



# United States Department of the Interior



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In Reply Refer To:

1610 (MT0010.CSB)

March 22, 2013

Dear Reader:

Attached for your review and comment is the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS) for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument RMP Revision. This plan revision is a combined effort that addresses both the Billings Field Office and the Pompeys Pillar National Monument in a consolidated RMP and associated EIS. This document refers to the combined Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument planning areas as the Planning Area and is referenced throughout the document as the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument Draft RMP/EIS. The BLM prepared this document in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency, Montana state agencies, county governments, other federal agencies and tribal governments located in the Planning Area.

The Planning Area is located in south central Montana and consists of approximately 10,804,549 acres of land in Big Horn, Carbon, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Wheatland, and Yellowstone counties in Montana and 4,298 acres of public land in Big Horn County, Wyoming. The BLM administers approximately 434,154 acres of surface lands and 1,839,782 acres of federal mineral estate using the management listed in the Billings Resource Management Plan (1984), as amended. When approved, this consolidated RMP and associated EIS will result in two Records of Decision (ROD), one for Pompeys Pillar National Monument and one for the Billings Field Office, which will replace the 1984 Billings RMP, as amended.

The Draft RMP/EIS describes and analyzes four alternatives for future management of public lands and resources administered by the BLM. While an Agency Preferred Alternative is identified, selection of the final plan has not been made. The final decision will be made only after consideration of the comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS.

Your review and comment on the content of this document are critical to the success of this planning effort. If you wish to submit comments on the Draft RMP/EIS, we request that you make them as specific as possible. Comments will be more helpful if they include suggested changes, sources, or methodologies, and reference to a section or page number. Comments that contain only opinions will be considered and included as part of the decision making process, although they will not receive a formal response from the BLM. Comments will be accepted for ninety (90) calendar days following the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) publication of its Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. The BLM can best utilize your comments and resource information submissions if received within the review period.

Written comments may be submitted as follows (submittal of electronic comments is encouraged):

- Written comments may be submitted during public meetings; or
- Written comments may be submitted electronically via email to: [Billings\\_PompeysPillar\\_RMP@blm.gov](mailto:Billings_PompeysPillar_RMP@blm.gov) or
- Written comments may be mailed directly or delivered to:

Draft Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument RMP/EIS  
Billings Field Office, Bureau of Land Management  
RMP Team Lead, Carolyn Sherve-Bybee  
5001 Southgate Drive  
Billings, Montana 59101

Information regarding meeting dates and locations for public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS will be forthcoming in news releases after publication of the EPA notice.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Copies of the Draft RMP/EIS have been sent to affected federal, state, and local government agencies and to those persons who have indicated that they wished to receive a copy of the Draft RMP/EIS. Copies of the Draft RMP/EIS are available on the project website and for public inspection at the following location:

Bureau of Land Management  
Billings Field Office  
5001 Southgate Drive  
Billings, Montana 59101  
Project website: [http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/billings\\_field\\_office/rmp.html](http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/billings_field_office/rmp.html)

The BLM thanks our cooperating agencies who have participated in the planning process and helped us complete this document.

For additional information or clarification regarding this document or the planning process, please contact Carolyn Sherve-Bybee, RMP Team Lead at (406) 896-5234

Sincerely,



James M. Sparks  
Field Manager

**Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument Resource Management Plan Revision  
Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement**

**1. Responsible Agency:**

U.S. Department of the Interior,  
Bureau of Land Management

**2. Draft** (X)                      **Final** ( )

**3. Type of Action:** Administrative (X)                      Legislative ( )

**4. Abstract:** This Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) describes and analyzes four alternatives for the planning and management of public lands and resources administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Billings Field Office located in south central Montana in Carbon, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Wheatland, and Yellowstone counties, Montana, and portions of Big Horn County, Montana, and portions of Big Horn County, Wyoming. These alternatives are Alternative A (continuation of current management or the No Action Alternative); Alternatives B and C, and Alternative D (Agency Preferred Alternative). Major RMP issues include managing for desired plant communities; maintaining or improving wildlife and fisheries habitat and controlling invasive species; conservation and recovery of threatened, endangered, proposed and sensitive species; identifying availability of public lands for commercial activities and managing commercial activities while protecting the integrity of other resources; managing recreation activities to meet public demand while protecting natural and cultural resources and providing for visitor safety; resolving conflicts between motorized and non-motorized uses and addressing effects to resources from motorized use; identifying areas requiring special management and providing management direction for those areas; addressing social and economic conditions; protecting the cultural and historic values at Pompeys Pillar National Monument; and managing the recreation and visitor services at Pompeys Pillar National Monument. The Alternatives present a range of management actions to achieve goals and desired future conditions for the Billings Field Office and Pompeys Pillar National Monument.

Comments on the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement will be accepted for 90 days following the date the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability for this Draft RMP and EIS in the *Federal Register*. The close of the comment period will be announced in news releases and on the RMP website at:

[http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/billings\\_field\\_office/rmp.html](http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/billings_field_office/rmp.html)

Comments should be submitted via email to [Billings\\_PompeysPillar\\_RMP@blm.gov](mailto:Billings_PompeysPillar_RMP@blm.gov)

Alternatively, comments can be mailed to:

Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument RMP/EIS  
Billings Field Office, Bureau of Land Management  
RMP Team Lead, Carolyn Sherve-Bybee  
5001 Southgate Drive  
Billings, MT 59101

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## List of Acronyms

<b>Acronym or Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full Phrase</b>
ACEC	area of critical environmental concern
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
ADA	American with Disabilities Act
AFMSS	Automated Fluid Mineral Support System
AFY	acre – feet per year
AML <sub>1</sub>	appropriate management level
AML <sub>2</sub>	abandoned mine lands
AMP	allotment management plan
AMR	appropriate management response
AMS	analysis of the management situation
amsl	above mean sea level
ANS	aquatic nuisance species
AO	authorized officer
APLIC	Avian Protection Plan guidelines
APD	application for permit to drill
APE	area of potential effect
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
APHIS-WS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Wildlife Services
AQ	air quality
AQI	air quality index
AQRV	air quality related values
AQTW	Air Quality Technical Workgroup
ARMP	Air Resource Management Plan
ARTSD	Air Resource Technical Support Document
ATV	all-terrain vehicle
AU	assessment units
AUM	animal unit month
BA	biological assessment
BACT	Best Available Control Technology
BBM	benefits based management

BCNRA	Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area
BEA	Bureau of Economic Analysis
BIA	US Dept of the Interior – Bureau of Indian Affairs
BiFO	Billings Field Office
BLM	US Dept of the Interior – Bureau of Land Management
BMPs	best management practices
BO	biological opinion
BOR	US Dept of the Interior – Bureau of Reclamation
BPS	budget planning system
C & MU	Classification and Multiple Use Act
CAA	Clean Air Act
CAPS	crucial area planning system
CBNG	coalbed natural gas
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CO	carbon monoxide
CO <sub>2</sub>	carbon dioxide
COA	conditions of approval
CSP	Concentrating Solar Power
CSU	controlled surface use
CWA	Clean Water Act
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
CWMA	Cooperative Weed Management Area
DEQ	Department of Environmental Quality (Montana)
DFC	Desired Future Condition
DNA	Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and National NEPA Adequacy
DNRC	Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
DOI	Department of the Interior
DR	decision record
EA	environmental assessment
EIS	environmental impact statement

EO	Executive Order
EPA	US Environmental Protection Agency
EPCA	Energy Policy and Conservation Act Amendments of 2000
ERMA	extensive recreation management area
ES	executive summary
ESA	Endangered Species Act of 1973
ESR	emergency stabilization and rehabilitation
EVT	existing vegetation type
° F	degrees Fahrenheit
FAR	functioning at risk
FAR-D	functioning at risk downward trend
FAR-NA	functioning at risk not apparent trend
FAR-NF	functioning at risk not functioning
FAR-U	functioning at risk upward trend
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
FLTFA	Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act
FMP	fire management plan
FMU	fire management unit
FMUD	final multiple use decision
FO	field office
FOFEM	first order fire effects model
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FPA	Federal Power Act
FPA	fire program analysis
FPPA	Farmland Policy Protection Act
FR	Federal Register
FRCC	fire regime condition class
FWFMP	Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy
FWP	Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
FY	fiscal year
GAO	Government Accountability Office

GAWS	general aquatic wildlife survey
GHA	general habitat area
GHG	greenhouse gas
GIS	geographical information system
GPS	global positioning system
HA	herd area
HAP	hazardous air pollution
HCP	habitat conservation plan
HFA	Healthy Forest Initiative
HFRA	Healthy Forest Restoration Act
HMA	herd management area
HMAP	herd management area plan
HMP	habitat management plan
HUA	herd use area
HVH	high value habitat
I -	Interstate
IB	information bulletin
IBA	important bird area
IBLA	Interior Board of Land Appeals
IDT	interdisciplinary team
IM	instruction memorandum
IMP	interim management policy
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IR	Indian Reservation
ISA	instant study area
ITA	Indian Trust Assets
ITRR	Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, University of Montana
IWM	integrated weed management
LAC	limits of acceptable change
LANDFIRE	Landscape Fire and Resource Management Planning Tools

	Project
LBA	lease by application
LCNHT / L&CNHT	Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
LHA	land health assessment
LN	lease notice
LS	lease stipulation
LTA	land tenure adjustment
LUP	land use plan
LWC	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics
MAAQS	Montana Ambient Air Quality Standards
MACT	maximum available control technology
mbf	thousand board feet
mcf	thousand cubic feet
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MDEQ	Montana Department of Environmental Quality
MEI	maximally exposed individual
MFISH	Montana Fish Information System
MIST	minimum impact suppression tactics
MLE	most likely exposure
MLP	Master Leasing Plan
MLRA	Major Land Resource Area
mmbf	million board feet
mmcf	million cubic feet
MOA	memorandum of agreement
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MNHP	Montana Natural Heritage Program
MSIP	Montana State Implementation Plan
MT	Montana
MTFWP	Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
mtpy	metric tons per year
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
NCDC	National Climatic Data Center

NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index
NEI	National Emission Inventory
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
NESHAPS	National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants
NF	non functional
NFP	National Fire Plan of 2000
NGO	non-government organization
NHL	National Historic Landmark
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NHT	National Historic Trail
NISMS	National Invasive Species Information Management System
NLCS	National Landscape Conservation System
NM	National Monument
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NNL	National Natural Landmark
NOA	Notice of Availability
NO <sub>2</sub>	nitrogen dioxide
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOI	Notice of Intent
NO <sub>x</sub>	mono-nitrogen oxides NO and NO <sub>2</sub>
NPNHT	Nez Perce National Historic Trail
NPS	National Park Service
nps	nonpoint source
NRCS	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
NREL	U.S. DOE National Renewable Energy Laboratory
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NRS	natural resource specialist
NSR	new source review
NSPS	new source performance standards
NSO	no surface occupancy
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
NWReGAP	Northwest Regional Gap Analysis Project
NWSRS	National Wild and Scenic River System

O <sub>3</sub>	ozone
O&G	oil and gas
OHV	off-highway vehicle
OHV EIS	Off-Highway Vehicle Environmental Impact Statement
ORP	Outdoor Recreation Planner
ORV	outstanding remarkable value
Pb	lead
PDM	Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan
PE	chemical and biological control
PEIS	preliminary environmental impact statement
PFC	proper functioning condition
PFYC	potential fossil yield classification
PGM	photochemical grid modeling
PILT	payment in lieu of taxes
PL	public law
PLO	public land office
PM	particulate matter
PM <sub>2.5</sub>	particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter
PM <sub>10</sub>	particulate matter smaller than 10 microns in diameter
PMU	population management unit
PMWHR	Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range
ppm	part per million
PPMN	Pompeys Pillar National Monument
PRPA	Paleontological Resources Protection Act
PPA	protection priority area (sage grouse)
PS	public health and safety
PSD	prevention of significant deterioration
PSQ	probable sale quantity
PV	photovoltaics
R & PP	Recreation and Public Purposes Act
RAC	Resource Advisory Council
RAMS	risk assessment and mitigation strategy
REIS	Regional Economic Information System

RELS	Reference Exposure Levels
RfCs	Reference Concentrations
RFD	reasonably foreseeable development
RFDS	reasonably foreseeable development scenario
RIP	range improvement project
RMIS	recreation management information system
RMP	Resource Management Plan
RMS	rangeland management specialist
RMZ	recreation management zone
RNA	research natural area
ROD	record of decision
ROI	region of influence
ROS	recreation opportunity spectrum
ROW	right-of-way
RA	restoration area (sage grouse)
RPS	Rangeland Program Summary Record of Decision (ROD)
SASEM	Simple Approach Smoke Estimation Model
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
S & G	Standards and Guides
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SLT	standard lease term
SO <sub>2</sub>	sulphur dioxide
SOC	species of concern
SOP	standard operating procedure
SMRA	special recreation management area
SMZ	stream management zone
SPE	Signal Peak Energy
SRP	special recreation permit
SSP	special status plants
SSS	special status species
T & E	threatened and endangered
TC	tribal consultation
TCP	traditional cultural property

TDS	total dissolved solids
TL	timing limitation
TM	transportation and travel management
TMA	travel management area
TMDL	total maximum daily load
TNEB	thriving natural ecological balance
TNR	temporary nonrenewable
TPS	Total Petroleum Systems
tpy	short tons per year
TSP	total suspended particles
TSS	total suspended solids
UFAS	Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards
URF	Unit Risk Factors
US	United States
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USC	United States Code
USDI	United States Department of the Interior
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFS	US Dept of Agriculture, Forest Service
USFWS	US Dept of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	US Dept of the Interior, Geological Service
VF	vegetation forest and woodland products
VOCs	volatile organic compounds
VRI	visual resource inventory
VRM	visual resource management
WA	wilderness area
WAAQS	Wyoming Ambient Air Quality Standards
WDEQ	Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
WDM	wildlife damage assessment
WEG	Wind Erodibility Group
WFDSS	Wildland Fire Decision Support System
WFIP	wildland fire implementation plan

WFM	wildland fire ecology management
WFSA	wildland fire situation analysis
WHB	wild horses and burros
WMA	wildlife management area
WMPP	Wildlife Monitoring and Protection Plan
WSA	wilderness study area
WSR	wild and scenic river
WUI	wildland urban interface
WWCC	Western Wyoming Community College
YCT	Yellowstone cutthroat trout

## Executive Summary

### ES 1 Introduction

This Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) describes and analyzes alternatives for the future management of public lands and resources the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers in the south central Montana and in northern Wyoming. The Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument Draft RMP/EIS would revise the 1984 RMP, as amended, for the BLM Billings Field Office (BiFO) and Pompeys Pillar National Monument in a consolidated RMP. This plan revision is a combined effort that addresses both the Billings Field Office and the Pompeys Pillar National monument in one consolidated RMP and associated EIS. This document refers to the combined Billings and PPNM planning areas as the Planning Area and is referenced throughout the document as the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument DRMP/EIS. The Planning Area covers approximately 10,804,549 acres of federal, state, and private lands in eight Montana counties (Big Horn, Carbon, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Wheatland, and Yellowstone) and portions of Big Horn County, Wyoming consisting of 4,298 acres of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. Included within the Planning Area is Pompeys Pillar National Monument (51 acres) which was established in 2001 by executive proclamation of the President. Because these are combined planning efforts, upon issuance of the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument Proposed RMP and Final EIS, and subsequent reviews and resolution of protests, if any, two separate Records of Decision will be issued for each area.

Of the total area, 434,154 acres are BLM-administered surface lands and 1,839,782 acres are federal mineral estate.

Revising existing land use plans is a major federal action for the BLM. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, requires federal agencies to prepare an EIS for major federal actions; thus this Draft RMP and EIS is a combined document. The Draft EIS analyzes the impacts of four alternative RMPs for the Planning Area, including the No Action Alternative (Alternative A) and the Agency Preferred Alternative (Alternative D). The No Action Alternative reflects current management (the existing plan). The analysis considers a comprehensive range of alternatives that provide for various levels of resource protection and opportunities for motorized and non-motorized recreational activities, leasing and development of mineral resources, livestock grazing, and other land use activities.

#### ES 1.1 Purpose and Need

The BLM administers public lands in the Planning Area according to one plan: the Billings RMP (1984), as amended. Since the Record of Decision for the existing plan, new data have become available, and laws, regulations, and policies regarding management of these public lands have changed. In addition, decisions in the existing plan do not satisfactorily address all new and emerging issues in the Planning Area. These changes and potential deficiencies

created the need to revise the existing plan. The new RMP will address the changing needs of the Planning Area and select a management strategy that best achieves a combination of the following:

- Employing a community-based planning approach to seek broadly supported solutions to issues, and collaborate with federal, state, and local cooperating agencies.
- Establishing goals and objectives for managing resources and resource uses on the approximately 434,154 BLM-administered surface acres and 1,839,782 acres of BLM-administered federal mineral estate in the Planning Area both administered by the BLM Billings Field Office in accordance with the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.
- Identifying land use plan decisions to guide future land management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions.
- Identifying management actions and allowable uses anticipated to achieve the established goals and objectives and reach desired outcomes.
- Providing comprehensive management direction by making land use decisions for all appropriate resources and resource uses the BLM administers in the Planning Area.
- Providing for compliance with applicable tribal, federal, and state laws, standards, and implementation plans, and BLM policies and regulations.
- Recognizing the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals and timber, and incorporating requirements of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Public Law 2005).
- Retaining flexibility to adapt to new and emerging issues and opportunities and to provide for adjustments to decisions over time based on new information and monitoring.
- Striving to be compatible with the plans and policies of adjacent local, state, tribal, and federal agencies and consistent with federal laws, regulations, and BLM policies; and be flexible enough to adapt to future BLM policy and guidance updates.

## **ES 1.2 Planning Issue Statements**

Planning issues identified through the scoping process and other public outreach efforts focus on the demands, concerns, conflicts, or problems concerning use or management of public lands and resources in the Planning Area. The main issues described and analyzed in the EIS include the following:

- **Vegetation Communities** – How can the public lands be managed to provide desired plant communities?
- **Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat and Invasive Species** – How can public lands be managed to maintain or improve wildlife and fisheries habitats and control invasive species?
- **Threatened and Endangered Species and Special Status Species** – How can public lands be managed to conserve and recover threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species?
- **Commercial Activities** – What public lands will be available for commercial activities and how will those activities be managed while protecting the integrity of other resources?
- **Recreation Activities** – How should recreation activities be managed to satisfy public demand while protecting natural and cultural resource values and provide for visitor safety?
- **Motorized and Non-Motorized Uses** – How will conflicts between motorized and non-motorized uses be resolved and how will effects to resources from motorized uses be addressed?
- **Special Designations** – What areas should be designated for special management (e.g. ACECs, Wild and Scenic Rivers, etc.) and how should these areas be managed?
- **Social and Economic Conditions** – What will be the social and economic consequences of each of the various resource management alternatives?
- **Pompeys Pillar National Monument** –
  - ▶ How will the cultural and historic values at Pompeys Pillar National Monument be protected?
  - ▶ How will recreation and visitor services at Pompeys Pillar National Monument be managed?

Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and guidelines that help direct the RMP planning process. In conjunction with planning issues, planning criteria ensure that the planning process is focused and incorporates appropriate analyses. The criteria also help guide final RMP selection, and the BLM uses the criteria as a basis for evaluating the responsiveness of planning options. Planning criteria for the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument RMP are summarized below; the full planning criteria can be viewed on the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument RMP website ([http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/billings\\_field\\_office/rmp.html](http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/billings_field_office/rmp.html)) in the Scoping Report.

The planning criteria are as follows:

- Address all BLM-administered lands in the Planning Area.
- Consider current scientific information, research, new technologies, and the results of resource assessments, monitoring, and coordination.
- Recognize valid existing rights.
- Apply the Standards for Healthy Rangelands and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the State of Montana to all activities and provide for public safety and welfare relative to fire, hazardous materials, and abandoned mine lands (AMLs).
- Comply with NEPA, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and all applicable laws, regulations, policies, and guidance.
- Consider current and potential future uses of the public lands through the development reasonable foreseeable future development and activity scenarios based on historical, existing, and projected levels of use.
- Coordinate with tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious heritages.
- Consider a reasonable range of alternatives that reflects the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

### **ES 1.3 Public Involvement**

A Notice of Intent (NOI) published in the Federal Register on May 15, 2008, formally announced the BLM's intent to revise the existing plans and prepare the associated EIS. Publication of the NOI initiated the scoping process and invited affected and interested agencies, organizations, and the general public to participate in determining the scope and issues to be addressed by alternatives and analyses in the EIS. The BLM held seven public scoping meetings between August 11 and August 21, 2008, in the following communities: Big Timber, Billings, Bridger, Red Lodge, Roundup, and Pompeys Pillar National Monument in Montana and Lovell, Wyoming. The seven scoping meetings provided the public with an opportunity to learn and ask questions about the project and the planning process and to submit their issues and concerns to the BLM. In addition to members of the BLM Interdisciplinary Team, about 90 people total attended the scoping meetings. The BLM collected comments from the public during the scoping meetings and throughout the scoping period.

The BLM published the Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument Draft RMP/EIS for public review and comment in the Federal Register on (insert date here). The NOA initiated the 10-day public comment period for this document. During this comment period, the BLM will hold seven public meetings on this Draft RMP and

EIS in Big Timber, Billings, Bridger, Red Lodge, Roundup, and Pompeys Pillar National Monument in Montana and Lovell, Wyoming.

## **ES 1.4 Cooperating Agencies and Tribal Consultation**

The BLM invited local, state, federal, and tribal representatives to participate as cooperating agencies on the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument RMP/EIS. The BLM invited these entities to participate because they have jurisdiction by law or because they could offer special expertise. Forty-three agencies and tribes were invited to participate as cooperating agencies and fifteen accepted the invitation to participate. The following fifteen agencies, counties and tribal representatives participated in the development of the Draft RMP/EIS as cooperating agencies: the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Reclamation, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (Northeastern Land Office and Southern Land Office), Montana Association of Counties, and the following Montana counties: Carbon County, Golden Valley County, Musselshell County, Wheatland County, Musselshell Planning Project, Yellowstone County, and Big Horn County (Wyoming).

The BLM and cooperating agencies participated in multiple workshops to formulate alternatives and meetings to keep cooperating agencies informed and to solicit their input. Development of this Draft RMP and EIS considered comments from cooperating agencies on previous administrative drafts.

Government-to-government consultation with the tribes will continue throughout the RMP process.

The Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council also participated in the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument Resource Management Plan planning process.

## **ES 1.5 Alternatives Considered in Detail**

To comply with NEPA requirements in the development of alternatives for this RMP and EIS, the BLM sought public input and analyzed a reasonable range of alternatives, including the No Action Alternative (A). Two alternatives (Alternatives B and C) were formulated that reflect a range of resource use and conservation. Following analysis of alternatives A, B, and C, the Interdisciplinary Team provided recommendations for selecting the Agency Preferred Alternative - Alternative D. The Agency Preferred Alternative does not represent a final BLM decision and will change between publication of the Draft RMP and EIS and Final RMP and EIS based on public comments on the draft document, new information, or changes in laws, regulations, or BLM policies. The BLM will make its final decision after it publishes the Proposed RMP and Final EIS, and will document its decision in a Record of Decision.

Including the No Action Alternative (Alternative A), the four alternatives analyzed in this Draft RMP and EIS represent differing approaches to managing resources and resource uses in the

Planning Area. Each alternative comprises two categories of land use planning decisions: (1) desired outcomes (goals and objectives) and (2) allowable uses and management actions. Goals and objectives direct BLM actions to most effectively meet legal mandates, regulations, and agency policy, as well as local and region resource needs. Goals are broad statements of desired outcomes that are usually not quantifiable. Objectives identify more specific desired outcomes for resources and might include a measurable component. Objectives are generally expected to achieve the stated goals. Allowable uses identify uses that are allowed, restricted, or excluded on BLM-administered surface lands and federal mineral estate. Management actions are proactive measures (for example, measures the BLM will implement to enhance watershed function and condition), or limitations intended to guide BLM activities in the Planning Area. Allowable uses often contain a spatial component because the alternatives identify whether particular land uses are allowed, restricted, or excluded. Alternatives may include specific management actions to meet goals and objectives and may exclude certain land uses to protect resource values.

### **ES 1.5.1 Alternative A**

Alternative A represents the continuation of current management under the existing land use plan (1984), as amended. Direction contained in existing laws, regulation and policy would also continue to be implemented. This alternative provides the baseline against which to compare the other alternatives. Under Alternative A, resources, resource uses, and sensitive habitats would receive management emphasis (methods and mix of multiple use management of public land) at present levels. In general, most activities would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis, and few uses would be limited or excluded as long as land health standards would be met. Current management identifies constraints on mineral leasing in the Planning Area to protect resource values. Current management includes nine Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), two National Historic Trails (NHTs), and one horse range (PMWHR). This alternative also includes seven Wild and Scenic River (WSR) eligible waterways, and four Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). The BLM maintains two Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) under Alternative A and seven areas would be managed as Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs), and livestock grazing is allowed on all but 37,408 acres of the decision area.

Approximately 42,270 acres would be designated as Visual Resource Inventory Class A or B. Approximately 7,463 acres of public land would be available for disposal with an additional 2,088 acres identified for further study. No Travel Management Areas (TMAs) are established under this alternative. Off-highway vehicle use would be limited to existing roads and trails in the planning area; however, in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, Acton, Shepherd Ah-Nei, and Horsethief, motorized travel would be restricted to designated routes. South Hills would be designated open for motorcycle use only.

Fluid minerals are available for leasing on 264,534 acres of the BLM-administered federal mineral estate with standard lease terms and are available for leasing on 369,048 acres of the BLM-administered federal mineral estate with major and moderate constraints.

Approximately 7,463 acres of public land would be available for disposal with an additional 2,088 acres identified for further study. Rights-of-Way (ROW) exclusion and avoidance areas encompass 68,217 acres of the BLM-administered surface (ROW exclusion: 44,014 acres, ROW avoidance: 24,203 acres). There would be one designated ROW corridor under this Alternative, encompassing 1,579 acres of the BLM-administered surface.

Under Alternative A, the BLM responds to proposals for renewable wind energy development within the decision area on a case-by-case basis. Although interests in wind energy have increased, no wind farms currently exist in the planning area on the BLM-administered surface. The area of the BLM-administered surface open to renewable wind energy development, but still subject to terms and conditions identified during the right-of-way application process is 361,514 acres. The area of the BLM-administered surface closed to renewable wind energy development is 47,496 acres. Alternative A has the highest number of acres available for renewable energy development.

### **ES 1.5.2 Alternative B**

Alternative B emphasizes the conservation of physical, biological, or cultural resources over commodity production, mineral extraction, and motorized recreation. Management actions would focus on those ecological systems that are functioning and healthy and the restoration of ecological systems that have been degraded or altered. Constraints or limitations to commercial uses/resources would be more constrained in this alternative than in most other alternatives, and in some cases and in some areas, uses would be excluded to protect sensitive or fragile resources. Nine ACECs would be retained and three additional ACECs are proposed under this alternative. Alternative B includes proposing the Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat ACEC. The management activities allowed in the ACECs, under this alternative, are the most restrictive. Other Special Designations include two National Historic Trails (NHTs), one horse range (PMWHR), seven Wild and Scenic River (WSR) eligible and recommended suitable waterways, and four Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). The BLM would maintain the two existing Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and manage four additional areas as SRMAs under Alternative B, and eleven areas would be managed as Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs), and livestock grazing would be allowed on all but 38,373 acres of the decision area. Acreages and locations for sage-grouse Protection Priority Areas (PPAs), Restoration Areas (RAs) and general habitat areas are the same for all action alternatives (B, C, and D), however under Alternative B, the PPAs are proposed as an ACEC.

Approximately 45,511 acres would be designated as Visual Resource Management Class I and II. Approximately 50 acres of public land would be available for disposal. OHV use would be limited to existing roads and trails except in the 11 TMAs where OHV use is limited to designated routes (391.5 miles closed to motorized vehicle use in the 11 TMAs and 348.1 miles open to motorized vehicle use in 11 TMAs). South Hills would be closed to motorized travel under Alternative B.

Fluid minerals are available for leasing on 67,726 acres of the BLM-administered federal mineral estate with standard lease terms. Fluid minerals are available for leasing on 354,136 acres of the BLM-administered federal mineral estate with major and moderate constraints.

Approximately 50 acres of public land would be available for disposal. Rights-of-Way (ROW) exclusion and avoidance areas encompass 369,991 acres of the BLM-administered surface (ROW exclusion: 211,384 acres, ROW avoidance: 185,607 acres). There is one designated ROW corridor under this Alternative, encompassing 1,579 acres of the BLM-administered surface and Silver Tip Road would not be designated a ROW corridor under Alternative B.

Under Alternative B, the area of the BLM-administered surface open to renewable wind energy development is 0 acres. The area of the BLM-administered surface closed to renewable wind energy development is 345,491 acres. Alternative B has the fewest acres open to renewable energy development

### **ES 1.5.3 Alternative C**

Alternative C would emphasize commodity production (forage, minerals, etc.), motorized recreational access, and services. Under this alternative, constraints on commodity production for the protection of sensitive resources would be the least restrictive possible within the limits defined by law, regulation and BLM policy, including the ESA, cultural resource protection laws and wetland preservation. In this alternative, constraints to protect sensitive resources would tend to be implemented in specified geographic areas rather than across the entire planning area. Nine ACECs would be retained and two additional ACECs are proposed under this alternative. The management activities allowed in the ACECs, under this alternative, are the least restrictive. Other Special Designations include two National Historic Trails (NHTs), one horse range (PMWHR), seven Wild and Scenic River (WSR) eligible waterways, and four Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). The BLM would maintain the two existing Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and manage nine additional areas as SRMAs under Alternative C, no areas would be managed as Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs), and livestock grazing would be allowed on all but 28,622 acres of the decision area. Acreages and locations for sage-grouse Protection Priority Areas (PPAs), Restoration Areas (RAs) and general habitat areas are the same for all action alternatives (B, C, and D).

Approximately 46,538 acres would be designated as Visual Resource Management Class I or II. Approximately 4,223 acres of public land would be available for disposal. OHV use would be limited to existing roads and trails except in the 11 TMAs where OHV use is limited to designated routes (5.6 miles closed to motorized vehicle use in the 11 TMAs and 831.1 miles open to motorized vehicle use in 11 TMAs). South Hills would be designated open for motorcycle use only under Alternative C.

Fluid minerals would be available for leasing on 126,732 acres of the BLM-administered federal mineral estate with standard lease terms. Fluid minerals would be available for leasing on 483,419 acres of the BLM-administered federal mineral estate with major and moderate constraints.

Approximately 4,223 acres of public land would be available for disposal. Rights-of-Way (ROW) exclusion and avoidance areas encompass 395,092 acres of the BLM-administered surface (ROW exclusion: 39,491 acres, ROW avoidance: 355,601 acres). There are two designed ROW corridors under this alternative, encompassing 13,832 acres of the BLM-administered surface.

Under Alternative C, the area of BLM-administered surface open to renewable wind energy development, but still subject to terms and conditions identified during the right-of-way application review process, is 21,349 acres. The area of BLM-administered surface closed to renewable wind energy development is 82,019 acres.

### **ES 1.5.4 Alternative D (Agency Preferred Alternative)**

Alternative D addresses the key planning issues identified in Chapter 1 by incorporating elements from each of the other alternatives to strike a balance between long-term conservation of public land and resources within the planning area with commodity production, recreational access, and services. Alternative D represents an approach to land management that address the issues, management concerns, and purpose and need while balancing resources and resource uses. Nine ACECs would be retained and two additional ACECs are proposed under this alternative. The total acreage for the ACECs strikes a balance between the acreages of Alternative B and Alternative C and in some cases the management activities allowed in the ACECs is as restrictive as Alternative B. Other Special Designations include two National Historic Trails (NHTs), one horse range (PMWHR), two Wild and Scenic River (WSR) eligible and recommended suitable waterways, and four Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). The BLM would maintain the two existing Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and manage seven additional areas as SRMAs under Alternative D, and two areas would be managed as Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs). Livestock grazing would be allowed on all but 28,387 acres of the planning area. Acreages and locations for sage-grouse Protection Priority Areas (PPAs), Restoration Areas (RAs) and general habitat areas are the same for all action alternatives (B, C, and D).

Approximately 42,509 acres would be designated as Visual Resource Management Class I or II. Approximately 170 acres of public land would be available for disposal. OHV use would be limited to existing roads and trails except in the 11 TMAs where OHV use is limited to designated routes (59.9 miles closed to motorized vehicle use in the 11 TMAs and 616.7 miles open to motorized vehicle use in 11 TMAs). South Hills would be designated open for motorcycle use only under Alternative D.

Fluid minerals would be available for leasing on 6,158 acres of the BLM-administered federal mineral estate with standard lease terms. Fluid minerals would be available for leasing on 599,938 acres of the BLM-administered federal mineral estate with major and moderate constraints.

Approximately 170 acres of public land would be available for disposal under Alternative D. Rights-of-Way (ROW) exclusion and avoidance areas encompass 397,616 acres of the BLM-administered surface (ROW exclusion: 48,258 acres, ROW avoidance: 349,358 acres). There

are two designated ROW corridors under this Alternative, encompassing 4,511 acres of the BLM-administered surface.

Under Alternative D, the area of BLM-administered surface open to renewable wind energy development, but still subject to terms and conditions identified during the right-of-way application process, is 20,937 acres. The area of BLM-administered surface closed to renewable wind energy development is 78,088 acres.

## **ES 1.6 Environmental Consequences**

This section summarizes the environmental consequences that would result from implementing each of the four alternatives. The purpose of the environmental consequences analysis is to determine the potential impacts of the federal action under each of the four alternatives on the human environment, while focusing on key planning issues identified by the BLM and raised during the scoping process. The analysis of environmental consequences is organized according to resource and includes: physical, biological, and cultural/heritage resources; resource uses and support; special designations; and socio-economic resources.

### **ES 1.6.1 Physical, Biological, and Cultural/Heritage Resources**

#### **ES 1.6.1.1 Air**

Impacts to air quality as a result of proposed BLM management actions by all Alternatives would be minor, short term, and localized to the project area. Because of the land base and land pattern managed by the Billings Field Office (4% of the surface acres in the eight-county planning area), the potential for BLM management actions and authorizations to contribute significantly to air quality deterioration is low. The use of prescribed fire would have the greatest potential to impact air quality over large areas; however smoke management through coordination with the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group would ensure that air quality standards are met.

#### **ES 1.6.1.2 Soil**

Impacts to soil resources may result from surface disturbance associated with a variety of resource programs including minerals development, motorized vehicle use, road construction, and recreation. When it contributes to offsite erosion and sediment delivery, surface disturbance is an adverse impact to water resources as well. Actions that restrict surface disturbance or restore vegetation on disturbed areas occur under all alternatives and generally are considered to have a beneficial impact on soil and water resources by limiting erosion. Alternatives B, C, and D all limit surface disturbing activities, however more impacts to soil and water resources are anticipated under Alternative C. Alternative C has the fewest restrictions to surface use authorizations, therefore providing the least amount of protection for soil resources of all the Alternatives. Alternative B is the most restrictive. Alternative D also places restrictions on surface use authorizations, but is less restrictive than B and more than C.

### **ES 1.6.1.3 Water**

Under all Alternatives, water resources would benefit from management in accordance with Rangeland Health Standards and applicable state and federal water-quality standards. Site specific mitigation and BMPs for surface disturbing activities would also reduce impacts to water resources. However with the scattered distribution of BLM-administered public lands in the planning area (4% of the surface area in an 8 county area), management actions to minimize impacts to water resources may not prevent impaired water quality on BLM waterways.

### **ES 1.6.1.4 Cave and Karsts**

Cave and Karsts are managed as mandated by the Federal Cave Resource Protection act as well as other Acts, such as the Endangered Species Act. Management actions in the RMP are in conformance with these prescriptions and protect the unique, nonrenewable, fragile, biological, geological, hydrological, cultural, paleontological, scientific, and recreational values. The management actions would result in significant restrictions of casual use of caves and karsts, but also provide more directed and focused responses due to the mandate for development of a specific Cave and Karsts Management Plan.

### **ES 1.6.1.5 Biological Resources**

Biological resources include vegetation, fish, wildlife, special status species, and wild horses.

Vegetation resources analyzed in this RMP revision include forests and woodlands, rangeland and shrubland communities, riparian/wetland resources, invasive species and noxious weeds, and special status plants; these plant communities incorporate the major vegetation types in the Decision Area. Long-term surface disturbance contributes to the decline in abundance, distribution, or health of vegetation communities in the Decision Area. Conversely, short-term surface disturbance from vegetation treatments would improve vegetation health and diversity, and may reduce the severity of wildland fires that destroy or permanently alter vegetation communities.

#### **ES 1.6.1.5.1 Woodlands**

Especially in forests and woodlands, active management, such as timber harvesting and silviculture treatments, would reduce the potential for catastrophic fires (the greatest threat to forests and woodlands), reduce the number of diseased trees, enhance age and species diversity, and reduce the spread of invasive species. Alternative C would result in the most long-term surface disturbance and allows the most activities that would adversely affect forests and woodlands, such as retaining timber harvest roads post-harvest for recreational activities. Conversely, Alternative C would result in the greatest beneficial impact to forests and woodlands due to the use of silviculture treatments, followed by alternatives D, A, and B respectively. Alternatives that allow the greatest use of silviculture treatments would result in the greatest beneficial impacts to the harvest of forest products. Management actions that advance active vegetation management, such as mechanical fuels treatments and invasive species control measures, would result in beneficial impacts to grassland and shrubland communities

#### **ES 1.6.1.5.2 Range and Shrublands**

Rangelands and shrublands are the largest habitat type in the Planning Area and, assuming a proportional distribution of the projected surface disturbance would occur in these communities, Alternative B would result in most short term impacts from long-term surface disturbance over the life of this plan (22,414 acres of crested wheatgrass treated), followed by alternatives D and C (12,000 acres and 7,500 acres, respectively), and Alternative A (160 acres). While Alternative B has the most short term impacts as a result of the crested wheatgrass treatments, it would result in the highest long term benefit.

#### **ES 1.6.1.5.3 Riparian**

Impacts to riparian/wetland areas occur as a result of either direct surface disturbance or actions in a watershed that cause a change in riparian/wetland functionality, such as changes in sediment loading rates or hydrology. Alternative B would result in the greatest direct beneficial impacts to riparian/wetland resources through restrictions on surface-disturbing activities in proximity to riparian/wetland resources and through proactive management actions. Alternatives D, A, and C, respectively, would result in less protection for riparian/wetland areas.

#### **ES 1.6.1.5.4 Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds**

The presence of invasive species and noxious weeds is considered an adverse impact to other biological resources in the Planning Area and, in spite of management proposed in this RMP, invasive species are expected to spread under all alternatives. Those alternatives projected to involve the greatest amount of surface disturbance would have the potential to result in the greatest adverse impacts from the spread of invasive species. Based on projected surface disturbance and the types of preventative measures required, Alternative C would result in the greatest potential for the spread of invasive species, followed by alternatives A, D, and B. Alternative D is projected to result in greater surface disturbance than Alternative A, but contains more stringent reclamation requirements that would result in a reduced potential for the spread of invasive species.

#### **ES 1.6.1.6 Fisheries**

The health of riparian/wetland areas, and water quality and quantity would affect fish populations in the Decision Area. Increased sediment in fish habitat (streams and rivers) decreases the potential for fish to naturally reproduce, fills in pools, leads to channel degradation, decreases light penetration and productivity, alters fish community composition, and increases stream temperature. Based on overall surface disturbance, reclamation practices, and fish habitat management including erosion control and reservoir design, Alternative B would result in the most beneficial impact to fish (including special status species fish), followed by alternatives D, C, and A respectively.

#### **ES 1.6.1.7 Wildlife**

The primary adverse impacts to wildlife result from surface disturbance related habitat loss and fragmentation; the primary beneficial impacts to wildlife result from management that restricts

surface disturbing activities in known or potential wildlife habitat and disruptive activities (e.g., motorized vehicle use, recreation) that can cause the abandonment of nest sites or home ranges. Alternative B minimizes wildlife habitat loss and fragmentation in the Decision Area (e.g., closing areas to oil and gas development) to the greatest degree, followed by alternatives D, C, and A respectively.

Impacts to special status plants, fish, and wildlife species are generally the same as those for vegetation, fish, and wildlife; however, all the alternatives include additional protective management for special status species. Overall, proactive management actions would be most beneficial to special status species under alternatives B, D, C, and A respectively. Alternative B would result in the greatest beneficial impacts to Yellowstone cutthroat trout and other special status fish species habitat. Alternative B includes the most proactive actions to restore and enhance habitats for special status wildlife species.

#### **ES 1.6.1.7.1 Wild Horses and Burros**

Wild horses are managed for self-sustaining populations of healthy, free-roaming animals in balance with other uses and the productive capacity of their habitat within the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. Impacts to wild horses include recreational and visitor activities, with the most impacts to wild horses occurring under Alternative A, followed by Alternatives C, D, and B. Under Alternative D, habitat and range improvement would be maximized to benefit the wild horses, followed by Alternative C, A, and B. Under Alternative B, the range improvements (i.e. water tanks, guzzlers, reservoirs) would be removed.

#### **ES 1.6.1.8 Fire and Fuels Management**

Fire is an integral part of natural ecosystem function; however, the natural fire regime largely has been suppressed in the Planning Area. Although the suppression of the natural fire regime is considered an adverse impact to fire ecology, actions contributing to an increase in the incidence of wildland fires or limiting the ability to effectively fight wildland fires are considered adverse impacts to fire management. Management under the alternatives would affect two aspects of fire and fuels management: wildfires (unplanned ignitions) and prescribed fires (planned ignitions).

All Alternatives utilize wildfire management to restore fire-adapted ecosystems and reduce hazardous fuels. Alternative A would result in the greatest potential for adverse impacts from human-caused, unplanned ignitions due to increased access and additional travel routes under this alternative. Under Alternatives A and C, wildfire would not be used to meet resource objectives, while under Alternatives B and D wildfire would be used to meet resource objectives (Alternative B: 52,548 acres over a 10 year period and Alternative D: 62,937 acres over a 10 year period). Prescribed fires can be used to meet resource objectives, such as for wildlife habitat enhancement, forage production, and fuel reduction. Under Alternative A, only 6,280 acres would be treated over a 10-year period, while under Alternatives B, C, and D, 21,700 acres would be treated using prescribed fire over the next 10 years.

### **ES 1.6.1.9 Cultural and Heritage Resources**

Because cultural resources are fragile, often unique, nonrenewable resources that occupy relatively small areas, almost any management action has the potential to affect them. Primary impacts to cultural resources result from surface disturbance, visual intrusions, and theft and vandalism. Overall, Alternative C is projected to result in the most surface disturbance and, therefore would result in the greatest adverse impacts to cultural resources.

The widespread presence of paleontological resources throughout the Planning Area and their close spatial association with extractive (i.e., mineral) resources present a number of management challenges. Any surface-disturbing activities in an area that can physically alter, damage, or destroy fossils or their context may result in adverse impacts to important paleontological resources. Across all action alternatives, paleontological resource inventories would occur prior to surface disturbing activities in areas with moderate to high potential for paleontological resources. This would help surface disturbing projects avoid disturbing paleontological resources. Alternative C provides the greatest exposure to direct impacts from surface-disturbing activities, but may result in more identification of paleontological localities due to increased resource use.

### **ES 1.6.1.10 Visual Resources**

Adverse impacts to visual resources result from projects that create visual contrast with the natural form, line, color, or texture of the landscape inconsistent with the management objectives for that area. Under all alternatives, traditional resource uses and development would continue, allowing varying degrees of development and resulting in impacts to visual resources. The overall contribution of the proposed management actions to the cumulative impact on visual resources is expected to be a minor incremental increase to the visual disturbances as a result of mineral resource development, transportation, wildfire, and vegetation treatments. Additionally, there would be incremental increases in the areas managed to protect visual resources. Mitigation would likely limit the impacts in viewsheds with high scenic quality in the Billings Field Office decision area.

### **ES 1.6.1.11 Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

Currently the Billings Field Office is managing 1,925 acres and lands with wilderness characteristics. Alternative B identifies the highest number of tracts to be managed for lands with wilderness characteristics (27,292 acres), followed by Alternative D (13,653 acres) and Alternative C (3,379 acres). Under each of the alternatives these areas would be managed to protect their wilderness characteristics and this management would adversely affect resource uses and other activities (e.g. motorized vehicle use) that could degrade the naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation in these areas. By any Alternative, managing any of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics for other resource values could lead to long-term degradation of wilderness values on those lands, although generally those lands have other management prescriptions which could provide some similar protective measures.

## **ES 1.6.1.12 Resource Uses and Support**

### **ES 1.6.1.12.1 Mineral Resources**

Mineral resources include locatable, leasable (fluid minerals and coal), and mineral materials. The Billings Field Office manages 10,804,549 acres of federal mineral estate in the planning area. Implementation of the alternatives would result in public lands remaining open (a beneficial impact), or withdrawn or segregated (an adverse impact) from locatable mineral entry under the mining laws.

Under Alternative A, the entire planning area is open to locatable mineral entry except for 1,855 acres which are currently withdrawn and would remain withdrawn from locatable mineral entry for all Alternatives. BLM consideration to future proposals to develop locatable minerals in the planning area would vary between alternatives. Areas recommended for withdrawal from locatable mineral entry in the planning area range from 37,845 acres (Alternative A) to 269,122 acres (Alternative B). In cases involving valid mining claims, exploration for locatable minerals would occur under all alternatives. With the exception of bentonite, the development potential for other locatable minerals in the planning area is low. Commercially important bentonite deposits in the planning area are located in southern Carbon County and occur in the Mowry and Thermopolis formations. Current and future bentonite surface mining operations would not be affected under any of the alternatives because the mining claims are valid, existing rights and the areas recommended for withdrawal do not coincide with areas having development potential.

The development potential for fluid leasables in the planning area ranges from moderate to no potential, depending on location. The Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD) scenario for the Billings Field Office is 2 to 4 oil and gas wells per year for all Alternatives. Management actions that restrict or constrain the potential for oil and gas leasing, development, and exploration would result in adverse impacts; management actions that ease restrictions or maintain areas as open for oil and gas exploration and development would result in beneficial impacts. All of the alternatives include management that restrict oil and gas leasing and development to varying levels, with Alternative A generally allowing the most development and Alternative B the least. Alternative A contains the smallest acreage managed as administratively unavailable for oil and gas leasing (39,730 acres), followed by Alternative C (65,891 acres), Alternative D (72,915 acres), and Alternative B (302,713 acres).

Coal development could occur under alternatives A, C, and D. However, under alternative B, future coal leasing actions would be prohibited. Most of the area closed to coal development in Alternatives A, C, and D occurs in areas where the coal development potential is extremely low or does not exist.

Areas recommended for closure to mineral materials disposal in the planning area range from 44,583 acres (Alternative A) to 343,745 acres (Alternative B). Although there is a wide variance between alternatives, the plan would provide land-use opportunities for the development of mineral materials. It would provide economic benefits and meet local

infrastructure needs while protecting or minimizing adverse impacts to other resources and their uses.

The BLM anticipates only limited development for locatable minerals, fluid minerals, coal, and mineral materials during the life of the plan and, therefore, effects to the development of these resources from the alternatives are expected to be minimal.

#### **ES 1.6.1.13 Lands and Realty**

Land Resources includes lands and realty, renewable energy, travel and trail management, recreation and visitor management, non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, and livestock grazing management.

Impacts to the lands and realty program from implementing the alternatives include land disposal, acquisition, and withdrawal, and management that make realty actions more difficult to complete (i.e. larger ROW avoidance and exclusion areas). Alternative A identifies the most land available for disposal (7,529 acres with an additional 2,088 acres identified for further study), followed by Alternative C (4,223 acres), Alternative D (170 acres), and Alternative B (50 acres). ROWs are for infrastructure and facilities, including renewable energy facilities for wind, solar, and biomass that are in the public interest and require authorization for location over, under, on, or through BLM-administered land. Adverse impacts to ROWs result from restrictions, in the form of avoidance/mitigation and exclusion areas, on the location of ROWs. Alternative A is the least restrictive followed by Alternatives C, D, and B.

#### **ES 1.6.1.14 Renewable Energy**

Impacts to Renewable Energy from implementing the alternatives include restrictions on renewable energy development. Alternative A has the least restrictions on renewable energy development, followed by Alternatives C, D, and B.

#### **ES 1.6.1.15 Travel and Transportation**

Adverse impacts to travel and transportation management result from restrictions on or closures of travel routes to motorized or mechanized vehicles, while beneficial impacts would result from management that increases access to public lands. Currently travel is limited to existing roads and trails. Eleven Travel Management Areas (TMAs) are proposed under Alternatives B, C, and D, with the number of miles or roads open/closed to motorized use varying by alternatives. Alternative A is the least restrictive (no TMAs), followed by Alternatives C, D, and B. Overall, Alternative C would cause the fewest adverse impacts (and the most benefits) to travel and transportation management, followed by alternatives A, D, and B.

#### **ES 1.6.1.16 Recreation**

Management that affects settings, experiences, and the ability of recreationists to achieve desired beneficial outcomes from uses on public lands (e.g., hunting or camping) are impacts to recreation. The increase in vehicle-based recreation and urban development, and associated

population growth all contribute to increased demand for recreational opportunities in the region. As a result the decision area could experience increased recreational visitors over the life of the plan, which could degrade certain recreational settings, resulting in diminished recreational opportunities and experiences, or increase user conflicts associated with dispersed unconfined recreational opportunities. There would be a minor incremental impact to recreational opportunities and experiences from proposed management actions.

#### **ES 1.6.1.17 Livestock Grazing**

The primary impacts to livestock grazing result from management that alters the area available to livestock grazing, constrains the placement or types of range improvements, or changes the number of animal unit months (AUMs) available to operators. The number of acres closed to grazing is 37,408 acres for Alternative A; 38,373 acres for Alternative B; 28,622 acres for Alternative C; and 28,387 acres for Alternative D. The acres of crested wheatgrass treated over the life of the plan is greatest under Alternative B (22,414 acres) followed by Alternatives D (12,000 acres), Alternative C (2,500 acres) and Alternative A (160 acres). Crested wheatgrass conversions could cause short-term impacts to livestock grazing as a result of treatment.

#### **ES 1.6.1.18 Special Designations**

Special Designations include National Monuments, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), National Historic Landmarks, National Natural Landmarks (NNLs), National Historic Trails (NHTs), Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSRs), Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), and Horse Ranges (PMWHR).

##### **ES 1.6.1.18.1 Pompeys Pillar National Monument and ACEC**

Under all Alternatives, Pompeys Pillar National Monument and ACEC (432 acres) would continue to be managed to protect the historical, cultural, and biological values, including its outstanding viewsheds and unique resources of the area. Emphasis on providing opportunities for interpretation, education, and enjoyment of the area would continue. The ACEC would be available for oil and gas leasing, subject to a No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulation. The ACEC has a low mineral development potential; therefore, while the NSO stipulation protects the values of concern within the ACEC, there would be minimal adverse impacts to oil and gas leasing. Pompeys Pillar National Monument (51 acres) which is included in a portion of the ACEC, would be managed to protect the historical and cultural objects for which it was nominated, and would be withdrawn from all forms of entry, location, selection, sale or disposition, subject to valid existing rights.

The National Historic Landmark (NHL 6 acres) which includes the rock feature itself would be managed as a VRM Class II to protect the values associated with the landform. The remainder of the ACEC would be managed as VRM Class III. This would allow for interpretive and educational programming, facilities and access to and within the site, while ensuring the visual quality and visual obtrusions are minimized or mitigated to protect the scenic values of the area.

#### **ES 1.6.1.18.2 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

ACECs are designated to protect resources, natural systems, and natural hazards values. ACECs proposed in the Decision Area include cultural, paleontological, vegetation, wildlife, special status species, recreational, and scenic values. To protect the values of concern, ACECs commonly include restrictions on mineral development and other surface-disturbing activities or motorized vehicle use. Alternative B, containing the most restrictive management activities proposes 12 ACECs (181,175 acres), followed by Alternative C (11 ACECs and 67,079 acres), Alternative D (11 ACECs and 38,786 acres), and Alternative A (9 ACECs and 37,896 acres). Alternative B, while proposing the largest acreage for ACEC designation, contains the most restrictive management. Alternative B would be the most effective at protecting the values of concern within ACECs by restricting resource uses and activities within these areas, followed by Alternatives D, C, and A respectively.

#### **ES 1.6.1.18.3 National Historic Trails**

National Historic Trails (NHTs) are designated to protect cultural resources; the principle impacts to the Nez Perce (Nee-me-poo or Nimi'ipuu) NHT and the Lewis and Clark NHT arise directly from development activities and intrusions into the viewshed that alter the environment that contributes to the trails' significance. Alternative B provides the greatest protection for these trails through the application of larger buffer zones for surface-disturbing activity (both no surface occupancy [NSO] and controlled surface use [CSU] stipulations). The larger acreage of special designations and limited resource use under Alternative B also reduce the potential for direct and indirect adverse impacts. Alternative C allows the greatest resource use, and provides the least protection through special designations, but does provide more effective proactive management, including NSO and CSU restrictions, than Alternative A. Alternative A, the existing management, includes the least effective proactive management in part because of the change in understanding of the adverse impact of viewshed intrusions that has evolved since this management was developed.

#### **ES 1.6.1.18.4 Wild and Scenic Rivers**

Alternatives A and C manage the eligible waterway segments and associated waterway corridors and seek to preserve their free-flowing characteristics, outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs), or characteristics that justified their tentative classifications. In contrast, under Alternative B, the eligible waterways would be managed as suitable for inclusion in the WSR system. Alternative D proposed to manage only 2 of the eligible waterways as suitable for inclusion in the WSR system.

Alternative B is the most protective of WSR eligible and draft suitable waterway segments and could result in the greatest beneficial impact to the free-flowing characteristics, ORVs, and characteristics that justified their tentative classifications as wild, scenic, or recreational waterways by restricting or limiting resource uses that could degrade these qualities. Alternatives A and C include the least restrictive management of several resource uses and would have the fewest adverse impacts on mineral development, livestock grazing, and timber harvesting. Due to the extent and intensity of the restrictions under Alternative B, the beneficial

impacts to the WSR-related qualities and the adverse impacts to other activities and resource uses would be greatest under this alternative.

#### **ES 1.6.1.18.5 Wilderness Study Areas**

WSAs exist under all alternatives and are managed under the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands under Wilderness Review, which restricts discretionary activities in WSAs to ensure that their suitability for Wilderness designations is not impaired. Although there are limited discretionary actions the BLM can take that would affect WSAs, management under Alternative B would result in the greatest beneficial impacts to WSAs by emphasizing resource protection and limiting the potential for activities, such as motorized vehicle use, in and adjacent to WSAs that may adversely affect wilderness characteristics, followed by alternatives D, C, and A, respectively.

#### **ES 1.6.1.18.6 Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range**

The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) was established under two Secretarial Orders in 1968 and 1969 prior to the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. The PMWHR is to be managed principally, but not necessarily exclusively, for the benefit of wild horses within the authorities of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, as amended. The designation of the PMWHR itself does not restrict other uses (travel, mineral and energy development, commercial activities, etc.) it is the overlaying management of the WSAs that restricts commercial activities within the PMWHR.

#### **ES 1.6.1.19 Social and Economic Resources**

Socioeconomic resources include social conditions, economic conditions, health and safety, environmental justice, and tribal treaty rights.

Impacts to social conditions in the Planning Area include changes in the quality of life for the various groups and individuals who have a direct relationship to management of BLM lands. These groups include ranchers/livestock grazing permittees, recreationists (including those who enjoy motorized and non-motorized activities), groups and individuals who prioritize resource protection, groups and individuals who prioritize resource use, wild horse advocates and American Indian Tribes. In some cases, social conditions are closely tied to changes in economic impacts including employment, earnings and tax revenues for local and state governments.

Under Alternatives A and C, the quality of life of permittees, those who prioritize resource use, and some residents of small communities would be maintained. Those who place a high priority on protection of wildlife habitat, water resources, vegetation, etc., would not feel these resources would be adequately maintained. Under Alternatives B, the quality of life of those who prioritize resource protection would be maintained while that of permittees, some residents of small communities, and those who favor resource use would decline. Alternative D offers a balance between resource use and resource protection which would meet many of the needs of the groups and individuals interested in public lands.”

While minority and low-income populations exist in the Planning Area, none of the alternatives are expected to result in disproportionate adverse impacts to these populations. The BLM would continue to consult with interested tribes regarding issues of importance to the tribes under all alternatives.

The combined effects of the anticipated level of activities associated with BLM management under each alternative would contribute about 477 to 492 local jobs and \$19.94 million to \$20.81 million in wage and proprietor's income. This would be less than 0.3% of current local employment and income. Annual revenues to the federal government would be between \$8.0 to 9.8 million; payment to the counties would be between \$4.21 to 4.5 million, most of which would be related to mineral leasing, rents, and production royalties, again varying by alternative. Local populations would increase by an average of 119 people and the number of households would increase by 41 to 50 households, varying by alternative. Populations and households would increase by approximately 0.05% relative to current levels.

Common to all alternatives, the employment, income, and revenue effects of BLM resource management would be spread unequally among the counties and communities within the Planning Area and the 10 counties that make up the local economy. Most of BLM land and minerals base and land/mineral uses are in Carbon and Musselshell counties. Much of the economic impacts would also occur in those counties. The influence of resource management on BLM-administered lands would not change local economic diversity (as indicated by the number of economic sectors), dependency (i.e. where one or a few industries dominate the economy), or stability (as indicated by seasonal unemployment, sporadic population changes, and fluctuating income rates). The population density and average income per household would continue to be about the same as current levels.

## **ES 1.7      The Next Steps**

This Draft RMP and EIS, now issued, provides 90 days for public comment. A series of five public meetings on this Draft RMP and EIS are scheduled during the 90-day comment period in Big Timber, Billings, Bridger, Roundup, Montana, and Lovell, Wyoming. Following the 90-day public comment period, the BLM will prepare a Final EIS considering comments submitted. The Proposed RMP and Final EIS is scheduled for release after an analysis of the public comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS and appropriate adjustments made in the plan. The Record of Decision scheduled subsequent to release of the Proposed RMP and Final EIS.

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# Reader's Guide to This Document

## Volume 1

- **Chapter 1: Purpose and Need for Action.** This chapter introduces the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (Draft RMP/EIS), describes the purpose and need to which BLM is responding, provides an overview of the BLM planning process, identified planning issues and criteria, summarizes consultation and coordination, and identified topics not addressed by this RMP revision.
- **Chapter 2: Resource Management Alternatives.** Chapter 2 describes how the four alternatives (A through D) were developed, the components and content of each alternative, and discusses the alternatives considered but eliminated from further consideration. It also presents a comparative summary of impacts of each alternative. Resource discussions in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are organized according to the following topics:
  - ▶ *Physical, Biological, and Cultural/Heritage Resources* – Air, Climate Change, Geology, Soil, Water, Vegetation (Forests and Woodlands, Rangelands, Riparian and Wetlands, Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds, Special Status Plants), Wildlife Habitat and Special Status Species, Fisheries Habitat and Special Status Species, Wild Horses and Burros, Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources, Visual Resources, Wildland Fire Ecology and Management, Wilderness Characteristics, Cave and Karst Resources
  - ▶ *Resource Uses and Support* – Energy and Mineral Resources (Coal, Fluid Minerals, Locatable Minerals, Mineral Materials), Forestry and Woodland Products, Lands and Realty (Land Tenure Adjustment and Access; Rights-of-Way, Leases and Permits; and Withdrawals), Livestock Grazing, Recreation and Visitor Services, Trails and Travel Management, Renewable Energy, Transportation and Facilities
  - ▶ *Special Designations* – Pompeys Pillar National Monument and ACEC, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, and National Historic Trails
  - ▶ *Socioeconomic Resources* – Social and Economic Conditions, Environmental Justice, and Tribal Treaty Rights
- **Chapter 3: Affected Environment.** This chapter describes the Decision Area and the existing environmental conditions that could be impacted by the alternatives. Chapter 3 also serves as the baseline for analysis of impacts in Chapter 4.

## Volume 2

- **Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences.** Chapter 4 forms the scientific and analytic basis for comparing environmental impacts of each alternative, including the No Action Alternative. Impacts generally are described in terms of direct or indirect and short-term or long-term, when applicable. Potential cumulative and unavoidable impacts and irreversible and irretrievable commitments are also discussed in this chapter.
- **Chapter 5: Consultation and Coordination.** This chapter describes the public participation opportunities and the consultation and collaborative efforts made as part of the RMP/EIS revision process. This chapter also includes the names and qualifications of the people responsible for preparing this Draft RMP/EIS.
- **Chapter 6: References.** This chapter provides full citation information for all references cited within the document.
- **Glossary:** The glossary defines select terms used throughout this document.

## Volume 3

- **Appendices A-X:** The appendices include documents that support existing resource conditions or situations, substantiate analyses, provide resource management guidance, explain processes, or provide information directly relevant or supporting conclusions in the Draft RMP/EIS. There are twenty-nine numbered appendices, twenty-four of which are included in this volume.

## Volume 4

- **Appendices Y, Z, AA, AB, and AC:** The appendices include documents that support existing resource conditions or situations, substantiate analyses, provide resource management guidance, explain processes, or provide information directly relevant or supporting conclusions in the Draft RMP/EIS. There are twenty-nine numbered appendices, five of which are included in this volume.
- **Maps:** Maps depict the affected environment or the alternatives by resource. For hard copy versions of the document, all maps except the oversize Travel Management Area (TMA) maps are printed and found after Appendix AC. All maps, including the Travel Management Area (TMA) maps, are provided on a CD at the back of Volume 2. For CD versions of the document, maps are provided in a separate file on the CD. Electronic copies of the maps are also available on the project website:  
[http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/billings\\_field\\_office/rmp.html](http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/billings_field_office/rmp.html)

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