EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzes the proposed action to revise the existing Kemmerer Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Kemmerer, Wyoming planning area. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 United States Code [USC] § 1701 et seq.) (FLPMA) requires developing, maintaining, and, as appropriate, revising land use plans for public lands. The purpose, or goal, of the land use plan is to ensure lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are managed in accordance with the FLPMA and the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

Revising an existing land use plan is a major federal action for the BLM. The National Environmental Policy Act (42 USC § 4321 et seq.) (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, requires federal agencies to prepare an EIS for major federal actions; thus, this Draft RMP and EIS is a combined document. The Draft EIS analyzes the impacts of four alternative RMPs for the planning area, including the No Action Alternative and agency Preferred Alternative. The No Action Alternative reflects current management (the existing plan).

PURPOSE AND NEED

Within the Kemmerer planning area, the BLM manages approximately 1.42-million acres of BLM-administered public land surface and 1.6-million acres of federal mineral estate. Since 1986, the existing plan has served as the framework for managing these BLM-administered lands; however, the existing plan has undergone more than 30 maintenance actions, including updates and amendments, and is in need of revision. Since the Record of Decision (ROD) was signed in 1986 for the existing plan, new data have become available, new policies established, and old policies revised. This, along with emerging issues and changing circumstances, resulted in the need for revision. This new version will address the changing needs of the planning area and select a management strategy that best achieves a combination of the following:

- Employing a community-based planning approach and complying with applicable tribal, federal, and state laws, standards, and implementation plans, as well as BLM policies and regulations.
- Establishing goals and objectives (desired outcomes) for managing resources and resource uses according to the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.
- Identifying land use plan decisions to guide future land-management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions.
- Identifying management actions and allowable uses anticipated to achieve the established goals and objectives and reach desired outcomes.
- Providing comprehensive management direction by making land use decisions for all appropriate resources and resource uses administered by the BLM Kemmerer Field Office.
- Recognizing the nation's needs for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber, and incorporating requirements of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act Reauthorization, the Energy Policy Act, the National Fire Plan, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, and the Healthy Forest Initiative.
- Retaining flexibility to adapt to new and emerging issues and opportunities, and providing for adjustments to decisions over time based on new information and monitoring.
- Striving to be compatible with existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, tribal, and federal agencies and consistent with federal law, regulations, and BLM policy.

- Providing for compliance with applicable tribal, federal, and state laws, standards, implementation plans, and BLM policies and regulations.

PLANNING ISSUES AND CRITERIA

Planning issues identified through the scoping process and other public outreach efforts focus on conflicts among resources and resource uses. Major issues described and analyzed in this Draft EIS include the following:

Energy and Mineral Resources

- What areas are suitable or not suitable for energy and mineral resource development?
- What level of development should be allowed in areas suitable for energy and mineral resource development?

Vegetation and Habitat Management

- How should soil, water, and vegetation be managed to reduce fuel loads and achieve forest health and healthy rangelands while providing for livestock grazing and fish and wildlife habitats?
- How should special status species conservation strategies be applied given the BLM's requirement for multiple-use management and sustained yield? How will these strategies affect other public land resources?

Land Ownership Adjustments, Access, and Transportation

- What land adjustments are necessary to improve access and management of public lands?
- How should travel be managed to provide access for recreation, commercial uses, and general enjoyment of the public lands while protecting cultural and natural resources?

Special Designations

- What areas, if any, contain unique or sensitive resources requiring special management?

Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and guidelines that help direct the RMP planning process. In conjunction with planning issues, planning criteria ensure the planning process is focused and incorporates appropriate analyses. Planning criteria for the Kemmerer RMP revision also apply to development of the final RMP and are summarized below.

- The revised RMP will recognize valid existing rights.
- Decisions in the revised RMP will comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Decisions may comply, as appropriate, with policy and guidance.
- Planning decisions in the revised RMP will cover BLM-administered public lands, including split-estate lands where the subsurface minerals are severed from the surface right. On split-estate lands, the BLM has legal jurisdiction over one or the other (surface land or subsurface minerals).
- The RMP planning effort will be collaborative and multi-jurisdictional in nature. The BLM will strive to ensure that its management decisions are complementary to its planning jurisdictions and adjoining properties within the boundaries described by law and regulation.

- The environmental analysis will consider a reasonable range of alternatives that focus on the relative values of resources and respond to the issues. Management prescriptions will reflect the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.
- The BLM will consider current scientific information, research, new technologies, and the results of resource assessments, monitoring, and coordination to determine appropriate local and regional management strategies to enhance or restore impaired ecosystems.
- The *Standards for Healthy Rangelands and Guidance for Livestock Grazing Management for the Public Lands Administered by the BLM in the State of Wyoming* (BLM 1998a) will apply to all activities and uses.
- The BLM will provide for public safety and welfare relative to fire, hazardous materials, and abandoned mine lands.
- Visual resource management class designations will be analyzed and modified to reflect present conditions and future needs.
- The BLM will consider current and potential future uses of the public lands through the development of reasonable foreseeable future development and activity scenarios based on historical, existing, and projected levels of use.
- Planning decisions will include the preservation, conservation, and enhancement of cultural, historical, paleontological, and natural components of public land resources, while considering energy development and other activities.
- The BLM will coordinate with tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious heritages.
- Planning decisions will comply with the Endangered Species Act and BLM interagency agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Areas potentially suitable for an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) or other special management designations will be identified and, where appropriate, brought forward for analysis in this EIS.
- Waterway segments are classified and determinations of eligibility and suitability will be made in accordance with Section 5(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Appropriate management prescriptions for maintaining or enhancing the outstanding remarkable values and classifications of waterway segments meeting suitability factors will be part of the RMP revision.
- Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use management decisions in the revised RMP will be consistent with the BLM's National OHV Strategy (BLM 2001b).
- A coal lease application—the Haystack Lease by Application—is located in northwestern Uinta County. Coal-screening determinations were made on this area during planning efforts for the Kemmerer RMP (BLM 2004b). No additional coal-screening determinations or coal-planning decisions are anticipated for the Kemmerer Field Office RMP, unless public submissions of coal resource information or surface resource issues indicate a need to update these determinations.

OVERVIEW OF ALTERNATIVES

The BLM conducted a series of four workshops in the Kemmerer Field Office with an Interdisciplinary (ID) Team comprising BLM staff and cooperating agencies. During the initial workshop, the ID Team shared their respective knowledge and expertise and collaborated to identify goals and objectives (desired outcomes) representing a full range of alternatives for each resource. The second workshop narrowed the scope of alternatives to a reasonable range bounded by the planning criteria.

The BLM formulated four action alternatives from the information gathered during the first two workshops; the ID Team reviewed these Action Alternatives during the third workshop. The BLM analyzed the potential impacts of the four action alternatives and the No Action Alternative. Based on this analysis, the similarity among alternatives became apparent and, therefore, the BLM eliminated two of the four action alternatives prior to the fourth workshop. During the fourth workshop, the ID Team considered the No Action Alternative (A) and the two remaining Action Alternatives (B and C) and provided the BLM with recommendations for selecting the Preferred Alternative (D). BLM selected the Preferred Alternative based on the following criteria:

1. Satisfies statutory requirements.
2. Reflects the best combination of decisions to achieve BLM goals and policies.
3. Represents the best solution to the purpose and need.
4. Provides the best approach addressing key planning issues.
5. Considers cooperating agencies and BLM specialists' recommendations.

For approximately 12 months following selection of the Preferred Alternative, the ID Team resolved inconsistencies, clarified intent, and generally refined the alternatives. The Preferred Alternative indicates the Agency's preliminary preference. The Preferred Alternative does not represent a final BLM decision and may change between publication of the Draft and Final EIS based on comments received on the Draft EIS, new information, or changes in BLM policies or priorities.

Including the No Action Alternative (A), the four alternatives analyzed in this Draft EIS represent differing approaches to managing resources and resource uses in the planning area. Each alternative comprises two categories of land use planning decisions: (1) desired outcomes (goals and objectives) and (2) allowable uses and management actions.

Goals and objectives provide overarching direction for BLM actions in meeting the Agency's legal, regulatory, policy, and strategic requirements. Goals are broad statements of desired outcome, but generally are unmeasurable. Objectives are more specific statements of a desired outcome that may include a measurable component. Objectives generally are anticipated to achieve the stated goals.

Allowable uses and management actions are anticipated to achieve the desired outcomes (goals and objectives). Management actions are proactive measures or limitations intended to guide BLM activities in the planning area. Allowable uses are a category of land use decisions that identify where specific land uses are allowed, restricted, or prohibited on BLM-administered surface lands and federal mineral estate in the planning area. Alternatives may include specific management actions to meet goals and objectives and may exclude certain land uses to protect resource values.

For each alternative, the BLM predicted actions and associated surface disturbance acreage for each resource over the life of the plan. For example, for livestock grazing, the BLM predicted the number of infrastructure developments (e.g., springs, wells, pits, reservoirs, fences, and pipelines) and estimated surface disturbance acreage for each alternative. For oil and gas, the BLM predicted the number of wells and estimated acres of surface disturbance for each alternative, as well as for the unconstrained (baseline) scenario. These predicted actions, allowable uses, and management actions form the basis for the impact analysis of alternatives described in Chapter 4. The three Action Alternatives and the No Action Alternative are described in detail in Chapter 2 and summarized in the following section.

Alternative A

The No Action Alternative represents a continuation of current management and provides a baseline from which to identify potential environmental consequences when compared to the Action Alternatives. The No Action Alternative describes current resource and land management direction as represented in the

existing plan and associated maintenance actions, updates, and amendments. Current management addresses resource conflicts on a case-by-case basis. The current designation of the Raymond Mountain ACEC and Raymond Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA) do not change, and no Other Management Areas (MAs) are identified if the No Action Alternative is selected. Selection of the No Action Alternative results in no revision to the existing plan at this time and does not meet the purpose and need of the proposed action.

Alternative B

Alternative B emphasizes conservation of physical, biological, and heritage resources with the most constraints on resource uses compared to all other alternatives. Relative to all alternatives, Alternative B conserves the most land area for physical, biological, and heritage resources and places the most constraints on resource uses. For example, Alternative B designates the highest number of ACECs (10) and establishes the most land area for Other Management Areas (MAs) (3), Research Natural Areas (RNAs) (2), Wild and Scenic River waterway segments (13), and Back Country Byways (1). Alternative B also manages contiguous blocks of native vegetation to minimize habitat fragmentation, includes the most restrictions to protect highly erosive soils, and is the most restrictive to OHV use, wind-energy development, and leasing for oil and gas and other solid leasable minerals.

Alternative C

Alternative C emphasizes resource uses (e.g., energy and minerals, grazing, recreation, and forest products) while lessening some resource conservation measures to protect physical, biological, and heritage resource values. Compared to all alternatives, Alternative C conserves the least land area for protecting physical, biological, and heritage resource values; designates no ACECs; identifies the smallest area for special management; is the least restrictive to OHV use; places the fewest constraints on resource uses; and allows the most land area for leasing oil and gas and other solid leasable minerals.

Alternative D (Preferred Alternative)

At this stage in the planning process, Alternative D is the BLM's Preferred Alternative because it reflects the best combination of decisions to achieve BLM goals and policies, meet purpose and need, address the major planning issues, and consider the recommendations of cooperating agencies and BLM specialists.

Alternative D emphasizes a moderate level of protection for physical, biological, and heritage resource values and moderate constraints on resource uses. For example, Alternative D retains the Raymond Mountain ACEC and the Raymond Mountain WSA. Alternative D designates the Bridger Butte ACEC, and two additional ACECs, one for special status plant species habitats and one for cushion plant communities, are considered on a case-by-case basis. Alternative D is a balanced approach to land management that the BLM believes best addresses the issues, management concerns, and purpose and need for revising the existing RMP.

In addition to the four alternatives analyzed in this Draft EIS, several alternatives were considered, but were not carried forward for detailed analysis because they

- Did not fulfill requirements of the FLPMA or other existing laws or regulations.
- Did not fulfill the purpose and need.
- Were already part of an existing plan, policy, requirement, or administrative function.
- Did not fall within the limits of the planning criteria.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Environmental consequences potentially resulting from each of the four alternatives were analyzed relative to meaningful direct, indirect, short-term, long-term, and cumulative impacts. The impacts of each alternative are summarized in Table 2-4 and described in more detail in Chapter 4. Also included in Chapter 4 is a discussion of cumulative impacts that could result from the incremental impact of each alternative when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

COOPERATING AGENCIES

As the lead federal agency for the RMP revision, the BLM invited local, state, and federal agencies to participate as cooperating agencies. Lincoln, Sweetwater, and Uinta County Commissioners and conservation districts agreed to participate as cooperating agencies in the RMP revision. The State of Wyoming and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation also are cooperating agencies. To date, the BLM and cooperating agencies have participated in four workshops to formulate alternatives and multiple meetings to keep cooperating agencies informed and to solicit their inputs. Comments from cooperating agencies on previous administrative drafts were considered when developing this Draft EIS.

COORDINATION WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

The BLM also invited tribes to participate as cooperating agencies and conducted ongoing coordination throughout the RMP revision process. Coordination included letters, multiple phone calls, and face-to-face meetings with interested tribe representatives to identify places and issues of concern regarding the RMP revision.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The BLM issued a Notice of Intent (NOI), on June 16, 2003, indicating a revision of the existing plan and preparation of this EIS. Issuance of the NOI initiated a 5-month scoping period to solicit input from the public and interested agencies on the nature and extent of issues and impacts to be addressed in the Draft EIS. The BLM conducted three individual public scoping meetings in Evanston, Rock Springs, and Kemmerer, Wyoming, during the 5-month scoping period to identify planning issues and introduce the public to the project and preliminary planning criteria. The BLM also established a project website (www.blm.gov/rmp/kemmerer) to keep the public informed about the RMP revision and to provide an ongoing method for public comment.

THE NEXT STEPS

This Draft EIS, now issued, provides 90 days for public comment. A series of two open houses and three individual public hearings on this Draft EIS are scheduled during the 90-day comment period in Cokeville, Kemmerer, Evanston, Rock Springs, and Lyman, Wyoming. Following the 90-day public comment period and consideration of comments received, the BLM will prepare a Final EIS/Proposed RMP in the winter 2007 with a ROD scheduled for 2008.

READER'S GUIDE TO THIS DOCUMENT

Volume 1

Chapter 1. Purpose and Need for Action. This chapter introduces the Draft EIS, describes the purpose and need to which BLM is responding, provides an overview of the BLM planning process, identifies planning issues and criteria, summarizes consultation and coordination, and identifies topics not addressed by this RMP revision.

Chapter 2. Resource Management Alternatives. Chapter 2 describes how the four alternatives (A through D) were developed, the components and content of each alternative, and discusses the alternatives considered but eliminated from further consideration. It also presents a comparative summary of impacts of each alternative. Resource discussions in chapters 2, 3, and 4 are organized according to the following eight resource topics:

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Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need for Action
Chapter 2 – Resource Management Alternatives
Chapter 3 – Affected Environment
Chapter 4 – Environmental Consequences
Chapter 5 – References
Chapter 6 – List of Preparers

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- **1000** Physical Resources – Air, Soil, and Water
- **2000** Mineral Resources – Locatable, Leasable, and Salable Minerals
- **3000** Fire and Fuels Management – Unplanned/Wildland Fire, Planned/Prescribed Fire, and Stabilization and Rehabilitation
- **4000** Biological Resources – Vegetation, Fish and Wildlife, and Special Status Species
- **5000** Heritage Resources – Cultural, Native American Concerns, and Paleontological
- **6000** Land Resources – Lands and Realty, Renewable Energy, Rights-of-way and Corridors, Livestock Grazing, Recreation, Travel Management, OHV, Visual, and National Historic Trails
- **7000** Special Designations – ACECs, MAs, RNAs, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Back Country Byways
- **8000** Socioeconomic Resources – Social and Economic Conditions, Health and Safety, and Environmental Justice.

Chapter 3. Affected Environment. This chapter describes the Kemmerer planning area and the existing environmental conditions that could be impacted by the alternatives.

Chapter 4. Environmental Consequences. Chapter 4 forms the scientific and analytic basis for comparing environmental impacts of each alternative, including the No Action Alternative. Impacts are described in terms of direct or indirect and short-term or long-term, when applicable. Potential cumulative and unavoidable impacts and irreversible and irretrievable commitments also are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5. References. This chapter provides full citation information for all references cited within the document.

Chapter 6. List of Preparers. Chapter 6 presents the names and qualifications of the people responsible for preparing this EIS.

Volume 2

Appendices. The appendices include documents that support existing resource conditions or situations, substantiate analyses, provide resource management guidance, explain processes, or provide information directly relevant to or support conclusions in the RMP revision. Fifteen appendices, labeled Appendix A to Appendix O, are included.

Glossary. The glossary defines select terms used throughout this document.

Maps. Maps depict the alternatives by resource. In hardcopy documents, maps can be found on a CD attached to the inside back cover of Volume I. For CD versions of the document, maps are provided as a separate file on the CD. Electronic copies of the maps are also available on the RMP website (www.blm.gov/rmp/kemmerer/).