficial impacts to native vegetation communities from restoration efforts, and the use of prescribed fire to remove invasive juniper. Improvements to riparian areas, water

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bodies, and other special habitats would improve soil and water resources, and wildlife habitat. The designation of three (archaeological) areas of critical environmental concern, one wild and scenic river, and an increased emphasis on cultural resource protection and management would have beneficial impacts to these important and unique resources.

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