



U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management
Casper Field Office, Wyoming

January 2004

Casper Field Office Planning Area



Final Scoping Report



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
ATV	all-terrain vehicle
AUM	animal unit month
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CRMP	Cultural Resource Management Plan
DOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPCA	Energy Policy and Conservation Act
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
GIS	Geographic Information System
HMP	Habitat Management Plan
kv	Kilovolt
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
MSA	Management Situation Analysis
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOI	Notice of Intent
NSO	no surface occupancy
NSS	Native Species Status
OHV	off-highway vehicle
ORV	off-road vehicle
PFC	Proper Functioning Condition
RFD	reasonable foreseeable development
RMP	resource management plan
ROD	Record of Decision
SMA	Special Management Area
TCP	Traditional Cultural Properties
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VRM	Visual Resource Management
WGFD	Wyoming Game and Fish Department
WSA	Wilderness Study Area

FINAL SCOPING REPORT

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Casper Field Office, Wyoming**

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It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to develop Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and to update or revise the RMPs when appropriate. The existing Platte River RMP was completed in 1985. Since then, the RMP has undergone over 50 maintenance actions to either update or amend the RMP. The BLM is revising the 1985 Platte River RMP and preparing a supporting Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The BLM's Platte River Resource Area is now referred to as the Casper Field Office Planning Area (Casper Planning Area). The RMP revision is titled and referred to as the Casper RMP revision.

The Casper Planning Area (Figure 1) includes 1.4 million acres of BLM-administered surface land and 4.7 million acres of BLM-administered mineral estate in Converse, Goshen, Natrona, and Platte counties in east-central Wyoming. Except for Natrona County, most BLM-administered surface land involves scattered tracts intermingled with state and private lands. The revised RMP will provide future direction for managing BLM-administered lands within the Casper Planning Area.

This scoping report describes the public involvement process (Section 2.0), which includes a discussion of the public notification process, descriptions of the scoping meetings, a summary of the opportunities provided for public comments, a list of cooperating agencies and federally recognized tribes. This scoping report also provides a summary of comments submitted to the BLM during the comment period (Section 3.0) and a summary of data gaps identified during the scoping process (Section 4.0). A summary of the next steps involved in the RMP revision process is provided in Section 5.0.

2.0 THE SCOPING PROCESS

Public involvement is an integral part of revising the RMP and preparing the EIS. The Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Scoping Guidance defines scoping as the "process by which lead agencies solicit input from the public and interested agencies on the nature and extent of issues and impacts to be addressed and the methods by which they will be evaluated."

BLM's planning regulations 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1601-1610 and CEQ's regulations 40 CFR 1500-1508 incorporate the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for public involvement and scoping. In 43 CFR 1501.7 and 1506.6, the CEQ describes what the federal agency must do as part of the scoping process to involve the public. BLM Manual Section 1790 and Handbook H-1790-1 set forth BLM policies and guidance for complying with CEQ Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) and the Department of the Interior's (DOI) Manual (516 DM 1-7) on implementing NEPA. BLM Handbook H-1610 gives direction for conducting public scoping meetings and Washington Office Information Bulletin 2003-020 gives guidance on what information may be included in the scoping report.

The intent of the scoping process is to provide ample opportunity for the collaborators (tribal, state, and local governments; other federal agencies; stakeholders; and the general public) to learn about and comment on the RMP revision. Scoping is not an isolated action, rather it brings together collaborators early in the process; identifies significant issues, alternatives and potential impacts to be addressed; and identifies assignments among lead and cooperating agencies. This process ensures that the RMP revision and EIS address significant issues important to the people who will be affected by BLM's decisions.

Scoping for the Casper RMP revision took place from June 20, 2003 to November 20, 2003. BLM resource management regulations only require a 30-day scoping period; however, the Casper revision scoping period remained open for five months.

In the Federal Register Notice of Intent (NOI) and during scoping preliminary planning issues and criteria were identified by BLM personnel. These planning issues and criteria will be used to guide the identification and development of management alternatives. Preliminary planning issues and criteria may be refined or new ones added as a result of the public scoping process.

While the scoping report identifies potentially significant issues, the document does not make decisions nor does it set forth policies. The scoping report only summarizes the issues received by BLM up to the end of the scoping period, November 20, 2003. Comments received during the scoping period are summarized by revision topic in Appendix A. A complete set of comments (letters) is included in Appendix B. Comments received after November 20, 2003 are not captured in the scoping report summary, but they are included in Appendix C and the BLM will work to ensure that these late comments are incorporated in the next phase of the RMP revision process to the extent possible. To that effect, the BLM is open to accepting comments any time during the RMP revision process and will work to ensure that these comments are incorporated into the next phase of the Casper RMP revision process.

2.1 *Notifications*

Federal Register Notice of Intent

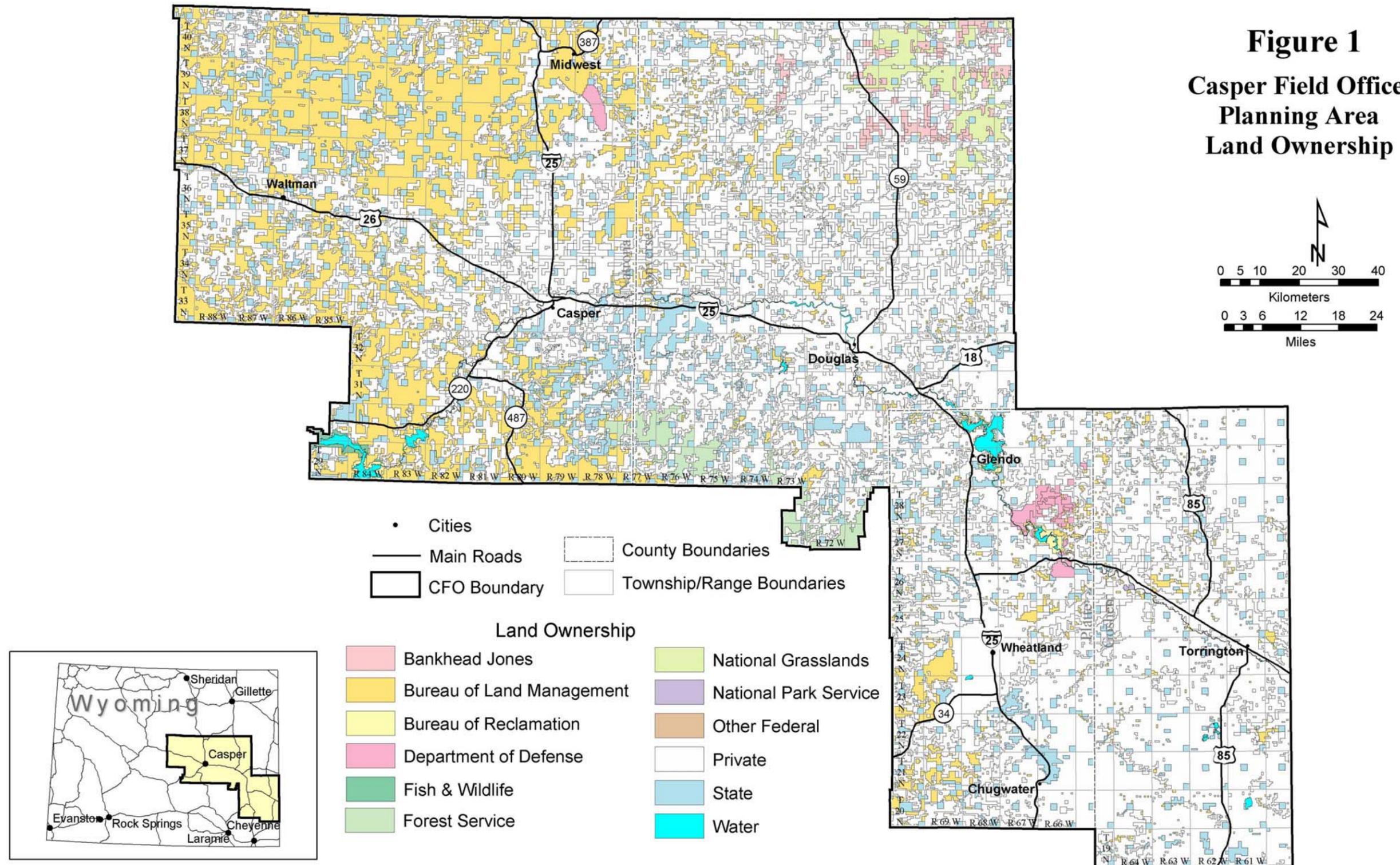
The initiation of the scoping process began with publication of the NOI to revise the Platte River RMP and prepare a supporting EIS in the Federal Register (see Appendix D). The NOI, published June 20, 2003, identifies preliminary planning issues and criteria. Although the NOI indicates that the BLM can most effectively use public comments and resource information submitted within 30 days of the publication, the scoping period for the Casper RMP revision extended beyond the 30-day period to five months.

Scoping Notice

The BLM pursued multiple avenues to notify the public of the various opportunities for involvement in and commenting on the nature and extent of issues and impacts to be addressed in the Casper RMP revision. A scoping notice (see Appendix E) was mailed to 1,104 interested and involved collaborators on October 20, 2003. In the scoping notice, the BLM solicited written comments on the RMP revision process, issues, and impacts and invited collaborators to a series of four public scoping meetings, to be held throughout the planning area. The scoping notice also served to remind the public of the opportunity to view the Summary of the Management Situation Analysis (MSA), the project schedule, and other relevant project information on the Casper RMP revision website (www.blm.gov/rmp/casper).

Additionally, Public Affairs Specialists from the BLM sent press releases to various newspapers in cities and towns across the planning area and the State of Wyoming. Appendix F provides a sample press release and a list of local and regional media used for public service announcements.

Figure 1
Casper Field Office
Planning Area
Land Ownership



Website

The BLM developed a website to provide collaborators with another tool to find information about the RMP revision process and to provide another input method for public comments. The website, www.blm.gov/rmp/casper, provides current information on the schedule for the RMP revision, relevant and complete documents and notifications, an opportunity to join the mailing list, photographs of the planning area, and an electronic comment form for anyone who wishes to submit comments online (Appendix G). The Casper RMP revision website went online on October 16, 2003 and will be regularly updated throughout the RMP revision with general project information, published reports, meeting dates, and photographs.

2.2 Scoping Meetings

A series of public scoping meetings were held across the Casper Planning Area in facilities compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Meeting times and locations are listed in Table 2-1. The four meetings employed an open house format with two formal presentations (3:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.) by the Casper Field Office Manager. Each presentation was followed by a question and answer session. Four fact sheets, the Summary of the MSA, and a series of four display boards were provided at each scoping meeting. Resource specialists and other representatives of the BLM were on hand to personally address questions and provide information to meeting participants. Meeting attendees were encouraged to comment using a variety of media, including written comment forms, flip charts, planning area maps, and a computer kiosk. A sign-in form was also provided to the public at these meetings (Appendix H).

Table 2-1. Scoping Meeting Times and Locations

Meeting Site	Date	Facility	Time
Wheatland	November 10, 2003	Platte County Library Large Meeting Room 904 9th St. Wheatland, WY	3 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Torrington	November 11, 2003	Eastern Wyoming College Community Training Center 3200 W. C St. Torrington, WY	3 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Douglas	November 12, 2003	Converse County Building Community Room 107 N. 5 th St. Douglas, WY	3 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Casper	November 13, 2003	BLM Casper Field Office 2987 Prospector Drive Casper, WY	3 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Displays

Four 3-panel, table-top display boards (see Appendix I) guided meeting participants visually through the RMP revision process and issues. The four display boards included the following:

-
- a description of the Casper RMP revision process, schedule, and preliminary planning issues;
 - a map of the Casper Planning Area;
 - a list of commonly used acronyms in the revision process;
 - physical and biological resources information;
 - resource uses of the planning area;
 - fire management on the planning area;
 - special land use designations; and,
 - social and economic conditions of the people living near the Casper Planning Area.

Fact Sheets

Four fact sheets were developed by the BLM to provide meeting participants with an overview of the Casper RMP revision process and can be found in Appendix J. The fact sheets provided the following:

- *The RMP Revision Process* - defined acronyms and terms commonly used in the planning process;
- *How You Can Participate* – provided a step-by-step description of how interested members of the public can be involved in the revision process;
- *Preliminary Planning Issues* – reiterated the preliminary issues and criteria documented in the Federal Register NOI that the BLM identified; and,
- *RMP Revision Topics* – listed the physical and biological resources, resource uses, and other topics that were being considered in the RMP revision process.

All fact sheets were distributed at each scoping meeting, were given to local and statewide media, and were made available at the Casper Field Office. Copies of the four fact sheets remain available at the Casper Field Office and on the website following closure of the public scoping period.

2.3 Opportunities to Comment

Collaborators were provided various opportunities to comment on the BLM's proposed resource issues and preliminary planning criteria. The following is a comprehensive list of methods made available for commenting during the scoping process:

- By mail – Interested parties were invited to submit comments by mail to the BLM Casper Field Office in both the NOI and the scoping notice;

- Online at the Casper RMP revision website – A comment form was made available online on November 3, 2003 for those wishing to submit comments electronically;
- By phone – The scoping notice and all four fact sheets included a phone number where interested parties could call and submit comments; and
- At public scoping meetings – Attendees at each of four public scoping meetings were provided the opportunity to submit written comments on a comment form (Appendix K), electronic comments at a computer kiosk, verbal comments to resource specialists who transcribed information onto flip charts, and written comments on maps of the planning area.

The BLM received comment in most of the aforementioned formats. An overview of the number of comments letters/forms received in each format during the scoping period (Table 2-2).

Table 2-2. Comments Received Through Each Format

Comment Format	Number of Comments Received
Mailed Comments	22
Website Comments	3
Telephone comments	0
Public Scoping Meetings	20
Total	45

2.4 Cooperating Agencies

The BLM initiated contact with potential cooperating agencies and invited them to become cooperating agencies in the RMP revision planning process (in accordance with CEQ Regulations, 40 CFR 1501.6). These cooperating agencies have begun to assist the BLM by providing information and support in the development of issues. Individual meetings were held with County Commissioners from Converse, Goshen, Natrona, and Platte counties. Table 2-3 identifies the local, state and federal agencies that have expressed an interest in cooperating agency status.

Table 2-3. Cooperating Agencies

Local Agencies	State and Federal Agencies
Converse County Commissioners	United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Converse County Conservation District	Wyoming State Planning Office
Lingle-Fort Laramie Conservation District	Wyoming State Department of Agriculture
Natrona County Commissioners	Wyoming Game & Fish Department
Natrona County Conservation District	Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments
North Platte Valley Conservation District	Wyoming State Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources - State Historic Preservation Office
Platte County Commissioners	
South Goshen Conservation District	

2.5 Tribal Consultation

The BLM consults with all federally-recognized tribes that have historically and traditionally occupied the land in the planning area and views them as sovereign nations. Representatives from the following tribes were invited to participate in the scoping process and were consulted on issues such as traditional use areas and sacred ceremonial sites.

- Blackfeet
- Cheyenne River Sioux
- Crow
- Eastern Shoshone
- Lower Brule Sioux
- Nez Percé
- Northern Arapaho
- Northern Cheyenne
- Ute
- Oglala Lakota
- Rosebud Sioux
- Confederated Salish and Kootenai
- Shoshone-Bannock

3.0 ISSUE SUMMARIES OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

3.1 Issue Summaries by Revision Topic

The following sections represent a summary of public comments provided to the BLM during the public scoping period. These public comments were generated from the methods described in Section 2.3.

In order to capture the public's concerns regarding the RMP revision each comment letter (or other form) was reviewed for content and categorized by revision topic. Key comments were identified and summarized. Many letters had more than one comment. Therefore, the number of these comments is greater than the number of comment letters received. A revision topic (e.g., minerals, grazing, recreation) was assigned to each comment. For example, the impacts of smoke on air quality was identified as an issue. This issue was then categorized under the air quality revision topic. Some comments identified more than one topic. For example, a comment on the impacts of smoke from fire was identified as an air quality comment and also identified as a fire comment. By assigning multiple topics to comments, the BLM ensures the issue will be considered for all relevant revision topics. In addition, some comments were contradictory with one another. For example some people want to fully protect resources while other people want to use resources to their full extent. Appendix B contains a complete set of scoping letters received by the BLM during the five-month scoping period.

Table 3-1 shows the number of comments received per revision topic in alphabetical order. Following Table 3-1, summaries of scoping comments by revision topic are described. While all comments will be considered during the RMP revision process, fish and wildlife; minerals (including oil and gas leasing), and livestock grazing received the highest number of comments during the scoping period. Vegetation, lands and realty, transportation and access, cultural resources and off-highway vehicles also received a large number of comments.

Fish and wildlife comments focused on considering the effects of development (i.e., surface use, range management, roads) on wildlife and their habitat. Many commentors requested protection and mitigation measures for wildlife to offset existing and anticipated impacts as a result of management decisions.

Comments on mineral resources focused on oil and gas exploration techniques such as directional drilling. Some commentors considered directional drilling appropriate while other commentors did not. The methods in which to calculate surface disturbance also generated comments as well as the compatibility of mineral leasing and oil and gas development with other resources.

Livestock grazing comments focused on considering fence modifications to improve wildlife movement and coordinating with adjacent landowners to develop wildlife-friendly fencing; considering the economic effects of management actions on the local agricultural community; and addressing the impacts on range conditions from drought, wildlife, and horses.

Table 3-1. Comments Per Revision Topic Area

Revision Topic	Number of Comments	Revision Topic	Number of Comments
Air Quality	5	Special Designations	16
Cultural Resources	29	Special Status Species	15
Fire Management	15	Transportation and Access	26
Fish and Wildlife	62	Utility and Communication Corridors	2
Geology	0	Vegetation	35
Lands and Realty	33	Visual Resources	10
Livestock Grazing	46	Water Resources	20
Mineral Resources	57	Alternatives	*
National Historic Trails	13	Content and Methodology	*
Off-Highway Vehicles	27	Purpose and Need	0
Paleontology	0	RMP Revision Process	10
Recreation	20	Mitigation Measures	14
Renewable Energy	2	Cumulative Impacts	9
Social and Economic Conditions	11	Regulatory Compliance	9
Soil	11	Valid Existing Management	5
¹Total:			501

Note: * Comments under this heading are included in the specific revision topic

¹ The total number of comments includes duplicate comments. For example the same comment may appear in both air quality and fire.

3.1.1 Air Quality

The air quality section of the RMP revision will include a detailed emission inventory calculated for the various activities associated with existing management and proposed alternatives for the Casper RMP. Air quality issues raised included prescribed fire, coordination between BLM and the State of Wyoming, and BLM's authority for air quality. There were 5 comments related to air quality all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Consider the impacts of smoke from prescribed fire on public health, nuisance and visibility.
- Promote the use of prescribed fire to reduce the effects of smoke from a wildfire.
- Conduct a comparison of visibility impacts from prescribed fire to visibility impacts from wildfire.
- Ensure that work on air quality issues is coordinated between BLM and the State of Wyoming.
- Ensure BLM recognition of State primacy for air quality under the Clean Air Act.

3.1.2 Cultural Resources

The cultural resources section of the RMP revision will include historic and prehistoric artifacts, buildings, and structures; mines, trails, railroads, ditches; historic landscapes and trash dumps; and archaeological sites. Cultural resources may also include Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP), which are properties that are critical to a living community's beliefs, customs, and practices. The majority of comments on cultural resources focused on surveying and protecting cultural resources, regulatory compliance, and ensuring tribal consultation. In addition, the Cedar Ridge-Badwater Creek area was recommended for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as a TCP (for other special designation nominations, see Section 4.0). There were 29 comments related to cultural resources all of which appear in Appendix A . A summary of the comments follows:

- Ensure compliance with state and federal regulations including Section 106 and Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).
- Follow mandates in BLM's Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP) manual, and adequately integrate FLPMA's multiple use mandates into the RMP process.
- Engage in tribal consultation early in planning process.
- Consider existing CRMPs during alternative development.
- Identify existing cultural resource threats, issues and areas of interest.
- Adopt management actions to protect, conserve and restore cultural resources.
- Integrate President Bush's "Preserve America" stewardship mandates into the RMP.
- Adopt specific measures to protect cultural resources from artifact collectors, looters, and vandals.
- Nominate the Cedar Ridge-Badwater Creek area to the NRHP as a TCP and manage it as a Special Management Area (SMA).
- Adopt No Surface Occupancy (NSO) restrictions and additional necessary stipulations for leases, in order to avoid and minimize potential adverse effects on cultural and historic properties.
- Outline specific management actions, such as stabilization, fencing, signage, closures and interpretative development.
- Ensure protection of historic roads and trails while maintaining today's allowable uses.
- Provide an in-depth overview and situational analysis of BLM-managed cultural resources in the Casper Planning Area.

3.1.3 Fire Management

The fire management section in the RMP revision will include a discussion of naturally occurring fires and prescribed burns, as well as fire suppression techniques. There were 15 comments related to fire management all of which appear in Appendix A. The majority of these comments focused on developing a comprehensive fire management policy recognizing fire as both a natural disturbance element on the landscape level, as well as a viable management tool for area-specific habitat enhancement activities. A summary of the comments follows:

- Consider impacts from fire (e.g., public health, smoke).
- Examine multiple management tools, including prescribed fires, pre and post-treatment management, and treatment for weeds.
- Consider including impacts of fire on other resources (e.g., sage grouse, sagebrush, and aspen).

3.1.4 Fish and Wildlife

The fish and wildlife section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of fish species and fisheries habitat in streams, lakes, and ponds. It will also include vertebrate wildlife species that occur in the planning area including reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. Threatened, endangered, sensitive, or other special status species will be addressed under a separate section. There were 62 comments related to fish and wildlife all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Develop mitigation strategies to minimize impacts from recreation and resource development on wildlife habitats and biological resources.
- Consider effects on range conditions from drought, wildlife, livestock and horses.
- Consider surface-use restrictions and available technologies to reduce impacts on wildlife habitats and to provide protection for riparian, floodplain, seep and spring communities.
- Provide protection measures for key wildlife habitats (e.g., big game crucial winter ranges, raptor and mountain plover nesting habitats, mahogany and sagebrush shrub and forest habitats) and for wildlife species of public and agency concern (e.g., sage grouse, prairie dogs, swift fox, and native warm water fishes). Continue to identify wildlife habitat improvement opportunities.
- Consider special management area designations to protect key wildlife habitats and continue to develop Habitat Management Plans for important areas.
- Continue to encourage local conservation efforts, such as the Bates Hole Sage Grouse Conservation Working Group.
- Continue coordination with Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) on planning efforts and management activities.

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- Consider protecting lands within the boundaries of or adjoining WGFD Wildlife Habitat Management Units (Rawhide, Table Mountain, Springer/Bump Sullivan, and Cottonwood) and lands adjacent to Glendo, Gurnsey and Gray Rocks Reservoirs from disposal or mineral leasing.
 - Review existing fences and consider fence modifications to improve wildlife movement and coordinate with adjacent landowners to develop wildlife-friendly fencing.
 - Review water developments contained in the existing RMP for wildlife, especially pronghorn and mule deer.
 - Address the effects of roads on wildlife and its habitat, particularly habitat fragmentation, habitat loss, and wildlife disturbance, especially in areas of intense resource development.
 - Support the development of new reservoirs and provide protection from development or disposal in key sport fisheries areas.

3.1.5 Geology and Geologic Hazards

The geology and geologic hazards section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of physiography, earthquakes, landslides, topography, floods, snow slides, and slumps. No geology specific comments were received during the scoping period.

3.1.6 Lands and Realty

The BLM lands and realty section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of rights-of-way for pipelines, utilities, and roads; land acquisition and disposal; easements; withdrawals; land use authorizations; and trespass identification and abatement. Lands and realty comments ranged from multiple use land management and preserving public lands to specific methods of land management such as land exchanges or easements. Several requests or comments regarding specific geographic areas, resources, or resource uses were provided. There were 33 comments related to lands and realty all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Consider existing lease agreements and other programs such as easements, land exchanges, allotments, withdrawals, disposals, and land tenure and how they might be impacted by new decisions.
- Consider preservation of public land, resource conservation, minimal regulations, and multiple use management in the RMP revision.
- Include programs such as land tenure adjustment or exchange to mitigate issues associated with isolated tracts of land (e.g., access, trespass).
- Continue coordination with county governments, specifically county comprehensive plans.

3.1.7 Livestock Grazing

The livestock grazing section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of grazing allotment issues, grazing leases, range improvement projects, livestock fences, livestock reservoirs, springs, water wells, and vegetative treatments. The majority of the livestock grazing comments focused on considering fence modifications to improve wildlife movement and coordinating with adjacent landowners to develop wildlife-friendly fencing; considering the economic effects of management actions on the local agricultural community; and addressing the impacts on range conditions from drought, wildlife, and horses. Several requests or comments regarding specific geographic areas, resources, or resource uses were provided. There were 46 comments related to livestock grazing all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Continue coordination with ranchers, public, and interested stakeholders.
- Consider multiple management strategies including habitat improvements, determining manageable pasture size, and fencing techniques.
- Include programs to implement management strategies that improve “P” class allotments.
- Consider including monitoring programs to help improve rangeland condition.
- Include programs that strive to balance wildlife and grazing management.

3.1.8 Mineral Resources

The mineral resources section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of leasable, locatable, and salable minerals. Leasable minerals within the planning area include coal and oil and gas, which includes coalbed natural gas. Uranium and bentonite represent some of the locatable minerals in the planning area. Salable minerals include sand and gravel, clay, limestone, and decorative stone. Mineral resource comments were received regarding oil and gas development and exploration; drilling methods; surface or water resource disturbance; and potential impacts to other resources or resource uses such as wildlife and recreation. Several requests or comments regarding particular geographic areas, resources, or resource uses were provided. There were 57 comments related to mineral resources all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Incorporate techniques including directional drilling and lease stipulations regarding pad spacing near habitat management areas to reduce impacts to surface resources.
- Consideration of directional drilling as a mitigation tool is inappropriate for planning level analyses.
- BLM should not make assumptions that industry can directional drill in any situation. Need to consider economics and technical feasibility when making this determination.
- Address coalbed methane related to surface development and water resources.
- Incorporate methods to calculate disturbance; employ least restrictive mitigation measures; develop monitoring programs; and accomplish reclamation into the RMP revision.

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- Methods which are used to calculate surface disturbance should take into consideration land which has already been reclaimed.
 - Protect and enhance opportunities to explore for and develop oil and gas including allowing the use of new technology, lessening restrictive surface management practices, and increasing access to public lands.
 - Consider existing lease agreements and lease stipulations and how they might be impacted by new decisions. Valid existing lease rights cannot be changed by a new RMP.
 - Consider the relationship between surface land management and subsurface resource development, including the compatibility of exploration and development activities with multiple-use and recreation as well as multiple mineral development.
 - Evaluate potential socioeconomic impacts, access to public land, and other considerations closely related to mineral development.
 - The BLM should ensure that access to State lands for subsurface mineral development is maintained when imposing federal prescriptions on surrounding public land.
 - Address foreseeable level of oil and gas development and potential impacts to other resources and resource uses.
 - Identify all areas where mineral development exists.
 - Consider the withdrawal of mineral leases associated with specific habitat units.
 - Provide realistic opportunities for the development of oil and natural gas on federal lands with only necessary restrictions on surface use.
 - Incorporate the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) inventory results.

3.1.9 National Historic Trails

The National Historic Trails section of the RMP revision will include trails associated with overland migration, frontier military activities and early transportation, including the California, Oregon, Mormon Pioneer, and Pony Express Trails. The majority of comments on National Historic Trails focused on protecting historic trails via viewshed protection, NSO restrictions, and well-defined compatible uses; conducting Section 106 review; and encouraging public use and recreational opportunities. There were 13 comments related to National Historic Trails all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Retain the existing RMP measures to protect National Historic Trails until such time as the Wyoming Historic Trail Management Plan is completed.
- Ensure adequate viewshed protection (e.g., buffer zone) for National Historic Trails within the planning area.

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- Conduct a Section 106 review before designating any areas in and around National Historic Trails as open for activities that may allow surface occupancy.
 - Adopt NSO restrictions and additional necessary stipulations for leases in order to avoid and minimize potential adverse effects on cultural and historic properties.
 - Provide adequate buffer zones to ensure that surface activities will not adversely impact National Historic Trails viewshed.
 - Attach cultural resource restrictions and stipulations for areas open for oil and gas development outside of the buffer zone protection area.
 - Restrict activities by applying NSO restrictions or other enforceable stipulations adequate to prevent all impacts to the historic viewsheds of National Historic Trail.
 - Maintain visual and physical integrity of historic trails.
 - Be specific about compatible uses for historic trails.
 - Encourage public use of historic trails by marking routes.
 - Provide recreational opportunity related to historic trails.

3.1.10 Off-Highway Vehicles

The off-highway vehicles section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of OHV access, user conflicts, and trails for OHV use and/or restrictions. The OHV comments mainly related to the management of OHV use; planning for when and where OHV and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use can occur or will be restricted; overall transportation planning; and the maintenance or reduction of roads. Several requests or comments regarding particular geographic areas, resources, or resource uses were provided. Four comments were specific to Poison Spider Park. There were 27 comments related to off-highway vehicles all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) prior to OHV class designations.
- Examine multiple management tools, including monitoring and educational programs, road surfacing, designating use areas, noise limitations, and closure and temporary closure.
- Develop additional ATV trail and OHV park systems.
- Consider developing a second OHV park or make additional land available for OHV use.

3.1.11 Paleontology

While there were no specific comments relating to paleontology, the paleontology section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of the known and potential distribution of fossil resources, active research issues, and permits.

3.1.12 Recreation

The recreation section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of sightseeing, touring, hiking, mountain biking, backpacking, photography, wildlife viewing, camping, fishing, and hunting. The focus of comments in this section was on recreational access. Several comments encouraged various forms of recreation and compatibility with oil and gas exploration. Comments on OHV can be found in the OHV section. Other requests regarding particular geographic areas, resources, or resource uses were provided. There were 20 comments related to recreation all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Consider compatible uses such as oil and gas exploration and development and semi-primitive recreation.
- Increase public access to the North Platte River and other important recreational areas.
- Consider programs that promote recreational opportunities related to historic trails and backcountry byways.
- Open historic trails and livestock routes to recreational use.
- Provide access points signs and identify property lines so that public land visitors may more effectively use public lands.

3.1.13 Renewable Energy

The renewable energy section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of wind energy, geothermal resources, solar power energy and other renewable sources. There were two comments related to renewable energy. One comment was on preparing a “Statement of Adverse Energy Impact;” the other that the Department of Energy is studying the feasibility of a wind farm in the planning area. Appendix A contains the comments relating to renewable energy.

3.1.14 Social and Economic Conditions

The social and economic conditions of the RMP revision will include health and safety, county level economic development information, and environmental justice. The methodologies for the socioeconomic analysis were the primary focus of comments in this section. There were 11 comments related to social and economic conditions all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Consider employment and beneficial revenues of mineral development and exploration, hunting and fishing, and other revenues on the counties in the planning area.

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- Address foreseeable level of oil and gas development.

3.1.15 Soil

The soil section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of soil disturbance from mineral extraction, erosion, and surface runoff. There were 11 comments related to soil all of which appear in Appendix A. The comments focused on analyzing impacts from surface disturbance. A summary of the comments follows:

- Consider addressing reasonable mitigation measures.
- Consider the effect of surface resource management on subsurface development opportunities and activities.
- Address coalbed methane related to surface development and water resources.
- Provide opportunities for development of oil and gas with only necessary restrictions on surface use.

3.1.16 Special Designations

The special designations section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of designated areas such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), National Historic Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness Study Areas. ACEC nominations are also discussed in Section 3.4. The focus of the special designation comments was on protecting wilderness quality and managing specific areas for adequate protection. There were 16 comments related to special designations all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Identify and protect lands of wilderness quality.
- Manage the Cedar Ridge-Badwater Creek area as a SMA.
- Designate SMAs for key wildlife habitats.
- Designate ACECs in various locations.

3.1.17 Special Status Species

The special status species section in the RMP revision will include a discussion of plant and animal species that are listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). It also includes BLM-designated sensitive species. There were 15 comments related to special status species all of which appear in Appendix A. These comments focused on special status species or requesting special listing for certain species. A summary of the comments follows:

- Consider specific species and their habitats. Some suggestions include sage grouse, prairie dogs, big game crucial ranges, raptor and mountain plover nesting areas, and swift fox.

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- Consider the sensitivity ratings of non-game fish.
 - Protect habitat using tools such as seasonal stipulations, designations of SMAs, and restoration.
 - Consider the multiple use mandate and limiting restrictions related to special status species in order to lesson economic impacts.

3.1.18 Transportation and Access

The transportation section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of access to public lands, mass transit, and infrastructure management. The majority of comments in this section related to transportation and access focused on ensuring access to public lands for recreational uses, oil and gas and mineral development, and general purposes; addressing private land trespassing; and ensuring the acceptability of equestrian transportation on BLM lands. There were 26 comments related to transportation and access all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Consider reduced access to public lands for purposes of exploring for and producing oil and gas resources as a separate issue from economic impacts.
- Maintain access to state and private lands surrounded by BLM land.
- Address transportation planning that includes off-road use and its probable increase in the future.
- Include and promote actions such as conservation easements and land exchanges to accomplish easy management and access.
- Consider public access in realty actions.
- Identify public access to the North Platte River as a critical issue.
- Include equestrian use an acceptable means of transportation and recreation on all BLM lands.
- Provide access to BLM land northeast of Casper in Area 25.
- Minimize the number of roads on BLM lands.
- Address the issue of access and trespassing across private land to reach public lands.
- Consider using only gravel on all weather roads.
- Ensure protection of historic roads and trails while maintaining today's allowed uses.

3.1.19 Utility and Communication Corridors

The utility and communication corridors section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of power and phone lines, fiber optic lines, rights-of-way, canals, ditches and cell phone towers. There were two comments related to utility and communications corridors. One requested that the BLM not allow above ground powerlines greater than 33 kilovolt (kv) and the other dealt with restrictions on utility corridors. Appendix A contains summaries of these comments.

3.1.20 Vegetation

The vegetation section of the RMP revision will include grassland and shrubland communities, riparian and wetland vegetation, woodlands and forests, and invasive, nonnative plant species, but does not include special status plants. There were 35 comments related to vegetation all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Maintain and improve vegetation communities important to wildlife.
- Continue to identify community enhancement opportunities.
- Address Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) and Potential Natural Community rankings and objectives.
- Conserve riparian habitats and consider the use of fencing to limit the effects of livestock grazing in these areas.
- Encourage the use of native species of vegetation during reclamation efforts after resource development and consider the needs of fish and wildlife.
- Incorporate aggressive management techniques and strategies to control the effects and spread of invasive, non-native plant species.
- Encourage the use of native species.

3.1.21 Visual Resources

The visual resources section in the RMP revision will include a discussion of scenic views, visual quality, Visual Resource Management (VRM), and overlooks. The majority of visual resource comments focused on monitoring and protecting the visual integrity of historic trails; using various management measures to protect viewsheds; allowing a diversity of landscapes; and managing visual resources with equal importance to other resources. There were 10 comments related to visual resources all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Consider multiple resource management and the compatibility of resources such as VRM, recreational user days and mineral development potential.
- Maintain the visual integrity of historic trails and other cultural resources for which integrity of setting is an integral component of site significance.
- Continue to work with land management agencies with adjacent lands for compatibility.

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- Continue to employ management techniques, mitigation measures, and standards to protect visual resources.

3.1.22 Water Resources

The water resources section in the RMP revision will include a discussion of water quality and quantity. The focus of water resource comments was on managing or prohibiting coalbed methane discharge into water bodies; the creation of reservoirs; floodplain issues; protection of springs and seeps; the use of best management practices (BMPs); and encouraging water developments for livestock and wildlife. There were 20 comments related to water resources all of which appear in Appendix A. A summary of the comments follows:

- Address coalbed methane and other mineral resources related to surface development and water resources.
- Include management programs and techniques to include protection of springs and seeps; development of new and rehabilitation of existing reservoirs; conversion of abandoned wells to water wells; and additional water developments.

3.1.23 Alternatives

The alternatives in the RMP revision will include a discussion of formulation of alternatives, definition of alternatives and preferred alternative. Alternatives will be developed during the next phase of the RMP revision. Comments on alternatives focused primarily on specific revision topics that could be used for alternative development. For example, some of the nominations listed in Section 3.4 may be considered in alternative development.

3.1.24 Content and Methodology

The content and methodology category includes the format of the RMP revision; geographic areas addressed in the planning process; analyses included or not included in the planning process; period of analysis; request for additional information; baseline definition; assumptions incorporated in the analysis; and, thoroughness of the analysis. These types of comments can be found under their respective revision topic.

3.1.25 Purpose and Need

The purpose and need section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of BLM goals and the need for RMP revision. There were no comments related specifically to the purpose and need of the RMP during the public scoping process. However, this will be addressed in the RMP revision and will include BLM goals and the need for RMP revision.

3.1.26 RMP Revision Process

The RMP revision section of this document addresses NEPA and FLPMA requirements, cooperating agencies, the public involvement process, and the objectivity of documents (Summary of the MSA, RMP, and Draft EIS). The majority of comments related to the RMP revision process focused on tribal and WGFD consultation; coordinating with ranchers, the public and interested

stakeholders; avoiding delay in oil and gas activities during the RMP revision; including mitigation measures; analyzing cumulative effects; and following other BLM mandates. There were 10 comments related to the RMP revision process all of which appear in Appendix A.

3.1.27 Mitigation Measures

The mitigation measures section in the RMP revision will include a discussion of measures to offset unavoidable impacts. The majority of these comments related to mitigation measures focused on mitigation measures for energy development; following BMPs; fencing for protection purposes; methods for re-using water; and strategies to minimize impacts from recreational uses. There were 14 comments related to mitigation measures all of which appear in Appendix A.

3.1.28 Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts section of the RMP revision will include a discussion of the impacts on the environment which result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The majority of cumulative impacts comments focused on including various management plans from other agencies and addressing impacts associated with the increasing intensity of land uses. There were 8 comments related to cumulative impacts all of which appear in Appendix A.

3.1.29 Regulatory Compliance

The regulatory compliance category addresses laws, executive orders, regulations and guidelines that will need to be implemented during the RMP revision process. The comments in this section related to compliance with Section 106 and 110 of the NHPA and following FLPMA's mandates. There were 9 comments related to regulatory compliance all of which appear in Appendix A.

3.2 Issues Raised That Will Not Be Addressed

At this early phase in the RMP process, all comments raised during the scoping period have been summarized in this scoping report. During the alternative formulation phase of the RMP revision process, BLM will refine the planning criteria and preliminary planning issues. Through this refinement, BLM will determine which issues are to be carried forward and which issues will not be addressed in the RMP revision process.

3.3 Valid Existing Management to be Carried Forward

Valid existing management practices that will be addressed in the RMP revision include continuing current management practices as is and bringing forward management actions from the existing RMP. The comments in this section showed support for continuing current management practices. There were 5 comments related to valid existing management to be carried forward all of which appear in Appendix A.

3.4 *Special Designation Nominations*

During the scoping process, various agencies and organizations proposed some areas to be nominated for special designations. Table 3-2 lists the name of the nominated area, proposed nomination category, who nominated the area, and the type of action requested. Most lands were nominated as an ACEC. One ACEC was recommended to be removed from ACEC designation and another area was recommended for being retained as an ACEC. One area was nominated as a TCP.

Table 3-2. Nominations for Special Designations

Name of Nomination/Resource Area	Proposed Category	Author or Organization Requesting Nomination	Type of Action
North Platte River Corridor	ACEC	WGFD; Sierra Club	Nomination
Casper Sand Dunes	ACEC	Sierra Club	Nomination
Hole in the Wall/Red Wall	ACEC	Sierra Club	Nomination
Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area	ACEC	Sierra Club	Nomination
South Fork of the Powder River Watershed	ACEC	Sierra Club	Nomination
South Fork of the Powder River Roadless Area northeast of Notches Dome identified in the book Wild Wyoming	WSA	Biodiversity Conservation Alliance	Nomination
Prairie Dog complexes larger than 3,000 acres	ACEC	Biodiversity Conservation Alliance	Nomination
Emigrant Trails	ACEC	Sierra Club	Nomination
Teapot Dome	ACEC	Sierra Club	Nomination
Pterodactyl Track	ACEC	Sierra Club	Nomination
Table Mountain	ACEC	Sierra Club	Nomination
Jackson Canyon	ACEC	Sierra Club, WGFD	Retain
Salt Creek	ACEC	Sierra Club	Remove
Salt Creek	ACEC	WGFD	Retain
Little Medicine Falls	ACEC	Joe D. Reddick	Nomination
Cedar Ridge-Badwater Creek	TCP and SMA	National Trust for Historic Preservation	Nomination
South Big Horns-Red Wall	ACEC	WGFD	Nomination
Special Management Areas for Key Wildlife Habitats	SMA	WGFD	Nomination

3.5 Future Decisions to be Made

This scoping report does not make any decisions, nor does it change current management direction set forth in the existing RMP. It merely summarizes those issues identified during the scoping period for the Casper Planning Area. Issues identified in the scoping report, as well as subsequently identified issues, will be used by BLM to help formulate a reasonable range of alternatives during the next phase (i.e., alternative formulation) of the RMP revision process. Each identified alternative (including continuation of existing management) will represent a complete and reasonable plan for managing the Casper Planning Area. BLM's evaluation of identified alternatives will be documented in an EIS prepared as part of the RMP revision process and required by NEPA.

FLPMA requires BLM to plan for and manage public lands administered by the Secretary of the Interior, specifically through the BLM. The Casper Planning Area is currently being managed in accordance with decisions made in and subsequent to the 1985 Platte River Resource Area RMP. Future decisions to be made for the Casper Planning Area will occur at two levels: 1) the RMP level, and 2) the implementation level. In general, only RMP-level decisions will be made as part of the RMP revision process; however, for background, both decision levels are described below.

3.5.1 Future RMP-Level Decisions

Future RMP-level decisions to be made for the Casper Planning Area will be on a broad scale. These decisions will identify management direction and guide future actions for the next 10 to 20 years within the Casper Planning Area. The revised RMP will present a vision for the Casper Planning Area by providing a comprehensive yet flexible framework for managing the numerous demands on resources managed by BLM.

The vision for the Casper Planning Area will be described in the revised RMP in terms of desired outcomes, also known as “desired future conditions”. Desired future conditions or outcomes represent one of two categories of RMP-level decisions.

Desired future conditions described in the revised RMP for the Casper Planning Area are the first category of RMP-level decisions and will be expressed in terms of specific goals, standards, and objectives. Goals are broad statements of desired outcomes (e.g., ensure sustainable development). Standards are descriptions of conditions or the degree of function required (e.g., land health standards). Objectives are specific, quantifiable and measurable desired conditions for resources (e.g., manage sagebrush communities to achieve a certain canopy cover by the year 2015).

The second category of RMP-level decisions, allowable uses and actions to achieve desired future conditions, will be expressed in the revised RMP as allowable uses, actions needed, and land tenure decisions. Livestock grazing, administrative designations (e.g., ACECs), and land disposal are examples of some RMP-level decisions in this category.

3.5.2 Future Implementation Decisions

The revised RMP and associated RMP-level decisions normally do not result in any immediate on-the-ground actions within the Casper Planning Area. The RMP must be implemented to carry out any on-the-ground actions or activities. Implementation decisions are those decisions to take action to implement the RMP. Implementation decisions are often referred to as project-level or activity-

level decisions and represent BLM's final approval of on-the-ground actions. Implementation decisions require a more detailed site-specific environmental analysis that will tie back to (i.e., tier to) the EIS prepared for the RMP revision. It is noted that in some limited circumstances, site-specific implementation decisions may be made through the RMP revision process.

For the purposes of this scoping report, issues identified during the scoping process are not organized as to the type or category of decision they may relate to. Instead, the comments summarized in the scoping report, along with subsequently identified issues, planning criteria, and other information (e.g., occurrence and development potential for minerals) will be used to formulate a reasonable range of alternatives that addresses significant planning issues identified during the RMP revision process.

4.0 DATA SUMMARY AND DATA GAPS

Data gaps were not specifically identified during scoping. However, data adequacy for Geographic Information System (GIS) layers associated with the Casper Field Office can be found in the Casper GIS Master Data List.

Missing datasets not identified on the GIS Master Data List include:

- 303 Streams – Does not exist
- Stream PFC – Partially complete
- Paleontology Sites – Partially complete
- Cultural Sites – Partially complete
- Visual Resources Inventory – Does not exist
- Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse – Partially complete
- Walk-in Hunting Areas – Not digital

Additional information concerning available data and data gaps may be obtained by calling the Casper Field Office.

5.0 SUMMARY OF FUTURE STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Future steps in the RMP revision process are described briefly in this section and on BLM's RMP website. Upon the close of the scoping period on November 20, 2003, management alternatives will be developed for detailed impact analysis. In compliance with NEPA, CEQ regulations, and the BLM planning regulations and guidance, alternatives should be reasonable and should be capable of implementation. A detailed analysis of each of these alternatives and the no action alternative will be conducted, documented and completed by the end of winter 2004.

Based upon the analyses of the alternatives, the Preferred Alternative (i.e., the alternative preferred by the BLM) will then be selected and analyzed in detail. The Preferred Alternative is often made up of a combination of management options from the other alternatives that provide the best mix and balance of multiple land and resource uses to resolve the issues with existing management in the planning area.

Next, the Draft EIS for the Casper RMP revision will be prepared in the Spring, Summer and Fall of 2004. The Draft EIS will in detail, analyze the possible impacts of each of the proposed alternatives on the existing planning area environment. Once the Draft EIS is complete, a Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EIS will be issued in the Federal Register which will initiate a formal public review and 90-day comment period to solicit input from tribal, state, and local governments, other federal agencies, and the public (see 43CFR1610.2[e]). The issuance of the NOA and the public comment period will take place in Winter 2004/2005.

Following the public review and comment period on the Draft EIS, the Final EIS will be prepared in the spring and summer of 2005. Based upon public comment, any new information and correction of errors in the Draft EIS, the Final EIS will present the Proposed RMP decisions along with the other alternatives.

Another NOA will be issued in the Federal Register for the Final EIS and Proposed RMP in summer of 2005, after which there will be a concurrent 60-day Governor's consistency review and a 30-day protest period on the Proposed RMP and Final EIS. Any protests submitted during this time will be resolved and both the Record of Decision (ROD) for the EIS and the approved RMP decisions may be prepared in one document and issued to the public in the summer/fall of 2005. Finally, implementation of the RMP will be initiated in the winter of 2005/2006. RMP implementation is dependent on many factors including available funding.

