



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Cottonwood Field Office
1 Butte Drive
Cottonwood, ID 83522-5200
<http://www.id.blm.gov/offices/cottonwood>

In Reply Refer to:
1610 (420)

Dear Reader:

Enclosed, for your review, is the Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Cottonwood Field Office. The RMP will guide future management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions on approximately 132,496 acres of BLM-administered land within the BLM's Cottonwood Field Office. This acreage figure reflects the recent transfer of approximately 11,304 acres of public land to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to be held in trust for the benefit of the Nez Perce Tribe. The transfer of this public land was made in accordance with the Snake River Water Rights Act of 2004 (Settlement Act), Public Law 108-447, Division J, Title X, Section 6. References to acreage figures, computations and percentages of public land throughout the Proposed RMP/Final EIS have not been updated to reflect this most recent land transfer. An acreage figure of 143,830 has been used in the RMP/EIS.

A majority of the 132,496 acres of BLM-administered land consists of scattered tracts intermingled with State of Idaho, private, Nez Perce Tribe, and National Forest lands. Due to the small amount of public land and the scattered land ownership, relatively few issues were raised during the public scoping period or in comments on the Draft RMP/EIS. There are no sage grouse or energy-related issues in the planning area. Alternatives were developed based upon public comments, resource issues identified, complexity of programs managed, as well as laws and regulations pertinent to the management of public land and resources.

The Proposed RMP is a refinement of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative B) presented in the May 2006 Draft RMP/EIS, with consideration given to public comments, corrections, and rewording for clarification. The Draft RMP/EIS was available for a 90-day review period ending on November 27, 2006. The Proposed RMP/Final EIS is designed to be used in conjunction with the Draft RMP/EIS for reference to maps and in regard to page numbers cited in the comment and response section (Appendix U). Both the Proposed RMP/Final EIS and Draft RMP/EIS are available on the project Web site, www.cottonwoodrmp.com. Chapter 5 of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS contains a summary of the public comment process and the comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS. All comment letters received and BLM responses are located in

Appendix U (Volume III). As a result of public comment and internal BLM review, Alternative B has been modified and is now considered the Proposed Action for management of BLM lands in the Cottonwood Field Office.

The decisions made in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, are primarily land use plan decisions, which are subject to a 30-day protest period as outlined below. However, in addition to defining area designations for travel and transportation management (closed, open and limited areas), which are land use plan decisions; decisions have also been made on specific travel routes and restrictions on those routes. The route designations are considered implementation level decisions that are appealable, rather than protestable, after the RMP is approved.

At the end of the 30-day protest period on the land use plan decisions, and after the Governor's consistency review and resolution of protests, BLM will prepare the Record of Decision and the Approved Resource Management Plan. Approval will be withheld on any portion of the Proposed RMP under protest until final action has been completed.

Who can protest?

Any person who participated in the planning process for the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, and has an interest that is or may be adversely affected, may protest approval of this Proposed RMP/Final EIS and land use plan decisions contained within it (see 43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.5-2) during the 30-day protest period. Only those persons or organizations who participated in the planning process leading to this Proposed RMP/Final EIS may protest. Participation is defined as having submitted written comments, attended a public meeting, and/or personally contacted or discussed the project with a member of the Cottonwood Field Office.

When to protest.

The 30-day period for filing a plan protest begins when the Environmental Protection Agency publishes in the *Federal Register* its Notice of Availability of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. ***The protest period ends 30 days after publication of this Notice of Availability.*** The BLM will publish announcements specifying the actual start and end dates in local and regional media. The BLM also will post this information on the project website (www.cottonwoodrmp.com) and mail it to contacts on the Cottonwood RMP mailing list. To be considered timely, your protest, along with all attachments, must be postmarked no later than the last day of the protest period. There is no provision for any extension of time.

What to protest.

A protesting party may raise only those issues submitted for the record during the planning process leading up to the publication of this Proposed RMP/Final EIS. New issues may not be brought into the record at the protest stage. All proposed decisions in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS are subject to protest, ***with the exception of decisions on route designations for motorized or nonmotorized vehicle travel, which are discussed in the Transportation and Travel Management portion of Section 2.6 of Chapter 2 of the Proposed RMP (including Figures 28 through 36 in Volume IV of the Cottonwood Draft RMP/EIS).*** ***Decisions on route designations may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land***

Appeals following the publication of the Approved RMP/Record of Decision. The Approved RMP/Record of Decision will include information on the appeal process.

How to protest.

A letter of protest must be filed in accordance with the planning regulations, 43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.5-2(a)(1). Protests must be in writing. Although not required, the BLM suggests that you send your protest by certified mail, return receipt requested. Electronic mail and faxed protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter, by either regular or overnight mail, postmarked by the close of the protest period. In such instances, the BLM will consider the emailed or faxed protest as an advance copy and give it full consideration. If you wish to provide the BLM with such advance notification, please direct faxed protests to the attention of the BLM protest coordinator at (202)452-5112, and emails to Brenda_Hudgens-Williams@blm.gov.

If sent by regular mail, send to:

Director (210)
Bureau of Land Management
Attention: Brenda Hudgens-Williams
PO Box 66538
Washington DC 20035

For overnight (e.g., FedEx), send to:

Director (210)
Bureau of Land Management
Attention: Brenda Hudgens-Williams
1620 L Street, Suite 1075
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 452-5045

To be considered complete, your protest must contain, at a minimum, the following information:

1. The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest.
2. A statement of the issue or issues being protested.
3. A statement of the part or parts of the Proposed RMP being protested. To the extent possible, this should be done by reference to specific pages, paragraphs, sections, tables, maps, etc., included in the document.
4. A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that you submitted during the planning process or a reference to the date the issue or issues were discussed by you for the record.
5. A concise statement explaining why the Idaho BLM State Director's proposed decision is believed to be incorrect. *This is a critical part of your protest.* Take care to document all relevant facts. As much as possible, reference or cite documents. A protest that merely expresses disagreement with the Idaho BLM State Director's proposed decision, without any data, will not provide us with the benefit of your information and insight. In this case, the Director's review will be based on the existing analysis and supporting data.

Thank you for your participation in this planning effort. For additional information or clarification regarding this document or the planning process, please contact Dean Huibregtse at (208) 962-3784.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Connolly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Connolly
Field Manager

1 Enclosure:

1. Proposed Cottonwood RMP/Final EIS (1730 pp)