

# Final EIS P. 25 29

## Alternatives

modified will depend on the type of action, the exact location of the action within the biologic buffer zone, and the exact dates on which different phases of an action would occur. A waiver may be granted if it is determined that crucial habitat would not be significantly affected during important seasons. The current USFWS seasonal guidelines are as follows: golden eagle, February 1 through July 15; osprey and merlin, April 15 through August 15; prairie falcon, March 15 through August 1; ferruginous hawk, March 15 through July 15; Cooper's hawk, April 1 through August 15; burrowing owl, April 15 through July 15; and Swainson's hawk, April 1 through July 15.

An active nest is defined as one that has been used at least once during the previous three years. The size of each buffer zone will be determined case by case, and specific raptor nesting periods, topography, and raptor prey habitat surrounding the nest site will be considered. For the purpose of environmental analysis, it is assumed that most buffer zones surrounding high-interest raptor nests encompass a radius of about ½ mile; thus, approximately 101,000 acres of federal minerals (14,000 acres of federal surface) are affected by this decision.

Rationale: The dates in the guidelines correspond with the approximate time of nest construction, egg laying, incubation, and fledging of each raptor species. Continuous surface-disturbing activity can cause nest abandonment, especially during nest building and incubation. Raptor species often can tolerate nearby human activity when the activity is screened by vegetation or topography. For this reason, site-specific analysis is needed before any action takes place.

**WHM-6: Develop HMPs to improve and protect wildlife habitat in the following priority areas: South Big Horns HMP (1985), including a portion or all of the Gardner Mountain and North Fork WSAs; Wetlands and Aquatic HMP (1986); and Powder River Breaks HMP (1987).**

The south Big Horns HMP area, which covers approximately 108,000 acres of public surface, is essential habitat for many wildlife species, including elk, mule deer, antelope, mountain lion, small game, and nongame species. The need for this HMP was initially identified in the previous MFP. Work is underway, and the HMP is expected to be completed by summer 1985, in accordance with the MFP.

The wetlands/aquatic HMP will be developed for the entire resource area to emphasize water

quality and wetland, riparian, and fisheries habitat that is in less than satisfactory condition. Priority will be first, maintenance or improvement of 50 miles of streams in the south Big Horns; second, maintenance or improvement of riparian and wetland areas in less than good condition throughout the resource area.

The Powder River Breaks HMP will cover about 257,000 acres. The area contains important winter and yearlong range for elk, mule deer, and antelope, as well as habitat for numerous small game and nongame species.

All HMPs will be developed in cooperation with the WGFD under authority of the Sikes Act. Implementation of the HMPs will be coordinated with the development of the AMPs prepared for the "I" category allotments and with other activity plans.

Rationale: Crucial winter and yearlong habitat for elk and deer in the south Big Horns is limited by the availability of forage, cover, and water. Implementation of the HMP will improve these habitat conditions and limit habitat degradation from timber harvesting, mineral development, livestock grazing, and recreational pursuits.

A wetland HMP is needed to maintain the streams or wetland areas on BLM-administered land that are now in good condition and to improve streams or wetland areas in less than satisfactory condition. Objectives are to increase duck and goose production, to create additional fish habitat, and to improve habitat for all wildlife species that use wetland sites.

Forage and water are limited in many areas in the Powder River Breaks. Implementation of the HMP will improve habitat conditions for all wildlife. Emphasis will be placed on meeting population objectives stated in the WGFD strategic plan.

**WHM-7: Prohibit surface disturbance or occupancy within ½ mile of communal winter roosts for bald eagles (see map 14), and prohibit surface disturbance within a biologic buffer zone around the roosts from November 1 through March 30. The prohibition can be waived by the authorized officer.** Whether or not the prohibition is waived will depend on the type of action, the exact location of the action within the boundaries of the biologic buffer zone, and the exact dates on which the different phases of the action would occur. A waiver may be granted if it is determined that crucial habitat would not be affected during the most important part of the season.

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The 1/2-mile zone around roosts will be analyzed and possibly revised once a specific activity is proposed. Biologic buffer zones will then be established on the basis of topography, vegetative screening, and essential foraging areas. A total of approximately 500 acres will be affected by the 1/2-mile "no surface occupancy" designation and approximately 1,400 more acres by the seasonal limitation.

Rationale: Bald eagles choose communal roost sites for specific habitat characteristics such as proximity to available food and aspect and density of conifer or deciduous trees, which afford protection from inclement weather. This endangered species will readily be displaced from an area by continuous surface-disturbing activity. This could cause them to expend more metabolic energy in search of food and thermal cover, with a resultant decline in reproduction.

Proposed decisions from other programs that apply to wildlife habitat management are CRM-2, FM-3, GM-3, LR-2, LR-4, RVRM-2, SWAM-1, SWAM-2, SWAM-3, and SWAM-4.

**APPROVAL OF THE RMP**

The proposed decisions described above constitute the proposed management plan for the Buffalo Resource Area. They will become effective upon approval of a record of decision.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE RMP**

The Buffalo Resource Area plan will be continually monitored and evaluated during its ten-year life for its management effectiveness and for its ability to meet public needs and demands, BLM policy, and stated objectives. Should monitoring reveal that changes in the plan are necessary, they can be achieved through plan maintenance (administrative modification), amendments to specific parts of the plan, or a new or revised RMP/EIS.

**ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS FOR CHAPTER 2**

Page numbers refer to pages in the second draft RMP/EIS. A partial paragraph at the top of a column counts as paragraph 1. The changed or added material in the "Should Read" column is in bold type.

Draft Page	Column	Para-graph	Line(s)	Should Read
16	2	Second	heading	Maximum <b>Livestock</b> Forage Production on "I" Allotments
20	2	2	14, 15	... two WSAs and the Middle Fork Management Area. <b>The fire classifications are shown on map 4; the locations of the WSAs and the Middle Fork Management Area are shown on map 3.</b>
26	2	6	2, 3	... of the Red Wall, which <b>has the potential for nomination as a National</b> ...
46	2	5	1-3	About <b>3,500</b> acres have been identified ... and approximately <b>170,000</b> acres are affected ...
48	1	1	3	... approximately <b>101,000</b> acres are affected ...

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## Environmental Consequences

TABLE 4-4  
RESTRICTIONS ON SURFACE-DISTURBING ACTIVITIES UNDER ALTERNATIVE B

Areas That Would Not be Leased for Oil and Gas	Federal Minerals (acreage) <sup>a</sup>	Total (acreage)	Federal Surface (acreage) <sup>a</sup>	Total (acreage)
Incorporated cities and towns		800		
"No lease total"		800		
<u>Areas With Year-Round "No Surface Occupancy" Provisions</u>				
<b>Wildlife</b>				
Elk calving grounds in Fortification Creek area <sup>b</sup>	4,900		3,800	
Big game winter ranges <sup>b</sup>	27,000		4,000	
Sage grouse leks <sup>b</sup>	3,500		200	
Sharp-tailed grouse leks <sup>b</sup>	240		80	
Eagle winter roosts <sup>b</sup>	300		80	
Wildlife subtotal		35,940		8,160
Area with slopes of more than 25%		281,100		172,100
<b>Cultural sites</b>				
Outlaw Cave Archeological District	60		30	
Cantonment Reno	600		600	
Dull Knife Battlefield	1,400		1,300	
Cultural resource subtotal		2,060		1,930
<b>Visual features</b>				
Red wall				
Middle Fork Canyon	7,200		7,200	
Dry Creek Petrified Tree	12,200		10,200	
	40		40	
Visual subtotal		19,400		17,440
<b>North Middle Pumpkin Butte and South Middle Pumpkin Butte</b>				
Streams, reservoirs, and wells <sup>c</sup>		1,000		1,000
County, state, and federal highways and railroads		19,000		1,200
		1,500		400
<b>Gillette R&amp;PP area</b>				
Sheridan R&PP area	40		40	
	560		560	
R&PP subtotal		600		600
Year Round "No Surface Occupancy" total		360,640		202,830
<u>Areas With Seasonal "No Surface Occupancy" Provisions</u>				
<b>Wildlife</b>				
Big game winter range b;c (11/30 - 5/1)	106,000		46,000	
Big game parturition areas <sup>b</sup> (5/1 - 6/30)	9,000		600	
Sage grouse nesting areas <sup>b</sup> (3/1 - 6/15)	170,000		8,000	
Sharp-tailed grouse nesting areas <sup>b</sup> (4/1 - 5/30)		3,000		800
Raptor nests <sup>b</sup> (3/1 - 6/30)	101,000		14,000	
Eagle winter roosts <sup>b</sup> (11/1 - 3/30)	1,700		0	
Wildlife subtotal		390,700		69,400
Severe erosion hazard (3/1 - 6/15)		1,819,000		655,000
Seasonal "No Surface Occupancy" total		2,209,700		724,000

NOTE: Some restrictions contain provisions permitting a waiver by the authorized officer if the restriction does not apply in a particular case. In some cases, two or more restrictions may overlap on one area.

a. Most acreage figures are approximate. Acreage figures for federal minerals apply to oil and gas development and development of salable minerals. Acreage figures for federal surface apply to all other actions.

b. Acreage figures concerning wildlife populations are estimates. Wildlife populations fluctuate, and restrictions on surface-disturbing activities may increase or decrease accordingly.

c. In these areas, surface disturbance is prohibited, but surface occupancy is permitted.

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## Environmental Consequences

REVISED TABLE 4-4  
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Incorporated cities and towns		800		0
"No lease" total		800		
<u>Areas With Year-Round "No Surface Occupancy" Provisions</u>				
Wildlife				
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Big game winter ranges <sup>b</sup>	4,900		3,800	
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	300		80	
Wildlife subtotal		35,940		8,160
Areas with slopes of more than 25%		281,100		172,100
Cultural sites				
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North Middle Pumpkin Butte and South Middle Pumpkin Butte				
Streams, reservoirs, and wells		1,000		1,000
State and federal highways		19,000		1,200
		1,500		400
Gillette R&PP area				
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	560		560	
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Eagle winter roosts <sup>b</sup> (11/1 - 3/30)	1,700		0	
Wildlife subtotal		394,700		69,400
Severe erosion hazard (3/1 - 6/15)		1,819,000		655,000

NOTE: Some restrictions contain provisions permitting a waiver by the authorized officer if the restriction does not apply in a particular case. In some cases, two or more restrictions may overlap on one area.

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## Alternatives

osprey, and merlin. Most buffer zones surrounding high-interest raptor nests encompass a radius of about ½ mile; thus, approximately 100,000 acres are affected by this decision. Specific raptor nesting periods and buffer zones will be considered case by case.

**Rationale:** The period March 1 to June 30 corresponds with the approximate time of nest construction, egg laying, incubation, and fledging of raptor species. Continuous surface-disturbing activity can cause nest abandonment, especially during nest building and incubation. Raptor species often can tolerate nearby human activity when the activity is screened by vegetation or topography. For this reason, site-specific analysis is needed before any action takes place.

**WHM-6: Develop HMPs to improve and protect wildlife habitat in the following priority areas: South Big Horns HMP (1985), including a portion or all of the Gardner Mountain and North Fork WSAs; Wetlands and Aquatic HMP (1986); and Powder River Breaks HMP (1987).**

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Buffer zones will be established on the basis of topography, vegetative screening, and essential foraging areas. A total of 500 acres will be affected by the "no surface occupancy" and approximately 1,400 more acres by the seasonal limitation.

**Rationale:** Bald eagles choose communal roost sites for specific habitat characteristics such as proximity to available food and aspect and density of conifer or deciduous trees, which afford protection from inclement weather. This endangered species will readily be displaced from an area by continuous surface-disturbing activity. This could cause them to expend more metabolic energy in search of food and thermal cover, with a resultant decline in reproduction.

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