

Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Assessment



High Desert District - Rawlins Field Office, Wyoming



August 2013

BLM Mission Statement

The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

BLM/WY/PL-13/003+1020

Acronyms and Abbreviations

°F	degrees Fahrenheit
AC	alternating current
ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
AML	appropriate management level
AR	Administrative Record
BA	Biological Assessment
BEA	U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
BO	Biological Opinion
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation
CBNG	coalbed natural gas
CCSM	Chokecherry and Sierra Madre
CDNST	Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CO ₂	carbon dioxide
CSU	Controlled Surface Use
DDCT	Density Disturbance Calculation Tool
DPC	Desired Plant Community
DRUA	Dispersed Recreation Use Area
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
GIS	Geographic Information System
HMA	herd management area
I-25	Interstates 25
I-80	Interstates 80
IB	Instruction Bulletins
IM	Instruction Memoranda
kV	kilovolt
LFO	Lander Field Office
LSR	Little Snake River
LWC	Lands with Wilderness Characteristic
m	meter
MBF	thousand board feet
MMBF	million board feet
mph	miles per hour
MSA	Management Situation Analysis
MW	megawatt

NA	not applicable
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NI	not inventoried
NNL	National Natural Landmark
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOI	Notice of Intent
NREL	National Renewable Energy Laboratory
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NSHT	National Scenic and Historic Trail
NSO	No Surface Occupancy
OHV	Off-highway Vehicle
PFC	Proper Functioning Condition
RFA	Reasonably Foreseeable Action or Activity
RFD	Reasonably Foreseeable Development
RFO	Rawlins Field Office
R&I	Relevance and Importance
RMP	Resource Management Plan
RMP-A	Resource Management Plan Amendment
ROD	Record of Decision
ROI	Region of Influence
ROW	right-of way
SD/MA	Special Designations/Management Area
SER	Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins
SH	State Highway
SLRU	Sensitivity Level Rating Unit
SQRU	Scenic Quality Rating Unit
SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
SUV	sport utility vehicle
UPRR	Union Pacific Railroad
USCB	U.S. Census Bureau
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
VRI	visual resource inventory
VRM	visual resource management
VRUA	Very Rare and Uncommon Area
WHMA	Wildlife Habitat Management Area
WSA	wilderness study area
WSR	Wild and Scenic River
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface

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1.0 Purpose and Need for the Plan Amendment

1.1 Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is conducting a plan review for public lands in south-central Wyoming administered by the Rawlins Field Office (RFO). The Rawlins Field Office Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (ROD) (BLM 2008b) was completed in 2008 for the RFO area. However, the Resource Management Plan (RMP) received multiple protests and in response to these protests, the BLM remanded the visual resource management (VRM) decisions until a current visual resource inventory (VRI) could be completed and used for the RMP amendment process in determining VRM Class objectives (BLM Handbook H-1601-1, *Land Use Planning*). The RMP protest resolution also required that five proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) be considered at the earliest opportunity (in accordance with BLM Manual 1613).

The focus of this environmental analysis is the potential effects of the VRM and ACEC management decisions proposed under each alternative on other resources and resource uses. Because these VRM and ACEC management decisions may influence the implementation of existing Rawlins RMP decisions for other resources and resource uses, the Plan Amendment also includes analyses of these management decisions in relationship to these other resources. The VRM and ACEC management decisions will be the subject of the impact analysis contained in this Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, (NEPA; Title 42 United States Code Section 4321, et seq.). The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, (FLPMA) regulations pertaining to land use planning, found at 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1600, require the BLM to manage the public lands and their various resources in combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people.

The Planning Area boundary encompasses all public land within the RFO administrative area in Albany, Carbon, Laramie, and eastern Sweetwater counties, Wyoming, with the exception of the land within the Chokeycherry-Sierra Madre (CCSM) Wind Farm proposed project area where VRM decisions were amended in a separate document (BLM 2012b).

1.1.1 Visual Resource Management Planning Review

Management of current visual resources utilize the VRM class objectives as established and analyzed in the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1 in the Rawlins Proposed RMP/Final Environmental Impact Statement [EIS]) (BLM 2008a,b) until updated and/or changed by a VRM-targeted plan amendment. The growing interest in wind energy development has increased the urgency to complete this Rawlins VRM planning review in a timely manner. The objectives of the planning review are to consider and incorporate: 1) new VRI data; 2) changing resource conditions; and 3) existing and new energy development opportunities within the RFO, in order to satisfy the BLM remand.

The BLM has completed a VRI for the RFO area (Otak, Inc. 2011). The VRI provides a snapshot in time of the current scenic values of the area without consideration of jurisdiction, manageability, existing leases, pending or approved projects, or other resource opportunities or constraints (i.e., wildlife habitats, mineral and energy potential, etc.). Scenic quality, sensitivity levels, and distance zones are established during the VRI process. The VRI serves as the baseline to develop a reasonable range of alternatives for VRM classes and analysis of impacts associated with the various alternatives. However, VRI classes are informational in nature and do not establish management direction.

The BLM is responsible for ensuring that the scenic values of the BLM-administered public lands it manages are considered before allowing uses that may have negative visual impacts. Scenic quality is

1 one of the resource values specifically addressed and provided for in FLPMA. Consideration of scenic
2 quality is accomplished through the VRM program. The VRM program involves inventory of scenic
3 values, establishment of management objectives for those values, and evaluation of proposed activities
4 to determine whether they conform to the management objectives. Updating the management actions for
5 visual resources to include information from the new VRI will allow the BLM to better manage visual
6 resources. The potential designation of new VRM class objectives will be considered and analyzed in
7 this Plan Amendment for the RFO area.

8 **1.1.2 ACEC Management Planning Review**

9 Comments received during the public scoping period for the 2008 RMP, included nominations for
10 designating ACECs to protect the following areas, habitats, or species: McCarty Canyon, areas
11 surrounding North Platte Reservoirs, Flattop Mountain (including any habitat for Gibbens' beardtongue),
12 Ferris Dunes (including the large dune field, grass-dominated wetland communities, and any habitat for
13 the kangaroo rat), and Ferris Mountain (including any habitat for Cedar Rim thistle north of the area).
14 These nominations were mistakenly overlooked in the RMP process documentation. Because the BLM
15 did not review or consider the nominations in accordance with BLM Manual 1613, these nominated
16 areas were considered at the earliest opportunity as part of this planning process.

17 To be designated as an ACEC, the nominated area must meet the criteria of relevance and importance
18 (R&I) (as defined in BLM Manual 1613) and require special management. Areas meeting the relevance
19 criterion possess significant historic, cultural, or scenic values; contain fish or wildlife resources, including
20 threatened and endangered species; or are natural hazards. To meet the importance criterion, the
21 resource must have substantial significance and value. This generally requires qualities of more than
22 local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern;
23 especially compared to any similar resource, qualities, or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive,
24 rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse changes. After
25 evaluation, the Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC was found to meet the relevance and importance criteria,
26 while the other nominated areas did not (see **Appendix A** for the ACEC Relevance and Importance
27 Evaluation forms). The plan amendment will evaluate whether the Ferris Dunes ACEC should be added
28 to the existing Blowout Penstemon ACEC, and analyze the impact of proposed changes to management
29 of the ACEC based on newly revised conservation measures established by the Biological Opinion in the
30 2008 RMP.

31 **1.2 Purpose and Need**

32 **1.2.1 Background**

33 An RMP guides management actions and allowable uses for public lands and resources identified and
34 addressed by the plan. Land use plan decisions establish goals and objectives for resource
35 management, the measures needed to achieve goals and objectives, and parameters for using BLM
36 lands or resources. Land use plan decisions identify lands that are open to, or available for, certain uses,
37 including any applicable restrictions, as well as lands that are closed to certain uses. Land use plan
38 decisions ordinarily are made on a broad scale and customarily guide subsequent site-specific
39 implementation decisions. Land use plan decisions are made according to the procedures of BLM's
40 planning regulations in 43 CFR 1600. According to BLM Handbook H-1601-1, the BLM can prepare
41 either an EIS or EA in conjunction with a plan amendment, depending on the scope of the planning effort
42 and anticipated impacts. The NEPA document discloses impacts of proposed actions and analyzes
43 reasonable alternatives (see Reader's Guide in Section 1.6).

44 Plan amendments (see 43 CFR 1610.5-5) change one or more of the terms, conditions, or decisions of
45 an approved land use plan. These decisions may include those relating to desired outcomes, measures
46 to achieve desired outcomes including resource restrictions, or land tenure decisions. Plan amendments
47 are most often prompted by the need to:

- 1 1. Consider a proposal or action that does not conform to the plan;
- 2 2. Implement new or revised policy that changes land use plan decisions;
- 3 3. Respond to new, intensified, or changed uses on public land; and
- 4 4. Consider significant new information from resource assessments, monitoring, or scientific
- 5 studies that change land use plan decisions.

6 The BLM regulations in 43 CFR 1600, 43 CFR 46, and the NEPA process detailed in the Council on
7 Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations in 40 CFR 1500 guide preparation of plan amendments. The
8 process is tailored to the anticipated level of public interest and potential for significant impacts.

9 Until this Plan Amendment is completed, the Rawlins RMP (BLM 2008b) provides current guidance and
10 direction for decisions involving VRM on public lands in the Planning Area, and the Blowout Penstemon
11 ACEC.

12 **1.2.2 Purpose**

13 Section 102 of FLPMA sets forth the policy for periodically projecting the present and future use of public
14 lands and resources through the use of a planning process. Sections 201 and 202 of the FLPMA are the
15 statutory authorities for the land use plans prepared by the BLM. The purpose or goal of the land use
16 plan is to ensure public lands and resources are managed in accordance with FLPMA and the principles
17 of multiple use and sustained yield.

18 The purpose of this Plan Amendment is to establish new VRM class designations within the RFO
19 resulting from the information obtained by the VRI completed in 2011 (Otak, Inc. 2011) and to address
20 potential changes in the size and management of the Blowout Penstemon ACEC . Management
21 decisions will consider how best to: 1) manage the public lands and resources in a combination that will
22 best meet the present and future needs of the American people in accordance with FLPMA 103(c);
23 2) manage public lands in a manner that will protect the quality of scenic values and the relevance and
24 importance of the potential incorporation of the Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC into the existing Blowout
25 Penstemon ACEC in accordance with FLPMA 102(b); 3) disclose impacts resource uses may have on
26 scenic values and management of the potential changes to the ACEC; and 4) disclose impacts the VRM
27 class objectives and potential changes to the ACEC designation may have on other resources and uses.

28 **1.2.3 Need**

29 The Rawlins RMP (BLM 2008b) included a remanded decision of the VRM class objectives and is
30 described in the ROD. The remanded decision was required to resolve a protest related to the BLM
31 guidance requiring that VRM class determinations be supported by a current inventory of visual quality
32 (BLM Handbook H-1601-1 *Land Use Planning*). The BLM is currently utilizing the VRM class objectives
33 as established and analyzed in the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1 in the Rawlins Proposed
34 RMP/Final EIS; BLM 2008a) until updated and/or changed by a VRM-targeted plan amendment. The
35 BLM completed a VRI for the RFO in 2011 (Otak, Inc. 2011).

36 The 2008 RMP protest resolution also required that the five nominated ACECs be considered at the
37 earliest opportunity, as part of the next planning process conducted for the RFO area. The BLM
38 completed the review of R&I criteria for these five areas in accordance with BLM Manual 1613, of which
39 only the Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC met the R&I criteria. The R&I evaluation forms can be found on
40 the BLM Rawlins RMP website along with maps and photographs of each of the areas:
41 <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/rawlins.html>. The R&I forms also are contained in
42 **Appendix A**.

43 The Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC partially overlaps the existing Blowout Penstemon ACEC. The need
44 for special management of the Blowout Penstemon ACEC has already been decided through the

1 alternatives and decision in the 2008 Rawlins RMP. The need to incorporate the Ferris Dunes ACEC into
2 the Blowout Penstemon ACEC is addressed through the alternatives in this Plan Amendment/EA. A
3 description of the newly proposed Blowout Penstemon ACEC, which would encompass the Ferris
4 Dunes, is found below in Section 2.2.5.2.

5 **1.3 Decisions to be Made**

6 This Plan Amendment will determine the appropriate management actions for visual resources on public
7 lands in the Planning Area (defined in Section 1.4) and amend the associated decisions in the Rawlins
8 RMP (BLM 2008b). This Plan Amendment will also analyze impacts associated with changes to the
9 acreage of the existing Blowout Penstemon ACEC and changes to existing management actions.

10 The public lands in the Planning Area are the subject of this Plan Amendment and the associated EA
11 analysis. Lands or minerals that are privately or state owned or that are administered by federal agencies
12 other than the BLM, such as the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), are
13 not affected by BLM management plans. Other BLM management actions beyond the scope and
14 geographic extent of this Plan Amendment will not be affected.

15 **1.4 Planning Area for VRM Plan Amendment**

16 The boundary of the RFO, excluding the portion delineated as the CCSM VRM Decision Area,
17 comprises the Planning Area boundary. The Planning Area contains 2.8 million acres of
18 BLM-administered public land surface and 2.7 million acres of BLM-administered federal mineral estates
19 in Albany, Carbon, Laramie, and eastern Sweetwater counties. The Medicine Bow National Forest
20 administered by the USFS, the Pathfinder/Seminole reservoirs administered by the BOR, the two wildlife
21 refuges administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and state and private lands, are
22 not subject to land use plans or decisions made by the BLM. The Planning Area is identified in **Figure 1-**
23 **1** and jurisdictional acreages within the Planning Area are detailed in **Table 1-1**.

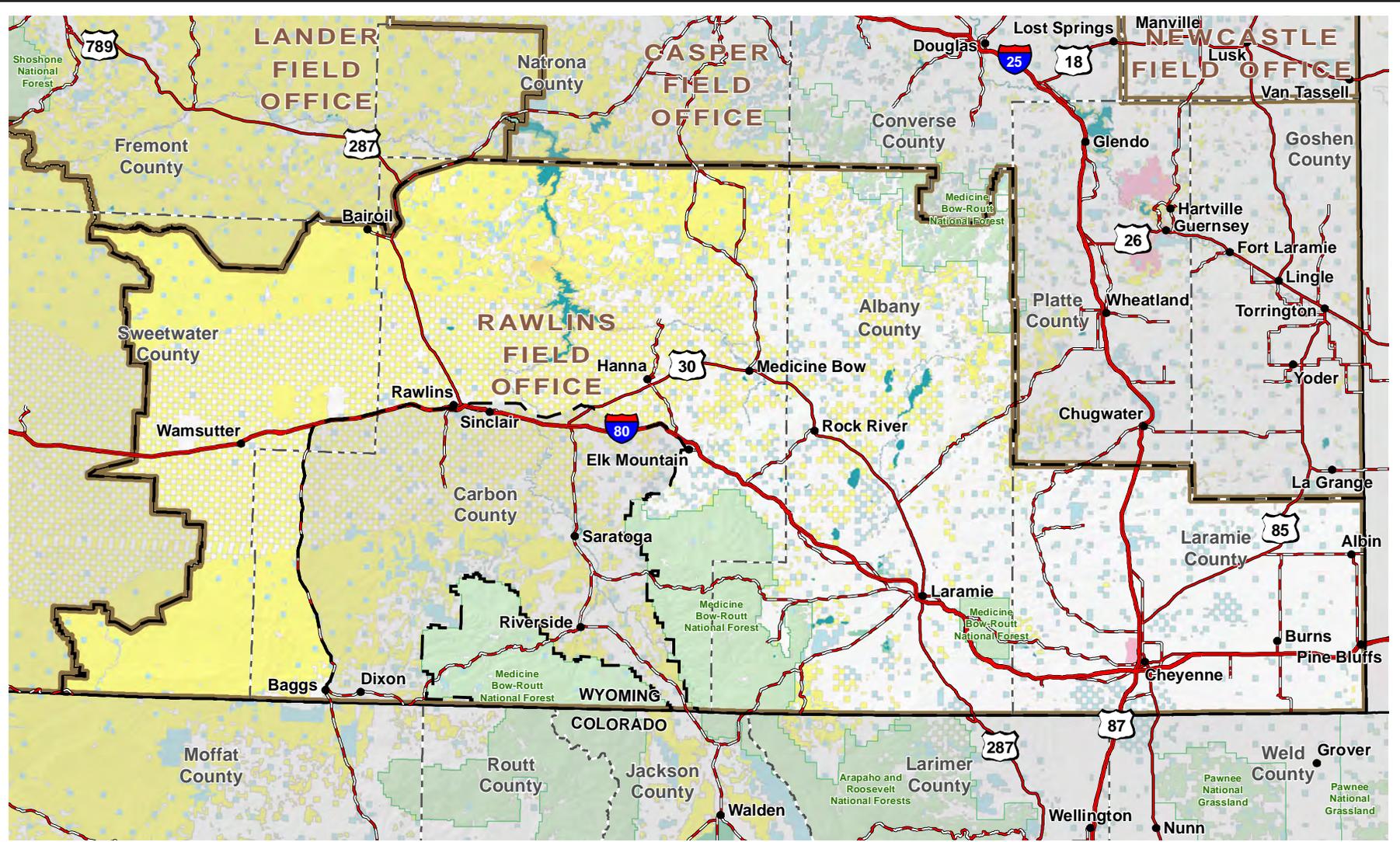
24 As depicted in **Figure 1-1**, the checkerboard land ownership constitutes a large swath of land through
25 the central portion of the Planning Area. The area also includes resources, such as wind, minerals, , and
26 grazing allotments, as well as, special designations/management areas (SD/MAs), recreational
27 resources, and wildlife habitat management areas.

28 **1.5 Reader's Guide to the RMP Plan Amendment Process**

29 An RMP provides management guidance and direction for BLM-administered public land surface and
30 federal mineral estate in accordance with FLPMA. Land use plan decisions establish goals and
31 objectives for resource management, the measures needed to achieve goals and objectives, and
32 parameters for using BLM lands or resources. The 43 CFR 1610 regulations establish procedural
33 requirements for the BLM's land use planning process. These regulations include the requirement that
34 land use plans (RMPs) are developed, proposed, and approved using NEPA regulations
35 (40 CFR 1500-1508) and Department of Interior regulations to implement NEPA (43 CFR 46).

36 An EA encourages resource protection and informed decision-making as required by NEPA, and
37 analyzes potential impacts of proposed projects and/or land use decisions. The EA establishes the need
38 for agencies to consider alternatives to a proposed action. The EA also serves to provide public
39 disclosure of potential environmental effects and provides opportunities for public review and comment.
40 The purpose of an EA is to determine if significant environmental effects may be anticipated as a result
41 of a proposed project. If significant environmental effects are not anticipated, then a Finding of No
42 Significant Impact (FONSI) is prepared; otherwise, an EIS is warranted. **Table 1-2** displays the NEPA
43 processes and environmental documents used to prepare the issue-targeted plan amendment.

X:\Projects\BLM_Rawlins_VRM_Amendment_60224981\FIGS\DOCEAN1_PDEA\Figure_1-1_RFO_VRMPlanningArea_20130618.mxd



Legend		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interstate Highway U.S. Highway State Highway BLM Field Office Boundary Planning Area 	<p>Land Owner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bureau of Land Management Bureau of Reclamation National Park Service US Department of Energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US Department of Defense US Fish and Wildlife Service US Forest Service Private State

**Rawlins Field Office
RMP-A/EA**

Figure 1-1

Rawlins Field Office VRM Planning Area

1:1,700,000

Table 1-1 Land and Minerals Ownership and Administrative Jurisdiction within the VRM Plan Amendment Planning Area

Jurisdiction	Acres ¹
Areas within the VRM Plan Amendment Planning Area:	
A. BLM-administered public land/federal minerals ²	2,686,788
B. BLM-administered public land/nonfederal minerals ³	104,933
C. Nonpublic land/federal minerals ⁴	1,014,037
Total BLM-administered public land surface within the VRM Plan Amendment Planning Area	2,791,721
Total BLM-administered federal mineral estate within the VRM Plan Amendment Planning Area	2,686,788
Other federal lands and minerals that WILL NOT be covered by the VRM Plan Amendment:	
D. USFS land/federal minerals ⁵	7,726
E. BOR land/federal minerals ⁵	41,071
F. USFWS land/federal minerals ⁵	6,390
Total BLM-administered federal mineral estate that WILL NOT be covered by the VRM Plan Amendment	55,187
Other lands that WILL NOT be covered by the VRM Plan Amendment:	
G. Department of Defense land	5,904
H. Private land/private minerals and state lands/state minerals ⁶	4,503,918
Total land surface area in the VRM Amendment Planning Area (all ownerships)¹	9,420,929

¹ Because of land surface and mineral ownership overlaps and administrative responsibility overlaps, the acreage figures for different jurisdictions do not add up to the total acreage.

² In areas where the public land surface and federal mineral estate are both administered by the BLM, the VRM Plan Amendment will include planning and management decisions for only the land surface.

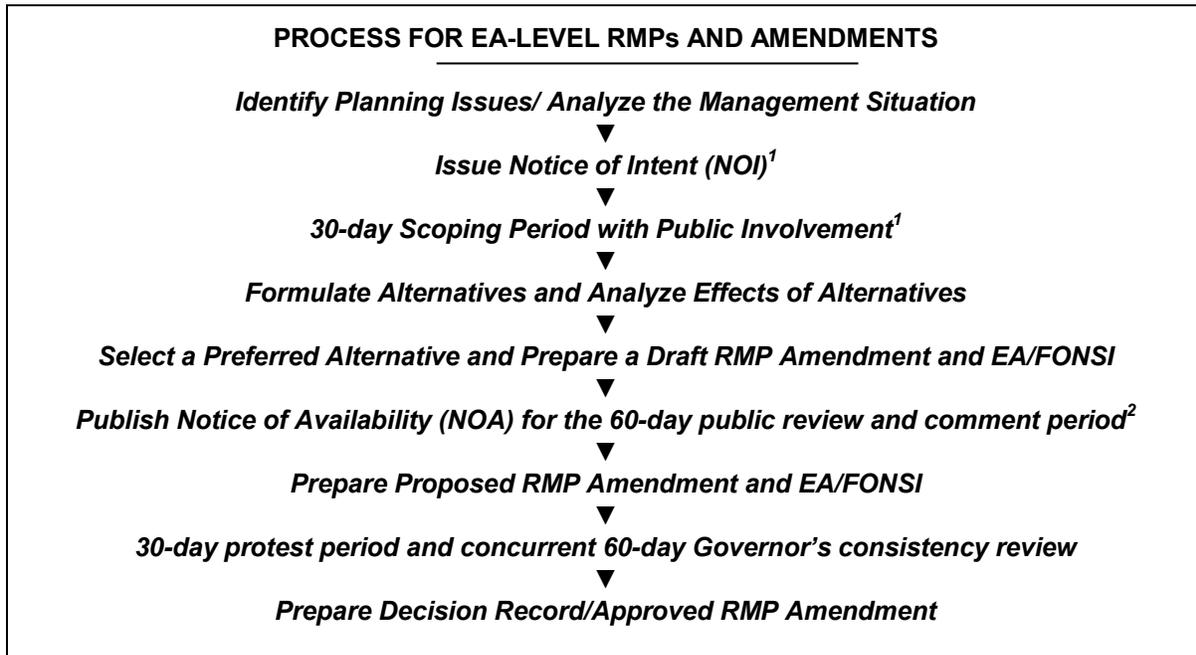
³ In areas where the public land surface is administered by the BLM, and the minerals are privately owned or owned by the State of Wyoming or local governments, the VRM Plan Amendment will include planning and management decisions for only the BLM-administered public land surface. Although these surface management decisions may have some effect on the management and development of non-federally owned minerals, the VRM Plan Amendment planning and management decisions will not pertain to the nonfederal mineral estate. At the same time, surface and minerals management actions and development activities anticipated in these areas will be taken into account for the purpose of cumulative impact analysis in the VRM Plan Amendment.

⁴ In areas where the land surface is privately owned or owned by the State of Wyoming or local governments, and the minerals are federally owned, the VRM Plan Amendment will include planning and management decisions for only the BLM-administered federal mineral estate. While the land and resource uses and values on the nonfederal surface will be taken into account ~~and will affect development of the federal mineral planning and management decisions~~, these decisions will not pertain to the state and privately owned land surface. At the same time, surface and minerals management actions and development activities anticipated in these areas will be taken into account for the purpose of cumulative impact analysis in the VRM Plan Amendment.

⁵ In areas where the public land surface is administered by the USFS, BOR, or USFWS, and the federal mineral estate is administered by BLM, the land surface planning and management decisions are the responsibility of these "other" federal or state surface management agencies. Any BLM administrative responsibilities within these areas (e.g., actions concerning the federal mineral estate) are handled case by case and are guided by the other surface management agencies' policies, procedures, and plans. At the same time, surface and minerals management actions and development activities anticipated in these areas will be taken into account for the purpose of cumulative impact analysis in the VRM Plan Amendment.

It also is important to note that, while other BLM responsibilities include surface management of certain public lands withdrawn for purposes of the BOR, they are carried out in accordance with an interagency agreement between the two agencies. Administrative jurisdiction (including land use planning) for these lands lies with the BOR.

⁶ The VRM Plan Amendment will not include any planning and management decisions for areas where the land surface and minerals are both privately owned or owned by the State of Wyoming or local governments.

Table 1-2 The NEPA Process for RMP Amendment Approval

¹ Public input period starts on the date of the federal notice publication in the *Federal Register*.

² A 60-day comment period and publication of NOA in the *Federal Register* is required for decisions involving ACECs.

1

2 **Identify Planning Issues** – Preliminary issues for the Planning Area were identified by BLM personnel;
3 federal, state, and local agencies; and other stakeholders. These issues included development of energy
4 resources and minerals-related issues, special designation management areas, wildland/urban interface,
5 and recreation and cultural resources (including National Historic and Scenic Trails).

6 **Management Situation Analysis** – The current conditions and trends of the resources and the
7 uses/activities that will relate to potential decisions in the Plan Amendment are documented in the
8 Management Situation Analysis (MSA) report (BLM 2003a). With the selection of the No Action
9 Alternative in the Rawlins RMP (BLM 2008a), the current management situation and the current
10 condition of most of the data/information contained in the MSA (BLM 2003a) for the Rawlins RMP is still
11 valid for this Plan Amendment. The seven elements of an adequate MSA are, for the most part, already
12 contained in the administrative record (AR) for the Rawlins RMP (BLM 2008a). The Rawlins RMP AR will
13 be augmented by the completion of the VRI report (Otak, Inc. 2011) for the RFO Planning Area.

14 **Issue Notice of Intent** – The BLM published an NOI in the *Federal Register* on April 11, 2012, to initiate
15 the public scoping process. The NOI announced the BLM's intent to prepare an amendment to the RMP
16 for the RFO and prepare an associated EA. The NOI identified that the Plan Amendment is intended to
17 resolve two protest issues: 1) to use the updated VRI to designate VRM classes; and 2) to review and
18 consider the public nominations received during the 2008 RMP process for potential designation as
19 ACECs.

20 **Conduct Scoping** – A 30-day scoping period began on April 11, 2012. The scoping period provided the
21 public with an opportunity to identify concerns and issues with the Plan Amendment. These comments
22 were documented in a scoping report, which is available online at
23 <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/rawlins/VRM.html> and in Appendix XX.

1 **Formulate Alternatives** – An alternative, in the case of this issue-targeted plan amendment, includes a
2 reasonable mix of VRM classes and ACEC management for potential expansion of the Blowout
3 Penstemon ACEC. In compliance with the NEPA, CEQ regulations, and BLM planning regulations and
4 guidance, alternatives must respond to the purpose and be capable of implementation in order to be
5 considered reasonable. The No Action Alternative is taken directly from the Rawlins RMP (BLM 2008b).
6 In addition to the No Action Alternative, three action alternatives were developed as discussed in
7 Chapter 2.0 of this EA. The alternatives provide the broadest range of options for detailed analysis and
8 a basis for comparative impact analyses.

9 **Analyze Effects of Alternatives** – A detailed analysis of the environmental impacts of each alternative
10 is included in Chapter 4.0 of this EA.

11 **Select a Preferred Alternative** – Based upon the analyses of the alternatives, the BLM's Preferred
12 Alternative was selected and analyzed in detail in this EA. The Preferred Alternative is composed of
13 management options from the other alternatives, thereby providing the best balance of management
14 actions that are capable of resolving existing management issues in the Planning Area.

15 **Prepare a Draft RMP Amendment and EA/FONSI** – The issue-targeted plan amendment was
16 completed concurrently with the EA. The FONSI was completed concurrently with the EA.

17 **Publish a Notice of Availability** – Because this issue-targeted plan amendment includes decisions
18 involving ACECs, an NOA was published in the *Federal Register* to announce the availability of the Draft
19 RMP Amendment (RMP-A) and EA for public review and comment (as required per H-1601-1).

20 **Provide a 60-day Comment Period** – Because this issue-targeted plan amendment includes decisions
21 involving ACECs, a 60-day public review and comment period was initiated with publication of the NOA.

22 **Prepare the Proposed RMP Amendment and EA/FONSI** – Following the public review and comment
23 period on the Proposed RMP-A, the EA/FONSI will be prepared. The primary difference between the
24 draft and final plan amendments is that the focus for the Final is on the “Proposed Decisions.” Based
25 upon public comment, any new information and correction of errors, the Proposed RMP-A and
26 EA/FONSI will present the Proposed VRM Class and ACEC Decisions

27 **Provide a 30-day Protest Period and Concurrent 60-day Governor’s Consistency Review** – A
28 30-day protest period and 60-day Governor’s consistency review will be provided before preparation of
29 the Decision Record. Because a NOA is not published in the *Federal Register* for EA-level amendments,
30 the BLM will notify the public through announcements and news releases to announce the protest
31 period. During the 30-day period, protests of the State Director’s Proposed RMP-A may be submitted to
32 the BLM Director and comments may be submitted to the BLM on the issue-targeted plan amendment
33 decisions. Any protests submitted will be resolved in the Decision Record.

34 **Prepare Decision Record and Approved RMP Amendment** – Following resolution of protests to the
35 issue-targeted plan amendment, the State Director may approve the plan amendment. This approval is
36 documented in a Decision Record (**Table 1-2**).

37 **1.6 Agency Roles and Relationships**

38 NEPA regulations provide for a lead agency's inclusion of federal, state, and local governments in the
39 development of the EA and in the BLM's planning process. This section identifies roles and
40 responsibilities of both the BLM lead agency and cooperating government agencies.

1 1.6.1 BLM

2 The BLM is the lead agency for the plan amendment and EA process. The lead agency takes primary
3 responsibility for preparing the plan amendment and EA as well as requesting the participation of each
4 cooperating agency. According to federal regulations, the lead agency is to request the participation of
5 each cooperating agency in the process at the earliest possible time. Furthermore, the lead agency must
6 use the environmental analysis and proposals of cooperating agencies with jurisdiction-by-law or special
7 expertise, to the maximum extent possible, consistent with its responsibility as lead agency.

8 1.6.2 Cooperating Agencies

9 Upon request of the lead agency, any other governmental entity that has jurisdiction-by-law can be a
10 cooperating agency (also called a cooperator). In addition, any other federal agency that has special
11 expertise with respect to any environmental issue that should be addressed in the EA may be a
12 cooperating agency upon request of the lead agency and acceptance by the agency. An agency also
13 may request the lead agency to designate it a cooperating agency.

14 The concept of cooperators includes federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies. This inclusion
15 of state and local government agencies as cooperating agencies is consistent with the BLM's planning
16 approach and policies. Any designated federal, state, tribal, or local government agency that becomes a
17 cooperator is required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding describing its specific roles and
18 responsibilities.

19 The primary role of the cooperating agencies is to provide input during the planning and EA process on
20 issues for which they have special expertise or jurisdiction. Cooperating agencies may participate in the
21 process in a role similar to that of any BLM interdisciplinary team member (e.g., BLM rangeland
22 management specialists, wildlife biologists). They also serve as reviewers of draft information and give
23 overall advice on the process with respect to their expertise and jurisdiction. Cooperators meet with the
24 lead agency periodically throughout the process to discuss issues and concerns as a group. Staff from
25 cooperating agencies is available to enhance the interdisciplinary capability of the lead agency by
26 providing needed information throughout the NEPA process.

27 The following agencies with jurisdiction, special expertise, or interest in the plan amendment process
28 have agreed to participate in the EA process as cooperating agencies:

- 29 • USFS (Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest and Thunder Basin National Grasslands);
- 30 • USFWS;
- 31 • State of Wyoming (including 12 departments);
- 32 • Little Snake River (LSR) Conservation District;
- 33 • Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins (SER) Conservation District;
- 34 • Medicine Bow Conservation District;
- 35 • Board of Carbon County Commissioners;
- 36 • Board of Sweetwater County Commissioners;
- 37 • Sweetwater County Conservation District; and
- 38 • City of Rawlins.

1 **1.7 Anticipated Planning Issues and Management Concerns**

2 The process for developing, amending, or revising an RMP begins with identifying the issues
3 (43 CFR 1610.4-1). Some of the issues addressed in the EIS for the current Rawlins RMP (BLM 2008b)
4 were reviewed and found to be applicable to this Plan Amendment. Specific questions and concerns
5 relative to the plan amendment have been identified (see identified issues in Section 1.7.1).

6 The VRI (Otak, Inc. 2011) addresses the issues raised in the RMP remand related to the VRM decisions
7 and provides the baseline visual resource condition information necessary to make informed VRM class
8 designations within the Planning Area.

9 The five areas proposed for ACEC designation in the 2008 RMP process that were not previously
10 evaluated have undergone interdisciplinary review. The Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC met the R&I
11 criteria; the other four proposed ACECs did not meet the criteria. The need for special management of
12 the Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC will be addressed in the plan amendment and EA through expansion
13 of the Blowout Penstemon ACEC.

14 The VRI and ACEC R&I Evaluation forms are posted on the BLM Rawlins RMP website at
15 <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/rawlins.html> and can be found in **Appendix A**.

16 **1.7.1 Issues Identified for Purposes of this Plan Amendment**

17 The following planning issues were identified through public scoping and information gathering during
18 analysis of the existing management criteria for the Rawlins RMP (BLM 2003a). These issues are based
19 on the input of BLM personnel, the public, and interagency consultation associated with the
20 2008 Rawlins RMP (BLM 2008a).

21 **ISSUE 1: Development of Energy Resources and Minerals-Related Issues**

22 It is mandatory to address conflicts with energy resource development (i.e., oil and gas, coal, solar and
23 wind energy) and related transportation networks. Questions to be answered in the Plan Amendment
24 include:

- 25 a. Are sufficient measures being taken to ensure protection of visual quality and the Ferris Dunes
26 proposed ACEC?
- 27 b. Are current VRM classes and potential expansion of the Blowout Penstemon ACEC consistent
28 with decisions regarding what public lands are available for energy and mineral development?
- 29 c. Are current VRM class objectives and management of the Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC
30 consistent with energy and mineral development and transportation network decisions?
- 31 d. How would the VRM class designations and potential expansion of the Blowout Penstemon
32 ACEC influence future opportunities to develop energy and mineral resources?

33 **ISSUE 2: Special Designations/Management Areas**

34 There are unique areas or sensitive lands and resources in the Planning Area that met the criteria for
35 protection and management under SD/MAs. There are five wilderness study areas (WSAs: Encampment
36 River Canyon, Prospect Mountain, Bennett Mountain, Adobe Town, and Ferris Mountains. Encampment
37 River Canyon and Prospect Mountain were previously addressed under the CCSM VRM Amendment.
38 There are three areas designated as ACECs (Sand Hills, Blowout Penstemon, and Cave Creek Cave)
39 that contain unique resources requiring special management attention. Sand Hills was previously
40 addressed in the CCSM VRM Amendment. There also are three special recreation management areas
41 (SRMAs): Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, North Platte River, and Shirley Mountain. The Adobe
42 Town Dispersed Recreation Use Area contains recreation values that also require special management.
43 There are no eligible river segments being managed as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and

1 Scenic River (WSR) system in the Planning Area. There are also three designated National Natural
2 Landmarks (NNLs) – Big Hollow, Sand Creek, and Como Bluff containing unique landscape values that
3 require special management. The SD/MAs are shown in the RMP on Maps 2-6 (WSAs), 2-9 (ACECs),
4 2-13 (other management areas), 2-18 (NNLs), and 2-47 (historic trails) of the Rawlins RMP ROD (BLM
5 2008b). The following questions about these areas are addressed within the plan amendment.

- 6 a. Should the VRM decisions made in the 2008 RMP be reviewed or changed in these areas?
- 7 b. Do current VRM class objectives support special designations/management area decisions?
- 8 c. Should the Blowout Penstemon ACEC be expanded to include the Ferris Dunes proposed
9 ACEC?

10 **ISSUE 3: Wildland/Urban Interface**

11 Accelerated growth in and around cities and towns in the Planning Area has increased demands for
12 public land resources. Questions to be answered include:

- 13 a. Do VRM class designations and potential expansion of the Blowout Penstemon ACEC enhance
14 or restrict the wildland/urban interface?
- 15 b. Do VRM class designations and potential expansion of the Blowout Penstemon ACEC influence
16 where urbanization (any development) should ultimately occur?

17 **ISSUE 4: Recreation and Cultural Resources, including National Historic Trails**

18 Certain resources and areas require protection while others should be considered for more public
19 recreation. Principal considerations include providing for suitable and sufficient recreation uses and
20 facilities (both dispersed and commercial), VRM direction, off-highway vehicle (OHV) road and trail
21 designations, and management of cultural and historical resources (of particular concern is protection of
22 the Overland Trail, the Cherokee Trail, expansion era roads, and Native American cultural properties).
23 The viewshed along these trails and Native American traditional cultural properties is an issue.
24 Questions to be answered include:

- 25 a. Do VRM classes and Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC designation support trails management,
26 including the setting of historic and scenic trails?
- 27 b. Would VRM classes and Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC designation influence how cultural
28 properties and Native American traditional areas are managed?
- 29 c. Is the viewshed along these trails and Native American traditional cultural properties an issue?

30 **1.8 Planning Criteria Identified for Purposes of this Plan Amendment**

31 Planning criteria are guidelines that are developed to direct planning efforts for preparation of the issue-
32 targeted plan amendment. The planning criteria serve the following purposes:

- 33 • To ensure that the planning effort is focused on the issues, follows and incorporates legal
34 requirements, addresses management of all public land resources and land uses in the Planning
35 Area, and that preparation is accomplished efficiently;
- 36 • To identify the scope and parameters of the planning effort for the decision-maker, the
37 interdisciplinary team, and the public; and
- 38 • Inform the public of what should and should not be expected from the plan amendment effort.
39 This includes identification of any planning issues that will be addressed only through
40 subsequent activity or implementation planning efforts or in approving public land and resource
41 use authorizations (e.g., livestock grazing allotment management plans, wildlife habitat

1 management plans, other coordinated activity planning, watershed management plans,
2 processing applications for permits for mineral exploration, or rights-of-way [ROW]).

3 **1.8.1 General Planning Criteria**

4 The general planning criteria were developed for the Rawlins RMP revision (BLM 2008a) to help focus
5 the preparation of planning and management alternatives and the analysis of impacts. They are also
6 used to guide selection of the Preferred Alternative. Some of the Rawlins RMP revision planning criteria
7 were used for this issue-targeted plan amendment, where appropriate, and are listed below.

- 8 • This planning effort will recognize valid existing rights;
- 9 • All actions must comply with laws, executive orders, regulations and policy;
- 10 • Lands covered by the planning effort include any/all lands that may affect, or be affected by, the
11 management occurring on the public lands in the Planning Area. However, the plan amendment
12 will apply only to the public lands and federal mineral estate in the Planning Area. This includes
13 decisions on the BLM-administered federal minerals that underlie non-federal lands (split estate)
14 in the Planning Area. Within the Planning Area, BLM management decisions will not apply to
15 non-public land surface or mineral estate, public lands administered by other federal agencies,
16 or federal mineral estate underlying public lands administered by other federal agencies;
- 17 • A collaborative and multi-jurisdictional approach will be used, where possible, to jointly
18 determine the desired future condition and management direction for the public lands;
- 19 • To the extent possible, and within legal and regulatory parameters, BLM management and
20 planning decisions will complement the planning and management decisions of other agencies,
21 state and local governments, and Indian tribes, with jurisdictions intermingled with and adjacent
22 to the Planning Area; and
- 23 • The Rawlins RMP (BLM 2008a) Reasonably Foreseeable Development (RFD) and Reasonably
24 Foreseeable Action or Activity (RFA) scenarios for all land and resource uses (including
25 minerals) will be reviewed, where appropriate, and portrayed based on historical, existing, and
26 projected levels for all programs.

27 **1.8.2 Planning Criteria for Specific Resources**

28 **1.8.2.1 Criteria for Use of Standard Mitigation Guidelines**

29 The BLM will apply the “*Wyoming BLM Mitigation Guidelines for Surface-disturbing and Disruptive*
30 *Activities*” (detailed in Appendices 1, 13, and 15 of the Rawlins RMP [BLM 2008b]) during analysis and
31 approval of subsequent activities.

32 **1.8.2.2 Criteria for Wilderness**

33 There are three WSAs (Adobe Town, Bennett Mountain, and Ferris Mountain), on public lands within the
34 Planning Area. These WSAs were established in accordance with the requirements of Section 603(c)
35 and 202 of FLPMA and will continue to be managed under the Interim Management Policy for Lands
36 Under Wilderness Review until Congress either designates all or portions of the WSAs as wilderness or
37 releases the lands from further wilderness consideration.

38 As a component of all alternatives in this planning effort, the three WSAs will continue to be protected by
39 VRM Class I objectives (according to BLM Manual 6330 – Management of BLM Wilderness Study
40 Areas). There is no directive to protect the viewshed not associated with the WSAs as a benefit or
41 protection for the values associated with the WSAs. Public lands “outside” of WSAs will be included in
42 the VRM class designations and will be considered and analyzed in this EA for the Planning Area.

1 **1.8.2.3 Criteria for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

2 The Rawlins RMP decisions regarding the Blowout Penstemon ACEC are being revisited in this planning
3 document. If any alternative other than the No Action Alternative were selected, then management
4 actions, as well as, current boundary for the existing Blowout Penstemon ACEC would change. The
5 Director's Protest Resolution for the Rawlins RMP determined that certain areas should be evaluated for
6 ACEC considerations. These include McCarty Canyon, areas surrounding the North Platte River
7 Reservoirs, Flattop Mountain (including any habitat for Gibben's penstemon), Ferris Dunes (including the
8 large dune field, Gramminoid wetland communities and any habitat for the kangaroo rat), and Ferris
9 Mountain (including any habitat for Cedar Rim thistle north of the area), were mistakenly overlooked
10 during the 2008 RMP process. These recommended areas will be considered during this planning
11 review. The R&I criteria for ACEC designation, found in BLM Manual 1613, have been applied to these
12 areas of BLM-administered public lands in the Planning Area to determine if any areas have the potential
13 for ACEC designation. The RFO has completed the R&I criteria review and the ACEC R&I Evaluation
14 forms are posted on the BLM Rawlins RMP website at: [http://www.blm.gov/wy/
15 st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/rawlins.html](http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/rawlins.html). These forms are also available in **Appendix A**.

16 An ACEC designation alone does not change the allowable uses of public lands (FLPMA-Section 201(a)
17 and 43 CFR 1601.0-5a). An ACEC designation is not a substitute for a WSA or wilderness suitability
18 recommendation (BLM Manual 1613.06). Protective measures for ACECs are not applied or required
19 simply because of the designation. Rather, the nature of the values, resources, or natural hazards they
20 contain are the basis for determining the appropriate types and levels of management required. The only
21 automatic requirement as a result of an ACEC designation is that the submittal of a "plan of operations"
22 must be submitted for any degree of mining claim development in the area (43 CFR 3809.1-4).

23 **1.8.2.4 Criteria for Multiple Use Considerations**

24 Multiple use is defined in the FLPMA, as "the management of public lands and their various resource
25 values so they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the
26 American people and not necessarily to the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic
27 return or the greatest unit output." Bureau of Land Management policy requires that the BLM-
28 administered lands be managed under this multiple-use concept. Management objectives and actions
29 described for each alternative addressed in the planning review/NEPA process will consider all
30 resources and resource uses in the Planning Area (physical, biological, and socioeconomic), as
31 appropriate. Program-specific criteria found in BLM laws, regulations, handbooks, manuals, and policy,
32 such as, Instruction Memorandums (IMs) and Instruction Bulletins (IBs) should be used for each
33 evaluated resource in this effort. These ACEC evaluation forms are available in **Appendix A**.

2.0 Description of the Plan Amendment Alternatives

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2.0 describes four Plan Amendment alternatives for managing visual resources and within the Planning Area and management of the changes to the Blowout Penstemon ACEC. These alternatives are as follows: Alternative 1 (No Action – Continuation of Existing Management Direction), Alternative 2 (Emphasis on the Development of Resources), Alternative 3 (Emphasis on Protection of Resources), and Alternative 4 (Preferred Alternative). For consistency, all alternatives are the same as the alternative themes developed for the 2008 Rawlins RMP (BLM 2008a) to ensure all applicable issues and concerns raised by cooperating agencies and the public during the formal scoping process and public review of the 2008 Rawlins RMP are being addressed in the Plan Amendment.

Decisions in the 2008 Rawlins RMP serve as the basis for Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative. Other alternatives were developed to address resource issues and concerns identified through the analysis of Alternative 1. The three action alternatives were developed to present a range of options to guide in the decision-making process in order to manage uses and activities within the Planning Area for visual resources and the expanded Blowout Penstemon ACEC. The management approach of each alternative is intended to minimize adverse resource impacts while providing for use and development opportunities consistent with the theme of the action alternatives, as well as, with current laws, regulations, and policies.

Alternatives were developed to establish a framework for measuring the impacts on the Planning Area that may occur as a result of future management of visual resources and the expanded Blowout Penstemon ACEC. The alternatives themselves do not constitute management decisions; instead, they represent reasonable approaches to managing public land and activities consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

2.2 Considerations and Requirements for the Development of Alternatives

Plan amendment alternatives were developed in order to address the BLM remands associated with visual resource decisions and ACEC documentation. The requirements of the remands are as follows:

- “In resolution of a protest concerning an updated inventory of visual resource values within the RMPPA, the [VRM] class designation and decision portions of the Proposed RMP/FEIS have been remanded (refer to BLM Land Use Planning Handbook, H-16011). The VRM designations and decisions will be reevaluated and subject to subsequent NEPA analysis. To comply with VRM policy (BLM VRM Manual 8400 and 8410), the RFO will undertake an effort to update the inventory of visual resources within the [RFO area]. Using this updated inventory as a baseline, VRM class objectives will be considered and analyzed in a future VRM-targeted EIS for the [RFO area]. Through the subsequent NEPA process, the public will have an opportunity to comment during this environmental analysis process regarding Rawlins VRM. Until such time, the Approved RMP will utilize the VRM class objectives as established and analyzed in the No Action Alternative, Alternative 1 in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.” (Section 1.1.1.1, pp. 1-1, BLM 2008b). Internal review of the NEPA process revealed any potential impacts should not be significant and would meet the requirements of a FONSI; therefore, it was determined at that time that an EA would be prepared.
- “The BLM has reviewed its administrative record and found that comments submitted through scoping (during a comment period for gathering input on potential ACECs) included recommendations for designating ACECs to protect the following areas, habitats, or species: McCarty Canyon, areas surrounding North Platte Reservoirs, Flattop Mountain (including any

1 habitat for Gibbens penstemon), Ferris Dunes (including the large dune field, grass-dominated
2 wetland communities, and any habitat for the kangaroo rat), and Ferris Mountain (including any
3 habitat for Cedar Rim thistle north of the area). These recommendations were mistakenly
4 overlooked in documentation. Because the BLM did not review or consider the
5 recommendations in accordance with BLM Manual 1613, the protest is granted and these
6 recommended areas will be considered at the earliest opportunity as part of the next planning
7 process conducted in the RFO.” (Section 1.1.1.1, pp. 1-2, BLM 2008b).

8 The BLM complied with NEPA requirements in the development of alternatives for this Plan Amendment,
9 including seeking public input during the 2008 Rawlins RMP and Plan Amendment scoping processes.
10 Formulation of the alternatives took into consideration existing decisions in the 2008 Rawlins RMP as
11 well as issues and concerns developed internally and solicited from the public during the Plan
12 Amendment scoping process. The following were considered during the development of alternatives:

- 13 • Consideration of present visual quality conditions, as reported in the 2011 VRI report (Otak,
14 Inc. 2011), and R&I values in the Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC, and opportunities for
15 resource use;
- 16 • Any potential inconsistencies with decisions in the 2008 Rawlins RMP not addressed in this
17 Plan Amendment; and
- 18 • Options for management of other resources, including significant cultural and historic resources,
19 fire suppression, hazardous fuels reduction, riparian and wetland areas, noxious weeds, habitat
20 for important wildlife and plant species, wild and scenic river values, vegetation management
21 objectives, recreational opportunities, SD/MAs, and watersheds.

22 **2.2.1 Alternatives Development Process**

23 Alternatives were developed for VRM and changes to the Blowout Penstemon ACEC. The alternatives
24 development process is discussed in the following sections.

25 **2.2.1.1 Visual Resource Management Alternatives Development Process**

26 The BLM is responsible for ensuring that the scenic value of public lands under its management are
27 considered before permitting uses that may potentially have negative visual impacts. Scenic quality is
28 one of the resource values specifically addressed and provided for in FLPMA. Landscape attributes are
29 considered and given a numerical rating, which is then translated into category A, B, or C, with A being
30 the highest. Consideration of scenic quality is accomplished through the use of VRM. The VRM program
31 involves inventory of scenic values through a VRI, establishment of management objectives for those
32 scenic values, and evaluation of proposed activities to determine whether they are in conformance with
33 the management objectives. A VRI for the BLM RFO was conducted and completed in February 2011.

34 Visual Resource Baseline

35 According to BLM Manual 8410, the VRI establishes inventory classes to serve as a tool through the
36 portrayal of visual resource relative quality. The VRI provides a snapshot in time of the current scenic
37 values of an area without considering jurisdiction, manageability, existing leases, pending or approved
38 projects, or other resource opportunities or constraints (i.e. wildlife habitats, mineral and energy potential,
39 etc.).

40 There are four VRI classes (I, II, III, and IV). VRI classes are assigned based on a matrix combination of
41 scenic quality, sensitivity level, and distance zones. As a general rule, lands with high scenic quality
42 where the landscape is of concern to the public, and visible from less than five miles, are rated higher
43 than lands with low scenic quality for which there is little public concern for maintenance of scenic
44 quality. Distance zones are categorized as foreground, middleground, background, and seldom seen.
45 Details regarding these zones can be found in Chapter 3 of this plan amendment. The VRI classes

1 provide a baseline to develop a range of alternatives for VRM classes during the planning process and
 2 during the analysis of impacts associated with the various alternatives. However, VRI classes are
 3 informational in nature and do not establish management direction. A VRI was completed by the BLM for
 4 the Planning Area (Otak, Inc. 2011). The VRI classes developed within the RFO area are shown in
 5 **Figure 2-1**.

6 VRM Classes

7 The visual resource inventory process provides BLM managers with a means to determine visual values.
 8 The VRI consists of a scenic quality evaluation, sensitivity level analysis, and a delineation of distance
 9 zones. Visual resource management classes are assigned through RMPs. The assignment of VRM
 10 classes is ultimately based on the management decisions made in RMPs. However, visual values must
 11 be considered throughout the RMP process. There are four VRM classes (I, II, III, and IV) (**Table 2-1**).
 12 VRM Class I provides for the greatest amount of protection of scenic values and Class IV the least. VRM
 13 Class I is assigned to areas where a management decision has been made to maintain a natural
 14 landscape (such as in WSAs). VRM Classes II, III, and IV are assigned based on a matrix combination of
 15 information from the VRI, as well as manageability and resource conflicts. VRM classes are established
 16 through the RMP planning process in consideration of: 1) multiple-use objectives; 2) the importance of
 17 visual values; and 3) the potential impacts projects may have on these values. The VRM classes in the
 18 Planning Area are described in **Table 2-2**.

19 Approach to VRM Alternatives

20 Baseline information used in developing the alternatives included: landownership, transportation and
 21 utility corridors, VRI classes, areas with high wind potential (areas with wind classes 5 through 7)¹, areas
 22 visible from high wind potential areas, existing wind energy site testing and monitoring applications,
 23 existing oil and gas leases, water bodies, SD/MAs, recreation areas, historic and scenic trails, and other
 24 management considerations that may limit surface-disturbing activities (including the Greater Sage-
 25 Grouse core areas as defined in Wyoming State Executive Order 2011-5). The Scenic Quality Rating
 26 Units (SQRUs) identified through the VRI process were also used during alternative development. The
 27 SQRUs are based on physiographic characteristics such as geology, vegetation, hydrology, texture,
 28 color, variety, and topography. The following factors were also considered in the development of
 29 alternatives:

- 30 • Wind energy development typically is not considered to be compatible with VRM Class I, II,
 31 or III where the turbines cannot be screened or absorbed by the landscape;
- 32 • Wind development will most likely occur in areas with high wind potential (wind
 33 classes 5 through 7);
- 34 • Oil, gas, and coal bed natural gas (CBNG) development is more compatible with VRM Class
 35 III and Class IV areas. However, such development can also occur in Class I and II if it can
 36 be mitigated in such a way as not to dominate the landscape.²

¹ Wind resources are characterized by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) wind-power density classes, ranging from Class 1 (the lowest) to Class 7 (the highest). Good wind resources (e.g., Class 4 and above, which have an average annual wind speed of at least 15.7 to 16.8 miles per hour [mph] at a 50-meter [m] height) are the minimum requirement for large wind turbine systems, but higher wind classes are more desirable for optimum power output. For the purposes of this Plan Amendment, areas with high wind potential were classified as areas with wind resources of Class 5 (excellent; 16.8 to 17.9 mph at 50 m), Class 6 (outstanding; 17.9 to 19.7 mph at 50 m), or Class 7 (superb; >19.7 mph at 50 m). Estimates of reasonably foreseeable wind energy development activity were developed from analysis of current wind site testing and monitoring application areas and areas with high wind potential. These estimates were used to aid in the analysis of environmental consequences. Because they are general, the development potential classifications are appropriate for planning purposes, but they are not intended to predict future activity or the locations of new wind energy projects.

² Using available geologic information, reports of past production, and information from the minerals industry, areas of high, moderate, and low potential for the occurrence and development of hydrocarbons in the Planning Area were identified. Estimates

- 1 • Areas with existing oil and gas leases are subject to the terms and conditions of the existing
- 2 lease, whereas, new or renewed leases would be subject to any new terms at the time of
- 3 authorization;
- 4 • Visual quality is difficult to manage within major utility and transportation corridors,
- 5 particularly in areas that coincide with fragmented landownership patterns;
- 6 • SD/MAs and recreation areas have resource values that could be maintained or enhanced
- 7 by protecting the visual quality; and
- 8 • Visual quality can be difficult to manage in areas with checkerboard (see Glossary) or
- 9 fragmented landownership patterns.

10 The Plan Amendment would only direct management of public lands and resources administered by the
 11 BLM within the Planning Area. However, landownership in the Planning Area includes a mixture of
 12 public, state, and private land, including a large swath of checkerboard ownership, as well as fragmented
 13 ownership in the eastern half of the RFO area. Whereas BLM-administered lands are managed for
 14 multiple uses in accordance with the FLPMA, intermingled private and state lands are protected by
 15 non-federal property rights. Federal agencies do not have the authority to modify or regulate activities on
 16 private land. Except when specifically requested by the landowner, the authorizations on federal lands
 17 may not be used to condition activities on non-federal land. The VRM classes, therefore, do not apply to
 18 any private or state lands. However, the impacts of project actions on private land do influence
 19 management decisions on public land and impacts to public land impacts as a result of actions occurring
 20 on private land are required to be disclosed to the public through the NEPA process. One of the BLM's
 21 challenges is to develop effective land management under the FLPMA multiple-use mandate. Because
 22 resource management may be limited in the checkerboard, and in other public and private intermingled
 23 landownership areas, BLM resource management may become constrained when the goals of private
 24 landowners conflict with public land multiple-use goals and objectives. Notable exceptions to these
 25 constraints include areas where resources on land ownership surrounding public lands are protected
 26 through local or private management methods, such as zoning, special designations, conservation
 27 easements, or topography.

28 **2.2.1.2 Blowout Penstemon/Ferris Dunes Proposed ACEC Alternatives Development**

29 **Process**

30 The BLM considered the relevance and importance criteria for the Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC in
 31 determining whether to adjust the boundary of the Blowout Penstemon ACEC through expansion of the
 32 Blowout Penstemon ACEC as a result of incorporating the Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC. In addition,
 33 new management actions based on conservation measures in the revised Biological Opinion, which has
 34 been incorporated in the RMP through a maintenance action, must be analyzed.

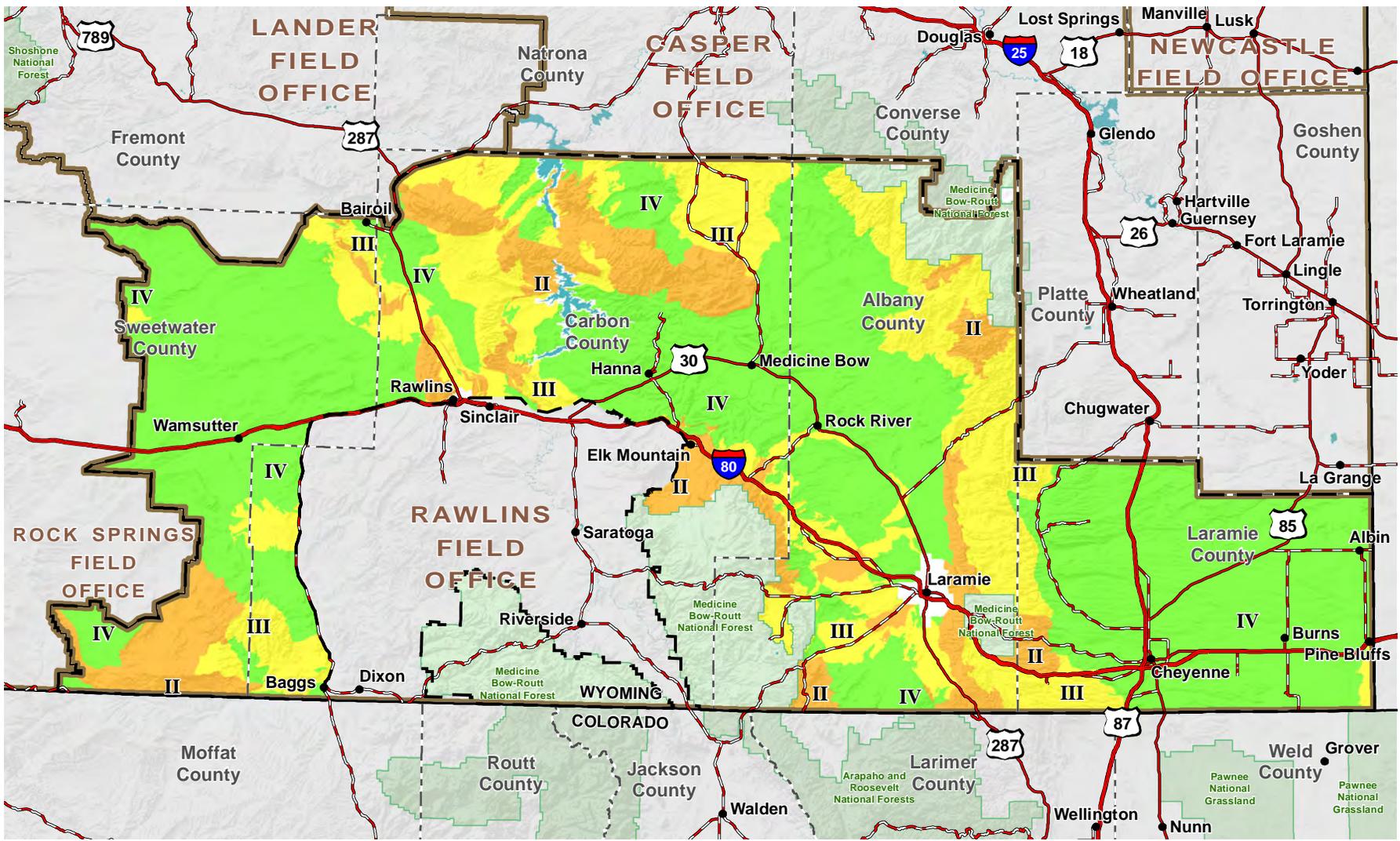
35 **2.2.2 Management Goals and Objectives**

36 The 2008 Rawlins RMP management goals and objectives were determined to still be valid, and as
 37 such, have not been modified as part of this VRM-targeted Plan Amendment. The goals and objectives
 38 for Areas of Interest and ACEC expansion are presented in **Table 2-3** and **Table 2-4**, respectively.

39
40

of reasonably foreseeable oil and gas (including coalbed methane) exploration and development activity were developed from analysis of past activity and production. These estimates were used to aid in the analysis of environmental consequences.

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- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- BLM Field Office Boundary
- Planning Area

- Legend**
- Visual Resource Inventory Classes**
- VRI Class I
 - VRI Class II
 - VRI Class III
 - VRI Class IV

**Rawlins Field Office
RMP-A/EA**

Figure 2-1

VRI Classes within the Planning Area

0 10 20 40 Miles

0 10 20 40 Kilometers

1:1,700,000

Table 2-1 VRM Classes and Management Objectives

VRM Class	Management Objective
I	Preserve the existing character of the landscape.
	Provide for natural ecological changes.
	Do not preclude very limited management activity.
	Level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.
II	Retain the existing character of the landscape.
	Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer.
	Level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low.
	Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
III	Partially retain the existing character of the landscape.
	Management activities may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer.
	Level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate.
	Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
IV	Provide for management activities that require major modification of the existing character of the landscape.
	Management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention.
	Level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high.
	Every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

Source: BLM Manual 8431, Visual Resource Contract Rating (BLM 1986).

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Table 2-2 Acreage of Proposed VRM Classes on Public Lands in the Planning Area by Alternative

VRM Class	Alternative 1: No Action		Alternative 2: Development		Alternative 3: Protection		Alternative 4: Preferred	
	Acres	% of Planning Area	Acres	% of Planning Area	Acres	% of Planning Area	Acres	% of Planning Area
Class I	62,584	2.2	62,078	2.2	76,889	2.8	62,078	2.2
Class II	235,019	8.4	0	0.0	741,909	26.6	337,472	12.7
Class III	2,086,807	74.7	783,999	28.1	1,205,888	43.2	776,410	27.8
Class IV	407,310	14.6	1,945,643	69.7	767,035	27.5	1,597,761	57.2
Grand Total	2,791,721	100.0	2,791,721	100.0	2,791,721	100.0	2,791,721	100.0

4

Table 2-3 Proposed Management Actions for Visual Resource Management by Alternative

Resource Area:	Visual Resource Management						
Management Goal¹:	Manage public lands according to VRM classes that are determined based on land use allocation decisions made in this RMP amendment.						
Management Objectives²:	1. Establish VRM classes for the RFO Planning Area. 2. Maintain the overall integrity of visual resource classes while allowing for development of existing and future uses.						
Area of Interest	Baseline Information and Other Data			Management Action/VRM Classification Recommendations			
	Scenic Quality Class²	Sensitivity Level²	VRM Class²	Alternative 1: No Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred
Areas Derived from Current Public and Agency Scoping Comments (2012)							
Adobe Town WSA	B	High	II	I	BLM Policy for WSAs is VRM Class I – Common to All Action Alternatives		
Adobe Town - BLM Dispersed Recreation Use Area (DRUA) and outside the WSA	B, C	High, Moderate	II, III	III	Class III with wind site testing and monitoring application as Class IV	VRM Class I and II	Class II and III with Class IV in high wind potential areas to the west
Adobe Town - “Very Rare and Uncommon” (VRUA) State of Wyoming Designation	B, C	High, Moderate, Low	II, IV	I, III	See above (DRUA)	See above (DRUA)	See above (DRUA)
Adobe Town - Other Surrounding Area	B, C	High, Moderate, Low	II, III, IV	III	Class IV closer to Baggs transitioning to Class III toward Powder Rim and Adobe Town	Class III closer to Baggs transitioning to Class II toward Powder Rim and Adobe Town	Class III closer to Baggs transitioning to Class II toward Powder Rim and Adobe Town
Checkerboard land ownership areas	A, B, C	High, Moderate, Low	II, III, IV	II, III, IV	Class IV	Class III or IV	Class III or IV
Cherokee Trail and 5-mile viewshed	A, B, C	High, Moderate, Low	II, III, IV	II, III, IV	Class III or IV to match surroundings	Class II or III to match VRM class with 3-mile-wide buffer	Class III and IV

Table 2-3 Proposed Management Actions for Areas of Interest by Alternative

Area of Interest	Baseline Information and Other Data			Management Action/VRM Classification Recommendations			
	Scenic Quality Class ²	Sensitivity Level ²	VRM Class ²	Alternative 1: No Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred
Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and 5-mile viewshed	B, C	High	II, III	III	Class IV with high wind potential area north of the checkerboard as Class III within trail buffer	Class II along trail with Class II in trail viewshed north of the checkerboard	Class II along one-fourth of trail with pockets in the north to match the VRM Class II area outside the checkerboard
Elk Mountain and surrounding areas	B	High, Moderate, Low	II south of Interstate 80 (I-80), IV north of I-80	II, IV	Class III south of highway; Class IV north of highway	Class II south of highway; Class IV north of highway	Class II and III south of highway; Class IV north of highway
Ferris Mountain	A	High	II	WSA = I, remainder of Ferris Mountain = III	Ferris Mountain WSA as Class I with remainder of area as Class III; wind application area as Class IV	Ferris Mountain WSA and expanded area as Class I with remainder of Ferris Mountain as Class II	Ferris Mountain WSA and expanded area as Class I with remainder of area as Class II
Ferris Mountains proposed expansions (i.e., Black Canyon)	A	High	II	III	Class III	Class II	Class II
Flattop Mountain (adjacent to State Highway [SH] 487 north of Medicine Bow)	B	Low	IV	III	Class IV due to presence of checkerboard landownership	Class IV due to presence of checkerboard landownership	Class IV due to checkerboard
Flat Top Mountain (east of Adobe Town, northwest of Baggs)	B	Low	III	III, IV	Class IV due to current oil and gas drilling in the area	Class III and IV	Class III and IV
Grazing - permitted allotments	All	All	II, III, IV	II, III, IV	Varying VRM classes depending on other features present	Varying VRM classes depending on other features present	All VRM Classes
Kinney Rim - North and South units	B	High	II	III	Class III and IV	Class II	Class III

Table 2-3 Proposed Management Actions for Areas of Interest by Alternative

Area of Interest	Baseline Information and Other Data			Management Action/VRM Classification Recommendations			
	Scenic Quality Class ²	Sensitivity Level ²	VRM Class ²	Alternative 1: No Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred
Laramie River corridor	A, B, C	High, Moderate	II, III, IV	II, III	Class III and IV	Class II and IV	Class II and IV
Medicine Bow National Forest - fringes and foothills	B, C	High, Moderate	II, III	II, III	Class III and IV	Class II (following SQRU lines) and Class IV	Northeast corner of field office as Class II; Vedauwoo area as Class II and IV; eastern edge of CCSM boundary as Class II; area encompassing Elk Mountain as Class III
North Platte reservoirs	A, B, C	High, Moderate and Low	II, III, IV	II	Class III, except in checkerboard area (Class IV)	Class III within checkerboard and remainder as Class II	Class II and III north of the checkerboard; Class III within the viewshed in the checkerboard
North Platte River corridor	B in immediate foreground, then B and C	High in immediate foreground, then High, Moderate and Low	II, III, IV	II, III	Class III and IV	Class II, III, and IV	Class II, III, and IV
Overland Historic Trail and 5-mile viewshed	B, C	High, Low	II, III, IV	III, IV	Class III or IV to match surroundings	Class II or III to match VRI class with 3-mile-wide buffer	Class II in Medicine Bow National Forest fringe; elsewhere Class IV
Pathfinder Reservoir and surrounding areas	A, B, C	High, Moderate	I, II, III, IV	II	Class III	Class II and III	Class II in viewshed from reservoir; Class III outside of viewshed
Pedro Mountains	A	High, Moderate	I, II	II, III	Class III	Class II	Class II

Table 2-3 Proposed Management Actions for Areas of Interest by Alternative

Area of Interest	Baseline Information and Other Data			Management Action/VRM Classification Recommendations			
	Scenic Quality Class ²	Sensitivity Level ²	VRM Class ²	Alternative 1: No Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred
Powder Rim	B, C	High	II, III	III	Class III	Class II	Class III, with corridor of Class IV for transmission
Seminole Mountains	A	High	II	I (Bennett Mountain WSA), II, III	Bennett Mountain WSA as Class I with remainder of area as Class III	Bennett Mountain WSA as Class I with remainder as Class II	Bennett Mountain WSA as Class I with remainder as Class III
Seminole Reservoir and surrounding areas	A, B, C	High, Moderate, Low	II, III, IV	II	Class III with Class IV in checkerboard area	Class III within checkerboard with remainder as Class II	Class III in the viewshed surrounding the reservoir in the checkerboard; Area between Blowout Penstemon ACEC and northern portion of Seminole Reservoir as Class II (following SQRU lines)
Shirley Basin	C	High	III	III, IV	Class III within sage-grouse core areas; Class IV outside	Class II within Sage-grouse core areas; Class III outside	Class IV

Table 2-3 Proposed Management Actions for Areas of Interest by Alternative

Area of Interest	Baseline Information and Other Data			Management Action/VRM Classification Recommendations			
	Scenic Quality Class ²	Sensitivity Level ²	VRM Class ²	Alternative 1: No Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred
VRM Class I and II areas	A, B, C	High and Moderate. Some low near Seminole Reservoir	II, III, IV	I (WSAs) and II (foothills of MedBow National Forest, Cameron Pass, Seminole Reservoir, Pathfinder Reservoir, and Shirley Mountains)	Class I areas to remain as Class I (Adobe Town, Ferris Mountain WSA, and Bennett Mountain WSA); Class II areas change to Class III and IV	Class I areas to remain as Class I (Adobe Town, Ferris Mountain WSA, and Bennett Mountain WSA); Class II areas change to Class II, III, and IV	Class I areas to remain as Class I (Adobe Town, Ferris Mountain WSA, and Bennett Mountain WSA). Most Class II areas remained as Class II except the southern half of Seminole Reservoir as Class III in the checkerboard; Fragments in the eastern portion as Class IV
Energy and transportation corridors	All	All	II, III, IV	II, III, IV	Class III and IV	Class II, III, and IV	Class II, III, and IV
Areas leased for oil and gas development	B, C	High, Moderate, Low	II, III, IV	All	Class III and IV	Class II, III, and IV	Class II, III, and IV
Oil and gas high and moderate potential development areas	B, C	High, Moderate, Low	Primarily IV, except for viewsheds of Overland Trail and Seminole-Alcova Scenic Byway which is II and III	II, III, IV	Class III and IV	Class II, III, and IV	All VRM classes
Areas Derived from 2008 RMP Effort Public and Agency Scoping Comments (2002)							
Big game crucial winter ranges	A, B, C	High, Moderate, Low	II, III, IV	All	Class I, III, and IV	All VRM classes	All VRM classes
Blowout Penstemon ACEC	A, B, C	High, Moderate	II, III, IV	II, III	Class III	Class I, II, and IV	Class II and III

Table 2-3 Proposed Management Actions for Areas of Interest by Alternative

Area of Interest	Baseline Information and Other Data			Management Action/VRM Classification Recommendations			
	Scenic Quality Class ²	Sensitivity Level ²	VRM Class ²	Alternative 1: No Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred
Chain Lakes	C	Moderate	IV	III, IV	Class IV	Class III	Class III
Coyote Springs Rim (i.e., Bull Springs Rim, Separation Rim) - landscape to the east	B	High (in Continental Divide National Scenic Trail [CDNST] viewshed), Moderate	II, III	III	Class IV	Class III	Class IV
Shirley Mountain SRMA	B	High	II	II, III	Class IV	Class II	Class II (following SQRU lines)
WSA viewsheds	Ferris Mtn WSA: A, B Adobe Town WSA: B, C Bennett Mtn WSA: A, B	Ferris Mtn WSA: High Adobe Town WSA: High, Moderate Bennett Mtn WSA: High, Moderate	Ferris Mtn WSA: II Adobe Town WSA: II, IV Bennett Mtn WSA: II, III	Ferris Mtn WSA: III Adobe Town WSA: III Bennett Mtn WSA: II, III	BLM does not manage WSA viewsheds; VRM classes vary depending on other features present.		

¹ Information from 2008 Rawlins RMP ROD, available at: http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/rawlins/rod_arnp.html.

² Information from 2011 RFO Visual Resource Inventory prepared by Otak, available at: <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/rawlins/vri.html>.

Table 2-4 Management Actions for Blowout Penstemon/Ferris Dunes ACEC by Alternative

Management Goals			
Manage the endangered blowout penstemon plant and its habitat			
Management Objectives			
Maintain, restore, and enhance the unique parabolic dune complex			
Protect the area to ensure the continued existence of the plant and to allow for continued research			
Management Actions by Alternative			
Alternative 1: No Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred
The existing Blowout Penstemon ACEC (17,185 acres) would not be expanded and would be managed as an endangered plant habitat area (Figure 2-6).	The Blowout Penstemon ACEC would be reduced in size to 14,916 acres and managed as an endangered plant habitat area (Figure 2-6).	The Blowout Penstemon ACEC would be expanded to 49,200 acres and managed as an endangered plant habitat area (Figure 2-6).	The Blowout Penstemon ACEC would be expanded to 29,312 acres and managed as an endangered plant habitat area (Figure 2-6).
The ACEC would be open to locatable mineral entry and closed to mineral material disposals.	Same as Alternative 1.	The ACEC would be closed to locatable mineral entry and mineral material disposals. Withdrawal would be pursued.	Same as Alternative 1.
Plans of operations would be required for locatable federal mineral exploration and development (except casual use), regardless of the number of acres that may be disturbed.	Same as Alternative 1.	The ACEC would be closed to locatable mineral entry.	Same as Alternative 1.
Occupied blowout penstemon habitat is open to oil and gas leasing with a No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulation within 0.25 mile of the occupied habitat (Appendix I of Appendix 14, RMP ROD 2008, p. 16).	Same as Alternative 1.	The ACEC is closed to new oil and gas leasing. The NSO stipulation within 0.25 mile of the occupied habitat will apply to proposed projects on existing leases. Surface disturbing activities on existing leases outside the 0.25 mile NSO will be intensively managed.	Same as Alternative 3.
Fire suppression activities would be utilized to maintain early succession plant communities.	Fire suppression activities would be based on Appropriate Management Response with an emphasis on maintaining early succession plant communities.	Same as Alternative 2.	Same as Alternative 2.
Actively pursue land tenure adjustments, including acquisition of lands, easements, or exchanges, to meet the ACEC management goals and objectives.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.

Table 2-4 Management Actions for Blowout Penstemon/Ferris Dunes ACEC by Alternative

Alternative 1: No Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred
BLM-administered public lands that contain occupied habitat for the blowout penstemon plant would not be exchanged or sold.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.
All the following management actions must be adhered to unless further consultation and coordination has occurred with the Fish and Wildlife Service and an agreement has been reached.			
Off-road motor vehicle use for necessary tasks would not be allowed. Exceptions would be considered on a case-by-case basis.	Limit the use of OHVs to existing, until designated, roads and trails within 1.0 mile of known populations, with the exception of authorized necessary tasks specifically related to firefighting, hazardous material cleanup, existing ROW maintenance, and fence maintenance.	Limit the use of OHVs to existing, until designated, roads and trails. Off-road motor vehicle use for “necessary tasks” would not be allowed except for the performance of authorized necessary tasks specifically related to firefighting, hazardous material cleanup, existing ROW maintenance and inspection, and fence maintenance.	Same as Alternative 3.
Motorized vehicle use would be limited to existing, until designated, roads and vehicle routes. OHV use to retrieve big game kills or access camp sites would be prohibited off existing, until designated, roads and vehicle routes.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.
Closures of specific areas to motorized vehicle routes would be considered on a case-by-case basis to meet the objectives of the ACEC.	Roads near blowout penstemon plants that are not required for routine operations or maintenance of developed projects, or lead to abandoned projects will be reclaimed.	Roads that are not required for routine operations or maintenance of developed projects, or lead to abandoned projects will be reclaimed.	Same as Alternative 3.
No OHV competitive events will be allowed within 1.0 mile of known blowout penstemon populations.	Same as Alternative 1.	No OHV competitive events will be allowed within the ACEC.	Same as Alternative 3.
Surface disturbing activities would be intensively managed in areas that contain habitat for the blowout penstemon to maintain or enhance habitat for the plant.	Surface disturbing activities would not be authorized within 0.25 mile of occupied habitat.	Surface disturbing activities would not be authorized within 0.25 mile of occupied habitat. Surface disturbing activities would be intensively managed outside of 0.25 mile of occupied habitat within the ACEC.	Same as Alternative 3.

Table 2-4 Management Actions for Blowout Penstemon/Ferris Dunes ACEC by Alternative

Alternative 1: No Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred
Place mineral supplements, or new water sources (permanent or temporary), for livestock, wild horses, or wildlife at least 1.0 mile from known blowout penstemon populations. Do not place supplemental feed for livestock, wildlife, or wild horses within 1.0 mile of known blowout penstemon populations. Straw or other feed must be certified weed-free.	Same as Alternative 1, except that the management action will be added to the grazing permit/lease renewal or Allotment Management Plan in allotments with known blowout penstemon populations.	Same as Alternative 2.	Same as Alternative 2.
Livestock stocking levels will not be increased in any allotment with pastures containing blowout penstemon populations.	Livestock grazing permits/leases would not be increased in any allotment with pastures containing blowout penstemon populations. This management action will be added to the grazing permit/lease renewal or Allotment Management Plan in allotments with known blowout penstemon populations.	Same as Alternative 2.	Same as Alternative 2.
Introduction of biological controls for noxious and invasive plant species will be prohibited in blowout penstemon habitat until the impact of the control agent has been fully evaluated and determined not to adversely affect the plant population. The Bureau will monitor biological control vectors (RMP ROD 2008, Appendix I of Appendix 14).	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.
Except in cases of extreme ecological health threats (insect or weed outbreaks/infestations), herbicide treatment of noxious plants/weeds will be prohibited within 0.25 mile of known blowout penstemon populations and insecticide treatments will be prohibited within 1.0 mile of known blowout penstemon populations to protect pollinators (RMP ROD 2008, Appendix I of Appendix 14).	Herbicide treatment (aerial, vehicle and ground) of noxious and invasive weeds will be prohibited within 0.5 mile of occupied blowout penstemon habitat. Insecticide treatments will be prohibited within 1.0 mile of occupied habitat in areas where treatments have potential to impact blowout penstemon pollinators Preliminary Final Blowout Penstemon Statewide Programmatic Biological Opinion (BO).	Same as Alternative 2.	Same as Alternative 2.

Table 2-4 Management Actions for Blowout Penstemon/Ferris Dunes ACEC by Alternative

Alternative 1: No Action Alternative	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred
On a case-by-case basis, pesticide use within 1.0 mile of known blowout penstemon populations will be applied by hand and herbicides applied by hand within 0.25 mile of blowout penstemon populations (RMP ROD 2008, Appendix I of Appendix 14).	For insecticide treatments, no aerial application of malathion or carbaryl will occur within 3.0 miles of occupied habitats; only carbaryl bran bait or diflubenzuron combined with Reduced Agent Area Treatment methodology would be used within the 3-mile buffer; and no application of carbaryl bran bait would be applied within 0.25 mile buffer of occupied blowout penstemon habitats	Same as Alternative 2.	Same as Alternative 2.
The ACEC is an exclusion area for wind energy development.	Wind energy developments will not be authorized within 1.0 mile of occupied blowout penstemon habitat.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.
All proposed ROWs projects will be designed and locations selected at least 0.25 mile from any occupied habitat.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.
No Similar Action.	Revegetation projects would not be authorized within 0.25 mile of occupied blowout penstemon habitat.	Same as Alternative 2.	Same as Alternative 2.

1 **2.2.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis**

2 Alternatives considered included ideas that were discussed during interdisciplinary team meetings,
3 meetings with agencies, and input received during public scoping. However, some alternatives were
4 eliminated from detailed analysis because of technical, legal, or policy considerations. Alternatives that
5 were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis are described below.

6 **2.2.3.1 No VRM Classes or VRM Class IV across the RFO Area**

7 The BLM is responsible for ensuring that the scenic values of the public lands it manages are taken into
8 consideration prior to permitting uses that may have potential negative visual impacts. Scenic quality is
9 one of the resource values specifically addressed and provided for in FLPMA. Consideration of scenic
10 quality is accomplished through the VRM program. The VRM program involves inventory of scenic
11 values, establishment of management objectives for those values, and evaluation of proposed activities
12 to determine whether they conform to the management objectives. An alternative that does not assign
13 VRM classes or apply the least stringent VRM class across the entire RFO area would be a violation of
14 the BLM's responsibilities under FLPMA.

15 **2.2.3.2 Application of VRI Classes without a Management Filter**

16 The VRI serves as a baseline to develop a reasonable range of VRM class alternatives and in which an
17 analysis of potential impacts associated with various alternatives in this resource-specific Plan
18 Amendment may be conducted. The BLM considers scenic quality, sensitivity levels, and distance zones
19 during the VRI process. According to the BLM Manual 8410, the VRI serves as an inventory tool that
20 portrays the relative value of the visual resources. The VRI provides a snapshot in time of the current
21 scenic values of an area without consideration for jurisdiction, manageability, existing leases, pending or
22 approved projects, or other resource opportunities or constraints (i.e. wildlife habitats, mineral and
23 energy potential, etc.).

24 Visual Resource Inventory classes are informational in nature and provide the basis for the development
25 of alternatives during the RMP process. They do not establish management direction and should not be
26 accepted without interdisciplinary considerations. The VRM class objectives are based on the VRI and
27 consideration of: 1) managing the public lands and the various resources so they are used in the
28 combination to best meet the present and future needs of the American people in accordance with
29 FLPMA 103(c); 2) managing public lands in a manner that will protect the quality of scenic values in
30 accordance with FLPMA 102(b); 3) the impacts resource uses may have on scenic value; and 4) the
31 impacts VRM class objectives may have on other resources and uses.

32 **2.2.3.3 VRM Class I or VRM Class II in All Wildlife Habitat Areas**

33 The intent of the inventory is to document scenic quality; therefore, it does not take into consideration
34 wildlife habitat or protection. The VRM is not the appropriate management tool or metric for wildlife
35 habitat protection.

36 The BLM's VRM system provides a process to identify and evaluate scenic values to determine the
37 appropriate level of visual management. It also provides a process to analyze potential visual impacts,
38 and apply visual design techniques to ensure that surface-disturbing activities are in harmony with their
39 surroundings. However, the BLM's VRM system is not a classification intended to "preserve areas
40 indefinitely." If an area contains important values that should be "preserved," a more appropriate
41 management tool may be through special designation, such as an ACEC or Wildlife Habitat
42 Management Area (WHMA). VRM is not intended to prevent development, but rather "to ensure that
43 surface-disturbing activities are in harmony with their surroundings" (BLM 1986). In developing the VRM
44 recommendations for each alternative, the BLM considered the existing environment plus decisions
45 described in the Rawlins RMP, including existing mineral potential and mineral leases, high wind

1 potential and existing wind development applications, ROW corridors and ROW applications, as well as
2 other external factors including resource or area restrictions.

3 **2.2.3.4 Use of VRM Classes to Manage Neighboring Private or State Lands**

4 Landownership in the Planning Area includes a mixture of public, state, and private lands, each with
5 different laws and regulations. While the BLM-administered lands are managed for multiple uses in
6 accordance with FLPMA, intermingled private and state lands are protected by their own property rights.
7 Areas of fragmented or checkerboard land ownership patterns within the Planning Area may lead to
8 conflicts in managing resources. The checkerboard pattern of alternating public and private land is a
9 remnant of the public land grants in order to finance the transcontinental railroad under the Union Pacific
10 Act of 1862. Congress granted every other section (1 square mile) of land within 20 miles, on either side
11 of the railroad ROW, to the Union Pacific Railroad, which then sold the land grants to raise capital for the
12 venture. When homesteading and government land sales ceased, many areas were left in a permanent
13 checkerboard pattern of alternating public and private land. Federal agencies do not have the authority to
14 modify or regulate activities on private land. Except when specifically requested by the land owner, the
15 authorizations on federal lands may not be used to condition activities on non-federal land. The Plan
16 Amendment only directs management of public lands and resources administered by the BLM within the
17 RFO. The VRM classes, therefore, do not apply to any private or state lands. However, the impacts of
18 actions on private land do influence management decisions on public land. Furthermore, impacts to
19 public land as a result of actions occurring on private land are required to be disclosed to the public
20 through the NEPA process. One of the BLM's challenges is to develop effective land management under
21 the FLPMA multiple-use mandate. Because resource management is often limited in the checkerboard,
22 and in other public and private intermingled land ownership areas, BLM resource management may be
23 constrained when the goals of private landowners come into conflict with public land multiple-use goals
24 and objectives. The VRM should not be used as a tool to preclude activities, but instead to minimize
25 potential impacts and to enhance project design characteristics.

26 **2.2.4 Management Actions Common to All Alternatives**

27 **2.2.4.1 Visual Resources Actions Common to All Alternatives**

28 The management action common to all alternatives from the 2008 Rawlins RMP is to “manage visual
29 resources to meet the Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands.” This action was determined to still
30 be valid and has not been modified as part of this issue-targeted Plan Amendment.

31 In addition, there are some existing visual resource designations and decisions within the Planning Area
32 that will not be revisited as part of the VRM decisions and will apply to all considered alternatives:

- 33 • Existing VRM Class I areas within the three WSAs in the Planning Area (Adobe Town,
34 Bennett Mountain, and Ferris Mountain) will remain as designated in the 2008 Rawlins
35 RMP.
- 36 • Surface disturbing activities on public lands in the North Platte River SRMA, within 0.25 mile
37 on either side of the river, will be intensively managed to maintain the quality of the visual
38 resource.
- 39 • Where the integrity of historic trail settings contribute to National Register of Historic Places
40 (NRHP) eligibility, management actions resulting in visual elements that diminish the
41 integrity of the property's setting will be managed in accordance with the Wyoming State
42 Protocol and best management practices (BMPs).
- 43 • Surface disturbing activities will not be allowed within 0.25 mile of a cultural property or the
44 visual horizon, whichever is closer, if the setting contributes to NRHP eligibility.

1 VRM Class II areas were designated as avoidance areas for linear utilities, transportation
2 systems/communication sites, and wind energy development, and as Controlled Surface Use (CSU) for
3 fluid mineral development. These management actions will remain unchanged for amended VRM Class
4 II designations:

- 5 • Lands and Realty: As indicated in Table 2-5 of the 2008 Rawlins RMP (pg. 2-61 & 2-62),
6 VRM Class I areas were designated exclusion areas and VRM Class II areas were
7 designated avoidance areas for linear utility/transportation systems/communication sites and
8 wind energy development. These management actions would remain in effect; however, the
9 covered area would be amended with new VRM Class I and II areas.
- 10 • Fluid Minerals: As indicated in Table 2-6 of the 2008 Rawlins RMP (pg. 2-63), new leases in
11 VRM Class II areas were designated CSU for fluid mineral development. VRM Class I areas
12 were not designated no lease or no surface occupancy because they carry other
13 designations (such as WSA designations). These management actions would remain, but
14 the covered area would change with new VRM Class I and Class II areas.

15 **2.2.4.2 Blowout Penstemon/Ferris Dunes Proposed ACEC Actions Common to All** 16 **Alternatives**

17 Management actions for resources within the existing ACEC boundaries as described in Section 2.3.12.2
18 of the Rawlins RMP (p. 2-30-31) that would remain in effect for all alternatives include the following:

- 19 • Pursuing land tenure adjustments;
- 20 • Retaining lands that contain occupied blowout penstemon habitat;
- 21 • Restricting motorized vehicles to existing roads and routes;
- 22 • Prohibiting the use of biological controls for noxious weeds until their affect on the plant
23 population has been fully evaluated; and
- 24 • Locating all proposed ROWs and projects 0.25 mile from occupied habitat.

25 **2.2.5 Alternatives Considered in Detail**

26 This section summarizes the four alternatives (1 through 4) considered in detail. The four alternatives
27 were developed to offer a range of management options. Each alternative is intended to be consistent
28 with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, while providing for varying levels of compatible resource
29 use and development opportunities.

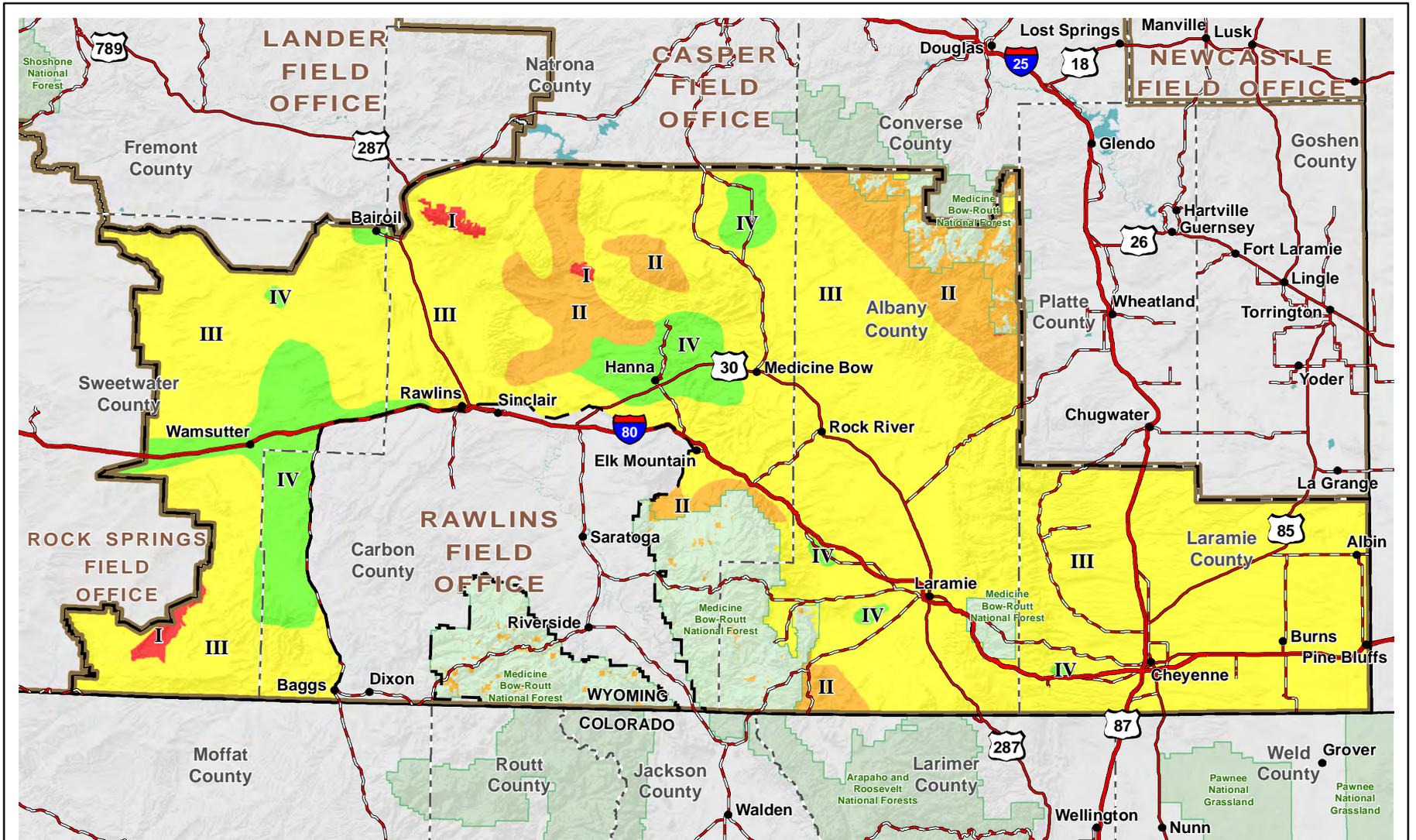
30 **2.2.5.1 Visual Resource Alternatives**

31 Alternative 1 (No Action – Continuation of Existing Management Direction)

32 Under the No Action Alternative VRM classes would continue as designated in the 2008 Rawlins RMP.
33 The BLM would use the VRM class objectives as established and analyzed in the No Action Alternative
34 (Alternative 1 in the Proposed 2008 Rawlins RMP/Final EIS; BLM 2008a). The VRM classes in the
35 Planning Area under Alternative 1 are displayed in **Figure 2-2** and presented in **Table 2-2**. **Table 2-3**
36 presents each alternative and management action recommendation, along with areas of interest and
37 baseline information.

38

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Legend

- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- BLM Field Office Boundary
- Planning Area

VRM Classes

- Class I
- Class II
- Class III
- Class IV

VRM classes only apply to public lands. For jurisdiction, see Figure 1-1.

**Rawlins Field Office
RMP-A/EA**

**Figure 2-2
Alternative 1 - No Action
VRM Classes within the Planning Area**

0 10 20 40 Miles
0 10 20 40 Kilometers

1:1,700,000

1 Alternative 2 (Emphasis on the Development of Resources)

2 Alternative 2 allows for development to dominate the view and become the major focus of viewer
3 attention. Under Alternative 2, landownership patterns and areas of high potential for energy and mineral
4 development formed the basis of VRM classification for this alternative. **Table 2-3** outlines the areas of
5 interest in the Planning Area and their respective VRM classifications. The distribution of VRM classes
6 under Alternative 2 is displayed in **Figure 2-3** and presented in **Table 2-2**.

7 Alternative 3 (Emphasis on the Protection of Resources)

8 Alternative 3 emphasizes protection of the existing landscape character. Relative to all alternatives,
9 Alternative 3 allows management activities to be seen, but not attract the attention of the casual observer
10 or dominate the landscape. For Alternative 3, the VRI classes (Otak, Inc. 2011) formed the major
11 baseline, with minor modifications. **Table 2-3** outlines the areas of interest in the Planning Area and their
12 respective VRM classifications. The distribution of VRM classes under Alternative 3 is displayed in
13 **Figure 2-4** and presented in **Table 2-2**.

14 Alternative 4 (Preferred Alternative)

15 Alternative 4 strives for a balance of opportunities by allowing some modification, while partially retaining
16 the existing character of the landscape. Under Alternative 4, the VRI classes (Otak, Inc. 2011), in concert
17 with landownership patterns and areas of high potential for energy and mineral development, formed the
18 baseline. **Table 2-3** outlines the respective VRM classifications for the Planning Area. The distribution of
19 VRM classes under Alternative 4 is displayed in **Figure 2-5** and presented in **Table 2-2**.

20 **2.2.5.2 Blowout Penstemon/Ferris Dunes Proposed ACEC Alternatives**

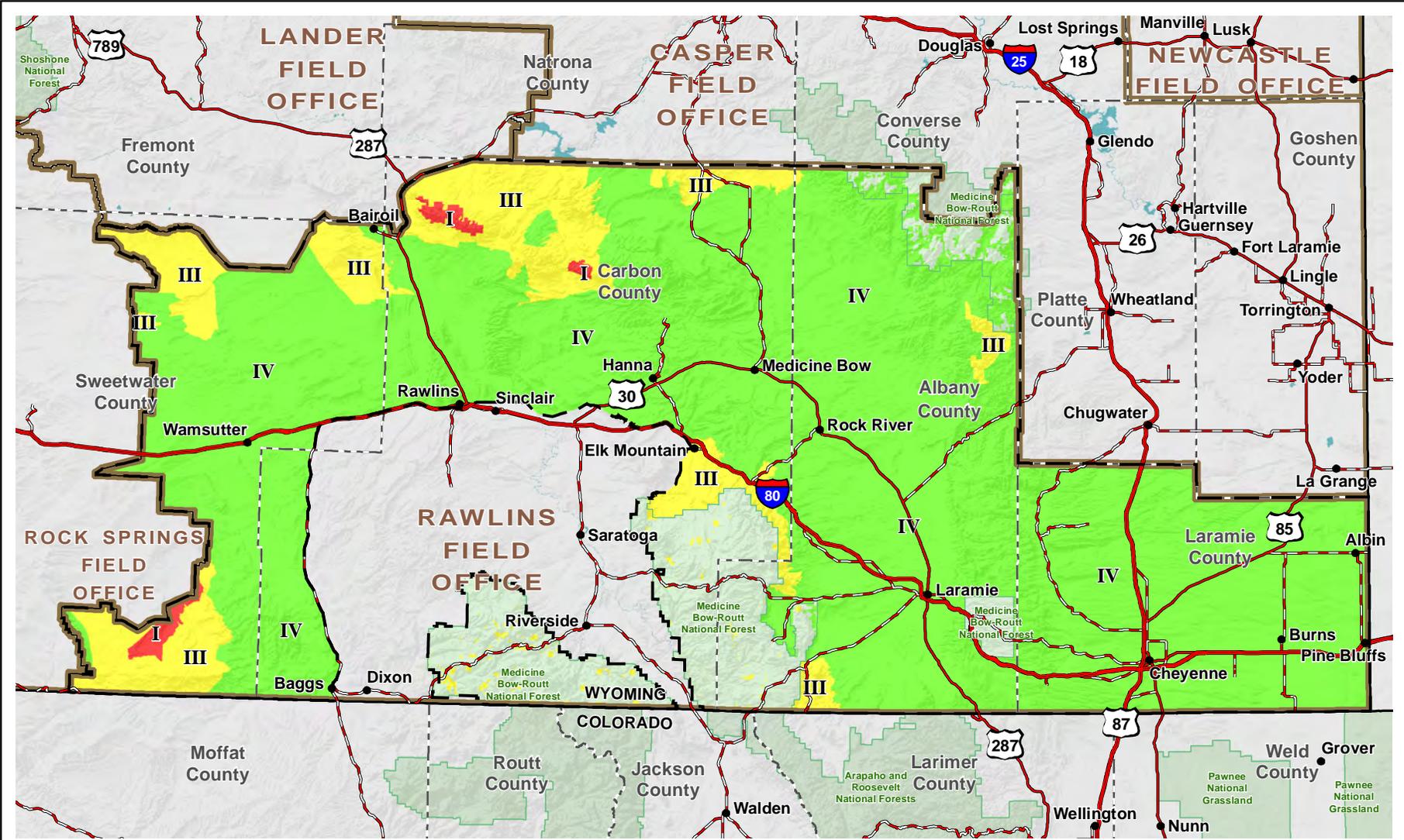
21 As described in Section 1.1.2, the Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC met the R&I criteria. This Plan
22 Amendment evaluates management actions and possible expansion of the Blowout Penstemon ACEC
23 boundary, in order to incorporate the Ferris Dunes proposed ACEC. The alternatives for the proposed
24 ACEC are displayed in **Figure 2-6** and presented in **Table 2-4**.

25 **2.2.6 Comparative Summary of Impacts**

26 **Table 2-5** provides a summary of the impacts of the VRM Plan Amendment alternatives, organized by
27 resource or resource management program. A comparison of impacts for proposed ACEC management
28 by resource of all alternatives is presented in **Table 2-6**. The environmental consequences of the
29 management actions proposed under each alternative are analyzed in Chapter 4.0.

30

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Legend

- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- BLM Field Office Boundary
- Planning Area

VRM Classes

- Class I
- Class II
- Class III
- Class IV

VRM classes only apply to public lands. For jurisdiction, see Figure 1-1.

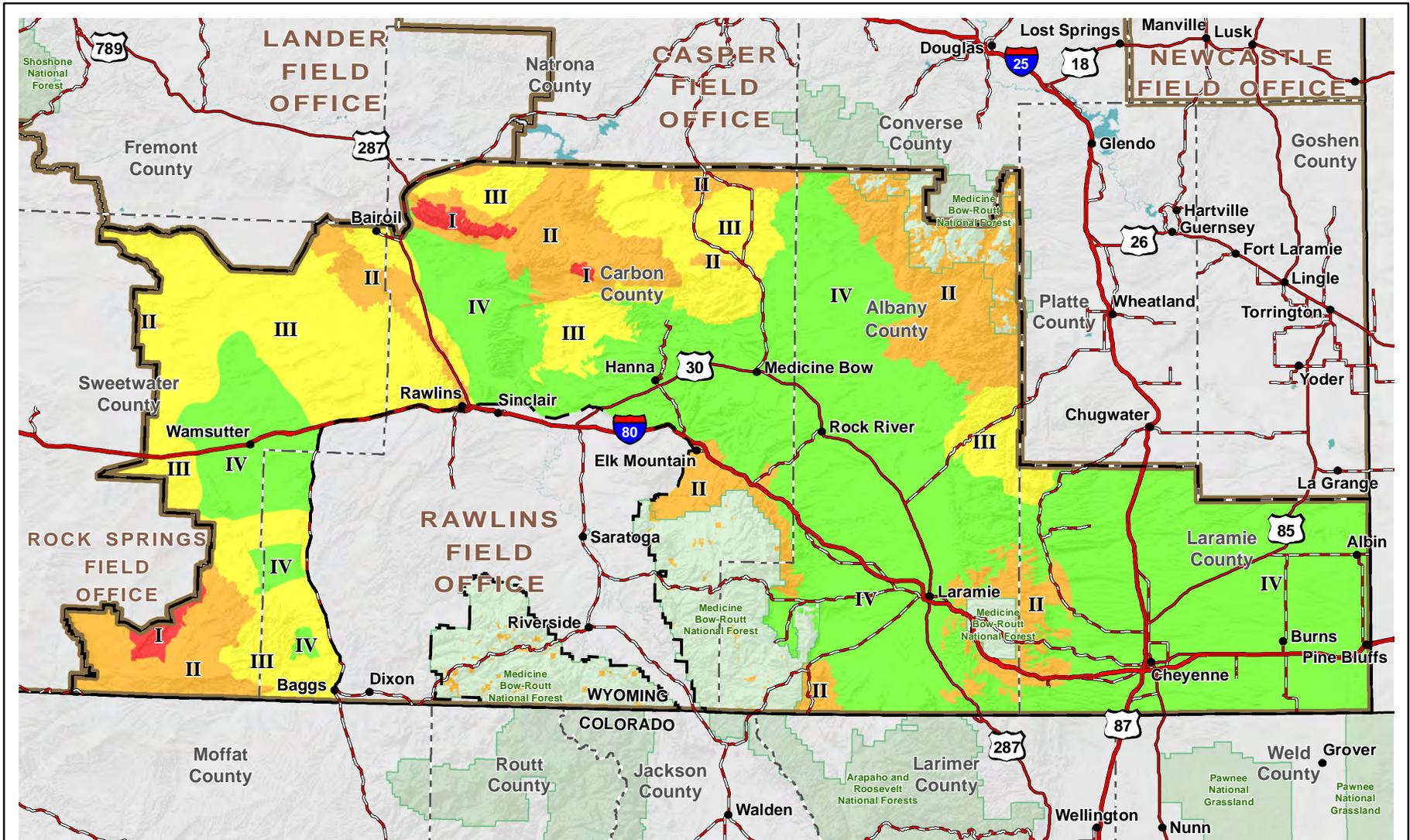
**Rawlins Field Office
RMP-A/EA**

**Figure 2-3
Alternative 2 - Development
VRM Classes within the Planning Area**

0 10 20 40 Miles
0 10 20 40 Kilometers

1:1,700,000

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VRM classes only apply to public lands. For jurisdiction, see Figure 1-1.

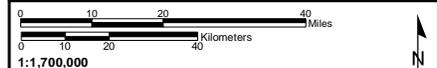
Legend

- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- BLM Field Office Boundary
- Planning Area

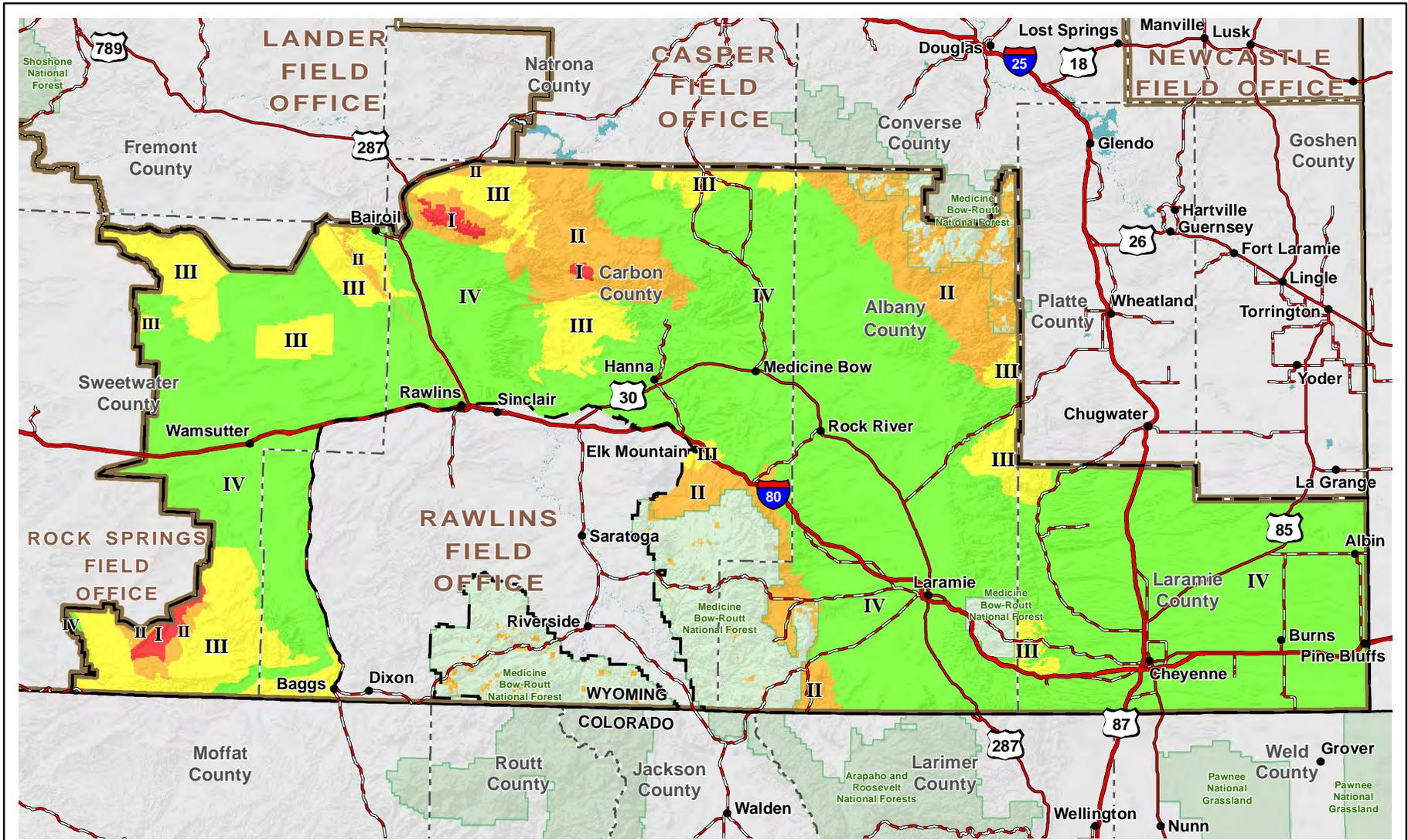
- VRM Classes**
- Class I
 - Class II
 - Class III
 - Class IV

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**Figure 2-4
Alternative 3 - Protection
VRM Classes within the Planning Area**



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Legend

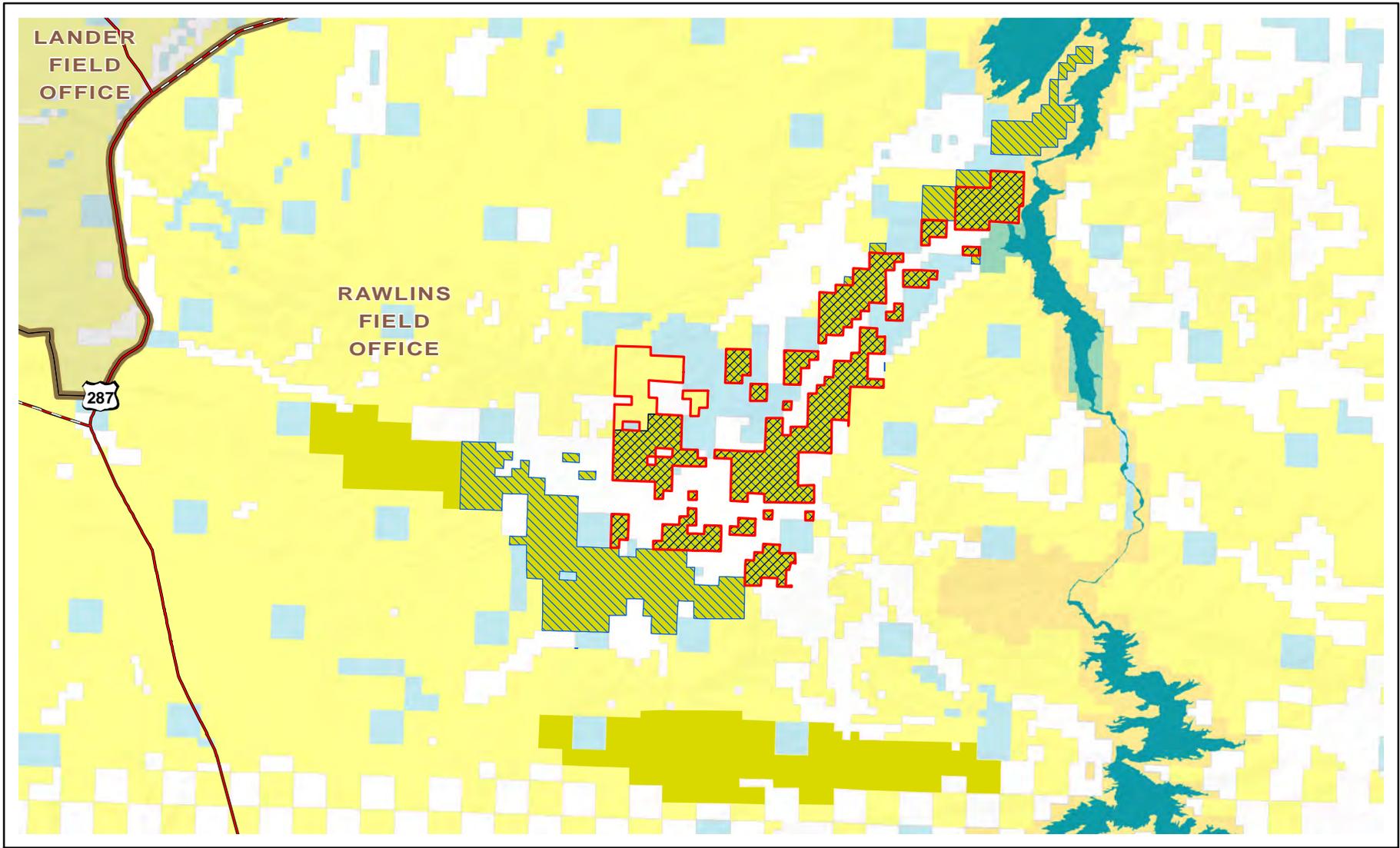
Interstate Highway	VRM Class I
U.S. Highway	VRM Class II
State Highway	VRM Class III
BLM Field Office Boundary	VRM Class IV
Planning Area	

VRM classes only apply to public lands. For jurisdiction, see Figure 1-1.

**Rawlins Field Office
RMP-A/EA**

**Figure 2-5
Alternative 4 - Preferred
VRM Classes within the Planning Area**

1:1,700,000



Blowout Penstemon ACEC		Land Owner	
	Alternative 1 - 17,185 Acres		Bureau of Land Management
	Alternative 2 - 14,916 Acres		Bureau of Reclamation
	Alternative 3 - 49,200 Acres		US Fish and Wildlife Service
	Alternative 4 - 29,312 Acres		Private
			State

**Rawlins Field Office
RMP-A/EA**

Figure 2-6

Blowout Penstemon ACEC

0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers

N

1:275,000

Table 2-5 Comparison of Impacts from Proposed VRM Classifications by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred Plan	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Air Resources	Little or no impacts.				No	4.2.1
Cultural Resources	Maintains protection of cultural resource settings in areas determined to contain Class A scenery with VRM Class II and III designations and Class B scenery with VRM Class II and III designations. VRM designations surrounding the Cherokee and Overland trails would not change.	Provides the greatest potential for alteration of cultural resource settings in areas determined to contain Class A and B scenery with VRM Class III and IV designations. The Cherokee Trail would intersect with 30.7 miles of Class III and 31.5 miles of Class IV areas. The Overland Trail would intersect 0.5 mile of Class III and 9.5 miles of Class IV areas.	Provides protection of cultural resource settings in areas determined to contain Class A scenery with VRM Class I, II, and III designations. Provides varying levels of protection and alteration of Class B scenery with VRM Class II, III, and IV designations. Under this alternative there would be greater areas of VRM Class II surrounding both trails compared to Alternative 1. The VRM classes surrounding the Cherokee and Overland trails would consist of Class II, III, and IV. The Cherokee Trail would intersect with 36.4 miles of VRM Class II, 25.6 miles of VRM Class III, and 0.3 mile of VRM Class IV areas. The Overland Trail would intersect with 0.5 mile of VRM Class II, 8.0 miles of VRM Class III, and 1.5 miles of VRM Class IV areas.	Provides protection of cultural resource settings in areas determined to contain Class A scenery with VRM Class II designations. Provides varying levels of protection and alteration of Class B scenery with VRM Class III and IV designations. The VRM classes surrounding the Cherokee and Overland trails would consist of Class II, III, and IV. The Cherokee Trail would intersect with 0.6 mile of VRM Class II, 41.7 miles of VRM Class III, and 20.0 miles of VRM Class IV areas. The Overland Trail would intersect with 0.0 mile of VRM Class II, 0.5 mile of VRM Class III, and 9.5 miles of VRM Class IV areas.	No	4.2.2

Table 2-5 Comparison of Impacts from Proposed VRM Classifications by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred Plan	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Wildland Fire and Fuels	Existing VRM Classes I and II are potentially incompatible with hazardous fuels reduction techniques. VRM Class III and IV areas allow for the use of a wider range of hazardous fuel reduction treatments and landscape altering activities that introduce ignition sources. Vegetation clearing and improved road network improves fire suppression response.	Allows for a wider range of hazardous fuel reduction treatments, vegetation clearing, and access roads that improve fire suppression response, but also allows for more landscape altering activities that introduce ignition sources.	Less ground clearing for landscape altering activities and fewer roads to assist firefighting efforts would result in greater fuel loads and fires that are more difficult to control. In unpopulated areas, wildland fire would be allowed to return to the fire-dependent ecosystems and used beneficially as a vegetation management tool due to the relative lack of industrial infrastructure and human presence.	Allows for a wider range of hazardous fuel reduction treatments, vegetation clearing, and access roads, but also introduces more ignition sources than Alternatives 1 and 3, but less than Alternative 2. Overall, wildland fire size and intensity would potentially be reduced.	No	4.2.3
Forest Management	Forested land with potential for commercial harvest would remain in the VRM Class II and III designations. Harvests in VRM Class II areas would be subject to visual resource mitigation, which may influence the harvest size and method as well as access to the site.	Forested land with potential for commercial harvest on Elk Mountain would remain as VRM Class II and III. The fringes and foothills of Medicine Bow National Forest would be changed to VRM Class III and IV, which would reduce timber harvesting guidelines and mitigation associated with viewshed protection.	Forested land with potential for commercial harvest on Elk Mountain would remain as VRM Class II and III. The fringes and foothills of Medicine Bow National Forest would change to VRM Class II and IV. This would reduce the required mitigation measures from Alternative 1, but not as much as Alternative 2.	Forested land with potential for commercial harvest on Elk Mountain would remain as VRM Class II and III. Portions of the fringes and foothills of Medicine Bow National Forest would be designated as VRM Class II, III, and IV, which would reduce the required mitigation measures from Alternative 1, but not as much as Alternative 2.	No	4.2.4

Table 2-5 Comparison of Impacts from Proposed VRM Classifications by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Air Resources	Little or no impacts.				No	4.2.1
Cultural Resources	Maintains protection of cultural resource settings in areas determined to contain Class A scenery with VRM Class II and III designations and Class B scenery with VRM Class II and III designations. VRM designations surrounding the Cherokee and Overland trails would not change.	Requires the fewer mitigation measures associated with alteration of cultural resource settings in areas determined to contain VRM Class III and IV designations. The Cherokee Trail would intersect with 30.7 miles of Class III and 31.5 miles of Class IV areas. The Overland Trail would intersect 0.5 mile of Class III and 9.5 miles of Class IV areas.	Requires the greatest mitigation for cultural resource settings in areas with VRM Class I, II, and III designations. Provides varying mitigation requirements associated with alteration of VRM Class II, III, and IV designations. Under this alternative there would be greater areas of VRM Class II surrounding both trails compared to Alternative 1. The VRM classes surrounding the Cherokee and Overland trails would consist of Class II, III, and IV. The Cherokee Trail would intersect with 36.4 miles of VRM Class II, 25.6 miles of VRM Class III, and 0.3 mile of VRM Class IV areas. The Overland Trail would intersect with 0.5 mile of VRM Class II, 8.0 miles of VRM Class III, and 1.5 miles of VRM Class IV areas.	Requires greater mitigation measures than Alternative 1 for maintenance of cultural settings. Provides mitigation requirements associated with alteration VRM Class III and IV designations. The VRM classes surrounding the Cherokee and Overland trails would consist of Class II, III, and IV. The Cherokee Trail would intersect with 0.6 mile of VRM Class II, 41.7 miles of VRM Class III, and 20.0 miles of VRM Class IV areas. The Overland Trail would intersect with 0.0 mile of VRM Class II, 0.5 mile of VRM Class III, and 9.5 miles of VRM Class IV areas.	No	4.2.2

Table 2-5 Comparison of Impacts from Proposed VRM Classifications by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Wildland Fire and Fuels	Existing VRM Classes I and II would require greater mitigation and may increase complexity of hazardous fuels treatments. VRM Class III and IV areas allow for the use of a wider range of hazardous fuel reduction treatments and landscape altering activities that introduce ignition sources.	Allows for a wider range of hazardous fuel reduction treatments, vegetation clearing, and access roads that improve fire suppression response as compared to Alternative 1.	Would increase the use of mitigation techniques and may increase complexity of hazardous fuels treatments as compared to Alternative 1.	Allows for a wider range of hazardous fuel reduction treatments, vegetation clearing, and access roads, than Alternatives 1 and 3, but less than Alternative 2.	No	4.2.3
Forest Management	Forested land with potential for commercial harvest would remain in the VRM Class II and III designations. Harvests in VRM Class II areas would be subject increased mitigation measures to retain to visual resource quality; may influence the harvest size and method as well as access to the site.	Forested land on Elk Mountain would remain as VRM Class II and III. The fringes and foothills of Medicine Bow National Forest would be changed to VRM Class III and IV, which would reduce requirements for timber harvesting mitigation associated with viewshed protection.	Forested land on Elk Mountain would remain as VRM Class II and III. The fringes and foothills of Medicine Bow National Forest would change to VRM Class II and IV. This would reduce the required mitigation measures from Alternative 1, but not as much as Alternative 2.	Forested land on Elk Mountain would remain as VRM Class II and III. Portions of the fringes and foothills of Medicine Bow National Forest would be designated as VRM Class II, III, and IV, which would reduce the required mitigation measures from Alternative 1, but not as much as Alternative 2.	No	4.2.4

Table 2-5 Comparison of Impacts from Proposed VRM Classifications by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Lands and Realty	VRM Class II areas would require more mitigation for lands and realty development projects, such as wind energy development, utility transmission, and communication towers.	The increase in VRM Class IV areas would allow for more opportunities and require fewer mitigation measures for wind energy and utility developments to occur in the Planning Area.	The increase in VRM Class II areas would increase mitigation required for wind development and other lands and realty development projects, such as transmission lines or communication sites.	The change in VRM class objectives would provide more opportunities for lands and realty developments than Alternatives 1 and 3, but fewer areas than Alternative 2.	No	4.2.5
Livestock Grazing	VRM Class II or Class III areas would rarely limit range improvements, but would affect the complexity of construction and/or maintenance to be consistent with the VRM standards.	Allows for more impacts to forage from activities that result in contrasts to the landscape, but fewer VRM mitigation requirements on range improvement projects.	Increase in mitigation measures required for landscape altering activities; this would result in less disturbance to grazing forage, but flexibility of placement or type of rangeland improvement projects may be limited due to increased visual mitigation standards.	Allows for more impacts to forage and less required mitigation on range improvements than Alternatives 1 and 3, but not as lenient as Alternative 2.	No	4.2.6
Minerals, Geology, and Topography	Approximately 94 percent of areas with high and moderate oil and gas potential would be within VRM Class III and IV areas, where fewer mitigation measures are necessary to meet VRM class objectives.	Approximately 97 percent of areas with high and moderate oil and gas potential would be within VRM Class III and IV areas, where fewer mitigation measures are necessary to meet VRM class objectives.	Approximately 71 percent of areas with high and moderate oil and gas potential would be within VRM Class III and IV areas, where fewer mitigation measures are necessary to meet VRM class objectives.	Approximately 95 percent of areas with high and moderate oil and gas potential would occur in VRM Class III and IV areas, where fewer mitigation measures are necessary to meet VRM class objectives.	No	4.2.7

Table 2-5 Comparison of Impacts from Proposed VRM Classifications by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
OHVs	Little to no impacts.				No	4.2.8
Paleontology	Little or no impacts.				No	4.2.9
Recreation and Visitor Services	The CDNST and North Platte River SRMAs would continue to be within VRM Class II and III areas. The Adobe Town DRUA and VRUA would remain as VRM Class III. Developed, undeveloped, and dispersed recreation sites would continue to be within VRM Class II and III areas where most development activities are mitigated to reduce visual impacts.	Requires the most mitigation associated with opportunities for potential future landscape altering activities and visual intrusions that would affect recreational setting and use and associated tourism, travelers along I-80, WY 30, and WY 789, and outdoor recreation play. Approximately 25 miles of the CDNST SRMA would change to VRM Class IV. The North Platte River SRMA, north of I-80, would be changed to VRM Class IV. Seminole and Pathfinder reservoirs would be changed to VRM Class III and IV. The Adobe Town DRUA and VRUA would remain as VRM Class III. Developed, undeveloped, and dispersed recreation areas would change to VRM Class III or IV compared to Alternative 1.	Requires the most mitigation for potential future activities that could result in contrasts to the landscape and visual intrusions to meet VRM Class objectives. The CDNST SRMA would be entirely within VRM Class II. A portion of the North Platte River, north of I-80, would be VRM Class IV. Seminole Reservoir would be VRM Class II and III and Pathfinder Reservoir would be entirely VRM Class II. The Adobe Town DRUA and VRUA would change from VRM Class III to VRM Class II. Developed, undeveloped, and dispersed recreation areas would range from VRM Class II to VRM Class IV.	Requires less mitigation to meet VRM objectives for activities that could result in landscape contrasts and visual intrusions than Alternatives 1 and 3, but more than Alternative 2. The CDNST SRMA would change to VRM Class II. A portion of the North Platte River, north of I-80, would be VRM Class IV. Seminole Reservoir would be VRM Class II and III and Pathfinder Reservoir would be entirely VRM Class II. The majority of the Adobe Town DRUA and VRUA would remain as VRM Class III; however, a small portion to the west would be changed to VRM Class II. Developed, undeveloped, and dispersed recreation areas would be within VRM Class II and IV.	No	4.2.10
Socioeconomics	A majority of the Planning area currently allows for the extraction	Compared to Alternative 1, more acreage of high to moderate oil and gas	In comparison to Alternative 1, Alternative 3 would require more mitigation	Alternative 4 provides for more acreage in Class IV than in Alternative 1, but not	No	4.2.11

Table 2-5 Comparison of Impacts from Proposed VRM Classifications by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
	of mineral resources with few requirements for mitigation.	potential and high wind potential occurs in VRM Class IV. Alternative 2 would allow for fewer mitigation requirements than Alternative 1. Reduced complexity associated with development of such resources may slightly impact the regional economy.	requirements and may increase complexity and required planning for energy development projects. This may slightly impact the regional economy, but would not result in significant impacts to incomes, tax revenues, or other economic considerations.	as much as is in Alternative 2. The increase in Class IV acreage would allow for		

Table 2-5 Comparison of Impacts from Proposed VRM Classifications by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
SD/MAs	<p>Existing VRM classes of III and IV in the Lands with Wilderness Characteristic (LWC) inventory areas would require extensive mitigation to maintain the naturalness and solitude found in these areas.</p> <p>VRM Class III along the CDNST would not be consistent with the recommended guidance to retain or improve the integrity of the associated settings and scenic values for which the National Trail was designated.</p>	<p>Both ACECs and all four WHMAs would require fewer mitigation measures for activities that result in contrasts to the landscape and visual intrusions as they change (at least partially) to a less protective VRM class. This alternative would allow for less viewshed protection of LWC units than Alternative 1.</p> <p>VRM Class III and IV along the CDNST would not be consistent with the recommended guidance to retain or improve the integrity of the associated settings and scenic values for which the National Trail was designated.</p>	<p>Compared to Alternative 2, all ACECs and WHMAs would require more mitigation from activities that result in contrasts to the landscape and visual intrusions through changes to their VRM class with the exception of the Laramie Plains Lakes WHMA, which would not change classification.</p> <p>This alternative would allow for more viewshed protection of LWC units than Alternative 1.</p> <p>VRM Class II along the CDNST would be consistent with the recommended guidance to retain or improve the integrity of the associated settings and scenic values for which the National Trail was designated.</p>	<p>All WHMAs would require more mitigation than Alternative 1 in regard to meeting their VRM class objectives with the exception of the Blowout Penstemon ACEC, which would change to VRM Class II, III, and IV, and the Laramie Plains Lake WHMA, which would change to VRM Class IV.</p> <p>This alternative would allow for more viewshed protection of LWC units than Alternative 1.</p> <p>VRM Class II along the CDNST would be consistent with the recommended guidance to retain or improve the integrity of the associated settings and scenic values for which the National Trail was designated.</p>	No	4.2.12

Table 2-5 Comparison of Impacts from Proposed VRM Classifications by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Transportation and Access	Existing VRM Class II designations would require intensive mitigation for transportation-related projects.	Impacts resulting from VRM classes would be the same as those described in Alternative 1, except there would be no VRM Class II areas. This alternative would increase opportunities and reduce mitigation required for placement of transportation and access actions.	Impacts resulting from VRM classes would be the same as those described in Alternative 1, except there would be an increase in VRM Class II acreage to 741,909 acres.	Impacts resulting from VRM classes would be the same as those described in Alternative 1, except there would be a decrease in VRM Class II acreage to 355,472 acres.	No	4.2.13
Vegetation	Little or no impacts.				No	4.2.14
Visual Resources – VRM Classes	VRM Class I: 62,584 acres VRM Class II: 235,019 acres VRM Class III: 2,086,807 acres VRM Class IV: 407,310 acres	VRM Class I: 62,078 acres VRM Class II: 0 acres VRM Class III: 783,999 acres VRM Class IV: 1,945,643 acres	VRM Class I: 76,889 acres VRM Class II: 741,909 acres VRM Class III: 1,205,887 acres VRM Class IV: 767,035 acres	VRM Class I: 62,078 acres VRM Class II: 355,472 acres VRM Class III: 776,410 acres VRM Class IV: 1,597,761 acres	No	4.2.15
Visual Resources Impacts – Visual Resource Values	Compared to the VRI classes, manages less area as VRM Class II, more area as VRM Class III, and less area as VRM Class IV. Manages 73 percent of areas with high sensitivity levels managed for moderate change with VRM Class III and 50 percent of areas with High Sensitive Scenic	Compared to the VRI classes, manages no area as VRM Class II, and more area as VRM Classes III and IV. Manages 44 percent of areas with high sensitivity levels managed for major change with VRM Class IV and 30 percent of areas with High Sensitive Scenic Quality A for major change with VRM Class IV.	Compared to the VRI classes, manages slightly less area as VRM Class II, more area as VRM Class III, and less area as VRM Class IV. Manages 57 percent of areas with high sensitivity levels managed for minor change with VRM Class II. Manages 56 percent of areas with High Sensitive Scenic Quality A for minor change with VRM Class II.	Compared to the VRI classes, manages less area as VRM Class II, more area as VRM Class III, and more area as VRM Class IV. Manages 30 percent of areas with high sensitivity levels managed for major change with VRM Class IV and 58 percent of areas with High Sensitive Scenic Quality A for minor change with VRM Class II.	No	4.2.15

Table 2-5 Comparison of Impacts from Proposed VRM Classifications by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
	Quality A for moderate change with VRM Class III.					
Water Quality, Watershed, and Soils	Little or no impacts.				No	4.2.16
Wild Horses	Little or no Impacts				No	4.2.17
Wildlife and Fish	Little or no impacts.				No	4.2.18

Table 2-6 Comparison of Impacts for Proposed ACEC Management by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Cultural Resources	Maintains indirect protection of cultural resources and reduces the potential for unanticipated discoveries and subsequent loss of cultural information.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on fewer acres, providing less protection to cultural resources overall; however, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of cultural resources, as compared to Alternative 1.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, providing greater protection to cultural resources overall; in addition, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of cultural resources, as compared to Alternative 1.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, providing greater protection to cultural resources overall; in addition, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of cultural resources, as compared to Alternative 1, but not as great as Alternative 3.	No	4.3.1
Lands and Realty	Maintains protection measures for natural resources which would result in preplanning and/ or relocation of ROW actions to avoid plant habitat. The ACEC is a wind energy development exclusion area.	The overall size of the ACEC would be reduced, thereby reducing the preplanning and relocation of ROW actions as compared to Alternative 1. Wind energy development is precluded within 1.0 mile of occupied habitat.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, resulting in greater pre-planning and relocation of ROW actions as compared to Alternative 1. The ACEC is a wind energy development exclusion area.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres as compared to Alternatives 1 and 2, but less than Alternative 3, which would result in more pre-planning and relocation of ROW actions as compared to Alternative 1. The ACEC is a wind energy development exclusion area.	No	4.3.2

Table 2-6 Comparison of Impacts for Proposed ACEC Management by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Livestock Grazing	Maintains protection measures for natural resources which would result in preplanning and/ or relocation of range improvements to avoid plant habitat.	The overall size of the ACEC would be reduced, thereby reducing the preplanning and relocation of range improvements as compared to Alternative 1.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, resulting in greater pre-planning and relocation of range improvements as compared to Alternative 1.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres as compared to Alternatives 1 and 2, but less than Alternative 3, which would result in more pre-planning and relocation of range improvements as compared to Alternative 1.	No	4.3.3
Minerals	<p>Maintains protection measures for natural resources which would result in preplanning and/ or relocation of mineral development projects to avoid plant habitat.</p> <p><u>Leasable</u></p> <p>Surface disturbing activities would not be allowed within 0.25 mile of occupied habitat which would result in modifications to facility locations.</p> <p><u>Locatable</u></p> <p>Plans of operations would continue to be required which would maintain the level of complexity to develop the resource.</p> <p><u>Mineral Material Disposal</u></p> <p>The area would remain closed to material disposals which would eliminate mineral material availability for use.</p>	<p>The overall size of the ACEC would be reduced, thereby reducing the preplanning and relocation of mineral development projects as compared to Alternative 1.</p> <p>Impacts to mineral material disposal, and leasable and locatable minerals would be the same as Alternative 1.</p>	<p>Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, resulting in greater pre-planning and relocation of mineral development projects as compared to Alternative 1.</p> <p><u>Leasable</u></p> <p>Impacts would be the same as Alternative 2, except that there would be no new leases authorized, resulting in fewer acres available for development.</p> <p><u>Locatable</u></p> <p>New locatable mineral development would not be allowed.</p> <p><u>Mineral Material Disposal</u></p> <p>Impacts would be the same as Alternative 1.</p>	<p>Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres as compared to Alternatives 1 and 2, but less than Alternative 3, which would result in more pre-planning and relocation of mineral development projects as compared to Alternative 1.</p> <p><u>Leasable</u></p> <p>No new leases would be authorized; there would be a reduction in area not available for new leasing as compared to Alternative 3.</p> <p><u>Locatable</u></p> <p>Impacts would be the same as Alternative 1.</p>	No	4.3.4

Table 2-6 Comparison of Impacts for Proposed ACEC Management by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
				<p><u>Mineral Material Disposal</u> Impacts would be the same as Alternative 1.</p>		
OHVs	Maintains protection measures for natural resources which would result in reduced OHV use.	The overall reduction in size of the ACEC and the reduction in restrictions would result in increased potential for OHV use as compared to Alternative 1.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied to more acres; however, management actions related to necessary tasks would be less restrictive than Alternative 1, thereby reducing restrictions on OHV use as compared to Alternative 1.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres as compared to Alternatives 1 and 2; however, management actions related to necessary tasks would be less restrictive than Alternative 1, thereby reducing restrictions on OHV use as compared to Alternative 1.	No	4.3.5
Recreation and Visitor Services	Little or no impacts on recreation and visitor services as a result of the limited past interest in dune competitive events.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.	Same as Alternative 1.	No	4.3.6

Table 2-6 Comparison of Impacts for Proposed ACEC Management by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Blowout Penstemon ACEC	<p>Maintains protection measures for blowout penstemon populations and habitat.</p> <p>Blowout penstemon populations occurring outside of the ACEC boundary would not be afforded the protections that are afforded to those within the ACEC.</p>	<p>The overall reduction in size of the ACEC and reduction in restrictions would increase the potential for damage to the plant.</p>	<p>Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied to more acres. Potential habitat without existing populations would be afforded additional protection measures over Alternatives 1 and 2.</p> <p>Additional populations would now be included under the protection measures of the ACEC.</p>	<p>Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres as compared to Alternatives 1 and 2. Potential habitat without existing populations would be afforded additional protection measures over Alternatives 1 and 2, but less than Alternative 3.</p> <p>Additional populations would now be included under the protection measures of the ACEC.</p>	No	4.3.7
Vegetation	<p>Maintains indirect protection of vegetation and reduces the potential to disturb vegetation.</p>	<p>Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on fewer acres, providing less protection to vegetation resources overall; however, specific management protection measures within the ACEC would increase which would reduce potential to disturb vegetation as compared to Alternative 1.</p>	<p>Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, providing greater protection to vegetation overall; in addition, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of vegetation resources, as compared to Alternative 1.</p>	<p>Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, providing greater protection to vegetation resources overall; in addition, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of vegetation resources, as compared to Alternative 1, but not as great as Alternative 3.</p>	No	4.3.8

Table 2-6 Comparison of Impacts for Proposed ACEC Management by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Visual Resources	Maintains the visual resources of the area.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on fewer acres, providing less protection to visual resources overall. Wind energy development would be allowed up to 1.0 mile of occupied habitat, which would increase impacts to visual resources.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, providing greater protection to visual resources overall; in addition, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of visual resources, as compared to Alternative 1.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, providing greater protection to visual resources overall; in addition, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of visual resources, as compared to Alternative 1, but not as great as Alternative 3.	No	4.3.9
Water Quality, Watershed, and Soils	Maintains indirect protection of water quality, watershed, and soils resources and reduces the potential to disturb these resources.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on fewer acres, providing less protection to water quality, watershed, and soils resources overall.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, providing greater protection to water quality, watershed, and soils resources overall; in addition, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of water quality, watershed, and soils resources, as compared to Alternative 1.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, providing greater protection to water quality, watershed, and soils resources overall; in addition, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of water quality, watershed, and soils resources, as compared to Alternative 1, but not as great as Alternative 3.	No	4.3.10

Table 2-6 Comparison of Impacts for Proposed ACEC Management by Resource for All Alternatives

Resource	Alternative 1: No Action	Alternative 2: Development	Alternative 3: Protection	Alternative 4: Preferred	Significance Criteria Exceeded?	Additional Discussion Section(s)
Wildlife and Fish	Maintains indirect protection of fish and wildlife and reduces the potential to disturb these resources.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on fewer acres, providing less protection to wildlife and fish overall.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, providing greater protection to wildlife and fish overall; in addition, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of wildlife and fish, as compared to Alternative 1.	Management actions afforded to the ACEC would be applied on more acres, providing greater protection to wildlife and fish overall; in addition, specific management protection measures within the ACEC have increased which would increase protection of wildlife and fish, as compared to Alternative 1, but not as great as Alternative 3.	No	4.3.11