



Scoping Report

Rawlins Resource Management Plan

Rawlins Field Office

May 2003



Bureau of Land Management - Department of the Interior

Executive Summary3
Introduction5
Rawlins Field Office RMP/EIS Planning Schedule6
Scoping Process7
 Rawlins RMP Website8
Public Scoping Meetings.....10
 Meeting Logistics and Attendance10
Informal Meeting Comments11
Written Scoping Comments12
 Method of Submittal12
 Number and Type of Comments Received12
Comment Summaries14
 Cultural and Historic Resources14
 Fire Management14
 Forestry14
 Mining and Oil and Gas Development14
 Range Management and Livestock Grazing16
 Recreation and OHV Use16
 Special Management Areas17
 Transportation and Access17
 Wilderness18
 Wild Horses18
 Wildlife and Fisheries19
 General Comments and Other Resource Concerns20



Appendices

- Appendix A: Written Comments Summary
- Appendix B: Federal Register Publication: Notice of Intent
- Appendix C: Legal Notices and Press Releases
- Appendix D: Planning Bulletin #1
- Appendix E: Scoping Meeting Handouts and Sample Sign-In Sheet
- Appendix F: Two Form Letters Received During Scoping Period

Copies of comments received during the scoping period are available at the Rawlins Field Office and the BLM's Wyoming State Office.



Executive Summary

This report documents the public scoping process of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Rawlins Field Office (FO) Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Scoping Report includes a description of the scoping process and an overview of the planning schedule; a description of the four scoping meetings; a summary of the comments submitted by the public; and an overview of the issues identified through all scoping comments.

The purpose of "scoping" is to identify issues important to the future management of public lands and resources. These issues will guide development of alternatives that will be evaluated in the EIS and will ultimately guide development of the RMP. The scoping process also provides an opportunity to educate the general public about the management of public lands and for BLM to gauge the concerns of those who have a stake in the resources of the area.

Public Scoping and Issue Identification

Upon publication in the Federal Register of the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an RMP, the BLM Rawlins FO initiated the first phase of the public scoping process, including a call for resource information and the identification of issues for this planning effort. The official 60-day scoping period began February 3, 2003 with the availability of the Scoping Notice and the Management Situation Analysis (MSA) on the project website. The scoping period lasted until April 7, 2003.

Throughout the scoping process, the BLM approach has been one of open communication and dialogue. The agency solicited input above and beyond minimum regulatory requirements. A total of four scoping meetings were held – three within the planning area and one in Rock Springs, WY, the site of a joint scoping meeting with the Pinedale Field Office. Comments were accepted through a variety of methods (email, website, mail, fax) to ensure that those who wished to comment could do so.

Public Scoping Meetings

During the four scoping meetings, 82 people registered their attendance, with some people attending more than one meeting. The meetings were structured in an open house format, with various information tables representing issues such as Livestock Grazing, Mineral and Gas Development and other resource areas. The meetings were held from 4:00 PM until 8:00 PM, with the public arriving and departing at their leisure. Instead of formal presentations, BLM specialists manned the resource stations and were available to answer any questions the public had. This open house format allowed BLM staff to mingle with the public in a casual environment. Comments were collected at the scoping meetings both electronically (databases set up on computers and a live link to the website) and in hard copy (using preprinted comment forms).

Besides comments collected during the scoping meetings, additional comments were received through letter, email, fax, and on the interactive project website (www.Rawlinsrmp.com).



Approximately 26,745 comments were received through the various methods. For organization and analysis purposes, comments were categorized into the following 12 topic areas that were predetermined by the BLM:

- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Fire Management
- Forestry
- Mining and Oil and Gas Development
- Range Management and Livestock Grazing
- Recreation and OHV Use
- Special Management Areas
- Transportation and Access
- Wilderness
- Wild Horses
- Wildlife and Fisheries
- General Comments and Other Resource Concerns

Scoping Results

The largest category of comments received (38.8%) brought up issues with Mining and Oil and Gas Development. Almost all comments expressed a desire for preservation over continued development. A major concern identified in the comments deals with the disruption of migration corridors for big-game herd animals and the degradation of environmentally sensitive areas.

The second category receiving the most comments was Wildlife and Fisheries (35.7% of all comments). Although fewer in number, comments were also received dealing with Range Management and Livestock Grazing, Recreation and OHV Use, Cultural and Historic Resources, Special Management Areas, Wilderness, Transportation and Access, and General Comments.



Introduction

The BLM Rawlins FO administrative area is located in south central Wyoming (see Figure 1). The Rawlins FO includes approximately 11.2 million acres of land in Albany, Carbon, Laramie, and Sweetwater Counties. Within that area, the Rawlins FO 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 private, and 1.2 million acres of federal mineral estate where the surface is privately owned or state owned. The area includes the larger communities of Cheyenne, Laramie, Rawlins, and Saratoga and the smaller communities of Arlington, Baggs, Bairoil, Dixon, Elk Mountain, Encampment, Hanna, McFadden, Medicine Bow, Pine Bluffs, Riverside, Rock River, Savery, Sinclair, and Wamsutter.

The existing Resource Management Plan, developed in 1990, requires modification due to new data, changing resource conditions, changing uses of BLM administered public lands and resources, and as a result of new laws, regulations, and policies. The Rawlins RMP will, pursuant with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), revise this land use plan resulting in a document with updated management actions, objectives, and resource allocations.

In compliance with NEPA, the Rawlins FO initiated a scoping process to receive public input on issues related to the development of an RMP and the associated EIS. This report describes the scoping process, the methods of comment retrieval, and includes a summary of issues, categorized by resource category, that were brought forward during scoping.

Figure 1. RMP Planning Area



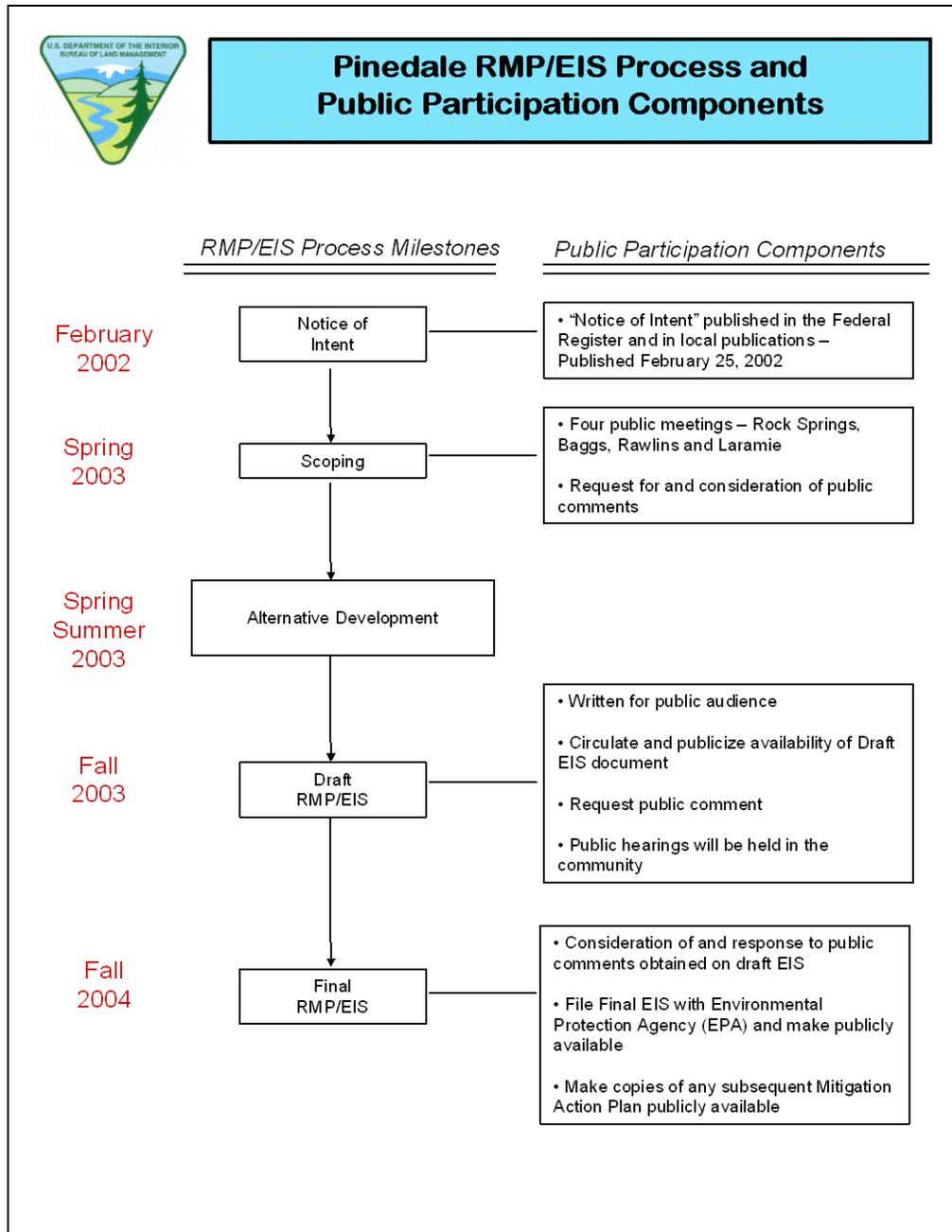
Overview of the Wyoming State Area



Rawlins Field Office RMP/EIS Planning Schedule

The process for the Rawlins RMP revision and accompanying EIS began with the publication of the NOI in the Federal Register on February 25, 2002. The process continues through scoping, alternatives development, and the development of a Draft EIS and Final EIS as shown in Figure 2.

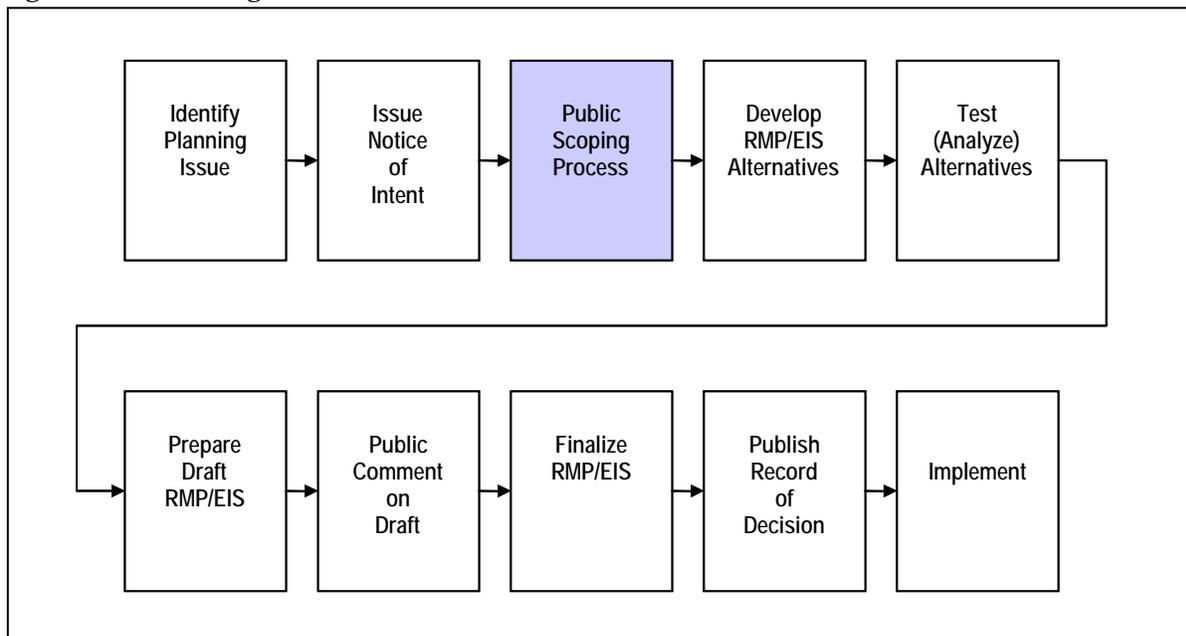
Figure 2. Rawlins Field Office RMP/EIS Planning Schedule



Scoping Process

Scoping is the process required by NEPA in the early stages of developing an EIS to determine the scope and significance of issues related to a proposed action, in this case, the implementation of a new RMP (40 CFR 1501.7). Knowing the scope and the significance of issues allows for an accurate and timely environmental analysis. In addition, scoping helps identify issues important to the management of the area, as well as which issues warrant consideration throughout the planning process. The scoping process is designed to encourage public participation and to solicit public input. Although only one of the many steps in the planning process (see Figure 3), scoping is an essential step that ensures all issues are brought to the table.

Figure 3. Planning Process



Rationale will be provided in the plan for each issue. Alternatives that incorporate a range of objectives, actions and land use allocations will then be developed and analyzed. Each alternative will address the issues identified during the scoping process.

In accordance with the planning schedule (Figure 2), the scoping process formally began with the publication of the NOI (Appendix B), documenting BLM's intent to prepare an RMP. During the scoping meetings, BLM officials made presentations to the County Commissioners from the counties in the Rawlins FO area, user groups, and other interested parties. In addition, interested individuals and organizations, affected Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as affected Indian Tribes were invited to submit comments to the BLM.

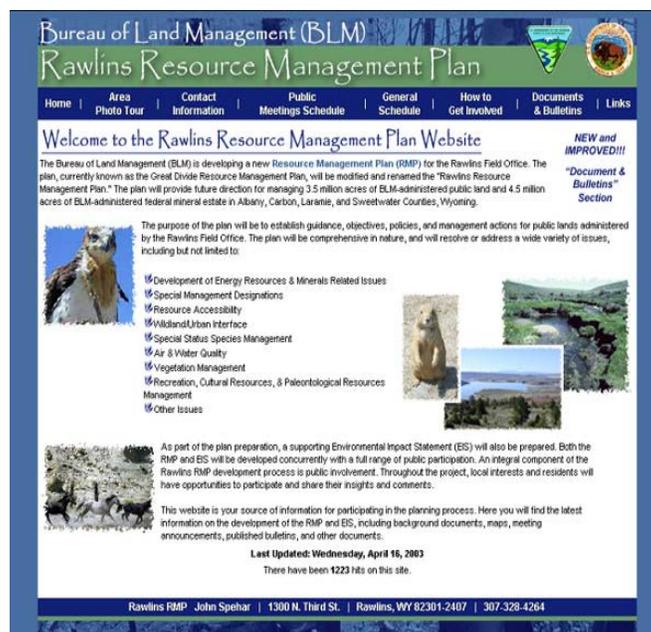


The official 60-day scoping period began February 3, 2003 with the publication of the Scoping Notice and the availability of the MSA on the project website. Although the scoping period ended April 7, 2003, the BLM will consider issues brought forward any time during the planning process. Only comments submitted during the scoping period, however, are summarized in this report.

Rawlins RMP Website

An important vehicle used during the scoping process to solicit comments and educate the public is the Rawlins RMP Website. Figure 4 shows the Rawlins RMP website homepage. Located at www.Rawlinsrmp.com, the website houses the latest information on the development of the RMP/EIS, including background documents, maps, meeting announcements, published bulletins, and other documents. An interactive feature entitled "How to Get Involved" enables the user to add themselves to the Rawlins RMP mailing list or to submit scoping issues directly onto the website. In order to better analyze the comments, the user is instructed to choose from a list of twelve categories. Categories include: Cultural Resources, Livestock Grazing, Mining and Oil and Gas Development, Recreation/OHV use, Wilderness, Wildlife and Fisheries, Transportation and Access, Special Management Areas, General Comments, Other Resource Concerns, Fire Management, and Forestry. The user can choose multiple categories for submittal. The user can type their issues directly into comment fields or they can choose to upload a file that contains the comments they want to submit. This was done to encourage comments to be submitted electronically and to decrease the time and resources of keying in hard-copy comments for analysis.

Figure 4. Rawlins RMP Website Homepage



The Rawlins RMP website site is divided into 8 main sections:

- **Home:** General Overview of the Program and details of the RMP
- **Area Photo Tour:** Photos of the Rawlins RMP Planning area
- **Contact Information:** Contact for John Spehar, Planning & Environmental Coordinator
- **Public Meeting Schedule:** Information of time/date/location of all public meetings
- **General Schedule:** Schedule of Process and Public Participation Components
- **How to Get Involved:** Functionality provided for interested users to join the mailing list or submit comments.
- **Documents and Bulletins:** Library of various RMP documents available for online viewing or download
- **Links:** Related Links, Other Planning Efforts and Agency Links.

The site has received a great number of visits from users all over the country. The pages that received the most number of hits are the “Documents and Bulletins” and “How to Get Involved” sections. All pertinent RMP documents (such as the MSA, Minerals Occurrence and Development Report, Socioeconomic Report, etc.) were split into “manageable” pieces (either .pdf or .gif) for easy download. The most downloaded file was Chapter 3 of the MSA, which was downloaded 736 times.

Users were encouraged to enter comments through the “How to Get involved” section of the website. These comments were stored in a database that eventually merged with comments received from other sources. A total of twenty-one comments were submitted on the project website.



Public Scoping Meetings

Public scoping meetings provide an opportunity for interested parties to submit scoping comments and may be a part of the early and open scoping process NEPA requires (40 CFR 1501.7). These meetings are especially important when there is “substantial environmental controversy concerning the proposed action or substantial interest in holding the [meeting]” (40 CFR 1506.6c1).

Meeting Logistics and Attendance

The Public Scoping Notice (Appendix C) announced four public scoping meetings. Public notice of the scoping meetings was sent to local newspapers, radio stations, and media.

A press release was sent to all the above newspapers, the radio stations (*need information from BLM*), the County Commissioners of the Counties, and to the offices of Wyoming US Senators and Congresswoman. The four public meetings were held in March. The total registered attendance for all four meetings was 82 people, with some people attending more than one meeting. Table 1 illustrates the attendance at each scoping meeting. The number of participants in communities closest to the planning area indicates the high level of local interest in the planning and management of the area.

Table 1. Meeting Location and Attendance

Meeting Location	Meeting Date	Attendance
Rock Springs, WY	March 3, 2003	22
Rawlins, WY	March 4, 2003	20
Baggs, WY	March 5, 2003	18
Laramie, WY	March 6, 2003	22
Total		82

Attendance at each public scoping meeting was recorded using a sign-in sheet at the registration station at each meeting. An example of this sign-in sheet can be found in Appendix E. Resource-specific handouts were made available to the public. Copies of the handouts can also be found in Appendix E.

Comments were solicited in a manner that provided an opportunity for everyone attending the public meetings to provide input. Meeting comments were recorded in two ways. First, computer stations were available for participants to key-in their comments directly into a comment database. In addition, hard-copy forms were provided to attendees so that their individual comments could be written and handed to a BLM representative or mailed to the Rawlins FO.



Informal Meeting Comments

Individual comments were categorized by primary topic, regardless of the position of the comment towards the topic. Several comments addressed more than one comment category, or topic; these comments were categorized by the driving topic unless the associated topics were of equal importance to the issue being presented, in which case the comment was placed under both comment categories. Examples of this include comments regarding surface stipulations for oil and gas drilling in wilderness quality areas in order to preserve the wilderness qualities. There are two potential topics presented, with the driving topic being that of preserving wilderness characteristics. Comments categorized as “Other” generally discussed very broad management concepts or very specific issues.

While each public scoping meeting raised unique issues and concerns, a number of common elements materialized. When all the public meetings are viewed as a whole, the ideas and concerns relating to mining and oil and gas development were the most frequently mentioned, with Wilderness and Wildlife and Fisheries also popular topics. Only “written” comments were recorded and analyzed in this report. Informal comments addressed to BLM staff during conversations at the open houses were not formally recorded, but noted in general.

There are a variety of scoping meeting comments on other topics that surfaced during informal conversations with BLM staff, including, but not limited to the following:

- Acknowledge and analyze economic impacts on the local communities;
- Concern for grazing and range management, both for the continuation of a historic use and improved management of range resources;
- Request for better management of and continued use for recreational OHV users, including requests for signage and trail maps and markers;
- Continued OHV access for permitted users, such as livestock management and firewood gathering;
- Realty issues;
- Quality and enforceability of responsible oil and gas development;
- Write a plan that is enforceable (money, time, and manpower);
- Management of the resources through education and enforcement, rather than additional rules and regulations;
- Concern with negative impacts wildlife has on livestock and ranchers;
- Request for a diversity of recreation uses; and
- Protection of riparian areas and watersheds.



Written Scoping Comments

In addition to receiving comments during the public scoping meetings, the Rawlins FO also received comments through the mail, fax, and email. Written comments summarized in this report were received during the scoping period (February 3, 2003 through April 7, 2003), as well as comments that were received shortly after the deadline, yet postmarked by April 7th, to compensate for mail delay.

Method of Submittal

Written scoping comments were accepted via mail, e-mail, the website and fax resulting in a total of 10,496 (see Table 2). A response is defined as one email, fax, letter or website submittal. One person could submit more than one response. Because some responses had more than one comment, the total number of comments received is greater than the number of respondents, or individuals who submitted comments. For example, one person could submit two emails with one email containing a comment on wildlife and another on forestry. The second email could contain one comment on wilderness. Thus, this example would be calculated as two responses and three comments, all from one person.

Table 2. Comment Source Data

Method of Submittal	Responses Received
Mail/Fax	542
E-Mail	9,868
Website	21
Scoping Meetings	65
Total Responses	10,496

Several responses were received multiple times and/or in multiple formats (ex. fax and mail). If the author(s) were the same for each response and the comments in the response were identical, the earliest response with the author's original signature was retained in the public record.

A majority of the comments, 22,950 of 26,745, are not unique to specific individuals, but instead can be attributed to two form letters (provided in Appendix F). Both form letters have wildlife and fisheries and mining and oil and gas development as their main issues.

Number and Type of Comments Received

Comments received during the scoping period were compiled into a master database. Searches were conducted to group like comments and several form



letters were identified and grouped accordingly. Summaries were also written for each comment. Each comment was provided an ID # that corresponded with the appropriate Person information. Reports were created for comments and organized by comment type, source and category. Each response was read in its entirety and all distinct comments were categorized for enumeration and analysis. Comments were enumerated using standard database and spreadsheet software.

It should be noted that while the enumeration of various submittal types was performed separately, the comment analysis process considered all comments collectively.

Table 3 shows the relative interest of respondents who submitted written comments towards various broad topics in a position-neutral perspective. This enumeration is not intended to show bias towards any issue; it is simply to indicate the level of interest in various issue areas. All issues will be addressed equally in the EIS and RMP.

Table 3. Comment Category Enumeration

Comment Category	Number Received	Percentage
Special Management Areas	14	.052
Transportation and Access	14	.052
Cultural / Historic Resources	8	.029
Range Mgmt / Livestock Grazing	856	3.20
Mining and Oil and Gas Development	10,380	38.81
Recreation / OHV	13	.049
Wilderness	5,825	21.78
Wildlife and Fisheries	9,552	35.72
Forestry	4	.014
Fire Mgmt	6	.022
Wild Horses	14	.052
General Comments	32	.12
Other Resource Concerns	27	.1
Total	26,745	100



Comment Summaries

As previously discussed, each of the comments were categorized into one (or more than one if necessary) particular resource category. Following is a summary of the comments received.

Cultural and Historic Resources

Some comments were submitted regarding cultural and historic resources. Some individuals requested that the BLM protect/maintain a five-mile buffer zone around the Overland and Cherokee trails in order to protect the areas from oil and gas development. Other individuals requested that these trails be mapped and appropriately marked.

Additional comments received regarding cultural and historic resources included general requests for the protection of Native American traditional and cultural sites.

Fire Management

Respondents generally encouraged BLM to allow naturally occurring wildfires to burn without human intervention. However, some individuals provided more specific comments regarding controlled burn measures, such as requests that BLM use controlled burn measures on Squaw Mountain and as a useful tool to improve habitat in the Great Divide resource area.

Forestry

Comments submitted regarding forest issues included requests that BLM not allow logging on lands in the Rawlins FO. An additional comment recommended abandoning clear cutting methods in favor of singletree and group selection, and group shelter woodcuts. The comment emphasized that ecological goals should be placed ahead of timber volume production. Another respondent requested that BLM require the retention of coarse woody debris on ponderosa and subalpine forest logging site.

Mining and Oil and Gas Development

Issues related to mineral exploration, leasing, and development were common topics in the comments received. Respondents identified a full range of issues both in support for and against oil, gas, and mining development. The majority of the mineral development comments discussed access, ecosystem health, planning, and technology issues. Each of these categories was discussed as it relates to oil, gas, and mining.

Commenting on the responsibility of BLM to protect the environment, some respondents urged BLM to ensure that oil, gas, and mining development is



performed in a manner that recognizes and protects other natural resources. Respondents also stressed the importance of ensuring that all stakeholders have a voice in the decision of lands acceptable for energy development. For example, some respondents asked that BLM prohibit oil and gas development in inappropriate and sensitive parts of the planning area, such as critical wildlife habitats, potential or proposed wilderness areas, and WSAs. Specific examples offered by respondents of sensitive areas to be protected included wintering and calving ranges for big game species, prairie dog colonies, mountain plover habitat, and within three miles of sage grouse leks and one mile of raptor nesting sites. Some respondents specifically requested that the Atlantic Rim area, Great Divide Region, and the Red Desert area be protected from oil, gas, and mining development. Several respondents also commented that new roads should not be installed for oil, gas, and mining development in WSAs and other areas in the planning area that are currently roadless.

Proponents of oil, gas, and mining development commented that oil, gas, and mining development must be allowed to continue at current levels. Some individuals stated that such development should be allowed in sensitive areas but should be managed under tight controls and protection measures. Other comments received included remarks that BLM should permit the fullest development of natural gas and oil resources in the area and that existing stipulations related to restrictions on drilling operations in critical habitats during breeding or wintering periods should be reduced.

Regarding technology used in oil and gas development, a number of respondents urged BLM to require oil companies to utilize best available technology (BAT) in order to minimize environmental harm. Some respondents also stated that directional and horizontal drilling techniques should be required on all federal lands in order to minimize road building and the impacts of “footprints” from drilling rigs. Other respondents disagreed, stating that directional drilling is not always an appropriate solution.

Comments specifically requesting the broad use of the No Surface Occupancy (NSO) designation for WSAs, ACECs, and other special management areas were received. Also, a number of respondents requested that BLM require the re-injection of wastewater from coalbed methane development (CBM) activities.

Regarding planning for oil, gas, and mining development, some individuals commented that BLM must include the basic elements of the Supplemental Program Guidance (SPG) for fluid mineral resource planning as planning criteria. The SPG criteria require that BLM develop a leasing strategy based on the resource values and the estimate of oil and gas development potential in the planning area. Additionally, some respondents requested that BLM consider the Western Heritage Alternative when developing the RMP. Focused on sustainable use of public lands and resources, the Western Heritage Alternative



supports the use of BAT to minimize landscape impacts and avoid habitat destruction in sensitive areas and includes strong protections to prevent water and air pollution, widespread erosion, and the discharge of CBM wastewater.

Range Management and Livestock Grazing

Several comments were submitted regarding livestock grazing. These comments included requests that BLM address ecosystem integrity and impacts to wildlife habitats. Several respondents also insisted that livestock grazing to be managed at levels that are ecologically sustainable. Some individuals also specifically requested that grazing be restricted or eliminated from riparian and other sensitive resource areas, such as the streamside habitats in the valleys that descend from the slopes of the Sierra Madres.

A number of respondents requested that livestock grazing be eliminated and restricted in big game crucial winter range areas. Other requests stated that existing fencing should be modified to be more compatible with natural wildlife movements and migration. In addition, some individuals submitted comments that included more general requests, including requests for BLM to (1) continue to require permittees to meet established standards and (2) protect the Great Divide wilderness resources from overgrazing.

In contrast to the above comments, one individual requested that BLM maintain or increase current levels of livestock grazing and provide management through the monitoring and implementation of Allotment Management Plans (AMP), which are developed in coordination with the permittee.

Recreation and OHV Use

Comments received regarding recreation were related to OHV use. Some respondents requested that BLM implement regulations and restrictions on OHV use to minimize (1) degradation to water quality and wetland areas, (2) erosion of sensitive hillsides and grasslands, and (3) disturbance of wildlife and other land users. A number of respondents also requested that OHV restrictions be enacted in the Pedro Mountains, Wild Cow Creek, Ferris Mountains, Adobe Town area, and all wilderness quality lands. In contrast, a request that all existing routes remain open for OHV use was also received.

Other individuals urged BLM to limit OHV use to roads only and to adopt a 'closed if not posted' policy for OHV trail use. Other comments included general requests for adequate enforcement of the restrictions and limitations.



Special Management Areas

Some comments were received regarding special management areas, most of which indicated support for existing WSAs and ACECs and requested that the RMP consider additional designations. Several respondents cited specific areas to be considered for special designation. Table 4 presents areas recommended for special designation.

Table 4. Areas to be Considered for Special Designation.

Specific areas requested to be considered for ACEC	
Red Rim	Atlantic Rim
McCarty Canyon	Wild Cow Creek
Savery Dam	Areas surrounding North Platte Res.
The Powder Rim-Cherokee Rim	Flattop Mountain
West Shirley Basin	Ferris Dunes
Chain Lakes	
Specific areas requested to be considered for WSA	
Kinney Rim	Wild Cow Creek
Ferris Mountains	Expand to include Adobe Town

Some comments received simply requested that the above listed areas be considered for special designation. In addition, some individuals requested that some general habitat areas be considered for special designation, including mountain plover concentration areas and any crucial wildlife habitat.

In addition, respondents requested that the Continental Divide National Scenic trail be properly managed according to the qualities for which it was designated.

Transportation and Access

Some individuals submitted comments concerning transportation and access issues. These comments generally fell under two categories: (1) requests to restrict vehicle use to designated roads and trails and (2) opposition to restricting access to public lands.

Several respondents suggested that all vehicles should be restricted to designated roads and trails. However, some individuals commented that a reasonable amount of new roads would need to be open and maintained if vehicle use is to be limited to designated areas. These same individuals suggested that oil, gas, and mining development companies be restricted to existing roads, and added that these companies should be required to upgrade and maintain the roads they use.

Other comments received included requests that no land should be sold or exchanged that would restrict access to public lands. Specifically, the comments included requests that access to National Forest areas and hunting grounds used by local residents should



be maintained. Also, a suggestion was made that access maintained in such situations did not have to include vehicular access.

Wilderness

Comments received regarding wilderness and other types of special designations were numerous. Unlike most of the other types of comments, wilderness comments were either for or against the use of special designations. A number of individuals indicated support for existing WSAs and requested that the RMP consider additional designations in order to “protect the wild character of the area.” Conversely, comments were received that do not support additional special designations in the new RMP. The designations to which the comments refer include WSAs, ACECs, and wilderness proposals.

In numerous comments, individuals indicated a desire for the RMP to consider additional areas for WSA designation, including Wild Cow Creek and the Pedro Mountains. Some respondents requested that BLM protect all remaining wilderness quality lands as WSAs. In addition, some individuals requested an inventory of all remaining unprotected lands for wilderness qualities, while others requested that such lands be protected as Wilderness. Comments were also received that supported the designation of additional ACECs in the planning area in order to protect the occurrences and habitat of all threatened and endangered species and other species of special concern.

Some individuals expressed an opinion opposite to those that supported special designations. These individuals only requested that the RMP not include new wilderness designations.

Wild Horses

Comments were received regarding wild horse herd numbers and the negative impacts the herds can have on native wildlife. Requests were received that specifically called for BLM to (1) remove and manage wild horse levels to objective levels and (2) consider wild horses comparably with other resource values. A request that the Powder Basin allotment be excluded from wild horse management was also received.

In contrast, some individuals expressed their opinion that wild horses must be a component on public lands, as mandated by the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. These respondents also requested that the BLM identify and encourage opportunities to improve the natural quality and quantity of wildlife and wild horse habitat through acquiring essential areas identified through the planning process via the land tenure adjustments and exchange program. These respondents also encouraged BLM to consider the designation of wild horse ranges that offers the public opportunity for viewing wild horses.



Wildlife and Fisheries

Comments on wildlife management and other issues associated with animal species in the planning area were received from many individuals and organizations as well as some government agencies. A range of issues was addressed in these comments, including the protection of certain wildlife species and crucial habitat, winter range management, threatened and endangered species, predator management, and wildlife/livestock conflicts.

Comments received regarding wildlife and fisheries management consisted of specific requests that the management and protection of several individual species be given significant consideration in the RMP, including the pronghorn antelope, mountain plover, burrowing owl, and the ferruginous hawk. In addition, some individuals specifically requested the protection of the migration routes of big game be given significant management attention in the RMP. A specific request that BLM address the protection of invertebrate species and their habitats in the RMP in order to preserve important opportunities for future research and education was also submitted.

Some respondents requested that BLM restore wild bison to the planning area. Other respondents specifically suggested that wild bison be restored to the Great Divide area.

Regarding conflicts between wildlife and livestock populations, some respondents requested that wild horses be managed to minimize the effects of their populations on other wildlife and livestock. Another suggestion stated that more animal units should be designated for wildlife use in areas where wildlife species compete with domestic livestock.

Some comments received proposed that future management actions address specific areas in the planning area that include crucial habitat for certain species. For example, some respondents requested that the RMP include significant consideration of the protection of the Atlantic Rim area, stating that this area contains crucial habitat for elk and deer populations. In addition, a number of individuals commented that protection and conservation of the sage grouse should be a priority in the RMP. Specifically, individuals requested the protection of sage grouse populations from CBM projects in the Powder River and Upper Green River Valley basins. Some respondents requested that the RMP include management actions aimed at protecting the home ranges of sage grouse.

Additional comments were made regarding the protection of winter grazing ground for elk and deer both from industrial uses and from overgrazing. Some respondents also requested that all crucial winter ranges in this area should be protected as ACECs.

Finally, some respondents urged BLM not to eliminate or manipulate native wildlife populations for the benefit of certain stakeholders. Also, a number of individuals



requested that all special status species in the planning area be given significant management attention in the RMP.

General Comments and Other Resource Concerns

Comments that were categorized as “Other” did not have a single theme that was easily identifiable or in some cases covered many different topics. Some of the comments related to issues that were extremely focused on a specific issue, and/or received very few comments. Since a summary of the comments in this category would be impractical, a sample of some of the topics is listed below.

- Need to retain multiple use management guidelines
- Enforcement of policies and laws
- Ecosystem management
- Air and water quality
- Wild and Scenic River review
- Don't let outside environmentalists influence the process
- Streamline the RMP planning process

Additional comments categorized as “Other” are listed in Appendix A.

