

# CHAPTER 1.0

## INTRODUCTION

The BLM YFO has prepared the Approved RMP for the YFO planning area (hereafter planning area). The Approved RMP will direct management of Federal surface and mineral estate managed by the YFO within Yuma, La Paz, and Maricopa counties in Arizona, and portions of Imperial and Riverside counties in California. The planning area encompasses over 1.3 million acres along the lower Colorado River in southwest Arizona and southeast California, and extends eastward into Maricopa County in Arizona (Map 1-1).

This plan represents years of ongoing, coordinated efforts on the part of BLM YFO staff, BLM Arizona State Office staff, representatives of communities located within the planning area, cooperating and collaborating government agencies, special interest and user groups, and hundreds of concerned citizens. The decisions outlined in this document will enable the BLM to manage the resources and uses of BLM-administered public lands located within the YFO planning area as a comprehensive unit.

In accordance with BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR Part 1600, and in fulfillment of the BLM's obligations under NEPA of 1969, the BLM prepared an EIS to analyze the effects of BLM's Approved Plan and a reasonable range of alternatives. The BLM complied with all Federal requirements and agency policies while developing a reasonable range of alternatives for the analysis of Management Actions for BLM-administered surface and mineral estate within the planning area. The analysis of resources and values within the planning area permitted the development of recommendations in alternatives for actions that would be taken on BLM-administered lands to enhance management of resources adjacent to and within the planning area. BLM distributed the DRMP/DEIS in December 2006 and the PRMP/FEIS in April 2008.

### 1.1 VISION

The vision of the YFO in constructing this Approved RMP is to manage BLM-administered lands comprehensively to accomplish needs for all resource uses, while acting as stewards of the land and its valuable resources. The BLM sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. YFO has considered the public's needs and stakeholder values in the management programs of resources in this Approved RMP.

## 1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR A RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN REVISION

### 1.2.1 PURPOSE

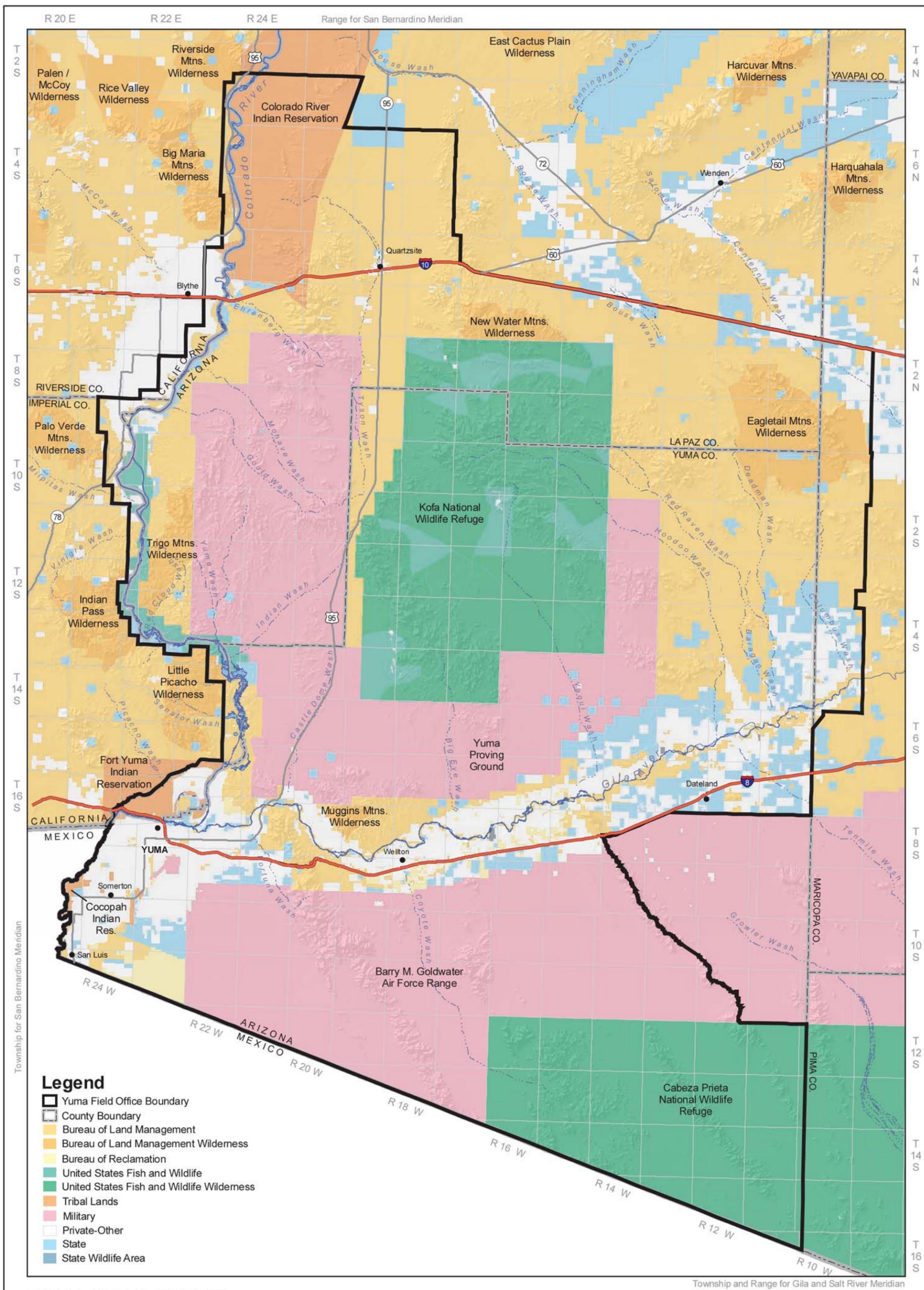
The purpose of this RMP is to establish management directions for the balanced uses of resources within the planning area, including: rangeland, wildlife, wilderness, recreation, cultural resources, and other natural, scenic, scientific, and historical values. There were three RMPs (with amendments) which previously provided for the administration and management of the resources within the planning area. This RMP consolidated those three plans and guides the overall management of activities, as well as the use and protection of BLM-administered resources within the planning area. Subsequent site-specific and more detailed planning will take place for certain geographic areas and resources within the planning area in conformance with this RMP. The RMP creates a framework for future planning and decision making.

FLPMA of 1976, as amended (43 U.S. Code [USC] 1711), requires BLM “to develop, maintain, and, when appropriate, revise land use plans” (43 USC 1712 [a]). FLPMA directs BLM to manage public lands and their various resource values for multiple use and sustained yield to ensure that they are utilized in a manner that would best meet the present and future needs of the public. As required by FLPMA and current BLM policy, YFO has prepared this RMP to establish management directions for the balanced uses of such renewable and non-renewable resources as rangeland, wildlife, wilderness, recreation, cultural resources, and other natural, scenic, scientific, and historical values within the planning area.

In many cases, existing management decisions that are still effective and valid are carried forward. In other cases, existing management decisions are outdated and inconsistent. The revised RMP provides the YFO an opportunity to consolidate three RMPs and several plan amendments. The RMP has been developed in compliance with FLPMA and current BLM policy as set forth in the 2005 BLM H-1601-1 *Land Use Planning Handbook*.

The objective of the planning effort was to produce an Approved RMP that achieved the following:

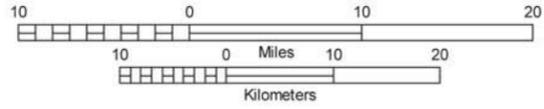
- Created a common vision for the planning area;
- Updated existing management decisions for BLM-administered land within the planning area;
- Addressed new uses of public land that occurred since the 1986 and 1987 Records of Decision (RODs) for the Yuma District RMP, associated amendments, and management/activity plans were implemented;
- Analyzed and incorporated data related to use of public lands that have become available since the 1987 Yuma District RMP, associated amendments, and management/activity plans were implemented;
- Addressed land incorporated into the planning area from the Lower Gila South and Lower Gila North planning areas; and
- Provided forward-looking, cohesive, and consistent land management through collaboration with neighboring communities, general public, interested groups, and all levels of government. Collaborators/partners will be involved in RMP implementation.



- Legend**
- Yuma Field Office Boundary
  - County Boundary
  - Bureau of Land Management
  - Bureau of Land Management Wilderness
  - Bureau of Reclamation
  - United States Fish and Wildlife
  - United States Fish and Wildlife Wilderness
  - Tribal Lands
  - Military
  - Private-Other
  - State
  - State Wildlife Area

**YUMA FIELD OFFICE  
RECORD OF DECISION  
APPROVED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Bureau of Land Management  
**Yuma Field Office**  
January 2010



**Map 1-1: Project Planning Area**

The Bureau of Land Management makes no warranties, implied or expressed, with respect to information shown on this map.

## 1.2.2 NEED

This RMP was needed to respond to the changed conditions and circumstances which occurred in the planning area and which may not have been previously addressed, as set forth in the Yuma District RMP, as amended (USDOI BLM 1987a); the Lower Gila South RMP, as amended (USDOI BLM 1988), and the *Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan*, as amended (USDOI BLM 1983b). Those portions of previous management which are responsive to changed conditions and circumstances were carried forward to this Approved RMP.

A LUP evaluation for the planning area was completed in December 2000. The evaluation concluded that a majority of RMP decisions were either being implemented or had been implemented. Resources within the planning area administered by the BLM were previously managed under three LUPs and their nine amendments.

Additional conditions and changing circumstances which relate to the management of BLM resources within the planning area were considered. These included:

- Population growth and changing demographics;
- Increased and conflicting demands on the planning area's resources and resource uses;
- Increased complexity of resource management issues; and
- Increased OHV use on public lands.

This Approved RMP comprehensively addresses these issues to balance resource uses in a way that satisfies both public demand and FLPMA's requirements of multiple-use and sustained yield approach for natural resource management.

## 1.3 PLANNING AREA

The planning area extends northward along the lower Colorado River from the U.S.–United Mexican States (Mexico) border at San Luis, Arizona, to north of Blythe, California, and Ehrenberg, Arizona. The eastern boundary extends past the eastern side of the Eagletail Mountains Wilderness Area in Maricopa County and south to the northern boundary of the Luke Air Force–Barry M. Goldwater Range (BMGR). The western boundary generally parallels the Colorado River to the west and includes land in California (see Map 1-1).

The YFO manages a diverse combination of land and resources. The lower Colorado River is a destination for visitors seeking camping, year-round water-related recreation, and off-highway travel. On average, 250,000 winter visitors use the La Posa Long-Term Visitor Area (LTVA) and the five surrounding 14-day campgrounds on an annual basis. Within the planning area there are four Wilderness Areas in Arizona and portions of four other Wilderness Areas in California. The YFO maintains an active lands and realty program to oversee ROWs for major corridors connecting energy-rich states such as Texas, Wyoming, and New Mexico to California, through Arizona. The planning area encompasses lands within five counties: three in Arizona (La Paz, Maricopa, and Yuma) and two in California (Imperial and Riverside). RMP-related impacts are most likely to occur in Yuma and La Paz counties, where approximately 95 percent of the

planning area lands are located.

Adjacent land jurisdictions that require management coordination in this RMP include Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), Arizona State Lands, BMGR, BLM Field Offices (Lake Havasu, Lower Sonoran, and El Centro), Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), Cibola National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Cocopah Indian Reservation, Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT), Fort Yuma–Quechan Indian Reservation, Imperial NWR, Kofa NWR, Marine Corps Air Station–Yuma (MCAS–Yuma), U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), and private land including regional irrigation districts.

Where urban interface issues are present, YFO collaborates with cities and towns adjoining public land including the City of Yuma and Town of Quartzsite; Arizona communities of San Luis, Somerton, Dateland, Wellton, Ehrenberg, and Hyder; and California communities of Blythe and Palo Verde, all of which have worked with YFO on various issues.

### **1.3.1 BUREAU OF RECLAMATION PROJECT LANDS**

Several hundred thousand acres of land in the planning area are withdrawn by Reclamation to accommodate Boulder Canyon and related projects from Davis Dam to Mexico. These Reclamation-withdrawn or -acquired lands that constitute a corridor along the lower Colorado River as identified in the *Lower Colorado River Land Use Plan* of 1964 (USDO) are jointly managed by Reclamation and BLM for specific purposes as outlined by *Departmental Manual* (DM) 613 1.1 and the joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of July 15, 1991.

The Secretary of the Interior has assigned recreation and wildlife management responsibilities on Reclamation-withdrawn lands to the BLM. These activities are conducted in coordination with Reclamation, and the provisions of this arrangement are found in DM 613 1.1. The Secretary of the Interior, acting through Reclamation, retains the role of Watermaster for the lower Colorado River and for operation of the various dams, river works, and irrigation project facilities authorized by Congress.

BLM has the responsibility to maximize opportunities for recreation, wildlife, and other purposes not specified by Reclamation. Reclamation retains the responsibility for operation and maintenance of works and facilities, and environmental mitigation and enhancement associated with its mission of water delivery on the lower Colorado River. Throughout the planning process, YFO has coordinated with Reclamation to ensure that the Approved RMP does not contain planning decisions that conflict with existing and planned Reclamation project activities. YFO will continue to coordinate and consult with Reclamation, as components of the Approved RMP are implemented on Reclamation project lands.

## 1.3.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PLANNING AREA

The Lower Colorado River Land Use Office (Land Use Office) was established in Yuma by the USDOJ in 1961 by Secretarial Order 2854. The *Lower Colorado River Land Use Plan* was published in 1964 by the USDOJ for 265 river miles between Davis Dam and the International Boundary. This multi-jurisdictional plan addresses trespass and water-based recreation issues to resolve illegal occupancy including trailer homes, shacks, commercial resorts, and agricultural development.

In December 1968, the Land Use Office was assigned to the BLM to implement the plan. The Yuma District Office was established on August 23, 1972. The district included Reclamation-withdrawn lands of the Land Use Office along the lower Colorado River corridor and large areas of public land to the east in Arizona. Management issues on public lands included recreation, grazing, mining, wildlife, and realty actions.

In October of 1997, through a reorganization of BLM lands within the State of Arizona, the Yuma District was split into the Yuma and Lake Havasu field offices. The YFO planning area expanded to manage 1.3 million acres, including portions of the Lower Gila North and South planning areas. In 2005, Arizona BLM reorganized to form a three-tiered organization composed of field offices, districts, and the Arizona State Office. The Colorado River District was formed, which includes the Yuma, Lake Havasu, and Kingman field offices. Planning area boundaries remained the same for each field office.

A block of BLM-administered land on U.S. Highway 95 (Highway 95) about 10 miles north of the Town of Quartzsite was transferred to the State Land Trust 30 years ago at the request of the Governor of Arizona and under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior to enable the State Land Department to benefit from future growth in the Colorado River area. The block of land was transferred to the State Land Department after a special study by BLM, the State Land Department, and other Federal and State agencies in 1972. The study determined that this, along with several other blocks of BLM-administered lands along the lower Colorado River in Arizona, should be transferred to State Land Trust's ownership.

## 1.4 PLANNING PROCESS

### 1.4.1 STEPS IN THE PROCESS

The BLM uses a multi-step process when developing a LUP. Some of the steps may occur concurrently. Some situations may require the manager to supplement previous work as additional information becomes available. These steps have been fully integrated with the NEPA process and CEQ guidelines, as depicted in Figure 1-1, and described below.

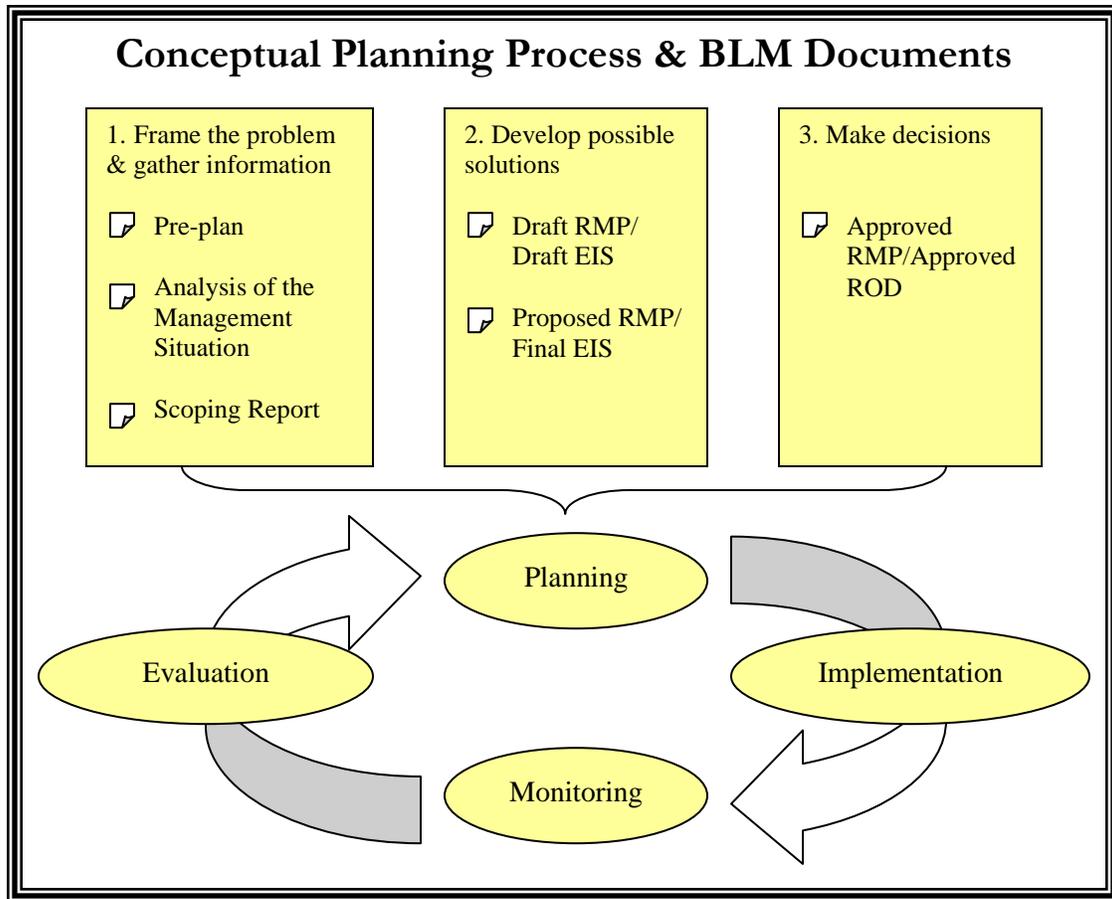


Figure 1-1

**A. IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES**

- Issue a NOI in the *Federal Register* to begin the scoping process to identify issues and develop planning criteria and to begin public participation.
- Identify issues. This sets the tone and scope for the entire planning process and is done with full public participation.

**B. DEVELOP PLANNING CRITERIA**

- Establish constraints and guides, and determine what will or will not be done or considered during the planning process.
- Produce a scoping report for public review, including final planning criteria.

**C. INVENTORY DATA AND INFORMATION COLLECTION**

- Collect an inventory of data and information, which is an ongoing activity and not governed solely by the planning process.

## **D. ANALYZE THE MANAGEMENT SITUATION**

- Gather information on the current management situation. Describe pertinent physical and biological characteristics and evaluate the capability and condition of the resources.

## **E. FORMULATE ALTERNATIVES**

- Alternative formulation is the step where the success of the planning effort hinges on clearly identified reasonable alternatives.

## **F. ESTIMATE EFFECTS OF ALTERNATIVES**

- Estimate the impact or effects of each alternative on the environment and management situation.

## **G. SELECT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

- Select the Preferred Alternative, which in the judgment of management best resolves the planning issues and promotes balanced multiple use objectives.
- Issue a NOA of DRMP/DEIS for the 90-day public review.

## **H. SELECT THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

- Review and analyze public comments, opinions, suggestions, and recommendations and use the important information/data in preparing the PRMP/FEIS.
- Issue a NOA of PRMP/FEIS for the 30-day protest period, concurrent with the 60-day Governor's review.
- Issue a NOA for the ROD/Approved Plan after protests are resolved.

## **I. TIERING TO THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

- Tiering is the incorporation by reference of the content of previous plans into future implementation level project planning. The Approved RMP identifies the need to develop several implementation-level management plans in compliance with NEPA that will be tiered to this Approved RMP and ROD, including TMPs and ACEC Management Plans.
- If a proposed project or site-specific action does not conform to or achieve consistency with the terms, conditions, and decisions in the Approved RMP, the YFO may deny the proposal or prepare an RMP amendment in the form of an Environmental Assessment (EA) or EIS.

### **1.4.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The RMP provides numerous opportunities for the public to be involved in the process.

- Public scoping meetings are initially held to assist the BLM in assessing the scope of the RMP proposed actions and alternatives to be considered.

- Public meetings are held once the DRMP/DEIS is released to garner public comments on the draft.
- A public protest period is held after the PRMP/FEIS is finished to allow for public input before the decisions are finalized in the ROD/Approved Plan.

Public participation is essential in making informed decisions. BLM believes that extensive public involvement improves communication, develops enhanced understanding of different perspectives, and identifies solutions to issues and problems.

In addition to the public, there are numerous individuals within BLM and other Federal agencies who take an active role in the planning process. A wide variety of individuals both internal and external to BLM participate in the planning process. While most of the work occurs at the Field Office level, many individuals at higher levels of the organization are involved in the planning process as well.

## 1.5 PLANNING CRITERIA AND LEGISLATIVE CONSTRAINTS

The BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-2) require the development of planning criteria to guide preparation of the RMP. Planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that guide and direct plan preparation. They ensure that the plan is tailored to the identified issues, and that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided. Planning criteria are based on applicable laws and regulations, agency guidance, the result of consultation and coordination with the public, other Federal, State, and local agencies, and Native American tribes.

### 1.5.1 GENERAL PLANNING CRITERIA

The following criteria were developed and distributed to all interested parties collaborating in the planning process.

- The plan has been completed in compliance with FLPMA, the ESA, NEPA, and all other relevant Federal laws and EOs (including wilderness legislation) and management policies of the BLM.
- The plan resulted in determinations as required by special program- and resource-specific guidance detailed in Appendix C of the BLM's *Land Use Planning Handbook* (H-1601-1).
- Planning decisions from the existing RMP that remain valid were carried forward into the plan. Relevant decisions and alternatives proposed in previous studies of the planning area were brought forward into the plan for reassessment.
- The planning team worked collaboratively with the State of Arizona, Yuma, La Paz, Imperial, Riverside, and Maricopa counties, Tribal governments, municipal governments, other Federal agencies, the Resource Advisory Council, and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals. Decisions in the plan strived to be compatible with existing plans and policies of adjacent local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies, and consistent with Federal

laws and regulations as long as the decisions are in conformance with legal mandates on management of public lands.

- Native American Tribal consultations were conducted in accordance with policy. Tribal concerns were given due consideration.
- Coordination occurred with the USFWS through the Section 7 consultation process to protect and enhance known habitat for threatened and endangered species and assist in the recovery of listed species to maintain biological diversity within the planning area. Special status species were reviewed, including species proposed for listing under the ESA, throughout the planning area to conserve habitat through inventory, monitoring, and adoption of conservation measures needed to curtail listing.
- Coordination occurred with the Arizona and California State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) throughout the planning process.
- The plan recognizes the States' responsibilities to manage wildlife populations, including uses such as hunting and fishing, within the planning area.
- The plan establishes new guidance and identifies existing guidance upon which the YFO will rely in managing public lands within the planning area.
- The Approved RMP applies the following existing plans, plan amendments, and their decisions: *Standards for Rangeland Health* (USDOI BLM 1997) as Land Health Standards applicable to all resources and activities, *Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management* (USDOI BLM 1997), and *Proposed Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan* (USDOI BLM 2002).
- The Approved RMP carries forward existing Wilderness Areas; national trails; Back Country Byways; wild and scenic river suitability recommendations; and, as appropriate, existing ACECs.
- Geospatial data was automated within a Geographic Information System (GIS) to facilitate discussions of the affected environment, alternative formulation, analysis of environmental consequences, and display of results.
- Resource allocations are reasonable, achievable, supported by technology, and within budgetary constraints. Resource allocations are consistent with current BLM policy.
- The lifestyles and concerns of area residents are recognized in the plan.
- Under the Clean Air Act (CAA), BLM-administered lands were given a Class II air quality classification unless reclassified by the states of California and Arizona. This classification allows moderate deterioration associated with moderate well-controlled industrial and population growth. Actions within the Yuma County particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) non-attainment area are assessed for conformance with air quality standards.
- The public will be protected from known safety hazards of abandoned mine lands (AML<sub>1</sub>) and hazardous materials sites within the planning area. As identified in the draft Instruction Memorandum (IM) titled *Mitigating and Remediating Physical Safety Hazards at Abandoned Mine Land Sites*, the YFO will address closure or signage of all AML<sub>1</sub> sites close to Recreation Information Management System sites. Closures and signage include temporary and remedial measures.
- YFO incorporated the Discovery Process®, developed by James Kent and Associates, to detect emerging issues affecting public land by engaging local citizens in the land use planning process.

## 1.5.2 PROGRAM-SPECIFIC PLANNING CRITERIA

### A. RIPARIAN AREAS, FLOODPLAINS, AND WETLANDS

Riparian areas, floodplains, and wetlands will be managed to protect, improve, and restore their natural functions to benefit water storage, groundwater recharge, water quality, and fish and wildlife values. All management practices were designed to maintain or improve the integrity of these high priority values, in accordance with the Clean Water Act (CWA), EO 11988 (Floodplain Management), and *Standards and Guidelines*. Additional criteria are found in the *Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program* (LCR MSCP), priority wildlife habitat designations, existing activity plans, and the current *Lower Colorado River Fire Management Plan*.

### B. WATER QUALITY

Section 319 of the CWA obligates Federal agencies to be consistent with state Nonpoint Source Management Program plans and relevant water quality standards. Section 313 requires compliance with State Water Quality Standards. YFO coordinated with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) regarding their Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program and other relevant water quality programs. YFO incorporated applicable BMPs or other conservation measures for specific programs and activities into the RMP. Water quality will be maintained or improved in accordance with State and Federal standards.

### C. SOIL

Soils will be managed to protect long-term productivity. BMPs were incorporated into other programs to minimize soil erosion and compaction resulting from Management Actions.

### D. VEGETATION

Vegetation will be managed to achieve desired plant communities (considering the ecological site potential) that provide for: biodiversity; protection and restoration of native species; and non-consumptive uses including plant protection (fuel collection), visual quality, and watershed protection. The desired plant communities will provide wildlife habitat, watershed protection and stability, and forage for livestock and wildlife. Water quality will be given priority in all vegetation management decisions.

There are several treatment methods and standard operating procedures that may be used in a vegetation treatment program. BLM policies and guidance for public land treatments will be followed in implementing all treatment methods. Many guidelines are provided in Manual Section 1740, *BLM Standards and Guidelines*, programmatic documents such as BLM's *Environmental Impact Statement for Vegetation Treatments, Watersheds and Wildlife Habitats on Public Lands Administered by the BLM in the Western United States, Including Alaska* (USDOI BLM 1991), and other general and specific program policies, procedures, and standards pertinent to implementation of renewable resource improvements.

## **E. FISH AND WILDLIFE**

Fish and wildlife habitat will be managed to maintain and/or improve the existing habitats including designated priority wildlife habitat. Management Actions should minimize the extent of disturbance to fish and wildlife habitat. Vegetation management practices will be considered to achieve desired future conditions.

## **F. THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES**

Management Actions authorized, funded or implemented by BLM will be implemented not to jeopardize the continued existence of federally listed threatened or endangered plant or animal species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat. Candidate species, species proposed for Federal listing, and BLM and State sensitive species will be given equal consideration as listed species. The intent will be to recover listed species and maintain healthy populations of all other species and therefore avoid the need for further Federal listing. As an agency operating within the USDO, the BLM will adhere to the LCR MSCP, approved by Secretary Gale Norton on April 5, 2005.

## **G. WILDLAND FIRE**

Fire management prescriptions will be consistent with the Federal Wildland Fire Policy, *National Fire Plan*, and *Lower Colorado River Fire Management Plan*. Fire suppression will be accomplished with the least amount of surface disturbance to protect significant cultural or paleontological values. Public lands and resources affected by fire will be rehabilitated in accordance with the multiple use objectives identified for the affected area, subject to BLM policies and available funding.

## **H. CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Management of cultural resources is an integrated system of identifying and evaluating cultural resources, deciding on their appropriate uses, and administering them accordingly, both on public lands and on other lands where BLM decisions could affect cultural resources. All management for cultural resources in this plan comply with the NHPA of 1966, as amended; BLM Manual 8100; and other applicable cultural resource laws, regulations, EOs, guidance, and policy. Areas with high cultural resource sensitivity were evaluated for the new SCRMA allocation. The plan will ensure that management measures are implemented in a manner that protects and provides access to sacred places in accordance with the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and EO 13007.

## **I. PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

This plan has developed appropriate management strategies that are based upon the best scientific information available. Management of paleontological resources emphasizes: the non-renewable nature of fossils; their usefulness in deciphering ancient and modern ecosystems; the public benefits and public expectations arising from their scientific, recreational, and educational

values; the BLM's interest in the continued advancement of the science of paleontology; and the importance of minimizing resource use conflicts within a multiple use framework.

## **J. VISUAL RESOURCES**

VRM classifications were conducted to address the public's concerns about open space and natural vistas. Some areas may be subject to special measures to protect resources or reduce conflicts among uses.

## **K. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

The YFO reviewed lands to be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. The YFO has the authority to address lands with wilderness characteristics and describe protective management prescriptions in the RMP. In keeping with the public involvement process that is part of all land use planning efforts, the YFO was committed to considering public input regarding lands to be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. As appropriate, the YFO identified lands to be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics.

## **L. LIVESTOCK GRAZING**

Livestock grazing will be managed through existing laws, regulations, and policies. The plans incorporated the statewide *Standards and Guidelines* established by the Arizona BLM State Director and were approved by the Secretary of the Interior. They include a strategy for ensuring that proper grazing practices are followed, while preserving habitats for sensitive plant and wildlife species. Appropriate BMPs will be followed to protect rangeland resources and, where necessary, to mitigate any conflicts with other uses and values. Administrative Actions to assure compliance with existing permit/lease requirements, to modify permits and leases, to monitor and supervise grazing use, and to remedy unauthorized grazing use will continue.

## **M. MINERALS**

Minerals management is consistent with FLPMA and existing policy and regulation including the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970, Section 102(a)(12) of FLPMA, the National Materials and Minerals Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980, and current BLM Mineral Resources Policy. Lands open to salable, leasable, and locatable minerals are identified in the plan. Areas within the planning area may also be subject to constraints to surface use. Areas proposed to be closed to mineral entry will continue to be subject to valid existing rights for mining claims, leases, and salable permits that currently exist within these areas.

## **N. RECREATION**

Existing designated recreation sites are carried forward and evaluated for additional facilities. Other public lands were evaluated for their suitability for recreational development.

## **O. TRAVEL MANAGEMENT**

Motorized and other access on public lands in the planning area will be managed in accordance

with existing law, EOs, proclamation, regulation, and policy. OHV use areas will be designated as open, limited, and closed designations. A network of roads and trails will be designated for all limited areas at least five years after the ROD is signed.

## **P. LANDS AND REALTY**

All public lands will be retained in Federal ownership, unless determined that disposal of a particular parcel(s) would serve the public interest. Lands were identified for withdrawal, disposal by sale, or exchange. Decisions to acquire private lands from willing sellers will be based on public benefits, management considerations, and public access needs. Specific actions to implement RMP land tenure decisions will include full public participation. There will be no net loss of public ownership along the lower Colorado River.

## **Q. RIGHT-OF-WAY CORRIDORS**

Public lands are generally available for transportation and utility ROWs subject to NEPA evaluation, except where specifically prohibited by law or regulation or in areas specifically identified for avoidance and exclusion to protect significant resource values. ROW Corridors avoid areas of designation such as priority wildlife habitat, special status species management areas, ACECs, Wilderness Areas, and cultural areas.

## **R. AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**

As required by FLPMA, priority was given to the designation and protection of ACECs. The RMP identifies new ACECs where special management attention is needed to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, and scenic values; fish or wildlife resources; or other natural systems or processes; or to protect human life and safety from natural hazards. The plan re-evaluated the existing Big Marias and Gila River Cultural Area ACECs, to reassess needs for special management attention and re-determine appropriate acreages. Management prescriptions were developed in the plan to guide management of ACECs and to protect key relevant and important values. The plan prescribes future ACEC plans or master interpretive plans for designated ACECs where necessary.

## **S. WILDERNESS AREAS**

Wilderness Areas are designated by Congress and are managed according to the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990, the California Desert Protection Act of 1994, regulations for wilderness management at 43 CFR 6300, BLM Manuals 8560 and 8561, BLM Handbook H-8560-1, and Wilderness Management Plans. The RMP does not address reducing or eliminating existing Wilderness Areas, changing existing wilderness boundaries, or allowing motor vehicle or other use of mechanical transportation in any Wilderness Areas not already authorized. Also consistent with policy, the YFO did not establish new Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), manage any lands not already established as WSAs prior to April 2003 under the FLPMA Section 603 non-impairment standard, or report such areas to Congress.

## **T. HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

Management Actions consider BMPs which protect the public to the greatest extent through existing policies.

## **U. SOCIOECONOMICS**

Management Actions were evaluated for socioeconomic impacts by using the “Economic Profile System” and other tools such as IMPLAN.

## **V. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

The lifestyles of low-income and minority populations, and potential impacts to these residents are considered in the RMP.

## **W. COORDINATED PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

YFO collaborated with adjacent Federal, State, Tribal, city, and county governments.

# **1.6 PUBLIC SCOPING ISSUES**

To allow an early and open process for determining the scope of issues and concerns related to preparation of the DRMP/DEIS (40 CFR 1510.7), a public scoping period was provided by BLM. A NOI to prepare the YFO DRMP/DEIS was published in the *Federal Register* on March 30, 2004 (Volume 69, Number 61, Pages 16608-16609 [AZ 050-04-1610-DO; 1610]). Publication of this notice in the *Federal Register* initiated a 90-day public scoping period for the DRMP/DEIS that ended on June 30, 2004.

YFO contacted Federal, State, county, and local agencies to initiate coordination and collaboration efforts. Agencies received postcards and were invited to comment as part of the initial scoping process and during individual agency meetings with YFO management staff. The YFO mailed informational postcards to approximately 1,200 individuals and organizations announcing its intent to prepare a DRMP/DEIS for BLM-administered public lands in the planning area. Public scoping meetings were held by the YFO in Yuma, Quartzsite, and Roll, Arizona, and Blythe, California on June 1 through 4, 2004. Approximately 150 to 210 persons attended the public scoping meetings. A total of 207 responses identifying 626 issues were received during the comment period. Copies of all project notices and comment forms distributed during the scoping period are contained in the *Final Scoping Report* (USDO IBLM 2004a).

Public comments addressed a variety of issues and concerns regarding resources and resource uses, as well as management considerations. A summary of the most common public comments, issues, and management concerns follows.

## 1.6.1 ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THIS APPROVED RMP

The major emphasis and considerations within this Approved RMP which were identified by the public scoping process include:

- Special Designations;
- Fish and Wildlife Management;
- Recreation Management;
- Travel Management;
- Lands Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics; and
- Lands and Realty Management.

### A. SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

Issues focused on the need to identify and protect special areas and resource values in general and from particular activities, such as oil/gas development, mining, livestock grazing, OHV use, and road construction. ACEC designation was requested for Sonoran pronghorn and desert tortoise habitat. It was also requested that the river corridor be designated as a natural resource area rather than as a general use area.

Comments were also received in opposition to special designations (specifically Wilderness), stating that these designations benefit only those few who are fit enough to hike into the areas to enjoy them, that there should be no additional Wilderness designated within the planning area, and that public access should be provided within all existing specially designated areas.

A considerable number of comments were received concerning Back Country Byway nominations. Several commenters stated they would prefer that no Back Country Byways be nominated in the planning area, because visitor use would increase on these particular routes.

### B. FISH AND WILDLIFE

Fish and wildlife issues included habitat fragmentation and impacts from OHV use and development. Impacts to wildlife, specifically ground-nesting birds, and impacts to forage availability and quality from grazing were also mentioned. Several comments were received regarding water catchments, including the desire that these be managed by BLM, concern that there are not enough catchments, and concern that some catchments are sometimes empty and others fenced making them unavailable for use by all wildlife. A few comments emphasized the benefit of agriculture to wildlife for food resources and one commenter expressed concern over policies to control predators and rodents. There were also requests to provide wildlife corridors between this planning area and adjacent areas.

### C. RECREATION

Many members of the public used the comment cards to inform the YFO what they felt to be the most important recreation activities on BLM-administered land. These recreation uses included hunting, OHV use, camping, rock hounding, fishing, photography, hiking, wildlife viewing,

scientific research, and shooting. Comments received indicated the need to maintain a multiple-use management approach.

Other recreation comments were received regarding the need to maintain camping areas, including the planning area's two LTVAs. Several comments were received requesting additional equestrian opportunities be provided, expressing a preference both for and against shooting in the area, and requesting trails be designated for specific uses. The need for additional recreational improvements and amenities were specifically mentioned for the Squaw Lake Campground and Day Use Area and the Oxbow Recreation and Wildlife Area.

Comments also stated there should be no fees for the use of public land.

Environmental education was also mentioned in comments. People felt the resources of public lands provide important educational opportunities for themselves and future generations. Commenters also emphasized the importance of educating visitors about environmental stewardship of public lands. Several comments were received about the scientific research and learning opportunities offered by the area, particularly for seed resources and geology.

#### **D. TRAVEL MANAGEMENT**

Many public comments were received concerning travel management planning, including motorized and non-motorized public access on public lands. A frequently raised issue was motorized access, with many users commenting that no further restrictions through road closures or Wilderness designation should occur, and that all currently closed roads within the planning area should be reopened. Other issues included: a desire for route designation to manage routes created by the lack of designation and illegal immigrants; the belief that public land should be publicly accessible; and the desire that current access should remain for future generations to enjoy the land. Other comments requested that there be no new roads established.

Several issues with motorized travel were identified by public comments, including damage to natural resources, wildlife, cultural resources, and existing roads from OHV use; a lack of designated open, closed, and/or limited areas; a lack of signs and enforcement; and the need to limit OHVs to certain designated areas. Some OHV supporters felt that OHV is the only way to enjoy remote areas, especially for older or disabled users.

#### **E. LANDS MANAGED TO MAINTAIN WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

The identification of lands where wilderness characteristics would be maintained by the BLM was a frequently mentioned issue. Commenters raised issues concerning the BLM definition of wilderness characteristics and the evaluation process that was used in formulation of the alternatives. Some commenters wanted lands with wilderness characteristics identified, protected, and closed to OHV use and other land disturbing activities. Another public issue was the opposition to managing for wilderness characteristics and the statement that managing for these resources essentially creates new wilderness in violation of Congressional intent.

## F. LANDS AND REALTY

Numerous comments were received regarding land tenure and use authorizations and generally covered one of three categories: (1) general policy regarding disposal or exchange, (2) support for disposal, exchange, or lease of specific areas, and (3) agricultural use. Many commenters expressed concern over future disposals or exchanges. They requested no future disposals or exchanges or only limited ones. Some comments stated that wildlife habitat should be considered during potential land exchanges. Specific areas mentioned for disposal/exchange or leases included Harvey's Fishing Hole, Martinez Lake, area along the Colorado River, and BLM-administered land within the Quartzsite town limits. Several comments were received supporting agricultural use in the area for a variety of reasons and expressing concern over potential termination of agricultural leases.

One response discussed ROW Corridors and expressed a need for future corridors to be identified in the plan, but that there should be no amendments for future corridors. The comment also stated that existing corridors should be used instead of creating new ones.

### 1.6.2 ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED IN THIS APPROVED RMP

Throughout the scoping process, issues were raised by the public that were either not within the jurisdiction of BLM or that could be dealt with administratively and would not require a planning decision. A full discussion of these issues is included in the scoping report. Issues not addressed in this Approved RMP are summarized below by topic.

- Airspace—Airspace over public land is managed by other jurisdictions.
- Fish and Wildlife—Wildlife population management is under the authority of AGFD and CDFG.
- Recreation—Recreation site fees are established through the approval of publicly reviewed YFO Recreation and Visitor Services Business Plans. Special Recreation Permit (SRP) fees for competitive events, organized groups, and commercial uses are established nationally by the BLM Director. Supplementary rules for public conduct within recreation sites and areas have been established through the authority provided by 43 CFR 8365.1-6. YFO may propose additional supplementary rules within the planning area to address resource protection, and public health and safety issues for the life of the Approved RMP, including restrictions related to overnight camping, recreational shooting, and firewood collection.
- Lands and Realty—Land authorizations in the Martinez Lake area of the lower Colorado River are not within the jurisdiction of BLM.
- Travel Management—Implementation-level TMPs tiered to this Approved RMP and its ROD will designate all inventoried routes in the planning area within five years.

### 1.6.3 LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The BLM planning process is governed by FLPMA and the BLM Planning Regulations in 43 CFR Part 1600. LUPs ensure that public land is managed in accordance with the intent of Congress as stated in FLPMA, under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. As required by FLPMA, public land must be managed in a manner that: protects the quality of scientific, scenic, historical,

ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values; that, where appropriate, would preserve and protect certain public land in their natural condition; that would provide food and habitat for fish, wildlife, and domestic animals; and that would provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use by encouraging collaboration and public participation throughout the planning process. In addition, public land must be managed in a manner that recognizes the nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from public land. LUPs are the primary mechanism for guiding BLM activities to achieve the mission and goals outlined in the BLM Strategic Plan. BLM's *Land Use Planning Handbook* (H-1601-1) contains program-specific guidance.

In addition to FLPMA, NEPA, and their associated regulations, BLM must comply with the mandate and intent of all Federal laws (and any applicable regulations) and EOs that apply to BLM-administered lands and resources in the planning area. The Approved RMP process is intended to develop LUP decisions that resolve such conflicts and meet the multiple use and sustained yield mandate of FLPMA. Appendix A provides a listing of applicable laws and EOs that apply to BLM-administered land and resources in the planning area.

## 1.7 COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The YFO has utilized a collaborative process to work with all other interested entities and individuals to address common needs and goals within the planning area. The effort involved early identification of the most appropriate, efficient, and productive type of working relationships to achieve meaningful results in land use planning initiatives. The YFO's primary objectives of the proposed collaboration process included providing a comprehensive forum for public involvement to achieve defensible decisions for the RMP. The YFO follows 40 CFR 1501.6 CEQ guidelines on roles of lead and cooperating agencies, as discussed in *A Desk Guide to Cooperating Agency Relationships* (USDO IBLM 2005). This desk guide identifies BLM's regulations for developing the cooperating agency relationship, where "Cooperating Agencies expect and deserve to be given a significant role in shaping plans and environmental analyses—not merely commenting on them—commensurate with their available time and knowledge" (USDO IBLM 2005). Several CFR sections are applicable to the BLM/cooperating agency relationship:

- "The Field Manager will prepare criteria to guide development of the resource management plan to ensure...[i]t is tailored to the issues previously identified... Planning criteria will generally be based upon applicable law, Director and State Director guidance, the results of public participation, and coordination with any cooperating agencies and other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and federally recognized Indian tribes." (43 CFR 1610.4-2);
- "The Field Manager, in collaboration with any cooperating agencies, will arrange for resource, environmental, social, economic, and institutional data and information to be collected, or assembled if already available." (43 CFR 1610.4-3); and
- "At the direction of the Field Manager, in collaboration with any cooperating agencies, BLM will consider all reasonable alternatives and develop several complete alternatives for detailed study. Nonetheless, the decision to designate alternatives for further development and analysis remains the exclusive responsibility of the BLM." (43 CFR 1610.4-5).

Public meetings in March 2005 were held to gain public input for Alternative Development (March 7, Quartzsite; March 8, Yuma; March 9, Wellton; and March 10, Blythe). Public meetings in July 2005 were conducted for Preliminary Alternatives (July 25, Wellton; July 26, Quartzsite and Blythe; July 27, Yuma; and July 28, Tucson). Information gathered by the YFO at these public meetings has been incorporated into this Approved RMP.

Additionally, YFO met individually with local offices of several Yuma-area agencies to discuss the DRMP/DEIS and to explain the statewide organizational change that BLM Arizona underwent. The YFO staff distributed DRMP/DEIS materials and conducted presentations when requested. The YFO facilitated discussions with the agencies, which generated issues and concerns that are documented in the *Final Scoping Report* (USDOI BLM 2004a) on file at the YFO. Meetings with area agencies were conducted during June, July, and August 2004.

### 1.7.1 COOPERATING AGENCIES

Numerous Federal, State, and local agencies and Tribal interests were identified by the YFO at the outset of the RMP/EIS effort, and these entities were contacted in writing to determine their interest in serving as cooperators on this RMP. As a part of initiating multiple planning efforts throughout the State, YFO compiled a list of Federal, State, county, and local agencies and Native American tribes that may have a relevant interest in the planning process. Letters were sent to more than 200 agencies to introduce the various RMP/EIS processes within the State of Arizona, identify the upcoming data gathering efforts, and offer an opportunity to become a cooperating agency in the planning effort. An initial cooperating agency meeting was held at the BLM Arizona State Office on October 30, 2002. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss BLM's planning process, collaborative planning, and the meaning and responsibilities of cooperating agencies. The opportunity for involvement in BLM's planning process without becoming a cooperating agency was also discussed. BLM emphasized the goal was to encourage involvement by all interested parties using whatever methods the parties preferred.

In January of 2005, the YFO held a cooperating agency invitation/information meeting. Cooperating agency meetings for the YFO RMP/EIS were conducted in Yuma on June 8, July 20, September 14, October 11, November 16, and December 13–14, 2005; January 12, February 22, and June 27, 2006; and February 27, 2008. The June 8, 2005, cooperating agency meeting included an overview of the BLM cooperating agency status, a review of MOUs, milestones and schedules, and development of issues/alternatives. The July 20, 2005, cooperating agency meeting included discussion of preliminary alternatives. The September 14, October 11, and November 16, 2005, cooperating agency meetings included discussion of alternatives and the internal BLM development of a Proposed Plan for the YFO DRMP/DEIS. The December 13 and 14, 2005, cooperating agency meeting included discussions on Special Designations (potential ACECs and potential Back Country Byways) and an overview of Chapter 3 of the DRMP/DEIS. February 22, 2006, was a review and comment session by cooperating agencies of the draft Chapter 2. At the June 27, 2006, meeting cooperating agencies had an opportunity to provide comments on the draft Chapter 4 and further discuss the draft Chapter 2. On February 27, 2008, YFO shared a print-ready version of the PRMP/FEIS with cooperating agencies.

The BLM has a national Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the USFWS to cooperate on Section 7 Consultation for the ESA. AGFD, Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), and

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the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have a statewide MOU with BLM and used this agreement to work collaboratively with the YFO.

The following entities signed MOUs to serve as cooperating agencies for the YFO RMP revision:

### **A. FEDERAL**

- Cibola NWR
- Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol
- Imperial NWR
- Kofa NWR
- MCAS–Yuma
- Reclamation, Yuma Area Office and Lower Colorado Regional Office
- U.S. Army YPG
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- U.S. Department of Transportation, FHWA

### **B. STATE**

- ADOT–State
- ADOT–Yuma
- AGFD

### **C. LOCAL**

- City of Yuma
- Town of Quartzsite
- Wellton–Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District (WMIDD)
- Yuma County Department of Public Works

### **D. TRIBAL**

- Cocopah Indian Tribe
- Fort Yuma–Quechan Tribe
- Yavapai–Apache Nation

## **1.7.2 CONSULTATION WITH NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES**

YFO initiated coordination and consultation with 30 Native American tribes and groups within Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Oklahoma with a letter dated June 17, 2004. In the letter, YFO requested the opportunity to make a presentation on the RMP/EIS planning process at a Tribal council meeting or a community meeting. At this early stage in the planning process YFO staff met with representatives from three tribes: the Fort Yuma–Quechan Tribe on August 31, 2004; Hualapai Tribe on August 16, 2005; and Tohono O’odham Nation on

July 15, 2004.

Twice during the planning process YFO invited all interested tribes to the YFO office to discuss the plan and to share input on the preliminary alternatives. The first meeting on December 9, 2005, was attended by representatives from the Cocopah Indian Tribe, CRIT, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and Tohono O'odham Nation. The second meeting was on December 12, 2006, and was attended by representatives from the Hualapai Tribe, Yavapai–Prescott Indian Tribe, Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, and Cocopah Indian Tribe.

Once the DRMP/DEIS was distributed for public comment on December 15, 2007, YFO staff telephoned each interested tribe to offer to meet at either their Tribal offices or at a central location. The purpose of these meetings was to provide Tribal representatives with an opportunity to ask questions about the DRMP/DEIS and to provide verbal input on the plan. At each meeting, YFO staff also shared a presentation that illustrated the differences between alternatives. During the public comment period, YFO met with representatives from the following tribes:

- Cocopah Indian Tribe on February 27, 2007;
- CRIT on February 20, 2007;
- Fort Mojave Tribe on March 1, 2007;
- Fort Yuma–Quechan Tribe on February 12 and March 26, 2007;
- Four Southern Tribes (Ak–Chin Indian Community, Gila River Indian Community, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and Tohono O'odham Nation) on March 16, 2007;
- Hualapai Tribe on March 15, 2007;
- Yavapai–Apache Nation on March 14, 2007; and
- Yavapai–Prescott Indian Tribe on March 14, 2007.

Because several of these meetings occurred around the end of the public comment period, YFO decided to extend the timeframe for comments from the tribes to April 30, 2007. Notification of this extension was sent to each tribe in a letter dated March 22, 2007. On March 5, 2008, the YFO mailed a letter to the Tribes with an electronic copy of the PRMP/FEIS. This mailing provided additional time for Tribes to become familiar with the print-ready Proposed Plan and to review how tribal input was incorporated into the YFO RMP revision.

Documentation of all meetings, written correspondence, and other coordination with the Tribes throughout this planning effort can be found in the administrative record. All tribes with an interest in the planning area were invited to join the planning process as a cooperating agency. The Cocopah, Fort Yuma–Quechan, and Yavapai–Apache tribes signed cooperating agency MOUs.

### 1.7.3 CONSULTATION WITH USFWS

As a part of this planning effort, the BLM executed ESA Section 7 consultation with the USFWS. In 2005, the BLM and USFWS finalized a consultation agreement to establish an effective and cooperative ESA, Section 7 consultation process. A biological assessment (BA) was prepared and submitted to determine the effect of the DRMP/DEIS on all relevant listed, proposed, and candidate species, and associated critical habitat. All anticipated environmental effects, conservation actions, mitigation, and monitoring were disclosed in the BA, including analysis of all direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the DRMP/DEIS. The USFWS provided the BLM with a BO of proposed actions on January 29, 2009 (USDOJ USFWS 2009). As this plan's decisions are implemented, actions determined through environmental analysis to potentially affect species listed or candidate species for listing under ESA would trigger additional site-specific consultation on those actions.

## 1.8 RELATED PLANS

Title II, Section 202 of FLPMA provides guidance for the BLM land use planning process to coordinate planning efforts with Native American tribes, other Federal departments, and agencies of State and local governments. To accomplish this directive, BLM is instructed to keep informed of State, local, and Tribal plans; assure that consideration is given to such plans; and to assist in resolving inconsistencies between such plans and Federal planning. The section goes on to state in Subsection (c)(9) that "Land use plans of the Secretary [of the Interior] under this section shall be consistent with State and local plans to the maximum extent he finds consistent with Federal law and the purposes of this Act." The provisions of this section of FLPMA are echoed in Section 1610.3 of BLM Resource Management Planning regulations. In keeping with the provisions of this section, State, local, and Tribal officials were made aware of the planning process through the previously described mailings and meetings. The following is a list of plans reviewed during YFO Approved RMP planning efforts:

- U.S. Department of the Air Force's *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Barry M. Goldwater Range Integrated Natural Resource Plan* (2006),
- U.S. Army's *YPG Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan* (1995),
- *City of Yuma General Plan* (2002),
- *Imperial County General Plan* (1993),
- *La Paz County Comprehensive Plan* (2005),
- *Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program* (USDOJ Reclamation et al. 2004),
- *Maricopa County—Managing for Results Strategic Plan* (2005),
- *Riverside County General Plan* (2003), and
- *Yuma County Plan 2010 Comprehensive Plan* (2006).

## 1.9 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Plan implementation is a continuous and active process. Decisions presented in the Management Decisions section of this Approved RMP are of three types: Immediate, One-Time, and Long-Term.

### 1.9.1 IMMEDIATE DECISIONS

These decisions go into effect upon signature of the ROD and Approved RMP. These include decisions such as the allocation of lands as available or unavailable for disposal, ACEC designations, and OHV designations. Immediate decisions require no additional analysis and provide the framework for any subsequent activities proposed in the planning area. Proposals for actions such as land adjustments and other allocation based actions will be reviewed against these decisions/allocations to determine if the proposal is in conformance with the plan.

### 1.9.2 ONE-TIME DECISIONS

These decisions include those that are implemented after additional site-specific analysis is completed. Examples are implementation of the development of an ACEC plan or TMP. One-time decisions usually require additional analysis and are prioritized as part of the BLM budget process. Priorities for implementation of “one-time” RMP decisions will be based on several criteria, including:

- Current and projected resource needs and demands
- National and statewide BLM management direction and program emphasis
- Funding

### 1.9.3 LONG-TERM GUIDANCE/LIFE OF PLAN DIRECTION

RMP decisions become effective upon approval of the ROD. These decisions include the goals, objectives (Desired Future Conditions), and Management Actions (allowable uses and actions to achieve outcomes) established by the plan that are applied during site-specific analyses and activity planning. Examples of decisions that become effective upon approval of the RMP include land use allocation decisions, and special designations such as an ACEC. Management Actions that require additional site-specific project planning as funding becomes available are implementation decisions and will require further environmental analysis. Decisions to implement these projects are subject to administrative review at the time when such decisions are made.

This guidance is applied whether the action is initiated by the BLM or by a non-BLM project proponent. Long-term guidance and plan direction is incorporated into BLM management as implementation-level planning and project analysis occurs. For example, as a result of receipt of a land use application that involves public land, the proposal would need to be in harmony with the goals, allocations, and actions established through this Approved RMP relative to that parcel of land, for the associated biological, VRM, and lands interests. If the proposal was in

compliance with BLM's long-term guidance, it would move onto the next level of assessment. In short, these decisions guide BLM decision-makers in what is, and is not acceptable through the life of the plan.

YFO will continue to involve and collaborate with the public during implementation of this plan. Opportunities to become involved in the plan implementation and monitoring will include development of partnerships and community-based citizen working groups. YFO invites citizens and user groups within the planning area to become actively involved in implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of RMP decisions. YFO and citizens may collaboratively develop site-specific goals and objectives that mutually benefit public land resources, local communities, and the people who live, work, or play on public lands.

#### **1.9.4 GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE OF "ONE-TIME" ACTIONS**

Decisions in the Approved RMP will be implemented over a period of years depending on budget and staff availability. Most of these actions require additional analysis and site-specific activity planning. The tentative schedule does not include the decisions which are effective immediately upon approval of the RMP (usually allocations), or the actions which describe the ongoing management that will be incorporated and applied as site-specific proposals are analyzed on an ongoing basis.

The priority list and schedule will assist BLM managers and staff members in preparing budget requests and in scheduling work. However, the proposed priorities must be considered tentative and will be affected by future funding, changing program priorities, non-discretionary workloads, community dynamics, and cooperation by partners and external publics.

#### **1.9.5 IMPLEMENTATION UPDATES**

The BLM will prepare an Annual Planning Update Report and Summary on the implementation of the Approved RMP. This report will be released in January of the year following the fiscal year reviewed (for example, January 2009 for Fiscal Year 2008) and will be available to the public on the Internet, with hard copies available upon request. Annual review of the plan will provide consistent tracking of accomplishments and provide information that can be used to develop annual budget requests to continue implementation.

#### **1.9.6 MAINTAINING THE PLAN**

LUP decisions and supporting information can be maintained to reflect minor changes in data, but maintenance is limited to refining, documenting, and/or clarifying previously approved decisions. Some examples of maintenance actions include:

- Correcting minor data, typographical, mapping, or tabular data errors.
- Refining baseline information as a result of new inventory data (e.g., changing the boundary of an archaeological district, refining the known habitat of special status species, or adjusting

the boundary of a fire management unit based on updated fire regime condition class inventory, fire occurrence, monitoring data, and/or demographic changes).

The BLM expects that new information gathered from field inventories and assessments, research, other agency studies, and other sources will update baseline data and/or support new management techniques, BMPs, and scientific principles. Adaptive management strategies may be used when monitoring data is available as long as the goals and objectives of the plan are met. In other words, where monitoring shows LUP actions or BMPs are not effective, modifications or adjustments may occur within the plan without amendment or revision of the plan as long as assumptions and impacts disclosed in the analysis remain valid and broad-scale goals and objectives are not changed.

Plan maintenance will be documented in supporting records and reported in annual planning updates. Plan maintenance does not require formal public involvement, inter-agency coordination, or the NEPA analysis required for making new LUP decisions.

### **1.9.7 CHANGING THE PLAN**

The Approved RMP may be changed, should conditions warrant, through a plan amendment or plan revision process. Plan amendments may be established through EAs or EISs developed in compliance with NEPA and BLM planning regulations and policies. A plan amendment may become necessary if major changes are needed or to consider a proposal or action that is not in conformance with the plan. The results of monitoring, evaluation of new data, or policy changes and changing public needs might also provide the impetus for an amendment. Generally, an amendment is issue-specific. If several areas of the plan become outdated or otherwise obsolete, a plan revision may become necessary. Plan amendments and revisions are accomplished with public input and the appropriate level of environmental analysis.

## **1.10 PLAN EVALUATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**

### **1.10.1 PLAN EVALUATION**

Evaluation is a process in which the plan and monitoring data are reviewed to see if management goals and objectives are being met and if management direction is sound. LUP evaluations determine if decisions are being implemented, whether mitigation measures are satisfactory, whether there are significant changes in the related plans of other entities, whether there is new data of significance to the plan, and if decisions should be changed through amendment. Monitoring data gathered over time is examined and used to draw conclusions on whether Management Actions are meeting stated objectives, and if not, why they are failing. Conclusions are then used to make recommendations on whether to continue current management or to identify what changes need to be made in management practices to meet objectives.

The BLM will use LUP evaluations to determine if the decisions in the Approved RMP, supported by the accompanying NEPA analysis, are still valid in light of new information and

monitoring data. Evaluation of the Approved RMP will generally be conducted every five years, unless unexpected actions, new information, or significant changes in other plans, legislation, or litigation triggers an evaluation.

The following estimated evaluation schedule will be followed for the YFO RMP:

- 2013
- 2018
- 2023
- 2028

Evaluations will follow the protocols established by the BLM *Land Use Planning Handbook* (H-1601-1) or other appropriate guidance in effect when the evaluation is initiated.

### 1.10.2 ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

The DOI's Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance defines adaptive management as a system of management practices based on clearly identified outcomes, monitoring to determine if Management Actions are meeting outcomes, and, if not, facilitating management changes that will best ensure that outcomes are met or re-evaluated. The adaptive management process is a flexible process that generally involves four phases: planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Figure 1-1). This Approved RMP is an integral part of the adaptive management strategy. Adaptive management is a flexible approach to learning from the outcomes of Management Actions, accommodating change, and improving management. It involves synthesizing existing knowledge, exploring alternative actions, and making explicit forecasts about their outcomes. Management Actions and monitoring programs are carefully designed to generate reliable feedback and clarify the reasons underlying outcomes. Actions and objectives are then adjusted based on this feedback and improved understanding. In addition, decisions, actions, and outcomes are carefully documented and communicated to others, so that knowledge gained through experience is passed on rather than being lost when individuals move or leave the organization.

BLM land use planning uses adaptive management through a four-phase process. The first phase is planning. When planning is finished, the RMP is implemented. Implementation of land use allocations, designations, and allowable-uses occur as soon as a ROD is signed, unless other appropriate NEPA analysis is required. Management Actions occur throughout the life of the plan. Periodically the plan is evaluated (usually every five years) to determine if the decisions are accurate, being implemented, or need to be changed, based on current information.

The Desired Future Conditions listed under each resource program are decisions that provide the parameters by which the BLM manages the lands and resources. The BLM uses continual monitoring of resource conditions to determine if the Management Actions being implemented are achieving the Desired Future Conditions. Adaptive management is applied in cases where the existing management is clearly not meeting those desired conditions or other alternatives could better meet the objectives. In such cases, adaptive management may include revising BMPs, or possibly revising an entire RMP. Periodic RMP amendments are expected to occur as resource

conditions, resource values, or goals and objectives change. RMP evaluations typically occur every five years, which are a complete analysis of existing conditions, anticipated issues, and the current decisions providing for the management of resources. Based on this interdisciplinary evaluation, the authorizing officer determines whether any, some, or all decisions remain appropriate for the management of the area.

A “limit of acceptable change” identifies specific thresholds for a resource that will not be crossed. Should those thresholds be reached adaptive management will be applied to stop or reverse resource degradation.

Based on the YFO’s LUP evaluation in the year 2000, it was determined that many of the decisions were either outdated according to resource conditions, new policies, or future goals. As YFO obtains new information, it will evaluate monitoring data and other resource information to periodically refine and update desired conditions and management strategies. This approach ensures the continual refinement and improvement of management prescriptions and practices.

Implementation-level planning, such as site-specific ACEC plans or Wilderness Area Plans, is monitored periodically to ensure decisions are valid.

As described in the DRMP/DEIS and the PRMP/FEIS, the YFO Approved RMP fosters “adaptiveness” by the presentation of Desired Future Conditions that focus on reaching outcomes rather than identifying inflexible standards and prescriptions that may not be applicable in certain situations.

### **1.10.3 ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS**

Although BLM’s intent and commitment to accomplish Administrative Actions is generally addressed in RMP-level documents, such activities are neither LUP-level decisions nor implementation-level management action decisions. Administrative Actions are day-to-day activities conducted by BLM, often required by FLPMA, but do not require a NEPA analysis or decision by a responsible official to be accomplished. Examples of Administrative Actions include but are not limited to mapping, surveying, inventorying, monitoring, collecting information needed such as research and studies, and completing project specific or implementation level plans.

### **1.10.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

RMP monitoring is conducted in three stages. The first is to ensure that decisions are implemented in accordance with the Approved RMP/ROD. This type of monitoring is conducted as RMP decisions become effective or when decisions to approve implementation level plans or to implement site-specific projects are approved or implemented.

The next stage of monitoring is to determine whether decisions are achieving the desired effects. Effectiveness monitoring provides an empirical data base on impacts of decisions and effectiveness of mitigation. Effectiveness monitoring is also useful for improving analytical procedures for future impact analyses and for designing or improving mitigation and enhancement measures.

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The last stage of monitoring is to determine whether a RMP decision continues to be the correct or proper decision over time. Evaluation monitoring goes beyond effectiveness monitoring and focuses on examining the validity of decisions. Evaluation monitoring is tied to adaptive management and the results of monitoring may require an update (amendment) to the RMP.