

United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Miles City Field Office
111 Garryowen Road
Miles City, Montana 59301-0940
<http://www.mt.blm.gov/mcfo/>



February 1, 2013

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the *Miles City Field Office Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* for the Miles City Field Office (MCFO). The resource management plan/environmental impact statement (RMP/EIS) has been prepared by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the following cooperating agencies: Big Horn, Carter, Custer, Daniels, Fallon, Garfield, Powder River, Richland, Rosebud, Sheridan, Treasure, and McCone counties; Carter, Garfield, McCone, Prairie, Richland, and Wibaux conservation districts; Prairie County Cooperative State Grazing District; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; Montana Department of Environmental Quality; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA); United States Fish and Wildlife Service; United States Bureau of Indian Affairs; and the Lower Brule and Fort Peck Tribes. In addition, the BLM collaborated with the Little Beaver Conservation District, United States Forest Service, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, and Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council in preparation of the Draft RMP/EIS.

The Draft RMP/EIS considers and analyzes five alternatives that address future management of approximately 2.8 million acres of federal surface and 11.0 million acres of federal mineral estate in eastern Montana administered by the BLM's MCFO. Alternative E is identified as the agency's Preferred Alternative. Although a Preferred Alternative has been identified, a final decision has not been made. The final decision, which will be documented in a record of decision, will be made after consideration of the comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS and after a Proposed RMP/Final Environmental Impact Statement (Proposed RMP and Final EIS) has been released. Compact disc copies of the document may be obtained through the MCFO or at the MCFO RMP website: http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/miles_city_field_office/rmp.html.

The Draft RMP/EIS consists of four volumes: Volume I includes an Executive Summary and Chapters 1, 2, 3, and part of Chapter 4; Volume II includes the rest of Chapter 4, Chapter 5, the Bibliography, Glossary, and Index; Volume III includes all appendices; and Volume IV contains the maps.

References to "sage-grouse" throughout the document refer to greater sage-grouse.

You are invited to review and comment on the Draft RMP/EIS. The public review period for the Draft RMP/EIS is 90 calendar days from the publication date of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* by the USEPA. Information regarding public meeting dates and times to discuss the plan and provide comment will be released through the news media and MCFO RMP website after the publication of the USEPA notice. Written comments need to be sent to: MCFO RMP Comments, 111 Garryowen Road, Miles City, MT 59301-0940. Email comments may be submitted to this email address: BLM_MT_MCFO_RMP@BLM.gov. Comments will be fully considered and evaluated in the preparation of the Proposed RMP and Final EIS, and all substantive comments will be addressed.

Comments will be most useful if they are specific, mention particular pages where appropriate, and address one or more of the following:

- inaccuracies or discrepancies in information;
- identification of new information relevant to the analysis;

- identification of new impacts, alternatives, or mitigation measures; or
- specific suggestions for improving management direction.

Comments, including name and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the MCFO during regular business hours between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. You may request confidentiality if you are commenting as an individual but you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comments. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. 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. Anonymous comments will not be considered. All submissions from organizations, businesses, and individuals identifying themselves as representatives of officials, organizations, or businesses will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

We appreciate your help in this planning effort and look forward to your continued interest and participation. For additional information or clarification regarding this document, please contact Mark Jacobsen, Public Affairs Specialist, at (406) 233-2800.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Todd D. Yeager", with a horizontal line extending to the left.

Todd D. Yeager
Miles City Field Manager

**MILES CITY FIELD OFFICE
DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
AND
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Responsible Agency: United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Draft (X) Final ()

Type of Action: Administrative (X) Legislative ()

Abstract: The *Miles City Field Office Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (RMP) describes and analyzes five alternatives for managing the public lands and resources in the planning area. The planning area consists of BLM-administered lands and minerals in eastern Montana in Carter, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, McCone, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Treasure, and Wibaux counties and portions of Big Horn and Valley counties.

To assist the agency decision maker, cooperating agencies, and the public in focusing on appropriate solutions to planning issues, the Draft RMP considers five alternatives. Alternative A is a continuation of current management (No Action Alternative). Under this alternative, use of public lands and resources would continue to be managed under the two existing RMPs, as amended. Alternative B emphasizes more protection of physical, biological, and heritage resources while providing for the lowest level of development. Alternative C emphasizes resource development while protecting physical, biological, and heritage resources. Alternative D maximizes revenue and economic opportunities through natural resource development while meeting legal, environmental, and cultural requirements. Alternative E is the BLM's Preferred Alternative, which is not a final agency decision but instead an indication of the agency's preliminary preference for management that reflects the best combination of decisions to achieve BLM program goals and policies, meet the purpose and need, address the key planning issues, and consider the recommendations of cooperating agencies and BLM specialists.

Major RMP issues include livestock grazing; energy development; wildlife habitat management, including sage-grouse; special designations, including areas of critical environmental concern; special recreation management areas; national trails; and wilderness study areas. The alternatives present a range of management actions to achieve goals and desired future conditions for the Miles City Field Office (MCFO). When completed, the record of decision for the RMP will provide comprehensive, long-range decisions for managing public resources in the MCFO and identifying allowable uses on the BLM-administered public lands and federal mineral estate.

Comments on the Draft RMP will be accepted for 90 days following publication of the Notice of Availability by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in the *Federal Register*. The comment period will be announced in news releases, newsletters, and at http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/miles_city_field_office.html, the RMP website.

For further information, contact:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the *Miles City Field Office Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (RMP) is a single, comprehensive land use plan to guide management of lands and minerals administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Miles City Field Office (MCFO) area. Conditions in the planning area have changed since the approval of the Big Dry and Powder River RMPs, necessitating a plan update. These conditions include new laws, regulations, and policies that supersede previous decisions and changed ecological, socioeconomic, institutional, and regulatory conditions; and user demands and activities.

The Draft RMP will be reviewed by the public and then reissued as a Proposed RMP/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); proposed decisions are not approved until the BLM issues the record of decision (ROD). The ROD is the planning document outlining management decisions for the MCFO planning area.

Land use plan decisions are made on a broad scale and guide subsequent site-specific implementation decisions. The land is managed for multiple uses and activities. The RMP makes the following types of decisions for the planning area:

- establishes resource goals, objectives, and desired future conditions;
- describes actions to achieve goals, objectives, and desired future conditions;
- makes land use allocations and special designations; and
- identifies land adjustment categories.

PREPARERS AND COLLABORATORS

The BLM is the agency responsible for the preparation of this Draft RMP. Included in the planning process are 27 formally designated cooperating agencies, which include tribal governments and federal, state, and local agencies.

PLANNING AREA

The planning area is all of the land within the MCFO administrative boundary, which includes Carter, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, McCone, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Treasure, and Wibaux counties as well as portions of Big Horn and Valley counties. In addition to BLM-administered lands, the planning area contains state, private, United States Forest Service (USFS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), United States Bureau of Reclamation, and United States Bureau of Indian Affairs lands. These lands include the Custer National Forest (USFS), Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS), and Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory (USDA). Landowners and land management agencies with significant holdings in the area include the BLM, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (which administers state trust lands and minerals), Fort Peck Tribes, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. The Crow Indian Reservation borders the planning area. However, the decision area is composed only of those lands administered by the BLM (surface and mineral estate).

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process has three tiers of planning: policy, RMP, and activity plans. This document is part of the RMP process, which includes scoping and drives the preparation of the RMP. Issues identified during scoping for the draft RMP include those described below.

- ***Issue 1: Vegetation Communities***
 - How will vegetation be managed on BLM-administered lands to achieve healthy ecosystems while providing for a broad range of multiple uses?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ***Issue 2: Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat, Special Status and Priority Plant and Animal Species***
 - How will BLM-administered lands be managed to provide wildlife habitat and conserve and recover special status plant and animal species and priority species?
- ***Issue 3: Travel Management and Access***
 - How should BLM manage motorized public travel to meet the needs for public access and resource uses while minimizing user conflicts and impacts to air, soil, watersheds, vegetation, wildlife, and other resource values?
- ***Issue 4: Recreation***
 - How should recreation management accommodate the full range of recreational uses enjoyed by the public on BLM-administered lands?
- ***Issue 5: Special Designations, including areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs), national trails, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness study areas (WSAs)***
 - Which areas, if any, should be managed with special designations? How should they be managed to protect values that warrant their special designation status?
- ***Issue 6: Master Leasing Plan Areas***
 - Which areas, if any, qualify for a master leasing plan? How should they be managed to minimize conflicts between fluid mineral development and other resources?
- ***Issue 7: Climate Change***
 - How can the BLM incorporate climate change adaptation or responses into its land management practices?

The BLM is also preparing the plan to identify master leasing plan (MLP) areas. These are areas of majority federal interest with medium to high potential for oil and gas occurrence and in which industry has expressed an interest in leasing the area. Identification of the areas is being done to ensure orderly, effective, timely, and environmentally responsible leasing of federal oil and gas.

The RMP is also being prepared to incorporate consistent objectives and conservation measures for the protection of sage-grouse and its habitat. These conditions drive the need for an inclusive, comprehensive plan that provides updated and clear direction to both the BLM and the public. This RMP revision will also incorporate appropriate management actions and practices to conserve greater sage-grouse and its habitats on BLM-administered land.

The BLM has developed management alternatives to address these planning issues and concerns.

BLM regulations require that the RMP be consistent with related local and state resource plans as long as they are consistent with federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. Similar plans in the area were reviewed during the preparation process.

MANAGEMENT GOALS, CONCERNS, AND DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

The following are goals for the management of BLM-administered lands in the planning area. Within the capability of the resources, the BLM strives to:

- sustain and, where necessary, restore the health and diversity of forest, rangeland, aquatic, and riparian ecosystems;
- support a sustainable flow of benefits in consideration of the social and economic systems of Eastern Montana; and
- provide diverse recreational and educational opportunities.

Desired future conditions, management goals, visions, and management concerns pertaining to resources, resource management activities, or land uses include the following: air quality, soil, water, cultural resources, traditional cultural properties (TCPs), paleontological resources, visual resources, lands and realty, hazardous material management, social and economic environments, environmental justice, and American Indian Tribes.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED FURTHER

Several issues raised during scoping and considered but not analyzed include those described below.

- The BLM should engage in prairie dog extermination. The numbers of hunting permits issued should be changed.
- Hunting and fishing should be recognized as historic, and traditional uses in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument should be included in current and future management plans.
- Provide equitable distribution of firefighting resources across the state.
- The Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge should be returned to BLM management.
- Detailed surveys of proposed development areas should be conducted before any development occurs.
- Water from Fort Peck Reservoir should remain in Montana.

CHAPTER 2: ALTERNATIVES

The goal of alternative development is to prepare different combinations of management to address issues and resolve multiple use conflicts. Alternatives must be reasonable and respond to the issues; meet the purpose and need; provide a mix of resource protection, use, and development; and meet established planning criteria. Each alternative is a complete land use plan that provides a framework for multiple use management of the full spectrum of resources, resource uses, and programs present in the planning area. Under all alternatives, the BLM will manage the public lands in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, BLM policy and guidance, and the Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health.

Five alternatives are presented in the RMP. Alternative A, a continuation of current management (also known as the No Action Alternative) was developed using existing planning and management documents, policies, and decisions; available inventory data; and established land use allocations. Alternatives B, C, and D were developed with participation and recommendations from the BLM interdisciplinary teams, collaborating agencies, cooperating agencies, the Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council, and public input collected during scoping workshops. Alternative E is the BLM's Preferred Alternative and is based on collaborator input and impacts from Alternatives A, B, C, and D. The alternatives are limited to those that are executable and those that employ reasonable methods for managing public lands and federal minerals while still offering a broad range of management scenarios to be evaluated.

ALTERNATIVE A

Alternative A would abide by all new laws and BLM policies implemented since the completion of the Powder River and Big Dry RMPs while continuing present management direction and activities. The current levels, methods, and mixes of multiple use management of public lands in the planning area would continue and resource values would receive attention at current levels. Three existing special recreation management areas (SRMAs) would continue to receive focused management. 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 were met.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B would enhance resource protection by minimizing resource development and land use. This alternative would emphasize active measures to enhance resource values and fish and wildlife habitats. Products from vegetation management in all habitats would be secondary to restoring healthy upland forest and riparian areas. In some cases and in some areas, uses would be prohibited to protect sensitive resources. Under this alternative, restrictions would more frequently be applied to broad habitats rather than focusing on specific sensitive resources in individual geographic areas. An MLP has been identified for an area in Carter County. Special designations would create eight new SRMAs and six new ACECs. Each of these special designation areas would receive focused management.

ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C would enhance the public's use of the land and resources in a long-term, environmentally sustainable manner while emphasizing local economic interests. This alternative would recommend a moderate level of protection, use, restoration, and enhancement of resources. Alternative C represents a mix and variety of actions that would resolve the issues and management concerns in consideration of all values and programs. Restrictions to protect resources would be implemented and monitoring and consultation with state agencies would be used to adjust restrictions for surface-disturbing activities. An MLP has been identified for an area in Carter County. Special designations would create eight new SRMAs and six new ACECs. Each of these special designation areas would receive focused management.

ALTERNATIVE D

Alternative D would provide the least restrictive resource management. This alternative would maximize revenue and economic opportunities through natural resource development while meeting legal, environmental, and cultural requirements. Restrictions to protect resources would be implemented only to the extent necessary to meet legal requirements. Alternative D would not create any new SRMAs, but six new ACECs would be designated. The existing SRMAs would be managed as part of the extensive recreation management area (ERMA) along with one existing ACEC (Howrey Island). This alternative contains the least restrictive oil and gas stipulations. An MLP has been identified for an area in Carter County.

ALTERNATIVE E (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

Alternative E would enhance the public's use of the land and resources in a long-term, environmentally sustainable manner while emphasizing local economic interests. This alternative would recommend a moderate level of protection, use, restoration, and enhancement of resources. Alternative E represents a mix and variety of actions that would resolve the issues and management concerns in consideration of all values and programs. Restrictions to protect resources would be implemented and monitoring and consultation with state agencies would be used to adjust restrictions for surface-disturbing activities. An MLP has been identified for an area in Carter County. Special designations would create eight new SRMAs and six new ACECs. Each of these special designation areas would receive focused management.

CHAPTER 3: AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The affected environment in the planning area (including resources, resource uses, special designation areas, and social and economic conditions) is described in this chapter.

The MCFO planning area includes all or portions of 17 counties, approximately 2.8 million BLM-administered surface acres, and 11.0 million BLM-administered acres of mineral estate. Primary uses of public lands in the planning area include livestock ranching, agriculture, and mineral development. A complex history of homestead and railroad land grants has resulted in fragmented surface and subsurface mineral ownership across the majority of the planning area.

The planning area is characterized as a semi-arid continental regime of the Great Plains grasslands. Average annual temperature is about 45 degrees Fahrenheit (°F). Winters are cold and dry while the summers are warm to hot. The frost-free season ranges from 100 days per year in the north to more than 200 days further east. Maximum rainfall occurs in summer, with about 10 inches of precipitation per year. Because evaporation exceeds precipitation, the total supply of moisture is low. The effects of climate change include changes in climate indicators, such as temperature and precipitation, as well as effects on many natural resources, including air quality, water quality, flora, fauna, and many other resources on local, regional, national, and global scales. Climate change also affects human health and economic resources. In addition to temperature and total precipitation changes, predicted climate changes include changes in precipitation timing by season and an increase in extreme rainfall events and other extreme weather events. Increases in average summer temperatures and earlier spring snowmelt in the planning area are expected to increase the risk of wildfires by increasing summer moisture deficits (Karl, Melillo, and Peterson 2009). Climate change also poses challenges for many resource uses on BLM-administered lands.

This RMP addresses air quality within the study area, which extends beyond the planning area and includes nearby areas in which air quality could potentially be affected by activities within the planning area. In some cases, data sources used to describe air resource characteristics in the planning area are located outside of the planning area. With the exception of a particulate matter (PM₁₀) nonattainment area near Lame Deer within the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, air quality throughout the planning area is good. Despite increases in population and resource extraction, recent monitored air pollutant concentrations remain well below National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in all portions of the planning area (including the Lame Deer area). Good air quality is expected to continue.

Derived mainly from sedimentary rock, soils in the planning area have diverse physical, chemical, and biological properties. Soils are commonly calcareous, poorly developed, and contain few coarse fragments.

Water resources across the planning area are present as surface water (e.g., rivers, streams, creeks, coulees, springs, reservoirs, lakes, ponds, wetlands, and canals) and groundwater from a variety of geologic strata. Irrigation is the predominate use of surface water, composing approximately 95 percent of the total surface water withdrawn. Groundwater is extremely important in the planning area.

Six general land classes occur in the planning area: agriculture or urban areas, grassland, shrubland, forests, riparian areas, and barren lands. Ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, limber pine, Rocky Mountain juniper, green ash, quaking aspen, boxelder, and bur oak forest habitat types occur in the planning area. Forestlands occur in six distinct geographic and geologic areas in the planning area: the Missouri Breaks in Garfield County, areas south of the Yellowstone River, Ekalaka Hills-Chalk Buttes in Carter County, Cedar Creek Anticline, the Terry Badlands, and areas north of the Yellowstone River. The primary invasive species targeted for control in the planning area include Russian knapweed, spotted knapweed, diffuse knapweed, leafy spurge, Canada thistle, common hound's-tongue, field bindweed, and salt-cedar.

Vegetation in the planning area includes rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs that provide habitat for a variety of wildlife (including fish, aquatic arthropods, amphibians, reptiles, and bivalves) and riparian communities. Big game, game birds, non-game wildlife, and special status wildlife species occur in the planning area. Some special status wildlife species are transient species while others reside and breed in the planning area, including greater sage-grouse.

Expanding energy development in western North America poses a major new challenge for sage-grouse conservation. Primary ongoing threats to sage-grouse include habitat loss, fragmentation, and deterioration resulting from factors including the spread of invasive species, infrastructure development, rapidly expanding energy development, wildfire, conversion of sagebrush habitats to nonnative species or agriculture, and conifer invasion (USFWS 2005d), which occurs throughout the planning area. (See the *Minerals* section for current numbers of oil and gas wells.) There are approximately 16.9 million acres of sage-grouse habitat in the planning area, including approximately 2.5 million acres (15 percent) on BLM-administered lands. As part of the BLM's December 2011 *National Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy*, transmitted via Washington IM 2012-044, the BLM is preparing amendments to formal land use plans to further govern management of sage-grouse on BLM-administered lands. The planning strategy will evaluate the adequacy of BLM RMPs and

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

address, as necessary, revisions and amendments throughout the range of the greater sage-grouse. Management Zone 1, which is part of the Rocky Mountain Region of this planning effort, includes this RMP's planning area.

Evidence of wildfire can be traced through the review of fire scars across all landscapes in the Northern Rockies. The planning area has an active fire season, with an average fire occurrence of 96 fires. The majority of fires occur during July and August.

Cultural resources in the planning area include archeological, historic, architectural properties, and traditional lifeway values important to American Indian groups. In the planning area, there is approximately one cultural site for every 100 acres of land.

The planning area is rich in paleontological resources, producing world famous fossils and supporting extensive research. The Hell Creek formation, Judith River formation, and Tullock member of the Fort Union formation are important geological formations occurring in the planning area. About 10 to 15 paleontological excavations occur in the planning area each year.

The planning area includes unique areas with a variety of scenic qualities. The planning area still maintains much of the scenic quality and pristine viewsheds encountered over the past 25 years.

The MCFO administers 1,776 grazing allotments comprising approximately 2,736,673 public acres and 546,570 public animal unit months (AUMs). Cattle are the most common livestock use category in the planning area (1,728 allotments), followed by sheep (132), horses (101), bison (3), and burros (1). Grazing systems are designed to maintain or improve plant diversity.

The planning area includes the Williston and Powder River basins, which are two geological formations important to mineral production. Minerals or mineral materials in the area include geothermal, oil and gas, coal, bentonite, uranium, gold, clinker (scoria), sand and gravel, and coal bed natural gas (CBNG). Renewable resources in the planning area include wind, biomass, solar power, and geothermal. An MLP area has been proposed in the planning area.

Recreation activities available within the planning area include hunting, wildlife viewing, driving for pleasure, fishing, picnicking, camping, hiking, OHV use, rock collecting, mountain biking, floating, horseback riding, photography, and snowmobiling. However, the most intensive, area-wide recreational use occurs during the big game hunting season. Off-highway vehicle use (OHV) use is one of the fastest growing Montana activities, and OHV use on public land is expected to increase in the planning area.

The planning area contains seven wilderness study areas (WSAs), totaling approximately 97,248 acres. Sixteen areas, located in 10 counties, are designated areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) and include significant cultural and paleontological resources in the form of fossils, prehistoric scatter, and wildlife. The planning area also includes the Big Sky National Back Country Byway and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. There are no wild and scenic rivers in the planning area.

Sparsely populated (less than two people per square mile) and predominately rural, the planning area population was 87,085 in 2010 (less than one-tenth of the population of the entire state). County populations ranged from over 10,000 in Custer, Big Horn, and Roosevelt counties to less than 2,000 in Carter, Treasure, Wibaux, Prairie, Powder River, McCone, Daniels, and Garfield counties. The 2010 planning area population estimate represented a decline of 6 percent since 2000, with all counties losing population except Big Horn, Richland, and Fallon counties. Agriculture, mineral and energy development, and recreation and tourism are important industries in the planning area. Important positive contributors to quality of life were proximity to the outdoors and wide-open spaces, good people, small town atmosphere, an active and supportive community, an ability to earn a living, opportunity for outdoor recreation, and the presence of suitable places to raise children.

CHAPTER 4: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Chapter 4 provides detailed descriptions of effects from the alternatives and discussion of the cumulative impacts, irretrievable and irreversible commitments of resources, and unavoidable adverse impacts of the alternatives.

Selection of Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, would maintain the current rate of progress in meeting land health standards and protecting resource values. Generally, it would allow for use levels to continue at current levels in current locations in the planning area; however, adjustments would be required to meet Standards for Rangeland Health or mitigate resource concerns in compliance with existing laws and regulations.

Alternative B would allow many uses to continue, and BLM actions under this alternative would have the least potential to impact physical and biological resources. However, certain activities such as livestock grazing and oil and gas development would be severely restricted to maintain or improve land health conditions and protect crucial wildlife habitat areas.

Alternative C would provide a moderate level of protection, and potential impacts to physical and biological resources from BLM actions under this alternative would be reduced. Wildlife habitat monitoring and consultation with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) would assist in meeting these goals. Habitat adjustments caused by surface occupancy or timing restrictions would potentially result in alteration or limitation of uses and activities.

Alternative D would offer the greatest potential for economic benefits from resource extraction but result in greater impacts to the physical and biological environment than actions proposed under Alternatives B and C. Although legal restrictions would still be applied, uses would generally be the least encumbered by management under this alternative.

Alternative E (Preferred Alternative) would provide a moderate level of protection, and potential impacts to physical and biological resources from BLM actions under this alternative would be reduced. Wildlife habitat monitoring and consultation with MFWP would assist in meeting these goals. Habitat adjustments caused by surface occupancy or timing restrictions would potentially result in alteration or limitation of uses and activities.

CHAPTER 5: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The BLM prepared a public participation plan to guide project management and team efforts in the development of the RMP and to ensure public involvement before and during the preparation of the RMP.

Major participation events included nine public scoping meetings, numerous cooperating agencies meetings, and an alternative development workshop. The BLM held scoping meetings to explain the planning process and gather input and mailed more than 9,000 informational scoping brochures to agencies, organizations, and individuals to solicit additional comments. Newsletters were prepared and sent to addresses on the mailing list throughout the preparation period.

In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and in recognition of the government-to-government relationship between tribes and the federal government, letters of introduction were sent to 13 tribal governments to inform them of the RMP revision. These letters, which also requested input on issues and concerns for the BLM to consider during the planning process, initiated efforts to identify areas of traditional cultural concern and extended offers of cooperating agency status. Subsequent contact with tribes was made throughout the planning process and during formal consultation.

As required by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), the BLM initiated consultation with the USFWS and consultation with the USFWS will continue throughout the RMP process. The BLM also participated in multiple sage-grouse presentations across the planning area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The BLM maintains a website to provide information on the RMP and planning process. In addition to outreach described above, other informal meetings, telephone conversations, and visits with agency representatives and public occurred as requested. Twenty-seven cooperating agencies assisted throughout development of the RMP.



Bighorn sheep at Strawberry Hill Recreation Area in Custer County

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

µeq/L	Micro-Equivalents per Liter	FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
µg/m ³	Micrograms per Cubic Meter	FR/CC	Fire Regime and Condition Class
µS/cm	Microsiemens per Centimeter	FSEIS	Final Supplement to the Montana Statewide Oil and Gas Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Amendment of the Powder River and Billings Resource Management Plans
ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern		
AMP	Allotment Management Plan		
AO	Authorized Officer		
AQRV	Air Quality Related Value		
APD	Application for Permit to Drill		
ARM	Administrative Rules of Montana	GHG	Greenhouse Gas
ARMP	Air Resource Management Plan	GIS	Geographic Information Systems
ATV	All-terrain Vehicle	gpm	Gallons per Minute
AU	Assessment Unit	GPS	Global Positioning System
AUM	Animal Unit Month	HAP	Hazardous Air Pollutant
BCC	United States Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern	HDD	Horizontal Directional Drilling
		IB	Information Bulletin
		IM	Instruction Memorandum
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs	IMPROVE	Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual Environments
BLM	Bureau of Land Management		
BMP	Best Management Practice	IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
BNKHD-JNS	Bankhead-Jones/Land Utilization Lands (BLM-administered)	kg/ha-yr	Kilogram per Hectare per Year
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation	kV	Kilovolt
BP	Before Present	LANDFIRE	Landscape Fire and Resource Management Planning Tools Project
C	Celsius		
CASTNet	Clean Air Status and Trends Network	lb	Pound
CBNG	Coal Bed Natural Gas	lb/in ²	Pound per Square Inch
ccf	100 cubic feet	MAAQs	Montana Ambient Air Quality Standards
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations	mbf	Thousand Board Feet
cfs	Cubic Feet per Second	mbf/year	Thousand Board Feet per Year
cm	Centimeters	MBMG	Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology
COA	Condition of Approval	MBOGC	Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation
COOP	Cooperative Observer Program	MCA	Montana Code Annotated
CSD	Controlled Surface Disturbance	MCFO	Miles City Field Office, Bureau of Land Management
CSU	Controlled Surface Use		
dBA	A-weighted decibel	mDarcies	milliDarcies (one thousandth of a darcy unit)
DOE	United States Department Of Energy	MDEQ	Montana Department of Environmental Quality
DOE-EIA	United States Department Of Energy-Energy Information Administration	MDNRC	Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
dS/cm	deciSiemens per meter	MFWP	Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
Dv	Deciview	mg/L	Milligrams per Liter
EA	Environmental Assessment	MIST	Minimal Impact Suppression Tactics
EC	Electrical Conductivity		
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement	MLP	Master Leasing Plan
EOR	Enhanced Oil Recovery	mmhos	Millimhos per Centimeter
ERMA	Extensive Recreation Management Area	MNHP	Montana Natural Heritage Program
ESA	Endangered Species Act		
F	Fahrenheit		

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

MOU	Memorandum of Understanding	R&PP	Recreation and Public Purposes Act
MPDES	Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System	RAWS	Remote Access Weather Stations
mph	Miles per Hour	RCA	Reserve Common Allotment
MSO	Montana State Office, Bureau of Land Management	RCM	Revised Code of Montana
MSU	Montana State University	RFD	Reasonably Foreseeable Development
mt	metric ton	RMP	Resource Management Plan
mtpy	metric tons per year	ROD	Record of Decision
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards	ROW	Right-of-Way
NADP	National Atmospheric Deposition Program	RSC	Recreation Setting Characteristics
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act	S/cm	Siemens per centimeter
ng/L	Nanograms per Liter	SAR	Sodium Adsorption Ratio
NHL	National Historic Landmark	SLAMS	State and Local Air Monitoring Stations
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act	SN	Sundry Notice
NLCS	National Landscape Conservation System	SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
NNL	National Natural Landmarks	SUPO	Surface Use Plan of Operations
NOI	Notice of Intent	TCP	Traditional Cultural Properties
NOS	Notice of Staking	TDS	Total Dissolved Solids
NPS	National Park Service	TKN	total Kjeldahl nitrogen
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service	TMA	Travel Management Area
NREL	National Renewable Energy Laboratory	TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places	TPA	Travel Planning Area
NSD	No Surface Disturbance	TPS	Total Petroleum System
NSO	No Surface Occupancy	tpy	tons per year
NTL	Notice to Lessee	TSS	Total Suspended Solids
NVCS	National Vegetation Classification System	$\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	micrograms per cubic meter
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge	U.S.C.	United States Code
NWSRS	National Wild and Scenic Rivers System	USDA	United States Department Of Agriculture
OHV	Off-Highway Vehicle	USDI	United States Department of the Interior
PEIS	Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement	USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
PFC	Proper Functioning Condition	USFS	United States Forest Service
PFYC	Potential Fossil Yield Classification	USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
PILT	Payment in Lieu of Taxes	USGS	United States Geological Survey
PNVG	Potential Natural Vegetation Groups	USNVCS	United States National Vegetation Classification System
PO	Plan of Operations	VOC	Volatile Organic Compounds
POD	Plan of Development	VRI	Visual Resource Inventory
ppb	Parts per Billion	VRM	Visual Resource Management
ppm	Parts per Million	WDEQ	Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
PRB	Powder River Basin	WDFG	Wyoming Department of Fish and Game
PRPA	Paleontological Resources Protection Act	WEM	Waivers, Exemptions, and Modifications
PSD	Prevention of Significant Deterioration	WMPP	Wildlife Monitoring and Protection Plan
PSQ	Probable Sale Quantity	WO	Washington Office, Bureau of Land Management
PTHV	Montana Permit to Hunt from the Vehicle	WSA	Wilderness Study Area