

Chapter 1

Introduction



Epiphytes on Peace River tract. (Photo by Faye Winters)

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Purpose and Need

This document is the approved Florida Resource Management Plan (RMP). The land use decisions in this document are the same as those in the proposed RMP which was released in October 1994.

The Florida RMP provides comprehensive guidance for management of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-administered mineral ownership and surface tracts within the State of Florida. The RMP is the first BLM land-use plan for Florida, and fulfills the land-use planning requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

Description of the Planning Area

The land use decisions of this RMP apply to all of the BLM-administered lands and mineral ownership in the State of Florida, including the following categories:

There are 395,000 acres of **split-estate federal mineral ownership (FMO)** located in 59 of the state's 67 counties.

On split-estate FMO the federal government owns all or a portion of the mineral estate, but the surface estate is owned by either the State of Florida or private interests. The BLM is the federal agency responsible for managing split-estate FMO. Most of the split-estate FMO, approximately 300,000 acres, lies in the Blackwater River and Withlacoochee State forests. The State of Florida owns 25 percent of the mineral interests in the Blackwater River State

Forest and none in the Withlacoochee State Forest.

There are several million acres of FMO where the surface is owned and managed by other federal agencies. The BLM has certain responsibilities for managing the **mineral ownership under these federal surface managing agencies (SMAs)**. These acreages are not analyzed in detail in this document.

Land ownership of other federal SMAs is shown in Map 1, and the location of split-estate FMO is shown in Map 2.

There are 227 acres of land for which the BLM has both surface and minerals management responsibilities and an additional 143 acres, currently withdrawn to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), for which the BLM may assume surface management responsibility. These lands are located in seven different counties and are referred to as **surface tracts**.

Lands have been identified for which the BLM may have both surface and minerals management responsibility, but ownership is in question. These are referred to as **lands of uncertain title**.

Indian lands, i.e. the Miccosukee and Seminole reservations, are not addressed in this RMP. Planning and mineral leasing are done by individual tribes in consultation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). BLM, however, must approve applications for permit to drill (APD) oil and gas wells.

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Implementation and Monitoring

This RMP is intended to provide BLM with direction in land use management for 10 to 20 years following the publication of this Record of Decision. The RMP will serve as the basis for budget development. "Land use allocation" decisions, such as the required application of stipulations to new mineral leases, will be in effect upon the signing of the Record of Decision by the State Director. Other RMP decisions, such as preparation of activity plans for surface tracts, will be implemented as funds are allocated through the budgeting process. BLM will monitor the RMP on an annual basis to track successful completion of the actions approved by the RMP and to identify needed changes to the RMP.

Maintenance and Modification

This plan will be updated as necessary to keep current without changing its scope or intent. Minor changes in data, which do not necessitate changes in land use decisions, will be documented in support records. These type of plan changes are referred to as plan maintenance, and do not require public involvement.

BLM will involve the public in any substantive modification of the land use decisions of this

RMP. Any change to land use allocations, restrictions, or uses will be effected through a formal plan amendment prepared in conformance with BLM planning regulations found in Section 1610.4 Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, and new or revised policies will be evaluated to determine whether an amendment is needed. In all cases, a proposed action that does not conform to the RMP but warrants consideration, will require a plan amendment. The amendment process is similar to the resource management planning process, but the scope of information, analysis and documentation is more limited. An amendment is often site specific and involves only one issue.

Document Format

This chapter (Chapter 1) contains introductory material and information on use of the RMP. Chapter 2 presents the land use decisions. The document concludes with several appendices, a glossary, and references cited. The appendices contain more detailed information to supplement the main text. The appendices are as follows: Appendix A, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); Appendix B, Lands; Appendix C, Oil and Gas; Appendix D, Recreation and Visual Resources; Appendix E, Soils; Appendix F, Solid Minerals; and Appendix G, Wildlife and Vegetation.

