



FACT SHEET

BLM-MONTANA/DAKOTAS

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South Dakota Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision

FACT SHEET: Understanding the Alternatives

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The BLM has studied existing conditions and information, considered public comments received from scoping and met with cooperating agencies and Resource Advisory Council members to determine how best to develop alternatives to address the issues, respond to the management opportunities and how to change resource conditions where appropriate.

Detailed, travel management planning is not addressed in the RMP. Under Alternatives, B, C and D, Fort Meade, the Exemption Area, and the Center of the Nation (Portions of Butte and southern Harding County would be designated as Travel Management Areas (TMAs) where more specific travel planning would occur in the future.

The information below provides some examples of the types of management actions considered under “Management Common to All Alternatives” and for each specific alternative.

Management Common to All Alternatives

- 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.
- No Surface Occupancy restrictions would apply to floodplains, wetlands, riparian areas and water bodies.
- Special Status Species and their habitat will be given special consideration before any actions are taken.
- The BLM would continue to consult with Native American Tribes to identify areas that are important to the tribes.
- Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) would continue to be managed as ACECs.
- Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management would continue to be used.

Alternative A

Alternative A, the “No Action Alternative,” continues current management of resources within the planning area under the existing plans.

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 Rights of Ways and renewable energy development throughout the planning area. In Alternative A, No Surface Occupancy, Controlled Surface Use, 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.

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 Greater 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 Priority Protection Areas (PPA) 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 No Surface Occupancy stipulation would apply in PPAs and they would be managed as avoidance areas for all types of Rights of Ways.

In general, the oil and gas stipulations Rights of Way 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 use.

Pending project-level environmental review and approval, the BLM would allow the transfer of up to 256 acres of surface and mineral estate out of the Fort Meade Recreational Area ACEC for use as a National Cemetery and South Dakota Army National Guard facility.

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.

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 Greater Sage-Grouse and provides the most stringent wildlife restrictions for surface-disturbing activities through additional PPA acres for Greater Sage-Grouse, more Rights of Way 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.

In general, the stipulations and Rights of Way 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 Rights of Way exclusion areas. 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 Greater Sage-Grouse General Habitat would be managed as a TMA. 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 Controlled Surface Uses and Alternative D would manage slopes from 25-50 percent as Controlled Surface Use and slopes over 50 percent as No Surface Occupancy.

Alternative C would not allow the transfer of BLM-administered lands within the Fort Meade ACEC.

Alternative D

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 use. Oil and gas minerals that are impacted by stipulations associated with Alternative D are shown in Map 2-28. The areas managed as Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs in Alternative D 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 Rights of Ways and avoidance areas for other types of Rights of Ways in Alternative D.

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.

Pending project-level environmental review and approval, the BLM would allow the transfer of up to 256 acres of surface and 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).