

Final Scoping Report for the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan Revision



Wyoming High Desert District – Rock Springs Field Office



January 2012

Mission Statement

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

Final Scoping Report

for the

Rock Springs Field Office Resource Management Plan

and

Environmental Impact Statement

for

Public Lands Administered

by the

Bureau of Land Management Wyoming Rock Springs Field Office

January 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the public scoping process for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Rock Springs Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The report summarizes the comments that the public provided and identifies the issues that will be considered in the RMP development process.

The purpose of public scoping is to identify issues important to the future management of public lands and resources. These issues will guide the development of alternatives that will be evaluated in the EIS and will ultimately guide development of the RMP. Scoping also provides the public with an opportunity to learn about the management of public lands and assists the BLM with identifying the public's concerns regarding the resources within the planning area.

Throughout the scoping period, the BLM Rock Springs Field Office fostered open communication and solicited input beyond the standard requirements. Public meetings were held in four locations within and in the vicinity of the Rock Springs Field Office: Rock Springs, Lyman, Farson, and Lander, Wyoming. Comments were accepted in various formats to ensure that those who wished to participate were able to do so effectively.

Chapter 1 describes the scoping process and presents an overview of the current situation in the planning area. Chapter 2 reports public scoping results and begins with a summary of BLM public outreach, which includes a description of the four public scoping meetings. Eighty-five individuals attended the public meetings. Chapter 2 also summarizes public comments that were received during the scoping period. A total of 11 written and oral comments from the public meetings, 24 hardcopy letters mailed or delivered to the BLM, and 63 email comment letters were received.

Chapters 3 and 4 report on the issues identified through the scoping process. Chapter 3 identifies issues that will be considered in the planning process. Chapter 4 identifies issues that will not be carried forward and provides justification for not considering them beyond the scoping phase. Chapter 5 identifies the planning criteria to be used throughout the planning process. Chapter 6 reports data identified by the public during the scoping process. Chapter 7 includes a general schedule of the planning process, identifying opportunities for public input.

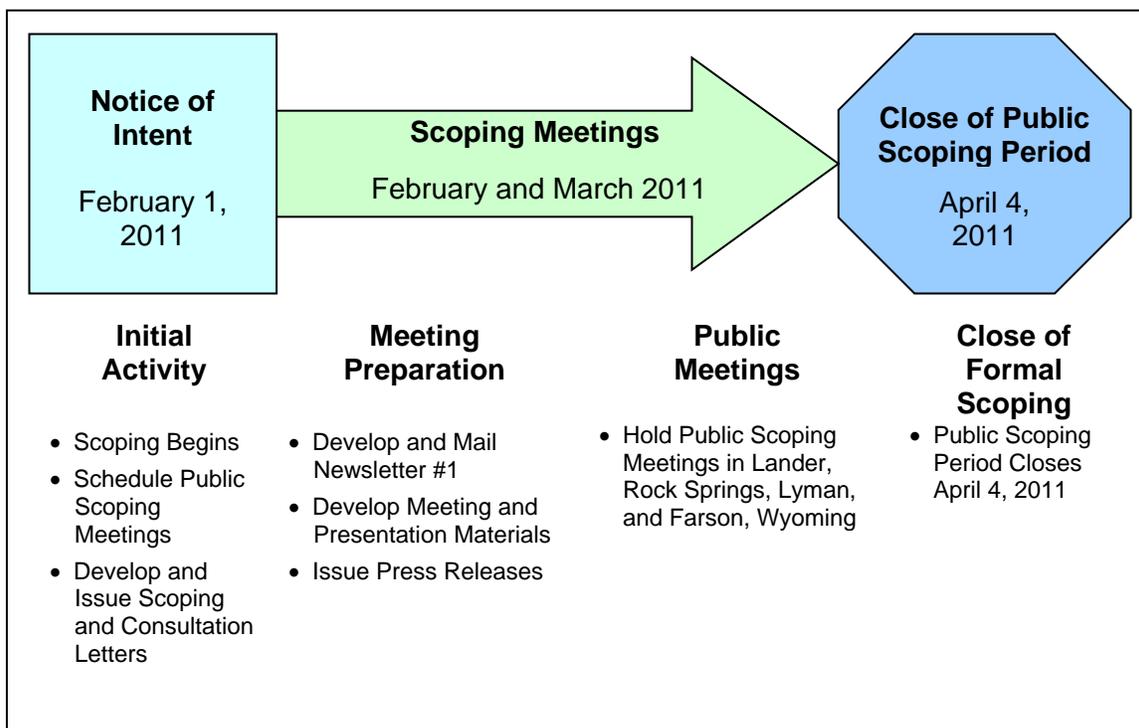
PLAN OVERVIEW

The Rock Springs BLM Field Office will prepare the Rock Springs Field Office RMP/EIS. The planning area includes approximately 3.6 million acres of surface land and 3.5 million acres of federal mineral estate administered by BLM in portions of Lincoln, Sweetwater, Uinta, Sublette, and Fremont counties in southwestern Wyoming.

PUBLIC SCOPING AND ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

The planning process and scoping period began with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* on February 1, 2011. Although the 60-day scoping period ended on April 4, 2011, scoping comments were accepted through April 11, 2011 for consideration in the Draft RMP. Four public scoping meetings were conducted during the scoping period. Figure 1 illustrates the scoping process timeline and associated scoping activities.

Figure 1: Public Scoping Process Timeline



Throughout the scoping period, 98 individuals, agencies, and groups provided comments concerning the future management of the planning area. Analysis of 666 unique comments resulted in the identification of issues to be addressed during development of the Rock Springs RMP. A majority of comments emphasized energy and minerals development, including renewable energy and oil and gas. Other high-interest issues included fish and wildlife management, special status species management, and special designations, such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Throughout the scoping process, issues were raised dealing with the following resources and resource uses:

- Air quality
- Climate change
- Cultural resources
- Fish and wildlife
- General comments
- Lands and realty
- Livestock grazing
- Minerals: Fluid
- Minerals: Solid
- Planning process
- Recreation
- Renewable energy
- Socioeconomics
- Soils
- Special designations
- Special status species
- Travel and transportation management
- Vegetation
- Visual resources
- Water resources
- Wild horses
- Wilderness, WSAs, and lands with wilderness characteristics
- Wildland fire management

CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rock Springs Field Office is revising the existing Green River Resource Management Plan (RMP) and preparing an associated environmental impact statement (EIS). The revision will be known as the Rock Springs RMP. The Rock Springs RMP will replace the Green River RMP and will provide an updated and comprehensive framework for managing and allocating use of public lands and resources administered by the BLM in the Rock Springs Field Office. The need to develop a land use plan is established under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). In the 13 years since the Record of Decision (ROD) for the existing RMP was signed (August 1997), new data have become available, new policies established, and old policies revised. These, along with emerging issues and management concerns (e.g., renewable energy and transmission corridors), have resulted in the need to revise the existing plan.

The following elements also contributed to the need to revise the existing plan: (1) an amendment for the Jack Morrow Hills planning area was completed in July 2006, and the decisions associated with the amendment need to be incorporated into the revised RMP; (2) multiple maintenance actions have been completed; (3) numerous RODs for programmatic EISs have been completed or are ongoing such as the *Designations of Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in Eleven Western States* (2008) and *Geothermal Leasing in the Western United States* (2008), which need to be reviewed and incorporated as needed; and (4) an amendment regarding sage-grouse management is in progress and will need to be incorporated into the revised RMP.

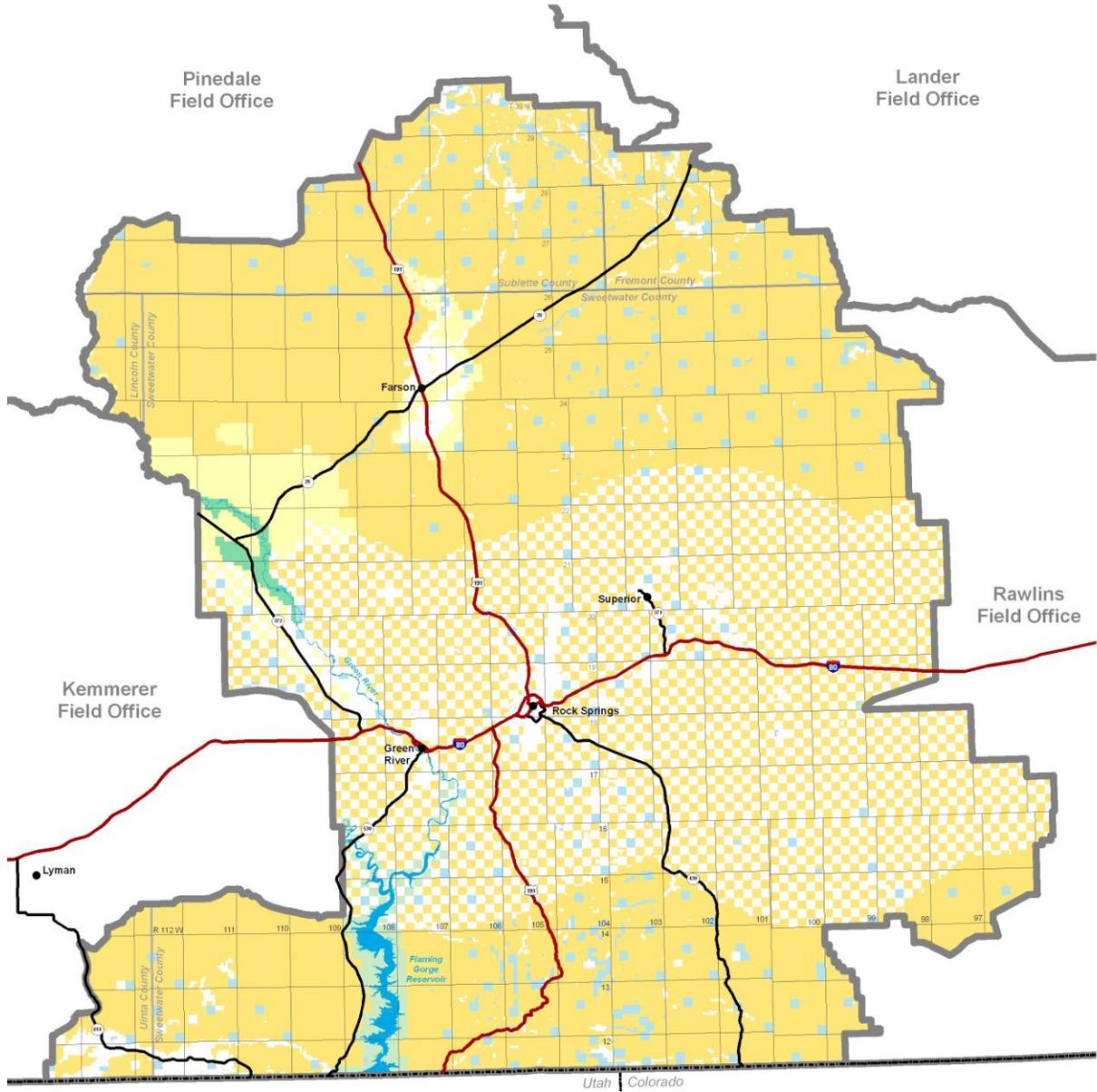
The Rock Springs planning area (Figure 2) includes about 3.6 million acres of BLM-administered surface land and 3.5 million acres of BLM-administered mineral estate in portions of Lincoln, Sweetwater, Uinta, Sublette, and Fremont counties in southwestern Wyoming. The Field Office administers various programs, including mineral exploration and development, renewable energy, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, wild horses, livestock grazing, and historic trails. The planning area includes 13 Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), 10 ACECs, five special recreation management areas (SRMA), five wild horse management areas, and various other areas where specific management prescriptions may be developed.

The BLM planning process officially started with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* on February 1, 2011. The NOI announced the Rock Springs Field Office's intent to prepare an RMP with an associated EIS. The NOI also initiated the scoping period, which ended on April 4, 2011. The scheduled completion date for the RMP is September 2014. The management decisions for the Green River RMP will remain in effect until the completion of the Rock Springs RMP.

The objective of scoping is to involve the public in the planning process and comply with FLPMA. The public scoping process will identify planning issues, develop planning criteria, and evaluate the existing land use plan decisions in the context of the public's needs and interests. The BLM conducted a series of public scoping meetings, which were held in Lander, Rock Springs, Farson, and Lyman, Wyoming, from February 28 through March 3. These meetings provided an opportunity for the public to learn about the RMP process, ask questions, and provide comments. This scoping report describes the scoping process, summarizes the public scoping comments received during the scoping period, and identifies issues raised in the scoping comments.

Figure 2: Rock Springs RMP Planning Area

Rock Springs Resource Management Plan and EIS



Surface Ownership

- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Fish & Wildlife Service
- Forest Service
- Private
- State



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for use of the data for purposes not intended by BLM.

CHAPTER 2—PUBLIC COMMENTS

The official 60-day scoping period began February 1, 2011 with the publication of the NOI in the *Federal Register*. Although the 60-day scoping period ended on April 4, 2011, scoping comments were accepted for consideration in the Draft RMP through April 11, 2011. Furthermore, the BLM will consider issues brought forward any time during the planning process.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires scoping in the early stages of developing an EIS to determine the scope and significance of issues related to the proposed action (40 *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] 1501.7). Scoping helps identify issues important to the management of the area, as well as issues and conflicts to be examined in the planning process and ultimately, decisions in the RMP. The scoping process is designed to encourage public participation and to solicit public input.

During the public scoping period, many individuals; federal, state, and local land management agencies; and public interest groups submitted comments, suggestions, and data and voiced concerns to the BLM regarding the Rock Springs RMP revision. The BLM offered various methods in which comments could be submitted. Comments were collected at the public meetings, delivered to the Rock Springs Field Office, and/or emailed to RockSpringsRMP_WY@blm.gov. A total of 98 comments were submitted during the scoping period. Table 1 lists the number of comments received via each method.

Table 1. Scoping Comment Submittals

Method of Submittal	Comments Received
Public Scoping Meetings (oral and written)	11
Email*	63
Hardcopy Delivered or Mailed to the BLM	24
Total Submittals	98

* Some commenters provided their comments by email and hard copy. These comments were not counted twice; they were counted only as hard copies.

The meetings were conducted in an open house format from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., allowing attendees to arrive and depart freely throughout the 3-hour period. Informational posters were displayed throughout the meeting room, which provided specific project-related information. Additional informational handouts were provided. Hardcopy comment forms were provided on a separate table to allow attendees to draft written scoping comments, which could be submitted at the scoping meetings or mailed to the BLM Rock Springs Field Office. Appendix E includes all information presented at the public scoping meetings. A court reporter was present at the meetings to provide an opportunity for attendees to submit oral comments, which were documented in written transcripts. For those who could not attend the public scoping meetings or preferred not to comment at the meetings, other methods of providing comments were provided during the scoping period (e.g., mailing, emailing, or hand-delivering written comments).

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

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

Meeting Logistics and Attendance

The NOI (Appendix B) announced that BLM would hold local public scoping meetings. The actual dates, meeting locations, and times were announced later in a project newsletter and in a press release issued on February 11, 2011. The press release (Appendix C) and newsletter (Appendix D) were posted on the project website (www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/RockSprings.html). BLM held four public scoping meetings over a 1-week period in Lander, Rock Springs, Lyman, and Farson, Wyoming. Attendance at each scoping meeting was recorded using a sign-in sheet at the registration station. Table 2 shows the locations, dates, and registered attendance for each scoping meeting.

Table 2. Scoping Meeting Locations and Attendance

Meeting Location	Meeting Date	Registered Attendance
Lander, WY	February 28, 2011	20
Rock Springs, WY	March 1, 2011	48
Lyman, WY	March 2, 2011	8
Farson, WY	March 3, 2011	9
Total		85

NUMBER AND TYPE OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

After the scoping period ended, the comment letters were entered into a database. Each comment letter was read in its entirety, and all distinct comments were recorded and analyzed. From among the 98 respondents, 666 substantive individual comments were identified.

Individual comments were categorized by primary topic regardless of the position that the commenter took regarding the topic. Several comments addressed more than one comment category or topic. These comments were categorized by the primary topic. Comments categorized as “General” pertain to broad management concepts covering a range of resource areas. Comments that did not touch on a resource or resource use issue addressed by the RMP, but instead on planning or policy, were categorized as “Planning Process.” The comment analysis process equally considered all comments, based on the issues raised and information provided. The outcome of these comments and subsequent analysis is the formulation of a list of planning issues (see Chapter 3) that the RMP revision will seek to address.

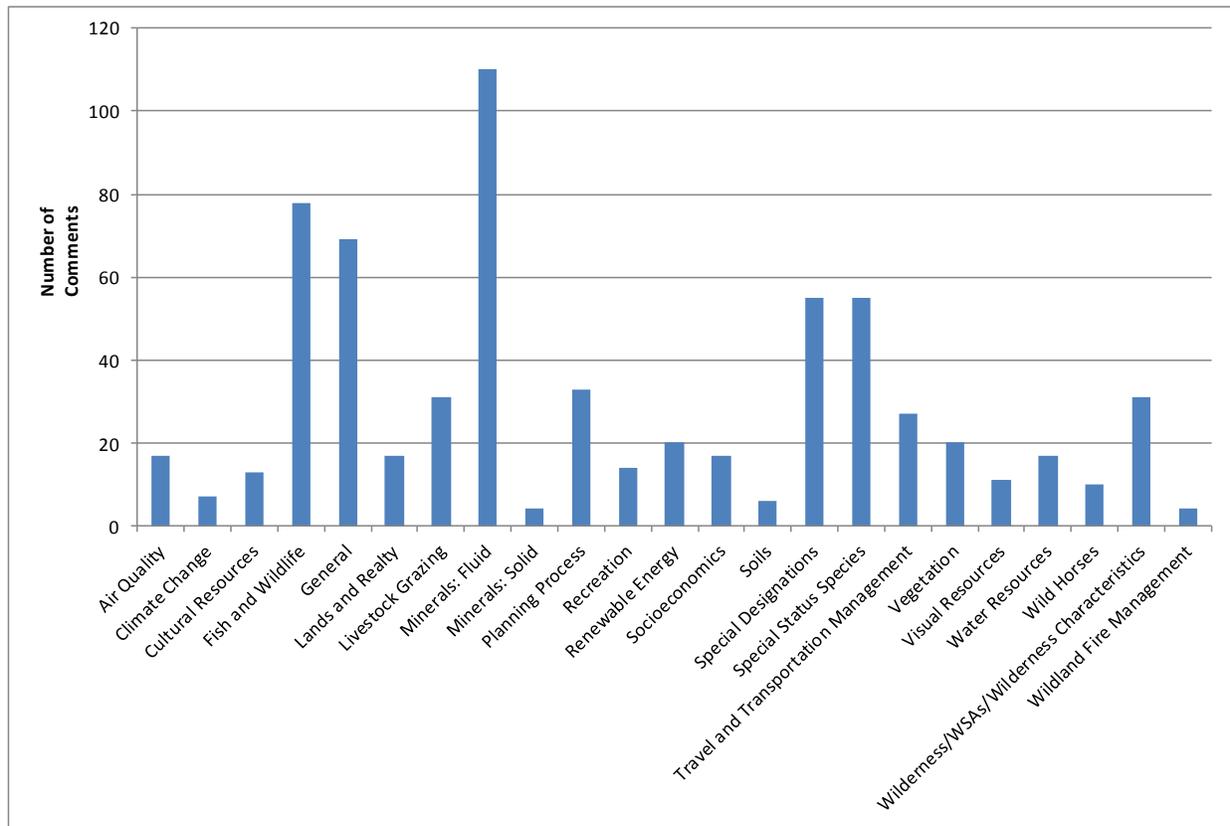
Table 3 and Figure 3 show the number of comments received by topic/issue category. This enumeration is not intended to show bias toward any particular issue; rather, its purpose is simply to convey the interest level in a specific issue/area.

Table 3. Comments Received by Category

Comment Category	Number of Comments	Percent of Total
Air Quality	17	3%
Climate Change	7	1%
Cultural Resources	13	2%
Fish and Wildlife	78	12%

Comment Category	Number of Comments	Percent of Total
General	69	10%
Lands and Realty	17	3%
Livestock Grazing	31	5%
Minerals: Fluid	110	17%
Minerals: Solid	4	<1%
Planning Process	33	5%
Recreation	14	2%
Renewable Energy	20	3%
Socioeconomics	17	3%
Soils	6	1%
Special Designations	55	8%
Special Status Species	55	8%
Travel and Transportation Management	27	4%
Vegetation	20	3%
Visual Resources	11	2%
Water Resources	17	3%
Wild Horses	10	2%
Wilderness/WSAs/Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	31	5%
Wildland Fire Management	4	<1%
Total	666	100%

Figure 3. Comments Received by Category



Summary of Comments

Before categorizing the written comments, comment categories were developed to organize the comments. Following is a summary of the comments received, organized by comment category. Appendix A includes all comments submitted during the scoping period.

Air Quality

Air quality comments focused on projects that create emissions and ensuring that these projects meet federal and state air quality standards. Some comments questioned BLM's authority to control air quality emissions.

Climate Change

Comments focused primarily on ensuring that climate change is analyzed in the RMP revision. Commenters were concerned with cumulative impacts related to climate change resulting from BLM's management decisions and how climate change could affect resources within the field office. Some comments suggested that climate change should not be analyzed or considered because the science surrounding climate change was not conclusive.

Cultural Resources

Comments about cultural resources focused on protecting known and unknown resources from development. Protecting historical trails and associated viewsheds was of particular concern. Some comments suggested particular areas and trails to protect and called for collaboration with local and state entities.

Fish and Wildlife

Fish and wildlife comments focused on the health of crucial winter habitat, nesting areas for various birds, migration corridors, sagebrush habitat, habitat restoration, and streams with sensitive fish species. Comments suggested management for various species, including fish, reptiles, amphibians, prairie dogs, nesting and migratory birds, and big game species. Many comments suggested that not only was mineral development the largest threat to fish and wildlife but also seasonal stipulations and other practices could minimize the impacts.

General

Many comments recommended using the best available science and specific documents in the development of the RMP, such as BLM Instruction Memoranda (IM), BLM policy documents, other state and federal environmental policies, and scientific journal articles. Comments suggested that cumulative impacts be assessed and how gathering baseline data and monitoring should be conducted. A couple of the comments were concerned about funding and implementation. A few comments identified a concern in how to manage lands in the “checkerboard” areas, where ownership is mixed in a checkerboard pattern.

Lands and Realty

The majority of the comments in the lands and realty category addressed rights-of-way (ROW), how they should be managed, and where they should be located. Other topics included reviewing existing withdrawals for appropriateness and the feasibility of land disposal or acquisition.

Livestock Grazing

Livestock grazing comments addressed both the continuation and elimination of livestock grazing practices. Concerns regarding the impacts of livestock grazing included habitat impacts, the spread of weeds, soil loss, impacts on water sources, and range deterioration. Some comments encouraged the BLM to coordinate with livestock grazing permittees.

Minerals: Fluid

Comments primarily addressed oil and gas leasing and the impact that such development might have on other resources, particularly on fish and wildlife and their habitat. A few comments specifically pointed out the impacts of wastewater discharge from coalbed natural gas operations. Another set of comments suggested particular areas that should be unavailable to leasing.

Other comments noted a nationwide need for mineral development and suggested that BLM not place excessive limitations on development. Several comments warned the BLM not to infringe on valid existing rights. Many comments cited practices and advanced technology that could facilitate development, such as directional drilling techniques, offsite mitigation, and reclamation practices.

Minerals: Solid

Comments cited various concerns regarding solid mineral development (e.g., coal and other solid mineral extraction) and the impact that mineral development might have on other resources and resource uses. Comments also suggested areas that should be withdrawn from mineral entry. One comment suggested a specific area in which a commercial entity is interested in obtaining a federal coal lease.

Planning Process

Comments addressed the planning process, policies and policy issues, and a range of questions and recommendations. Cooperation and collaboration with state and local agencies was suggested, as well as incorporating other ongoing planning processes, such as the Sage-grouse RMP Amendments. Several comments focused on how public participation and local working groups should be incorporated into the planning process.

Recreation

Recreation comments focused on preserving recreation opportunities and minimizing the impacts of recreation use (e.g., off-highway vehicles [OHV]) on other resources. Some comments suggested the protection of soundscapes as part of the recreation environment. Appropriate management of special recreation permits (SRP) was suggested as a way to limit impacts from recreation.

Renewable Energy

Most comments regarding renewable energy suggested that the BLM should pursue more wind energy development on BLM-administered lands. A few comments were concerned about the visual impacts and impacts to birds caused by wind energy development.

Socioeconomics

Many comments focused on the adverse economic impacts that management decisions could have on industry and local economies in Wyoming. Some comments suggested that short-term “boom” time benefits of industry and development would eventually “bust,” leaving local populations to deal with difficult economic circumstances. A few comments focused on specific concerns, such as the issuance of user fees, the loss of the “spirituality,” or defining characteristics of the region in general.

Soils

The majority of comments addressed the impacts on soil resources from the development of mineral resources, particularly oil and gas. Of particular concern was the protection of biological soil crusts. Some comments suggested that the BLM cooperate with the NRCS on soil-related matters.

Special Designations

Comments in this category addressed the protection of sensitive areas within the Rock Springs Field Office. Suggestions included the designation of specific areas as ACECs, National Conservation Areas (NCA), and Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR).

Special Status Species

Comments in the special status species category were concerned with the protection of various threatened and endangered species and other sensitive species. The bulk of these comments focused on the protection of sage-grouse and associated habitat, especially sage-grouse “core” areas. Suggestions for management changes were submitted, including greater buffer distances, additional seasonal stipulations, and expansion or reduction of core areas. Suggestions for the protection of various sensitive fish species also were provided.

Travel and Transportation Management

Travel and transportation management comments primarily addressed roads and access routes. Some comments addressed the harmful impacts on wildlife and their habitat from vehicle use. Other comments raised concerns about the potential for reduced access on BLM land. One particular area of concern was the sand dunes area, with several comments suggesting management and protection of the open OHV play area.

Vegetation

Vegetation comments primarily addressed impacts from other resources and resource development. Many comments pointed out the threat of noxious weeds, cheatgrass, and other invasive species on native vegetation. Some comments suggested management for riparian areas and sagebrush communities.

Visual Resources

Although some comments in the visual resources category were concerned with the protection of visual resources from development, many comments were concerned that visual resource management (VRM) classifications would be too restrictive on various uses, such as mineral development. Some comments questioned the methods in which visual resource inventories were conducted. One comment suggested protecting the night sky by limiting light pollution.

Water Resources

Comments related to water resources focused primarily on impacts on watersheds, streams, lakes, and aquifers. Of particular concern was the impact from waters discharged from mineral and energy development—particularly from coalbed natural gas, hydraulic fracturing, and carbon sequestration. Some comments suggested that BLM needs to analyze impacts not only from drought and floods but also to wetlands from other resources uses.

Wild Horses

Comments suggested that BLM should limit the number of wild horses to reduce loss of forage for wildlife and livestock uses.

Wilderness, WSAs, and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

Comments focused on the need for not only designating additional areas that are managed to protect wilderness characteristics but also limiting the designation of such areas because of the limitation they place on resource use and development. Some comments suggested that BLM should not designate any wild lands according to the new policy, leaving “wilderness” designations up to Congress, whereas other

comments favored the wild lands secretarial order and encouraged BLM to protect as much land as possible.

It should be noted that, as a result of new policy (The Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (Pub. L. 112-10)(2011 CR)) passed after the initial public scoping period, the BLM will not designate any lands as “Wild Lands.” Comments related to wild lands are included in this Scoping Report, but will not be analyzed or considered further during the planning process.

Wildland Fire Management

Comments related to wildland fire management focused on the buildup of fuels, BLM’s use of a “let it burn” policy, and prescribed fire to reduce fuels. One comment suggested collaboration with local agencies regarding fire management policy. Another suggested that prescribed fire should be the preferred vegetation treatment over mechanical treatments.

CHAPTER 3—ISSUES IDENTIFIED DURING SCOPING

Scoping is a dynamic process that assists with identifying planning issues to be addressed in the RMP/EIS. The BLM planning handbook defines planning issues as disputes or controversies about existing and potential land and resource allocations, levels of resource use, production, and related management practices. Issues include resource use, development, and protection opportunities for consideration in the preparation of the RMP.

To generate the issues from public comments, all public comments were analyzed and key points were summarized. Each issue was identified as a position-neutral statement or question that sets the groundwork for development of alternative solutions to be analyzed in the EIS. The following sections present a compilation of all scoping issues that were raised during the scoping period. Because the scoping process is dynamic and continual, scoping issues are subject to change throughout the planning process as new conditions and/or information are identified. Issues are organized by comment category. Similar issues were grouped where possible. The categories below are organized alphabetically and are not ordered based on the number of comments received or perceived importance of the issues. Duplicate issues were listed only once.

Air Quality

1. What are the air quality impacts from development?
2. Will air quality studies account for new technology that allows for more wells while studies are showing a decline in particulate emissions?
3. Are there locations where carbon dioxide (CO₂) could be stored?
4. How will air quality, including emissions standards, be addressed in the RMP/EIS, specifically as it relates to oil and gas development?
5. Does the RMP regulate air quality?
6. Will air quality modeling be conducted as part of the RMP process?
7. What air quality mitigation actions will be included in the RMP to address adverse impacts?

Climate Change

1. Will climate change be considered in the RMP?

Cultural Resources

1. How will the RMP address historic trails?
2. Will historic trails eliminate multiple use management?
3. Are there areas in which cultural and heritage resources should be protected?

4. How will national historic trails be protected in the RMP, specifically the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer, Cherokee, Overland, and Pony Express Trails?
5. Will concern for religious, Native American spiritual, and sacred places be considered in the RMP?

Fish and Wildlife

1. How will the RMP revision address habitat fragmentation?
2. What science will be used in determining impacts on sage-grouse from transmission lines?
3. How will big game winter range be protected?
4. How will the RMP consider fisheries and impacts from dams on fish migration and spawning?
5. Will restrictions be placed on fence construction?
6. How will elk habitat be maintained?
7. Will the RMP consider special protection for critical winter range?
8. How will fish and wildlife habitat be preserved and protected from energy development and other uses in the Little Mountain Area?
9. What role will monitoring play in the development of the RMP?
10. Will the RMP consider an outcome-based approach to habitat enhancement?
11. Will the RMP allow private industry to be included in mitigation and reclamation efforts, particularly offsite mitigation?

General

1. Will any national parks be impacted by the Rock Springs RMP revision?
2. Will the RMP revision include adaptive management?
3. How will funding be addressed?
4. How will the RMP look at tracking and accountability of projects in the RMP?
5. How will coordination be addressed with other agencies and interested parties?
6. How will the public be engaged in RMP projects during and after planning?
7. How will science be incorporated in the plan?
8. Will cumulative impacts be considered?

9. Will comments submitted for the Sage-grouse RMP Amendments be considered in this plan?
10. What monitoring will take place?
11. How will surface disturbance be addressed?
12. Will the BLM restrict development near National Wildlife Refuges?
13. How will “checkerboard” lands be managed?
14. How will contractors be used in the planning effort?

Lands and Realty

1. How will the RMP revision address land sales and exchanges?
2. Will the RMP revision designate Section 368 Row corridors?
3. Will the RMP emphasize identifying a small number of large ROW corridors versus managing a large number of smaller corridors?

Livestock Grazing

1. How will the RMP address livestock grazing?
2. How will the relationship with grazing associations be encouraged?
3. How will the RMP revision affect the amount of land available for grazing livestock?

Minerals: Fluid and Solid

1. Will special areas be off limits to mineral development?
2. Which practices will be used in developed areas to protect resources?
3. Will the RMP address impacts from oil shale and carbon sequestration?
4. How will suitability assessments be conducted for coal leasing?
5. How will the RMP revision address energy and minerals development?
6. Will the RMP revision recognize valid existing rights?
7. Will resource uses be given equal footing with conservation?
8. Will the RMP address Master Leasing and Development Plans?
9. Where should oil and gas development be allowed and prohibited?
10. Which stipulations will be used to guide oil and gas exploration and development?

11. What types of effects from mineral development will be addressed in the EIS?
12. How will the potential for occurrence of oil and gas resources be assessed in the RMP?
13. How will directional drilling be considered in the new plan, including the impact on new and existing leases?
14. What level of restrictions on oil and gas development will the new RMP contain?
15. How will the revised RMP address oil and gas reforms contained in IM 2010-117; II.C.2, Plan Conformance and Adequacy, specifically as they relate to fish and wildlife management? Will current oil and gas leases be reviewed and new stipulations for management created?
16. What areas should be withdrawn from energy development?

Planning Process

1. How will the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan (JMH-CAP) be incorporated into this planning process?
2. Will the public be part of alternatives development?
3. How will the RMP proceed with regard to collaboration?
4. Will existing plans be tiered and/or used as templates in the new plan?
5. How will the RMP process address ongoing NEPA activities, such as the Sage-grouse RMP Amendments and the visual resource inventory?

Recreation

1. How will the RMP address lost recreation opportunities as a result of development activities?
2. How will the RMP revision address recreation uses and impacts?
3. Will the RMP address cumulative impacts from recreation uses?
4. Will a soundscape analysis be conducted?
5. Will visitor use monitoring surveys be conducted?
6. How will SRP standards be addressed?
7. How will SRMAs and extensive recreation management areas (ERMA) be managed?
8. How will unauthorized use of roads be addressed in the RMP?
9. Will the desire for solitude be considered?

Renewable Energy

1. How will the visual impacts of wind development be addressed?
2. Where should wind energy development be allowed and prohibited?
3. How will renewable energy be addressed in the RMP?

Socioeconomics

1. To what extent will socioeconomic values of mineral development be addressed in the RMP?
2. What are the socioeconomic impacts from decisions regarding oil and gas development?
3. What are the economic impacts of either developing or not developing mineral resources?
4. What is the economic cost to local residents of full-scale development?
5. What socioeconomic studies will be used to assess impacts to social and economic values?
6. Will user fees be used or changed in the new RMP?
7. Will oil and gas revenue and jobs creation be considered in the socioeconomic analysis?

Soils

1. How will impacts to soil resources be addressed in the RMP?

Special Designations

1. How will existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) be managed, and will new ACECs be designated in the RMP?
2. Will any new areas be designated for special protection or management?
3. Will NCAs be considered in the Red Desert?
4. Will Wild and Scenic River designations be considered?
5. What streams will be considered for WSR designation?
6. Will the Sweetwater River be considered for WSR designation?
7. Will the Greater Red Desert be designated as an NCA?
8. Will the south Wind River Front be designated as a special designation?
9. What types of activities should be prohibited within ACECs?

Special Status Species

1. Will sage-grouse “core” habitat be maintained and preserved?
2. Will the RMP recognize the Wyoming strategy for greater sage-grouse core area populations and the corresponding management directives?
3. How will migration corridors be managed?

Travel and Transportation Management

1. How will off-highway vehicle (OHV) traffic be managed?
2. How much area will be managed as open, closed, and limited to OHV use?

Vegetation

1. How will the RMP address the need to eradicate invasive vegetation species and reclaim impacted habitats?

Visual Resources

1. Will a visual resource inventory be conducted for the RMP, and will new VRM classes be assigned?
2. How will VRM classes be presented on the maps?

Water Resources

1. What are the impacts to groundwater from carbon sequestration?
2. How will streams and water resources be protected?
3. How will the RMP clarify BLM’s role in preserving water quality?
4. What will the impacts be on groundwater resources from energy development, and how will management actions protect these resources?
5. How will wetlands and riparian areas be managed, and which actions will the RMP contain to protect these areas?

Wild Horses

1. How will rangeland and wild horses be managed?
2. How will wild horse populations be managed?
3. How will the RMP control herd management area (HMA) herd numbers?

Wilderness, WSAs, and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

1. Will the RMP evaluate wilderness characteristics?
2. How will existing WSAs be managed?
3. What areas should be considered for WSAs and wilderness protection designations?
4. How will Wilderness be analyzed in the RMP?

Wildland Fire Management

1. How will the RMP revision address wildland fire use?

CHAPTER 4—ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE RMP/EIS

Some of the issues raised during scoping were outside the scope of the RMP and therefore will not be considered in the planning process. The following are three justifications for removing these issues from consideration:

- BLM does not have authority to resolve the issue raised.
- The issue raised is not germane to the planning process.
- The issue raised is addressed through law, regulation, or other policy or administrative action.

Issues in this chapter are grouped by appropriate justification and organized by comment category.

JUSTIFICATION 1

BLM does not have the authority to resolve the issue raised. BLM is granted certain authorities through federal law that are implemented by the *Code of Federal Regulations*. Issues falling under this justification are usually resolved through congressional or judicial action.

Air Quality/Climate Change

Does the RMP regulate air quality?

Will air quality modeling be conducted as part of the RMP process?

The RMP will establish management actions and goals that ensure that authorized development does not violate any federal or state air quality laws, regulations, and standards established by other federal agencies and the State of Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ). The BLM is currently conducting air quality modeling for several projects that will cover the Rock Springs planning area. Results from these modeling analyses will be used in developing the RMP.

Minerals: Fluid

Which technologies will be used to limit resource development impacts?

BLM cannot mandate which technologies a leasee must use to explore or develop minerals.

Will the RMP address hydraulic fracturing?

Hydraulic fracturing is regulated under 43 CFR 3162.3 (2b). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the State of Wyoming regulate hydraulic fracturing fluids.

General

Will NCAs be considered in the Red Desert?

Will the Greater Red Desert be designated an NCA?

NCAAs are designated by congressional action; thus, BLM will not consider areas for NCA designation as part of the RMP process.

JUSTIFICATION 2

An issue is not germane to the planning process if it is beyond the scope of a particular planning effort, or if it involves a matter normally addressed in plan implementation. Issues that are not germane to the planning process will not be considered as scoping issues but treated as comments.

General

How will funding be addressed?

Funding to implement decisions contained in the RMP is not part of the RMP process but is instead managed through congressional budget decisions, followed by BLM state and local field office yearly budget planning.

Minerals: Fluid

What mitigation measures and reclamation standards will be required on oil and gas leases, and how will they be addressed in the RMP?

Mitigation measures and reclamation standards are generally included on Applications for Permit to Drill (APD) as Conditions of Approval (COA) or through a reclamation plan at the implementation planning level.

Recreation

Will user fees be used or changed in the new RMP?

User fees are determined and set at the implementation level and will not be part of the RMP planning process.

Will visitor use monitoring surveys be conducted?

Although conducting new visitor use surveys is not part of the planning process, existing survey data will be used in formulating management actions.

JUSTIFICATION 3

The issue raised is addressed through law, regulation, or other policy or administrative action. This includes BLM standard operating procedures and policies or federal laws or regulations.

General

Will comments submitted for the Sage-grouse RMP Amendments be considered in this plan?

In order for comments to be considered during the planning process, they must be received within the timeframe of the specific RMP for which the comment was raised, beginning with the official NOI published in the *Federal Register*. Thus, comments received for a separate RMP (e.g., comments received for the Sage-grouse RMP Amendments) cannot be considered legally as part of the planning process.

Minerals: Fluid

Will shorter timeframe leases be considered as a way to limit impacts?

Lease terms are specified in the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 and cannot be changed through the RMP planning process.

Will a new RFD be conducted, and will new technologies be considered in the RFD?

The BLM Washington Office (WO) IM 2004-089, “Policy for Reasonably Foreseeable Development (RFD) Scenario for Oil and Gas,” specifies the requirements associated with developing an RFD scenario for oil and gas.

To what extent will management actions for monitoring be employed in the RMP?

Inspection and enforcement (I&E) for fluid mineral activities is mandated by the BLM Washington Office and a strategy is issued on a yearly basis.

Wilderness, WSAs, and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

Will wild lands be designated?

What will the process be for proposing wild lands, including citizen proposals?

What areas should be considered for wild lands?

As a result of The Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (Pub. L. 112-10)(2011 CR), the BLM will not designate any lands as “Wild Lands.”

CHAPTER 5—DRAFT PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria are constraints or ground rules developed to guide and direct the planning effort. Planning criteria are based on laws and regulations; guidance that the BLM Wyoming State Director provides; results of consultation and coordination with the public, other agencies, governmental entities, and Indian tribes; and analysis of information pertinent to the planning area, public input, and professional judgment. The planning criteria focus on the development of management options and alternatives, analysis of the related effects, and selection of the Preferred Alternative and the Proposed RMP. Additional planning criteria may be identified as the planning process progresses. Preliminary planning criteria include the following:

- The proposed RMP will be in compliance with FLPMA and all other applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
- Impacts from the management alternatives considered in the revised RMP will be analyzed in an EIS developed in accordance with land use planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610 and National Environmental Policy Act regulations at 40 CFR 1500.
- Lands covered in the RMP will consist of public land and split estate lands managed that BLM manages. No decisions will be made relative to non-BLM administered lands.
- For program-specific guidance of land use planning level decisions, the process will follow the Land Use Planning Manual 1601 and Handbook H-1601-1, Appendix C.
- Broad-based public participation will be an integral part of the planning and EIS process.
- If the other agencies, tribes, and/or governments have officially approved or adopted resource-related plans, then the land use plan must, to the maximum extent practical, be consistent with their officially approved and adopted resource-related policies and programs, so long as the land use plan is consistent with the policies, programs, and provisions of public land laws and regulations [see 43 CFR 1610.3-2 (b)].
- The RMP will recognize the State's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife. BLM will consult with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD).
- The RMP will recognize valid and existing rights.
- The RMP/EIS will incorporate management decisions brought forward from existing planning documents.
- The planning team will work cooperatively and collaboratively with cooperating agencies and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals.
- The BLM and cooperating agencies will jointly develop alternatives for resolution of resource management issues and management concerns.
- The planning process will incorporate as goal statements the Standards for Healthy Rangelands and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for the Public Lands Administered by the BLM in the State of Wyoming.
- WSAs will continue to be managed under the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review until Congress either designates all or portions of the WSA as wilderness or

releases the lands from further wilderness consideration. As stated previously, BLM will analyze lands with wilderness characteristics as part of the planning process.

- Forest management strategies will be consistent with the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.
- Geographic Information System (GIS) and metadata information will meet Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) standards, as required by Executive Order 12906. All other applicable BLM data standards also will be followed.
- The planning process will involve American Indian tribal governments and will provide strategies for the protection of recognized traditional cultural uses.
- All proposed management actions will be based on current scientific information, research and technology, and existing inventory and monitoring information. Where practicable and timely for the planning effort, additional scientific information, research, and new technologies will be considered.
- A Mineral Potential Report, Cultural Resources Overview Report, Biological Assessment, and Socioeconomic Baseline Report will be completed and used during the RMP process.
- The RMP will include adaptive management criteria and protocols as appropriate to deal with future issues.
- A reasonable foreseeable development scenario for fluid minerals will be developed.
- Known areas in the Rock Springs planning area with coal development potential are located in Sweetwater County, Wyoming. Coal screening determinations were made on these areas and updated during planning efforts for the existing Green River RMP. No additional coal screening determinations with associated coal planning decisions are planned, unless public submissions of coal resource information or surface resource issues indicate a need for such screening.

CHAPTER 6—DATA SUMMARY/DATA GAPS

During the scoping period, the public was encouraged to identify issues for the RMP revision. Individuals, organizations, and agencies also were encouraged to provide the BLM with applicable data that could assist in alternatives development and/or alternatives analysis. New data and data gaps were required to be identified beyond casual reference. Public comments that simply made statements of preference were not considered new data. As with data gaps, lack of existing data would not halt the planning process. Because this project is a landscape-level programmatic decision-making document, the absence of site-specific data will likely not impede the ability to develop or analyze reasonable alternatives. With the existence of all data gaps, the BLM will comply with NEPA regulation 40 CFR 1502.22 (Incomplete or Unavailable Information).

The public responded to requests for data by providing data in various formats along with their comments. Data that the public, organizations, and other agencies provided during the public scoping period are as follows:

- Scientific research and reports on various topics
- Related state and local management plans
- Maps depicting various resources
- GIS files with location information for various resources
- Names of locations for ACEC, NCA, and WSR nominations
- Names of areas with wilderness characteristics.

CHAPTER 7—ROCK SPRINGS FIELD OFFICE RMP/EIS PLANNING SCHEDULE

The Rock Springs Field Office RMP interdisciplinary (ID) team will use the data collected during the scoping process and issues identified in this report to develop management decisions and generate a range of management alternatives. Following alternatives development, the ID team will evaluate the potential environmental consequences of implementing each alternative and select the Preferred Alternative. The BLM will issue the Draft RMP/EIS, which will be followed by a 90-day public comment period. BLM will review the public input on the draft document, make any needed revisions, and issue the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Following a 30-day protest period and 60-day Governor’s consistency review, the BLM will resolve any protests, sign a ROD, and issue the Approved RMP. Figure 4 presents the general planning schedule for the RMP/EIS, including opportunities for public involvement.

Figure 4. Rock Springs RMP/EIS Planning Schedule

