Reader's Guide

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 identifies 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:

- **Natural, Biological, and Cultural Resources** – Air, Climate Change, Geology, Soil, Water, Vegetative Communities (Forest 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, Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources, Visual Resources, Fire Management and Ecology, and Wilderness Characteristics.

- **Resource Uses and Support** – Forest 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, Energy and Mineral Resources (Coal, Fluid Minerals, Locatable Minerals, Mineral Materials), Transportation and Facilities, and Renewable Energy.

- **Special Designations** – Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Historic Trails, and Back Country Byways.

- **Social and Economic** – Social and Economic Conditions, Environmental Justice, and Tribal Treaty Rights.

Chapter 2 provides a great deal of comparative information in the form of tables. These tables include:

- Table 2-1 is a summary of the restrictions that are proposed to protect resources and manage uses.
- Table 2-2 provides a description and comparison of the alternatives including the management actions that are common to all alternatives.
- Table 2-3, the last section of Chapter 2, provides a comparison of impacts by alternative.

Chapter 3: Affected Environment. This chapter describes the planning area and the existing environmental conditions that could be impacted by the alternatives.

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 of resources are also discussed in this chapter. A comparison of impacts is located in the Summary Comparison of Impacts Table (Table 2-3) which is located at the end of Chapter 2 (after the Summary Comparison of Alternatives Table).

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.

Bibliography: The bibliography provides full citation information for all references cited within the document.

Glossary: The glossary defines select terms used throughout the document.

Appendices: The appendices include documents that support existing resource conditions or situations, substantiate analyses, provide resource management guidance, explain processes, or provide information directly relevant to or supporting conclusions in the Draft RMP/EIS.

Maps: Maps are provided with the printed version of the document. 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 at http://blm.gov/m1kd.

Executive Summary

Introduction

This Draft 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 Dakota Field Office (SDFO). The South Dakota RMP would revise the 1986 South Dakota RMP. The BLM's SDFO headquarters is located in Belle Fourche in Butte County, near the state's western border. The planning area for the SDFO and this Draft RMP covers the entire state of South Dakota, which includes approximately 49.3 million acres of public, private, and state lands, and Native American reservations. Within the planning area, the BLM administers about 274,000 acres of BLM public land surface. The BLM manages approximately 1.7 million acres of federal mineral estate in 37 counties. Collectively, the lands that the BLM administers (surface and mineral estate) are considered the "Decision Area." Over 99 percent of the BLM administered surface and mineral estate in South Dakota is located in the western part of the state.

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 alternatives 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 (existing plans and guidance). The analysis considers a range of reasonable alternatives that provide for various levels of resource protection and opportunities for recreational activities, leasing and development of mineral resources, livestock grazing, and other land use activities.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this RMP is to provide a single, comprehensive land use plan to guide management of public lands and minerals administered by the SDFO. The RMP provides goals, objectives, land use allocations, and management direction to maintain, improve, or restore resource conditions and to provide for the long-term benefits to the public, including economic needs of local communities. This is done in coordination with federal, tribal, state, and local governments; land users; and the interested public. This RMP revision will also incorporate appropriate management actions and practices to conserve sage-grouse and its habitats on BLM-administered land.

The need for the revision is the result of considerable changes within the planning area since completion of the SD RMP in 1985, including:

- Changed ecological, socioeconomic, institutional, and regulatory conditions;
- New laws, regulations, and policies that invalidate or supersede previous decisions;
- Changing user demands and activities, including increased demand for recreational use of public lands, renewable energy, and oil and gas exploration and development;
- Increased conflicts between land use and wildlife/wildlife habitat; and
- Heightened public awareness and interest in BLM management actions and permitted uses.

In March 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its listing decision for the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) as "Warranted but Precluded." Inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms was identified as a major threat in the USFWS finding on the petition to list the Greater Sage-Grouse. The USFWS has identified the principal regulatory mechanism for the BLM as conservation measures in RMPs. Based on the identified threats to the Greater Sage-Grouse and the USFWS timeline for making a listing decision on this species, the BLM needs to incorporate objectives and adequate conservation measures into RMPs in order to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse and potentially reduce the need to list the species as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. This RMP revision incorporates specific management actions and conservation measures to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitats on BLM land. Throughout this document Greater Sage-Grouse are referred to as sage-grouse.

These conditions drive the need for an inclusive, comprehensive plan that provides updated, clear direction to the BLM, other agencies and entities, and the public.

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:

Issue: Energy Development. Manage energy development to provide for domestic energy production while protecting the integrity of other resources.

Issue: Vegetation Management. Manage public lands to provide desired plant communities and meet objectives of the BLM Standards for Rangeland Health (Standards can be found in Appendix A).

Issue: Wildlife Habitat. Manage public lands to conserve wildlife species, maintain or improve their habitats, and control invasive species.

Issue: Special Status Species. Manage public lands to conserve and recover threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species. In March 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) warranted protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing the species was precluded by the need to address other, higher-priority species first (75 FR 13910, March 23, 2010). One reason for the USFWS decision was an identified need for "improved regulatory mechanisms" to ensure species conservation. The principal regulatory mechanisms for BLM are Resource Management Plans (RMPs); therefore, the BLM is using this opportunity to develop long-term and effective management for the species on the BLM-administered lands (WO IM No. 2012-044).

Issue: Travel Management and Access. Determine how transportation and access would be managed in the planning area to provide for use and enjoyment of public lands, while protecting significant resource values and providing user safety.

Issue: Commercial Uses. Determine what public lands would be available for commercial activities and how those activities would be managed.

Issue: Land Ownership Adjustments. Determine criteria to make public land tenure adjustments, including disposal of public land and acquisition of nonpublic lands, and determine what public lands may be available for future adjustment activities.

Issue: Visual Resource Management. Manage public land to conserve or improve visual resource values.

Issue: Climate Change. Provide for adaptable, flexible management and diverse, healthy ecosystems that are resilient to the impacts of climate change. Consider the impact of BLM actions on climate change.

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 South Dakota RMP Revision Project are summarized below. The full planning criteria can be viewed on the South Dakota Field Office website at http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/south_dakota_field/rmp.html in the Scoping Report.

- Address all BLM-administered surface and mineral estate 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 Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health (Dakotas portion) to all activities and provide for public safety and welfare relative to fire, hazardous materials, and abandoned mine lands.
- Apply the appropriate Montana/Dakotas Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (Dakotas portion) to grazing allotments in the planning area.
- Comply with NEPA, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and all applicable laws, regulations, policies, and guidance.
- Consider current and potential future uses of the public lands through the development of reasonable foreseeable future development and activity scenarios based on historical, existing, and projected levels of use.
- Consult with tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious traditions.
- Consider a reasonable range of alternatives that reflects the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

Public Involvement

A Notice of Intent (NOI) published in the Federal Register on July, 19, 2007, 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 nine public scoping meetings in Belle Fourche, Buffalo, Faith, Hot Springs, Pierre, Rapid City, Sturgis, and Union Center South Dakota between August 14 and October 9, 2007. The nine 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. A total of 89 people attended the scoping meetings and provided 44 comments. Public attendance was good in areas with significant amount of public lands. Attendance in areas with a low amount of public land was limited to one or two people. An additional 265 comments were received through letters, e-mails and faxes.

The BLM will publish the Notice of Availability (NOA) for the South Dakota Draft RMP and EIS for public review and comment in the Federal Register. The NOA initiates the 90-day public comment period for this document. During this comment period, the BLM will hold public meetings on this Draft RMP and EIS in Belle Fourche, Buffalo, Pierre, Rapid City, and Sturgis, South Dakota.

Cooperating Agencies and Tribal Consultation

The BLM invited local, state, federal, and tribal representatives to participate as cooperating agencies on the South Dakota RMP/EIS. The BLM invited these entities to participate because they have jurisdiction by law or because they could offer special expertise.

The South Dakota Field Manager contacted county commissioners in the South Dakota counties with BLM-administered surface estate or a significant amount of mineral estate. These counties were invited to participate in the planning process as cooperating agencies and were provided information on the procedures along with a sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Harding, Butte, Custer, Meade, Pennington, and Lawrence counties signed a cooperating agency MOU with the BLM. Butte, Harding and Meade counties participated in cooperating agency meetings on a regular basis. The State of South Dakota also signed the cooperating agency MOU and participated as a cooperating agency by designating a representative who participated in cooperating meetings on a regular basis. The U.S. Forest Service was also invited to participate as a cooperating agency but did not sign a cooperating agency agreement. From 2008 to 2012 a total of nine cooperating agency meetings were held to summarize the comments received through scoping, develop alternatives, and solicit input from cooperating agencies. Development of this Draft RMP and EIS considered comments from cooperating agencies on previous administrative drafts.

The BLM invited Native American tribes and councils that are in the planning area to be cooperating agencies but did not receive any offers of interest. A tribal representative from the Dakota Resource Advisory Council was invited to cooperating agency meetings and attended one meeting. An instructor of the American Indian Studies program at Black Hills State University who serves as a RAC member representing the public at large attended cooperating agency

meetings on a regular basis from 2008 to 2012. The BLM met with various tribes including the Rosebud, Lower Brule, Standing Rock, and Cheyenne River Sioux, the Northern Cheyenne, and the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Nations to discuss the RMP and other projects starting in 2008. Consultation with the tribes will continue throughout the RMP process.

The USFWS and U.S. Forest Service are cooperators for the larger Greater Sage-grouse planning effort, which includes the South Dakota RMP. The MOU between the BLM, USFWS and USFS was signed in March 2012.

Highlights of Management Actions Common to All Alternatives

- BMPs and Mitigation Guidelines (Appendix B) will be used to guide management practices to minimize impacts based on site-specific evaluations.
- Priority will be placed on actions that reduce or mitigate Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by actions such as enhanced energy efficiency, use of lower GHG-emitting technologies, renewable energy, planning for carbon capture and sequestration, and the capture or beneficial use of fugitive methane emissions.
- All Fire Management Units in the planning area will be designated as Category B where suppression is required, but prescribed fire and mechanical treatments will be utilized.
- National fire suppression guidelines and the current Fire Management Plan will be utilized to guide fire suppression techniques.
- The State of South Dakota, Division of Wildland Fire Suppression will continue to provide suppression responsibilities in cooperation with local rural and volunteer fire departments. The BLM Eastern Montana/Dakotas District Office in Miles City, Montana will continue to provide suppression responsibilities within Harding County in northwest South Dakota. The SDFO is not equipped to conduct suppression of wildfire. Wildlife urban interface (WUI) areas will be prioritized for fuels treatments in conjunction with completed Community Wildfire Protection Plans.
- Fire Regime Condition Class will be used to determine the level of fuels treatment outside of WUI areas.
- The Fort Meade Recreation Area and Fossil Cycad Area will be managed as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs).
- A range of forest conditions (savanna to dense canopy, newly regenerated to mature stands) will be maintained. All appropriate silvicultural systems (even-aged, two-aged, uneven-aged) will be used for management.
- Rangeland Health Standards may be applied to other uses of BLM-administered public land, as applicable.
- Permitted use levels for livestock grazing would be allocated at approximately 25 percent of the available annual forage production for livestock and 75 percent of the annual forage production to meet wildlife and watershed needs (not to be confused with utilization levels which is a percent of current year's growth removed by animals).
- The BLM will continue to manage the portions of the Centennial National Recreation Trail that are located on BLM-administered land and will work with the State of SD, other agencies, and stakeholders to assist with the management of the Mickelson National Recreation Trail.
- Firearm shooting will be allowed except in portions of the Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC. Specific areas may be closed to firearm shooting if health and safety issues arise, littering occurs or conflicts with other resources or resource uses occur.
- Oil and gas timing limitation lease stipulations will not apply to the operation and maintenance of production facilities. Mitigation of potential surface-disturbing or disruptive activities associated with oil and gas operation and maintenance activities would be applied as needed at the project level through Conditions of Approval or BMPs to minimize the impact of human activities on important seasonal wildlife habitats.
- Leasing and development decisions also apply to geophysical exploration. When a geophysical application is received, restrictions may be placed on the application to protect resource values or mitigate impacts to them. Some of these requirements may be the same as oil and gas lease stipulations. Other less restrictive measures

may be used when impacts to resource values will be less severe. This is due in part to the temporary nature of geophysical exploration. The decisions concerning the level of protection required are made on a case-by-case basis when a Notice of Intent (NOI) is received.

- No surface occupancy and use will be allowed within floodplains in Alternative A (Current Management), B, C, and D (Preferred Alternative) or within 1/4 mile of least tern or piping plover habitat.
- The Fort Meade ACEC (6,574 acres) will be recommended for continued withdrawal of locatable minerals and would be continue to be closed to other minerals.
- Motorized travel will be limited to existing roads and trails, unless otherwise restricted. Motorized cross-country travel will be allowed for BLM grazing lease holders if the travel is essential to administer the lease, provided it does not result in resource damage or wildlife disruption. The BLM may limit or prohibit administrative cross-country travel on a seasonal or site-specific basis to limit impacts to resources. Use of snowmobiles or vehicles specifically equipped to drive over snow will be prohibited in the Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC.
- Existing public access routes will be retained in land adjustment actions.
- The BLM will continue to work with partners and willing landowners to proactively secure access to the public lands for the use and enjoyment of the public with consideration of the working landscape and the intermingled landownership pattern that is present.
- Acquired lands will be managed the same as adjacent BLM-administered public lands or, if isolated, the same as nearby BLM-administered public lands. Exchanges will be the preferred method of land adjustment.
- Identified cultural resource sites will be assigned to cultural resource use categories as defined in Chapter 3, Cultural Resources; Best Management Practices and Guidelines.
- The Back Country Byway designation and management will continue as detailed in the 1996 Fort Meade ACEC Management Plan.

Management Actions Common to Alternatives B, C, and the Preferred Alternative (Alternative D)

At the minimum, Travel Management Areas (TMAs) will include the Center of the Nation (Map 2-1), Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC (Figure 2-1), and Exemption Area (Figure 2-3). Motorized travel will be limited to existing roads and trails. Cross-country travel with snowmobiles and vehicles specifically equipped to travel on snow will be allowed except in the Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC and portions of the Exemption Area. Travel management plans will be completed at the implementation (project) level after the RMP/EIS planning process is complete.

The Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC will be designated a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA).

Approximately 86,578 of public land will be available for disposal pending site-specific environmental review.

Land ownership adjustment criteria are described in detail in the Summary Comparison of Alternatives (refer to the Lands section of Table 2-2 and Map 2-2 located at the end of Chapter 2, and Appendix I).

The Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad ACEC will continue to be managed as ACECs. The acres managed within these ACEC would vary slightly by alternative.

All sage-grouse habitat and use areas that are not identified as a Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs will be managed as General Habitat. Mitigation and conservation actions for sage grouse would be applied as shown in Appendix V.

When applicable, stipulations developed for oil and gas development may be applied to other resource uses and activities pending environmental review at the project level (implementation level).

Alternatives Considered in Detail

To comply with NEPA requirements in the development of alternatives for this Draft RMP/EIS, the BLM sought public input and analyzed a reasonable range of alternatives, including the No Action Alternative (Alternative A). The BLM conducted a series of workshops with an interdisciplinary team comprised of BLM specialists and local and state cooperating agencies. Alternative A reflects current management under the current land use plans and amendments. The BLM formulated a Resource Use Alternative (Alternative B) and a Conservation Alternative (Alternative C) that reflect various degrees of resource protection and use. Following analysis of Alternatives A, B and C, and a review of the issues that had been identified, the interdisciplinary team provided recommendations for the Agency Preferred Alternative—Alternative D.

The BLM provided the cooperating agencies with their recommendation for the preferred alternative by providing a PowerPoint presentation of the preferred alternative. During this meeting the BLM answered questions, provided clarification when needed, and discussed potential changes. The changes recommended by the cooperating agencies were minor and were discussed between various resource specialists and the cooperating agencies. The BLM made changes to the preferred alternative when a general consensus was reached about specific topics of discussion. The Draft RMP/EIS was sent to the Montana/Dakota State Office for review and additional edits and updates were included into the Draft RMP/EIS document. The Agency Preferred Alternative does not represent a final BLM decision and may change between publication of the Draft RMP/EIS and the Proposed RMP and Final 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/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 regional 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.

The areas impacted by the restrictions that are described in the various alternatives and summaries of the restrictions are presented as follows:

- Rights-of-way (ROWs): Maps 2-15 through 2-18 and summarized in Appendix R.
- Renewable energy ROWs: Maps 2-19 through 2-24 and summarized in Appendix R.
- Oil and gas restrictions: Maps 2-25 through 2-28 and described in Appendix E1, E2, E3 and E4.

Alternative A

Alternative A (Current Management) would continue present management on the BLM-administered surface and mineral estate within the planning area and provides baseline information from which to identify potential environmental consequences when compared to the other alternatives. If selected, this management option would follow direction in the existing South Dakota RMP (as amended), the Miles City Field Office Oil and Gas Leasing EIS (1994), and the Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC Plan (1996).

The BLM would continue with the present National Register of Historic Places District Boundary for portions of the Fort Meade ACEC which includes about one-half of the ACEC. Motorized cross-country travel to retrieve big game animals would be prohibited. Cross-county travel would be allowed within 300 feet of roads to access campsites. Alternative A would not place restrictions on snowmobile use except in the Fort Meade ACEC, where it would be prohibited. Nearly all BLM-administered lands would be managed as Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs).

Alternative A would continue to balance resource protection and use but would provide less specific direction and fewer protective management actions compared to Alternatives B, C and D (Preferred Alternative). Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative A places the fewest constraints on resource uses. Alternative A would provide very limited direction for management of ROWs and renewable energy development throughout the planning area. ROW restriction areas for Alternative A are displayed in Maps 2-15 and 2-20. In Alternative A, NSO, CSU, and timing limitations would apply to oil and gas activities only. In many cases, resource protection would be limited to standard oil and gas stipulations to protect sensitive and high value resources. The specific areas and amount of acres affected by closure or recommended withdrawal of minerals for all alternatives are shown in Table 2-1 and are summarized in Table 2-2 (Summary Comparison of Alternatives - Minerals section). These areas are displayed in Maps 2-25 through 2-28.

Alternative B

Alternative B emphasizes commercial use while providing the minimum protection necessary to protect physical, biological, cultural and visual resources. Alternative B provides fewer constraints than Alternatives C and D, but provides more constraints than current management (Alternative A) because it brings current management up to date. Alternative B creates protection priority areas for sage-grouse and provides additional wildlife restrictions for surface-disturbing activities, as well as additional buffers around sensitive soils and wildlife habitat. Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs in Alternatives B and D would be smaller than those developed for Alternative C (refer to Map 2-4, Table 2-1 and the Special Status Species Section of Table 2-2). In Alternatives B and D 83,744 surface acres and 253,357 oil and gas mineral acres would be managed as Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs. The BLM would only allow new grazing allotments in the Exemption Area in the Black Hills where grazing capability criteria are met. High value resources including important wildlife habitat would be avoidance areas for renewable energy development. ROW restriction areas for Alternative B are displayed in Maps 2-16 and 2-21.

Compared to Alternatives C and D, Alternative B would provide less stringent measures to protect sensitive soils by utilizing Controlled Surface Use (CSU) in these areas (soils with low fugitive dust resistance and low restoration potential). NSO stipulation would apply in PPAs and they would be managed as avoidance areas for all types of ROWs. Oil and gas minerals that are impacted by stipulations associated with Alternative B are shown in Map 2-26.

Under Alternative B, the Fort Meade ACEC and the Exemption Areas would be managed as SRMAs. As noted in the management common to Alternatives B, C, and D, the Fort Meade Recreational Area and the Fossil Cycad ACEC would continue to be managed as ACECs. Under this alternative, the entire Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC would be formally nominated as a National Historic Landmark for a National Register Landmark listing. Pending project-level environmental review and approval, the BLM would allow the transfer of up to 226 acres of surface/mineral estate out of the Fort Meade Recreational Area ACEC for use as a National Cemetery and South Dakota Army National Guard facility.

Motorized cross-country travel would be limited to 300 feet from the nearest road to retrieve downed big game animals and to access campsites in dispersed recreational areas. Use of snowmobiles and vehicles specifically equipped to travel on snow would be unrestricted (except in the Fort Meade ACEC) unless damage to resources/ infrastructure occur, wildlife is disturbed, or safety problems become evident. In the Fort Meade ACEC, use of snowmobiles and vehicles specifically equipped to travel on snow would be prohibited.

In general, the oil and gas stipulations ROW restrictions under Alternative B would involve more constraints and would address specific resource concerns better than Alternative A, but would provide less stringent restrictions than Alternatives C and D. Under Alternatives B, C and D, stipulations would not be limited to oil and gas production; they may be applied to other resource uses as applicable and when needed to protect or manage resources and resource uses.

Alternative C

Alternative C emphasizes conservation of resources. Compared to other alternatives, Alternative C provides the highest degree of resource protection for physical, biological, visual, and cultural resources.

The BLM would not allow new grazing allotments in the Exemption Area in the Black Hills. In addition, this alternative would provide more stringent grazing management requirements than the other alternatives.

In most cases, sensitive resources and important wildlife habitat would be exclusion areas for renewable energy development. Alternative C creates the largest protection priority areas for sage-grouse (refer to Map 2-5) and provides the most stringent wildlife restrictions for surface-disturbing activities through additional PPA acres for sage-grouse, more ROW exclusion areas, and in many cases, expanded protective buffers for wildlife habitat. Alternative C provides the greatest degree of protection within PPAs by closing or recommending withdrawal of all minerals in PPAs except those already claimed or leased. The PPA protection would include 93,266 surface acres and 289,563 of oil and gas subsurface mineral estate. The PPAs would be closed to oil and gas development. The PPAs would be recommended for withdrawal from locatable mineral development and exploration. PPAs would be closed to salable mineral development and exploration and closed to other fluid energy minerals (geothermal) and other non-energy leasable minerals (potash, sodium etc.) development and exploration. Oil and gas minerals that are impacted by stipulations associated with Alternative B are shown in Map 2-27. PPAs would be unsuitable for coal leasing and closed to exploration. All sage-grouse habitat that is not part of a PPA would be managed as General Habitat as noted in Map 2-5. PPAs would be excluded from renewable energy and other types of ROWs. This alternative would close all leasable and salable federal minerals at the abandoned Black Hills Army Depot (BHAD) and the adjacent former town of Igloo. BHAD and Igloo are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, throughout the area there were activities that required some Superfund actions. The BHAD is located next to the former town of Igloo (refer to Figure 3-22) south of Edgemont, SD.

In addition to the Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad ACECs, all Greater Sage-Grouse Protection Priority Areas (PPAs) would be managed as an ACEC (refer to Map 2-5) in Alternative C. In the Fort Meade Recreational Area ACEC, the number of acres protected as an ACEC would be slightly higher as the exchange of land for the Fort Meade National Cemetery (up to 170 acres) and South Dakota Army National Guard facility (up to 50 acres) would not occur. The BLM would revise the National Register of Historic Places Fort Meade District nomination to incorporate 3,370 additional acres inside the District Boundary and incorporate the entire Military Reservation. Total acreage in the Historic District would be changed to 6,570 acres. In Alternative C, the Fort Meade Recreational Area would be managed as a SRMA and the Exemption Area would be managed as an ERMA.

Motorized cross-country travel to retrieve big game animals would not be allowed (the same as Alternative A). Motorized wheeled travel would be allowed within 100 feet of roads to access campsites in dispersed recreational areas (the same as Alternative D). Snowmobiles and vehicles specifically equipped to travel on snow would be restricted to designated roads and trails.

Under Alternative C, No Surface Occupancy and Use restrictions would be applied to sensitive soils and steep slopes. In contrast, Alternatives A, B, and D would manage these areas as CSUs. In general, the stipulations and ROW restrictions under Alternative C would provide a higher degree of constraint on resource uses compared to Alternatives A, B and D. Alternative C provides the most acres of closed, recommended withdrawal, and ROW exclusion areas (Table 2-1 and Appendix R). ROW restriction areas for Alternative C are displayed in Maps 2-17 and 2-22. Alternative C provides more acres managed as Travel Management Areas (TMAs). In addition to the Center of the Nation, Fort Meade, and Exemption Area TMAs, all areas within sage-grouse General Habitat would be managed as a TMA (refer to Map 2-5). Under Alternative C, No Surface Occupancy and Use restrictions would be applied to sensitive soils and steep slopes. In contrast Alternatives A and B would manage these areas as CSUs and Alternative D would manage slopes from 25-50 percent as CSU and slopes over 50 percent as NSO.

Alternative D (Agency Preferred Alternative)

Alternative D increases conservation of physical, biological, and cultural and visual resources compared to Alternatives A and B but does not provide the more stringent resource protection measures that were developed under Alternative C.

In general, the stipulations under Alternative D would provide an intermediate degree of restriction compared to Alternatives B and C. Alternative D would provide more specific direction to protect resources and manage resource uses than Alternative A. Under Alternatives B, C and D, stipulations would not be limited to oil and gas production; they may be applied to other resource uses as applicable and when needed to protect or manage resources and resource uses. Oil and gas minerals that are impacted by stipulations associated with Alternative C are shown in Map 2-28. The areas managed as Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs would be the same as Alternative B (Map 2-4). Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs in Alternatives B and D would be smaller than those developed for Alternative C (refer to Map 2-4). In Alternatives B and D, 83,744 surface acres and 253,357 oil and gas mineral acres would be managed as Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs. The No Surface Occupancy and Use stipulations would apply in the PPAs. The PPAs would be managed as exclusion areas for renewable energy ROWs and avoidance areas for other types of ROWs. ROW restriction areas for Alternative D are displayed in Maps 2-18 and 2-23.

The criteria for allowing new grazing allotments in the Exemption Area in the Black Hills would be the same as Alternative B.

Pending project-level environmental review and approval, the BLM would allow the transfer of up to 226 acres of surface/mineral estate out of the Fort Meade Recreational Area ACEC for use as a National Cemetery and South Dakota Army National Guard facility (same as Alternative B).

Prior to completion of a Travel Management Plan, motorized cross-country travel to retrieve downed big game animals would be prohibited (the same as Alternatives A and C). Cross-country travel would be allowed within 100 feet of existing roads to access campsites in dispersed recreational areas (the same as Alternative C). This decision would be revaluated when a Travel Management Plan is completed.

Sensitive and high value resources including important wildlife habitat would be a mixture of avoidance and exclusion areas for renewable energy development (Table 2-1, 2-2 and summarized in Appendix R). No surface occupancy use restrictions will be applied to sensitive soils.

Alternative D would revise the current National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Fort Meade Historic District site boundary to incorporate all additional acres, approximately 3,370 acres inside the original Military Reservation, that are administered by the BLM. The BLM would consider a National Historic Landmark nomination, contingent on other partnering agency cooperation.

Specific Details about the Alternatives and Summary of the Environmental Consequences

This section provides additional details about the alternatives and provides basic details about the environmental consequences (impacts) 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 on the human environment under each of the four alternatives, while focusing on key planning issues identified by the BLM and raised by the public and stakeholders during the scoping process. The analysis of environmental consequences is organized according to resource area, and includes: physical resources, mineral resources, fire and fuels management, biological resources, cultural and visual resources, land resources, special designations, and socio-economics.

Physical Resources

Air

Under management common to all alternatives, priority will be placed on actions that reduce or mitigate Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by actions such as enhanced energy efficiency, use of lower GHG-emitting technologies, renewable energy, planning for carbon capture and sequestration, and the capture or beneficial use of fugitive methane emissions.

Alternative B would result in the greatest amount of smoke from prescribed fires. Under all alternatives, smoke from prescribed fire would be minor, localized, and would last for a few days each year. If oil and gas drilling reaches the upper level of the reasonably foreseeable development scenario, the potential to exceed air quality standards for dust, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, ozone, and nitrogen dioxide would tend to be moderately increased, and would need to be evaluated to find whether measures should be taken by the state to ensure that standards are met. This would apply to all of the alternatives.

Soil and Water

Alternative C would result in greater surface use restrictions that would provide the most protection to soil and water resources. Potential short- and long-term adverse impacts to surface and groundwater would be less than under other Alternatives.

Mineral Resources

Alternative A provides the most opportunities for development of mineral resources. Under Alternative A, 103,033 surface and 798,690 oil and gas mineral acres would be open to leasing without restrictions other than standard terms and conditions. Locatable federal minerals under the Fort Meade ACEC (6,574 acres) and Fossil Cycad ACEC (320 acres) would be recommended for continued withdrawal. Leasable federal minerals under the Fort Meade ACEC and oil and gas under the Fossil Cycad ACEC would continue to be closed (no lease).

Alternative B provides for a moderate level of development of mineral resources. Under Alternative B, 59,416 surface and 487,627 oil and gas mineral acres would be open to leasing without restrictions other than standard terms and conditions. Locatable federal minerals under the Fort Meade ACEC (6,574 acres), Fossil Cycad ACEC (320 acres), and Bear Butte National Historic Landmark (410 acres) would be recommended for withdrawal. Leasable federal minerals under the Fort Meade ACEC would be closed. Leasable federal minerals under the Fossil Cycad ACEC and Bear Butte National Historic Landmark would be closed (no lease) except for oil and gas, which would be open to leasing with an NSO stipulation. Salable federal minerals under the Fort Meade ACEC, Fossil Cycad ACEC, and Bear Butte State Park would be closed. Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs in Alternatives B and D would be smaller than those developed for Alternative C (refer to Map 2-4, Table 2-1 and the Special Status Species Section of Table 2-2). In Alternatives B and D, 83,384 surface acres and 253,357 oil and gas mineral acres would be managed as Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs.

Alternative C provides for the least development of mineral resources. Under Alternative C, 52,146 surface and 451,382 oil and gas mineral acres would be open to leasing without restrictions other than standard terms and conditions. Locatable federal minerals under the Fort Meade (6,574 acres), Fossil Cycad ACEC (320 acres), and Bear Butte National Historic Landmark (410 acres) would be recommended for withdrawal, while leasable federal minerals and salable federal minerals would be closed (no lease).

In Alternative C, mineral development would be closed or recommended for withdrawal (depending on the type of mineral) in Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs except for valid existing rights. Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs would include 96,379 surface acres and 289,563 oil and gas mineral acres (refer to Map 2-5, Table 2-1 and the Special Status Species section of Table 2-2). PPAs would be closed to oil and gas development. The PPAs would be recommended for withdrawal from locatable mineral development and exploration. PPAs would be closed to salable mineral development and exploration and closed to other fluid energy minerals (geothermal) and other non-energy leasable minerals (potash, sodium, etc.) development and exploration. PPAs would be unsuitable for coal leasing and closed to exploration. PPAs would be excluded from renewable energy and other types of ROWs. All sage-grouse habitat that is not part of a PPA would be managed as General Habitat as noted in Map 2-5.

In general, the stipulations under Alternative D would provide an intermediate degree of restriction compared to Alternatives B and C. Under Alternative D, the acres available for mineral development would be similar to Alternative C. Approximately 52,803 surface and 461,747 oil and gas mineral acres would be open to leasing without restrictions other than standard terms and conditions. Locatable federal minerals under the Fort Meade ACEC (6,574 acres), Fossil Cycad ACEC (320 acres), and Bear Butte National Historic Landmark (410 acres) would be recommended for withdrawal, while leasable federal minerals and salable federal minerals would be closed (no lease).

Under Alternatives B and D, the acres displayed for the Fort Meade ACEC may change based on the potential transfer of up to 226 acres to the VA Black Hills National Cemetery or SD Army National Guard as noted on page xix.

Fire and Fuels Management

Under management common to all alternatives, all 274,000 acres of BLM-administered lands which includes the Exemption Area, Fort Meade ACEC, and the remainder of the South Dakota Fire Management Units would be designated as Category B (wildfire suppression would be required). Prescribed fire and mechanical treatments would be used to reduce hazardous fuels and to enhance resources. Fire Regime Condition Class would be used to determine the level of fuels treatment outside of WUI areas.

Under Alternative A, forest and rangeland fuel and vegetation treatments would average about 559 acres per year in the planning area; 346 acres would be treated mechanically and about 213 acres would be treated with prescribed fire. For the 20-year life of the RMP, total acres treated would be about 11,180 acres or about 4 percent of BLM-administered lands in the planning area. Under Alternative B, forest and rangeland vegetation treatments would average about 1,400 acres per year; 400 acres would be treated mechanically and about 1,000 acres would be treated with prescribed fire. For the 20-year life of the RMP, the total acres treated would be about 28,000 acres, or about 10 percent of BLM-administered lands in the planning area. Under Alternative C, forest and rangeland vegetation treatments would average about 850 acres per year; 350 acres would be treated mechanically, and about 500 acres would be treated with prescribed fire. For the 20-year life of the RMP, the total acres treated would be about 17,000 acres, or about 6 percent of BLM-administered lands within the planning area. Under Alternative D, vegetation treatments opportunities and fire management strategies and options would be the same as under Alternative B.

Biological Resources

Under management common to all alternatives, the BLM would continue to use an Integrated Pest Management approach for control and management of noxious weeds and invasive pests. Alternatives B and D would allow the highest levels of prairie dog control to occur. Alternative D would allow proposals for prairie dog reintroduction on large blocks of public land under specific criteria provided that cooperation with adjacent landowners is achieved. In general, Alternative C would protect more acres of wildlife and special status habitat by providing more stringent restrictions for surface-disturbing and disruptive activities, larger time frames for certain timing restrictions, and more ROW exclusion areas. In addition, Alternative C would place a higher priority on wildlife and special status species needs when proposals for range improvements are evaluated.

Alternative A would not provide for specific protection of sage-grouse through the establishment of Protection Priority Areas (PPAs).

Alternative C would provide the most protection to sage-grouse through the designation of larger protection priority areas (PPAs) of approximately 96,000 acres of surface estate and approximately 290,000 acres of subsurface federal mineral estate. These larger PPAs would be closed to oil and gas development and exploration, recommended for withdrawal from locatable mineral development and exploration, and closed to development and exploration of other leasable minerals including salable minerals, and managed as ROW exclusion areas for all types of ROWs including renewable energy ROWs. All sage-grouse habitat that is not part of a PPA would be managed as General Habitat as noted in Map 2-5.

Alternatives B and D would designate smaller sage-grouse protection priority areas of approximately 84,000 acres of surface estate and approximately 253,000 acres of subsurface mineral estate. Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs would be managed under an NSO stipulation under Alternatives B and D. Under Alternative B, Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs would be managed as ROW avoidance areas for all types of ROWs. In Alternative D, the Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs would be managed as ROW exclusion areas for renewable energy ROWs and would be avoidance areas for other types of ROWs.

Alternative A would provide minimal protection of wildlife and special status species habitat. Compared to Alternative C, Alternatives B and D would provide more acres of CSU restrictions and fewer acres that are closed or recommended for withdrawal from mineral development. Alternative C provides the most acres of ROW exclusion areas for renewable

energy ROWs and other types of ROWs. Alternative D is the next most restrictive in terms of ROWs and provides a combination of ROW exclusion and ROW avoidance areas for wildlife and sensitive species habitat.

Under Alternative C, no surface occupancy restrictions on steep slopes and sensitive soils would provide additional benefits for wildlife and special status species compared to the other Alternatives. Alternatives C and D would provide the most protection to special status species from herbicide treatments by requiring larger buffers around special status plants and around sage-grouse leks. Under management common to all alternatives, NSO restrictions in riparian areas, floodplains, wetlands, and water bodies and streams would benefit wildlife and special status species habitat.

Cultural, Paleontological, and Visual Resources

Under Alternative A, the BLM would continue with the present National Register of Historic Places District Boundary for Fort Meade, which includes 3,200 acres. Under Alternative B, the BLM would complete a formal nomination of Fort Meade as a National Historic Landmark for a National Register Landmark listing of 6,570 acres. Under Alternative C, the BLM would revise the National Register of Historic Places Fort Meade District nomination to incorporate 3,370 additional acres inside the District Boundary and incorporate the entire Military Reservation. The total acres in the Historic District would be changed to 6,570 acres. Under Alternative D, the BLM would revise the current National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Fort Meade Historic District site boundary to incorporate all additional acres, approximately 3,370 acres, inside the original Military Reservation that are administered by the BLM. The BLM would consider a National Historic Landmark nomination, contingent on partnering agency cooperation. Alternatives A and B would not require fossil surveys prior to surface disturbance in fossil rich geological formations. Alternatives C and D would require surveys in these formations.

Alternative C would be most protective of the visual resources by designating the most acres in VRM Classes II and III. VRM acres would be managed as follows: None of the alternatives would designate any VRM Class I. Alternative A would manage 1,231 acres in Class II, 4,993 acres in Class III, and 531 acres in Class IV. In Alternative A, 264,997 acres would have no VRM classification specifically identified. Alternative B would manage 1,544 acres in Class II, 5,284 acres in Class III, and 264,924 acres in Class IV. Alternative C would manage 11,657 acres in Class II, 179,212 acres in Class III and 80,883 acres in Class IV. Alternative D would manage 1,544 acres in Class II, 10,367 acres in Class III, and 259,841 acres in Class IV. Under Alternatives B and D, the acres displayed for the Fort Meade ACEC may change based on the potential transfer of up to 226 acres to the VA Black Hills National Cemetery or SD Army National Guard as noted on page xix.

Recreation

Under Alternative A, there would be no Recreation Setting Characteristic classes identified. Under Alternatives B and D, approximately 95 percent of the planning area would be managed for Middle Country Characteristics, approximately 4 percent (Fort Meade ACEC and the Exemption Area) for Front Country Characteristics; and the Fossil Cycad ACEC (0.1 percent) would be managed for Back Country Characteristics recreation. Under Alternative C, Middle Country Characteristics would be available on approximately 32 percent of BLM-administered acres. Management under Alternative C for Back Country Characteristics on approximately 65 percent of the acres would shift the recreation use type and quality. Front Country Characteristics would be available on approximately 2 percent of the acres (Fort Meade ACEC) under Alternative C (Appendix L and M).

Commercial recreational permits would be issued under Alternatives A, B and Alternative D but would not be allowed under Alternative C.

Transportation

Under Alternative A, motorized travel would be limited to existing roads on 264,706 acres and limited to designated routes on 7,046 acres (Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad ACECs). Under Alternatives B, C and D, motorized travel would be limited to existing roads on approximately 143,528 acres, and limited to designated routes on approximately 128,224 acres (Travel Management Areas and ACECs) after travel management planning is completed. Alternative C would provide the highest restriction on snowmobile use by limiting such use to designated roads and trails in all areas. All other alternatives would restrict snowmobile use to designated roads and trails within the Black Hills in the Exemption

Area, but would allow such use on the prairie except in the Fort Meade ACEC where snowmobile use would be prohibited under all alternatives.

Under Alternatives A and B, motorized travel cross country for camping purposes would be limited to within 300 feet of existing roads and trails after locating the campsite in a non-motorized fashion, while Alternatives C and D would restrict motorized travel cross country for camping purposes to a 100 foot limit.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel to retrieve downed big game animals would be prohibited under Alternatives A, C and D. Under Alternative B, motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be limited to 300 feet from the nearest road to retrieve big game animals. These actions are subject to modification during travel management planning pending environmental review at the project level.

Under all alternatives, the planning area would be designated as Limited for transportation purposes. Motorized travel would be allowed on designated roads and trails which may include existing roads and trails, or specifically identified roads and trails in Travel Management Areas. Designation of roads and trails would be determined in future travel/transportation planning processes in accordance with the chosen alternative. Roads and trails may be closed to protect resources. Under Alternative C no new permanent roads and trails would be developed except when required by law, regulation or policy.

Land Resources

Under Alternatives A and C, livestock grazing would be allowed on about 271,000 acres. The amount of forage available for preference on these lands would be about 73,400 Animal Unit Months (AUMs). Alternatives B and D would allow livestock grazing on about 272,000 acres. The amount of forage that could be available for preference on these lands would be about 77,300 AUMs. Alternatives B, C, and D would prohibit domestic sheep grazing in bighorn sheep range; however, Alternative D would provide the highest buffer around bighorn sheep range by prohibiting domestic sheep grazing within 15 miles of bighorn sheep range. Under Alternative A, less intensive management of grazing allotments would occur as more allotments would be managed as Custodial (C) category allotments. Under Alternative A, the BLM would prioritize management of allotments as follows: 428 Custodial (C) category allotments, 21 Improve (I) category allotments, and 55 Maintain (M) category allotments. Under Alternatives B, C and D, more intensive management of allotments would occur with 324 Custodial (C) category allotments, 21 Improve (I) category allotments, and 159 Maintain (M) category allotments. Alternatives B and D would allow for higher levels of adaptive management to adjust grazing use to manage for changing conditions.

Alternatives A, B and D would result in a Probable Sale Quantity (PSQ) of 7000 tons/year for all forest and woodland products. Alternative C would result in lower PSQ as treatment methods and would favor natural processes. Under Alternative C, PSQ would be 6000 tons/year for all forest and woodland products. Alternatives C and D would protect snag and cavity-bearing trees the most. Alternative B would result in the greatest number of acres of fuels treatment.

Alternatives A, B and D would allow the use of non-native species for revegetation if the species selected are non-invasive. Alternative C would prohibit the use of non-native species for revegetation except when needed to revegetate problematic soils or provide a nurse crop, or when emergency reclamation is needed and native seed is not available.

Under management common to all alternatives, land ownership adjustment would be considered on a case-by-case basis based on retention, acquisition, and disposal criteria. Under Alternatives B, C and D, public lands would be classified for retention or disposal as follows:

> ***Category 1 – Retention area with no disposal (6,900 acres):*** Lands managed in Category 1 – Retention would include all ACECs, National Register-eligible archeological sites/historic districts, and lands acquired through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Category 1 lands would not be transferred from BLM management by any method for the life of the plan.
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> ***Category 2 – Retention with limited disposal potential based on specialist review (186,424 acres):*** Public lands within Category 2 would be considered for limited land ownership adjustments; however, lands in Category 2 would not be available for sale under section 203 of FLPMA. Some public lands in Category 2 may contain resource

values protected by law or policy. If actions cannot be taken to adequately mitigate impacts from disposal of those lands, the parcels would be retained.

Category 3 – Disposal contingent on specialist review (86,578 acres): These lands generally are isolated or fragmented from other public land ownerships making them difficult to manage. Public land parcels in this category are relatively smaller in size (typically 160 acres or less). These disposal parcels can be found by alternative in Map 2-2. These parcels have been found to potentially meet the sale criteria of section 203(a)(1) of FLPMA and could be made available for sale or disposal through any method.

Under Alternatives A, B and D, the BLM may allow a transfer or authorization of up to 170 acres of BLM-administered lands to the Department of Veterans Affairs to allow for expansion of the Black Hills National Cemetery, and may allow a public land transfer or authorization of up to 50 acres for facilities for the South Dakota Army National Guard, provided that impacts are minimal and additional review determines that the transfer or authorization is consistent with management goals and objectives of the RMP. If approved, these actions would reduce the size of the Fort Meade ACEC by as much as 226 acres or about three percent. Under Alternative C, these land transfers or authorizations would not be allowed and the size of the Fort Meade ACEC would remain the same.

Alternative C would restrict renewable energy development ROWs by providing more acres of ROW exclusion areas. Renewable energy development would be as follows: Under Alternative A, 267,768 acres in western South Dakota would be open to renewable energy development, and 5,522 acres would be renewable energy ROW exclusion areas. Under Alternative B, 84,137 acres would be open to renewable energy development, and 189,153 acres would be renewable energy ROW avoidance areas. Under Alternative C, 73,870 acres would be open to renewable energy development, and 199,420 acres would be renewable energy ROW exclusion areas. Under Alternative D, 75,751 acres would be open to renewable energy development; 78,636 acres would be renewable energy ROW avoidance areas; 118,904 acres would be renewable energy ROW exclusion areas.

Special Designations

Alternative A would not provide additional special designations. The Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad ACECs would continue to be managed as ACECs. Sage-Grouse PPAs would be managed as an ACEC under Alternative C. Alternatives B and D would designate approximately 259,936 acres as Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs) while Alternative C would designate 265,019 acres as ERMAs. Alternatives B and D would designate approximately 11,652 acres (Fort Meade ACEC, 6,574 acres; and the Exemption Area, 5,078 acres) as Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs), indicating a commitment to intensive recreation management.

As noted in the Land Resources section above, under Alternatives A, B, and D, the BLM may allow a transfer or authorization of up to 170 acres of BLM-administered lands to the Department of Veterans Affairs to allow for expansion of the Black Hills National Cemetery and may allow a public land transfer or authorization of up to 50 acres for South Dakota Army National Guard facilities, provided that additional review determines that impacts are minimal and the transfer or authorization is consistent with management goals and objectives of the South Dakota RMP. If approved, these actions would reduce the size of the Fort Meade ACEC by as much as 226 acres or about three percent. Under Alternative C, these land transfers or authorizations would not be allowed and the size of the Fort Meade ACEC would remain the same.

Under management common to all alternatives, there would be no recommendation for inclusion of lands into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System and there would be no recommendation for designation as Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas. BLM surface estate in the planning area is very limited, occurs in a scattered pattern in most areas, and has numerous infrastructure features present on or near BLM lands, deterring these special designations.

Social and Economic Resources

No disproportionate adverse impacts to minority or low income populations considered under Environmental Justice guidance would occur under any of the alternatives. In general, Alternative A would enhance the quality of life of lessees and permittees, those who favor resource use, and residents of local communities, while Alternative C would

increase the quality of life for those who favor resource protection and recreation that provides solitude. Alternatives B and D would result in an intermediate level of impact depending on the values and interests of recreationists.

BLM management that would generate the most employment and income would be mineral development (mostly oil and gas development). 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 the BLM land and minerals base and land/mineral uses are in Butte, Harding, and Meade counties. Much of the economic impact 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.

Economic development as a result of annual timber harvest would range from 1,790 CCF to 1,930 CCF of sawtimber and would support an estimated 13 jobs and from $500,000 to $530,000 in wages and proprietors' income. This activity would also generate about between $70,000 and $80,000 in federal revenues and less than $5,000 in state/local revenues. Alternative D would result in numbers at the lower end of the ranges provided, while Alternative A would result in numbers at the upper end of the ranges provided.

In general, Alternative A would result in the fewest restrictions and the greatest benefit to the local economy. Federal mineral production would increase from current levels. Under Alternative A, total annual federal mineral revenues from leases, rents, production royalties, and sales would be about $3.4 million; of which about $1.6 million would be distributed to the counties of production. Under Alternative B, federal oil/gas production would increase more than Alternatives C or D. Total annual federal revenues from leases, rents, production royalties, and sales would be about $2.8 million; of which about $1.4 million would be distributed to the counties of production. Alternative C would result in the most restrictions and would limit economic development more than Alternatives A, B or D. Total annual federal mineral revenues from leases, rents, production royalties, and sales would be about $2.7 million; of which about $1.3 million would be distributed to the counties of production. Under Alternative D, federal oil/gas production would be the same as Alternative B. Total annual federal revenues from leases, rents, production royalties, and sales would be about $2.8 million; of which about $1.4 million would be distributed to the counties of production.

Renewable energy development on BLM lands would support 1,210 to 3,280 local jobs and an estimated $46.7 to $126.5 million in labor income during construction. After construction, average annual operation and maintenance would contribute from 40 to 120 jobs and between $1.7 and $4.5 million in wages and proprietors' income. It would generate about $1.06 to $2.88 million in annual federal ROW rent revenues. Alternative C would result in numbers at the lower ends of these ranges, while Alternative A would result in numbers at the upper ends of these ranges.

The combined effect of Alternative A would contribute an average annual 620 local full and part-time jobs and $24.1 million in wages and proprietors' income. This would be less than 1 percent of current local employment and income. Annual program revenues to the federal government would be about $6.5 million; payments to counties would be about $2.3 million, most of which would be related to oil and gas production and PILT payments. Employment would increase by about 190 jobs; income would increase by about $7.4 million; federal revenues would increase by about $3.9 million; and local revenues would increase by about $500,000 compared to current average annual levels. The local population would increase by an estimated 290 people and the number of households would increase by an estimated 120.

The combined effect of Alternative B would contribute an average annual 510 local full and part-time jobs and $20.2 million in wages and proprietors' income. This would be less than 1 percent of current local employment and income. Annual program revenues to the federal government would be about $4.3 million; payments to counties would be about $2.0 million, most of which would be related to oil and gas production and PILT payments. Employment would increase by about 80 jobs; income would increase by about $3.4 million; federal revenues would increase by about $1.7 million; and local revenues would increase by about $210,000 compared to current average annual levels. The local population would increase by an estimated 120 people and the number of households would increase by an estimated 50.

The combined effect of Alternative C would contribute an average annual 500 local full and part-time jobs and $19.8 million in wages and proprietors' income. This would be less than 1 percent of current local employment and income. Annual program revenues to the federal government would be about $4.0 million; payments to counties would be about

$2.0 million, most of which would be related to oil and gas production and PILT payments. Employment would increase by about 70 jobs; income would increase by about $3.0 million; federal revenues would increase by about $1.5 million; and local revenues would increase by about $200,000 compared to current average annual levels. The local population would increase by an estimated 100 people and the number of households would increase by an estimated 40.

The combined effect of Alternative D would contribute an average annual 530 local full and part-time jobs and $20.9 million in wages and proprietor's income. This would be less than 1 percent of current local employment and income. Annual program revenues to the federal government would be about $4.8 million; payments to counties would be about $2.0 million, most of which would be related to oil and gas production and PILT payments. Employment would increase by about 100 jobs; income would increase by about $4.2 million; federal revenues would increase by about $2.2 million; and local revenues would increase by about $210,000 compared to current average annual levels. The local population would increase by an estimated 150 people and the number of households would increase by an estimated 60.

The Next Steps

This Draft RMP/EIS, upon issuance, provides 90 days for public comment. A series of five public meetings on this Draft RMP/EIS are scheduled during the 90-day comment period in Belle Fourche, Buffalo, Rapid City, Sturgis, and Pierre, South Dakota. 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 in the spring of 2014 with a Record of Decision scheduled to be completed and signed in 2014.