APPENDIX C

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BUFFALO FIELD OFFICE

FORTIFICATION CREEK RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT

SCOPING REPORT

Fortification Creek Planning Area
Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment

Scoping Report

February 2008

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Acronyms

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
AEM	adaptive environmental management
AMS	Analysis of the Management Situation
BFO	Buffalo Field Office
BLM	U.S. Bureau of Land Management
CBNG	coal bed natural gas
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FCPA	Fortification Creek Planning Area
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
FR	Federal Register
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
NRDC	Natural Resource Defense Council
NSO	No Surface Occupancy
O&G	Oil and Gas
PRB	Powder River Basin
RMP	Resource Management Plan
RMPA	Resource Management Plan Amendment
TL	Timing Limitation
WSA	Wilderness Study Area

1.0 Introduction

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Buffalo Field Office (BFO), is amending its 1985 Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM 1985) with a RMP Amendment (RMPA)/Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Fortification Creek Planning Area (FCPA). Existing land use decisions will be evaluated to determine whether they are still relevant given the mixed ownership pattern and other management challenges within the FCPA.

The Buffalo RMP and associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) were prepared in 1985 (BLM 1985); and amended by the Buffalo RMP (BLM 2001) and changes to BLM policy. Additional management decisions for the FCPA are described in the Powder River Basin (PRB) Oil and Gas (O&G) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) (PRB O&G FEIS) (BLM 2003).

The 1985 RMP identified an area of approximately 12,415 acres as having wilderness characteristics and established it as the Fortification Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA). In addition, the 1985 RMP stated that the area surrounding the WSA would require special management. The resource values identified for this area were orderly mineral development, protecting wildlife habitat and watershed areas, and maintaining wilderness values. Additionally, an elk calving range No Surface Disturbance (NSO), elk crucial winter range timing limitation (TL), protections for erosive soil, and the requirement for piping oil and gas production out of the elk crucial winter range were included.

An Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) was proposed during scoping for the PRB O&G FEIS (BLM 2003). BLM verified that the area meets the relevance criteria for scenic value and wildlife. It also meets the importance criteria for local significant qualities, has circumstances that make it fragile and unique (isolated elk herd and minimal impacts from man), and has been recognized as warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns. A final decision on whether to designate an ACEC in this area was deferred (BLM 2003).

According to the BLM Handbook, H-1601-1 – Land Use Planning Handbook, and consistent with the goals, standards, and objectives for the FCPA, the BLM will make the following special management area determinations in the RMPA:

- Whether to designate an ACEC and identify goals, standards, and objectives for the ACEC, as well as general management practices and uses, including necessary constraints and mitigation measures (see BLM Manual 1613).
- Whether to conduct a land exchange with the State of Wyoming for 640 acres of State land in the WSA.
- Whether to allow overhead power lines on Federal surface land where it is currently restricted.
- Whether to continue the RMP management objectives for important resource values identified for the FCPA (steep slopes, erosive soils, elk habitat, archaeological and paleontological resources, and visual resources) and the geographical extent of the identified resource values.
- Whether to identify tracts for an exchange for the State owned surface and minerals.

This report summarizes the comments made during the scoping period.

1.1 Description of the Planning Area

The FCPA (Planning Area) is located in the PRB in Campbell, Johnson, and Sheridan Counties, northeastern Wyoming (Figure 1). The Planning Area is generally bounded on the northeast by Wild Horse Creek, on the west by the Powder River, and on the south by Fortification and Montgomery Roads.

Total acreage within the Fortification Creek planning boundary is 100,655 acres. The plan will amend the management of 42,755 acres of public lands managed by the BLM. There are approximately 52,576 acres of private surface and 5,324 acres of State of Wyoming surface and subsurface land in the area. The BLM includes these lands in the Planning Area because BLM land use decisions may affect non-BLM lands, and may be affected by activities on private and state lands. The Fortification Creek RMPA will include decisions for BLM administered public lands only.

With generally rugged topography, the area is primarily shrublands, with ridges covered by juniper woodlands. This diverse landscape is home to an isolated elk herd as well as a variety of other wildlife.

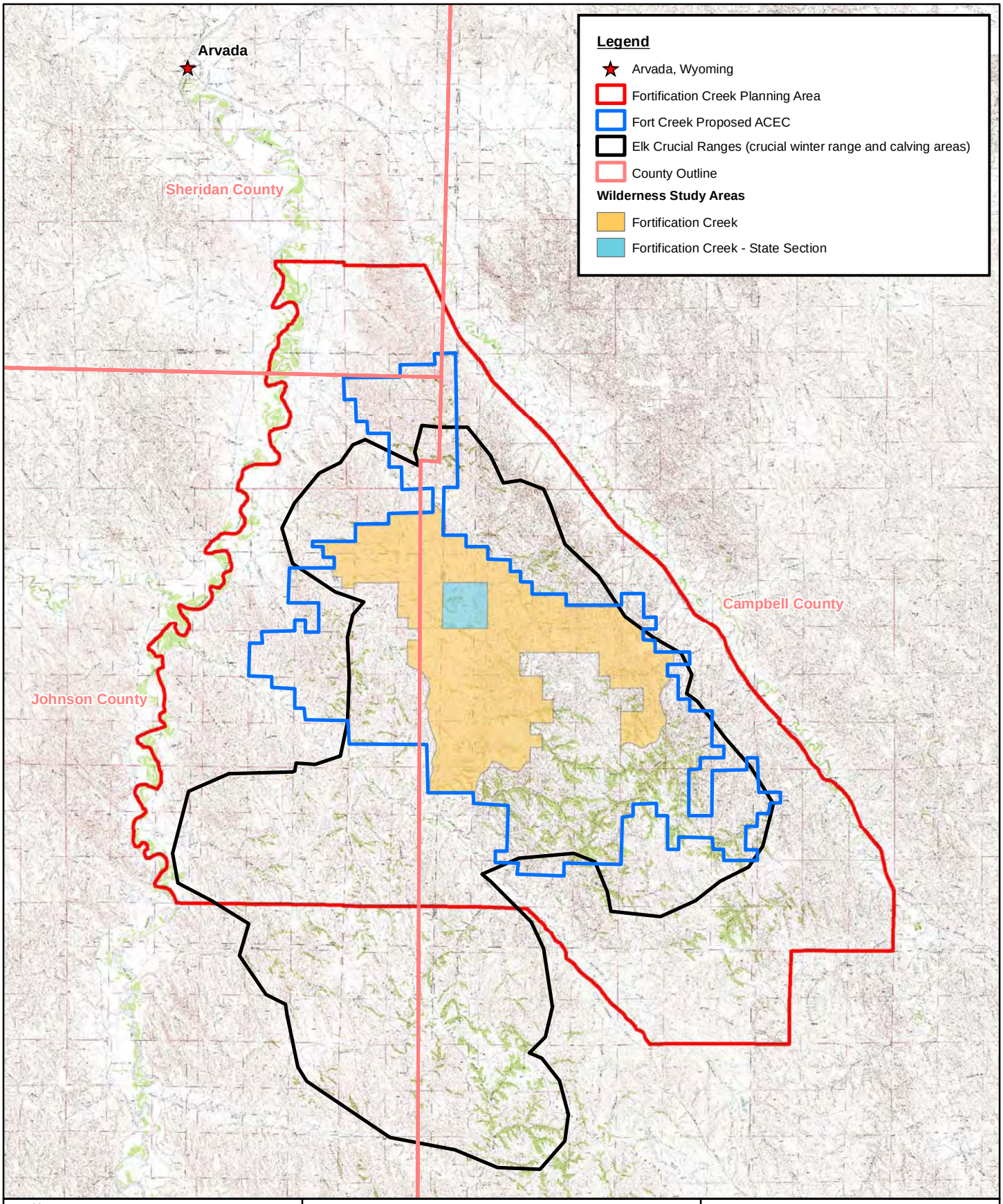
The area is landlocked by private property and there is no general public access into the Planning Area. The area is used lightly for hunting. Human activity is visible throughout the surrounding landscape with gas field developments on the south and east, and private ranches surrounding the Planning Area.

2.0 The Scoping Process

The BLM BFO has completed the scoping process to determine the relevant issues that will influence the scope of the environmental analysis and alternatives that will be analyzed in the Fortification Creek RMPA/EA. Scoping is conducted in the early phase of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process and is used to determine the breadth and depth of the RMPA/EA. The BFO will use the comments received during the scoping period to determine:

- Significant issues to be addressed;
- Depth of the analysis;
- Alternatives to be assessed; and
- Potential environmental and socioeconomic effects of the various alternatives.

The formal scoping period began on August 20, 2007 with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register (FR). Written comments on the proposed RMPA/EA were accepted through November 30, 2007.



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Scale 1:185,000

ecology and environment, inc.
International Specialists in the Environment
Seattle, Washington

Buffalo Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment Fortification Creek Planning Area

Campbell, Johnson, and Sheridan Counties, Wyoming

Figure 1
Fortification Creek Planning Area

Map Reference:

Date:	GIS:	Project ID:
11/28/2007	avh	

During the scoping period, the BFO held three public scoping meetings in Wyoming as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Public Scoping Meetings

Town	Date	Location
Gillette	Tuesday, October 30, 2007	Campbell County Extension, 1000 Douglas Highway
Buffalo	Wednesday, October 31, 2007	BLM Office, 1425 Fort Street
Sheridan	Thursday, November 1, 2007	Fulmer Public Library, 335 W. Alger

The informal format of the scoping meetings allowed meeting participants to review displays, maps, and literature and to meet members of the RMPA/EA project team, agency staff, and contractors to discuss the project. Repositories were provided to receive written comments. Approximately 26 people attended the meeting in Gillette, 23 in Buffalo, and 15 in Sheridan. These are estimates because not all participants who attended the meetings signed-in.

In addition to the public scoping meetings, scoping activities included:

- Publishing press releases regarding public scoping and the public scoping meetings in the Sheridan Press, Gillette News Record, and the Buffalo Bulletin;
- Submitting press releases to the Casper Star Tribune, the Associated Press, and the United Press;
- Mailing the scoping new release to interested parties including: landowners; conservation organizations; oil and gas companies; individuals expressing past interest in the FCPA; congressional representatives; the counties of Sheridan, Campbell, and Johnson; and the State of Wyoming;
- Posting the NOI, scoping press release, and scoping meeting schedule on the BLM's Fortification Creek Area RMPA website: http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/bfodocs/fortification_creek.html;
- Posting project contact information on the Fortification Creek Area website (address above);
- Contacting several local radio stations to announce the scoping period and public meetings;
- Initiating consultation with some of the cooperating agencies in preparation for the public scoping meetings; and
- Publishing a press release announcing the extension of the public scoping comment period.

Public scoping documents are included in Appendix A.

2.1 Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies formally contacted during the scoping process included: Sheridan County, Campbell County, Johnson County, and the State of Wyoming.

2.2 Collaboration With Tribes

No tribes were formally contacted during the public scoping process.

3.0 Scoping Issue Summary

All public documents were compiled in a database for internal analysis. A total of 25,722 formal comment letters were received during the public scoping period. Of the total comment letters received, 25,661 comment letters (25,645 form letters and 16 unique letters) were received via the Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC). Table 2 provides a summary of comment letters received:

Table 2 Comment Summary

Organization Type	Number of Comment Letters	Name/Title
Agency	4	Wyoming Office of Lands and Investments
		Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality – Air Quality Division
		Wyoming Game and Fish Department
		Environmental Protection Agency
Industry	6	Yates Petroleum Corporation
		Gene R. George & Associates (on behalf of Yates Petroleum Corporation)
		Anadarko Petroleum Corporation
		Petroleum Association of Wyoming
		Devon Energy Corporation
		Williams Exploration & Development
Land Owner	7	Floyd Land and Livestock (2)
		Mark & Julie Lopez
		Allen Mooney
		Robert Sorenson
		Jill Sorenson
		Brett Sorenson
Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC)	25,645	Form Letters
NRDC	16	Unique Letters
Private Citizen	36	Unique Letters
Other Organizations	8	The Wilderness Society

Table 2 Comment Summary		
Organization Type	**Number of Comment Letters**	**Name/Title**
		Wyoming Wilderness Association
		National Wildlife Federation/Wyoming Wildlife Federation
		The Nature Conservancy
		Biodiversity Conservation Alliance
		Powder River Basin Resource Council
		Wyoming Backcountry Horsemen of America
		Coalition of: Powder River Basin Resource Council Natural Resourced Defense Council Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club Wyoming Wildlife Federation Wyoming Outdoor Council National Wildlife Federation The Wilderness Society

The form letters via the NRDC were in support of the creation of an ACEC, maintaining existing management objectives to protect sensitive resources in the FCPA, a land exchange for the State parcel surrounded by the WSA, underground power lines and required phased development with proven reclamation. Copies of the two form letters received are included in Appendix B.

Specific form letter comments included the following:

- Do not to approve any additional energy development within the FCPA until a RMPA has been completed;
- Do not open this area to development without a comprehensive analysis of the full impacts of that activity on the area;
- The FCPA offers an unspoiled haven and prime habitat for an isolated elk herd and other species;
- The Powder River provides habitat for several imperiled fish species;
- The RMPA should maintain and formally adopt current management prescriptions for the ACEC;
- Continue the current management objectives for all resource values identified in the FCPA, such as steep slopes, erosive soils, elk habitat, and archaeological resources;
- Expand the geographic extent of these management prescriptions where appropriate;

- Work toward exchanging state land in the core of the FCPA to increase conservation and wildlife habitat;
- Maintain the requirement for underground power lines; and
- Require phased development with proven reclamation.

The majority of the unique comments received are in favor of the creation of a formal ACEC, support a prohibition of overhead transmission lines, and favor a land exchange for the State parcel. Of those comments that explicitly addressed whether or not to designate an ACEC in the FCPA, 24 were in favor of the ACEC, while nine were opposed. Of those comments that specifically addressed whether or not overhead transmission lines should be allowed in the area, 24 supported the current restriction, while three letters expressed safety concerns over mandating buried lines and requested that overhead lines be allowed. Out of those comments that specifically addressed a potential land exchange for the state parcel surrounded by the WSA, 24 letters supported the exchange, while five were opposed. Thirteen of the responses specifically stated that they are against all further drilling in the FCPA while several letters specifically supported drilling the FCPA.

The primary issues identified were wildlife and wildlife habitat (particularly the elk herd), cultural resources, and visuals/aesthetics (wilderness characteristics). Specific issues identified in the unique letters include:

- Impacts to the existing elk herd numbers and range;
- Impacts to existing and unidentified cultural resources and artifacts;
- The loss of sensitive ecosystems and habitats;
- Inclusion of the area in the National Wilderness Preservation System;
- Honoring adjacent land owner rights and existing water rights;
- Compliance with the Energy Policy Act of 2005;
- Postponement of any new coal bed natural gas (CBNG) approvals until completion of the RMPA/EA;
- Honoring existing leases in the FCPA;
- The loss of revenue from management decisions which could impede CBNG development on state and private lands;
- Project specific air quality modeling, impact assessment, and monitoring;
- Impacts to big-game hunting;
- Restrictions placed on CBNG development (which may render some sites uneconomical);
- Loss of wilderness characteristics and scenery;
- Impacts to sensitive/rare species (including aquatic species in the Powder River);
- Designation or expansion of the ACEC;
- Water quality in the watershed;
- Providing public access into the area;

- Reclamation of steep slopes/sensitive soils;
- Consideration of cumulative effects; and
- The necessity of completing an EIS instead of an EA.

Several responses suggested mitigation measures and alternatives, including:

- Canceling or exchanging leases in crucial and parturition elk ranges;
- Prohibiting facilities in the elk crucial winter and parturition ranges;
- Expanding the boundary of the WSA;
- Prohibiting overhead power lines;
- Providing public access into the WSA;
- Requiring two-track roads;
- Requiring wastewater be injected into poor quality aquifers;
- Requiring directional drilling;
- Considering or requiring phased development; and
- Requiring more cultural surveys be completed prior to further development.

Many of the responses supported the continued management of resources in the FCPA as specified in the 2001 RMP. Planning issues are summarized in Table 3

Table 3 Planning Issues Raised by Public During Scoping Comments (Percent of Unique Comments)
No Drilling Should Occur Without Further Impacts Analysis (27%)
The ACEC Should be Formalized (31%)
Preservation of Wildlife or Elk Habitat (42%)
The Area Should be Drilled for Energy Development (9%)

4.0 Draft Planning Criteria

Planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that are developed to guide and direct the planning revision of the FCPA RMPA/EA. Planning criteria are based on laws and regulations; guidance provided by the BLM Wyoming State Director; results of consultation and coordination with the public, other agencies and governmental entities, and Indian tribes; analysis of information pertinent to the Planning Area; public input; and professional judgment. The planning criteria focus on the development of management options and alternatives, analysis of their effects, and selection of the Preferred Alternative and the Proposed RMPA/Final EA. Additional planning criteria may be identified as the planning process progresses.

Planning Criteria proposed for the FCPA RMPA include:

- The amendment will comply with Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and all other applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The land use plan amendment process

will be governed by the planning regulations in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1610 and BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 in effect.

- The proposed action and alternatives will be analyzed in accordance with the NEPA.
- Lands affected by the proposed plan amendment will be public land and mineral estate managed by BLM. No decisions will be made relative to non-BLM administered lands or non-federal minerals.
- Broad-based public participation will be an integral part of the planning process.
- The plan amendment will recognize all valid existing rights.
- The planning team will work cooperatively and collaboratively with cooperating agencies and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals. The amended plan will be consistent with existing non-Federal plans and policies, provided the decisions in the existing plans are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of Federal law, and regulations applicable to public lands.
- The potentially affected WSA will continue to be managed under the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review until Congress either designates all or portions of the WSA as wilderness or releases the lands from further wilderness consideration.
- The planning process will involve American Indian tribal governments and will provide strategies for the protection of recognized traditional uses.
- The RMPA may include adaptive environmental management (AEM) principles and protocol to deal with unknown future issues and outcomes.

5.0 Summary of Future Steps in the Planning Process

Public scoping is part of Step 1 in the BLM nine-step land use planning process. The scoping process assists in the identification of issues and concerns and aids in the development of potential alternatives.

Step 1 – Identify the issues
Step 2 – Develop planning criteria
Step 3 – Collect/consolidate data
Step 4 – Prepare Analysis of the Management Situation
Step 5 – Formulate alternatives
Step 6 – Estimate effects
Step 7 – Select the preferred alternative and conduct public review and obtain comments
Step 8 – Prepare Decision Record
Step 9 – Monitor and evaluate

Future steps in the planning process include development of the planning criteria and data gathering in order to prepare the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS). The AMS presents baseline information for resources or topics by describing indicators, current conditions, trends, and forecasts. The AMS focuses on the major issues identified during scoping that provide the basis for formulating reasonable alternatives.

Once a list of reasonable alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the proposed amendment are defined, the environmental impacts of each alternative will be analyzed in an Environmental Assessment. Based on the assessment of potential impacts and the purpose and need for the amendment, a preferred alternative will be identified. The draft RMPA/EA will then become available for public review and comments on the document will be received by the BFO for 60 days.

Based on public and agency comments, the proposed RMPA/EA will be revised and made available to the public for a 30-day protest period. If no protests are received, the Field Manager will sign a Decision Record that will identify which management decisions will be included in the RMPA.

6.0 References

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 1985. Resource Management Plan Record of Decision, Buffalo District Office, Buffalo, Wyoming. Bureau of Land Management. U.S. Department of the Interior.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2001. Approved Resource Management Plan for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management Buffalo Field Office, Buffalo, Wyoming. Bureau of Land Management. Department of the Interior.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 2003. Final Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Plan Amendment for the Powder River Basin Oil and Gas Project. Buffalo Field Office.

Appendix A

Public Scoping Documents

Notice of Intent (NOI) To Amend the Resource Management Plan for the Buffalo Field Office, Wyoming

[Federal Register: August 20, 2007 (Volume 72, Number 160)]
[Notices]
[Page 46511-46512]
From the Federal Register Online via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov]
[DOCID:fr20au07-93]

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
[WY-070-07-1610-DU]

Notice of Intent (NOI) To Amend the Resource Management Plan for the Buffalo Field Office, Wyoming

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.
ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Buffalo Field Office, Wyoming, proposes to amend its 1985 Resource Management Plan (RMP) because of changes in circumstances and proposed actions that may result in changes in the scope of resource uses and/or changes in decisions of the approved plan. The BLM will evaluate the following: (1) Management guidance for the Fortification Creek area, (2) Designation of an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in the Fortification Creek area, and (3) a potential land exchange with the

State of Wyoming to consolidate ownership and facilitate management of the Fortification Creek area. The BLM may consider further land use planning decisions for the area surrounding the proposed ACEC.

DATES: Scoping for the proposed plan amendment will commence on the date that this notice is published in the Federal Register. The BLM will host several public, open house meetings to provide additional information about the proposed amendment, and identify any additional resource information or concerns. The BLM will announce the dates and locations of public meetings at least 15 days in advance through local news media, Web site announcements, or mailings. Written comments will be accepted for 30 calendar days after the last public meeting.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be submitted to the BLM through any of the following methods:

- Web site: http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/bfodocs/fortification_creek.html;
- E-mail: Fort_Crk_WYMail@blm.gov;
- Fax: (307) 684-1122;
- Mail: Fortification Creek RMP Amendment, BLM Buffalo Field Office, 1425 Fort Street, Buffalo, WY 82834; or
- By personal delivery to the Buffalo Field Office or at a BLM-hosted public meeting.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Bills, Project Manager, BLM Buffalo Field Office, 1425 Fort Street, Buffalo, Wyoming 82834, or by telephone at (307) 684-1133.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Buffalo RMP and associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) were prepared in 1985; the RMP was amended in 2003. The 1985 RMP identified an area of approximately 12,415 acres as having wilderness characteristics and established it as the Fortification Creek (Fort Creek) Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The 1985

RMP also evaluated an area adjacent to the Fort Creek WSA to determine whether it met ACEC relevance and importance criteria, but it did not designate the area as an ACEC in its Record of Decision (ROD). In addition, the 1985 RMP stated that the area surrounding the WSA would require special management. However, it did not specify what resource values were in need of special management, nor did it clearly describe limitations or use restrictions that might be needed to manage those resource values. This RMP amendment process will evaluate resources and issues related to the planning criteria, including the designation of an area surrounding the Fort Creek WSA as an ACEC and the appropriate management actions and use restrictions for the ACEC, if designated. The Fort Creek area is located in Campbell, Johnson, and Sheridan Counties, Wyoming.

The purpose of the scoping process is to determine relevant issues that will influence the scope of the environmental analysis and alternatives. Scoping comments will also guide the planning process. The BLM will prepare an associated NEPA document, either an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), based on scoping comments and issues.

[[Page 46512]]

The BLM has identified the following preliminary issues:

• Management of the Fort Creek Area. Should the BLM recommend the area, or a portion of the area, as an ACEC, or should it establish a management area (MA) with specific goals and objectives?

• Resource Values and Limitations. If the BLM concludes that some or all of the Fort Creek Planning Area merit establishment of an ACEC, what resource values and what measures would be appropriate to manage the area and its resources?

If the BLM decides that the Fort Creek Planning Area does not merit ACEC status, the BLM will determine what resources should be evaluated for activities and use limitations within the area:

1. Uses. Appropriate use and occupancy of the public lands in the Fort Creek area for energy resources.

2. Management Activities. Continue management activities for resource values currently identified in the RMP, or generate new goals and objectives and use limitations for the protection of steep slopes, erosive soils, elk habitat, cultural resources and visual resources.

3. Landownership Adjustments. Identify opportunities, if any, to exchange lands with other landowners including the State of Wyoming for the purpose of consolidating public lands and maintaining continuous wildlife habitat.

The preliminary land use planning criteria are:

1. The amendment will be in compliance with FLPMA and applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The land use plan amendment process will be governed by the planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610 and BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1.

2. The proposed action and alternatives will be analyzed in accordance with NEPA.

3. Lands affected by the proposed plan amendment include public surface and mineral estate managed by the BLM. No decisions will be made relative to non-BLM administered lands or non-federal minerals.

4. Broad-based public participation will be an integral part of the planning process.

5. The plan amendment will recognize all valid existing rights.

6. The BLM will work with cooperating agencies and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals. The amended RMP will be consistent with existing non-Federal plans and policies, provided the decisions in the existing plans are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of Federal law and regulations for public lands.

7. The WSA will continue to be managed under the BLM's Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review until Congress either designates all or portions of the WSA as wilderness or releases the lands from further wilderness consideration.

8. The planning process will involve consultation with American

Indian tribal governments to provide strategies for the protection of recognized traditional uses.

9. The RMP amendment may include adaptive environmental management (AEM) principles and protocol to deal with future issues and outcomes.

All comment submittals must include the commenter's name and street address. Comments, including the names and street addresses of respondent, will be available for public review at the Buffalo Field Office listed above during its business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except for Federal holidays. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment--including your personal identifying information--may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Alan Rabinoff,
Acting State Director.
[FR Doc. E7-16332 Filed 8-17-07; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 4310-22-P

RMP Amendment

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Buffalo Field Office (BFO) is proposing to amend its 1985 Resource Management Plan (RMP) with an associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Fortification Creek Planning Area (FCPA) (map attached). Existing land use decisions need to be evaluated to determine whether they are still relevant given the mixed ownership pattern and other management challenges within the FCPA.

The Buffalo Resource Management Plan (RMP) was originally completed in October 1985, and an update was completed in April 2001. Current RMP decisions are on the Buffalo Field Office web site, www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/field_offices/Buffalo/bfoplan.html.

Preliminary issues identified for the Fortification Creek amendment include:

- Whether to manage a proposed Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) area formally as an ACEC.
- Whether overhead power should be allowed on Federal surface where it is currently restricted.
- Whether to continue the RMP management objectives for any or all of the resource values identified for the FCPA (steep slopes, erosive soils, elk habitat, archaeological/paleontological resources, visual resources) and the geographic extent of the identified resource values.
- Whether to identify tracts for an exchange for the State owned surface and minerals.

BLM is requesting public comments to identify relevant issues. Useful comments are those that are specific, identify additional relevant issues, and/or determine the extent of the relevant issues. Comments will be accepted through November 10, 2007.

Written comments submitted by mail should be sent to the BLM Buffalo Field Office, Attention Thomas Bills, Project Manager, 1425 Fort Street, Buffalo, Wyoming 82834. Comments may also be sent by facsimile to the attention: Thomas Bills at 307-684-1122; or sent electronically to: Fort_Crk_WYMail@blm.gov.

BLM will host public scoping meetings from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm at the following locations:

Town	Date	Location
Gillette	Tues., Oct. 30	Campbell County Extension, 1000 Douglas Hwy
Buffalo	Wed., Oct. 31	BLM office, 1425 Fort Street
Sheridan	Thurs., Nov. 1	Fulmer Public Library, 335 W. Alger

Your comments are important and will be considered in the environmental analysis process. If you comment, your name will be added to a mailing list in order to provide you with future information regarding the Fortification Creek amendment.

The BLM has established a web site for the Fortification Creek amendment, located at: www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/bfodocs/fortification_creek.html. BLM will provide additional opportunities for public participation during the development of the Fortification Creek Amendment/EA.

For more information, contact Thomas Bills at 307-684-1133.

October 23, 2007

Contact: Lesley Collins,
307-261-7603

Media Advisory
LM Buffalo Field Office Hosts Scoping Meetings

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Buffalo Field Office (BFO) is proposing to amend its 1985 Resource Management Plan (RMP) with an associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Fortification Creek Planning Area (FCPA). Existing land use decisions need to be evaluated to determine whether they are still relevant given the mixed ownership pattern and other management challenges within the FCPA.

BLM is requesting public comments to identify relevant issues. Comments will be accepted through November 10, 2007.

Who: Bureau of Land Management, Buffalo Field Office

What: BLM will host public scoping meetings from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

When:

Town	Date	Location
Gillette	October 30, 2007	Campbell County Extension, 1000 Douglas Hwy
Buffalo	October 31, 2007	BLM office, 1425 Fort Street
Sheridan	November 1, 2007	Fulmer Public Library, 335 W. Alger

For more information contact Thomas Bills at 307-684-1133.

-BLM-

Appendix B
Form Letter Comments

Form Letter #1

Thomas Bills,
BLM Project Manager
1425 Fort Street
Buffalo, WY 82834

Dear Mr. Bills,

I urge the BLM not to approve any additional energy development within the Fortification Creek area until a Resource Management Plan amendment has been completed. It is inappropriate to open this pristine wildland to development without a comprehensive analysis of the full impacts of that activity on the area's outstanding natural and cultural values. The Fortification Creek area offers an unspoiled haven for wildlife within a region that has been transformed by massive industrialization. It provides prime habitat for an isolated herd of rare high-desert elk, as well as mule deer, pronghorn, whitetail deer, bald eagles, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, burrowing owls, sage grouse, bobcats and mountain lions. The Powder River, which borders the area on one side, is the only remaining undammed prairie river in the country and provides habitat for several imperiled fish species, including sturgeon chub, shovelnose sturgeon, sauger and goldeye. The RMP amendment should maintain and formally adopt current management prescriptions for the Area of Critical Environmental Concern and continue the current management objectives for all of the resource values identified in the Fortification Creek area, such as steep slopes, erosive soils, elk habitat and archaeological resources. In addition, I urge the BLM to expand the geographic extent of these management prescriptions where appropriate, work toward exchanging state land in the core of the Fortification Creek area to increase conservation and wildlife habitat, maintain the requirement for underground power lines and require phased development with proven reclamation.

Sincerely,

Form Letter #2

Project Manager Thomas Bills
BLM Buffalo Field Office
1425 Fort Street
Buffalo, WY 82834

Dear Mr. Bills,

The Fortification Creek Planning Area's rugged terrain and critical wildlife habitat are an irreplaceable part of the Powder River Basin's wildland ecosystem. By BLM's own accounts, the 1400 well coal bed methane project proposed for the area would result in the death or displacement of four fifths of the area's isolated high desert elk herd; many of the area's other rich resources will no doubt be degraded or destroyed in the process. BLM should protect this special place by maintaining and expanding the protective

management prescriptions outlined in its 1985 Resource Management Plan. Famous for its rugged terrain and world-class hunting, BLM's 1985 Resource Management Plan also identified the following isolated prairie elk herd numbering 200-300 elk; a 12,000 acre Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in the center of the area; a proposed Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) to protect the area's critical wildlife habitat, rich cultural, historic, and paleontological resources; "High Quality" visual resources; and "breaks" topography consisting of steep slopes with highly erosive soils, especially vulnerable to impacts from oil and gas development. These values merit protection. Maintain and formally adopt current management prescriptions for the proposed ACEC; Not allow overhead power lines in the Fortification Creek Planning Area; continue the current RMP management objectives for all of the resource values identified for the Fortification Creek Planning Area (steep slopes, erosive soils, elk habitat, archaeological/paleontological and cultural resources, etc.) and expand the geographic area that will be considered; and actively search out tracts of land that would be suitable exchanges for the State-owned surface and minerals in the core of the Fortification Creek Planning Area; Further, no additional development should occur within the Fortification Creek Planning Area until BLM has properly analyzed all the resources values. Piecemeal analysis and approval of CBM development proposals before the Fortification Creek RMP Amendment is completed would only compromise BLM's management of other resources. Thank you for your time and for considering my comments.

Sincerely