



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND  
MANAGEMENT

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## CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Purpose

This manual section provides the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) policy, direction, and guidance for planning for recreation resources as part of the land use planning process required under BLM Manual section 1601, Land Use Planning, rel. 1-1693. The BLM's Recreation Planning process is an outcome-focused management approach that stresses the management of recreation settings to provide opportunities that allow visitors and local communities to achieve a desired set of individual, social, economic, and environmental benefits. Planning for recreation resources focuses on fulfilling the BLM's mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

### 1.2 Objectives

The goals and objectives of the BLM's recreation and visitor services (R&VS) planning policy are to:

- A. Provide for visitor safety, resource protection, and to address resource use conflicts.
- B. Plan for R&VS on an interdisciplinary basis in concert with other resources or resource programs to facilitate visitor's freedom to pursue a variety of outdoor recreation activities and attain a variety of outcomes.
- C. Emphasize R&VS by managing for specific recreation opportunities and settings on a sustained or enhanced long-term basis.
- D. Identify R&VS planning process requirements for land use planning.
- E. Encourage regional and landscape-level planning for the management of recreation settings and opportunities on and adjacent to BLM-managed lands and waters.
- F. Recognize the factors that affect and support sustainability and ecosystem function.
- G. Provide a framework to improve public involvement in the recreation planning process and to define the public's expectations for activities, settings, experiences, and benefits.
- H. Engage local communities and foster long-term partnerships with public and private recreation providers.
- I. Promote leveraging of resources for more cost-effective management of recreation settings and opportunities both on and adjacent to BLM-managed lands and waters.
- J. Improve the long-term management of recreation settings, facilities, and public access on BLM-managed lands and waters.

- K. Encourage resource stewardship and enhance educational and interpretive experiences for visitors.

### 1.3 Authority

The following lists major legal authorities relevant to planning for recreation resources within the BLM land use planning process; it is not an inclusive list of all BLM authorities:

- A. Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), as amended, (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.), provides the authority for the BLM land use planning process.
  - 1. Sec. 102(a)(7) and (8) sets forth the policy of the United States concerning the management of the public lands, including protecting the quality of scenic values and providing for outdoor recreation.
  - 2. Sec. 201 requires the Secretary of the Interior to prepare and maintain an inventory of the public lands and their resource and other values (including, but not limited to, outdoor recreation and scenic values), giving priority to areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC), and, as funding and workforce are available, to determine the boundaries of the public lands, provide signs and maps to the public, and provide inventory data to state and local governments.
  - 3. Sec. 202(a) requires the Secretary, with public involvement, to develop, maintain, and when appropriate, revise land use plans (LUP) that provide by tracts or areas for the use of the public lands.
  - 4. Sec. 202(c)(1-9) requires that, in developing LUPs, the BLM shall use and observe the principles of multiple use and sustained yield; use a systematic interdisciplinary approach; give priority to the designation and protection of ACEC; rely, to the extent it is available, on the inventory of the public lands; consider present and potential uses of the public lands; consider the relative scarcity of the values involved and the availability of alternative means and sites for realizing those values; weigh long-term benefits against short-term benefits to the public; provide for compliance with applicable pollution control laws, including state and Federal air, water, noise, or other pollution standards or implementation plans; and consider the policies of approved state and tribal land resource management programs, developing LUPs that are consistent with state and local plans to the maximum extent possible consistent with Federal law and the purposes of this Act.
  - 5. Sec. 202(d) provides that all public lands, regardless of classification, are subject to inclusion in LUPs, and that the Secretary may modify or terminate classifications consistent with LUPs.

6. Sec. 202(f) and Sec. 309(e) provide that Federal, state, and local governments, and the public be given adequate notice and an opportunity to comment on the formulation of standards and criteria for, and to participate in, the preparation and execution of plans and programs for the management of the public lands.
  7. Sec. 302(a) requires the Secretary to manage BLM lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, in accordance with available LUPs developed under Sec. 202 of FLPMA. There is one exception: where a tract of the BLM lands has been dedicated to specific uses according to other provisions of law, it shall be managed in accordance with such laws.
  8. Sec. 302(b) recognizes the entry and development rights of mining claimants, while directing the Secretary to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the public lands.
  9. Sec. 603(a) requires the Secretary to conduct a review of roadless areas having wilderness characteristics and report to the President regarding the suitability or non-suitability of each area for preservation as wilderness. Until Congress determines which of these areas shall be designated as wilderness, and subject to certain existing uses, the Secretary must manage these areas so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness.
- B. Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-11), In order to conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations, Congress established the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). The system includes each area under BLM administration that is designated as a national monument, national conservation area, wilderness study area, national scenic and historic trail designated as a component of the National Trails System, a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, components of the National Wilderness Preservation System, and any area designated by Congress to be administered for conservation purposes, including the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area; the Headwaters Forest Reserve; the Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area; public land within the California Desert Conservation Area administered by the BLM for conservation purposes; and any additional area designated by Congress for inclusion in the system. The NLCS will be managed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and in a manner that protects the values for which the components of the system were designated.
- C. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), requires Federal agencies to evaluate the environmental effects of proposed major Federal actions.
- D. Outdoor Recreation Act of May 28, 1963 (16 U.S.C. 4601-1), promotes the coordination and development of effective programs related to outdoor recreation.

- E. Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), (16 U.S.C. 3101), et seq., provides for the special designation of certain public lands in Alaska and conservation of their fish and wildlife values.
- F. American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (42 U.S.C. 1996), establishes a national policy to protect and preserve the right of American Indians to exercise traditional Indian religious beliefs or practices.
- G. Antiquities Act of 1906 (16 U.S.C. 431-433), protects cultural resources on Federal lands and authorizes the President to designate National Monuments on Federal lands.
- H. Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA), (16 U.S.C. 470aa), requires the protection of archaeological resources and sites which are on public lands.
- I. Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4151), requires that buildings and facilities that are designed, constructed, or altered with Federal funds, or leased by a Federal agency, comply with Federal standards for physical accessibility.
- J. Clean Air Act of 1990, as amended (42 U.S.C. 7418), requires Federal agencies to comply with all Federal, state, and local requirements regarding the control and abatement of air pollution. This includes abiding by the requirements of State Implementation Plans.
- K. Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.):
  - 1. Provides a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened species depend may be conserved and provides a program for the conservation of such endangered and threatened species (Sec. 1531(b), Purposes);
  - 2. Requires all Federal agencies to seek to conserve endangered and threatened species and utilize applicable authorities in furtherance of the purposes of the ESA (Sec. 1531(c)(1), Policy);
  - 3. Requires all Federal agencies to avoid jeopardizing the continued existence of any species that is listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered or destroying or adversely modifying its designated or proposed critical habitat (Sec. 1536(a), Interagency Cooperation); and
  - 4. Requires all Federal agencies to consult (or confer) in accordance with Sec. 7 of the ESA with the Secretary of the Interior, through the Fish and Wildlife Service, and/or the National Marine Fisheries Service, to ensure that any Federal action (including LUPs) or activity is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any species listed or proposed to be listed under the provisions of the ESA, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated or proposed critical habitat (Sec. 1536(a), Interagency Cooperation, and 50 CFR 402).

- L. Federal Cave Resources Protection Act (FCRPA) of 1988, as amended (PL 100-691) (16 U.S.C. 4301 et seq.), requires that caves be considered in the preparation and implementation of land management plans, and allows for cave location to be kept confidential.
- M. Federal Water Projects Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 4601-12 et seq.), encourages consideration of recreation and fish and wildlife enhancement at Federal water development projects and authorizes providing facilities for outdoor recreation and fish and wildlife at reservoirs.
- N. Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) of 2004 P.L. 108-447 (16 U.S.C. § 6804), provides Federal land-managing agencies with long-term recreation fee authority. It specifically authorizes these agencies, including the BLM, to reinvest recreation fees at the local recreation sites where they were collected to benefit visitors through enhanced facilities and services. In addition, this law requires specific public participation opportunities when the BLM proposes to establish new, or alter existing recreation fees.
- O. Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended (16 U.S.C 4601 - 4601-11), establishes a national policy that—present and future generations be assured adequate outdoor recreation resources and that—all levels of government and private interests . . . take prompt and coordinated action . . . to conserve, develop, and utilize such [their] resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people. The Secretary of the Interior was directed to inventory, evaluate, and classify outdoor recreation facilities, and formulate and maintain a nationwide outdoor recreation plan.
- P. National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (P.L. 89-665; 80 Stat. 915; 16 U.S.C. 470), extends the policy in the Historic Sites Act to include state and local, as well as national significance, expands the National Register of Historic Places, and establishes the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, State Historic Preservation Officers, Tribal Preservation Officers, and a preservation grants-in-aid program. Section 106 directs all Federal agencies to take into account effects of their undertakings (actions and authorizations) on properties included in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and Section 110 sets inventory, nomination, protection, and preservation responsibilities for federally owned cultural properties. Section 106 of the act is implemented by regulations of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 36 CFR Part 800.
- Q. National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 1242-1243), amends the National Trails System Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- R. National Trails System Act of 1968, as amended (P.L. 90-543, P.L. 110-229) and 16 U.S.C. 1241-1251, establishes a national system of trails including congressionally designated national scenic and historic trails, administratively designated national

recreation and connecting or side trails. The Act also establishes rail-trails, which may be established administratively. The Act seeks to institute a national system of trails and prescribes methods and standards by which additional components may be added to the system.

- S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 794, Section 504), requires that no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that either receives Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any Executive agency or the United States Postal Service.
- T. Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.), requires Federal land management agencies to identify potential river systems and then study them for potential designation as wild, scenic, or recreational rivers.
- U. Oregon and California Grant Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1181a), provides for the management of certain lands in Western Oregon for sustained timber production.
- V. Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (43 U.S.C. 1901), provides that the public rangelands be managed so that they become as productive as feasible in accordance with management objectives and the land use planning process established pursuant to 43 U.S.C. 1712.
- W. Recreation and Public Purposes Act of 1926, as amended (43 U.S.C. 869, et seq.), authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to lease or convey BLM lands for recreational and public purposes under specified conditions.
- X. Sikes Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 670a-670o and P.L. 90-465), authorizes a program for development of outdoor recreation facilities.
- Y. Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 (43 U.S.C. 315), authorizes the Secretary of the Interior—to establish grazing districts, or additions thereto, and/or to modify the boundaries thereof of vacant, unappropriated, and unreserved lands from any part of the public domain . . . which in his opinion are chiefly valuable for grazing and raising forage crops[.] . . . The Act also provides for the classification of lands for particular uses.
- Z. Vocational Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794), requires that Federal Programs and activities be available to all persons including those with disabilities.
- AA. Wilderness Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), authorizes the President to make recommendations to Congress for Federal lands to be set aside for preservation as wilderness.



- BB. John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (P.L. 116-9), sets forth provisions regarding various programs, projects, activities, and studies for the management and conservation of natural resources on Federal lands.
- CC. Executive Order 11644 (Use of Off-Road Vehicles on Public Lands) (37 FR 2877; February 9, 1977), establishes policies and procedures to ensure that off-road vehicle uses shall be controlled so as to protect public lands.
- DD. Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) (42 FR 26951; May 25, 1977), requires evaluating the potential effects of any actions taken in a floodplain to ensure that planning programs and budget requests reflect consideration of flood hazards and floodplain management and that construction and other uses in floodplains meet certain standards.
- EE. Executive Order 11989 (Off-road Vehicles on Public Lands) (42 FR 26959; May 25, 1977), establishes policies and procedures to ensure that off-road vehicle use shall be controlled so as to protect public lands.
- FF. Executive Order 13195 (Trails for America in the 21st Century) FR Doc 01-2141, directs Federal agencies—in cooperation with tribes, states, local governments, and interested citizen groups—to protect, connect, promote, and assist trails of all types throughout the United States and describes the means by which this will be accomplished.
- GG. Secretarial Order 3308 (Management of the National Landscape Conservation System), November 15, 2010, furthers the purposes of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, which established the NLCS within the BLM in order to conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations, and the President’s initiative on America’s Great Outdoors.
- HH. Secretarial Order 3310 (Protecting Wilderness Characteristics on Lands Managed by the Bureau of Land Management), December 22, 2010, directs the BLM to maintain a current inventory of lands with wilderness characteristics, place a priority on protecting those wilderness characteristics and where appropriate, and through the public planning process, designate those lands as Wild Lands.

#### 1.4 Responsibility

- A. *The Director, Bureau of Land Management through the Deputy Director for Administration and Programs, the Assistant Director, National Conservation Lands and Community Partnerships, and the Chief, Division of Recreation and Visitor Services* is responsible for:

1. Establishing policy, goals, objectives, and procedures for land use and recreation planning and management on public lands and associated waters within the framework of public law and departmental policy;
2. Providing direction, management, and leadership relating to land use and R&VS planning and management of public lands and associated waters;
3. Communicating policy and management direction through the issuance and update of manuals, handbooks, and instruction memoranda;
4. Identifying, addressing, and reconciling interrelationships, policy issues, and conflicts between recreation planning and management and other programs;
5. Providing training opportunities for field personnel through the National Training Center;
6. Providing for recreation plan evaluations;
7. Resolving protests to proposed LUPs and amendments;
8. Maintaining liaison with other government agencies, tribal entities, permittees, concessioners, user groups, and private and non-profit organizations concerned with R&VS planning and management on the public lands and associated waters; and
9. Establishing data standards and maintaining national data systems to account for and monitor recreation visitor use, areas, and facilities in support of planning.

B. *State Directors* are responsible for:

1. Implementing policy and providing statewide program coordination and guidance for R&VS planning and management on the public lands and associated waters;
2. Reviewing, evaluating, and ensuring the accomplishment of approved annual work plan items related to coordinating and guiding R&VS planning and management;
3. Providing program development and technical assistance to district and field offices to ensure that the R&VS program goals and objectives are accomplished;
4. Maintaining liaison with other government agencies, tribal entities, permittees, concessioners, user groups, and private and non-profit organizations concerned with R&VS planning and management on the public lands and associated waters in their respective states; and

5. Determining which special recreation management areas (SRMAs), backcountry conservation areas (BCAs), and extensive recreation management areas (ERMAs) to designate as part of the land use planning process.

C. *District/Field Managers* are responsible for:

1. Providing for the appropriate consideration of R&VS within the land use planning and implementation process, including the designation of special recreation management areas (SRMA), backcountry conservation areas (BCA) and extensive recreation management areas (ERMA);
2. Ensuring that individuals responsible for managing the R&VS program receive appropriate training;
3. Developing, implementing, and monitoring actions related to R&VS planning and management;
4. Maintaining liaison with other government agencies, tribal entities, permittees, concessioners, user groups, and private and non-profit organizations concerned with R&VS planning and management on the public lands and associated waters in the field office;
5. Ensuring R&VS planning and management is an interdisciplinary, collaborative process across all programs;
6. Managing R&VS on BLM-administered public lands and associated waters by allocating necessary personnel and resources to meet the program goals and objectives;
7. Developing, implementing, and monitoring R&VS plans as required to implement LUP decisions;
8. Ensuring that planning for the R&VS program is conducted in conformance with legal and professional standards; and
9. Providing for the appropriate consideration of recreation permits and fees within the planning process, including the establishment of special areas where permits may be required to accomplish resource management objectives.

## 1.5 References

A. Bureau of Land Management Manuals

1. MS-1601, Rel. 1-1666, Land Use Planning.

2. MS-1626, Rel. 1-1778, Travel and Transportation Management.
3. MS-6250, Rel. 6-133, National Scenic and Historic Trail Administration.
4. MS-6310, Rel. 6-138, Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory on BLM Lands.
5. MS-6320, Rel. 6-139, Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the BLM Land Use Planning Process.
6. MS-6330, Rel. 6-134, Management of Wilderness Study Areas.
7. MS-6340, Rel. 6-135, Management of Designated Wilderness Areas.
8. MS-8130, Rel. 8-76, Planning for Uses of Cultural Resources.
9. MS-8330, Rel. 8-70, Policy on Reasonable Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities.
10. MS-8351, Rel. 8-61, Wild and Scenic Rivers - Policy and Program Direction for Identification, Evaluation, and Management.
11. MS-8360, Rel. 8-61, Visitor Services.
12. MS-8380, Rel. 8-80, Cave and Karst Resources Management.
13. MS-8400, Rel. 8-24, Visual Resource Management.
14. MS-9102, Rel. 9-403, Facility Design.
15. MS-9113, Rel. 9-405, Roads.

B. Bureau of Land Management Handbooks

1. H-1601-1, Rel. 1-1693, Land Use Planning Handbook.
2. H-1790-1, Rel. 1-1710, National Environmental Policy Handbook.
3. H-8320-1, Rel. 8-85, Planning for Recreation and Visitor Services.
4. H-8342-1, Rel. 8-82, Travel and Transportation Management.
5. H-8410-1, Rel. 8-28, Visual Resource Inventory.
6. H-8431-1, Rel. 8-30, Visual Resource Contrast Rating.

### C. Bureau of Land Management Strategic Plans/Directives/Training Manuals

1. The BLM National Science and Technology Center Technical Note, Roads and Trails Terminology Report.
2. The BLM Training Module/Lesson Plans for BLM Class 8300-11, Recreation Planning, Effective Engagement in the BLM's Resource Management Planning Process.
3. The BLM's National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan, November 2002.
4. The BLM's National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands, January 19, 2001.
5. National Scenic and Historic Trails Strategy, February 13, 2006.
6. The BLM's Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation, August 2023.

## 1.6 Policy

The BLM's R&VS program is influenced by additional direction from the Department of the Interior (DOI) and BLM-wide strategic program goals and objectives. These goals and objectives are contained within other strategic documents.

The BLM's land use planning process establishes goals and objectives that specifically relate to the LUP (refer to BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1)). Land use planning goals are broad statements that are usually not quantifiable. Goals are drawn from the DOI and BLM strategic plans, land health standards, or other sources and are often interdisciplinary. Recreation objectives identify specific desired outcomes for R&VS. Recreation specific objectives are defined in the establishing objectives sections of this manual. This policy additionally requires the establishment of R&VS objectives for each RMA.

### A. Recreation Planning Framework

The recreation planning requirements are based on specific concepts of recreation and recreation management. Advances in recreation knowledge and practices are responsible for the transition from activity-based management to experience-based management and then to benefits-based management. Each transition is built on the components of the previous. Benefits-based management has now transitioned to outcomes-focused management (OFM). The OFM is defined as: an approach to park and recreation management which focuses on the positive outcomes of engaging in recreational experiences. Outcomes are categorized as individual (i.e., learning, enjoying nature, physical fitness), social (i.e., lifestyle, sense-of-place), economic (i.e.,

increased revenue and jobs, supporting local businesses), or environmental (i.e., greater stewardship, awareness, and protection of natural landscapes).

There is a direct relationship between an individual's ability to obtain specific outcomes and the physical, social, and operational recreation setting characteristics (RSC) of the recreation area. Therefore, to incorporate OFM, it is critical to understand the relationship between the outcomes and the RSCs. Understanding this relationship helps outdoor recreation planners identify management direction and allocations for allowable use for R&VS and other programs to maintain or enhance the desired physical, social, and operational setting qualities.

## B. Recreation and Visitor Services Planning

Land use planning includes consideration of various management scenarios for all resources that are present within a geographic area to achieve LUP goals. Recreation use and associated recreation resources are present on the lands and adjacent waters managed by every BLM field office. This requires that recreation planning is included in all land use planning efforts. There are two levels of planning: land use and implementation.

### 1. Land Use Planning (Resource Management Plan)

#### a. Overview

Land use planning decisions are usually made on a broad scale and customarily guide subsequent site-specific implementation decisions. Determining management objectives for R&VS on public lands and waters is an integral part of the land use planning process.

#### b. Land Use Plan Decisions for Recreation and Visitor Services

The BLM plans for R&VS to address issues, concerns, and potential recreational opportunities identified by BLM staff, other agencies, organizations, or the general public.

The required LUP decisions for R&VS are the:

- (1) Designation of recreation management areas (RMA). RMA types include: SRMA, BCA, and ERMA
- (2) Establishment of LUP objectives for the recreation program.
- (3) Establishment of R&VS objectives for each RMA.

- (4) Identification of management direction and allocations for allowable use for each RMA.

## 2. Implementation Planning

Implementation actions are used to achieve LUP decisions and generally require additional NEPA analysis. (NEPA Handbook H-1710-1) Implementation actions may be proposed and approved through a(n):

- a. Case-by-case basis (e.g., a proposed action in an environmental analysis).
- b. Interdisciplinary activity plan.

Implementation actions may also be proposed and approved through recreation specific activity plans, including recreation area management plans and project plans.

### (1) Recreation Area Management Plan

Recreation Management Areas with complex implementation issues not resolved during the land use planning process may require a subsequent activity plan that addresses implementation-level management, administration, information, and monitoring actions. The Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) provides specific direction for on-the-ground implementation of the LUP. The RAMP must address the four implementation categories: management, administration, information and education, and monitoring. RAMPs for BCAs must also consider actions needed within the four implementation categories to meet wildlife objectives for the area.

### (2) Project Plan

Project plans can be developed on a case-by-case basis and are developed in conformance with the LUP and in compliance with activity plans. The project plan identifies the site and facility design requirements for construction.

## C. Recreation and Visitor Services Land Use Planning Requirements

### 1. Data Collection, Inventory, and Mapping

Inventories, assessments, and monitoring records and other forms of data collection should be used to understand recreation uses and resources in the planning area. Data assembled to support all planning phases must be sufficient to address the nature and complexity of existing and potential issues or concerns. These data may

include information on the use and/or demand for public land recreation opportunities and existing/desired RSCs. As appropriate, data should be displayed graphically in accordance with established BLM data standards.

## 2. Issues, Trends, and Opportunities Identification

Issues, trends, and opportunities affecting or created by recreation resources or recreation use will be identified. These will be considered within the scope of the plan parameters. Issues identified should include those that have a cause-effect relationship with the proposed action, inform of the efficacy of the alternative(s) in addressing the purpose and need, and explain the significance of the proposed action.

## 3. Designation of Recreation Management Areas

The RMA is a land unit where R&VS objectives are recognized as a primary resource management consideration and specific management is required to protect the recreation opportunities. The RMA designation is based on: recreation demand and issues, RSCs, resolving use/user conflicts, compatibility with other resource uses, and resource protection needs. In addition to the RMA criteria, BCAs are designated based on areas being generally intact and undeveloped and a demand for wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities. \*For the purposes of this Manual whenever wildlife is mentioned it includes fish species.

The RMA is designated as either an SRMA, BCA, or ERMA. SRMAs recognize unique and distinctive recreation values and are managed to enhance a targeted set of activities, experiences, benefits, and RSCs, which becomes the priority management focus. BCAs recognize where existing or proposed opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation are recognized for their unique value, importance, and/or distinctiveness; and is commensurately managed to protect and enhance fish and/or wildlife habitat. ERMAs recognize existing recreation use, demand, or R&VS program investments and are managed to sustain principal recreation activities and associated qualities and conditions of the ERMA, commensurate management with other resources and resource uses.

### a. Designation of Special Recreation Management Areas

*Definition.* The SRMA is an administrative unit where the existing or proposed recreation opportunities and RSCs are recognized for their unique value, importance, and/or distinctiveness, especially as compared to other areas used for recreation.

*Management Focus.* The SRMA is managed to protect and enhance a targeted set of activities, experiences, benefits, and desired RSCs. The LUP may subdivide the SRMA into recreation management zones (RMZ) to further



delineate specific recreation opportunities. Within an SRMA, R&VS management is recognized as a prioritized use, where specific recreation opportunities and RSCs are managed and protected on a long-term basis.

*Requirements.*

(1) Establish Special Recreation Management Areas/Recreation Management Zones Objectives

The SRMAs/RMZs must have measurable outcome-focused RMA objectives. These RMA objectives must define the specific recreation opportunities (i.e., activities, experiences, and benefits derived from those experiences) that will become the focus of R&VS management.

(2) Identify Land Use Plan Management Direction and Allocations for Allowable Use for Special Recreation Management Areas/Recreation Management Zones

Identify necessary management direction and allocations for allowable resource use for R&VS and other programs to achieve SRMA/RMZ LUP objectives.

Within the R&VS program, identify supporting management direction and allocations for allowable resource use in the LUP, to guide implementation planning to accomplish the following:

- (a) Sustain or enhance LUP objectives for recreation management.
- (b) Maintain or enhance the desired physical, social, and operational RSCs.
- (c) Constrain uses, including non-compatible recreation activities that are detrimental to meeting recreation objectives.
- (d) When necessary to support SRMA objectives, address visitor health and safety, resource protection, and use and user conflicts (e.g., areas closed to target shooting, area wide camping limitations).
- (e) Address the type(s), activities, and locations where special recreation permits (SRP) would not be issued to meet objectives.

Work interdisciplinarity with other resource programs and uses to integrate their plan components so that decisions identified complement each other and comport with the SRMA designation (e.g., stipulations on mineral or other development, designations for all types and modes of travel, areas available for livestock grazing, or visual resource management classes). All

actions must conform to applicable program policy, regulations, and valid existing rights.

b. Designation of Backcountry Conservation Areas

*Definition.* A BCA is an administrative unit which is generally intact and undeveloped, typically with backcountry or primitive RSCs; and where existing or proposed opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation are recognized for their unique value, public access, importance, and/or distinctiveness; and is commensurately managed to protect and enhance wildlife habitat.

*Management Focus.* A BCA is managed to protect and enhance a targeted set of wildlife-dependent activities, experiences, benefits, and desired RSCs, typically backcountry and/or primitive. The LUP may subdivide a BCA into Backcountry Conservation Area Zones (BCAZ) to further delineate specific recreation opportunities. Within a BCA, R&VS and wildlife-dependent recreation habitats are recognized as the predominant management focus. BCAs and associated RSCs are managed and protected on a long-term basis.

*Requirements.*

(1) Establish Backcountry Conservation Areas and Backcountry Conservation Area Zones Objectives

Through the Resource Management Plan (RMP) process, and in cooperation with state and tribal partners, identify species of recreational value and their associated habitats, and establish measurable outcome-focused recreation objectives. These BCA objectives must define the specific wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities (i.e., activities, experiences, and benefits) that will become the focus of R&VS and habitat conservation. Each BCA combines R&VS objectives with wildlife objectives to produce a specific BCA objective.

(2) Identify Land Use Plan Management Direction and Allocations for Allowable Use for Backcountry Conservation Areas and Backcountry Conservation Area Zones

Identify necessary management direction and allocations for allowable use for R&VS and other programs to achieve BCA and BCAZ objectives. (Note: Unless actions are essential to meeting the objective, they should be identified in the recreation appendix as best management practices to guide implementation planning.)

Within the R&VS and Wildlife Programs. Identify supporting management direction and allocations for allowable use in the LUP or as best

management practices documented in the recreation appendix to guide implementation planning to accomplish the following:

- (a) Sustain or enhance recreation and wildlife habitat objectives.
- (b) Maintain or enhance the desired physical, social, and operational RSCs.
- (c) Constrain uses, including incompatible recreation activities that are detrimental to meeting recreation and wildlife habitat objectives.
- (d) When necessary to support BCA objectives, address visitor health and safety, resource protection, and use and user conflicts (e.g., areas closed to target shooting, area wide camping limitations).
- (e) Address the type(s), activities, and locations where SRPs would not be issued when necessary to support objectives.

Work interdisciplinarity with other resource programs and uses to integrate their plan components so that decisions identified complement each other and comport with the BCA designation (e.g., stipulations on mineral or other development, designations for all types and modes of travel, areas available for livestock grazing, or visual resource management classes). All actions must conform to applicable program policy, regulations, and valid existing rights.

c. Designation of Extensive Recreation Management Areas

*Definition.* The ERMA is an administrative unit that requires specific management consideration in order to address recreation use, demand, or R&VS program investments.

*Management Focus.* The ERMA is managed to support and sustain the principal recreation activities and the associated qualities and conditions of the ERMA. Management of ERMA is commensurate with the management of other resources and resource uses. While generally unnecessary, ERMA may be subdivided into RMZs to ensure R&VS are managed commensurate with the management of other resources and resource uses.

*Requirements.*

(1) Establish Extensive Recreation Management Area Objectives

The ERMA must have measurable objectives. The ERMA objectives must define the recreation activities and the associated qualities and conditions

which become the focus for R&VS management.

(2) Identify Land Use Plan Management Direction and Allocations for Allowable Resource Use for the Extensive Recreation Management Area

Identify management direction and allocations for allowable use for R&VS and other programs to achieve ERMA objectives. Ensure all decisions are compatible with other resource objectives.

Supporting management direction and allocations for allowable resource use must facilitate the visitors' ability to participate in outdoor recreation activities and protect the associated qualities and conditions of specific targeted RSC attributes. For example, specific attributes within the physical RSC component under the visitor facility category, might include maintained and marked trails, simple trailhead developments, and basic toilets.

Within the R&VS program, identify supporting management direction and allocations for allowable resource use in the LUP to guide implementation planning to accomplish the following:

- (a) Facilitate visitor participation in the identified outdoor recreation activities.
- (b) Maintain particular RSCs.
- (c) Restrict or constrain uses, including incompatible recreation activities that are detrimental to achieve interdisciplinary objectives.
- (d) When necessary to support ERMA objectives, address visitor health and safety, resource protection, and use and user conflicts (e.g., areas closed to target shooting, area wide camping limitations).
- (e) Address the type(s), activities, and locations where SRPs would not be issued, when necessary to support objectives.

Work interdisciplinarity with other resource programs and uses to integrate their plan components so that decisions identified complement each other and comport with the ERMA designation (e.g., stipulations on mineral or other development, designations for all types and modes of travel, areas available for livestock grazing, or visual resource management classes). All actions must conform to applicable program policy, regulations, and valid existing rights.

#### 4. Public Lands Not Designated as Recreation Management Areas

*Definition.* All lands not established as an SRMA, BCA, or ERMA.

*Management Focus.* Public lands that are not designated as RMAs are managed to meet basic R&VS and resource stewardship needs. Recreation is not emphasized; however, recreation activities may occur except on those lands closed to public use. The R&VS are managed to allow recreation uses that are not in conflict with the primary uses of these lands.

*Requirements.* LUP objectives and management direction for recreation management may still be necessary to address basic R&VS and resource stewardship needs:

- a. Visitor health and safety (e.g., areas closed to target shooting, area wide camping limitations).
- b. Use and user conflicts (e.g., conflicts among recreation user groups, closing a campground to livestock grazing).
- c. The type(s), activities, and locations where SRPs would not be issued.
- d. Mitigation of recreation impacts on cultural and natural resources.

#### 5. Mapping

All recreation management areas (e.g., SRMA, BCA, and ERMA) will be defined geographically and mapped for analysis and administrative purposes.

#### 6. Interdisciplinary Coordination

R&VS planning requires coordination with other programs (e.g., travel and transportation management, visual resource management, cultural, wildlife, and law enforcement) to ensure decisions are compatible across programs. Coordination helps establish interdisciplinary developed plan components for other resource programs necessary to achieve the R&VS objective(s).

#### 7. Regional Coordination

Where the BLM is not the sole source provider of recreation opportunities it is important to coordinate with other recreation providers within the planning area. Planning efforts are coordinated with other suppliers of resource-dependent recreation to identify gaps in recreation services and to ensure complimentary rather than competitive management efforts. To the extent possible, LUPs should be

consistent with the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and other applicable Federal, state, and local plans.

## 8. Monitoring and Evaluation

R&VS planning, management, and monitoring is an iterative process that includes evaluating the success of implementation actions in achieving LUP decisions.

Establish and implement a monitoring and evaluation schedule to assess the effectiveness of LUP recreation decisions and implementation actions. When necessary, adjust implementation actions based on evaluation of monitoring to meet the ERMA, BCA, or SRMA objective. Implementation action adjustments must continue to be in conformance with the underlying plan decisions and may need to be accompanied by the appropriate level of NEPA analysis.

## 9. Implementation Planning Requirements

Implementation decisions allow site specific actions to achieve LUP objectives (refer to Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1) and are generally appealable to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

Implementation decisions include these four categories:

- a. *Management.* Recreation management actions, such as commitment of resources, services to be offered to visitors, and/or the development and provision of facilities (e.g., developed recreation sites, roads, and trails, concessions).
- b. *Administration.* Regulatory actions including the implementation of allocation systems, permits, fees, use restrictions, partnership agreements, as well as business plans or fiscal accountability systems, and data management protocols.
- c. *Information and Education.* Information and education actions including maps or brochures, websites, outreach efforts, events, interpretation, environmental education, signing, and other visitor information delivery services.
- d. *Monitoring.* Monitoring of recreation resources and human use including visitor use and use patterns; recreation caused resource effects or impacts; visitor satisfaction; and effectiveness or attainment of outcomes-focused management objectives, RSCs, standards, and indicators.

Recreation management areas with complex implementation issues may require a subsequent plan that addresses implementation-level management, administration, information, and monitoring actions.

## 1.7 File and Records Maintenance

Establish and maintain case files in accordance with BLM Manual Section 1274, Rel. 1-1339. Refer to BLM Manual Section 1271 for case disposition.

## 1.8 Relationship to Other Planning Efforts and Resource Programs

### A. Interdisciplinary Approach

R&VS issues affect many resource management programs. Therefore, planning for R&VS requires an interdisciplinary approach to integrate with land use planning and other resource management programs. Using an interdisciplinary approach can resolve or prevent resource conflicts and issues associated with recreational use of public lands and associated waters. Public input must be considered, including BLM Resource Advisory Councils, Recreation Resource Advisory Councils (where available), and cooperating agencies, such as state fish and game departments. Consequently, to ensure coordinated resource management and the efficient use of BLM personnel, recreation program staff and field managers will initiate and pursue continued coordination with other resource and support programs to communicate management actions that facilitate recreation use on the public lands and waters.

In coordinating efforts, it is essential that recreation program staff and field managers gain a thorough familiarity with other programs. Knowledge of other planning efforts within the BLM will ensure that managers have a greater understanding of the consequences of their resource management decisions on the provision of R&VS on the public lands and associated waters.

### B. Multi-resource Implementation Planning

One multi-resource activity plan for a management area is preferable to many individual resource activity plans (e.g., RAMP, Habitat Management Plan) for the same area. Incorporation of R&VS concerns and related participation in multi-resource implementation planning efforts is encouraged.

### C. Program Relationships

Most of the BLM's resource programs are highly interdependent and require coordinated resource management and efficient use of personnel. This requires managers and recreation program staff to initiate and pursue continued coordination with other resource programs, supporting program staffs, and other agencies involved in managing R&VS. Familiarity with these relationships and with other resource programs enables personnel assigned with R&VS responsibilities to help managers understand the ramifications of resources allocation and other management decisions in providing R&VS opportunities on public lands and waters. Similarly, implementation

planning efforts must ensure that the recreation management goals set forth in the LUP are not adversely affected by other program actions.



### Glossary of Terms

Following are definitions for terms and descriptions for acronyms used in this Manual and Handbook H-8320-1. Also refer to definitions for terms used in Section 103 of FLPMA and the planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601.0-5. This glossary does not supersede these definitions or those in other laws or regulations.

#### -A-

*Activity-based Management.* Management that focuses on providing activities and the ability of users to engage in desired activities.

*Activity Plan.* A program or area specific detailed implementation-level plan that usually describes multiple projects and the specific management direction that will be applied to meet specific land use plan objectives. Examples of recreation related activity plans include travel and transportation management plans and recreation area management plans.

#### -B-

*Backcountry Conservation Area (BCA).* An administrative unit which is generally intact and undeveloped, typically with backcountry or primitive recreation setting characteristics; and where existing or proposed opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation are recognized for their unique value, public access, importance, and/or distinctiveness; and is commensurately managed to protect and enhance wildlife habitat.

*Backcountry Conservation Area Zone (BCAZ).* A subdivision of a Backcountry Conservation Area to further delineate specific recreation opportunities, setting characteristics, and wildlife habitat.

*Benefits.* The result of a satisfying recreation experience that leads to an (a) improved condition, or (b) maintenance of a desired condition. These accrue from recreation participation and are both short- and long-term and are realized on- and off-site.

*Benefits Based Management (BBM).* A recreation and resource planning and management system used by managers and their collaborating partners to assure an array of benefit opportunities are being provided and to target and facilitate the realization of one or more specific types of benefits desired. BBM is one specialized application of the beneficial outcomes approach to leisure (BOAL).

#### -D-

*Designations.* Geographic areas of public land where management is directed toward one or more priority resource values or uses (43 CFR 1601.0-5(n)(1)). Designations include both administrative (identified in BLM or Department of the Interior program-specific policies or

regulations, are established through the BLM's land use planning process to achieve resource management plan objectives) and designations that can only be established by the President, Congress, or the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to specific legal authority.

**-E-**

*Experience-based Management.* Management that focuses on the demand for opportunities to realize desired experiences as well as desired activities.

*Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA).* The ERMA is an administrative unit that requires specific management consideration in order to address recreation use, demand, or recreation and visitor services program investments.

**-G-**

*Goal (LUP).* A broad, generally qualitative statement of desired outcomes to achieve in all action alternatives to address the problems or opportunities identified. Under the National Environmental Policy Act, the problems and opportunities and the outcomes to achieve are what must be described in your purpose and need and by writing a purpose and need specific to your planning effort, you have also described your goals.

**-I-**

*Implementation Decisions.* Decisions that take action to implement land use plan decisions; generally appealable to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) under 43 CFR 4.410.

**-O-**

*Objective (LUP).* A concise statement of desired resource conditions and uses within the planning area, or a portion of the planning area. Objectives are most helpful when they can be quantified and measured and, where possible, have established timeframes for achievement.

*Objective (R&VS).* A concise statement of desired resource conditions and uses within each RMA. Objectives are most helpful when they can be quantified and measured and, where possible, have established timeframes for achievement

*Outcomes Focused Management (OFM).* OFM is defined as an approach to park and recreation management which focuses on the positive outcomes of engaging in recreational experiences. Outcomes are categorized as individual, social, economic, and environmental.

**-P-**

*Project Plans.* Project plans can be developed on a case-by-case basis and are developed in conformance with the land use plan and in compliance with activity plans. The project plan identifies the site and facility design requirements for construction.

**-R-**

*Recreation.* Use of leisure time to freely engage in activities in a variety of settings that provide personal satisfaction and enjoyment and contribute to the renewal and refreshment of one's body, mind, and/or spirit.

*Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP).* The RAMP identifies the specific recreation implementation actions to be taken to realize the decisions made in the land use plan, including specific recreation permitting or use allocation decisions. The RAMP must address the four components of implementation: management, administration, information and education, and monitoring.

*Recreation Experiences.* Immediate states-of-mind resulting from participation in recreation opportunities that result in benefits.

*Recreation Management Zone (RMZ).* A subdivision of a Recreation Management Area to further delineate specific recreation opportunities and recreation setting characteristics.

*Recreation Opportunities.* The combination of recreation activities, settings, and experiences provided by a specific geographic area.

*Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS).* ROS is a widely used planning and management framework for classifying and defining recreation opportunity environments ranging from the primitive to the urban. This continuum recognizes variation among the components of any landscape's physical, social, and operational attributes.

*Recreation Resources.* Recreation resources are those landscape characteristics found within an area and may include natural or cultural features, constructed facilities, and infrastructure.

*Recreation Settings.* The collective distinguishing attributes (RSCs) of a landscape. Recreation settings determine the production of recreation opportunities.

*Recreation Setting Characteristics (RSCs).* The RSCs are derived from the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. The RSCs are categorized as physical, social, and operational components and are further subdivided into specific characteristics (attributes). These characteristics are categorized across a spectrum of classes that describe a range of qualities and conditions of a recreation setting, for example primitive to urban.

-S-

*Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)*. The SRMA is an administrative unit where the existing or proposed recreation opportunities and recreation setting characteristics are recognized for their unique value, importance, or distinctiveness; especially compared to other areas used for recreation.

**Acronyms**

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
BBM	Benefits-based Management
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
DOI	Department of the Interior
ERMA	Extensive Recreation Management Areas
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
LUP	Land Use Plan
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NLCS	National Landscape Conservation System
OFM	Outcomes-focused Management
R&VS	Recreation and Visitor Services
RAMP	Recreation Area Management Plan
RMA	Recreation Management Area
RMZ	Recreation Management Zone
RMIS	Recreation Management Information System
RMZ	Recreation Management Zone
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
RSC	Recreation Setting Characteristics
SCORP	State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area