Appendix C--Ecosystem Management
(SEORMP-FEIS, Chapter 3, pages 141-151)

Ecosystem management can be viewed as hierarchical and occurring at multiple levels. The basic planning levels are (1) the broad scale or regional perspective depicted by the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP); (2) the mid scale which can be the size of a resource area or several resource areas and is the scale analyzed in the Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement (SEORMP/EIS), and (3) the fine scale which can be the size of pastures, allotments, watersheds, subwatersheds, subbasins, or other geographic subunits and is at the level of activity plans such as allotment management plans (AMP's), habitat management plans (HMP's), Water Quality Management Plans (WQMP's), or other integrated activity plans for geographic units. At each level of planning, implementation is periodically adjusted as management is adapted to changing conditions, circumstances, and new information.

Monitoring and evaluations need to follow the same pattern, answering questions and measuring trends at the various levels. Certain issues and activities within the area can have effects at the broadest level, such as activities that affect air quality, noxious weeds, or wide-ranging species. Other issues or activities, such as forest health, western juniper encroachment, and species endemism, operate within smaller geographic areas. Still other issues or activities are mostly of local concern, such as access management and municipal watersheds. Monitoring strategies need to recognize this hierarchy and provide for data collection and evaluation at the appropriate levels.

Broad Scale

The ICBEMP scientific assessment is a regional level or broad-scale assessment. It covers public land in the RMP planning area of southeast Oregon as well as other lands in eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, Idaho, and parts of Montana. The scientific assessment was used as a context for land use and resource management analysis at lower levels of planning.

ICBEMP has developed an ecosystem analysis process to characterize human and ecological features, conditions, process, and interactions within a geographic area. A program would be developed that would allow information gathered locally to be compiled and analyzed to answer broad regional questions and use regional level assessments to better address broad-scale questions. The analysis would be intended to help estimate direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of management activities and guide the general type, location, and sequence of appropriate management activities within a regional area.

Mid Scale

The step-down from the ICBEMP scientific assessment is the SEORMP. The SEORMP is the mid-scale plan which links broad-scale scientific assessments with plan implementation at the activity level (fine-scale). It covers JRA and Malheur Resource Area (MRA) of the Vale BLM District. The proposed SEORMP/FEIS is consistent with those scientific and management philosophies developed in the ICBEMP.

The record of decision (ROD) for each resource area would include management objectives and priorities for management. Implementation of the RMP would be monitored on a continual basis to allow up-to-date response to changing conditions. Management actions arising from activity plan decisions would be evaluated to ensure consistency with SEORMP/FEIS objectives.

The SEORMP/EIS starts the step-down process by initiating (1) the collaboration and scoping process, (2) validation of the ICBEMP scientific assessment, (3) prioritization of fine-scale areas for review or assessment and evaluation, and (4) data gap identification. This process is designed to ensure that broad-scale analysis is viewed and validated within the context of local conditions, and it ensures that local decisions are made within the context of broad-scale goals and objectives. This is accomplished by using the best available information from multiple-scale assessments to provide a comprehensive basis for sustainable ecosystem management.

Fine Scale

The step-down from PSEORMP/FEIS to the fine scale is the GMA assessment, evaluation, and planning. The GMA's (Table 3-2; Map GMA-1) that would be assessed and evaluated vary in size depending upon watersheds, issues, concerns, dependent resources, resource potentials and capabilities that are reviewed by interdisciplinary teams in each resource area in consultation with the interested public and affected land users. GMA's and their priority for assessment and evaluation were derived primarily from a combination of subbasin and allotment boundaries based on a variety of issues including the following:

- legal mandates ("Clean Water Act"[CWA], ESA, and others);
- priorities established in existing land use plans;
- resources at risk;
- potential for recovery;
- resource conflicts or controversy;
- opportunity for interagency or partnership assessments;
- field staff knowledge of the area; and
- current ongoing management.

This preliminary prioritization and scoping process was presented to and approved by the Southeast Oregon Resource Advisory Council (SEORAC) before inclusion in the SEORMP. It was also sent to the interested public, local, state and Federal agencies, and tribes for comment. Periodic validation of issues is an important part of fine-scale assessments and evaluations. The schedule for completion of GMA evaluations would be reviewed annually to determine if there have been any changes in resource issues, BLM policies, regulations, law or other concerns that would warrant a change in the priorities for each resource area. It is anticipated that management actions implemented in each GMA would be evaluated at least once every ten years by an interdisciplinary team. Based on recommendations of those evaluations, current activity plans within each GMA would be revised or rewritten as necessary to ensure consistency with RMP objectives. Work would focus on higher priority areas; however, other areas may require interim attention to address site-specific needs.

Consultation and collaboration with interested public, affected land users, other agencies, counties, Tribes, and others is an important part of the process to help identify issues and to bring together all the existing information concerning a given area. Information assembled during the assessment would be evaluated to determine appropriate management actions at the fine scale. These evaluations would be done using an ecosystem analysis process that looks at human and ecological features, conditions, processes, and interactions. The evaluation process would also involve consultation and collaboration with affected parties. It is during this time that priorities for actions regarding restoration, conservation, or other management actions would be discussed.

The end result of the GMA evaluation process would be the development of recommendations for future actions affecting the management of resources and uses in the GMA. Recommendations on management changes may be implemented through activity plans, management agreements, or direct decisions and would depend on the complexity of issues.