# RECORD OF DECISION
# for the
# SNAKE RIVER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

## DECISION

The decision is to select and approve the attached Snake River Resource Management Plan (RMP), to guide the future management of the public lands and resources administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in the Snake River planning area of the Pinedale Field Office. The Snake River RMP was prepared under the regulations (43 CFR 1600) for implementing the land use planning requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). An environmental impact statement (EIS) was prepared for the Snake River RMP in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). A copy of the EIS for the Snake River RMP is on file in the Pinedale Field Office.

The decisions in the Snake River RMP provide general management direction and allocation of uses for the BLM-administered public lands and resources in the planning area. The selection and approval of the Snake River RMP is based upon the analysis of environmental impacts of six alternative management plans, public comments, surveys, and consultation with federal, state, and local governments and agencies and upon the consideration of 4 planning issues: 1) cooperative management; 2) recreational opportunities; 3) development of construction materials; and 4) land ownership adjustment.

The attached Snake River RMP provides a balance between production and commodity uses with protection of the environment. It represents the BLM's preferred management plan alternative for the Snake River planning area, and one of the environmentally preferred alternatives, in terms of minimizing environmental impacts and guiding the uses of the public lands in the planning area. This alternative best meets the Bureau's statutory mission under FLPMA, and identifies actions to protect resources and to avoid or minimize environmental harm while allowing for minimal commodity uses. Alternatives C and E of the EIS, which would place more restrictions on land uses than the approved RMP, also qualify as environmentally preferred alternatives.

## PROTESTS

Two protests were submitted during the 30-day protest period for the Proposed Snake River RMP. Both protests were responded to and resolved by the Director of the BLM. Resolution of the protests required some minor corrections and wording clarifications, but did not result in changing any of the proposed Snake River RMP decisions.

Wyoming Outdoor Council (WOC) and the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance (JHCA) submitted a protest that more specific requirements should be applied to government agencies or entities proposing to acquire BLM parcels. While the BLM Director found that the WOC and JHCA letter failed to meet the requirements for protest, comments contained in the letter were addressed in the protest resolution process. Language clarifying the parcel transfer process and requirements has been added to the Lands and Realty Decisions section of the RMP.

The Sewell Partners submitted a protest of language in the Proposed Plan requiring removal of occupancy trespass, and of the lack of opportunity in the Proposed Plan to do land exchanges with adjacent landowners. While the Director found several valid points of protest in Sewell's letter, she did not find it necessary to change the decisions in the RMP. Some clarifying language has been added to the Lands and Realty Decisions section of the RMP regarding treatment of trespass on the public lands, and consideration of exchanges or small parcel sales to resolve both trespass and cumbersome boundary situations.

# ALTERNATIVES

## Alternatives Considered in Detail

Each of the six alternative plans examined in detail provided a different emphasis for managing the planning area, and each resolved the planning issues differently.

Alternative A, Continuation of Present Management (No Action), continued the existing management and uses of the public lands and resources at present projected levels, with retention of the parcels by BLM.

Alternative B emphasized developing and using natural resources, with retention of the parcels by BLM. Environmental protection was provided for, but the major emphasis was resource development.

Alternative C emphasized protection of the environment to a greater extent than Alternatives A or B, and included retention of the parcels by BLM. Resource development was provided for put the major emphasis was resource protection.

Alternative D emphasized disposal of the public land parcels by whatever means were to become available, including private sale of the parcels, with interim management of the parcels similar to Alternative A.

Alternative E allowed for resource use, with greater emphasis on protection of the natural environment than Alternatives A, B, or D, and included retention of the parcels by BLM.

The Preferred Alternative (and Proposed Plan) provides for disposal of the parcels from BLM administration, while ensuring that the lands remain in public ownership and available for recreation, public access, open space, and wildlife habitat.

## Alternatives and Management Options Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Alternatives and management options considered but eliminated from detailed study included: disposal of the federal mineral estate in the planning area; allowing firewood harvest on the public lands; use of prescribed fire; allowing land disposal via desert land entry; use of lethal animal control measures (including M-44's); establishment of wilderness study areas; and maximum, unconstrained alternatives that exclude other resource uses.

### The Selected Plan

The Snake River RMP consists of the proposed RMP described in the Final EIS. As a result of protests on parts of the proposed RMP, some clarification has been included in the Snake River RMP; however, no changes were made to the proposed decisions identified in the proposed RMP. The land use plans of local and state governments and other federal agencies in and around the Snake River planning area have been considered during the planning process to ensure the approved Snake River RMP will be compatible with them.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND CONSISTENCY

Public participation occurred throughout the planning process. Both formal and informal involvement methods were encouraged and used. The public participation that occurred is described in Chapter 5 of the Final EIS. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Notice of Filing for the Final EIS was published in the Federal Register on September 26, 2003. A Contingent Valuation Modeling study and random public survey were conducted during 1999 to gain information on the non-market values present on the public land parcels in the planning area. Open houses and meetings were held throughout the planning process. Three letters were submitted to the Director during the 30-day protest period for the Proposed Snake River RMP and Final EIS.

Government agencies, organizations, and individuals received copies of both the draft and final EIS documents. Comment letters were received from individuals and organizations at the Draft EIS stage. Responses to these comments were prepared and printed in the Final EIS.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with BLM conclusions regarding effects on Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate species due to the Proposed Snake River RMP. Since the proposed decisions in the proposed RMP were not changed, the conclusions are still applicable. The conclusions are as follows: black-footed ferret, Canada lynx, and grizzly bear, no effect; gray wolf, not likely to jeopardize; mountain plover, no effect/not likely to jeopardize; bald eagle and western yellow-billed cuckoo, may effect, likely to adversely affect for 12 of the 15 total resource programs. Any actions implemented under the RMP that may adversely affect the bald eagle would require separate formal Section 7 consultation at the project level. Appendix 6 to the RMP contains the Biological Opinion from USFWS, including Reasonable and Prudent Measures, Terms and Conditions, Conservation Recommendations, and Conservations Measures.

The public is invited to continue to participate in the implementation of the Snake River RMP through involvement in the activity or implementation planning phase of the planning process. This phase deals with site specific and detailed decision making and project implementation or approval in support of the general land use planning decisions presented in the RMP.

The Snake River RMP is consistent with officially adopted plans programs, and policies of other Federal agencies and State and local governments, as well as those of the Department of the Interior and BLM.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Management actions and decisions of the Snake River RMP will be tracked and evaluated to determine effectiveness and to determine if the objectives of the RMP are being met. If

evaluation indicates that the RMP is not working as expected or needed, or if situations in the planning area change, it may become necessary to modify, amend, or revise the RMP. Intervals and standards for monitoring and evaluation will be established as necessary.

All mitigation measures identified directly or referenced or implied in the Snake River RMP are adopted. Additional or revised mitigation identified through activity or implementation planning or individual analysis, and that are in conformance with the RMP objectives, will be considered a supporting part of the Snake River RMP.

## PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF THIS DOCUMENT

Copies of the Snake River RMP are available on request from the Pinedale Field Office located at:

Bureau of Land Management
Pinedale Field Office
432 S. Mill St.
P.O. Box 768
Pinedale, Wyoming 82941
Telephone: (307) 367-5300

The document is also available on-line at: http://www.wy.blm.gov/srrmp/index.htm

Alan L Kesterke

Robert A. Bennett
State Director
Acting

April 5, 2004
Date