

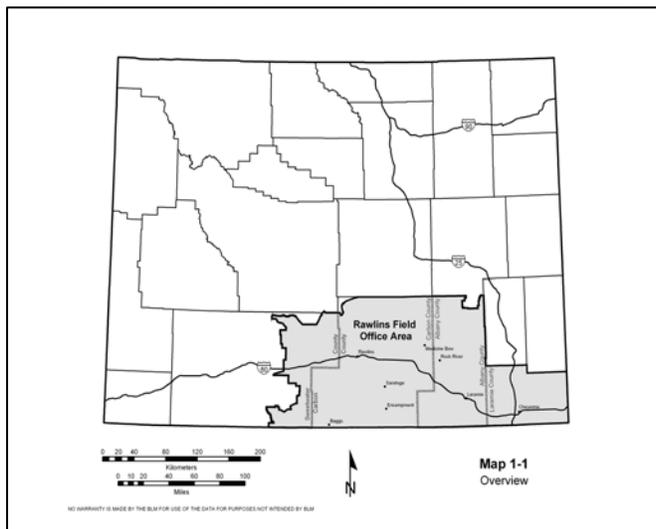
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) documents the comprehensive analysis of alternatives for the planning and management of public lands and resources administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rawlins Field Office (RFO) in Wyoming. The BLM RFO administrative area is located in south-central and southeastern Wyoming. The RFO includes approximately 11.2 million acres of land in Albany, Carbon, Laramie, and Sweetwater Counties.

Within the approximately 11.2 million acres, the RFO administers approximately 3.4 million acres of public land surface and mineral estate, 0.1 million acres of public land surface where the mineral estate is state-owned or private, and 1.2 million acres of federal mineral estate where the surface is state-owned or private.

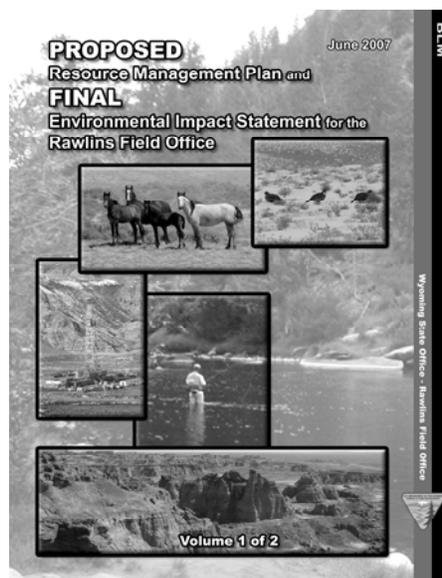
The public lands and federal mineral estate within the Rawlins RMP Planning Area (RMPPA) are the subject of the planning effort and this associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) document. Neither this document nor the RFO's current land use plan applies to lands or minerals within the RMPPA that are administered by federal agencies other than BLM, such as the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and the U.S. Air Force.



BACKGROUND

The Great Divide RMP, approved by the Wyoming BLM State Director on November 8, 1990, currently covers the public lands included in the Rawlins RMP. The Great Divide RMP provides guidance and direction for management of BLM-administered public land surface and federal mineral estate.

The purpose of the Rawlins RMP Revision and EIS is to replace the existing Great Divide RMP, and to address the deficiencies described in the Great Divide RMP Evaluation (Section 1.2.3). The Rawlins



This RMP FEIS provides analysis of potential management direction for important resource values and resource uses within the RMPPA, and allocates the use of public lands for multiple-use. The RMP FEIS also provides management direction for the protection of certain resources while allowing for leasing and development of mineral resources, livestock grazing, and other activities at appropriate levels.

RMP will provide the overall management direction for the public lands and resources administered by the RFO. Adequate decisions from the Great Divide RMP will be carried forward to the revised plan.

The Great Divide RMP includes 5 Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)—Encampment River Canyon, Prospect Mountain, Bennett Mountains, Adobe Town, and Ferris Mountains; 4 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)—Jep Canyon, Como Bluff, Shamrock Hills, and Sand Hills; 3 Wild Horse Herd Management Areas (HMA)—Adobe Town, Stewart Creek, and Lost Creek; and 3 Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA)—Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, North Platte River, and Shirley Mountain. Major land uses include mineral development, wildlife habitat, wild horse use, livestock grazing, and recreation.

ISSUES AND CONFLICTS

The identified issues are based upon the demands, concerns, conflicts and problems involving the use or management of the public lands and resources within the RMPPA. The following planning issues were identified through public scoping and other public outreach efforts. Issues were also identified through an evaluation of the Great Divide RMP completed by the BLM on July 5, 2001. Planning issues and conflicts between various resources and activities addressed in the Rawlins RMP include:

- Energy resource development (e.g., oil and gas, coal, solar, and wind energy) and related transportation network conflicts with other land and resource uses and values (e.g., wildlife habitat, recreation values, historic resources, cultural resources, sensitive vegetation types, and sensitive watersheds).
- There are unique areas or sensitive lands and resources in the RMPPA that meet the criteria for protection and management under special designations and management areas (SD/MA). There are also concerns that SD/MAs may result in too many restrictions on the use of the public lands.
- Resource accessibility relates to the value or usability of some resources. To be used, resources must be accessible—legally and physically—and manageable.
- New demands are being placed on public lands due to growth in and around some cities, towns, and rural subdivisions in the RMPPA. Considerations include balancing development with the desire for open space.
- Attention is needed where development activities may conflict with special status species and their habitat requirements.
- Federal and state requirements for water quality warrant additional attention as the RMP is implemented and updated.
- There are conflicting demands for consumptive (e.g., livestock, wildlife, and wild horse grazing and vegetation removal for development activities) and non-consumptive (e.g., watershed protection, soil stabilization, and wildlife habitat) uses of the vegetation resources.
- Recreation uses and demands are increasing. Certain areas and resources need protection while others need to be considered for more public recreation uses.

Actions taken under the Great Divide RMP created land use patterns and valid existing rights that influence options for future management. For example, many of the oil and gas resources in the RMPPA have been leased. The presence of these valid existing rights will affect the management choices available for BLM to consider in developing the Rawlins RMP. Alternatives will address potential stipulations to

be attached to new leases or leases to be re-offered if existing leases are relinquished, the availability of unleased lands for future oil and gas leasing, and additional mitigation measures to be considered in reviewing Applications for Permits to Drill.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE FINAL EIS ALTERNATIVES

Chapter 2 describes four alternative RMPs: the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1—Continuation of Existing Management Direction) and three action alternatives; Alternative 2 (Emphasis on the Development of Resources), Alternative 3 (Emphasis on Protection of Resources), and Alternative 4 (Conservation Alternative – Proposed Plan). The No Action Alternative (Continuation of Existing Management Direction) includes direction provided by the Great Divide RMP (November 1990) as well as new direction and policy that have been developed since completion of the Great Divide RMP and resulting amendments to the plan. The three action alternatives were developed to present a range of management options. Each alternative management plan is intended to minimize adverse impacts on cultural and natural resources while providing for compatible resource use and development opportunities, as consistent with current law, regulation, and policy.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative is a continuation of the current management direction. Ongoing programs initiated under existing legislation, regulations, and in the Great Divide RMP would continue. Thus, the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1) describes the current resource and land use management direction in the RMPPA. The No Action Alternative and its impact analysis represent the baseline to which the other management alternatives and their associated analyses are compared. Management actions proposed under the No Action Alternative are presented in Table 2-1.

Alternative 2 (Development of Resources)

Alternative 2 provides expanded opportunities to use and develop resources found within the RMPPA. This alternative emphasizes development and intensive management, while placing less emphasis on environmental protection. Resources would be protected to the extent required by applicable laws and regulations. Development and activities would occur throughout the RMPPA as proposed through management actions consistent with existing BLM guidelines. Management actions proposed under Alternative 2 (Emphasis on the Development of Resources) are presented in Table 2-1.

Alternative 3 (Protection of Resources)

Alternative 3 changes the mix of opportunities to use, develop, and manage resources. The alternative emphasizes the improvement and protection of habitat for wildlife and sensitive plant and animal species; improvement of riparian areas and water quality; preservation of unique genetic phenotypes in wild horses of the Lost Creek HMA; increase in designation of ACECs and SD/MAs; and protection of historic and cultural sites. Development of resources within the RMPPA would occur with intensive management of surface-disturbing activities. Management actions proposed under Alternative 3 (Emphasis on Protection of Resources) are presented in Table 2-1.

Alternative 4 (Conservation Alternative-Proposed Plan)

The Proposed Plan provides a balance for opportunities to use and develop resources within the RMPPA while ensuring environmental conservation. The Proposed Plan provides the guidance that emphasizes

neither resource use nor resource protection. This balanced alternative best meets the issues and concerns raised during scoping. The Proposed Plan represents the management actions recommended by the Field Manager to the State Director as the actions that best resolve planning issues within the RMPPA and that best promote balanced multiple use objectives. Management actions proposed under the Proposed Plan are presented in Table 2-1.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The environmental consequences that could result from the management prescriptions of the four alternatives are described in Chapter 4 and are summarized and compared in Table 2-4, Summary Comparison of Impacts. These potential consequences are discussed for each resource program, providing an analysis of environmental effects resulting from management of all resources and resource uses. This includes an analysis of cumulative effects, which are defined as the impacts that result from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PLAN

Key points of the Proposed Plan are listed below.

Air Quality

BLM would minimize, within the scope of its authority, any emissions that may add to atmospheric deposition, cause violations of air quality standards, or degrade visibility. For example, BLM would require proponents of a proposed project to periodically demonstrate that potential impacts to air quality from their project are below applicable significance criteria in the EIS for that project. EPA approves the State of Wyoming SIP and provides oversight on State compliance with the Clean Air Act. State standards enforced in the RMPPA would be as strict as or stricter than federal standards. Special requirements to alleviate air quality impacts would be considered on a case-by-case basis in processing land use authorizations within the scope of BLM's authority. BLM would cooperate with the operation of the National Atmospheric Deposition Program (NADP)/National Trends Network atmospheric deposition monitoring site, as well as in the collection of basic climate and meteorological data from remote automatic weather stations.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources would be identified and protected on a case-by-case basis, according to site-specific needs. Cultural properties eligible for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listing would be managed for preservation of cultural and historic values. Where the setting contributes to NRHP eligibility, actions that diminish the visual integrity of the property's significant historic features would not be allowed within ¼-mile of the cultural property or the visual horizon, whichever is closer. Unevaluated portions of the setting would be protected until a cultural inventory is complete. Protective measures would be developed for threatened or sensitive sites determined as a result of Section 110 inventory (National Historic Preservation Act [NHPA]) and monitoring.

Fire and Fuels Management

BLM would conduct wildland fire suppression and fuels management activities to first provide for firefighter and public safety. Public lands within the checkerboard or other intermixed landownership areas would be managed to protect private property; most often resulting in fire suppression activities. Wildland fire suppression activities in the remainder of the RMPPA would be managed for Appropriate Management Response (AMR). AMRs for SD/MAs would protect or enhance the relevant and important values for the ACEC or SD/MA. A high priority for fire management activities would be given to areas identified as:



- Communities at risk (as identified in Federal Register, Volume 66, Number 3, 2001)
- Industrial interface areas
- Areas of high priority resource values within the RMPPA

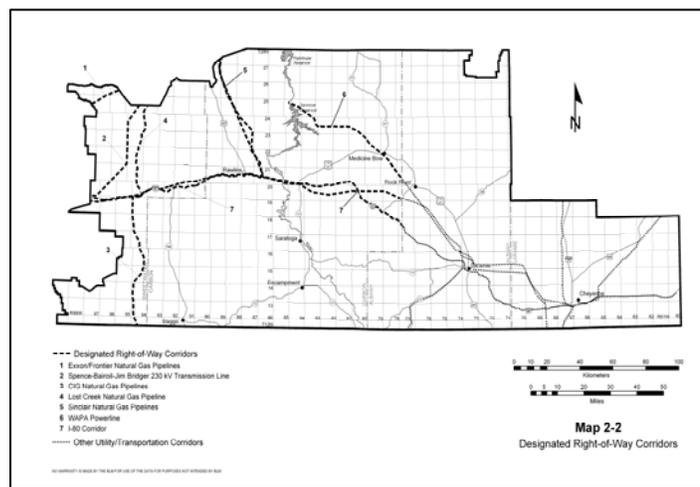
Fuels treatments, including prescribed fire, mechanical, chemical, and biological treatments, would be used to reduce fuels levels and meet other multiple-use resource objectives, including returning fire to its natural ecological role in the ecosystem. Wildland urban interfaces and communities at risk would receive priority for fuels reduction. Rehabilitation and restoration efforts would be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, for public health and safety, and to help communities protect infrastructure.

Forest Management

Approximately 21,813 acres of commercial forest would be available for commercial timber harvest. All forest and woodlands in the RMPPA would be open to non-commercial harvest of minor wood products, such as fuelwood, posts and poles, Christmas trees, and wildings. Forest and woodlands management would also include manipulation of aspen, juniper, and other non-commercial tree species to meet forest health and/or other multiple-use objectives. Forests and woodlands would be managed using natural processes, prescribed fire, and chemical, mechanical, and biological treatments. Approximately 6,700 acres of steep slopes and riparian areas and their associated buffer zones would not be available for commercial timber harvest.

Lands and Realty

Existing withdrawals in the RMPPA would remain in place unless it is determined they should be terminated. Such determination (and plan amendment) would be based upon full examination of the issues associated with withdrawal terminations, including land use, environmental, and other factors associated with opening public lands now closed to entry under the public land laws or to mineral location under the mining laws. Where appropriate and necessary to protect other resource values, new withdrawals



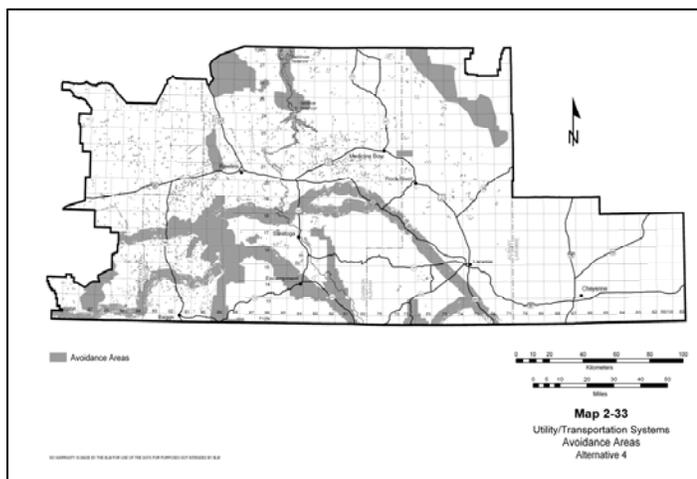
would be pursued and implemented prior to terminating any existing withdrawals. Proposed new withdrawals of approximately 16,980 acres would be pursued.

Coal classifications on 671,768 acres in the RMPPA are no longer necessary (Coal classifications are no longer necessary because: (1) the Federal Coal Leasing Amendments Act of 1976 requires competitive leasing on all, not just known, deposits of federal coal; and (2) the Multiple Mineral Development Act of 1954 established procedures to regulate conflicts between coal leases and mining claims). Existing withdrawals would be reviewed and terminated, as appropriate.

When practicable, develop and maintain a land ownership pattern that will provide better access for management and protection of public lands.

Approximately 46,230 acres of BLM-administered public lands meet the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) criteria and would be available for consideration for disposal. The preferred method of disposal is exchange.

BLM-administered public lands within ¼-mile of the incorporated boundaries of cities and towns would be open to oil and gas leasing with an NSO stipulation and closed to locatable mineral entry and mineral material disposals. Existing activities would be intensively managed.



All BLM-administered public lands, except WSAs and some SD/MAs, would be open to consideration for placement of transportation and utility right-of-way (ROW) systems. Each system would be located adjacent to existing facilities when possible. Existing major transportation and utility ROW routes would be designated corridors. However, major transportation routes within the RMPPA that are located east of the Carbon County-Albany County line would not be considered for ROW corridor designation because of the scattered public land ownership pattern in the area. Mitigation requirements for surface-disturbing and disruptive activities would be applied to activities related to utility/transportation systems to protect important resource values. Sensitive resource values would be avoided. Wind energy development would also be considered outside of avoidance or exclusion areas.



Certain scattered parcels of land withdrawn for Seminoe Reservoir (2,000 acres) and the Savery-Poohook area (1,205 acres), currently managed by BOR, are being considered for revocation because they are no longer needed for the purpose for which they were withdrawn. BLM determined that the lands are suitable for return to public domain status. When returned to BLM administration, these lands would be managed the same as adjacent public lands.

Livestock Grazing

Current livestock grazing uses would be continued until monitoring indicates an adjustment is necessary. Monitoring would include coordination, cooperation, consultation, and negotiation with grazing permittees and the interested public. Requests for changes in season-of-use or kind-of-livestock would be considered on a case-by-case basis, and reviewed to determine range suitability and to evaluate potential

impacts to both riparian and upland vegetation and other land resource uses. Grazing systems and range improvements would be designed to achieve the management goals for livestock grazing and maintain healthy rangelands. New fence construction would be authorized to BLM standards. Existing fences would be modified according to current BLM standards where needed or as older fences are reconstructed following consultation with affected parties.

Livestock grazing would be managed to sustain and enhance livestock grazing opportunities and to provide for protection or enhancement of all resource values. The Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands and Guidelines for livestock Grazing Management would be implemented when authorizing livestock grazing use and related activities within the RMPPA. BLM would work closely with operators and others to determine the most appropriate methods to achieve Standards and desired plant community.



Designated camping areas, wetland/riparian spring enclosures, sensitive plant species enclosures, some cooperative wildlife management areas, coal mines, and some oil and gas production facilities would not be authorized for livestock grazing. Management of domestic sheep and

goats would be in accordance with national BLM policy and, to the extent possible, the recommendations of the Wyoming Bighorn/Domestic Sheep Interaction Working Group. Conversions from cattle or sheep to domestic bison would not be allowed in areas of blocked federal surface land ownership.

Minerals

Oil and Gas

BLM is integrating the results of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) Inventory into its RMPs. EPCA inventory data is integrated into the Reasonably Foreseeable Development (RFD) scenario that predicts future mineral development within the RMPPA. RMP actions that apply to mineral resource development are evaluated to:

- Clearly present best management practices (BMP), mitigation, and reclamation requirements necessary to reduce impacts of oil and gas operations on other resources.
- Ensure that BMPs and mitigation are either statutorily required or scientifically justifiable and are the least restrictive measure necessary to accomplish the desired level of resource protection.
- The BMPs and mitigation requirements would be monitored to determine if more or less restrictive measures might accomplish the same goal.

Oil and Gas Reasonably Foreseeable Development for the 20-Year Planning Period.

Action	Total
Wells Projected to be Drilled	8,822
Miles of New Oil and Gas Roads	3,158
Acres Disturbed in the Short Term	57,819
Wells Abandoned	1,184
Well Sites Reclaimed	1,066
Miles of Roads Closed (Reclaimed)	500

Action	Total
Acres of Disturbance Remaining over the Long Term	15,472

Oil and gas opportunity for leasing, exploration and development on 4,587,900 acres of subsurface fluid mineral within the Rawlins RMPPA is subject to the following constraints:

Oil and Gas Classifications for Mineral Estate (4.59 million acres).

Classification	Acres
Open to leasing consideration and subject to standard lease form stipulations	803,070
Open to leasing consideration and subject to moderate lease constraints such as seasonal restrictions	3,070,180
Open to leasing consideration and subject to major lease constraints such as no surface occupancy (NSO)	605,860
Closed to leasing	108,790

Oil and Gas Constraints for Mineral Estate in High and Moderate EPCA Gas Potential Areas

Oil and Gas Potential	Closed	No Surface Occupancy
High Potential	510 acres	34,730 acres
Moderate Potential	28,550 acres	59,170 acres
Total	29,060 acres	93,900 acres



Oil and gas lease stipulations may be modified or eliminated using the exception, waiver, or modification criteria outlined in this RMP. Stipulations that do not accomplish the desired resource protection would be changed based on monitoring or new scientific data.

All lands open to oil and gas leasing consideration also would be open to geophysical exploration, subject to appropriate resource surveys, surface protection measures, adequate bonding, and adherence to State of Wyoming standards for geophysical operations. Vehicular use for “necessary tasks,” such as geophysical exploration purposes, including project survey and layout, would be permitted except where specifically prohibited, such as some SD/MAs (see definition of “necessary tasks” in the glossary).

Oil and Gas Disturbance

Private Wells	Private Acreage	Federal Wells	Federal Acreage	Total # Wells	Total Acreage
5,111	35,400	3,711	22,419	8,822	57,545

Coal

New applications for leasing federal coal are not expected during the 20-year analysis period for this EIS. Existing leases may be developed. The first two steps of the coal screening process (Appendix 2) were completed for federal coal lands in the RMPPA. Approximately 4,990 acres (containing an estimated 70.1 million tons of surface mineable federal coal) were unsuitable for surface coal mining. Approximately 51,250 acres (containing an estimated 2,318.7 million tons of surface mineable federal coal) were identified as acceptable for further leasing consideration. Applications would be considered on a case-by-case basis and the remaining steps of the coal screening process would be completed. There are seven existing coal leases that are exempt from the coal screening process that are subject to existing lease terms. Development of existing coal leases in the Carbon Basin is addressed in the cumulative impact section of Chapter 4.

Other Leasable Minerals

With the exception of WSAs and some SD/MAs, the remainder of the RMPPA would be open to consideration for leasing of geothermal resources and non-energy leasable minerals.

Locatable Minerals

Approximately 952,510 acres would be closed to locatable mineral entry. The remainder of the RMPPA would be open to locatable mineral entry.

Salable Minerals

Mineral material sales are discretionary actions. Disposal would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Stipulations to protect important surface values would be based on interdisciplinary review of individual proposals.

Off-Highway Vehicle Use

The RMPPA is generally open to use of motorized over-the-snow vehicles. Checkerboard lands would remain primarily limited to existing roads and vehicle routes. Off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel in Limited to Designated Areas (LDAs) would remain limited to existing roads and vehicle routes until a site specific analysis and transportation plan is completed for each LDA. Those areas that are defined as "limited" may have seasonal restrictions or travel limitations to either existing or designated roads and vehicle routes, or any combination of these. Travel on parcels of public land not having legal public access would remain limited to existing roads and vehicle routes.

Off-Highway Vehicle Classifications

Classification	Acres
Limited to either designated or existing roads and vehicle routes	2,190,690
Limited to existing roads and vehicle routes (within checkerboard or other intermixed land ownership)	1,283,930
Limited to designated roads and vehicle routes and closed to over-the-snow vehicles	12,700
Seasonally closed to OHV use	14,060
Closed to OHV use	46,370

Motorized vehicle use in the Dune Ponds Cooperative Management Area (3,730 acres) would be limited to existing roads and vehicle routes on vegetated portions of the area and open to vehicle use on non vegetated sand areas of active dunes. The Encampment River Canyon Area (about 4,500 acres) would be closed to motorized vehicle use, including over-the-snow vehicles, December 1 to April 30, to reduce stress on wildlife wintering in the canyon area. The Encampment River Trail would be closed to all types of motorized vehicle use year-round. The Pennock Mountain (7,770 acres) and Wick Beumee (280 acres) wildlife habitat management areas would be closed to motorized vehicle use and human presence between November 15 and April 30, to reduce stress on wildlife wintering in the area. The Prospect Mountain, Encampment River Canyon, Bennett Mountains, and Adobe Town WSAs (44,240 acres total) would be closed to all types of motorized vehicle use. The Ferris Mountains WSA (21,880 acres) would be open to all types of motorized vehicles on designated roads and vehicle routes.

OHV use to retrieve big game kills and access camping sites would be allowed within 300 feet of existing roads and vehicle routes, except where roads and vehicle routes are closed and in WSAs and specific SD/MAs.

Paleontology

Paleontological resources would be managed to protect their important scientific values. Area closures, restrictions, or other mitigation requirements for the protection of paleontological values would be determined on a case-by-case basis. Collecting of scientifically significant vertebrate fossils by qualified paleontologists would be allowed by permit only. The paleontological and historical values for which the Como Bluff area was designated a National Natural Landmark would be protected. Collection of fossils from public lands is allowed with some restrictions, depending on the significance of the fossils. Hobby collection of common invertebrate or plant fossils by the public would be allowed in reasonable quantities using hand tools. On-the-ground surveys would be conducted on a case-by-case basis prior to approval of surface disturbing activities or land disposal actions for Class 4 and 5 formations to avoid resource bearing strata. Surface disturbing activities would be surveyed on a case-by-case basis in potential resource bearing strata. Following discovery of Class 3 formations, the area would be surveyed and monitored on a case-by-case basis.



Recreation and Visitor Services

Existing recreation sites would be maintained or improved to assure continued availability and use to the recreating public. Additional recreation sites would be considered for development based on demand, site suitability, and legal public access. Developed and undeveloped recreation sites (9,660 acres) and the surrounding ¼-mile area (an additional 7,930 acres) would be open to oil and gas leasing with an NSO stipulation. Within the ¼ mile surrounding these sites (7,930 acres), the area would be closed to locatable mineral entry, mineral material disposals, and operation of the public land laws, including sale. Withdrawals would be pursued.



The entire RMPPA would be open to dispersed recreation with the exception of specific areas that must be excluded to protect public health and safety or special resource values.

Eight areas would be managed as Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA) (82,160 acres): Continental Divide National Scenic Trail SRMA (600 acres), North Platte River SRMA (5,060 acres), OHV SRMA (area to be determined), Jelm Mountain SRMA (18,100 acres), Pedro Mountains SRMA (18,650 acres), Laramie Plains Lakes SRMA (1,600), Rawlins Fishing SRMA (330 acres), and Shirley Mountain SRMA (37,820 acres).

Special Designations and Management Areas

Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) (Encampment River Canyon, Prospect Mountain, Bennett Mountains, Adobe Town, and Ferris Mountains) are closed to all mineral development. Existing mining claims must meet the “non-impairment mandate” for WSAs. WSAs are managed according to the Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review until Congress makes decisions on WSAs. OHV use within the Ferris Mountains WSA would be limited to designated roads and vehicle routes. All



other WSAs would be closed to OHVs or all types of motor vehicle use.

ACECs (Sand Hills/JO Ranch, Blowout Penstemon, and Cave Creek Cave) would be managed to protect their intrinsic values which include historic and cultural values; unique, stabilized sand dune vegetation communities; wildlife habitat; habitat for an endangered plant; and a cave system utilized by a variety of bat species. Management actions have been tailored to the specific needs of the above-mentioned areas and the resources present.

Special Designations and Management Areas

SD/MA	Acres	Purpose
WSAs	66,120	To protect wilderness characteristics, WSAs are managed to meet the non-impairment mandates of FLPMA, to manage lands in a manner so as to not impair the suitability of such areas for preservation as wilderness.
ACECs	29,970	To protect a unique vegetation complex and wildlife habitat and maintain balanced recreational opportunities. To protect habitat for the endangered Blowout Penstemon. To protect a cave system utilized as habitat by a variety of bat species.
WHMAs	193,350	To maintain the cooperative management of a variety of wildlife habitats while providing for other compatible multiple uses.
NNLs	2,650	To protect the geologic and paleontologic values for which the areas were designated or proposed.

Surface-disturbing activities in Wildlife Habitat Management Areas (WHMAs) (Jep Canyon ACEC/Jep Canyon WHMA, Chain Lakes Potential ACEC, Laramie Peak Potential ACEC, Red Rim-Daley Potential ACEC, Pennock Mountain WHMA, Wick-Beumee WHMA, Laramie Plains Lakes Potential ACEC, Upper Muddy Creek Watershed/Grizzly Potential ACEC, Cow Butte/Wild Cow Potential WHMA) would be intensively managed to protect their intrinsic wildlife values. The majority of the WHMAs contain

private land purchased by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) as well as federal lands and are managed jointly by the WGFD and the BLM. In some cases, seasonal closures to OHV use and human activity would protect unique habitats and big game crucial winter ranges.

Lands totaling 800 acres in the Big Hollow National Natural Landmark (NNL) and 160 acres in the Sand Creek NNL would be considered for disposal to individuals, organizations, agencies, or institutions that would manage these areas in accordance with their NNL status. Como Bluff NNL (1,690 acres) would be managed to protect the paleontological and historic values. The Encampment River Potential Wild and Scenic River (WSR) would be managed to maintain or enhance its outstandingly remarkable values, with a tentative classification of Wild. The Stratton Sagebrush Steppe Research Area Potential ACEC (5,530 acres) would be managed for the historic and scientific values in the study area.

Transportation and Access

The public land transportation system would be maintained or modified to provide for public health and safety and adequate access to public lands. Road density would be considered during the analysis process and authorization of surface-disturbing and disruptive activities.

Vegetation

The Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands (Standards) apply to all resources and resource uses on BLM-administered public lands. These Standards are the minimum acceptable conditions for the health, productivity, and sustainability of the rangeland. The Standards direct the management of public lands and focus implementation toward the maintenance or attainment of healthy rangelands. Rangeland areas also would be managed to achieve desired plant community.



Populations of special status species would be fenced to protect them from grazing, trailing, or other disturbance. Known populations of special status plant species would be closed to locatable mineral entry and operation of the public land laws, including sale. Intensive management actions would be taken to protect BLM Wyoming State Sensitive plant species within areas open to oil and gas leasing. Unique plant communities would be closed to mineral material disposals.

The fenced Gibben's beardtongue (*Penstemon gibbensii*) site (approximately 15 acres) would be maintained to protect the population from disturbance. Special management actions would be taken for occupied habitat for Colorado butterfly plant, blowout penstemon, and Ute ladies' tresses.

Informal conferencing and consultation, and formal consultation, if necessary, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) would occur for authorized activities that would potentially affect the habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate plant species within the RFO.

Visual Resources

Visual Resource Management would maintain scenic value by managing impacts and intrusions through mitigation.

Visual Resource Management Classes (Acres)

Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
66,120	346,670	2,467,780	670,910

Water Quality, Watershed, and Soils Management

Water quality and quantity would be maintained or improved by managing surface land use and groundwater resources within BLM's jurisdiction and according to state standards. Nonpoint source pollution from federal lands to all receiving waters would be minimized where possible. Surface discharge of produced water that meets Wyoming surface water standards would be allowed in the Colorado River Basin.

Watershed, wetland, aquifer, riparian, and stream functions would be maintained or re-established to support natural or desired surface flow regimes. The hydrologic and water quality conditions needed to support riparian/wetland areas would be maintained within BLM's jurisdiction to minimize flood and sediment damage and provide for wetland function. Reservoirs that are functionally compromised on BLM lands would be rehabilitated or reclaimed. Water impoundments in the Upper Muddy Creek/Grizzly SD/MA that would result in an annual water loss and/or storage of greater than 1 acre foot per project in Muddy Creek would not be allowed.

Surface-disturbing activities would be avoided on unstable areas, such as landslides, slopes over 25 percent, slumps, and areas exhibiting soil creep. Surface-disturbing activities would be avoided in the following areas: (1) identified 100-year flood plains, (2) areas within 500 feet of perennial waters, springs, wells, and wetland and riparian areas, and (3) areas within 100 feet of the inner gorge of ephemeral channels. Surface-disturbing activities would be intensively managed within those portions of watersheds that contribute to degradation of reaches listed on the 303(d) list in consultation and cooperation with affected interests.

Elevated levels of salt contribution from federal lands to the Colorado River system would be minimized consistent with Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) water quality regulations. Proposed projects above Class 1 waters and impaired bodies on the State's 303(d) list would receive special consideration during the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process to ensure that project actions would not degrade these water bodies beyond the uses specified. Encampment River Watershed (USGS HUC 1018000205) would be protected for municipal drinking water sources, WSR values, and recreation. Surface-disturbing activities, grazing management, and forest management actions would be intensively managed to meet watershed objectives.

Wild Horses

Periodic gathers would be the primary tool for population management in the Adobe Town, Lost Creek, and Stewart Creek HMAs. Appendix 12 contains a detailed description of the development, application, and interpretation of AMLs for the Rawlins HMAs. AMLs in the HMAs would remain at: 700 adults in

Adobe Town; 70 adults in Lost Creek; and 150 adults in Stewart Creek. These AML levels were established in 1994 by extensive monitoring and evaluation (Map 2-21 and Appendix 12).

Through genetic testing and analysis, the total extent of the “New World Iberian” (Spanish) genotype within the meta-population that includes the Lost Creek HMA would be documented. The BLM would then implement the necessary management practices (including adjustment of the AML) to achieve the goal of maintaining the “New World Iberian” traits.



Wildlife and Fisheries

BLM would cooperate with the WGFD, USFWS, and other agencies in considering and planning for the introduction, transplant, re-establishment, augmentation, and/or stocking of all wildlife and fish species including species of threatened or endangered status.



BMPs would be applied to surface disturbing and disruptive activities to maintain or enhance waterfowl, neotropical birds, upland game birds, and other migratory bird species and their habitats.

BMPs would be applied to surface-disturbing and disruptive activities to maintain or enhance wildlife and fish populations and their habitats. Impoundments and instream structures would be designed to minimize impacts on

special status fish species and their habitats. Road crossings would be designed to simulate natural stream processes.

To protect amphibian species and their habitats, surface-disturbing and disruptive activities would be avoided in the following areas: (1) identified 100-year flood plains, (2) areas within 500 feet of perennial waters, springs, wells, and wetlands, and (3) areas 100 feet from the inner gorge of ephemeral channels.

Informal conferencing and consultation, and formal consultation, if necessary, with the USFWS would occur for authorized activities that potentially affect the habitat for endangered, threatened, proposed, and candidate species within the RMPPA. Habitat and species conservation measures for threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species are identified in the biological assessment and the biological opinion. Both documents would be adhered to for compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the BLM Wyoming State Director’s Sensitive Species List (BLM Manual 6840). The Statewide Programmatic Biological Assessments and Biological Opinions authorized for each species, including all the reasonable and prudent measures and terms and conditions would be implemented for the RMPPA. For example:

- All white-tailed prairie dog towns/complexes greater than 200 acres in size and black-tailed prairie dog towns/complexes greater than 80 acres in size would be avoided, unless appropriate mitigation occurs.
- Where applicable, key linkage riparian travel corridors that may be used by Canada lynx would be enhanced or maintained.

- Fire suppression and forest conversion practices in areas adjacent to Canada lynx habitat would consider the habitat requirements for the lynx.
- Surface-disturbing and other activities located in potential mountain plover habitat are prohibited during the reproductive period of April 10 to July 10 for the protection of breeding and nesting mountain plover.

The RFO would implement recent BLM management direction regarding greater sage-grouse habitat and is consistent with the recent “Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan” which was developed by the WGFD and a broad range of stakeholders. The plan proposes to maintain and enhance sage-grouse habitat through an implementation, monitoring, and evaluation approach. BMPs would be considered to reduce both the direct loss of habitat and disturbance to sage-grouse during the critical breeding and nesting period.

Surface disturbing and other activities potentially disruptive to nesting raptors would be prohibited within distances and time periods necessary to allow raptors to complete breeding and nesting activities. These distances and time periods are between $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1 mile and between February 1 and August 31, respectively, for different raptor species. Facilities requiring a repeated human presence would not be allowed within 825 feet (ferruginous hawks, 1,200 feet) of active raptor nests.

Surface-disturbing and other activities potentially disruptive to big game crucial winter range would not be allowed during the period of November 15 to April 30. Surface-disturbing and disruptive activities within big game crucial winter range would require the use of BMPs designed to reduce the amount of human presence and activity during the winter months.

COOPERATING AGENCY SUMMARY

The RFO extended cooperating agency status to the State of Wyoming, other federal agencies, County governments, and various Conservation Districts for the Rawlins RMP planning effort. These agencies were invited to participate because they have jurisdiction by law or could offer special expertise. A list of actively participating cooperators is included below.

- Carbon County
- Albany County
- Sweetwater County
- State of Wyoming and State Agencies
- Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District
- Medicine Bow Conservation District
- Little Snake River Conservation District
- Sweetwater County Conservation District
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

COORDINATION WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

As part of the scoping process, letters were sent to the Arapaho, Comanche, Crow, Eastern Shoshone, Shoshone-Bannock, and Ute tribes. The letters requested information to be considered in the planning process. As a result of these letters, the BLM received comments from the Ute tribe requesting that the BLM consider and protect cultural resources and sites sensitive to Native Americans in the planning document. Following the scoping process, a second letter was sent to all of the tribes listed above and additionally to the Northern Cheyenne. This letter more specifically requested information regarding any

concerns the tribes might have within the RMPPA and presented the opportunity for meetings or field trips with representatives from the tribes. These letters were followed up with telephone calls. The need for the tribes to review and comment on the Draft EIS (DEIS) was also stressed in the letters and during the follow-up telephone calls. The Eastern Shoshone Tribe expressed concerns that the BLM consider cultural resources in the planning process and requested that the BLM continue to contact the tribes on a project specific level so that the tribes could provide input to sacred sites that might be impacted at that time. In December 2004, copies of the DEIS for the RMP were mailed to Shoshone, Arapaho, Ute, Northern Cheyenne, Oglala Sioux, Rosebud Sioux, Cheyenne River Sioux, Shoshone-Bannock, and Crow Tribes. This was followed by letters and telephone calls to remind the tribes that the DEIS was available for review and to renew the invitation for meetings, tours and additional contacts.

In addition to the formal consultation process described above, the tribes were also invited to participate in the planning process as cooperating agencies. Letters inviting the tribes to become cooperating agencies were sent to the Shoshone, Arapaho, Ute, Northern Cheyenne, Oglala Sioux, Rosebud Sioux, Cheyenne River Sioux, Shoshone-Bannock, Crow, Hunkpapa-Santee Sioux, and Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes. None of the tribes contacted requested to be considered cooperating agencies.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) on February 25, 2002 announced BLM's intention to revise the Great Divide RMP. A formal 60-day scoping period began on January 31, 2003 with the release of the scoping notice. The notice announced the availability of the Management Situation Analysis (MSA) and invited input on issues, alternatives, and resource data. Public scoping meetings were held in Rock Springs, Rawlins, Baggs, and Laramie, Wyoming, on March 3, 4, 5, and 6, 2003, respectively. During the four scoping meetings, more than 80 people attended. Comments from the public were collected during the scoping meetings and throughout the scoping period through a variety of methods - mail, fax, email, and through the project website. Approximately 26,740 comments were received through these various methods. Comments were categorized by topic for analysis purposes. The category receiving the most comments was "Mining and Oil and Gas Development". A large number of comments expressed a desire for preservation over continued development. A major concern identified in the comments was disruption of big game migration corridors and the degradation of environmentally sensitive areas. The category receiving the second-most comments was "Wildlife and Fisheries." A summary of all comments was then compiled and made available as the "Rawlins RMP Scoping Report, May 2003," which can be viewed at: <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/wy/rawlins>.

BLM published the Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Rawlins RMP DEIS for public review and comment in the *Federal Register* on December 17, 2004. This notice initiated the 90-day public comment period which concluded on March 18, 2005. Four public meetings were held in February 2005 to provide an opportunity to comment on the Rawlins RMP DEIS. During the four meetings, again, more than 80 people registered their attendance. During the RMP DEIS public comment period, approximately 62,233 comment letters were received. Of the total letters received, 62,256 of them were identified as form letters while 977 were considered to be unique letters.

The Rawlins RMP EIS project website can be found at <http://www.blm.gov/rmp/wy/rawlins>. The site serves as a virtual repository for documents related to RMP development, including announcements, bulletins, and draft and final documents. These documents are maintained in .pdf format to ensure that they are available to the widest range of users.