

2.0 Description of the VRM Plan Amendment Alternatives

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2.0 describes four VRM Plan Amendment alternatives for managing visual resources within the Decision Area. These alternatives are divided into a No Action Alternative and three action alternatives as follows: Alternative 1 (No Action – Continuation of Existing Management Direction), Alternative 2 (Emphasis on the Development of Resources), Alternative 3 (Emphasis on Protection of Resources), and Alternative 4 (Proposed Plan). To be consistent in this Planning Amendment, all alternatives are based on the alternative themes developed for the 2008 Rawlins RMP (2008a) to ensure that all applicable issues and concerns raised by cooperating agencies and the public during the scoping process and public review of the 2008 Rawlins RMP are addressed in the Planning Amendment.

The existing 2008 Rawlins RMP serves as the basis for Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative. Other alternatives were then developed to address resource issues and concerns identified through the analysis of Alternative 1. The three action alternatives for the Planning Amendment were developed to present a range of VRM class options to guide decision-making for managing uses and activities within the Decision Area. Each alternative management approach is intended to minimize adverse impacts on visual resources while providing for resource use and development opportunities consistent with the theme of the action alternatives as well as, consistent with current laws, regulations, and policies.

Alternatives were developed to establish a framework for measuring the impacts on the Decision Area that might occur as a result of future management of visual resources. The alternatives themselves do not constitute management decisions, but instead represent reasonable approaches to managing public land and activities consistent with laws, regulations, and policies.

2.2 Development of Alternatives

The BLM complied with NEPA requirements in the development of alternatives for this RMP Amendment, including seeking public input during the 2008 Rawlins RMP process and CCSM project scoping. Alternative formulation took into consideration existing decisions in the 2008 Rawlins RMP as well as issues and concerns developed internally and solicited from the public during CCSM project scoping as documented in Volume II. The following were considered during development of alternatives:

- Consideration of present visual quality conditions (from the 2011 VRI report [Otak, Inc. 2011]) and opportunities for resource use;
- Any potential for inconsistencies with other decisions in the 2008 Rawlins RMP not addressed in this Plan Amendment; and
- VRM class options for management of other resources including significant cultural and historic resources, fire suppression and hazardous fuels reduction, riparian and wetland areas, noxious weeds, habitat for important wildlife and plant species, wild and scenic river values, vegetation management objectives, recreation opportunities, SD/MAs, and watersheds.

As discussed in Section 1.5, alternatives for VRM classes were developed for the Decision Area, which is a smaller area within the Planning Area (**Figure 1-1**). The remaining area outside the Decision Area boundary (but within the Planning Area boundary) will be addressed in the upcoming VRM Plan Amendment for the RFO area.

The following considerations were used to guide the selection of the Proposed Plan:

- Levels of land use restrictions or mitigation needed to support VRM class designations in order to protect resources and keep lands and resources available for public use;
- Manageability of VRM class designations with consideration of jurisdiction, management goals for other resources present, and resource uses on public lands;
- The potential for the occurrence of mineral and energy resources;
- Consistency with the land use plans, programs, and policies of other federal agencies, state and local governments, and Indian tribes;
- The potential for sustaining the productivity and diversity of ecosystems while providing for human values, products, and services;
- Social and economic values;
- Existing law, regulations, and BLM policy;
- Public welfare and safety; and
- Environmental impacts.

2.2.1 Alternatives Development Process

The BLM has completed a VRI for the RFO area (Otak, Inc. 2011). The VRI served as a baseline to develop a reasonable range of VRM class alternatives and analysis of impacts associated with the various alternatives in this project-specific Plan Amendment. According to BLM Manual 8410, the VRI establishes VRI classes to serve as an inventory tool that portrays the relative value of the visual resources.

There are four VRI classes (I, II, III, and IV). Class I is assigned to those areas where a management decision has been made previously to maintain a natural landscape (since the VRI only relies on visual quality without consideration of BLM management [such as requiring VRM Class I in WSAs], no VRI Class I occurs in the Decision Area). Classes II, III, and IV are assigned based on a matrix combination of scenic quality, sensitivity level, and distance zones. VRI classes are informational in nature and provide the basis for developing alternatives during the RMP process (**Figure 2-1**). They do not establish management direction and should not be used as a basis for constraining or limiting surface disturbing activities. VRM Classes (**Table 2-1**) are established through the RMP Planning process in consideration of: 1) multiple-use objectives; 2) the importance of the visual values; and 3) the impacts projects may have on these values.

Table 2-1 VRM Classes and Management Objectives

VRM Class	Management Objective
I	Preserves the existing character of the landscape.
	Provides for natural ecological changes.
	Does not preclude very limited management activity.
	Level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.

Table 2-1 VRM Classes and Management Objectives

VRM Class	Management Objective
II	Retains the existing character of the landscape.
	Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer.
	Level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low.
	Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
III	Partially retains the existing character of the landscape.
	Management activities may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer.
	Level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate.
	Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
IV	Provides for management activities that require major modification of the existing character of the landscape.
	Management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention.
	Level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high.
	Every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

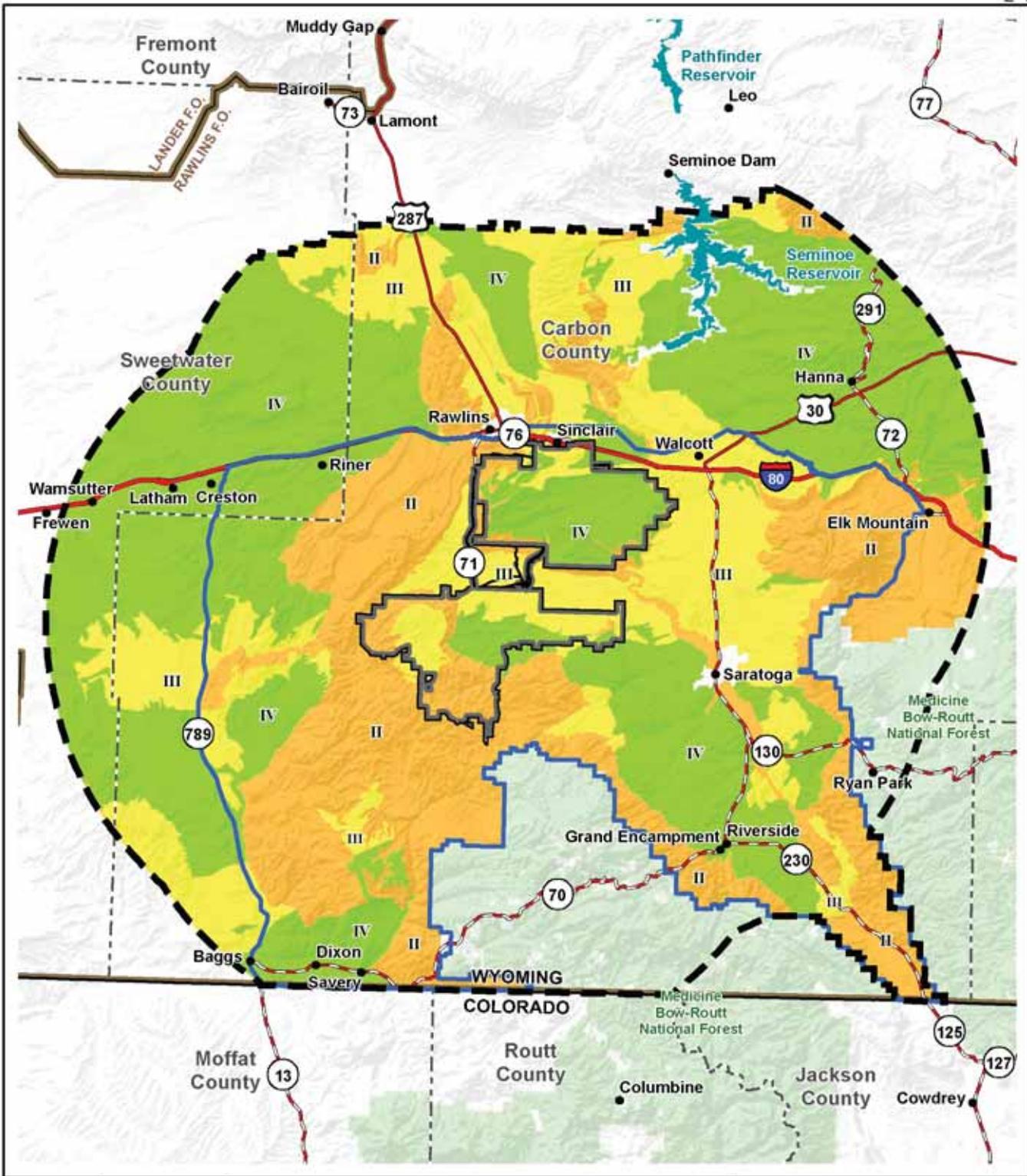
Source: BLM Manual 8431, Visual Resource Contract Rating.

Baseline information used in developing the alternatives included: landownership, transportation and utility corridors, VRI classes, areas with high wind potential (areas with wind classes 5 through 7)¹, areas visible from high wind potential areas, existing oil and gas leases, water bodies, SD/MAs, recreation areas, historic trails, and other management considerations that restrict surface-disturbing activities (including the greater sage-grouse core breeding areas [Version 3 Map]). The Scenic Quality Rating Units (SQRUs) identified through the VRI process were also used during alternatives development. SQRUs are based on physiographic characteristics such as geology, vegetation, hydrology, texture, color, variety, and topography. The following factors also were considered in developing the alternatives:

- Wind energy development typically is not considered to be compatible with VRM Class I; VRM Class II within the Foreground/Middleground and Background Distance Zones; and VRM Class III within the Foreground/Middleground Zone;

¹ Wind resources are characterized by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) wind-power density classes, ranging from Class 1 (the lowest) to Class 7 (the highest). Good wind resources (e.g., Class 4 and above, which have an average annual wind speed of at least 15.7 to 16.8 miles per hour [mph] at a 50-m height) are the minimum requirement for large wind turbine systems, but higher wind classes are more desirable for optimum power output. For the purposes of this Plan Amendment, areas with high wind potential were classified as areas with wind resources of Class 5 (excellent; 16.8 to 17.9 mph at a 50 m), Class 6 (outstanding; 17.9 to 19.7 mph at 50 m), or Class 7 (superb; >19.7 mph at 50 m). Estimates of reasonably foreseeable wind energy development activity were developed from analysis of current wind site testing and monitoring application areas and areas with high wind potential. These estimates were used to aid in the analysis of environmental consequences. Because they are general, the development potential classifications are appropriate for planning purposes, but they are not intended to predict future activity or the locations of new wind energy projects.

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Legend

- Planning Area
- Decision Area
- Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Application Area
- State Boundary
- County Boundary
- BLM Field Office Boundary
- National Forest
- VRI Class I
- VRI Class II
- VRI Class III
- VRI Class IV

Wind Energy Application Area

Figure 2-1

VRI Classes in the Planning Area and Decision Area

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- Wind development is most likely to occur in areas with high wind potential (wind classes 5 through 7);
- Oil and gas and coal-bed natural gas (CBNG) development is compatible with VRM Class III and IV areas since such development can be mitigated to not dominate the landscape²;
- Visual quality is difficult to manage within major utility and transportation corridors, particularly in areas that coincide with fragmented landownership patterns;
- SD/MAs and recreation areas have resource values that could be maintained or enhanced by protecting the visual quality; and
- Visual quality can be difficult to manage in areas with checkerboard (see Glossary) or fragmented landownership patterns.

The Plan Amendment would only direct management of public lands and resources administered by the BLM within the RFO; however, landownership in the Decision Area includes a mixture of public, state, and private land, including a large swath of checkerboard ownership. Whereas BLM-administered lands are managed for multiple uses, in accordance with the FLPMA, intermingled private and state lands are protected by their own property rights. Federal agencies do not have the authority to modify or regulate activities on private land. Except when requested by the landowner, the authorizations on federal lands may not be used to condition activities on non-federal land. The VRM management classes, therefore, do not apply to any private or state lands. However, the impacts of actions on private land do influence management decisions on public land and the public land impacts of actions occurring on private land are required to be disclosed to the public through the NEPA process. One of BLM's challenges is to develop effective land management under the FLPMA multiple-use mandate. Since resource management is often limited in the checkerboard and in other public and private intermingled landownership areas, BLM resource management is constrained when the goals of private landowners conflict with public land multiple-use goals and objectives. Notable exceptions include areas where resources on landownership surrounding public lands are protected through local or private management methods, such as zoning, special designations, conservation easements, or topography.

2.2.2 Management Goals and Objectives

The management goals and objectives from the 2008 Rawlins RMP were determined to still be valid and have not been modified as part of this VRM-targeted Plan Amendment. The goals and objectives are presented below.

VRM Goals

- Manage public lands according to VRM classes that are determined based on land use allocation decisions made in the 2008 Rawlins RMP.

VRM Objectives

- Establish VRM classes for the Decision Area.
- Maintain the overall integrity of visual resource classes while allowing for development of existing and future uses.

² Using available geologic information, reports of past production, and information from the minerals industry, areas of high, moderate, and low potential for the occurrence and development of hydrocarbons in the Planning Area were identified. Estimates of reasonably foreseeable oil and gas (including coalbed methane) exploration and development activity were developed from analysis of past activity and production. These estimates were used to aid in the analysis of environmental consequences. Because they are general, the development potential classifications and production estimates are appropriate for planning purposes, but they are not intended to predict future activity or the locations of new discoveries.

2.2.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Alternatives that were considered included options for the Plan Amendment boundary and a variation of the Proposed Plan that were developed through interdisciplinary team meetings, meetings with agencies, and input received during public scoping. However, these concepts were eliminated from detailed analysis because of technical, legal, or policy considerations. All of these concepts are discussed in this section.

There were extensive discussions, literature reviews, and field observations conducted regarding the appropriate Planning Area boundary for this Plan Amendment. Options for the Planning Area boundary included consideration of distances between 10 and 15 miles up to 20 and 30 miles from the Application Area based on the extent of areas where the wind project would be visible and whether specific areas should be included or excluded (i.e., beyond the northern extent of the checkerboard ownership, beyond the Wyoming state line, and the Saratoga Valley). Because the 30-mile buffer of the project area extending outside of Wyoming is outside of the jurisdiction of this document, that area was eliminated from further consideration. The area north of the checkerboard, while again within 30 miles of the project, was eliminated because of numerous other influences beyond the project that would influence any decisions, and, therefore, it was determined to exclude that area until the RFO-wide Plan Amendment occurred. The area of the Saratoga Valley was originally excluded from the 30-mile planning boundary. However, because this area is geographically connected to the Planning Area, it was determined this area should be included in this review.

Iterations for the Decision Area boundary considered the entire Planning Area as well as subsets within the Planning Area that either followed scenic quality rating unit boundaries, geographic boundaries, and/or visual influences from utility corridors and other developments. With the multitude of additional influences on visual resources, BLM determined that the Decision Area for this analysis should focus on those areas that were most likely to be influenced by the CCSM Wind Energy Project proposal.

A variation of the Proposed Plan was considered but eliminated that included a delineation of VRM Class IV in the checkerboard and VRM Class III in the area adjacent to the checkerboard in the southern Sierra Madre area. However, after further review, a portion of the Sierra Madre area south of the checkerboard designated as VRI Class III would not be compatible with wind energy development. Since the area in question consists of fragmented ownership (a BLM swath of VRM Class III between private lands), BLM would not be able to maintain the area as VRM Class III if turbines were placed on both sides of the swath (within high wind potential area). Therefore, the VRM Class IV designation would dip down below the checkerboard in this area to capture the southern CCSM project area boundary (which follows the greater sage-grouse core area boundary) as shown in Alternative 4 analyzed in detail.

2.2.4 Management Actions Common to all Alternatives

The management actions common to all alternatives from the 2008 Rawlins RMP were determined to still be valid and have not been modified as part of this VRM-targeted Plan Amendment. The actions include:

- Manage visual resources to meet the Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands.

In addition, there are some existing visual resource designations and decisions within the Decision Area that will not be revisited as part of the VRM Plan Amendment and will apply to all alternatives considered:

- Existing VRM Class I areas within the two WSAs in the Decision Area (Encampment River Canyon and Prospect Mountain) will remain as designated in the 2008 Rawlins RMP.

- Existing VRM Class I areas within 0.25 mile of the high-water line on each side of the Encampment River segment suitable for inclusion in the National WSRs system will remain as designated in the 2008 Rawlins RMP.
- Within the Sand Hills/JO Ranch ACEC, the 18 acres that include the JO Ranch buildings and a 2-mile transition zone or the visual horizon, whichever is closer, are designated as VRM Class II.
- Within the North Platte River SRMA, surface disturbing activities on public lands within 0.25 mile on either side of the river will be intensively managed to maintain the quality of the visual resource.
- Where the integrity of historic trails setting contributes to National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility, management actions resulting in visual elements that diminish the integrity of the property's setting will be managed in accordance with the Wyoming State Protocol and best management practices (BMPs).
- Surface disturbing activities will not be allowed within 0.25 mile of a cultural property or the visual horizon, whichever is closer, if the setting contributes to NRHP eligibility.

Changes in VRM classes will affect the area covered by management actions for lands and realty and minerals; however, these management actions in the 2008 Rawlins RMP will remain unchanged.

- **Lands and Realty:** Management actions for alternative energy development, transportation, and utility ROW systems, and communication sites used VRM classes to designate exclusion and avoidance areas for these proposals. As indicated in Table 2-5 of the 2008 Rawlins RMP (pg. 2-62 & 2-63), VRM Class I was used to designate exclusion areas and VRM Class II was used to designate avoidance areas for linear utility/transportation systems/communication sites and wind energy. These management actions would remain, but the area covered would change with new VRM Class I and II areas.
- **Minerals:** Management actions for oil and gas used VRM classes to designate oil and gas classification areas for new leases. As indicated in Table 2-6 of the 2008 Rawlins RMP (pg. 2-63), VRM Class II was used to designate controlled surface use areas. VRM classes were not used in designating no lease or no surface occupancy areas because VRM Class I areas are already protected by other designations (such as WSA designations). These management actions would remain, but the area covered would change with new VRM Class I and II areas.

All alternatives incorporate new information since the 2008 Rawlins RMP provided by other agencies as part of the Draft EIS comment period that is relevant to VRM considerations including: the correct alignment of the CDNST, information from the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan regarding guidance on visual resource management and private ROWs, and a conservation easement on private lands near Elk Mountain.

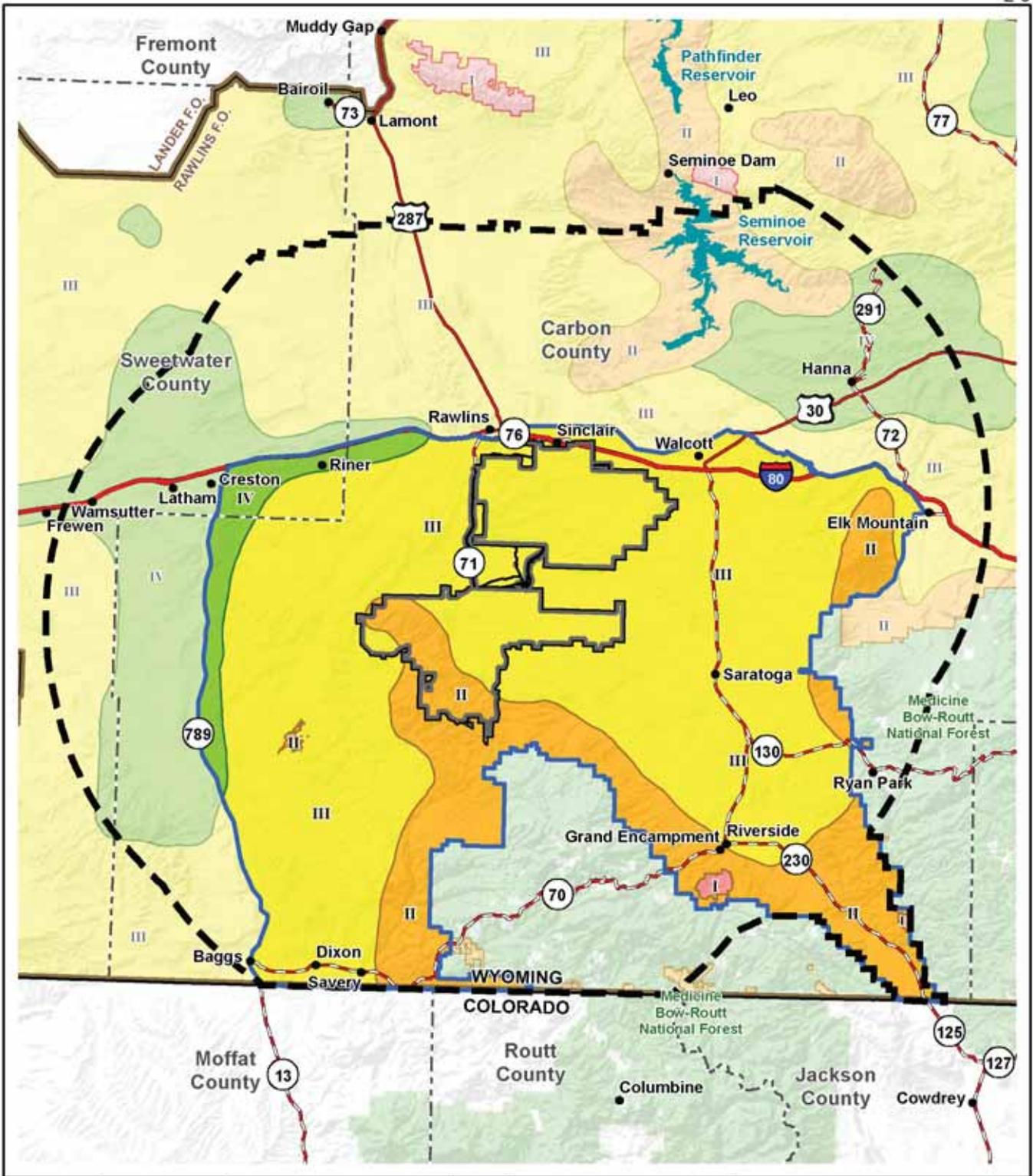
2.2.5 Alternatives Considered In Detail

This section summarizes the four alternatives (1 through 4) considered in detail. The four alternatives were developed to offer a range of management options. Each alternative is intended to be consistent with law, regulation, and policy while providing for varying levels of compatible resource use and development opportunity.

2.2.5.1 Alternative 1 (No Action – Continuation of Existing Management Direction)

VRM classes would remain as designated in the 2008 Rawlins RMP. The BLM would continue to use the VRM class designations as established and analyzed in the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1 in the Proposed 2008 Rawlins RMP/Final EIS; 2008a) until updated and/or changed by a VRM-targeted Plan Amendment. The VRM classes in the Decision Area under Alternative 1 are displayed in **Figure 2-2** and presented in **Table 2-2**.

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Legend

Planning Area	BLM Field Office Boundary
Decision Area	National Forest
Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Application Area	VRM Class I
State Boundary	VRM Class II
County Boundary	VRM Class III
	VRM Class IV

VRM classes only apply to public lands. For jurisdiction, see figure 1-1. VRM classes outside the Decision Area are provided in the background as faded colors to show continuity with proposed VRM management.

Wind Energy Application Area

Figure 2-2

Alternative 1
(No Action - Continuation of Existing Management Direction)

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Table 2-2 Acres of VRM Classes under Alternative 1 (No Action – Continuation of Existing Management Direction) in the Decision Area

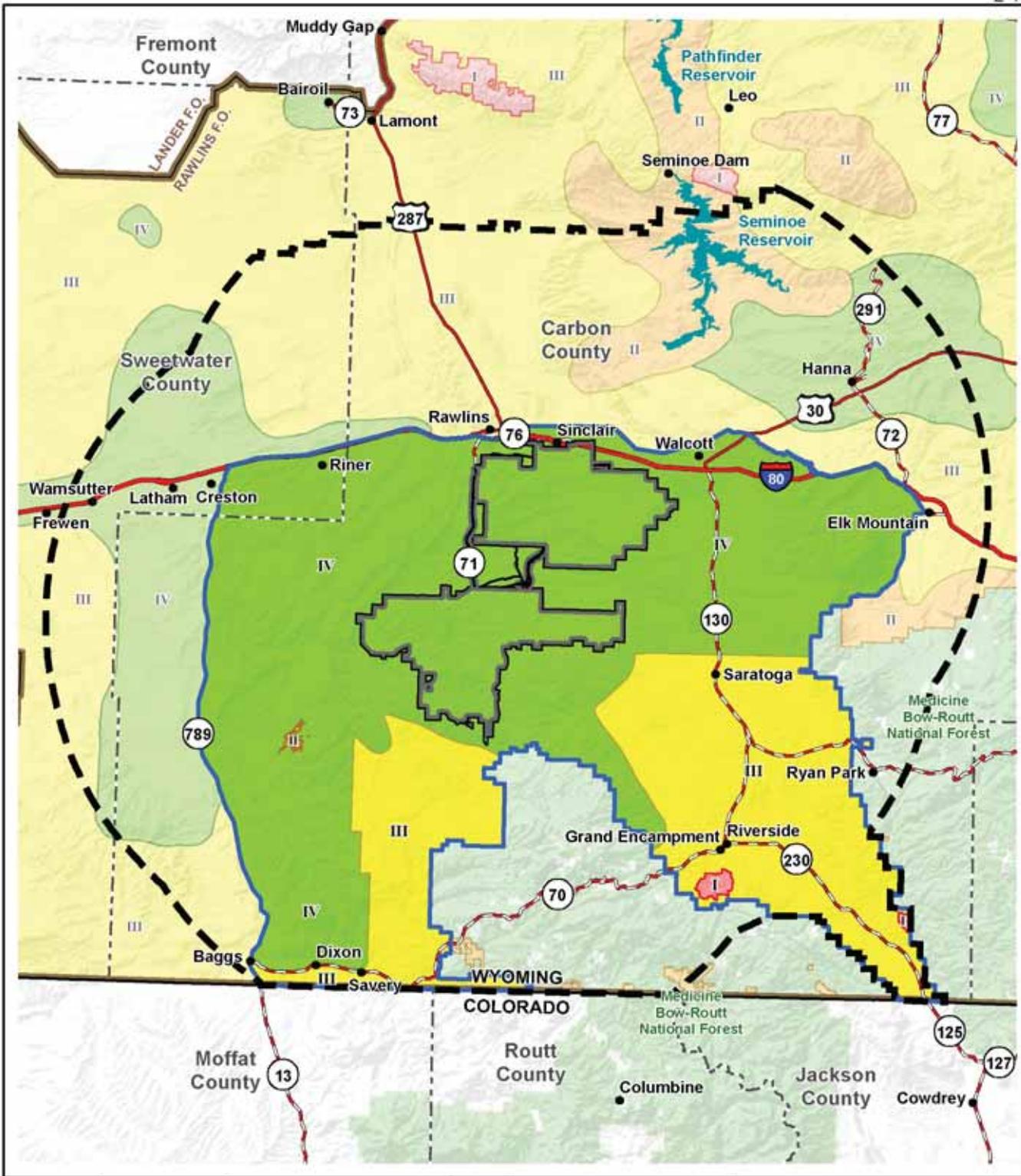
VRM Class	Acres	Percent (%) of Decision Area
Class I	5,613	1
Class II	124,207	17
Class III	573,612	77
Class IV	39,180	5

2.2.5.2 Alternative 2 (Emphasis on the Development of Resources)

Alternative 2 allows for management activities to dominate the view and remain the major focus of viewer attention. Under Alternative 2, landownership patterns and areas of high potential for energy and mineral development formed the basis of this alternative as noted below:

- VRM Class IV:
 - All checkerboard landownership due to the inability of the BLM to effectively manage VRM classes in varied landownership patterns;
 - High wind potential areas to foster wind development under this alternative theme in areas with the greatest resource; and
 - Areas visible from high wind potential areas since the viewshed in these areas would be dominated and influenced by development in high wind potential areas.
- VRM Class III:
 - Areas outside the checkerboard landownership that do not have high wind potential, but would allow for development of existing leases for oil and gas and CBNG; and
 - Areas where there is an opportunity to manage visual values since it is outside the high wind potential areas.
- VRM Class II:
 - Retain the existing decision of the 18-acre JO Ranch in the Sand Hills/JO Ranch ACEC.
- VRM Class I:
 - Retain the existing decision of the Encampment River Canyon and Prospect Mountain WSAs.
 - Retain the existing decision of within 0.25 mile of the high-water line on each side of the Encampment River eligible river segment.
- The distribution of VRM classes under the Alternative 2 is displayed in **Figure 2-3** and presented in **Table 2-3**.

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Legend

Planning Area	BLM Field Office Boundary
Decision Area	National Forest
Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Application Area	VRM Class I
State Boundary	VRM Class II
County Boundary	VRM Class III
	VRM Class IV

VRM classes only apply to public lands. For jurisdiction, see figure 1-1. VRM classes outside the Decision Area are provided in the background as faded colors to show continuity with proposed VRM management.

Wind Energy Application Area

Figure 2-3

**Alternative 2
(Emphasis on the Development of Resources)**

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Table 2-3 Acres of VRM Classes under Alternative 2 (Emphasis on the Development of Resources) in the Decision Area

VRM Class	Acres	Percent (%) of Decision Area
Class I	5,613	<1
Class II	1,445	<1
Class III	160,395	22
Class IV	575,15	77

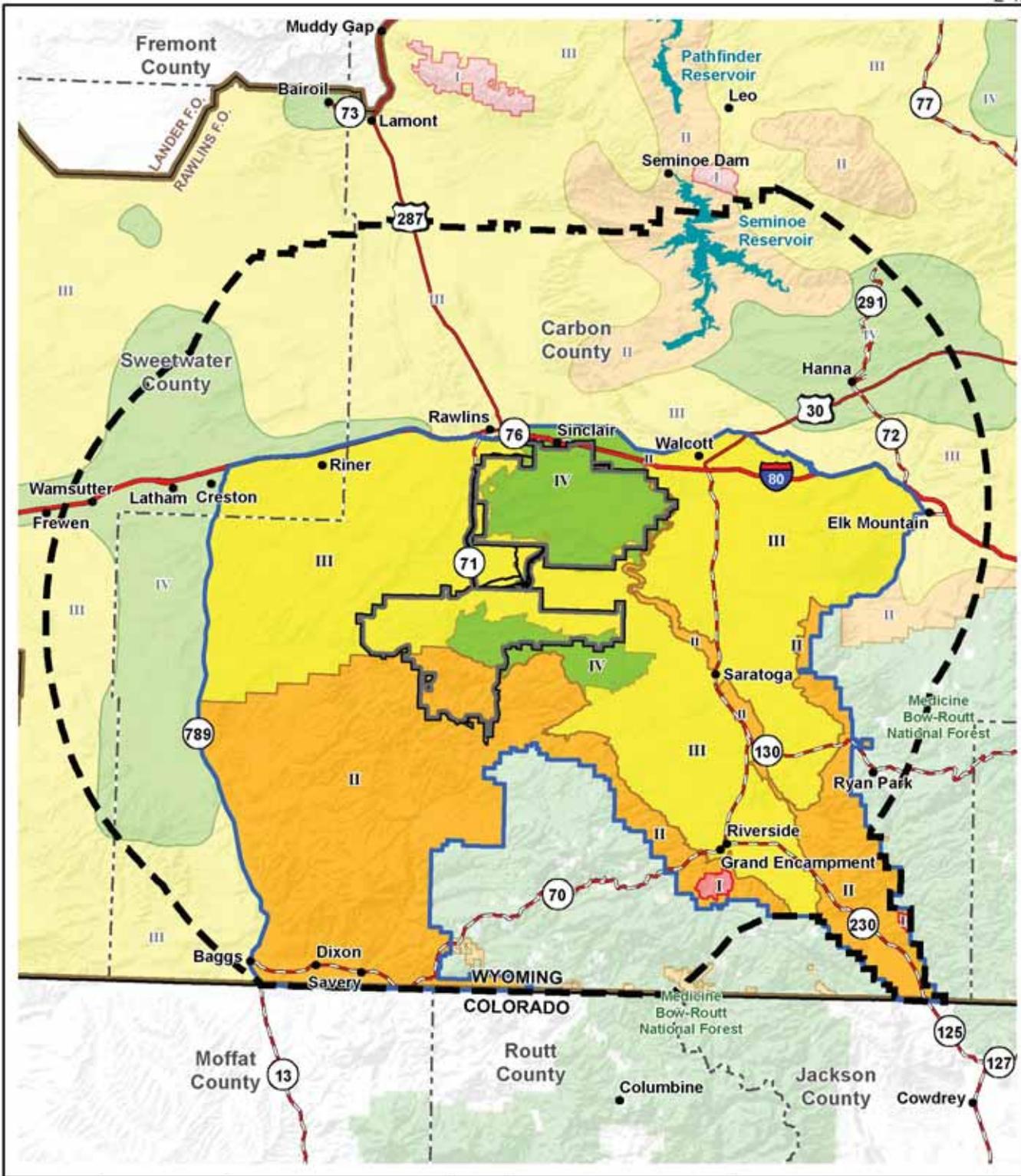
2.2.5.3 Alternative 3 (Emphasis on Protection of Resources)

Alternative 3 emphasizes protection of the existing character of the landscape. Relative to all alternatives, Alternative 3 allows management activities to be seen, but not attract the attention of the casual observer or dominate the landscape. Under Alternative 3, the VRI classes (Otak, Inc. 2011) formed the major baseline for this alternative with minor modifications as noted below:

- VRM Class IV:
 - Within, and contiguous to, the CCSM Application Area, areas would become VRM Class IV, including small fingers and bands of VRI Class II and III between VRM Class IV because of the inability to manage small fingers and bands through a surrounding VRM Class IV area; and
 - Large area of contiguous federal ownership of VRI Class IV southeast of the Sierra Madre site because it is in a high wind potential area.
- VRM Class III:
 - Bolton Rim along the southern border of the Chokecherry site; and
 - Upper Muddy SD/MA in the checkerboard landownership.
- VRM Class II:
 - Retain the existing decision of the 18-acre JO Ranch in the Sand Hills/JO Ranch ACEC;
 - All areas within 0.25 mile of the North Platte River;
 - The southern part of the Sierra Madre site;
 - The Sand Hills and Cow Butte SD/MA; and
 - Areas adjacent to the USFS boundary.
- VRM Class I:
 - Retain the existing decision of the Encampment River Canyon and Prospect Mountain WSAs; and
 - Retain the existing decision of within 0.25 mile of the high-water line on each side of the Encampment River eligible river segment.

The distribution of VRM classes in the Decisions Area under the Alternative 3 are displayed in **Figure 2-4** and presented in **Table 2-4**.

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Legend

Planning Area	BLM Field Office Boundary
Decision Area	National Forest
Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Application Area	VRM Class I
State Boundary	VRM Class II
County Boundary	VRM Class III
	VRM Class IV

VRM classes only apply to public lands. For jurisdiction, see figure 1-1. VRM classes outside the Decision Area are provided in the background as faded colors to show continuity with proposed VRM management.

Wind Energy Application Area

Figure 2-4

Alternative 3
(Emphasis on
Protection of Resources)

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Table 2-4 Acres of VRM Classes under Alternative 3 (Emphasis on Protection of Resources) in the Decision Area

VRM Class	Acres	Percent (%) of Decision Area
Class I	5,613	1
Class II	318,792	43
Class III	340,589	46
Class IV	77,618	10

2.2.5.4 Alternative 4 (Proposed Plan)

Alternative 4 strives for a balance of opportunities to allow some modification while partially retaining the existing character of the landscape. Under Alternative 4, the VRI classes (Otak, Inc. 2011) in concert with landownership patterns and areas of high potential for energy and mineral development formed the baseline for this alternative as noted below:

- VRM Class IV:
 - Most areas of checkerboard landownership, except within the floodplain of the North Platte River outside of major utility and transportation corridors and in the vicinity of Elk Mountain, and the BLM will attempt to maintain visual quality in these areas until it is no longer manageable;
 - A portion of the Sierra Madre site south of the checkerboard consisting of fragmented ownership within a high wind potential area outside of the boundaries of the greater sage-grouse core breeding areas (Version 3 Map); and
 - The area of high oil and gas potential associated with Atlantic Rim that is outside of the checkerboard landownership along SH 789.
- VRM Class III:
 - Area of oil and gas development in the Cow Butte SD/MA;
 - The area surrounding Elk Mountain located within fragmented ownership that coincides with an existing conservation easement on private lands that protects “significant scenic vistas and open-space values”;
 - The area along Highway 70 from Baggs to Savory that occurs within fragmented ownership but is the subject of a scenic byway designation request; and
 - Areas of contiguous federal ownership south of the checkerboard landownership.
- VRM Class II:
 - Retain the existing decision of the 18-acre JO Ranch in the Sand Hills/JO Ranch ACEC;
 - SQRUs encompassing the North Platte River outside of major utility and transportation corridors since the river is in a valley and the designation would be consistent with and support the SRMA and recreation values;
 - Elk Mountain; and
 - Areas adjacent to the USFS boundary.

- VRM Class I:
 - Retain the existing decision of the Encampment River Canyon and Prospect Mountain WSAs; and
 - Retain the existing decision of within 0.25 mile of the high-water line on each side of the Encampment River eligible river segment.

The distribution of VRM classes in the Decision Area under the Alternative 4 is displayed in **Figure 2-5** and presented in **Table 2-5**.

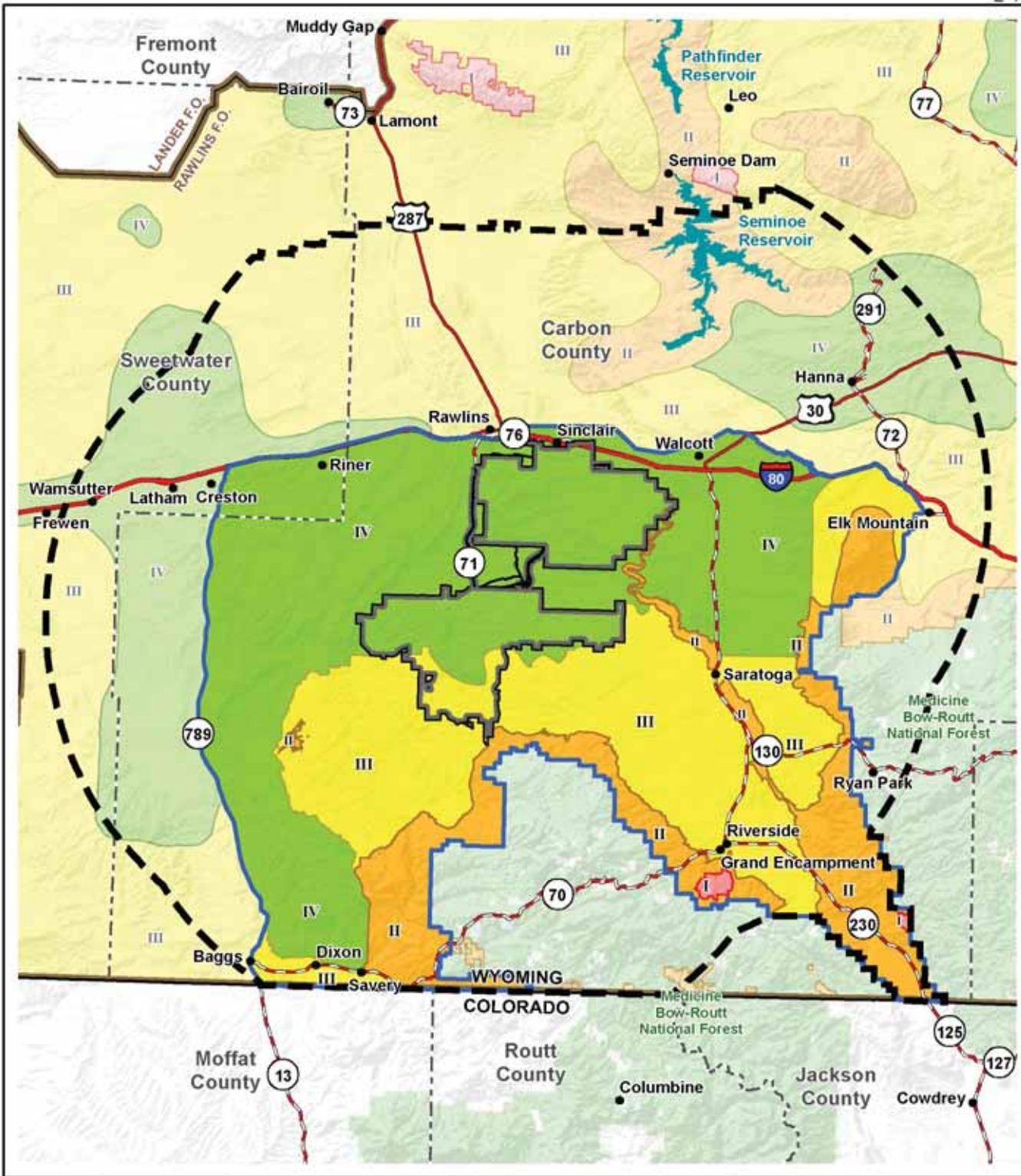
Table 2-5 Acres of VRM Classes under Alternative 4 (Proposed Plan) in the Decision Area

VRM Class	Acres	Percent (%) of Decision Area
Class I	5,613	1
Class II	83,067	11
Class III	233,498	31
Class IV	420,434	57

2.2.6 Comparative Summary of Impacts

Table 2-6 provides a summary of the impacts of the VRM Plan Amendment alternative, organized by resource or resource management program. The environmental consequences of the management actions proposed under each alternative are analyzed in Chapter 4.0.

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Legend

Planning Area	BLM Field Office Boundary
Decision Area	National Forest
Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Application Area	VRM Class I
State Boundary	VRM Class II
County Boundary	VRM Class III
	VRM Class IV

VRM classes only apply to public lands. For jurisdiction, see figure 1-1. VRM classes outside the Decision Area are provided in the background as faded colors to show continuity with proposed VRM management.

Wind Energy Application Area

Figure 2-5

Alternative 4 (Proposed Plan)

Scale: 0 to 25 Miles / 0 to 25 Kilometers
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Table 2-6 Comparison of Impact in the Decision Area by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Proposed Plan	Additional Discussion
Cultural Resources	VRM Class I and II areas maintain protections of cultural setting, whereas the cultural setting in VRM Class III and IV areas would continue to be at risk.	Allows for the most landscape alteration that would affect the settings of cultural resource sites.	Allows for more protections to retain the natural setting of cultural resource sites.	Allows for more potential for areas of visual intrusions and high levels of landscape alteration that affect cultural resources than Alternatives 1 and 3, but less than Alternative 2.	Section 4.2
Widland Fire and Fuels – Hazardous Fuels Reduction	Existing VRM Classes I and II potentially restrict hazardous fuels reduction techniques. VRM Class III and IV areas provides for development that introduces more ignition sources, but vegetation clearing and improved road network improves fire suppression response.	Allows for a wider range of hazardous fuel reduction treatments, vegetation clearing, and access roads that improves fire suppression response, but also allows for more ignition sources.	Restricts hazardous fuels reduction and allows for less vegetation clearing and new access roads to a lesser degree than Alternative 1.	Allows for a wider range of hazardous fuel reduction treatments, vegetation clearing, and access roads, but also introduces more ignition sources than Alternatives 1 and 3, but less than Alternative 2.	Section 4.3
Forest Management	Forested land with potential for commercial harvest would remain in the VRM Class II and III designation, which influences the harvest size and method as well as access to the site.	Forested land with potential for commercial harvest would change to VRM Classes III and IV, where timber harvesting restrictions would be reduced.	Areas of forested land with potential for commercial harvest would change to VRM Class II and III, which requires timber harvesting restrictions while still providing commercial forest products.	Same as Alternative 2 on northeastern forested lands and same as Alternative 1 on southern forested lands.	Section 4.4

Table 2-6 Comparison of Impact in the Decision Area by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Proposed Plan	Additional Discussion
Lands and Realty – Wind Development	Opportunities for wind energy development limited on nearly 100 percent of areas classified as having high wind potential if adequate mitigation measures were not developed outside VRM Class IV areas.	Opportunities for wind energy development limited on 2 percent of areas classified as having high wind potential if adequate mitigation measures were not developed outside VRM Class IV areas.	Opportunities for wind energy development limited on 77 percent of areas classified as having high wind potential if adequate mitigation measures were not developed outside VRM Class IV areas.	Opportunities for wind energy development limited on 40 percent of areas classified as having high wind potential if adequate mitigation measures were not developed outside VRM Class IV areas.	Section 4.5
Lands and Realty – Other Developments	Lands and realty development projects may be permitted in VRM Class IV areas and potentially VRM Class II and III areas, if mitigation measures limit impacts.	The increase in VRM Class IV areas would allow for more opportunities for lands and realty development projects to occur.	Increased VRM Class II areas would likely limit opportunities for lands and realty development projects if mitigation measures for large vertical structures are not available.	Provides for more opportunities for lands and realty developments than Alternatives 1 and 3, but fewer areas than Alternative 2.	Section 4.5
Livestock Grazing	VRM Class II or Class III areas would rarely limit range improvements, but would affect the complexity of construction and/or maintenance to be consistent with the VRM standards.	Allows for more impacts to forage from landscape altering activities, but fewer VRM mitigation requirements on range improvement projects.	Decrease in opportunities for landscape altering activities results in less disturbance to grazing forage, but flexibility of placement or type of rangeland improvement projects may be limited due to increased visual mitigation standards.	Allows for more impacts to forage and fewer restrictions on range improvements than Alternatives 1 and 3, but less than Alternative 2.	Section 4.6
Minerals, Geology, and Topography	The majority of areas with high and moderate oil and gas potential are within VRM Class III and IV areas, which would produce few if any conflicts between mineral extraction activities and VRM objectives.	The majority of areas with high and moderate oil and gas potential are within VRM Class III and IV areas, which would produce few if any conflicts between mineral extraction activities and VRM objectives.	Approximately 39 percent of areas with high and moderate oil and gas potential would occur in VRM Class III and none would occur in VRM Class IV areas.	Approximately 98 percent of areas with high and moderate oil and gas potential would occur in VRM Class III and IV areas.	Section 4.7

Table 2-6 Comparison of Impact in the Decision Area by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Proposed Plan	Additional Discussion
OHVs	Protects the scenic qualities of the OHV settings.	Allows for more landscape altering activities and visual intrusions that could displace OHV users seeking natural landscape settings.	Additional restrictions on landscape altering activities and visual intrusions would preserve the visual quality of OHV settings.	More restrictive on potential future landscape altering activities and visual intrusions that would affect OHV users than Alternative 2, but less restrictive than Alternatives 1 and 3.	Section 4.8
Recreation and Visitor Services	Protects the scenic qualities of recreational settings for dispersed uses and in SRMAs. Developed and undeveloped recreation sites would remain VRM Class II and III.	Allows for more landscape altering activities and visual intrusions that affects recreation settings and displaces users for dispersed uses and in SRMAs. Developed and undeveloped recreation sites would become VRM Class III and IV.	Protects the scenic qualities of recreational settings for dispersed uses and in SRMAs to a lesser degree than Alternative 1. More developed recreation sites would become VRM Class II.	More restrictive on landscape altering activities and visual intrusions that could affect recreation settings than Alternative 2 and less restrictive on developments than Alternatives 1 and 3. The setting of developed and undeveloped recreation sites in the checkerboard land ownership pattern would be located in VRM Class IV and recreation sites in the Saratoga Valley would become VRM Class II.	Section 4.9
SDs/MAs	Natural character of SD/MAs maintained.	Allows for more landscape altering activities and visual intrusions that affect SD/MAs.	Limits landscape altering activities and visual intrusions that affect SD/MAs.	More restrictive on landscape altering activities and visual intrusions that affect SD/MAs than Alternative 2 and less restrictive on developments than Alternatives 1 and 3.	Section 4.10

Table 2-6 Comparison of Impact in the Decision Area by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Proposed Plan	Additional Discussion
Transportation and Access	Existing VRM Class II designations (124,207 acres) would potentially restrict transportation-related projects.	Transportation-related projects potentially restricted on 1,445 acres designated as VRM Class II.	Transportation-related projects potentially restricted on 318,792 acres designated as VRM Class II.	Transportation-related projects potentially restricted on 83,067 acres designated as VRM Class II.	Section 4.11
Vegetation	Little or no impacts.				Section 4.12
Visual Resources – VRM Classes	VRM Class I: 5,613 acres VRM Class II: 124,207 acres VRM Class III: 573,612 acres VRM Class IV: 39,180 acres	VRM Class I: 5,613 acres VRM Class II: 1,445 acres VRM Class III: 160,395 acres VRM Class IV: 575,159 acres	VRM Class I: 5,613 acres VRM Class II: 318,792 acres VRM Class III: 40,589 acres VRM Class IV: 77,618 acres	VRM Class I: 5,613 acres VRM Class II: 83,067 acres VRM Class III: 233,498 acres VRM Class IV: 420,434 acres	Section 4.13
Visual Resource Impacts – Visual Resource Values	Compared to the VRI classes, manages less area as VRM Class II, more area as VRM Class III, and less area as VRM Class IV. Manages 76 percent of areas with high sensitivity levels managed for moderate change and 71 percent of areas with High Sensitive Scenic Quality A for minor change.	Compared to the VRI classes, manages significantly less area as VRM Class II, less area as VRM Class III, and more area as VRM Class IV. Manages 80 percent of areas with high sensitivity levels managed for major change and 61 percent of areas with High Sensitive Scenic Quality A for minor change.	Compared to the VRI classes, manages slightly less area as VRM Class II, more area as VRM Class III, and less area as VRM Class IV. Manages 55 percent of areas with high sensitivity levels managed for minor change and 44 percent for moderate change. Manages 61 percent of areas with High Sensitive Scenic Quality A for minor change.	Compared to the VRI classes, manages less area as VRM Class II, more area as VRM Class III, and more area as VRM Class IV. Manages 54 percent of areas with high sensitivity levels managed for major change and 78 percent of areas with High Sensitive Scenic Quality A for minor change.	Section 4.13
Surface Water	Little or no impacts.				Section 4.14