SCOPING AND CONSULTATION

In order to encourage public involvement and to ensure that all interested parties were given an opportunity to participate in this planning process, the BLM, Casper Field Office mailed 128 letters and sent 32 email notifications requesting scoping comments. A public scoping meeting was held at the Casper Field Office on April 12, 2007. A total of 15 letters, emails, and completed comment forms were received prior to the end of the public scoping period on April 29, 2007. Comments available for public viewing are on file at the Casper Field Office.

The following issues represent a summary of comments received and were addressed in the development of the alternatives

- Maintaining all existing roads and trails
- Maintaining specific road networks
- Prohibiting the development of new roads
- Restricting OHV use, including ATVs, to a specific road network
- Signing all closed and user-created roads
- Preserving wildlife habitats
- Preserving available forage for livestock
- Preserving open space
- Preserving social and economic resources
- Allowing additional access points for newly acquired private lands
- Preserving historic OHV use in the area
- Considering off-road use for disabled hunters
- Damage caused by off-road vehicle use and the creation of new trails
- Reasons for prioritizing the Sand Hills TMA over oil and gas development areas where road construction is having a greater impact on wildlife habitat areas and visual resources.

The following comments are outside the scope of this document and were not considered further for the reasons provided:

- Closing public access to public lands.

  The BL M does not control public access into the Sand Hills. This area is surrounded by private lands. There is no legal or reasonable public access; therefore, no public lands would be closed by implementation of any of the alternatives.

- Lack of law enforcement.

  While the BLM agrees that additional law enforcement would be beneficial, this is beyond the scope of this document.

- The need to sign all public and private roads and access points.

This is an unreasonable expectation in intermixed land patterns. The BLM signs public access points as is reasonable to do so.

- Increase penalties for noncompliance of OHV regulations.

  Penalties are set in the Federal Code of Regulations and are outside the scope of this document.

- Removal of existing gates and not allowing new ones to be constructed.

  The fence in which the gates are being constructed does not belong to the BLM, and therefore is beyond the authority of this document.

- Acquiring additional motorized public access to increase hunting opportunities.

  The current land use plan for the Casper Field Office limits additional public access for the Sand Hills to non-motorized access.

- Catering to specific social and economic groups.

  That community defines the user groups in any given area. All publics with legal and/or existing rights are considered during the NEPA process. No exceptions have been made in the development of this document.

- The need to permit OHV use on the Bozeman Trail.

  The Casper Field Office RMP (2007) prohibits motorized use on historic trail ruts. Therefore, permitting this use would not be in conformance with the existing land use plan.

- Preserving the Bozeman Trail.

  Historic trail ruts are closed to motorized use through-out the Casper Field Office. No further analysis is needed.