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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

MANUAL TRANSMITTAL SHEET

Release

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Date

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Subject

4180 – Land Health

1. **Explanation of Materials Transmitted:** This release transmits a complete revision of Manual 4180, the Land Health Manual for the Bureau of Land Management. This manual establishes policy, provides guidelines, and assigns management structure and responsibilities for conducting land health evaluations.
2. **Reports Required:** None
3. **Materials Superseded:** Rangeland Health Manual Section 4180- Release 4-106
4. **Filing Instructions:** File as directed below

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Release 4-106
Dated 01/19/2001
Total 6 pages

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4180 (total 14 pages)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James H. ...", is written over the printed name.

Director, Bureau of Land Management

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.01 Purpose

This Manual Section sets forth the authorities, roles and responsibilities, and policies for developing and implementing land health standards on the National System of Public Lands. The purpose of BLM's land health evaluation process is to help ensure sustainable public land health. This Manual and companion Handbooks (see section .05 References) provide:

- 1) guidance for developing and amending land health standards
- 2) guidance for conducting integrated and interdisciplinary evaluations to ascertain if land health standards are being achieved
- 3) the process for determining significant causal factors when standards are not achieved
- 4) a process for addressing those areas where standards are not achieved, and
- 5) a monitoring and adaptive management strategy to ensure progress is being made toward achieving standards where management is changed for that purpose.

Land health standards describe the minimum requirements for land health and are used to develop objectives in land use plans (H-1601-1).

The National Research Council has defined rangeland health as "the degree to which the integrity of the soil and the ecological processes of rangeland ecosystems are sustained." (NRC, 1994) The fundamentals of rangeland health are general statements that describe conditions that relate to the health and functionality of watersheds, ecological processes, water quality, and threatened and endangered species habitat. The fundamentals provide the basis for the development and implementation of the standards for land health.

.02 Objective

This Manual Section establishes a framework for evaluating land health and taking action necessary to ensure significant progress toward achievement of the land health standards. This framework applies to local and regional scale assessments of land health. Conducting evaluations at the different scales is addressed in this manual at section .06.

.03 Authority

This section lists statutes, regulations, and executive orders that provide authority or guidance, applicable to this manual.

- A. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, as amended (43 U.S.C. 315 et seq.), authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to establish grazing districts from any part of the public domain of the United States (exclusive of Alaska) which, in his/her opinion, are chiefly valuable for grazing and raising forage crops, to regulate and administer grazing use of the public lands, and to improve the public rangelands.

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- B. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*), provides for the public lands to be generally retained in Federal ownership; periodic and systematic inventory of the public lands and their resources; multiple-use management on a sustained yield basis; protection of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resources and archaeological values; and land use management that recognizes the Nation's needs for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber and fiber from the public lands.
- C. The Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (43 U.S.C. 1901 *et seq.*) and The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (16 U.S.C. 1333 *et. seq.*), provide for the improvement of range conditions on public rangelands, research on wild horse and burro population dynamics, and other range management practices.
- D. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), requires the preparation of environmental impact statements for Federal projects which may have a significant effect on the environment. It requires a "systematic, interdisciplinary approach which will ensure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts in planning and decision making which may have an impact on man's environment." 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(A)
- E. The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), requires Federal agencies to ensure that their actions do not jeopardize threatened or endangered species.
- F. The Clean Air Act of 1990 as amended (42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*), requires Federal Agencies to comply with all federal and State requirements regarding the control and abatement of air pollution. This includes abiding by the requirements of the State implementation plans.
- G. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6501 *et.seq.*), provides direction to help reduce hazardous fuels and restore healthy forest and rangeland ecosystems.
- H. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*), directs federal agencies to take into account the effect of any federal undertaking on properties included in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and to give the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment on the undertaking.

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I. Executive Order 13287, Preserve America (68 FR 10635, March 5, 2003) directs Federal agencies to recognize and manage the historic properties in Federal ownership as assets that can support department and agency missions while contributing to the vitality and economic well-being of the Nation's communities.

J. The Clean Water Act of 1987, as amended (33 U.S.C. 1251), establishes objectives to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Nation's water.

K. Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management (42 FR 26951, May 24, 1977), provides for the restoration and preservation of natural and beneficial floodplain values.

L. Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands (42 FR 26961, May 25, 1977), directs Federal Agencies to minimize the destruction, loss or degradation of wetland and riparian habitats on the public lands.

M. The Sikes Act of 1974, as amended (16 U.S.C. 670 et seq.), provides for the conservation, restoration, and management of species and their habitats in cooperation with State wildlife agencies.

N. Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations Part 4100, provides regulatory direction for integrating livestock grazing administration with land health standards.

O. Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (5 U.S.C. app. 1), describes how agencies may establish advisory committees. Under this authority, BLM has established Resource Advisory Councils to advise it on matters relating to the management of public lands.

.04 Responsibility

The responsibilities described below are commensurate with those identified in approved functional statements (see Manual Sections 1211, 1212 and 1216).

A. The Director and Deputy Directors are responsible for directing cross-program implementation of land health in the management of public lands; ensuring subordinate accountability for fulfillment of their land health evaluation, implementation action and monitoring responsibilities; and for recommending changes in land health standards to the Secretary of the Interior.

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B. Assistant Directors, Deputy Assistant Directors and Washington Office Division Chiefs are responsible for establishing policy and procedures for cross-program implementation of land health evaluations, managing priority setting processes to reflect Bureau-wide funding and staffing levels, advocating program initiatives, reporting accomplishments to the Director and Executive Leadership Team, ensuring development and implementation of data collection and storage standards, and reporting the bureau-wide status of implementing land health standards.

C. State Directors are responsible for revising and implementing, in consultation with Resource Advisory Councils, land health standards for evaluating the condition of public lands and guidelines for activity management; for setting priorities for conducting land health evaluations within their state; for reporting the status of implementing land health standards in their state, and for ensuring compliance with established policy and procedures.

D. District Managers and Field Managers are responsible for setting priorities for conducting land health evaluations within their office; for taking appropriate action to make progress toward achieving land health standards; for ensuring compliance with established policy and procedures; and for providing employees and volunteers with direction and training to perform their tasks.

.05 References

A. Manual Sections and Handbooks

1. Manual Section 1220 – *Records and Information Management*
2. Manual Section 1221 – *Reports Management*
3. Handbook 1601-1 – *Land Use Planning*
4. Handbook 1740-2 – *Integrated Vegetation Management*
5. Handbook 4180-1 – *Rangeland Health*

B. Additional References

1. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) requires Federal land management agencies to identify and study river systems for their potential designation as wild, scenic, or recreational rivers. Designated wild and scenic rivers must be preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. Each component of the national

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wild and scenic system must be managed to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in that system.

2. The Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300f), protects public health by regulating the Nation's public water supply.
3. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (42 U.S.C. 1996 et seq.), directs federal agencies to ensure that the views of Indian leaders will be obtained and considered when a proposed land use might conflict with the traditional Indian religious beliefs or practices, and that unnecessary interference with Indian religious practices will be avoided during project implementation.
4. Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites, (61 FR 104, May 29, 1996), directs federal agencies to accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners, and to avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites. It also requires agencies to comply with the Executive memorandum of April 29, 1994, "Government-to-Government relations with Native American Tribal Governments."
5. Executive Order 12088, Federal Compliance with Pollution Control Standards, (43 FR 47707, October 17, 1978), identifies pollution control standards and limits on exemptions from standards to which agencies must adhere, and how agencies are to coordinate with one another for that purpose.
6. The Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715 et seq.), and The Migratory Bird Treaty Act as amended (16 U.S.C. 703 et seq.), provide for habitat protection and enhancement for protected migratory birds.
7. Executive Order 13186, Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds (66 FR 3853, January 17, 2001) directs each federal agency taking actions that have, or are likely to have, a measureable negative impact on migratory bird populations to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a conservation agreement.
8. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establishment Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 3701), established the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation as a nonprofit corporation to encourage, accept, and administer private gifts of property and to undertake activities to further the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, and plant resources of the United States.
9. The Administrative Procedure Act of 1946 (5 U.S.C. 551 et seq.) provides direction for processing applications for permits.

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.06 **Policy**

A. The regulations in 43 CFR subpart 4180 require State Directors in consultation with Resource Advisory Councils (RACs) to develop Land Health Standards for lands within their jurisdiction. The BLM and the RACs have agreed to work together to evaluate and, where appropriate, expand these Standards to ensure that there are land health standards that are relevant to all ecosystems and programs across public lands, including livestock grazing (Handbook H-1601-1, *Land Use Planning*).

B. The 43 CFR subpart 4180 regulations also require State Directors to develop “Guidelines” for grazing administration. The BLM will review and enhance the development of program guidelines (sometimes expressed as best management practices) needed to achieve land health standards.

C. The BLM will conduct land health evaluations and issue annual reports to communicate with the public and local, State, and tribal governments about land health. The BLM will:

1. Provide opportunities to involve the public and local, State, and tribal governments in the development of land health evaluations, including the collection of qualitative information (assessments) and quantitative information (monitoring).
2. Report evaluations, findings, monitoring results, planned actions and progress toward meeting standards for individual evaluation areas.

D. The BLM must identify the geographic area for conducting the land health evaluations across the landscape. Strong consideration should be given to using a watershed boundary for conducting these evaluations (Fifth level, ten-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC). A watershed is defined as polygons representing areas of land (hydrologic units) that are drained by distinct streams or complex river systems.). Once the geographic areas are determined, they should be prioritized for conducting the land health evaluations.

Areas identified as not achieving land health standards may require the implementation of management actions and the monitoring needed to ensure progress is being made toward achieving the standards.

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1. Evaluations of land health will occur primarily at the watershed level, but can be completed at other spatial scales to properly evaluate the standard and or the geographic area. For example, regional assessments may be used to identify condition of wildlife habitat with respect to habitat fragmentation.
 2. Regional assessments may identify specific areas for conservation and/or restoration. These areas would then become a priority for conducting the local land health evaluation.
 3. To address workload priorities, conducting regional assessments may take precedence over conducting site or local level monitoring and/or evaluations in low priority areas.
 4. Actions needed to make progress toward achieving land health standards (including restoration activities) or maintenance of land health must be prioritized by management and implemented through the budget process.
 5. Monitoring progress toward achievement of standards or maintenance of land health on high priority areas is a priority over monitoring of lower priority areas.
- E. Action necessary to achieve, or make progress toward achieving, land health standards developed for each region will occur:
1. unless otherwise specified in the land use plan,
 2. for all programs as prioritized and funded through the budget process,
 3. for livestock grazing, action will be taken no later than beginning the next grazing year upon making a determination that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on public lands are a significant causal factor in failing to achieve standards.

.07 File and Record Maintenance

All land health records will be managed according to established records retention and disposal policies. See BLM Manual Section 1220, *Records and Information Management*, for disposition policies and procedures.

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.08 Programmatic Implementation of Land Health Standards**A. Rangeland Management Program (Grazing Administration)**

The Rangeland Management Program provides technical assistance and policy guidance for implementing land health standards for managing rangeland vegetation, including native and non-native plant communities and for integrating the land health standards into land use plans. This specific guidance is provided in the Handbook H-4180-1, *Rangeland Health Standards*.

B. Forestry Program

The Forestry Program provides technical assistance and policy guidance for implementing land health standards for forests and woodlands administered by the BLM. This includes integrating land health indicators applicable to forests and woodlands into land use plans.

C. Fish and Wildlife Program

The Fish and Wildlife Program provides technical assistance and policy guidance for implementing land health standards in regards to habitat quality for threatened, endangered, and special status species, and for native plant and animal communities. The program provides guidance for consultation or conference in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Specific guidance is provided in Manual Section 6840, *Special Status Species*. The program also provides technical assistance and policy guidance in implementing aquatic health standards for lakes, ponds, rivers and streams administered by the BLM.

D. Soil, Water and Air; and Riparian Programs

The Soil, Water and Air program, and the Riparian program, provide technical assistance and policy guidance in implementing land health standards. Using watersheds as a basis for land health standards evaluations assists in determining whether EPA-approved State water quality standards are being achieved as directed by the Clean Water Action Plan and the Unified Federal Policy.

E. Wildland Fire Management Program

The Wildland Fire Management Program provides technical assistance and policy guidance for implementing land health standards related to fuel load management and post fire management activities. The BLM recognizes that fire has a role in the natural ecological process.

F. Cultural Resource and Paleontology Program

The Cultural Resource and Paleontology program provides technical assistance and policy guidance in implementing land health standards in regards to the condition of cultural and paleontological resources. The program will provide guidance for consultation in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Specific guidance is provided in Manual Section 8140, *Protecting Cultural Resources*.

G. Use Authorization Programs

Programs that authorize uses on public land will provide guidance and direction in manual sections, handbooks, or policy memoranda, as necessary, to ensure consistency between their programs and this manual section. Program managers will ensure that program best practices are applied to use authorizations, as needed, to help ensure that land health standards and related land use plan resource condition goals and objectives are achieved.

.09 Land Use Planning

Land Health Determinations identify significant causal factors for those land health standards that are not achieved. The Determination can also identify needed management adjustments in order to achieve land health standards or make significant progress toward achieving land health standards. A land use plan amendment or revision may be necessary if the current planning decisions are not expected to achieve standards within a reasonable period of time. Land use plans shall identify where meeting statutory/regulatory requirements or other land use allocations will prevent achievement of land health standards.

When BLM develops new standards or guidelines or makes significant modifications to existing ones, these changes should be analyzed under NEPA where appropriate. They must also be examined to determine if they conform to existing land use plans. If they are not in conformance, a land use plan amendment is necessary.