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Bureau of Land Management
Bakersfield Field Office, California
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Bakersfield Resource Management Plan SCOPING REPORT



SCOPING REPORT
BAKERSFIELD RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BAKERSFIELD FIELD OFFICE

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2010

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym or Abbreviation

Full Phrase

BLM	United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management
CCNM	California Coastal National Monument
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CPNM	Carrizo Plain National Monument
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FO	Field Office
GIS	Geographic Information System
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
NLCS	National Landscape Conservation System
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision

SCOPING REPORT

A. COVER LETTER



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Bakersfield Field Office
3801 Pegasus Drive
Bakersfield, California 93308-6837
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Re: The need for revision of the 1997 Caliente RMP

Dear Reader;

The Bakersfield Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is currently revising and updating the 1997 Caliente Resource Management Plan (RMP). The new plan, named the Bakersfield RMP, will incorporate lands previously managed under the 1985 Hollister RMP and newly acquired properties into a single plan to be implemented by the Bakersfield Field Office.

The Caliente and Hollister RMPs have served to guide management of public lands managed by the Bakersfield Field Office for more than 13 years, however much has changed in this time, from the ownership pattern of the land to the socio-economic climate of central California. These changes, along with the evolution of BLM policy, management practices and best science, have or potentially will have impacts on public lands. As such, the need exists to revise and update the RMP to address these changes and appropriately plan for the future management of public lands. BLM will continue to manage public land and mineral estate in accordance with the current, unrevised RMPs until the Bakersfield RMP/EIS is completed and record of decision (ROD) is signed.

The National Environmental Policy Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act are two important statutes that guide the BLM in the evaluation of management decisions and practices. Together, both acts provide the framework for the BLM to engage and solicit public input concerning land management issues. The first phase of public involvement, a process called scoping, helps the BLM establish the scope and range of issues that need to be addressed and included in the draft RMP and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS).

In the spring of 2008 the official scoping period began with seven public meetings and an opportunity to provide written comments directly to the Bakersfield Field Office. At these meetings and through these written comments the RMP team received input and feedback on the issues the public believed should be addressed in the RMP revision. The following report summarizes the scoping process and details the input received.

Sincerely,

Timothy Z. Smith
Bakersfield Field Manager

B. INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for management of public land—its resources and uses—based on the principles of multiple use and sustained health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for present and future generations. Management direction is provided by land use plans, which are used to determine appropriate uses and allocate resources, develop strategy to manage and protect resources, and establish systems to monitor and evaluate the status of resources and effectiveness of management practices over time.

The BLM's Bakersfield Field Office (FO) administers public land from the California central coast to the Southern Sierra Nevada Mountains and from Ventura County in the south to Madera County in the north. The public land in these areas is currently managed under four existing land use plans. These documents set forth land use decisions and terms and conditions for guiding the management of activities on the public land in the planning area.

Beginning in March 2008, the Bureau of Land Management's Bakersfield Field Office began preparation of the Bakersfield Resource Management Plan (RMP) which will provide a comprehensive framework for managing and allocating uses of the public lands and resources within the boundaries of the Bakersfield planning area (Map 1).

i. PURPOSE & NEED

The purpose of an RMP revision is to establish new goals, objectives, and management actions for BLM public lands that address current issues, knowledge, and conditions.

The need for revision of the 1997 Caliente Resource Management Plan (RMP) is driven by several factors including guidance provided in (43 CFR 1610.5-5) that recommends amending or revising an RMP to: (i) implement new and revised policies that change land use planning level decisions; (ii) respond to new, intensified or changed uses of public land; and (iii) consider significant new information from resource assessments, monitoring or scientific studies that change land use decisions. In addition a plan revision is needed to address the management of newly acquired lands and to incorporate lands previously managed under the 1985 Hollister RMP into a current Bakersfield Field Office plan.

This revision effort is specifically needed to address the following changes that have impacted the overall landscape and socio-economic climate of Central California causing portions of the 1997 Caliente and 1985 Hollister RMPs plans to become outdated.

- In January 2000, President Clinton established and included the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) in the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). The monument consists of more than 20,000 rocks and islands that are spread along the 1,100-mile California coastline; of which approximately 230 miles fall within the Bakersfield FO. In September 2005, a separate RMP was approved providing guidance and direction for the CCNM.
- In October 2000, the Bakersfield FO acquired management responsibility for the public lands in Madera and eastern Fresno Counties, which are managed under the 1985 Hollister RMP. The San Joaquin River Gorge was among the lands transferred.

- In January 2001, President Clinton designated the Carrizo Plain National Monument (CPNM) and included it in the BLM’s NLCS. In April 2010, a separate RMP was approved, covering the approximately 206,000 acres of public lands within the CPNM. Therefore, the lands within the CPNM will not be included in the Bakersfield RMP.
- In March 2001, the BLM began to acquire several thousand acres of land in southwestern Tulare County and eastern Kings County. Acquired under the auspices of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, there was no specific direction for these lands within the 1997 Caliente RMP.
- In May 2002, the US Coast Guard transferred the Piedras Blancas Light Station to the BLM. This action created an opportunity for public benefits that were unanticipated by the Caliente RMP. In May 2008, President George W. Bush signed a law designating Piedras Blancas Light Station as an Outstanding Natural Area and including it in the BLM’s NLCS.
- In 2005, Congress transferred to the BLM most of the Naval Petroleum Reserve Number 2, consisting of 10,451 acres in southwestern Kern County. The Caliente RMP was immediately amended to provide for leasing oil and gas, but other management decisions were postponed until a future planning effort could be completed.

C. DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The Bakersfield FO administrative boundary defines the planning area assessed in this RMP revision. The Bakersfield FO Planning Area encompasses about 17 million acres throughout Kings, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Tulare, Ventura, Madera, eastern Fresno, and western Kern Counties and includes all lands within the Bakersfield FO administrative boundary regardless of jurisdiction or ownership. Stretching from the coastal islands in the Pacific Ocean across the Central Valley to the crest of the Sierra Nevada, public lands are scattered across the Planning Area in numerous parcels of various size. The larger blocks of public land lie in the CPNM, the Three Rivers-Kaweah River region of Tulare County, and in the Lake Isabella-Chimney Peak-Walker Pass region of Kern County. With a variety of settings and landforms, this is a region of diverse topography and landscapes, and extraordinary biodiversity. Elevations range from sea level to more than 14,500 feet at Mount Whitney. The following table presents land status within the Planning Area.

Land Status within the Planning Area

Land Status	Acres	Percentage of Planning Area
BLM	612,137	3.5
US Bureau of Reclamation	12,084	0.1
US Forest Service	4,084,317	23.6
US Fish and Wildlife Service	33,296	0.2
National Park Service	1,030,378	5.9
Bureau of Indian Affairs	59,830	0.3
Other Federal	2,052	0.01
State of California	108,989	0.6
Local Government	11,794	0.07
Military	181,993	1.1
Private	11,182,537	64.6
Total	17,319,347	100

Source: BLM 2010a



While the Planning Area encompasses the entire area within the boundaries of the Bakersfield FO regardless of jurisdiction or ownership, the Bakersfield FO *Decision Area* encompasses about 404,000 acres of public lands surface (not including the CPNM which is managed by the Bakersfield FO under a different RMP). The BLM also administers subsurface minerals on approximately 544,470 acres of “split estate” (areas where the BLM manages federal subsurface minerals but the surface is owned by a non-federal entity) and subsurface minerals on approximately 195,303 acres with other Federal Surface. These combined areas (1,170,404 acres) constitute the area for which the BLM has authority and makes decisions (i.e. the Decision Area) under this plan revision.

The Decision Area does not include other private lands, state lands, tribal lands, federal lands not administered by the BLM, and lands within the CCNM and CPNM, except for livestock grazing management in a small portion of the CPNM.

Decision Area

Land Status	Acres	Percentage of Decision Area
BLM Surface Only	8,194	0.7
BLM Surface and Mineral Estate	395,745	33.8
Mineral Estate with Other Federal Surface	195,303	16.7
Split Estate	571,162	48.8
Total Surface	403,939	-
Total Mineral Estate	766,465	-
Total Decision Area	1,170,404	100

Source: BLM 2010a

While the RMP decisions do not apply to lands not administered by the BLM, lands that are interspersed with BLM-managed public lands could be indirectly affected by BLM management actions. The planning effort recognizes that nearby lands, communities, resource values, and uses are all affected by management of the Bakersfield FO Decision Area; in turn, their use and values affect BLM management of public lands. The plan includes recommendations for the BLM to work with entities that manage areas or programs that are not under its jurisdiction but that directly affect the BLM’s management (such as county roads, tourism information programs, and hunting). However, final decisions regarding these actions rest with the appropriate agency or community government.

D. SCOPING PROCESS

This section provides a description of the scoping process, the techniques that were used to notify the public, and a brief summary of the public meetings.

i. DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to develop the Bakersfield RMPs and associated EIS was published in the *Federal Register*. This initiated the public scoping period. A news release was submitted to local and regional media and posted on BLM’s Web site.

The Bakersfield FO hosted several public meetings. Agencies and the public were encouraged to submit oral and/or written comments regarding management of public lands in the planning area. Initially, the formal scoping period ended on May 3, 2008 (approximately 60 days). Although the BLM accepts comments at any time during the planning process, comments received during the scoping period are

particularly helpful in guiding the development of alternatives. All of the comments received by November 22, 2010 were compiled, reviewed, organized, and analyzed. Issues were derived from the comments and documented in this report.

ii. PUBLIC NOTICE

The RMPs/EIS and scoping meetings were announced through the *Federal Register*, direct mailings, the Bakersfield BLM Web site, and media releases.

Federal Register

The Bakersfield RMP/EIS public scoping process began with the publication of a NOI in the Federal Register on March 4, 2008 (Volume 73, Number 43, pages 11661-11662).

Direct Mailings

The Bakersfield FO prepared a notice to announce the scoping effort. This letter was sent via direct mail on April 4, 2008 to 1,138 people whom had expressed interest and were on the initial mailing list.

As more interested parties requested participation in the process their names were added to the mailing list of interested and affected parties and were sent letters.

In addition, a mailing list of email addresses has been compiled separately and is continually updated. On April 10, 2008, 453 email addresses were sent the electronic version of the letter to announce the scoping effort. On April 22, 2008, an additional 83 email addresses were sent the same electronic version of the letter.

The letter included background information, a description of the planning process, timeline, dates and locations of public meetings and links to addition online information.

Media Releases

Press releases were sent to local and major Central California news media and posted on the BLM California website on March 14, 2008. This release included information on the RMP revision process and details of upcoming public meetings.

Web site

An informational web site was activated in the spring of 2008. It provided background information on the Bakersfield FO, information on the past Caliente and Hollister RMPs, an outline of the planning process and a schedule of upcoming scoping meetings.

Web site visitors were encouraged to email any comments they may have to a specifically established email address (cacalrmp@ca.blm.gov). Comments were also accepted that were addressed to specific BLM resource specialists concerning the RMP.

Telephone

A telephone number (661-391-6022) was made available for comments or questions about the planning process.

iii. PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Bakersfield FO hosted seven public scoping meetings between April 8 and April 22, 2008, as summarized in the following table. During these meetings 84 people registered their attendance.

Summary of Public Meetings

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Registered Attendance
April 8, 2008 (2-4pm)	Bakersfield	11
April 8, 2008 (6-8pm)	Bakersfield	12
April 9, 2008 (6-8pm)	Taft	4
April 10, 2008 (6-8pm)	Lake Isabella	9
April 15, 2008 (6-8pm)	Fresno	24
April 17, 2008 (6-8pm)	Three Rivers	17
April 22, 2008 (6-8pm)	San Luis Obispo	7

The structure of the meetings was kept consistent throughout the process starting with an “open house” period before a more formal presentation by BLM staff and finally a question and answer session. During the meetings participants were asked specific questions on what they valued about these lands, what kinds of activities or uses were important to them, and how they envisioned the area being managed in the future. BLM staff guided participants through these questions to identify the publics’ vision for the Bakersfield RMP decision area, identify goals and common values, and suggesting specific actions for achieving those goals.

iv. COOPERATING AGENCIES

Cooperating agency status provides a formal framework for governmental agencies to engage in active collaboration with a Federal agency to implement the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq.). Federal and state agencies and local and tribal governments may qualify as cooperating agencies because of “jurisdiction by law or special expertise” (40 CFR 1501.6 and 1508.5).

The agencies in the following list were approached by the Bakersfield FO to participate in the RMP process. To date only a few responses have been received. The California Department of Fish and Game responded in writing stating their desire to participate and a designated lead was assigned to cooperate with the BLM. The National Park Service also responded in writing highlighting several issues but declining cooperating agency status, however they wished to remain abreast of the planning process.

- California Department of Fish and Game
- Fresno County
- Kern County
- Kings County
- Lemoore Naval Air Station
- Madera County
- National Park Service
- Naval Base Ventura County Point Mugu
- San Luis Obispo County
- Santa Barbara County
- Tulare County
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service
- Ventura County
- Vandenberg Air Force Base

v. COLLABORATION AND CONSULTATION WITH TRIBES

The unique political relationship between the US government and federally recognized Indian tribes is defined by treaties, statutes, executive orders, judicial decisions, and agreements. This relationship has

created a special federal trust responsibility, involving the legal commitments and obligations of the US toward Indian tribes, Indian lands, tribal trust resources, and the exercise of tribal rights. These trust responsibilities supersede any and all actions taken by the BLM. There are eight federally recognized tribes within the Planning Area. These include the following Tribes:

- Tachi Yokut Tribe of the Santa Rosa Rancheria
- Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians
- Tule River Reservation
- Cold Springs Rancheria
- Table Mountain Rancheria
- North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians
- Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians
- Big Sandy Rancheria

Although the Bakersfield FO has no trust administration responsibilities among any of these federally recognized tribes, the BLM is required to consult with Native American tribes regarding any actions conducted by the agency which have the potential to affect places of traditional or religious importance to them.

In addition to these federally recognized Tribes the Bakersfield FO engaged with several non-federally recognized tribal entities including:

- Chumash Council of Bakersfield,
- Tejon Indian Tribe
- Salinan Tribe
- San Luis Obispo Chumash Council
- Monache Intertribal Association
- Northern Chumash Tribal Council
- Nuui Cunni Cultural Center

BLM consultation with Native American tribes, groups and individuals, both federally recognized and non-recognized, is regularly conducted during the course of actions completed on BLM managed lands. The BLM extends the opportunity to provide input for the Bakersfield RMP/EIS to all affected regional California Native American tribal entities and individuals, throughout the planning process.

A letter, inviting participation in the planning process, was sent on April 4, 2008, to all eight federally recognized Native American tribes and several non-federally recognized Native American tribes, groups, and individuals. Native Americans will continue to be contacted and may consult with the BLM throughout the RMP/EIS process.

BLM initiated consultation with the federally recognized tribes in the planning area at the beginning of the scoping period.

E. ISSUE SUMMARY

i. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public comments received during the scoping period included BLM-provided comment forms, letters, email messages, or oral comments at the public scoping meetings. Although the comment response period closed on May 3, 2008, comments received to date are included in this report.

The BLM has received 142 separate pieces of correspondence (submissions) from various agencies, individuals, and/or special interest groups and oral comments from approximately 84 individuals at seven public meetings. These submissions included 21 form letters. The following table shows the submission made by respondent type i.e., individual, group, or agency.

Affiliation	Number of Submission(s)
Individual	104
Organization	26
Business	7
Federal Agency	2
State Agency or Organization	1
Local Agency	1
Native American Interest	1
Elected Officials	0
Total	142

There were 725 individual comments parsed out of the written comment submissions and oral comments provided at public meetings. A database was developed and individual comments were put into one of 17 subjects. Some were further subdivided into sub-categories as shown below.

Number of Individual Comments per Planning Theme

Major Subject (# comments)	Number of comments by Sub-Category	Number of Individual Comments
Air, Soil, Water (9)	Climate Change	2
	Air Quality	2
	Water Quality	1
	Other Water Issues	4
Biological Resources (77)	Habitat-Protection, Mgt, Restoration	20
	Listed Species	29
	Corridors/Linkages/Connectivity	7
	Monache-Walker Pass NCLWMA Mgt	21
Fuels & Fire Mgt (9)		9
Cultural & Paleo (1)		1
Visual Resources Mgt (2)		2
Wilderness/WSA/Character (10)		10
Livestock Grazing (58)		58
Minerals (41)	Leasable Minerals	31
	Locatable Minerals	1
	General	9
Noxious & Invasive Plants (23)		23
Recreation (128)	Uses/ Opportunities	68
	Access for Recreation	20
	San Joaquin River Gorge	13
	Keyesville	7
	Case Mtn	6
	N. Fork Kaweah	3
	Temblors	1
General	10	
Travel Management (115)	Motorized Uses	33
	Non-Motorized Uses	5
	Keyesville	14
	Temblors	4
	N. Fork Kaweah/Case Mtn	1
	Kettleman Hills	1
	Trail Specific comments	4
	General	53
Lands & Realty (60)	Land Tenure	34
	ROWs	2
	Renewable Energy	10
	Access	14
Special Designations (25)	ACECs	21
	Piedras Blancas ONA	1
	Back Country By-way	3
Social & Economic (4)		4
Public Safety (52)		52
General (102)	General mgt/conservation concern	32
	Budget & Staffing	7
	Volunteers/ Partnerships	30
	Visitor Information/ Interp & Env Ed	20
	General/Unclassified	13
Process (9)		9
Total		725

ii. ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Public comment analysis in combination with bureau policy, directives and guidance resulted in the identification of six planning issues that will be addressed during development of alternatives. Planning issues are disputes or controversies about existing and potential land and resource allocations, levels or resource use, production, and related management practices. Usually, the causal relationship between the activity or use and undesirable results are well defined or can be documented, and the level of controversy is high enough to merit further analysis. Statement of planning issues orients the planning process so that interdisciplinary thought, analysis, and documentation is directed toward resolving the planning issues during preparation of the RMP.

Issue 1: *Adequately address the need for access to and continued availability of, public lands for multiple recreational uses and open spaces.*

Of greatest public concern was the need to ensure that public lands remain open for recreational uses and the preservation of opportunities for future generations. Specific comments were received regarding the need to provide opportunities for shooting sports and hunting. Other less prominent concerns included preserving opportunities for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV), camping, equestrian, mountain biking, and caving. At the core of all these concerns was the need to maintain and improve access to public lands for all users and ensure open space continues to be available.

The idea of multiple-use was a common theme in many of the public comments. However, on closer analysis, many of these comments related to recreational uses of public lands. Only a few comments were received regarding multiple-use from a commercial perspective.

Issue 2: *Establish a balance between the extent of the travel network and protection of natural and cultural resources including an appropriate allocation of routes to the various modes of transport.*

All of the comments received focused on recreational use of the travel management network with conflicting viewpoints on either expanding or limiting opportunities for motorized use. The total elimination of OHV opportunities was presented in a few comments. Although comments focused only on the recreational aspects, travel management encompasses the full range of motorized and non-motorized uses, as well as recreational, administrative, and commercial uses.

Some comments addressed the need to allocate differing portions of the travel management network to specific modes of transport (e.g., separate motorized and non-motorized uses). Other commenters highlighted desires related to specific routes, route connectivity, and travel opportunities to be incorporated into the Travel Management Plan.

Issue 3: *Ensure appropriate protection for Threatened and Endangered species, critical habitat, and other biological resources in a multiple-use environment.*

The majority of comments were divided between protection of threatened and endangered species and protection or restoration of habitat. A number of comments focused on maintaining and creating corridors and linkages for wildlife movement specifically through realty actions. A number of comments acknowledged that managing for biological resources needs to be balanced with other compatible uses on public lands to meet the BLM's multiple-use mandate. In addition to these concerns, a number of commenters highlighted the need for more active management of invasive plants.

Specific comments were received regarding areas for more intensive management for biological resources including proposed Areas of Critical Environment Concerns (ACECs).

Issue 4: *Continue to appropriately manage livestock grazing to provide for economic benefit, rural lifestyles and vegetation management while protecting other resources.*

Comments presented multiple viewpoints on the value of livestock grazing on public lands. Some commenters highlighted the benefits of grazing along with the maintenance of this traditional use on the landscape, while others spoke to the potential for detrimental effects. Specific comments were received relating to improved management and greater transparency within the rangeland management program. Other comments presented the use of livestock grazing as a tool in the management of other resources.

Issue 5: *Balance the demand for energy development (including oil and gas, wind, and solar energy) and other land use authorizations (such as road and transmission corridor right-of-ways) with other resource values.*

Although not specifically identified in any public comments, the issue of providing for energy development and other land use authorizations was a common theme. Changes in executive policy have focused on energy development through domestic oil and gas production and renewable energy sources, therefore bringing this issue to the forefront.

Issue 6: *Address the impacts of climate change on the management of public lands including strategies that will reduce impacts and incorporation of appropriate monitoring.*

Bureau policy directs that climate change be addressed as an issue throughout the RMP, however only one comment was received. This comment specifically highlighted climate change as the single important factor to consider. Another comment noted that mature trees are very important to carbon sequestration.

In addition to the five planning issues, concerns related to the planning process such as public outreach and adaptive management methodology were also raised. These will be addressed during the planning process but will not assist in the development of alternatives.

iii. ANTICIPATED DECISIONS

In accordance with FLPMA, BLM is responsible for management of public land and its resources based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. Management direction is provided by a land use plan or RMP. The RMPs are developed to determine decisions regarding appropriate multiple uses and allocation of resources, develop strategy to manage and protect resources, and establish systems to monitor and evaluate the status of resources and effectiveness of these management practices over time. Also, the management direction developed through the planning process needs to be adaptable to changing conditions and demands over the life of the RMP. Development of the RMPs will be in accordance with the guidance set forth in the BLM H16011 – Land Use Planning Handbook (BLM 2005b).

The types of decisions made will follow the requirements of H16011, Appendix C which outlines required planning level decisions for each resource and resource use. Some examples of the types of decisions to be made are listed below:

- How can the BLM accommodate potentially competing interests?
- What types of constraints should be placed on resource uses?

- What areas will be designated as open, closed, or limited to off-highway vehicle use?
- What are the desired resource conditions (e.g. vegetation, soils, water quality, etc.) in the planning area?
- Which lands should be available for mineral entry and leasing?
- Which lands should be available for disposal through sale or exchange?

iv. ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED

During the public scoping process, several concerns/issues were raised by the public and identified by the IDT as outside the scope of the planning effort. Other comments represented questions on how the BLM would go about conducting the planning process and implementation of land use plan decisions. Comments on these items are valuable and appreciated, even though they are outside the scope of an RMP. These comments will be considered when decisions are made on implementation plans, proposed projects, or day-to-day management.

Three concerns were commonly expressed:

- The need for adequate law enforcement personnel and patrols throughout the Bakersfield Field Office – Some members of the public expressed the desire for a resident law enforcement ranger or park ranger in their local area. Staffing issues are not typically addressed in land use plans; they are more appropriately addressed administratively.
- Increasing the use of volunteers and partnerships to assist in managing public lands and resources – Recruitment and opportunities for volunteers and partnerships are ongoing BLM activities that are means of implementing an RMP.
- The adequacy of budget and staffing to ensure implementation of the RMP – The RMP alternatives will be based on an optimal but reasonable assessment of the level of management needed. However, the RMP is not a budget document and alternative development is not based on specific funding projections.

v. VALID EXISTING MANAGEMENT TO BE CARRIED FORWARD

BLM administered public land in the Planning Area is managed with direction from four documents: the Caliente RMP (1997), the Hollister RMP (1985), the California Coastal National Monument RMP (2005), and the Carrizo Plain National Monument RMP (2010). Since these plans were implemented, numerous changes have occurred that require reconsideration of certain management decisions. Additionally, some lands in the planning area have never had specific direction identified within a land use plan.

In 2007, the BLM completed plan evaluation for the Caliente RMP. The evaluation showed that it needed updating to include the new standards and changed policies. In addition, it is deficient in addressing the BLM's current planning guidance (BLM 2005b, H16011, Appendix C). The evaluation also found that some of the decisions in the plan warranted further evaluation to determine if they were still valid.

Based on demonstrated experience, some elements of the existing plans work well and remain valid, and BLM intends to carry these management decisions forward. Determining which existing management decisions will be carried forward is a part of the planning process. BLM will review the existing condition of the environment, review the existing management situation, and identify which existing management

decisions should be carried forward and where there is a need to modify existing management direction and/or develop new management guidance.

vi. SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS, INCLUDING NOMINATIONS

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)

ACECs may be nominated by BLM staff, other agencies, or members of the public at any time. Currently, 13 ACECs are managed under the Caliente RMP: Cypress Mountain ACEC; Point Sal ACEC; Salinas River ACEC; Tierra Redonda ACEC; Alkali Sinks and Goose Lake ACECs; Chico Martinez ACEC; Lokern ACEC; Kettleman Hills ACEC; Blue Ridge ACEC ; Horse Canyon ACEC; Case Mountain ACEC; and Piute Cypress ACEC.

As part of the public scoping process, the BLM received nominations at the San Luis Obispo public scoping meeting, reiterated in written comments, to consider designating four ACECs: Freeborn Peak/Hubband Hill; Chimineas lands within the California Department of Fish and Game Chimineas Ranch Ecological; East Temblor Ridge; and Irish Hills. Letters received from the public included nominations for two additional areas. Audubon California, Kern River Preserve nominated lands in the Cyrus Canyon vicinity, and the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners nominated the Atwell Island. These public nominations did not include boundary maps.

Internal scoping generated an additional 13 areas to be considered for ACEC designation. The importance and relevance of each of the nominations is analyzed through the ACEC Report.

Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)

The BLM is not currently authorized to designate additional WSAs. However, public comments received specifically identified, with maps, areas the public proposed for wilderness management. The areas identified in these comments along with additional internally described areas are analyzed in the Wilderness Characteristics Inventory. Should these areas be managed for their wilderness values, they would be managed through wilderness characteristics management rather than being designated as WSAs.

Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSRs)

Currently there are seven river segments determined to be eligible for designation as Wild and Scenic. Two additional river segments, that had been internally identified, were determined to be eligible. All nine of the river segments are studied for suitability in the Wild and Scenic River Report.

Outstanding Natural Area (ONA)

Currently the only ONA in the Bakersfield FO is the Piedras Blancas Light Station. No additional ONA areas were presented or proposed during the scoping process. The current management plan for the Piedras Blancas Light Station will be incorporated into the RMP.

National Trails

The Bakersfield FO currently has management responsibility for a section of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, which is a part of the Bureau's NLCS, in addition, the Wu Ki` Oh National Recreation Trail is managed within the San Joaquin River Gorge area. Public comments received and internal scoping also supported the proposed San Joaquin River for nomination as a National Recreation Trail.

F. DRAFT PLANNING CRITERIA

The BLM planning regulations are contained in 43 CFR 1610. The BLM planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.4-2 require the development of planning criteria to guide preparation of the resource management plan. Planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that guide and direct the preparation of the plan. They ensure 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.

The following preliminary criteria were developed and will be reviewed by the public during scoping. These criteria were included in the Notice of Intent, published in the Federal Register, and distributed as the public scoping meetings.

- The plan will be completed in compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and all other applicable laws.
- The planning process will include an environmental impact statement that will comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) standards.
- The plan will establish new guidance and identify existing guidance upon which the BLM will rely in managing public lands within the Bakersfield Field Office.
- The RMP/EIS will incorporate by reference the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.
- The RMP/EIS will incorporate by reference all prior wilderness designations and wilderness study areas findings that affect public lands in the Bakersfield RMP area.
- The plan will result in determinations as required by special program and resource specific guidance detailed in Appendix C of the BLM's Planning Handbook.
- Decisions in the plan will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies as long as the decision are in conformance with legal mandates on management of public lands.
- The scope of analysis will be consistent with the level of analysis in approved plans and in accordance with Bureau-wide standards and program guidance.
- Geospatial data will be automated within a Geographic Information System (GIS) to facilitate discussions of the affected environment, alternative formulation, analysis of environmental consequences, and display of the results.
- Resource allocations must be reasonable and achievable within available technological and budgetary constraints.
- The lifestyles and concerns of area residents will be recognized in the plan.

- Issues and allocations that pertain to the Carrizo Plain National Monument will not be considered within this process.
- Decisions and management actions within the existing plans will be evaluated; those that are determined to still be valid will be carried forward into this revised RMP.

Although no specific criteria differing from those listed above were suggested by the public during scoping, many commenters supported the method provided by these principles to evaluate the issues. The public encourages the BLM to use criteria and standards for as many decisions as possible, making it easier to manage site-specific activities during implementation-level management phases.

G. DATA SUMMARY/DATA GAPS

At the onset of the planning effort, management direction was to use the best available data and limit collection of new data deemed necessary for the effort. The *Preplan Analysis for the Bakersfield RMP/EIS*, approved March 2007, identifies these data needs. Since then the planning team has worked to refine data needs and developed necessary GIS data themes required for this planning effort. Some new data has been collected for use in Travel Management planning. This process is ongoing.

Data Summary/ Data Gaps

Data Set	Comment	Status
Cultural Inventory		Class I assessment of cultural resources completed 6/24/2009.
W&SR Inventory		Suitability study completed 8/23/2010.
Viewshed Inventory		Final Visual Inventory completed 6/16/2009.
Roads & Trails		Field Office-wide Route Inventory completed 5/31/2009.
Social and Economic		Social and Economic Report incomplete.
Recreation Use		Data gathered from annual RMIS reports.
Soils Inventory		Utilize NRCS soils data.
Standards & Guidelines Assessments		Completed with existing staff as scheduled.
Riparian Areas and PFC		Use existing data. Supplement with inventories as time and funding allow.
Spring Locations and Condition		Use existing data. Supplement with inventories as time and funding allow.
Weed Inventory		Use existing data. Coordinate with local weed councils as needed.
T&E Species Distribution		Coordinate with species experts as needed. Complete additional inventories as time & funding allow.
Sensitive Species Distribution		Use existing data. Coordinate with species experts as needed.
T&E Species Trends in Oilfields	Evaluation of T&E population trends within oilfields –initiated in 2007. Likely to be a multi-year endeavor.	Use existing data and results of oil field study as they become available.
Oil and Gas Surface Disturbance	Recent information assessed for certain areas. Broader review for cumulative effects assessment would	Use existing data. Complete additional assessments as time and funding allow.

Data Set	Comment	Status
Land Tenure Adjustment	be desirable. Need to compile updated lists of lands available for disposal.	In Progress.
Withdrawals	Need to identify withdrawals for revocation or modification.	In Progress.

H. SUMMARY OF FUTURE STEPS

It is anticipated that the Bakersfield Draft RMPs/EIS will be published and made available for public comment by September 2011. A Notice of Availability (NOA) will be published in the Federal Register announcing the public comment period. In addition, press releases will announce the availability of the draft RMPs/EIS. Public meetings to review and comment on the draft RMPs/EIS will be held approximately 30 days after the start of the public comment period. Meeting dates and locations will be publicized in local media.

If the draft RMPs/EIS is published as anticipated, the Proposed Plan/Final EIS should be published about August 2012. Delay in release of the draft will result in delay in the release of the final. An NOA will be published in the Federal Register announcing the 30 day protest period with press releases submitted to local media. Signing of the Record of Decision for the Bakersfield RMPs is expected to follow in late 2012 or early 2013, depending on resolution of protests.

Further information regarding the status of the Bakersfield FO planning effort and opportunities for public participation may be obtained through the following contacts:

Bureau of Land Management Attention: Susan Porter, RMP Project Manager, 3801 Pegasus Drive, Bakersfield, CA 93308 Telephone: (661) 391 6000

Project website:

http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/bakersfield/Programs/planning/caliente_rmp_revision.html