



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Butte Field Office
106 North Parkmont
Butte, Montana 59701-9701
www.blm.gov/mt

In Reply Refer To:
9200 (MTB070)

June 6, 2014

Dear Reader:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Butte Field Office (BFO) is making available the Iron Mask Planning Area Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-MT-B070-2013-0019-EA) for a 45 day public comment period beginning on June 6, 2014 and ending July 22, 2014. The EA is available on the BFO webpage at: http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/butte_field_office.html

In addition to the 45 day comment period the BLM will be hosting an open house to discuss the Iron Mask Planning Area EA and to answer questions about the proposed projects in the planning area. The open house is scheduled for June 25, 2014 at the U.S. Forest Service, Townsend Ranger District Office, 415 S. Front St., Townsend, Montana, between 5:00 P.M. and 7:00 P.M.

The Iron Mask Planning Area is located near Townsend, Montana and includes approximately 26,397 acres of land. Over 10,000 acres are in the Limestone Hills Montana National Guard Military Training Area. In late 2013, management of the training area lands was transferred from the BLM to the Department of the Army. However the BLM remains responsible for permitting livestock grazing and regulating mining within the training area, therefore, the training area is included as part of the environmental analysis.

The EA analyzes three alternatives: the No Action (current situation), Proposed Action (Alternative B) and a second Action Alternative (Alternative C). Potential decisions to be made in the Iron Mask Planning Area include:

- Which travel routes within the Iron Mask acquisition area would be managed as open to the public for motorized use, or limited to authorized/administrative uses, and what restrictions would be required, if any; including the location of parking areas and trailheads.
- What, if any, types of structural range improvements and grazing systems would be established for the Indian Creek Forage Reserve grazing allotment.
- Whether or not to renew grazing authorizations on six allotments that will expire in coming years or are currently authorized under Appropriation Act provisions.
- Whether changes to existing grazing authorizations are needed to meet RMP Standards for Rangeland Health and land health goals.
- Determine the availability of 579 relinquished AUMs in the Limestone Hills allotment.
- Whether to treat upland vegetation to restore vegetation communities toward a more historic condition with regard to vegetation/wildlife habitat types and wildland fuels conditions, and if so, how many acres would be treated with what types of treatments.

- What actions, if any, would be taken to address soil erosion and water quality impacts in the project area which are occurring from historic mining, one large stream headcut, and locations on roads where water flow is disrupted.
- Whether to treat riparian vegetation communities, and if so how would they be treated to meet RMP goals and management actions for Riparian Management Zones.
- Whether to reconstruct or make adjustments to existing fences that do not currently meet wildlife specifications.

Commenting

At this time, we would like to hear your comments on the Iron Mask Planning Area EA, and unsigned Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Specifically, we would like your comments on any additional issues, concerns, analysis, or alternatives that should be evaluated by the BLM before making a decision on the above listed items. We will use your comments to help complete the EA and issue a subsequent Decision Record.

If you care to comment, please make your comments as specific as possible, including suggestions regarding resource issues, data sources, or alternatives to be considered in the final environmental analysis.

Please provide your comments to the Butte Field Office at 106 N. Parkmont, Butte, MT 59701 or e-mail to: sfrankli@blm.gov Comments received after July 22, 2014 may not be considered in completing the EA and Decision Record/FONSI.

All comments must contain the name and address of the submitter. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personally identifying information in your comment, you should be aware 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 your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

If you have questions regarding the Iron Mask project, please contact the Project Lead, Scot Franklin at the Butte Field Office at (406) 533-7603 or e-mail at: sfrankli@blm.gov

Sincerely,

//SIGNED//
Scott Haight
Field Manager