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Dominion Exploration & Production	O-1	GC5	The RMP/DEIS fails to address how the BLM will handle/staff the increased workload related to APDs in order to prevent undue processing delays.	The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires that BLM manage the public lands for Multiple Use. Section 103(c) of FLPMA defines Multiple Use as follows: "The term 'multiple use' means . . . harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land and the quality of the environment with consideration being given to the relative values of the resources and not necessarily to the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or the greatest unit output." Additionally, given that the implementation schedule for the RMP will vary in the future based on national priorities, available workforce, and funding, etc., there is no way to meaningfully evaluate costs and benefits of the alternatives. Therefore, increased workloads from public applications and staffing needs associated with that workload are not decisions to be made in the RMP. It is assumed that BLM would have the funding and work force to implement the selected alternative. Implicit in this assumption is that the BLM will seek and obtain funding for implementation and mitigation of the selected alternative.	
Dominion Exploration & Production	O-1	GC6	The RMP/DEIS fails to define "significant resource value" as it relates to energy development restrictions.	Table 2.1.7 (Lands and Realty Management) in the PRMP/FEIS states: "Sensitive resource values would include, but are not limited to, threatened and endangered species	

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				habitat, cultural and paleontological resources, sensitive soils, riparian areas, areas possessing high scenic quality, and areas of critical environmental concern."	
Dominion Exploration & Production	O-1	ME3	The RMP/DEIS does not explain whether proposed closures or restrictions apply to existing leases. This needs to be clarified.	See comment response GC24.	
Dominion Exploration & Production	O-1	ME4	The RMP/DEIS does not include any details regarding the nature of avoidance measures for adverse environmental impact from mineral leasing on split estate lands or detail how the BLM will make decisions to implement such measures. This information needs to be included in the document.	The RMP will determine the leasing category for all federal minerals, including split estate lands, to be leased by BLM within the planning area, except those areas managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Site- specific proposals will include mitigating measures from the surface management agency or surface owner that will address minimizing effects to other resource values. Information regarding leasing and development on split estate lands is found at the following Washington Office website: www.blm.gov/bmp/Split_Estate.htm. Instruction Memorandum No. 2003-202 outlines the policy, procedures and conditions for approving oil and gas operations on split-estate lands. In particular, the BLM will not consider and Application for Permit to Drill or a Sundry Notice administratively or technically complete until the Federal lessee or its operator certifies that an agreement with the surface owner exists, or until the lessee or its operator complies with Onshore Oil and Gas Order No. 1. Compliance with Onshore Oil and Gas Order No. 1 requires the Federal mineral lessee or its operator to enter into good-faith negotiations with	

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				the private surface owner to reach an agreement for the protection of surface resources and reclamation of the disturbed areas, or payment in lieu thereof, to compensate the surface owner for loss of crops and damages to tangible improvements, if any. In addition, the BLM will invite the surface owner to participate in the onsite inspection and will take into consideration the needs of the surface owner when reviewing the Application for Permit to Drill. The BLM will offer the surface owner the same level of surface protection BLM provides on Federal surface (Instruction Memorandum No. 89-201).	
Dominion Exploration & Production	O-1	ME5	The RMP/DEIS does not provide information on how the BLM will handle situations of multiple mineral development conflicts or how the BLM will prioritize energy resources in conflict areas. This information needs to be included in the document.	BLM encourages companies with conflicting mineral development areas/proposals to resolve those conflicts between themselves. If requested, BLM would assist in facilitating agreements between the competing parties. BLM would also exercise authority provided for in the leases, applicable statutes, and regulations to manage the federal mineral development in the public's best interest. BLM would seek to achieve the following goals in resolving development conflicts: Optimize the recovery of both resources in an endeavor to secure the maximum return to the public in revenue and energy production. Prevent avoidable waste of the public's resources utilizing authority under existing statues, regulations, and lease terms. Honor the rights of each lessee, subject of the terms of the lease and sound principles of resource conservation. Protect public health and safety, and mitigate	

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				environmental impacts.	
Dominion Exploration & Production	O-1	ME6	Clarify how oil and gas leases would gain access to leased lands where soils are deemed unsuitable for road construction.	Road placement and any mitigation developed associated with soils would be done when site-specific NEPA analysis is done.	
Dominion Exploration & Production	O-1	PR1	The open house format of the public meeting in Salt Lake City on February 24, 2004, may not have complied with federal law requiring the BLM to afford the public "opportunities to meaningfully participate in and comment on the preparation of plans" (43 C.F.R. § 1610.2(a); see also 40 C.F.R. § 1506.6(a) and 43 U.S.C.A. § 1712(f). The format did not provide for the public to discuss or respond to any comments made by the BLM or others, as per 43 C.R.R. (sic) § 16102(d). Failure to meet the requirements of the legislation cited could result in legal challenges to the document.	The perceived lack of an open forum at the Salt Lake City meetings did not preclude the public from asking questions, submitting comments, or discussing issues with the BLM. BLM staff from a variety of specialties and disciplines was readily available to attendees to answer questions, provide clarification, receive comments, and discuss issues as needed. The BLM believes this format met the letter and intent of the relevant legislation.	
Ecology Center of Southern California	O-2	AT12 (AT-D)	The BLM's preferred alternative should be balanced in order to provide for a full spectrum of resource uses and recreational opportunities on our public lands. Instead, the agency's preferred alternative for Vernal opens 93 percent of the area to industrial development and designates a spaghetti network of motorized routes, foreclosing certain resource management options for these scenic and wildlife rich lands. In no way is this balanced.	FLPMA directs the BLM to manage public lands on the basis of multiple use (Section 102(a) (7)). As a multiple-use agency, the BLM is required to implement laws, regulations and policies for many different and often-competing land uses and to resolve conflicts and prescribe land uses through its land use plans. The BLM must manage lands under its jurisdiction to the benefit of the public and permit valid land uses where such uses do not result in unmitigated damage to resources. See comment response AT58.	
Ecology Center of Southern California	O-2	AT13 (AT-E)	In order to minimize resource and user conflicts, the BLM's preferred alternative should not designate routes or allow or oil and gas leasing in areas with wilderness characteristics, including Bitter Creek, Upper Desolation Canyon, Wolf Point, White River, and lands surrounding Dinosaur National Monument.	Non-WSA lands found either to have wilderness characteristics or likely to have wilderness characteristics will be managed according to the direction established in this land use plan. Unlike for WSAs, there is no statutory or policy directive requiring BLM to protect the wilderness	

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				characteristics of these non-WSA lands. These non-WSA lands have many resource values, and the draft RMP/EIS considered all available information and a range of alternative prescriptions for how the values and uses of the non-WSA lands would be managed. In Alternative B, most of the non-WSA lands are open to oil and gas leasing subject to standard terms and conditions. On the other hand, Alternative C is designed to provide maximum conservation and protection of natural resources from development and use. Under Alternative C, some non-WSA lands would be closed to leasing and most non-WSA lands would be leased subject to either minor constraints like timing limitations or controls on surface use or major constraints like no surface occupancy. Alternative D reflects existing management direction, and Alternative A (the Preferred Alternative in the draft plan) is designed to provide for a wide variety of resource needs, including mineral resource development and some level of protection of natural resources. Through its land use planning revision process and to comply with the FLPMA multiple-use mandate, BLM has discretion to choose how the non-WSA lands ultimately will be managed, considering all the values and potential uses of these non-WSA lands and the other lands within the planning area.	
Ecology Center of Southern California	O-2	AT14 (AT-F)	The Greater Dinosaur/Book Cliffs Heritage Plan preserves opportunities for camping, river running, fishing, hunting, hiking, wild life viewing, and other traditional activities on these lands without the disruptive sights and sounds of vehicles or industrial development. This plan has the backing of scientists, environmentalists and local citizens and should be	See comment response AT1.	

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			given greater consideration.		
The Piney Valley Ranches Trust	O-3	LG5	Studies used to support the analysis for impacts to vegetation resources from livestock and grazing decisions should be cited. Please, use the article "Vegetation Change After 65 Years of Grazing and Grazing Exclusion" found in the recently released Journal of Rangeland Management. This study found few differences between plant populations on grazed and ungrazed lands.	The BLM uses a variety of monitoring and inventory techniques to evaluate rangeland conditions and trends. These can be found in BLM Technical References and are referenced in many parts of the documents. Indicators of Rangeland Health, Proper Functioning Conditions, Utilization, Actual Use, are a few of the techniques used by the BLM to assess rangeland conditions. The commenter reference to the article entitled "Vegetation Change After 65 Years of Grazing and Grazing Exclusion" is noted.	
The Piney Valley Ranches Trust	O-3	LG6	A more recent Bighorn Sheep study than the one from 1900 that is cited in the document should be used. Use more recent data.	Section 3.19.1.4 in the DRMP does not cite a study, but rather a statement of declining big horn sheep numbers in the early 1990s.	
The Piney Valley Ranches Trust	O-3	LG7	The RMP/DEIS should note what studies were used to support the claim that sheep grazing interferes with sage grouse and their strutting.	The commenter did not provide a page number for reference. Therefore, the BLM is unable to provide a response.	
The Piney Valley Ranches Trust	O-3	SO5	The socioeconomic analysis fails to consider the sheep industry.	The sheep industry is included as part of the discussion of agriculture in Sections 3.12.2.2.2, 3.12.3.2.2, and 3.12.4.2.1 and in the socioeconomic analysis in Section 4.12 and its subsections.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-4	ME11	Throughout the RMP/DEIS, please clarify whether proposed stipulations will be applied to existing oil and gas leases and whether these stipulations will supercede existing lease notice provisions and/or stipulations contained in other NEPA documents. The applicability of the stipulations to existing leases should be clarified for every stipulation proposed.	See comment response ME3.	

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Newfield Exploration Co.	O-4	ME12	The EIS does not adequately demonstrate that requiring costly "best available technology" to reduce noise and light pollution will benefit sensitive areas and wildlife. The suggested equipment is costly and difficult to maintain and sometimes is not capable of carrying out the job needed.	The Vernal RMP/EIS is a planning document that analyses the impacts of noise and light at a regional level. The specific location of BMPs to mitigate the disturbances caused by sound and light is beyond the scope of this document. However, Table 2.1.9 (Minerals and Energy Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS does provide direction when light and sound mitigation measures would come into play. Table 2.1.9 states the following: “The BLM would seek to minimize light and sound pollution within the planning area using best available technology such as installation of multi-cylinder pumps, hospital sound-reducing mufflers, and placement of exhaust systems to direct noise away from noise sensitive areas, e.g., sensitive habitat, campgrounds, river corridors, and Dinosaur National Monument. Light pollution would be mitigated by using methods such as limiting height of light poles, timing of lighting operations (meaning limiting lighting to times of darkness associated with drilling and work over or maintenance operations), limiting wattage intensity, and constructing light shields. If a determination is made that natural barriers or view sheds would meet these mitigation objectives, the above requirements may not apply.” The BMPs would be determined at a site-specific NEPA project level, and proposed specific light and sound sources located near sensitive areas would then be analyzed in project-level NEPA documents for their impacts, and the appropriate technologies	

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				or mitigation would then be applied.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-4	ME7	The RMP/DEIS shows an expected development of 1700 oil wells in the Monument Butte-Red Wash field. Newfield owns leases for 1873 existing and permitted wells. Thus, the number of expected wells in the RMP is already exceeded for these fields. The document should clarify whether or not the RMP will enforce a cap on development within the Monument Butte field and clarify if the RMP will supercede the existing EIS for development of the field.	RFD projections do not limit the number of wells the BLM may authorize. Total well counts or surface disturbance exceeding those projected do not automatically prompt a need for a supplemental planning document. Mitigation of environmental effects, for example, through successful reclamation, clustering of wells on shared well locations, and minimizing pad and road construction can prevent the level of impacts from substantially exceeding those originally analyzed in the RMP. Depending on a proposed project's level of significance, therefore, BLM may tier site-specific proposals that exceed RFD surface disturbance projections to the Vernal RMP/EIS by relying on a Determination of NEPA Adequacy, an Environmental Assessment, or project level EIS.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-4	RW1	FEMA 100-year floodplain maps do not provide consistent coverage for the area of the VFO and should not be used to designate areas of no new surface disturbance. The gaps in the map coverage require subjective interpretation. A minimum waterway dimension or flow rate should be specified instead.	As stated in Section 3.11.2, a preliminary inventory of riparian and wetland resources was conducted within the VPA. This inventory, when combined with FEMA floodplain coverages, provided sufficient information to determine the condition of wetland and riparian resources. As stated in section 3.11.2, the riparian and wetland condition inventory is preliminary and may change as the inventory is completed.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-4	RW2	Define what a "riparian area" is to avoid inconsistent application of the "no new surface disturbance" stipulation.	Riparian Area is defined in the glossary on page GL-14.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-4	SW3	The EIS does not demonstrate that there is sufficient risk to soil and water resources from pipeline crossings to justify the cost associated with requiring the proponent to conduct a hydraulic analysis for every pipeline crossing of intermittent and ephemeral stream	The reference to conducting hydraulic analysis for pipeline crossings of intermittent and ephemeral stream channels is included in Table 2.1.17 (Soil and Water Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Goals and Objectives. As the	

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			channels. The methodology outlined in Appendix B Hydraulic Considerations for Pipeline Crossings of Stream Channels is difficult to interpret and would be extremely difficult to implement for every pipeline crossing.	section heading indicates, the items listed under it are goals, not stipulations or requirements. The BLM would be available to assist as needed in the interpretation and implementation of the methods outlined in Appendix B. Most of this can be determined during onsite surveys with the operator and the Natural Resource Specialist of the BLM.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-4	WF1	The EIS does not adequately demonstrate that reclaiming or enhancing sagebrush habitat at a ratio of 1.5:1 will benefit wildlife.	Section 3.19 of the Draft EIS describes the importance of sagebrush habitat to various wildlife species. By reclaiming or enhancing sagebrush habitat at a greater ratio to that which is impacted, more habitats will be provided to sagebrush obligate species. This will provide benefits such as increased availability of forage and cover. See comment response WF 21.	
Uintah County Farm Bureau Federation	O-5	LG4	Reallocating AUMs from livestock to wildlife or wild horses as described in the RMP/DEIS violates the Taylor Grazing Act.	The Vernal RMP determines the allowable uses of the public lands as provided for in FLPMA. FLPMA states in section 202(a) that land use planning provides for the use of the public lands "regardless of whether such lands previously have been classified, withdrawn, set aside, or otherwise designated for one or more uses". FLPMA further provides in Section 202(e) the authority to issue management decisions which implement newly developed or revised land use plans. Such decisions, including those that exclude one or more uses, are subject to reconsideration, modification and termination through revision of the land use plan. The Secretary has the discretion under FLPMA to use the land use planning process to close areas to grazing, change levels of use, or to devote the land to another public purpose in accordance with the relevant land use plan. The	

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				transfer of AUMs from livestock to wildlife reflects the desire of BLM to modify the levels of use and in this particular instance to recognize the importance of wildlife values. FLPMA indicates that it is the policy of the United States to manage the public lands on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield. While it is the goal of the BLM to enhance rangeland health while providing for and recognizing the need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber and fiber, there is no requirement in the Taylor Grazing Act (TGA) or other applicable law for the BLM to continue current allocations. According to FLPMA, BLM is to manage for "multiple uses" which best meets the present and future needs of the American people without permanently impairing the productivity of the land. According to section 2 of the TGA, it is the objective of the act to regulate the occupancy and use of the Grazing Districts and to preserve these lands. Under FLPMA, uses of the land are allocated during the land use planning process. The combinations of uses proposed in the Draft RMP/EIS are varied and diverse across the planning area taking into consideration the current and future needs of the public. This is consistent with both FLPMA and the TGA.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	AT73 (LAT-9)	We support the continuing designation of the current ACECs and the newly-nominated ones under these alternatives: A- Bitter Creek and Lower Green River; Alternative C-Coyote Basin, 4 Mile Wash, 9 Mile Canyon, Middle Green River, Lower Green River, and White River.	Comment noted.	
The Nature	O-6	AT74	The application of Utah BLM Rangeland Health	As the commenter did not identify specific actions	

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Conservancy Moab Project Office		(LAT-10)	Standards to all resource programs and authorized activities is good. Because these are Standards and not merely "Goals," we assume that by this statement the VFO is obligating itself to adopt a Final RMP that will be consistent with these "rules," and thereby achieve the conditions defined by the four Standards on BLM-administered public lands in the VPA. Proposed actions under some of the Alternatives clearly appear to violate these Standards (Appendix F) in the short and long term, and thus must be rejected for inclusion in the FRMP.	under the alternatives that he/she believes violate the Standards. As such, this comment cannot be addressed. It is BLM's opinion that the various provisions of the alternatives meet the Standards.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	LG184 (LLG-1)	None of the text in this section refers to the Standards for Rangeland Health in Appendix F.	Table 2.1.8 (Livestock and Grazing Management) in the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Goals and Objectives incorporates the Rangeland Health Standards by reference.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	LG185 (LLG-2)	All rangelands/livestock allotments should undergo a rangeland assessment per the Interpreting Indicator of Rangeland Health. Livestock should be removed from poorly functioning streams to allow rehabilitation, and allotment management should address drought alternatives.	Please, see Table 2.1.6 (Forage - All Locations) and Table 2.1.8 (Livestock and Grazing Management) in the PRMP/EIS for proposed management actions related to forage allocations and livestock and grazing.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	RE62 (LRE-1)	It would be useful for the Final RMP to show a table of all of the monitoring obligations to which the VFO is committing, and prioritize them if they cannot all be accomplished.	The BLM declines to provide the monitoring obligation table as suggested. This is beyond the scope of the RMP and is a plan implementation level decision.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	RE63 (LRE-2)	No campgrounds or other developments should be constructed in important habitat for Special Status Species, and camping should be prohibited within 100 feet of riparian areas.	The BLM is required to comply with Executive Order 11988 (1977) for Floodplains/Utah Riparian Management Policy which states that: “No new surface disturbing activities will be allowed within 100 meters of riparian areas unless it can be shown that (1) there are no practical alternatives or (2) all long-term impacts can be fully mitigated or (3)	

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				the activity will benefit and enhance the riparian area." Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) describes the proposed RMP goals for Special Status Species, which includes managing these species and their habitat in such a manner as to conserve and recover these species for de-listing under the Endangered Species Act.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	RE64 (LRE-3)	Mountain bikes should be considered motorized vehicles and restricted, climbing routes near raptor nests should be closed seasonally, base jumping should only be allowed in designated areas, and special events should be limited in number, size, and allowed in areas that can support the traffic.	The commenter does not provide additional information or explain why these activities should be restricted and/or where they should be restricted. As described in Table 2.1.13 (Recreation Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS, Goals and Objectives include managing recreation within the VPA under comprehensive integrated activity level planning. These plans would include recreation use allocations, group size or seasonal limitations, opportunities for dispersed or organized camping (including large events), and establishing limits of acceptable change.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	RE65 (LRE-4)	Adverse effects to riparian areas, soil and water, SSS, vegetation, visuals, fish and wildlife, and woodlands by the 300-ft corridor need to be discussed. Red Wash, 12 Mile Wash and Steinaker Reservoir all contain SSS.	See comment responses RE1 and RE63.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	SD173 (LVE-2)	All ACECs should have subsequent management plans prepared for them after the FRMP to detail protection	See Response to Comment SD161-G-1.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	SS133 (LSS-15)	Include the following species in the Special Status Species list unless you have other information that would exclude them: Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Barneby Pepper Grass, Big-tailed Bat, Fringed Myotis,	See comment response SS75.	

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			Kit Fox, Spotted Bat, Short-eared Owl, Cornsnake, Western Toad, Eureka Mountainsnail, Palmer's Cleomella, Goodrich's Blazingstar, Wolverine, Boreal Owl, Petiolate Wormwood, Peculiar Moonwort, Clustered Lady's-slipper, and Alpine Poppy. (See original comment letter for reasoning behind this list, including the presence of these species on State and USFS lists.)		
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	SS134 (LSS-16)	BLM should assess impacts to species on UDWR's list of 'in conservation need' but not special status—should at least be considered at the project level.	It is not feasible to specifically assess impacts to all wildlife and plant species at this programmatic planning level due to the sheer number of species descriptions that would be required, Accordingly, the Draft EIS assesses impacts to key management indicator species that are representative of the typical species that occupy the existing habitat in the planning area. Additionally, impacts to threatened, endangered, and sensitive species are also analyzed, including impacts to BLM-sensitive species. BLM's mandated policy is to ensure that planning-level management decisions do not result in non-listed species becoming federally-listed (BLM Manual 6840). The impacts of individual projects will be analyzed at the site-specific level when those projects are proposed. If applicable, this analysis will also include the potential impacts to listed "in conservation need" species.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	SS135 (LSS-17)	The RMP must establish the broad umbrella of stipulations under which project level NEPA is done and must prioritize maintenance of special status species over activities that adversely affect them.	The BLM must manage lands under its jurisdiction under the federal mandate of multiple use and sustained yield, and must do so in compliance with other federal legislation such as the Endangered Species Act. The RMP does establish the programmatic/landscape level framework for resource programs within the planning area.	
The Nature	O-6	SS136	The RMP contains language that appears to provide	The commenter does not specifically identify how	

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Conservancy Moab Project Office		(LSS-18)	the necessary commitment to the protection of special status species; however, these commitments are stated as goals (which appears to mean guidance) rather than binding policy. This is relevant because several decisions in the RMP, such as oil and gas lease stipulations within several alternatives, appear clearly to violate stated goals and protective actions and to override many of the protective actions that are supposedly common to all alternatives. The DRMP does not clearly state how it resolves cases where goals/actions for different resources or program areas are in direct opposition. What happens when different goals conflict with each other?	decisions in the RMP appear to violate the stated goals and objectives. As such, the BLM is unable to address this portion of the comment. The goals and actions of the RMP were developed to be compatible with each other across resource programs. Actions such as lease stipulations, restriction of OHV travel to designated routes and areas, establishment of ACECs, SRMAs, and WSRs, etc. are all intended to meet the overall goals of each resource program.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	SS137 (LSS-19)	The listed Book Cliffs soil-endemic plants have no protective stipulations, although surface-disturbing activities were among the main reasons for their listing to begin with. Surface-disturbing activities other than oil and gas are not discussed in Appendix K for these plants.	The stipulations in Appendix K apply to all surface-disturbing activities, not just oil and gas development. Protections for Book Cliffs soil-endemic plants would be established through lease stipulations and project-level conditions of approval in cases where such plants are identified through NEPA analysis conducted subsequent to the RMP.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	SS138 (LSS-20)	All lands with special status species should be federally retained, as well as high-priority habitats like riparian areas.	Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) of the PRMP/FEIS establishes the position of the BLM in retaining lands known to contain special status species.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	SS139 (LSS-21)	The FRMP should enact adequate protective stipulations within the clustered occurrence areas of special status species that represent a minority of the land area of the VPA. None of the alternatives may be acceptable in their present forms for consideration as the Minerals and Energy Management section of the FRMP.	The BLM is at liberty to select any or all components of any given alternative for the Final RMP. Timing and controlled surface use, no surface occupancy, and no leasing stipulations apply to anywhere from 42% of lands open to oil, gas, and coal bed methane leasing under Alternatives B and D to 55% of lands under Alternative C (Alternative A = 49%). Within these broad leasing stipulations, more specific stipulations exist for all surface-disturbing activities. Additionally, conditions of approval would	

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				implement site-specific restrictions, minimization, and mitigation measures at the project level.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	SS140 (LSS-22)	Mitigation measures are inadequate and need to be strengthened. Increased protection will reduce the need for monitoring.	Ongoing monitoring is a requirement under BLM policy. Additional mitigation measures will be developed at the project level, when such measures can be more appropriately tailored to the specific needs of the resources in question and the specific impacts of the proposed land use.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	VE28 (LVE-3)	We believe it is necessary to know how the indirect effects of exploration and development such as road dust, fragmentation, and invasive species, etc, affect those Special Status Species plants.	Anticipated impacts on special status species (both plant and animal) from proposed resource program management actions under both all alternatives and each individual alternative are outlined in Section 4.15 of the document and summarized in Table 4.15.1. The level of detail in the analysis is presented on a landscape level. More specific impacts would be assessed and either avoided, minimized, or mitigated to the extent possible through field-level and/or site-specific environmental analyses (NEPA documents, technical reviews, etc.).	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	VE29 (LVE-4)	It should be discussed in the FRMP that several plant species may experience irreversible and irretrievable impacts.	Long term impacts on special status species plants are acknowledged in Section 4.15.5. The BLM does not believe that these resources would experiences irreversible or irretrievable impacts under the proposed management program, which includes avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for activities with the potential to impact special status species.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	WF157 (LWF-5)	The multi-state CA developed by the UDWR should be noted in the RMP.	See comment response WF77.	
The Nature Conservancy	O-6	WF158	The RMP needs to address the management of linkage	A small portion of the lynx linkage zone (See Figure 34) is on BLM lands and is in an area with low	

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Moab Project Office		(LWF-6)	zones for the lynx.	potential for mineral development. The remainder is on private and Forest Service lands. Any proposed development in the area would require site-specific NEPA analysis and would consider the impacts to the lynx linkage zone.	
The Nature Conservancy Moab Project Office	O-6	WT4 (LWT-2)	We oppose the removal of pinyon and juniper from areas where it forms woodlands "naturally". Under no circumstances should 'old-growth' P-J stands be removed for other commodity-based resource uses.	Comment noted.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	AT78 (NAT2)	As a general matter, PacifiCorp believes that the DRMP should better emphasize and promote issues related to electrical energy development, particularly given the importance of the VFO area in providing access for the continued supply of the electrical energy needs in Utah and throughout the West.	The BLM cannot promote specific land uses, but rather must serve as a neutral administrator when attempting to balance mandated multiple land uses while protecting against undue damage and degradation to the cultural and natural environment from those uses.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	AT82 (NAT6)	PacifiCorp suggests the Carbon-Ashley 138 kV line passes through the VRM class II, III and IV areas under each alternative shown in Attachment 4; or the Carbon-Ashley 138kV line passes through two proposed ACEC's (Red Mountain and Lears Canyon) under alternative C and the Red Mountain ACEC under all other alternatives as shown in PacifiCorp's Comment Letter Attachment 3; or the Carbon-Ashley 183 kV line appears to cross over the eastern part of the proposed Argyle Creek Wild and Scenic River area in Alternative C as shown generally in Attachment 3. The final RMP should contain a detailed discussion explaining that any such designation will not impair the existing lines or, if such impairment will result, a detailed explanation of how and the legal justification therefore.	The RMP already acknowledges in several places that valid existing rights are recognized by all management decisions that may be implemented in the Final RMP through the Record of Decision. These valid existing rights include utility easements. No additional discussion specific to utilities is necessary.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	AT83 (NAT7)	Some of PacifiCorp's distribution lines cross the Coyote Basin-Myton Bench ACEC under Alternative C. In addition, the distribution lines north of Vernal are within the Red Mountain ACEC. Also, the distribution lines	See comment response AT82.	

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			north of Vernal are located within Class II VRM under all alternatives.		
PacifiCorp	O-7	GC131 (NAT1b)	PacifiCorp urges the final RMP to reflect the specifics of coordinating with Ashley National Forest planning. This way, PacifiCorp facilities caught between planning efforts by separate federal agencies will have the needed assurance that one agency will not blindly make land use decisions without considering the decisions by a neighboring agency, and will have assurances that each agency will consider the cumulative impact that the decisions of both agencies will have on PacifiCorp facilities.	BLM is required to coordinate with adjoining managing entities.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	GC132 (NAT3)	The VFO should conduct a review of the Western Regional Corridor Planning Partnership Priority Corridors (dated July 2003) and include in the final RMP a discussion of any proposed corridors under Alternatives A, B, C, and D. The final RMP should also note that designated corridors apply only to BLM lands and do not include those portions that cross state and private lands.	The following language has been added to Section 1.4.1 of the PRMP/FEIS: "Decisions and actions of the RMP only fully apply to BLM lands. In cases of split estate lands, such as lands within the planning area that are split between the BLM and the Uintah & Ouray Indian Tribe, actions affecting the surface must be coordinated with the surface owner. Undertakings conducted on lands not wholly or partly administered by the BLM are subject to the laws, regulations, conditions, and policies of the relevant land management agency or other landowner." Presently, BLM is doing a national corridor EIS, which when complete, would amend this plan if there are inconsistencies or differences.	X
PacifiCorp	O-7	GC133 (NAT4)	PacifiCorp advocates for development of suitable, wide corridors for planning purposes in the final RMP in order to account for topography, land use, engineering, and access issues, separation from other proposed	See comment response to GC132.	

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			facilities (e.g., transmission lines, water and gas pipelines, etc.), visual resources, sensitive plant and wildlife species, and cultural resources. Once corridors are analyzed for compatibility with RMP resources, then formal designation of these utility corridors would avoid the need for plan amendments on future projects.		
PacifiCorp	O-7	GC134 (NAT5)	PacifiCorp notes that in all cases, it was not possible using map scales offered in the DRMP to determine exactly where PacifiCorp's' lines are located relative to planning alternatives. In these locations, PacifiCorp suggests continued work with the VFO to rectify any discrepancies, update this information and designate the area containing transmission and distribution lines as utility corridors.	See comment response to GC132.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	GC90 (NGC1)	We anticipate the need to maintain existing facilities; upgrade and/or expand existing facilities; and locate new facilities as needed. As such, we look for the RMP to enable us to accomplish these tasks.	Comment noted.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	GC91 (NGC2)	The location of existing or future utility facilities in between and sometimes straddling the borders of both the VFO and Forest Service lands presents the critical need for VFO and Ashley Forest planning efforts to be closely coordinated. Otherwise, the cumulative result of independent planning could adversely impact PacifiCorp operations in ways that neither planning effort anticipates.	As noted in Section 1.10 in the PRMP/FEIS, the Ashley National Forest Land Use Plan was reviewed and considered in the development of the VFO's RMP.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	GC92 (NGC3)	The final RMP should anticipate the addition of new transmission and distribution lines along with the maintenance, upgrade and replacement activities associated with existing and new lines.	Table 2.1.7 (Land and Realty Management) in the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Transportation/Utility Corridors recognizes both existing transmission lines and rights-of-way (ROW) and provides for the designation of new corridors subject to physical barriers and sensitive resource values.	

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PacifiCorp	O-7	GC93 (NGC4)	The final RMP should include consideration of recent announcements by Utah's Governor Huntsman, which acknowledge the need for more regional interstate transmission lines that very well could cross VFO lands.	See comment response GC92 regarding additional transmission lines within the Vernal Planning Area.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	GC94 (NGC5)	It is PacifiCorp's understanding that the Vernal DRMP will combine and supersede previous planning documents for the VFO. These previous documents included the Book Cliff and Diamond Mountain Resource Management Plans.	This is a correct assumption.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	GC96 (NGC6)	PacifiCorp assumes that the "on-the-ground" location of existing facilities will be utilized for the final RMP and any valid and existing rights will be recognized and perpetuated.	See comment responses GC 24 and GC27.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	GC97 (NGC7)	PacifiCorp assumes that any existing use will be allowed to continue without further restriction regardless of new classifications under any of the DRMP alternatives. To the extent the VFO disagrees with these assumptions, PacifiCorp objects to the DRMP.	See comment responses GC 24 and GC27.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	LR23 (NLR1)	According to the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1, decisions made for Lands and Realty pertaining to right-of-way corridors need to identify "right-of-way corridors, avoidance areas, exclusion areas, and any general terms and conditions that may apply."	See Table 2.1.7 (Lands and Realty Management) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Transportation/Utility Corridors for overall management decisions relative to right-of-way corridors.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	LR24 (NLR2)	The plan should identify issuance of site-specific right-of-way grants and authorizations.	The Vernal RMP/EIS is a programmatic planning document. The identification of site-specific issuance of rights-of-way, grants, and authorizations are beyond the scope the document. Site-specific rights-of-way issuance, grants, and authorizations would be analyzed and identified in site-specific NEPA documents and processes.	

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PacifiCorp	O-7	LR25 (NLR3)	The BLM should consult with parties to interagency agreements or MOUs relating to corridor identification or use, and the Western Utility Group must be consulted when developing decisions affecting utility use.	As described in Table 2.1.7 (Lands and Realty Management) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Transportation/Utility Corridors, the BLM acknowledges existing utilities rights-of-way, including the Western Utility Group update to the Western Regional Corridor Study and would designate additional corridors in coordination with existing corridors, subject to physical barriers and sensitive resource values.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	LR26 (NLR4)	As documented in the Pre-Plan Analysis, one of the main planning issues identified for the RMP addresses future energy needs stating "community growth and development and increased use of public lands dictates the update of many goals and objectives in lands and realty management portion of the RMP. This planning effort will ensure that the following are appropriately addressed: transportation and utility right-of-way corridors (including avoidance and exclusion areas); specific land use authorization decisions determined to be appropriate in meeting specific resource goals and objectives; access needs". PacifiCorp was unable to find in the DRMP the section(s) where the above-mentioned items were addressed regarding existing utility right-of-way corridors and potential new utility corridors and urge the final RMP to adequately address these issues.	Existing and future rights-of-ways for utilities and other facilities are discussed in Table 2.1.7 (Lands and Realty Management) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Transportation/Utility Corridors and illustrated in Figure 6.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	NSO1	As depicted on the maps in our Attachment 5 (based on the interpretation of the DRMP and BLM GIS data), there do not appear to be any existing power lines (or potential for future lines) that will cross WSA and non-WSA lands likely to have wilderness characteristics. The final RMP should make clear that designation of these WSAs and non-WSA lands will not preclude PacifiCorp from continued access to existing or	WSA's are outside the scope of the RMP, and will continue to be managed under IMP. Generally, this means that they must be managed to a non-impairment standard, which precludes new ROW's. Existing ROW's would not be affected by any planning decision. Restrictions resulting from managing non-WSA lands for wilderness characteristics are present only in Alternative E and the proposed plan, which identifies these areas as	

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			potential new facilities.	ROW exclusion areas. Management prescriptions for these areas would prohibit the construction of new facilities, as well as granting of ROW's to access these (non-existent) facilities.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	NSO2	PacifiCorp suggests that new high-voltage transmission lines need to be appropriately separated to reduce the impact of multiple outages including Homeland Security issues.	This comment does not belong in the SE section; it needs to be moved to (I assume) Lands and Realty, and responded to.	
PacifiCorp	O-7	TR48 (NTR1)	All of the alternatives presented in the DRMP should acknowledge existing authorizations and allow for rights-of-way access to maintain and operate the network of existing transmission lines critical to PacifiCorp's overall system.	See comment response GC24.	
Orion Reserves Limited Partnership	O-8	ME128 (ME-NN)	The DRMP foresees at most only limited oil shale development efforts for the near term. That view seems quite outdated given the reductions in supply and increase in cost of conventional liquid hydro-carbon fuels in recent years,	BLM's Washington Office is undertaking a national programmatic EIS addressing oil shale and tar sand leasing, which includes DOE. When complete, that EIS will amend all existing BLM plans that contain oil shale and tar sand resources.	
Orion Reserves Limited Partnership	O-8	ME129 (ME-00)	The BLM and the DOI should be key players in decision making respecting oil shale production. We urge cooperation w/ the DOE and DOD including revising the DRMP. (See attached information)	Please see response to ME128.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	LG101 (SO-J)	This section predicts economic impacts based on the assumption that "the demand for oil and gas will remain high over the next twenty years." Agriculture, particularly sheep and cattle production, has been a major historic economic contributor in the Vernal District, when mineral industries have gone through several "boom and bust" cycles. Farm Bureau supports multiple-use, but believes that adverse impacts anticipated to grazing, especially in the Bonanza area, must be mitigated.	Proposed mitigation of anticipated impacts from management decisions on livestock and grazing resources are discussed in Section 4.7.3.	
Utah Farm	O-9	LG109	The RMP proposes establishing a forage priority in	See comment response LG88.	

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Bureau Federation		(LG-U)	violation of the Taylor Grazing Act.		
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	LG110 (LG-V)	The RMP notes that all alternatives pertaining to wild horse management decisions would have "indirect impacts upon livestock grazing, mostly in regards to forage availability." It continues, "if AUM designation were changed for wild horses, it could affect livestock and wildlife." Further the RMP discusses reintroduction of Rocky Mtn. big horn sheep, bison and moose and changes in forge availability and "use-priority>" All proposals potentially adversely impact livestock AUMs and should be assessed for economic, cultural and historic effects.	The statements in question represent potential management decisions over the life of the RMP. Changes in AUM allocation from those represented in the final RMP and any reintroductions of Rocky Mountain big horn sheep, bison, and/or moose would require additional impacts analysis subsequent to the RMP/EIS at the time the change in AUM allocation and/or reintroductions were proposed and specific implementation plans were developed.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	LG111 (LG-W)	UFB is concerned that the VFO in its RMP is proposing reallocation "from livestock to wildlife or wild horses," clearly in violation of Presidential Executive Order, Congressional mandates, state and federal law and the stated position of the agency's administrative officers.	See comment response LG4.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	LG112 (LG-X)	The VFO RMP or any BLM FO, proposing the transfer or retirement of livestock grazing rights to accommodate increases in wildlife or wild horses clearly violates the "chiefly valuable" doctrine of the Taylor Grazing Act.	See comment response LG4.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	LG113 (LG-Y)	As BLM field offices make minor changes and temporary adjustments to address rangeland health, the UFB recommends they be broad based. Past experience has shown that BLM resource managers focus attention on easily identified livestock allocations for reductions while not making similar demands of the state's wildlife managers and BLM wild horse herds.	Comment noted.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	LG114 (LG-Z)	Concerns are raised in the Vernal RMP pertaining to adverse impacts on cool season plants. There are no range trend studies cited that quantify this assertion.	See comment response LG87.	

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Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	LG115 (LG-AA)	UFB supports "restoration of suspended non-use and active non-use or increased animal unit months to existing permitees when range monitoring clearly demonstrates an upward trend in carrying capacity, including recovery from drought condition."	Comment noted.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	RW11	How can Alternative A have more indirect beneficial impacts to riparian resources than Alternative D when both are stated to preclude agricultural entry onto withdrawal lands?	Both alternatives preclude agricultural entry on land withdrawals. However Alternative A would preclude agricultural entry on 36,265 acres versus 35,900 acres under Alternative D.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	RW12	This paragraph implies that ecologically sound manners of timber harvesting would occur only under Alternatives A and C. However, Page 9 of Appendix K indicates that all surface disturbing activities across the planning area, even under Alternatives B and D, would be regulated with setbacks and other restrictions to protect riparian areas. Correct analysis.	The setbacks and restrictions described in Appendix K for do not apply to the Book Cliffs RMP area for Alterative D, thus making this Alternative less restrictive than the other alternatives. Consequently, Section 4.11.2.3.1 is still accurate in its analysis.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	SD38	When Alternative D includes an ACEC designation in the Lower Green River Expansion of only 1,700 acres less than Alternatives A and C, how could Alternative D “not have the benefits” described for Alternatives A and C? It should provide the same benefits but to a slightly lesser degree.	Chapter 4 in the PRMP/F EIS has been revised to indicate that Alternative D would have lesser benefit than Alternatives A, C, and E.	X
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	SO15	Minerals development will not have a long-term adverse effect on the tourism sector of the economy. This is because a majority of the tourism is associated with resources that are located outside of the “oilfield” areas (High Uintah Wilderness, Starvation Reservoir, Flaming Gorge, etc…).	While a large portion of the tourism is concentrated in the northern end of the VPA, there are recreation opportunities in the proposed SRMAs, non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, special designations, and OHV travel routes in the southern portion of the VPA where the highest concentration of minerals development is likely to occur according to the RFD.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	SO19	The Counties question the findings in the last two sentences of Section 4.12.3.1 on page 4-175. If Alternative C were to be selected, Table 2.3 indicates	Sections 4.12.2.1 and 4.12.3.1 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to provide details on AUM demand.	X

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			that livestock forage would decrease from 146,161 AUMs under Alternative D to 77,294 AUMs. Such a reduction would have an impact on the livestock industry and its ability to expand in the future to serve a growing population. Such reductions ignore provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act and withdrawals.		
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	SO20	A decrease in jobs in the oil and gas sector would not decrease the dependency of the region on the oil and gas industry or make the region less susceptible to boom and bust cycles. The way to make the region less vulnerable is to create jobs in other economic sectors. In addition, the creation of more jobs in the minerals industry will attract more jobs in other sectors of the economy. This increased level of services could make the region more attractive to other forms of basic industry, which may result in less dependency on oil and gas.	It is not the BLM's role to create (or decrease) employment opportunities in any one sector of the economy. The role of the RMP is to assess the impacts planning decisions have on various affected sectors, if any.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	SW8	This section fails to mention the potential long-term, adverse impacts [on soils and water] of failing to allow woodland and forest species salvage, under Alternative C, associated with catastrophic wildfire.	Catastrophic wildfire is possible under all alternatives.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	VI21	How can 35,900 acres of mineral withdrawals under Alternative D lead to a higher level of visual protection than 36,267 acres of such withdrawals under the three action alternatives?	Section 4.17.2.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to reflect that Alternatives A, B, C, and E provide more acreage for protection of visual resources that does Alternative D.	X
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	VI22	It is not correct to say that Alternative B does not specify management actions on slopes greater than 40%. Table 2.3, Page 2-54, states that an approved, engineered plan is required under Alternative B for surface disturbance on slopes greater than 20% (which should include slopes over 40%).	Section 4.17.2.8 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to clarify the statement describing the slope management actions for Alternative B.	X
Utah Farm Bureau	O-9	VI23	It is not logical that Alternative B would have greater negative OHV impacts on visual quality than Alternative D. Alternative B has much fewer acres open to	The text in question has been deleted from Section 4.17.2.7.4 of the PRMP/FEIS.	X

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Federation			unrestricted OHV use and both of these alternatives maintain existing roads if they continue to serve a public purpose.		
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	WH39 (WHE)	The RMP should note that since the wild horse removal, the resource has shown marked improvement even during difficult drought conditions.	The BLM has not done a vegetation inventory within the Bonanza area since the removal of wild horses, but is starting to gather data for rangeland health standards. At this time, the BLM does not have data to support or refute the commenter's conclusion.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	WH40 (WHF)	The Farm Bureau opposes the Alternative C recommendation for the re-establishment of wild horses on the Bonanza HMA.	See comment response WH35.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	WH41 (WHG)	Alternatives A, C and D cite various limitations to herd size and proposals for maintaining maximums. Historically, this has been less than effective. Herds have grown beyond management levels with little or no agency attention.	Comment noted.	
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	O-9	WH42 (WHH)	BLM should consider different options for dealing with current wild horse populations. Providing an incentive for private harvest through a permit or license process would reduce BLM costs and provide a better option for the animals.	Proposed options under the alternatives allow flexibility in the BLM's management of the wild horse populations within the planning area. See comment response WH35.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	AT35 (AT-BB)	DCWCD supports an alternative that provides the least restrictions on the use of natural resources in the planning area. This appears to be Alt B.	Comment noted.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	GC56 (GC-M)	DCWCD would like to see further information given as to the Colorado River Compact and how it affects public land use.	There is absolutely no effect whatsoever on water rights or in-stream flows related to suitability findings made in a land use plan decision, barring Congressional action. Even if Congress were to designate rivers into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, any such designation would have no affect on existing, valid water rights. Section 13(b)	

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				of the Wild and Scenic River Act states that jurisdiction over waters is determined by established principles of law. In Utah, the state has jurisdiction over water. Although the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act implies a federal reserved water right for designated rivers, it doesn't require or specify any amount, and instead establishes that only the minimum amount for purposes of the Act can be acquired. Because the State of Utah has jurisdiction over water, BLM would be required to adjudicate the right as would any other entity, by application through state processes. Thus, for Congressionally designated rivers, BLM may assert a federal reserved water right to appurtenant and unappropriated water with a priority date as of the date of designation (junior to all existing rights), but only in the minimum amount necessary to fulfill the primary purpose of the reservation. In practice, however, federal reserved water rights have not always been claimed if alternative means of ensuring sufficient flows are adequate to sustain the outstandingly remarkable values. The BLM is fully evaluating and considering potential impacts related to these Wild and Scenic River decisions in this planning process. Congressional designation of suitable streams is evaluated in the cumulative impacts analysis of the FEIS. See Appendix C for a more thorough discussion of how the suitability considerations are applied to each eligible river.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	LG105 (LG-Q)	Duchesne County is within Areas #2 and #6 depicted on the grazing maps. DCWCD supports Alt A for Areas #2 and Alt B for Area #6 as they have the potential for the most beneficial use by the livestock industry. If the Duchesne County Cattleman's Assoc has a different	See comment response LG88.	

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			preference during the review process, DCWCD would concur with their decision.		
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	LG106 (LG-R)	It is noted that unallocated AUMs could be allocated to wildlife. DCWCD feels strongly that any unallocated AUMs should be considered first for domestic grazing as this directly affects the economy of the Uintah Basin.	See comment response LG88.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	LG107 (LG-S) (LG-22)	Section 4.6.2.4 does not seem to exist in the document and the effects of livestock grazing decisions on fire management definitely needs to be addressed	Section 4.7.2.1.1 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to remove the reference Section 4.6.2.4 and to impacts analysis of livestock grazing management actions on fire management. As stated in Section 4.4.2, the management actions associated with livestock grazing would have negligible impacts on fire management.	X
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	LG108 (LG-T)	DCWCD would question the assumption that management decisions for livestock and grazing, forage and wild horse resources would always result in a loss of vegetative cover and result in wind and water erosion. With proper management, livestock grazing can actually have beneficial effects.	Section 4.13.1.3 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to eliminate the use of the word "always" and to reflect the concept that vegetation loss is possible but not a given.	X
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	LR36 (SO-H)	As the Duchesne County General Plan has a "no net loss" policy, both in regard to amount of acreage and fair market value, DCWCD would like the Land Tenure Adjustment policies listed on Page 2-15 and the Exchange/Acquisition policies on Pages 2-16 and 2-17 of the RMP be revised as necessary to be consistent with the Duchesne County General Plan policies.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the	

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				adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/EIS. See comment responses LR2 and LR2A.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	RE37 (RE-Q)	DCWCD supports Alt B. Under this alt, 44,181 acres in Nine Mile Canyon would continue to be managed as a SRMA. Duchesne Co. does not support increasing this SRMA to 81,168 acres under Alt A.	Comment noted.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	RW23 (RW-E)	DCWCD feels that the correct management of riparian areas is to provide "reasonable protection" not prevent all impacts. DCWCD feels that riparian area buffer zones should be determined in a flexible manner and only when studies show it is necessary to reasonably protect a particular area. RMP and forest plans must require that waters and riparian areas be managed so as to not impair function or reduce domestic grazing allotments.	Comment noted.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	SD225 (SD-TT)	In keeping with Duchesne Co General Plan policies, DCWCD supports Alt B for ACEC. DCWCD would be opposed to the extension of the existing ACEC in Nine Mile Canyon.	See Response to Comment SD8-G-9.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	SD226 (SD-UU)	DCWCD strongly supports the Duchesne County Plan which contains the following policies and strongly opposes additional WSRs within the Uintah Basin, including the segments currently being proposed by the USFS: "Support for the addition of a river segment to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System shall be withheld until: 1) It is clearly demonstrated that water is present and flowing at all times; 2) It is clearly demonstrated that the required water-related value is considered outstandingly remarkable within a region of comparison consisting of one of the	See Responses to Comments SD8-G-9 and SD19-G-22. Duchesne County was a cooperating agency for the Vernal Plan.	

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			three physiographic provinces in the state. The rational and justifications for the conclusions will be disclosed; 3) The effects of the addition of the local and state economies, private property rights, agricultural and industrial operations and interests, tourism, water rights, water quality, water resource planning, and access to and across river corridors in both upstream and downstream directions from the proposed river segment have been evaluated in detail by the relevant federal agency; 4) It is clearly demonstrated that the provisions and terms of the process for review of potential additions have been applied in a consistent manner by all federal agencies; and 5) The rationale and justification for the proposed addition, including a comparison with protections offered by other management tools, is clearly analyzed within the multiple-use mandate, and the results disclosed. All valid existing rights, including grazing leases and permits shall not be affected."		
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	SD227 (SD-VV)	This section discusses the upper, middle, and lower segments of the Green River in regard to WSR status. DCWCD is in favor of Alt B and strongly opposes any designation that would impact the future use of the Green River and the development of this valuable water resource.	See Responses to Comments SD8-G-9, SD19-G-22, SD37-G22.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	SO39 (SO-I)	As the livestock industry is Duchesne County's largest and most stable economic source of revenue, DCWCD would oppose any policy that would be economically disruptive.	The BLM is aware of the importance of the livestock industry to the county. As described in section 4.12.3.1 of the PRMP/FEIS, the number of AUM's in the proposed plan is identical to current conditions (the No Action alternative), which the BLM believes will avoid the disruption concerning the commenter .	

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Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	TR1 (TR-N)	We request that the BLM articulate its policies regarding the granting of Title 5 rights of way to counties and provide a Title 5 right of way agreement template in an appendix of the RMP.	The request is beyond the scope of this document. Title V rights-of-way are clearly explained in FLPMA. It is not necessary to repeat that information in this document.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	TR31 (TR-O)	This item talks about the elimination of "unneeded travel routes." DCWCD would like to see this amended to take into account Duchesne County planning for transportation and require input by county entities before such elimination of routes takes place.	See comment response TR7.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	TR5	There are many roads on BLM land that are not officially "county roads," but are public (Class D) roads that have RS 2477 rights. Many of these appear on the Duchesne County Transportation Plan that has been provided to the BLM. Can the BLM recognize such rights in this part of the document?	A "D" route does not equate to a County road assertion. The routes identified as "D" routes in the DRMP/DEIS are roads located on public lands and managed by the BLM until properly adjudicated. The DRMP/DEIS proposes four different alternatives to manage these routes. As specified in the Draft RMP/DEIS Section 1.8 these issues are addressing RS 2477 assertions and are beyond the scope of this planning effort. However, nothing extinguishes any right-of-way or alters in any way the legal rights the State and Counties have to assert and protect RS 2477 rights. See comment response TR8.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	TR6	Duchesne County favors Alternative B. The county promotes the continued use of roads that serve a public interest. The county would like the ability to maintain and upgrade existing roads and propose realignments to address safety or environmental issues. The county recognizes the importance of Off Highway Vehicles to the economy of the area;	Comment noted.	

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			however, the damage OHV use causes to the environment is of concern. We feel that Alternative B strikes an acceptable balance.		
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	TR7	Closing or restricting access over public lands is mentioned in this paragraph. Duchesne County requests that this paragraph make it clear that such closures or restrictions would not effect roads shown on county transportation plans or roads with RS 2477 rights.	This clarification is provided for in Section 1.8, Issues Beyond the Scope of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	VI1	It is the position of Duchesne County that RMP's should not apply VRM classifications in such a way as to diminish historically permitted or leased "domestic livestock grazing," "mineral exploration and production," "timber production," and principal and major uses of the land as mandated by FLPMA Section 1702(1).	According to BLM Manual 8400.06(2) Visual Resource Management, VRM classes shall result from, and conform to, the resource allocations made in RMPs. This would include domestic livestock grazing, mineral exploration and production, timber production, etc.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	VI1A	VRM classifications and goals must be limited to protecting against only damage that is permanent and irreparable, while recognizing and allowing for overall multiple use and quality of life for local communities (who enjoy the land and who rely on balanced, sustained-yield economic use of natural resources in the planning area) and visitors to public lands [see FLPMA Section 1702(1)].	The purpose of VRM classifications is not tied to protecting permanent and irreparable damage. VRM classifications are assigned to public lands based on scenic quality, sensitivity level, and distance zones. The VRM classification has an objective which prescribes the amount of change allowed in the characteristic landscape. See the Glossary of Terms in BLM Manual 8400.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	VI1B	VRM I and II classifications constitute de facto wilderness management in violation of the multiple use mandate of FLPMA, and required by BLM Manual H 8410 and NEPA to impose VRM restrictions.	VRM classifications are not the mechanism for designating wilderness areas. Wilderness Study Areas are managed by their own set of rules and regulations (see BLM Manual H-8550-1, Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review). BLM Handbook 8410-1, Visual Resource Inventory, states in III(5), “Special Areas. Management objectives for special	

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				areas such as Natural Areas, Wilderness Areas or Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Scenic Areas, Scenic Roads or Trails, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), frequently require special consideration for the protection of the visual values. This does not necessarily mean that these areas are scenic, but rather than one of the management objectives may be to reserve the natural landscape setting. The management objectives for these areas may be used as a basis for assigning sensitivity levels." Furthermore, BLM IM-2000-96 (Use of Visual Resource Management Class I Designation in Wilderness Study Areas states: "... that all WSAs should be classified as Class I, and managed according to VRM Class I management objectives until such time as the Congress decides to designate the area as wilderness or release it for other uses. If a WSA is designated as wilderness, the area would continue to be managed as VRM Class I."	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	VI1C	VRM analysis should be based on certain visual reference points. For example, analysis should be based on that which is visible from the resource that is intended to be protected. Classifications for VRM should not be "overly broad." All VRM's must be developed based on a specific point of reference such as a river, a stream, a road, etc. RMP's are legally flawed that lack such articulation of existing character and why retention of such is important, a statement of acreage affected, etc..	VRM classifications are made to meet management goals and objectives. Although an inventory may be used, it is not required. The current classifications were brought forward from the Book Cliffs and Diamond Mountain RMPs. H1601-1 – Land Use Planning Handbook, Appendix C, I. Visual Resources states, "Land Use Plan	

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				Decisions. Manage visual resource values in accordance with visual resource management (VRM) objectives (management classes). Designate VRM management classes for all areas of BLM land, based on an inventory of visual resources and management considerations for other land uses. VRM management classes may differ from VRM inventory classes, based on management priorities for land uses (see BLM Handbook H8410-1 for a description of VRM classes)." The commenter is correct in stating that VRM classifications should be prescribed to areas as seen from specific places only. Called "Key Observation Points" (KOP), i.e. a scenic overlook, a frequented canyon rim, or a particular feature, the VRM classification given would be managed to protect that view shed from that point. Another way to protect an area like the White/Green River corridors or a Scenic Byway would be to manage for whatever classification is determined along the entire river corridor. This has been analyzed in the past by projecting a computer generated viewer from 3 feet above the river surface (similar to a canoeist) located in the middle of the waterway and then asking the computer to generate a 360 degree view for the length to be analyzed. The results demonstrate the frequency of sightings, the distance seen, and the areas observed.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	VI1D	VRM I rating shall be restricted to Class I wilderness areas, congressionally designated wild and scenic river segments, and other areas where congressional decisions or legitimate administrative decisions have	VRM Class I can be designated for other areas that are not national wilderness areas, wild and scenic river segments, and other congressionally and administratively designated areas. The language of	

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			been made to preserve a natural landscape.	H-8410-1 states that in areas where the natural landscape is to be maintained includes areas such as WSAs, wild and scenic rivers, etc. This does not eliminate other naturally scenic areas from designation as VRM I. The BLM can designate other areas as VRM I if the land use objectives for that area deem it important to maintain the natural scenic quality and if the area proposed for VRM I designation possesses scenic quality and natural landscape characteristics. The alternatives present a range of VRM categories from which management can select from.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	VI1E	RMP's are contrary to law to the extent they authorize VRM ratings beyond these parameters. VRM I ratings are illegal in WSA's (see BLM IM 2000-96 and BLM H-8550-1). Moreover, a VRM I classification on WSA's conflicts with FLPMA Section 1782(c), which expressly allows for the continuation of existing mining and grazing uses and mineral leasing in the manner and degree in which the same was conducted when FLPMA took effect.	Visual Resource Management in class I and II areas does not preclude oil and gas development, but it does mean that the BLM has to try harder to accommodate both the visual concerns as well as the valid and existing rights. Through screening techniques such as topography, vegetation, coloration, and adaptation of facilities, we have been successful in fully mitigating the visual concerns of some VRM II areas. See comment response SD174 regarding valid existing rights. This would include both mining and grazing uses.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	VI1F	Duchesne County has adopted a policy in its General Plan stating, "Imposing VRM classifications that result in the prohibition of formerly valid surface occupying or surface disturbing activities is an improper use of the VRM tool." Based on the above, Duchesne County expresses support of Alternative A, depicted on Figure 29 of the	BLM is aware that there are specific County and State Plan decisions relevant to aspects of public land management that are discrete from, and independent of, Federal law. However, BLM is bound by Federal law. FLPMA requires that the development of resource management planning for public land must be coordinated with and consistent with county plans to the maximum extent possible by law, and resolve to the extent practicable,	

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			Draft EIS. This alternative contains no Class I VRM in Duchesne County and the only Class II VRM is located along Nine Mile Canyon, east of Gate Canyon. Duchesne County opposes Alternatives B, C, and D, which designate more Class II VRM areas in the county.	inconsistencies between federal and non-federal government plans (FLPMA, Title II Sec. 202 (c) (9)). As a consequence, where State and local plans conflict with Federal law there will be an inconsistency that cannot be resolved or reconciled. Thus, while county and federal planning processes, under FLPMA, are required to be as integrated and consistent as practicable, the federal agency planning process is not bound by or subject to county plans, planning processes, or planning stipulations. BLM will identify these conflicts in the FEIS/Vernal RMP so that the State and local governments have a complete understanding of the impacts of the Vernal RMP on State and local management options. A consistency review of the Vernal RMP with the State and County Master Plans has been included in Chapter 5.	
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District	O-10	WH2	All localities – Duchesne County supports Alternative B. Duchesne County's General Plan contains the following policies regarding Wild Horses: "At present there are no known feral or wild-horse populations roaming on public lands in Duchesne County. Free-roaming horses on public lands increase the possibility of equine disease among domestic horses. Wild and free-roaming horses rapidly increase in population, cause overgrazing, negatively impact wildlife and livestock, and burden the land managing agency with unnecessary costs. The introduction of wild horses would adversely affect Duchesne County's environment and economy. It is the position of Duchesne County that: a. No forage allocations or permits shall be provided for wild or fugitive horses on public lands in Duchesne	The BLM does not manage any wild horse areas within Duchesne County; therefore, the BLM is consistent with the Duchesne County General Plan.	

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			County; b. All feral or fugitive horses found roaming on public lands in Duchesne County are trespassing and shall be removed.		
Utah Wildlife Federation	O-11	WF106 (WF-D)	The answer for the BLM is to not restrict leasing, but rather to restrict the terms of leases. This mitigation measure intends to make everyone happy by leaving the areas in question open to development under terms that presumably have the fewest deleterious impact to fish and wildlife. However, when the impact of gas and oil development particularly coal bed methane on fish and wildlife are largely unknown and the few studies that have been conducted point towards detrimental effects, the effectiveness of these stipulations is questionable. This approach is irresponsible and no stipulations can mitigate that.	All BLM-administered public lands within the VPA fall under one of the following four leasing categories for oil and gas development: 1) Standard Stipulations; 2) Timing and Controlled Surface Use; 3) No Surface Occupancy; 4) Closed to leasing. The lands are categorized through the RMP process by considering resources and resource uses in the area and analyzing the impacts to them under each alternative. Standard stipulations also requires that a “lessee shall conduct operations in a manner that minimizes adverse impacts to the land, air, and water, to cultural, biological, visual, and other resources, and to other land uses and users.	
Utah Wildlife Federation	O-11	WF107 (WF-E)	The threats to mule deer and elk with in the East Tavaputs Plateau RFDA are most pointedly habitat fragmentation and displacement from suitable winter range due to gas and oil development exploration. Moreover, the UDWR conclude in a four-year study (1998-2002) that "accelerated oil and gas development	See comment response WF46.	

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			in the Book Cliffs - East Tavaputs RFDA has the potential to further displace big game animals and increase habitat fragmentation during winter range, thereby lowering the carrying capacity of the range. Given these facts, the development of those habitats deemed "critical" to mule deer and elk would be a profound disregard for the public trust and could result in deer hunting closures similar to those enacted during the late 1990s.		
Utah Wildlife Federation	O-11	WF108 (WF-F)	Pronghorn habitat deemed "critical" by UDWR exists primarily within the monument –Red Wash RFDA. Despite this fact, pronghorn are scarcely mentioned in the text of the Draft EIS. However, they are devoted a table – number 6 on page I-8 of the appendices, that shows Alt C – the one deemed to "focus on the protection of natural and cultural resources"-leaves 71% of pronghorn habitat open to oil and gas development under standard stipulations. That is to say that for the majority of those leases, the BLM will not even be taking their-"mitigation through stipulation" approach to protecting these critical pronghorn habitats.	Comment noted.	
Utah Wildlife Federation	O-11	WF60	The greater sage grouse has seen recent population declines all across its historical range and the Vernal Planning Area is no exception. Areas of the VPA that provide important habitat for the greater sage grouse include the mid-level elevations of the Book Cliffs and the Uinta Basin, with Diamond Mountain retaining one of the strongest populations in Utah. The draft EIS states that under Alternative C, 95% of all sage grouse habitat would be open for leasing, with 41% of that under no special stipulations to protect grouse. Under the same alternative, 93% of essential sage grouse brooding habitat would be open to leasing with 43% of those areas critical to sage grouse recovery open to	As described in Table 2.1..21 (Special Status S) of the PRMP/FEIS, Alternatives A: (1) Connelly's Guidelines to Manage Sage Grouse Populations and Their Habitats, which recommends no surface disturbing activities within two miles of active sage grouse leks from March 1 through June 15 and no surface disturbing activities within one-quarter mile of active sage grouse leks year round, would be implemented.	

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			leasing with no lease stipulations. It is essential that current populations and habitats are not only maintained, but improved upon to prevent further population declines of this important game bird and the possibility of future federal listing. The Vernal RMP can be part of this effort to prevent ESA listing by designating the Coyote Basin/Shiner ACEC and abiding by the conservation strategy for public land habitats as outlined in the UDWR Strategic Management Plan for Sage Grouse 2002. This plan relates directly to oil and gas development with two stipulations: 1) Avoid the development of roads, fences, poles, and utility lines within 1300 feet of a lek, and 2) Avoid human disturbances within 0.6 mile of a lek during breeding season (March 1 to May 31) from one hour before sunrise to three hours after sunrise.	(2) No permanent facilities or structures would be allowed within two miles when possible.	
Utah Wildlife Federation	O-11	WF61	The reintroduction efforts of Colorado River cutthroats into the upper Willow Creek and Bitter Creek areas of the Book Cliffs by the UDWR could be compromised by aquifer dewatering and water quality issues stemming from Coal Bed Methane development.	The commenter does not provide any additional information to substantiate the assertion that impacts from coal bed methane operations would cause aquifer dewatering. Analysis of site-specific coal bed methane impacts is beyond the scope of the EIS and would be analyzed in other site-specific, project-related NEPA documents.	
Utah Wildlife Federation	O-11	WF62	Protecting the East Tavaputs Plateau and the critical wildlife areas within it should be a priority.	Comment noted.	
Utah Wildlife Federation	O-11	WF63	The protections afforded to wildlife under Alternative C (e.g., Main Canyon ACEC, Bitter Creek ACEC, Bitter Creek/PR Spring ACEC, Bitter Creek WSR, Book Cliffs Mountain ISA, and the Winter Ridge WSA) should be considered a minimum as the other alternatives offer even fewer designations and would certainly result in more lost hunting opportunities.	Comment noted.	
Utah Wildlife Federation	O-11	WF64	From a fisheries standpoint, the lost angling opportunities could be trout angling opportunities as	Table 2.1.26 (Wildlife and Fisheries Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS states:	

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			well as warm water fishing for bass and panfish in lakes of the Uinta Basin being hampered by increased runoff and impaired water quality due to a rise in total dissolved solids. For the trout angler, coldwater fishing in Jones Hole Creek could be compromised by indirect sedimentation and pollution. In addition, designations in place to preserve the world class trout fishing in the Green River below Flaming Gorge Reservoir should not be taken for granted or considered a given. All of the proposed protections for this area should be sought out, including Red Creek ACEC, Browns Park ACEC, West Cold Springs WSA, Diamond Breaks WSA, and the Upper Green River WSR designation.	"The VFO would assist in implementing the strategic plan for Utah's Initiative on Blue Ribbon Fisheries by managing aquatic and riparian habitats along the Green River, from the Ashley National Forest border to the Colorado/Utah border, for a quality cold water sport fishery and Pelican Lake for a quality warm water sport fishery. In addition, any aquatic and riparian habitats along other waters identified as Blue Ribbon Fisheries would be managed for quality sport fisheries. The VFO would implement this initiative to the extent consistent and appropriate with the Vernal RMP and other land use authorizations."	
Questar	O-12	AT32 (AT-Y)	Areas of concern that are not adequately addressed in lease stipulations have and will continue to be addressed in site-specific COAs and/or project-specific EAs or EISs, the proposed additional restrictions and, in some cases, outright disregard for oil and gas industry's valid existing rights proposed in Alternative A and or C are unwarranted. Alt B is much more consistent federally mandated multiple use management of the public lands.	All management actions proposed under all alternatives recognize valid existing rights and do not apply newly developed management prescriptions that differ from prescriptions already ascribed to those rights.	
Questar	O-12	AT65 (LAT-1)	The DEIS provides no specific analysis to evaluate and justify the preferred actions as the least restrictive necessary and does not document the scientific basis for the proposed oil and gas restrictions. (As per IMs 2003-234 p.4 and 2003-233 p.2).	In the absence of specifics, we are unable to respond to your comment.	
Questar	O-12	AT66 (LAT-2)	The DEIS fails to address the rationale for not continuing many of the current management standards that have governed energy development in the planning area.	The general purpose and need for the RMP and its provisions regarding the spectrum of land uses is presented in Section 1.2 of the PRMP/FEIS. Alternatives and management actions considered	

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				but not included or carried forward in the Draft RMP are discussed in Section 1.9 of the PRMP/FEIS. The Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) requires BLM to evaluate existing lease mitigation requirements to determine if they are appropriate and effective. The alternatives reflect that evaluation (IM 2003-233).	
Questar	O-12	ME42	The statement that none of the alternatives would result in more than a 0.4% net decrease in the number of predicted oil and gas wells is deceiving. Based on the information in Tables 4.8.2, 4.8.3, 4.8.4 and 4.8.5, Alternatives A, B and C all provide more opportunity for oil and gas well drilling than Alternative D. However, the difference between Alternatives B and C is about 2.5%.	Sections 4.8.3 and 4.8.4 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to read: "Under all action alternatives there would be a net increase in the number of predicted oil, gas, and CBM wells as compared to the No Action alternative."	X
Questar	O-12	SD214 (SD-II)	43 CFR 1610.7-2 requires potential ACECs to meet test of relevance and importance. Bitter Creek does not meet either requirement. Nothing in this area is so significant or distinctive that it requires an ACEC designation to prevent irreparable damage to important resources. Alternatives A and C do not meet the requirements of the regulation that creates ACECs and should not be considered further.	See Response to Comment SD27-G-22.	
Questar	O-12	SD222 (SD-QQ)	The expansion of the Lower Green River ACEC is not justified. The importance criteria given in the draft RMP for the Lower Green River Expansion states that the relevant values "have substantial significance due to qualities that make them fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary and unique." However, the document fails to mention which or any of the qualities that make this area qualify for a special designation.	See Response to Comment SD27-G-22.	
Questar	O-12	SD326	We believe that many of these ACECs should be	Appendix G provides direction and the steps taken	

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		(LSD-1)	eliminated from consideration, since they do not comply with the BLM regulations under 43 CFR 1610.7-2. There is no discussion detailing how the BLM followed these guidelines	during ACEC evaluation.	
Questar	O-12	SD327 (LSD-2)	The new ACECs should be reexamined since there was insufficient information provided to the public about the factors that influenced these decisions.	The public was notified in a supplement to the notice of availability of the Draft RMP and Draft EIS for the Vernal Field Office to list proposed areas of critical environmental concern and specific associated resource use limitations for public lands was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005. This NOA addressed ACECs within the Vernal Field Office and identified an associated 60-day public comment period. The relevance and importance criteria can be found in Appendix G in the PRMP/FEIS.	
Questar	O-12	SD328 (LSD-3)	The DEIS has embellished the regulatory definition of "importance" and added additional regulations (see bolded type below) to Section 1610.7-2 as purportedly cited in Appendix G: 1. Has more locally significant qualities which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource. 2. Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change. 3. Has been recognized as warranting protection in	The five qualities of importance criteria does not come from Section 1610.7-2, but is quoted from BLM Manual 1613 - Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.	

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			order to satisfy national priority concerns to carry out the mandates of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. 4. Has qualities that warrant highlighting in order to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare. 5. Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.		
Questar	O-12	SD329 (LSD-4)	The DEIS does not contain sufficient information to explain why the Nine Mile Canyon Expansion ACEC was created and why this area is more restricted under Alternative A than under B or D. There is no explanation of the 'importance criteria' for this area.	The inconsistencies in cited relevant and important resource values have been corrected. Appendix G contains the correct list of values.	X
Questar	O-12	SD330 (LSD-5)	Figure 22 shows overlap in current and proposed ACECs, inconsistent with the text.	The commenter does not identify how Figure 22 is inconsistent with the text. As such, the BLM cannot respond directly to this comment.	
Questar	O-12	SO100 (LSO-2)	Land and resource restrictions limits development and affects energy prices, local economies, state and federal tax revenues and energy consumption. These impacts are not discussed in the DEIS.	The impact of management decisions in the Vernal planning area on nationally-driven energy prices is outside the scope of the PRMP/FEIS. The anticipated socioeconomic impacts for counties within the planning area are discussed in Section 4.12 and its subsections.	
Questar	O-12	SO99 (LSO-1)	Local and state revenue through oil and gas taxes is not discussed.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten and discusses the fiscal impacts to local government of the alternative decisions affecting the oil and gas industry in the Vernal planning area.	X
Questar	O-12	SS119 (LSS-1)	This section trivializes the impacts of special species resource decisions on the oil and gas industry.	Comment noted.	

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Questar	O-12	SS120 (LSS-2)	Alternative A in Appendix K states that no exemptions or waivers will be allowed but the section on raptor nests claims there may be. Same contradiction in sage grouse section	Appendix K and Sections 4.8.2.5.1.1 and 4.8.2.5.1.2 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to correct inconsistencies described in the comment.	X
Questar	O-12	SS121 (LSS-3)	Explain how it was determined that 2% more area surrounding hawk nest sites will be open to development.	See comment responses M194 and SS40.	
Questar	O-12	SS122 (LSS-4)	Provide data to support statements about loss of raptor habitat due to development. Existing artificial raptor perches in oil fields have been successful.	See comment response SS40.	
Questar	O-12	WF153 (LWF1)	Explain why there is a 1.5:1 ratio for sagebrush habitat in Alternative A and a 1:1 ratio in Alternative B.	See comment response WF21.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-13	AT11 (AT-C)	The WPA encourages adopting Alternative B to reduce the timing/seasonal lease restrictions and stipulations for oil and gas leases.	Comment noted.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-13	ME VI47 (VI-D)	The EIS does not adequately demonstrate that requiring costly "best available technology" to reduce noise and light pollution will benefit sensitive areas and wildlife. Additionally, multi-cylinder pumps and hospital mufflers referred to are costly and difficult to maintain. Often multi-cylinder pumps cannot be effectively used because they do not produce the same torque as standard wellhead engines.	The commenter does not provide any additional information or explain how Best Available Technology (BATs) would not benefit sensitive areas and wildlife nor does he provide information to refute the EIS impacts analysis.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-13	ME112 (ME-X)	The Pariette Wetlands ACEC was created to protect a unique riparian habitat. However, this in itself does not justify the "NSO designation. The very fact that there is already oil and gas activity within the ACEC and critical habitat further proves that the habitat and special species can coexist. Furthermore, the ACEC boundary	Comment noted.	

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			does not delineate a continuous riparian and wetlands habitat. Therefore, with the ACEC boundary there are lands that can be developed with no impact on the critical habitat or special species.		
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-13	ME113 (ME-Y)	Throughout the document, it is unclear whether or not you intend to apply new stipulations to existing oil and gas leases and existing facilities. To do this would violate Newfield's existing lease rights and likely be inconsistent with Newfield's soon to be completed EIS. Please clarify whether or not you intend to supersede existing lease notice provisions and/or stipulations contained in other NEPA documents.	See comment response ME3.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-13	RW22 (RW-D)	Our experience has been that the FEMA 100 yr floodplain maps do not provide consistent coverage in the area you are trying to regulate. Thus allowing no new surface disturbance within active floodplains requires subjective interpretation and is enforced inconsistently. A minimum waterway dimension or flow rate should be defined. Specify what size floodplain you wish to protect to avoid over-regulating tiny intermittent or ephemeral washes. Likewise, you should define what a "riparian area" is to avoid inconsistent application of this stipulation.	See comment response RW1.	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-13	SS27 (SS-A)	The BLM should limit the scope of the sage grouse stipulations to ACTIVE leks and define active vs. inactive leks. Newfields leases contain a lek that is surrounded by development and has been inactive for several years. Do you intend these stipulations to apply to maintenance and operations of existing facilities near an inactive lek? Within 0.5 mile of active leks, do you intend to require operations to retrofit existing equipment with best available technology to reduce noise.	These stipulations do not apply to maintenance and work-over operations. Information clarifying the scope of the sage grouse stipulations in terms of lek activity has been included in the FEIS.	X
Newfield	O-13	SW28	The EIS does not demonstrate that there is sufficient	See comment response SW3.	

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Exploration Co.		(SW-G)	risk to soil and water resources from pipeline crossings to justify the cost associated with requiring the proponent to conduct a hydraulic analysis for every pipeline crossing of intermittent and ephemeral stream channels. The methodology outlined in Appendix B Hydraulic Considerations for Pipeline Crossings of Stream Channels is difficult to interpret and would be extremely difficult to implement for every pipeline crossing.		
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-13	WF104 (WF-B)	The adoption of the "Fish and Wildlife's Guidelines for Raptor Protection" would prohibit us from developing some of our acreage. The overall goal of the guidelines is to protect the nests from becoming unsuitable nesting sites. Newfield has been able to work with the BLM on a site-by-site basis to achieve both development and protection of the nest. Adoption of these guidelines is both unnecessary and will only hinder the development of the resource and not further protect the nests.	The Utah BLM raptor BMPs were adopted through IM UT-2006-096 and are incorporated in Appendix A	
Newfield Exploration Co.	O-13	WF105 (WF-C)	What does enhancement of sagebrush habitat entail? A large percentage of Newfield's activities occur within sagebrush habitat; thus, this stipulation would be particularly burdensome. The EIS has not adequately demonstrated that reclaiming or enhancing sagebrush at a 1.5:1 ratio will benefit wildlife.	As stated in Table 2.1.26 (Special Status Species) of the PRMP/FEIS, the Utah Strategic Management Plan For Sage Grouse (2002) would be adopted as the baseline threshold for management of the species under Alternative A. Habitat enhancement is described therein. Also, sagebrush habitat enhancement is described in Connelly's Guidelines to Manage Sage Grouse Populations and Their Habitats which is also proposed under other alternatives. See comment response WF21.	
IPAMS	O-14	AT29 (AT-V)	The preferred alternative needs to ensure the number of wells in the RFD document is not a cap on development for the planning area by including	The RFD is not a planning criteria but rather a measure of surface disturbance based upon a best estimate at the time the RMP is prepared. The RFD	

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			flexibility in the planning process to allow for increased activity due to price spikes or new discoveries without invalidating existing lease rights.	presented in the EIS is not intended as a limit the number of individual wells within the planning area. It is used as a relative measure of development for the purpose of impacts analysis. The RFD allows for collocation and retirement and reclamation. As additional information is obtained over the life of the RMP, the RFD can be recalculated and amended as necessary.	
IPAMS	O-14	AT32 (AT-Y)	Areas of concern that are not adequately addressed in lease stipulations have and will continue to be addressed in site-specific COAs and/or project-specific EAs or EISs, the proposed additional restrictions and, in some cases, outright disregard for oil and gas industry's valid existing rights proposed in Alternative A and or C are unwarranted. Alt B is much more consistent federally mandated multiple use management of the public lands.	All management actions proposed under all alternatives recognize valid existing rights and do not apply newly developed management prescriptions that differ from prescriptions already ascribed to those rights.	
IPAMS	O-14	AT65 (LAT-1)	The DEIS provides no specific analysis to evaluate and justify the preferred actions as the least restrictive necessary and does not document the scientific basis for the proposed oil and gas restrictions. (As per IMs 2003-234 p.4 and 2003-233 p.2).	In the absence of specifics, we are unable to respond to your comment.	
IPAMS	O-14	AT67 (LAT-3)	BLM must develop reasonable alternatives that understand the effects of existing stipulations. BLM should consider outcome-based solutions including performance –based operating standards.	Alternative D and the analysis thereof in Chapter 4 reflect the impacts of existing stipulations on the various resources and land uses within the Vernal Planning Area (VPA). Where existing stipulations are carried forward into proposed action alternatives, these impacts are analyzed and disclosed in Chapter 4 as well. The goals and objectives contained in Chapter 2 for each resource and land use represent the desired outcome of the BLM for management actions within the VPA.	
IPAMS	O-14	AT70	The additional acres subject to timing limitations under Alternative A limit cost-effective operations by oil and	Comment noted.	

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		(LAT-6)	gas developers.		
IPAMS	O-14	AT71 (LAT-7)	Alternative B should be modified once the full effects of oil and gas management are understood.	Alternative B represents part of the range of alternatives that the BLM must consider in developing its land use plan. The potential effects of management decisions under each alternative on minerals and energy development are discussed in Section 4.8 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
IPAMS	O-14	CR30	The DEIS states that no alternative benefits cultural resources. While the underlying assumption of this statement is that cultural resources are better off left alone, the section should also acknowledge that proper identification of cultural resource sites, data collection at those sites, and recording of sites that cannot be avoided, are all activities that would contribute to the body of scientific knowledge and understanding of the cultures that once occupied the vernal planning area.	Section 4.3.2.13 in the PRMP/FEIS has added the following additional language: "It should be noted, however, that both the identification of sites and the mitigation of impacts through data recovery conducted in association with the Section 106 process for land uses have the positive impact of increasing the body of knowledge about past human behaviors and occupations in the Vernal Planning Area."	X
IPAMS	O-14	EJ1 (JEJ-1)	BLM fails to disclose how the restrictions to oil and gas development, from overlapping proposed management decisions may combine to increase the consumer cost of gas, which may be disproportionably borne by low-income populations.	Should increased consumer costs for oil and gas products result from management decisions included in the RMP, the costs would be borne equally by all consumers, and not just low-income populations. As such, no analysis of such impacts is warranted in terms of environmental justice.	
IPAMS	O-14	LR13 (LLR-1) (JLR-5)	Lands managed by the State of Utah Division of Wildlife Resources have also not been accurately portrayed within Figure 1 (Land Ownership) of the RMP. The School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) website contains an accurate map of these lands within the planning area. Alternatively, a map can be obtained directly from the Division. These lands need to be accurately portrayed because of development restrictions inherent to them.	Figure 1 has been updated to reflect the State of Utah's land ownership as indicated on maps obtained from the SITLA website.	X
IPAMS	O-14	ME22	The DEIS/RMP fails to analyze the impacts on oil &	The integration of EPCA into the RMP is discussed	

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			gas development [of special designations] and comply with EPCA and IMs directing incorporation of EPCA into RMPs. It requires that management restriction be the least restrictive necessary to protect documented and supportable needs.	in Section 1.12. EPCA does not prohibit the use of special designations or multiple overlapping prescriptions, but requires that these prescriptions are the minimum necessary to maintain sustained yield. The BLM believes it has met this mandate and has only identified special designations where such designations are necessary.	
IPAMS	O-14	ME42	The statement that none of the alternatives would result in more than a 0.4% net decrease in the number of predicted oil and gas wells is deceiving. Based on the information in Tables 4.8.2, 4.8.3, 4.8.4 and 4.8.5, Alternatives A, B and C all provide more opportunity for oil and gas well drilling than Alternative D. However, the difference between Alternatives B and C is about 2.5%.	Sections 4.8.3 and 4.8.4 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to read: "Under all action alternatives there would be a net increase in the number of predicted oil, gas, and CBM wells as compared to the No Action alternative."	X
IPAMS	O-14	ME46	The table in the DEIS that depicts the “overall effect of spatial and temporal limitations on energy and mineral development” is limited and therefore totally inadequate. The DEIS needs to discuss and overlay, by alternative, the timing and spatial limitations in combination with other proposed management prescriptions that impact oil and gas development, including VRM, SRMA, and ACEC decisions. EPCA policy requires overlays to identify areas of conflict and opportunities for resolving specific issues. (BLM IM 2003-233, Attachment 2-1.) Taken together, proposed resource decisions may restrict or reduce areas of development that may otherwise appear accessible.	The commenter is referred to Figures 11-18, wherein areas depicted as timing and controlled surface use and closed reflect the implications of management decisions under the alternatives for all other resource programs. With regard to the use of overlays, IM 2003-003 does not require the use of overlays but suggests they be used in scoping and pre-alternative development. For plans such as the Vernal RMP, which were beyond the scoping and pre-alternative development stage at the time EPCA was issued, agencies are only directed to, at a minimum, use the EPCA findings to "understand the full effects of existing stipulations and other management options."	
IPAMS	O-14	ME47	Well projections must be adjusted in an EIS under each alternative to reflect administrative designations, management practices, and mitigation measures.	The reasonable foreseeable development (RFD) scenario used for comparative purposes in the RMP was derived from the Mineral Potential Report. This	

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			(BLM IM 2004-089, Attachment 1-1). BLM does not disclose the methodology it used in projecting oil and gas well activity by alternative. It is unclear, therefore, whether the projected well activity was based on a thorough evaluation of leasing constraints as required by BLM policy, or merely tied to the increase of 188,500 acres of split estate lands available for leasing in the Hill Creek extension.	fact is discussed at the beginning of Section 4.1.2. This section also states that the RFD is based on surface disturbance and not on exact numbers of wells.	
IPAMS	O-14	ME48	The BLM failed to consider that once a well is plugged, reclaimed, and abandoned, it has no adverse effect on the environment.	Reclamation activities, collocation, and other factors that reduce overall surface impacts were taken into account when developing the reasonable foreseeable development (RFD) scenario used in the analysis for the RMP.	
IPAMS	O-14	ME49	With respect to the RFD, the number of wells projected is the same as the number of well pads and well locations, which does not contemplate any co-location, twinning, or commingling, which would reduce the amount of surface disturbance. The occurrence of two or more well bores on a single location may incrementally increase the well pad size needed to accommodate two or more wellheads and production equipment, but it would also result in significantly less surface disturbance. The key element which must be considered in determining what level of oil and gas activity will be allowed over the life of the plan is not the number of wells which could be drilled, but rather the net effect of surface disturbance and activities.	See comment responses ME47 and ME48.	
IPAMS	O-14	ME50	The DEIS states that “it would be very rare for any one lease to have so many limitations as to render it inaccessible for energy development.” Clearly this statement is erroneous since the ½-mile restrictions around all raptor nests, in combination with big game crucial winter range restrictions, would render some oil and gas leases inaccessible to development. For	See comment responses ME181 and SS29.	

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			example, seasonal restrictions for various species of raptors extend from January to August. Critical deer and elk winter range restrictions extend from November to the end of April. Based on these restrictions, there would be only 2½ months where oil and gas development would be allowed.		
IPAMS	O-14	ME54	Appendices A and H must be rewritten; and, rather than instituting blanket stipulations, we recommend that BLM commit to developing stipulations (as well as the associated exception, waiver, and modification) for surface-disturbing activities resulting from oil and gas operations in cooperation with the oil and gas industry, other agencies, and other key stakeholders.	Appendices A and H in the PRMP/FEIS have been updated to reflect BMPs for Raptors and Their Associated Habitats in Utah, IM UT 2006-096.	X
IPAMS	O-14	ME85 (LAT-4)	BLM must clarify that the RFD was developed pursuant to the Mineral Potential Report that included tar sands.	Section 4.1.2 states that the RFD was derived from the Mineral Potential Report and notes that it includes all mineral resources for the VPA.	
IPAMS	O-14	ME86 (LAT-5)	Typical oil and gas operations are unlikely to meet the standard for unnecessary and undue degradation	Comment noted.	
IPAMS	O-14	ME90 (ME-B)	It is our contention that it is in the best interest of the local communities as well as our nation for the BLM to adhere to Congressional dictates that require that federal planning create the least impact on the continued reasonable use of renewable and extractive resources in any long term land use plan.	Comment noted.	
IPAMS	O-14	PR2	BLM acknowledges that in the case of "numerous overlapping stipulations, the time frame in which drilling can occur given constraints (drilling window) may be very limited, which could cause adverse impacts." EPCA policy, however, specifically requires BLM to evaluate the continued need for resource related constraints, including multiple overlapping timing stipulations.	The VFO evaluated the continued need for resource related constraints as part of alternative development. During the initial stages of alternative development a review of the two existing plans (Book Cliff RMP and Diamond Mountain RMP) was conducted. Management prescriptions that were duplicative or no longer necessary were not brought forward. The Mineral Potential Report and the Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenario	

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				were considered during this process. As noted in Section 1.12 of the PRMP/FEIS: "…a review was provided outlining existing leasing constraints within the focus areas. Data on proposed and existing leasing constraints specific to the proposed Vernal RMP are provided in the minerals section of the alternatives matrix (Chapter 2)". Layering of program decisions is not optional for BLM, but is required by the FLPMA, 1976 and National BLM planning and program specific regulations. The FLPMA directed that management of public lands be on the basis of multiple use (Section 102(a)(7)). As a multiple-use agency, the BLM is required to implement laws, regulations and policies for many different and often competing land uses and to resolve conflicts and prescribe land uses through its land use plans. Multiple-use management requires a balancing of the mandates for separate resource and land use programs. The RMP will include the decisions required for each program, and BLM will ensure that the allowable uses and allocations are compatible and meet the objectives of the selected plan.	
IPAMS	O-14	PR3	BLM asserted that it would "make all possible attempts" to make the management prescriptions as "complimentary as possible" to local land use plans. This statement does not conform to FLPMA which requires the BLM to "assure" that its land use plans are consistent with state and local plans to the extent they conform to federal law. The affected counties have identified numerous inconsistencies with local land use	The BLM is aware that there are specific County and State plan decisions relevant to aspects of public land management that are discrete from, and independent of, Federal law. However, the BLM is bound by Federal law. The FLPMA requires that the development of an RMP for public lands must be coordinated and consistent with County plans, to the maximum extent possible by law, and	

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			plans, and BLM must address and justify any divergence.	inconsistencies between Federal and non-Federal government plans be resolve to the extent practical (FLPMA, Title II Sec. 202 (c)(9)). As a consequence, where State and local plans conflict with Federal law there will be an inconsistency that cannot be resolved or reconciled. Thus, while County and Federal planning processes, under FLPMA, are required to be as integrated and consistent as practical, the Federal agency planning process is not bound by or subject to County plans, planning processes, or planning stipulations. The BLM will identify these conflicts in the FEIS/PRMP, so that the State and local governments have a complete understanding of the impacts of the PRMP on State and local management options. A consistency review of the PRMP with the State and County Master Plans is included in Chapter 5. 43 U.S.C. §1712(c)(9) states that the Secretary of the Interior (through the land use plans of the federal agencies under it) shall "coordinate the land use inventory, planning, and management activities of or for such lands with the land use planning and management programs of other Federal departments and agencies and of the States and local governments within which the lands are located." It further states that "the Secretary shall...assure that consideration is given to those State, local, and tribal plans that are germane in the development of land use plans for public lands [and] assist in resolving, to the extent practical, inconsistencies between Federal and non-Federal	

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				Government plans..." This language does not require the BLM to adhere to or adopt the plans of other agencies or jurisdictional entities, but rather to give consideration to these plans and make an effort to resolve inconsistencies to the extent practical.	
IPAMS	O-14	RW30 (LRW-1)	The conditions for granting a waiver in Chapter 4 are inconsistent with the stipulations for riparian floodplains in Appendix K.	See comment response RW3. Executive Order 11988 (1977) for Floodplains/Utah Riparian Management Policy which states that "No new surface disturbing activities will be allowed within 100 meters of riparian areas unless it can be shown that : (1) there are no practical alternatives or (2) all long-term impacts can be fully mitigated or (3) the activity will benefit and enhance the riparian area.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD191 (SD-L)	Coyote Basin should be managed as the Black-footed Ferret Amendment Plan calls for, not as an ACEC.	See Response to Comment SD20-G-25.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD20	Strike 2nd paragraph.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the	

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				adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD20A	A future inventory has no place in an RMP. BLM has no additional authority to either establish new WSAs or to manage them.	FLPMA Section 201 gives BLM the authority to inventory for wilderness characteristics. Section 202 of FLPMA gives BLM the authority for planning how the public lands are to be managed. Section 302 of FLPMA gives BLM general management authority for the public lands. It is BLM policy (as stated in its planning handbook and in Instruction Memorandums 2003-274 and 2003-275 Change 1), that through planning, the BLM has addressed non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics in the October 2007 Supplement to the DRMP/EIS.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD214 (SD-II)	43 CFR 1610.7-2 requires potential ACECs to meet test of relevance and importance. Bitter Creek does not meet either requirement. Nothing in this area is so significant or distinctive that it requires an ACEC designation to prevent irreparable damage to important resources. Alternatives A and C do not meet the requirements of the regulation that creates ACECs and should not be considered further.	See Response to Comment SD27-G-22.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD222 (SD-QQ)	The expansion of the Lower Green River ACEC is not justified. The importance criteria given in the draft RMP for the Lower Green River Expansion states that the relevant values "have substantial significance due to qualities that make them fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary and unique." However, the document fails to mention which or any of the qualities that make this area qualify for a special designation.	See Response to Comment SD27-G-22.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD326 (LSD-1)	We believe that many of these ACECs should be eliminated from consideration, since they do not comply with the BLM regulations under 43 CFR 1610.7-2. There is no discussion detailing how the BLM followed these guidelines	Appendix G provides direction and the steps taken during ACEC evaluation.	

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IPAMS	O-14	SD327 (LSD-2)	The new ACECs should be reexamined since there was insufficient information provided to the public about the factors that influenced these decisions.	The public was notified in a supplement to the notice of availability of the Draft RMP and Draft EIS for the Vernal Field Office to list proposed areas of critical environmental concern and specific associated resource use limitations for public lands was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005. This NOA addressed ACECs within the Vernal Field Office and identified an associated 60-day public comment period. The relevance and importance criteria can be found in Appendix G in the PRMP/FEIS.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD329 (LSD-4)	The DEIS does not contain sufficient information to explain why the Nine Mile Canyon Expansion ACEC was created and why this area is more restricted under Alternative A than under B or D. There is no explanation of the 'importance criteria' for this area.	The inconsistencies in cited relevant and important resource values have been corrected. Appendix G contains the correct list of values.	X
IPAMS	O-14	SD330 (LSD-5)	Figure 22 shows overlap in current and proposed ACECs, inconsistent with the text.	The commenter does not identify how Figure 22 is inconsistent with the text. As such, the BLM cannot respond directly to this comment.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD331 (LSD-6)	No support is given for the statement that the Coyote Basin ACEC provides a 'crucial habitat' for special species	Appendix G in the PRMP/FEIS has been expanded to include more information for the rationale behind proposed ACECs.	X
IPAMS	O-14	SD332 (LSD-7)	The table and discussion of non-WSA lands does not consider cumulative impacts and restrictions to oil and gas development.	Impacts and restrictions to oil and gas development are discussed in detail in the 2007 Supplement to the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, Section 4.8.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD34	The size of this ACEC is not supported in the text and is not supported by distribution of the reported values to be protected.	See Response to Comment SD14-G-13.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD36	Here there appears to be a layering of special designations in an attempt to manage this area for non-	See Response to Comment SD14-G-13.	

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			impairment. This is in conflict with the BLM's mandate for multiple use and IMs that provide for the removal of unnecessary stipulations that impact energy development, which is in conflict with EPCA and BLM instructional memorandums.	In accordance with BLM policy and its recognition of the National Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 2000 (EPCA), as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, mineral resource development would be allowed throughout the VPA subject to standard lease terms unless precluded by other program prescriptions, as specified in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.	
IPAMS	O-14	SD47	The cumulative effect of certain resource decisions, such as layering an SRMA over a special designation, may combine to illegally withdraw some of these proposed SRMAs from multiple-use, in violation of FLPMA's withdrawal procedures and the Settlement Agreement in State of Utah v. Norton, which prohibits de facto non-impairment management on non-Wilderness Study Area lands. An ACEC designation may not be managed as a substitute for wilderness suitability. (BLM Manual 1613.06)	See Response to Comment SD14-G-13.	
IPAMS	O-14	SO100 (LSO-2)	Land and resource restrictions limits development and affects energy prices, local economies, state and federal tax revenues and energy consumption. These impacts are not discussed in the DEIS.	The impact of management decisions in the Vernal planning area on nationally-driven energy prices is outside the scope of the PRMP/FEIS. The anticipated socioeconomic impacts for counties within the planning area are discussed in Section 4.12 and its subsections.	
IPAMS	O-14	SO15	Minerals development will not have a long-term adverse effect on the tourism sector of the economy. This is because a majority of the tourism is associated with resources that are located outside of the "oilfield" areas (High Uintah Wilderness, Starvation Reservoir, Flaming Gorge, etc…).	While a large portion of the tourism is concentrated in the northern end of the VPA, there are recreation opportunities in the proposed SRMAs, non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, special designations, and OHV travel routes in the southern portion of the VPA where the highest concentration of minerals development is likely to occur according to the RFD.	
IPAMS	O-14	SO16	This same level of analysis should be applied to oil and gas development as it has a positive effect on the same sectors of the economy. The loss of jobs and tax	Sections 4.12.2.3 and 4.12.2.4 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to address tourism tax revenues.	X

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			revenue will be made up several times over by development.		
IPAMS	O-14	SO99 (LSO-1)	Local and state revenue through oil and gas taxes is not discussed.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten and discusses the fiscal impacts to local government of the alternative decisions affecting the oil and gas industry in the Vernal planning area.	X
IPAMS	O-14	SS119 (LSS-1)	This section trivializes the impacts of special species resource decisions on the oil and gas industry.	Comment noted.	
IPAMS	O-14	SS120 (LSS-2)	Alternative A in Appendix K states that no exemptions or waivers will be allowed but the section on raptor nests claims there may be. Same contradiction in sage grouse section	Appendix K and Sections 4.8.2.5.1.1 and 4.8.2.5.1.2 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to correct inconsistencies described in the comment.	X
IPAMS	O-14	SS121 (LSS-3)	Explain how it was determined that 2% more area surrounding hawk nest sites will be open to development.	See comment responses M194 and SS40.	
IPAMS	O-14	SS122 (LSS-4)	Provide data to support statements about loss of raptor habitat due to development. Existing artificial raptor perches in oil fields have been successful.	See comment response SS40.	
IPAMS	O-14	SS123 (LSS-5)	“Planning area wide” expanded deer and elk timing restrictions in Alternative A are unacceptable and must be revised.	Comment noted.	
IPAMS	O-14	SS124 (LSS-6)	Two government reports dispute the claim that oil and gas development was a major factor in listing Book Cliffs plant species as endangered: A 2002 BLM report states that illegal collection of the Uinta Basin hookless cactus is the primary threat to this species conservation	See comment response SS35.	

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			and recovery on BLM lands; and a 1979 USFWS report arrives at a similar conclusion. As such, this entire discussion about the impact of oil and gas development should be deleted. (See original comment letter for full report references.)		
IPAMS	O-14	SS125 (LSS-7)	Modify the impacts analysis to provide site-specific development data and commitments	The RMP is a programmatic (landscape level) document. Site-specific development data and commitments will be provided at the project-level NEPA stage and as part of conditions of approval for land use permits.	
IPAMS	O-14	SS126 (LSS-8)	Stipulations for raptor time restrictions need to be based on hard current data on a site-specific basis to determine the most appropriate level of protection	See comment response SS19.	
IPAMS	O-14	SS127 (LSS-9)	The table shows acreage differences between Alternatives A and D, which could not be calculated from the data provided.	Comment noted.	
IPAMS	O-14	SS128 (LSS-10)	Text is inconsistent in amount of acreage available to oil and gas than stated in Table S.1 and Table 4.8.1	Tables S.1 and Table 4.8.1 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to correct inconsistencies described in the comment.	X
IPAMS	O-14	SS129 (LSS-11)	No studies were cited to document how different raptor species are affected by disturbances.	See comment response SS19.	
IPAMS	O-14	SS130 (LSS-12)	The BLM needs to develop exceptions that would allow surface disturbance in the vicinity of a nest when protected by impacts or once the young have fledged.	Please, see Appendix K for exceptions related to seasonal and spatial buffers for raptor nests.	
IPAMS	O-14	SS131 (LSS-13)	If the 7-year monitoring period for unoccupied nests is part of the USFWS guidelines then include them in the appendix, if not, the requirement should be deleted. Nests in poor or fair condition should have different stipulations than those in good condition. Develop species-specific guidelines based on nest re-use patterns. Buffers around every nest make oil and gas	See comment response SS19.	

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			development difficult		
IPAMS	O-14	SS132 (LSS-14)	Stipulations in Table 19 are inconsistent with Table 4.8.6 and Appendix H for ferruginous hawk timing restrictions	See comment response ME211.	
IPAMS	O-14	VE26 (LVE-1)	Calculation errors in vegetation disturbance between Table 4-1, Table 4.16.6 since some short-term disturbance could continue over the life of the well and should be considered long-term disturbance	See comment response VE9. Table 4-1 displays total disturbance per well. Table 4.16.6 displays short-term and long-term disturbance (which together equals total disturbance) for the predicted number of wells by alternative.	
IPAMS	O-14	WF153 (LWF1)	Explain why there is a 1.5:1 ratio for sagebrush habitat in Alternative A and a 1:1 ratio in Alternative B.	See comment response WF21.	
IPAMS	O-14	WF154 (LWF-2)	Include data by Irby et al (1987) that mule deer are not affected by low intensity oil and gas operations. Not strong enough data to justify NSO.	The summary of the study conducted by Irby et al. in Section 4.19.2.5.2.1 also identified impacts from oil and gas exploration and development on mule deer that did have adverse impacts on the species, notably habitat loss and/or degradation of habitat.	
IPAMS	O-14	WF155 (LWF-3)	The restriction on operations in sage grouse habitats is inconsistent in Appendix K and the timing restrictions. Add 'active lek' to restrictions.	Appendix K in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to correct the inconsistencies.	X
IPAMS	O-14	WF156 (LWF-4)	Stipulations in these appendices are restrictive without due cause and should be altered to reflect site-specific resources	Comment noted.	
IPAMS	O-14	WF2	The RMP fails to document or support the "crucial winter or other big game" habitat. It is rarely clear whether UDWR has updated or expanded these areas as well as what is the scientific basis for such classifications.	Section 3.19.1.2 of the PRMP/FEIS states that: "Crucial winter range is considered to be the part of the local deer and elk range where approximately 90% of the local population is located during an average of five winters out of ten from the first heavy snowfall to spring green-up."	

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				The BLM has adopted the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources' (UDWR) identification of crucial winter habitat.	
IPAMS	O-14	WT3 (LWT-1)	Page 4-331 lists all of the disturbed vegetation as woodlands which are a small part of that total.	Comment noted.	
Utah Professional Paleontology Council c/o Utah Geological Survey	O-15	GC66 (GC-W)	We would like to note the following incorrect spelling of geologic localities: Uinta Mountains not Uintah, Uinta Basin not Uintah.	Comment noted.	
Utah Professional Paleontology Council c/o Utah Geological Survey	O-15	PA3	The process of addressing impacts to paleontological resources at the project level does not protect fossil resources from inadvertent destruction by OHV travel. We are concerned about protection of the sensitive badlands with well-exposed bedrock in the Uinta Basin as well as those elsewhere in the state. Increased erosion of bedrock resulting from OHV use also increases the destruction and deterioration of fossils contained therein.	See comment response PA1. Consideration will be given to sensitive areas and formations when designating specific OHV routes. The closure of the majority of planning area lands to unrestricted OHV use and the designation of specific authorized routes is expected to reduce the broad-scale exposure of sensitive formations and badlands from accelerated erosion from OHV travel.	
Utah Professional Paleontology Council c/o Utah Geological Survey	O-15	PA4	We strongly advise that other areas that are not rich in fossil resources can be chosen for the OHV riders that are individually challenging, but not destructive to the sensitive scientific resources managed by the BLM.	See comment response PA1.	
Western Gas Resources	O-16	ME124 (ME-JJ)	Specific conditions of approval or lease terms are often required in order to mitigate the adverse effects of development activities on "special status species". It is	See comment ME3.	

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			well established that BLM may not modify leases beyond the effective limitations of existing lease terms and conditions.		
Western Gas Resources	O-16	ME62	On 4-112 the document states "specific conditions of approval or lease terms are often required in order to mitigate the adverse effects of development activities on special status species." It is well established that BLM may not modify leases beyond the effective limitations of existing lease terms and conditions. Valid existing rights may be developed to the "extent authorized by the issuance of the approval document" and may not be regulated to the point where it unreasonably interferes with enjoyment and benefit of the right.	See comment response ME3.	
Western Gas Resources	O-16	SD229 (SD-XX)	The document fails to provide the reader with information as to why existing ACECs should continue and new ACECs should be established. Under Alternative A the preferred alternative, the draft RMP proposes eight new ACECs and the expansion of two existing ACECs. There is no supporting evidence that suggests these designations are needed. Alternative A is contrary to the NEPA and EPCA policy.	See Responses to Comments SD8-G-9, SD27-G-22, SD90-G24.	
Western Gas Resources	O-16	SD230 (SD-YY)	The DEIS has proposed Nine Mile Canyon Expansion ACEC, which would designate an additional 48,000 acres in Nine Mile Canyon as an ACEC under Alternative A. There would be no expansion under ALT B. The "importance criteria" given in the draft RMP for the ACEC state that the relevant values "have substantial significance due to qualities that make theme fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary and unique." There is no documentation of any relevant documents that verify these qualities.	See Table 2.1. (Special Designations – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)) describes under which alternative the Nine Mile Canyon Expansion ACEC would be established.	
EOG Resources	O-17	AT32	Areas of concern that are not adequately addressed in lease stipulations have and will continue to be	All management actions proposed under all alternatives recognize valid existing rights and do	

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		(AT-Y)	addressed in site-specific COAs and/or project-specific EAs or EISs, the proposed additional restrictions and, in some cases, outright disregard for oil and gas industry's valid existing rights proposed in Alternative A and or C are unwarranted. Alt B is much more consistent federally mandated multiple use management of the public lands.	not apply newly developed management prescriptions that differ from prescriptions already ascribed to those rights.	
EOG Resources	O-17	AT36 (AT-CC)	Alts B and D would not expand the existing ACEC to the eastern side of the river but would retain the NSO designation the NSO stipulation for the 8470 acre western side of the river. EOG does not support this NSO designation for the reasons discussed in SD-V.	Comment noted.	
EOG Resources	O-17	AT37 (AT-DD)	No specific limitations on oil and gas development are identified in the analysis, however, EOG remains concerned about the potential implementation of such measures that may be planned but are omitted from the analysis or are yet to be developed in a future comprehensive integrated activity plan should this ACEC (Four Mile Wash) be officially designated. Given that Alternatives A and B particularly A do not include this proposed ACEC, EOG questions whether the character of this area fully meets criteria for designation as an ACEC.	See Appendix G for the relevance and importance criteria for the Four Mile Wash ACEC. As per BLM Manual 1613 – Areas of Environmental Concern, designation is based on whether or not a potential ACEC requires special management attention in the selected plan alternative (which is determined through analysis). After completing the analysis of the effects of each alternative the manager selects the preferred alternative which best meets the planning criteria and the guidance applicable to the area. Future integrated activity plans must tier off of decisions made in the RMP. Therefore, they may have more detailed management prescriptions but these decisions would not conflict with the RMP.	
EOG Resources	O-17	AT38 (AT-EE)	Alternatives A and B would permit leasing of culturally sensitive lands in the Four Mile Wash and other areas, with Timing and Controlled Surface Use. Because Alternative C would impose greater impacts on oil and	Comment noted.	

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			gas development by closing the area to leasing, EOG does not support this alternative.		
EOG Resources	O-17	AT39 (AT-FF)	EOG supports adoption of Alternative B as amended per the foregoing comments, as the most reasonable alternative in compliance with federal laws concerning multiple use and the encouragement of domestic and oil and gas exploration and development pursuant to lease mitigation measures that are scientifically justifiable and the least restrictive as necessary.	Comment noted.	
EOG Resources	O-17	GC57 (GC-N)	The statements in Appendix K prior to the tabular presentation conflict with the actual approach to defining exceptions, modifications and waivers for a number of resource concerns listed in the table. The possibility for exception, modification, and waiver is defined as "none" for a number of resources. This arbitrary designation of "none" indicates a lack of flexibility which will likely result in less production of essential oil and gas supplies.	Appendix K has been revised to reflect identified surface stipulations for the PRMP/FEIS.	X
EOG Resources	O-17	GC58 (GC-O)	It is inappropriate for the description of the affected environment to include information on what will be included in the ROD. The reader is directed to BLM Manual 8351 to determine the management to be applied to designated wild and scenic rivers. This information should be summarized and included in the text of the DEIS. The DEIS is a standalone document that is able to reference supporting information.	The statement in question does not presuppose the decision of the Record of Decision (ROD) but merely states the nature of information that must be contained in the ROD in accordance with current policy. The statement notes that the ROD would identify any river segments that were found suitable, and would, if any such segments were identified, also identify any special management actions. The RMP/DEIS may incorporate other management guidance and policy by reference and need not be an exhaustive summary or reiteration of such guidance and policy.	
EOG Resources	O-17	ME125 (ME-KK)	There is no consideration given to how proposed constraints on oil and gas leasing and development would affect industry access to state and private land surrounded by BLM land. This should affect access to	Reasonable access to state and private lands must be granted. The Cotter decision is the court decision relating to this policy.	

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			valid and existing EOG lease on state and private land surrounded by federal land if it were to be managed as NSO for protection of wilderness characteristics.		
EOG Resources	O-17	ME84 (GC-P)	No information is provided on the amount and distribution of current leases in Chapter 3 and no information is presented in Chapter 4 to document how many wells projected by the RFD would occur on existing leases. While it may be appropriate to implement some constraints through site specific Conditions of Approval, it cannot be assumed for analysis purposes that restrictions such as NSO would apply to an existing lease. Disallowing EOG's ability to physically access its existing leases disregards its valid existing rights and results in a taking.	The numbers of wells, developments, and explorations existing within the VPA changes rapidly and frequently. As such, presenting such information within the Chapter 3 of the EIS would be without merit, since said information would be outdated immediately upon issuance of the document. As stated at the beginning of Section 4.1.1: “All resource actions recognize valid existing rights.”	
EOG Resources	O-17	SD200 (SD-V)	Alternative A would designate acreage along the White and Green River corridors as ACECs to protect unique geologic and high-value riparian areas. With closures in large portions of this proposed ACECs, oil and gas development would be precluded from potentially thousands of acres; however, EOG is not sure about the specifics impacts as no mapping or description of the dividing line between the western and eastern parts is presented.	Figures 22-24 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to show the boundaries of both the old and current ACECs for the different alternatives. A written description of the ACEC areas is described in Appendix G.	X
EOG Resources	O-17	SD202 (SD-W)	EOGs concerns about establishing the White River ACEC with the proposed stipulations begin with the obvious absence of the reaffirmation of previous statements in the DEIS stating all proposed ACECs would remain open to oil and gas leasing and would be subject to valid existing rights. The proposed stips totally conflict with previous determination of "open to leasing" and "subject to valid existing rights" presented	See Table 2.1 (Special Designations – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)) describes under which alternative the White River ACEC would be established. The ACEC would be subject to a combination of no surface occupancy and timing and controlled surface use stipulations. A portion would also be closed to oil and gas leasing. This closure would be based on factors unrelated to	

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			in the analysis.	the ACEC designation.	
EOG Resources	O-17	SD203 (SD-X)	The conditions for application of protective stipulations for the White River ACEC are ill-defined and not tied to specific locations or situations within this large 47,130-acre area [under Alternative C]. EOG cannot make any other evaluation of this mostly undefined ACEC configuration other than it would be excessively restrictive in oil and gas development and therefore, should not be designated particularly in light of the fact adequate protections are currently in place.	See Responses to Comments SD27-G-22 and SD202-O-17.	
EOG Resources	O-17	SD204 (SD-Y)	Under Alternative A, the White River SRMA would be added. EOG asserts that the extent of the analysis of the SRMA in relation to impacts or limitations on mineral, particularly oil and gas development is inadequate.	No restrictions on minerals and energy development would be implemented as part of the White River SRMA. Although SRMA identification is not, in and of itself, an enforcement tool for minerals, the BLM policy is to manage recreation on Bureau lands, both within and outside of SRMAs.	
EOG Resources	O-17	SD205 (SD-Z)	Specific to oil and gas, the analysis identifies only that the western portion of the White River SRMA would be managed under NSO. Review of Appendix K confirms the assignment of NSO for this lower segment of the White River in the section on River Corridors under Resource of Concern page K-8.	Comment noted.	
EOG Resources	O-17	SD206 (SD-AA)	Alternatives B and D would not include a new [White River] SRMA, and the White River area would continue to be managed under current conditions, with minimal oversight for water based recreational activities. Selection of either of these alternatives would pose few restrictions; but EOG is concerned, again, by the uncertainty and lack of clarity regarding impacts resource decisions will have on existing and future oil and gas leases. The uncertainty and, therefore, the concern comes from the text on page 4-151 stating "the White River area would continue under current conditions," but a review of Appendix K indicates that	See Response to Comment SD8-G-9.	

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			the same NSO stipulations would be applied to the lower segment of the White River under Alternative B. The lack of consistency between the text above and the information in Appendix K creates uncertainty as to what is stipulated for the White River under Alternative B. A second problem between text on page 4-151 and Appendix K is that the text indicates no change in management for the White River and Appendix K indicates the NSO stipulations will be applied for an even longer segment of the river.		
EOG Resources	O-17	SD207 (SD-BB)	Under Alt C, the proposed White River SRMA under Alt A would be expanded. EOG is even more concerned with the selection of this alternative due to the potentially increased number of well and facility locations that could be eliminated by the expanded NSO acreage associated with the White River corridor.	See Response to Comment SD8-G-9.	
EOG Resources	O-17	SD208 (SD-CC)	Nine Mile Canyon is proposed as an ACEC under each alternative. It is impossible to determine how EOG's leases might be affected under each alternative due to the broad range of management prescriptions listed in the DEIS. The management decisions for this ACEC have been deferred until a comprehensive integrated activity plan is developed in the future. This leaves open the question of how this ACEC would be managed until the activity plan has been completed.	Nine Mile Canyon will be managed according to the Record of Decision for the Final EIS.	
EOG Resources	O-17	SD209 (SD-DD)	Alternative A & C would designate an additional 3,819 and 36,987 acres respectively to the existing 44,181-acre Nine Mile Canyon ACEC. The analysis states "the area would be open subject to standard lease terms or managed as NSO for oil and gas leasing. Based on a yet-undefined activity plan and the open ended statement concerning NSO, EOG's concerns regarding this ACEC arise from the lack of certainty regarding restrictions to be applied to oil and gas	The specific details of the integrated activity plan would be consistent with the Record of Decision for the Final EIS.	

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			development within both ACEC configurations.		
EOG Resources	O-17	SD210 (SD-EE)	BLM needs to balance the cost/benefits of environmentally sound development of essential oil and gas resources and the protection of views and other resources associated with mostly recreation.	Comment noted.	
EOG Resources	O-17	SD211 (SD-FF)	Under Alternative B, the Nine Mile Canyon area would continue under the current program. There are current and existing laws and procedures in place to protect cultural resource areas. Therefore, additional protection is unwarranted. The analysis needs to address the detrimental impacts that implementation of these alternatives would have on oil and gas development.	See Response to Comment SD50-G-25. Chapter 4 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to clarify the anticipated impacts of special designations on minerals and energy development.	X
EOG Resources	O-17	SD212 (SD-GG)	EOG holds a substantial leasehold position in and around the Lower Green River and Four Mile Wash area. The general area is poised to experience an increased level of activity as industry expands development southwest from the Greater Natural Buttes area. As such stipulated areas of concerns will be addressed under site specific COAs, adequate protection of such resource values already exist. Therefore ACEC, VRM and SRMA management prescriptions proposed under Alternatives A and C are unwarranted.	See Response to Comment SD8-G-9.	
EOG Resources	O-17	SD231 (SD-ZZ)	EOG requests that development of valid and existing leases and associated rights to access leases within a Wild and Scenic River designation would be protected. The clarity of this analysis should be improved addressing the valid existing rights issue more forthrightly and by consistently accounting for stipulations in Appendix K and Section 4.14.2 so that the source and nature of those restrictive measures proposed in the DEIS can be understood.	See Response to Comment SD174-O33. The potential impacts of restrictions included in Appendix K were incorporated into the analysis contained in Chapter 4.	X

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EOG Resources	O-17	SD232 (SD-AAA)	Neither the preparation of an activity plan for Fantasy Canyon as proposed in Alt A nor designating this area as an SRMA as proposed in Alt C is necessary to preserve the unique character and tourist appeal of Fantasy Canyon or reduce perceived potential conflicts among user groups.	See Response to Comment SD161-G-1.	
EOG Resources	O-17	SD233 (SD-BBB)	BLM Manual 8351, in Section .51 Management Designated WSRs, states "reasonable mining claim and mineral lease access will be permitted" in designated scenic river corridors. Because BLM manual 8351 allows for some flexibility in how W&SRs are to be managed, and the stipulations described in Appendix K provide a broad, relatively non-specific range of management within each proposed W&SR corridor, there is no clear description of how these areas would be managed under each alternative. This lack of proposed management prescription associated with each specially designated area makes it impossible for EOG to determine how the proposed designations would affect its current and future leases and development potential.	Chapter 2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to clarify that suitable rivers/river corridors will be managed to protect their outstandingly remarkable values, tentative classifications, and free-flowing nature. Specific resource allocations and management prescriptions within and outside of eligible river corridors are shown on alternative maps, whether or not such information is described in the wild and scenic river section of Chapter 2.	X
EOG Resources	O-17	SD234 (SD-CCC)	While it can be argued that the WSAs have been documented previously, more explanation of wilderness characteristics is needed to support the proposed special management of non-WSA lands. The DEIS provides no basis to support the special management conditions applied to these areas.	See Response to Comment SD1-I-1. The BLM in October 2007 printed a supplement with a single alternative analyzing the protection of all Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would best provide a reasoned choice among the alternatives. Although the other alternatives do not provide specific management prescriptions to protect Non-WSA, these alternatives analyze and disclose the impacts of the proposed resource management prescriptions, uses and actions on the Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. This gives the public the ability to fully compare the	

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				consequences of protecting or not protecting the wilderness characteristics on these Non-WSA lands. If all alternatives contained comparable protections of the Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, the alternatives would have substantially similar consequences and would not be significantly distinguishable.	
EOG Resources	O-17	SO40 (SO-K)	The analysis of impacts on economic aspects of implementing the revised assignments of VRM classes by alternative should be expanded to more clearly describe the significant adverse impacts that would result from limiting or preventing oil and gas development on existing leases and areas likely to be leased in the future based on probable presence of recoverable oil and or gas.	Valid existing rights are considered Administrative Actions by the BLM and do not require a specific planning decision to implement. As noted in Chapter 1 under Planning Criteria and as outlined in the BLM's Land Use Planning Manual (Section 1601.06G), all decisions made in land use plans and subsequent implementation decision are subject to valid existing rights. The BLM will work with and subject to the agreement of holders of valid existing rights to modify proposed actions or activities to reduce the effect of the actions or activities on resource values and uses. These modifications may be necessary to maintain the choice of alternatives being considered during land use plan development and implementation, and may include appropriate stipulations, relocations, redesigns, or delay of proposed actions.	
EOG Resources	O-17	VI44 (VI-A)	Assigning VRM Class I, essentially a NSO stipulation to an area that is greater than ½-mile wide corridor [along wild and scenic rivers] and an area under which essential oil and gas resources will not be recovered is not acceptable minerals/oil and gas management on the part of the BLM.	The segment of the White River between Asphalt Wash to where the river leaves Section 18 T10S R23E SLBM has been given the tentative classification of "wild" under Alternative C on Table 2.1.20 (Special Designations – Wild and Scenic Rivers) of the PRMP/FEIS. According to BLM Manual HB 8510-1, Section V.A.1. Visual Resource Inventory Classes:	

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				"Class I is assigned to those areas where a management decision has been made previously to maintain a natural landscape. This includes areas such as national wilderness areas. The wild section of national wild and scenic rivers and other congressionally and administratively designated areas where decisions have been made to preserve a natural landscape."	
EOG Resources	O-17	VI45 (VI-B)	The analysis on these pages is even less clear with management proposed as VRM Class I, II, III, or IV. NSO would be the same as for Alt A, but areas beyond the 1/2 mile buffer for NSO would be open to leasing subject to standard lease terms and managed w/ timing and controlled surface use or closed to oil and gas leasing.	See comment responses VI4 and VI17A. The alternatives provide a range of VRM classification from which management can select from for the final RMP and the VRM classification within the final RMP will be consistent with general overall management direction.	
Howard County Bird Club	O-18	AT15 (AT-G)	Alternative A is severely unbalanced. Only 137,000 acres would be either closed or leased with NSO stipulations (7 percent). We urge that lands with high wildlife values and wilderness characteristics not be leased.	Alternative A blends proposed management decisions from Alternatives B, C and D. In general, such decisions affect a compromise between the greater levels of unrestricted or lightly-restricted development provided for under Alternative B and the lesser levels of such restrictions provided for under Alternative C.	
Howard County Bird Club	O-18	AT16 (AT-H)	We urge BLM to give complete protection to wilderness values in all the areas proposed for designation as wilderness.	Comment noted.	
Howard County Bird Club	O-18	RE22 (RE-B)	Lands should be closed to ORVs unless signs indicate a particular route is open. No cross-country travel should be allowed. Closed routes should be obliterated and revegetated.	Comment noted.	
Howard County Bird Club	O-18	RW19 (RW-A)	We urge the BLM in the final plan to include measures that will restore those substandard riparian areas: (a) close OHV routes in riparian areas (b) adjust livestock grazing to foster restoration of natural riparian habitat.	Comment noted.	

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Howard County Bird Club	O-18	TR17 (TR-A)	In preparing the Travel Management Plan, BLM should use a screening process to decide which of the existing routes will be approved for OHV travel, and which will be closed and returned to a natural condition.	See comment response RE20.	
James W. Bunger and Associates	O-19	AT10 (AT-B)	Would like to recommend that the BLM adopt Alternative B as the next management plan.	Comment noted.	
James W. Bunger and Associates	O-19	ME120 (ME-FF)	Based on the draft RMP, potential development of oil shale resources is not given adequate consideration. Based on its potential economic value and the principle of "highest and best use," placing a high priority on oil shale in the current RMP is warranted.	See comment response ME128.	
James W. Bunger and Associates	O-19	ME121 (ME-GG)	See potential characteristics of commercial oil shale development in Uinta Basin	Comment noted.	
James W. Bunger and Associates	O-19	ME122 (ME-HH)	A potential conflict exists with oil and gas production that penetrates the oil shale zones. For those oil shale areas that may be developed within the next 30 years, it is recommended that BLM manage these leases so as to minimize the number of wells penetrating the oil shale zones and consider giving priority to oil shale leases in prime access areas.	Recent circumstances with the R&D lease have identified the need for Utah to issue an IM to address the comment. Because the BLM is currently unable to lease oil shale (leasing regulations are not in place), it is premature to address the comment at this time at the RMP level.	
James W. Bunger and Associates	O-19	ME123 (ME-II)	To enhance the information database, the BLM should consider requiring lessees to report logs of oil shale and tar sands penetrated by oil and gas operations.	Comment noted.	
Uintah Mountain Club	O-20	ME97 (ME-I)	Dry Fork/Red Mtn ACEC should be removed from leasing, reflecting Alternative C's Figure 13. White River ACEC: should be removed from leasing. The White River is economically important to the recreation industry with increasing use by tours and private boaters.	Comment noted.	

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Uintah Mountain Club	O-20	SD185 (SD-F)	We request that the following boundary be established for each of the areas: Four Mile Wash/Lower Green R. ACEC: Use the "no leasing" area for figure 13 and that boundary will simultaneously delineate the ACEC boundary, the OHV closure boundary, and the oil/gas & mineral resources closure boundary. Main Canyon: Use the ACEC boundary in Figure 24 and that boundary will simultaneously delineate the ACEC boundary the OHV boundary, the OHV closure, and the oil gas and mineral resources closure boundary. Dry Fork: Should be removed from leasing reflecting Alternative C's figure 13 Nine Mile Canyon ACEC: OHV use and energy development should be considered secondary importance after the cultural resources. Blue Mountain SRMA: Monitoring of the area should occur and the camping area's existence should be contingent on the protection of the relict forest.	See Responses to Comments SD14-G-3 and SD8-G-9.	
Uintah Mountain Club	O-20	SD186 (SD-G)	We support the following designations from Alternative A: Upper Green River-22 miles, Lower Green 30 miles. We support the following designations from Alternative C: White River- 44 mile stretch, Middle Green 36 mile stretch, Nine Mile Creek 13miles.	Comment noted.	
Uintah Mountain Club	O-20	SD187 (SD-H)	We support the following Alternative A ACEC designations: Red Mountain, Lower Green, Bitter Creek, Browns Park, Lears Canyon, Pariette, Red Creek, White Canyon, 4 Mile Wash, Nine Mile Canyon, Middle Green, Main Canyon, Coyote Basin	Comment noted.	
Maryland Alliance for	O-21	ME95 (ME-G)	Several proposed wilderness areas in the planning area are part of America's Redrock Wilderness Act, a	Comment noted.	

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Greenway Improvement and Conservation			measure now pending in Congress. The DEIS is wrong to open much of this area to oil and gas leasing. The Vernal RMP should provide complete protection for the wilderness character of these areas by prohibiting oil and gas leasing and excluding Off Road Vehicles.		
Maryland Alliance for Greenway Improvement and Conservation	O-21	RE21 (RE-A)	The draft plan is wrong to allow 4800 miles of ORV routes, many of them in proposed wilderness areas and riparian habitat. A more balanced plan is needed, allowing ORVs on approved routes where increasing ORV traffic will not impair natural wildlife and wilderness values, but excluding them from fragile areas. The plan should also retire many of the redundant ORV routes that have grown up without BLM approval.	See comment response RE19.	
Maryland Alliance for Greenway Improvement and Conservation	O-21	RE22 (RE-B)	Lands should be closed to ORVs unless signs indicate a particular route is open. No cross-country travel should be allowed. Closed routes should be obliterated and revegetated.	Comment noted.	
Maryland Alliance for Greenway Improvement and Conservation	O-21	RE23 (RE-C)	The draft plan is wrong in contemplating a corridor 600 feet wide along ORV routes in which ORVs would be free to roam off the existing roadbed.	See comment response RE1.	
Maryland Alliance for Greenway Improvement and Conservation	O-21	RE24 (RE-D)	We urge BLM to use the Heritage Plan as a basis for regulating OHV traffic.	See comment response AT1.	

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American Rivers	O-22	ME96 (ME-H)	We are very concerned about the obvious bias towards mineral and energy development in the DEIS. Not only does this affect the rivers in the Vernal area, but it has an overall detrimental impact to the surrounding environment that is not clearly studied in the DEIS. The bias towards mineral exploration and development is made obvious by a quick glance at the "Impacts of Mineral Decisions on Riparian Resources (4.11.2.5) section.	Comment noted.	
American Rivers	O-22	ME96A (ME-H)	The "environmentally sensitive" Alternative C actually allows more leasing than the "no action" alternative D.	See comment response ME136.	
American Rivers	O-22	RW20 (RW-B)	The BLM can not ensure riparian and wetland functioning, as directed by Standard 2 of the Utah BLM Standards and permit extensive mineral oil and gas exploration at the same time. The DEIS states "The Utah BLM Standards for Rangeland Health apply to riparian resources in the VPA. All alternatives must adhere to Standard 2 of these standards, "Riparian and wetlands [must be] in properly functioning condition. Stream channel morphology and functions appropriate to soil type, climate and function (BLM 1997)." (page 4-161)	The commenter does not explain why the BLM cannot ensure riparian and wetland functioning, as directed by Standard 2 of the Rangeland Health Standards.	
American Rivers	O-22	RW21 (RW-C)	Coalbed methane extraction in particular is completely incompatible since it results in severe lowering of the water table and scouring of streambeds and banks. The DEIS p 4 clearly states "draw down of groundwater due to techniques used to extract oil, gas and coal bed methane could lead to dewatering of riparian areas, increasing the risks of invasive species introduction and reducing water available for riparian ecosystems." (p 4-162). "ll authorized activities would require reclamation and rehabilitation actions to ensure sustainability and productivity of the site." Yet none of the reclamation and rehab activities are studied or	Site-specific techniques for reclamation and rehabilitation of sites impacted by coal bed methane projects is beyond the scope of the RMP EIS. Project-specific impacts would be analyzed and mitigations proposed through site-specific NEPA processes and documents.	

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			examined thoroughly in the DEIS and RMP, a significant oversight that will lead to substantial degradation of the watershed and riparian areas.		
American Rivers	O-22	SD182 (SD-C)	We are pleased that one of the alternatives, Alternative C, as expressed on page 4-211, found 216 miles of rivers eligible and suitable for inclusion into the National System. This clearly signifies that Utah has a number of rivers with outstandingly remarkable values that should be protected for future generations.	Comment noted.	
American Rivers	O-22	SD183 (SD-D)	Unfortunately, the preferred alternative, Alternative A only finds two segments of the White River, a total of 72 miles suitable for designation into the national system. The exclusion of the Middle Green river is particularly notable given strong support for designating the river segment from recreation and environmental communities and past congressional support.	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	
American Rivers	O-22	SD184 (SD-E)	Seven suitability factors were considered for each river and "notes" were provided in Appendix C for most of these factors for each river segment. But nowhere do the EIS documents indicate how BLM evaluated these factors and proceeded to a final determination. In fact, on page 4-1 the DEIS states "in most cases the exact locations of projected development and other changes are not known at this time." An eligibility/suitability determination should be based on past and current use, or planned development in a short time frame, not on theoretical development. Thus the RMP and EIS suitability determinations are not supported by substantial evidence on record. Additional important considerations were not included. This includes, among other things, the contributions of the river segment to the river system or basin integrity, reflecting the benefits of a systems approach.	See Response to Comment SD175-O-26.	

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Lexco	O-24	LR13 (LLR-1) (JLR-5)	Lands managed by the State of Utah Division of Wildlife Resources have also not been accurately portrayed within Figure 1 (Land Ownership) of the RMP. The School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) website contains an accurate map of these lands within the planning area. Alternatively, a map can be obtained directly from the Division. These lands need to be accurately portrayed because of development restrictions inherent to them.	Figure 1 has been updated to reflect the State of Utah's land ownership as indicated on maps obtained from the SITLA website.	X
Lexco	O-24	ME115 (ME-AA)	Under the section "Planning Issues identified for the VPA during the agency and public scope process are described below" you state, "assess known Gilsonite leasing area classification." The current "known Gilsonite area" is totally inadequate for identifying a commercial deposit. Nowhere in the document can I find an assessment of this classification. Please provide an assessment of the current classification along with any proposed amendments.	The known leasing area standards for gilsonite were published in the Oct. 4, 1995 Federal Register (60 FR 52006). The BLM is in the process of assessing known gilsonite leasing areas and has done field work on five gilsonite veins in the Bonanza vicinity. After BLM State Office review and concurrence a formal designation of know gilsonite leasing areas will be published in the Federal Register. For more information on the status of the pending KGLA designations, contact the Utah State Office.	
Lexco	O-24	ME116 (ME-BB)	You state, "Gilsonite and Tar Sands would be inventoried and planning determinations would be made in the revised RMP." I have been unable to identify your inventory or planning determinations in the draft RMP. Please provide details of your inventory and determinations.	See comment responses ME115 and ME 128...	
Lexco	O-24	ME117 (ME-CC)	The scale of figure 15-18 is inadequate to identify the exact location and extent of veins and open vs closed areas. The open areas should be identified by survey and should extend a minimum of one fourth mile on each side of the strike of the vein and a minimum on one mile beyond the known vein terminations.	Figures 15-18 do not intend to show the exact location and extent of veins rather a general picture of general location and extent. The open areas will be identified by survey during site-specific NEPA.	
Lexco	O-24	ME118 (ME-DD)	Provides a description of gilsonite uses from information that is incorrect and very out dated, and in	The RMP is not expected to be a compendium of past and current uses of minerals extracted from	

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			fact, quotes reports dated 1960 instead of information from existing produces. This document should use the most recent data available.	public lands.	
Lexco	O-24	ME119 (ME-EE)	States "Gilsonite" is allocated by non-competitive leasing only. Leasing actions may be initiated by Public interests or by the BLM. Allocation methods vary to suit different situations. Please provide an explanation of which situations affect allocation and how they affect it.	This is outside the scope of the RMP. Section 3.8.3 states gilsonite is allocated by non-competitive and competitive leasing only (the only two avenues available under the 43 CFR 3500 regulations).	
Cliffs Mining Services Company	O-25	ME114 (ME-Z)	A specific concern is the possibility of strict limitations on access and land use for BLM properties adjacent to Cliffs Synfuel property (T 10S-R24W and T10S-25E). Important access such as roads, power, water and fuel between Synfuel's North and South blocks may actually be 'cut off' if rights to cross such areas cannot be secured. Any plan would have to recognize the need for, and offer mechanisms to secure, access across these strategic areas in the oil shale fields.	Comment noted.	
Cliffs Mining Services Company	O-25	SD228 (SD-WW)	Cliffs Synfuel's Northern Block, and Evacuation Creek runs through 10 miles of our Southern Block. A WSR designation or ACEC designation would place overwhelming restrictions on development in those areas and effectively eliminate resources utilization. There are already a variety of designations and restrictions in place that make development extremely difficult, further restrictions are unnecessary.	See Responses to Comments SD8-G-9, SD19-G-22.	
Cliffs Mining Services Company	O-25	VI48 (VI-E)	We have concerns about restrictions related to VRM classification, noise and traffic; all factors related in some way to resource utilization. This resource management plan must again recognize that mineral development is a major part of balanced land use and provide methods for allowing such factors to coexist with visual, cultural and recreational resources.	Section 3.8 and its subsections discuss the magnitude of minerals and energy exploration and development within the planning area. Such exploration and development are extensively provided for under all alternatives. FLMPA mandates the consideration of multiple uses on public lands; however, it does not mandate that all uses must be allowed in all areas and at all times.	

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				Surface occupancy restrictions and requirements for use of best available technology have been included in at varying levels in management prescriptions under the different resource programs within the planning area only in areas where necessary and appropriate to allow minerals and energy exploration to coexist with other resource values and land uses.	
Utah Rivers Council	O-26	SD116	The Utah Rivers Council urges the VFO to protect all three Green River segments as suitable Wild and Scenic segments.	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	
Utah Rivers Council	O-26	SD117	The Utah Rivers Council supports the VFO's finding that the Upper Green River is eligible for Wild and Scenic designation due to the ORV's of scenic, recreational, fish, wildlife/habitat, and cultural. We recommend that this segment also be found suitable for WSR designation.	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	
Utah Rivers Council	O-26	SD118	The Utah Rivers Council supports the VFO's finding that the Middle Green River is eligible for Wilde and Scenic designation due to the ORV's of fish. However, we recommend that the segment also be found eligible for scenic/geologic, wildlife/habitat, and recreational. We recommend that this segment also be found suitable for WSR designation.	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	
Utah Rivers Council	O-26	SD119	The Utah Rivers Council supports the VFO's finding that the Middle Green River is eligible for Wilde and Scenic designation due to the ORV's of fish and recreation. However, we also request that it be found eligible for the values of wildlife/habitat and scenic/geologic. We recommend that this segment also be found suitable for WSR designation.	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	
Utah Rivers Council	O-26	SD120	The Utah Rivers Council supports the VFO's finding that the Middle Green River is eligible for Wilde and Scenic designation due to the ORV's of	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	

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			scenic/geologic, fish, wildlife/habitat, recreational, and historic/cultural. We recommend that this segment also be found suitable for WSR designation.		
Utah Rivers Council	O-26	SD121	The Utah Rivers Council supports the VFO's finding that the Middle Green River is eligible for Wilde and Scenic designation due to the ORV's of scenic and cultural. However, we request that it also be found eligible for the values of wildlife/habitat. We recommend that this segment also be found suitable for WSR designation.	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	
Utah Rivers Council	O-26	SD175 (PR-I)	Seven suitability factors for Wild and Scenic Rivers were considered, but in many cases the "notes" section was left unresolved and vague. More importantly, the basis for rejecting segments as unsuitable was not provided, except in the cases where the limited nature of federal land ownership may make management a challenge. Nowhere in the draft RMP does the Vernal BLM share how they evaluated the factors to come to a decision about suitability. Because of this disconnect, the DRMP's suitability determinations are not supported by substantial evidence on the record and so are not defensible. In addition the seven factors that were considered are incomplete. We respectfully request that the VFO conduct in depth suitability analysis of all the rivers and streams found eligible for protection using the approach recommended by the Interagency Wild & Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council and involving the public throughout the process.	The WSR suitability appendix has been expanded to address the suitability factors in more detail. However, although the factors are clearly discussed for each eligible river segment, there is no “rejecting segments as unsuitable” in this appendix or elsewhere in the RMP/EIS. The actual decision regarding suitability and the rationale for that decision will be made in the record of decision for the RMP/EIS.	X
Utah Rivers Council	O-26	SD176 (PR-J)	The Utah Rivers Council is concerned that the full range of ORVs were not identified for several of the rivers identified eligible. Specifically, the Middle Green, Lower Green, and Nine-Mile Creek clearly exhibit ORVs that are not identified in the Draft RMP. We respectfully request that the BLM consider and add the	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	

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			following ORVs for these segments: Middle Green River—wildlife/habitat, scenic/geologic, and recreation. Lower Green River—recreation, fish, wildlife/habitat, and scenic/geologic. Nine-Mile Creek—scenic, cultural, and habitat. Our comment letter contains supporting documentation for these ORVs.		
Trout Unlimited	O-27	GC35	Under current plans, 97% of the VPA is open to gas and oil leasing. We feel this is a lopsided plan that favors extraction over other multiple uses such as hunting and fishing that are adversely impacted by gas and oil development.	Comment noted.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	GC60 (GC-Q)	We recommend a phased-in approach to development in which smaller portions of the landscape are developed, monitored and the impacts fully understood.	Comment noted.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	GC61 (GC-R)	We urge the BLM to reconsider its multiple use mandate and develop a more prudent, balanced plan that ensures protection of fish, wildlife, water and associated recreational opportunities.	Comment noted.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	ME126 (ME-LL)	Trout Unlimited would like to see a selenium contamination management plan for selenium poisoning and watershed contamination addressed in the Final RMP.	This is outside the scope of the RMP.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	SD108	We ask that all 52,721 acres be included in the Browns Park ACEC and that the ACEC designation not be rolled back to 18,474 acres as per Alternative B.	See Response to Comment SD50-G25.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	SD109	Among the areas of special designations, we ask that no gas and oil leasing take place as we feel that no stipulations or mitigation within these areas would adequately address the known adverse impacts, nor account for the lack of research on the impacts, that gas and oil development would have on this remarkable natural area and the significant hunting,	See Response to Comment SD103-I-46.	

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			fishing, and other recreational opportunities that it provides.		
Trout Unlimited	O-27	SD236 (SD-EEE)	We commend the BLM for recognizing the priceless nature of the Upper Green River watershed and request that all of the protections stated in Alternative C be included in the final RMP.	See Response to Comment SD8-G-9.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	SO24	We urge the BLM to consider potential impacts of gas and oil development on both the social and economic values (e.g., hunting and angling) of fish, wildlife, and wild places in the VPA.	See comment responses SO9 and SO15.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	SW29 (SW-H)	We request that all CBM produced wastewater be disposed of using reinjection techniques that in turn aid in aquifer recharging.	See comment response SW23.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	WF46	Continued gas or oil development in summer range, winter range, and migration corridors would be a huge detriment to this recovering deer herd and we suggest that for the sake of these resources and the hunters of Utah, that the Final Vernal RMP stipulate that migration corridors as well as those areas deemed critical winter range and critical summer range be off limits to further gas and oil leasing and that applications for permits to drill that are approved on existing leases stipulate "no surface occupancy" within the aforementioned areas.	The RMP proposes a no surface disturbing restriction under all alternatives during April and May (exact timeframes vary) in the McCook and Monument Ridge migration corridors. The RMP alternatives also propose that any activities that would result in adverse impacts to deer and elk within crucial winter range would not be allowed from approximately November to April (exact timeframes vary).s depending on the alternative... April (exact timeframes vary).	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	WF47	We ask that critical elk winter range identified by the UDWR and located within the Tabiona-Ashley Valley RFD area be conserved through timing and controlled surface use stipulations that minimize habitat fragmentation and protect elk during this crucial winter months.	The RMP goals and objectives for wildlife, stated in Table 2.1.26 (Wildlife and Fisheries Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS, are to protect wildlife habitat, and manage for unfragmented blocks of wildlife habitat. Actions Common to All alternatives include management actions that would reduce habitat fragmentation from oil and gas development through reduction in surface disturbances. Existing and future habitat fragmentation of Tabiona-Ashley RFD are provided in Appendix I, Tables 23-24.	

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Trout Unlimited	O-27	WF48	No surface disturbing activities within two miles of active sage grouse leks from March 1 to June 15. No surface disturbing activities within one-quarter mile of active sage grouse leks year round. No permanent facilities or structures would be allowed within two miles. Within .5 mile of known active leks, the best available technology should be used to reduce noise, such as installation of multi cylinder pumps, hospital sound mufflers, and the placement of exhaust systems.	A range of alternatives for protecting sage grouse is presented in Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	WF49	We recommend that the final RMP include the Coyote Basin/Shiner ACEC in order to protect the relatively strong population of sage grouse that utilize the Diamond Mountain Area.	Comment noted.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	WF66	Considering our lack of knowledge about impacts of gas and oil development on fish and wildlife populations, particularly in regards to coal bed methane development, and indications that impacts can be serious and far-reaching, we urge the BLM to slow down, develop a better understanding of current fish and wildlife populations and needs across the landscape, and consider the cumulative impacts of such wide-scale development, across such a large land mass, on fish, wildlife and hunting and angling opportunities.	Comment noted.	
Trout Unlimited	O-27	WF67	We ask that a comprehensive mitigation plan be created to head off the human and wildlife threats from elevated levels of selenium in soils and waterways resulting from minerals development and to be proactive at mitigating this current and burgeoning problem. Within that plan we are asking to include a ban on hydraulic fracturing in areas where the underlying geology is composed of Mancos Shale, regulations requiring the reinjection of CBM produced wastewater, prohibiting surface disturbing activities	The Clean Water Act requires that all discharges of pollutants to surface water must be authorized by a permit issued under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The water policy of the BLM is that the states have the primary authority and responsibility for the allocation and management of water resources within their own boundaries, except as otherwise specified by Congress.	

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			within highly seleniferous soils, and that both water concentrations and aquatic life tissue sample concentrations are regularly monitored within the VPA.	BLM would apply and comply with water quality standards established by the State of Utah (R.317-2) and the Federal Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts. Activities on BLM administered lands would support the designated beneficial uses described in the Utah Water Quality Standards (R.317-2) for surface water and groundwater. The RMP proposes several goals, objectives, and actions common to all alternatives that are proactive measures to prevent soil and water degradation. They are: 1) Eliminate or reduce discharge of pollutants into surface waters and achieve water quality that provides protection and propagation of fish, amphibians, wildlife, livestock, and recreation in and on the water. 2) Restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the area's waters as required by the State of Utah's and EPA's water quality standards. 3) The VFO would operate under the unified policy to protect water quality and aquatic ecosystems on federal lands (Unified Federal Policy for a Watershed Approach to Federal Land and Resource Management). This policy guides protection of water quality and aquatic ecosystem health through the reduction of polluted runoff, the improvement of natural resources stewardship, and an increase in public involvement in watershed management on	

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				federal lands. 4) Collaborate with the state, counties, Tribes, and the Division of Water Rights when possible to protect and enhance priority watersheds. 5) Cooperate with states and Tribes to review processes for issuing and renewing use authorizations and licenses when these uses/licenses may affect watershed condition and water quality. Revise these processes if necessary to ensure that they address watershed protection, improvement, and monitoring and water quality compliance needs. 6) Continue partnership with State of Utah, Daggett County, UDWR, USFS, Wyoming Fish and Game, and Rock Springs BLM to develop a watershed activity plan for Red Creek in Daggett County. 7) Restore and protect water quality and severe and critical erosion areas by restricting or mitigating surface disturbance. 8) Comply with standards identified in “The Surface Operating Standards for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development” (Gold Book) unless otherwise specified in the plan. 9) BLM would adhere to criteria outlined in the Colorado River Salinity Control Act.	

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				10) Work in partnership with the State of Utah and others to reduce potential effects of selenium loading on the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge and Pariette Wetlands. 11) Ensure the physical presence and legal availability of water on public lands. Ensure that those waters meet or exceed established federal and state water quality standards for specific uses, and mitigate activities to prevent water quality and watershed degradation. 12) Reduce sediment and salinity production on important watersheds and critical soils through intensive management and construction measures to reduce water degradation of the Green River, White River, and their tributaries. 13) The State of Utah's Non-Point Source Management Plan would be used as a standard to reduce potential non-point source of pollution impacts. Coordinate with the Utah Division of Water Quality as needed. 14) Work in partnership with the State of Utah and others to reduce potential effects of selenium loading on the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge and Pariette Wetlands.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	CR27 (CR-E)	On page 4-44, we concur with the statement that, ".... although there is always potential for inadvertent discovery, historically, the ability to identify sites during	Comment noted.	

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		(LCR-1)	the planning phase, and standard development stipulations that enable and promote site avoidance, has resulted in a relatively low rate of sites requiring mitigation and a very low rate of negative impacts to sites. According to the Vernal field office archaeologist, approximately 1% of the total cultural resource sites involved in oil and gas development has been negatively impacted by development."		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	CR30	The DEIS states that no alternative benefits cultural resources. While the underlying assumption of this statement is that cultural resources are better off left alone, the section should also acknowledge that proper identification of cultural resource sites, data collection at those sites, and recording of sites that cannot be avoided, are all activities that would contribute to the body of scientific knowledge and understanding of the cultures that once occupied the vernal planning area.	Section 4.3.2.13 in the PRMP/FEIS has added the following additional language: "It should be noted, however, that both the identification of sites and the mitigation of impacts through data recovery conducted in association with the Section 106 process for land uses have the positive impact of increasing the body of knowledge about past human behaviors and occupations in the Vernal Planning Area."	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	GC70 (GC-AA) (J-PR6)	BLM asserted that it would "make all possible attempts" to make the management prescriptions as "complimentary as possible" to local land use plans. (DEIS 1-10). This statement does not conform to FLPMA which requires BLM to "assure" that its land use plans are consistent with state and local plans to the extent they conform to federal law. (43 U.S.C. §1712(c) (9)). The affected counties have identified numerous inconsistencies with local land use plans, and BLM must address and justify any divergence.	See comment response GC20.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	GC71 (GC-BB)	We recommend that BLM prepare and issue a revised Draft Vernal RMP/EIS for public review and comment. Given that the RMP sets management goals and objectives for the Vernal Field Office for the next 15 to 20 years, it is critically important for BLM to establish a viable working document that establishes reasonable	Comment noted.	

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			management goals for oil and gas development along with viable and necessary mitigation measures. The revision should rectify the deficiencies identified in the comments and provide sufficient explanation and information documenting the need for management change. BLM must also clearly state the law governing RFD well projections. In addition, the revised DEIS must be consistent with statutory and executive policies, which promote and facilitate oil and gas development, including the adoption of lease mitigation measures that are scientifically justifiable and the least restrictive necessary. In its current form, the Vernal RMP/DEIS does not allow for meaningful analysis and informed decision-making required by NEPA.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	LR13 (LLR-1) (JLR-5)	Lands managed by the State of Utah Division of Wildlife Resources have also not been accurately portrayed within Figure 1 (Land Ownership) of the RMP. The School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) website contains an accurate map of these lands within the planning area. Alternatively, a map can be obtained directly from the Division. These lands need to be accurately portrayed because of development restrictions inherent to them.	Figure 1 has been updated to reflect the State of Utah's land ownership as indicated on maps obtained from the SITLA website.	X
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	ME88 (PR-O)	The DEIS fails to identify relevant Operator-committed mitigation measures routinely utilized during oil and gas exploration and development, and as a result, petroleum industry impacts are significantly overstated. For example, no mention is made of industry's contribution to a habitat enhancement fund that operators paid into for years. Monies from this fund have been used to improve big game habitat to offset current oil and natural gas activities. Also not mentioned are unrecorded habitat enhancement and other voluntary efforts undertaken by the industry, including, but not limited to, the creation of wildlife	Section 4..8.2.7 in the PRMP/FEIS states: "Operators have complied with spatial and temporal restrictions and over the years have developed strategies to minimize the economic risks associated with development." However, there is no specific BLM tracking of on and off-lease operator committed mitigating measures [including payment into water depletion	

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			guzzlers and other water retention activities requested by BLM during well on-site inspections. We, therefore, recommend that Chapter 4 be revised to include all Operator-committed mitigation measures in the environmental consequences and cumulative effects analysis.	funds managed by other regulatory agencies] that current and past federal oil and gas lessees have instituted in order to make a quantitative and qualitative statement about such in Chapter 4. Operator committed measures are voluntary. For planning purposes, BLM must consider mitigating impacts which may not be voluntarily incorporated into proposals. In addition, enhancements, reclamation, and other mitigation efforts engaged in by operators were used in the calculation of the Reasonably Foreseeable Development (RFD) scenario used in projecting impacts from minerals and energy exploration and development. This is why the RFD projects area of disturbance rather than numbers of wells or developments and why the RFD does not represent a ceiling or cap.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	PR20	To satisfy NEPA, an EIS must contain reasonably thorough data, information, and analysis supporting the need for the proposed action. A conclusory statement in an EIS, unsupported by empirical or experimental data, scientific authorities or explanatory information not only fails to crystallize the issues, but affords no basis for a comparison of the problems involved with the proposed project and the difficulties involved in the alternatives. The DEIS lacks information and thorough analysis supporting the need for change and omits significant and contradictory scientific data.	The purpose and need for the PRMP/FEIS are outlined in Section 1.3. The analysis of anticipated impacts is discussed, by resource, in Chapter 4 of the PRMP/FEIS. The RMP was prepared using the best available information identified by the BLM. The commenter fails to identify specific examples of "significant and contradictory scientific data" that were omitted from the document or identify better sources of data that the BLM should have used in its preparation of the document.	

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Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	PR26 (PR-P)	The Vernal DEIS analyzes the cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable actions on riparian resources, vegetation, air quality, soil and water, wildlife, special status species, ACECs, socioeconomics, recreation, livestock grazing, lands and realty, etc., but not minerals management and development. DEIS Sec. 4.22. This glaring omission must be corrected. 40 C.F.R. §1508.14 (economic and social effects are part of the "human environment" which must be considered). The DEIS does not adequately analyze the cumulative effects of the proposed action on mineral development by alternative. Specifically, BLM fails to disclose the total effect of all the stipulations and restrictions imposed on energy development. DEIS 2-87, 4-123- 124. These decisions, at a minimum, restrict the ability to extract mineral resources and, in some cases, even eliminate the potential for extraction of needed mineral resources. The table in the DEIS that depicts the "overall effect of spatial and temporal limitations on energy and mineral development" is limited and therefore totally inadequate. DEIS 4-112. The DEIS needs to discuss and overlay, by alternative, the timing and spatial limitations in combination with other proposed management prescriptions that impact oil and gas development, including VRM, SRMA and ACEC decisions. EPCA policy requires overlays to identify areas of conflict and opportunities for resolving specific issues. IM 2003-233, Attachment 2-1.	The impacts on mineral resources from other resource decisions by alternative are addressed in section 4.8 of the DEIS. Because of the presences of other [non-mineral] critical elements of the human environment, the various alternatives do not allow for unmitigated or unrestricted development of mineral resources and the array of acreages available for mineral development under different categories is summarized by alternative in Table 4.8.1 and graphically displayed on Figures 11 – 18 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SD239 (SD-III)	The draft RMP fails to comply with its FLPMA and NEPA responsibilities in its consideration and analysis of areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) and	The public was notified in a supplement to the notice of availability of the Draft RMP and Draft EIS for the Vernal Field Office to list proposed areas of	

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			fails to propose designations necessary to protect important resource values. The DRMP also fails to give priority to ACEC designation. The BLM's only significant treatment of ACEC nomination is in Appendix G. Furthermore, SUWA was not notified of the decisions regarding our nominations. The lack of written record and rationale is in direct violation of BLM's manual 1613.33.	critical environmental concern and specific associated resource use limitations for public lands was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005. This NOA addressed ACECs within the Vernal Field Office and identified an associated 60-day public comment period.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SD242 (SD-LLL)	Contrary to EPCA and NEP policy, the designation of Segments 1 and 2 of the White River as suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System would result in overlapping restrictions, since the lands adjacent to these river banks are frequently wetland habitats and within the 100-year floodplain, which are under NSO stipulations or closed to mineral development. We recommend that stipulations not necessary to accomplish desired protection be modified or dropped through the planning process. NEP, pp. 5-7; IM 2003-233, p.3. Preferred actions in the DEIS/RMP must be analyzed and developed in the context of these statutory and executive policies that promote and facilitate oil and gas development.	See Response to Comment SD14-G-13.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SD243 (SD-MMM)	The Draft RMP/EIS fails to demonstrate that the proposed ACEC decisions meet the regulatory criteria of importance and relevance. 43 C.F.R. §1610-7-2. Secondly, many of the identified resource values already receive adequate protection through other management prescriptions, and the proposed overlapping ACEC designations are unwarranted and contrary to FLPMA, the NEP and BLM policy. 43	See Responses to Comments SD14-G-13, SD27-G22.	

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			U.S.C. §1702(a) (ACECs may be designated "were special management attention is required…to protect and prevent irreparable damage"); BLM Manual 1613.51-53 (ACECs unnecessary when other designations are adequate to protect a resource or value).		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SD244 (SD-NNN)	The DEIS, however, does not adequately analyze the extent to which proposed management for areas within non-WSA lands with or likely to have wilderness characteristics was tailored to preserve alleged wilderness values identified in the 1999 wilderness inventory and the interdisciplinary team evaluation. The only clear correlation between wilderness characteristics and preferred management is the Browns Park SRMA extension, which is to be managed for primitive recreation values. DEIS 2-52. A separate analysis is the only means of determining whether "wilderness characteristics [were] considered in a manner commensurate with other resource information," as required by FLPMA's multiple use principles. DEIS 1-9. The issue is significant given that the Vernal plan revision was originally intended to determine whether the non-WSA lands found to posses wilderness character would be managed as WSAs under the IMP. In fact, before the Settlement Agreement, several of the large areas of undisturbed wildlife were also being analyzed for "wilderness designation potential" through special designations. Vernal Administrative DEIS, pp. 1-12, 3-108.	The public was notified in a supplement to the notice of availability of the Draft RMP and Draft EIS for the Vernal Field Office to list proposed areas of critical environmental concern and specific associated resource use limitations for public lands was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005. This NOA addressed ACECs within the Vernal Field Office and identified an associated 60-day public comment period.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SD381 (ME-CCC)	Appendix K states that the 71,000-acre Bitter Creek ACEC is established to protect 71,000 acres containing pinyon pines. This acreage differs from the 68,834 acres designated as the potential Bitter Creek ACEC	The Proposed RMP/Final EIS has been revised to correct acreage amounts or rationale provided for the differences.	X

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			on page 3-81 of the draft RMP/EIS. Please correct.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SD385 (ME-CCC)	Appendix K states that the 71,000-acre Bitter Creek ACEC is established to protect 71,000 acres containing pinyon pines. This acreage differs from the 68,834 acres designated as the potential Bitter Creek ACEC on page 3-81 of the draft RMP/EIS. Please correct.	The Proposed RMP/Final EIS has been revised to correct acreage amounts or rationale provided for the differences.	X
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO43 (SO-N)	BLM fails to disclose how the restrictions may combine to increase the consumer cost of gas, which may be disproportionately borne by low-income populations. Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations, 59 Fed. Reg. 7629 (1994).	Analysis of the potential impact of management decisions within the Vernal planning area on the cost of gas to consumers is outside the scope of this document. Regardless, any increase in the cost of gas for any reason would be borne equally across all consumers in that all consumers would be subject to the higher prices. As such, low-income populations would not bare a higher percentage of the increased cost. Thus, the impact on low-income populations would not be disproportionate to populations of other income levels. Furthermore, the BLM Planning Manual (1601-1), Appendix D, p.12, states that environmental justice issues apply to defined minority populations living within or close to the planning area, and not to the nation as a whole.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO44 (SO-O)	Tables 2.5 and 2.3 fail to adequately address the economic impacts from the decisions and stipulations in the draft RMP/EIS to oil and gas development. The number of acres eliminated from potential oil and gas development under each alternative are not specified in the tables; and, the precise area of the eliminated acres is not identified for further evaluation and consistency review. The number of acres available for oil and gas leasing under all alternatives in Table 2.5 is not consistent with the number of acres specified in	Table 2.3 of the Draft RMP contains the alternative management decisions under consideration and is not intended to be an analysis of impacts. Table 2.5 summarizes the anticipated impacts that are discussed in Chapter 4. The anticipated impacts of proposed management decisions on minerals and energy resources are outlined in Sections 4.8.1 through 4.8.6. Note: Table 2.3 of the Draft RMP has been	

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			Table S.1 and Table 2.3, and should be corrected.	renumbered as Tables 2.1.1 through 2.1.27 of the PRMP/FEIS. Table 2.5 of the Draft RMP has been renumbered as Table 2.2 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO45 (SO-P) (JSO-3)	Tables 3.12.3 and 3.12.7 in Chapter 3 should indicate that the "Mining" category includes oil and gas employment.	Tables 3.12.3 and 3.12.7 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to indicate that the "mining" category includes oil and gas employment.	X
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO46 (SO-Q)	Page 3-60, Section 3.12.2.2.3 (Mineral Resources) is confusing. It should refer to oil and gas exploration and production and related mineral exploration. Also, according to Table 3.12.4, oil production is the second largest contributor of royalties to the State at $2.8 million, behind natural gas, which is the most significant contributor at $30.3 million. Figure 3.12.1 appears to have been inverted or presented backwards as the charts begin in 2001 and go back in time to 1991 along the X (horizontal) axis. We suggest the chart begin in 1991 and end in 2001.	See comment response ME 200.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO47 (SO-R) (JSO-4)	The draft RMP/EIS fails to effectively address the full realm of positive economic benefits associated with current and future oil and gas activities. While Section 4.12 provides a brief comparison of wells to be drilled, industry jobs that would be created, industry sales, and federal royalties under each alternative, what appears to have been excluded is the highly significant state and local revenue generated due to a variety of taxes paid.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten. The BLM believes this revision represents the importance of this industry to the Vernal planning area.	X
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO48 (SO-S) (JSO-5)	The socioeconomic analysis contained in Section 4.12 of the draft Vernal RMP/EIS does not adequately describe the long-term incremental and cumulative differences in public sector revenues of the four alternatives. Specifically, the section fails to discuss the property tax revenues that each alternative would	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten and discusses the fiscal impacts to local government of the alternative decisions affecting the oil and gas industry in the Vernal planning area.	X

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			generate and the various community facilities and services that this significant source of revenue funds for residents in the Vernal planning area. As an example, according to the Uintah County Treasurer's office, fully 57.6% of that county's 2004 property tax revenue was derived from the oil and gas and mining industries. Accordingly, management decisions that influence the level of oil and gas activity have direct and significant impacts on local government fiscal conditions in the VPA and indirect impacts on the quality of life of Vernal planning area residents. These impacts must be disclosed in the draft RMP/EIS.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO49 (SO-T) (J-SO7)	The Draft RMP/EIS does not address Utah severance taxes. Severance taxes on natural gas are assessed on a sliding scale, 3% on the first $1.50/Mcf, and 5% percent thereafter. The draft RMP/EIS does not estimate the differences in severance taxes for each alternative. Given that oil and gas production from the Vernal planning area was a substantial portion of the state's total, it is important to understand the implications of each alternative for State of Utah severance tax revenues.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten and discusses the fiscal impacts to local government (including severance taxes) of the alternative decisions affecting the oil and gas industry in the Vernal planning area.	X
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO50 (SO-U) (J-SO8)	The absence of a more complete fiscal assessment will impede the ability of the public, local governments, and BLM decision-makers to assess the effects of each alternative on local government revenues and on their ability to provide public services, which directly affect the quality of life of Vernal planning area residents. Moreover, the limited scope fiscal analysis in the Draft RMP/EIS does not fulfill the BLM's charge to assess the degree of local dependence on resources from public lands, or fulfill the agency's obligations outlined in Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-H) or Instruction Memorandum No. 2002-167.	Section 4.12 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to expand the discussion of the fiscal impacts to state and local governments. The BLM will review the Utah State University survey of rural counties conducted by the State of Utah. The BLM has received preliminary data from this study received after completion of the DEIS. The BLM has incorporated findings in the PRMP/FEIS as appropriate.	X

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Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO51 (SO-V) (J-SO9)	The Draft RMP/EIS assumes development costs of $600,000 per well. This figure is dated and does not account for other types of development taking place in the Vernal planning area. The deeper formations being developed cost more than the figure used above and the analysis should reflect this fact. This number should be revised to ensure that any economic analysis accounts for the activities in the planning area. Regardless of this oversight, the impact analysis does not address the extent these expenditures would occur in the local economy, nor do they address how the economy would be impacted both locally and nationally. Indirect employment as a result of industry expenditures and the additional tax revenue this spending activity would generate are important impacts the Draft RMP/EIS should disclose. A study was prepared that estimated that eighty-one percent (81%) of the expenditures for development benefited the local economy. On that assumption, the numbers should be reworked to reflect this significant detail.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten. The PRMP/FEIS incorporates recent data provided by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics and the State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining. This data has been used in the recent (November, 2007) study commissioned by the State of Utah: The Structure and Economic Impact of Utah's Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Industry Phase I - The Uinta Basin.	X
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO52 (SO-W)	The statement in Section 4.12.2.2, paragraphs 3 and 4 that areas open to (minerals) exploration "would have an adverse impact on the recreation and tourism industries" and that "the quality of the recreational experience would be degraded along with possible decreases to visual quality..." is incorrect. In much of the Vernal planning area, mineral exploration and development activity would occur in remote areas that are not popular for recreation or visually sensitive. At present, mineral development and recreational activities generally take place in separate geographic areas and co-exist quite successfully in the Vernal planning area. As examples, no mineral development would occur within the recreationally significant	Section 4.12.2.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to delete the statements as suggested in the comment. See also comment responses SO15 and SO37.	X

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			Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, Dinosaur National Monument, nor along much of the Green River (due to NSO and CSU stipulations intended to protect recreational, scenic, and other natural resources values of the river corridor). In addition, despite the substantial increase in oil and gas exploration and development that has occurred in the Vernal planning area over the last 15 years, tourism has increased rather than decreased. This fact directly contradicts the baseless statement that mineral development hurts the tourist economy and employment in the Vernal planning area.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SO53 (SO-X) (JSO-11)	In paragraph 5, of Section 4.12.2.2, there is a statement that, "increasing jobs (related to mineral development) would also increase population in the region ... and this would increase the need for social services and infrastructure." Yet, under Section 4.12.2.3 — Recreation, the projected increase in tourism and recreation-related employment is not expected to have similar impacts of increased population and demand for social services and infrastructure. We contend that growth in any and all economic activities and employment sectors would generate increased population and demand for services. As the DEIS is currently written, it unfairly singles out the minerals industry as the sole source of these presumably negative impacts. Further, as stated above, there are studies that indicate that 81% of expenditures on well development. Thus, the positive impacts of job creation and "increase[d] overall prosperity in the region" could be a more significant benefit to the planning area because, as BLM correctly notes, "wages in th[e] [energy] sector. . . are typically higher than service and government related jobs."	According to data provided by the State of Utah's Utah Data Center, the population increases for the Uintah Basin was13.1% from 2000-2007. This figure is well below the State of Utah total of 20.2%, indicating that population change has not been very high. It is possible, however, that the components of population change (age, gender, etc) may be changing, but the BLM lacks data to assess this possibility.	
Westport Oil	O-28	SO54	The draft RMP/EIS states that the rationale for	The jobs created per well has been revised in the	X

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and Gas Company		(SO-Y) (J-SO12)	decreasing mineral development is to increase recreation and OHV opportunities in the Vernal Planning Area. According to the information presented in Table 4.12.1, the economic value of oil and gas sales in the Vernal planning area is currently $189.53 million and $248.68 million, respectively. Royalties are currently more than $8.6 million annually. According to the draft RMP/EIS recreation currently provides a total tax benefit at approximately $1.6 million. The revenues from royalties, alone, are more than five times the tax benefits from recreation. Under Alternative D (existing conditions) the total number of jobs, based on the average number of employees per well, is estimated to be 215,260 over the next 20 years, while there are 1,578 jobs attributable to recreation. We question the rationale for increasing recreational opportunities at the expense of oil and gas development, which would decrease the revenues to the state, counties, and Tribes, as well as decrease the supply of oil and gas to the public. In addition, a decrease in future oil and gas development is contrary to the President's Energy Policy.	FEIS. Based on date form the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining, it is more reasonable to project an increase approximating 3.74 new jobs per well drilled than the approximately 14 suggested in the UEO study, which was for only one well. The impact analysis in Chapter 4 will be rewritten to reflect this lower estimate. The FEIS will continue to reflect the high economic value provided by minerals activities in the Uintah Basin. See also comment responses SO15 and SO37.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS28 (SS-B)	Section 4.2.8.5 purportedly discloses the effects of special status species resource decisions on mineral resources. However, the impacts to oil and gas development from special resource stipulations are greatly trivialized in the draft RMP	The comment is on the analysis associated with effects of Special Status Species upon Mineral Resources. For those species which are T&E listed, BLM has to mitigate those impacts regardless of the outcome. Impacts to oil and gas development are discussed in Section 4.8.2.5.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS29 (SS-C)	This sections states that "it would be very rare for any one lease to have so many limitations as to render it inaccessible for energy development." Clearly this statement is erroneous since the ½-mile restrictions around all raptor nests, in combination with big game	There are exceptions, waivers, and modifications to both of these stipulations, which allow for development under particular circumstances.	

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			crucial winter range restrictions, would render some oil and gas leases inaccessible to development. For example, seasonal restrictions for various species of raptors extend from January to August. Critical deer and elk winter range restrictions extend from November to the end of April. Based on these restrictions, there would be only 2 ½ months where oil and gas development would be allowed.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS30 (SS-D)	This section states that "overall, it is estimated that a small number of operators may experience adverse economic effects if drilling operations must be stayed during special status species protection periods or if drilling operations must be moved to another area on the lease." Moving to another area on the lease may not be technically and/or economically feasible. A specific area is chosen for development by the operators because it is the best location for oil or gas development. The same potential is not likely to be present at another location. In addition, 43 CFR 3101.1-2 states that a proposed well location can be moved up to 200 meters (0.12 mile) and the timing of the actual drilling can be delayed no more than 60 days to mitigate environmental concerns. Reference to this regulation appears in Appendix A of the draft RMP/EIS. In addition, the availability of drilling rigs is very limited. An operator might not be able to drill at all in a given year due to timing and spatial stipulations and a, lack of availability of drilling rigs during the limited period when the drilling stipulations do not restrict all construction and drilling activities. Therefore, we strongly object to the minimization of the potential effects to the oil and gas industry of the excessive stipulations in the draft RMP/EIS.	Comment noted.	

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Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS31 (SS-E)	This section states that "modifications, exemptions, or waivers may, in some cases, allow mineral development to occur. This would increase the potential number of wells drilled or other mineral development, increase the domestic supply of oil and natural gas or other mineral, and increase royalties to the federal government…" It would be very difficult for the operators to conduct cost-effective operations with the uncertainty of whether waivers, exemptions, or modifications would be granted by the BLM. In addition, this statement in the RMP is contradictory to the information in Appendix K for Alternative A, which indicates that exceptions, modifications, or waivers would not be allowed. For example, the stipulation for unoccupied raptor nests states that "nests would be protected for a period of seven years… Although an exception may be allowed under certain conditions, no modifications or waivers are allowed." The conflicting statements should be corrected.	At the time of the on-site, operator requests for exceptions will be reviewed and recommendations will be discussed. Appendix K indicates that under Alternative A, throughout the planning area, exceptions to the spatial and seasonal buffers may be allowed.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS32 (SS-F)	This section states that "management of sage grouse under Alternative A would be similar to Alternative D." It further states that "it is not likely that management decisions under Alternative A would have a greater impact on mineral and energy development than Alternative D." This presumption is erroneous. The stipulations under Alternative D, provided in Appendix K, contain exceptions for the sage grouse stipulations. However, under Alternative A, there is no provision for exceptions, modifications, or waivers. For example, the stipulation under Alternative A related to sage grouse states the following: "Avoid human disturbance within 0.6 mile of a lek during the breeding season from	The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.1) require BLM to consider reasonable alternatives, which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment, based on the nature of the proposal and facts in the case (CEQ 40 Most Asked Questions 1b.). While there are many possible management prescriptions or actions, the BLM used the scoping process to determine a reasonable range alternatives that best addressed the issues, concerns, and alternatives identified by the public.	

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			1 hour before sunrise to 3 hours after sunrise. Exception: None. Modification: None. Waiver: None." The contradictory information needs to be corrected.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS33 (SS-G)	This section states that it is unlikely that the impacts from timing restrictions for deer and elk crucial winter range would be substantially more significant than current management "because timing restrictions would be increased only 15 days above the criteria currently used in the Diamond Mountain area and Book Cliffs area." According to the information in Appendix K, timing restrictions under the existing Book Cliffs RMP timing restrictions are only for crucial winter elk habitat; Brown's Park and Dry Fork ACECs have stipulations for crucial deer and elk winter ranges. However, under Alternative A of the Draft RMP, timing restrictions for deer and elk are "planning area wide." This is unacceptable and must be revised.	See comment response SS32.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS34 (SS-H)	There is no basis for the statement that a net decrease of no more than 0.4% in the number of predicted oil and gas wells would result from the wildlife mitigation measures. This information must be disclosed.	See comment response ME187.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS35 (SS-I)	This section states that oil and gas development is a key threat to Book Cliffs listed plant species and was a major factor that lead to their listing under the Endangered Species Act. This statement is contradicted by two government surveys and, as a result is baseless. A BLM report (2002) states that illegal collection of the Uinta Basin hookless cactus, a threatened species, is the prime threat (emphasis added) to the conservation and recovery of the species on Utah BLM lands. It further reports that an estimated 50 to 70 percent of a single Uinta Basin hookless cactus population in the Myton Bench area of the Diamond Mountain resource area was illegally	The reports referenced by the commenter are specific to the Uinta Basin hookless cactus, for which collection is a primary threat. However, the statement in question in the RMP refers to all Book Cliffs soil endemics (as an entire group, on a landscape level). Oil and gas development has been identified as a specific threat to these species and played a primary role in their listing. As such, the BLM declines to change the discussion as written.	

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			collected in the recent past (BLM 2002. Biological Assessment of Threatened, Endangered and Proposed Plant and Animal Species for the Environmental Assessment for 2-D Seismic Exploration by Veritas DGC Land Inc. Prepared by Bureau of Land Management, Vernal Field Office, Uintah County, Utah). The USFWS also reports that range-wide, the Uinta Basin hookless cactus is a desired species among cactus collectors because of its "beautiful purplish-red flowers." (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1979. Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Determination that Sclerocactus glaucus is a Threatened Species. Federal Register Vol. 44, No. 198). Clearly these impacts have nothing to do with oil and gas development. This discussion must be eliminated.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS36 (SS-J)	This section states that "although most of the riparian zone is listed as NSO, this stipulation could be waived if necessary for transmission lines, roads and surface occupancy." The conditions for granting of a "waiver" in Chapter 4 of the draft RMP/EIS are inconsistent with the stipulation for riparian floodplains described in Appendix K, which does not grant a waiver to NSO. It allows an "exception," which is defined in Appendix K as a one-time exemption from a stipulation.	Section 4.15.1.3 in the PRM/FEIS has revised the statement to read as an exception rather than a waiver.	X
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS37 (SS-K) JME-36	The DEIS states that "one of the main factors in the listing of the Colorado River fishes was the cumulative effect of water depletion within the Colorado River system" and implies that the requirement of water for oil and gas development is a major factor in water depletion in the Colorado River System. We recommend that BLM limit its consideration to verifiable information. Streamflow regulation and	The PRMP/FEIS does not imply that oil and gas development is a "major" factor in water depletion. Section 4.15.1.3, 2nd paragraph states that: "New depletions from these rivers or changes in the amount of water returned to the rivers would constitute an additional impact on the Colorado River fishes."	

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			habitat modification associated with water regulation by dams, such as the Flaming Gorge Dam, are identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the primary threat to the endangered Colorado River fish. Since 1950, annual peak flows in occupied razorback sucker habitat upstream of Westwater Canyon have decreased by 29-38%. Flows of the Green River at Jensen, Utah, downstream of one of the principal spawning areas of razorback sucker have decreased by 13-15% during spring and increased from 10-140% from summer to winter, due to regulation by the Flaming Gorge Dam (USFWS 2002. Razorback sucker (Xyrauchen texanus) Recovery Goals: Amendment and Supplement to the Razorback Sucker Recovery Plan. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mountain-Prairie Region (6) Denver, Colorado). The RMP must clarify that oil and gas development is not the major cause of water depletion of the Green River within the Vernal planning area. The Flaming Gorge Dam and other water-control structures are the main cause of water depletion in the Upper and Lower Colorado River System.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS38 (SS-L)	All spatial buffers for unoccupied raptor nests under Alternative A are 0.5 mile (except for peregrine falcons). If the factors mentioned in the draft RMPIEIS are being used to determine spatial buffers, there is no justification for the 0.5 mile buffers identified in the DEIS. BLM must modify the impacts analysis sections for Effects of Special Status Species Decisions on Minerals and Energy Resources by removing the seasonal restrictions tables (Tables 4.8.6, 4.8.7, 4.8.8,	The spatial buffers are based on the raptor BMPs and the IMs as adopted through IM UT 2006-096, Best Management Practices for Raptors and Their Associated Habitats in Utah. These BMPs can be found in Appendix A of the PRMP/FEIS.	

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			and 4.8.9), and the limitations they present, with revised impact analyses for raptors that are based on and will provide foundation for accurate evaluations analysis of existing conditions and an analysis of potential impacts that are based on future site-specific development data and commitments to mitigate impacts to any raptors that would be affected. We also urge BLM to modify the stipulations in Appendix K for raptor nests with stipulations dealing with known current use of nests within one year as opposed to stipulations resulting in protection of unused nests for up to 7 years. The revised impacts analysis should be based on realistic, hard-data-based stipulations and commitments of industry and management agencies to compile current existing data, to conduct any necessary surveys to obtain real-time, site-specific/project-specific data on status of raptor activity, and to develop acceptable site-specific mitigation measures prior to project specific oil and gas activity.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS39 (SS-M)	This section states that the number of acres open to oil and gas leasing on Vernal BLM lands is 1,776,782 acres. However, Table S.1 and Table 4.8.1 state that the acres open to oil and gas leasing are 1,843,265 acres. These numbers are not consistent. Please correct and give the precise area of the acres in question for further identification, evaluation and consistency review.	Section 4.15.2.3.1.1 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to correct the inconsistencies described in the comment.	X
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS40 (SS-N)	This section states that Alternative A would increase the proportion of areas surrounding ferruginous hawk nesting sites open to oil and gas development by approximately 2% when compared to Alternative D. BLM must explain how this percentage was determined	Calculations are based on areas associated within the ½ mile buffer around known active and inactive ferruginous hawk nests in the VPA. These areas were overlaid onto the oil and gas leasing acreages (by type) to calculate the percentage. However, the	

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			and exactly what spatial buffer was used.	areas within the ½ mile buffer zone for active and inactive ferruginous hawk nests will actually be managed under the special stipulations for raptors outlined in Chapter 4. See comment response SS38.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS41 (SS-O)	This section states that construction and development around bald eagle roosts would be managed under BMPs and include spatial and seasonal buffers. The Draft RMP/EIS does not describe how a bald eagle roost site is determined. Unlike nest sites, roosting structures/habitats of the bald eagle may vary from year to year and a single tree may not serve as a roost site. Would the location of the spatial and seasonal restrictions vary from year to year? Please clarify.	What constitutes a roost site would be determined on a site-specific basis based on the presence of eagles, distance to water, and protection from the elements and human disturbance. Spatial and seasonal restrictions would be determined on a case-by-case basis based on the location and activity at the roost site. Trying to mandate these restrictions at this programmatic planning level would not allow the flexibility necessary to ensure that each roost site is protected appropriately.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	SS42 (SS-P)	The RMP states that the ferruginous hawk population could be irretrievably lost due to impacts from surface disturbance for mineral development, habitat fragmentation, and habitat loss. The draft RMP/EIS provides no evidence that mineral development has or would cause declines in ferruginous hawk populations. Provide the data in the EIS to support this statement or delete the statement	Section 4.15.6 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to add the following information: "As a species ferruginous hawks have two characteristics that seem to make them more susceptible to disturbance-their preference for solitude when nesting and their high dependence on primary prey species (rabbits and/or ground squirrels). Bechard et al. (1990) showed ferruginous hawks' tendency for solitude by proving that their nest site selection is significantly further from roads and human habitation than other sympatric hawks. White and Thurow (1985) documented ferruginous hawk sensitivity to human disturbances when they found that 33% of briefly disturbed nests were deserted and the other nest had lower fledging success. In years of low prey	X

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				abundance, sensitivity to disturbance increased and larger buffer zones were recommended to protect nesting pairs. Holmes et al. (1993) documented ferruginous hawk sensitivity to walking and vehicular disturbances and recommended a buffer zone to protect nesting attempts. (Reproductive Success and Nesting Chronology of Ferruginous Hawks in Northwestern Utah From 1997-1999. United States Department of Interior, BLM, Salt Lake Field Office. Page 5 Paragraph 1. Mining disturbance is linked to nest desertion (Olendorff 1993). Pairs nesting near active petroleum wells experience lower productivity than those that nest further away. Railroads apparently are not a disturbance, but pairs have been found to nest farther from primary and secondary roads than Swainson's Hawks do. (Bechard et al. 1990)" "Olendorff (1993) attributed population declines to the effects of cultivation, grazing, poisoning, and controlling small mammals, mining, and fire in nesting habitats, with cultivation being the most serious."	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	VE10 (VE-B)	This section states that estimated disturbance by individual well development would total 18,971 acres. However, p. 4-331 (Woodlands and Timber Resources) also states that 18,971 acres of woodlands could be adversely affected from oil and gas development. Since woodlands and timber resources are a small portion of the vegetation community in the Vernal planning area, this statement appears to be incorrect. These numbers should be recalculated and corrected in the RMP/EIS.	In Woodlands section 4.20.2.3, the PRMP/FEIS text states that 18,971 acres of woodlands could be affected by minerals impacts. At the programmatic level of impacts analysis, the locations of oil and natural gas well sites in woodlands are unknown, but the analysis of impacts to woodland resources must consider the impacts of these wells as potentially being located in this vegetation type. In Vegetation Section 4.16.2.5.1 potential well surface disturbances of 18,971 acres includes all vegetation	

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				types, of which woodlands is one vegetation type. Again, without site-specific well locations the analysis cannot determine proportional impacts to each vegetation type, so the impacts must be considered at the broad, programmatic level.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	VE9 (VE-A)	There appear to be several errors in calculating vegetation disturbance. For example, adding the acres of disturbance for standard stipulations and timing limitations and controlled surface use does not equal 1,776,782. "Estimated surface disturbance by individual well development" does not total 18,971 acres. According to Table 4-1, surface disturbance would be less than 5 acres per well. The percent increase and increase of disturbance between Alternative A and Alternative D also should be recalculated. Table 4.16.6 shows 18,971 acres as total disturbance under Alternative A. This total is obtained by combining the short- and long- term disturbance. However, some short-term disturbance would continue over the life of the project and be included as long-term disturbance. As a result of this overlap, the two totals cannot be added together. These errors need to be corrected.	Section 4.16.2.5.1 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to correct the errors.	X
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	WF56	Table 2.3, Alternative A, Nest Protection for Raptors, Unoccupied Nests — is inconsistent with the information provided in Appendix A. Appendix A states that no activities would be allowed within the buffer until seven-year monitoring is complete. Table 2.3, on the other hand, states that non-permanent (short-term) activities would be allowed within the spatial buffer of nests during the nesting season as long as those activities are shown to have no effect on nesting raptors. It is necessary for Appendix A to be consistent with Table 2-3. Allowances for permanent (long-term) structures should also be given, if these activities would	See comment response WF39.	

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			not affect raptor nesting.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	WF57	P.4-315, 4.19.2.5.2.1, Paragraph (Big Game Species)—This paragraph discussed a paper by Irby et al (1987) on mule deer which states that the authors were unable to detect a response by mule deer to low intensity oil and gas exploration and gas drilling activities. It also refers to a paper by Karpowitz (1984), who also investigated the impacts of energy development on mule deer and found it difficult to assess. Since neither report (Irby et al 1987; Karpowitz 1984) cited in the draft RMP provides definitive evidence on impacts of oil and gas development on mule deer, it is inappropriate to base resource planning decisions upon these findings. In addition, all information presented in the Karpowitz (1984) paper was speculative. Data that support the stipulation should be included in the RMP. Otherwise, the stipulation should be deleted.	The commenter incorrectly interprets the analyses described in Section 4.19.2.5.2.1. A more careful reading of the section shows that the studies cited by the commenter do include inconclusive and speculative outcomes of these studies, but the section also describes the substantive conclusions and observations derived from these studies that form the basis for the analyses in the section.	
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	WF58	We strongly object to the adoption of the stipulations in Appendices A and H, as they are extremely restrictive without due cause and would cause severe and unacceptable adverse impacts on the ability of oil and gas operators to fulfill their lease obligations. Since the proposed stipulations often do not provide any data or literature that supports the proposed restrictions, BLM's stipulations appear to be capricious. Many stipulations described in Appendices A and H are too general in nature and do not consider differences that may occur on a resource or site-specific basis. Following are examples in relation to these comments: Section 4.19.2.5.2.3 states that "All alternatives would apply spatial and temporal buffers to minimize disturbances in the vicinity of nesting raptors. The	See comment response WF39.	

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			buffers were tailored to the individual raptor species involved, and were based on factors, such as line of sight distance between nest and disturbance, type and duration of disturbance, nest structure security, sensitivity of the species to disturbance, observed response to related disturbances, and the amount of existing disturbances near the nest". Although these factors are listed, no specific reports are cited that document how different raptor species are affected by physical disturbances. In addition, if these factors are the parameters for developing spatial buffers and timing limitations, then application of a 0.5 mile spatial buffer for all raptor species (Appendix H — Alternative A) is not consistent with the identified criteria. The overall goal of applying spatial and temporal buffers around unoccupied raptor nests is to avoid causing the nests to become unsuitable for future nesting. Therefore, if it is determined by site-specific evaluation, that an activity would have no effect on future raptor nesting then the 0.5 mile stipulation should be waived. Therefore it is appropriate for BLM to implement exception, waiver, and modification criteria that would allow surface disturbance during the timing limitation, provided the nest is protected from visual and/or noise impacts by topography and/or vegetative screening, or once the young have successfully fledged the respective nest. Appendix A states that the implementation of spatial and seasonal buffers would be comparable to the USFWS, Utah Field Office 'Guidelines for Raptor Protection from Human and Land Use Disturbances" (January 2002). Appendix A states that unoccupied		

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			nests would be monitored for seven years. Aside from the fact that such a time frame is excessive, there is no explanation in the draft RMP/EV3 for the requirement of a seven-year nest monitoring period for unoccupied raptor nests. If the rationale is contained in the USFWS guidelines, the guidelines should be included as an appendix to the RMP/EIS. If it is not included in the USFWS guidelines, this requirement must be deleted. Unoccupied raptor nests have the potential to remain visible for many years. Therefore raptor nest conditions must be considered when establishing stipulations regarding spatial and temporal buffers. Raptor nest conditions vary depending upon several factors including age, substrate, previous usage, etc. Nests in “Good” to “Excellent” condition are either usable or need only minor attention in order to be used again (BLM — Powder River Basin Wildlife Survey Protocol), while nests in “Poor” or “Fair” condition would need significant repair to become functional. As the potential for reestablishment of “Poor” or “Fair” nests would be much less likely, stipulations regarding these nests should not be identical to nests currently in good or excellent condition. Based upon the resilience of raptor nests, thousands of unoccupied raptor nests likely occur throughout the Vernal planning area. If surface disturbing stipulations were activated within 0.5 mile of every unoccupied raptor nest regardless of nest condition, oil and gas operators would be unable to fulfill their lease obligations within the planning area.		

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			Raptor species have different nesting requirements. Some species typically reuse nests year after year (i.e., bald eagles, golden eagles, and osprey). However, some species (e.g., ferruginous hawks) build multiple nests in close proximity on an annual basis, and only use one for rearing young. Therefore, by not developing species- specific stipulations for unoccupied nests, unneeded restrictions would be applied. Appendices A and H be must be rewritten; and, rather than instituting blanket stipulations, we recommend that BLM commit to developing stipulations (as well as the associated exception, waiver and modification) for surface-disturbing activities resulting from oil and gas operations in cooperation with oil and gas industry, other agencies, and other key stakeholders. Raptor species have different nesting requirements. Some species typically reuse nests year after year (i.e., bald eagles, golden eagles, and osprey). However, some species (e.g., ferruginous hawks) build multiple nests in close proximity on an annual basis, and only use one for rearing young. Therefore, by not developing species- specific stipulations for unoccupied nests, unneeded restrictions would be applied. Appendices A and H be must be rewritten; and, rather than instituting blanket stipulations, we recommend that BLM commit to developing stipulations (as well as the associated exception, waiver and modification) for surface-disturbing activities resulting from oil and gas operations in cooperation with oil and gas industry, other agencies, and other key stakeholders.		

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			Appendix A states that the implementation of spatial and seasonal buffers would be comparable to the USFWS, Utah Field Office 'Guidelines for Raptor Protection from Human and Land Use Disturbances" (January 2002). Appendix A states that unoccupied nests would be monitored for seven years. Aside from the fact that such a time frame is excessive, there is no explanation in the draft RMP/EV3 for the requirement of a seven-year nest monitoring period for unoccupied raptor nests. If the rationale is contained in the USFWS guidelines, the guidelines should be included as an appendix to the RMP/EIS. If it is not included in the USFWS guidelines, this requirement must be deleted. Unoccupied raptor nests have the potential to remain visible for many years. Therefore raptor nest conditions must be considered when establishing stipulations regarding spatial and temporal buffers. Raptor nest conditions vary depending upon several factors including age, substrate, previous usage, etc. Nests in "Good" to "Excellent" condition are either usable or need only minor attention in order to be used again (BLM — Powder River Basin Wildlife Survey Protocol), while nests in "Poor" or "Fair" condition would need significant repair to become functional. As the potential for reestablishment of "Poor" or "Fair" nests would be much less likely, stipulations regarding these nests should not be identical to nests Raptor species have different nesting requirements. Some species typically reuse nests year after year (i.e., bald eagles, golden eagles, and osprey). However, some species (e.g., ferruginous hawks) build multiple		

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			nests in close proximity on an annual basis, and only use one for rearing young. Therefore, by not developing species- specific stipulations for unoccupied nests, unneeded restrictions would be applied. Appendices A and H be must be rewritten; and, rather than instituting blanket stipulations, we recommend that BLM commit to developing stipulations (as well as the associated exception, waiver and modification) for surface-disturbing activities resulting from oil and gas operations in cooperation with oil and gas industry, other agencies, and other key stakeholders.currently in good or excellent condition. Based upon the resilience of raptor nests, thousands of unoccupied raptor nests likely occur throughout the Vernal planning area. If surface disturbing stipulations were activated within 0.5 mile of every unoccupied raptor nest regardless of nest condition, oil and gas operators would be unable to fulfill their lease obligations within the planning area.		
Westport Oil and Gas Company	O-28	WF59	Table 2, in Appendix I, shows that timing limitations and controlled surface use stipulations in mule deer crucial winter range habitat have increased from 37% of the area under Alternative D (existing RMPs) to 93% of the area considered by the BLM for mineral leasing under Alternatives A and B. The references cited in the draft RMP (Irby et al 1987, Karpowitz 1984, Van Dyke and Klein 1996 do not support the large scale timing limitations and controlled surface use stipulations. The rationale for these stringent stipulations needs to be explained in the RMP/EIS. The stipulations for elk crucial winter range habitat also cover a larger area (68% Alternative A vs. 34% Alternative D). However,	See comment response WF39.	

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			no basis has been given for increasing the area covered by stipulations for protecting mule deer crucial winter range habitat and elk crucial winter range habitat. Absent established scientific justification, this change must be withdrawn in the final document. Table 19 in Appendix I indicates that 92% of ferruginous hawk nesting habitat is under standard stipulations and only 7% is under timing limitations and controlled surface use stipulations. This is inconsistent with Table 4.8.6, which has timing restrictions from March 1 to August 1 for ferruginous hawk nests. It is also inconsistent with Appendix H, which has a 0.5-mile buffer for occupied and unoccupied ferruginous hawk nests. It is also inconsistent with Appendix K, which specifies "planning area wide" spatial and seasonal buffers for raptors. These are not standard stipulations.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	CR27 (CR-E) (LCR-1)	On page 4-44, we concur with the statement that, ".... although there is always potential for inadvertent discovery, historically, the ability to identify sites during the planning phase, and standard development stipulations that enable and promote site avoidance, has resulted in a relatively low rate of sites requiring mitigation and a very low rate of negative impacts to sites. According to the Vernal field office archaeologist, approximately 1% of the total cultural resource sites involved in oil and gas development has been negatively impacted by development."	Comment noted.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	CR30	The DEIS states that no alternative benefits cultural resources. While the underlying assumption of this statement is that cultural resources are better off left alone, the section should also acknowledge that proper identification of cultural resource sites, data collection	Section 4.3.2.13 in the PRMP/FEIS has added the following additional language: "It should be noted, however, that both the	X

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			at those sites, and recording of sites that cannot be avoided, are all activities that would contribute to the body of scientific knowledge and understanding of the cultures that once occupied the vernal planning area.	identification of sites and the mitigation of impacts through data recovery conducted in association with the Section 106 process for land uses have the positive impact of increasing the body of knowledge about past human behaviors and occupations in the Vernal Planning Area."	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	GC70 (GC-AA) (J-PR6)	BLM asserted that it would "make all possible attempts" to make the management prescriptions as "complimentary as possible" to local land use plans. (DEIS 1-10). This statement does not conform to FLPMA which requires BLM to "assure" that its land use plans are consistent with state and local plans to the extent they conform to federal law. (43 U.S.C. §1712(c) (9)). The affected counties have identified numerous inconsistencies with local land use plans, and BLM must address and justify any divergence.	See comment response GC20.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	GC71 (GC-BB)	We recommend that BLM prepare and issue a revised Draft Vernal RMP/EIS for public review and comment. Given that the RMP sets management goals and objectives for the Vernal Field Office for the next 15 to 20 years, it is critically important for BLM to establish a viable working document that establishes reasonable management goals for oil and gas development along with viable and necessary mitigation measures. The revision should rectify the deficiencies identified in the comments and provide sufficient explanation and information documenting the need for management change. BLM must also clearly state the law governing RFD well projections. In addition, the revised DEIS must be consistent with statutory and executive policies, which promote and facilitate oil and gas development, including the adoption of lease mitigation measures that are scientifically justifiable and the least restrictive necessary. In its current form, the Vernal RMP/DEIS does not allow for meaningful analysis and	Comment noted.	

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			informed decision-making required by NEPA.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	ME88 (PR-O)	The DEIS fails to identify relevant Operator-committed mitigation measures routinely utilized during oil and gas exploration and development, and as a result, petroleum industry impacts are significantly overstated. For example, no mention is made of industry's contribution to a habitat enhancement fund that operators paid into for years. Monies from this fund have been used to improve big game habitat to offset current oil and natural gas activities. Also not mentioned are unrecorded habitat enhancement and other voluntary efforts undertaken by the industry, including, but not limited to, the creation of wildlife guzzlers and other water retention activities requested by BLM during well on-site inspections. We, therefore, recommend that Chapter 4 be revised to include all Operator-committed mitigation measures in the environmental consequences and cumulative effects analysis.	Section 4..8.2.7 in the PRMP/FEIS states: "Operators have complied with spatial and temporal restrictions and over the years have developed strategies to minimize the economic risks associated with development." However, there is no specific BLM tracking of on and off-lease operator committed mitigating measures [including payment into water depletion funds managed by other regulatory agencies] that current and past federal oil and gas lessees have instituted in order to make a quantitative and qualitative statement about such in Chapter 4. Operator committed measures are voluntary. For planning purposes, BLM must consider mitigating impacts which may not be voluntarily incorporated into proposals. In addition, enhancements, reclamation, and other mitigation efforts engaged in by operators were used in the calculation of the Reasonably Foreseeable Development (RFD) scenario used in projecting impacts from minerals and energy exploration and development. This is why the RFD projects area of disturbance rather than numbers of wells or developments and why the RFD does not represent a ceiling or cap.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas	O-29	PR20	To satisfy NEPA, an EIS must contain reasonably thorough data, information, and analysis supporting the	The purpose and need for the PRMP/FEIS are outlined in Section 1.3. The analysis of anticipated	

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Onshore LLC			need for the proposed action. A conclusory statement in an EIS, unsupported by empirical or experimental data, scientific authorities or explanatory information not only fails to crystallize the issues, but affords no basis for a comparison of the problems involved with the proposed project and the difficulties involved in the alternatives. The DEIS lacks information and thorough analysis supporting the need for change and omits significant and contradictory scientific data.	impacts is discussed, by resource, in Chapter 4 of the PRMP/FEIS. The RMP was prepared using the best available information identified by the BLM. The commenter fails to identify specific examples of "significant and contradictory scientific data" that were omitted from the document or identify better sources of data that the BLM should have used in its preparation of the document.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	PR26 (PR-P)	The Vernal DEIS analyzes the cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable actions on riparian resources, vegetation, air quality, soil and water, wildlife, special status species, ACECs, socioeconomics, recreation, livestock grazing, lands and realty, etc., but not minerals management and development. DEIS Sec. 4.22. This glaring omission must be corrected. 40 C.F.R. §1508.14 (economic and social effects are part of the “human environment” which must be considered). The DEIS does not adequately analyze the cumulative effects of the proposed action on mineral development by alternative. Specifically, BLM fails to disclose the total effect of all the stipulations and restrictions imposed on energy development. DEIS 2-87, 4-123- 124. These decisions, at a minimum, restrict the ability to extract mineral resources and, in some cases, even eliminate the potential for extraction of needed mineral resources. The table in the DEIS that depicts the “overall effect of spatial and temporal limitations on energy and mineral	The impacts on mineral resources from other resource decisions by alternative are addressed in section 4.8 of the DEIS. Because of the presences of other [non-mineral] critical elements of the human environment, the various alternatives do not allow for unmitigated or unrestricted development of mineral resources and the array of acreages available for mineral development under different categories is summarized by alternative in Table 4.8.1 and graphically displayed on Figures 11 – 18 of the PRMP/FEIS.	

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			development" is limited and therefore totally inadequate. DEIS 4-112. The DEIS needs to discuss and overlay, by alternative, the timing and spatial limitations in combination with other proposed management prescriptions that impact oil and gas development, including VRM, SRMA and ACEC decisions. EPCA policy requires overlays to identify areas of conflict and opportunities for resolving specific issues. IM 2003-233, Attachment 2-1.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SD239 (SD-III)	The draft RMP fails to comply with its FLPMA and NEPA responsibilities in its consideration and analysis of areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) and fails to propose designations necessary to protect important resource values. The DRMP also fails to give priority to ACEC designation. The BLM's only significant treatment of ACEC nomination is in Appendix G. Furthermore, SUWA was not notified of the decisions regarding our nominations. The lack of written record and rationale is in direct violation of BLM's manual 1613.33.	The public was notified in a supplement to the notice of availability of the Draft RMP and Draft EIS for the Vernal Field Office to list proposed areas of critical environmental concern and specific associated resource use limitations for public lands was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005. This NOA addressed ACECs within the Vernal Field Office and identified an associated 60-day public comment period.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SD242 (SD-LLL)	Contrary to EPCA and NEP policy, the designation of Segments 1 and 2 of the White River as suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System would result in overlapping restrictions, since the lands adjacent to these river banks are frequently wetland habitats and within the 100-year floodplain, which are under NSO stipulations or closed to mineral development. We recommend that stipulations not necessary to accomplish desired protection be modified or dropped through the planning process. NEP, pp. 5-7; IM 2003-233, p.3. Preferred actions in	See Response to Comment SD14-G-13.	

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			the DEIS/RMP must be analyzed and developed in the context of these statutory and executive policies that promote and facilitate oil and gas development.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SD243 (SD-MMM)	The Draft RMP/EIS fails to demonstrate that the proposed ACEC decisions meet the regulatory criteria of importance and relevance. 43 C.F.R. §1610-7-2. Secondly, many of the identified resource values already receive adequate protection through other management prescriptions, and the proposed overlapping ACEC designations are unwarranted and contrary to FLPMA, the NEP and BLM policy. 43 U.S.C. §1702(a) (ACECs may be designated "were special management attention is required…to protect and prevent irreparable damage"); BLM Manual 1613.51-53 (ACECs unnecessary when other designations are adequate to protect a resource or value).	See Responses to Comments SD14-G-13, SD27-G22.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SD244 (SD-NNN)	The DEIS, however, does not adequately analyze the extent to which proposed management for areas within non-WSA lands with or likely to have wilderness characteristics was tailored to preserve alleged wilderness values identified in the 1999 wilderness inventory and the interdisciplinary team evaluation. The only clear correlation between wilderness characteristics and preferred management is the Browns Park SRMA extension, which is to be managed for primitive recreation values. DEIS 2-52. A separate analysis is the only means of determining whether "wilderness characteristics [were] considered in a manner commensurate with other resource information," as required by FLPMA's multiple use	The public was notified in a supplement to the notice of availability of the Draft RMP and Draft EIS for the Vernal Field Office to list proposed areas of critical environmental concern and specific associated resource use limitations for public lands was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005. This NOA addressed ACECs within the Vernal Field Office and identified an associated 60-day public comment period.	

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			principles. DEIS 1-9. The issue is significant given that the Vernal plan revision was originally intended to determine whether the non-WSA lands found to posses wilderness character would be managed as WSAs under the IMP. In fact, before the Settlement Agreement, several of the large areas of undisturbed wildlife were also being analyzed for "wilderness designation potential" through special designations. Vernal Administrative DEIS, pp. 1-12, 3-108.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SD381 (ME-CCC)	Appendix K states that the 71,000-acre Bitter Creek ACEC is established to protect 71,000 acres containing pinyon pines. This acreage differs from the 68,834 acres designated as the potential Bitter Creek ACEC on page 3-81 of the draft RMP/EIS. Please correct.	The Proposed RMP/Final EIS has been revised to correct acreage amounts or rationale provided for the differences.	X
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SD385 (ME-CCC)	Appendix K states that the 71,000-acre Bitter Creek ACEC is established to protect 71,000 acres containing pinyon pines. This acreage differs from the 68,834 acres designated as the potential Bitter Creek ACEC on page 3-81 of the draft RMP/EIS. Please correct.	The Proposed RMP/Final EIS has been revised to correct acreage amounts or rationale provided for the differences.	X
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SO43 (SO-N)	BLM fails to disclose how the restrictions may combine to increase the consumer cost of gas, which may be disproportionately borne by low-income populations. Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations, 59 Fed. Reg. 7629 (1994).	Analysis of the potential impact of management decisions within the Vernal planning area on the cost of gas to consumers is outside the scope of this document. Regardless, any increase in the cost of gas for any reason would be borne equally across all consumers in that all consumers would be subject to the higher prices. As such, low-income populations would not bare a higher percentage of the increased cost. Thus, the impact on low-income populations would not be disproportionate to populations of other income levels. Furthermore, the BLM Planning Manual (1601-1), Appendix D, p.12, states that environmental justice issues apply to defined minority populations living	

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				within or close to the planning area, and not to the nation as a whole.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SO44 (SO-O)	Tables 2.5 and 2.3 fail to adequately address the economic impacts from the decisions and stipulations in the draft RMP/EIS to oil and gas development. The number of acres eliminated from potential oil and gas development under each alternative are not specified in the tables; and, the precise area of the eliminated acres is not identified for further evaluation and consistency review. The number of acres available for oil and gas leasing under all alternatives in Table 2.5 is not consistent with the number of acres specified in Table S.1 and Table 2.3, and should be corrected.	Table 2.3 of the Draft RMP contains the alternative management decisions under consideration and is not intended to be an analysis of impacts. Table 2.5 summarizes the anticipated impacts that are discussed in Chapter 4. The anticipated impacts of proposed management decisions on minerals and energy resources are outlined in Sections 4.8.1 through 4.8.6. Note: Table 2.3 of the Draft RMP has been renumbered as Tables 2.1.1 through 2.1.27 of the PRMP/FEIS. Table 2.5 of the Draft RMP has been renumbered as Table 2.2 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SO45 (SO-P) (JSO-3)	Tables 3.12.3 and 3.12.7 in Chapter 3 should indicate that the “Mining” category includes oil and gas employment.	Tables 3.12.3 and 3.12.7 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to indicate that the “mining” category includes oil and gas employment.	X
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SO46 (SO-Q)	Page 3-60, Section 3.12.2.2.3 (Mineral Resources) is confusing. It should refer to oil and gas exploration and production and related mineral exploration. Also, according to Table 3.12.4, oil production is the second largest contributor of royalties to the State at $2.8 million, behind natural gas, which is the most significant contributor at $30.3 million. Figure 3.12.1 appears to have been inverted or presented backwards as the charts begin in 2001 and go back in time to 1991 along the X (horizontal) axis. We suggest the chart begin in 1991 and end in 2001.	See comment response ME 200.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas	O-29	SO47 (SO-R)	The draft RMP/EIS fails to effectively address the full realm of positive economic benefits associated with current and future oil and gas activities. While Section	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten. The BLM believes this revision represents the importance of this industry to	X

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Onshore LLC		(JSO-4)	4.12 provides a brief comparison of wells to be drilled, industry jobs that would be created, industry sales, and federal royalties under each alternative, what appears to have been excluded is the highly significant state and local revenue generated due to a variety of taxes paid.	the Vernal planning area.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SO48 (SO-S) (JSO-5)	The socioeconomic analysis contained in Section 4.12 of the draft Vernal RMP/EIS does not adequately describe the long-term incremental and cumulative differences in public sector revenues of the four alternatives. Specifically, the section fails to discuss the property tax revenues that each alternative would generate and the various community facilities and services that this significant source of revenue funds for residents in the Vernal planning area. As an example, according to the Uintah County Treasurer's office, fully 57.6% of that county's 2004 property tax revenue was derived from the oil and gas and mining industries. Accordingly, management decisions that influence the level of oil and gas activity have direct and significant impacts on local government fiscal conditions in the VPA and indirect impacts on the quality of life of Vernal planning area residents. These impacts must be disclosed in the draft RMP/EIS.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten and discusses the fiscal impacts to local government of the alternative decisions affecting the oil and gas industry in the Vernal planning area.	X
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SO49 (SO-T) (J-SO7)	The Draft RMP/EIS does not address Utah severance taxes. Severance taxes on natural gas are assessed on a sliding scale, 3% on the first $1.50/Mcf, and 5% percent thereafter. The draft RMP/EIS does not estimate the differences in severance taxes for each alternative. Given that oil and gas production from the Vernal planning area was a substantial portion of the state's total, it is important to understand the implications of each alternative for State of Utah severance tax revenues.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten and discusses the fiscal impacts to local government (including severance taxes) of the alternative decisions affecting the oil and gas industry in the Vernal planning area.	X

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KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SO50 (SO-U) (J-SO8)	The absence of a more complete fiscal assessment will impede the ability of the public, local governments, and BLM decision-makers to assess the effects of each alternative on local government revenues and on their ability to provide public services, which directly affect the quality of life of Vernal planning area residents. Moreover, the limited scope fiscal analysis in the Draft RMP/EIS does not fulfill the BLM's charge to assess the degree of local dependence on resources from public lands, or fulfill the agency's obligations outlined in Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-H) or Instruction Memorandum No. 2002-167.	Section 4.12 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to expand the discussion of the fiscal impacts to state and local governments. The BLM will review the Utah State University survey of rural counties conducted by the State of Utah. The BLM has received preliminary data from this study received after completion of the DEIS. The BLM has incorporated findings in the PRMP/FEIS as appropriate.	X
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SO51 (SO-V) (J-SO9)	The Draft RMP/EIS assumes development costs of $600,000 per well. This figure is dated and does not account for other types of development taking place in the Vernal planning area. The deeper formations being developed cost more than the figure used above and the analysis should reflect this fact. This number should be revised to ensure that any economic analysis accounts for the activities in the planning area. Regardless of this oversight, the impact analysis does not address the extent these expenditures would occur in the local economy, nor do they address how the economy would be impacted both locally and nationally. Indirect employment as a result of industry expenditures and the additional tax revenue this spending activity would generate are important impacts the Draft RMP/EIS should disclose. A study was prepared that estimated that eighty-one percent (81%) of the expenditures for development benefited the local economy. On that assumption, the numbers should be reworked to reflect this significant detail.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten. The PRMP/FEIS incorporates recent data provided by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics and the State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining. This data has been used in the recent (November, 2007) study commissioned by the State of Utah: The Structure and Economic Impact of Utah's Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Industry Phase I - The Uinta Basin.	X
KerrMcGee	O-29	SO52	The statement in Section 4.12.2.2, paragraphs 3 and 4	Section 4.12.2.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been	X

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Oil and Gas Onshore LLC		(SO-W)	that areas open to (minerals) exploration "would have an adverse impact on the recreation and tourism industries" and that "the quality of the recreational experience would be degraded along with possible decreases to visual quality..." is incorrect. In much of the Vernal planning area, mineral exploration and development activity would occur in remote areas that are not popular for recreation or visually sensitive. At present, mineral development and recreational activities generally take place in separate geographic areas and co-exist quite successfully in the Vernal planning area. As examples, no mineral development would occur within the recreationally significant Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, Dinosaur National Monument, nor along much of the Green River (due to NSO and CSU stipulations intended to protect recreational, scenic, and other natural resources values of the river corridor). In addition, despite the substantial increase in oil and gas exploration and development that has occurred in the Vernal planning area over the last 15 years, tourism has increased rather than decreased. This fact directly contradicts the baseless statement that mineral development hurts the tourist economy and employment in the Vernal planning area.	revised to delete the statements as suggested in the comment. See also comment responses SO15 and SO37.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SO53 (SO-X) (JSO-11)	In paragraph 5, of Section 4.12.2.2, there is a statement that, "increasing jobs (related to mineral development) would also increase population in the region ... and this would increase the need for social services and infrastructure." Yet, under Section 4.12.2.3 — Recreation, the projected increase in tourism and recreation-related employment is not expected to have similar impacts of increased population and demand for social services and infrastructure. We contend that growth in any and all	According to data provided by the State of Utah's Utah Data Center, the population increases for the Uintah Basin was13.1% from 2000-2007. This figure is well below the State of Utah total of 20.2%, indicating that population change has not been very high. It is possible, however, that the components of population change (age, gender, etc) may be changing, but the BLM lacks data to assess this possibility.	

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			economic activities and employment sectors would generate increased population and demand for services. As the DEIS is currently written, it unfairly singles out the minerals industry as the sole source of these presumably negative impacts. Further, as stated above, there are studies that indicate that 81% of expenditures on well development. Thus, the positive impacts of job creation and "increase[d] overall prosperity in the region" could be a more significant benefit to the planning area because, as BLM correctly notes, "wages in th[e] [energy] sector. . . are typically higher than service and government related jobs."		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SO54 (SO-Y) (J-SO12)	The draft RMP/EIS states that the rationale for decreasing mineral development is to increase recreation and OHV opportunities in the Vernal Planning Area. According to the information presented in Table 4.12.1, the economic value of oil and gas sales in the Vernal planning area is currently $189.53 million and $248.68 million, respectively. Royalties are currently more than $8.6 million annually. According to the draft RMP/EIS recreation currently provides a total tax benefit at approximately $1.6 million. The revenues from royalties, alone, are more than five times the tax benefits from recreation. Under Alternative D (existing conditions) the total number of jobs, based on the average number of employees per well, is estimated to be 215,260 over the next 20 years, while there are 1,578 jobs attributable to recreation. We question the rationale for increasing recreational opportunities at the expense of oil and gas development, which would decrease the revenues to the state, counties, and Tribes, as well as decrease the supply of oil and gas to the public. In	The jobs created per well has been revised in the FEIS. Based on date form the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining, it is more reasonable to project an increase approximating 3.74 new jobs per well drilled than the approximately 14 suggested in the UEO study, which was for only one well. The impact analysis in Chapter 4 will be rewritten to reflect this lower estimate. The FEIS will continue to reflect the high economic value provided by minerals activities in the Uintah Basin. See also comment responses SO15 and SO37.	X

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			addition, a decrease in future oil and gas development is contrary to the President's Energy Policy.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS28 (SS-B)	Section 4.2.8.5 purportedly discloses the effects of special status species resource decisions on mineral resources. However, the impacts to oil and gas development from special resource stipulations are greatly trivialized in the draft RMP	The comment is on the analysis associated with effects of Special Status Species upon Mineral Resources. For those species which are T&E listed, BLM has to mitigate those impacts regardless of the outcome. Impacts to oil and gas development are discussed in Section 4.8.2.5.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS29 (SS-C)	This sections states that "it would be very rare for any one lease to have so many limitations as to render it inaccessible for energy development." Clearly this statement is erroneous since the ½-mile restrictions around all raptor nests, in combination with big game crucial winter range restrictions, would render some oil and gas leases inaccessible to development. For example, seasonal restrictions for various species of raptors extend from January to August. Critical deer and elk winter range restrictions extend from November to the end of April. Based on these restrictions, there would be only 2 ½ months where oil and gas development would be allowed.	There are exceptions, waivers, and modifications to both of these stipulations, which allow for development under particular circumstances.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS30 (SS-D)	This section states that "overall, it is estimated that a small number of operators may experience adverse economic effects if drilling operations must be stayed during special status species protection periods or if drilling operations must be moved to another area on the lease." Moving to another area on the lease may not be technically and/or economically feasible. A specific area is chosen for development by the operators because it is the best location for oil or gas development. The same potential is not likely to be present at another location. In addition, 43 CFR 3101.1-2 states that a proposed well location can be moved up to 200 meters (0.12 mile) and the timing of	Comment noted.	

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			the actual drilling can be delayed no more than 60 days to mitigate environmental concerns. Reference to this regulation appears in Appendix A of the draft RMP/EIS. In addition, the availability of drilling rigs is very limited. An operator might not be able to drill at all in a given year due to timing and spatial stipulations and a, lack of availability of drilling rigs during the limited period when the drilling stipulations do not restrict all construction and drilling activities. Therefore, we strongly object to the minimization of the potential effects to the oil and gas industry of the excessive stipulations in the draft RMP/EIS.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS31 (SS-E)	This section states that "modifications, exemptions, or waivers may, in some cases, allow mineral development to occur. This would increase the potential number of wells drilled or other mineral development, increase the domestic supply of oil and natural gas or other mineral, and increase royalties to the federal government…" It would be very difficult for the operators to conduct cost-effective operations with the uncertainty of whether waivers, exemptions, or modifications would be granted by the BLM. In addition, this statement in the RMP is contradictory to the information in Appendix K for Alternative A, which indicates that exceptions, modifications, or waivers would not be allowed. For example, the stipulation for unoccupied raptor nests states that "nests would be protected for a period of seven years… Although an exception may be allowed under certain conditions, no modifications or waivers are allowed." The conflicting statements should be corrected.	At the time of the on-site, operator requests for exceptions will be reviewed and recommendations will be discussed. Appendix K indicates that under Alternative A, throughout the planning area, exceptions to the spatial and seasonal buffers may be allowed.	

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KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS32 (SS-F)	This section states that "management of sage grouse under Alternative A would be similar to Alternative D." It further states that "it is not likely that management decisions under Alternative A would have a greater impact on mineral and energy development than Alternative D." This presumption is erroneous. The stipulations under Alternative D, provided in Appendix K, contain exceptions for the sage grouse stipulations. However, under Alternative A, there is no provision for exceptions, modifications, or waivers. For example, the stipulation under Alternative A related to sage grouse states the following: "Avoid human disturbance within 0.6 mile of a lek during the breeding season from 1 hour before sunrise to 3 hours after sunrise. Exception: None. Modification: None. Waiver: None." The contradictory information needs to be corrected.	The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.1) require BLM to consider reasonable alternatives, which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment, based on the nature of the proposal and facts in the case (CEQ 40 Most Asked Questions 1b.). While there are many possible management prescriptions or actions, the BLM used the scoping process to determine a reasonable range alternatives that best addressed the issues, concerns, and alternatives identified by the public.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS33 (SS-G)	This section states that it is unlikely that the impacts from timing restrictions for deer and elk crucial winter range would be substantially more significant than current management "because timing restrictions would be increased only 15 days above the criteria currently used in the Diamond Mountain area and Book Cliffs area." According to the information in Appendix K, timing restrictions under the existing Book Cliffs RMP timing restrictions are only for crucial winter elk habitat; Brown's Park and Dry Fork ACECs have stipulations for crucial deer and elk winter ranges. However, under Alternative A of the Draft RMP, timing restrictions for deer and elk are "planning area wide." This is unacceptable and must be revised.	See comment response SS32.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS34 (SS-H)	There is no basis for the statement that a net decrease of no more than 0.4% in the number of predicted oil and gas wells would result from the wildlife mitigation measures. This information must be disclosed.	See comment response ME187.	

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KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS35 (SS-I)	This section states that oil and gas development is a key threat to Book Cliffs listed plant species and was a major factor that lead to their listing under the Endangered Species Act. This statement is contradicted by two government surveys and, as a result is baseless. A BLM report (2002) states that illegal collection of the Uinta Basin hookless cactus, a threatened species, is the prime threat (emphasis added) to the conservation and recovery of the species on Utah BLM lands. It further reports that an estimated 50 to 70 percent of a single Uinta Basin hookless cactus population in the Myton Bench area of the Diamond Mountain resource area was illegally collected in the recent past (BLM 2002. Biological Assessment of Threatened, Endangered and Proposed Plant and Animal Species for the Environmental Assessment for 2-D Seismic Exploration by Veritas DGC Land Inc. Prepared by Bureau of Land Management, Vernal Field Office, Uintah County, Utah). The USFWS also reports that range-wide, the Uinta Basin hookless cactus is a desired species among cactus collectors because of its "beautiful purplish-red flowers." (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1979. Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Determination that Sclerocactus glaucus is a Threatened Species. Federal Register Vol. 44, No. 198). Clearly these impacts have nothing to do with oil and gas development. This discussion must be eliminated.	The reports referenced by the commenter are specific to the Uinta Basin hookless cactus, for which collection is a primary threat. However, the statement in question in the RMP refers to all Book Cliffs soil endemics (as an entire group, on a landscape level). Oil and gas development has been identified as a specific threat to these species and played a primary role in their listing. As such, the BLM declines to change the discussion as written.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS36 (SS-J)	This section states that "although most of the riparian zone is listed as NSO, this stipulation could be waived if necessary for transmission lines, roads and surface occupancy." The conditions for granting of a "waiver" in Chapter 4 of the draft RMP/EIS are inconsistent with the stipulation for riparian floodplains described in	Section 4.15.1.3 in the PRM/FEIS has revised the statement to read as an exception rather than a waiver.	X

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			Appendix K, which does not grant a waiver to NSO. It allows an "exception," which is defined in Appendix K as a one-time exemption from a stipulation.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS37 (SS-K) JME-36	The DEIS states that "one of the main factors in the listing of the Colorado River fishes was the cumulative effect of water depletion within the Colorado River system" and implies that the requirement of water for oil and gas development is a major factor in water depletion in the Colorado River System. We recommend that BLM limit its consideration to verifiable information. Streamflow regulation and habitat modification associated with water regulation by dams, such as the Flaming Gorge Dam, are identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the primary threat to the endangered Colorado River fish. Since 1950, annual peak flows in occupied razorback sucker habitat upstream of Westwater Canyon have decreased by 29-38%. Flows of the Green River at Jensen, Utah, downstream of one of the principal spawning areas of razorback sucker have decreased by 13-15% during spring and increased from 10-140% from summer to winter, due to regulation by the Flaming Gorge Dam (USFWS 2002. Razorback sucker (Xyrauchen texanus) Recovery Goals: Amendment and Supplement to the Razorback Sucker Recovery Plan. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mountain-Prairie Region (6) Denver, Colorado). The RMP must clarify that oil and gas development is not the major cause of water depletion of the Green River within the Vernal planning area. The Flaming Gorge Dam and other water-control structures are the main cause of water depletion in the Upper and Lower	The PRMP/FEIS does not imply that oil and gas development is a "major" factor in water depletion. Section 4.15.1.3, 2nd paragraph states that: "New depletions from these rivers or changes in the amount of water returned to the rivers would constitute an additional impact on the Colorado River fishes."	

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			Colorado River System.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS38 (SS-L)	All spatial buffers for unoccupied raptor nests under Alternative A are 0.5 mile (except for peregrine falcons). If the factors mentioned in the draft RMPIEIS are being used to determine spatial buffers, there is no justification for the 0.5 mile buffers identified in the DEIS. BLM must modify the impacts analysis sections for Effects of Special Status Species Decisions on Minerals and Energy Resources by removing the seasonal restrictions tables (Tables 4.8.6, 4.8.7, 4.8.8, and 4.8.9), and the limitations they present, with revised impact analyses for raptors that are based on and will provide foundation for accurate evaluations analysis of existing conditions and an analysis of potential impacts that are based on future site-specific development data and commitments to mitigate impacts to any raptors that would be affected. We also urge BLM to modify the stipulations in Appendix K for raptor nests with stipulations dealing with known current use of nests within one year as opposed to stipulations resulting in protection of unused nests for up to 7 years. The revised impacts analysis should be based on realistic, hard-data-based stipulations and commitments of industry and management agencies to compile current existing data, to conduct any necessary surveys to obtain real-time, site-specific/project-specific data on status of raptor activity, and to develop acceptable site-specific mitigation measures prior to project specific oil and gas activity.	The spatial buffers are based on the raptor BMPs and the IMs as adopted through IM UT 2006-096, Best Management Practices for Raptors and Their Associated Habitats in Utah. These BMPs can be found in Appendix A of the PRMP/FEIS.	

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KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS39 (SS-M)	This section states that the number of acres open to oil and gas leasing on Vernal BLM lands is 1,776,782 acres. However, Table S.1 and Table 4.8.1 state that the acres open to oil and gas leasing are 1,843,265 acres. These numbers are not consistent. Please correct and give the precise area of the acres in question for further identification, evaluation and consistency review.	Section 4.15.2.3.1.1 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to correct the inconsistencies described in the comment.	X
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS40 (SS-N)	This section states that Alternative A would increase the proportion of areas surrounding ferruginous hawk nesting sites open to oil and gas development by approximately 2% when compared to Alternative D. BLM must explain how this percentage was determined and exactly what spatial buffer was used.	Calculations are based on areas associated within the ½ mile buffer around known active and inactive ferruginous hawk nests in the VPA. These areas were overlaid onto the oil and gas leasing acreages (by type) to calculate the percentage. However, the areas within the ½ mile buffer zone for active and inactive ferruginous hawk nests will actually be managed under the special stipulations for raptors outlined in Chapter 4. See comment response SS38.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS41 (SS-O)	This section states that construction and development around bald eagle roosts would be managed under BMPs and include spatial and seasonal buffers. The Draft RMP/EIS does not describe how a bald eagle roost site is determined. Unlike nest sites, roosting structures/habitats of the bald eagle may vary from year to year and a single tree may not serve as a roost site. Would the location of the spatial and seasonal restrictions vary from year to year? Please clarify.	What constitutes a roost site would be determined on a site-specific basis based on the presence of eagles, distance to water, and protection from the elements and human disturbance. Spatial and seasonal restrictions would be determined on a case-by-case basis based on the location and activity at the roost site. Trying to mandate these restrictions at this programmatic planning level would not allow the flexibility necessary to ensure that each roost site is protected appropriately.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	SS42 (SS-P)	The RMP states that the ferruginous hawk population could be irretrievably lost due to impacts from surface disturbance for mineral development, habitat fragmentation, and habitat loss. The draft RMP/EIS provides no evidence that mineral development has or	Section 4.15.6 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to add the following information: "As a species ferruginous hawks have two	X

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			would cause declines in ferruginous hawk populations. Provide the data in the EIS to support this statement or delete the statement	characteristics that seem to make them more susceptible to disturbance-their preference for solitude when nesting and their high dependence on primary prey species (rabbits and/or ground squirrels). Bechard et al. (1990) showed ferruginous hawks' tendency for solitude by proving that their nest site selection is significantly further from roads and human habitation than other sympatric hawks. White and Thurow (1985) documented ferruginous hawk sensitivity to human disturbances when they found that 33% of briefly disturbed nests were deserted and the other nest had lower fledging success. In years of low prey abundance, sensitivity to disturbance increased and larger buffer zones were recommended to protect nesting pairs. Holmes et al. (1993) documented ferruginous hawk sensitivity to walking and vehicular disturbances and recommended a buffer zone to protect nesting attempts. (Reproductive Success and Nesting Chronology of Ferruginous Hawks in Northwestern Utah From 1997-1999. United States Department of Interior, BLM, Salt Lake Field Office. Page 5 Paragraph 1. Mining disturbance is linked to nest desertion (Olendorff 1993). Pairs nesting near active petroleum wells experience lower productivity than those that nest further away. Railroads apparently are not a disturbance, but pairs have been found to nest farther from primary and secondary roads than Swainson's Hawks do. (Bechard et al. 1990)" "Olendorff (1993) attributed population declines to the effects of cultivation, grazing, poisoning, and	

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				controlling small mammals, mining, and fire in nesting habitats, with cultivation being the most serious."	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	VE10 (VE-B)	This section states that estimated disturbance by individual well development would total 18,971 acres. However, p. 4-331 (Woodlands and Timber Resources) also states that 18,971 acres of woodlands could be adversely affected from oil and gas development. Since woodlands and timber resources are a small portion of the vegetation community in the Vernal planning area, this statement appears to be incorrect. These numbers should be recalculated and corrected in the RMP/EIS.	In Woodlands section 4.20.2.3, the PRMP/FEIS text states that 18,971 acres of woodlands could be affected by minerals impacts. At the programmatic level of impacts analysis, the locations of oil and natural gas well sites in woodlands are unknown, but the analysis of impacts to woodland resources must consider the impacts of these wells as potentially being located in this vegetation type. In Vegetation Section 4.16.2.5.1 potential well surface disturbances of 18,971 acres includes all vegetation types, of which woodlands is one vegetation type. Again, without site-specific well locations the analysis cannot determine proportional impacts to each vegetation type, so the impacts must be considered at the broad, programmatic level.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	VE9 (VE-A)	There appear to be several errors in calculating vegetation disturbance. For example, adding the acres of disturbance for standard stipulations and timing limitations and controlled surface use does not equal 1,776,782. "Estimated surface disturbance by individual well development" does not total 18,971 acres. According to Table 4-1, surface disturbance would be less than 5 acres per well. The percent increase and increase of disturbance between Alternative A and Alternative D also should be recalculated. Table 4.16.6 shows 18,971 acres as total disturbance under Alternative A. This total is obtained by combining the short- and long- term disturbance. However, some short-term disturbance would continue over the life of the project and be included as long-term disturbance. As a result of this overlap, the two totals cannot be added together. These errors need to be	Section 4.16.2.5.1 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to correct the errors.	X

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			corrected.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	WF56	Table 2.3, Alternative A, Nest Protection for Raptors, Unoccupied Nests — is inconsistent with the information provided in Appendix A. Appendix A states that no activities would be allowed within the buffer until seven-year monitoring is complete. Table 2.3, on the other hand, states that non-permanent (short-term) activities would be allowed within the spatial buffer of nests during the nesting season as long as those activities are shown to have no effect on nesting raptors. It is necessary for Appendix A to be consistent with Table 2-3. Allowances for permanent (long-term) structures should also be given, if these activities would not affect raptor nesting.	See comment response WF39.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	WF57	P.4-315, 4.19.2.5.2.1, Paragraph (Big Game Species)—This paragraph discussed a paper by Irby et al (1987) on mule deer which states that the authors were unable to detect a response by mule deer to low intensity oil and gas exploration and gas drilling activities. It also refers to a paper by Karpowitz (1984), who also investigated the impacts of energy development on mule deer and found it difficult to assess. Since neither report (Irby et al 1987; Karpowitz 1984) cited in the draft RMP provides definitive evidence on impacts of oil and gas development on mule deer, it is inappropriate to base resource planning decisions upon these findings. In addition, all information presented in the Karpowitz (1984) paper was speculative. Data that support the stipulation should be included in the RMP. Otherwise, the stipulation should be deleted.	The commenter incorrectly interprets the analyses described in Section 4.19.2.5.2.1. A more careful reading of the section shows that the studies cited by the commenter do include inconclusive and speculative outcomes of these studies, but the section also describes the substantive conclusions and observations derived from these studies that form the basis for the analyses in the section.	
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	WF58	We strongly object to the adoption of the stipulations in Appendices A and H, as they are extremely restrictive without due cause and would cause severe and	See comment response WF39.	

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			unacceptable adverse impacts on the ability of oil and gas operators to fulfill their lease obligations. Since the proposed stipulations often do not provide any data or literature that supports the proposed restrictions, BLM's stipulations appear to be capricious. Many stipulations described in Appendices A and H are too general in nature and do not consider differences that may occur on a resource or site-specific basis. Following are examples in relation to these comments: Section 4.19.2.5.2.3 states that "All alternatives would apply spatial and temporal buffers to minimize disturbances in the vicinity of nesting raptors. The buffers were tailored to the individual raptor species involved, and were based on factors, such as line of sight distance between nest and disturbance, type and duration of disturbance, nest structure security, sensitivity of the species to disturbance, observed response to related disturbances, and the amount of existing disturbances near the nest". Although these factors are listed, no specific reports are cited that document how different raptor species are affected by physical disturbances. In addition, if these factors are the parameters for developing spatial buffers and timing limitations, then application of a 0.5 mile spatial buffer for all raptor species (Appendix H — Alternative A) is not consistent with the identified criteria. The overall goal of applying spatial and temporal buffers around unoccupied raptor nests is to avoid causing the nests to become unsuitable for future nesting. Therefore, if it is determined by site-specific evaluation, that an activity would have no effect on future raptor nesting then the 0.5 mile stipulation		

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			should be waived. Therefore it is appropriate for BLM to implement exception, waiver, and modification criteria that would allow surface disturbance during the timing limitation, provided the nest is protected from visual and/or noise impacts by topography and/or vegetative screening, or once the young have successfully fledged the respective nest. Appendix A states that the implementation of spatial and seasonal buffers would be comparable to the USFWS, Utah Field Office 'Guidelines for Raptor Protection from Human and Land Use Disturbances" (January 2002). Appendix A states that unoccupied nests would be monitored for seven years. Aside from the fact that such a time frame is excessive, there is no explanation in the draft RMP/EV3 for the requirement of a seven-year nest monitoring period for unoccupied raptor nests. If the rationale is contained in the USFWS guidelines, the guidelines should be included as an appendix to the RMP/EIS. If it is not included in the USFWS guidelines, this requirement must be deleted. Unoccupied raptor nests have the potential to remain visible for many years. Therefore raptor nest conditions must be considered when establishing stipulations regarding spatial and temporal buffers. Raptor nest conditions vary depending upon several factors including age, substrate, previous usage, etc. Nests in "Good" to "Excellent" condition are either usable or need only minor attention in order to be used again (BLM — Powder River Basin Wildlife Survey Protocol), while nests in "Poor" or "Fair" condition would need significant repair to become functional. As		

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			the potential for reestablishment of “Poor” or “Fair” nests would be much less likely, stipulations regarding these nests should not be identical to nests currently in good or excellent condition. Based upon the resilience of raptor nests, thousands of unoccupied raptor nests likely occur throughout the Vernal planning area. If surface disturbing stipulations were activated within 0.5 mile of every unoccupied raptor nest regardless of nest condition, oil and gas operators would be unable to fulfill their lease obligations within the planning area. Raptor species have different nesting requirements. Some species typically reuse nests year after year (i.e., bald eagles, golden eagles, and osprey). However, some species (e.g., ferruginous hawks) build multiple nests in close proximity on an annual basis, and only use one for rearing young. Therefore, by not developing species- specific stipulations for unoccupied nests, unneeded restrictions would be applied. Appendices A and H be must be rewritten; and, rather than instituting blanket stipulations, we recommend that BLM commit to developing stipulations (as well as the associated exception, waiver and modification) for surface-disturbing activities resulting from oil and gas operations in cooperation with oil and gas industry, other agencies, and other key stakeholders. Raptor species have different nesting requirements. Some species typically reuse nests year after year (i.e., bald eagles, golden eagles, and osprey). However,		

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			Raptor nest conditions vary depending upon several factors including age, substrate, previous usage, etc. Nests in “Good” to “Excellent” condition are either usable or need only minor attention in order to be used again (BLM — Powder River Basin Wildlife Survey Protocol), while nests in “Poor” or “Fair” condition would need significant repair to become functional. As the potential for reestablishment of “Poor” or “Fair” nests would be much less likely, stipulations regarding these nests should not be identical to nests Raptor species have different nesting requirements. Some species typically reuse nests year after year (i.e., bald eagles, golden eagles, and osprey). However, some species (e.g., ferruginous hawks) build multiple nests in close proximity on an annual basis, and only use one for rearing young. Therefore, by not developing species- specific stipulations for unoccupied nests, unneeded restrictions would be applied. Appendices A and H be must be rewritten; and, rather than instituting blanket stipulations, we recommend that BLM commit to developing stipulations (as well as the associated exception, waiver and modification) for surface-disturbing activities resulting from oil and gas operations in cooperation with oil and gas industry, other agencies, and other key stakeholders.currently in good or excellent condition. Based upon the resilience of raptor nests, thousands of unoccupied raptor nests likely occur throughout the Vernal planning area. If surface disturbing stipulations were activated within 0.5 mile of every unoccupied raptor nest regardless of nest condition, oil and gas operators would be unable to fulfill their lease		

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			obligations within the planning area.		
KerrMcGee Oil and Gas Onshore LLC	O-29	WF59	Table 2, in Appendix I, shows that timing limitations and controlled surface use stipulations in mule deer crucial winter range habitat have increased from 37% of the area under Alternative D (existing RMPs) to 93% of the area considered by the BLM for mineral leasing under Alternatives A and B. The references cited in the draft RMP (Irby et al 1987, Karpowitz 1984, Van Dyke and Klein 1996 do not support the large scale timing limitations and controlled surface use stipulations. The rationale for these stringent stipulations needs to be explained in the RMP/EIS. The stipulations for elk crucial winter range habitat also cover a larger area (68% Alternative A vs. 34% Alternative D). However, no basis has been given for increasing the area covered by stipulations for protecting mule deer crucial winter range habitat and elk crucial winter range habitat. Absent established scientific justification, this change must be withdrawn in the final document. Table 19 in Appendix I indicates that 92% of ferruginous hawk nesting habitat is under standard stipulations and only 7% is under timing limitations and controlled surface use stipulations. This is inconsistent with Table 4.8.6, which has timing restrictions from March 1 to August 1 for ferruginous hawk nests. It is also inconsistent with Appendix H, which has a 0.5-mile buffer for occupied and unoccupied ferruginous hawk nests. It is also inconsistent with Appendix K, which specifies “planning area wide” spatial and seasonal buffers for raptors. These are not standard stipulations.	See comment response WF39.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow	O-30	CR26 (CR-D)	Buying the Ute allotments absolutely would be the worst thing for any cultural resources.	Comment noted.	

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Outfit					
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	FM8 (FM-B)	Fire Alt D should have the most acreage or C and D should be combined as fire is needed more often than you have listed.	Management actions under Alternative D (the No Action Alternative) represent maintenance of current management policies as provided for in the existing RMP. The remaining alternatives (the action alternatives) represent changes from the current management condition in order to address the increasing agency-wide recognition of the need for higher frequencies of controlled natural and prescribed fire to avoid catastrophic wildfire.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	GC62 (GC-S)	BLM rules allow you to protect areas in whatever manner you wish so it looks as if you are trying a backdoor approach to creating wilderness	Comment noted.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	GC63 (GC-T)	You don't need to re-allocate AUMs in order to transplant fish therefore it is not a need for writing a new plan.	The reference to re-allocating AUMs applies to the wildlife referred to in the statement "native fish and wildlife species," not to the fish.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	GC64 (GC-U)	You need to acquire less land and dispose of more.	Comment noted.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	GC65 (GC-V)	I cannot find anything about this Standpipe Reservoir and I can't find anyone in the office who knows what it is.	Table 2.4 of the Draft RMP has been deleted from the PRMP/FEIS. Consequently, the comment is no longer relevant.	X
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	LG128 (LG-NN)	All lands should be open for desert land entry and section 15 leasing.	Comment noted.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	LG129 (LG-OO)	There is enough land out of production, we don't need any withdrawals.	Comment noted.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	LG130 (LG-PP)	This plan shows that you have the ability to double AUMs. Therefore you have no reason to propose any livestock cuts.	Comment noted.	
Cripple	O-30	LG131	It appears, based on your AUM figures that you are	Nowhere in the RMP is it proposed, stated or	

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Cowboy Cow Outfit		(LG-QQ)	planning to replace livestock with big game.	assumed that wildlife is replacing livestock.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	LG57	There seems to be 100k AUM mistake here. Probably because you left the previous page blank where it should have said 146k AUMs. In any case, a 50k AUM preference looks like a 2/3 cut.	The comment refers to Table 2.4 in the DRMP, which outlines alternative actions that were eliminated from detailed analysis. The AUM numbers identified in the table arose during the scoping process in advance of the development of the alternatives. The principle of the suggested action in maintaining certain levels of AUM allocation for livestock and wildlife were rolled into management actions common to all alternatives and were supplemented. This table was removed in the PRMP/FEIS.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	ME127 (ME-MM)	Just because an area is closed to OHV use is not a reason to close it to mining claims.	Table 2.1.9 (Minerals and Energy Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Locatable relays information about when a plan of operation is needed to operate. Not all lands closed to OHV are also withdrawn from the location of mining claims or sites.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	RW24 (RW-F)	For the best benefits to riparian areas you should use Alt B all the way from maximum fire to maximum AUMs with the addition of 80% utilization.	Comment noted.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	WF50	Keep in mind that washes will heal w/o the trampling of domestic livestock on the banks. As long as elk are this thick you will not be able to grow Cottonwoods. If you fence springs, you will have to also develop them to keep the animals from tearing down the fence.	Comment noted.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	WF51	Ferruginous Hawks seem to do fine where there are not Prairie Dogs, so extra protection for rodents does not seem warranted.	Comment noted.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	WF52	The elk will never allow Bighorn Sheep to live on Bitter Creek. The sheep industry should not be penalized just because someone wants to plant Bighorns.	Comment noted. However the commenter does not provide any additional information or explanation to substantiate the assertion regarding elk and bighorn	

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				sheep.	
Cripple Cowboy Cow Outfit	O-30	WF53	While making fish transplant plans, remember that Bitter Creek has gone dry 3 times in my lifetime.	Comment noted.	
Utah Environmental Congress	O-31	SD223 (SD-RR)	The UEC requests that the Vernal BLM identity and inventory of all undeveloped adjacent BLM lands in your RMP revision and the associated site-specific environmental analysis. After this is completed, the UEC urges the VFO to assign management prescriptions that would preserve or enhance the undeveloped and wilderness characteristics of all of these adjacent BLM parcels. Additionally, the UEC urges the VFO to formally recommend each of these Vernal BLM parcels for wilderness designation to Congress. We understand that this may involve 'Wilderness Study Area and/or some other designation.	See Response to Comment SD1-I-1.	
Utah Environmental Congress	O-31	SD224 (SD-SS)	We would like to notify the BLM that the UEC roadless area inventory and subsequent wilderness proposal are also available on line at www.uec-utah.org.	Comment noted.	
Western Gas Resources, Inc.	O-32	SD384 (WF110) (AWF-1)	We are concerned with the preferred alternative's inclusion of a designation of an ACEC for the white-tailed prairie dog in the Coyote Basin. In November 2004 the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) denied a listing petition for a white-tailed prairie dog ACEC in the Coyote Basin. The FWS concluded in the 90-Day Finding that “there is not substantial scientific or commercial information to indicate that listing the white-tailed prairie dog may be warranted at this time.” We would recommend that the BLM look at the FWS 90-Day Finding and the Conservation Assessment, a study completed by a consortium of affected state agencies and reconsider establishing any ACECs with regard to white-tailed prairie dogs.	The Coyote Basin ACEC relevance and importance criteria can be found in Appendix G in the Final EIS. Additionally, the importance for this proposed ACEC is based on a specific white-tailed prairie dog complex that has had many consecutive years of population inventory collected. Prairie dog complexes have relevance in the life cycles of other sensitive species.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AQ143	RMP & DEIS Text with Changes The air quality modeling performed as part of this analysis considered the air quality impacts of both proposed (near-field and far-field) and existing emission sources within the project area. As discussed in the specific air quality modeling section and the TSD (Trinity, 2003), background data in most cases represented an overestimation of existing concentrations, which adds an additional margin of safety to the other conservative assumptions discussed previously. It is possible, however, that the development proposed by Alternative A, combined with increased population growth and usage of the project area, could result in increased pollutant levels above those projected by the model. Discussion / Explanation The RMP omits any discussion of wind energy, even though nationally DOI encourages development of wind energy on public lands.	See comment response AQ89. An EIS was prepared nationally to address wind energy potential on BLM managed lands. As a part of the EIS process, it addressed potential for each State. For the Vernal Field Office area, the potential was low. See comment responses ME 240 and ME 241.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AQ144	The air quality modeling projected an increase in PM10 concentrations within the VPA and specific PSD Class II sensitive areas related to management decisions specific to mineral extraction. Future, non-project sources of airborne particulate and NOx emissions associated with increased traffic in the area could produce potentially substantial cumulative impacts to these areas. The adjacent national forests report pine beetle	It was decided during the modeling protocol development meetings that projected future emissions from non-project secondary mobile sources would not be included in the modeling because the uncertainty in projecting population growth and then translating that growth to vehicle and fugitive dust emissions was too high. The existing statements regarding wildfire emissions are adequate given the large year-to-year variability	

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			infestation and fuel loading that could lead to wildfires. The fires will increase particulate and carbon emissions temporarily.	in conditions. It should be noted that the background concentration comes from an urban area (Grand Junction, CO) and may overestimate rural background concentrations.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AQ145	Air quality modeling also projected an increase in ambient 24-hour xylene concentrations associated with management decisions specific to mineral extraction. As the existing background concentrations exceeded the ambient air quality threshold of 100 µg/m³, the potential exists that future; non-project sources of xylene (such as compressors or glycol dehydrators associated with non-BLM gas extraction activities) could result in cumulative impacts to air quality in the VPA.	It should be noted that the background concentration comes from an urban area (Grand Junction, Colorado) and may overestimate rural background concentrations.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT100 (R-AT10)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Soil types and climatic variations would be major determinates to reclamation that would range from ten years or longer to permanent scarring of the landscape." There is no record of oil and gas development "permanently scarring" the landscape.	Section 4.14.3 in the PRMP/FEIS has been completely rewritten. The paragraph cited in the comment has been deleted. The suggested wording change is not longer applicable.	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT101	Strike the entire statement beginning with "The noise of construction and operation of producing wells…" and ending with "Given the number and spacing of industrial facilities, it would be difficult to escape the adverse effects on solitude and primitive recreation throughout the areas having wilderness character."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why	

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			This section is improperly written. First, for the WSAs the discussion with respect to mineral development is flatly wrong. Leases issued in WSAs were subject to a contingent development stipulation. Congress prohibited leasing in WSAs in 1989. 30 U.S.C. §226-3. Thus, this section is misleading and inaccurate. If there are producing wells in "wilderness," it is not wilderness or a WSA.	the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/EIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT102 (R-AT11)	Strike the entire statement beginning with "It can be expected that as a result of cumulative effects…" and ending with "Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, and Non-WSA Lands Likely to have Wilderness Characteristics." Since leasing has been prohibited in WSAs, this statement is inaccurate. It would only apply to the now illegal WIAs. These areas have already been determined to not have wilderness character. Congress can and, often has, designated areas as wilderness that did not meet the strict definition of wilderness.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/EIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT103 (R-AT12)	Modify the title of the table as follows "TABLE 4.14.4 ALTERNATIVES IMPACTS TO OTHER LANDS PROPOSED FOR WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTER" To the extent that the RMP needs to address leasing in the former wilderness inventory areas, it cannot fairly	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why	

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			describe them as areas having "wilderness character." The public and local governments have consistently objected to these designations and characterizations. It is more accurate to say that these areas are proposed for wilderness designation in pending legislation before Congress.	the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/EIS. Section 3.22 in the PRMP/FEIS provides a detailed description of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. This section clearly describes the debate regarding these designations.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT87 (R-AT13)	Strike the entire statement beginning with "New surface disturbance within crucial mule deer winter range…" and ending with "All surface disturbance within sagebrush habitat on crucial mule deer winter range would be reclaimed or enhanced at a ratio of 1.5 to 1." The DEIS does not disclose the basis for the 560 acres per township. This is less than .02% of the township and cannot be justified on any scientific basis. It would violate valid existing rights and BLM energy direction as well. It should be deleted.	Under Alternative A, disturbance within sagebrush habitat on crucial deer winter range would be reclaimed at or enhanced at a ratio of 1.5:1. Alternatives C and E still propose a 3:1 ration and a total surface disturbance allowance of 560 acres per township.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT90 (R-AT2)	NEPA requires a federal agency to consider a range of reasonable alternatives. 40 C.F.R. §1502.14. While the RMP identifies four alternatives, there is little difference among the four alternatives, because BLM assumes that all of the new resource development restrictions apply to all of the alternatives. These standards, guidelines, and policies are not required by law but adopt a variety of protective measures aimed at prohibiting land uses that might disturb vegetation, startle wildlife, or affect any resource. Even if these restrictions had factual or scientific merit, there is no	The Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1, requires consideration of many factors in the development of alternatives (i.e. meet the purpose and need for the action; meet the goals and objectives for the plan; can be feasibly carried out based on cost, logistics, technology, and social and environmental factors; represents a different land use plan that addresses and/or resolves the planning issues; decisions may be common to some or all of the alternatives; components of each individual alternative must be complementary; and	

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			legal basis to apply all of the restrictions to all of the alternatives. By doing so, it assures that the EIS does not actually measure the cost of these restrictions on economic uses, energy production, or other social and economic costs.	developed in an open, collaborative manner to the extent possible). With cooperators assistance and public input, BLM has met the handbook requirements. The resource development prescriptions outlined in the RMP are not identical across all alternatives as suggested by the comment. Each alternative incorporates various levels of restrictions, from little or no restriction to greater restriction. Tables 2.1.1 through 2.1.27 in the PRMP/FEIS provide the range of alternatives for each management action. Also see comment responses AT61 and AT62.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT91 (R-AT3)	While courts have long deferred to agency selection of alternatives, courts will set aside an EIS when it fails to consider a sufficient range of reasonable alternatives. State of Wyoming v. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 277 F. Supp.2d 1197, 1223-35 (D. Wyo. 2002). In the case of the RMP, BLM is imposing discretionary restrictions that lack statutory or scientific basis. These restrictions violate BLM energy policy and related policy direction. Their application for all alternatives only illustrates the failure of the EIS to actually consider a range of reasonable alternatives.	The RMP presents four alternative proposals for managing public lands in the VPA. The alternatives were developed in response to the issues identified in the public scoping process and the planning criteria. The BLM recognizes that social, economic, and environmental issues cross land ownership lines and that extensive cooperation is needed to actively address issues of mutual concern. To the extent possible, these alternatives were crafted utilizing input from public scoping comments: Duchesne, Daggett, and Uintah County representatives and other cooperating agencies. Each alternative is a complete, reasonable, and implementable resource management plan, in which the different management practices are described, and the different ways of achieving balanced resource management under different management priorities are discussed.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	AT92 (R-AT4)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, the following:	

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Partnership			"This [preferred] alternative provides generally broad management direction to accommodate a wide variety of values and uses. The planning area would be managed to provide development opportunities while protecting sensitive resources. This alternative would identify land objectives and would authorize actions to achieve those objectives employs timing and sequencing of events through adaptive management based on sensitive resource indicators. It designates ACECs and recommends sections of two rivers for Wilde and Scenic designation." The RMP should identify the desired outcome or land management objective and give managers the flexibility to achieve the objective. As written, the RMP imposes numerous prescriptions that prohibit otherwise lawful uses without any assurance that the restrictions will achieve any identified land resource objective.	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/EIS. Chapter 2 identifies the goals and objectives common to all alternatives for all resources addressed in the PRMP/FEIS. The management prescriptions outlined in the alternatives of the RMP were developed to meet these goals and objectives.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT94	Modify the following statement as indicated by the bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Construction and operation of oil and gas wells and associated support facilities, including roads, surface and buried pipelines, and compressor stations would degrade the roadless and natural character of areas containing wilderness values. In addition to site-specific surface disturbance, the cumulative number of wells and density of spacing would change the natural landscape to a more developed an industrial landscape." landscape.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the	

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				adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/EIS. Roadless and natural character are part of the definition of wilderness, 16 U.S.C. §1131. The BLM can manage to protect individual characteristics that are found in the definition of wilderness but outside of the WSAs, the BLM cannot mange to protect wilderness values as such. Settlement in State of Utah v. Norton. The areas affected were studied on several occasions and removed from WSA classification due to roads, development and lack of wilderness character.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT94 (R-AT1)	The RMP appears to move BLM land management planning from outcome based approach to highly prescriptive, especially as it may apply to management of livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and energy development. This essentially denies field managers the necessary flexibility to achieve a sound outcome based on the specific circumstances. Instead, all permits must conform to the plan and any deviation would require a plan amendment or revision. 43 C.F.R. §1610.5-3. The RMP should set outcome based goals and identify or authorize adaptive management to achieve these objectives or outcomes. The prescriptive approach found throughout the RMP will make it very difficult to follow this approach, since any change will require a plan amendment or revision.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT97 (R-AT7)	Alternative A Strike the entire statement beginning with "Alternative A, new surface disturbance up to 560 acres per township…"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not	

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			and ending with "Similar decisions are unspecified under Alternative D-No Action."	substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/EIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	AT98 (R-AT7)	The RMP fails to discuss the scientific basis for the surface disturbance limit. The 560 acres represents less than 2% of the township. This limit could have a significant impact on valid existing rights and energy development that is not adequately disclosed or discussed. This standard also violates IM 2003-237.	IM 2003-237 is probably the wrong reference as that memorandum was entitled "Wildland Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Policy and Procedures per May 5, 2003, Department of the Interior Memorandum". It is believed that the commenter was referencing IM 2003-233 or 2003-234, both of which dealt with integration of the Energy Policy Conservation Act (EPCA) into planning.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR29 (R-CR13)	The standards for cultural resource protection will have major not minor impacts on livestock grazing.	Before any ground disturbing actions occur, a Class III (100%) inventory would be completed. If a significant site was located, project modification or some other management tool would be used to avoid the site or minimize damage to it. The report, site form and mitigation would be reviewed by the Utah Division of State History through the Section 106 process. Before a grazing permit is renewed, known sites would be checked to ascertain if grazing and related actions have negatively affected significant sites. If so, then actions would be taken to minimize or avoid further damage to these properties.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	CR42 (R-CR1) (RCR2)	-The draft RMP assumes that BLM can manage large areas of land to protect cultural resources. See generally DEIS II-6-7, 81, IV-33-35. A closer look at	The NHPA requires the BLM to assess the impact of federal undertakings on the characteristics of cultural resources that have resulted in their listing	

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Partnership			the applicable statutes contradicts this assumption. The National Historic Preservation Act ("NHPA"), 16 U.S.C. §§470- 470b, and the rules, 36 C.F.R. Part 800, merely require BLM to analyze possible adverse impacts of a federal undertaking on any site listed under the NHPA. The law and rules protect the physical sites, not the views or experiences related to those sites. Even when an agency must assess the direct and indirect impacts to a site, the question is limited to the physical impacts, not experiential. This is equally true for the Archeological Resources Protection Act ("ARPA"), 16 U.S.C. §§470aa-470mm. Federal law protects the integrity of the site or the artifact from destruction or loss. Neither law authorizes BLM to withdraw or classify large areas of land as protective zones on the basis that other multiple uses may adversely affect the experience of visitors to the physical site. Cultural resource protection is not found in the definition of multiple uses and it is not one of the primary multiple uses identified by Congress for management of the public lands. 43 U.S.C. §§1702(c), 1702(l). FLPMA does not include protection of viewsheds or experiences related to these cultural or historic sites in the mandate for management of public lands.	on or have rendered them eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under one of the Register's four criteria. As part of this assessment under the mandates of the NHPA, the BLM must consider seven elements of historical integrity for each resource. These elements of integrity include location, materials, design, workmanship, association, setting, and feeling. Additionally, under both the NHPA and other legislation, the BLM must consider the impact of its undertakings on those resources that are identified as culturally important and/or sacred to Native American Tribes and other cultural groups. The elements of these resources that render them important to such groups are most often related to the activities that occur at the site, the oral tradition related to the site, etc., which are experiential and sometimes only minimally related to the physical aspects of the site. Impacts that alter or diminish the ability the cultural practitioner to use that site in the traditional way, which includes having the traditional experience, are considered adverse impacts. A significant negative impact to site setting is considered an "Adverse Effect" in 36 CFR Part 800.9, (a), (b), (2).	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR43 (R-CR2)	-"4.11.1 Impacts Common to All" There is little if any correlation between visual classes and protection of cultural resources. The RMP assumption of a direct and beneficial correlation is a fallacy repeated throughout the DEIS. See Kenczka letter [Brooks Letter, p. 3-4] regarding lack of legal authority to rely on NHPA to establish visual classes for	The establishment of visual classes for individual areas has been done independent of whether or not cultural resources are present in the area. The commenter erroneously assumes that the presence of such resources is the cause for any given designation. Rather, the independent designation of higher VRM classes has, as an incidental	

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			cultural sites.	consequence, a beneficial impact upon those cultural resources that may be present by placing special management provisions on land uses that result in ground disturbance; reduced ground disturbance related to the maintenance of visual values results in less opportunity for inadvertent impact to cultural resources.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR44 (R-CR3)	The RMP needs to discuss how law and policy changed and support the cultural resources management proposed. For instance, rules now require local government to be consulted on undertakings if requested but the RMP makes no provision for such consultation.	An RMP need not include discussion of how each law related to each resource or land use issue has changed since the previous RMP was prepared. It is sufficient to describe, as is outlined in the purpose and need statement for the RMP (Chapter 1), that revisions to the existing RMP are necessary to comply with changes in federal law and policy governing public lands.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR45 (R-CR4)	The laws and rules regarding cultural resource protection have not changed to support the expansive approach adopted in the RMP. The RMP uses cultural resource protection as grounds to expand visual resource management ("VRM") classes. Neither federal law nor the rules authorize VRM to protect cultural resources outside of the actual physical site.	See comment response CR43.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR46 (R-CR5)	"Conduct an inventory according to professional standards commensurate with the land use activity, environmental conditions, and the potential for cultural resources. Local, state, and tribal governments will be consulted when they indicate a desire to be consulted or involved."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions	

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				or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR46A (R-CR5)	BLM should recognize county's role under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act ("NHPA") in helping BLM determine eligibility for cultural resources and appropriate management. 36 C.F.R. §800.1(a).	The BLM is aware that there are specific County and State plan decisions relevant to aspects of public land management that are discrete from, and independent of, Federal law. However, the BLM is bound by Federal law. The FLPMA requires that the development of an RMP for public lands must be coordinated and consistent with County plans, to the maximum extent possible by law, and inconsistencies between Federal and non-Federal government plans be resolve to the extent practical (FLPMA, Title II Sec. 202 (c)(9)). As a consequence, where State and local plans conflict with Federal law there will be an inconsistency that cannot be resolved or reconciled. Thus, while County and Federal planning processes, under FLPMA, are required to be as integrated and consistent as practical, the Federal agency planning process is not bound by or subject to County plans, planning processes, or planning stipulations. The BLM will identify these conflicts in the FEIS/PRMP, so that the State and local governments have a complete understanding of the impacts of the PRMP on State and local management options. A consistency review of the PRMP with the State and County Master Plans is included in Chapter 5. 43 U.S.C. §1712(c)(9) states that the Secretary of the Interior (through the land use plans of the	

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				federal agencies under it) shall "coordinate the land use inventory, planning, and management activities of or for such lands with the land use planning and management programs of other Federal departments and agencies and of the States and local governments within which the lands are located." It further states that "the Secretary shall...assure that consideration is given to those State, local, and tribal plans that are germane in the development of land use plans for public lands [and] assist in resolving, to the extent practical, inconsistencies between Federal and non-Federal Government plans..." This language does not require the BLM to adhere to or adopt the plans of other agencies or jurisdictional entities, but rather to give consideration to these plans and make an effort to resolve inconsistencies to the extent practical.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR47 (R-CR6)	-Alternative A, Alternative D The RMP assumes a direct correlation between VRM and cultural resources which does not exist. Many of the cultural resources are not visible and even if they are, the VRM classes far exceed what is appropriate applying BLM guidance, DM 8431, H-8410-1.	See comment response CR43.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR48 (R-CR7)	Table 4.3.5 Estimated Acres and Potential Cultural Resource Sites Associated with Rangeland Constructions and Vegetation Treatment by Alternative Table 4.3.5 needs to be revised, since it appears that BLM is operating under an incorrect assumption of its cultural resources authority. See Letter to Jerry Kenczka [Brooks Letter].	See comment response CR42. BLM manages cultural resources under numerous laws and their implementing regulations. The agency's 8100 manuals, which outline how cultural resources are to be managed, provide agency managers with the guidelines necessary to consider cultural resources in a multiple use context. NEPA and CEQ guidelines provide further guidance for management. Table 4.3.5 in the PRMP/FEIS is based on these authorities.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR49 (R-CR8)	The RMP assumes that visual classifications will protect cultural resources, an assumption which contradicts other statements in the EIS that the effects on cultural resources are due to surface and subsurface disturbances. Most of the cultural resources are buried and VRM classes have little if any direct correlation. These discussions should be deleted.	See comment response CR43.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR50 (R-CR9)	4.3.2.10.1 Alternative A Class I VRM is limited to wilderness. In most cases, it does not appear that the acres classified as Class II meet the criteria. Instead, the RMP lumps land together without regard to DM 8431, H-8410-1. BLM cannot impose a VRM class to protect cultural resources. The VRM classes are intended to protect "vistas" when cultural resource protection is limited to the physical rather than the visual integrity of the site. Just as the National Park Service cannot extend a wild and scenic river boundary to protect the vista, BLM cannot impose VRM classes to protect views from the cultural resources site. Sokol v. Kennedy, 210 F.3d 876, 880 (8th Cir. 2000).	See comment response CR43.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR51 (R-CR10)	4.3.2.10.4 Alternative D [No Action] Cultural resources are protected by statute and the protection applies to the physical site. 16 U.S.C. §§470, 470aa. No authority exists to extend that protection to the visual, auditory, or emotional experience.	See comment responses CR42 and CR43. Please refer also to 36CFR Part 9(a), (b), (2). Setting is considered by the CFR as a factor in site preservation and determination of adverse effects. It appears also that the commenter has incorrectly read the analysis in this section. The impacts discussed relate to protection of cultural resources associated with proposed VRM classes, not a protection of the visual resource itself.	
Vermillion	O-33	CR52	4.3.2.11 Impacts of Wildlife and Fisheries Decisions of	Section 4.3.2.5 in the PRMP/FEIS describes the	X

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-CR11)	Cultural Resources The RMP incorrectly assumes that land use per se harms cultural resources. As written, the RMP treats wildlife and wild horse grazing as having no impact but livestock grazing as having an adverse impact. This is inaccurate and biased.	impacts of trampling impacts from livestock. Section 4.3.2.11 describes the trampling impacts from wildlife and wild horses. The text in Section 4.3.2.11 has been revised as follows: "It should be noted, however, that direct, long-term adverse impacts to cultural resources might occur from wildlife use of the Planning Area. These impacts are primarily related to the trampling of archaeological sites by herd animals such as wild horses, burros, and elk. These potential impacts would typically be comparable to those described for livestock grazing. Because of their particular herd behavior, wild horses may have a slightly greater impact on cultural resources by trampling, as evidenced by the higher level of vegetation damage and soil erosion noted in areas where wild horses congregate."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR53 (R-CR12)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "The reduction or control of surface disturbing activities, such as oil and gas development and OHV travel, within large geographic areas to preserve crucial deer winter range affords significant protection to cultural resource sites and insures preservation of the important scientific, experimental, conservation, and traditional use values of these resources assuming they are present."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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				OHV travel has clear and well-documented surface disturbance associated with it. The BLM also declines to implement the suggested addition. The BLM is specifically mandated to manage cultural resources that have been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or otherwise determined through consultation and consensus to be locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally important. Such resources, by definition, possess scientific, experimental, conservation, and/or traditional use values.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR53A (R-CR12)	The RMP overstates the effects of oil and gas development and protection of cultural resources. It also shows that the draft RMP fails to conform to IM 2003-237, because the RMP fails to scientifically justify these restrictions and fails to explain how these are the least restrictive necessary. The RMP loses sight of the fact that elk, deer, and antelope are game species, whose populations are trending upward and have greatly increased over the last planning cycle.	Any management action that reduces or eliminates surface and subsurface disturbance has a direct correlation to the protection of cultural resources, for which the primary (though not only) threat of irreparable damage is physical disturbance. As surface disturbance is reduced, the probability of impacts to cultural resources is also reduced. IM 2003-237 applies to the fire program and the effects of fire management on cultural resources. Oil and gas development is not considered in this IM.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR54 (R-WH14)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "The reduction or control of surface disturbing activities, such as oil and gas development and OHV travel, with large geographic areas to preserve crucial deer winter range…insures preservation of the important scientific, experimental, conservation, and traditional use values of these resources assuming they are present."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the	

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				current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	CR54A (R-WH14)	If OHV travel is surface disturbing, then so are wild horses and mountain bikes. OHV travel does not mix soil and if OHV travel is to be included within the definition, then so should wild horse herd management areas, where the horses trail and strip the area of vegetation.	The analysis provided is offered on a broad landscape level. Impacts from wild horses would occur on a very localized level within Herd Management Areas (HMAs) and only within those portions of the HMAs where horses trail or congregate. Additionally, beyond confining horses to specific management areas, the BLM cannot manage animal behavior to the degree that it can manage human behavior by establishing designated travel routes in order to direct the behavior away from sensitive resources. As such, the impact of wild horses on cultural resources cannot be quantified. The impacts of recreation decisions on cultural resources are discussed in Section 4.3.2.6 in the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	FM17 (R-FM1)	"Firefighter safety and public safety would be the first priority in every fire management activity. Property values including range improvements and other structures located on the public lands, and critical resource values would be the next priority." It is important that the AMR discussion recognize the need to protect water projects and fences used to manage livestock on public lands. Public funds are too scarce and fire will remove these important improvements.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect.	

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				The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The term “property values” includes all types of buildings, structures, and improvements on BLM lands within the Vernal Planning Area, not just those related to range improvements. The term is left unspecified in order to allow the BLM flexibility in prioritizing fire management actions.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	FM18 (R-FM3)	-Alternative A (West Cold Spring WSA) To be consistent with Little Snake fire plan this should be category D. While the IMP might support less fire control, there is no law limiting it and in this case local government plans should control.	The Draft Vernal Fire Management Plan assigns the portion of the West Cold Springs WSA as D2 FMU. This is a “D” Category, and is connected to the “D” category FMU in the Craig FMP.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC123 (R-GC12)	Eliminate the entire statement beginning with "All alternatives in this Draft EIS are consistent with the intent." and ending with "...any prime farmland soils (NRCS, 1990)."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion	O-33	GC123A	This conclusion in the RMP is unsupported and	The statement in the RMP was based upon NRCS	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-GC12)	inaccurate. The base property for most ranches consists of "farm land" where operators grow hay. These lands are an integral part of the public lands and the RMP management policies directly affect these lands. This section reflects an anti-grazing bias found elsewhere in the draft RMP. The implementation of the RMP without correction will lead to more ranches being sold for development. This more than any other factor will close access to public lands and "fragment habitat" by replacing ranches and grazing allotments with 35-acre ranchettes. If BLM were to follow the prime farmland policy, it would revise the plan to recognize and provide for the economic viability and stability of the livestock industry. Instead, the RMP fails to recognize the significant contribution that ranch operations make to maintaining open space, improving rangeland resources and habitat conditions, and providing water for all species, not just livestock.	(1990) related to Secretary of Agriculture Memorandum 1827. The commenter appears to commenting about private lands, not BLM managed lands.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC126 (R-GC4)	Chapter 4 of the DEIS fails to fully disclose the cumulative effects of the RMP on existing rights by increasing costs of access and development, as well as vegetation management. The detailed comments show that the RMP identifies direct and indirect effects to specific resources; it does not integrate the cumulative effects of the plan as a whole. For instance, the RMP discusses the direct and indirect effects of winter closures and energy development and assumes that most management restrictions will benefit wildlife. The RMP entirely omits the cumulative effects of increasing big game populations and wild horse numbers while restricting range management tools in ACEC or special management areas or other Class I and II VRMs. As written, the preferred alternative will increase grazing pressure by wildlife and wild horses but remove effective management tools such as vegetation	See comment responses GC 24 and GC27. Cumulative effects are discussed in Section 4.23 in the PRMP/FEIS.	

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			treatments or water projects. Similarly, the RMP assumes only environmental benefit from ACEC or SRMA designations without addressing the cumulative effects of restricting vegetation management tools while increasing wildlife numbers.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC127 (R-GC5)	Delete the following sentences: "Review mitigation and lease stipulations and ensure consistency throughout the planning area. Surface use stipulations developed for oil and gas would apply across the board for all surface-disturbing activities."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC127A (R-GC5)	The BLM cannot revise the terms of existing leases. See National Wildlife Federation, et. al., 150 IBLA 385, 403 (1999) citing Union Oil v. Morton, 512 F.2d 743, 750-51 (9th Cir. 1975).	The sentence is in Section 1.7.6 in the PRMP/FEIS and applies to future leasing. See comment response GC27 regarding valid existing rights.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC128 (R-GC6)	The draft RMP and DEIS fail to define or properly use a number of key terms including "surface disturbing activities" or "surface disturbance," "habitat fragmentation," and "habitat loss." These terms are used throughout the RMP and appear to contradict federal law, rules, BLM policy or case law. The Glossary should include the following definitions: Surface disturbance or surface disturbing activities-	See comment response GC15 regarding surface disturbing activities. See comment response GC59C regarding habitat fragmentation. The glossary in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to	X

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			"Disturbance from development activities that involve the removal of vegetation and topsoil, or overburden where there is a physical change to the surface, in connection with activities for mineral and energy development, rights-of-way, and road construction or reconstruction. It does not include incidental disturbances associated with the construction, reconstruction, or maintenance of fences or corrals or stock tanks, livestock or wildlife grazing, or recreation uses." Habitat Fragmentation – "An event that creates a greater number of habitat patches that are smaller in size than the original contiguous tract(s) of habitat." Habitat Loss – "The permanent or effectively permanent removal of habitat cover needed by a particular wildlife species." (This definition of habitat loss corresponds to how this concept is used in mainstream habitat management and avoids the need to attempt to define or regulate human disturbance or disruptive activities. The latter terms should not be regulated.) Sustained yield or sustainability "means the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the public lands consistent with multiple uses." (This definition is appropriately taken from FLPMA, 43 U.S.C. §1702(h).)	include a definition of “habitat loss” and “sustained yield.”	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC129 (R-GC7)	The analysis provided to the public fails to fully meet this objective, especially with respect to wild & scenic river proposals, ACECs, and wild horses, as just a few examples.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	GC137 (J-PR8)	Modify the following statement as indicated by the strikethrough deletion:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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Partnership			"The criteria used for categorizing the allotments were based on resource potential, resource use conflicts or controversy, opportunity for positive economic return on public investments, and the present management situation."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC137A (J-PR8)	Controversy per se is not a basis to evaluate an allotment.	The presence of controversy suggests a possible land use conflict that must be evaluated or investigated. As such, the use of "controversy" as a condition under evaluation of allotments will occur will remain in the RMP.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC19 (R-GC14)	Remove the term "locality" from the following statement: "On winter sheep ranges in the Book Cliffs locality, additional forage would be allocated proportionately between livestock and big game." The term "locality" is imprecise and should be deleted.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC59 (R-GC11)	Revise the following statement as indicated: "intact riparian areas, important habitats for mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk…"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC59A (R-GC11)	-The adjectives are deleted since they are used in an ambiguous, subjective, and otherwise meaningless fashion.	The reference to the degree to which the riparian areas are intact and serve as important habitats for mule deer are accurate descriptors of the current condition.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC59B (R-GC11)	Revise the following statement as indicated: "A description of the existing habitat fragmentation can be found in Tables 20 to 32 in Appendix I."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the	

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				adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC59C (R-GC11)	Revise the following statement as indicated: "Efforts will continue to be made to identify and maintain existing important habitats and their interconnecting corridors. A description of the existing habitat fragmentation can be found in Tables 20 to 32 in Appendix I."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC59D (R-GC11)	-The use of the habitat fragmentation table is problematic given the misuse of the term “habitat fragmentation.” As used, any land use fragments habitat, which is not accurate or scientifically documented by peer-reviewed research. The RMP treats private land as fragmented habitat when that is not true for agriculture uses, which predominate along the rivers.	The use of the term "habitat fragmentation" within the BLM is determined to mean: “The disruption (by division) of extensive habitats into smaller habitat patches. The effects of habitat fragmentation include loss of habitat area and the creation of smaller, more isolated patches of remaining habitat. Private land (including agricultural areas along the rivers) can be considered fragmented habitat depending on the scope of the fragmentation and the species that are being impacted.”	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	GC59E (R-GC11)	The tables should be deleted since the RMP misuses the term “habitat fragmentation.”	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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Partnership				The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC59F (R-GC11)	Revise the following statement as indicated: "The BLM would provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife and fish species by limiting surface development fragmentation, thereby possibly reducing loss of vegetation cover and reducing nonpoint source pollution into the keeping soils intact and sediment out of streams."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC59G (R-GC11)	As written, this statement is simply not accurate. It assumes certain facts that are often not the case, that habitat fragmentation necessarily increases soil erosion into the streams. The term “fragmentation” is misused.	Surface development can be a contributor to habitat fragmentation. Depending on the area and scope of the fragmentation, as defined above, the outcome could result in increased soil erosion and greater sediment accumulation into rivers and streams.	
Vermillion	O-33	GC77	Revise the following statements as indicated:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-GC10)	"The VPA presently contains large areas of disturbed wildlife habitat. Habitat fragmentation may be has become an issue in areas where mineral, agriculture, and other types of land development affect a permanent loss of habitat. Is currently occurring. Reducing the effects of habitat fragmentation on wildlife species include determining thresholds for disturbance, conserving existing habitats on an ecosystem level, providing usable corridors between neighboring patches, and controlling the invasion of undesirable species into these refuges."	changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC77A (R-GC10)	These comments suggest definitions for key terms. Disturbed wildlife habitat appears to assume that any disturbance harms all wildlife, which is not supported and is unlikely. Adverse effects traditionally occur if the habitat is lost and it is habitat that is important for essential life cycle activities. As written, the DEIS assumes any “disturbance” is harmful to wildlife.	Habitat fragmentation can be of a short-term or long-term nature, not just where there is a permanent loss of habitat. The statement does not assume that any disturbance harms all wildlife, but suggests that impacts can be negative to specific species (such as "mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, greater sage-grouse, ferruginous hawk, black-footed ferret, etc." whose habitat requirements will be degraded by the fragmenting activities.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC77B (R-GC10)	The RMP misuses the term “habitat fragmentation” to mean any disruption in any habitat, which is not an accepted usage of the term. The discussion incorrectly states that agriculture uses fragment habitat. Agriculture in the planning area is primarily ranching and it does not fragment habitat. Indeed, if agriculture is eliminated, the remaining private lands will be subdivided, i.e. Taylor Subdivision along Red Creek. Subdivision development will fragment habitat for some wildlife. Second, the alleged fragmentation may actually refer to private land ownership along water	See comment response GC59C.	

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			bodies. Unless the land uses prevent life processes, it is inaccurate to describe the habitat as fragmented. Moreover, fragmentation means different things to different species and the general discussion incorrectly assumes that all habitat changes have an equally adverse effect.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC8	Strike "often-conflicting" and replace with "land".	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC82 (R-GC13)	When these various measures are considered in their totality [see also Comments VE43, and LG260], they cumulatively increase the costs of a livestock operation, without any measurable public or environmental benefit. The DEIS fails to address and properly quantify these cumulative effects.	The cumulative effects of management decisions on livestock and grazing are included in the analysis of direct and indirect effects outlined in Section 4.7.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC86 (R-GC9)	The establishment of an SRMA in addition to the ACEC is not necessary. It also corresponds to former WIAs. The proposed designation ignores existing livestock operations, thus creating future management conflicts. The John Jarvie Historical Ranch site is quite small, consisting of a few buildings and less than 10 acres. The RMP cannot justify the size of the proposed	Under FLPMA's multiple-use mandate, the BLM manages many different resource values and uses on public lands. Through land use planning BLM sets goals and objectives for each of those values and uses, and prescribes actions to accomplish those objectives. Under the multiple-use concept, the BLM does not necessarily manage every value	

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			SRMA. If the additional acreage is justified to preserve the "integrity of the experience," this theory does not conform to the law or rules that would authorize an SRMA. Specifically, the BLM is authorized to protect the integrity of the physical site, not the view or emotional experience. Thus, an SRMA for the historic site should be quite small.	and use on every acre, but routinely manages many different values and uses on the same areas of public lands. The process of applying many individual program goals, objectives, and actions to the same area of public lands may be perceived as "layering". The BLM strives to ensure that the goals and objectives of each program (representing resource values and uses) are consistent and compatible for a particular land area. Inconsistent goals and objectives can lead to resource conflicts, failure to achieve the desired outcomes of a land use plan, and litigation. Whether or not a particular form of management is restrictive depends upon a personal interest or desire to see that public lands are managed in a particular manner. Not all uses and values can be provided for on every acre. That is why land use plans are developed through a public and interdisciplinary process. The interdisciplinary process helps ensure that all resource values and uses are considered to determine what mix of values and uses is responsive to the issues identified for resolution in the land use plan. Layering of program decisions is not optional for BLM, but is required by the FLPMA and National BLM planning and program specific regulations.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC8A	The assumption that recreation or aesthetic land uses conflict is over-stated.	The statement in question regarding land use conflicts refers to all land uses, not just aesthetic and recreational, which were merely provided as examples of how some desired uses of public lands have changed since the last RMP was completed.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC95 (R-GC8)	Revise the following statement by adding the bolded language:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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			"Modify existing fences on public lands where wildlife are adversely affected, when funds are available."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	GC95A (R-GC8)	The issue of fence reconstruction is contentious given the lack of funding for fences and the UDWR opposition to fences and other projects that would increase upland distribution. For this reason, any reconstruction must be funded and maintained by wildlife interests.	All management prescriptions proposed in the RMP are predicated on the assumption that funding will be available to accomplish them.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	HZ4 (RHZ-1)	We suggest the following revisions to this paragraph "Where appropriate, the RMP would address will identify hazardous materials issues that are regulated by the state but which may arise due to proposed oil, gas, and mineral development."	Section 1.7.4 of the PRMP/FEIS has been revised as follows: “Where appropriate, the proposed RMP will identify hazardous materials issues that may arise due to proposed oil, gas, and mineral development.”	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	HZ4A (RHZ-1)	As written the paragraph implies that BLM can regulate hazardous materials, when that is delegated to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Utah Department of Environmental Quality.	The paragraph as written does not state that the BLM regulates hazardous materials, but merely acknowledges that potential hazardous materials issues may arise from minerals and energy development managed under the RMP, and as such, the BLM must address these issues. Clarification of the BLM's role in addressing hazardous materials issues is outlined in Section	

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				3.5, wherein the relationship of the BLM's management to the regulatory agencies and policies is described.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG203 (R-LG1)	The seasons of use in the RMP are one example of prescriptive rather than outcome based management. Setting seasons of use in the RMP is inconsistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act ("FLPMA"), 43 U.S.C. §1752(b) and the terms of the ten-year grazing permits held by grazing permittees. FLPMA provides that seasons of use must be established in a grazing permit, not the RMP. 43 U.S.C. §1752(e).	See comment responses LG26, LG46, and LG87.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG204 (R-LG2)	The RMP conflicts with the grazing rules to the extent that the RMP would unilaterally amend a grazing permit without monitoring data or other information. 43 C.F.R. §4130.2-1 (changes in grazing use). Dictating changes in the seasons of use from the RMP also violates the requirement that BLM coordinate, consult and cooperate with individual permittees before amending an allotment management plan. 43 U.S.C. §1752(d); 43 C.F.R. §4110.3-2. Public comment on the RMP falls far short of "consultation, cooperation, and coordination." Alternative D should be adopted.	See comment responses LG4, LG20, LG26, LG46, LG75, and LG87 regarding BLM's authority to amend grazing permits. Please, note that in Table 2.1.8 (Livestock and Grazing Management) in the PRMP/FEIS, the BLM acknowledges that under all alternatives, changes in grazing management for specific allotments will be undertaken in direct consultation and coordination with the affected permittee.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG205 (R-LG3)	Because any permit must conform to the RMP, BLM must amend or revise the RMP if it is determined that a grazing plan or allotment management plan needs different seasons of use. For instance, we have been working jointly with BLM to implement a grazing management plan where livestock graze Area 3 two months longer than would be allowed under the RMP. This circumstance illustrates the reasons that seasons of use should be set at the allotment level rather than as a prescription in the RMP.	The Guidelines for Grazing Management include implementing grazing management practices that "meet the physiological requirements of desired plants and facilitate reproduction and maintenance of desired plants" (1(c)). The proposed seasons of use will provide for these plant needs. The DRMP also includes flexibility providing for extended seasons of use when deferment and/or rest are provided for and for authorization of use outside of the specified season of use when certain criteria are met (Table 2.1.8 (Livestock and Grazing	

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				Management) in the PRMP/FEIS, There is no requirement in FLPMA to maintain seasons of use as currently specified in grazing permits. Alternative D continues the current grazing management practices including the seasons of use as indicated on existing grazing permits. FLPMA indicates that it is the policy of the United States to manage the public lands on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield and in such a manner as to best meet the present and future needs of the American people without permanently impairing the productivity of the land. The proposed seasons of use will provide for the use of the public lands while helping to insure that no permanent loss of productivity will occur.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG206 (R-LG4)	The RMP proposes to exclude from forage allocations all land that produces less than 25 or 32 pounds of forage per year. See DEIS 2-11. The draft RMP and DEIS do not analyze the effects of doing so even though much of the planning area is a high mountain desert and produces less than 25 pounds of forage a year. This criteria could remove significant volume of forage and acreage from livestock grazing. Range science does not support this proposal and the DEIS inadequately discloses and assesses the effects. While livestock may use the steep slopes less, wildlife and wild horses graze these areas. By excluding these areas from the forage allocation and calculations, the RMP actually allocates significantly more forage for wildlife and wild horses than is disclosed in the RMP and imposes domestic grazing reductions by removing land from the permit. The grazing rules require that such changes be made in consultation and	See comment response LG17.	

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			coordination with the individual permittee rather than unilaterally throughout the planning area. In addition, the grazing rules require consultation with the permittee before amending the permit to exclude land. 43 C.F.R. §4110.4-2.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG207 (R-LG5) (R-LG14)	Delete this entire statement: "A permittee would voluntarily relinquish a grazing permit (active and suspended use). Relinquished grazing permits would be devoted or allocated to another public purpose after completion of an appropriate evaluation and analysis."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG207A (R-LG5) (R-LG14)	The RMP attempts to authorize the retirement of grazing permits and their reallocation to wildlife. This violates the Taylor Grazing Act, 43 U.S.C. §315, FLPMA, 43 U.S.C. §1752, and the terms of the Executive Orders No. 6910, 54 I.D. 539 (1934), and No. 6964 (Feb. 5, 1935), which withdrew public lands as chiefly valuable for grazing. Any such decision would also require amending the Presidential Executive Orders, which BLM cannot do, since authority to amend a withdrawal is limited to the Interior Secretary.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	LG208 (R-LG6)	Delete the following statement: "Any decision to retire livestock grazing on federal	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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Partnership			lands would not be permanent and such action would be subject to reconsideration and reversal during subsequent land use planning."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG208A (R-LG6)	The Tenth Circuit in Public Lands Council v. Babbitt, 167 F.3d 1287 (10 Cir. 1999), aff'd on other grounds, 529 U.S. 728 (2000), held that BLM could not offer permits "not to graze" public lands, since grazing permits are limited to domestic livestock. By the same token, BLM cannot purport to authorize wildlife grazing by retiring grazing permits in order to allocate the forage for wildlife.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG209 (R-LG7)	This [RMP] represents a change in grazing use without following the procedures set out in the BLM grazing rules. 43 C.F.R. §§4110.3; 4110.4. It is also inconsistent with the grazing rules, which provide for BLM to offer a vacant permit to qualified permittees whose base property is nearby. 43 C.F.R. §4130.1-2.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG210 (R-LG8)	FLPMA limits the discretion to disallow all livestock grazing by requiring BLM to file a report with Congress. 43 U.S.C. §1712(e). Grazing is a major multiple use and as such enjoys a preferred status among multiple uses. 43 U.S.C. §1702(l). To the extent that these allotments have been closed to domestic grazing for almost 10 years, failure to report the land use decision to Congress violates FLPMA. 43 U.S.C. §1712(e).	See comment response LG88.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG211 (R-LG9)	The impacts of special management areas and ACECs on livestock grazing and other multiple uses are significant. The draft RMP fails to recognize current livestock grazing in these ACECs and SMAs as a legitimate and authorized land use. It is ironic that the Wilderness Act, 16 U.S.C. §1133(d), actually grants more protection to livestock grazing, than BLM's WSA and de facto wilderness policies found in the proposed ACEC and SMAs. The RMP should drop these proposals from the preferred alternative.	The RMP does not exclude livestock grazing in areas of special designations. Nowhere in the RMP is it suggested that the livestock grazing permittee will be subject to significant reductions and operating restrictions within an ACEC or SRMA.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG212 (R-LG10)	If the RMP were to assure current land users, especially livestock permittees, that the ACEC or SRMA will not be managed to the detriment of grazing, it would be less problematic. As written, however, the RMP suggests without adequate discussion or disclosure, that the livestock grazing permittee will be subject to significant reductions and operating restrictions. There is no justification for this action and the rules do not allow BLM to use the ACEC to limit other multiple uses. 43 C.F.R. §1610.51.	See comment response LG211.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG213 (R-LG11)	The RMP fails to document the need to change livestock grazing management or to renew and expand ACECs.	The need for a new resource management plan is outlined in Section 1.3 of the PRMP/FEIS where the Purpose and Need for the new RMP are described. The discussion of renewing, expanding, and establishing ACECs can be found in Section 3.14 and its subsections and in Appendix G. Also, see Alternative E in the Supplement RMP regarding ACECs.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG214 (R-LG12)	Delete the following statement: "Resource concerns and potential conflicts have arisen regarding the allocation and season-of use of forage within the planning area."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not	

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				substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG214A (R-LG12)	The RMP fails to document resource-based reasons to change livestock grazing seasons-of-use. Any resource conflicts arise from: (1) the failure to comply with previous RMP decisions regarding wild horses; (2) increased numbers of big game species, which are both numerous and increasing in population: and (3) the failure to actually fund and implement grazing or allotment management plans ("AMPs"). Any conflicts should be addressed on site-specific basis.	The Guidelines for Grazing Management include implementing grazing management practices that "meet the physiological requirements of desired plants and facilitate reproduction and maintenance of desired plants" (1(c)). The proposed seasons of use will provide for these plant needs. The DRMP also includes flexibility providing for extended seasons of use when deferment and/or rest are provided for and for authorization of use outside of the specified season of use when certain criteria are met (Table 2.1.8 (Livestock and Grazing Management). There is no requirement in FLPMA to maintain seasons of use as currently specified in grazing permits. Alternative D continues the current grazing management practices including the seasons of use as indicated on existing grazing permits. FLPMA indicates that it is the policy of the United States to manage the public lands on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield and in such a manner as to best meet the present and future needs of the American people without permanently impairing the productivity of the land. The proposed seasons of use will provide for the use of the public lands while	

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				helping to insure that no permanent loss of productivity will occur. The entire RMP and the management actions within it are predicated upon the base assumption that the BLM will have the funding and staffing necessary to accomplish the decisions enacted upon issuance of the Record of Decision.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG215 (R-LG13)	Modify the following statement with the bolded addition: "BLM grazing regulations recognize suspended non-use as part of the grazing preference."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG215A (R-LG13)	The 2005 grazing rules would restore suspended non-use and recognition of grazing preference, 43 C.F.R. §4100.0-5, and the opportunity to restore that use. 43 C.F.R. §4110.3.	IM 2007-137 instructed the BLM to stop implementing all changes to the grazing regulations (43 CFR 4100) that were promulgated on July 12, 2006. Until a decision on the 2005 grazing regulations is made, the BLM will implement the grazing regulations that were in effect previously.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG217 (R-LG15)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes	

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			"A permittee may apply for temporary non-renewable the grazing permit or AUMs; however, BLM must determine if forage is available."	necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG217A (R-LG15)	This change is necessary to conform to the grazing rules, 43 C.F.R. §4130.1-3.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG218 (R-LG16)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Isolated instances of resource degradation, whether caused by livestock, big game, or wild horses, have occurred in site-specific areas particularly associated with seasons-of-use and forage allocation. The planning effort would ensure resolution of rangeland health concerns by addressing the following: • incorporating standards for rangeland health into the revised RMP; • evaluating adjustments in livestock, and wildlife, wild horse numbers and seasons-of-use; • evaluating forage allocation and carrying capacity for wildlife, wild horses, and livestock; and."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The wording in question is not a process issue. It is a method to determine contributing factors.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG218A (R-LG16)	The RMP cannot imply or assume that livestock grazing is the sole or even primary reason that there is resource degradation. Big game and wild horse numbers have steadily increased, while livestock grazing has either declined or remained at the same levels.	The RMP based the so-called assumptions off of the issues identified through the scoping process.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG219 (R-LG17)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Joint monitoring and evaluation strategies would be implemented to measure progress in accordance with Utah BLM Rangeland Health Standards based on site-specific conditions. Site-specific conditions must be documented in order to warrant modification of prescriptions."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG219A (R-LG17)	The RMP over prescribes without regard to site-specific conditions. BLM has also signed a national memorandum of understanding to promote joint BLM and permittee monitoring of range conditions.	The BLM acknowledges and promotes joint monitoring yet the BLM cannot force the permittees to participate in monitoring, therefore we can only use the word "joint" in terms of "promotion of joint monitoring." Site-specific conditions must be the basis for any adjustments.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG220 (R-LG18)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Use would be allowed in both quantity and timing that	The Fire, Drought, and Natural Disasters subsection of Table 2.1.1 in the PRMP/FEIS (Management Common to All Alternatives) in the PRMP/FEISPRMP/FEIS has been revised to read as follows:	X

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			would not result in a downward shift in rangeland health and/or production. BLM would work cooperatively to affect effect a grazing strategy specific to a grazing permittee's individual grazing allotment(s), commit to fund and implement appropriate range improvements; and make changes to the grazing authorizations as appropriate within the limits of the existing permit and in accordance with the grazing regulations. In the case of drought, the last recourse for BLM would be to temporarily close the range, or portions of it, to livestock grazing."	"Use would be allowed in both quantity and timing that would not result in a downward shift in rangeland health. BLM would work cooperatively to affect a grazing strategy specific to a grazing permittee's individual grazing allotment(s), commit to fund and implement appropriate range improvements; and make changes to the grazing authorizations as appropriate within the limits of the existing permit and in accordance with the grazing regulations. In the case of drought, the last recourse for BLM would be to temporarily close the range, or portions of it, to livestock grazing."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG220A (R-LG18)	The RMP needs to recognize and commit BLM to implementing range improvements.	The entire RMP and the management actions within it are predicated upon the base assumption that the BLM will have the funding and staffing necessary to accomplish the decisions enacted upon issuance of the Record of Decision.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG221 (R-LG19)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Maintain or improve the total forage resource using techniques that are compatible with the use and development of other resources and which would maintain, meet, or make substantial progress towards meeting meet or exceed Utah BLM Rangeland Health Standards."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG221A (R-LG19)	The grazing rules recognize that making progress towards meeting rangeland health standards is compliance. 43 C.F.R. §4180.1. The RMP omits this key qualifier, which is problematic because, in many cases, it will take many years to meet range health standards.	See comment response LG16.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG222 (R-LG20)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Any adjustments in forage assignments to either livestock, wild horses, or wildlife would be based on analysis of joint monitoring data including long-term vegetation trend, actual use, climate, and utilization. Additionally forage would not be allocated in areas where forage production is less than 25lbs per acre which equates to 32 acres per AUM. Areas that are seldom or never grazed by livestock due to physical factors such as slopes greater than 50% and area that are in excess of four miles from water would not be included in the livestock forage allocation. An exception for areas in excess of four miles of water if water is hauled or the areas would be grazed when snow is on the ground. Adjustments would involve permittees and would be implemented through documented mutual agreement or decision …"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The BLM acknowledges and promotes joint monitoring yet the BLM cannot force the permittees to participate in monitoring, therefore we can only use the word "joint" in terms of "promotion of joint monitoring." The lined out statements are range suitability criteria. Therefore we decline to delete those.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG222A (R-LG20)	The first sentence is appropriate but the rest of the paragraph should be struck because forage is currently allocated on allotments that may produce less than 25 lbs/acre or which have steep slopes. BLM cannot use	The commenter provides no data to support their statement that the BLM is allocating areas with less than 25lbs/acre.	

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			the RMP to revise grazing permit adjudications, which must be done in consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the permittee. 43 C.F.R. §4110.2-3. The exclusion of land from forage allocations for areas more than 4 miles from water penalizes allotments where BLM has not been able or willing to fund or approve range projects. More importantly, there is no resource basis for these conditions.	The BLM is not proposing to use the RMP to revise grazing permit adjudications, and the BLM agrees that this must be done in consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the permittee. 43 C.F.R. §4110.2-3. The BLM has merely provided criteria to use to when adjustments are required. See comment response LG220.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG223 (R-LG21)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions: "Increases or reductions associated with joint monitoring of base allocations would be evaluated against the established grazing permits, UDWR herd unit objectives, and wild horse Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) set in the RMP to determine needed adjustments to animal numbers. The goal of the RMP is also to maintain the full preference AUMs and BLM will undertake all actions necessary to do so, including the recognition and coordination with livestock grazing, including range improvements and vegetation treatments, in maintaining habitat."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. As per comment response LG88, the BLM is not required to maintain maximum grazing levels or historical levels but is authorized to make adjustments in grazing to maintain appropriate ecosystem health and manage for multiple use and sustained yield.	
Vermillion Ranch	O-33	LG223A (R-LG21)	The statutory policies in the TGA, FLPMA, and PRIA require BLM to recognize the grazing preferences	See comment response LG219A.	

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Limited Partnership			adjudicated and to ensure that wild horse management does not lead to loss of grazing in order to protect resources adversely affected by excess wild horse numbers. Livestock grazing is an integrally connected land use and needs to be both recognized and coordinated.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG224 (R-LG22)	Delete the statement beginning with "A permittee would voluntarily relinquish..." and ending with "...after completion on an appropriate evaluation and analysis."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG224A (R-LG22)	Any relinquished grazing permit should be offered to qualified permittees. 43 C.F.R. §4110.3	See comment response LG4.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG225 (R-LG23)	Delete the following statement: "Any decision to retire livestock grazing on federal lands would not be permanent and such action would be subject to reconsideration and reversal during subsequent land use planning"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why	

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				the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG225A (R-LG23)	BLM lacks the authority to hold grazing permits in "nonuse." The grazing rules prohibit nonuse, 43 C.F.R. §4130.1-1(g) (limiting nonuse to three years). The RMP essentially attempts to adopt the prohibited conservation use grazing permit while violating the grazing rules regarding nonuse.	See comment response LG4.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG226 (R-LG24)	The public lands were classified as "chiefly valuable for livestock grazing" pursuant to Section 1 of the Taylor Grazing Act, 43 U.S.C. §315. Shortly thereafter, President Roosevelt withdrew these lands from operation of most of the public land laws to effect this classification pursuant to authority in TGA, 43 U.S.C. §315f. See Executive Order 6910, 54 I.D. 539 (1934), and Executive Order 6964 (Feb. 5, 1935). These lands are still withdrawn as chiefly valuable for grazing and BLM cannot super-impose a new "range suitability" determination in the absence of a change in the withdrawal or the law.	See comment response LG88. Having an area deemed chiefly valuable for livestock grazing does not exempt the area from analysis to determine the amount of the area suitable for livestock grazing.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG227 (R-LG25)	Delete the following statement: "If it is determined through monitoring that livestock grazing is beneficial to other resource values, it would be allowed in 16 miles of river corridor along the upper Green River in Browns Park following an adequate evaluation and assessment. If such use is allowed, it would be of short duration and would not detract from recreation and/or riparian values along the river."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the	

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				current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG227A (R-LG25)	Livestock grazing is an historic use along the Green River and Brown's Park area and has occurred since 1849. There is little, if any, scientific basis to exclude livestock grazing from this area. It is also unlawful and contrary to existing BLM rules.	See comment response LG19.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG228 (R-LG26)	Add the following statement: "In most cases, livestock grazing is part of the historical use of the river areas and may continue in conformance with applicable rules."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG228A (R-LG26)	FLPMA does not allow BLM to cancel grazing preference in an RMP and the grazing rights on the river corridor cannot be canceled in this fashion.	See comment response LG19.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	LG229 (R-LG27)	Delete the following statement: "Grazing preference is retired on the following allotments: Red Creek Flat, Taylor Flat, Watson… and Crouse Reservoir. Applications for livestock grazing would only be	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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Organization	**Record ID & Comment Number**	**Resource Category**	**Comment Text**	**Response to Comment**	**Doc Mod**
Partnership			approved on a non-renewable, short duration basis following an adequate evaluation and assessment to determine if it would enhance wildlife values."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG229A (R-LG27)	The proposed “retirement” of the listed grazing permits is legally flawed. The State of Utah acquired these grazing permits from certain nonprofit groups for the purpose of not grazing them. This is unlawful, because the federal courts set aside the "conservation grazing permit” and no permittee may take nonuse for more than three years. The State is not using the permits, which violates the 1995 non-use grazing rules, which are still in effect. Under the revised grazing rules, these permits should be made available to other permittees, especially since these lands remain chiefly valuable for grazing. 43 C.F.R. §4130.1-2. Federal law does not authorize or recognize a wildlife grazing permit.	See comment response LG117.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG230 (R-LG28)	Delete the following statement: "The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation would voluntarily relinquish their grazing permits when the Vernal RMP becomes effective. Active AUMS permitted to TNC (4,239) and RMEF (4,025) would be allocated to wildlife."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion.	

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				The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG230A (R-LG28)	These groups have failed to follow BLM grazing rules by not exercising their grazing permits. BLM has failed to enforce the rules, which prohibit nonuse for more than three years. This situation should be ended now, with the permits canceled and offered to other qualified permittees.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG231 (R-LG29)	Delete the following statement: "Achieve appropriate utilization of range by livestock; wildlife and wild horses through management prescriptions and administrative adjustments."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG231A (R-LG29)	The management objectives for livestock grazing fails to correctly reflect the weight to be given to grazing as a major or principal multiple use. 43 U.S.C. §1702(l).	The BLM manages for multiple use and recognized the forage and grazing needs of all grazing groups, including livestock, wildlife, and wild horses.	

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				See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG232 (R-LG30)	Add the following statement: "BLM will consider changes in a grazing permit including changes in seasons of use or livestock conversions when joint monitoring data by the permittee and BLM establish that livestock grazing contributes to the failure to make significant progress towards meeting or to meet or maintain Utah rangeland health standards:…"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. See comment response LG219A.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG232A (R-LG30)	The criteria proposed in the draft RMP fail to conform to FLPMA or the grazing rules. Changes in seasons of use should be based on site specific facts and management decisions with consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the grazing permittee.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG233 (R-LG31)	Delete the following statement: "Requests from a permittee to change seasons of use would be a priority if all of the following criteria were met…"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the	

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				current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. See comment response LG26.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG233A (R-LG31)	The Secretary concerned shall also specify therein the numbers of animals to be grazed and the seasons of use and that he may reexamine the condition of the range at any time and, if he finds on reexamination that the condition of the range requires adjustment in the amount or other aspect of grazing use, that the permittee or lessee shall adjust his use to the extent the Secretary concerned deems necessary." 43 U.S.C. §1752(e); 43 C.F.R. §4110.3.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG234 (R-LG32)	Delete the following statements: "..changes enhance or meet resource objectives contained in the Vernal RMP;" "..allotment(s) are scheduled for assessment the same year a request is made, and..", and "..funding for the assessment is provided by sources other than the BLM."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG234A (R-LG32)	There is no legal basis to deny any change if the allotment is not scheduled for assessment nor is there any legal basis to require the grazing permittee to pay for the NEPA compliance.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG235 (R-LG33)	Delete the entire statement beginning with "Requests from permittees to convert class of livestock would be handled as follows:.." and ending with "Applicants would be required to fence the road if it is determined necessary to protect human and livestock health and safety."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG235A (R-LG33)	These limits in the RMP for livestock grazing are legally and factually flawed. First, the grazing rules govern such changes and require monitoring data and other relevant information. 43 C.F.R. §4130.3-2. Second, the proposed limits on livestock grazing in crucial deer range or wild horse areas are not within the scope of the rules. Similarly the limits on conversions and range improvements in WSAs are not required in the Interim Management Plan ("IMP') and cannot be justified as a matter of science based management. The level of detail that is found in the section is inconsistent with the respective differences between an RMP and a subsequent activity plan. The RMP repeatedly makes the incorrect statement that grazing levels or utilization in the current RMP are not specified, when they are	See comment response LG26.	

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			appropriately stated in AMPs or grazing plans.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG236 (R-LG34)	Delete the following statements: "Conversions to cattle would not be allowed in wild horse management areas."; "Areas with reverie/lotic systems may require additional management actions such as, but not limited to, fencing of streams."; "Conversions would not be allowed in WSAs if fencing or other structural improvements are necessary or if the conversion would result in significant resource conflicts or impacts."; "As opportunities arise, such as voluntary relinquishment, consider discontinuing livestock use."; and "Where livestock conflicts with other uses of the river, mitigate through management or other action."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. See comment response LG31.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG237 (R-LG35)	Delete the following statement: “Identify criteria for acceptable levels of livestock grazing use along river bottoms. (See Riparian section.)”	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the	

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				adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG237A (R-LG35)	The riparian or river corridor section needs to be amended to conform to BLM rules. First, the changes need to be based on monitoring data and the data must show that livestock is the primary reason that the area is not maintaining, meeting or making progress towards meeting rangeland health standards. BLM must address the causes as well.	The Taylor Grazing Act directs the BLM to preserve the land and its resources from destruction or unnecessary injury. In addition, FLPMA requires that the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of ecological, environmental, and water resource values as well as others. The criteria referenced will be developed at the activity based level to help assure that these requirements are met. Also, rangeland health standards and proper functioning conditions will be met or maintained as indicated in the riparian section. The DRMP doesn't propose to make changes at this time but rather requires criteria to be developed that will be used in assessing and evaluating monitoring data to determine what changes, if any, are needed for livestock grazing to be in compliance with the RMP and the BLM's regulations.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG238 (R-LG36)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions: "If grazing is causing resource degradation to the extent that rangeland health standards are not being met and progress is not being made, joint monitoring data by the permittee and BLM show that livestock grazing is the most significant factor, and all other options have been exhausted, temporarily close those riparian areas that do not satisfactorily respond to changes in management."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG238A (R-LG36)	Strike the entire statement beginning with "As opportunities arise...” and ending with "Identify criteria for acceptable levels of livestock grazing use along river bottoms."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG238B (R-LG36)	In too many cases, there are no monitoring data and it is otherwise very difficult to quantify the role of wildlife, especially big game, or wild horses. The RMP would unfairly penalize the permittee for lack of data, when, in most cases, the absence of data is a result of the RMP monitoring plan not being implemented. In the past, BLM has not approved water projects, which reduce grazing pressure in riparian areas.	See comment response LG222.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG239 (R-LG38)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Restore, maintain and/or improve rangeland conditions and productivity to maintain, meet or make substantial progress towards meeting rangeland health standards while meeting forage obligations in grazing permits and grazing preference decisions, as well as wildlife and wild horse habitat. while providing for its use and development. Maintain, improve, and/or	Table 2.1.12 (Rangeland Improvements) in the PRMP/FEISPRMP/FEIS has been revised to read as follows: Restore, maintain and/or improve rangeland conditions and productivity to maintain, meet or make substantial progress towards meeting rangeland health standards while meeting forage obligations in grazing permits and grazing preference decisions, as well as wildlife habitat.	X

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			restore habitat for wildlife; provide optimum forage for livestock; maintain healthy watersheds and vegetation communities; and promote sustained yield and multiple use." The change would reflect both the rules and FLPMA policies that livestock grazing is a principal multiple use to be protected.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG240 (R-LG39)	BLM should not claim authority to tell a livestock operator which kind of livestock to raise. This is especially true when there are such significant differences between the cattle and sheep markets.	See 4130.3-1 (a) Mandatory Terms and Conditions, of 43 CFR (a) "The authorized officer shall specify the kind and number of livestock,…"	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG241 (R-LG40)	There are few management options in the RMP that enable livestock operators to remain [when riparian objectives aren't being met] and the alternatives to livestock are 35-acre subdivisions, where recreational users are excluded.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG242 (R-LG41)	RE: Alternative A—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Unless otherwise specified by a management plan, up to 50% utilization of forage on uplands would be allowed. 137,838 _____ [replaced by current preference allocation] AUMs are would be allocated for livestock, 104,871 AUMs would be allocated for wildlife, and 2,940 AUMs would be allocated for wild horses."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences.	

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				The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG242A (R-LG41)	The RMP fails to disclose the grazing preference AUMs or whether the AUMs stated in the RMP are the permitted use or an average of actual use on public lands. The grazing rules require monitoring data before there can be a change in grazing use (up or down). 43 C.F.R. §4130.2-3. The RMP projects a reduction in livestock grazing without explaining the basis nor accounting for the likely and additional reductions due to application of RMP standards. The RMP needs to document the changes from Alternative D to Alternative A. If these projections are due to permit retirements, this is unlawful. If it is something else, this too violates FLPMA since the RMP cannot reduce grazing on individual permits without failing to consult, coordinate and cooperate with the permittee. 43 U.S.C. §1752(d); 43 C.F.R. §4110.3-2.	See Table 2.1.8 (Livestock and Grazing Management) in the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG243 (R-LG42)	RE: Alternative A—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "If joint monitoring indicates that the resources cannot support the forage assignments cannot be met, then livestock wild horses and wildlife use would be reduced proportionately. The first year livestock wild horse reductions would be made with an initial 10% adjustment. Similar adjustments would be made to big game. If that is not sufficient, then the BLM would develop five-year agreements would be developed and	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions	

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			signed to establish outlining the process for phased reductions to the desired level.	or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG243A (R-LG42)	Additional AUMs would be provided as follows: In the northern half of the area (Diamond Mountain and Browns Park), additional AUMs would be provided to livestock until wildlife demands require them. In the southern half of the area (Ashley Valley and Myton Bench), forage increases would be divided proportionately between livestock and big game on non-crucial wildlife areas."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG243B (R-LG42)	It is good that the RMP discloses forage allocations, since otherwise BLM is adopting plan conditions that cannot be achieved. The RMP should reflect a goal of retaining the full grazing preference to sustain and enhance the livestock industry. Any additional AUMs should be allocated based on contribution of resources invested. The process outlined in the RMP violates FLPMA because it makes management a matter of forage, rather than whether resource objectives (Utah rangeland health standards and individual allotment management or grazing plan) are being achieved and the reasons that they are not. In addition, the process violates the obligation to coordinate, consult and cooperate with the grazing permittee, because it imposes a top-down grazing reduction without the permittees' involvement or consent. 43 C.F.R. §4110.3-	See comment response LG222.	

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			2. BLM policy requires a proportionate reduction while the RMP would put the burden entirely on the permittee. H-4180-1, III-16. This is also inequitable, because the permittee makes the largest investment and yet receives the least reward.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG244 (R-LG43)	RE: Alternative C—Modify the following statement as indicated by the bolded addition: If joint monitoring indicates forage assignments cannot be met."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG244A (R-LG43)	Alternative C contradicts BLM rangeland health management policy by only reducing livestock without regard to the causal connection between forage use or consumer. H-4180-1, III-12. While the RMP can discuss an alternative that violates law or policy, it needs to fully disclose this conflict. All of the alternatives also suffer from the fact that they do not address resource conditions and trend and would base reductions simply on forage. This too contradicts the grazing rules, which control.	See comment response LG222.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	LG245 (R-LG44)	RE: Alternative D—Modify Alternative D as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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Partnership			"If joint monitoring indicates that forage assignments cannot be met..If there is no conflict and the reduction is necessary because of overuse by either livestock or wildlife, that animal's numbers would be reduced..Temporary adjustments in use due to effects of drought would be made to livestock and/or wildlife as needed based on joint monitoring by the permittee and the BLM."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG245A (R-LG44)	Alternative D may reflect the current plan but it does not reflect the current situation. Forage is assigned through preference adjudications and grazing permits.	See comment response LG219A.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG246 (R-LG45)	RE: Alternative A—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "PHENOLOGY Livestock grazing would be continued in Areas 1-6 in accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act. allowed in Area 1 of the VFO. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 6/ 1 to 10/ 31 in Area 2 or 5/ 1 with a deferment. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 5/ 1 to 11/ 30 in Area 3. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 5/ 1 to 6/ 1 in Area 4. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 5/ 1 to 6/ 1 and 10/ 1 to 2/ 28 in Area 5. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 10/ 1 to 4/ 1 or 5/ 1 w/ deferment in Area 6. Livestock grazing would be	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			allowed from 4/ 1 to 5/ 31 and/ or 9/ 1 to 10/ 31 in Area 7."		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG246A (R-LG45)	BLM does not have the discretion to disallow grazing. The Taylor Grazing Act, FLPMA and PRIA all establish direction and mandate for livestock grazing. Thus the language with respect to grazing discretion needs to be changed for all alternatives. The Alternative A grazing seasons belong in allotment specific plans and decisions and should be deleted from the RMP. It appears that the RMP seeks to return the allotments to either traditional winter or summer allotments. While, in some cases, the grazing seasons may have changed from traditional winter and summer grazing, these are site-specific circumstances that should remain part of the grazing plan or allotment management plan and should not be prescribed at the RMP level.	The BLM is not proposing to “disallow grazing” on the areas in question. Livestock grazing will continue although with potential changes to the grazing seasons of use. These changes would be made on an allotment specific basis to meet the objectives of the RMP and the requirements of the BLM’s rules and regulations. Both the TGA and FLPMA provide BLM with the authority to regulate and manage the uses of the BLM lands to preserve the land and protect its values.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG247 (R-LG46)	RE: Alternative C— Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "ADJUDICATED Livestock grazing would continue in Areas 1-6 in accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act. could be allowed under the discretion of the VFO. in Area 1. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 6/ 15 to 8/ 31 in Area 2. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 6/ 15 to 8/ 31 in Area 3. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 10/ 1 to 3/ 1 (Fall/ Winter) in Area 4. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 10/ 1 to 3/ 1 (Fall/ Winter) in	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			Area 5. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 10/ 1 to 3/ 1 (Fall/ Winter) in Area 6. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 10/ 1 to 11/ 30 (Fall) in Area 7." " PERMITTED Livestock grazing would be continued in Areas 1-6 in accordance with the Taylor Grazing Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act. allowed in Area 1 under the discretion of the VFO. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 5/ 19 to 10/ 7 in Area 2. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 6/ 3 to 10/ 6 in Area 3. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 6/ 1 to 10/ 31 in Area 4. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 4/ 3 to 6/ 15 and 10/ 31 to 1/ 30 in Area 5. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 3/ 10 to 4/ 24 and 6/ 23 to 8/ 30 and 10/ 21 to 2/ 28 in Area 6. Livestock grazing would be allowed from 5/ 26 to 10/ 20 in Area 7."		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG247A (R-LG46)	Continuing livestock grazing is not “discretionary.” Current permittees are entitled to renewal and Congress affirmed this only recently. §328, Pub. L. 108-7, 117 Stat. 11 (2003) as amended by Supp. Appropriations Act, Pub. L. 108-11, 117 Stat. 559, 594 (2003).	Alternative C is not proposing to discontinue livestock grazing. The proposed seasons of use would be adjustments to the terms and conditions of the permit to meet objectives of the RMP and the requirements of the grazing regulations. Both the TGA and FLPMA provide BLM with the authority to regulate and manage the uses of the BLM lands to preserve the land and protect its values. The public laws cited provided BLM the ability to renew grazing permits for a period of ten years under the same terms and conditions of the expiring permit. These “rider” permits are to remain in effect, according to P.L. 108-7 “until such time as the	

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				Secretary of the Interior completes processing of such permit or lease in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, at which time such permit or lease may be canceled, suspended or modified, in whole or in part, to meet the requirements of such applicable laws and regulations". As proposed, the need for season of use changes would be assessed and analyzed during the BLM's processing of the permit to comply with applicable laws and regulations as referenced.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG248 (R-LG47)	RE: Alternative A--Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "52,720 acres in Browns Park would be managed for multiple use, including livestock grazing and recreation uses. as an SRMA to provide for outstanding scenic vistas and enhancement of resources and associated activities such as, riparian, fisheries, special status species, water quality, water-based recreation, hunting, comprehensive trail system for hiking, biking, horseback riding, and OHV use, camping, cultural and historic interpretation and facility development. The south side of the river between Little Hole and Fire Flat extending around the Taylor Flat subdivision to Rye Grass Draw in the east would be managed for primitive recreation values, VRM I, and closed to surface disturbing activities, except for activities that complement recreation values. Additionally, the area would be closed to OHV use. The historic wagon route in Sears Canyon would be evaluated and analyzed along with other routes, i.e. Crouse Canyon and Rye Grass to determine if an opportunity exists to provide a loop route for OHV use."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG248A (R-LG47)	The RMP does not document the need to continue the ACECs or manage the area as an SRMA. This area surrounds the Taylor Flat subdivision and is not shown to be critical or necessary for recreation use. Application of VRM I is unnecessary and contrary to policy, since Class I is limited to wilderness or wilderness study. Map 29 does not show this area as VRM I. The establishment of ACEC or SRMA will increase regulatory burdens for agriculture, thereby facilitating subdivision development and the loss of open space. During the life of the current plan, the Taylor Flat subdivision was established when a ranch sold. If the RMP wants to promote recreation use, it would recognize that current land use activities like livestock grazing are entitled to continue and should be protected. Otherwise recreation will continue to lose access as ranchers are forced to sell and the private land is subdivided. In general, the RMP fails to address the impacts on livestock grazing but adopts a number of objectives that could be used to reduce or remove livestock grazing. If this is the objective, the RMP and DEIS must disclose it and the effects. If this is not the objective, then specific language recognizing that livestock grazing is compatible should be added.	Table 2.1.14 (Recreation – Special Recreation Management Areas) and Table 2.1.8 (Special Designations – ACECs) in the PRMP/FEIS discuss the values for both the SRMA and the ACEC. Both identify scenic vistas and views as one of the values associated with these areas. Neither the SRMA nor the ACEC preclude agricultural use in their prescriptions. The BLM does not administer use on private lands.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG249 (R-LG48)	RE: All Alternatives—Management of this WSA should be consistent with the adjacent Colorado BLM management and related grazing management plans.	Land Use Plans may prescribe certain activities allowed for in IMP policy which includes current grazing management plans.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG250A (-LG49)	RE: Alternative A—Delete the following statement: "..phenology-based use system would have minimal impacts on rangeland health. 137,838 AUMs allocated to livestock, a 5.7% AUM reduction compared to alternative D."	Table 2.2.7 (Livestock and Grazing) in the PRMP/FEIS for Alternative A has been revised as follows: "Phenology-based use system would have positive impacts on rangeland health."	X

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			The RMP fails to document or justify the livestock grazing reduction.	The reduction is based off of the relinquishment of AUMs from the TNC, and the RMEF, which is stated in Table 2.1.6 (Forage – All Locations). No other reductions are proposed.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG251 (R-LG50)	RE: Alternative A—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "It is projected that about Rangeland improvements would treat 34,640 acres of forage rangeland would be treated, build 69 miles of fence, construct 812 guzzlers/reservoirs, and develop 51 spring/wells for long term beneficial impacts on livestock and wildlife/ wild horse grazing." The acres of rangeland are not equal to forage. The discussion is confusing, since it refers to range improvements in terms of acres and then refers to structures, which are also range improvements. In addition, these projected projects should not be considered a ceiling. Finally the RMP never explains the reasons for reducing both range improvements and vegetation treatment from what is planned for Alternative D or the Current Direction and Alternative A.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. Table 2.2.7 (Livestock and Grazing) in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to incorporate the suggested change for Alternative A.	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG252 (R-LG51)	As a general comment, the RMP either omits or understates the economic and cultural importance of grazing and ignores effects that reducing AUMs on will have on private land open space. During the ten years since BLM adopted new grazing rules, the western states have seen ranchers leave the business and sell their private lands for 35-acre home sites. This occurred even during high cattle prices and low interest	Comment noted.	

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			rates. It is widely recognized that BLM's increased regulation and hostility to livestock grazing plays a significant role in this trend. If the objective is to protect open space and wildlife habitat, the RMP must recognize the important and, even critical, role that ranch operations and livestock grazing plays in providing wildlife habitat and open space.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG253 (R-LG52)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Forty-five of the 153 allotments are currently grazed under a deferment rotation system, which involves delaying grazing in an allotment until the seed maturity of the key forage species. The remaining 108 allotments employ deferred grazing through annual plans, grazing plans, or allotment management plans do not have a recognized grazing system." The RMP incorrectly implies that most livestock grazing in the VPA is year-long and not under any system. The BLM made a policy decision several years ago not to make significant investments for allotments that were in good condition (M) or which could not be improved (C). Those allotments were not scheduled for intensive management and no funding was allocated for improvements. Many of the Vernal permits are winter grazing, which defers or rests the allotment at least half the year. Grazing during dormancy also requires less intensive grazing system. Grazing should be restored to these allotments. TNR does not contribute to the stability of the livestock industry, a policy that is mandated by	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			Taylor Grazing Act and FLPMA.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG254 (R-LG53)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "The criteria used for categorizing the allotments were based on resource potential, resource use conflicts or controversy, opportunity for positive economic return on public investments."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. Controversy is a legitimate basis for considering management approaches to allotments.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG254A (R-LG53)	The criteria used to classify the allotments is incorrect and bears little relationship to actual management or resources.	The commenter does not identify how the criteria do not reflect actual management or resources. As such, the BLM cannot respond to the latter part of this comment.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG255 (R-LG54)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "The Utah Department of Agriculture reports 36 farms in Daggett County, by which 26,485 acres of land is farmed. Livestock and the related ranch operations are is the county's largest source of cash receipts, with a contribution of $1.6 million for livestock and livestock products and $500,000 for crops. Daggett County has	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the	

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			7,676 acres of harvested cropland and 7,840 acres of irrigated land, which produce 12,000 tons of hay and alfalfa (Utah Agricultural Statistics 2001). Livestock grazing is important economically and culturally to Daggett County. Reductions in AUMs adversely affect the cash flows of individual ranches and may cause those permittees to leave the ranching business and to develop their private land. Elsewhere in Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming, ranchers have converted their land to subdivisions, with a resulting loss of open space and often public access. The rural subdivisions are generally less beneficial to wildlife, including big game."	current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG255	The DEIS fails to disclose and discuss the full historic grazing preference. The reference to 146,220 AUMs appears to be the average use over the last 10 years. By using this lower figure, the DEIS obscures the probable reductions in domestic grazing that will occur under this plan. This violates the obligation under NEPA to fully disclose the effects of a proposed federal action on the social and economic aspects of the human environment.	The VFO has only one permittee that actually resides and farms in Daggett county.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG256 (R-LG55)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "The RMP adopts management standards Many areas have proposed management decisions that change limit or reduce livestock grazing intensity and time, and manage for greater vegetation retention and generation. These standards will not address the adverse effects of other grazing animals, such as wild horses and wildlife."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the	

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				current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG256A (R-LG55)	An RMP does not make management decisions. Here the RMP prejudges and predetermines the response to livestock grazing issues inappropriately. The first sentence is also inaccurate because the RMP only limits livestock grazing while increasing big game and wild horse impacts. Thus the RMP actually increases big game and wild horse grazing intensity. There is likely to be little reduction in the intensity of grazing. This discussion further illustrates the bias found in the document against livestock grazing and the related myopia regarding the other species that also graze the public lands.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG257 (R-LG56)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "..Impacts from these management alternatives may have significant are generally projected to have minor impacts on livestock grazing, except as they relate to improved vegetation… Long-term effects are expected to include the required revision development of grazing management plans and structural range improvements to achieve appropriate vegetation utilization as per BLM guidelines and to provide sources of water outside of the riparian areas."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion	O-33	LG257A	The impacts from riparian management can never be	The BLM does not agree with the implication of the	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-LG56)	described as "relatively minor." Any management involves significant investment of time and money, and BLM imposed reductions in grazing use would have significant and adverse effects on ranch operations.	sentence in question regarding the nature of impacts	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG258 (R-LG57)	The RMP only manages for the effects of livestock grazing when rules and policy require BLM to manage all grazing animals. For example, the RMP would require removal of livestock, if elk graze the area to 30% utilization (of woody species) or to 4" stubble height of key herbaceous species. Thus the impacts are potentially huge since it is generally not possible to remove livestock from a riparian area without removing them from the allotment entirely. Grazing management plans are the best way to address the issue but implementation of the plans depends entirely on BLM's willingness and ability to support the structures necessary to implement the plans. Historically, BLM has been unable to do so, thus the RMP puts the ranchers at a huge risk, since there is no correlative commitment in the RMP to approve and to fund these structures.	The BLM does not find the suggested change necessary as all management prescriptions proposed in the RMP are predicated on the basis that implementation would be accomplished as funding becomes available to accomplish them. See comment response LG220.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG259 (R-LG58)	The RMP needs to clearly commit to joint permittee BLM monitoring and implementation of grazing plans and range improvement projects. During the past planning cycle, BLM did not implement plans or conduct as much monitoring as needed. Also, for semantic purposes in the RMP, most allotments have grazing plans so any change is a revision.	See comment response LG219A.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG260 (R-LG59)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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			"Habitat and forage decisions for wildlife may affect livestock grazing directly and indirectly. Prescribed fire, vegetation treatments, and development of water may temporarily displace grazing but will benefit the operation over the long term. Impacts specific to decisions regarding the provision of habitat and forage, and potential emigration and reintroduction of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, bison, and moose, would include some changes in forage availability and use priority. Combined with prescribed fire and other vegetation treatment options, including enhanced distribution and access to water and impacts to livestock grazing from wildlife and fisheries management, would be minor. Any reintroduction of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep would occur only with the agreement of any affected permittee."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG260A (R-LG59)	The RMP ignores the fact that wildlife allocations and habitat restrictions adversely affect livestock grazing, especially where closures are imposed and range projects are blocked due to perceived adverse effects on wildlife. Range projects and vegetation treatments can displace an operator for several years, which can be very significant to the permittee. The RMP may benefit livestock grazing but as it is written and without clarification, it could lead to removal of grazing to a significant degree and this could force some operators out of business. The RMP must disclose these effects and discuss the social, economic and environment consequences. The RMP should also provide ways to mitigate the effects, including allocating replacement AUMs to livestock.	The anticipated impacts of wildlife management and forage allocation decisions on livestock grazing are discussed in Sections 4.7.1 and 4.7.2.2. The anticipated impacts of proposed management decisions on the socioeconomic elements of the planning area, which includes agricultural pursuits, are discussed in Section 4.12.3.1.	
Vermillion Ranch	O-33	LG261	As specified in the RMP, none of the allotments slated for reintroduction are sheep permits. The RMP,	Comment noted.	

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Limited Partnership		(R-LG60)	however, appears to set a precedent to cancel grazing permits for wildlife reintroduction. The RMP needs to clearly state that the reintroduction would not occur if it were to require cancellation of grazing permits. The RMP also needs to make it clear that adjacent sheep operations will not be adversely affected.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG262 (R-LG61)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Impacts to livestock grazing from these management decisions may be temporarily would be moderately adverse in that they would result in increased human caused noise, dust, and vegetation disturbance, and allow a greater opportunity for harassment of grazing animals. Intense recreational activities would exclude livestock use in the same area unless uses were separated in time. Any effects are best mitigated with signs, replacing gates with guards, and public education."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The BLM does not find the suggested change necessary as the RMP provides for actions, such as those suggested, that would help mitigate the impacts.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG262A (R-LG61)	The RMP overstates the effects of recreation use on livestock grazing. There is no basis for the claimed impacts of noise and dust. Dust does not adversely affect grazing activities. The RMP also overstates the impacts between recreation and livestock grazing. Public use of	Comment noted.	

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			rangelands has occurred for several decades and the effects on fences and harassment of livestock have been largely resolved. The most effective mitigation is to replace gates with cattle guards.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG263 (R-LG62)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "The mean number of AUMs per acre of land within the VPA is 0.06 AUMs (standard deviation of 0.04). Assuming this average loss per acre of land open to OHV use, the number of lost AUMs for these areas under Alternatives A, B, and C, would be up to 372, 326, and 326 AUMs respectively. There is no way to effectively quantify the amount of AUMs that have currently been lost due to the 787,859 acres of area open to OHV use under Alternative D. Sound management is likely to increase AUMs which would replace AUMs lost due to other land uses, including OHV recreation. However, it is assumed that future loss of AUMs by continuing to leave these areas open would be much higher than would be experienced under the more controlled OHV use proposed under Alternatives A, B, and C."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG263A (R-LG62)	This assumption cannot be proven. If the RMP is going to calculate lost AUMs for each land use, it needs to make the same calculation for wild horses outside HMAs, wild horse numbers that exceed AMLs, and lost AUMs due to big game population increases and habitat management. The RMP assumes that the forage resource is finite and cannot be increased, which is not the case. Vegetation treatments will very likely increase forage, which would replace lost forage due to other land uses. The RMP does not provide that forage increases would be allocated to livestock,	Forage allocations for livestock, wildlife and wild horses are covered Table 2.1.6 (Forage – All Locations) in the PRMP/FEIS. The allocation of increased forage resulting for improved range conditions and vegetative treatments is addressed in Table 2.1.6. BLM does not allocated forage to non-consumptive uses such as OHV use. But when activities such as OHV use reduce the amount of forage available for consumptive uses it is appropriate to attempt to quantify the level of that impact. Livestock forage made available by	

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			which is contrary to grazing rules, which provide the permittee is entitled to grazing increases when his investment yields increases in forage.	permittee investment would be allocated in proportion to the permittees contribution as provided for in the grazing regulations (43 CFR 4110.3-1(a)(1).	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG264 (R-LG63)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Impacts on livestock grazing from forage management decisions could result in increases or decreases in total AUMs, depending on the alternative. Increases in forage utilization in some areas of the VPA could occur where range improvements are planned. Without careful management, long-term impacts could be adverse, as increased utilization can result in decreased forage quality over time. Additional impacts would be related to the potential for available unallocated AUMs to be allocated to wildlife and wild horses, rather than livestock."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG264A (R-LG63)	This section is both confusing and not accurate. The RMP sets a precedent for removing livestock grazing from the landscape. There are few if any areas where forage for livestock grazing will be increased or could be increased in the future unless BLM commits to range projects and vegetation treatments and the effective management of other grazing animals. There are no unallotted AUMs. The Taylor Grazing Act adjudication process allocated the AUMs between wildlife and livestock grazing. The RMP would reallocate AUMs from livestock to wildlife.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	LG265 (R-LG64)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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Partnership			"Impacts from special status species, wild horses, and wildlife and fisheries management decisions are projected to be adversely small to moderate to significant on livestock grazing, as management for the increased needs of bighorn sheep could result in the negatively affect sheep operations reduction of grazing opportunities and changes in priority forage utilization for livestock. The RMP standards could dramatically affect forage and range management. The emphasis to manage for big game habitat also means that the management may reduce grass species and forage in favor of increasing browse species. In the case of special management species like the sage grouse, the management favoring sage brush may directly affect forage availability, especially when considered in the context of increased big game species and wild horses. Additional forage should be returned to livestock to replace reductions."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG265A (R-LG64)	The DEIS inconsistently identifies adverse impacts on livestock grazing (although understated) and elsewhere concludes there is no adverse impact. See above [LG260, LG263]. The RMP incorrectly assumes that forage is a finite resource that cannot be increased. Adverse effects should be mitigated with intensive management and BLM commitment to fund and approve range improvement projects.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG266 (R-LG65)	Delete the entire statement beginning with "The determination of the season of use.." and ending with ".....thereby producing minimal impacts to rangeland health."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why	

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				the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG266A (R-LG65)	The statement is not accurate. The RMP proposes to change seasons of use, thus decreasing the grazing season, which disrupts ranch operations. These decisions by law must be made on an allotment basis in consultation, cooperation and coordination with the permittee. 43 U.S.C. §1752(d); 43 C.F.R. §4110.3-3.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG267 (R-LG66)	The RMP fails to articulate a legal or policy reason to reduce domestic livestock grazing while increasing wild horses and wildlife. As written, this is arbitrary and capricious. The 5.7 % reduction is understated because it does not take into account the effects from other management standards in the RMP for wildlife, wild horses, and riparian areas. If grazing is reduced 5.7% it is not possible for the forage reductions to be 1% unless BLM treats the current non-use as permanent. The projected reduction also assumes that management cannot and will not increase forage. Sound management actions would avoid livestock reductions and should be a part of this plan.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG268 (R-LG67)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "As the number of AUMs is directly related to the amount of available forage for grazing, the short-and long-term, direct impacts can be similarly anticipated whenever AUMs are used as a quantitative measure of impact. In the short term, Alternative A would	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why	

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			beneficially impact livestock. Also, the use of grazing management criteria (see Section 2, Alternatives) to maintain or improve rangeland conditions, would over the long term, maintain adequate forage production levels for livestock, wildlife, and wild horse use. Minor Indirect and potentially significant indirect impacts as a result of the implementation of Alternative A would occur to the ranching community but not and to individual ranchers due to the reduction in AUMs."	the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG268A (R-LG67)	The RMP overstates the direct benefits to livestock grazing. The most beneficial alternative is the no action alternative. All of the other alternatives increase or expand big game wildlife management while sacrificing management for livestock grazing, restrict opportunities for vegetation treatments and range projects, and fail to address the resource damage done by uncontrolled wild horse numbers.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG269 (R-LG68)	RE: Alternative D – Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "The determination of season of use under Alternative D – No Action was based on the permitted use. Season of use, combined with allowable utilization levels would adversely impact rangeland health to the greatest degree among the alternatives. Under this alternative, within the VPA, a total of 146,161 AUMs would be allocated to livestock, a total of 96,607 AUMs would be allocated to wildlife, and a total of 3,360 AUMs would be allocated to wild horses. Forage actions for the uplands in all localities of the VPA are established in allotment management and grazing management plans. unspecified; therefore, the effects of forage management decisions on livestock grazing	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			cannot be determined at this time. Alternative D – No Action is the alternative most favorable to livestock."	Alternative D describes the current management.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG269A (R-LG68)	Alternative D is the best option and Alternative A should be modified to follow Alternative D. The RMP fails to accurately discuss current livestock grazing program. For instance, current seasons of use and standards in permits cannot be said to have adverse effects on rangeland health, while the RMP omits any mention of unmanaged wild horse and wildlife numbers, as well as lack of implementation of range projects from the previous land use plans.	The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.1) require BLM to consider reasonable alternatives, which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment, based on the nature of the proposal and facts in the case (CEQ 40 Most Asked Questions 1b.). While there are many possible management prescriptions or actions, the BLM used the scoping process to determine a reasonable range alternatives that best addressed the issues, concerns, and alternatives identified by the public. Public participation was essential in this process and full consideration was given to all potential alternatives identified. The BLM determined that a single alternative analyzing the protection of all Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would best provide a reasoned choice among the alternatives. Although the other alternatives do not provide specific management prescriptions to protect Non-WSA, these alternatives analyze and disclose the impacts of the proposed resource management prescriptions, uses and actions on the Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. This gives the public the ability to fully compare the consequences of protecting or not protecting the wilderness characteristics on these Non-WSA lands. If all alternatives contained comparable protections of the Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, the alternatives would have substantially similar consequences and would not be significantly distinguishable.	

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				The BLM, in developing the PRMP/FEIS, can chose management actions from within the range of the alternatives presented in the DRMP/DEIS and create a management plan that is effective in addressing the current conditions in the planning area based on FLPMA's multiple-use mandate.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG270 (R-LG69)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "The potential impacts of mineral development on livestock grazing would be similar for all of the alternatives. The construction of drilling well pads, pipelines, and access roads would remove areas from the forage base, thereby resulting in a decrease in available AUMs for livestock. These lost AUMs are expected to be relatively small and temporary. The actual losses of AUMs as a result of development under each alternative are described separately below. Mineral development would also potentially produce adverse impacts on use patterns due to roadways and fence lines, resulting in the potential fragmentation of the forage resource base. This fragmentation could result in areas where livestock grazing would be avoided or areas where livestock become more concentrated. While the loss in AUMs under any alternative would be relatively low, these other issues pertaining to habitat changes, either temporary or longer-term, resource fragmentation could result in a cumulatively greater impact.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	LG270A (R-LG69)	Discussion misuses term fragmentation and should be replaced with “habitat changes” or “habitat loss.” The RMP appears to use an expansive definition of fragmentation which applies whenever there is any	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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Partnership			removal or displacement, regardless of the fact that it is temporary. Since livestock are domesticated, most “fragmentation” can be overcome by driving or hauling livestock. Roads and fences do not fragment forage.	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG271 (R-LG70)	Modify the following statement as indicated by strikethrough deletions: "Improved management practices, coupled with rangeland improvements would result in improved wildlife habitat, potential benefits to Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species. , improved conditions for and security to permit holders, increased flexibility during times of drought, and potential improvements to scenic quality."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG271A (R-LG70)	The RMP does not increase security, nor provide flexibility to livestock operators. The RMP cancels permits, reduces grazing, restricts management action, and makes grazing subservient use to wildlife and wild horses. Scenic quality plays a minor role, if any, in livestock operations.	The BLM does not agree with the implication of the sentence in question regarding the nature of impacts.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG272 (R-LG71)	Delete the following statement in its entirety: "Alternative A would use a phenology-based system for timing livestock use. This system would use timing of vegetation growth to determine proper grazing limits. Due to limits on grazing time, Alternative A provides an intermediate amount of direct, long-term beneficial impacts to riparian resources, as compared to Alternatives B and C. This alternative would provide greater direct, long-term beneficial impacts than Alternative D – No Action."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG273 (R-LG72)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Alternative D – No Action would uses the grazing permit and/or allotment management plan to set the periods of time for a permitted system for timing livestock use. This system is currently in use and provides an intermediate amount of impacts between other alternatives. FLPMA provides that the number of livestock and seasons of use be established in the grazing permit and the grazing rules reflect this requirement."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	LG273A (R-LG72)	The RMP cannot override the permit terms and conditions. FLPMA requires that BLM set both numbers and seasons of use in the grazing permit. 43	See comment response LG88	

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Partnership			U.S.C. §1752(d) and 1752(e); 43 C.F.R. §4130.3-1. These are mandatory terms and BLM cannot set them outside of the permit. Natural Resources Defense Council v. Hodel, 618 F. Supp. 848, 869 (E.D. Calif. 1985) (setting aside cooperative management permit rule on basis that FLPMA requires the grazing permit to state the numbers and seasons of use). Only Alternative D conforms to FLPMA and grazing rules.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG274 (R-LG73)	Delete the following statement in its entirety: "In addition to oil and gas development, other activities, such as construction of livestock and wildlife facilities, vegetation treatments and harvesting of forest products would likely occur in various areas having wilderness character. However, at this time, site-specific project locations are not known."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG274A (R-LG73)	These activities are consistent with Wilderness Act, which allows livestock grazing and range improvements and are allowed under the IMP.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG275 (R-LG74)	Delete the following statement in its entirety: "Alternative A would employ a phenology-based grazing system, which would allow vegetation to recover by coupling forage use with dormancy and avoiding the growth periods of plants. Grazing would	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not	

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			occur in Area 1 (Special Resources) only at the discretion of the VFO. Also, BLM lands acquired in the Nine Mile area would not be grazed. This would have less of an adverse impact on vegetation compared to Alternative D – No Action."	substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG275A (R-LG74)	This belongs in an AMP or grazing plan.	See comment response LG68.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG276 (R-LG75)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Rangeland improvements that include vegetation treatments and fencing may would have short-term adverse impacts on vegetation caused by construction, surface disturbances, but would have long-term beneficial impacts on vegetation by improving distribution of grazing animals, restricting livestock, restoring natural vegetation communities, and eliminating weeds. Guzzlers and reservoir development would tend to have long-term adverse impacts on vegetation by concentrating livestock and attracting wildlife and wild horses in those areas, with subsequent disturbance and degradation of vegetation communities. These effects are mitigated in AMPs or grazing plans." Range improvements do not “restrict livestock” as written but facilitate proper grazing by encouraging	Section 4.16.2.7.4 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to read as follows: "Rangeland improvements that include vegetation treatments and fencing would have short-term adverse impacts on vegetation caused by construction, but would have long-term beneficial impacts on vegetation by improving distribution of grazing animals, restoring natural vegetation communities, and eliminating weeds. Guzzlers and reservoir development would tend to have long-term adverse impacts on vegetation by concentrating livestock and attracting wildlife and wild horses in those areas, with subsequent disturbance and degradation of vegetation communities."	X

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			livestock to water and graze outside of riparian areas.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG277 (R-LG76)	Amend the following sentences by adding the bolded language and deleting the strikethrough language: "Additional forage will be allocated in proportion to the contribution each program or permittee makes to improved conditions. If wild horses or big game in the Winter Ridge Wild Horse Herd Area do not need additional forage, it would be allocated to livestock. Additional forage in the northern-half of the Diamond Mountain locality (Diamond Mountain and Browns Park) would be provided to livestock until wildlife demands require them. These strategies would provide additional forage to wildlife under these conditions when compared to the No Action Alternative."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG277A (R-LG76)	Grazing rules regarding additional forage supersede RMP. Permittees with suspended use may also be entitled to increases.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG278 (R-LG77)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "If forage allocation reductions are necessary to make significant progress towards or sustain rangeland health, reductions must be based on the reasons that the area is not maintaining, meeting or not making progress towards meeting Utah rangeland health standards as shown by joint permittee and BLM monitoring. there is no specified management plan for the Bonanza and Book Cliffs localities. In the Bonanza Wild Horse Area locality pronghorn use would be reduced but not below 289 AUMs. Wild horse numbers	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences.	

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			may need to be reduced. In the Blue Mountain locality, any reductions in livestock use states that livestock AUM figures are not the final stocking levels. Rather, all livestock use adjustments would be implemented must be based on joint monitoring data by the permittee and BLM that document the causes for the area not meeting, failing to maintain, or not making substantial progress towards meeting Utah rangeland health standards and reductions must be prorated among the causes, i.e. wildlife, wild horses, and livestock, and through documented mutual agreement or by decision. When livestock use adjustments would be implemented by decision, it would be based on operator consultation and joint monitoring of resource conditions. Additionally, any necessary adjustments in stocking levels or other management practices, including changes or additions to existing management facilities, would be based on allotment evaluations. Decreases in livestock would be implemented over a 5-year period." The RMP would impose livestock reductions without regard to the causal role of livestock, wildlife, or wild horses, contrary to BLM policy, H-4180-1, ch. III 12-16. Reduction procedure as applied to livestock must conform to 43 C.F.R. §4110.2-3, which requires monitoring data and the cooperation, consultation and coordination with the permittee.	The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG279 (R-LG78)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "The Diamond Mountain locality would based on joint monitoring data by the permittee and BLM that documents the causes for the area not meeting, not	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not	

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			making substantial progress towards meeting, or not maintaining Utah rangeland health standards and reductions must be prorated among the causes, i.e. wildlife, and livestock, and through documented mutual agreement or by decision. make reductions using the following criteria. (1) Livestock temporary, nonrenewable AUMs above permitted use would be reduced first. (2) On wildlife crucial habitat, livestock permitted use would be reduced if there is a conflict between use by livestock and wildlife, and if wildlife numbers are within the herd unit or population objective levels. If there is no conflict and the reduction is necessary because of overuse by either livestock or wildlife, the number of grazers would be reduced. (3) On non-crucial wildlife habitat, livestock permitted use and wildlife numbers would be reduced in proportion to their role, if determined, or otherwise equally. The first year, there would be an initial 10% adjustment in permitted use. Five-year agreements would be developed and signed at the same time outlining the process for phased reductions in the desired level. (4)Temporary adjustments in use due to effects of drought would be made proportionally to livestock, wild horses, and/or wildlife as shown needed by joint monitoring by the permittee and BLM." BLM policy does not allow rangeland resources to be overused simply because UDWR herd numbers are higher. Similarly, BLM policy requires removal or reduction of wild horses or wildlife to the extent that they are the reason an area is not achieving rangeland health standards. Since rangeland health is based on a rule, the RMP must conform to the rule and BLM policy.	substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			The answer does not change even if the habitat is crucial or non-crucial. BLM policy does not allow pro-rating forage out of proportion to the contribution of each party.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG280 (R-LG79)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Additionally, any necessary adjustments in stocking levels or other management practices, including changes or additions to existing management facilities, would be based on allotment evaluations that would address the proportional and causal role played in the area not meeting, not making substantial progress towards meeting or not maintaining Utah rangeland health standards. Additional forage would be allocated in the Blue Mountain area the same as described for Book Cliffs except habitat for deer would be managed to support current levels and the permittee would receive additional AUMs in relation to management measures that led to improved resource conditions. Diamond Mountain additional forage would be used to provide additional AUMs (over permitted use) to livestock on a temporary, nonrenewable basis until identified for crucial wildlife needs. Additional AUMs outside crucial wildlife areas may be assigned to livestock."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG280A (R-LG79)	The RMP would allocate AUMs away from livestock for wildlife, notwithstanding BLM rules and policy to the contrary. The liberal use of “temporary nonrenewable” also contradicts the principles in Taylor Grazing Act and FLPMA that a permittee enjoy the certainty and	See comment response LG88.	

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			stability of livestock numbers. It also assumes that livestock grazing is not a primary multiple use of the public lands, even though FLPMA so provides.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG281 (R-LG80)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Special Designation areas (ACECs/Research Natural Areas [RNAs]) may would generally have a long-term beneficial impact on the wildlife and fisheries known to occur within their boundaries but the restrictions on management actions would also have adverse effects. Normally, only activities that would maintain or enhance habitat used by wildlife and fisheries and maintain livestock grazing at grazing preference levels would be permitted in these areas, although some of these areas would remain open to minerals development. In areas where minerals development may impact wildlife and fisheries, restrictive lease stipulations would be required to minimize these impacts. The designation of these areas, or lack thereof, would have similar impacts between alternatives. Alternative C proposes the most ACECs/Research Natural Areas. Alternatives B and D propose the same ACECs/Research Natural Areas. Alternative A generally designates fewer acres in the existing and proposed ACECs/Research Natural Areas than Alternative C but more than Alternatives B and D."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG281A (R-LG80)	The DEIS discussion implies that livestock grazing will be restricted in ACECs when nothing else in the plan discloses this consequence. The RMP does not document the basis for the restrictions.	Nowhere in the statement in question is livestock grazing or any restriction to it mentioned. The commenter has misinterpreted the statement regarding the interaction between special designations and livestock grazing. Please see Section 4.7.2, second to last bullet, regarding the anticipated impact of special designations on livestock and grazing resources.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG282 (R-LG81)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions: "Provided that there is no adverse effect on sheep permittees, habitat and forage would be provided for the emigration and/or reintroduction of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in the following areas: ..This would expand the reintroduction effort for bighorn sheep in the VPA and would benefit bighorn sheep populations when compared with the No Action Alternative. So long as it does not adversely affect existing grazing permits and preference rights, habitat and forage would be provided for the emigration and/or reintroduction of bison. Habitat and forage would be provided for the emigration and/or reintroduction of moose. This would benefit moose populations in the VPA when compared with the No Action Alternative. Moose and bison are also subject to rangeland health."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG282A (R-LG81)	The DEIS needs to discuss and disclose the effects on existing ranch operations. Reintroduction may adversely affect nearby permittees. The RMP fails to disclose the basis or the effects of introducing either bison or moose. Portions of the DEIS conclude there is range degradation, a fact, that if true, would argue against the introduction of another grazing animal, when BLM has limited authority to control numbers or grazing. In addition, brucellosis infections from bison herds pose a serious health risk for Utah cattle.	The subsection entitled Reintroductions in Table 2.1.26 states that: “After analysis, reintroductions would be made in areas where they do not conflict with livestock or where such conflicts would be avoided. Coordination with permittees would be required.”	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	LG283	Add the following statement: Grazing is an important economic and cultural resource	Table 2.1.8 (Livestock and Grazing Management) in the PRMP/FEISPRMP/FEIS has been changed to read as follows:	X

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Partnership			and the BLM goal is to maintain and enhance the industry by retaining full historic grazing preference through management prescriptions and forage for wildlife and wild horses.	"Achieve appropriate utilization of the range by livestock and wildlife through management prescriptions and administrative adjustments."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG284 (R-LG52)	The assumption of limited demand for AUMs is unsubstantiated. If BLM had a number of vacant allotments it could make the case but it does not. The only vacant allotments are those purchased by UDWR and kept in nonuse in violation of the grazing rules limiting nonuse to 3 years. The RMP incorrectly implies that most livestock grazing in the VPA is year-long and not under any system. The BLM made a policy decision several years ago not to make significant investments for allotments that were in good condition (M) or which could not be improved (C). Those allotments were not scheduled for intensive management and no funding was allocated for improvements.	See comment response LG53.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG285	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions: "On the remaining 7 allotments (Red Creek Flat, Rye Grass, Marshall Draw, Taylor Flat, Warren Draw South, Watson-Diamond Mountain and Sears Canyon), cattle are permitted on a temporary, non-renewable basis; however, such use has been is discretionary. Applications for grazing permits will be considered."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the	

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				adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG285A	Grazing should be restored to these allotments. TNR does not contribute to the stability of the livestock industry, a policy that is mandated by Taylor Grazing Act and FLPMA.	See comment response LG88.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG286	The RMP does not disclose what is the full historic grazing preference. Chapter 3 states that 146,220 AUMs are allocated to grazing and 137,897 AUMs are active permitted use. The difference in 8,323 AUMs appears to be the Bookcliffs permits now owned by UDWR. The RMP and DEIS must disclose this difference. As written, BLM would never restore the suspended preference, when preference grazing is to be restored when permittees contribute to increased forage. 43 C.F.R. §4130.3-2.	As stated on Page 3-35 in Section 3.7 Livestock and Grazing, the last paragraph; 146,161 AUMs are the Full preference for Alternative D. See Table 2.1.6 (Forage – All Localities) where the AUMs for the TNC and RMEF are discussed.2. Nowhere in the PRMP/FEIS does in state that the BLM would never restore suspended preference.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG287	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Impacts to livestock grazing from fire management decisions, livestock grazing management decisions, rangeland improvements, riparian management decisions, vegetation management decisions, and woodland and forest management decisions are projected to be directly beneficial and provide both short-and long-term improvements in forage health and availability, habitat improvements, and water access and availability. These improvements will directly benefit livestock grazing over the long-term, while having significant adverse impacts over the short term. The permittee will lose access to allotments or parts of allotments during vegetation treatment and must make a significant investment of time and often money to support implementation of the other management decisions. The use of fire as a management tool may	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			lead to some areas being unavailable for foraging in the short term, but in the long term would act to improve overall conditions and reduce the chance for catastrophic wildland fire damage. Additional forage will be allocated to livestock to replace lost AUMs."		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG287A	Effective vegetation treatment and range projects will improve range resources and forage availability. These increases should go first to livestock. 43 C.F.R. §4110.3- 1. Failure to implement the projects (as in the past) may force operators out of business and the DEIS needs to disclose and discuss this possibility.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG288	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Increased human-caused impacts would include potential harassment of livestock, potential for OHVs to move off of designated roads and trails, potentially producing vegetation losses due to illegal trails, and the potential cutting of fences or leaving gates open affecting proper livestock distribution. These events currently occur and have been mitigated through public education and signs. Under Alternative D – No Action, designated routes would not exist, which would allow visitors to travel throughout the allotments. Four open or “play” areas exist close to Vernal, Utah. These areas are designated as “open for OHV use. While these areas are limited in forage production, they are located within existing allotments. Due to the level of impact, these areas would be considered lost in the calculation of forage production because these areas effectively change the allotment boundaries."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG288A	The DEIS overstates the effects of lost AUMs. RMP actually creates sacrifice areas outside of existing allotments, a fact not included in this discussion. As written, this section overstates the user conflicts while	Comment noted.	

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			grossly understating the inter-relationship between wildlife and wildlife habitat and livestock grazing management. BLM cannot remove land from forage calculations unless there is no vegetation or the allotment and 10-year grazing permit is amended in accordance with the grazing rules. 43 C.F.R. §§4110.3-2; 4110.4.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG289	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded strikethrough deletions: "Impacts from recreation and travel-based management decisions are expected to be adversely small to moderate on livestock grazing as related to increases in noise, dust, soil and vegetation disturbances, and harassment from humans. The majority of these projected impacts are assumed to be the result of proposed increases in motorized travel and access opportunities."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG289A	The DEIS overstates recreation and grazing use conflicts in this section.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG290	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions: "Activities associated with the exploration and development of mineral resources would have impacts on livestock grazing that would result in: 1) the	Section 4.7.2.3 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to read as follows: "Activities associated with the exploration and development of mineral resources would have impacts on livestock grazing that would result in: 1)	X

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			temporary loss of vegetation and/or the loss of land available for grazing; 2) the possible disruption of livestock practices; and 3) the possible loss of grazing capacity due to changes in land management. These are minor, unless well densities are higher than projected, and are routinely mitigated. Reclamation can result in more palatable forage Livestock grazing and the development of oil and gas and coal bed methane, deposits are assumed to be generally compatible uses in most cases, as exploration activity would be short-term and extraction activities and impacts are expected to have relatively small footprints for equipment and machinery. Development of phosphate, Gilsonite, tar sands, and oil shale resources would result in the long-term removal of lands from grazing activity to a greater extent than the above resource extraction processes. Presently, it does not appear that there is a viable market for tar sands or oil shale. In general, livestock grazing on rangeland would be expected to continue at some level during the development of oil and gas, and coal bed resources, which mitigates displacement."	the temporary loss of vegetation and/or the loss of land available for grazing; 2) the possible disruption of livestock practices; and 3) the possible loss of grazing capacity due to changes in land management. These are minor, unless well densities are higher than projected, and are routinely mitigated. Reclamation can result in more palatable forage Livestock grazing and the development of oil and gas and coal bed methane, deposits are assumed to be generally compatible uses in most cases, as exploration activity would be short-term and extraction activities and impacts are expected to have relatively small footprints for equipment and machinery. Development of phosphate, Gilsonite, tar sands, and oil shale resources would result in the long-term removal of lands from grazing activity to a greater extent than the above resource extraction processes. In general, livestock grazing on rangeland would be expected to continue at some level during the development of oil and gas, and coal bed resources, which mitigates displacement."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG290A	This section overstates the impacts, largely because the market for tar sands and oil shale remains speculative. As noted above, the RMP overstates the conflicts in some areas while understating the conflicts in others.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG77 (R-GC1)	[T]he phenology criteria described in Alternative A are an appropriate consideration in setting seasons of use for an allotment but not as an across-the-board prescription for the entire planning area. As used, the RMP does not allow managers or permittees sufficient flexibility to accommodate yearly variations in weather, precipitation, and plant phenology or variations of elevation, topography or aspect within the identified	The stated seasons of use are not proposed to be applied on a planning area wide basis. Instead, seven geographical areas, considering topography, climate and other resource and management consideration, are identified in figure 7 and area specific seasons of use are identified. Extended seasons of use are also identified when range management practices such as deferment and rest	

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			areas.	are implemented. In area number 6, the end date for the season of use has been extended from 2/28, as stated in the existing land use plan, to 5/1 to provide for existing livestock operations while maintaining or enhancing rangeland conditions. Only in a few isolated instances where BLM has identified concerns regarding the season of use and rangeland health standards will current seasons of use be affected. In addition, the plan proposes, under Section 2.4.7.2, that seasons of use could be authorized outside of those proposed when certain criteria are met. These criteria can be found in Section 2.4.7.3 of the PRMP/FEIS. These criteria give the Authorizing Officer adequate flexibility to manage BLM lands on a site-specific basis while avoiding seasons of use that may be detrimental to the health of the public rangelands.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG78 (R-GC2)	The analysis in the RMP is entirely inadequate. The Analysis of the Management Situation merely refers to an earlier study done for the Diamond Mountain RMP, which in turn refers to the 1980 study. The RMP assumes, based on that study, that the river segments are still suitable for designation. Much has changed in 25 years and the failure to actually conduct the necessary study violates BLM policy regarding assessments and renders the EIS legally inadequate as well.	The FLPMA gives the BLM broad authority to manage the public lands, including management of eligible and suitable river segments. For eligible rivers, it is BLM's policy to protect certain values identified in the eligibility determination process to ensure that a decision on suitability can be made. To accomplish this objective, the BLM's management prescriptions must protect the free-flowing character, tentative classifications, and identify outstandingly remarkable values of eligible rivers according to the prescriptions and directions of the current, applicable land use plan per BLM Manual Section 8351.32C. The BLM Manual further states that should a determination on suitability not are made during the planning process, "the RMP	

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				must prescribe protective management measures to ensure protection shall be afforded the river and adjacent public land area pending the suitability determination" (Section 8351.33A). The NEPA specifies that while work on the EIS is in progress, BLM cannot undertake or authorize any actions in the interim that would prejudice the RMP decision or, in this case, the suitability determination (40 CFR 1505.1 (c)(3)). A case-by-case evaluation of potential impacts resulting from a proposed action must be made to ensure that all eligible rivers are not limited from being considered for suitability among the range of RMP alternatives, thus eliminating the opportunity to prejudice the decision. Implementation of the interim management to protect eligible rivers, therefore, is applied through site-specific NEPA analysis of environmental impacts on a case-by-case basis. The NEPA compliance, required for all Federal actions that could significantly affect the environment, ensures that BLM consider alternatives to the proposed action and provides BLM an opportunity to apply mitigation measures that will reduce impacts on a given resource such as an eligible stream. This mechanism of applying management must be in conformance with the current land use plan. Protective prescriptions would be applied to rivers determined suitable in the ROD for the Field Office RMP. Resource allocations (such as those for visual resources, OHV use, and mineral leasing) compatible with protecting river values would be prescribed for suitable river corridors as part of the decision. In addition, no special management objectives would be applied to eligible rivers	

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				determined not to be suitable in the ROD. Instead, they would be managed without additional consideration according to the provisions of the plan.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG82 (R-AT8)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "This alternative would provide resource protection for livestock grazing by maintaining forage utilization at proper use, while allowing low impact to rangeland health. However, there would be see a 3-4 percent anticipated loss of AUMs from mineral development and the least number of acres treated for improvements under rangeland improvement management actions." It is not accurate to state that livestock grazing harms rangeland health. The RMP provides little resource protection for grazing and leaves an operator vulnerable to conflicts with big game and wild horses, inability to manage or use riparian areas and water resources, while being subject to arbitrary standards that are applied without regard to the site.	Section 4.7.2.6.1 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised as suggested.	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG83 (R-AT9)	Modify the following statement as indicated by the strikethrough deletions: "Alternative D-No Action would provide the least number of acres for fire treatment, and produce the greatest long-term adverse impacts to rangeland health. This alternative would provide for rangeland improvements greater than Alternative A, but less than Alternatives B and C."	Section 4.7.2.6.4 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised as suggested.	X

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			This paragraph contradicts most other portions of the DEIS. It is not clear why the BLM would conclude Alternative D would not benefit rangeland health when elsewhere it has the largest number of acres subject to vegetation treatment. Moreover, rangeland health standards are enforced by rule and apply to Alternative D. The statement is inaccurate.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG84 (R-AT5) This is AT95 in BLM Table 9-30.	Add the following language: For all alternatives, the vegetation treatments and range improvement projects are merely projections and are not a ceiling on possible projects."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG84A (R-AT5) This is AT95 in BLM Table 9-30.	The discussion regarding range projects needs to be prefaced with an explanation that these are anticipated projects but are not intended to set a limit, when designing grazing management plans. As written, the discussion appears to set ceilings on range projects. The discussion is also troubling in that it fails to show how BLM would actually accomplish these objectives. Unfortunately planned projects are often not funded or not approved due to lack of resources to complete NEPA evaluation. The agriculture industry should not suffer if BLM fails to secure the funding or uses the	The entire RMP and the management actions within it are predicated upon the base assumption that the BLM will have the funding and staffing necessary to accomplish the decisions enacted upon issuance of the Record of Decision.	

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			funding for other priorities.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LG85 (R-AT5)	The number of acres for vegetation treatment, especially the differences between Alternatives D and A, make no sense. Vegetation treatment can be equally or even more beneficial for wildlife. There is no explanation for fewer acres.	See comment response LG48.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LR27 (R-LR1)	"Acquire lands that would enhance management objectives of this RMP or dispose of lands to resolve unintentional agricultural trespass."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LR27A (R-LR1)	There are a few cases in the planning area of long-standing unintentional trespass where settlers have been growing hay fields on land that is actually owned by the United States. The RMP needs to provide for disposal of these lands to resolve unintentional trespass.	Unintentional trespass is addressed in Table 2.1.7 (Lands and Realty Management) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Trespass Resolution.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LR28 (R-LR2)	In Utah, the Schools and Institutional Trust Lands Administration ("SITLA") administers four sections out of each township and enjoys rights of access to develop these lands. State of Utah ex rel. Cotter Corp. v. Andrus, 487 F. Supp. 995 (D. Ut. 1979).	Comment noted.	
Vermillion	O-33	LR29	Add the bolded language to the following sentence:	The proposed changes have been implemented as	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-LR3)	"If one or more of the above criteria are not met, proposed land ownership changes outside of designated transfer areas would not be approved or would require a plan amendment unless it was determined to be in the best interests of the affected landowners and in the public…"	suggested.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LR29A (R-LR3)	As written, the land tenure adjustment ("LTA") criteria are too limiting and prescriptive. LTA standards should also consider the interests of local and tribal governments, both in terms of land management and protecting the local tax base.	See comment response LR3A.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LR30 (R-LR4)	"No lands would be classified or opened for agricultural entry or leasing in the RMP planning area, unless consistent with the proposed land exchange or sale."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LR30A (R-LR4)	If the RMP plans to authorize land exchanges, it should allow agricultural entry consistent with the proposed land exchange. It is not clear what kind of leasing is meant here. Generally, BLM will withdraw the land to preclude mineral entries or lease sales that are	See comment response LR1.	

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			inconsistent with land exchanges.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LR31 (R-LR5)	FLPMA criteria for land exchanges differ from the criteria in the RMP. 43 U.S.C. §1716 for non-federal land exchanges to be acquired through both Bureau- and public-initiated exchanges.	The comment does not indicate how the commenter believes the criteria differ from or are otherwise inconsistent with FLMPA. The VFO developed the language of the RMP based upon standard agency policy, which conforms to the mandates of FLPMA regarding land exchanges and acquisitions.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LR31A (R-LR5)	These land exchanges should also be consistent with local government and tribal land use plans.	See comment response LR2A.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LR32 (R-LR6)	BLM should not be in the business of acquiring land solely for big game habitat due to adverse impacts on the local tax base.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	LR33	Add the following language as a requirement of land exchanges: "The land exchange is consistent with state, local, government, and tribal plans."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The BLM is required to engage in land exchanges in accordance with FLMPA, not with non-federal	

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				policies. The BLM is, however, required to notify government entities that have zoning or other land use regulatory jurisdiction within the geographical area of the exchange/acquisition, which the BLM does as a matter of standard procedure not dictated by the prescriptions of the RMP. See comment response LR2A.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	PR33 (R-PR1)	The draft RMP and DEIS recognize the existence of county and state plans but do little to incorporate their provisions into the plan to ensure consistency or to address conflicts. In addition, the RMP needs to consider management in the adjacent BLM field offices, and the respective local government plans, policies and programs, such as the Moffat County land use plan and the Sweetwater County Conservation District plan.	The management of adjacent Field Office plans has been accounted for in the development of the RMP. Adjacent county plans were not reviewed in the development of the RMP, as the RMP does not make management decisions for lands within the areas under county jurisdiction. See comment response PR3.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	PR34 (R-PR2)	The State of Utah owns four sections in each township of public land in the planning area. These lands are administered by the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (“SITLA”) to generate revenues for public schools. The statutory mandate to manage these lands for revenue production also imposes an obligation on BLM to assure access. State of Utah ex rel. Cotter Corp. v. Andrus, 487 F. Supp. 995 (D. Utah 1979). The draft RMP imposes significant development restrictions on the Trust lands without any discussion of the conflicts or justification for not revising the management to reduce these conflicts.	The BLM makes no claims to implementing management decisions on lands administered by the SITLA. Further, the BLM and the RMP recognize valid existing rights, including those of landowners and/or administrators of lands contained or "landlocked" within BLM lands. The BLM recognizes its mandate to ensure access to those lands or to compensate the owners/administrators of such lands when access cannot be maintained. Management actions implemented through the RMP apply only to lands administered by the BLM.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	PR35 (R-PR4)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "While the BLM would not cannot consider designating	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes	

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			additional WSAs in this planning process, it can manage the resources to protect those individual components associated with wilderness, such as opportunity for solitude. would consider whether non-WSA lands with or likely to have wilderness characteristics will be managed to preserve some or all of those values with other land management allocations and actions. These allocation management actions may include, but would not be limited to, designation of OHV categories, mineral leasing categories and withdrawals, VRM classes, special recreation management areas, and Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes., and ACECs.	necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	PR35A (R-PR4)	As written, the RMP still fails to conform to the State of Utah v. Norton settlement or other case law. An ACEC or special management area cannot be a surrogate for a former “wilderness inventory area.” Unfortunately, many of the proposed SRMAs or ACECs are exactly that and they fail to meet the criteria and policy.	ACECs are not designated by the BLM as surrogates for WSAs or former WIAs. ACECs can only be designated where outstanding and remarkable resource values are present and where such values are under imminent threat of irreparable harm. Types of values that can be considered include, but are not limited to, scenic, fish and wildlife, and natural systems. These values often coincide with WSAs and non-WSA lands possessing wilderness characteristics. As such, there are some instances in which the BLM's proposed ACEC designations overlap with former WSAs and WIAs. SRMAs are designated in a similar fashion, only where special management is needed to maintain desired recreational opportunities. Like ACECs, SRMAs often coincide with lands with wilderness characteristics, particularly in areas like the Vernal Planning Area, where desired recreational opportunities include, but are not limited to, hiking, backpacking, stream/river fishing, etc.	
Vermillion	O-33	PR36	Modify the following statement as indicated by the	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-PR5)	bolded additions: "Assure that counties and others, such as Native American tribes (Tribes) whose interests might be affected have a sufficient opportunity for productive participation in BLM planning and resource management decision-making. Further assure that the RMP is consistent with state, local government and tribal government plans, programs, and policies and work to resolve contradictions."	changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	PR36A (R-PR5)	FLPMA requires that BLM plans be consistent with local governments, unless contrary to federal law. 43 U.S.C. §1712(c)() (9). Thus, consistency should be a keystone consideration.	Please, see comment response PR3 for the rationale behind this. In short, FLPMA requires only that the BLM give consideration to consistency with non-Bureau plans and make an effort to reconcile inconsistencies when practical.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	PR37 (R-PR7)	Modify the following statement as indicated by the bolded additions: "All future ROW applications. . . would be evaluated on a case by case basis. Future ROWs would be consolidated in corridors where reasonable and economically feasible, legally required, or consistent with state, local or tribal plans, programs, and policies."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the	

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				adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	PR37A (R-PR7)	The RMP must consider and disclose the impacts relating to the exercise of valid existing rights. This analysis would include but not be limited to, R.S. 2477 rights-of-way, ditch and water rights etc. In addition, BLM must provide access when it is legally required, such as under the Mineral Leasing Act or to in-holdings, 16 U.S.C. §3210(b).	The PRMP/FEIS already recognizes all valid existing rights and the authorities that mandate access across BLM lands. However, as a general rule under FLPMA, the BLM is not required to ensure that its right-of-way designations are consistent with the plans, programs, and policies of state, local, or tribal entities but to make an effort to be consistent with them when practical and to be consistent with federal law. See comment response GC24.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	PR38 (R-PR9)	The RMP needs to address the connected actions occurring in the adjacent field offices in Wyoming and Colorado, as well as the local government plans and policies in those areas. The VFO is not an isolated island and the adjacent land management actions are cumulative actions that need to be addressed in the regional overview and the cumulative effects chapter. The RMP is incomplete by not addressing land use and social and economic issues in Wyoming. As the RMP notes, Daggett County is economically connected to Sweetwater County.	Section 1.10 of the PRMP/FEIS indicates that Sweetwater General Plan (and other county plans adjacent to the planning area in Wyoming and Colorado) would be reviewed as a part of the planning process. These plans were reviewed and considered in the development of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	PR39 (R-PR10)	This discussion is not an adequate discussion of consistency. The RMP must conform to the county plans unless legally contradicted. 43 U.S.C. §1712(c)(9). The RMP needs to address when how the RMP is consistent and how it is not. For example, the RMP land locks most of the Utah trust lands, thereby frustrating statutory direction that these lands be managed to maximize revenue. The RMP needs to identify and discuss the conflicts between school trust mandates and proposed management of the public lands and property rights.	See comment responses GC34 and PR70.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RE67 (R-AT6)	-Alternative D The SRMA is not adequately justified and should be discontinued.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RE77 (R-RE6)	Recreation use is a direct, not an indirect effect on riparian resources. The RMP provides for no mitigation from adverse recreation impacts.	The proposed PRMP/FEIS is a programmatic NEPA document that analyses impacts of the proposed management actions under the various alternatives. This level of analysis is necessarily broad in scale. Site-specific impacts of recreational activities on riparian resources would be analyzed under separate NEPA processes and documents. As described in Table 2.1.13 (Recreation Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Goals and Objectives, it includes managing recreation within the VPA under comprehensive integrated activity level planning. These plans would include recreation use allocations, group size or seasonal limitations, opportunities for dispersed or organized camping (including large events), and establishing limits of acceptable change. Broad mitigation measures are described for riparian resources in Section 4.11.3. Also see comment response RE20.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RE78 (R-RE7)	The statement that access roads would increase illegal OHV use makes no sense. If the road is open OHV use is lawful. If it is not, it does not follow that a limited access road promotes unlawful activity.	The statement in question does not say that access roads will increase illegal OHV use. Rather, the statement says, "more roads would increase access for illegal OHV use in remote riparian areas." That is, the presence of more roads provides more opportunity for illegal OHV use in remote riparian areas to occur. Under all Alternatives, OHV travel is designated	

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				Open-Managed, Limited, or Closed. See Figures 25-28 and 28e in the PRMP/FEIS. Not all open roads are considered designated routes. As such, limited access roads, while not being designated for OHV use, have the potential to attract unapproved OHV use.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RE78A (R-RE7)	This statement should be deleted.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW52 (R-RW1)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Management actions to meet riparian objectives would include alternative sources of water, fencing, herding, change of livestock class, temporary closures, and/or changes of season. Additional management actions would include reductions in big game and/or wild horse numbers." Herding is very expensive and not reasonable alternative without proper infrastructure (fencing and	The management actions listed in Table 2.1.16 (Riparian Resources) of the PRMP/FIES to meet riparian objectives are a range that includes herding of livestock as a management action that would be applied where appropriate. Nowhere in this section is it implied or stated that the livestock grazing industry is specifically targeted for application of riparian and wetland resources management actions. The commenter does not provide additional information on what "significant factors" have been omitted from livestock grazing prescriptions.	X

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			water). Herding is not a substitute for structural range improvements. An essential component of riparian management is to provide alternative sources of water to facilitate distribution of livestock and big game / wild horses. The prescription omits significant factors of big game and wild horses and unfairly targets the livestock industry. It also implies that BLM will not support nor fund the range improvements necessary to properly manage the rangeland resources.	Table 2.1.16 under the subsection entitled Management Common to All Action Alternatives has been revised to read as follows: "Appropriate management actions to meet riparian objectives could include fencing, herding, change of livestock class, temporary closures, and/or change of season."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW53 (R-RW2)	RE: Alternative A (Pages 2-53 and 2-54)— Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Key streamside herbaceous riparian vegetation, where stream bank stability is dependant dependent upon it, would have a minimum stubble height at the end of the growing season capable of trapping and assuring retention of sediment during high flows. Management actions could be based on residual stubble height of key herbaceous species measured from the green line or utilization of current year's growth at the end of the growing season. An initial management action would be to set a stubble height of 4 inches or 30% utilization on key herbaceous species measured from the green line if riparian conditions in that reach are to be maintained and 6 inches stubble height on key herbaceous species measured from the green line or <20% utilization if riparian conditions need to be improved. This initial stubble height or utilization level would need to be jointly monitored by the permittee and BLM to verify if it provides for maintenance or improvement objectives, with adjustments in allowable utilization or stubble height being made as needed."	Table 2.1.6 (Riparian Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to correct the spelling error in Table 2.3 (Riparian Alternative A). The BLM declines to make the other suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	X

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			Make the same changes for Alternative A, same pages. Make the same changes on Page 2-86 under Alternative A. Make the following changes on Page 2-86 for Alternative D: "Upland utilization and riparian vegetation utilization measurements are specified in allotment management and grazing plans, rather than in the RMP unspecified, and proper use would potentially be maintained." The alternatives incorrectly use the stubble height and utilization standards interchangeably. They are not interchangeable and as written, they are not defined properly. The RMP should adopt the stubble height standard as revised. This comment applies throughout the document, which refers to riparian grazing use standards in terms of (4" stubble on key herbaceous species or 6" stubble height or 30% to 20% utilization presumably on woody species. See e.g. 2-53, page 2-86 and 2-93. The riparian standards stated on page 4-238, 4.15.2.2.1 Alternative A (also see line 2 page 4-239) are equally problematicequally problematic. The differences in wording regarding key species vs. woody species are significant and could lead to very troublesome interpretations by staff. Monitoring needs to be jointly done by BLM and the permittee. The RMP discussion is inaccurate.		
Vermillion	O-33	RW54	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-RW11)	additions and strikethrough deletions: Effects of Minerals decisions may have adverse direct and indirect effects on riparian resources would be adverse, long-term, and direct, resulting from in upland erosion and subsequent stream sedimentation through surface disturbing activities. These potential impacts are mitigated by best management practices for nonpoint source pollution and BLM fluid minerals BMPs. The impacts analysis represents relative risks of adverse impacts to riparian resources by alternative, due to the incomplete riparian inventory data. Site-specific analyses would need to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis to establish quantitative impacts. Reclamation and restoration of oil and gas, locatable minerals, surface minerals, and alternative energy sites would be required upon abandonment of the site, resulting in less stream sedimentation. The risks of accidental release of hazardous materials and petroleum products from oil, gas, and coal bed methane (CBM) leasing sites would also have an indirect, long-term, adverse impact on riparian resources. Drawdown of groundwater due to techniques used to extract oil, gas, and coal bed methane could lead to dewatering of riparian areas, increasing the risks of invasive species introduction and reducing water available for riparian ecosystems." Mineral development decisions would have temporary and largely mitigated impacts on riparian resources. There is little, if any basis, for the statement that oil and gas or CBM development will dewater a riparian area. Similar discussions with BLM planning specialists agree that a riparian area would be "dewatered" only if	changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			a reservoir were built and the stream diverted into the reservoir. CBM produces water from the coal, not underground aquifers. Thus this statement in the RMP shows a shocking lack of understanding regarding CBM. Oil and gas development produces water only when the well fails to strike oil or gas and this is temporary since such strikes are quickly plugged. Wells are cased as they are drilled so going through an aquifer does not pump water from the aquifer. Technology allows drilling with little adverse effects, including within the flood plain of the Green River.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW55 (R-RW4)	RE: Alternative D— The RMP does not justify the proposed change from Alternative D and no change should be made.	BLM must provide a reasonable range of alternatives for consideration and analysis.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW56 (R-RW5)	RE: Alternative A—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "245,649 AUMs allotted with 4" to 6" stubble height of key herbaceous species measured on the green line 30% riparian utilization and grazing by big game and wild horses may would cause more short-term adverse impacts to riparian resources than Alternative C." The RMP inaccurately assumes that livestock grazing will harm riparian resources. First, livestock grazing has occurred in these riparian areas for more than 100 years. These riparian areas receive heavy utilization by wild horses and big game. As written this is a very biased and not accurate. Second, other uses contribute to effects on riparian resources. Third,	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			livestock grazing has declined while big game (and wild horse) numbers have increased. The RMP needs to reconsider the assumption that livestock grazing is the sole or even major factor in adverse impacts to riparian resources.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW57 (R-RW6)	RE: Alternative D—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "246,128 AUMs allotted with unspecified use of riparian areas in the current RMPs but riparian use is specified in grazing plans and allotment management plans. would have the greatest adverse impacts to riparian resources." This statement in the RMP with respect to Alternative D is flatly incorrect. Riparian use is specified in the individual allotment management and grazing plans.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW58 (R-RW7)	RE: Alternative A—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Rangeland improvements would treat 34,640 acres, and this reduction in acres treated will result in less benefit with the least beneficial impacts to riparian resources from which would occur with more acres treated. Vegetation treatments seek to improve improving filtration (reducing sedimentation) and range improvement structures elsewhere reduce reducing livestock, wildlife, and wild horse watering within riparian areas."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences.	

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			The RMP never explains why Alternative A has the least benefits from range projects nor does it explain the reason for fewer acres. As written this makes little sense and assumes that only livestock grazing adversely affects riparian areas. Range projects have equal benefits to riparian areas through better distribution and use of water elsewhere on the public lands by wildlife and wild horses.	The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. Table 2.2.12 (Range Improvements) of the PRMP/FEIS states that Alternative A is the most beneficial of all the alternatives because it would treat the greatest number of acres.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW59 (R-RW8)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded: "Approximately 16,000 acres of riparian zones are found along the Green and White Rivers and Bitter, Evacuation, Sweetwater, and Willow Creeks in the Book Cliffs portion of the VPA. As of 1982, 470 acres of riparian zones in the Book Cliffs portion of the VPA were identified as being in poor ecological condition (BLM 1984). These data are not current and are probably not an accurate indicator of current conditions. BLM will continue to complete the range health assessments for each allotment. The Diamond Mountain portion of the VPA contains 60,300 acres of riparian lands (2 percent of the inventoried lands), with 15,650 acres of the 60,300 acres in public lands. There are 540 miles of perennial and intermittent streams in the VPA (BLM 1993b). The BLM manages its riparian zones for multiple uses, including recreation, grazing, wildlife habitat, and other uses." The DEIS needs to disclose the fact that it has no current assessment of the Book Cliffs riparian zones. Twenty-three year old data are not meaningful nor reliable. Riparian areas will recover (and change)	Section 3.11.1 of the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to include clarification of out-dated riparian data for the Book Cliffs and an acknowledgment that preliminary inventories have been conducted, to be followed by comprehensive VPA wetland and riparian inventories (Section 3.11.2). The reads as follows: “Approximately 16,000 acres of riparian zones are found along the Green and White Rivers and Bitter, Evacuation, Sweetwater, and Willow Creeks in the Book Cliffs portion of the VPA. As of 1982, 470 acres of riparian zones in the Book Cliffs portion of the VPA were identified as being in poor ecological condition (BLM 1984). However, current riparian conditions within the Book Cliffs are being assessed, and riparian conditions could have changed since the 1984 riparian/wetland assessment (see 3.11.2 below). The Diamond Mountain portion of the VPA contains 60,300 acres of riparian lands (2 percent of the inventoried lands), with 15,650 acres of the 60,300 acres in public lands. There are 540 miles of perennial and intermittent streams in the VPA (BLM 1993b). The BLM manages its riparian zones for multiple uses,	X

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			relatively quickly. The DEIS cannot assume that area remains in "poor ecological condition." Nor is it accurate for the RMP to imply that the poor ecological conditions are due to domestic livestock grazing or that they still exist. For instance, in the Book Cliffs area, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation purchased ranches and grazing permits in the early 1990's and the area has not been grazed by livestock since that purchase. If the riparian zones have not improved, then BLM needs to disclose the fact that these resource conditions are not due to continued domestic livestock grazing and BLM must pursue wildlife (elk) reductions and vegetation projects. BLM and permittees have been actively monitoring rangeland health conditions over the last several years. A significant percent are in functioning condition. In the areas that are at risk or not functioning, we find that there is major wildlife use, especially on willows. In other cases, road crossings may funnel runoff to create an arroyo effect that prevents the establishment of vegetation.	including recreation, grazing, wildlife habitat, and other uses."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW60 (R-RW9)	Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Impacts to riparian areas in the VPA would be a result of surface disturbing activities and forage use within the riparian zones..." and "...These are preliminary numbers and will change as the inventory is completed. Monitoring Joint monitoring by the permittee and the BLM would be used to determine the trend and condition of riparian areas..." The RMP fails to manage big game or wild horses in riparian areas, thus forcing the livestock industry to bear the full brunt of riparian management. This is only	The BLM does manage big game or wild horse in their association with riparian habitat. During inventories to comply with rangeland health standards the BLM monitors riparian habitat. If these inventories prove less than PFC for the habitat, cause of the impacts are determined and solutions are evaluated and implemented. Section 4.11 in the PRMP/FEIS now read as follows: "Impacts to riparian areas in the VPA would be a result of surface disturbing activities and forage use both within and outside of the riparian zones and are subject to restrictions to insure conditions are improved or at least not degraded. The Utah BLM	

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			exacerbated by the lack of assurances that BLM will fund and approve range projects necessary. Even if the range improvement projects are implemented, unless the big game and wild horses numbers are managed, riparian areas will still not maintain, meet, or make progress towards meeting rangeland health standards. The riparian area discussion is not based on sound data. Much of the data was collected more than 20 years ago. DEIS 3-55. Thus, proposed management changes are premature and should be preceded by joint permittee and BLM monitoring. The estimates regarding functioning condition suggest that the inventory is not done and it is inaccurate. Elsewhere the DEIS refers to 1982 data. If the RMP is mixing data, it needs to justify doing so. The inventory fails to attribute the causal factors in nonfunctioning condition. These are material omissions that would dramatically change the recommendations regarding management. The last sentence is also the reason that other aspects of the RMP, such as seasons of use and phenology, need to be deleted from the RMP and deferred to the specific allotments.	Standards for Rangeland Health apply to riparian resources in the VPA. All alternatives must adhere to Standard 2 of these standards, "Riparian and wetland areas [must be] in properly functioning condition (PFC). Stream channel morphology and functions are appropriate to soil type, climate, and function" (BLM 1997)."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW61 (R-RW10)	Not all upland surface disturbance will accelerate erosion. Utah non-point source best management practices and BLM BMPs also limit surface erosion. Any sedimentation will depend on the site, soils, slope and proximity to a water body. The general statement as written is inaccurate.	Section 4.11 of the PRMP/FEIS has been revised for clarification to state that "Upland surface disturbance could cause a loss of vegetation that could accelerate soil erosion…"	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW62 (R-RW11)	Strike this entire statement in the document: "Drawdown of groundwater levels from oil, gas, and	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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			coal bed methane leasing could lead to dewatering of riparian areas." This statement is untrue. Aquifers are not drilled for oil and gas. Water is produced from coalbed gas due to the release of gas and water is not intentionally pumped from existing aquifers. The pumping is unintentional and of short duration it is unlikely to dewater an aquifer. Oil and gas development does not drill into an aquifer to release water. Wells are cased so water is not released. Similarly the 100-year flood plain bears little relation to vegetation or soil resources and is not a valid basis to limit or prohibit drilling. Operators have been drilling in these areas for several years now without adverse effect.	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. See comment response RW54.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW63 (R-RW12)	Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Effects to riparian resources specified under forage and wild horse management decisions would be short-term, direct, and indirect potentially beneficial, depending on season of use and duration and wildlife and wild horse numbers. Some . These decisions would also have longterm direct beneficial impacts to riparian resources by improving riparian conditions, while other decisions will have neutral or adverse effects. AUMs would be adjusted for livestock, wild horses, and/or wildlife when joint monitoring by the permittee and BLM shows that riparian condition is not at PFC. Any benefits assume that wild horse numbers are reduced or maintain the AMLs in the HMAs and	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			remove wild horses located outside of the HMAs." Forage decisions and wild horse management decisions will not benefit riparian resources in most if not all cases. The RMP adopts significant increases in elk and deer numbers which adversely affect riparian resources. Documented research consistently shows that well-timed grazing will benefit riparian areas. Similarly, the RMP fails to deal adequately with wild horse management, which to date has caused significant damage to riparian resources. While it may be true that the RMP changes will in some cases benefit riparian resources, the forage decisions cannot be said to do so, because they do not address grazing by wildlife and wild horses.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW64 (R-RW13)	Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: “The effects of livestock and grazing decisions on riparian areas would generally be adverse, long-term, and direct. Long-duration grazing would impact riparian areas through loss of vegetative cover and trampling of soils, potentially leading to riparian area degradation. Limited Well-timed livestock grazing , when properly managed, would benefit riparian areas by stimulating new growth in riparian vegetation. Effects on riparian vegetation vary between seasons of use. For example, grazing riparian areas in late spring allows vegetation to grow through summer and into the fall, where it can protect banks during critical spring runoff and late summer thunderstorms. Any changes to seasons of use or AUMs would need to be in compliance with Standard 2 (and all other standards) of the Utah BLM Standards for Rangeland Health and	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			grazing rules after consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the permittee." This statement epitomizes the bias found throughout the DEIS. It is simply untrue. Also note that big game and wild horse grazing is omitted suggesting that only domestic livestock harm riparian resources. Several decades of sound research consistently show that well-managed grazing will benefit riparian areas. Limiting grazing is not the solution. Better timing and better management of other grazing animals is.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW65 (R-RW14)	There is no scientific basis to prohibit drilling 100 meters from riparian zones or within the 100-year flood plain. A riparian zone, in many cases, refers to vegetation changes when water might be briefly found or as a transition zone near a source of water.	See comment response RW3 above. BLM Executive Order 11988 (1977) for floodplain management establishes the riparian buffer zone of 100m to protect riparian and floodplain resources.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW66 (R-RW15)	Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "The effects of rangeland improvements on riparian areas would be beneficial, long-term, indirect, and direct. Vegetation treatments would ultimately reduce stream sedimentation and improve riparian vegetative cover. Fencing of riparian areas, development of water, and establishment of grazing systems, with related range improvements, would reduce impacts from grazing in these areas and development of other water sources away from riparian areas would limit grazing use of river corridors. Development of reservoirs would have long-term adverse impacts to riparian resources by inundation of riparian habitat and dewatering of downstream areas."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. Recommend reference to Sections 2.4.12, 3.11 and	

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			Fencing will not prevent big game from grazing and elk use has a measurable and adverse impacts on VPA riparian areas. Reservoirs and stock water ponds store water and do not “dewater” downstream areas. Reservoir creates new type of water edge or riparian habitat.	4.13.1.3 of the RMP.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW67 (R-RW16)	Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Visual resource management (VRM) decisions would impose visual restrictions on those riparian areas near be beneficial, long-term, and would directly affect riparian resources by precluding some areas from surface disturbance due to their proximity to highways, scenic areas, and special designations. Such restrictions would preclude other management actions, such as However, adverse, short-term, indirect impacts would occur if vegetation treatments could not be implemented in VRM sensitive areas and this would ultimately have adverse effects on riparian resources. VRM classes range from I to IV – Class I lands are not open to surface disturbance (full retention), and Class IV lands are available for full development." The RMP does not put all riparian areas into VRM Class II, so this statement is not accurate unless qualified. Second, BLM cannot classify riparian areas as per se Class II and meet the handbook criteria. Excluding or limiting vegetation treatment in VRM Class II in riparian areas will limit management tools	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The commenter is incorrect. Section 4.11.1accurately states that some riparian areas would be protected under VRM Class I and Class II resource objectives by precluding surface disturbances in some riparian areas (due to their proximity to highways, scenic areas, and special designation areas). However, the impacts of vegetation control in VRM-sensitive areas would be site-specific and not limited or restricted based	

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			and result in indirect adverse impacts on resources.	strictly on the VRM Class, but on the potential for visual or scenic quality degradation. This level of analysis is beyond the scope of the EIS and would be determined for site-specific vegetation treatment projects through other NEPA processes and documents.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW68 (R-RW17)	Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Wildlife and fisheries management would have limited direct and significant beneficial and adverse effects on riparian resources. Introduction of moose populations would have long-term, indirect beneficial and adverse impacts on riparian resources by increasing biodiversity in these areas while increasing forage competition. The BLM would provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife and fish species by limiting fragmentation, resulting in less surface disturbance which in turn may decrease and stream sedimentation. The effects of wildlife management decisions on riparian resources would be beneficial and adverse long-term, and indirect, by limiting surface development within specified wildlife buffer zones. Most of the wildlife and fisheries management decisions involve seasonal constraints and would not necessarily preclude surface-disturbing activities, although the cumulative effect will permit development on specific sites for less than three months of the year. This may result in increased impacts due to the concentration of development in a relatively short period of time. The only measurable component of wildlife and fisheries management decisions on riparian resources would be the preservation of crucial deer winter range and the enhancement of winter range to mitigate surface	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. See comment response RW67.	

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			disturbance. The alternatives are similar with respect to their effects on riparian resources." This discussion is both biased and inaccurate. Wildlife can have very significant and adverse impacts on riparian resources. Sedimentation into riparian areas from surface development will depend entirely on the location and the extent of the development. The assumption that every possible surface disturbance will increase stream sedimentation is inaccurate. This is another example of how the DEIS cumulative effects discussion is inadequate. In an effort to only find benefits from wildlife management, the DEIS omits the cumulative effect of wildlife restrictions and the effects of concentrating activities in only a short period of time. The last sentence documents a major concern of the RMP, which is the lack of a genuine range of alternatives. The RMP adopts so many restrictions said to be "common to all alternatives" that in fact the so-called resource development alternative is more restrictive than the current RMP. This illustrates the extreme nature of the "common to all alternatives" restrictions and standards. It also violates NEPA, as explained in the cover letter to these comments.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW69 (R-RW18)	Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Vegetation treatments for rangeland improvement would total 34,640 acres, 50,900 acres, 45,860 acres, and 40,390 acres for Alternatives A, B, C, and D – No Action, respectively. Therefore, Alternative B would be	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion.	

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			the most beneficial to riparian resources, and Alternative A would be the least beneficial, as compared to Alternative D – No Action. Fencing and development of water projects would facilitate provide for timed livestock grazing and would have an indirect beneficial effect on riparian areas. There may be some , except for trampling effects along the fence line. Water developments would provide water to upland range sites, keeping livestock and other ungulates out of sensitive riparian areas. Guzzlers, reservoirs, wells, and springs would attract livestock away from riparian areas and would decrease soil disturbance and sedimentation around riparian areas." Vegetation treatments are not only in riparian areas and the correlation to riparian resources is both indirect and site specific. The acreage figures do not make sense and should be described as an approximation not a ceiling. The discussion omits importance of water development, since fencing livestock away from the only source of water rarely works. The DEIS also exaggerates trampling along fences. Riparian areas are resilient not sensitive.	The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The commenter does not provide any additional substantiating information and/or explain how and why the acreage figures do not "make sense", why the acreage should be an approximation, why fencing "rarely works", why trampling along fences is exaggerated, and the resiliency of riparian areas.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW70 (R-RW19)	Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Alternative C would classify the most acres in ACECs, which would restrict or preclude development in the riparian areas affected. offer the greatest protection to riparian resources through ACEC designations, protecting This affects approximately 515,186 acres more than Alternative D. Alternative A classifies the second most acres as ACECs, involving offers the next best level of protection to riparian resources with	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect.	

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			approximately 182,072 more acres than Alternative D. Alternative C has the most miles of riparian corridor recommended for designation as either wild or scenic. Alternatives A, B, and D – No Action would recommend for designation less miles of wild and scenic rivers than Alternative C. These designations would restrict or preclude all development, even management designed to enhance riparian area resources." The SMAs do not directly correlate to benefiting riparian resources except by prohibiting or restricting surface disturbance. The surface management prohibitions or restrictions prohibit beneficial activities as well. Thus the assumption of "better protection" in Alternative C is not accurate.	The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The commenter does not explain how and why, or provide additional information on what activities that would be beneficial to riparian resources within special management areas would also be restricted and prohibited because of surface management prohibitions.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW71 (R-RW20)	Delete the following statement: "Alternative A would designate 67,357 and 446,287 acres as VRM Classes I and II respectively, which is 11,230 and 215,613 more acres with limits on surface disturbance than Alternative D – No Action. This alternative would provide more long-term indirect beneficial impacts, when compared to Alternative D – No Action, due lower levels of sedimentation and fragmentation of riparian areas." VRM classes and riparian areas have no correlation. This discussion should be deleted.	As stated in Section 4.11.2.14.1, VRM class objectives allow very little or limited visual impacts to areas designated as Class I and Class II. The indirect effects of reducing surface disturbances within riparian areas with these classifications would include the reduced likelihood of surface-disturbance-caused soil erosion, sedimentation, and habitat fragmentation.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW72 (R-RW21)	Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Proper functioning condition (PFC) is the minimum	Section 4.13.1.7 of the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to read as follows: "Proper functioning condition (PFC) is the minimum	X

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			acceptable goal for riparian areas. Riparian-wetland areas would be maintained, restored, and managed protected, and/or expanded to achieve PFC with respect to soils, vegetation, and hydrology/water quality. Thus, riparian management would have short- and long-term, direct, beneficial impacts to soils and water through proper and well-timed grazing. where use of streamside vegetation is reduced." The RMP should focus on well-timed grazing rather than reducing livestock grazing.	acceptable goal for riparian areas. Riparian-wetland areas would be maintained, restored, and managed to achieve PFC with respect to soils, vegetation, and hydrology/water quality. Thus, riparian management would have short- and long-term, direct, beneficial impacts to soils and water where use of streamside vegetation is reduced."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	RW73 (R-RW22)	Modify the following statements as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Under Alternatives A, B, and C, key streamside herbaceous riparian vegetation measured from the green line for a stubble height of 4 to 6", where stream bank stability is dependent upon it, would have a minimum stubble height capable of trapping and assuring retention of sediment during high flows at the end of the growing season. Management actions would be based on residual stubble height of key herbaceous species measured from the green line or utilization of current year's growth at the end of the growing season. To maintain riparian conditions, stubble height on key herbaceous riparian plant species would be set at four inches with 30% utilization. If riparian conditions need improvement, stubble height on key riparian plant species would be set at six inches with less than 20% utilization. Key riparian woody vegetation would not be browsed at a level that precludes adequate recruitment to maintain or recover the woody component. Woody vegetation would be managed for the sprouting and young	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			categories rather than in the mature and dead categories. Woody vegetation utilization would be set at 30%." The RMP needs to recognize that to maintain riparian conditions, stubble height for key herbaceous species should be measured on the green line to 4" and if conditions change, then to 6". The RMP's use of utilization in the context of the riparian areas should only apply to woody species, which is measuring different species from different points in the riparian area. Any change should be based on joint monitoring by the permittee and BLM. As noted earlier, measurement of key herbaceous species is quite different from and not interchangeable with utilization.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD170 (R-RE3)	These comments apply to Alternatives A through D. The RMP generally fails to document the need to continue the existing ACECs. Many correspond to the now abolished WIAs, and in several cases, the RMP adopts additional restrictions on the activities within the ACECs. The RMP needs to recognize that continued livestock grazing is consistent with the objectives of the ACECs.	See Response to Comment SD50G-25. Management prescriptions for Livestock Grazing can be found in Table 2.1 (Livestock and Grazing Management), Appendix F, and Appendix L of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD171 (R-RE2)	The RMP should delete this section entirely, since it does not use an up-to-date study that reflects current developments along the river segments as well as water rights.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the	

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				current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The existing inventory is sufficient for a programmatic level document. The process, including suitability considerations for each eligible stream, is found in Appendix C of the PRMP/FEIS. In Chapter 1 of the PRMP/FEIS, it states that: "All decisions made in the RMP and subsequent implementation decisions will be subject to valid existing rights".	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD172 (R-RE1)	The draft RMP formulates recommendations for wild and scenic river segments and then adopts de facto designation. BLM misreads its authority. First, FLPMA does not grant BLM authority to manage river segments as wild, scenic, or recreational. The Wild & Scenic Rivers Act only authorizes a study. 16 U.S.C. §1276(d)(1). Unlike the Wilderness Act, the law does not direct BLM to formulate recommendations or to manage these rivers until final action by Congress. Indeed, a river segment can be nominated by a state and approved by the Secretary of Interior or it must await action by Congress. 16 U.S.C. §1273(a). As it concerns the Vernal Planning Area, there is no support in Utah, let alone action, for designation, and no support in Congress. Thus, those portions of the RMP	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	

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			that would purport to manage segments of the Green River as either scenic or recreational are beyond BLM's authority and must be removed from the plan.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD174 (R-GC3)	The river segment proposals are problematic in light of the developments found in the corridor. Ranchers have been grazing livestock in the ½ mile corridor proposed as a scenic or recreation river. Many oil and gas companies are also producing within the same proposed corridors that the RMP would now close. The RMP fails to address these active legal rights and land uses and does not explain how designation is appropriate, when it creates land use conflicts that currently do not exist.	The RMP recognizes all valid existing rights within the Vernal Planning Area and would not retroactively apply management prescriptions to existing rights that would conflict with the currently allowable activities accompanying those rights. In Chapter 1 of the PRMP/FEIS, states that: "All decisions made in the RMP and subsequent implementation decisions will be subject to valid existing rights".	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD179	The proposed ACECs and SMAs do not provide for livestock grazing and would appear to drive out livestock operations.	See Response to Comment SD79-G-27.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD337 (R-SD1)	Continuation of existing and the establishment of new areas of critical environmental concern ("ACEC") are poorly documented and should be dropped for several reasons. First, the DEIS and Appendix fail to adequately document the basis to continue, expand, or create new ACECs. FLPMA requires that an ACEC be based on an irreparable threat to a resource value of national, as opposed to local, significance. 43 U.S.C. §1702(a). Existing ACECs must be re-justified in the next RMP, since there is no rule or policy that provides that existing ACECs are automatically continued. 43 C.F.R. §1610.7-2; see also H-1610-1, App. C. In several cases, expansions of ACECs are justified	See Response to Comment SD27-G-22 for ACEC authority and irreparable damage. The public was notified in a supplement to the notice of availability of the Draft RMP and Draft EIS for the Vernal Field Office to list proposed areas of critical environmental concern and specific associated resource use limitations for public lands was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005. This NOA addressed ACECs within the Vernal Field Office and identified an associated 60-day public comment period. Browns Park relevance and importance criteria	

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			based on wildlife and/or wildlife habitat for big game species, which are a plentiful resource not subject to irreparable harm or threat and not of national significance. In other cases, like Brown's Park, the ACEC is based on an historic ranch site that is already protected under the NHPA. The added land area is merely a buffer, without evidence of irreparable threat or national significance that would justify the additional land for the ACEC.	include high value scenery, wildlife, cultural, and historic resources and are not limited to the historic property.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD338 (R-SD2)	BLM planning policy discourages the use of special management designations because they establish ambiguous management criteria and generally avoid the more exacting criteria for ACECs. The wisdom of this direction is illustrated by the numerous ambiguous and confusing designations found in the Vernal plan. The RMP uses SRMA as a fall-back to ACEC designation, supporting the assumption that SRMA or SMA is merely an ambiguous and catch-all term to limit multiple uses. This contradicts FLPMA mandates and should be abandoned.	SRMAs are not special designations but rather are management tools for the maintenance and enhancement of recreational opportunities. ACECs are a special designation and provide for the focusing of special management attention on the maintenance and enhancement of relevant and important resource values that may not be related to recreation, and, therefore, would not be managed under a recreation management plan.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD339 (R-SD3)	The RMP misconstrues the settlement terms in State of Utah v. Norton as allowing BLM to manage public lands as if they have wilderness character based on the controversial and disputed "wilderness" inventory. The settlement provides that the inventory cannot be the basis for managing these areas as if they were wilderness study areas.	See Response to SD16A-G-22. Additionally, wilderness characteristics are specifically addressed in the 2007 Supplement to the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD340 (R-SD4)	Delete the entirety of the following statement: "A plan would have to be filed for operations usually conducted under notice in: 1. areas in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and areas designated for potential addition to the system; 2. designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)"	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion.	

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				The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD340A (R-SD4)	The RMP cannot amend the Part 3809 rules to require plans of operation when notice is otherwise all that is required. 43 C.F.R. §3809.11. A rule has the effect of law and a land use plan cannot supersede a legislative rule.	See comment response ME19.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD341 (R-SD5)	Delete the entirety of the following statement: "The Upper Green River from Little Hole to the Colorado state line would limit all surface-disturbing activities within line of sight up to one-half mile, unless related to recreational infrastructure support."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD341A (R-SD5)	The RMP does not document the basis for the ½ mile line-of-sight area. A similar designation was held to be unlawful by the Eighth Circuit. Sokol v. Kennedy, 210 F.3d 876, 880 (8th Cir. 2000).	The one-half mile line of sight stipulation is associated with the proposed ACEC designation and not the Wild and Scenic River Act. ACEC values include unique geologic formations, high value scenic vistas, and a riparian ecosystem.	

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			To the extent that the surface disturbance standard is part of the proposed wild and scenic river, it also violates federal law and policy. The Wild & Scenic Rivers Act does not authorize management of river corridors where neither the State nor the Congress has nominated the river segment. BLM's sole authority is to study; it cannot change management as if already designated. 16 U.S.C. §1273.	Also, see Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD342 (R-SD6)	FLPMA states: "The term 'areas of critical environmental concern' means areas within the public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards." 43 U.S.C. §1702(a).	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD343 (R-SD7)	The proposed and the existing ACECs in the RMP do not meet the definition. There is no evidence that the ACEC resources are threatened by 'irreparable harm' and that they are more than locally significant resources.	See Response to Comment SD27-G-22.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD344 (R-SD8)	Delete the entirety of the following statement: "Red Creek Watershed (24,475 acres) – Manage to protect the high value watershed and wildlife habitat resources."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions	

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				or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD344A (R-SD8)	In addition to the fact that the Red Creek ACEC is a surrogate for the former WIA, the ACEC will fragment management to the detriment of land management and multiple uses. Wildlife habitat in question is locally rather than nationally, significant.	The commenter has not supported the contention that designation of the ACEC will cause fragmentation of management. Only one of the importance criteria refers to more than locally significant qualities, and is not the sole resource value to consider when designating ACECs.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD345 (R-SD9)	Delete the entirety of the following statement: "Prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of certain public lands to determine the presence or absence of wilderness characteristics." A future inventory has no place in an RMP. BLM has no additional authority to either establish new WSAs or to manage the areas as wilderness. BLM also repealed its wilderness inventory guidance, so reference to a future wilderness inventory would be without any criteria.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. Also, see Response to Comment SD20A-G-22, O-14.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD346 (R-SD10)	The proposed wild and scenic rivers in the RMP exceed BLM authority under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. Neither the state nor Congress support designation of these rivers and, thus, BLM lacks any authority to manage these rivers as wild or scenic. 16	The State of Utah has worked as a Cooperating Agency throughout this planning process and has been intimately involved with the BLM's wild and scenic river planning process. The State has assisted Field Office specialists to help determine eligibility findings for each of the river segments,	

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			U.S.C. §1272(a).	and has provided social and economic expertise and advice as the BLM determined which eligible segments to carry forward as suitable into the Proposed Plan. BLM has committed to working cooperatively among Federal, State, and local governments and communities during the post-planning wild and scenic river study phase when statewide recommendations for inclusion of river segments into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System would go forward to Congress. Prior to this post-planning phase, BLM would work with affected partners to help identify in-stream flows necessary to protect the outstandingly remarkable values for which the subject river segments were found suitable via this planning process. Thus, because there are no effects of this planning decision on valid existing rights, and because suitability findings in this planning process do not create new water rights for the BLM, the land use planning wild and scenic river suitability determinations are found by BLM to be consistent with the Utah Code 63j-4-401.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD347 (R-SD11)	The following discussion [see R-SD12 to R-SD19] documents the basis that the proposed river segments fail to meet the study criteria and should be dropped.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions	

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				or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD348 (R-SD12)	The following developments are found and are the basis for the failure of this river segment to meet the study criteria (the segment should be dropped): -Transmission powerlines and corridors -Tail race restrooms and boat ramp that was improved in the 1990s and built in 1965 -Dripping Springs bathrooms built in the 1990s -Little Hole improvements including road, paved parking lot, restrooms, enlarged parking area, boat ramps and picnic areas all built in the 1990s -UDWR/SITLA lands have fences, irrigation ditches -Little Hole high volume gas pipeline corridor built in the 1970s	All of the lands mentioned in this comment are managed by surface management agencies other than the BLM.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD349 (R-SD13)	The following developments are found and are the basis for the failure of this river segment to meet the study criteria (the segment should be dropped): -Power lines and access roads to Brown's Park built in 1960s -Mann Bench Road east side dugway built in 1960s -About 8 developed campgrounds and improvements including restrooms -Water gap fence on Green River pasture built in 1970s and 1980s -Livestock allotments and improvements on both sides of the river -Crouse irrigation diversions structure before 1980 -Indian Crossing BLM horse corrals pasture built in	These developments were considered in the BLM's eligibility and suitability evaluations. Please, see Appendix C in the PRMP/FEIS for more information.	

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			2001 -Indian Crossing improved campground built in 2001 -Indian Crossing boat ramp and improvements built in 2001		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD350 (R-SD14) (R-SD15 through R-SD18)	The following developments are found and are the basis for the failure of this river segment to meet the study criteria (the segment should be dropped): -Taylor Flat campground improvements ('90s) -Road to Taylor Flat subdivision ('60s-70s) -Allen Ranch irrigation pump setting and power-lines, fences and cultivated fields (~'70s) -Allen Ranch headquarters and out-buildings, corrals, cemetery, power-lines, streetlights, and fences -Multiple developed campgrounds from Taylor Flat Bridge to Colorado State line ('80s and 90s) -Pipeline corridor and access roads (70s, 80s, 90s, and 00s) -UDWR Bridgeport pump setting, irrigation canal and flume ('70s) -UDWR Parson's irrigation diversion and canal improvements ('02-04) -Multiple UDWR fences, dikes, outlet structures all associated with waterfowl management area administration from Bridgeport to Colorado state line ('70s thru 2000s) -Livestock grazing allotments on both sides of the river -River access roads (all currently used) -Large portions of old Taylor flat bridge along river ('83) -Old pump setting and associated structures ('60s)	These developments were considered in the BLM's eligibility and suitability evaluations. Please, see Appendix C in the PRMP/FEIS for more information.	

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			-Parson's garage and ferry structures ('50s and earlier) -Pipeline crossing and associated access roads ('70s thru '00s) -Pipeline corridor through Rye Grass Canyon within view shed ('70s thru '00s) -Power lines ('60s) -Developed river access on both sides of the river below Swallow Canyon, River left improved in the '90 -Improved restroom facilities ('90s) -UDWR pump setting ('70s) -Private pump setting and associated infrastructure ('70s? with improvements in '04) -Private agricultural fields with wheel line irrigation system, electrical lines, and stack yards -Non-native invasive weed species including white-top, Russian olive, tamarisk, and phragmites throughout river corridor -River access at multiple points to the Colorado state line on both sides of the River -UDWR WMA headquarters with associated out buildings and equipment ('70s to present) -Private ranch headquarters with associated out buildings and equipment ('20s to present) -UDWR and USFWS waterfowl pond and associated dikes, fences, roads and outlet structures ('70s)		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD355 (R-SD19)	The following developments are found and are the basis for the failure of this river segment to meet the study criteria (the segment should be dropped):: -Developed campground with associated roads, fences, and modern restroom facilities ('70s and 80s)	These developments were considered in the BLM's eligibility and suitability evaluations. Please, see Appendix C in the PRMP/FEIS for more information.	

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			-Swinging bridge improved in '80s -Livestock corrals on both sides of the river associated with swinging bridge improvements ('04) -Roads, fences, signs and cattle guards are all visible from the river -From the swinging bridge downstream there are more dikes, fences, roads weed outcroppings, outlet structures, diversions and associated administration site associated with active livestock operations and USFWS waterfowl management activities.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD356 (R-SD20)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "BLM would manage the black-footed ferret consistent with the 1999 Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction Plan Amendment and those portions of the Cooperative Plan for the Reintroduction and Management of Black-footed Ferret in Coyote Basin, Uintah County, Utah that are consistent with this plan amendment. Any black-footed ferret introduced in Daggett County should be classified as experimental nonessential."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD356A (R-SD20)	Daggett County should be added to the experimental nonessential designation status for the ferret and the lands in the county.	The statement in question is specific to Uintah County and the existing reintroduction plan. Black-footed ferrets introduced outside of Uintah County or outside of the existing area covered by the plan would be managed in cooperation with the UDWR and reintroduction plans developed for that population.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD357 (R-SD21)	Delete the entirety of Alternative A in Table 2.3.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD357A (R-SD21)	The Bitter Creek ACEC is a SUWA-nominated area that corresponds to the former Desolation Canyon WIAs nominated by SUWA. The extensive use of VRM Classes I and II and closure to OHV use also mimic de facto wilderness management. This conflicts with BLM direction following the Utah v. Norton settlement, IM 2003-275 and 2003-274.	The FLPMA states that in developing land use plans the BLM shall give priority to the designation and protection ACEC. The BLM gave full consideration to the designation and preservation ACEC during this land use planning process. Nominations for ACECs from the public were specifically solicited during the scoping period. A total of 35 ACEC nominations were received and the relevance and importance of each were determined. Fourteen of the ACEC nominations were found to meet both the criteria of relevance and importance and all these were included for special management as proposed ACECs in Alternative B. The BLM Manual 1613.23 states that “After completing the analysis of the effects of each alternative, the manager selects the preferred plan alternative which best meets the planning criteria and the guidance applicable to the area. The	

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				preferred alternative reflects the BLM's proposals for designation and management of ACECs." The BLM has full discretion in the selection of ACECs for the various alternatives. In the selection of the preferred alternative, a comparison of estimated effects and trade-offs associated with the alternative leads to development and selection of the preferred alternative. Should BLM choose not designate potential ACECs, BLM Manual 1613 .33E provides direction in this process. Rational for not proposing designation of a potential ACEC in the preferred alternative must be provided, that is, the reasons for the decision not to provide special management attention must be clearly set forth. Such reasoning may include: Special management attention is not required to protect the potential ACEC because standard or routine management prescriptions are sufficient to protect the Relevance and Importance Values from risks or threats of damage/degradation. The area is being proposed for designation under another statutory authority such as wilderness and would require no further management attention. The manager has concluded that no special management attention is justified either because of exposure to risks of damage to threats to safety is greater if the area is designated or there are no reasonable special management actions which can be taken to protect the resource from irreparable	

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				damage or to restore it to a viable condition. BLM ACEC guidance (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; Policy and Procedures Guidelines, 45 FR 57318, 57319 (Aug. 27, 1980)) allows a manager to exercise discretion not to protect a potential ACEC through ACEC designation, but that decision has to be documented through the planning process. If the manager decides to provide the necessary protection through another form of special management, the documentation will include specifics of the special management proposed. Rationale for all ACEC decisions will be provided in the Record of Decision and supported by analysis in the EIS. If the decision is to allocate the resources with relevant and important values, in whole or in part, to another use which would in result in damage or loss to such resource, the authorized officer must first find that there is an overriding public need for such other use; that the public benefits of such other use outweigh the public benefits of use appropriate with ACEC designation, and that such other use will best meet the present and future needs of the American people. In addition, any allocations to such other use will include all feasible planning and management to prevent, minimize, mitigate or restore any consequent damage to the resource, and these requirements will be specified in the documentation. The BLM, in developing the PRMP/FEIS, can chose management actions from within the range of the alternatives presented in the DRMP/DEIS and	

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				create a management plan that is effective in addressing the current conditions in the planning area based on FLPMA's multiple-use mandate. The Utah v. Norton Settlement Agreement does not affect BLM's authority to manage public lands. This Agreement merely remedied confusion by distinguishing between wilderness study areas established under FLPMA §603 and those lands required to be managed under §603's non-impairment standard, and other lands that fall within the discretionary FLMPA §202 land management process.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD357B (R-SD21)	The RMP fails to document the threat of irreparable harm to resources of national significance to justify the ACEC.	See Response to Comment SD27-G-22.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD357C (R-SD21)	It also fails to identify the effects of the classification on other land uses, especially livestock grazing. For these reasons, it should be dropped as an ACEC or RNA.	Livestock grazing would not be altered through blanket restrictions within the ACEC. Any changes to livestock grazing would be the result of monitoring and the discovery of unintended or undue impacts from specific grazing activities. Such changes would be undertaken in consultation with the affected permittee.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD358 (R-SD22)	No designation of the Bitter Creek area is the most consistent with FLPMA objectives as well as current BLM policy and direction.	See Response to Comment SD357A-O-33.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD359 (R-SD23)	Delete all of Alternative A.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes	

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				necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD359A (R-SD23)	The proposed White River ACEC fails to conform to the ACEC criteria in FLPMA and the planning rules. First, the RMP fails to document the need.	See Appendix G in the PRMP/FEIS for relevance and importance criteria.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD359B (R-SD23)	FLPMA definition of an ACEC requires evidence that there is a threat of "irreparable harm" to resource values of national, rather than local or regional, significance. The RMP makes no such showing.	See comment response SD27 for irreparable harm discussion.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD359C (R-SD23)	The RMP also fails to recognize the right of livestock grazing to continue, which creates a conflict that is not adequately disclosed or discussed.	Special designations would not alter livestock grazing. Management of livestock grazing in areas of special designations would be consistent with the management provisions outlined in Appendix F and Appendix L Also, see Response to Comment SD174-O-33.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD359D (R-SD23)	Where VRM Class I or II is imposed, for example, there is a legitimate concern that range improvements and vegetation treatment would be limited or not allowed. Similarly, the RMP would appear to require or lead to reductions in grazing to be more consistent with VRM I or II.	See comment responses VE$, VI1, and VI14.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD359E (R-SD23)	This proposal corresponds to the former White River WIA. As noted above with respect to the Bitter Creek ACEC, the VRM Classes and limits on surface uses looks very much like de facto wilderness management. This violates the terms of the settlement in State of Utah v. Norton as well as the implementing direction. IM 2003-275 and 2003-274.	The Utah v. Norton Settlement Agreement does not affect BLM's authority to manage public lands. This Agreement merely remedied confusion by distinguishing between wilderness study areas established under FLPMA § 603 and required to be managed under § 603's non-impairment standard, and other lands that fall within the discretionary FLMPA § 202 land management process. See comment response SD20A.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD360 (R-SD24)	RE: The White River. This area should be managed as part of the public lands for multiple use.	See Response to Comment SD50-G-25.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD361 (R-SD25)	Delete Alternative C for the reasons expressed in Comment SD359.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. See comment response SD359.	
Vermillion	O-33	SD362	All alternatives related to the management of Brown's	BLM declines to make the suggested wording	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-SD26)	Park as an ACEC and Alternatives A through C for the Red Mountain-Dry Fork Complex should be removed.	changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD362A (R-SD26)	The RMP fails to document the need to manage the Brown's Park area as an ACEC.	See Response to Comment SD90-G-24.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD362B (R-SD26)	There is no evidence of a threat of "irreparable harm" to nationally significant resource values.	See Response to Comment SD27-G-22.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD362C (R-SD26)	Cultural and historic resources are already protected under the NHPA and ARPA. Scenic views and wildlife habitat abound throughout the VPA and there is no basis to conclude that the ACEC is nationally significant. Second, there is no documentation that the entire 52,721 acres are necessary. The area is adjacent to an existing wildlife refuge and presumably the best wildlife habitat was withdrawn for the refuge. Third, the RMP fails to explain why current surface use standards do not protect scenic views, wildlife habitat, or cultural and historic resources. Certainly historic	See Response to Comment SD8-G-9.	

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			sites are far less than 52,721 acres.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD362D (R-SD26)	Alternatively, the RMP needs to recognize and incorporate livestock grazing and other land uses as part of the area. Certainly, ACEC status is not intended to close public lands to the other multiple uses. 43 C.F.R. §1610.51.	See Response to Comment SD174-O-33.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD362E (R-SD26)	The RMP does not document the "irreparable harm" to specific and significant national or regional resources for the Red Mountain-Dry Fork Complex, does not document the need to set aside the entire 24,285 acres to protect specific sites, such as relict vegetation, and fails to document the continued need for this ACEC.	See Response to Comment SD27-G-22. See Appendix G in the Final EIS for relevance and importance criteria.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD362F (R-SD26)	Alternatively, any activity plan needs to protect and respect existing and long-standing land uses, such as livestock grazing and necessary infrastructure.	See Response to Comment SD174-O-33.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD363 (R-SD27)	Alternatives A through C should be removed.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch	O-33	SD363A	In this case, there is so little documentation that it looks as if the proposed ACEC is a substitute for the former	See Response to Comment SD14-G-13.	

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Limited Partnership		(R-SD27)	Nine Mile Canyon WIA in violation of the settlement terms and direction in State of Utah v. Norton.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD364 (R-SD28)	Modify the statements as indicated: "Manage lands in the WSA according to the following prescription: • Fire management category B D • Oil and Gas lease category timing and controlled surface use • As part of the Browns Park ACEC • OHVs limited to designated routes • VRM Class IV • Available for woodcutting • Livestock grazing"	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. See Response to Comment SD14-G-13. OHV use is limited to designated routes or designated areas throughout the planning area and under all alternatives.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD364A (R-SD28)	Inclusion in ACEC only shows lack of basis for ACEC as double layers of protection.	See Response to Comment SD14-G-13.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD365 (R-SD29)	Modify Alternative A as follows: "345,850 acres of ACEC designation, 52,978 acres of WSAs, and 72 miles of W&SR recommended designations may in some cases increase would result	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate.	

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			in the second highest amount of benefits to rangeland, fire, soil, watershed, vegetation, riparian, woodland, and wildlife resources."	The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD365A (R-SD29)	The RMP incorrectly assumes that ACEC designation, WSAs or W&SR classification will benefit habitat for special status species. There are too many habitat types and too many limitations to support this generalization.	The statements as written are intended to provide a relative comparison of alternatives based upon the same set of analytical assumptions.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD365B (R-SD29)	Modify Alternative D as follows: "165,944 acres of ACEC designation, 52,978 acres of WSAs, and 52 miles of W&SR recommended designations would result in the least amount of benefits to rangeland, fire, soil, watershed, vegetation, riparian, woodland, and wildlife resources."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	SD365C (R-SD29)	The RMP cannot accurately equate ACEC, WSA and W&SR recommended areas as per se beneficial to all resources. The opposite is generally true since there is	See Response to Comment SD8-G-9.	

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Partnership			less management and treatment for noxious weeds. The steady migration of elk out of parks and into national forests is just one example of where wildlife does not necessarily prefer pristine areas.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD366 (R-SD30)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "34,640 acres of rangeland improvement and additional range improvement structures would benefit special status species where additional water sources were established and habitat were restored, though improvements could have adverse impacts if livestock move into areas that have received little grazing in the past."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD366A (R-SD30)	This statement suffers from an all inclusive and thus inaccurate generalization. It also confuses the difference between vegetation treatments and water projects. It is assumed that the acreage figure refers to acres to be treated and not acres affected potentially by water projects. The RMP also omits water projects and fences, which are essential to distribution and management of grazing.	The commenter is correct that the acres referred to are specific to vegetation treatments geared at range improvement under Alternative A. The same assumption was made in the description of the other alternatives in this same line of Table 2.5. The statements within the table for all alternatives have been reworded to include numbers for potential water projects. Also, clarification has been made to the Vegetation section of Table 2.5 in the Draft EIS that the acres referred to are related strictly to vegetation treatments geared toward range/forage improvement. Note: Table 2.5 of the Draft RMP has been	X

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				renumbered as Table 2.2 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD367 (R-SD31)	FLPMA requires that BLM consider whether to continue previous ACEC designations. 43 C.F.R. §1610.7-2. The RMP must justify the ACEC by proving a threat of irreparable harm to nationally significant resource values. As discussed in the cover letter, the RMP fails to do so. The draft RMP fails to disclose the basis for continuing these ACEC designations. To the extent that the draft RMP imposes new criteria such as no oil and gas development that requires surface use, then BLM must publish notice in the Federal Register as well. 43 C.F.R. §1610.7-2.	See Responses to Comments SD8-G-9,SD 27-G-22, SD90-G-24, SD125-G-1.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD368 (R-SD32)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "Management of the White River area as an SRMA (which would include management of public use and limiting surface disturbance by designating the western portion VRM I and the eastern portion VRM II) under Alternative A would provide more long-term, beneficial impacts to water and soil than Alternative D – No Action. Restrictions on management tools may limit benefits and result in long-term adverse effects."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD368A (R-SD32)	The RMP fails to document the basis for VRM I, which is reserved for wilderness or WSA. Moreover, the proposal to designate the area either VRM I or VRM II is not documented. Instead it appears as if the planning team “lumped this area” into a restrictive class.	The section in question reflects the analysis of impacts from management decisions addressed in Table 2.1.24 (Visual Resource Management) of the PRMP/FEIS. The identification of VRM classes in this section does not introduce new alternatives.	

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				Further, no VRM classification precludes necessary or desirable management activities, such as vegetation treatments, but rather it limits the manner in which said treatments can occur and the duration of their visual impacts. See comment response VI44.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD368B (R-SD32)	Since this area corresponds to the former Cripple Cowboy WIA, it appears to violate the terms of the settlement agreement, State of Utah v. Norton. SRMA designation will not necessarily benefit soil and water resources.	Classification of the area as VRM Class I and II is part of the special management of the proposed SRMA. As such, classification does place limitations on the nature and extent of surface disturbance. Establishment of the SRMA would, in general, benefit soil and water resources on a landscape level.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD369 (R-SD33)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "Management of the Blue Mountain, Fantasy Canyon, Book Cliffs, Red Mountain-Dry Fork, and Nine Mile Canyon areas as SRMAs would limit OHV use to trails and therefore provide greater direct long-term beneficial impacts to soils and water, as compared to Alternative D. Although increased public visitation would have greater indirect, long-term adverse impacts to water quality and soil productivity than Alternative D. Restrictions on management tools may limit benefits and result in long-term adverse effects."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD369A (R-SD33)	The SRMAs are not documented as necessary under Appendix C, H-1610-rel 675. The proposals should be put out for comment as a supplement to the draft or be dropped.	See Response to Comment SD368A-O-33. BLM Manual H-1601-1 states that a SRMA is: “A public lands unit identified in land use plans to direct recreation funding and personnel to fulfill	

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				commitments made to provide specific, structured recreation opportunities (i.e., activity, experience, and benefit opportunities, both land use plan decisions and subsequent implementing actions for recreation in each SRMA area geared to a strategically identified primary market – destinations, community or undeveloped." Information about the specific SRMAs included in the alternatives can be found in Sections 3.10.1.1 and 3.10.1.2 and their subsections. The SRMAs listed in these sections have been made available for public comment during the draft RMP public comment period.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD370	BLM policy does not authorize VRM I for a SRMA. The Brown's Park SRMA is not justified and should be dropped. SRMA designation also limits management tools, especially with visual restrictions to no good purpose. Designation would have significant adverse environmental impacts that the RMP omits.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD370 (R-SD34)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "Management of 52,720 acres in the Browns Park area as an SRMA, with special management attention given	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes	

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			to enhancement of riparian and fisheries resources and limiting OHV use, would impose restrictive de facto wilderness protection for protect 34,246 more acres than Alternative D – No Action. Closing the southern portion of the Browns Park area to OHV use and managing it as VRM I would reduce recreation use. Management would reduce tools available for effective land management, reduce opportunities for livestock operations, and facilitate additional subdivisions in the area with less open space, recreation access, and wildlife habitat. Proposed management would result in less surface disturbance by development and recreation users; this, in turn, would have indirect, long-term benefits and adverse impacts to water quality and soil productivity."	necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD371 (R-SD35)	Delete the entirety of the following statement: "With all alternatives, the seven currently designated ACECs (Brown's Park, Nine Mile Canyon, Lears Canyon, Red Mountain-Dry Fork, Red Creek Watershed, Pariette Wetlands, and Lower Green River Corridor) would continue to be managed as designated ACECs, and their relevance and importance values, including historic, cultural, scenic, fish and wildlife resources, would continue to be protected, subject to valid existing rights."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD371A (R-SD35)	BLM planning handbook and rules require that the RMP revision justify the continuation of existing and proposed ACECs. The RMP fails to do so. The standards are relatively high, in that BLM must show	See Response to Comment SD27-G-22 for ACEC authority and irreparable damage.	

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			that there is a risk of irreparable harm to "significant historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard." 43 U.S.C. §1702(a); 43 C.F.R. §1610.7-2(a). Similarly there is no discussion that the resources have "substantial significant and value" as opposed to merely local significance. §1610.7-2. The RMP discussion suggests that the resources have only local or regional but not national significance. In this context, the ACECs probably should not have been classified initially but cannot be rejustified.	The public was notified in a supplement to the notice of availability of the Draft RMP and Draft EIS for the Vernal Field Office to list proposed areas of critical environmental concern and specific associated resource use limitations for public lands was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005. This NOA addressed ACECs within the Vernal Field Office and identified an associated 60-day public comment period.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD372 (R-SD36)	Delete the entirety of the following statement: "With all alternatives, relevance and importance values of potential and existing ACECs would benefit from the special management attention they would receive if designated, including development of comprehensive, integrated activity plans in some cases. The plans would address the maintenance and development of OHV or non-OHV trails, minimal facilities development necessary for human health and safety, and other surface disturbing activities that may be complementary to the goals and objectives of each ACEC."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. See comment response SD27-G-22 for irreparable and reparable damage discussion.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD372A (R-SD36)	The RMP fails to identify the substantial importance and threats to the ACEC resources for which they were established. It is not accurate to assume that plans will protect the values.	See Appendix G in the PRMP/FEIS for relevance and importance criteria.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD372B (R-SD36)	The emphasis appears to be on OHV plans, thereby suggesting that a separate limit on OHV use is all that is necessary rather than a special management plan for the entire ACEC.	OHV use would not be the sole focus of integrated activity plans but would be one component of them. As the statement quoted by the commenter indicates, other issues to be addressed in the plan include, but are not limited to, facilities development for human health and safety as well as surface disturbing activities.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD373 (R-SD37)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "In alternatives where some potential ACECs would not be designated or where surface disturbance may occur, the relevance and importance of these areas may mean the areas will not be fully reclaimed be at some risk of irreparable damage during the life of the plan, depending upon the specific resource use categories or other actions proposed by alternative."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD373A (R-SD37)	It is inaccurate to describe surface disturbance as having “irreparable damage” to resources. Oil and gas development is an irreversible commitment of the mineral resources and will arguably occur for the life of the plan. Soil and vegetation resources are routinely reclaimed, contradicting the description of “irreparable damage.”	See comment response SD27-G-22 for irreparable and reparable damage discussion. Table 2.1.7 (Soils and Water Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS indicates the BLM will comply with Gold Book standards as a Best Management Practice, which includes reclamation. The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 and 43 CFR Part 3100 authorizes the BLM to enforce reclamation standards on all of its managed lands.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD374 (R-SD38)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "Decisions that would generally have a positive impact on potential and existing ACECs, regardless of which alternative is chosen, include those involving restrictions on development. fire resources, soil and watershed actions, and vegetation resources (including riparian areas and woodlands). Positive impacts of treatments would, in the long-term, restore vegetative components to resemble more natural ecosystems, which are important to identified relevant and important values in some ACECs."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD374A (R-SD38)	As written, fire management and vegetation treatment would not occur in ACECs so it is difficult to assume benefit to these resources. Similarly, it is inaccurate to assume benefits to soil and water, when big game and wild horses continue and recreation use is increased but management actions are constrained.	The commenter is incorrect in the assumption that fire management and vegetation treatment would not occur in ACECs. There is no blanket correspondence between ACEC boundaries and fire management categories. Compare Figures 2 and 22-24. Further, no ACECs preclude vegetation treatments. Treatments limitations related to VRM class or other program decisions are site specific and restrict only the manner and duration of treatment, not the ability to treat.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD375 (R-SD39)	The RMP classifies the ACECs as VRM I and II, which prohibits or restricts vegetation treatments. Thus, ACEC classification will have adverse effects.	No VRM classification prevents necessary vegetation treatments, including prescribed burns, which are considered short-duration visual disruptions. No BLM management decisions, including VRM classifications, apply to state trust land inholdings. The BLM cannot impose any restrictions or limitations on lands not under its jurisdiction. The BLM must also provide for reasonable access to such inholdings.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD376 (R-SD40)	The RMP does not disclose the status of the lands within the ACECs (proposed and current). If these areas are already under lease, it suggests that the areas are of local but not national importance and should not be classified as ACECs.	The status of lands is irrelevant to the creation of ACECs.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD377 (R-SD41)	Delete the following statement in its entirety: "Alternatives A and C would designate 52,721 acres in Brown's Park as an ACEC. It would develop a comprehensive integrated activity plan that would address protection of high-value scenic views, wildlife habitat, and cultural and historic resources. The area would be closed, NSO, or managed with timing and controlled surface use for oil and gas leasing. Visual Resources would be managed as Class I or II. OHV use would be closed or limited to designated routes. This would preserve existing wildlife habitat and cultural resources. It would also afford protection to visual resources, and would consequently improve the recreational experience in the area. Closing the area to OHV use or restricting it to existing routes would also decrease disturbance but would also decrease the motorized recreational opportunities in the area."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD377A (R-SD41)	This ACEC should be dropped from the preferred alternative for the simple fact that there is no threat of irreparable harm to the values described and the identified values are not of national significance. The wildlife and scenery are common throughout the planning area.	See comment response SD27-G-22 for irreparable and reparable damage discussion. ACECs are only required to meet one of five criteria listed in BLM Manual 1613. See Appendix G in the PRMP/FEIS for a list of the importance criteria. The Browns Park ACEC relevance and importance criteria can be found in Appendix G in the PRMP/FEIS and include high value scenery,	

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				cultural, and historic resources. These values are not common throughout the planning area.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD377B (R-SD41)	The cultural/historic resources occupy less than 1% of the entire 52,271 acres. Thus, this area does not meet the statutory criteria for an ACEC and must be reduced to conform to the site or dropped.	See Response to Comment SD14-G-13.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD377C (R-SD41)	BLM policy does not support either Class I or Class II VRM. VRM management is an entirely different exercise and there is no documentation that the entire 52,271 acres could be seen from trails or roads. Instead, the RMP appears to “lump” the area into the same viewshed, which does not conform to VRM policy H-8410, H-8431.	VRM classification prevents necessary vegetation treatments, including prescribed burns, which are considered short-duration visual disruptions. No BLM management decisions, including VRM classifications, apply to state trust land inholdings. The BLM cannot impose any restrictions or limitations on lands not under its jurisdiction. The BLM must also provide for reasonable access to such inholdings.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD377D (R-SD41)	Modify the following statements as indicated: "Under Alternative B 18,474 acres would be designated as an ACEC. The area would be open subject to standard lease terms, closed, NSO, or managed with timing and controlled surface use for oil and gas leasing. Visual Resources would be managed as Class I, II, III, or IV. OHV use would be closed or limited to designated routes." "Since Alternatives A and C have a higher amount of acreage being managed as an ACEC and they have greater restrictions on minerals development and VRM this would result in a greater benefit to wildlife habitat, cultural resources, and recreation in comparison with Alternative B."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			While smaller, Alternative B proposal also fails to meet the statutory criteria for an ACEC.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD378 (R-SD42)	Delete the following statement in its entirety relative to Alternative D: "Accordingly, this alternative would provide less protection to wildlife habitat, cultural resources, and visual resources than A and C but more than B due to the increased acreage."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. See comment response SD53 for ACEC range of alternatives.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD378A (R-SD42)	There is no basis to assume wildlife habitat or cultural resources would be less protected without the ACEC. The RMP fails to rejustify the ACEC and reliance on these common resource values also suggests the ACEC was never properly established. BLM has no valid soil type data since it has never conducted a digitized soil survey. The RMP cannot make any sound conclusions without such a survey.	The purpose of the ACEC is to focus special management attention where such attention has been deemed necessary in order to protect identified relevant and important resource values. By definition then, the resources of the area need such special management attention, and the lack thereof would place them at risk. Access to a digitized soil type survey would not change the relevant and important values identified for this ACEC nor would it alter the need for special management attention for said values.	
Vermillion Ranch	O-33	SD379	Delete the following statement in its entirety:	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not	

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Limited Partnership		(R-SD43)	"Should Congress designate eligible/suitable river segments into the NWSRS, protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, tentative classifications, and free-flowing nature of these rivers would continue to be protected, but to a greater extent than under the proposed management actions. In addition to the BLM protecting wild and scenic values to the extent of its authority, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) would not be able to license any hydropower projects within any designated segments. This would preclude any future construction of a dam involving Segment 1 of the White River. Also, if Congress were to designate Segment 2 of the White River into the NWSRS with a tentative classification of Wild, all public lands within the river corridor would automatically be withdrawn from mineral location and the public land laws. In addition, Congress may choose to provide a federal reserved water right for in-stream flow purposes for..."	limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD379A (R-SD43)	BLM cannot manage the river as if it were already designated. Authority is limited to conducting the study. BLM is free at all times to make recommendations to Congress, it just cannot impose management changes to make these de facto wild, scenic or recreational rivers without additional authority.	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD380 (R-SD44)	Delete the following statement in its entirety: "Cumulative impacts from implementation of other resource decisions on WSAs, Non-WSA lands with Wilderness Characteristics, and Non-WSA lands likely to have Wilderness Characteristics would be minimal with the exception of mineral and OHV decisions.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not	

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			Mineral resource development and OHV activity could result in major adverse impacts to wilderness characteristics (see Table 4.14.3)."	substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD380A (R-SD44)	BLM cannot manage these lands to limit oil and gas and other uses without affecting a withdrawal in accordance with FLPMA, 43 U.S.C. §1714(c).	The commenter does not support his/her contention. The statement in question effectively says that the limited nature of restrictions placed on mineral resource development and OHV use within areas containing or likely to contain wilderness characteristics could result in cumulative adverse impacts on those characteristics. The section in question discusses the cumulative effects of all program decisions, including minerals development, *on* areas of special designations. It does not discuss the potential impacts of special designations *on* minerals development, as the commenter appears to suggest.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD382 (R-SD5)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "Visual resource management (VRM) decisions would be both beneficial and adverse. long-term. They would directly affect water and soil resources by precluding some areas from surface disturbance due to their proximity to highways, scenic areas, and special designation areas."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect.	

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				The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SD382A (R-SD5)	The proposed management of a segment of the Green River as a wild and scenic river is unlawful. For the most part, but not disclosed, much of the corridor is private and state land. Moreover, the proposal would violate established water compacts and water rights, neither of which is disclosed or addressed in the DEIS.	The commenter does not identify which segment of the Green River that would be managed as a WSR is in question nor why such management would be unlawful. See Response to Comment SD19-G-22. The BLM's management of any river to preserve those characteristics that render it eligible and suitable for WSR designation is subject to all valid and existing water rights and compacts.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SO101 (R-SO1)	The draft RMP Reasonable and Foreseeable Development Scenario ("RFD") appears to fall short of the analysis required. IM 2004-89. While this only indirectly affects grazing permittees like us, it suggests that the RMP does not adequately address the economic effects of the proposed changes in management found in the draft RMP. A challenge to the RFD could lead to a successful challenge to the RMP, which in turn would delay approval of range projects and vegetation treatments, as well as wild horse management actions.	The socioeconomic impacts of proposed management actions are discussed in Section 4.12 and its subsections. See comment responses ME47 and ME70.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SO102 (R-SO2)	The failings of the cumulative effects analysis are most evident in the discussion of social and economic effects of the RMP. The RMP assumes only beneficial effects without addressing the opportunity costs of additional SRMAs and ACECs or limiting rangeland management.	The cumulative impacts sections discuss the impacts of the proposed management decisions in the RMP as a whole in conjunction with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions unrelated to the RMP. The impacts of special designations and other management decisions	

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				considered in the RMP are outlined in Section 4.12 and its subsections.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SO103 (R-SO3)	RE: Mineral Development--The social and economic section for all of the alternatives entirely omits the role of agriculture in the region. It is the historical land use and consistently plays an important role in the custom and culture of the community as well as the economy. This is a huge omission that needs to be corrected.	The socioeconomic role of agriculture in the planning area is discussed in Sections 3.12.2.2.2, 3.12.3.2.2, and 3.12.4.2.1 and in the socioeconomic analysis in Section 4.12 and its subsections.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SO103A (R-SO3)	Re: Recreation--The DEIS needs to acknowledge that tourism tends to generate minimum wage and often seasonal jobs. Such employment is a poor substitute for energy and agriculture as the economic engines of the communities.	See comment response SO12.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SO104 (R-SO4)	The DEIS needs to address the fact that the seasonal restrictions concentrate development activities and, thus, economic activity in three months of the summer. This too will have significant and adverse environmental, social, and economic effects. The RMP incorrectly assumes that a tourism-based economy has greater social benefits than communities driven by energy and agriculture. There is no basis for this assumption and strong evidence to the contrary. The economic analysis omits severance taxes paid to the state as well as higher income taxes that are paid to the state when workers earn professional salaries rather than minimum wage and tips (where under-reporting is a longstanding issue).	See Section 4.12 and its subsections for impacts analysis with additional information incorporated into the FEIS. See comment responses SO31 and SO54.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SO105 (R-SO5)	The DEIS discussion of social and economic factors is limited to tourism and is inadequate. The area historically depended on agriculture and mineral development for its social and economic base. This is still true now. Recreation by contrast plays a relatively small role in the economy. Moreover, a tourism tax	This information has been incorporated into Section 4.12 and its subsections in the FEIS. The socioeconomic role of agriculture in the planning area is discussed in Sections 3.12.2.2.2, 3.12.3.2.2, and 3.12.4.2.1 and in the socioeconomic	

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			base is only sales tax. There is little other tax base since the United States owns the majority of the land in the planning area. It is a misnomer to describe a sales tax base as healthy since it suffers from periodic slumps. By comparison, the State of Utah also assesses a severance tax, which is entirely omitted from the economic discussion. In addition, the counties receive half of the federal mineral leasing revenues and these funds play a greater role in funding schools and public services.	analysis in Section 4.12 and its subsections. The socioeconomic role of minerals and energy exploration and development in the planning area is discussed in Sections 3.12.2.2.1, 3.12.2.2.3, 3.12.3.2.1, 3.12.3.2.3, 3.12.4.2.2. Also, see comment responses SO31 and SO54.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SO106 (R-SO6)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Visual resource management (VRM) decisions would be both beneficial and adverse. long-term. They would directly affect water and soil resources by precluding some areas from surface disturbance due to their proximity to highways, scenic areas, and special designation areas. However, adverse, short-term, indirect impacts would occur if vegetation treatments were not implemented in VRM-sensitive areas."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SO106A (R-SO6)	VRM classes limit land management options and increase the costs of doing business. The EIS must address the adverse effects on the local and regional economies.	This section of Chapter 4 discusses the impacts of VRM decisions on soil and water resources, not minerals or socio-economics. Impacts to those resources are discussed in Sections 4.8 and 4.12.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SO107 (R-SO7)	Modify the following statement as indicated by strikethrough deletions: "The Forest Management Plan for the Ashley National	Section 4.22.4 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to read as follows: “Additionally, if drilling for oil and gas is allowed on	X

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			Forest could have a cumulative impact with respect to social and economic conditions by either increasing or decreasing tourism visitation based on allowable activities. Additionally, if drilling for oil and gas is allowed on the forest, it could affect the regional economy by reducing tourism and potentially increasing the oil and gas sector of the economy."	the forest, it could affect the regional economy potentially increasing the oil and gas sector of the economy. In addition, tourism is likely to lose some of its appeal if the visible oil and gas-related activities or installations, detract from the natural environment."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SO107A (R-SO7)	The discussion of cumulative social and economic impacts entirely omits the role of agriculture. BLM appears to forget that ranching forms part of the economic backbone of these counties.	Section 4.22.4 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to add information on the role of agriculture in the counties...	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SS151 (R-SS1)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "Implement the management necessary to increase populations of special status species, including federally listed animal species, and restore them to their historic ranges by enhancing, protecting, and restoring known and potential habitat"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SS151A (R-SS1)	The criteria should not be restoration to historic range. First, little, if anything, is actually known about historic ranges or wildlife populations. Second, what is often written about historic wildlife ranges is based on conjecture not data. It is neither feasible nor practical to restore these species to their alleged historic range.	See comment response SS2A.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SS152 (R-SS2)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "The minerals development land categorization proposed in Alternative A may would have multiple short-term and long-term, direct and indirect adverse impacts on greater sage grouse populations in the VPA. These impacts include categorizing a large majority of the important greater sage grouse winter and brooding habitat as open to minerals development. These designations would likely have impacts similar to those described for ferruginous hawks."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SS152A (R-SS2)	The DEIS needs to address the effects of sport hunting as well on sage grouse populations. The RMP omits entirely the fact that sage grouse are still hunted for several months out of the year. If populations are seriously declining, one would assume that UDWR would cancel hunts for a few seasons.	Hunting is regulated by the UDWR and is outside of the scope of the RMP.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SS152B (R-SS2)	Research does not support the assumption of adverse impacts from mineral development. Comments submitted to the USFWS opposing the listing of the sage grouse strongly suggest that neither livestock grazing nor oil and gas development are directly connected to reported declines in sage grouse. Certainly recent drought is a factor, which is largely ignored. This discussion needs to be modified to reflect other scientific viewpoints.	The potential impacts of mineral development to sage grouse habitat that are described in the Draft EIS are due to the potential removal of that habitat. Citations regarding research on drought, mineral, and grazing impacts on sage grouse habitat will be provided in the Final EIS. The section the commenter is referring to addresses impacts of minerals decisions on special status species. Impacts from other resource decisions are discussed elsewhere in the document.	X

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				Information and references have been added to the Final EIS to support the assertion of impacts to sage-grouse habitat from mineral development.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SS153 (R-SS3)	Modify the following statement as indicated: "The minerals development proposed in Alternative A, where surface excavation would occur in a prairie dog town, may have multiple short-term and long-term, direct and indirect adverse impacts on white-tailed prairie dogs and where the black-footed ferret has been introduced, on their populations in the VPA."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SS153A (R-SS3)	This statement is inaccurate unless it is qualified. The prairie dog is unaffected and actually prefers areas where there is no vegetation. Adverse effects are caused by excavating the prairie dog town, since the dogs die from suffocation. This is not a long-term adverse effect, since prairie dogs will return to or expand into adjacent areas and reproduce at high rates. Similarly the only effect on the black-footed ferret will be where the excavation occurs and the ferret has been reintroduced. Unless the area is paved, prairie dog habitat is not adversely affected by surface disturbance other than direct excavation of the towns.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch	O-33	SW58 (R-SW1)	Add the bolded statement where indicated:	The suggested wording has been added to Table 2.1.17 ((Soil and Water Resources) in order to	X

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Limited Partnership			"Eliminate or reduce discharge of pollutants into surface waters and achieve water quality that provides protection and propagation of fish, amphibians, wildlife, livestock, and recreation in and on the water. Implement best management practices adopted by Utah Division of Environmental Quality ("DEQ") to limit surface discharges into water." The Utah DEQ has jurisdiction over water quality, both point and non-point sources of water pollution. BLM's only regulatory option is to implement the "best management practices" for non-point sources, which are designed to reduce sedimentation and erosion into streams.	clarify that the BLM acknowledges the authority of and adheres to the regulations of the DEQ (and the EPA) under all alternatives.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW59 (R-SW2) (R-SW16)	The section is biased and inaccurate and should be deleted. This discussion fails to recognize the scientific controversy regarding "crypto biotic" crusts or "Shepherds soils" and the role of various land uses on the soils. For example, if sheep or cattle hooves have adverse effects, then elk and wild horses, as well as deer and antelope, will have equally significant, if not greater, adverse effects. The RMP assumes incorrectly that only livestock have adverse effects.	The BLM declines to delete the section as suggested. The section does not single out livestock grazing as the sole potential source of impacts to biological soil crusts but includes other land uses as well.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW60 (R-SW3)	[T]he RMP does not address the effects of mountain biking or concentrated recreation uses on soil and water resources. The selective blame-shifting in the RMP only supports charges that soil crust issue is a device to remove livestock grazing or obstruct development, rather than a legitimate scientific issue.	The RMP does not claim to permanently remove valid existing rights for livestock grazing in order to protect soil and water resources. Rather, alternatives under the RMP provide for flexible management of that grazing to adapt to environmental conditions and overall management objectives, which include maintaining rangeland health. The potential impacts of recreation management actions proposed under the	

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				alternatives are outlined in Section 4.13.1.6.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW61 (R-SW4)	Revise the statement as follows: "Establish new and maintain all existing guzzlers and other water sources to improve forage and habitat for all grazing animals and distribution in the planning area." Water projects should not be limited to just wildlife but should be supported for all grazing species.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW62 (R-SW5)	-Alternative A As is the case with the riparian area discussion, the allocation of upland forage assumes that only livestock affect soil and water resources. This is inaccurate. Wild horses have greater adverse impacts and big game through numbers and duration will also have measurable and potentially adverse impacts. -Alternative D The RMP cannot say that the current direction will have the greatest adverse impacts. Forage utilization is set out in individual allotment grazing plans and monitored.	See comment response SW7. All other things being equal across alternatives, alternatives wherein higher numbers of AUMs are allocated, and presumably used, would have a greater potential impact on soil and water resources are greater numbers of animals have the potential for more trampling that smaller numbers of animals. The same table to which this comment refers (Table 2.5, page 2-96 of the DEIS) also acknowledges the several situations in which Alternative D has fewer potential impacts than other alternatives. Note: Table 2.5 of the Draft RMP has been renumbered as Table 2.2 in the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion	O-33	SW63	-Alternative A [Soils and Water Resources]	Table 2.5 (to which the comment is directed) is a	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-SW6)	The acreage figures are not explained. It is unclear whether they refer to vegetation treatments or include acres affected by fences, water projects, and other structures.	summary of impacts from alternative management prescriptions outlined in Table 2.3 and analyzed in Chapter 4. Note: Table 2.5 of the Draft RMP has been renumbered as Table 2.2 in the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW64 (R-SW7)	Any CBM water disposal is governed by Utah DEQ. The other effects are accidental spills or unlawful actions that presumably are prevented through enforcement procedures. Disposal by definition is not accidental.	Section 4.7.2.3.2 does not claim that disposal is accidental as suggested by the comment. The statement in this section merely refers to disposal as a potential source of additional unquantified adverse impacts. However, the reference to accidental spills has been removed from the text, as accidental spills are tied to unplanned actions.	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW65 (R-SW8)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "The effects of recreation decisions on soils may would generally be long-term, indirect, and beneficial for specific areas by limiting OHV use to designated areas and by providing management for areas as SRMAs. Adverse effects would occur from increased visitor traffic, development of trails, and OHV use. Adverse impacts would include trampling of banks, compaction of soils, and spread of noxious weeds. Where limits are place on OHV travel off of designated routes for big game retrieval, beneficial effects may would occur. The “Tread Lightly” program is invaluable in educating OHV users to stay on existing trails, thereby decreasing impacts to riparian areas. “Sacrifice” areas would be designated for OHV users in areas that are not ecologically sensitive and present little or no risk to riparian condition and other components identified in the Utah BLM Standards for Rangeland Health."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The statement as written is a landscape level analysis that takes into account the entirety of the Vernal Planning Area. Further, it	

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			The statement is only true if applied to specific areas. Recreation use, especially bikes or ATVs will increase soil disturbance and erosion.	is not an overstatement to say that as a rule, restriction of OHV travel to designated routes would benefit soils located outside of those routes by subjecting them to fewer direct impacts.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW66 (R-SW9)	VRM does not necessarily limit soil disturbance. The assumption in the RMP that it does suggests that the RMP fails to accurately disclose the full ramifications of the VRM Classes I and II. The RMP misuses this management tool	The commenter is partially correct in that VRM Class I and II designation do not, in and of themselves, prevent soil disturbance. However, VRM Class I and II designation do place limits on how development can occur and does require efforts to reduce the overall geographic extent and ground disturbance of that development. By extension, this lesser ground disturbance would create a situation where the potential for soil disturbance is lower when compared to situations in which no such limits are in place. The commenter is correct. The management objectives of an area determine a VRM classification. Therefore it is not the VRM classification that may limit soil disturbance, but rather the management objectives.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW67 (R-SW10)	Increased recreation use will have significant effects on soil and water that are largely ignored in the DEIS. Trail use by recreationists can have significant and adverse impacts on soil and water quality.	See Table 2.1.13 (Recreation Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS where the Rangeland Health Standard 2, states that: “1. Where feasible, and consistent with user safety, development travel routes should be	

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				located/relocated away from sensitive riparian and wetlands areas. 2. Camping in riparian areas should be avoided and must be managed, monitored, and modified as conditions dictate to reduce vegetation disturbance and wetlands areas. 3. Stream crossings would be limited to the number dictated by the topography, geology, and soil type. Design any necessary stream crossings to minimize sedimentation, soil erosion, and compaction."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW68 (R-SW11)	Camping activities generally result in increased levels of bacteria in creeks and streams. The EIS must address these significant health risks. The trail system will also increase erosion and run off. This too is a direct consequence of opening this area to intense recreation.	See comment response SW67.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW69 (R-SW12)	RE: Alternative A-- Recreation use will have significant adverse effects on soil and water, which are omitted. Thus the conversion of this area from multiple use to intense recreation use will have greater or as great adverse environmental impacts. This proposal should be dropped. There is limited justification, it contradicts BLM energy policy, and the environmental effects are potentially significant.	Potential impacts from recreation management decisions on soil and water resources are addressed in Section 4.13.2.6. There is no need to drop any proposal under any alternative in the RMP. The BLM must consider a reasonable range of alternatives that each meet the purpose and need of the RMP. Further, any one alternative assessed in the EIS need not be selected in its entirety in the Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD may include individual management options under any of the alternatives in the final suite of management actions that are to be included in the Final RMP.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW70 (R-SW13)	Oil and gas and mining have limited water needs, other than reducing dust.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion	O-33	SW71	-Clearcut logging affects surface water flows. Full Field	Comment noted.	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-SW14)	development with sites being reclaimed is unlikely to affect surface water flows. -Oil and gas development does not dewater aquifers. Any tertiary pumping is approved by Utah Department of Environmental Quality.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW72 (R-SW15)	-The discussion omits private and state trust lands, which is significant omission. BLM's past history of delaying oil and gas development has resulted in much of the drilling occurring on the trust lands or private lands. -BLM best management practices should be disclosed and discussed.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW74 (R-SW6)	The special designations would not necessarily limit erosion, since they also limit management tools that would improve vegetation and reduce erosion. Heavy recreation use is equally likely to cause erosion and stream sedimentation.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	SW75 (VE53)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Designating new ACECs and expanding current ACECs would have long-term, direct and indirect, beneficial and harmful impacts to soils and water by protecting relevant and important values and limiting OHV travel to designated routes (although designation would not preclude oil and gas development within these areas) but limiting management opportunities. Specific management guidelines would be created for each ACEC and would require further analysis of impacts to soils and water resources. Special designations of ACECs are reconsidered for would continue in Browns Park, Red Mountain-Dry Fork, Lears Canyon, Pariette Wetlands, and Red Creek	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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			Watershed; therefore, these designations will not be analyzed by individual alternative." ACEC designation for wildlife will not benefit soils, since both big game and wild horses have direct and indirect adverse effects on vegetation cover and soils. This discussion also illustrates the tunnel vision found in the DEIS, where wildlife are "good" and domestic livestock are "bad." Limiting OHV travel to specific routes will increase the impacts on particular areas. Similarly, limiting oil and gas development to certain areas and times of the year will also increase the impacts.	Section 4.13.1.9 discusses ACECs in general terms and does not discuss establishing ACECs for wildlife, though wildlife may be one of many resource values considered in the proposed ACEC designation. The analysis is based on landscape-level considerations rather than site-specific considerations. Wild horse populations are limited within the planning area and would have only limited and localized impacts rather than landscape-level (planning area wide) impacts. The same is true for OHV use of designated routes and areas.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR58 (R-TR1)	Several provisions in the BLM rules and handbook direct BLM to incorporate the county land use plans and to make the BLM plan consistent with the plans and policies of tribal, state, and local governments to the maximum extent possible consistent with federal law. 43 U.S.C. §1712(c)(9); 43 C.F.R. §§1610.3-1(c)(1); 1610.3-2; BLM Planning Manual 1601.02, ¶C. Thus, the county transportation system, which is a large part of the respective county plans, needs to be considered and BLM should try to resolve inconsistencies as part of the land use planning process.	See comment response TR7. Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah Counties were coordinating partners in the development of the RMP and provided input in the development of the transportation plan within the RMP.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR59 (R-TR2)	The planning handbook requires BLM to develop maps showing roads and the transportation system. BLM H-1601-1, Appendix C, ¶3. While the handbook reserves for a future date the transportation or travel planning format, there can be no doubt that BLM must consider	See comment response TR7. As the BLM continues to work on the travel plan after the approval of the proposed RMP, the BLM	

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			public roads, and claims of public roads as part of the plan. Thus, BLM must include the county's travel plan as a major issue, part of the inventory, and then identify the roads for which there is no dispute are public.	will work with its cooperating agencies and other entities to identify both motorized and non-motorized travel routes in accordance with WO IM 2004-005.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR60 (R-TR3)	While the R.S. 2477 issue is subject to the Memorandum of Understanding signed in April 2003, it does not relieve BLM of recognizing and incorporating the public roads into the transportation plan. Omitting this important issue makes the travel management portion of the plan flawed from the outset. This is especially true for long-standing county roads that BLM has always conceded are not under its jurisdiction.	See comment response TR58.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR61 (R-TR4)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Revised Statute 2477 assertions and county roads, concerning the public construction of roads across public lands, as proposed by the counties and state or county roads within the planning area would be addressed with current policy."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR61A (R-TR4)	R.S. 2477 roads are not "constructed" in the present tense. The BLM must recognize R.S. 2477 rights-of-way and other public roads. 43 U.S.C. §§1701 n.701(g); 1715(a). The RMP fails to do so. In this respect, the RMP is not consistent with county plans.	See comment response TR58.	
Vermillion	O-33	TR62	BLM's Planning handbook requires the RMP to	See comment response TR58.	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-TR5)	address transportation issues, which includes state and public roads. The RMP omits most of the county roads that are important points of access for public land users.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR63 (R-TR6)	Delete the following from this section: "Ashley Creek drainage, White River, Jackson Draw, Warren Draw, Allen Draw, Red Mountain, Wild Mountain-south, Pot Creek, Spring Creek, Nine Mile, Red Mountain East and West, and Moon Shine area..."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR63A (R-TR6)	The RMP fails to document the need for public access across private land. The RMP omits most, if not all, of the county roads and rights-of-way. Before Condemning easements, BLM needs to document the need to acquire access by including public roads and routes and determining the cases where there is inadequate public access.	The RMP notes that the proposed easements are for recreational purposes. BLM would not condemn for public access. See comment responses LR8 and LR9.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR64 (R-TR7)	Add an additional goal and objective to the list as follows: “Travel management would account for valid existing rights and would incorporate the county and other public roads.”	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion.	

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				The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR64A (R-TR7)	The added bullet reflects the need for the RMP to recognize and consider valid existing rights impacts to travel management (i.e., public roads, including R.S. 2477 rights-of-way).	See comment response TR58.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR65 (R-TR8)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "As Euroamericans settled the Uinta Basin, establishing efficient travel avenues was of vital importance in aiding the growth to settlements, the mining industry, and the agriculture and ranching businesses. In addition to the state and county road systems in the VPA, there are To date, identified transportation related sites include trails, paths, paved or unpaved roads..."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR65A (R-TR8)	The RMP must address the transportation system. H-1601, App. C, ¶C.1. The county public roads, including those that arose pursuant to R.S. 2477, must be included. The RMP and DEIS are deficient by attempting to ignore the public roads, over which BLM has limited or no jurisdiction.	The discussion in this section is related to the classification of transportation components and systems as cultural resources under the umbrella of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and is not a political or jurisdictional statement. The ownership of the transportation component in question is irrelevant as to where the component is	

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				considered a cultural resource site under the NHPA.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR66 (R-TR9)	RE: the statement beginning with "All public lands in the VPA...” and ending with "Corridors may be designated as Active or Contingency."	The BLM is aware of its requirements regarding allowing reasonable access to inholdings such as state lands. The BLM will continue to follow this requirement under the new RMP.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR66A (R-TR9)	Access to permits and leases is governed by law and cannot be limited to a defined area. BLM must also allow access to Utah trust lands. State of Utah ex rel. Cotter Corp. v. Andrus, 487 F. Supp. 995 (D. Ut. 1979).	The BLM’s policy, as required by the Cotter decision (State of Utah v. Andrus, 10/1/79), is that “the State must be allowed access to the State school trust lands so that those lands can be developed in a manner that will provide funds for the common school . . . .” This decision confined the issue of access to situations directly involving economic revenues generated for the school trust.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR67 (R-TR10)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Access to public lands is provided throughout the VPA. BLM must provide access to inholdings or access pursuant to a permit or lease. In situations when BLM is not required to grant a right-of-way pursuant to law or regulation, BLM can close or limit access, Access should be closed or restricted, where necessary, to protect public health and safety and to protect significant resource values."	Section 3.6.6 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to read as follows: “Access to public lands is provided throughout the VPA. Access should be closed or restricted, where necessary, to protect public health and safety and to protect significant resource values. Easements can be acquired to provide access to public lands for recreational, wildlife, range, cultural/historical, mineral, ACEC, special management areas, and other resource needs. Note that all valid existing leases and rights are acknowledged by the BLM, and management actions implemented through approval of the Final RMP and Record of Decision do not apply retroactively to these leases and rights.”	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR67A (R-TR10)	This section overstates BLM’s authority and is limited to situations when BLM issues a Title V right-of-way and there is no other legal basis to require BLM to grant access, e.g. telecommunications or pipeline	See comment response TR66.	

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			rights-of-way.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR68 (R-TR11)	Delete the statement: "Public access to the Diamond Mountain public lands is limited because of private ownership."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	TR68A (R-TR11)	The RMP must document the lack of alternative access or delete this statement. The RMP omits the county roads and road systems, thereby omitting possible access.	If the BLM finds that a county claims a public road to where the public desires access, then the BLM would work with the county to ensure that public access is indeed in place.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE27 (R-VE27)	Add the bolded information to the end of the following statement: "Sagebrush habitat reclamation or enhancement within crucial deer winter range under Alternative C would benefit this vegetation type, when compared to Alternative D – No Action (under which sagebrush habitat reclamation remains unspecified). Vegetation treatments in sagebrush communities would beneficially impact the development of the desired seral stages. Alternatives A and B would also reclaim disturbed sagebrush habitat areas, but at a lower ratio and producing fewer beneficial impacts to the	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences.	

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			vegetation than Alternative C, but more than Alternative D. These benefits would not be available in VRM Classes I and II or other areas where restrictions would preclude vegetation treatment."	The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE27A (R-VE27)	The RMP for the most part does not address the fact that many of the common to all alternatives restrictions would limit assumed benefits. The RMP should either delete the exaggerated claims of environmental benefit or remove the unnecessary restrictions.	No VRM Class designation precludes the implementation of vegetation treatments.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE31 (R-VE1)	Delete the statement: "Current management direction is inadequate or lacking in opportunities to enhance the management of Watershed Values and Vegetation Resources" and replace with "The RMP needs to be revised to reflect regulatory changes relating to rangeland health standards." BLM did not implement planned range projects authorized in prior plans. Thus, the problem is not a matter of inadequate direction found in current management but a failure of BLM to implement the AMPs and grazing plans. There was also a policy during the 1990's of not funding range projects and the RMP should take responsibility for this situation.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE32 (R-VE2)	Change the listing of vegetation management goals to read as follows: "Manage the vegetation to attain the ecological stage that would: Ensure sustainability; Meet grazing preference for livestock and forage authorized use allocations (livestock, for wildlife, wild horses); Ensure	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion.	

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			species diversity.”	The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE33 (R-VE3)	Alternative A—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "245,649 AUMs allotted could result in short-term impacts that include loss of vegetative cover and biomass, and trampling, with long-term impacts such as reductions in plant productivity and regenerative ability, and increases in weeds; though 50% upland vegetation utilization by livestock, and 4" stubble height of key herbaceous species measured from the green line 30% riparian vegetation utilization would set limits on grazing impacts. These impacts are equal or less than those by wild horses and big game."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE33A (R-VE3)	The DEIS only addresses the effects of livestock on vegetation when wild horses and big game have similar and possibly greater impacts. This discussion reveals a significant bias against livestock grazing. It is also inaccurate to say that continued grazing of livestock would have negative impacts when this area is also grazed by wild horses and big game, whose numbers have increased. The vegetation in this region is well-adapted to grazing and continued livestock grazing does not and will not have adverse impacts.	Potential impacts on vegetation resources from wild horses and wildlife are discussed in Sections 4.16.2.14 and 4.16.2.15, respectively.	
Vermillion	O-33	VE34	Alternative A—Modify the following statement as	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-VE4)	indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "34,640 acres of rangeland improvements would help restore natural vegetation communities, eliminate weeds, and control livestock movement (through fencing). Guzzlers and reservoirs may have some minimal would have adverse impacts. Range improvements will also facilitate better distribution of wild horses and wildlife throughout the area."	changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE34A (R-VE4)	The draft RMP overstates the effects of vegetation use near water. The amount of land and the actual effects are much less than what is described.	The potential impacts of range improvements on vegetation are discussed in Sections 4.16.1 and 4.16.2.7. The potential impacts of range improvements on wild horses and wildlife are addressed in Sections 4.18.2.5 and 4.19.2.6, respectively.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE35 (R-VE5)	All Alternatives—Add the following to all alternatives: "Noxious weeds will be subject to additional control and prevention by funding local weed and pest control programs and enforcing reclamation terms to ensure that noxious weeds do not take hold on recently reclaimed areas. Vegetation treatments will also be aimed at reducing noxious weeds and encouraging desired vegetation."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording change. See comment response VE4.	
Vermillion	O-33	VE35A	The RMP is largely silent about addressing noxious	The BLM's weed management program is in	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-VE5)	weed issues. Presidential executive order requires each agency to make noxious weed control a priority.	compliance with the Presidential executive order and is a funded high priority program for the Vernal Field Office. The BLM is an active member of the Uintah Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area and contributes to education programs, assists State lands in weed control and is a partner in grants and multi-agency weed control projects through the Cooperative Weed Management Area.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE36 (R-VE6)	Delete the following statement: "Air quality impacts from these alternatives are generally projected to result in increased vegetation (density and height) and lower overall surface/soil disturbance."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE36A (R-VE6)	The assumed correlation between fugitive dust and vegetation is overstated and undocumented. Other than along roads or well sites, it is unlikely that development will generate sufficient dust to adversely affect vegetation.	The BLM believes that the potential effects of fugitive dust on vegetation is not overstated and must be disclosed The BLM acknowledges that the bulk of these anticipated effects would be within ¼-mile of roads (see Section 4.7.2.3.2).	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE37 (R-VE7)	Alternative D-Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions: "Rangeland improvement vegetation treatments under Alternative D would occur on an estimated 40,390	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate.	

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			acres. This is an estimate not a limit. Alternative D would benefit fire management more than Alternative A, but less than Alternatives B and C."	The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE37A (R-VE7)	The RMP never discusses the reason that the Preferred Alternative would adopt less vegetation treatment. This makes little sense in the context of the plan. The RMP does not document the resource reason to limit vegetation treatment to specific number of acres.	Acreages of vegetation treatments provided within the individual alternatives under each applicable resource program are projections used for comparison purposes and do not represent absolute caps on the numbers of acres of vegetation that the BLM may treat.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE38 (R-VE8)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions: "Impacts to livestock and grazing resources would occur under all of the proposed alternatives. The impacts could include those caused by road and trail construction and maintenance, wellpad construction, vehicle traffic, accidental spills of potentially hazardous materials, and noxious weed infestations. These impacts are generally mitigated as part of the conditions of approval." The RMP overstates the impacts on livestock grazing from energy development. The amount of land used for energy is relatively small and disruption occurs for a relatively short period of time. In some cases, dust will benefit the plants as well.	Section 4.7.1 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to include the bolded comment text.	X

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE38A (R-VE8)	Delete the following statement: "For all of the alternatives, fugitive dust caused by vehicles traveling along proposed new roads, existing roads, and other areas of surface disturbance could settle on vegetation used as forage, especially alongside roadway corridors with heavy traffic. This dust would potentially affect the quality and regenerative capacity of roadside grasses and forbs as well as decrease the palatability of the forage for livestock use."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE38B (R-VE8)	The effects of dust are largely overstated and inaccurate. Any dust is limited to roadside vegetation, and would be removed with rain/snow and wind. This discussion lacks scientific basis. Even if there were dust on plants, it will not adversely affect the vigor of the plants.	The BLM believes that the potential effects of fugitive dust on vegetation is not overstated and must be disclosed. The BLM acknowledges that the bulk of these anticipated effects would be within ¼-mile of roads (see Section 4.7.2.3.2).	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE39 (R-VE9)	Add the following statement: “The noxious weed issue is an ongoing problem, in large part due to wind and wildlife. Noxious weeds will take hold where the surface is disturbed and reclamation is delayed. Enforcement of reclamation terms and conditions and better coordination with local noxious weed control agencies will facilitate noxious weed efforts.”	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions	

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				or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE39A (R-VE9)	The RMP omits the role of wildlife and wind in facilitating noxious weed problems. These factors exist in the planning area and have little or nothing to do with energy development.	Wind has been added as a contributing factor to the spread of noxious weeds in Section 3.16.2 of the PRMP/FEIS.	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE40 (R-VE10)	Snow removal chemicals and salt may affect roadside vegetation. However, the unpaved roads used for energy development do not see chemical snow removal. This discussion should be deleted.	It is unclear as to what the comment is referring to as there is no discussion of the use of snow removal chemicals and salt and their potential effects on roadside vegetation in this section of the document or any other.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE41 (R-VE11)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Several areas have proposed wildlife and fisheries management decisions that would limit or reduce access and disturbance seasonally or year-round. Surface disturbance restrictions will not apply to livestock grazing activities, including vegetation treatment and range project construction. Impacts from the proposed designations are generally projected to have relatively minor effects on livestock grazing."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE41A (R-VE11)	Range projects should not be regulated as surface disturbing activities. The RMP needs to explicitly provide that vegetation treatments or range project construction are not defined as and are not regulated as surface disturbing activities. As written this section implies that vegetation treatments and range projects	The section referred to in the comment says nothing about range improvements. The section acknowledges that vegetation treatments would occur, therefore, they are clearly not excluded by proposed restrictions on surface disturbing activities. With regards to the second part of the	

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			would be prohibited in these areas. There is no scant [sic] research supporting the proposition that wildlife (big game) are adversely affected or harmed by vegetation treatments or range project construction. Accordingly this section needs to be revised.	comment, the section referenced discusses the potential impacts on livestock grazing from wildlife and fisheries management alternatives, not potential impacts on wildlife from vegetation treatments.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE42 (R-VE12)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Impacts associated with mineral management decisions would could be potentially adverse to livestock grazing, as they represent the potential loss of AUMs from mining, well-pad and access road construction, and the construction of support facilities. In most cases, these impacts are routinely mitigated, are of relatively short duration and affect a relatively small area. These impacts may be greater where energy development features dense well sites. Current RFD scenarios do not assume such a high density. Other potentially adverse but remote impacts from mineral development would include the production of fugitive dust, increased livestock management needs, decreased livestock dispersal, noxious and invasive weed encroachment, and the physical risks of livestock/vehicle collisions associated with increased vehicle traffic in grazing areas. There are often benefits where reclamation of right-of-way corridors and well pads establish more palatable forage."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE42A (R-VE12)	In many cases reclamation also results in improved forage and reclamation standards call for spraying to control noxious weeds. Thus the discussion omits benefits and overstates the impacts.	See comment response VE4.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	VE43 (R-VE13)	The new and costly restrictions on vegetation treatment and range structures appear to exceed BLM's statutory authority. This is also true for VRM classes that will	Under FLPMA, the BLM is given broad discretionary authority to manage public lands under its jurisdiction and implement management decisions	

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Partnership			make it difficult if not impossible to do vegetation treatments and range projects.	that do not preclude the exercise of valid existing rights. The BLM does not believe that management decisions proposed relative to vegetation treatment and range structures impose an undue burden or preclude valid land uses. See comment response VE27 regarding the impact of VRM Class designation on vegetation treatment.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE44 (R-VE14)	There may be sound resource reasons to apply plant phenology analysis but these decisions need to be made at the allotment or site-specific level, rather than the programmatic level of the RMP.	See comment response LG18.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE45 (R-VE15)	If vegetation treatments are planned for 156,425 acres, why does the DEIS conclude that only 40,390 acres will see improved forage? The RMP never justifies the reduction in vegetation treatments from the current RMP and certainly there is no resource management basis.	The commenter has incorrectly interpreted the analysis presented in the document. The 156,425 acres indicated in Section 4.7.2.5.1 refer to expected benefits to forage from vegetation treatments through prescribed fire. It is unclear where the commenter obtained the 40,390 acres figure as a conclusion of expected improved forage; however, it appears that the commenter may have taken the number from Section 4.7.2.4.4 (Alternative D), which describes anticipated forage benefit specifically from rangeland improvement projects. Anticipated acres of improvement to forage from different resource program management actions are not duplicative but are additive.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE46 (R-VE16)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: “Decisions making lands unavailable for upland surface disturbance and riparian corridor disturbance may benefit would be beneficial to riparian resources. Beneficial impacts may would result from stubble	Section 4.11 in the Final EIS text has been revised to include the suggested wording changes.	X

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			height requirements, utilization levels, reduced use, and season of use changes that are proposed in some of the alternatives." This statement may not be accurate where natural erosion is the major or only factor in sedimentation. Similarly, limiting surface disturbance for vegetation treatments may prevent improvement of upland vegetation, which will also not benefit riparian resources.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE47 (R-VE17)	Invasive species are not introduced by oil and gas or CBM development. The invasive species are already found on public lands due to wind, wildlife, and all manner of human activity.	Section 4.11.1 in the PRMP/FEIS states: "...road development providing access to oil, gas, and CBM leasing would increase risks of invasive species introduction..." This statement does not claim that oil, gas, and coal bed methane (CBM) development introduce invasive species but merely increases the risk that such introduction could occur.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE48 (R-VE18) (R-VE19)	Revise the DEIS as follows for this statement: "The effects of livestock and grazing, forage and wild horse decisions on soils would generally be short-term and direct. Through joint monitoring by the permittee and BLM and changes in range use, soils are unlikely to should not become degraded to the point where they lose productivity; therefore no long-term impacts should occur. Management decisions for livestock and grazing, forage, and wild horse resources may would always result in reduction in or loss of vegetative cover for a short time. and subsequent wind and water	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions	

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			erosion, and loss of biological soil crusts, where they occur." Rangeland systems have evolved with grazing and are adapted to it. Thus, it is difficult to support the statement that grazing will have direct adverse effects. It changes vegetation for a short time, this is not an adverse effect. The last phrase incorrectly assumes that the loss of vegetation cover is totally from grazing. This occurs for wild horses perhaps but not for any other grazing, when managed.	or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE49 (R-VE8)	The entire discussion in Section 4.7.2.3.2 (Alternative A) regarding fugitive dust should be deleted.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE49A (R-VE8)	It overstates any adverse effect, which is extremely minor and very temporary.	The BLM is required to disclose known or anticipated impacts to resources from management decisions considered in the RMP.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	VE50 (R-VE20)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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Partnership			"Forage and wild horse management decisions would affect soils and water resources when AUMs for livestock, wild horses, and/or wildlife are adjusted in response to evidence from joint monitoring that water quality or soil degradation is eminent or occurring. Depending on season of use and duration, adjusting AUMs would be a short-term, direct, and potentially beneficial impact, as it may would slow the loss of ground cover. On the other hand, greater forage utilization and more AUMs in a given area may put greater stress on the soils via trampling and loss of cover. The loss of vegetation would have direct, long-term, adverse impacts to water quality and soil productivity, especially in areas with soil limitations."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE50A (R-VE20)	Vegetation is not lost unless the topsoil is stripped and plants are removed by their roots. The RMP overstates the effects of livestock grazing. If forage is used beyond proper management or capacity, then there would be stress. This assumes grazing exceeds current capacity, which it does not.	Conditions such as drought may result in increased vegetation loss and increased soil erosion prior to adjustments in AUMs.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE51 (R-VE21)	Delete this entire statement: "With respect to livestock grazing, alternatives vary between season of use and duration of use. Due to growing seasons, effects on vegetation (and subsequently, on water and soils) vary depending on the season of use. For example, limiting grazing before periods of high runoff (generally due to spring runoff and late summer thunderstorms) reduces adverse impacts: banks that retain their vegetation are	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect.	

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			protected from erosion caused by high flows. A longer duration of use would result in greater impacts to vegetation, soils, and water in a given area.”	The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) are activity level planning and AMP decisions have to conform to the RMP direction.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE51A (R-VE21)	Delete this entire statement: “All alternatives contain restrictions to livestock grazing during seasons of use as well.” These are decisions for the AMP not the RMP. Strike the statements as indicated.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE52 (R-VE22)	Modify the statement as indicated by the bolded addition: "Maintaining plant stubble of key herbaceous species along the banks traps sediment and reduces stream bank erosion. Managing key riparian woody vegetation maintains bank stability by providing root structure, holding banks together, and reducing sediment transport. Maintaining riparian vegetation would also	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the	

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			attenuate floodwaters and, therefore, lower runoff amounts and flooding levels."	current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE52A (R-VE22)	Stubble height should not be the sole measure, so important to add key herbaceous species.	The statement in question refers to the physical trapping of sediment by plant stubble, regardless of species. The nature of that stubble and its relationship to the health of the riparian ecosystem are discussed elsewhere in the document.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE54 (R-VE24)	Alternatives A, B, and C—Edit the statement as indicated: "Areas managed as VRM Class I would potentially provide beneficial impacts to vegetation by preventing visually degrading surface disturbances. Alternative A would manage 67,357 acres as VRM I, and Alternative C would managed 148,260 acres under this VRM Class."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE54A (R-VE24)	VRM classification has little if any impact on vegetation.	VRM Class I designation provides for some limitation on ground disturbing activities that can disrupt vegetation communities and create conditions where invasive species and noxious weeds can become established.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	VE55 (R-VE25)	Alternative D-- Edit the statement as indicated:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not	

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Partnership			"This alternative would manage 56,127 acres within the VPA as VRM Class I. Alternative C would have the most beneficial impacts on vegetation, with fewer beneficial impacts to vegetation under Alternative A. Alternative B and D would provide the least potential benefit to vegetation from visual resource protection."	limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. Please, see comment response VE54.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE56 (R-VE3)	Alternative D—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "246,128 AUMs allotted could result in impacts similar to Alternative A; upland utilization and riparian use are covered in allotment management or grazing plans. unspecified upland vegetation utilization by livestock and no utilization specified for riparian areas could have indirect, adverse impacts on vegetation." Vegetation utilization and riparian use criteria are specified in individual grazing plans or allotment management plans. It is also important to note that utilization by itself is not a determinant of rangeland resource condition or health. It is only a single picture in time showing the plants and amount consumed.	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. It would be inappropriate to modify Alternative D as	

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			Utilization data provide little information regarding plant health and vigor or which species consumed the resource.	that simply reflects the current decisions.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE56 (R-VE26)	Alternatives A, B, C and D—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Seasonal restrictions and limitations on surface-disturbing activities for the protection of wildlife may would indirectly benefit vegetation although increases in wildlife or big game or wild horses might have greater adverse impacts on vegetation and soil resources. Alternatives A, B, and C would provide slightly more protection than Alternative D – No Action, as the No Action Alternative would only restrict minerals activities. Alternatives A and B would stipulate limits on the amount of surface disturbance per township (560 acres per township), further reducing the direct adverse impacts to vegetation when compared to Alternative D – No Action, under which new surface disturbances remain unspecified."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE56A (R-VE26)	Seasonal restrictions may also have cumulative adverse effects by concentrating development over a short time period and thus the effects occur throughout the VPA over a short time.	Wildlife management decisions are not directed at increasing population sizes but rather at maintaining species and habitat. Thus, the presumption in the comment that wildlife populations will increase and thereby have greater impacts on vegetation is erroneous. The compressed time frame for development would not be expected to have increased adverse impacts on vegetation as compared to impacts that would occur if development occurred over a longer period of time. Ultimately, the same acreage in the same	

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				locations would be subject to ground disturbance. It would be inappropriate to modify Alternative D as that simply reflects the current management decisions.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE57 (R-VE4)	RE: Alternative D This discussion is another example of how the RMP focuses only on negatives of livestock grazing while completely ignoring the fact that wild horses and wildlife will have similar and possibly greater impacts. The omission of wildlife and wild horses from the vegetation is a chronic and unjustifiable flaw.	See comment response VE2.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE58 (R-VE5)	Modify the following statement (page 4-83) as indicated by strikethrough deletions: “Areas of disturbed soil would lead to invasion by noxious weeds or other undesirable opportunistic plant species. These species would reduce rangeland and forage values by replacing preferred forage species, leading to a reduction in grazing capacity. Without proper management and control, invasive plant species become established and cause severe infestations..."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VE58A (R-VE5)	These impacts are overstated, and omit the fact that wind and wildlife play equal or even more significant roles. The RMP needs to incorporate state and local noxious weed control programs and it does not. The failure to do so implies that BLM will not allow or cooperate in noxious weed control efforts. Assuming	The BLM does not believe that the potential impacts are overstated and believes they must be disclosed. The section cited in the comment does not specify sources of disturbance but merely states that	

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			that the VPA does cooperate on noxious weed control and operators use controls, the assumption of widespread noxious weed infestation ignores the role that wind and wildlife play dissemination. Better enforcement of the reclamation terms and conditions and better coordination with local weed control districts should be part of the RMP.	noxious weeds become established in areas where soil is disturbed and can affect the quality and quantity of forage available to livestock. State and local noxious weeds lists were used to create Table 3.16.6, which lists those plants the BLM has targeted for treatment and control. The "Status" column of the table indicates whether the plant is a state or local target species. Additional discussion of the noxious weeds included in the BLM's weed control program is provided in Section 3.16.2. See comment response VE12. The VFO is also an active member of the Uintah Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area, which includes a representative from all adjacent agencies and private land representatives.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI50 (R-VI1)	The RMP misuses VRM classes and most of the Class II areas should be changed to Class III or IV. There is little evidence that the RMP complies with procedures in DM 8431 or H-8410-1. The maps support this conclusion since VRM Classes I and II apply to large areas that are lumped.	See comment response VI7A.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI50A	While FLPMA expresses a policy to protect scenic quality, there is no other direction or authority that allows BLM to make this an independent resource use or management imperative. FLPMA policies cannot be implemented absent such direction. 43 U.S.C. §1702(g).	H1601-1 – Land Use Planning Handbook, Appendix C, I. Visual Resources states: “Land Use Plan Decisions. Manage visual resource values in accordance with visual resource management (VRM) objectives (management classes). Designate VRM management classes for all areas of BLM land, based on an inventory of	

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				visual resources and management considerations for other land uses. VRM management classes may differ from VRM inventory classes, based on management priorities for land uses (see BLM Handbook H8410-1 for a description of VRM classes)."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI51 (R-VI2)	Delete the following from this section: "Manage the public lands in such a way as to preserve those scenic vistas, which are deemed to be most important: • in their impact on the quality of life for residents and communities in the areas; • in their contribution to the quality of recreational visitor experiences; and • in supporting the regional tourism industry and segments of the local economy dependent on public land resources."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI51A	Visual quality in FLPMA is only a policy and cannot be implemented as a plan objective. FLPMA does not authorize BLM to implement a policy unless there is specific statutory authority elsewhere in FLPMA or another law. 43 U.S.C. §1702(b). The RMP would preserve "scenic vistas" which exceed the areas being used or entitled to protection. BLM cannot rely on other laws, such as the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. §§470-470b; or the Archeological Resources Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. §§470aa-470mm, since neither law authorizes protection of an experience, nor does it authorize protection outside of the cultural site itself.	FLPMA, Sections 102(a)(8), 103(c), 201(a), and 205(a) all direct federal land managers to consider and implement management prescriptions that take into account the scenic values of lands under their jurisdiction. FLMPA grants the BLM broad discretionary authority to manage its lands and does not state that management prescriptions can only be implemented in the presence of other federal legislation. Rather, such prescriptions must not contradict or conflict with other federal legislation. Further, the NEPA, Sections 101(b) and 102, also directs federal land managers to consider measures that will account for scenic values.	

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				See comment response CR42 regarding the consideration of setting and feeling with regards to cultural resource sites.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI52 (R-VI3)	Federal law protects cultural resources from physical destruction, not the adjacent viewshed. Previous efforts of federal agencies to establish viewsheds have been set aside. Sokol v. Kennedy, 210 F.3d 876 (8th Cir. 2000) (setting aside National Park Service scenic river boundary as too broad and outside the authority in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act). Similarly, a federal agency cannot extend viewshed protection to limit private or state land uses. United States v. County Bd. of Arlington County,,487 F. Supp. 137, 143 (D. Va. 1979) (setting aside land use restrictions adopted to protect visitors views from National Capitol).	See comment response CR42.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI53 (R-VI4)	RE: Alternative A: Strike the reference to specific acres to be managed as VRM Class I and II under Alternative A.	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch	O-33	VI53A	RE: Alternatives A and D:	See comment responses VI1 and VI14.	

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Limited Partnership			The RMP designates much of the planning area as VRM Class II without justifying the classification and without clarifying the impact on existing operations. Much of the VRM Class II is grazed by livestock. The RMP needs to specify that livestock grazing activities and related infrastructure will not be constrained. For instance, vegetation treatments, while temporary, do have significant visual effects. The RMP would prohibit such treatments in ½ million acres. If the RMP used the handbook criteria, there would be no basis to double the amount of land in Class II.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI54 (R-VI5)	Alternative A: Strike the statement that reads: "Elimination of grazing in the Nine Mile Acquired Area would preserve scenic quality of riparian areas."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI54A (R-VI5)	BLM has limited authority to "eliminate" livestock grazing. It is inaccurate to say that livestock grazing adversely affects visual quality. Also, the RMP shows bias against livestock grazing by classifying it as harming visual qualities while ignoring other grazing animals.	The alternatives present a range of VRM categories from which management can select. See comment response LG46.	
Vermillion	O-33	VI54B	Alternative D: Strike the statement:	BLM declines to make the suggested wording	

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Ranch Limited Partnership			"Unlimited grazing in the Nine Mile Acquired Area would diminish scenic quality." There is no such thing as "unlimited grazing."	changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. The alternatives present a range of VRM categories from which management can select.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI55 (R-VI6)	Alternative A—Add the following statement to the section that begins with "Asphalt Wash would"…: "Structural range improvements and vegetation treatments will be allowed notwithstanding VRM class."	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI55A	The RMP should expressly allow range improvements, including structures and vegetation treatments in VRM I and VRM II areas. As written, the RMP is not clear. The literal application of these classes would prohibit all vegetation treatments, even if they were intended for wildlife. The failure to allow such improvements conflicts with the BLM mandate that all rangelands meet or make progress towards meeting health standards. 43 C.F.R. §4180.1, 4180.2; H-4180-1. Alternative B—The White River Corridor and Book Cliffs areas do not qualify for management as VRM I and the RMP fails to document the basis for VRM Class II. While a corridor along the river itself may meet Class II, the entire area does not.	Please see comment response VI1. The pages to which the comment refers are part of Table 2.5 which summarizes impacts of management decisions from elsewhere in Chapter 2, including Table 2.3. Table 2.5 does not contain management prescriptions but only a summary of impacts to them. No VRM classification precludes vegetation treatments or range improvements. VRM Class I and II designation place greater restrictions on how such actions may be undertaken but do not prevent them. Note: Table 2.5 of the Draft RMP has been renumbered as Table 2.2 of the PRMP/FEIS. Also, the specific limits that the VRM Class objectives could place on vegetation treatments are beyond the scope of the RMP programmatic EIS. The impacts of site-specific vegetation treatments and mitigation would be analyzed at the project level under site-specific analyses through other NEPA processes and documents.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI56 (R-RE4)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions: “Alternative A would increase the current acreage of VRM Classes I and II by 227,187 acres to a total of 513,644 acres. This increase would have long-term beneficial effect on some types of recreation throughout the VPA, when compared with Alternative D—No Action. It would, however, negatively affect	BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the	

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			OHV recreation uses."	current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI56A	The RMP fails to address the fact that much of the recreation is OHV and VRM class expansion will negatively affect this class of recreation.	OHV travel is impacted by route designation and designation of open and closed areas. These designations are only partially tied to VRM classification; all resource programs were considered when making travel designations under each alternative. As such, the impacts to OHV use are discussed in Section 4.10.2.8 as a consequence of Travel decisions on Recreation.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI57 (R-RE5)	"4.10.2.9.2 Impacts of Visual Resource Management Decisions on Recreation, Alternative B and D – No Action" Overall, the RMP does a poor job of justifying and documenting the increases in VRM Classes I and II. VRM Class I is limited to designated wilderness, of which there is none in the VPA. VRM Class II is almost doubled without any resource management basis to do so.	See comment response VI1, VI1D, and VI14.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	VI60	The RMP fails to disclose the limits the VRM classes will place on vegetation treatments and range improvement projects. If the classes will not limit these activities, the RMP needs to specifically allow them.	See comment response VI55A. In addition, Section 4.17.3 of the PRMP/FEIS states: "All surface-disturbing activities, regardless of alternatives or management action, would be subject to the VRM class objectives of the area within which the activity takes place."	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF175 (R-WF1)	The RMP adopts a number of onerous timing and surface use restrictions to protect wildlife habitat. These restrictions apply to big game animals, that are numerous and highly adaptable. The RMP would afford protections similar to those for species listed under the Endangered Species Act ("ESA"), when there is no basis to assume that these wildlife are under threat. In addition, wildlife are not subject to rangeland health standards, despite BLM rules and policy, that require reductions when wildlife use interfere with maintaining, meeting, or making progress towards meeting applicable rangeland health standards.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF176 (R-WF2)	The RMP needs to provide additional data regarding wildlife and big game populations and their impacts on resources. Other data suggest that wildlife numbers, especially elk, mule deer, and antelope, have increased over the life of the plan and continue to trend upward. Livestock numbers have decreased or remained stable in a few areas. Thus, the RMP must ensure that any forage decisions respect livestock grazing rights and do not create new resource conflicts.	The current status of wildlife and fisheries resources is discussed in Section 3.19 and its subsections. The impacts of wildlife and fisheries management decisions on other resource programs are discussed by resource in Chapter 4. Forage allocation decisions are outlined in Table 2.1.6 (Forage All Locations) of the PRMP/FEIS. See also Appendix L).	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF177 (R-WF3)	The RMP fails to document or support the "crucial winter or other big game" habitat. It is not clear where UDWR has updated or expanded these areas as well as what is the scientific basis for such classifications. BLM cannot abdicate its public land management responsibilities to UDWR and must ensure that UDWR objectives are consistent with other multiple uses and resource objectives.	As stated in the introduction to Section 1.5, the PRMP pre-planning process involves the identification of issues and resource use conflicts identified by federal, state, and local agencies (and other stakeholders). Also see the text in Chapter 1 entitled "Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Wildlife Habitat Classification System Change.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF178 (R-WF4)	Modify statement by adding bolded language and deleting the strikethrough language: "reassessment of big game numbers, herd population	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes	

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			trends and forage allocation consistent with the habitat carrying capacity and achievement or maintenance of rangeland health standards; establishment of thresholds for disturbance that could be accommodated without significant impacts to wildlife populations…" There is no scientific basis for the premise in the draft RMP that "disturbance" of any kind adversely affects populations or viability of big game animals. This assumption is counter-intuitive since UDWR sanctions hunting of all of these animals, an equally disturbing, and often fatal, experience.	necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF179 (R-WF5)	Modify statement by adding bolded language and deleting the strikethrough language: "…consideration for reintroduction or transplants of native fish and wildlife species into the planning area that were not addressed during the previous planning efforts, consistent with state, local, and tribal government plans, programs, and policies; including allocating AUMs, where appropriate…"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF179A (R-WF5)	Reintroduction should not take AUMs from livestock operators and should be consistent with local and tribal land use plans.	See comment response WF44.	

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF180 (R-WF6)	Modify the following statement indicated by the bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "During periods of prolonged dryness or drought, to the extent that If wildlife grazing ungulate populations cannot be sustained due to competition for water and available forage or if wildlife numbers are a factor in the failure to meet or maintain or to make significant progress towards meeting rangeland health standards, and overall animal health is compromised. BLM would enter into discussions with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) regarding herd numbers and overall management options to ensure that rangeland health is maintained. BLM may also confer with the UDWR when drought conditions require response combat the effects of drought."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF180A (R-WF6)	Drought should not be the only reason to require BLM to work with UDWR to reduce wildlife numbers. The criteria for initiating discussions with UDWR should not be animal health or sustaining target herd numbers, because this would allow range health to be harmed even if animal health is not. As written this standard contradicts policy that requires reductions of wildlife when they are a factor in not maintaining, achieving or making progress towards rangeland health standards.	Table 2.1.8 (livestock and Grazing Management) of the Prmp/FEIS states that the goals and objectives for livestock and grazing management would comply with the standards for rangeland health, which includes stipulations (see Appendix F) to manage and/or adjust other grazing animal populations, as needed, to meet rangeland standards (item 12). Also, see comment response WF5.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF181 (R-WF7)	Modify the following statement indicated by the bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Provide, maintain, enhance, and protect habitats for diversity of fish and wildlife species within the planning	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate.	

ORGANIZATIONS					
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			area so long as consistent with and in conformance with rangeland health standards… Maintain, restore, enhance, and protect crucial habitats for all fish and wildlife species and restore degraded habitats. Manage for unfragmented blocks of continuous habitat that would provide the life cycle requirements of a variety of wildlife species…Coordinate with UDWR and state, tribal and local governments as well as permittees other partners to accomplish the populations and habitat goals and objectives of current, revised, and/or future big game Herd Management Plans that are consistent with and meet the multiple use goals and objectives of this land use plan and comply with rangeland health standards."	The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. See comment response WF180.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF181A (R-WF7)	Conformance with rangeland health standards is required. 43 C.F.R. §4180.1. BLM must identify the causal factors and make corrections. BLM H-4180-1, III-12 to III-16. This means that if wildlife is a factor in the area not complying, livestock numbers cannot be reduced to make up the difference in forage or habitat. Instead, BLM must ensure reduction in wildlife use. As written, the RMP would preclude or downgrade all multiple uses in favor of fish and wildlife. The standard operates to the detriment of most other multiple uses by elevating game and fish to a highest priority. The criteria for unfragmented blocks of habitat is meaningless since habitat needs vary widely and fragmentation also varies depending on the species. There is no documentation that each of the management species, especially big game, require large blocks of continuous and contiguous habitat. In fact, big game are adaptable, numerous, and hunted.	See comment response WF5. See also Section 4.19.2.5.2.	
Vermillion	O-33	WF182	Modify the following statement indicated by the bolded	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording	

ORGANIZATIONS					
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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-WF8)	additions and strikethrough deletions: "Identify species and habitats regulated under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) most in need of conservation… Coordinate with UDWR and other local and tribal governments partners to accomplish the populations…and/or future big game Herd Management Plans assuming that these goals and objectives can be achieved within the existing rights and other statutory direction that are consistent with and meet the goals and objects of this land use plan."	changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF182A (R-WF8)	Any "need of conservation" needs to be limited to species listed under the ESA. The RMP imposes a level of protection and regulation that is only authorized for species listed under the ESA. The most onerous regulations are developed for game species that are common, numerous, and, in most cases, highly adaptable. The UDWR plans are not equivalent with "species and habitat" in need of conservation. Any state habitat plans must be forage based as well and modified to incorporate existing grazing preference rights and compliance with rangeland health standards.	See comment response SS135.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF183 (R-WF9)	Modify the following statement as indicated by the bolded addition: "BLM would consider habitat banking as a method to compensate for habitat loss due to surface-disturbing activities only if it is voluntary and there is a causal connection to the impacts being mitigated."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why	

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Organization	**Record ID & Comment Number**	**Resource Category**	**Comment Text**	**Response to Comment**	**Doc Mod**
				the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF183A (R-WF9)	The RMP needs to conform to the IM on mitigation. IM-2005-069 states that all compensatory mitigation is voluntary. The case law requires a causal connection between the effect to be mitigated and the off-site mitigation. Robertson v. Methow Valley Citizens, 490 U.S. 332 (1989) (holding that the Forest Service did not have to mitigate effects on adjacent private land relating to ski area). The RMP currently promotes buying out grazing permits without regard to the impacts on resource management, the economy, or community.	See comment response WF11.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF184	As written, the RMP promotes reintroduction without regard to the merits of a specific proposal. In cases where reintroduced species will use private lands and private resources, such as domestic livestock, reintroduction should not occur with the agreement of the private land owners. Moreover, reintroduction of a species may impose new regulations on landowners, without their consent. One example is the reintroduction of the gray wolf, that is now found in southern Wyoming and eastern Utah, even though the reintroduction was originally limited to the national park and wilderness areas.	As written, the revised RMP is a programmatic planning and NEPA document with a scope that is region-wide, not site-specific. Any proposed action to reintroduce wildlife species would be analyzed under site-specific NEPA processes and documents, including solicitation of comments and concerns from the public, stakeholders, state and federal agencies	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF184 (R-WF10)	Modify the following statement as indicated by the bolded addition: "Reintroduction of native fish and wildlife species into	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes	

ORGANIZATIONS					
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			appropriate habitats would be accomplished through coordination with UDWR, counties and interested public through the appropriate public participation process. When reintroduction of a species will result in impacts on private lands, the landowners must also consent."	necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF185 (R-WF11)	Modify this statement by adding the bolded language: "After analysis, reintroduction would be made in areas where they do not conflict with livestock or private property rights or where such conflicts are mitigated. Coordination with permittees would be required. When the reintroduced species is subject to the ESA, it will be an experimental nonessential population."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF185A (R-WF11)	Coordination needs to be clearly understood to be consent.	See comment response WF184.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	WF186 (R-WF12)	Modify the following statement as indicated by the bolded additions and strikethrough deletions:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

ORGANIZATIONS					
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Partnership			"Evaluate the effects of Do not allow surface disturbing activities that would result in adverse impacts to the key life processes of antelope from May 1 through June 30…"	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF186A (R-WF12)	The RMP fails to provide a scientific basis for these restrictions and clearer limits. As written it would prohibit any activity that in the opinion of one person might lead to an adverse impact. The standard is too broad and too vague. The exception to the standard should not be limited to maintenance of existing facilities, since the level of disruption to build a range improvement would be similar to that to maintain an existing well. Many public land activities should be allowed to continue but would be prohibited as the standard is written.	The statement as written defines the disallowed activities as those having adverse impacts, which presumably would include those related to "the key life processes" of antelope. Additional restriction of the management prescription to mere evaluation of only surface disturbing activities does not meet the management goals of the RMP or provide a mechanism for action.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF187 (R-WF13)	-Alternative B [2-48 Forage, Diamond Mountain Locality (Figure 5)] Alternative B reflects national policy.	Comment noted.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF188 (R-WF14)	-Alternative A Modify the following statement indicated by the bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Human Surface disturbances would be avoided within 0.6 mile of a lek…and utility lines would be avoided	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not	

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			within 1,300 feet of a lek during breeding season." -Alternative B Modify the similar statements under Alternative B in the same way.	substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF188A (R-WF14)	The term "human disturbance" is too broad, ambiguous, and unsupported. It should be replaced with "surface disturbance," which must be specifically defined. The RMP should recognize that the native species found in the planning area are well-adapted to the vegetation and grazing activities that have been historically associated with this region. Any plan for protecting special status species needs to incorporate both prehistoric and historic grazing activities into the habitat management. BLM must also coordinate with applicable tribal, local and state government grouse plans. These plans should be incorporated into the RMP so that the RMP can evolve as knowledge about the sage grouse situation evolves. Analysis of existing research regarding the sage grouse suggests that criteria in the RMP should be reconsidered. The RMP needs to document the science-based research that supports the mitigation measures. This is especially true for the timing and disturbance to leks without regard to whether they are occupied.	Human disturbances to sage grouse are not limited to surface disturbances, or those that could be caused by livestock grazing. The physical presence of humans can constitute a disturbance to sage grouse, particularly during breeding season. The management actions for protection of sage grouse were based on the State of Utah Strategic Management Plan for Sage Grouse (Alternatives A and B), and Connelly's Guidelines to Manage Greater Sage Grouse Populations and their Habitats (Section 4.15.2.5).	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF189 (R-WF15)	-Alternative C Strike the entire statement of Alternative C beginning with "Connelly's Guidelines to Manage Sage Grouse Populations and their Habitats…" and ending with "No permanent facilities or structures would be allowed	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate.	

ORGANIZATIONS					
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			within two miles when possible."	The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF189A (R-WF15)	Connelly does not find that surface disturbance within two miles is harmful to the sage grouse.	The commenter incorrectly interprets the management action. Connelly recommends that permanent structures not be constructed within 3 km (1.9 miles) of seasonal habitats because they are potential raptor perch sites.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF190 (R-WF16)	-Alternative A, Alternative D The RMP does not define surface disturbance. If the term is defined as the actual construction of a road, where vegetation is removed and soil is mixed or removed, this may be reasonable. If the term is used to apply to any activity that scuffs dirt, then it is unreasonable. The RMP fails to document the scientific basis for prohibiting surface disturbing activities along migration corridors.	The EIS text has been revised to include the definition of surface disturbance, in the context of the wildlife and fisheries management actions.	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF191 (R-WF17)	-Alternative A [Wildlife and Fisheries] The proposed introduction of big horn sheep is identified for cattle allotments and should not displace existing sheep ranch operations. The Red Creek allotment, however, is about 5 miles from the boundary and may be adversely affected. The RMP needs to make it clear that reintroduction will not occur if it adversely affects existing sheep operations. As written, the RMP implies that BLM could cancel existing	This language is already provided for in the proposed RMP. In Table (2.1.26 (Wildlife and Fisheries Resources) under the subsection entitled Management Actions Common to All Alternatives - Reintroductions, it states: "Reintroduction of native fish and wildlife species into appropriate habitats would be accomplished through coordination with UDWR, counties, and	

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			permits to reintroduce wildlife and that is inaccurate. 43 U.S.C. §1752(g). Any re-introduction proposal needs to closely evaluate migration of coyotes and wolves south from Wyoming. It seems likely that introduction would not succeed if coyotes and wolves continue to push south out of Wyoming. The experience in Wyoming shows that wolves have a significant impact on big game numbers (as well as livestock) and push the coyotes into new territory as well. The RMP fails to address this issue.	interested publics through appropriate public participation processes. Reintroductions would involve, but may not be limited to, native species such as Rocky Mountain big horn sheep, moose, bison, and Colorado River cutthroat trout, and wild turkey."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF192 (R-WF18)	-Alternative A [Wildlife and Fisheries] Similarly, current numbers of coyotes, bear and mountain lions also impose real limits on the success of any attempted reintroduction. For instance, BLM in southeastern Arizona tried numerous times to reintroduce big horn sheep but they were extirpated in a single season by mountain lions. Before putting people out of business, the RMP needs to realistically analyze the success or failure of the introduction. In general, reintroduction needs to be consistent with state, local and tribal government plans, programs, and policies.	Reintroduction of native fish and wildlife species into appropriated habitats would be accomplished through coordination with UDWR, counties, and interested publics through appropriate public participation processes. Analysis would be conducted prior to reintroductions to determine feasibility. See comment response WF191.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF193 (R-WF19)	-Alternative D [Wildlife and Fisheries] Any reintroduction must also consider the effects on valid existing rights. The RMP does not document habitat or effects.	Under section 1.9 of the PRMP/FEIS, it is stated that: "All decisions made in the RMP and subsequent implementation decisions will be subject to valid existing rights."	
Vermillion Ranch	O-33	WF193A (R-	Habitat improvement would include chaining and removal of fir or piñon / juniper.	The proposed RMP allows for vegetation treatments to be conducted to meet wildlife habitat	

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Limited Partnership		WF19)		requirements, including chaining. See Table 2.1.23 (Vegetation Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Management Actoins Common to All Alternatives.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF194 (R-WF20)	-Alternative A Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions: "Surface disturbing activities that would result in adverse impacts to deer and elk within crucial winter range would not be allowed from November 15 to April 30. This restriction would not apply if it is determined through analysis and coordination with UDWR as well as any other state, local, and tribal government that impacts are insignificant or could be mitigated. Factors to be considered would include snow depth, temperature…"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF194A (R-WF20)	The term surface disturbing needs to be defined as recommended on page 5 of these comments. EPCA, Executive Orders and BLM Policy require more detailed analysis and documentation than what is found in the draft RMP with respect to wildlife management conditions and the imposition of overlapping conditions. This standard needs to be limited to surface disturbing activities and to only apply to significant impacts. The RMP must ensure that restrictions have a scientific basis. For example, it is shown that big game become accustomed to incidental uses of a road by motor vehicles or even drilling in the distance. If the activity involves 6 acres out of 18,000 acres it is not a significant activity.	The Glossary of the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to include the definition of surface disturbance, in the context of the wildlife and fisheries management actions.	X

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Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF195 (R-WF21)	-Alternative D [Book Cliffs] The oil and gas industry has extensive experience working in big game habitat and there is no credible support for the assumption of long-term ill effects. Big game numbers are high and population trends are upwards. Thus, it is difficult to justify closures that are being proposed in the RMP.	The commenter does not provide any information or explanations to substantiate the assertions and comparisons of impacts on wildlife habitat.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF196 (R-WF22)	-Alternative D [Diamond Mountain] The RMP appears to assume that any human interaction causes the animal to leave, if however briefly, thus constituting a "loss of habitat." This is a misuse of the term, since loss of habitat traditionally means the total deprivation of habitat or its conversion. Additionally, the RMP assumes that human interaction that causes an animal to be excited is disruptive and, thus, harmful. If this is the standard, then BLM must prohibit hunting, since that interaction causes the loss of habitat through avoidance and substantial excitement on the part of wildlife. This suggestion is, of course, is ridiculous but no more ridiculous than the premise that human interaction with wildlife will have significant adverse effects. Similarly, the RMP misuses the term habitat fragmentation and needs to adopt and apply the accepted definition.	Alternative D is the current management condition. Credible support for management actions in the Book Cliffs and Diamond Mountain areas is documented in the current RMP for the Vernal Planning Area. Also see comment response WF37.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	WF197 (R-	-Alternative A Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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Partnership		WF23)	additions and strikethrough deletions: "Limiting upland vegetation utilization by livestock to 50% and 4" stubble height of key herbaceous species measured from the green line 30% riparian vegetation utilization would beneficially improve habitat and wildlife resources. Any benefits may be reduced by wild horse and wildlife use which cannot be readily managed."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF197A (R-WF23)	This statement omits the continued grazing of these areas by big game and wild horses. It also discloses that the RMP would only manage livestock, contrary to established policy that requires BLM to make reductions based on causation. Relying solely on utilization without short and long-term monitoring is inconsistent with BLM rules and policy as well.	See comment response WF 127.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF197B (R-WF23)	-Alternative D Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Unspecified Vegetation utilization by livestock for uplands and riparian areas are set in allotment management and grazing management plans. , and unspecified riparian vegetation utilization would provide less protection to wildlife and fisheries habitat than the other alternatives."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences.	

ORGANIZATIONS					
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				The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF197C (R-WF23)	The discussion of Alternative D is inaccurate. It is not possible to assume that current management is providing less protection.	When the proposed alternative management actions (under the action alternatives) are compared to current management (Alternative D), analysis concludes that Alternative D would provide less protection. This conclusion was not based on assumption, but on analyses and comparison of alternatives.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF198 (R-WF24)	-Alternative A Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Construction activities associated with mineral development may would cause reduction in the AUMs available to wildlife, loss of wildlife and fisheries habitats, and disruption and/or alteration of seasonal migration routes due to the additional construction facilities; indirect impacts include habitat fragmentation and changes in behavior, distribution, activity and energy expenditure that are caused by human disturbance. These impacts are minimal where construction activities are temporary or of relatively short duration and similar to other land uses and activities."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF198A (R-WF24)	The RMP unfairly singles out mineral development even though fire and hunting activities will also result in loss of habitat, disruption, and habitat fragmentation. In short, hunting probably has greater disruptive effect on wildlife than does construction activities which do not directly threaten the wildlife.	The commenter does not provide any information or explanations to substantiate the assertions and comparisons of impacts on wildlife habitat.	

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			-Alternative D Similarly, most ranch operations can easily adapt to energy development. The impacts on both forage for livestock and wildlife habitat are relatively small. For many ranchers, energy development also provides income for use of private land facilities or access.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF199 (R-WF25)	-Alternative A Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Designation of SRMAs and byways may in some cases would have long-term beneficial impacts on wildlife and fisheries by limiting surface-disturbing activities; adverse impacts would be produced by increased visitor use and recreational activities."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF199A (R-WF25)	-Alternative D If Alternative D is the same as A, the conclusion makes no sense.	The comparison of Alternatives A and D are made within the context of designating SRMAs and byways. As stated in Section 4.19.2.7, the long-term impacts on wildlife and fisheries populations (both beneficial and adverse) would be similar for Alternatives A and D. The EIS text has been revised to state that the impacts under Alternative D would be "similar" to Alternative A (as it is stated in Section 4.19.2.7).	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	WF200 (R-WF26)	-Alternative A Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded addition:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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Organization	**Record ID & Comment Number**	**Resource Category**	**Comment Text**	**Response to Comment**	**Doc Mod**
Partnership			"Stream habitat improvements would help reduce erosion and sedimentation, which would have direct beneficial impacts on wildlife and fisheries resources. Such projects may increase erosion during the construction phase."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF200A (R-WF26)	Upland improvements will also benefit streams by reducing sedimentation and regulating water flows into the streams during runoff.	Stream habitat improvement is described in the context of stubble height and browsing restrictions on riparian and woody plant species. The impacts of construction-type improvement projects were not analyzed in this section (4.19.2.8.1).	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF201 (R-WF27)	-Alternative A Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Wildlife management actions may in some cases would have beneficial impacts by providing habitat and forage for wildlife, expanding wildlife reintroduction efforts, and protecting crucial winter ranges. Wildlife management may adversely affect vegetation and riparian resources when populations exceed habitat capacity."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion	O-33	WF201A	Not all reintroduction efforts will benefit wildlife habitat.	The commenter does not provide any additional	

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Ranch Limited Partnership		(R-WF27)	For example, increased prairie dog populations to support the black-footed ferret will have significant and adverse impacts on rangeland vegetation. While this is justified under the ESA, the RMP cannot ignore the damage done and resulting increase in sediment and erosion, loss of native vegetation, etc.	information or substantiation for suggested revisions to the EIS analysis and text.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF202 (R-WF28)	The RMP discussion should also address changes in big game and wildlife populations and trends. Elk numbers, for example, in this region are reportedly increasing and this upward trend will continue for the next decade. If UDWR has increased its herd objectives that fact is also relevant to the issue of where rangeland conditions are not maintaining or achieving rangeland health standards and the contributing factors.	Section 3.19 in the EIS text has been revised and trend count data added to the section.	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF203 (R-WF29)	Strike the words: "and increase habitat fragmentation during the winter period" from the sentence beginning with "UDWR identified that accelerated oil and gas development…"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	WF203 (R-WF29)	The DEIS needs to place the conclusions in the proper perspective. Oil and gas development may displace wildlife but it will not necessarily fragment the habitat, if wildlife can move through an area. For instance, elk	The commenter does not provide additional information or substantiation for suggested revisions to the EIS analysis and text.	

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Partnership			might avoid the well site itself but still use the area nearby for cover and forage. Elk can easily cross dirt access roads and thus are not prevented from using the adjacent habitat. Big game numbers have increased over the life of the plan, so there is little if any basis to assume a reduced carrying capacity. It is more likely that any issues are due to drought and increased predation. Also there is no distinction between temporary displacement versus permanent habitat loss.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF204 (R-WF30)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions: "The effects of wildlife management decisions on water and soils would be beneficial, long-term, and indirect, by limiting surface development. In many cases, wildlife management decisions will have long-term direct and indirect adverse impacts on water, vegetation, and soil. Most of the wildlife and fisheries management decisions involve seasonal constraints but would not necessarily preclude surface-disturbing activities and other multiple uses, although the cumulative effect may deny access for six to nine months out of the year. The concentration of energy development in a single season or window throughout the VPA will have cumulative adverse effects."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF204A (R-WF30)	Wildlife management decisions are not uniformly beneficial.	The commenter does not provide additional information or substantiation for suggested revisions to the EIS analysis and text.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF205 (R-WF31)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions:	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following:	

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			"The only impacts of wildlife and fisheries management decisions upon water and soils that can be seen where they utilize vegetation, especially in riparian areas and spring ranges. While the RMP will preserve measured are the preservation of crucial deer winter range and the reclamation of disturbance within sagebrush habitat, the RMP provides for relatively little management of big game and wild horses with resulting direct and indirect adverse impacts on vegetation cover, soils through trampling and trailing, and harm to riparian vegetation. Reclamation of disturbances within sagebrush habitat would stabilize soils and increase vegetation, thereby benefiting soil productivity by reducing soil erosion and sedimentation in streams. The allowance of new surface disturbance within crucial winter range may would result in indirect, long-term, adverse impacts to water quality and soil productivity and improved forage palatability."	The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF205A (R-WF31)	If wild horse and wildlife numbers are not monitored and controlled, they will cause areas to not maintain or not meeting Utah Rangeland Health Standards. Reclamation may improve forage palatability for both wildlife and livestock.	In Table 2.1.26 (Wildlife and Fisheries Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS, it states: "Maintain, restore, enhance, and protect crucial habitats for all fish and wildlife species and restore degraded habitats. Manage for unfragmented blocks of continuous habitat that would provide the life cycle requirements of a variety of wildlife species."	
Vermillion Ranch	O-33	WF206	The RMP is ambiguous when it comes to the definition of surface disturbance and whether the restrictions	See comment response WF194.	

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Limited Partnership		(R-WF32)	apply to all activities. The RMP should clearly state that range improvement projects are not subject to these restrictions and limits.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF207 (R-WF33)	Add the following statement at the top of the table: These range improvements are only projected and are not a ceiling.	Table 4.19.8 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to add language as suggested for clarification purposes.	X
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF207A (R-WF33)	This clarification is wise given the difficulty with "ceilings" in the reasonable and foreseeable development scenarios.	Neither the RFD nor the estimated range improvements represent a ceiling. Rather, they are used for analysis purposes only.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WF208 (R-WF34)	Management restrictions in special designations outweigh assumed benefits for wildlife habitat. There is little correlation between visual quality management and wildlife habitat, since the main issue is retaining habitat qualities.	The commenter does not provide any information to substantiate the assertion that visual resource management and wildlife habitat quality are not related.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH52 (R-WH1)	In general, the DEIS does not adequately address the effects of wildlife (particularly big game populations) and wild horses on rangeland resources or their interaction. The RMP fails entirely to address and disclose the issues relating to the Bonanza HMA and the Winter Ridge herd. These issues have been litigated, BLM has lost and even in this plan, the wild horses would remain. The adverse impacts of wild horses on rangeland resources are well and fully documented. The failure of the RMP to discuss and disclose these effects renders this portion of the DEIS inadequate.	Section 3.18.1 outlines the history of litigation and conflict regarding the Bonanza Herd Management Area. Also, see comment response WH50.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH53 (R-WH2)	Experience in managing wild horses for the last 30 years provides important information regarding their effects on the environment. The wild horses have significant and adverse impacts on the environment	The impacts of wild horse management decisions are provided under each resource section in Chapter 4 for which impacts are anticipated. They are also summarized in Table 2.5 of the Draft RMP.	

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			which are generally omitted from the RMP. Wild horses are very effective in controlling their territory, establish visible trails, and consume most types of forage, generally eating an entire year's growth at one time. In addition, wild horse herds increase at the rate of 18% to 23% a year, thus making it very difficult to manage wild horse grazing or their numbers.	See comment response WH35. Note: Table 2.5 of the Draft RMP has been renumbered as Table 2.2 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH54 (R-WH3)	The omission of the effects of wild horses cannot be reconciled with the proposal to continue or to allow wild horses in Bonanza or Red Hill. Indeed, based on Uintah County and tribal plans, there should be 0 horses in the Bonanza area and there is no basis to establish or expand horses elsewhere in the RMPs The RMP ignores past legal problems and does not address the inconsistency with local and tribal plans. The final RMP needs to correct these issues to reflect local and tribal government's objectives and to address and mitigate the adverse environmental effects of current wild horse management.	Please see comment responses WH52 and WH53.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH55 (R-WH4)	The RMP fails to justify retaining the Winter Ridge herd and it should be terminated, if that is the desire of the tribal and/or local governments. There are three legal standards that apply: (1) wild horse management must not adversely affect maintaining, meeting or making progress towards meeting rangeland health standards; (2) there must be sufficient numbers to maintain a healthy population; and	See comment response WH35.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited	O-33	WH55A (R-WH4)	(3) the proposed management must be consistent with local government plans, programs, and policies.	See comment responses PR3 and WH15.	

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Partnership					
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH56 (R-WH5)	Modify the bullet item as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "coordinate management of the Hill Creek herd with the Ute Indian Tribe in order to be consistent with tribal and local government objectives and rangeland health standards develop a mutually satisfactory course of action; and…"	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH56A (R-WH5)	Both FLPMA consistency and the Utah federal court case do not allow BLM to develop mutually acceptable course of action. The RMP must conform to local and tribal government management objectives, including zero tolerance for wild horses.	See comment responses PR3 and WH15.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH57 (R-WH6)	Modify the bullet item as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "adopt goals and objectives for the Winter Ridge herd consistent with Uintah County and Uintah tribal plans, programs, and objectives."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions	

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				or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH57A (R-WH6)	If local governments object to wild horses, then they should be removed.	The BLM will work with local partners and stakeholders to develop the most appropriate management goals and prescriptions that meet the purpose and need of the BLM's multiple-use and sustainable-yield mandate. See comment responses PR3 and WH15.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH58 (R-WH7)	RE the statement "Comprehensive Land Health Standards would apply to all grazing activities…" The RMP needs to include wild horse forage allocations.	See Table 2.1.6 (Forage – All Localities) of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH59 (R-WH8)	Modify the following statement as indicated by the bolded additions: "Use would be allowed within allocations made in the land use plan, and overall herd numbers would be confined to management limits established as an appropriate management level. BLM would remove wild horses when appropriate management levels ("AMLs") are exceeded or when wild horses are found outside of the herd management areas. BLM would also reduce the AML when wild horses are a factor in the area not meeting or maintaining or failing to make significant progress towards meeting rangeland health standards."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch	O-33	WH59A	The RMP needs to commit to the prompt removal and active management of wild horses. The BLM grazing	See comment response WH57A.	

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Limited Partnership		(R-WH8)	rules, 43 C.F.R. §4180.1, require BLM to reduce wild horses when an area fails to meet rangeland health standards and the wild horses are a causal factor. H-4180- 1, Ch. III p. 16. Wild horses are a major factor in rangeland conditions and the RMP needs to include the option of reducing wild horse numbers.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH60 (R-WH9)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Limit wild horses to the defined occurrence area of the Herd Management Area consistent with the respective tribal and local government plans."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH60 (R-WH9)	The BLM is already under court order to remove wild horses in the Bonanza area. Uintah County v. BLM, Civ. No. 00-0482J (Sept. 2001). BLM also needs to remove wild horses from the Winter Ridge area in accordance with local policy.	See comment response WH57A.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH61 (R-WH10)	RE: Alternative D—Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Alt. D 146,161 AUMs would be allocated for livestock, 9,607 AUMs would be allocated for wildlife, and 0 AUMs 3,360 AUMs would be allocated for wild horses."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion.	

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				The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH61A (R-WH10)	The litigation and local land use plans preclude any allocation of forage to wild horses.	The statement relative to Alternative D describes existing policy.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH62 (R-WH11)	The tribal and county plans provide for 0 wild horses. The RMP cannot allocate forage for wild horses when it is inconsistent with local plans and there is no federal mandate requiring wild horses when not consistent with local land management. The allocation also contradicts the current court order requiring BLM to remove the wild horses. The RMP needs to adopt the zero tolerance for any wild horses.	See comment response WH15. Allocating forage for wild horses is consistent with federal law and public land policy, which supersedes county land use plans and policy.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH63 (R-WH12)	RE: the allocation of AUMs to wild horses— The RMP does not address or fully discuss the wild horse management issues. This omission is significant since BLM has been under a court order to reduce wild horse herd numbers and to remove horses. See e.g. Uintah County v. BLM, Civ. No. 00-0482J (Sept. 2001).	Wild horses are discussed in Table 1.25 (Wild Horses) of the PRMP/FEIS, as well as Sections 3.18, and 4.18. The impacts of wild horse management decisions on other resources are discussed under the various resource sections of Chapter 4.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH64 (R-WH13)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "This section describes the affected environment concerning wild horses in the Bonanza Herd Management Area (HMA), the Hill Creek HMA, and the Winter Ridge HMA (HA), as well as outside the HMAs	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion.	

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			in the VPO. ….The wild horse objective for the Hill Creek Herd Area is to ensure that "Wild horse habitat will be managed to support desired population levels…" (BLM 1985); this statement must be modified to conform to rangeland health standards and consistency with state, local, and tribal government plans, programs, and policies encapsulates the objectives of management decisions in the new RMP."	The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH64A (R-WH13)	The RMP and DEIS discussion of wild horse management is deficient. It omits the number of wild horses outside HMAs and excess numbers of wild horses within HMAs, and significant and ongoing resource damage caused by unmanaged wild horse use. There should be zero horses in the Bonanza area. It also omits the fact that BLM failed to manage horses within the AML's for the HMAs and failed to remove wild horses outside the HMAs. The inability to manage wild horse numbers has contributed to resource damage, which violates BLM rules and policy with respect to range management and local and tribal government plan consistency. More importantly, BLM must ensure that wild horse numbers do not interfere with attaining rangeland health standards. The combined effects of drought and excess wild horse numbers are also omitted. The RMP also omits the fact that tribal and local governments sued to enforce wild horse numbers and that there is no local support for the Winter Ridge Herd Area to be converted to an HMA. In these circumstances, BLM needs to provide for limiting horse numbers to AML and to removing wild horses elsewhere. Wild horse numbers increase rapidly and probably more than any other non-domestic species. Thus it can be a	See comment responses WH57A and WH62.	

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			significant factor in rangeland resource conditions.		
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH65 (R-WH19)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "Within the Bonanza Wild Horse Herd locality, additional forage allocations would be distributed in the following ways: (1) Increase pronghorn use until there are conflicts with sheep; and (2) increase sheep use in accordance with available forage. Wild horse numbers would also be evaluated and adjusted downward to the extent that wild horse use is a causal factor in the area not meeting, not making substantial progress toward meeting or not maintaining Utah rangeland health standards."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH65A (R-WH19)	Wild horse use of range resources has multiple effects, including removal of vegetation, trailing, and territorial interactions with wildlife. Thus, BLM must aggressively manage wild horse numbers and reassess AMLs when the horses either leave the HMA or exceed carrying capacity, in relation to other uses and wildlife. There should be zero tolerance for excess wild horses.	The section of the Draft RMP/EIS to which the comment refers specifically addresses the impact of forage allocations on wildlife and fisheries. Wild horses are addressed separately from wildlife, so including discussion of wild horses here would be inappropriate. The analysis of impacts of forage allocation decisions on wild horses is provided in Section 4.18.2.3. See comment response WH35.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH66 (R-WH15)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "For all of the alternatives, wild horse management	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes	

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			decisions would generally have an direct and indirect relationship to impacts upon livestock grazing, mostly in regards to forage availability an interfering with maintaining, meeting, or making substantial progress towards meeting rangeland health standards. In terms of AUMs and categories of use, forage would be managed and designated to livestock, wildlife, and/or wild horses. This, if AUM designation were changed for wild horses, it could affect livestock and wildlife, as well as interfering with meeting rangeland health standards or it could affect wildlife only. See Section 4.22.2.3.1 for specific forage decisions that affect livestock in terms of wild horses. Wild horses in much of the VPA do not move and graze winter range year-long with resulting adverse effects on rangeland resources. Wild horses will consume an entire year's growth of a plant, which makes the area unavailable for other grazing animals."	necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH66A (R-WH15)	Wild horse management relates directly and indirectly to livestock grazing and the draft RMP understates the interrelationship. Wild horses eat most kinds of vegetation, thus competing directly with livestock for forage. Wild horses also affect rangeland resources by the way they consume a year's growth of forage, as opposed to browsing, their utilization of most available forage, their trailing habits, and their territorial habits that tend to occupy water sources. It is highly unlikely that wild horse use would only affect wildlife.	See comment response WH59.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH67 (R-WH16)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "General impacts to livestock grazing from this alternative are project to be primarily the relatively small and often temporary, and readily mitigated, loss	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not	

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			of grazing land from the construction of well pads, other extraction facilities and roads, loss of vegetation available for grazing due to surface disturbance in areas associated with extraction activities, and disruption of livestock management practices due to extraction activities."	substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH67A (R-WH16)	Also, the RMP needs to use a similar level of detail when discussing the interaction of wildlife and wild horse management on other resources as is provided in the rest of this section.	Where potential impacts from wildlife and wild horse management prescriptions on other resource programs are anticipated to exist, they are discussed relative to the specific resource under its relevant section in Chapter 4. These impacts are summarized in Table 2.5. Note: Table 2.5 of the Draft RMP has been renumbered as Table 2.2 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH68 (R-WH17)	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "If forage allocation reductions are necessary to maintain, meet or make significant progress towards or sustain rangeland health in the Bonanza, Diamond Mountain, Book Cliffs (excluding wild horse herd areas), and Blue Mountain localities or the Bonanza Wild Horse Herd Area, AUMs allocated to big game and wild horses would be reduced proportionately to the role they play with those allocated to livestock. If reductions are necessary in the Hill Creek and Winter Ridge Wild Horse Herd Areas big game and wild horses would be reduced proportionally with AUMs allocated to livestock and wild horses. However, AUMs	Section 4.19.2.3.1 of the PRMP/FEIS has been revised as follows: "Under Alternative A, if forage allocation reductions are necessary to maintain, meet or make significant progress towards rangeland health in the Bonanza locality AUMs allocated to live stock and pronghorn would be reduced proportionally though pronghorn use would not be reduced below 502 AUMs. Alternative A would be more beneficial to wildlife than Alternative D since Alternative A specifies necessary actions when the aforementioned criteria are met. If, however, additional forage is available forage	X

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			allocated to pronghorn would not be reduced below 502 AUMs in the Bonanza locality and 239 AUMs in the Bonanza Wild Horse Herd Area locality unless antelope numbers have played a role in the area not meeting rangeland health standards. … Reductions in forage allocation for wildlife in the Bonanza, Book Cliffs, and Blue Mountain localities would not be specified under the No Action Alternative. There would be no reductions in forage allocation for wildlife in the Diamond Mountain locality on crucial habitat; on non-crucial habitat, allocations would be reduced equally with livestock under the No Action Alternative.	increases would be divided proportionately between livestock and big game with the wildlife AUMs going to pronghorn and deer. In this case, the impacts of Alternatives A and D are approximately the same since both alternatives would provide additional forage for wildlife."	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH68A (R-WH17)	If big game or wild horses affect rangeland health they are reduced based on their effect. There is no proportionality unless it is shown that livestock are contributing to the problem. The last sentence is contrary to policy H-4180-1, ch. III. The reference to locality in connection with HMAs should be deleted. Horses outside an HMA must be removed. There should be zero tolerance for excess wild horses.	Section 4.19.2.3.1 is specific to the effect of forage allocation decisions on wildlife and fisheries. Wild horses are considered separately from wildlife, and as such, are not discussed in this section. The effects of forage allocation on wild horses are discussed in Table 2.1.6 (Forage – All Localities) of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH69	Modify the following statement as indicated by bolded additions and strikethrough deletions: "If additional forage is available and rangeland health is being sustained, or significant progress is being made	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate.	

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			towards sustaining rangeland health in the Bonanza, Blue Mountain, and Diamond Mountain localities and the Bonanza Wild Horse Herd Area, additional forage allocations would be divided proportionally between big game, wild horses, and livestock. Additional forage in the Book Cliffs locality (excluding wild horse herd areas) would be allocated 40% to wildlife and wild horses and 60% to restore suspended cattle livestock AUMs. After restoring all suspended AUMs, additional forage would be allocated proportionally between cattle and wildlife. In the Hill Creek and Winter Ridge Wild Horse Herd Areas additional forage would be divided proportionally between livestock, and big game, and wild horses. Wild horses need to be removed from the Winter Ridge area, so no forage should be allocated to horses there. Wild horse numbers need to stay within AMLs and no additional forage should be allocated.	The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WH70 (R-WH18)	Here also the RMP needs to take a position of zero tolerance for excess wild horses.	Section 4.19.2.3.4 of the Draft RMP/EIS specifically addresses the impact of forage allocations on wildlife and fisheries. Wild horses are addressed separately from wildlife, so including discussion of wild horses here would be inappropriate. The analysis of impacts of forage allocation decisions on wild horses is provided in Section 4.18.2.3.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WT5 (R-WT1)	Alternative A—Add the bolded language where indicated: “499,620 acres of managed SRMAs would have long-term beneficial impacts to woodland resources but SRMA management would potentially increase the risk of wildfire.”	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion.	

ORGANIZATIONS					
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				The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS.	
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership	O-33	WT5A (R-WT1)	The RMP cannot assume that SRMA will benefit woodlands when adjacent national forest suffers from pine beetle and fuel loading. Recent fire history shows that the area is ripe for a major wildfire given drought conditions over the last several years.	See comment response WT1. The impacts of SRMAs on fire risk are discussed in Section 4.4.2.4 in the PRMP/FEIS.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD263 (JSD-7)	We do not agree with the need or justification provided in the RMP to establish as white-tailed prairie dog ACEC in the Vernal area. BLM has not provided substantive scientific info in support of the designation nor has it demonstrated how the white-tailed prairie dog meets the relevance and importance criteria or that the white-tailed prairie dog needs special management.	The Coyote Basin ACEC relevance and importance criteria can be found in Appendix G in the Final EIS. Additionally, the importance for this proposed ACEC is based on a specific white-tailed prairie dog complex that has had many consecutive years of population inventory collected. Prairie dog complexes have relevance in the life cycles of other sensitive species.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD264 (JSD-8)	There are adequate protection policies are in place for the white-tailed prairie dog already: No surface disturbance within a white-tailed prairie dog town greater than 200 acres, no shooting and no poisoning. No ACEC is necessary.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD265 (JSD-9)	Adequate protection policies are in place for the white-tailed prairie dog already, for example: Protection of bald eagles, and ferruginous hawks with specific language protecting white-tailed prairie dogs as a prey. There is additional language regarding special and temporal protection of the various raptors. These	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	

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			protections will protect the white-tailed prairie dog throughout the whelping period, which also coincides with the shooting ban in place in Utah on public lands not included in the black-footed ferret protection areas. No ACEC is necessary.		
Julander Energy	O-34	SD266 (JSD-12)	Adequate protection policies are in place for the white-tailed prairie dog already: "The plan should recognize the National Energy Policy by…(2) encouraging conservation of sensitive resource values." No ACEC is necessary.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD267 (JSD-11)	Adequate protection policies are in place for the white-tailed prairie dog already: "Manage for unfragmented block of continuous habitat that would provide for the life cycle requirements of a variety of wildlife species". No ACEC is necessary. While gas and oil activity may cause disturbance on the landscape, they also provide habitat expansion opportunities for white-tailed prairie dogs. Conservation Assessment acknowledges that while some populations may decrease in size, others have increased. Also, all alternatives include APHIS support for predator control, managing habitat to prevent the need for listing additional species and cooperating with utility companies to prevent electrocution of raptors. This is important because by eliminating perching opportunities, predation on white-tailed prairie dogs is reduced.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	

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Julander Energy	O-34	SD268 (JSD-12)	Adequate protection policies are in place for the white-tailed prairie dog already, and no ACEC is necessary: "BLM will participate in the development of a conservation plan for white-tailed prairie dogs." BLM specifically stated it would be revising the RMP to consider the white-tailed prairie dog in special species status which would carry with it protections similar to those for species protected under ESA. They do not say what these protections would be nor does the draft RMP ever hint at that.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD269 (JSD-13)	Adequate protection policies are in place for the white-tailed prairie dog already, and no ACEC is warranted: Alternatives A and B are very similar. The table (2.3) fails to establish any management to protect white-tailed prairie dogs that is not already provided in other provisions of the document, not special management, no ACEC.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD270 (JSD-14)	Adequate protection policies are in place for the white-tailed prairie dog already, and no ACEC is necessary: Summaries are all pretty much the same, similar to A and even to C. If protections are the same regardless of the amount of land covered by an ACEC (or none as in Alternative D), then there is no advantage to the designation of an ACEC.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD271 (JSD-15)	Adequate protection policies are in place for the white-tailed prairie dog already, and no ACEC is necessary: Raptors: Alternative A provides BMPs in Appendix A and H. These provide protecting for white-tailed prairie dogs during the whelping season.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD272 (JSD-16)	The ACECs really appear to be largely symbolic. We fail to see what they could add to the protection of white-tailed prairie dogs since no "special	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	

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			management" is provided. As such, an ACEC is not appropriate.		
Julander Energy	O-34	SD273 (JSD-17)	The Primary Management Zone for black-footed ferret is protected regardless of ACEC designation. There seems to be some confusion in the document regarding the protection area provided by the black-footed ferret reintroduction. The reintroduction plan calls for the entirety of Uintah and Duchesne counties to be considered black-footed ferret potential areas and therefore closed to shooting year round and other protections provided by the black-footed ferret plan. If this is the case then the areas described by Alternative C are already protected, as is the expanded area of Alternative A, and no ACEC is needed as special management already exists through the protection of the ferret. There seems to be an effort throughout the RMP not to discuss the black-footed ferret plan and how it affects/protects the white-tailed prairie dog. ACEC justification includes a need for research focused on disease transmission by fleas, and habitat protection… but these are already in place through black-footed ferret program, which provides protection of the white-tailed prairie dog as the prey base. If the white-tailed prairie dog population is OK the other associated species are also protected. Relevance and importance criteria are not clearly defined for the Coyote Basin complex. It would be circular to argue that because the white-tailed prairie dog is important to black-footed ferret reintroduction it needs to be protected by an ACEC.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD274 (JSD-18)	The Fish and Wildlife Service considers all of Uintah and Duchesne counties to be within the experimental population area for black-footed ferret. Within this	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	

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			area, white-tailed prairie dogs are to be protected as prey base for the black-footed ferret. The proposed [Coyote Basin] ACEC is fully within Uintah County. Also, BLM protects BLM- and state-listed species as if they were candidates so they do not become listed. With these protections in place, no additional protection is necessary for white-tailed prairie dogs. Therefore, an ACEC to protect white-tailed prairie dogs is not appropriate. Coupled with BLM applying standard stipulations along with limited CSU/timing and NSO, no special management is necessary.		
Julander Energy	O-34	SD275 (JSD-19)	Table 3.15.2 states that major threats to white-tailed prairie dogs include habitat loss, poisoning and disease. The Conservation Assessment identifies oil and gas as potential threats to the habitat of the white-tailed prairie dog and suggests ACEC designation. However, the FWS 90-Day Finding does not concur, stating there is information showing that oil and gas activity actually enhances or expands white-tailed prairie dog habitat.	The BLM will manage according to USFWS findings	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD276 (JSD-20)	"Designation…would not prevent the continued adverse impact of plague. However it would provide positive benefits in the form of preservation of essential habitat..." It is not clear that there is anything in the proposed management of the ACECs that would preserve the essential habitat.	If the ACEC is designated, activity level planning will take place. Also, see Response to Comment SD161-G1.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD277 (JSD-21)	"Alternative D does not designate the ACEC, thereby offering no additional benefit for protection for the white-tailed prairie dog or black-footed ferret." BLM fails to recognize the black-footed ferret	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	

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			reintroduction plan protects all white-tailed prairie dog habitat, occupied or unoccupied, in Uintah County. An ACEC to provide this protection is, therefore, unnecessary.		
Julander Energy	O-34	SD278 (JSD-22)	"Designation as a Research Natural Area would provide additional opportunities for research..." ACEC designation is not necessary in order to conduct research, see Section 2.4.18.2 regarding ongoing APHIS control efforts and plague research. Conservation Assessment concluded white-tailed prairie dogs do not appear to be on the verge of extinction because of plague, though more research needed.	ACEC designation is not proposed for this area in order to provide for opportunities to conduct research. The designation of the area as a Research Natural Area is independent of the proposed ACEC and is a mechanism through which the BLM can focus a special management effort in order to study specific issues while controlling external influences. See Appendix G in the PRMP/FEIS for relevance and importance criteria.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD279 (JSD-23)	"ACECs would provide essential habitat for the potential reintroduction of black-footed ferrets". The habitat for the ferret is already protected as the current populations are considered by the Fish and Wildlife Service as being within the experimental population area, wherein their habitat is protected. Also, through black-footed ferret protection, many other species and their habitat are also afforded protection. ACEC designation not needed.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD280 (JSD-24)	Page 4-233 doesn't even mention white-tailed prairie dogs or black-footed ferrets, indicating a lack of true importance. Also, management actions under Section 4.15.1.6 on page 4-235 preclude the need to establish white-tailed prairie dog ACECs. No additional special management is needed. The NEED for special management of the relevant and important resource is the key to designating an ACEC.	See Appendix G in the PRMP/FEIS for relevance and importance criteria.	

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Julander Energy	O-34	SD281 (JSD-25)	BLM has stated, and it is mentioned in Section 4.15.1.6, that they will work with UDWR to maintain white-tailed prairie dogs as viable prey base for ferruginous hawks. This cooperative effort provides protection for white-tailed prairie dogs without the need for an ACEC. It is not mentioned in the analysis of Alternative A.	Chapter 4 discusses the impacts of minerals and energy program decisions on special status species. The commitment for the BLM to work with the UDWR to maintain white-tailed prairie dogs as a viable prey base for ferruginous hawks is a special status species program decision and is discussed in Chapter 4.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD282 (JSD-26)	Given the level of protection being afforded raptors, BLM has not made any scientifically based argument to demonstrate why additional protection would be needed under an ACEC, in fact, they have not suggested any, therefore, an ACEC is not needed. Further, BLM has not provided any scientific justification for the extremely expansive protection being advocated with 7 years of protection of unoccupied nests. FWS raptor guidelines are not available for review	It should be noted that areas of special designations are rarely established for a single purpose or to protect a single resource. While raptor nests may be afforded certain protections through specific seasonal and spatial buffers, their habitat and prey base are not. Additionally, other relevant and important resources located in a given area would not necessarily be afforded sufficient consideration through these seasonal and spatial raptor buffers. Best Management Practices (BMPs) for raptor habitat can be found in Appendix A.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD283 (JSD-27)	This section provides no justification for an ACEC for white-tailed prairie dogs. The protections provided by raptor stipulations and the black-footed ferret reintroduction plan provide protection for white-tailed prairie dogs, without the need for ACEC designation.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD284 (JSD-28)	This section says "mineral resource development …could result in major adverse impacts to Resource values in some areas depending upon alternatives". This very hollow statement means nothing if not backed up by scientific citations.	Chapter 4 of the PRMP/FEIS discloses the impacts for each resource.	

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Julander Energy	O-34	SD285 (JSD-29)	White-tailed prairie dogs do not warrant ACEC protection. Answers to criteria questions should be 1) questionable, 2) NO, FWS chose not to list 3) NO, has NOT been recognized as warranting special protection (see 2); 4) No, 5) No.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD286 (JSD-30)	Page G-5 [Coyote Basin ACEC section] needs to be updated to reflect: 1) FWS decision of "not warranted"; 2) the Conservation Agreement regarding the estimated remaining percentage of the area once occupied, and finding of "unknown"; 3) the fact that white-tailed prairie dogs are not particularly vulnerable; 4) critical ecosystem, one of 25 complexes nominated, does not mean there are only 25 complexes and the majority of the 25, if not all, are associated with oil and gas development, and in some instances very old oil and gas development.	See Response to Comment SD275-O-34.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD287 (JSD-31)	White-tailed prairie dog and black-footed ferret habitats are discussed as being the same. It appears from Table 16 that Alternative D (no Action) provides a GREATER level of protection than the others, including Alternative C. If this indeed the case, then there is no need for the Coyote Basin ACEC.	The figures for Alternative D in the DRMP/EIS, Table 16 does not include the 188,500 acres of the Hill Creek Extension. As such, the percentages of area open to mineral development in Alternative D must be compared with Alternatives B, C, and D with that clarification in mind.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SD288 (JSD-32)	There is no discussion of white-tailed prairie dogs or black-footed ferrets in this appendix, though there is a lot of discussion of various spatial and seasonal restrictions for raptors. This is further evidence that the BLM is not proposing any special management for white-tailed prairie dogs and that ACECs are not justified.	Appendix K has been revised in the PRMP/FEIS to include additional prescriptions.	X
Julander Energy	O-34	SS69 (JSS-26)	The RMP says "Change in prairie dog prey base within Coyote Basin experimental population through the conversion of open, sparse grassland to a different	Comment noted.	

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			habitat type." Oil and gas operations do not "convert open sparse grassland to a different habitat type". Experience shows oil and gas creates prairie dog habitat. See Moxa, Rangely, Meeteetsee: the Conservation Assessment and ACEC nomination indicate oil and gas fields are the best (exemplary) white-tailed prairie dog habitat. The discussion about overall threats to black-footed ferrets, which rely on prairie dogs, discusses threats to the prairie dogs, which do not include oil and gas operations.		
Julander Energy	O-34	SS70 (JSS-27)	The protection of unoccupied nest for 7 years with spatial buffers as per Appendix M of the USFWS Guidelines for Raptor Protection is not available for review. The protections provided include ferruginous hawks, and burrowing owls both of which also provide significant protection to the WTPD.	See comment response SS19.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SS71 (JSS-28)	Neither of these sections discusses white-tailed prairie dogs or black-footed ferrets, indicating the appropriate lack of priority afforded these species.	See comment response SS61.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SS72	[The State of] Utah and BLM have implemented an April 1-June 15 closure on shooting to protect white-tailed prairie dogs during whelping season and a year-round closure on shooting in the black-footed ferret reintroduction area. There are two issues here: 1) Shooting was shown in the Conservation Assessment and in the FWS 90 Day Finding not to be a significant problem; 2) If there is a ban on shooting and it is not being followed, there is an enforcement problem, not an oil and gas problem.	Seasonal closures on wildlife are the responsibility of UDWR.	
Julander Energy	O-34	SS72 (JSS-29)	The DEIS states "For example, increased access into prairie dog sites will increase mortality by shooters and indirectly impact all the species associated with them."	Comment noted.	
Julander	O-34	WF114	Effects of mineral development section. Page 4-310	Comment noted.	

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Energy		(JWF-4)	states that it is assumed that all lands would be developed to their full potential. This is necessary but not realistic, but provides the scope of the analysis. Section on habitat fragmentation makes assumption that impacts of oil and gas development are all bad. Conservation assessment acknowledges that impacts may be good or bad but no one really knows, as the definitive research has not been done yet. Refer to Rangley EA for info re: lack of threats to WTPD from oil and gas development.		
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	AT58 (JAT-9)	RMP lacks balance. It places an inordinate focus on benefits of developing oil and gas and de-emphasizes the economic, historical and cultural benefits of recreation. This is in clear conflict of BLM's mandated mission to manage lands for multiple uses. Given lack of attention to and detail on potential for and benefits from recreation, we cannot endorse any alternatives. The draft should be amended to reflect: 1) the need to protect recreation and visual resources such as the Sand Wash area above Desolation canyon 2) the economic benefits to local communities from the recreational opportunities that bring visitors and residents to the Vernal FO 3) cultural and heritage resources of the Vernal area 4) the societal and health benefits of recreation to the American people.	The Draft EIS evaluated a range of alternatives in detail to assure a balanced approach was recommended that allows opportunities for mineral exploration and production and for the BLM to protect the resources and resource uses. A supplement to the Draft RMP was later issued to consider Non WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. The management actions proposed under the Alternatives offer management flexibility to ensure resources are protected while allowing for acceptable levels of mineral development. Additionally, as exploration and production activities proceed, impacts (short and long term) will be evaluated in subsequent NEPA documents. The Sand Wash area above Desolation Canyon would be open to OHV use on designated trails only and standard mineral lease stipulations under Alternatives A and B. It would be closed to OHV travel and mineral and energy leasing under Alternative C and open to manage OHV use and subject to timing and controlled surface use stipulations under Alternative D. Under all alternatives, Sand Wash would be included in	

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				existing (to-be-carried-forward) or proposed ACECs and classified as VRM Class II and/or III. Management prescriptions for ACECs can be found in Table (Special Designations – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern) and Table 2.1.23 (Visual Resource Management) of the PRMP/FEIS. The contribution of recreation to the economy of the Vernal Planning Area is addressed in Section 4.12 of the PRMP/FEIS. Provisions for the management of cultural and heritage resources in accordance with federal law and BLM policy are outlined in Table 2.1.4 (Cultural Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	AT59 (JAT-10)	The 4 Alternatives under the plan do little to protect and virtually nothing to promote land-based recreational activities away from the sites and sounds of oil and gas production and/or motorized recreations. Alternatives offer few if any choices available to truly advance the concept of multiple use, the ROS or the interests and needs of quality outdoor recreation beyond those enjoyed by OHV users. Oil and gas leasing range from 90-97% of total acreage. Similarly OHV use loses access to less that 1.5 % of the total acres under preferred Alt vs. No Action Alt. It is only in suitability for Wild and Scenic river designation that a true range of options can be seen across the alternatives.	See comment response AT58. Additionally, the BLM cannot "promote" one land use over another, but must be a neutral party in considering multiple land uses. While there may be limited difference in the number of miles of designated OHV routes between Alternatives A, B, and C, these alternatives provide a reasonably range of OHV management options and all offer significantly more opportunities for land-based recreation away from OHVs than the current management situation (Alternative D) by restricting travel to designated routes. The RMP also includes the designation of several Special Recreation Management Areas under Alternatives A and C.	
Outdoor	O-35	GC80	The draft RMP fails to establish a meaningful threshold	A discussion of recreation opportunities within the	

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Industry Association		(JGC-3)	in the development, presentation and analysis of hard data related to: recreation participation; a presentation of or adherence to a ROS; the socioeconomic values and benefits of preserving and promoting natural, cultural heritage and outdoor recreation resources, and; the short-and long-term ramifications of ignoring and ultimately handicapping outdoor recreation in favor of oil and gas production.	Vernal Planning Area can be found within description and analysis of socioeconomics as related to recreation opportunities and management decisions can be found in Sections 3.12.2.2.4 and 4.12.3.3.	
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	LR22 (JLR-5)	BLM has a mandate to manage for multiple uses. In affording access to as much as 97% of the area to oil and gas leasing and 91% to OHV use, BLM has recognized two primary uses and benefits. In keeping with agency mission, mandate and practice, BLM must also recognize the vast opportunities and benefits related to active outdoor recreation present in the Vernal FO area.	See Table 2.1.13 (Recreation Resources) as well as 3.10, and 4.10 of the PRMP/FEIS, for management alternatives related to recreation within the VFO.	
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	RE50 (JRE-5)	Draft RMP's stated goals clearly lay out the needs for and BLM's intention to provide protection for recreational resources such as Sand Wash. The oil and gas development proposed under this RMP is in direct contradiction of goals and objectives stated for both Recreation and Visual Resources. BLM should adhere to stated goals and objectives; protect the viewshed and wilderness character of the areas above Sand Wash; protect the Green River Corridor from the sights, sounds and lights form oil and gas development. None of the alternatives does this.	In Table 2.1.18 (Special Designations – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)) in the PRMP/FEIS does provide protection of the Lower Green River for both the Proposed Plan and well as in Alternatives A, C and E. The objective of the ACEC is to protect the high-value scenic resources and riparian ecosystems. The referenced NSO is for line of sight from the center line of the river up to one-half mile along both sides of the Lower Green River.	
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	RE51 (JRE-6)	BLM must recognize, plan for and manage the vast array of recreational opportunities present in the Vernal FO. The language of the RMP indicates an attitude of resignation to the economic power of oil and gas. This approach states: we have oil and gas reserves other BLM resource areas do not have, therefore we should develop oil and gas. The same can be said for many	Comment noted.	

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			elements of the ROS offered here-dinosaur remains, world class fishing, archaeological resources, scenic vistas, river corridors, etc). The opportunity for a true ROS exists within the area covered by the draft RMP. Concession to economic value of oil and gas and the regional popularity of OHV use weaken or obliterates many components of the ROS.		
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	RE52 (JRE-7)	Economic value of outdoor recreation is both significant and growing (and must also include travel and tourism numbers). Societal value of recreation also important. BLM's Workplan For The Fiscal Years 2003-2007 recognizes the importance of these elements in its stated goals. Draft RMP fails to recognize or meet these objectives. There are detailed analyses of economic benefits of oil and gas development but none for recreation, with exception of baseline data in No Action Alt. There is a detailed analysis of the detrimental effects of recreation on oil/gas development…but there is no detailed analysis of detrimental effects of oil/gas development on recreation (Section 4.12.4 just says there would be "no unavoidable adverse impacts to socioeconomics" from the projected oil/gas development). 4.12.6 says there are no long term impacts - positive or negative - from oil/gas development, nor are there any irreversible and irretrievable resources. There are likely both positive and negative effects and these should be considered.	In Section 4.12.1 of the PRMP/FEIS, is states: “If impacts to some aspect of the socioeconomic situation are not mentioned in this analysis, then a negligible effect should be assumed.” Consequently, it was concluded that the impacts on recreation from oil and gas development would be negligible and therefore no further reporting would be done.	
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	RE53 (JRE-8)	Draft RMP fails to develop, offer or analyze recreation, participation numbers by categories, type or use or type of experiences desired within the planning areas.	See comment responses RE54 and RE55.	
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	RE54 (JRE-9)	Draft RMP fails to take into consideration impacts of oil and gas development and widespread OHV use on world-class recreational opportunities that are limited in availability and may be unique to the planning area.	Section 4.10.1 describes the proposed management action impacts common to all alternatives, including those caused by minerals development and OHV use. As a programmatic NEPA document,	

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				analyzing the impacts of OHV and minerals development is beyond the scope of the PRMP/FEIS. Site-specific impacts analysis for recreation areas would be conducted through other NEPA processes and documents and through site-specific or area-specific planning (see Section Table 2.1.3 (Recreation Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Goals and Objectives).	
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	RE55 (JRE-10)	Draft RMP fails to assess desires and demands on behalf of all recreationists-motorized and non-motorized for protection of scenic vistas and view sheds.	As described in Section 1.7 Identification of Issues, the Draft RMP scoping process provided an opportunity for the general public, local, county, state, and other federal agencies, and other stakeholders to address resource conflicts and questions, and to identify resource issues. Following the public comment period, the BLM analyzed public comments and integrated them into the PRMP/FEIS, as appropriate.	
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	RE56 (JRE-11)	Draft RMP fails to offer or analyze the benefits and efficiencies from regional recognition and management of natural, cultural, heritage and recreation resources, including: 1) Coordination with other BLM offices on management of the Green and White river corridors to maximize resource protection, recreation and wildlife values; 2) Protection and promotion of natural and recreation values on BLM lands surrounding Dinosaur National Monument to maximize resource protection, recreation and wildlife values; 3) Protection of wilderness, back country, or Primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities in areas such as Desolation Canyon, Wolf Point, the Book Cliffs and Bitter Creek.	A summary of all consultation and coordination can be found in Chapter 5 of the PRMP/FEIS. Section 5.4 provides a log of meetings and coordination with partners for the development of the Vernal RMP. Coordination with adjacent BLM offices and other federal agencies, including Dinosaur National Monument, was performed throughout both the planning and analysis portions of the revised plan. Please also see the “Dear Reader” letter from the Utah State Director in the front of the Draft RMP: “We would like to particularly recognize the State of Utah and its agencies; Daggett, Uintah, and Duchesne Counties; the Ute Tribe and Bureau of Indian Affairs; and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	

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				as cooperating agencies on this DRMP/DEIS." Also, in Section S-2 of the Executive Summary in the PRMP/FEIS, it states: "The revised RMP, also referred to as the Vernal Field Office RMP, will coordinate the management of the VPA with other land management agencies and private entities, including: the State of Utah; the National Park Service (NPS); the Forest Service (USFS); the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah Counties; and municipalities."	
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	RE57 (JRE-12)	Draft RMP fails to offer management of these same critical areas from the sights and sounds related to oil and gas development. Remote portions of Desolation Canyon currently offer the only respite from the sounds and nighttime illumination of oil and gas development.	Although the Vernal Field Office does not manage for natural sight and sound throughout the VPA, it does identify through land planning decisions those areas where natural sights and sounds are important and should occur; one example is the Lower Green River Visual Corridor.	
Outdoor Industry Association	O-35	SO58 (JSO-2)	BLM should reconsider the impacts of a rapid and unbalanced oil and gas development on the socioeconomics of the area. The BLM work plan states that the goal is to provide assistance in sustainable economic diversification that is both ecologically and socially responsible. There should be balance between resource development/extraction, outdoor recreation, travel and tourism, and agriculture.	The term "multiple use" as defined in the FLPMA means "the management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are used in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people." This direction indicates that not all uses need to be accommodated in all areas. The DRMP/DEIS includes a detailed evaluation of all options to ensure a balanced approach. This balanced approach will ensure protection of resource values and sensitive resources while allowing opportunities for mineral exploration and production. The PRMP/FEIS will offer management flexibility to ensure that resource values and uses are protected	

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				while allowing for acceptable levels of mineral development. The BLM believes that its preferred alternative satisfies these objectives.	
Californians for Western Wilderness	O-36	SD250 (ASD-6)	…we would like to see all areas that presently possess wilderness character (generally untouched by humans, solitude, opportunities for unconfined, primitive recreation, etc.) managed to preserve that character. This includes all those lands covered by America's Redrock Wilderness Act (H.R.1774), as well as other areas which may not be included.	See Response to Comment SD1-I-1.	
Californians for Western Wilderness	O-36	SD251 (ASD-7)	Lands included in H.R.1774 should be closed to oil and gas leasing, or at least have no surface occupancy stipulations placed on them. OHV use should also be eliminated in these areas.	See Response to Comment SD1-I-1.	
Californians for Western Wilderness	O-36	SD252 (ASD-8)	Sand Wash in Upper Desolation Canyon. Because this is the put-in for rafters on the Green River, it is important that the motors be kept far away, to preserve the peace and quiet of the area. Many routes designated in the Preferred Alternative are returning to their natural state and are not needed. These should be eliminated from the list of designated routes.	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	
Californians for Western Wilderness	O-36	SD253 (ASD-9)	The White River is an outdoor laboratory for many schoolchildren, as well as being a recreation corridor. These uses are more important than oil and gas leasing, which should be prohibited there. OHV use should also be limited, and the routes in Atchee Wash and Saddle Tree Draw should not be designated as open. This will help preserve the primitive and wild nature of the area.	See Response to Comment SD19-G-22.	
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	AT52 (JAT-3)	The Alternatives do not match the results of the scoping phase. This planning process is not "issue driven". Alternative actions should be formulated to resolve the planning issues and priorities as defined during scoping. This discrepancy weakens the draft's	The commenter does not provide an example of an issue from scoping that is not addressed in the plan. Planning issues are discussed in Chapter 1 of the	

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			assertions that it will "ensure the continued availability of quality outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences" listed during the public input process.	PRMP/FEIS. Management Common to All and the alternatives are proposed prescriptions to address the identified issues.	
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	AT53 (JAT-4)	Current negative impacts of mineral development on world-class recreational and visual resources such as the Lower Green River segment were not addressed in any Alternative with location-specific consideration. More generally, nothing in the Alternative actions serves the draft's goal to "establish limits of acceptable change or other environmental indictors to provide for adaptive management" of recreation resources.	Past, present/current, and reasonably foreseeable future impacts from minerals and energy development as well as other land uses on recreation within the Vernal Planning Area are addressed in Section 4.8.2.4 in the PRMP/FEIS. Provisions for recreation management are outlined in Table 2.1.13 (Recreation Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS.	
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	AT54 (JAT-5)	Environmental impacts were evaluated against an outdated baseline reference. No rationale provided to explain why environmental impacts of alternatives were compared to the impacts of the no-action alternative. This is a serious bias because it positions the 2 outdated plans as a baseline reference throughout the EIS, even though the no action alternative already leans heavily toward an emphasis on resource uses and especially oil and gas development.	NEPA requires that the No Action alternative be analyzed in any EIS. The No Action alternative would be our baseline reference as that provides the current management direction.	
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	AT55 (JAT-6)	Other relevant alternative actions were not considered. No alternative was reviewed that would have limited the growth rate of mineral development in specific areas to maintain existing recreation opportunity spectrum in the district. Alt C emphasizes the natural succession of ecosystems, but none of the alternatives indicates BLM's concern for the future of recreation. The result is the draft does not offer a true range of choices reflecting the BLM's multiple use mission. With Alt C-the most restrictive alternative- 97.4% of potential	The Draft RMP presents four alternative proposals for managing public lands in the VPA. A supplement to the Draft RMP was later issued to consider Non WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. The alternatives were developed in response to the issues identified in the public scoping process and the planning criteria. The BLM recognizes that social, economic, and environmental issues cross land ownership lines and that extensive cooperation is needed to actively	

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			wells get drilled and 90.6% percent of the land gets developed for its oil and gas potential. We feel that areas closed to oil and gas development could be increased with no significant impact on employment, income and local government revenues yet with a substantial difference made in landscape protection. The BLM is clearly not considering any substantial tradeoffs in an effort to protect natural landscape values that are threatened by oil and gas development.	address issues of mutual concern. To the extent possible, these alternatives were crafted utilizing input from public scoping comments, Duchesne, Daggett, and Uintah County representatives and other cooperating agencies. Through its land use planning revision process and to comply with the FLPMA multiple-use mandate, BLM has discretion to choose how the BLM lands ultimately will be managed, considering all the values and potential uses of these lands and the other lands within the planning area.	
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	AT56 (JAT-7)	When analyzing impacts of alternative actions, the BLM did not adequately measure "the effects of actions from the perspective of future generations in addition to considering their immediate effects." Specific parts of this analysis, especially pertaining to impacts on recreation resources and the state economy at large, should have been quantified.	Section 4.23 in the PRMP/F considers the cumulative impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on resources and land uses within the Vernal Planning Area. This analysis projects into the future to the extent that it is reasonable and prudent.	
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	AT57 (JAT-8)	BLM Vernal recognized, after scoping phase, the presence in the planning area of world-class scenery and recreational resources needing protection, yet none of the alternatives provide for protective management of such sensitive resources. The final draft should follow the direction of new BLM handbook by integrating Visual and Recreation Resource protection and proposing a formula that will allow for a continuity of the existing ROS.	The RMP is in accordance with BLM Manual 8400.06(2) Visual Resource Management.	
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	PR29 (JPR-3)	We wish to thank the BLM for the deadline extension following the BLM web network shutdown and for the new tools initially offered to help the public navigate this planning process.	Comment noted.	
National	O-37	RE47	Opportunities for "solitude and primitive and unconfined	Proposed Special Designation areas (ACECs, Wild	

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Outdoor Leadership School		(JRE-2)	types of recreation" were not identified as a recreation use to be preserved in the future, even though the draft is supposed to "assure there is a spectrum of recreation opportunities and settings through a comprehensive integrated activity level planning". Specifically the preferred alternative only considers opportunities for unconfined, dispersed, and primitive recreational activities throughout the designation of a Book Cliffs SRMA, of which 90% of the subsurface is currently leased for mineral development.	and Scenic River segments), and existing WSAs described in Section 3.14 and Chapter 2 would provide recreational opportunities for solitude, primitive, and dispersed recreation.	
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	RE48 (JRE-3)	Other "Recreation Goals and Objectives" listed as common to all alternatives were not translated adequately into management actions. Example 1) Goal: "Continue to implement the 1979 Green River Management Plan for Desolation and Gray Canyons to protect the Desolation Canyon historical landmark within VFO." Why are the historical values of this 1979 plan and their corresponding protective actions partially perpetuated in the new Vernal draft while the full EIS considerations and visual corridor created at the time neglected?	Even though the Desolation Canyon Landmark boundaries are identified as “extending along the Green river from Nine Mile Creek in Nutters Hole, in a strip extending one mile either side of the center line of the channel, 45 miles south to Florence Creek” and “The Desolation and Gray Canyons of the Green River Management Plan as an “...average of about one mile in width” (to protect the visual corridor), there are no stipulations, prescriptions, nor maps associated with those documents to identify where those boundaries are. The intent of the boundaries was to protect both natural sights and sounds from the river user. This protection is currently being administered by the Vernal Field Office and will continue with a one-half mile no surface occupancy (NSO) to oil and gas activities along these sections of the lower Green River.	
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	RE48A	Example 2) Goal: "All developed recreational sites would be closed to (…) all forms of surface disturbing activities not directly related to recreation development." Doesn't explain how it will limit surface disturbing activities. Without specific spatial boundaries attached to it and placed within the context of other section of the draft referring to oil and gas	The Final EIS does not list those sites spatially. However, the sites which have been alluded to in this document refer to those in both the Diamond Mountain RMP and the Book Cliffs RMP which have digitized, mapped and identified in ArcView, thus allowing us to continue to protect these locations with a spatial and legal reference.	

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			leasing stipulations across the planning area, we do not believe that statement carries adequate protection.		
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	RE49 (JRE-4)	The draft does not fulfill its goal to adequately review recreation uses and address projected recreation needs. Draft is inconsistent and incomplete it its efforts to "identify special recreation management areas requiring enhanced or special management for recreational uses, or for protection of recreational-related resource values." Specifically, EIS alludes to beneficial impacts from attached NSO restrictions to oil and gas leasing, but only gives random bits of information on which SRMA's would include such restrictions and to what degree. This lack of basic info makes it impossible for reader to know what special recreation resources will be protected and how. Page 4-143 says that each SRMA would have a management plan that would specify the limits of mineral resource development. We believe these are land use decisions, not implementation decisions (per BLM handbook), and should therefore be included in the draft.	A wide range of alternatives were analyzed to determine all impacts to resource values including recreation and oil and gas leasing. The Record Of Decision (ROD) will delineate SRMAs as well as stipulations for oil and gas leasing. Activity plans will be prepared to implement identified SRMAs after the Record Of Decision is signed.	
National Outdoor Leadership School	O-37	SD262 (JSD-6)	Desolation Canyon SRMA is not documented in this draft, nor does it appear in Figure 21. We do not know if Sand Wash is/will be a recognized integral part of this SRMA and how recreation management of this developed site will be integrated with other resource uses considerations/impact analyses.	The Desolation Canyon SRMA is under the jurisdiction of the BLM's Price Field Office. Please, see the Price RMP for information about this SRMA.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	AT50 (JAT-1)	The BLM has not provided a reasonable range of Alternatives, has not followed its own manual, is contributing to the need to list a species under ESA and fails to follow FLMPA's mandates to give priority to the designation of ACECs and to manage for multiple uses, including for wildlife habitat. Every Alternative, even C would open more white tailed prairie dog	The commenter did not include any suggestions for 'a range of alternatives' that would be adequate. CEQ regulations require that the lead agency "rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives" (40CFR 1502.14). This includes a range of alternatives applicable to the nature and timing of the proposed action (Natural	

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			habitat to oil and gas leases and protective stipulations would apply even less habitat than they do now. In fact, the preferred alternative would decrease the proportion of habitat by 30% as compared to the no action alternative. Rather than adopting new RMPs that would provide protection equivalent to ESA listing as the Service asserted, the BLM plans to dramatically decrease the meager protections for oil and gas drilling that currently apply to prairie dogs in the Vernal Field Office. It is hard to know whether ACEC designation under these terms would really offer any benefits.	Resources Defense Council, Inc. v. Adams, 566 F.2d 419, 425 (2d Cir. 1977)). An agency is not required to consider "every extreme possibility which might be conjectured" (Carolina Envt. Study Group v. United States, 510 F.2d 796, 801 (D.C. Cir. 1975). The public has opportunity to propose alternatives during the public scoping process. During the scoping process, which involved both the public and agencies, an array of alternative approaches to the proposed action were explored that could potentially resolve scoping issues or at least reduce the magnitude of effects to one or more environmental resources. However, some of these potential alternatives were impractical, did not adequately meet the purpose and need for the project, or resulted in little or no environmental benefit when compared to the proposed action or another comparable alternative.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	AT51 (JAT-2)	Page 4-234 states that under all Alternatives, large areas associated with ferruginous hawk nesting sites, Mexican spotted owl habitat and greater sage grouse habitat would be open for oil and gas and mineral development. This cannot be considered a reasonable range of Alternatives.	While some areas associated with ferruginous hawk nesting sites, Mexican spotted owl habitat and greater sage grouse habitat would be open for oil and gas and mineral development, site-specific surveys for the actual presence of such habitat will be undertaken at the project development NEPA stage. Should such habitat be identified within the proposed development area, stipulations and/or conditions will be attached to the development lease or permit outlining the best management practices and mitigation measures to be implemented in order to avoid, minimize, or mitigate for the impacts. Additionally, seasonal and spatial buffers for the species identified in the comment are included under all alternatives.	
Center for Native	O-38	FM12	Because of the extent of cheatgrass infestation in the Vernal FO, prescribed fire must be used with caution.	Section 4.15.1.1 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to clarify the impact of fire in areas with	X

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Ecosystems		(JFM-3)	Page 3-22 indicates "unplanned fire is not desired at all… in the desert shrub type where the risk of cheatgrass…is high after an area has been burned or treated". …However this is one of the few places in the document that acknowledges that fire must be used with caution in light of the cheatgrass. On page 2-99, fire is considered to be a benefit to special status species. Page 4-232 makes a reference to cheatgrass but does not fully analyze how fire in areas with cheatgrass could affect special status species. This should be addressed in the final draft.	cheatgrass and how fire could affect special status species. The following language has been inserted: "If prescribed fires were to spread beyond their intended dense woodland target these fires would have adverse impacts on special status species by directly destroying individual plants of special status plant species or by indirectly contributing to the risk of cheatgrass invasion, which is higher following a fire."	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	GC79 (JGC-2)	The draft RMP is extremely vague. The plan leaves most of the details about mitigation until later, the APD phase, the field development stage, the project phase, etc. This is not adaptive management; this is a plan without teeth and without boundaries for acceptable development.	Comment noted.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	LG177 (JLG-4)	Grazing practices should not be permitted to pose a threat to white-tailed prairie dogs. With proper stocking levels and avoidance of white-tailed prairie dog habitat that already requires rehabilitation, prairie dogs and livestock should be able to coexist. When prairie dog declines occur, local grazing practices should be reviewed and altered if necessary. Livestock grazing pressure should always be reduced in drought years.	The Fire, Drought, and Natural Disasters subsection of Table 2.1.1 (Management Common to All Alternatives) in the PRMP/FEIS indicates that adjustments to livestock grazing would also occur in times of drought.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	LG178 (JLG-5)	Livestock grazing rates should be adjusted before wildlife herds are culled. Page 2-4 suggests that wildlife herds could be culled in response to drought. Reduction of livestock stocking rates would be employed first.	See comment response LG177.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	LG179 (JLG-6)	Voluntary retirement of permits should be encouraged. We applaud TNC and RMEF for voluntarily retiring their grazing permits upon adoption of this RMP. We hope the recently announced changes in grazing permit	See comment response LG4.	

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			management by the BLM will not hinder this plans.		
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	LG180 (JLG-7)	Allowing grazing to threaten special status species under all of the alternatives is irresponsible and violates NEPA. The Grazing in River Corridors section on page 2-19 is completely vague and non-committal about how grazing in this most potentially damaging area will be addressed. Page 2-32 presents two yellow-billed cuckoo prescriptions that are completely contradictory: "Fence riparian areas to reduce or eliminate grazing pressure on young trees, especially willow and cottonwood;" and "Apply rotation grazing or consider eliminating hot-season grazing in riparian areas to allow young trees to become established." Which is it, will grazing be allowed or not in riparian areas? BLM must seriously consider impacts of grazing on each special status species and provide real mitigation.	Additional management actions related to riparian corridors can be found in Table 2.1.16 (Riparian Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS . This table provides information regarding management prescriptions and stipulations for grazing within riparian corridors. The prescriptions regarding yellow-billed cuckoo are not contradictory. The prescriptions would be implemented on a case-by-case basis, applying the prescription most appropriate to the situation; fencing, which creates its own level of environmental disturbance, may be less desirable in some situations that rotation grazing or seasonal restrictions, which are actions involving less disturbance. The analysis of anticipated impacts of grazing management decisions on special status is provided in Sections 4.15.1.2 and 4.15.2.2. Anticipated mitigation for impacts on special status species from all activities is outlined in Section 4.15.3. Section 4.15.3 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to add additional mitigations for grazing and other activities for special status species in Section 4.15.3.	X
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	LR19 (JLR-2)	Public Lands supporting special status species should be retained. BLM is obligated to retain habitat for special status species.	See comment response LR17.	
Center for Native	O-38	LR20 (JLR-2)	Page 4-2 clarifies that cultural resource clearance is required before disposal of land; the final RMP should	The BLM is required to prepare a NEPA document for all instances of land disposal prior to the actual	

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Ecosystems			clarify that lands should be cleared for special status species prior to serious consideration of disposal as well.	disposal. The analysis conducted as part of the preparation of that document would include assessments of the presence/absence of and potential impact upon special status species and other resources.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	LR21 (JLR-4)	Federal law still constrains the use of leased lands. The BLM seems to write off areas that have been leased, but in reality the agency still has the responsibility to ensure compliance with ESA, CWA, etc, even when lease stipulations do not expressly protect those resources. The BLM should therefore plan for the responsible management of all resources, whether or not they occur in leased areas. Leases expire, after all. It is troublesome that the very first "Analytical Assumption" listed is "All resource actions recognize valid existing rights." The RMP should clarify that these rights are subject to the ESA, CWA and CAA, e.g.	The assumption that all resource actions recognize valid existing rights acknowledges that new management actions implemented through the RMP do not apply retroactively to existing leases. That is, existing leases are not subject to new restrictions or stipulations. However, the BLM has always reserved and will continue to reserve the right to implement management actions when unacceptable or unintended adverse effects relative to existing federal law are identified, regardless of lease stipulations. All leases granted after the establishment of the ESA, CWA, CAA, and other federal legislation are subject to the requirements of these laws and regulations.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	LR35 (JLR-2)	BLM's recent proposal for a shooting range on white-tailed prairie dog colony, with hints that this land could be transferred to City of Vernal, are cause for concern.	Comment noted.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SD260 (JSD-4)	Prescriptions for the Coyote Basin ACEC are vague. Noxious weeds would be controlled but the primary weed in this area is cheatgrass, and we are unaware of any effective control strategy. Natural fire regimes would be restored, but we are not sure how this will be possible since it is overrun with cheatgrass, which alters fire regimes and is often better able to out-compete natives after fire. Page 4-232 says prescribed burns would take place in desert shrublands, but also says fire won't take place in black–footed ferret habitat, which is confusing. The main special management that could benefit prairie dogs (the reason for ACEC	Table 2.1 (Special Designations – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)) has been revised to clarify the prescriptions for the Coyote Basin ACEC under the various alternatives.	X

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			designation) consists of "implementing actions to maintain or enhance…habitat". What ARE the actions? What about prohibiting actions that reduce habitat? Instead, BLM proposed to continue to lease habitat with standard lease terms, or perhaps with timing limitations, but does not spell out what the stipulations would be in place where.		
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SD261 (JSD-5)	The multi-state Prairie Dog conservation Team has recommended ACEC designation for large complexes. The BLM admits that the complex as we nominated it for special management (including the Shiner, Snake, John Kennedy Wash and Coyote Basin subcomplexes) meets the relevance and importance criteria. Choosing not to provide special management via ACEC designation for the entire complex is arbitrary and capricious. The resource and threats are the same throughout the full complex, it makes no sense that the need for special mgt would be any different. Myton's Bench relevance, importance and needs for special management should be fully assessed as well. BLM must include a rationale of why these areas were not included in the preferred alternative.	Please, see Chapter 3 in the PRMP/FEIS wherein the proposed Coyote Basin Complex ACEC is discussed. This 124,161-acre potential ACEC includes the following five subcomplexes: Coyote Basin-Coyote Basin; Coyote Basin-Snake John; Coyote Basin-Kennedy Wash; Coyote Basin-Myton Bench; and Coyote Basin-Shiner. See Responses to Comment SD24-G-22 and Comment SD8-G-9. The projected RFD for each alternative accounts for restrictions resulting from closures associated with special designations, special status species protections, and other resource program decisions.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS44 (JSS-2)	SSS goals and objectives include "implement the management necessary to increase populations of special status species…and restore them to their historic ranges by enhancing protecting and restoring known and potential habitat". This is an admirable goal, but the plan is not serious about attaining it; the draft RMP admits that special status species will continue to decline under all alternatives.	The RMP states that there will be a potential for a loss of some habitat and individual species cumulatively for all activities. Mitigation measures are used to lessen foreseeable impacts to maintain the ability of species existence and with monitoring and management changes, work toward the goal of increasing the populations.	
Center for Native	O-38	SS45	SSS goals and objectives include "manage all T&E plant species and the habitat upon which they depend	Comment noted.	

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Ecosystems		(JSS-3)	upon in such manner as to conserve and recover these species to the point where the requirements of ESA are no longer necessary." This is an admirable—and required--goal, but the BLM admits later that at least Alternative B won't just fail to recover the species, it would place Bookcliffs soil endemics at substantial risk and potentially result in jeopardy to listed species and/or the listing of previously candidate or sensitive species as T or E (4-243), and even Alt C would maintain the current condition that is one of continued risk for endemics (4-244).		
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS46 (JSS-4)	Says all alternatives will maintain and enhance white-tailed prairie dog habitat, but page 4-242 admits that the preferred alternative will decrease the proportion of white-tailed prairie dog habitat subject to special stipulations by approx 30%.	The management action referred to on page 2-32 of the Draft RMP is meant as a management goal to restore and maintain prairie dog habitat wherever possible. It does not mean that all other activities that could impact prairie dog habitat would be curtailed.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS47 (JSS-4)	Vernal FO has not demonstrated that it is capable of development oil and gas resources without adversely affecting special status species. FO has a track record of permitting activities that degrade ecosystem health and endanger imperiled species. There is no indication that the Vernal FO is capable of adequately mitigating oil and gas drilling. Therefore the agency should not permit additional development in habitat for special species and should ensure that leases stipulate no ground disturbance (including no surface occupancy) with no waivers, exceptions or modification in special species' habitat. Instead, the BLM admits that new oil and gas drilling will be concentrated in these sensitive areas (p 4-240). This irresponsible development violates FLPMA and ESA and this set of alternatives cannot be considered "reasonable" under NEPA.	FLPMA mandates that lands be managed for multiple use and sustained yield (FLPMA Section 102 (a) (7)). This includes preserving ecological values while allowing for human occupancy and use (FLPMA Section 102 (a) (8)). The purpose of this planning EIS is to analyze a range of alternatives that allow for multiple use while maintaining the long-term sustainability of the ecosystem, including ensuring the population viability of TES species as mandated in the ESA. The alternatives analyzed provide a range of development opportunities and this EIS will disclose how much development can be allowed while still meeting the requirements of FLPMA and ESA. All of the alternatives retained for detailed analysis are "reasonable" in that they meet the purpose and need of the project (managing for multiple use) while trying to resolve resource conflict (TES species vs. oil and gas development). To	

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				completely prohibit oil and gas development in sensitive species habitat without analyzing the potential impacts to both the human and natural environment would be a violation of NEPA, which indicate that alternatives should be analyzed in cases of unresolved resource conflict (NEPA Section 102 (2)(e))	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS48 (JSS-5)	BLM has not met its special species obligations. The draft RMP discusses the BLM's obligation not to contribute to the need to list sensitive species under ESA but it has other obligations as well. IM 7-118, BLM Manual 6840.06, BLM Manual 1622.1, BLM Land Use Handbook all require that BLM id species, habitat, and manage for recovery and that land use decisions be consistent with those mandates. Rather than planning for recovery and expansion of special status species, the stated goal on page 202 is much more modest: "desired species including native, T&E and special status, are maintained at a level appropriate for the site and species involved."	Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) of the PRMP/FEIS proposes several goals and objectives common to all for special status species. They are as follows: Conserve and protect special status species and enhance their habitats. Implement recovery measures for special status species, including listed species and the ecosystems on which they depend. Mitigate or reduce long-term habitat fragmentation through avoidance and site-specific reclamation to return areas to productive levels. Manage all listed T&E plant species and the habitats upon which they depend in such a manner as to conserve and recover these species to the point where the requirements of the Endangered Species Act are no longer necessary. Manage non-listed sensitive species and the habitats upon which they depend in such a manner as to preclude the need to list them as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The guidance for this management is put forth in the BLM 6840 Manual. Implement the specific goals and objectives of recovery plans, conservation agreements and	

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				strategies, and approved activity level plans. BLM would continue to work with USFWS and others to ensure that plans and agreements are updated as necessary to reflect the latest scientific data. Implement the direction contained in the Northwest National Fire Plan Project Design and Consultation Process and the Counterpart Regulations including Alternative Consultation Agreements. Implement the management necessary to increase populations of special status species, including federally listed animal species, and restore them to their historic ranges by enhancing, protecting, and restoring known and potential habitat.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS49 (JSS-6)	"Pariette cactus is endangered because of BLM's mismanagement". This is one of the most endangered species in the Vernal FO, yet it is not even addressed in this plan. We understand the Castle Peak/Eightmile Flat EIS is being revised now to address this oversight. The BLM must also revise any BA it has drafted for the RMP to include an analysis of the impacts on Pariette cactus. Pariette cactus is included separately from Uintah basin hookless cactus on the Utah BLM's sensitive species list, and there is no credible explanation for not completing an impacts analysis for this species. P 2-28 (desc. of Pariette Wetlands ACEC) does not make reference to the cactus, despite it being a major reason for its designation. The RMP states that the ACEC will be managed as NSO but the BLM has not required that in the draft Castle Peak/Eightmile Flat EIS. We strongly support NSO throughout this ACEC.	Information concerning the taxonomic changes to Sclerocactus glaucus has been addressed in Section 4.15.2.3.1.1 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Center for	O-38	SS50	Draft RMP identifies Monument Butte-Red Wash area	The BLM is required to conduct a presence/absence	

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Native Ecosystems		(JSS-7)	as center of oil and gas drilling operations. BLM must provide adequate mitigations for Pariette cactus, Uintah basin hookless cactus and other special status species for drilling and leasing to continue legally.	survey for special status species before construction of any project. If any special status species are found in the project area, the BLM would require avoidance of these species. If avoidance is not feasible, BLM would consult with the FWS regarding adequate mitigation for potential species impacts. All oil and gas applications for permits to drill (APD) will be subject to site-specific NEPA to ensure that these permit approvals comply with ESA and BLM policy.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS51 (JSS-8)	Table 4.13.1 suggests that soils in the Monument Butte-Red Wash are highly erodible and highly saline. BLM must carefully analyze the impacts of drilling in the proximity of the Green River on the listed Colorado River fish and mitigate for impacts to these species and to their designated critical habitat.	The BLM has analyzed the potential impacts to the listed Colorado River fish resulting from energy development in the Monument Butte-red Wash area.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS52 (JSS-9)	BLM's main commitment to Graham's penstemon in the draft RMP is that it will implement the "conservation plan" for this species; however, this document does not provide management prescriptions. RMP should be the BLM's opportunity to ensure that every population of this species is protected adequately from oil and gas drilling, ORV use etc. We strongly urge that the BLM consult with the Service about what mgt prescriptions should be adopted for this species, which clearly seems to be on track for ESA listing. If nothing else, this could avoid the BLM from having to substantially amend the RMP after this listing is complete.	The BLM is committed to implementing the conservation measures contained in the Conservation Agreement. These are specific measures designed to protect and manage the species. Measures include inventory, monitoring, and avoidance activities.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS53 (JSS-10)	Graham's and White River penstemon not listed in the oil-shale endemics page 4-233 says that Graham's penstemon is in severe decline, but only lists the reed-mustards as species restricted to oil shale formations.	Clay reed mustard is not an oil shale endemic. Section 4.15.1.3 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to read:	X

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				"This threat is particularly high for shrubby reed mustard, White River beardtongue and Graham's beardtongue, as they are restricted to geologic formations containing oil shale."	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS54 (JSS-11)	List of impacts should include loss of pollinators (perhaps this is what "potential loss of long-term reproduction capabilities" alludes to but this should be spelled out) Pages 4-240-41 avoids this analysis by saying that studies of these impacts…are limited and few conclusions can be drawn. There is a large body of literature and field studies available, BLM's positions is arbitrary and capricious. Best available science indicates that these are plants will be adversely affected by the continuing fragmentation of their habitat and of their pollinators.	In cooperation with the USFWS, and in conformance with the ESA, the Vernal FO has established conservation plans which will allow for protection of pollinators based on current information. Table 2.1.21 in the PRMP/FEIS (Vegetation) states in the Management Common to All: "BLM would continue to work with USFWS and others to ensure that plans and agreements are updated as necessary to reflect the latest scientific data. Recovery plans have been finalized for Uinta Basin hookless cactus, shrubby reed–mustard, and clay reed-mustard. A draft plan is being developed by the USFWS for Ute ladies' tresses. A Conservation Plan has been prepared for Astragalus equisolensis, Penstemon goodrichii, Penstemon grahamii and Penstemon scarious var. albifluvis."	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS55 (JSS-12)	The draft RMP concludes that "The potential impacts to Uintah Basin hookless cactus, clay reed mustard, shrubby reed mustard, Graham's beardtongue, and White River beardtongue are expected to be high with oil, gas and coal bed methane development". Clearly the BLM is violating ESA, NEPA, FLPMA, and APA by allowing high levels of impacts in habitat for extremely narrowly distributed listed and candidate plant species under the preferred alternative.	Although the potential effects of oil and gas development are expected to be high, standard stipulations for oil and gas development allow for movement of drilling operations to avoid and/or minimize impacts to these species. The determination regarding specific avoidance or mitigation measures are necessary to comply with ESA, NEPA, FLPMA, and APA will be determined at the site-specific level. The Final EIS has been amended to include information regarding the range	X

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				of avoidance and mitigation options for these species, as well as the projected impacts subsequent to implementation of these measures.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS56 (JSS-13)	The Vernal FO has a special responsibly for white-tailed prairie dog management. Coyote Basin is one of the few areas where the white-tailed prairie dog ecosystem remains relatively intact; it is the premier complex in Utah. We applaud the BLM for designating at least a portion of this as an ACEC in every alternative. However, the plan does little to conserve this complex and recover the species. Page 2-32 states that "all alternatives will maintain and enhance the white-tailed prairie dog… habitat…" There is no indication that BLM intends to carry this out and no explanation as to how they intend to do this. Page 2-38 just says BLM will "participate in the development of a conservation plan". There is no direction to even implement the plan, just help with the preparation. BLM should provide interim management prescriptions as well. The Prairie Dog Conservation Team was very clear in their Conservation Assessment that the BLM must make management changes if the white-tailed is to be recovered and ESA listing avoided.	Table 2.1.18 (Special Designations – ACECs) in the PRMP/FEIS includes a summary of the measures that would be implemented for the alternatives that would manage white-tailed prairie dog in the Coyote Basin ACEC. They include controlling noxious weeds, restoring a historic fire regime, managing for ferret habitat and prey base, and implementing a monitoring program.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS57 (JSS-14)	White-tailed prairie dog shooting should be prohibited throughout each of the ACECs. Closures must be enforced and the consequences of noncompliance must serve as deterrents to violation.	Hunting is regulated by the UDWR and is outside of the scope of the RMP.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS58 (JSS-15)	BLM should maintain a ban on prairie dog poisoning and clearly inform all lessees and adjacent private property owners that white-tailed prairie dog poisoning will not be tolerated. Suspected poisoning events should be investigated and the consequences of noncompliance must serve as deterrents to violation.	The PRMP/FEIS will not authorize poisoning. Should such an event occur, that BLM will thoroughly investigate the situation.	
Center for	O-38	SS59	Each ACEC should be evaluated for its value as a	Each proposed ACEC was evaluated for prairie dog	

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Native Ecosystems		(JSS-16)	white-tailed prairie dog relocation site. Relocation plans should be developed for those portions of these ACECs that represent high value relocation areas. While private landowners should pay for relocation costs plus a surcharge devoted to prairie dog mgt, the BLM should facilitate the relocation of prairie dogs from colonies that face imminent destruction on private lands. Relocation should be accomplished using protocols that have proved successful for other prairie dog species while protocols specific to white-tailed prairie dogs are developed.	potential. ACEC evaluations are found in Appendix G of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS60 (JSS-17)	Plague monitoring through collection of fleas and testing of prairie dog carcasses should be conducted in areas with suspected prairie dog declines and in all black-footed ferret reintroduction areas. At present, dusting borrows with insecticides is advised in colonies where plague is known to be active. Because existing insecticides are not flea-specific, dusting burrows to limit the spread of plague should be seen as a temporary measure to be applied in areas without significant non-target species concerns.	Comment noted.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS61 (JSS-18)	Black footed ferret recovery should be a priority throughout the Uinta Basin. As one of only a few reintroduction sites, Coyote Basin and the Vernal FO in general are very important to the recovery of this species. Page 2-31 states that BLM will continue to implement goals of recovery plan by augmenting existing population in the Snake John Wash area. We support this, but also urge the BLM ensure white-tailed prairie dog populations are actively conserved and recommend protecting and augmenting other parts of the Coyote Basin complex including the Shiner sub-complex if population levels recover.	Section 4.14.1.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS describes the range of protection measures for the white-tailed prairie dog.	
Center for	O-38	SS62	The list of potential reintroductions on page 2-38 does	The reintroduction of black-footed ferrets is	

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Native Ecosystems		(JSS-19)	not include black-footed ferrets; this should be corrected. BLM should also consider whether lynx, wolf or wolverine reintroduction might be feasible during the life of the plan.	addressed as a separate issue under Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) of the PRMP/FEIS. Table 2.1.26 (Wildlife and Fisheries Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS indicates that reintroductions under this plan would involve, but may not be limited to, native species such as Rocky Mountain big horn sheep, moose, bison, Colorado River cutthroat trout, and wild turkey. This allows the BLM the flexibility to consider the reintroduction of other species. This section also indicates that: "Potential reintroduction of gray wolves would be made in consultation with the UDWR, USFWS, Ute Tribe, counties, and private landowners through the Resource Advisory Council process for public involvement."	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS63 (JSS-20)	Page 4-236 lists overall threats to black-footed ferrets, but only seems to contemplate habitat conversion to agriculture as a factor causing habitat loss. BLM must consider contribution of oil and gas development to habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation for the white-tailed prairie dog and thus the ferret. Page 4-242 includes the troubling statement that "For this analysis it was assumed that black-footed ferrets are completely dependent upon white tailed prairie dog towns for survival…" There should be absolutely no question that ferrets are dependent upon prairie dogs for both food and shelter. They are widely known as prairie dog obligates and only known to inhabit prairie dog colonies.	The potential impacts of mineral and energy development on black-footed ferrets is discussed for each alternative in Sections 4.15.2.3.1.2, 4.15.2.3.2.2, 4.15.2.3.3.2, and 4.15.2.3.4. The statement regarding the assumption of the black-footed ferrets dependence on white-tailed prairie dogs is merely provided in order to clarify for readers unfamiliar with the ferret-prairie dog relationship the assumptions upon which analysis was conducted.	
Center for	O-38	SS64	Sage Grouse management should, at a minimum,	Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) of the	

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Native Ecosystems		(JSS-21)	follow the guidelines in Connelly et al. 2000. The draft RMP only implements sage grouse management under Alternative C, even though they admit on Page 4-116 that it is not likely that management decisions under Alternative C would have a greater impact on mineral and energy development than Alternative D--No action. This is totally arbitrary; the BLM is compromising sage grouse management without even providing any benefit to the oil and gas industry according to its own analysis. Page 4-115 admits that the preferred alternative will simply maintain the status quo, (a declining trend for the sage grouse). Page 4-234 states that under all alternatives, large areas associated with…sage grouse habitat would be open for oil and gas and mineral development. This cannot be considered a reasonable range of alternatives. Impacts of the preferred alternative (Page 4-242) would include categorizing a large majority of important greater sage grouse winter and brooding habitat as open to minerals development.	PRMP/FEIS indicates that sage grouse management would be undertaken under all alternatives, but would take a different form for each alternative. Under Alternative A, the Strategic Management Plan (SMP) for Sage Grouse (State of Utah, 2002) would be adopted and implemented. Under Alternative B, spatial and seasonal buffers comparable to the SMP would be adopted. Under Alternatives C and E, Connelly's Guidelines to Manage Sage Grouse Populations and Their Habitats would be implemented. Under Alternative D, spatial and seasonal buffers would be implemented but would differ somewhat from those implemented under the other alternatives. Timing and controlled surface use stipulations (spatial and seasonal buffers) would be implemented under all alternatives in relationship to sage grouse leks in order to minimize the impact of minerals and energy development on sage grouse.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS65 (JSS-22)	Grazing has very real impacts on sage grouse habitat quality, yet there seems to be no discussion of the impacts on grazing on sage grouse under the different alternatives. This partly seems to be because the plan is so vague: page 4-245 states "impacts would be either beneficial or adverse, depending on whether the improvement made for livestock grazing resulted in moving livestock out of special species (sic) status habitat or concentrating them in new habitats. The exact locations of the rangeland treatment are presently unknown." The BLM at a minimum should adopt the grazing management prescriptions in Connelly at el. (2000).	The potential impacts of livestock grazing on special status species are discussed under Section 4.15.2.2.	

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Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS66 (JSS-230	Disturbance and loss of habitat from oil and gas development should be included on this list of impacts on Mexican Spotted Owls. The Preferred Alternative would open more spotted owl habitat to oil and gas leasing and would decrease the extent of protective stipulations in owl habitat. Page 4-242 says that most of the increased oil and gas development and reductions in special status stipulation designations would occur in the canyon habitat immediately adjacent to designated CH and in areas in which much suitable habitat for the spotted owl occurs. The BLM must consult with the Service on this proposal, which could easily constitute take or adverse modification of critical habitat. Even Alter native C includes a 23% reduction in protective measures (4-245).	The potential impact on Mexican Spotted Owls from habitat disturbances related to minerals and energy development are acknowledged in Sections 4.15.1.3, 4.15.2.3.1.2, 4.15.2.3.2.2, 4.15.2.3.3.2, and 4.15.2.3.4. As indicated in Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) of the PRMPR/FEIS under all alternatives the BLM would continue to work with the USFWS and others to ensure that plans and agreements regarding the Mexican spotted owl (and other species) are updated and implemented during the life of the RMP. In Section 2.4.13.4.2.2, the BLM, under all alternatives, commits to collaborating with the USFWS, DWR, and other partners to develop habitat management plans or conservation strategies for sensitive species.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS67 (JSS-24)	The ferruginous hawk is a threatened species. In 2003, FWS described several oil and gas EAs that it believed were in violation of the Diamond Mountain RMP's direction regarding ferruginous hawks and concluded that current management direction will lead to population declines and therefore may not meet responsibilities under Executive Order 13186. This RMP should have been an opportunity to the BLM to affirm its commitment to conserving ferruginous hawks in the Uinta Basin. Instead BLM is offering up even more habitat.	Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) of the PRMP/FEIS and Appendix K contain the management measures specific to the protection of ferruginous hawks and their habitat. The Utah BLM has adopted the BMPs for Raptors and Their Associated Habitats in Utah, IM UT 2006-096. Detailed guidelines for implementing waivers to stipulations are found in Appendix A of the PRMP/FEIS. None of the alternatives are in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (EO13186).	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SS68 (JSS-25)	FWS Raptor guidelines should be incorporated in all RMPs. Only Alternative C implements the Service's raptor guidelines. BLM has chosen a weaker, arbitrary standard for the preferred alternative. BLM should	The incorporation of FWS raptor guidelines is not a legal requirement for an RMP. The Utah BLM has adopted the BMPs for Raptors and Their Associated Habitats in Utah, IM UT 2006-096. Detailed	

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			simply use the Service's buffers rather than something they say is "comparable". Also, the BLM's guidelines are very vague about when waivers could be granted. Alternative B even waives buffers for occupied nests, which seems to be a clear violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. It is not reasonable to include illegal alternatives in the EIS. Alternative C is less restrictive than the no action alternative for many raptors.	guidelines for implementing waivers to stipulations are found in Appendix A of the PRMP/FEIS. None of the alternatives are in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act does not require buffers around occupied nests. It specifically stipulates that it is illegal to "…pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, attempt to take, capture or kill, possess, offer for sale, sell, offer to purchase, purchase, deliver for shipment, ship, cause to be shipped, deliver for transportation, transport, cause to be transported, carry, or cause to be carried by any means whatever, receive for shipment, transportation or carriage, or export, at any time, or in any manner, any migratory bird." None of these illegal actions are proposed in any of the alternatives.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	SW31 (JSW-2)	The soils and water resources goals have many positive aspects, including the explicit goal to reduce selenium loading, but the plan itself does not elucidate how this will be achieved.	As stated in the RMP, the BLM will work in collaboration with a variety of partners to develop specific plans for reducing selenium loading within the planning area. This collaboration is anticipated to be a long-term activity that will be refined over time and will take place subsequent to the implementation of the final RMP.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	TR37 (JTR-1)	Existing routes that have not been specifically designated for motorized use should be closed and rehabilitated. Consider closing routes that cross these (prairie dog) complexes. The BLM should ensure that off-road vehicle regulations are enforced and that fines serve as deterrent to noncompliance.	BLM enforces the regulations and issues penalties but can only do so when violations are observed in real time. Also see comment responses TR34 and TR36.	

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Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	VE16 (JVE-1)	The RMP has a goal of "Restore of rehabilitate up to 200,000 ac of sagebrush-steppe habitat over the life of the plan." But no map is provided in the RMP as to how to get there.	We presume the reference to the lack of a "map" in the comment relates to a road map or plan and not to a graphic figure. The alternatives in Table 2.1.23 (Vegetation Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS lay out vegetation treatments across alternatives and across resource programs. These various programs, when combined, represent the plan for how the BLM will achieve its sagebrush steppe management goal. The BLM will target sagebrush steppe restoration and rehabilitation when and where it will be the most effective. Identifying specific areas for treatment within the an RMP that will serve for 15-20 years would be inappropriate and would decrease the flexibility the BLM has in achieving its goal. Additionally, the BLM will need to work with other agency and land management partners in developing specific treatments in order to ensure that such efforts are not counteracted by actions on adjacent lands. See comment response VE4.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	VE17 (JVE-2)	BLM should develop a noxious weed management plan addressing both the prevention and treatment of infestations, for each ACEC. Noxious weeds should be controlled using methods that minimize surface disturbance and effects on non-target species. All surface disturbances should be avoided to prevent spread and establishment of noxious weeds.	See comment response VE4.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	VE18 (JVE-3)	The BLM is commended for attempting to incorporate drought measures into the RMP; however, measures should not be voluntary. We understand that the	The VFO is committed to following the Washington Office drought policy as it pertains to the VFO drought situation. The grazing regulations that are	

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			Washington Office of the BLM has issued a drought policy. The prolonged drought and sagebrush die off in the Vernal area should emphasize the need for drought prescriptions in the RMP.	found in 43 CFR 4110.3-2 (Decreasing permitted use) provide the authority to temporarily suspend grazing use due to drought. Even though the BLM has the authority to decrease permitted use without it being voluntary, the BLM will work with the permittees through coordination, consultation, and cooperation to promote voluntary reductions due to the drought.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	VE19 (JVE-4)	BLM must limit proliferation of noxious weeds by limiting surface disturbance. Page 3-112 and 3-113 acknowledge that noxious weeds are proliferating in the FO primarily in oil and gas fields and along roadsides, but there seems to be a disconnect between this recognition and the draft plans to open even more land up to surface disturbance and to remove existing protective stipulations from habitat for many special status species. Page 3-113 says cheatgrass infestation has increased and is now a major management concern. But page 4-6 says, "effective implementation of management common to all alternatives designed to minimize spread…would prevent this risk from being significant". We're not sure how that could be, when there is already a significant problem NOW. And RMP will only allow more opportunity for weeds to take hold.	See comment response VE4.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	VE20 (JVE-5)	Native plants that are unpalatable to livestock are not noxious weeds. Some of the undesirables are native plants, according to the table itself. It is inappropriate for the BLM to designate native species as undesirable, even if they are unpalatable to livestock.	The native species listed as undesirable in table are species that have long been identified as poisonous plants and control is an appropriate management option. The BLM may initiate control of these species in areas where livestock use is a primary use, the densities of these plants are greater than normal, and control does not negatively affect wildlife or special status species. Currently there are not any areas identified for this type of control.	

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Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	WF102 (JLR-3)	The RMP must mitigate the impacts of habitat fragmentation. The RMP concedes that many of the proposed activities will further fragment habitat. What is missing is an attempt to mitigate for this. Page 2-37 has a good list of goals for reducing habitat fragmentation from oil and gas development, but there is no indication that these will be attained. The key verb here is "encouraging" rather than requiring best management practices for reducing habitat fragmentation.	BLM makes every effort to achieve the goals listed in the RMP. In Table 2.1.26 (Wildlife and Fisheries Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Management Actions Common to all for Wildlife and Fisheries, it states: “Reduce habitat fragmentation by requiring oil and gas field development plans and encouraging such activities as well clustering, multiple drilling from a single pad, utilization of existing roads and pipelines, and other measures to minimize surface impacts.”	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	WF112 (JWF-2)	Plague monitoring through collection of fleas and testing of prairie dog carcasses should be conducted in areas with suspected prairie dog declines and in all black-footed ferret reintroduction areas. At present, dusting borrows with insecticides is advised in colonies where plague is known to be active. Because existing insecticides are not flea-specific, dusting burrows to limit the spread of plague should be seen as a temporary measure to be applied in areas without significant non-target species concerns.	Measures to address plague would be part of the specific management plan for the Coyote Basin ACEC and would be enacted in cooperation with ongoing research in the area.	
Center for Native Ecosystems	O-38	WF113 (JWF-3)	5 years of disturbance cannot be considered short-term impact to many wildlife and plant species. Time frame is arbitrary and much shorter periods of disturbance are capable of causing long-term nest or lek site abandonment. 5 years of physical disturbance can also make a rare plant site uninhabitable because of long-term changes to soil or because of the loss of viable seed.	Short-term impacts are typically defined as 5 years or less. In Section 4.1.1, the 5-year short-term impact assumption is used, with the note that "assumptions associated with a single issue (e.g., wildlife) are included within the alternative discussion for that issue". This means that, if warranted, other short-term analysis assumptions could be used that do not include the 5-year short-term assumption.	
Outdoor Industry Assoc.,	O-39	SD245 (ASD-1)	The BLM has proposed 10 miles of the White River for “scenic” designation. The White River is an island of generally unleased and undeveloped public land in a	See Response to Comment SD1-I-1.	

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National Outdoor Leadership School, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, The Wilderness Society, National Resources Defense Council, Outward Bound West, Colorado Plateau River guides, Living Rivers, Wasatch Mountain Club Dinosaur Expeditions, Grand Canyon Trust, Utah Rivers Council, River Runners Transport, Adrift Adventures, Uinta			constantly encroaching sea of oil and gas activity. Recent BLM oil and gas lease sales and industry proposals to drill many more gas wells, as well as motor vehicle routes, threaten this area.		

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Mountain Club, Desolation Canyon Outfitters, Inc., Wild Utah Project, Holiday Expeditions					
Outdoor Industry Assoc., National Outdoor Leadership School, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, The Wilderness Society, National Resources Defense Council, Outward Bound West, Colorado Plateau River guides, Living Rivers, Wasatch Mountain Club	O-39	SD246 (ASD-2)	…the Upper Desolation Canyon area is seeing heightened levels of oil and gas leasing and development. River runners beginning their trip at Sand Was are increasingly being confronted with the sights and sounds of oil and gas developments where river runners floating the Green River between Ouray and Sand Wash put-in. Proposed off road vehicle route designations could also significantly impact boaters experiences on this portion of the Green River.	See Response to Comment SD1-I-1.	

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Dinosaur Expeditions, Grand Canyon Trust, Utah Rivers Council, River Runners Transport, Adrift Adventures, Uinta Mountain Club, Desolation Canyon Outfitters, Inc., Wild Utah Project, Holiday Expeditions					
Outdoor Industry Assoc., National Outdoor Leadership School, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, The Wilderness Society,	O-39	SD247 (ASD-3)	Include no-surface occupancy stipulations for the proposed White River and Lower Green River ACECs or within 1 mile of river centerline, whichever is greater. For areas already leased for oil and gas development without NSO stipulations, the BLM should exercise the full extent of its management discretion to preserve the backcountry experience (reducing the sight and sound of development to the maximum extent feasible).	Under all alternatives, the Lower Green River corridor would be managed for NSO for line of sight up to ½ mile along both sides of the river from the trust land boundary at Ouray to the Carbon County Line. Under Alternatives A and B, the White River corridor from where the river enters T.10S, R24E, to where it leaves Section 18 of T.10S, R.23E would be managed as NSO for line of sight up to ½ mile along both sides of the river. Under Alternative B, the White River from the Utah State line to where the river leaves R.23E would be managed with timing and controlled surface use stipulations to comply with VRM Class II objectives. Under	

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National Resources Defense Council, Outward Bound West, Colorado Plateau River guides, Living Rivers, Wasatch Mountain Club Dinosaur Expeditions, Grand Canyon Trust, Utah Rivers Council, River Runners Transport, Adrift Adventures, Uinta Mountain Club, Desolation Canyon Outfitters, Inc., Wild Utah Project, Holiday Expeditions				Alternatives C, D and E, the White River from the Utah State line to the Indian Reservation boundary would be managed as NSO for line of sight up to ½ mile along both sides of the river. Please, see Appendix K for more information.	

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Outdoor Industry Assoc., National Outdoor Leadership School, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, The Wilderness Society, National Resources Defense Council, Outward Bound West, Colorado Plateau River guides, Living Rivers, Wasatch Mountain Club Dinosaur Expeditions, Grand Canyon Trust, Utah Rivers Council, River Runners	O-39	SD248 (ASD-4)	Prohibit all off-road vehicle use in the White River and (Upper) Desolation Canyon areas with BLM identified wilderness characteristics and BLM identified lands "which have a reasonable probability" of wilderness character.	Under all action alternatives, OHV use would be restricted to designated routes and open areas. Please, see Figures 21-28 for illustration of the proposed open, closed, and limited OHV areas relative to areas of special designations under each alternative.	

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Transport, Adrift Adventures, Uinta Mountain Club, Desolation Canyon Outfitters, Inc., Wild Utah Project, Holiday Expeditions					
Enduring Resources	O-40	CR28 (JCR-1)	The DEIS proposes to "pro-actively reduce hazardous fuels or mitigate the potential hazard around archaeological and cultural sites that are susceptible to destruction by fire and from prescribed fire activities." We are concerned with how the BLM will pro-actively reduce hazardous fuels around arch sites and in what way this will affect oil and gas development.	Oil and gas development will not be affected by this provision. The "hazardous fuels" referred to in the statement are vegetation and woody materials such as invasive plants that provide a ready fuel source for wildland fire. Pro-active reduction of these fuels would consist of vegetation treatments to reduce fuel loading.	
Enduring Resources	O-40	FM10 (JFM-1)	DEIS says: "BLM would coordinate appropriate management responses with affected parties…A variety of emergency or interim actions may be necessary to minimize land health degradations such as…limitations on energy field activities." We are concerned that "appropriate management responses" is extremely vague and would like a clearer picture of what responses might be involved.	Appropriate Management Response is purposely left vague, as each AMR would be determined by ongoing and site-specific conditions. There are a multitude of potential responses that could occur, but each AMR is driven by the current conditions and desired objectives. Based on past actions associated with drought, fire, or natural disasters, the limitations have been based upon drought and fire restrictions. The limitations on the oil and gas industry has been in the area of limiting welding operations, etc., as there were restrictions on open flames in place. If there were a wild fire, for example, in an area of existing wells	

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				and production facilities, the BLM would be asking operators to shut in their operations to minimize impacts from fire. So, the limitation would be associated with what type of “disaster” is occurring.	
Enduring Resources	O-40	FM11 (JFM-2)	DEIS says "Hazardous fuel reduction activities would be implemented." We would like clarification.	Hazardous fuels reduction refers to the reduction of fire fuels composed of plants and woody vegetation. As described in Table 2.1.5 (Fire Management) in the PRMP/FEIS, the techniques used to reduce or eliminate these fuels may include prescribed fire, chemical, or mechanical treatments.	
Enduring Resources	O-40	HZ3 (JHZ-1)	DEIS says "Dangerous sites, structures, roads or other facilities, e.g., abandoned mines would be stabilized or closed if it is determined that they are a public hazard."	We are unable to discern the nature of your concern from your comment.	
Enduring Resources	O-40	LR18 (JLR-1)	DEIS says" This RMP recognizes existing right of way corridors…and would designate additional corridors subject to physical barriers and sensitive resource values." What are "sensitive resource values"?	Sensitive resource values such things as T&E species, cultural and paleontological resources, sensitive soils, riparian areas, areas of high VRM classification, etc. Language has been added to Table 2.1.7 (Lands and Realty Management) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Transportation/Utility Corridors to read as follows: “Sensitive resource values would include, but are not limited to, threatened and endangered species habitat, cultural and paleontological resources, sensitive soils, riparian areas, areas possessing high scenic quality, and areas of critical environmental concern.”	X
Enduring Resources	O-40	PR27 (JPR-1)	The DEIS must be consistent with statutory and executive policies that promote oil and gas development:	43 CFR 1610.3-2 is entitled Consistency Requirements, which relates to consistency with other resource plans, not the National Energy	

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			Analysis used through the RMP EIS is not consistent with the National Energy Policy as required in 43 CFR 1610.3-2. To the extent consistent with applicable law, federal agencies are ordered to "expedite their review of permits or take other actions necessary to accelerate the completion of energy related projects (Exec Order 13212). It is the continuing policy of the Federal Government… to foster and encourage private enterprise in…the orderly and economic development of domestic mineral resources (30 USC 21a). Vernal RMP must be analyzed within the context of congressional and presidential energy policy as implemented by the BLM (IPAMS/PLA comments 4/14/2005) Vernal RMP must substantively and procedurally comply with the foregoing direction and policies that require the BLM to promote and facilitate the development of energy resources on public lands. (Robert Glenn, 124 IBLA 104, 108; 1992) and (Ellis Ferguson, 69 IBLA 353 n.2; 1983).	Policy. The commenter's items numbered 2-5 lack specificity and do not provide the BLM sufficient information to develop a reasoned respond. See comment response PR3.	
Enduring Resources	O-40	PR28 (JPR-2)	The BLM recognizes its policy to consider EPCA information in the planning process and states that EPCA data is incorporated into the DEIS and RFD, and that the data outlining existing leasing constraints is provided in the minerals section of the matrix. BLM explains that "careful review of this information shows many major inaccuracies of oil and gas stipulations"…but then summarily concludes that the stipulations generally reflect the minimum requirements necessary to protect the resource. How can this be?	BLM did review existing lease stipulations and made meaningful changes in developing the RMP. These changes are evident in a comparison of the action alternatives (A, B, and C) against the existing management situation (Alternative D).	
Enduring	O-40	SD177	NEPA and BLM policy require that the BLM make	Information on the evaluation and determination of	X

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Resources		(JPR-2) SD-Temp1	available for public comment the information upon which the decision to designate ACECs were reached, including the underlying analysis for the proposed and existing.	ACEC designations was provided in Appendix G of the Draft RMP, which was available for public review and comment. The information in this appendix has been expanded in the PRMP/FEIS. Additional opportunities for public input were provided during the scoping process as well as the public comment period for the Vernal Supplement to the DRMP and EIS. Section 4.21.2.9 and Table 4.21.2 discuss ACECs.	
Enduring Resources	O-40	SD257 (JSD-1)	"Manage WSAs as directed…in a manner that does not impair their suitability for designation as wilderness. Allow temporary uses that create no new surface disturbance nor involve permanent placement of structures." We find this analysis vague and did not find any supporting documents for this consideration.	Please refer to BLM Handbook H-8550-1 – Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review, Introduction, Management to the Non-Impairment Standard.	
Enduring Resources	O-40	SD258 (JSD-2)	Designate and manage areas as ACECs where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage…continue to manage previously recommended segments of the Upper and Lower Green rivers to protect their outstandingly remarkable values…." What are the "outstandingly remarkable values"…we would like to have more specifics here so that we can understand why/how BLM will handle this issue ahead of time.	See Responses to Comments SD27-G-22, SD19-G-22. See Appendices C and G for more information regarding the Upper and Lower Green River Wild and Scenic Rivers segments as well as the Green River ACECs.	
Enduring Resources	O-40	SD259 (JSD-3)	"This 1700-acre potential Lower Green River Expansion ACEC includes the current Lower Green River ACEC and is being proposed to include the eastern shoreline. Relevance and importance values are the same as the existing Lower Green River ACEC." (3-83) The "importance criteria" given in the draft RMP for the lower Green River Expansion ACEC states the relevant value is that it "has more than locally significant qualities which give it special worth and distinctiveness" (3-79). There is no documentation	See Appendix G for more information regarding the Lower Green River Expansion ACEC.	

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			in the draft RMP that verifies this statement. We would like further explanation of the "importance" criterion.		
Enduring Resources	O-40	SS43 (JSS-1)	Peregrine Falcon-protect and enhance habitat in Pariette Draw, along Green River, White River, Bitter creek and other drainages. Black footed Ferret- BLM would manage the black-footed ferret consistent with the 1999 Black-footed Ferret reintroduction Plan…. We did not find any data enclosed with the RMP to support the assertion that the area provides crucial habitat for these species. IPAMS/PLA memo dated 4/14 2005 states that all released ferrets are considered to be "experimental, non-essential populations" and are treated as "proposed" rather than endangered.	Data on crucial habitat for the Peregrine falcon was brought forward from the Diamond Mountain RMP. Data on crucial habitat for the Black-footed ferret is described in the references cited in the Diamond Mountain RMP, the 1999 Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction Plan Amendment, and the Cooperative Plan for the Reintroduction and Management of Black-footed Ferret in Coyote Basin, Uintah County, Utah .	
Enduring Resources	O-40	SW30 (JSW-1)	DEIS says "pipeline crossing…should be constructed to withstand 100-year floods to prevent breakage and subsequent accidental contamination of runoff during high flow events." The pipelines are already built to withstand floods and at what point do you stop over-engineering?	The use of pipelines that can withstand a 100-year flood is listed as a goal and not a stipulation or requirement. Further, the BLM makes every effort to accommodate multiple uses of public lands in balance with the potential environmental impacts from those uses. The BLM can allow uses with potential adverse environmental impacts so long as measures are taken to avoid, minimize, or mitigate those impacts. The BLM believes that establishing a goal that pipelines be able to withstand a 100-year flood event is a reasonable avoidance and minimization measure.	
Enduring Resources	O-40	WF112 (JWF-1)	"Reduce habitat fragmentation by requiring oil and gas development plans and encouraging activities like clustering, multiple drilling from a single pod, use existing roads/pipelines etc to minimize surface impacts." We as an operator are making every effort to minimize	See comment response WF102.	

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			surface impacts, and flexibility to meet demands as a consideration rather than a requirement would be appreciated. We also feel that economics play a key role in determining when we can drill multiple lateral wells from one location.		
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	AT72 (LAT-8)	We support Alternative C because it comes closest to balancing multiple uses including the conservation of significant cultural resources and landscapes with recreation and energy development. Alternative A fails to incorporate BLM's responsibilities under NHPA and Executive Order 13287.	Comment noted.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR12	The draft RMP fails to incorporate BLM's responsibilities under the NHPA into the RMP process, and to ensure that irreplaceable historic and cultural resources are fully considered in planning for proposed management decisions and objectives. The draft focuses heavily on accommodating oil and gas development, giving little consideration to the protection of cultural resources beyond what would be required by Section 106 of the NHPA later in time. Without such considerations, BLM has not met their obligation as stewards of cultural resources.	As part of its Section 110 responsibilities and in incorporating cultural resources into the planning process, the BLM has identified and proposed a number of ACECs within which cultural resource values are a key component. See Table 2.1.18 (Special Designations – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern) and Section 3.14 of the PRMP/FEIS for more information on these designations. Further, the BLM would implement the overall management decision to designate specific OHV routes rather than leaving the entire VPA open to OHV travel as it is currently. See Table 2.1.4 (Cultural Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS, for specific details on these OHV designations. The designation of these routes is prompted in large part by the desire to protect cultural resources. Additionally, a program for interpretive facilities at specific sites within the VPA would also be implemented under all alternatives. See Table 2.1.4 (Cultural Resources), for specific details on these interpretive facilities.	
National Trust for	O-41	CR13	The draft Vernal RMP/EIS is deficient in its analysis of environmental impacts with respect to designating	The analysis of direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that the broad management decisions	

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Historic Preservation			areas available for oil and gas leases, energy development, and OHV designations, and the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that these activities will have on cultural and historic resources.	related to oil and gas leasing, energy development, and OHV designations could have under each alternative is contained in Section 4.3 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR14	The RMP lacks analysis on how increased OHV designations and other forms of recreation will directly and indirectly impact cultural resources. The draft RMP makes no attempt to analyze the impacts to cultural resources outside of estimating the number of potentially impacted resources. Furthermore, there is no analysis regarding current impacts to cultural resources caused by OHV use.	Designation of specific OHV routes is expected to result in a reduction in overall impacts to cultural resources (and other resources) on a planning area-wide basis as compared to the current condition in which the entire planning area is open to OHV travel. The RMP is a programmatic document wherein broad management decisions, not project specific ones are made. As such, the preliminary identification of possible designated OHV routes is offered, but the specific feasibility and impacts of individual routes will be addressed in an OHV travel plan that will be prepared in conjunction with a NEPA document subsequent to the adoption of the final RMP.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR31 (LCR-2)	BLM needs more comprehensive management strategies and is currently falling short of its responsibilities under Section 110. BLM needs more continuing stewardship over the properties.	It is required under federal law that project effects on the physical condition and setting of a site be analyzed through the NHPA Section 106 process and the NEPA process before project implementation. Activity plans will be written to comply with Section 110 after the approval of the RMP for Special Management areas. These plans will be reviewed by the BLM, Division of State History, Tribes and others before implementation to assure the plan meets regulatory and social needs and requirements.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR32 (LCR-3)	The predictive model is flawed, it does not: capture the overall adverse effects on the integrity of context and setting on cultural resources and landscapes, address cumulative adverse effects of heavy development, and the BLM assumes that preservation can occur through	The predictive model used to analyze impacts on cultural resources was not designed to describe impacts to the larger cultural landscape, but rather to provide a means of assessing the relative potential impact of the range of alternatives. The	

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			the Section 106 process. Develop a new model that considers the areas already leased, lands to be leased, and known cultural resources to achieve a more holistic perspective. Consider cumulative impacts in the alternatives.	potential cumulative impact of land use management decisions on the overall cultural resources record of the Vernal Planning Area is discussed in Section 4.3.2.13 in the PRMP/FEIS. Adding information on areas already leased, to be leased, and known sites would not enhance or refine the model to make it more accurate or holistic. Areas that have been leased have not necessarily been developed, and as extensive acreage within the Vernal Planning Area (VPA) would be open to at least some form of minerals and energy development, livestock grazing, etc., the addition of such information would not result in a significant change from the current model, which considers the entire VPA. Additionally, the model was tested against data regarding known site locations. Incorporating known sites locations into the model beyond this measure would likely skew the predictive capabilities of the model as the vast majority of sites identified thus far within the VPA have been identified as a result of Section 106 undertakings in very specific portions of the VPA and, which does not represent a scientifically valid sampling strategy. In addition to implementing the Section 106 process to address known potential impacts on individual sites at the project level, the RMP provides for the proactive management of cultural resources through such actions as the designation of ACECs, which include cultural values, the nomination of worthy sites, districts, landscapes, and traditional cultural properties to the National Register, the public interpretation of appropriate cultural resources.	

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				NEPA also guides the process by which the effects of a project are measured, to evaluate the potential of projects to have negative effects on a resource. Predictive models are designed to measure many variables. Projects would condition the model used to predict some factor regarding the archaeology of the Area of Potential Effect (APE). Thus, a dynamic approach to land use planning must be utilized to ensure a proper balance of competing needs. The database is constantly evolving as more data are acquired through project inventories. These data are used in the NEPA process.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR33 (LCR-4)	The RMP should ensure Executive Order 13287 (Preserve America) is integrated to establish a proactive stewardship agenda.	The BLM has integrated the spirit of the Preserve America executive order and the mandates of Section 110 of the NHPA through such measures as the proposed adoption of ACECs that would, in large measure, be established to provide protection to cultural values via special management provisions, through the proposed limiting of OHV travel to designated routes as a measure of decreasing impacts to cultural resources throughout the Vernal Planning Area. Other protection measures include the proposed adoption of Management Common to All goals that include nomination of sites, districts, landscapes, and traditional cultural properties to the National Register of Historic Places, reducing vegetation fuels loading around cultural sites to reduce the likelihood of impacts from wildfire, and identifying priority areas for inventories for cultural resources in the absence of a federal undertaking.	
National Trust for	O-41	CR34 (LCR-5)	The RMP should provide an appropriate timeline for Section 106 compliance, and should not defer	Standard BLM practice, which would continue under all alternatives in the RMP/EIS, calls for a three-	

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Historic Preservation			compliance until the APD is submitted by adding stipulations to a lease. An alternative to Section 106 is a phased process, which will defer the final identification and evaluation of adverse effects until the nature, scope, and effect of an undertaking is defined. An MOA or PA must be in place. However, not all impacts can be mitigated through Section 106 and should not be deferred for site-specific development. Because it is not only reasonably possible to analyze the environmental impacts of the proposed energy development on cultural resources at the present time, but also likely that such impacts will occur, BLM should be required to analyze those impacts in the EIS and provide such information to the public.	pronged approach to meeting its Section 106 and other legislative responsibilities. First, the BLM uses existing cultural resources data to assist in the identification of broad management decisions in the RMP such as land use allocations, special designations, etc. The Utah State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Native American Tribes, and other interested parties are consulted as part of the RMP preparation process. Second, the BLM requires identification and evaluation of cultural resources at the time sufficient specific details of an undertaking are known to identify potential impacts to cultural resources in the area of potential effects. This may occur during or prior to the submittal of an APD. Third, the BLM consults with SHPO and other interested parties regarding the anticipated impacts of the undertaking in order to identify appropriate avoidance or mitigation measures, which may include but are not limited to lease stipulations.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR35 (LCR-6)	We oppose BLM designating limited OHV travel areas without conducting Section 106 and mitigating effects. Provide details on new motorized trails and the potential for adverse effects. OHV activity could have major adverse impacts to resources in some areas. BLM should provide greater detail on the limited OHV routes through ACECs and remove those that would cause irreparable harm to resources.	Routes being designated through the RMP are existing routes where disturbance has already occurred. No new routes are being proposed for construction. Impact assessments for the routes will be carried out as part of the implementation plan that will be prepared subsequent to the RMP.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR36 (LCR-7)	The RMP does not provide adequate baseline data, information and a description about current cultural and historic resource conditions, a requirement of NEPA. More inventory is needed to identify eligible sites and determine appropriate management	Any recitation of individual sites known to be in the area would only be partial and would be outdated immediately upon issuance of the RMP. The current cultural resources condition changes on a daily basis as sites are identified and evaluated as a result of inventories and assessments. The BLM is required to describe the current condition at the time of the RMP using the best available data and	

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				presenting it in a manner that affords the public an opportunity to understand the nature of the cultural resource environment within the planning area. Section 3.3 of the PRMP/FEIS discusses the nature of the cultural record in the area, the relative density of cultural resources across the landscape as known from existing data, and the status of NRHP-listed sites. See also the comment response CR7 regarding inventory of cultural resource sites. The volume of the RMP precludes a lengthy discussion of the existing site database held by the BLM and other agencies. This limitation prevents highly detailed discussions. There are BLM staff and references which could address public concerns about detail and content.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR37 (LCR-8)	The analysis for direct and indirect impacts to cultural resources is inadequate. The RMP needs additional analysis of direct and indirect impacts in the present and future. Impacts should be considered for surface and buried deposits.	The BLM has deemed the analysis sufficient for the needs and requirements of a programmatic level RMP. Additional analysis will be conducted during project-level NEPA and Section 106 processes, when information about the nature and location of specific undertakings and their potential impacts are known. Review of these documents by other authorities also ensures that effects are adequately researched prior to decision-making.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR38 (LCR-9)	BLM must analyze mitigation measures in detail and explain how effective the measures would be. The RMP does not provide information about mitigation measures in addressing adverse effects. These must be specifically discussed in the oil and gas section. The RMP process is a good time to alter ‘conditions of	Analyzing mitigation measures in detail and discussing the effectiveness of said measures as suggested presupposes the precise nature of the mitigation measure employed as well as the precise nature of the resource involved. The nature of the mitigation measure employed is tailored through the	

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			approval'	Section 106 and other consensus processes to the specific nature of the resource involved and is designed to be the most effective measure that is feasible and prudent relative to the nature of the impact. Further, mitigation measures can include a wide variety of actions, which are agreed upon through the consensus process. As such, the RMP cannot analyze all possible mitigation measures and their effectiveness.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR39 (LCR-10)	Baseline data on the current cultural resources condition are needed to accurately balance multiple land use. This information is not sufficiently provided in the RMP. This lack of adequately establishing the baseline has caused the BLM to fail in balancing all multiple uses and giving equal consideration to non-renewable cultural and natural resources relative to minerals and energy development; cultural resources are under-represented in the consideration of balancing land uses.	The BLM has considered cultural resources in establishing management decisions such as special designations, minerals and energy lease stipulations, and overall management goals and objectives that adhere to the mandates of federal law and BLM policy, as demonstrated throughout the RMP. Provisions have been made for nominating worthy sites, districts, landscapes, and traditional cultural properties to the National Register of Historic Places and for the avoidance of impacts to National Register-eligible sites by other land use activities. Baseline data for cultural resources are available to BLM managers in the VFO, provided by the appropriate staff. Conditions are monitored by professionals in the field and interested public. Site condition is also provided to the BLM through inventories conducted for projects and used in the NEPA process.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR40 (LCR-11)	Many of the designated river systems have outstanding, irreplaceable cultural and historic resources along their banks, and we strongly recommend that the BLM designate all 39 river segments as eligible for the NWSRS.	Comment noted.	

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National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	CR41 (LCR-12)	We suggest that BLM provide for adaptive management schemes that allow BLM to withdraw areas from approved destructive uses when they are identified as having cultural resources.	Standard BLM policy, regardless of the provisions of an RMP, allows for emergency closures and other adaptive management actions when unanticipated and unacceptable levels of impacts to resources are identified.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	SD333 (LSD-8)	ACECs should not be strictly subject to multiple use principles; they need greater protection and management than other areas. They are a priority and should not be discretionary. Eligible sites are located in Bitter Creek, Main Canyon, White River, and Nine Mile Canyon.	See Response to Comment SD50-G-25.	
National Trust for Historic Preservation	O-41	SD46	The BLM provides very little evidence for all of the alternatives about where and how mineral development will occur within ACECs. Furthermore, the draft RMP does not analyze in detail the impacts stemming from management decisions made, nor is there a discussion about how to mitigate these impacts. In terms of ACECs, such a lack of discussion, or moreover effort, to protect the valuable resources identified for the ACECs and prevent against irreparable harm violates the strict requirement of FLPMA. See 43 U.S.C. §§ 1702(a), 1712(c)(3).	Leasing stipulations for minerals development in ACECs are provided in Table 2.1 (Special Designations – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)) and illustrated on Figures 11-18 and 22-24. The exact locations where such development may occur are not known at this time. Additional NEPA analysis and disclosure will be conducted at the project-level stage, when site specific information is known. Chapter 4 of the PRMP/FEIS outlines the analysis of potential impacts from each resource program's management decisions. Also, see Response to Comment SD27-G-22.	
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	CR27 (CR-E) (LCR-1)	On page 4-44, we concur with the statement that, "…. although there is always potential for inadvertent discovery, historically, the ability to identify sites during the planning phase, and standard development stipulations that enable and promote site avoidance, has resulted in a relatively low rate of sites requiring mitigation and a very low rate of negative impacts to	Comment noted.	

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			sites. According to the Vernal field office archaeologist, approximately 1% of the total cultural resource sites involved in oil and gas development has been negatively impacted by development."		
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	CR30	The DEIS states that no alternative benefits cultural resources. While the underlying assumption of this statement is that cultural resources are better off left alone, the section should also acknowledge that proper identification of cultural resource sites, data collection at those sites, and recording of sites that cannot be avoided, are all activities that would contribute to the body of scientific knowledge and understanding of the cultures that once occupied the vernal planning area.	Section 4.3.2.13 in the PRMP/FEIS has added the following additional language: "It should be noted, however, that both the identification of sites and the mitigation of impacts through data recovery conducted in association with the Section 106 process for land uses have the positive impact of increasing the body of knowledge about past human behaviors and occupations in the Vernal Planning Area."	X
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	EJ1 (JEJ-1)	BLM fails to disclose how the restrictions to oil and gas development, from overlapping proposed management decisions may combine to increase the consumer cost of gas, which may be disproportionably borne by low-income populations.	Should increased consumer costs for oil and gas products result from management decisions included in the RMP, the costs would be borne equally by all consumers, and not just low-income populations. As such, no analysis of such impacts is warranted in terms of environmental justice.	
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	GC70 (GC-AA) (J-PR6)	BLM asserted that it would "make all possible attempts" to make the management prescriptions as "complimentary as possible" to local land use plans. (DEIS 1-10). This statement does not conform to FLPMA which requires BLM to "assure" that its land use plans are consistent with state and local plans to the extent they conform to federal law. (43 U.S.C. §1712(c) (9)). The affected counties have identified numerous inconsistencies with local land use plans, and BLM must address and justify any divergence.	See comment response GC20.	
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	PR30 (JPR-5)	The fact that the Vernal plan revision was classified as a time-sensitive plan (TSP) to "timely address" energy resources under EPCA does not allow BLM to merely	Comment noted.	

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			reference the data on leasing constraints without further evaluation as required by law. While TSP's are indeed to streamline the process, they must still be legally sustainable and all required planning and NEPA steps must be followed. BLM has acknowledged that EPCA policy applied to the land revision and asserted compliance.		
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SD302 (JSD-45)	The RMP proposes 3 new ACEC designations and expansion of 2 existing ACECs under the preferred alternative. NEPA and BLM policy require that BLM make available for public comment the information upon which the decisions to designate ACECs were reached, including the underlying analysis for the proposed and existing ACECs. The Draft RMP does little to disclose to the public how and on what info the proposed ACEC determinations were reached. The ACECs were nominated by non-governmental organizations, and there is a lack of disclosure about these submissions and how these procedures complied with existing BLM policy. Existing ACECs are subject to reconsideration when the RMP is revised. There is no information about the need to continue existing ACECs in the RMP. Appendix G, page 4, just contains a presumptive statement that these areas will be carried forward, without specifying why they should be carried forward and what information was used in making that decision. The RMP also fails to explain why other management prescriptions are inadequate.	See Responses to Comments SD55-G-25, SD301-O-44. BLM Manual 1613 .21 C states: "Normally, the relevance and importance of resource or hazards associated with an existing ACEC are reevaluated only when new information or changed circumstances or the result of monitoring establish the need."	
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SD303 (JSD-45)	The proposed ACEC designation of Coyote Basin fails to meet regulatory criteria of importance and relevance. No data is provided to verify that this area contains "critical" white-tailed prairie dog habitat, and no mention is made that the FWS denied white-tailed prairie dog listing because they were found to be in abundance and in no threat of extinction. Page 3-80	See Response to Comment SD263-O-034.	

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			states that this ACEC would provide crucial habitat for other species as well, though no data are provided to support this assertion. The black-footed ferret reintroduction program includes monitoring by FWS, BLM, and DWR in this area; therefore adequate protections are already in place, and overlapping restrictions are not necessary. Also, the FWS requires black-footed ferret surveys be conducted prior to construction/drilling in prairie dog colonies, provided that a minimum of 200 acres of colonies with a minimum density of 8 burrows/acre are present. It is not indicated in the draft RMP whether these purportedly critical areas meet the FWS criteria. This is information that must be included in the RMP.		
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SD304 (JSD-46)	The proposed ACEC designation of Nine Mile Canyon fails to meet regulatory criteria of importance and relevance. There is no documentation in Chapters 3 or 4, or in Appendix G that verifies that this area has "substantial significance due to qualities that make them fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable exemplary and unique". Appendix G states that the significance of these importance resources has been recognized (no citation given). Figures 22 and 23 indicate that under Alternative A, this area is being restricted from development more than under Alternatives B and D, with little explanation why this occurring. There is no analysis demonstrating that BLM adhered to its ACEC policy manuals in developing potential ACECs. There are existing laws and management prescriptions in place here [to protect the identified values], and ACEC designation is inappropriate.	See Responses to Comments SD50-G-25, SD295-O-44. Information gathered from comments provided during the 60-day comment period that started December 13, 2005, was considered with the BLM Interdisciplinary (ID) Team. As part of its consideration, the ID team considered "substantial significance due to qualities that make them fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable exemplary and unique" for all ACECs. See Response to Comment SD8-G-9 for range of alternatives discussion.	
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SD305 (JSD-47)	The proposed Lower Green River ACEC Expansion fails to meet regulatory criteria of importance and relevance. There is no documentation in Chapters 3 or 4, or in Appendix G, that verifies that this area has	See Responses to Comments SD14-G-13,SD27-G-22.	X

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<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>"substantial significance due to qualities that make them fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable exemplary and unique". Appendix G states that the significance of these importance resources has been recognized (no citation given). Without such supporting documentation, this area should be eliminated from consideration as an ACEC. Figure 22 shows many areas of overlap in current and proposed ACECs. This is inconsistent with the text in the RMP, since the stated goal is not to re-propose or layer additional restriction onto the existing ACEC areas within the planning area.</td><td>Additional information has been added to Appendix G and Chapters 3 and 4 to clarify the proposed Lower Green River Expansion ACEC.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Utah Petroleum Association</td><td>O-42</td><td>SD306
(JSD-48)</td><td>The RMP should include a table that clearly identifies the stipulations for each proposed ACEC under all the alternatives. The table should approximate the following:
<table><tr><td></td><td>Standard</td><td>T&CSU</td><td>NSO</td><td>closed</td></tr><tr><td>ACEC 1</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>ACEC 2</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>etc</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table></td><td>This information has been added to the Final EIS.</td><td>X</td></tr>
<tr><td>Utah Petroleum Association</td><td>O-42</td><td>SD307
(JSD-49)</td><td>The RMP does not contain any discussion on the effects of designation of new ACECs on mineral leasing and development. Since the impacts of additional stipulations for ACECs would be exceptionally restrictive, a discussion of the impacts to mineral development from designation of new ACECs</td><td>Chapter 4 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to clarify the effects of ACEC designation of mineral leasing and development.</td><td></td></tr>
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			must be included in Chapter 4.		
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SD308 (JSD-50a)	Re: Non-WSA Lands With Or Likely To Have Wilderness Character. DEIS does not adequately analyze the extent to which proposed management for areas within these lands was tailored to preserve alleged wilderness values identified in the 1999 wilderness inventory and the interdisciplinary team evaluation. The only clear correlation between wilderness characteristics and preferred management is the Browns Park SRMA extension, which is to be managed for primitive recreation values. A separate analysis is the only means for determining whether wilderness characteristics were considered in a manner commensurate with other resource information, as required by FLPMA's multiple use principles. The issue is significant given that the vernal plan revision was originally intended to determine whether the non-WSA lands found to possess wilderness character would be managed as WSA under the IMP. In fact, before the settlement agreement, several of the large areas of undisturbed wildlife were also being analyzed for "wilderness designation potential" through special designations.	See Response to Comment SD244-O-28, O-29.	
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SD309 (JSD-50b)	Appendix K states that the Bitter Creek ACEC is 71,000 acres. Page 3-81 says it is 68,834 acres. Please correct this contradiction.	The Proposed RMP/Final EIS has been revised to correct acreage amounts or rationale provided for the differences.	X
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SO45 (SO-P) (JSO-3)	Tables 3.12.3 and 3.12.7 in Chapter 3 should indicate that the “Mining” category includes oil and gas employment.	Tables 3.12.3 and 3.12.7 in the PRMP/FEIS have been revised to indicate that the “mining” category includes oil and gas employment.	X
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SO47 (SO-R) (JSO-4)	The draft RMP/EIS fails to effectively address the full realm of positive economic benefits associated with current and future oil and gas activities. While Section 4.12 provides a brief comparison of wells to be drilled,	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten. The BLM believes this revision represents the importance of this industry to the Vernal planning area.	X

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			industry jobs that would be created, industry sales, and federal royalties under each alternative, what appears to have been excluded is the highly significant state and local revenue generated due to a variety of taxes paid.		
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SO48 (SO-S) (JSO-5)	The socioeconomic analysis contained in Section 4.12 of the draft Vernal RMP/EIS does not adequately describe the long-term incremental and cumulative differences in public sector revenues of the four alternatives. Specifically, the section fails to discuss the property tax revenues that each alternative would generate and the various community facilities and services that this significant source of revenue funds for residents in the Vernal planning area. As an example, according to the Uintah County Treasurer's office, fully 57.6% of that county's 2004 property tax revenue was derived from the oil and gas and mining industries. Accordingly, management decisions that influence the level of oil and gas activity have direct and significant impacts on local government fiscal conditions in the VPA and indirect impacts on the quality of life of Vernal planning area residents. These impacts must be disclosed in the draft RMP/EIS.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten and discusses the fiscal impacts to local government of the alternative decisions affecting the oil and gas industry in the Vernal planning area.	X
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SO49 (SO-T) (J-SO7)	The Draft RMP/EIS does not address Utah severance taxes. Severance taxes on natural gas are assessed on a sliding scale, 3% on the first $1.50/Mcf, and 5% percent thereafter. The draft RMP/EIS does not estimate the differences in severance taxes for each alternative. Given that oil and gas production from the Vernal planning area was a substantial portion of the state's total, it is important to understand the implications of each alternative for State of Utah severance tax revenues.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten and discusses the fiscal impacts to local government (including severance taxes) of the alternative decisions affecting the oil and gas industry in the Vernal planning area.	X
Utah	O-42	SO50	The absence of a more complete fiscal assessment will	Section 4.12 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to	X

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Petroleum Association		(SO-U) (J-SO8)	impede the ability of the public, local governments, and BLM decision-makers to assess the effects of each alternative on local government revenues and on their ability to provide public services, which directly affect the quality of life of Vernal planning area residents. Moreover, the limited scope fiscal analysis in the Draft RMP/EIS does not fulfill the BLM's charge to assess the degree of local dependence on resources from public lands, or fulfill the agency's obligations outlined in Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-H) or Instruction Memorandum No. 2002-167.	expand the discussion of the fiscal impacts to state and local governments. The BLM will review the Utah State University survey of rural counties conducted by the State of Utah. The BLM has received preliminary data from this study received after completion of the DEIS. The BLM has incorporated findings in the PRMP/FEIS as appropriate.	
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SO51 (SO-V) (J-SO9)	The Draft RMP/EIS assumes development costs of $600,000 per well. This figure is dated and does not account for other types of development taking place in the Vernal planning area. The deeper formations being developed cost more than the figure used above and the analysis should reflect this fact. This number should be revised to ensure that any economic analysis accounts for the activities in the planning area. Regardless of this oversight, the impact analysis does not address the extent these expenditures would occur in the local economy, nor do they address how the economy would be impacted both locally and nationally. Indirect employment as a result of industry expenditures and the additional tax revenue this spending activity would generate are important impacts the Draft RMP/EIS should disclose. A study was prepared that estimated that eighty-one percent (81%) of the expenditures for development benefited the local economy. On that assumption, the numbers should be reworked to reflect this significant detail.	Section 4.12.3.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been extensively rewritten. The PRMP/FEIS incorporates recent data provided by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics and the State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining. This data has been used in the recent (November, 2007) study commissioned by the State of Utah: The Structure and Economic Impact of Utah's Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Industry Phase I - The Uinta Basin.	X
Utah Petroleum	O-42	SO53 (SO-X)	In paragraph 5, of Section 4.12.2.2, there is a statement that, "increasing jobs (related to mineral	According to data provided by the State of Utah's Utah Data Center, the population increases for the	

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Association		(JSO-11)	development) would also increase population in the region ... and this would increase the need for social services and infrastructure." Yet, under Section 4.12.2.3 — Recreation, the projected increase in tourism and recreation-related employment is not expected to have similar impacts of increased population and demand for social services and infrastructure. We contend that growth in any and all economic activities and employment sectors would generate increased population and demand for services. As the DEIS is currently written, it unfairly singles out the minerals industry as the sole source of these presumably negative impacts. Further, as stated above, there are studies that indicate that 81% of expenditures on well development. Thus, the positive impacts of job creation and "increase[d] overall prosperity in the region" could be a more significant benefit to the planning area because, as BLM correctly notes, "wages in th[e] [energy] sector. . . are typically higher than service and government related jobs."	Uintah Basin was13.1% from 2000-2007. This figure is well below the State of Utah total of 20.2%, indicating that population change has not been very high. It is possible, however, that the components of population change (age, gender, etc) may be changing, but the BLM lacks data to assess this possibility.	
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SO54 (SO-Y) (J-SO12)	The draft RMP/EIS states that the rationale for decreasing mineral development is to increase recreation and OHV opportunities in the Vernal Planning Area. According to the information presented in Table 4.12.1, the economic value of oil and gas sales in the Vernal planning area is currently $189.53 million and $248.68 million, respectively. Royalties are currently more than $8.6 million annually. According to the draft RMP/EIS recreation currently provides a total tax benefit at approximately $1.6 million. The revenues from royalties, alone, are more than five times the tax benefits from recreation. Under Alternative D (existing conditions) the total	The jobs created per well has been revised in the FEIS. Based on date form the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the State of Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining, it is more reasonable to project an increase approximating 3.74 new jobs per well drilled than the approximately 14 suggested in the UEO study, which was for only one well. The impact analysis in Chapter 4 will be rewritten to reflect this lower estimate. The FEIS will continue to reflect the high economic value provided by minerals activities in the Uintah Basin. See also comment responses SO15 and SO37.	X

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			number of jobs, based on the average number of employees per well, is estimated to be 215,260 over the next 20 years, while there are 1,578 jobs attributable to recreation. We question the rationale for increasing recreational opportunities at the expense of oil and gas development, which would decrease the revenues to the state, counties, and Tribes, as well as decrease the supply of oil and gas to the public. In addition, a decrease in future oil and gas development is contrary to the President's Energy Policy.		
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SO59 (JSO-6)	Oil and gas-related sales and use taxes are significant. The oil and gas industry makes significant contributions to sales and use tax revenues in their purchases of substantial quantities of goods and services. Also oil and gas industry workers spend their earnings in local communities, thereby also adding to the sales tax revenue. The draft RMP does not estimate this contribution or project the impacts of each alternative on sales and use tax revenues.	The sales tax information will be included in the PRMP/FEIS based on information the Counties have provided. In Section 4.12.3.2, contributions from industry workers are discussed.	X
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SO60 (JSO-10)	Statements to the effect that areas open to mineral exploration would have an adverse impact on the recreation and tourism industries and that recreational experience would be degraded are incorrect. In much of the VPA, mineral development would take place in remote areas that are not popular for recreation or visually sensitive. Also mineral development and recreation generally take place in separate areas and co-exist quite successfully. Despite increases in mineral development [in the past], tourism has increased. This directly contradicts baseless statement that mineral development has hurt the tourist economy.	See comment responses SO15, SO37, and SO52.	
Utah Petroleum Association	O-42	SS37 (SS-K) JME-36	The DEIS states that "one of the main factors in the listing of the Colorado River fishes was the cumulative effect of water depletion within the Colorado River	The PRMP/FEIS does not imply that oil and gas development is a "major" factor in water depletion. Section 4.15.1.3, 2nd paragraph states that:	

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			system" and implies that the requirement of water for oil and gas development is a major factor in water depletion in the Colorado River System. We recommend that BLM limit its consideration to verifiable information. Streamflow regulation and habitat modification associated with water regulation by dams, such as the Flaming Gorge Dam, are identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the primary threat to the endangered Colorado River fish. Since 1950, annual peak flows in occupied razorback sucker habitat upstream of Westwater Canyon have decreased by 29-38%. Flows of the Green River at Jensen, Utah, downstream of one of the principal spawning areas of razorback sucker have decreased by 13-15% during spring and increased from 10-140% from summer to winter, due to regulation by the Flaming Gorge Dam (USFWS 2002. Razorback sucker (Xyrauchen texanus) Recovery Goals: Amendment and Supplement to the Razorback Sucker Recovery Plan. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mountain-Prairie Region (6) Denver, Colorado). The RMP must clarify that oil and gas development is not the major cause of water depletion of the Green River within the Vernal planning area. The Flaming Gorge Dam and other water-control structures are the main cause of water depletion in the Upper and Lower Colorado River System.	"New depletions from these rivers or changes in the amount of water returned to the rivers would constitute an additional impact on the Colorado River fishes."	
Ranges West	O-43	LG133 (ALG-26)	On page 2-75 (Wildlife) why is BLM even dealing with the issue of bear-baiting permits? This is a UDWR issue or prerogative.	Table 2.1.26 (Wildlife and Fisheries Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Mountain Lion and Black Bear states:	

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				"Placement of bear bait on public land would require a permit." Any bear bait permit would be issued though the UDWR.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG138 (ALG-5)	Note the proposed failure to carry on the grazing permit AUMs that were suspended after 1995 (Range Reform Regs). Need to check the US Supreme Court decision in PLC vs Babbitt (Bremmer case). I question BLM's authority to drop suspended AUMs from the permit.	The requirement to hold decreased AUMs in suspended use was dropped in the 1995 changes to the grazing regulations. This was not challenged in PLC v. Babbitt (No. 95-CV-165-B) and as a result was never addressed in the subsequent US Supreme Court decision. The preamble to the Final Rules on February 22, 1995, explain that the "Department does not believe that it serves the best interests of the rangeland or the operator to continue to carry suspended numbers on a permit". Since the changes to the regulations in 1995 there is no regulation providing for placing reductions of permitted use in suspension. At this time, it would not be appropriate to carry reduced AUMs as suspended use. If changes to the regulations once again provide for suspended AUMs then this LUP would be maintained to be in accordance with the new grazing regulations.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG139 (ALG-6)	This paragraph should also include a statement like this: "BLM will, when feasible, conduct vegetation management practices to maintain the productivity and desired plant community where woody plant successional processes have adversely impacted watershed values or livestock and wildlife habitat."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect.	

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				The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS. This issue is addressed under the Utah Standards for Rangeland Health & Guidelines for Grazing Management.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG140 (ALG-7)	Both sets of numbered items (1,2,3) seem appropriate. Item 1 (1 set of numbered items) is very important. The next paragraph on voluntary relinquishment of a grazing permit probably raises legal questions as to who gets the AUMs.	See comment response LG4.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG141 (ALG-8)	The 3rd paragraph from the page bottom is troublesome precedent. Grazing in Browns Park along the river has been historic tradition and culture since 1849 when a band of Cherokee Indians first wintered cattle in the Park.	As the commenter does not specifically identify what it is about the paragraph that sets a "troublesome precedent," the BLM is unable to respond.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG142 (ALG-9)	The 2nd paragraph from page bottom: Vermillion Ranch has a grazing plan with the Vernal District and UDWR that provides for periodic TNR use of Red Creek Flat.	Comment noted.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG143 (ALG-10)	Last paragraph: Is this relinquishment of the TNC and RMEF permits and the reallocation of 8264 AUMs legal? Both of these permits are in common use allotments with other cattle permittees.	See comment response LG4.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG144 (ALG-11)	Need a more appropriate goal and objective. Suggest “To promote the stability of the public land grazing industry by maintaining, through management practices, the historic livestock forage allocations consistent with sustainable resource constrains and	Comment noted.	

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			multiple use values".		
Ranges West	O-43	LG145 (ALG-12)	It is irrational to make compliance with rangeland health standards a prerequisite to a change in season of use. In fact, a change in season of use frequently is necessary to achieve standard compliance.	.See comment response LG87.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG146 (ALG-13)	Permittee-requested changes in season of use should not require outside funding to pay BLM to do the assessment. BLM is saying that, if a permittee needs to change grazing season, then that permittee must pay the BLM to consider the request.	If a permittee requests that an environmental assessment (EA) be completed, there are two options that need to be considered. The first option is to have the BLM to do the NEPA work. In such a case, when the BLM could work on the EA would be based on management decisions and work load priorities. The second option is to have the permittee to have a 3rd party contractor do the NEPA work for them and at the permittee's own expense. The permittee is not required to choose the second option, but must decide if it is in their best interest to do so.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG147 (ALG-14)	BLM is proposing to require health certificate and proof of vaccinations for all permittee horses used in grazing management on allotments within HMAs. There is no precedent for this.	Comment noted.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG148 (ALG-15)	The BLM is proposing to blackmail permittees who need to change class of livestock by requiring them to pay entirely for any needed fencing.	The BLM is merely stating the policies agreed upon with the Grazing Advisory Board.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG149 (ALG-16)	What is the definition of the terms phenology, billed use, adjudicated and permitted as used in this table? These terms are used again on page 2-86, Table 2.5, and 4-166 to specify available livestock AUMs. There apparently is no explanation in this draft RMP (that I could find) to discuss these so-called "systems" for allocating livestock forage.	The terms are used in Table 2.3 of the Draft RMP as simple headings referring to the basis, by alternative, for the specific management actions related to livestock and grazing seasons of use that are outlined in the table. "Phenology" refers to the management of livestock grazing based upon the physiological requirements of forage/vegetation. "Billed Use" refers to management based upon how the permittees are actually billed, regardless of phenology. "Adjudicated" refers to management of	X

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				livestock grazing based upon the 1960s adjudication of seasons of use. "Permitted" refers to the management of livestock grazing seasons of use as outlined under the current permits. Clarification of these terms has been added as a footnote to Table 21.8 (Livestock and Grazing Management) in the PRMP/FEIS.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG150 (ALG-17)	All Alternatives state that livestock grazing "would be allowed in Area 1 under the discretion of the VFO". Grazing is not at the discretion of a BLM field office but is regulated by the CFRs, the grazing permit and a grazing plan.	See comment response LG88.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG151 (ALG-18)	Season of use is specified as to exact dates. This does not allow sufficient flexibility to accommodate yearly vagaries of weather and plant phenology or variations of elevation, topography or aspect within the identified areas.	The season of uses is based on phenology, which is based off of weather and plant phenology.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG152 (ALG-19)	Are future range improvement projects limited to what is listed in this RMP? Much too specific for an RMP and decidedly limits future management options. Potentially very troublesome (case in point is the Owyhee RMP in Idaho).	See comment response LG47.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG153 (ALG-20)	Browns Park to be managed for "enhancement of resources and activities….cultural and historic interpretation". Livestock grazing IS the oldest cultural and historic activity in Browns Park. Documented livestock grazing started in 1849 when a band of Cherokee Indians wintered their cattle and horses in the Park. Yet, this RMP proposes to severely limit and/or retire livestock grazing in the Park.	See comment response LG117.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG154 (ALG-21)	Browns Park south of the river to be managed as VRM1 under alternative A (preferred). This is inappropriately restrictive for Browns Park (except those portions along the river in the narrow rock	Map 29 shows the correct VRM classifications. It is not in conflict with Alternative A, Table 2.1.13 (Recreation Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS.	

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			canyons). This statement also does not agree with the VRM map for Alternative A Figure 29. (Also see page 2-56).		
Ranges West	O-43	LG155 (ALG-22)	This section specifies riparian grazing use limits and residual stubble heights. The RMP should not specify grazing management prescriptions but rather should set outcome goals and provide adaptive management approaches to achieve the goals.	Broad goals for riparian resource management under all alternatives can be found in Table 2.1.16 (Riparian Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS; however, the PRMP must also include concrete measures for achieving those goals as considered at a landscape/programmatic level.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG156 (ALG-23)	The riparian grazing use standards (4" stubble or 30% utilization on key species or 6" stubble or 20% utilization) as stated here on page 2-53, again on page 2-86 and 2-93 DO NOT agree with the riparian standards stated on page 4-238, 4.15.2.2.1 Alternative A (also see line 2 page 4-239).	Table 2.1.16 (Riparian Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS outlines the alternatives considered in the PRMP/FEIS. Pages 2-86 and 2-93 of the DEIS are part of Table 2.5 (renumbered as Tables 2.2.7 (Livestock and Grazing) 2.2.12 (Riparian Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS), which merely summarizes (in abbreviated fashion) the anticipated impacts described in Chapter 4 and does not include new alternatives or management actions. As such, there is no contradiction between Table 2.1.16 and Table 2.2.12 in the PRMP.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG156A (ALG-23)	The differences in wording regarding key species vs. woody species are significant and could lead to very troublesome interpretations by staff.	Table 2.1.6 (Riparian Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS and Section 4.15.2.2.1 in the PRMP have been revised to correct a discrepancy between woody and herbaceous species.	X
Ranges West	O-43	LG157 (ALG-24)	Pg 2-54, Table 2.3 Soil and Water- Again, need definitions of surface disturbance .	See comment response GC15.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG158 (ALG-25)	Total acres of ACEC by alternatives amounts to 20%, 10%, 40% and 10% of the total public lands in the Vernal planning area. See pages S 3-5, 2-91 and 2-104. Livestock grazing would become more restricted or even removed. No grandfather status for grazing makes future use even more uncertain than normal	See comment response LG131.	

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			uncertainties associated with public land grazing.		
Ranges West	O-43	LG159 (ALG-26)	Pg 2-67 thru 2-79, Alternative Elements Eliminated from Detailed Analysis: What does this table signify? For example, on page 2-72 the table identifies 50,299 AUMs of existing livestock preference for all alternatives and then under rationale for elimination it is stated that this action is moved to "management common to all". What does this mean to livestock permittees or the public, especially when Table 2.5 page 2-86 indicates the following livestock AUMs for each alternative (A-137, 838, B-139,163, C- 77,294 and D-146161) and on page 3-35 current actual use is 78,500 AUMs? There are numerous other items in Table 2.4 that raise concerns or serious questions.	See comment response LG57.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG160 (ALG-27)	What species of plants does the riparian grazing use standard (30% or 50%) apply to and where in the riparian zone does this apply (greenline or terrace meadows)?	The plant species would be determined at the AMP/Grazing management plan level as the key species may be different by location. See Table 2.1.16 (Riparian Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS to see where the use levels apply.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG161 (ALG-28)	The analysis of impacts to soil and water and vegetation resources indicates that the AUM allocation (Alt A) and the grazing use limits of 30% "riparian vegetation" would adversely impact soils and vegetation. Yet on page 2-108 the AUM allocations and the "30% riparian vegetation" use limit would be beneficial to habitat and wildlife resources. These are contradictory conclusions and illogical. Grazing under Alternative A is subject to Rangeland Health Standards which assures healthy riparian and upland habitat or soils and vegetation.	Table 2.2.14 (Soils and Water Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to accurately describe the impacts (30% limitations would be more beneficial than the No Action alternative). The Preferred Alternative has been revised to read as follows: "30% forage utilization of riparian areas would benefit soils through reduction in loss of cover and trampling and subsequent sedimentation."	X
Ranges West	O-43	LG162 (ALG-29)	Chapter 3 is supposedly a description of the "affected environment" yet there is no discussion of historical, economic and cultural importance of ranching to the Uinta Basin or the interdependence of private ranch	An RMP/EIS need not include an exhaustive history of the study area, but must include a description of the nature and condition of resources (including land uses) within the area within which such	

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			lands and maintenance of open space agriculture.	resources could be affected by actions under consideration. With regards to the agricultural industry in the Vernal planning area, information is contained in Section 3.3.3 in the form of known historical site types, in Section 3.7 and its subsections, and in Sections 3.12.4.2.1, 3.12.2.2.2, and 3.12.3.2.2.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG163 (ALG-30)	Grossly inadequate discussion. Many BLM actions impact directly on intermingled private rangelands and prime farm lands. There is an inevitable linkage between public rangelands and private agricultural lands throughout the West. This linkage should be acknowledged at the very least.	See comment response LG56.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG164 (ALG-31)	The last sentence of this paragraph does not compute: "Minor indirect impacts as a result of implementation of Alternative A would occur to the ranching community but not individual ranchers due to the reduction in AUMs". In the 5th paragraph, last sentence, it states just the opposite.	Section 4.7.2.2.1 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to clarify the analysis. The point of the statement in question is that the reduction in AUMs would be spread across permit holders and would not be targeted at any one holder.	X
Ranges West	O-43	LG165 (ALG-32)	Historic actual use is not an appropriate basis for allocating livestock forage. Permittees take voluntary non-use for many reasons (drought, economic, range improvement, family, age or health or operator convenience). Forage production, range condition and trend are the appropriate basis for forage allocation.	The grazing regulations provide for criteria to authorize or deny non-use.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG166 (ALG-33)	This is an inappropriate assumption regarding Alternative C. Rangeland health standards apply equally to all alternatives as per the CFRs and BLM policy.	Section 4.7.2.2.3 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to delete the statement beginning with "…rangeland health would be the driving force".	X
Ranges West	O-43	LG167 (ALG-34)	Contradictory statements in 2nd paragraph, next to last sentence and 3rd paragraph, last sentence. Either	Section 4.7.2.6.3 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to correct the contradictory statement as	X

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			Alternative D will maintain rangeland health or it won't.	suggested	
Ranges West	O-43	LG168 (ALG-36)	This is a remarkably biased statement. According to this analysis, livestock have adverse impacts to fossils whether the livestock are present or removed from an area. After 130 years of livestock grazing and millions of years of bison, mammoths, giant ground sloths and other large critters roaming unregulated across the western landscape, it is indeed wonderous that ANY of these fragile fossils remain.	The commenter has incorrectly interpreted the statement in question. The statement indicates that excluding livestock from some areas would change their travel patterns, potentially forcing them into and concentrating their movement in areas containing fossil-bearing outcrops, where fossils could be impacted.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG169 (ALG-37)	2nd sentence is not correct as Alternative C does not meet current actual use that has occurred during the recent several years of drought. There will be an even greater shortfall as AUM demand increases with more favorable weather cycles.	Comment noted.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG170 (ALG-38)	Last 2 sentences: Incorrect statements. Alt C does not fulfill the ranching community's goal for AUMs and the county or local economy is certainly impacted by the current drought-induced reduction in livestock grazing.	Comment noted.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG171 (ALG-39)	1st paragraph, last sentence- Biased statement that assumes any foraging subjects soils to erosion. No science base to this statement. Rangeland ecosystems evolved with large animal grazing and animal foraging on vegetation is a natural and fundamental biological process. Grazing is functionally positive or negative to vegetation depending on many things such as intensity and timing.	Section 4.13.1.3 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to clarify that foraging has the potential to impact soils but that it is not a given.	X
Ranges West	O-43	LG172 (ALG-40)	This paragraph is eco-bio gobbledygook with only a selective-science basis. Grazing is a fundamental biologic process at the base of the natural food chain. It is not something man invented to assault nature. Herbivory is functional to plants in many ways that the author of this paragraph apparently never noticed, such as enhanced seed germination and transport, planting, fertilizing, tillering and subsequent increase in	Section 4.15.1.2 in the PRMP/FEIS has been modified for clarity.	X

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			reproductive stalks. The effects of grazing can range from positive to negative depending on amount, timing, species of plant and the grazing animal, etc. The statement in this paragraph is, at best, unprofessional and more likely dangerous.		
Ranges West	O-43	LG173 (ALG-41)	This definition of riparian grazing use standards is different than those found on pages 2-53, 2-86 and 2-93.	See comment response LG156.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG-35	This sentence implies that livestock grazing and rangeland health are inversely related. This is not necessarily true. Rangelands evolved with large animal herbivory.	Comment noted.	
Ranges West	O-43	LG76 (AGC-6)	For the most part, this paragraph is appropriate. Adjustments to either livestock or wildlife grazing should be based on monitoring data. The exclusion of areas with less than 25 lbs/ac, greater than 50% slope and more than 4 miles from water has been historically very troublesome when BLM applied these suitability criteria to forage carrying capacity inventories in the late 1960s-1980s. These criteria were an open invitation for anti-livestock grazing agendas. However, as stated in this paragraph, the application of these suitability criteria to allocation of additional forage is not very significant. Forage increases on these low potential ranges are not likely.	Comment noted.	
Ranges West	O-43	RE45 (ARE-3)	Why is recreation given special socioeconomic condition here and other cultural activity such as grazing and mineral or energy discussions on pages 3-35 thru 3-46 do not even recognize socioeconomic characteristics or importance. This discussion of recreation socioeconomics does not belong in chapter 3.10 but should be part of Chapter 3.12. Treat all resource uses similarly.	The PRMP/FEIS text has been amended to combine the socioeconomic considerations in Section 3.10.4 with the tourism and recreation socioeconomic description in Section 3.12.2.2.4.	X

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Ranges West	O-43	RW27 (ARW-1)	Pg 4-184, 4.13.1.5 Impact Common to range improvements: Last sentence at bottom of page: Biased and emotive use of words. Riparian areas are the least sensitive or most durable and recuperative part of a landscape. They may sometimes be heavily impacted by concentrated use and watershed energy but sensitive they are not.	Comment noted.	
Ranges West	O-43	SO55 (ASO-1)	Pg 3-65, 3.12.3.2.2 and pg 3-68, 3.12.4.2.1 Agriculture- Grossly inadequate discussion of agriculture's social and economic contribution to the Uinta Basin. Obvious lack of knowledge on the subject.	The commenter does not indicate how the discussion of agriculture's role in the Uinta Basin is inadequate. As such, the BLM cannot respond to the comment.	
Ranges West	O-43	VE12 (AVE-2)	Chapter 2 was a description of proposed actions for each alternative. There appears to be no serious consideration given to an invasive species control program. Yet, noxious and invasive weeds are an increasing problem on public lands.	See comment response VE4.	
Ranges West	O-43	VE13 (AVE-3)	This section is grossly inadequate recognition and discussion of an increasingly serious weed problem. Invasive and exotic plants are a high priority national initiative for land management agencies, yet this Vernal RMP hardly mentions weeds as a problem. Other BLM field offices have developed aggressive weed control and prevention programs.	See comment response VE4.	
Ranges West	O-43	VE15 (AVE-4)	The juniper common to the Vernal Resource Area is Utah juniper (Juniperus utahensis) not western juniper (Juniperus occidentalis). Someone needs to take range plants class.	Section 4.15.1.4 in the PRMP/FEIS has been revised to clarify that the juniper found in the VRA is Utah juniper and not western juniper.	X
Ranges West	O-43	WH50 (AWH-8)	Pg 2-44, Table 2.3 - Alternatives C&D would put wild horses back in the Bonanza HA despite Uintah County's earlier lawsuit.	See comment response WH35.	
Ranges West	O-43	WH51 (AWH-9)	Regarding the past numerous issues and problems with the Bonanza wild horse herd, we strongly object to the biased wording in this 1st paragraph (i.e.	See comment response WH35.	

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			"perceived horse management problems"). The county certainly thought these horses were more than a "perceived problem". The horses were indeed a resource health standards problem because of yearlong grazing on seasonal winter range. BLM certainly considers yearlong grazing on winter range by livestock to be a big range health problem (refer to the 2000? affidavit for the county's lawsuit).		
Westport Oil and Gas Co.	O-44	SD292 (JSD-36)	IN ORDER FOR ACEC DESIGNATION TO OCCUR, AN AREA MUST MEET CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFICATION OF IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE OR NATURAL HAZARD. REVIEW OF THE AVAILABLE DOCUMENTATION SUBMITTED FOR THE COYOTE BASIN APPLICATION ESTABLISHES THAT THIS DESIGNATION DOES NOT MEET THE LEGAL STANDARDS FOR ACEC DESIGNATION: THE LISTING PETITION FOR WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOGS TO THE FWS WAS DENIED; THE WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG ISN'T A RARE OR SENSITIVE SPECIES; ITS' HISTORICAL RANGE HASN'T CHANGED MUCH; AND EVIDENCE DOES NOT SHOW THAT OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT NEGATIVELY AFFECTS THE SPECIES. CLASSIFICATION OF WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOGS AS A FRAGILE, SENSITIVE, RARE, IRREPLACEABLE SPECIES IS OVERSTATED, OUTDATED, AND INACCURATE. ACCORDINGLY THERE IS NO BASIS TO IDENTIFY COYOTE BASIN AS A POTENTIAL ACEC.	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	
Westport Oil and Gas Co.	O-44	SD293 (JSD-37)	THE DESIGNATION PROCESS FOR AN ACEC REQUIRES A NEED FOR SPECIAL MANAGEMENT. EVIDENCE PROVIDED IN THE RMP SHOWS THAT COYOTE BASIN DOES NOT REQUIRE SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ATTENTION. BLM PROVIDES NO ANALYSIS IN THE RMP ON THE NEED FOR SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ATTENTION FOR THIS AREA; THERE IS ONLY A GENERAL STATEMENT ABOUT HOW THE AREA WOULD BENEFIT FROM ACEC DESIGNATION. THIS DOES NOT SATISFY THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE AREA NEEDS SPECIAL MANAGEMENT. OTHER MEASURES ARE ALREADY	See Responses to Comments SD27-G-22, SD263-O-34.	

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			IN PLACE TO PROTECT WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOGS, SUCH AS: THE OHV PLAN, WHICH LIMITS USE TO DESIGNATED ROUTES, THUS PROTECTING WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOGS; THE BLACK-FOOTED FERRET REINTRODUCTION PROTECTIONS WILL ALSO PROTECT WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOGS; CURRENT TIMING AND CONTROLLED SURFACE USE CONSTRAINTS FOR OTHER SPECIES, WHICH ALSO PROVIDE SERENDIPITOUS PROTECTIONS FOR WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOGS; AND THE SHOOTING BAN DURING MOST SENSITIVE TIMES. THERE IS NO NEED TO ADD REDUNDANT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES THAT WOULD PROVIDE NO GREATER BENEFIT BUT WOULD SUBSTANTIALLY AND ADVERSELY AFFECT OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT.		
Westport Oil and Gas Co.	O-44	SD294 (JSD-38)	NO EVIDENCE IS PROVIDED IN THE RMP TO SHOW THAT THE WHITE RIVER ACEC DESIGNATION IS WARRANTED. UNTIL THIS IS SHOWN, ACEC DESIGNATION CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED. BLM PROVIDES NO ANALYSIS IN THE RMP ON THE NEED FOR SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ATTENTION FOR THIS AREA; THERE IS ONLY A GENERAL STATEMENT ABOUT HOW IT WOULD BENEFIT FROM ACEC DESIGNATION. THIS DOES NOT SATISFY REQUIREMENT THAT THE AREA NEEDS SPECIAL MANAGEMENT.	See Response to Comment SD50-G-25.	
Westport Oil and Gas Co.	O-44	SD295 (JSD-39)	THE PUBLIC IS SUPPOSED TO BE AFFORDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEANINGFULLY PARTICIPATE IN AND COMMENT ON IDENTIFICATION AND DESIGNATION OF ACECS. INFORMATION PROVIDED REGARDING THE WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG ACEC AND WHITE RIVER ACEC IS SO VAGUE THE PUBLIC CANNOT DO THIS. BLM MUST PROVIDE ITS ANALYSIS FOR THE PUBLIC TO MEANINGFULLY PARTICIPATE.	See Response to Comment SD239-O-47, O-28, O-29. In addition, the public was given the chance to comment on ACEC designation-once during the DEIS comment period from January 14, 2005 through June 24, 2005 and then an additional comment period specifically for ACECs from December 13, 2005 through February 10, 2006.	
Westport Oil and Gas Co.	O-44	SD296 (JSD-40)	EVEN IF ACEC DESIGNATION WAS SUPPORTED, BLM HAS NOT PROVIDED THE REQUISITE LEGAL OR FACTUAL SUPPORT FOR THE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS IT HAS	See Responses to Comments SD27-G-22, SD8-G-9,	X

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			PROPOSED. THE DRAFT RMP DOES NOT ADEQUATELY DESCRIBE THE COYOTE BASIN MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS, AND THE LIMITED MANAGEMENT DESCRIPTIONS PROVIDED ARE INAPPROPRIATE AND UNNECESSARY FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG IN THE WHITE RIVER CORRIDOR. THE RMP FAILS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION AS TO RESOURCE USE LIMITATIONS, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION. THE RMP INDICATES THAT THE APPENDICES LIST ALL THE SURFACE USE STIPULATIONS IN THE VERNAL PLANNING AREA. HOWEVER, APPENDIX K DOES NOT CONTAIN ANY TIMING LIMITATION STIPULATION OR CONTROLLED SURFACE USE STIPULATIONS FOR WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOGS. BLM NEEDS TO ADDRESS THIS.	The white-tailed prairie dog is considered a sensitive species under IM 2007-078 and BLM Manual 6840 provides guidance that does not allow actions that would lead to listing. In addition, the 1999 Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction Plan Amendment and those portions of the Cooperative Plan for the Reintroduction and Management of Black-footed Ferret in Coyote Basin, Uintah County, Utah that are consistent with this plan amendment affords mitigation to the white-tailed prairie dog. Appendix K has been modified to incorporate mitigating measures for the white-tailed prairie dog.	
Westport Oil and Gas Co.	O-44	SD297 (JSD-40)	THE RMP PROVIDES NO JUSTIFICATION FOR THE TIMING LIMITATIONS, CONTROLLED SURFACE USE, AND NO SURFACE OCCUPANCY LIMITATIONS IN THE COYOTE BASIN AND WHITE RIVER ACECS. LEGISLATIVE HISTORY AND ACEC GUIDELINES MAKE CLEAR THAT DEVELOPMENT CAN STILL HAPPEN IN THESE AREAS. OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION DOES NOT ENDANGER THE WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG OR ITS HABITAT, AND IN FACT, IT PROVIDES FAVORABLE HABITAT. CURTAILING OIL AND GAS ACTIVITY MAY REDUCE THE PRODUCTION OF FAVORABLE HABITAT.	The rationale behind the proposed designation of the Coyote Basin and White River ACECs is provided in Appendix G in the Final EIS. By comparing Figures 11-14 with Figures 22-24, the reader will see that closed to leasing, no surface occupancy, and timing and controlled surface use stipulations for the White River and Coyote Basin ACECs do not correspond directly with the proposed ACEC boundaries. This is because ACEC designation would not apply blanket stipulations to the entire area and would recognize that potential for multiple use. Restrictive stipulations within the ACECs are not directly tied to prairie dog preservation beyond what is contained in the black-footed ferret recovery plan. Restrictive stipulations on oil and gas leasing in these two areas is related to such issues as wild and scenic rivers, high visual/scenic resource values, riparian areas, and special status species. By comparing the figures as referenced, the reader will also note that the vast majority of the areas within these two	

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				proposed ACECs remains open to oil and gas leasing under standard stipulations.	
Westport Oil and Gas Co.	O-44	SD298 (JSD-41)	THE LIMITED MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS IN THE RMP REGARDING COYOTE BASIN ARE INAPPROPRIATE AND/OR INAPPLICABLE. NO VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT LIMITATIONS ARE NECESSARY, AS THE AREA CONTAINS NO SPECIFIED SCENIC RESOURCES THAT NEED TO BE PROTECTED. IN ADDITION, THE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATION FOR OHV USE IN THIS AREA ALREADY ADEQUATELY PROTECTS THE WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG HABITAT.	See Response to Comment SD297-O-44.	
Westport Oil and Gas Co.	O-44	SD299 (JSD-42)	BLM MUST CONSIDER VALID EXISTING RIGHTS WHEN MAKING MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS. IN FACT, MANAGEMENT OF AN ACEC SHOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH THE VALID EXISTING RIGHTS OF EXISTING OIL AND GAS LEASES IN THESE AREAS. SPECIFICALLY, THE SAVINGS PROVISIONS OF FLPMA STAT THAT "ALL ACTIONS BY THE SECRETARY CONCERNED UNDER THIS ACT SHALL BE SUBJECT TO VALID EXISTING RIGHTS." (SEE 43 U.S.C. § 1701(A), NOTE (H)). THESE RIGHTS MUST BE HEAVILY CONSIDERED BEFORE MAKING SUCH STRINGENT MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS.	In Chapter 1 of the PRMP/FEIS, it states that: "All decisions made in the RMP and subsequent implementation decisions will be subject to valid existing rights".	
Westport Oil and Gas Co.	O-44	SD300 (JSD-43)	BLM has proposed Coyote Basin as a Research Natural Area (RNA). There is no legal or factual basis for this designation. Prairie dog complexes are not that unusual, and the species is not threatened. In addition, 85,000 acres greatly surpasses the 6,250 acres of PD habitat that are recommended for black-footed ferret reintroduction area. Finally, it is not entirely clear what will be studied in the area; APHIS is already doing predator control and disease research, and RNA designation is not necessary for that work to continue.	Research Natural Areas and ACECs are separate designations that carry different management goals and objectives. Also, see Response to Comment SD278-O-34.	
Westport Oil and Gas Co.	O-44	SD301	BLM has committed several procedural errors in development and publication of RMP. ACEC	See Response to Comment SD125-G-1.	

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		(JSD-44)	Guidelines state that BLM must make identification determination as soon as possible, but not later than 6 months after the resource is nominated. In this case, Coyote Basin was nominated in 2001 and 2003 and White River was nominated in 2003. These nominations are between 2 and 4 years old, and determinations should have been made with respect to these nominations years ago. Failure to complete the determinations at the appropriate time has led to use of outdated and inaccurate scientific information and reliance on a listing petition to the FWS that has since been denied. The BLM should eliminate these ACECs from the Draft RMP until proponents submit new nominations containing updated and scientifically accurate and verifiable information. The BLM is also required by its own polices to publish a notice in the Federal Register listing each ACEC proposed and specifying the resource use limitations, if any, that would occur if the ACEC were formally designated. The Federal Register notice published on 1/14/05 does not make mention of any specific ACECs and does not describe the resource use limitations that would occur if formal designation occurs. This oversight results in a major procedural default and fails to provide adequate information to the public. The Draft RMP should be resubmitted for public notice and comment to ensure that all relevant information has been provided to the public.	BLM Manual 1613 gives policy direction for ACEC designation. No 6-month timeline is included in this manual. 43 CFR 1610.7-2 also gives instruction and authority for ACEC designation and gives no 6-month timeline. The Federal Register Notice published on December 13, 2005, listed proposed ACECs and specific associated resource limitations. A 60-day comment period on the potential ACECs commenced with the publication date and ended 60 days after the publication date.	
Julander Energy Company	O-45	SD310 (JSD-51)	In order for ACEC designation to occur, an area must meet criteria for identification of important environmental resource or natural hazard. Review of the available documentation submitted with Coyote	See Response to Comment SD263-O-34.	

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			Basin application establishes that this designation does not meet the legal standards for ACEC designation: the listing petition for white-tailed prairie dogs to the FWS was denied; the white-tailed prairie dog isn't a rare or sensitive species; its' historical range hasn't changed much; and evidence does not show that oil and gas development negatively affects the species. Classification as fragile, sensitive, rare irreplaceable species is overstated, outdated, and inaccurate. Accordingly there is no basis to identify Coyote Basin as a potential ACEC.		
Julander Energy Company	O-45	SD311 (JSD-52)	Designation process for ACEC require a need for special management. Evidence provided shows that Coyote Basin does not require special management attention. BLM provide no analysis in RMP on the designation for need for special management attention for this area; there is only a general statement about how they would benefit from ACEC designation. This does not satisfy requirement that they NEED special management. Other measures already in place to protect WTPD: OHV plan limited use to designated routes, thus protecting WTPD; BFF reintroduction protections will also protect WTPD; Current timing and surface use constraints for other species also provide further protections; and there is also a shooting ban during most sensitive times. No need to add redundant management practices that would provide no greater benefit but would substantially and adversely affect oil and gas development.	See Responses to Comments SD27-G-22, SD263-O-34.	
Julander Energy Company	O-45	SD312 (JSD-53)	Public is supposed to be afforded opportunity to meaningfully participate in and comment on identification and designation of ACECs. Info provided re: WTPD ACEC and White River ACEC is so vague, the public cannot do this. BLM must provide its analysis for public to meaningfully participate.	See Response to Comment SD50-G-25.	

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Julander Energy Company	O-45	SD313 (JSD-54)	Even if ACEC designation was supported, BLM has not provided the requisite legal or factual support for the management actions it has proposed. Draft RMP does not adequately describe Coyote Basin management requirements. RMP fails to provide info as to resource use limitations, particularly with respect to oil and gas production. RMP indicates that appendices list all the surface use stipulations in the Vernal Planning area. However, appendix K does not contain any timing limitation stipulation or controlled surface use stipulations for WTPD. BLM needs to address this.	See Response to Comment SD239-O-47, O-28, O-29. In addition, the public was given the chance to comment on ACEC designation-once during the DEIS comment period from January 14, 2005 through June 24, 2005 and then an additional comment period specifically for ACECs from December 13, 2005 through February 10, 2006.	
Julander Energy Company	O-45	SD314 (JSD-55)	The RMP provides no justification for the timing limitations, controlled surface use, and no surface occupancy limitations in the Coyote ACEC. Legislative history and ACEC Guidelines makes clear that development can still happen in these areas. Oil and gas exploration does not endanger the WTPD, or its habitat and in fact, provides favorable habitat. Curtailing oil and gas activity may reduce the production of favorable habitat.	The rationale behind the proposed designation of the Coyote Basin and White River ACECs is provided in Appendix G in the Final EIS. By comparing Figures 11-14 with Figures 22-24, the reader will see that closed to leasing, no surface occupancy, and timing and controlled surface use stipulations for the White River and Coyote Basin ACECs do not correspond directly with the proposed ACEC boundaries. This is because ACEC designation would not apply blanket stipulations to the entire area and would recognize that potential for multiple use. Restrictive stipulations within the ACECs are not directly tied to prairie dog preservation beyond what is contained in the black-footed ferret recovery plan. Restrictive stipulations on oil and gas leasing in these two areas is related to such issues as wild and scenic rivers, high visual/scenic resource values, riparian areas, and special status species. By comparing the figures as referenced, the reader will also note that the vast majority of the areas within these two proposed ACECs remains open to oil and gas leasing under standard stipulations.	

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Julander Energy Company	O-45	SD315 (JSD-56)	Limited management prescriptions in the RMP re: Coyote Basin are inappropriate and/or inapplicable. No visual resource management limitations are necessary, as the area contains no specified scenic resources that need to be protected. In addition, the travel management classification for OHV use in this area already adequately protects the WTPD habitat.	See Response to Comment SD297-O-44.	
Julander Energy Company	O-45	SD316 (JSD-57)	BLM has also proposed Coyote Basin as a Research Natural Area (RNA). There is no legal or factual basis for this designation. Prairie dog complexes are not that unusual, and the species is not threatened. In addition, 85,000 ac greatly surpasses the 6,250 ac of PD habitat that are recommended for BFF reintroduction. Finally, it is not entirely clear what will be studied in the area; APHIS is already doing predator control and disease research and RNA designation not necessary for that work to continue.	Research Natural Areas and ACECs are separate designations that carry different management goals and objectives. Also, see Response to Comment SD278-O-34.	
Julander Energy Company	O-45	SD317 (JSD-58)	BLM has committed several procedural errors in development and publication of RMP. ACEC Guidelines state that BLM must make identification determination ASAP, but not later than 6 months after the resource is nominated. In this case, Coyote Basin was nominated in 2001 and 2003and white river was nominated in 2003. Nomination are between 2 and 4 years old, determination should have been made years ago. Failure to complete identification as appropriate time has led to use of outdated and inaccurate scientific info and reliance on listing petition that FWS as being denied. BLM also required published Federal Register notice listing each ACEC proposed and specifying the resource use limitation, if any, that would occur if designated. The Federal Register notice published 1/14/05 does not make mention of any specific ACECs and does not describe the resource use limitations that would occur if formal designation	See Response to Comment SD125-G-1. BLM Manual 1613 gives policy direction for ACEC designation. No 6-month timeline is included in this manual. 43 CFR 1610.7-2 also gives instruction and authority for ACEC designation and gives no 6-month timeline. The Federal Register Notice published on December 13, 2005, listed proposed ACECs and specific associated resource limitations. A 60-day comment period on the potential ACECs commenced with the publication date and ended 60 days after the publication date.	

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			occurs. Draft RMP should be resubmitted for public notice and comment to ensure that all relevant information has been provided to the public.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	AT68 (NAT9)	The restrictions and travel plan included in the Greater Dinosaur/Book Cliffs Heritage Plan should be adopted as the preferred alternative.	See comment response AT1.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	AT76 (NAT1a)	The Final RMP should allow development and human use in a way that promotes the persistence of large blocks of intact habitat rather than allowing continued fragmentation.	Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) and Table 2.1.26 (Wildlife and Fisheries Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS address habitat fragmentation. Table 2.1.21 under Goals and Objectives states: “Mitigate or reduce long-term habitat fragmentation through avoidance and site-specific reclamation to return areas to productive levels.” Table 2.1.26 under Management Action s Common to All states: “Reduce habitat fragmentation by requiring oil and gas field development plans and encouraging such activities as well clustering, multiple drilling from a single pad, utilization of existing roads and pipelines, and other measures to minimize surface	

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				impacts."	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	AT84 (NAT8)	The Wilderness Society specifically recommends that the BLM conduct a sufficient cumulative impact analysis, taking into account activities throughout the eco-region, and then take appropriate action to avoid unnecessary environmental consequences, including further restricting areas open to oil and gas development and off-road vehicle use and adopting additional protective measures that will lessen the impacts of these activities.	The cumulative effects analysis is presented in Section 4.23 of the PRMP/FEIS. Extension of the cumulative effects analysis outside of the Vernal Planning Area is outside the scope of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	AT88 (NAT12)	The Vernal RMP should identify all riparian and wetland areas, assess their current health and level of function, and analyze how management prescriptions in the various alternatives of the plan will affect the ecological function of such areas.	The current condition of riparian and wetlands within the Vernal Planning Area (VPA) are described in Section 3.11 of the PRMP/FEIS. Potential impacts to these resources are disclosed in Section 4.11 of the PRMP/FEIS. The RMP establishes broad policy across the VPA. Individual riparian areas and wetlands and potential impacts to them are addressed in area-specific or development level environmental studies (e.g. NEPA documents).	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	AT89 (NAT13)	It is particularly key that new or potential wilderness units are joined together with existing protected (or other specially designated) areas like ACECs to ensure that large-scale ecological disturbance can proceed naturally.	The BLM only has the authority to identify lands with wilderness characteristics and cannot designate such lands. ACECs and other special management designations can only be implemented where specific criteria for relevance and importance of resource values are met, and cannot be used to link wilderness units together in the absence of such resource values.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	AT93 (NAT17)	The alternative we propose that BLM add to this analysis would propose, based on the allotments indicated as failing to meet standards, changes in season of use and stocking numbers should it be determined that will lead to areas and streams meeting rangeland health standards. For those allotments where standards are met, periods of use and stocking	Comment noted.	

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			levels should be based on current forage production capability using the methods described earlier in these comments. The results would be a table like that in Appendix L but with stocking numbers and seasons of use that reflect ecological needs. Wild Utah Project offers its services to help BLM construct this alternative. We argue that this alternative, the multiple use alternative, is the only alternative presented that would lead to rangelands in this planning area meeting agency requirements. The table present in Appendix L show clearly that grazing use decided in the preferred alternative would be in violation of a number of fundamental agency requirements and perform a long term deserve to the ranching community and wildlife.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC100 (NGC10)	Heart of the West and the Trout Unlimited report provide information that should be considered and incorporated into the Vernal EIS in evaluating the cumulative impacts of various activities on the ecosystem.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC101 (NGC11)	We urge BLM to expand its cumulative impacts analysis to consider the regional effects of the decisions made in the Vernal RMP and the potential side effects of activities outside the VPA on the resources within the VPA.	As described in Section 4.22 and throughout the subsections of Section 4.22, the cumulative effects analysis considers reasonably foreseeable developments and actions outside the VPA that may contribute to resource affects within the VPA.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC102 (NGC12)	The Heart of the West Conservation Plan is directly relevant to the Vernal RMP.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild	O-46	GC103	The Heart of the West Conservation Plan recommends that all areas within core areas that possess wilderness	Comment noted.	

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Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems		(NGC13)	characteristics be managed in accordance with the 1964 Wilderness Act.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC104 (NGC14)	Predator control and trapping should be prohibited, unless necessary for restorative management or recovery of focal species.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC105 (NGC15)	Human use should be managed to protect the ecological integrity of the area.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC106 (NGC17)	Overall, core recovery areas should be managed with the objective of restoring them to an ecologically functioning and natural state, and eventually an integral component of intact core areas.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC107 (NGC18)	Lands with wilderness characteristics provide important support for wildlife, in addition to providing scenic value and recreational uses.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native	O-46	GC108 (NGC19)	Wilderness and protection of wilderness characteristics provide critical support to wildlife.	Comment noted.	

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Ecosystems					
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC109 (NGC20)	Of key importance to land management agencies, wilderness and other protective designations can assist in maintaining viable populations of native species on Utah's public lands.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC110 (NGC21)	Additional WSA/Wilderness designated within the Vernal Resource Area will bring us within each of another goal of conservation geology: the maintenance of ecological processes across a landscape.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC111 (NGC22)	A wilderness selection strategy that maintains intact environmental gradients and all physical habitat (soil types, slope aspects, etc.) and links these habitat together across the landscape is surely one of the best ways to provide for long term ecological change without losing biodiversity.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC112 (NGC23)	BLM has the authority and obligation to protect areas with wilderness characteristics. We maintain that the April 2003 settlement agreement between Secretary Norton and the State of Utah (win which BLM abdicated its authority to designate any additional Wilderness Study Areas – WSAs) is invalid and will ultimately be overturned in pending litigation. However, we recognize that the Vernal Filed Office is operating under current guidance that directs BLM not to identify new WSAs.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native	O-46	GC113 (NGC24)	BLM should take appropriate actions to protect wilderness characteristics, whether through alternate designations, such as ACECs, or by simply managing to protect wilderness characteristics as a priority over other uses, such as oil and gas development or off-	Comment noted.	

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Organization	**Record ID & Comment Number**	**Resource Category**	**Comment Text**	**Response to Comment**	**Doc Mod**
Ecosystems			road vehicle use.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC114 (NGC25)	The DEIS does not adequately protect wilderness characteristics; BLM should include management designations and prescriptions that will specifically protect these lands.	The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.1) require BLM to consider reasonable alternatives, which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment, based on the nature of the proposal and facts in the case (CEQ 40 Most Asked Questions 1b.). While there are many possible management prescriptions or actions, the BLM used the scoping process to determine a reasonable range alternatives that best addressed the issues, concerns, and alternatives identified by the public. Public participation was essential in this process and full consideration was given to all potential alternatives identified. The BLM determined that a single alternative analyzing the protection of all Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics would best provide a reasoned choice among the alternatives. Although the other alternatives do not provide specific management prescriptions to protect Non-WSA, these alternatives analyze and disclose the impacts of the proposed resource management prescriptions, uses and actions on the Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. This gives the public the ability to fully compare the consequences of protecting or not protecting the wilderness characteristics on these Non-WSA lands. If all alternatives contained comparable protections of the Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, the alternatives would have substantially similar consequences and would not be significantly distinguishable.	

ORGANIZATIONS					
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				The BLM, in developing the PRMP/FEIS, can chose management actions from within the range of the alternatives presented in the DRMP/DEIS and create a management plan that is effective in addressing the current conditions in the planning area based on FLPMA's multiple-use mandate.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC115 (NGC26)	In order to comply with NEPA, the RMP should require more detail on the mitigation actions to be performed, the manner in which they will prevent environmental consequences, the degree to which potentially significant impacts are mitigated to levels below significance, and a definitive schedule for taking any such actions.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC116 (NGC27)	All core recovery areas should be managed with an objective to restore and protect natural ecological conditions.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC117 (NGC28)	In its discussion of “Irreversible and Irretrievable Impacts,” “Unavoidable Adverse Impacts” and “Short-Term Use Versus Long-Term Productivity” with respect to wildlife and special status species, BLM takes note of the irretrievable habitat fragmentation that would be caused by minerals development in the planning area, as well as the long-term loss of special status species and even complete loss of the ferruginous hawk population. However, the BLM does not propose meaningful measures to avoid or limit these impacts. It is not acceptable for the BLM to merely identify impacts and label them "unavoidable."	The RMP is a programmatic document establishing management goals and objectives and broad scale management prescriptions. In order to be effective and appropriate, mitigation must be tailored to the specific nature and intensity of the identified adverse impacts. To this end, additional impacts analyses are conducted through project-scale environmental studies subsequent to the RMP/EIS. Avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measured are thus focused on the known impacts and are not speculative. Including detailed mitigation measures within the programmatic level RMP presupposes the precise nature of impacts.	
Wilderness Society, Wild	O-46	GC118	BLM finds that the proposed energy development would likely destroy primitive recreation in wilderness	See comment response GC114.	

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Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems		(NGC29)	quality lands, stating: "[g]iven the number and spacing of industrial facilities, it would be difficult to escape the adverse impacts to solitude and primitive recreation throughout the areas having wilderness character." However, BLM does not propose meaningful measures to avoid or limit these impacts.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC119 (NGC30)	BLM concludes that opening certain portions of the planning area to mineral development "may be inconsistent with the direction to manage for large un-fragmented blocks of continuous wildlife." However, BLM does not propose meaningful measures to avoid or limit these impacts.	See comment response GC114.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC120 (NGC31)	BLM can and should fully assess the existing multiple resources and uses in the Vernal Resource Area (VRA) and the risk to them from potential management decisions.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC121 (NGC32)	The Trout Unlimited report identifies key areas for habitat, which provide an important basis for analyzing the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of various activities that will be governed by the RMP on wildlife and habitat.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC122 (NGC32)	As part of this analysis, DEIS should provide a map showing those rangelands that today meet rangeland health standards and those that do not. Some of the key indicators used to determine rangeland health are important on their own and should be displayed individually. The more telling measurable indicators that have established standards include Indicator 4 (bare ground), 15 (annual plant production), 16 (invasive plants). Maps that show the value that each allotment gives to these specific indicators (a five step	Current range conditions are discussed in Section 3.7.1 and were considered in the analysis. Inclusion of a map in the PRMP/FEIS is not necessary for the inclusion of the information in analysis.	

ORGANIZATIONS					
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			scale) are an important analysis tool.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC130 NGC16	In general, we recommend that the chief human uses in core areas be limited to non-motorized activities.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC135 (NAT10)	Heart of the West and Wildlife At A Crossroads provide environmentally protective alternative management practices that should be fully evaluated and incorporated into the Vernal RMP for protection of the ecosystem.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC136 (NAT16)	The DEIS should provide precipitation information for as long as records were kept for this area.	The inclusion of precipitation information in the RMP is not necessary for the development of broad scale management actions. The effects of drought and the relationship to grazing management are reflected in the alternatives.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC138 (NRE2)	TWS encourages the BLM to ensure that energy development, ORV use, and livestock grazing occur only in the many areas where they will cause fewer impacts to key wildlife species, riparian areas, and wilderness-quality lands.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC98 (NGC8)	We are especially concerned with the deficiencies in the DEIS's analysis of the impacts from potentially destructive activities, which has led to corresponding deficiencies in recommendations for protective measures – such as closures of sensitive areas to oil and gas development or ORV use and the imposition of stringent lease stipulations, including best management practices.	Comment noted.	

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Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	GC99 (NGC9)	The BLM must protect species, habitat and landscapes: The Heart of the West Conservation Plan, Trout Unlimited's Gas and Oil Development on Western Public Lands Report, the TWS' Wildlife at a Crossroads Report and the Greater Dinosaur/Book Cliffs Heritage Plan provide vital information for the DEIS regarding management of wildlife habitat.	Several of these documents, including the Greater Dinosaur/Book Cliffs Heritage Plan, were consulted in the preparation of the RMP.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG187 (NLG1)	We hope that the BLM will bear in mind that energy development, ORV use, and livestock grazing in the Vernal Resource area, must be undertaken and managed in a way that does not cause irreparable harm to the wildlife and wildlands in the planning area.	See Table 2.1.8 (Livestock and Grazing Management), Table 2.1.9 (Minerals and Energy Resources), and Table (Travel – Roads and Trails) in the PRMP/FEIS for proposed management actions related to energy development, OHV use, and livestock and grazing. See also Sections 4.7.3, 4.8.3, and 4.10.2.11 regarding proposed mitigation measures for anticipated impacts from these land uses.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG188 (NLG2)	We encourage the BLM to ensure that livestock grazing occur only in the many areas where they will cause fewer impacts to key wildlife species, riparian areas, and wilderness-quality lands.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG189 (NLG3)	Livestock grazing should be limited to levels of use that ensure diverse plant community composition, forage production at potential, and unimpaired riparian areas.	See Table 2.1.6 (Forage – All Localities), Table 2.1.8 (Livestock and Grazing Management)Sections 2.4.5, 2.4.7 and 2.4.15 for management actions common to all alternatives regarding management of grazing, forage, and vegetation to maintain appropriate vegetation communities. See also Table 2.3 (Forage, Livestock and Grazing, and Vegetation).	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for	O-46	LG190 (NLG4)	Livestock grazing can have negative impacts on arid lands and their flora and fauna.	Comment noted.	

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Native Ecosystems					
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG191 (NLG5)	The assessment of grazing in the DEIS is deficient and must be improved.	Without specific identification of the perceived deficiencies, the BLM cannot address this comment.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG192 (NLG6)	BLM must consider the significant impacts of grazing and develop appropriate measures to manage and mitigation those impacts. NEPA requires BLM to assess the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts and effects of potential actions on other resources, including ecological values "such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems.	The anticipated impact of livestock grazing on resources and uses with the planning area can be found in Chapter 4, under each resource heading. Mitigation of impacts is also discussed resource by resource in Chapter 4.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG193 (NLG7)	For each allotment pasture, the plan should assess the plant community's level of ecological function and the true livestock grazing capacity for that pasture.	This is done at an activity plan level, not in an RMP.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG194 (NLG8)	Drought is not fully planned for in the land use plan. From 2000 to mid-2004, the western states have endured a period of serious drought.	The Fire, Drought, and Natural Disasters subsection of Table 2.1.1 in the PRMP/FEIS (Management Common to All Alternatives) describes planned responses to drought conditions.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native	O-46	LG194A (NLG8)	While grazing stocking numbers declined early in this period, for one year during the drought grazing numbers increased above historic levels in normal precipitation years. BLM needs to explain this anomaly.	This is beyond the scope of the RMP.	

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Ecosystems					
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG195 (NLG9)	We recommend that the preferred alternative recommend that stocking numbers should be reduced to a level that can be supplied by 25% of the forage grown during a drought. Such a reduction should take place immediately once drought condition forage production is known. Once the drought ends, grazing stocking should be at a red level until the productivity of the range is at or near its potential.	See comment response LG195.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG196 (NLG10)	A combination of factors has placed many key species at risk in the VRA, but BLM does not often acknowledge the role that livestock grazing has in the demise of these species.	The anticipated impacts of livestock and grazing management decisions on special status species, vegetation, and wildlife are discussed in Sections 4.15.1.2, 4.15.2.2, 4.16.7.4 and 4.19.1, respectively.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG197 (NLG11)	We ask that a section be added to Section 2.4.7 regarding the process for renewing grazing permits that adheres to the following steps: Determine which lands are capable for livestock grazing; for lands capable of grazing, determine which are suitable for livestock grazing; where practicable, allotment boundaries are redrawn to exclude those lands, which are both unsuitable and incapable. Those lands occurring outside an allotment are designated as not available for livestock grazing; stocking levels for livestock will be calculated based in ecological standards. Use Table 1 of our comment letter, to determine the percent of forage that can be allocated for livestock grazing; environmental analysis will be published and circulated for public comment; the grazing permit will be issued with standard stipulations described later; records of the permit and annual grazing use will be made publicly available by way of the web for each allotment.	The RMP, in conformance with current BLM policy, proposes to adjust livestock numbers as needed to meet LUP objectives through the evaluation of monitoring data. One time inventories and assessments, such as the one suggested, have not proved to be accurate or supportable in the past. BLM's monitoring program is ecologically based as objectives, monitoring data and assessments are based on the capability of the affected land and its ability to support the proposed use while maintaining its productivity and health.	
Wilderness	O-46	LG198	This section describes goals for rangeland	The commenter does not identify which goals may	

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Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems		(NLG12)	improvements. There are a number of goals that may be in conflict with the standards for rangeland health. We recommend that this be reworded to indicate that all the goals and subsequent range improvement projects be consistent with meeting the standards for rangeland health. The argument for this suggested language change is that lands converted to maximize forage production are highly likely to lack the structure and function needed for native wildlife.	be "in conflict with the standards for rangeland health." The BLM declines to modify this section of the document as requested, as the goal of meeting the Utah Rangeland Health Standards is already established for all alternatives in Table 2.1.6 (Forage – All Localities) under the subsection entitled Management Action Common to All Alternatives in the PRMP/FEIS.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG199 (NLG13)	We recommend that the final RMP include the means for incorporating additional ecology-based methods into decisions on stocking levels and seasons of use for each allotment. Such methods are described in the grazing management recommendations that Wild Utah Project prepared for the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (http://rangenet.org/directory/jonesa/sulrprec/index.html). These tools include a biologically based GIS tool to more accurately assess allotment grazing capacity based on wildlife habitat function, range productivity, and other ecological needs, as well as an objective method to help determine when grazing is the cause of impaired lands failing to meet the standard.	The BLM has a method in place called "Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health." This process is updated periodically to remain current with any new information.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG200 (NLG14)	If the grazing AUM allocations described in the table in Appendix L are not based on analysis, then the environmental analysis suggested by the EIS does not reflect the proposed action.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native	O-46	LG201 (NLG15)	There is an obvious alternative missing from the DEIS, what might be called the "Multiple Use Alternative". We strongly recommend that the Vernal Field Office consider and adopt as preferred an alternative that manages livestock grazing consistent with BLM's	The current range of proposed alternatives do meet the requirements of BLM's multiple use mandate as the array of valid uses are all permitted at varying levels under the RMP while protections against and mitigation for impacts to resources are included.	

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Ecosystems			multiple use mandate and manage grazing so that rangelands meet rangeland health standards the productivity and the values of BLM lands will not be permanently impaired.	The BLM has set meeting the Utah Rangeland Health Standards as found in Table 2.1.6 (Forage – Common to All) in the PRMP/FEIS.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG202 (NLG16)	We recommend that the environmental analysis use AUMs for an allotment based on the ecological carrying capacity of the allotment and that this same number of AUMs appear on the final grazing permit.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG291 (NSO4)	We request that BLM provide the public with that analysis which would include current forage productivity for each allotment, which lands are both capable and suitable, and, based on utilization, the forage that can be allocated to livestock under this alternative. The DEIS does not indicate that such analysis has been conducted.	The PRMP/FEIS is a programmatic level document that establishes general management practices on a landscape level. Subsequent NEPA documents and site-/resource-specific plans developed under the umbrella of the PRMP address individual allotments.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	LG80 (NAT14)	We recommend the following language for the preferred alternative: "livestock grazing would be allowed in both quantity and timing that would ensure that for rangelands meeting rangeland health standards, those standards are continued to be met and for lands where standards are not now met, grazing use be changed to ensure that as rapidly as is practical, rangeland standards be met."	The BLM declines to make the suggested wording changes for a variety of reasons including but not limited to, the following: The BLM does not find the suggested changes necessary or appropriate. The suggested wording change does not substantively contribute to or clarify the discussion. The commenter did not provide any rationale why the suggested change is necessary or how the current data and analysis is incorrect. The suggested change expressed personal opinions or preferences. The suggested change had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the RMP/FEIS	
Wilderness	O-46	LG81	We recommend that the plan prepare a drought	The Fire, Drought, and Natural Disasters subsection	

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Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems		(NAT15)	response plan that establishes the reserve/resilience needed during the time of drought, methods to predict prior to cattle on the range a drought, reductions in use in the first year where precipitation is less than 2" of normal, range capacity be reduced based on forage production during the drought period, and recovery ensure stocking levels are reduced until the range is recovered.	of Table 2.1.1 in the PRMP/FEIS (Management Common to All Alternatives) addresses management actions to be taken with regards to drought on BLM lands within the Vernal Field Office. After coordination with affected permittees temporary reductions in authorized use would be used to mitigate grazing impacts during drought conditions on an allotment specific basis. This direction is in conformance with BLM policy as stated in Washington Office IM 2003-074 and BLM regulations at 43 CFR 4110.3-2. The severity of drought is affected by many factors including the amount and timing of precipitation, temperatures and conditions of the rangeland. Precipitation events can also be very sporadic so production on one allotment or even within one allotment may be drastically different than on an adjacent allotment or between areas within an allotment. Precipitation levels and drought indices can be used to help identify broad areas that may be affected by drought but may not be accurate at the allotment level. For these reason drought restrictions on a planning wide basis would not be appropriate and would not comply with BLM direction. BLM regulations, (43 CFR 4110.3-2, Decreasing permitted use) provide for the suspension of use on a temporary basis, as needed, to protect the rangeland resources from grazing impacts during drought periods. Allotment closures are also provided for in both the regulations and the DRMP when soil, vegetation or other resources on the	

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				public lands require immediate protection due to drought. Coordination and consultation with the affected permittees is also a requirement of the regulations and can only be accomplished on an allotment specific basis.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	ME12	The Wilderness Society encourages the BLM to ensure that energy development, ORV use, and livestock grazing occur only in the many areas where they will cause fewer impacts to key wildlife species, riparian areas and wilderness-quality lands.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RE66 (NRE1)	Concerned that neither BLMs preferred alternative, nor the other management alternatives provide sufficient protection for the ecosystem from the impacts of intrusive activities, especially ORVs and oil and gas development.	The commenter does not provide additional information or explain what constitutes "sufficient protection." The PRMP/FEIS alternatives were developed and based on issues identified during the scoping process and on planning criteria for preparation of an EIS (40 CFR 1501.7) as described in Section 1.7.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RE68 (NRE3)	We believe that mechanical recreation (both motorized and mountain bike) be suitable for Compatible Use Areas on designated routes only.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RE69 (NRE4)	ORV use has substantial impacts on the ecosystem, affecting wildlife, wildlife habitat, and the entire landscape.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for	O-46	RE70 (NRE5)	Vehicular impacts on vegetation range from complete denudation of large staging areas to selective kill-off of the most sensitive plants. This does appear to have	Comment noted.	

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Native Ecosystems			been adequately considered in the EIS.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RE71 (NRE6)	ORV use can lead to reduced density and diversity of small mammal populations (Bury 1977, BLM 1978, CEQ 1979, Liddle 1997). This needs to be considered in the EIS.	OHV use and its impacts are considered in Table 2.1.22 (Travel – Roads and Trails) of the PRMP/FEIS as well as Section 4.19.2.7 (Recreation and Travel Effects on Wildlife and Fisheries).	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RE72 (NRE7)	We appreciate BLM's acknowledgement of the damage that off-road vehicles (ORVs) can have to wildlife, habitat and wilderness characteristics and BLM's commitment to designating routes in this planning process. However, we remain concerned that neither the BLM's preferred alternative nor the other management alternatives provide sufficient protection for the ecosystem from the impacts of intrusive activities, especially ORVs and oil and gas development.	See comment response RE66. See Alternative E in the PRMP/FEIS. Alternative E provides the largest range of protection for lands with wilderness characteristics.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW39 (NRW1)	BLM must provide better protection for riparian areas as these zones have great ecological importance and are biologically unique.	See comment response RW38.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW40 (NRW2)	When assessing the biological role of the very limited number of riparian corridors in the Vernal Resource Area, it is important to consider the watershed that is associated with the main stream corridor.	As stated in Section 3.11.1, the PRMP/FEIS considers watershed features (ponds, designated wetlands, springs, riparian zones, etc) as well as main stem riparian corridors in its analysis of impacts.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for	O-46	RW41 (NRW3)	It is crucial that small, isolated wetlands interspersed within the landscape, such as springs and small ponds, are also carefully protected because they may partially aid in limited recolonization and dispersal between	See comment response RW40.	

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Native Ecosystems			disjunct riparian zones in desert lands.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW42 (NRW4)	Riparian zones will be substantially impacted by the management decisions made in the RMP.	The commenter does not provide additional information nor explain how, why, and to what degree riparian zones would be impacted by the RMP management decisions. Also, please refer to Section 3.11 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW43 (NRW5)	Heart of the West provides environmentally protective alternative management that should be fully evaluated and incorporated into the Vernal RMP for protection of riparian areas.	A range of protective measures are discussed and evaluated in Sections 3.11 and 4.11 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW44 (NRW6)	BLM must also discuss how it intends to bring riparian zones that are not functioning or functioning at risk back of a Properly Functioning Condition (PFC). Achieving this may well require cessation of ORV use and livestock grazing in all riparian areas in the Vernal Resource Area.	In Table 2.1.16 (Riparian Resources) of the PRMP/FEIS under the subsection entitled Goals and Objectives, management actions are discussed that could be used to meet riparian goals of bringing riparian areas into proper function condition. Site-specific actions to achieve riparian goals are beyond the scope of the RMP EIS. Site-specific actions or project-related actions to achieve riparian goals would be analyzed and discussed under site-specific NEPA processes and documents. Also, please refer to Section 3.11 of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW45 (NRW7)	Coalbed methane production is associated with lowering of water tables, wells and springs drying up, and increases in methane gas seeps, which kills vegetation and is a hazard to humans and wildlife (BLM, n.d.).	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project,	O-46	RW46 (NRW8)	We recommend that rangelands be managed to prevent the impairment of productivity and values (incorporate above text straight from FLPMA Section	Comment noted.	

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Center for Native Ecosystems			103 (c)), and rangelands be managed to ensure wildlife habitat functions at a level that will ensure viable populations of native species in each habitat community.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW47 (NRW9)	This section describes riparian habitat goals. The DEIS suggests that the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment method now used by many agencies be a minimum standard. We argue that the current PFC assessment fails to assess key biotic indicators required in the rangeland health standard. We request that you consider for implementation an alternative riparian assessment method developed by a group of scientists with the Wild Utah Project and Trout Unlimited, which was submitted with WUP's scoping comments.	In addition to establishing PFC as the minimum riparian goal, the RMP identifies that the BLM will adhere to the Utah Rangeland Health Standards under all alternatives. The BLM considered the information provided by WUP and believes that the combination of monitoring and management measures outlined in the RMP sufficiently meet the goals identified for riparian resources.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW48 (NRW10)	We recommend that cheatgrass and Russian olive be added to the noxious plant list in the RMP.	Cheatgrass and Russian olive are included in Table 3.16.6 (Noxious Weeds Undesired Plant Species) as well as in Section 3.1.6.2 (Undesired Plant Species) of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW49 (NRW11)	We recommend that one of the key parts in the definition of range condition reflect forage plant productivity, measured as a percent of its potential.	Range condition definitions and explanations of the standards for rangeland health are included in Appendix F of the PRMP/FEIS.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW50 (NRW12)	We recommend producing a map of riparian and wetland areas of the planning area that shows which streams have been inventoried and, of those inventoried, which are either PFC, FAR or NF.	Figure 5 displays the coverage of the riparian and wetland inventory data within the VPA. Section 3.11.2 discusses the number of acres and miles of riparian in Properly Functioning Condition (PFC), Functioning at Risk (FAR), or Not Functioning (NF). As discussed in Section 3.11.2, the preliminary inventory of wetland and riparian areas could once	

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				the comprehensive inventory has been conducted. Thus, producing a map of riparian and wetland areas and their conditions based on the preliminary inventory would not be useful.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	RW51 (NRW13)	A map showing those steams that are in properly functioning condition, functioning at risk or non-functioning should also be prepared and included in the EIS. Such a map should correlate PFC rating for streams with allotments boundaries.	See comment response RW50. Also see Appendix L Grazing Allotment Table, which lists Rangeland Problems/Conflicts by allotment.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SD334 (NSD1)	We believe the following human activities to be suitable for Compatible Use Areas: Mechanical recreation (both motorized and mountain bike) on designated routs only; Camping; Livestock grazing management that uses stocking levels and seasons of use that ensure that range health goals are met and sustained, and riparian areas are restored; grazing should be conducted in a manner that allows predator populations to reach traditional levels, by utilizing “predator friendly” lives tock grazing based on non-lethal methods to deal with livestock depredation wherever and whenever possible; Limit woodcutting to a level that ensures a pre-settlement patchwork stands in varying structure and condition; Restoration management should limit habitat manipulation to that necessary for focal plant and animal species; All fencing needs to meet state fence standards or wildlife; and Oil and gas should limit surface disturbance as much	See Response to Comment SD8-G-9.	

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			as possible to existing oil fields, emphasizing using directional drilling.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SD335 (NSD2)	BLMs regulations provide for designation of areas as open, limited, or closed to OHVs "based on the protection of the resources of the public lands, the promotion of safety of all the users of public lands, and the minimization of conflict among various uses of the public lands." However, the alternatives presented in the DEIS do not adequately take into account the extent of the conflict with other resources, such as wilderness characteristics, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and riparian areas.	See Response to Comment SD8-G-9. A systematic interdisciplinary approach was used to provide accurate, objective and scientifically sound environmental analysis on the environmental consequences associated with the management actions or prescriptions under each alternative. The analysis discloses the direct, indirect and cumulative effects on the public lands resources and uses sufficient for the decision maker to make a reasoned choice among alternatives.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SD336 (NSD3)	The plan needs to include comprehensive analyses of the general impacts of OHV use on desert biota and ecosystems, and include site-specific analyses of where OHV use is inappropriate due to expected impacts on species at risk and their essential habitats, along with all other resources considered in the upcoming DEIS.	As part of the travel management plan, any OHV areas or routes would require additional analysis and disclosure prior to designation.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SS141 (NSS1)	Planning now to protect sensitive lands and at-risk species over the life of the RMP will limit the opposition to final plan and facilitate its rapid implementation.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SS142 (NSS2)	BLM does not propose meaningful measures to avoid or limit the impact of work with respect to wildlife and special status species.	See comment response SS140.	
Wilderness	O-46	SS143	In order to protect the wildlife populations within the	The RMP proposes similar objectives in	

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Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems		(NSS3)	VPA, including special status species, BLM should specifically identify a management objective of no net loss of habitat, maintenance of native vegetation communities in large and continuous stands wherever possible, and of reducing habitat fragmentation for special status species. By adopting the designations and protective measures set out in the Greater Dinosaur/Book Cliffs Heritage Plan, BLM can implement such an approach.	Management Common to All. They are: Mitigate or reduce long-term habitat fragmentation through avoidance and site-specific reclamation to return areas to productive levels. Ensure that management of native and naturalized plant species enhances, restores, and does not reduce the biological and genetic diversity of natural ecosystems. Conserve and protect special status species and enhance their habitats.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SS144 (NSS4)	We recommend that certain exotic species be controlled and/or eliminated in core areas. Species such as exotic trout and monocultures of noxious weeds are especially detrimental in these areas.	Control of exotic trout falls under the jurisdiction of UDWR. See Rangeland Health Standard 3 in Table 2.1.13 (Range Improvements) of the PRMP/FEIS for control of noxious weeds.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SS145 (NSS5)	Monitoring of habitat, focal species, and habitat function should establish critical thresholds needed for species (especially carnivore) persistence.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SS146 (NSS6)	BLM has not provided sufficient protections for special species and sensitive areas against the negative impacts of grazing.	Under the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health as provided by regulations, developed by the Secretary of the Interior on February 22, 1995, the following conditions must exist on BLM lands: "Habitats; are, or are making significant progress toward being, restored or maintained for Federal	

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				threatened and endangered Species, Federal proposed, Category 1 and 2 Federal candidate and other special status species." See comment response SS106.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SS147 (NSS7)	This paragraph states that Alternative A would allow impacts to special status species plants. BLM should assess the management that will ensure viable populations of sensitive species. This conclusion [of the referenced paragraph] indicates that the proposed action would permanently impair public land values, a finding that is in conflict with BLM obligations.	The BLM must manage lands under its jurisdiction for multiple use and sustained yield and provide for authorized land uses, such as grazing, to the extent that they are compatible with the overall mandate, federal law, and agency policy. The paragraph in question discusses the potential risks to special status species from grazing. These risks are not absolute. In order to address undue impacts to special status species from grazing and other land uses, the BLM engages in a long-term monitoring program geared to ensure adherence with the Fundamentals of Rangeland Health (see the response to Comment SS146) and makes adjustments to land uses accordingly.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SS148 (NSS8)	In order to mitigate the environmental consequences of oil and gas development, BLM must use scientifically-based mitigation measures (such as the buffer for sage grouse leks identified earlier), define the actions to be taken, incorporate them into leases, and ensure they will be applied and enforced.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SS149 (NSS9)	Based on the analysis set out in Wildlife at a Crossroads, we recommend that BLM develop and implement road closure plans and other restrictive stipulations to achieve these scientifically-derived standards within crucial winter range and migration routes: Mule deer: Provide core habitat and migration routes that are greater than 1,542 feet from a road; Pronghorn: Provide core area that is farther than 3,168 feet from a road an limit road densities to less than 1	Figure 35 of the Draft EIS indicates wildlife habitat that is 660 feet, 1,320 feet, and 2,640 feet from the effects of roads. This includes habitat for mule deer, pronghorn, elk, and sage grouse. BLM has considered the restrictions recommended in this comment but has determined that implementation of these restrictions would prevent other resource uses that are also part of the project purpose and need. These include the maintenance of existing travel	

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			mile per square mile; Elk: Reduce road densities to less than 1 mile per square mile; Sage grouse: Implement seasonal road restrictions barring traffic within 656 feet of winter habitat, within 3 miles of leks, nesting and brood-rearing areas. Impose a 30 mph speed limit during non-restricted hours.	corridors, mineral leasing, and development of recreational facilities. BLM has included a range of alternatives which includes restrictions on disturbance in crucial deer and elk habitat; as well as restrictions on activities in the vicinity of sage grouse leks (See Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) of the PRMP/FEIS).	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SS150 (NSS10)	A map should be included that displays critical and high-value habitat for key wildlife species found in this planning area, particularly for species at risk highlighting which of these important wildlife lands are unsatisfactory (fail to meet RLH standards).	Map 34 of the PRMP/FEIS shows habitat for key wildlife species in the planning area. Chapter 3 describes the status of that habitat.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SW	Retention of topsoil for reclamation purposes is important because availability of mycorrhizal propagules in soil used for reclamation can influence the success of sagebrush reestablishment (Lyford 1995). Top soil should be reserved during every surface-disturbing activity, so that it can be replaced during the reclamation process.	The comment is a standard practice for surface disturbing operations within the planning area and not something that needs to be stated in the RMP.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	SW73 (NVE2)	ORVs can have disastrous effects on cryptobiotic crusts which are rapidly being depleted across rangelands today.	BLM recognizes the impacts vehicular travel can have on biological soil crusts and considered this in the decision to implement management actions restricting OHV travel to designated routes under Alternatives A, B, and C.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	TR49 (NTR2)	In core species recovery areas, we recommend that the land manager work to reduce road density to a level that encourages return of wildlife and prevents further population loss of certain species.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild	O-46	TR50	Routes not needed by the public can be closed with a	Comment noted.	

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Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems		(NTR3)	gate or the route removed and reclaimed.		
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	TR51 (NTR4)	In general, we recommend that when linkages connecting core recovery areas intersect well-used highways, structures allowing the passage of wildlife be constructed.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	TR52 (NTR5)	Vehicle use must be limited to designated routes and linkages.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	TR54 (NTR7)	High densities of roads have been shown to negatively impact certain species of animals. In particular, densities of more than one mile on road/square mile represent a level of access that is associated with more pronounced effects on wildlife species such as wolves (Canis lupus) and bears (Ursus spp.) that are sensitive to contact with humans (Thiel 1985, Van Dyke et al. 1986, Mech et al. 1988, Lovallo and Anferson 1996, Mace et al. 1996). Road densities within the VFO should be below this level.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	TR55 (NTR8)	Roads can fragment habitat of dispersal-limited species. Some of these species, which tend to be small, display “acute road-avoidance effect” in which animals remain at some distance from the road and never or very rarely attempt to cross. Efforts should be made to reduce road-related habitat fragmentation.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild	O-46	TR56	BLM’s analysis of alternative area and route designations does not provide sufficient protection for	The anticipated impacts of OHV and travel management decisions on other resources and	

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Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems		(NTR9)	other resources from the impacts of OHVs.	uses within the planning area are discussed in Sections 4.2 through 4.22. .	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	TR57 (NTR10)	More environmentally protective route designation alternatives should be considered and adopted.	See comment responses TR22, TR29, TR38, TR40, and TR45.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	VE30 (NVE1)	Vehicular impacts on vegetation range from complete denudation of large staging areas to selective kill-off of the most sensitive plants. Ultimately, web-like networks of ORV trails coalesce into broad areas largely denuded of vegetation.	The BLM believes that the restriction of OHV travel to designated existing roads and trails and managed open areas under Alternatives A, B, C, and E (see Table 2.1.22 (Travel—Road and Trails) of the PRMP/FEIS) will result in fewer impacts to special status plants over the term of the RMP as compared to the present condition.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF159 (NWF1)	The greatest risk to wildlife populations in the Vernal Planning Area (VPA) is from habitat fragmentation, which many conservation groups identify as one of the chief causes of lack of population persistence, species rarity and extirpation in the West.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF160 (NWF2)	Hunting and fishing should be managed in a manner that prevents degradation of the ecological integrity of the area.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native	O-46	WF161 (NWF3)	Where possible, current uses should be modified to allow for use in deference to the need of habitat to function for wildlife.	Comment noted.	

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Ecosystems					
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF162 (NWF3)	BLM has provided insufficient protections for lands with wilderness characteristics.	The commenter does not provide any additional information or explanation to substantiate the assertion that insufficient protection is proposed for lands with wilderness characteristics.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF163 (NWF4)	Wildlife services (WS) activities are generally restricted in Wilderness/WSAs primarily because BLM Interim Management Policy (IMP) for Lands Under Wilderness Review requires that WS activities must be directed "at a single offending animal" and use of aerial gunning in these areas requires approval from the State Director of BLM.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF164 (NWF5)	Wilderness/WSAs should not be subjected to large scale chemical and mechanical vegetation treatments.	Wilderness and WSAs, by definition, are managed to maintain and preserve their pristine, natural and undeveloped characteristics. However, section 4(d)(1) of the Wilderness Act mandates that measures may be taken as necessary in the control of fires, insects and diseases within wilderness. Lands that contain wilderness characteristics have been addressed in Alternative E.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF165 (NWF6)	Wilderness and properly protected areas with wilderness characteristics, linked across the Vernal Resource Area, can lead to the realization of many fundamental goals and objectives proposed both by the science of conservation biology and the discipline of resource conservation.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native	O-46	WF166 (NWF7)	While preservation of any new Wilderness/ WSAs in the Vernal Resource Area may prevent future human influences from altering natural disturbance regimes, it is particularly key that new or potential wilderness units are joined together with existing protected (or other specially designated) areas like ACECs to ensure that	Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), wilderness areas, and ACECs are selected or designated based on criteria described in Section 3.14 (e.g., scenic, unique, fragile, rare, recreational, cultural). The criteria are based on laws that stipulate the process for designation, and are not based on the proximity	

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Ecosystems			large scale ecological disturbance can proceed naturally. This does not appear to be the case in the RMP.	of other special designation areas or areas. Thus, joining areas to ensure large-scale natural processes is beyond the scope of the EIS and of the VPA RMP planning process.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF167 (NWF8)	OHV use can lead to reduced density and diversity of small mammal populations (Bury 1977, BLM 1978, CEQ 1979, Liddle 1997). Often this effect on mammals can be attributed to a reduction in plant diversity, simplification of plant structure, and reduction in ground cover, all of which are results of ORV activity (CEQ 1979). Also, harassment of wildlife may place a considerable energy strain on wildlife, both due to general stress and due to attempts to escape harassment (Bury 1977). These impacts should be analyzed in the EIS.	OHV impacts on all resources were analyzed in the Final EIs. See Table 2.1.22 (Travel – Road and Trails) of the PRMP/FEIS as well as Sections 3.10.2.2 and 4.10.1	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF168 (NWF9)	Other studies have documented the deleterious effects of OHV noise on desert animals (e.g., Brattstrom and Bondello 1983). These impacts should be analyzed in the EIS.	As OHV travel will be restricted to designated routes under all action alternatives, impacts from OHV noise on animals is expected to be negligible and avoidable.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF169 (NWF10)	OHVs can also impact wildlife habitat indirectly through the dispersal of weed seeds that can attach to and ride on OHVs. This impact should be analyzed in the EIS.	The potential impacts of OHV-caused dispersion of noxious weeds and seeds are analyzed throughout the Section 4.16 (Vegetation), Section 4.11 (riparian and wetlands), Section 4.19.6 (wildlife), and in Section 4.20) woodlands.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF170 (NWF11)	BLM catalogues the overwhelming habitat fragmentation already occurring and projected to occur under all of the proposed alternatives, then identifies the activities necessary to reduce the effect of habitat fragmentation. However, these measures do not appear to be implemented in the alternatives or Management Common to All.	See comment responses WF34 and WF 102.	

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Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF171 (NWF12)	The DEIS "proposes to open approximately 80 to 100% of available habitat for most wildlife and fisheries managed by BLM to minerals development." The protections offered by the preferred alternative and the other alternatives in the DEIS are not adequate to protect a number of important and rare species and their habitats in the Vernal Resource Area.	The commenter does not provide any information to substantiate the assertion that the management action protection measures are inadequate to protect wildlife in the VPA.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF172 (NWF13)	More than one year ago, Wild Utah Project submitted to the Utah State Office of BLM and to a number of field offices the Heart of the West Conservation Plan, a science-based spatial analysis of the relative importance of various wildlife habitat cores and linkages throughout the Heart of the West ecoregion, which includes the Vernal Resource Area. This plan should be used in the development of the RMP.	BLM considered this document in preparation of the Draft andPRMP/FEIS.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF173 (NWF14)	In addition, Trout Unlimited's report, titled Gas and Oil Development on Western Public Lands: Impacts of Fish, Wildlife, Hunting and Angling ("TU Report"), shows important location of various species and their habitats. The TU Report also provides information necessary for analyzing impacts on wildlife and deciding upon appropriate management.	Comment noted.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF174 (NWF15)	In addition to detailing the effects of habitat fragmentation on species found in the VRA, Wildlife At a Crossroads provides suggested management approaches to protect wildlife habitat.	See comment response WF172.	
Wilderness Society, Wild Utah Project, Center for Native Ecosystems	O-46	WF209 (NAT11)	In general, core areas should be managed such that no new permanent roads are built, use of motorized/mechanized equipment and vehicles is prohibited or substantially limited, logging and other tree removal activities are curtailed, and new surface mineral extraction activities avoided if at all possible.	Comment noted.	

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Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	AT1	Adopt the Great Dinosaur/Book Cliffs Heritage Plan.	The Great Dinosaur/Book Cliffs Heritage Plan was considered and elements of this plan have been incorporated into the alternatives. See comment responses GC68, TR13, TR22, and TR29.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	AT3	The preferred alternative provides for opening as much as 93% of the area to oil and gas development and to the development of off-road vehicle motorized use with little consideration given to preserving opportunities for other recreational activities and the protection of wildlife habitat.	Table 2.1.13 (Recreation Resources) and Table 2.1.22 (Travel – Roads and Trails) describe management goals and prescriptions for recreational uses. Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) 2.2.24 (Vegetation Resources), and Table 2.1.26 (Wildlife and Fisheries Resources in the PRMP/FEIS describe management goals and prescriptions for wildlife and wildlife habitat. See comment responses AT1, TR13, TR20, TR24, TR29, and TR38.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	AT40 (AT-GG)	The DRMP/DEIS fails to do a proper alternatives analysis under NEPA. It fails to comply with NEPA because it failed to explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives. The range of alternatives discussed only differed on minor matters and provided no real alternatives other than the relatively minute differences between A, B and C. It fails to include an alternative that would preclude ORV use in WSAs, proposed and other areas the VFO has found to have wilderness qualities.	ORV use is precluded within WSAs in all alternatives. The RMP presents four alternative proposals for managing public lands in the VPA. The alternatives were developed in response to the issues identified in the public scoping process and the planning criteria. The BLM recognizes that social, economic, and environmental issues cross land ownership lines and that extensive cooperation is needed to actively address issues of mutual concern. To the extent possible, these alternatives were crafted utilizing input from public scoping comments,	

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				Duchesne, Daggett, and Uintah County representatives and other cooperating agencies. Through its land use planning revision process and to comply with the FLPMA multiple-use mandate, BLM has discretion to choose how the non-WSA lands ultimately will be managed, considering all the values and potential uses of these non-WSA lands and the other lands within the planning area.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	AT41 (AT-HH)	The DRMP fails to consider and fully analyze alternatives that adequately address wilderness, oil and gas development, ORV management and other resources.	See Table 2.1.20 (Special Designations – Wilderness Study Areas), Table 2.1.9 (Minerals and Energy Resources), Table 2.1.2.1.3 (Recreation Resources), and Appendix K for management prescriptions and impacts analysis for the named resources and land uses. Discussions of other resource management provisions and impacts analysis are located elsewhere throughout Chapters 2 and 4.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	AT42 (AT-II)	Include an explanation in the FEIS as to why an alternative, such as the Greater Dinosaur/Book cliffs Heritage Plan was not analyzed and approved by the BLM.	See comment response AT1.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	GC67 (GC-X)	Although this planning process is a tremendous opportunity, thus far the DRMP fails to take any significant positive steps to protect the wilderness values, wildlife habitat, water resources, scenic values, cultural resources, and other natural resources.	Table 2.1.10 (Non-WSA Lands with Wilderness Characteristics) in the PRMP/FEIS along with Appendix K outline broad management actions to be taken to address lands with wilderness characteristics, wildlife and wildlife habitat, special status species, soil and water resources, scenic values, cultural and paleontological resources, among other resources. The management prescriptions are designed to balanced land use and resource protection to the extent possible.	
Southern	O-47	GC68	Unfortunately, the two fatal flaws of the DRMP are 1)	Comment noted.	

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Utah Wilderness Alliance		(GC-Y)	its failure to protect 98% of wilderness quality lands outside of existing WSAs from oil and gas development; and 2) the lack of any meaningful ORV management or intelligent route designations.		
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	GC69 (GC-Z)	The RMP must reflect the changing resource values in this area, emphasizing the increasing importance of unfragmented wildlife habitat, clean water, clean air and primitive recreation opportunities. Oil and gas often directly conflicts w/ these values.	See comment response GC67.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	PR23 (PR-L)	While the draft recognizes the wilderness characteristics of far more acreage than is protected in WSA's, it neglects to consider any alternative that would provide meaningful protection of these identified wilderness characteristics. This is in direct violation of NEPA.	NEPA does not require that a no-impact or minimal-impact alternative be considered. Rather, NEPA requires that a reasonable range of alternatives meeting the purpose and need of the undertaking. The BLM is required under FLPMA and BLM policy to manage lands under its jurisdiction for multiple use. The BLM has developed a range of alternatives that balance the protection of sensitive resources, including lands with wilderness characteristics, with legitimate land uses. The proposed RMP's Alternative C restricts uses on a larger number of acres of lands with wilderness and other lands than any other alternative. This alternative includes more areas closed to use as well as more areas subject to timing and controlled surface use restrictions.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	PR24 (PR-M)	The DRMP fails to comply with NEPA's requirement to take a hard look at the potential environmental impacts of designating particular routes. The RMP, including the recreation and OHV travel management portion of the plan, must also demonstrate how it will comply with the national goal to minimize damage as defined in EO 11644 and 11989 and federal regulations. Thus, SUWA requests that BLM temporarily close all inventoried routes that have not yet undergone	In designating OHV routes through the RMP, the BLM has selected existing routes that would be designated as is, without any improvement, realignment, etc. The BLM believes that the restriction of OHV travel to designated routes under Alternatives A, B, and C represents a significant shift in favor of reducing resource conflicts and degradation and fully meets the spirit and intent of E.O.s 11644 and 11989, which did not call for a	

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			environmental review, analysis, and formal use designation in compliance with the E.O.s and federal regulations.	prohibition of OHV travel on public lands but merely a careful allowance of it in balance with other uses and resources values.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	PR25 (PR-N)	Cumulative impact of oil and gas related developments, added to the impacts caused by other public lands uses, are not adequately analyzed in the DRMP	The impacts of minerals and energy development as well as of the range of reasonably foreseeable future development that could impact lands and resources within the Vernal Planning Area are discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.8.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	RE23 (RE-C)	The draft plan is wrong in contemplating a corridor 600 feet wide along ORV routes in which ORVs would be free to roam off the existing roadbed.	See comment response RE1.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	RE38 (RE-R)	In order to ensure the continued viability of these recreational experiences, BLM must during the RMP process, consider a recreation spectrum, one that will provide high quality recreation opportunities for various user groups.	As stated in Table 2.1.13 (Recreation Resources) in the PRMP/FEIS Section 2.4.11 Recreation Goals and Objectives, one of the recreation resource goals of the RMP is to: "Assure that there is a spectrum of recreation opportunities and settings through comprehensive integrated activity level planning."	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	RE39 (RE-S)	The new RMP including recreation and ORV must comply w/ fed regulations. Specifically, VFO must take into account not only the increase in ORV use, but also the damages caused to natural resources by such use and the heightened conflict between user groups as heretofore non-motorized areas are being transformed into motorized areas. The DRMP fails to adequately address these and other resource damages and user conflicts.	See comment response RE20. The BLM would make future OHV route adjustments in areas designated as Open and/or Limited based on access needs, recreational opportunities, and natural resource constraints. These adjustments are beyond the scope of the PRMP/FEIS and would be analyzed at the activity planning level under other NEPA processes and documents.	

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Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	RE40 (RE-T)	Consider designating particular routes "administrative" routes, so that the permittee, lessee or BLM can access areas by motor vehicle if deemed necessary. The current trail system must also be segregated into motorized and non motorized portions.	The commenter does not provide additional information nor explain why or where trail segregation should be proposed.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	SD178 (PR-K)	The BLM is required to review wilderness characteristics and account for those values as it plans for the use of our public lands.	See Response to Comment SD1-I-1	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	SD237 (SD-GGG)	Unfortunately, the Draft Plan fails to provide any meaningful protection for the wilderness quality lands that do not currently fall within the boundaries of existing WSAs	See Response to Comment SD234-O-17.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	SD238 (SD-HHH)	The draft RMP fails to consider fully and to analyze the full spectrum of available management options that could provide protection of wilderness characteristics, as provided by FLPMA and BLM instruction. Rather, every alternative allows some degree of leasing, development and motorized recreation within these areas and real protection from certain damaging actions essentially only exist within the existing WSAs…even under ALT C	See Response to Comment SD234-O-17.	
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	SD239 (SD-III)	The draft RMP fails to comply with its FLPMA and NEPA responsibilities in its consideration and analysis of areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) and fails to propose designations necessary to protect important resource values. The DRMP also fails to give priority to ACEC designation. The BLM's only significant treatment of ACEC nomination is in Appendix G. Furthermore, SUWA was not notified of the decisions regarding our nominations. The lack of written record and rationale is in direct	The public was notified in a supplement to the notice of availability of the Draft RMP and Draft EIS for the Vernal Field Office to list proposed areas of critical environmental concern and specific associated resource use limitations for public lands was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005. This NOA addressed ACECs within the Vernal Field Office and identified an associated 60-day public comment period.	

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			violation of BLM's manual 1613.33.		
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance	O-47	WF48	No surface disturbing activities within two miles of active sage grouse leks from March 1 to June 15. No surface disturbing activities within one-quarter mile of active sage grouse leks year round. No permanent facilities or structures would be allowed within two miles. Within .5 mile of known active leks, the best available technology should be used to reduce noise, such as installation of multi cylinder pumps, hospital sound mufflers, and the placement of exhaust systems.	A range of alternatives for protecting sage grouse is presented in Table 2.1.21 (Special Status Species) of the PRMP/FEIS.	