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# Chapter 1

## Introduction





# Overview

Currently, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands within the planning area (Map 1) are being managed under three plans. The Two Rivers Resource Management Plan (1986) addresses management in the western portion of the planning area; the John Day Resource Management Plan (1985) addresses management in most of the eastern portion of the planning area; and the Baker Resource Management Plan (1989) addresses management of small portions in Morrow and Umatilla Counties.

The land use planning process is the key tool the BLM uses to manage resources and designate uses on public lands in coordination with tribal, federal, state, and local governments; land users; and interested members of the public. Generally, a Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision does not result in wholesale change of current management. Accordingly, this RMP incorporates new information and regulatory guidance, and provides management direction where it may be lacking or requires clarification to resolve land use issues or conflicts. For certain activities, the BLM will carry forward current management direction that has proven effective and requires no change. Existing management objectives, actions, and guidelines are described in Chapter 2 under the sections “Management Common to All Alternatives” or “Alternative 1 – No Action.” Management within the planning area is also guided by public policies and legislation. Relevant legal authorities are briefly summarized in Appendix A.

The BLM has prepared this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to analyze the environmental effects that could result from implementation of a John Day Basin Resource Management Plan (JDBRMP). The JDBRMP will provide direction for managing public lands in eastern Oregon under the administrative jurisdiction of the Central Oregon Resource Area of the Prineville District BLM.

During the time between publishing of the Draft RMP/EIS and publication of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, Congress passed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 that the President signed into law (Public Law 111-11) on March 30, 2009. The Act designated the Spring Basin Wilderness and also contained several Spring Basin-specific land exchange provisions that the BLM will begin working on. That work includes getting appraisals, conducting hazardous material clearances, and conducting other lands and realty-related work outside the scope of this RMP.

# Vision

The current RMP’s guiding management of BLM-administered lands in the project area is being revised under the JDBRMP according to guidance in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 Code [USC] 1701 et seq.) and BLM’s Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601). An EIS is incorporated into this document as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (CEQ 1978, 40 CFR 1500-1508). Consistent with FLPMA, all alternatives analyzed under this PRMP/FEIS are designed to meet three broad goals to:

- Protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archeological values;
- Preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition, provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals, and provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use; and
- Recognize the Nation’s need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from the public lands including implementation of the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970 (84 Stat. 1876, 30 U.S.C. 21a) as it pertains to the public lands.

In conformity with FLPMA, the mission of the BLM is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

# BLM Mission and Philosophy

## Mission of the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon and Washington

The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In Oregon and Washington, the BLM provides innovative leadership in managing natural resources of the Pacific Northwest.

We are committed to functioning with technical excellence, fiscal responsibility, and human sensitivity in fulfilling the following objectives:

- *Instilling a stewardship ethic for conservation and prudent use of the land and its resources.*
- *Promoting public partnerships and global policies that sustain health and diversity of ecosystems.*
- *Fostering social and economic responsibility in the use and management of lands and resources.*

## Planning Criteria and Legislative Constraints

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act is the primary authority for the BLM's management of public lands. This law provides the overarching policy by which public lands will be managed and establishes provisions for land use planning, land acquisition and disposition, administration, range management, rights-of-way, designated management areas, and the repeal of certain laws and statutes. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides the basic national charter for environmental responsibility and requires the consideration and public availability of information regarding the environmental impacts of major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. In concert, these two laws provide the guidance for all BLM activities.



## How BLM Employees Get Direction to Manage Public Lands

Direction for management of public lands administered by the BLM is multi-tiered.

First, Congress authorized the BLM to manage lands and passed laws that provide overall objectives for management of those lands. While one law, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, authorizes the BLM to manage specific lands, other laws can provide direction to many government agencies. For example, the Endangered Species Act establishes guidance that must be followed by all federal agencies to protect threatened and endangered species.

The Department of the Interior or the BLM then creates regulations and policies that describe how the BLM will act to implement the direction of Congress. Regulations are initially published in the Federal Register and subsequently in the Code of Federal Regulations.

Policy direction is then provided to the BLM staff in the form of Manuals and Handbooks. For teams preparing Resource Management Plans, the primary references are the NEPA Manual and Handbook and the Planning Manual and Handbook.

Executive Orders can also direct and guide management. These orders are issued under the authority of, and signed by the President. An executive order generally recognizes one or more laws and provides instructions for implementing those laws to one or more federal agencies.

Laws created by Congress (legislative guidance) and executive direction (executive guidance) provided through Department of the Interior or BLM regulations and policy and executive orders that apply to this planning process are listed and briefly described in Appendix A.

Resource Management Plans establish specific objectives and guidance for managing lands within a defined planning area or describe specific project-level stipulations. This guidance is described in Chapter 2 of this document (Alternatives).

Implementation-level (project-level) guidance is the equivalent of a blueprint and architect instructions. Depending on the size and type of project, planning at the project level may be almost as complex as developing a Resource Management Plan or may result in a very simple and small document. Project-specific, implementation-level guidance will not be addressed nor described in this document.

A final note is that certain regulations generated by the BLM and other agencies provide guidance that directly applies to day-to-day BLM activities. These include regulations for the management of cultural resources, protection of endangered species, many lands procedures, and several other activities. This planning process does not have the authority to modify such guidance.

# The Planning Process

In accordance with 43 CFR 1610.4, preparation of an RMP involves interrelated steps as described in Table 1-1 below.

**Table 1-1. BLM Planning Process.**

Step	Description	Timeframe
Step 1 – Identify planning issues	Issues, concerns, and opportunities are identified through a scoping process that includes the BLM, the public, Indian tribes, other federal agencies, and state and local governments. The BLM publishes a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register to inform the public of the planning process and begin the scoping process.	Fall 2005 to Fall 2006. NOI published February 2006.
Step 2 – Develop planning criteria	Planning criteria are created to ensure decisions are made to address the issues pertinent to the planning effort. Planning criteria are derived from a variety of sources, including applicable laws and regulations, existing management plans, coordination with other agencies' programs, and the results of public and agency scoping. The planning criteria may be updated and changed as planning proceeds.	Ongoing.
Step 3 – Collect data and information	Several BLM specialists analyze the planning area's resources, environmental conditions, uses, and current management.	Ongoing.
Step 4 – Analyze management situation	Public scoping meetings are held to help identify issues and concerns. This initial analysis was included in the scoping report. The scoping report summarizes comments from public meetings and other outreach, and uses this information along with staff input to refine issues and planning criteria.	Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) and Scoping Report published Fall 2006.
Step 5 – Formulate alternatives	The BLM formulates a range of reasonable management alternatives to address issues identified during scoping.	January 2007 to November 2007.
Step 6 – Assess alternatives	This step involves estimating the physical, biological, economic, and social effects of implementing each alternative in order to provide a comparative evaluation of impacts.	November 2007 to July 2008.
Step 7 – Select preferred alternative	The alternative that best resolves planning issues is identified as the preferred alternative. The Draft RMP/EIS is prepared and distributed for a 90-day public review.	Draft RMP/EIS August 2008.
Step 8 – Select RMP	After comments to the draft document have been received and analyzed, the Proposed RMP/Final EIS is refined as needed; published; and then made available for a public protest period of 30 days. Following resolution by the BLM Director of any protests or Governor's consistency review comments, the BLM State Director signs the Record of Decision to approve the RMP/EIS.	Proposed RMP/Final EIS: estimated March 2012. Approved RMP/ROD: estimated August 2012.
Step 9 – Implementation and Monitoring	Management measures outlined in the approved plan are implemented on the ground, and monitoring is conducted to test their effectiveness in resolving the identified issues and achieving the desired results.	Ongoing after RMP approval.

As directed by FLPMA, during development of this RMP, the BLM has:

- 1 Used and observed the principles of multiple use and sustained yield;
- 1 Used a systematic interdisciplinary approach to integrate consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences;
- 1 Given priority to the designation and protection of ACECs;
- 1 Relied, to the extent it is available, on the inventory of the public lands, their resources, and other values;
- 1 Considered present and potential uses of the public lands;
- 1 Considered the relative scarcity of resource values and the availability of alternative means for realization of those values;
- 1 Weighed long-term benefits against short-term benefits to the public;
- 1 Provided for compliance with applicable pollution control laws, including state and federal air, water, noise, or other pollution standards or implementation plans; and
- 1 To the extent consistent with the laws governing the administration of the public lands, coordinated land use inventory, planning, and management activities with the land use planning and management programs of other federal departments and agencies, state and local governments, and Indian tribes.

Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and guidelines that help to guide data collection, alternative formulation, and alternative selection in the RMP process. In conjunction with the planning issues, planning criteria assure the planning process is focused. The criteria also help guide the final plan selection and provide a basis for judging the responsiveness of the planning options.

## Planning Criteria

Preliminary planning criteria were developed prior to public scoping and refined based on public input to the AMS. The following criteria set the focus for the planning process and guide decision making by topic.

- 1 The RMP planning effort will be collaborative. The BLM will strive to ensure that its management decisions complement other planning jurisdictions and adjoining properties within the boundaries described by law and federal regulations.
- 1 The public land in the planning area will provide a diverse array of opportunities that result in a sustained flow of economic and social benefits to communities and provide a diversity of recreation opportunities while continuing to protect visual quality, wildlife and fish habitats, and other resources and resource uses.
- 1 The planning process will identify existing guidance and establish new guidance upon which the BLM will rely to manage public lands within the planning area.
- 1 The plan will comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and current policies.
- 1 The RMP will recognize all valid existing rights.
- 1 Resource allocations will be reasonable and achievable given available technological and budgetary constraints.
- 1 As part of this RMP process, the BLM will analyze areas for potential designation as ACECs in accordance with 43 CFR 1610-7-2, and river corridors for recommendation and designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSR Act).
- 1 All previously established Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) will continue to be managed for wilderness values and character until Congress designates them as wilderness areas, or releases them for multiple use management, unless management direction as set forth in the approved RMP continues management for wilderness values and character regardless of their release by Congress.

# Relationship to BLM Policies, Plans, and Programs

Since development and approval of the Baker, John Day, and Two Rivers RMPs in the 1980s, there have been amendments to provide additional land management direction. As the land use plan guidance is put into practice on the ground, implementation-level planning is directed by BLM policy, program-specific guidance, and Best Management Practices.

All future resource authorizations and actions will conform to, or be consistent with the decisions contained in the approved RMP. All existing operations and activities authorized under permits, contracts, cooperative agreements, or other authorizations will be modified, as necessary, to conform to the approved RMP within a reasonable time frame. However, the plan will not repeal valid existing rights on public lands. A valid existing right is a claim or authorization that takes precedence over the decisions developed in this plan. If such authorizations come up for review and can be modified, they will also be brought into conformance with the plan.

## Related Plans

The BLM planning regulations require that BLM plans be consistent with officially approved or adopted resource-related plans of other federal, state, local, and tribal governments to the extent those plans are consistent with federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. Plans formulated by federal, state, local, and tribal governments that relate to management of lands and resources in the John Day Basin have been reviewed and considered in development of the John Day Basin RMP/EIS. These plans include the following:

### Federal Plans

- 1 John Day River Management Plan (USDI BLM 2001c)
- 1 Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (USDA Forest Service and USFWS 2000)
- 1 Summary of the Draft EIS, Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment (USDA Forest Service and USDI BLM 2004)
- 1 PACFISH (USDA and USDI 1995)
- 1 Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (designation of West-wide energy corridors) is being implemented through an interagency Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). The Final PEIS provides plan amendment decisions that address numerous energy corridor related issues, including the utilization of existing corridors (enhancements and upgrades), identification of new corridors, supply and demand considerations, and compatibility with other corridor and project planning efforts. The approved PEIS amended existing plans and is incorporated in the JDBRMP.
- 1 National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans for the adjacent Ochoco, Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests.

### Tribal Government Plans and Treaties

- 1 The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation consider the John Day River Management Plan (USDI BLM 2001c) as the management plan for the John Day Wild and Scenic River (B. Cunningham, pers. comm. 1/2007).
- 1 Pine Creek Habitat Management Plan.
- 1 Treaties of 1855.

## State and County Plans

- 1 The Oregon Conservation Strategy (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife 2006).
- 1 County land use plans.

## Collaboration

The benefits of enhanced collaboration among agencies in the preparation of NEPA analyses include disclosing relevant information early in the analytical process; applying available technical expertise and staff support; avoiding duplication with other federal, state, tribal, and local procedures; and establishing a mechanism for addressing intergovernmental issues. Collaboration and consultation are discussed further in Chapter 5.

## Policy

Implementation of the RMP begins when the Oregon/Washington BLM State Director signs the Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/RMP. Implementation of decisions made in the FEIS/RMP will be a function of the BLM budgeting and collaborative implementation planning processes (IM 2008-041).

## Purpose and Need for a Revised Plan

The purpose of the JDBRMP is to provide direction for managing public lands in eastern Oregon that are primarily under the jurisdiction of the Prineville District BLM. The JDBRMP will revise the Two Rivers RMP (1986); the John Day RMP (1985); and the Baker RMP (1989), all of which address management of BLM lands in the planning area. The JDBRMP will provide objectives, land use allocations, and management direction to maintain, improve, or restore resource conditions over the long term. It will specify where and under what circumstances particular activities will be allowed on BLM-administered public lands. A primary goal of the JDBRMP is to develop management practices that ensure long-term sustainability of a healthy and productive landscape, and add to community stability through resource use and enjoyment. The JDBRMP generally will not include a description of how particular programs or projects will be implemented or prioritized; those decisions are deferred to implementation-level planning.

There is a need for a new John Day Basin RMP because information and circumstances have changed since the original plans were approved, including:

- 1 Changed circumstances and new information on economic, social, and biologic conditions within the planning area;
- 1 New laws, regulations, and policies that invalidate or supersede previous decisions;
- 1 Changed user demands and activities that create new resource effects and user conflicts; and
- 1 Changed acceptance of impacts.

These conditions, and the fact that some of the existing plans have been amended, drive the need for an inclusive comprehensive plan that provides updated and clear direction to both the BLM and the public.

# Planning Area

## Physical Boundaries

The RMP planning area encompasses 5,450,225 acres, mostly within the John Day River basin of eastern Oregon (Map 1). Within the planning area, the BLM manages about 456,000 acres of public land surface. The BLM-managed lands fall in eight Oregon counties—Grant, Wheeler, Gilliam, Wasco, Sherman, Umatilla, Jefferson, and Morrow.

The **planning area** includes *all* land within the planning boundary, regardless of jurisdiction.

The **decision area** covers only those lands administered by the BLM.

The boundary of the planning area generally follows watershed boundaries and, therefore, also includes portions of Baker and Malheur counties although there are no BLM lands within those two counties. Collectively, the lands that the BLM administers (surface and mineral estate) are considered the “decision area.” Of the surface area, 441,987 acres are in the Central Oregon Resource Area of the Prineville District BLM, and 14,622 acres are in the Baker Resource Area of the Vale District BLM. This RMP would provide direction for BLM lands within the planning area that are within the boundaries of both the Prineville District and the Baker Resource Area of the Vale District. Private and county lands, as well as lands administered by state or other federal governments, are not subject to decisions made in this RMP.

The planning area can be grouped into the following geographical areas:

1. **Lower John Day River**—Land primarily in the canyon, but also includes uplands north of Clarno, as far away as Horn Butte.
2. **Sutton Mountain/Bridge Creek**—Lands upstream of Clarno to Service Creek, including the Bridge Creek, Bear Creek and Sutton Mountain areas. The southwestern portion of this area is outside of the John Day Basin, in the Deschutes watershed, but is included in the planning area for logistical reasons.
3. **Rudio Mountain/Johnson Heights**—Area upstream of Service Creek to Dayville, including the Rudio Mountain, Squaw Creek, and Johnson Heights areas.
4. **South Fork John Day River**—Area from Dayville south along the South Fork of the John Day River, Cottonwood, Birch and Rock Creeks, but north and east of the Harney and Crook County lines.
5. **Upper Main Stem John Day River**—Lands in the Upper John Day Valley including Little Canyon Mountain, and Dixie and Standard Creeks. Three BLM parcels within the planning area are south of the John Day Basin, in the Silvies River watershed, but are included for logistical reasons.
6. **North Fork John Day River**—Lands upstream of Monument, along the North Fork of the John Day River to Camas Creek, and north of Highway 402.

## Social and Economic Setting

Although the planning area encompasses parts of 10 counties (most of Grant, Wheeler, and Gilliam, and smaller portions of Jefferson, Umatilla, Sherman, Wasco, Morrow, Malheur, and Baker), there are different characteristics of human history, values and lifestyles within each county. While not in the planning area, Union and Crook counties are adjacent and can be considered economically and socially linked given the connecting transportation system, integrated markets, and communities.

Prior to European settlement, indigenous American Indians occupied and used the planning area. The northern portion was used by cultures oriented to the Columbia Plateau, and the southern portion was used by cultures influenced by the Great Basin. These two populations represent separate language groups, but the boundary between the two culture areas appears to have been fluid. People, goods, and ideas from these adjacent cultural areas variously merged or contracted depending on the vagaries of climate and social conditions. Hunting, gathering, and fishing were the traditional economic pursuits conducted by these nomadic people.

After the arrival of Euro-Americans, treaties were signed with affected tribes within the planning area. Reservations and ceded land rights were established in the treaties of 1855. Those rights allowed continuation of traditional social and economic pursuits within public lands through the present day.

An influx of homesteaders and gold miners moved to the area in the latter part of the 19th century. As the mining boom subsequently declined, farming, ranching, and timber grew in importance. Although forest activities have waned in the last several decades, the area still has several lumber mills. Tourism provides some economic benefit to the area and may be increasing in importance. Hunting, fishing, and rafting bring many visitors to the basin in summer and fall as thousands of enthusiasts migrate to the area for several days to weeks at a time.

Current cultural identity within the John Day Basin varies, as shown in a recent report from community field work commissioned by the BLM (Priester *et al.* 2006). The report suggests residents in Grant County relate in terms of cultural identity to Baker City and La Grande rather than to Bend for regional affiliation. In essence, Grant County residents consider themselves part of “Eastern” Oregon. Residents in Wheeler County relate more to Prineville and Bend rather than to the Columbia River area or Baker County area. Wheeler County residents consider themselves part of “Central” Oregon or the “High Desert” (Priester *et al.* 2006).

The concerns among residents and the impacts to communities from public land management decisions vary. Some concerns arise simply because of the intermixed land ownership patterns where management actions (or inaction) on one piece of land can affect actions or values on neighboring land. Other concerns associated with the social and economic environment focus on changes to recreation, forestry, livestock grazing, and other land uses as a result of increased population, economic growth, and continuing development in the planning area.

## Issues Identified During Scoping

### Scoping Process

Although formal public scoping began with publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register in February 2006, the BLM planning team actively pursued public input on planning issues and concerns both before and after that date in a variety of ways. A full scoping report was published in the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) and is available on the JDBRMP Web site (<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/prineville/index.php>). A summary of the scoping report is provided below.

One of the first outreach approaches began in fall 2005, when the BLM contracted with James Kent Associates, Inc. to conduct interviews with residents throughout the planning area. The subsequent report identified local concerns related to public land management; social and economic trends affected by land use decisions; and opportunities for further communication between community residents and BLM. The report also recommended communication strategies for each geographic area, such as the best time and place for meetings, key people to involve, and appropriate methods of local communication. Generally speaking, residents appreciate personal connection and want a planning process that builds off local interests and includes national interests in a positive manner.

In early January 2006, the BLM partnered with Wheeler County, the cities of John Day and Canyon City, and the Sonoran Institute to host two workshops to assess the economic profile of communities in the planning area, identify trends, and discuss how BLM might affect those trends. Both workshops, one in Fossil (Wheeler County) and the other in John Day (Grant County), were well attended by a wide variety of local officials, business owners, and residents.

In March 2006, the BLM held five public meetings (Forest Grove, Bend, John Day, Fossil, and Pendleton) to invite the public to help identify planning issues and concerns relating to the management of resources and resource uses on BLM-administered lands in the planning area. The BLM also met periodically with the John Day/Snake Resource Advisory Council, which represents a variety of public interests and with a group of cooperating agencies consisting of representatives of federal agencies, American Indian tribal representatives, and state and local governments (40 CFR 1508.15).

The BLM provided periodic newsletters, newspaper advertisements, news releases, and a project web site to inform the public of public meetings, public comment opportunities, the planning schedule, and contact information. Following the public scoping process, and extensive review of the existing RMPs and new information, the BLM summarized the issues in the AMS, published in fall 2006. In spring 2007, the BLM held another round of public meetings (Fossil, John Day, Bend, and Salem) to refine the issues and gather information on criteria to use during development of alternatives. The refined issue descriptions are below.

**The land use planning process is issue driven.**

*Planning issues* are disputes or controversies about existing and potential land and resource allocations, levels of resource use, production, and related management practices.

*Scoping* is a collaborative public involvement process to identify planning issues to be addressed.

## Issues Addressed

Issue identification is the first step of the nine-step BLM planning process (see Table 1-1). A planning issue is a major controversy or dispute regarding management of resources or uses on public lands that can be addressed in a variety of ways. The issues drive the formulation of alternatives considered in the EIS (Chapter 2). The three main issues the BLM addresses in this RMP are landscape health, access and travel management, and management of land acquired near the North Fork John Day River. These issues are described below.

### Issue 1: Landscape Health

**How should public land be managed to achieve healthy plant and animal communities?**

**Where is it appropriate to manage unplanned fires to achieve resource management goals and objectives?**

There are opportunities to improve sustainability and resiliency of terrestrial vegetation conditions and to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic losses from insect and disease outbreak or severe unplanned fires through management actions such as thinning forest stands to reduce uncharacteristic densities and use of fire to reduce amounts and concentrations of hazardous fuels. Determining locations and the best methods for meeting these desired conditions can be achieved by comparing current vegetative conditions with those predicted to occur within historic or acceptable ranges. The alternatives display options for prioritizing areas for treatment, based in part on amount of deviation of current conditions from desired ones, and other resource needs.

The JDBRMP will include new direction and science from many sources, including the:

- 1 Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP).
- 1 USDA Forest Service-Department of the Interior-The Nature Conservancy LANDFIRE Project (spatial distribution of, and acceptable ranges of variation for Biophysical Settings [BpS]; spatial data of Fire Regime Condition Class).
- 1 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007.)
- 1 National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands (2001) , a proactive BLM OHV Strategy to determine and implement better on-the-ground motorized off-highway vehicle management solutions. This strategy resulted from extensive public input with a diverse range of interest groups interested in OHV use on BLM public land (BLM publication No. BLM/WY/PL-01-006+1610. January, 2001; [http://www.blm.gov/ohv/OHV\\_FNL.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/ohv/OHV_FNL.pdf)).
- 1 303(d) listing of stream channels that are not addressed by existing management plans.

The BLM has coordinated with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to describe existing and desired winter range for big game. The alternatives include criteria for deciding where resource uses may need to be modified to protect, mitigate, or restore important plant communities, wildlife habitats, and sensitive species.

Fire is an important ecological component, as well as a primary public safety concern. The RMP will identify areas within the planning area where desired conditions may be met through the use of fire as a management tool.

The RMP will incorporate new local and national emphases and techniques for managing fuels within defined wildland urban interface areas, such as those in the National Fire Plan (August 2000) or those identified through local Community Wildfire Protection Plans.

Alternatives explore ways in which this issue can be addressed in conjunction with multiple use outputs such as livestock, biomass energy, and timber production.

## **Issue 2: Access and Travel Management**

**How should the BLM design a road system to efficiently deliver goods, people, and services across the planning area?**

**What opportunities will BLM provide for motorized recreation, while protecting natural and cultural resources?**

User demands have increased, particularly for recreational access and use of roads for community transportation needs, in some cases resulting in conflicts between uses and concerns about natural resource damage. Many of the BLM transportation facilities in the John Day Basin have never been designated with a maintenance level or assigned a maintenance schedule.

Though actual use data for the planning area is lacking, it appears that OHV use is increasing consistent with the high level of OHV sales nationally (Cordell 2005). From scoping it is clear that OHV users desire to maintain and in some instances increase OHV opportunities. Other groups have expressed a desire to have OHV use curtailed in order to protect wildlife, avoid encounters on trails with rapidly moving and loud OHVs, and decrease noise near their residences. Existing plans do not adequately address the impacts of widespread use by OHVs. Due to new OHV restrictions on National Forests in and near the planning area, the BLM expects increased demand for use of BLM-managed lands by OHV and other motorized vehicles.

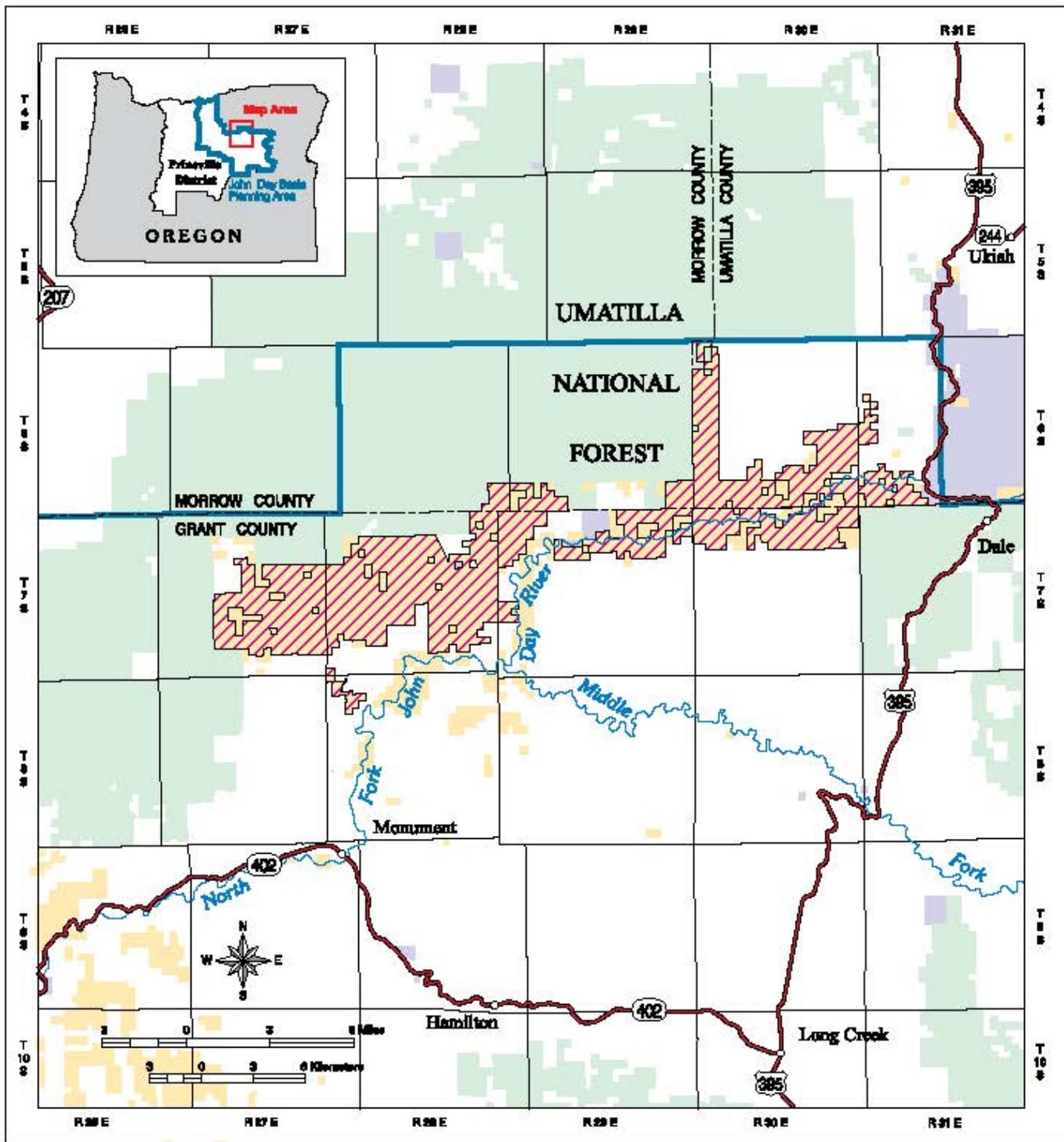
The BLM policy requires all OHV area designations to be completed at the RMP level. There are no existing BLM designated motorized trail or motorized vehicle route systems despite increasing demand. There are also no existing designated hiking, horseback riding, and mountain bike trails or any other designated non-motorized trail systems.

## **Issue 3: North Fork of the John Day River**

**How can the BLM manage these lands to protect native fish, wildlife habitat, and public recreation?**

Since approval of the current RMPs, the BLM acquired approximately 40,000 acres of land near the North Fork John Day River (see Map 2). These lands were acquired by the Oregon Land Exchange Act (OLEA) of 2000, and they are not covered by an RMP. The Act directs that “Lands acquired . . . within the North Fork of the John Day subwatershed shall be administered in accordance with section 205(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, but shall be managed primarily for the protection of native fish and wildlife habitat, and for public recreation.” The OLEA also provides the foundation for future management decisions beyond the primary criteria: “The Secretary may permit other authorized uses within the subwatershed if the Secretary determines, through the appropriate land use planning process, that such uses are consistent with, and do not diminish these management purposes.”

As a result of the guidance provided in the OLEA, management direction from the existing RMPs cannot be applied to these acquired lands. Consequently, there is no specific long-term direction for managing resources or resource uses on these lands. On the long list of resources and resource use topics with issues that must be addressed are: landscape health (including vegetation, noxious weeds, wildlife, special status species, post-fire recovery, and fire/fuels management), access and travel management, recreation, Wild and Scenic River status suitability, visual resources, wilderness characteristics, and livestock grazing.



**LEGEND**

-  Acquired
-  Planning Area Boundary
- Administered Land**
-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Forest Service
-  State
-  Private or Other

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Bureau of Land Management



**PRINEVILLE DISTRICT**  
John Day Basin  
Proposed Resource Management Plan  
Final Environmental Impact Statement  
2012

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Digital data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.

**Map 2: North Fork John Day Acquired Lands  
Oregon Land Exchange Act 2000**

## Management Concerns

There are two types of management concerns:

- 1 Topics raised during scoping that require attention, but which have a lower level of controversy over management than for the key issues identified above. While management concerns are addressed in the RMP, the management related to them generally does not vary by alternative (except in select situations).
- 1 Guidance required by BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook (USDI-BLM 2005). Again when management has not been identified as an issue, guidance generally does not vary by alternative.

## Air Quality

The BLM is obligated under the Clean Air Act to consider potential impacts of the proposed management direction on air quality. Air quality issues include public health impacts from wildland and prescribed fires, and the need to identify area-wide standards that apply to activities authorized by the BLM. These issues were not raised as concerns during scoping.

## Soil

Soil concerns focus on the need to reduce accelerated soil erosion and compaction within the decision area.

## Hydrology and Water Resources

Many streams are lacking the physical processes necessary to properly function and will not reach this condition without active changes in management. Juniper stands in densities and locations beyond the range of historic or acceptable variability have altered hydrologic processes. Some rivers and streams within the planning area have been listed by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) as water quality limited (also known as 303[d] streams).

The RMP will identify criteria or thresholds for determining watersheds that may need special emphasis because of human health concerns, aquatic or upland ecosystem health, or public uses.

This plan will incorporate new information to develop an aquatic conservation strategy sufficient to protect anadromous and other native fish in the planning area. New science on disturbance regimes and riparian area management may be incorporated into the standards and guidelines for riparian areas. The mechanisms to achieve desired conditions for fish, water quality, water quantity, stream channels, and floodplains may also be addressed through Best Management Practices.

The existing RMPs did not address water quality limited streams (303[d] streams). The JDBRMP will guide implementation of the Clean Water Act of 1977 to protect and restore water quality, and will support implementation of state-developed water quality measures (such as Total Maximum Daily Loads of sediment).

## Noxious Weeds

Management of noxious weeds and other nonnative invasive species is a critical part of public land management. Noxious weeds are one of the largest threats to maintaining and restoring ecosystem health. They also affect local economies with regard to their detrimental impact on livestock grazing, recreation, timber production, wildlife habitat, and scenery viewing. Noxious weeds displace native plant species and reduce natural biological diversity; degrade soil integrity; alter nutrient cycling; change wildland fire dynamics and energy flow; and interfere with site-recovery mechanisms, such as seed banks, that allow a site to recover following disturbance (Quigley and Arbelbide 1997). The existing plans say little with regard to noxious weed management, but there is ample new guidance that the JDBRMP will incorporate, including the national *BLM Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides Final Programmatic EIS and Record of Decision* (2007), national *Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States Final EIS and Record Of Decision* (1991), and the Prineville District *Integrated Weed*

*Management Environmental Assessment* (1993). New state-wide direction (Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon EIS, October 2010) will update guidance for treatment of noxious weeds.

## **Wild Horses**

The Murderer's Creek Wild Horse Territory/Horse Management Area (HMA) is the only herd management area within the planning area. This plan will set an HMA boundary and herd size that will allow BLM to meet resource needs and protect sensitive resources, such as Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Malheur National Forest has primary planning responsibility for this herd management area.

## **Cultural Resources**

Management concerns include compliance with new laws, guidelines, and directives to ensure that cultural resources and traditional uses are identified and evaluated prior to surface-disturbing activities, and that appropriate mitigation occurs to protect these resources.

## **Paleontology**

The John Day Basin is one of the premiere tertiary fossil mammal and plant areas in the world. Many of the fossil localities are on BLM-managed public lands. There is a need to identify criteria and use restrictions to ensure areas containing these resources are identified and evaluated prior to surface-disturbing activities. There is also a need to make recommendations for developing and promoting the scientific, educational, and recreational uses of fossils.

## **Wilderness Characteristics**

The BLM-managed lands not already identified as Wilderness Study Areas or designated as Wilderness by Congress within the planning area have been assessed for the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics. Where such characteristics have been identified, consideration will be given to protecting them. This review included proposals for new Wilderness Study Areas that have been submitted by the public.

## **Visual Resources**

The existing plans designated Visual Resource Management (VRM) for all public lands except for public lands in the North Fork John Day area. A new VRM Management Class designation of public lands in the North Fork John Day River area is part of this RMP.

## **Special Designations**

The BLM will continue to manage existing designated Wild and Scenic Rivers to protect and enhance their Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) in accordance with the John Day and Two Rivers RMPs as amended by the John Day River Management Plan (2001). The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 required an eligibility and suitability assessment and determination to be conducted as a part of the resource management planning process. The North Fork John Day River between a few miles north of Monument and the confluence of Camas Creek has been determined to be eligible for Wild and Scenic River status. This planning process will determine the suitability of this portion of the North Fork John Day River for National Wild and Scenic River designation. Those river segments determined suitable will be recommended for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System (although final designation would be an Act of Congress), and interim management will be developed.

During the JDBRMP process, the BLM will review the appropriateness of the designation and extent of the existing Horn Butte and Spanish Gulch ACECs, and also consider proposals for new ACECs.

## **Cave Resources**

The plan will identify basic management needed to protect any caves determined to be significant under the standards in 43 CFR Part 37.

## **Livestock Grazing**

The existing RMPs made decisions about forage allocation and areas available for livestock grazing based on natural resource conditions. Adjustments to those decisions are made on a site-specific basis for the purpose of meeting goals and objectives. In this plan the BLM explores two approaches to retiring areas from livestock grazing in the event of a grazing preference relinquishment: grazing matrix and grazing decision tree. The grazing matrices measure nine factors across the basin and rank each allotment's potential demand and potential for social and ecological conflict. Three matrix alternatives were based on three sets of criteria. The grazing decision tree provides a step-by-step guide for evaluating a subsequent application for grazing following a preference relinquishment. Other than the need for a procedure to address relinquishment, issues identified with livestock grazing were addressed in the 2001 John Day River Plan; monitoring indicates these planning level issues were addressed sufficiently.

## **Lands and Realty**

The BLM is required to identify lands that should be retained, disposed, or acquired to serve the national interest. Since the completion of the existing RMPs, significant land tenure adjustments have occurred, including acquisition of Sutton Mountain and the North Fork John Day lands, and disposal of dozens of small parcels. Some current BLM land tenure zoning designations that identify whether BLM lands should be retained or disposed may not reflect new ownership patterns in the planning area. The alternatives also address options for providing rights-of-way for wind energy.

## **Minerals and Energy**

The BLM Energy Policy recognizes the nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, energy, and other resources. It also recognizes the responsibilities concerning the discovery, development, production, and acquisition of minerals and metals. The RMP alternatives provide management options for leasable, salable, and locatable minerals. Biomass production is addressed in the Landscape Health section, and wind and solar energy are addressed as potential rights-of-way in the Lands and Realty section.

## **Issues Considered but not Analyzed Further**

During scoping, concerns were raised that are clearly of concern to the public but were beyond the scope of the RMP purpose; inconsistent with existing laws or regulations; or could adequately be resolved under existing law, regulation, or policy. Scoping comments are summarized in the AMS, which is available for review on the planning web page at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/prineville/plans/johndayrmp/jdbdocuments.php>. One issue is listed below.

## **Management of the Newly Acquired Lands in the North Fork John Day River as Wilderness Study Areas**

The BLM no longer has the authority to designate public lands as Wilderness Study Areas; however, the BLM may manage areas to protect wilderness characteristics. The BLM inventoried the acquired lands in the vicinity of the North Fork John Day River for wilderness characteristics, along with contiguous roadless federal lands. The BLM found that all but three of the North Fork wilderness inventory units failed to meet the criteria for naturalness due to signs of past commercial logging activity, including many constructed roads and visible tree stumps. Although BLM's inventory findings concluded that the North Fork lands, since they lack naturalness, do not possess wilderness characteristics, a total of 38,358 acres of acquired BLM lands outside of wilderness study areas within the planning area do contain wilderness characteristics.

# Data Standards

To support planning and implementation decisions, the Prineville District has developed and managed an automated geospatial geographic information system (GIS) database. Extensive collaborative efforts in data collection, data standards, and data acquisition by the Prineville District and BLM Oregon State Office have occurred as a result of the John Day Basin RMP. Existing data was evaluated for accuracy, reliability, and limitations. Missing, incomplete, or outdated information was identified and updated where practical. The result is a significant increase in the amount and accuracy of the geospatial data available for land use planning.

Extensive efforts were made to ensure the accuracy of the data. However, accuracy varies due to the size of the analysis area, spatial resolution of available data, compilation of data from various sources, and the fluid nature of some of the elements that can be mapped. Analysis and summary data presented in this report represent relative, not absolute accuracy. Data used in the analysis of the alternatives was summarized at various scales, including the planning area, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ecoregion, fifth field Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC), Travel Management Analysis (TMA) area, and BLM parcel. The quality, quantity, and management of data contained within the GIS database have provided managers and resource professionals with the ability to analyze complex land management issues and scenarios. This information is provided in whole or summary in this document to assist the reader with evaluating the objectives, actions, and outcomes of the RMP.

## How This Document is Organized

This PRMP/FEIS is designed to provide a logical progression of information to the reviewer. The following four chapters and appendices explain the alternatives designed to address the purpose and need (Chapter 2); the current social, biological, and physical environment (Chapter 3); analyses of the anticipated environmental consequences resulting from the implementation of any given alternative (Chapter 4); and public, governmental, and tribal involvement in the planning process (Chapter 5). Appendix T is a summary of public comment on the Draft RMP/EIS and BLM response. Appendix P crosswalks common and scientific names of plant and animal species. A glossary and list of acronyms and abbreviations are also provided to help readers understand technical terms.