



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Jarbidge Field Office
2536 Kimberly Road
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301



**Jarbidge Proposed Resource Management Plan
and Final Environmental Impact Statement
Clarification Letter**

Dear Interested Citizen:

The purpose of this letter is to clarify the relationship between the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision and (1) the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Idaho Southwestern Montana Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) for managing Greater Sage-Grouse (Idaho/SW Montana RMPA), and (2) the 2005 Jarbidge Stipulated Settlement Agreement.

The Jarbidge RMP Revision Process

BLM began the process of revising the existing Jarbidge RMP (1987) in January 2006 with the publication of the Notice of Intent to Prepare the Jarbidge RMP Revision in the Federal Register. The Jarbidge RMP planning process focused on updating management actions for all resources in the field office. As such, the Jarbidge Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS) provides the proposed action for integrated management of all resources in the planning area.

The National Sage-grouse Planning Strategy and RMP Amendment Process

After BLM Idaho began the Jarbidge RMP revision process, a national strategy for sage-grouse management was initiated through issuance of BLM's Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. 2012-044. That IM provided direction to all of the planning efforts across the range of the Greater Sage-Grouse (sage-grouse) to consider all applicable conservation measures when revising or amending Resource Management Plans in sage-grouse habitat. The IM also directed that BLM consider the measures set forth in "A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures" (NTT Report) (Dec., 2011). The national planning strategy responded to an increasing national concern over the future of the sage-grouse and its habitat, including the US Fish & Wildlife's March 2010 finding that the sage-grouse was "warranted but precluded" for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

As part of the national planning strategy, the BLM is in the process of developing the Idaho/SW Montana RMPA EIS which will consider sage-grouse conservation measures for all RMPs in Idaho and southwest Montana, including an alternative that included the conservation measures from the NTT Report. Specifically, the Idaho/SW Montana RMPA EIS considers incorporating appropriate sage-grouse conservation measures into RMPs for twelve BLM field offices in Idaho and southwestern Montana, including approximately 1.3 million acres of public lands in a portion of the Jarbidge Field Office in Idaho. The Draft Idaho/SW Montana RMPA EIS, issued on November 1, 2013, proposed amending the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. BLM Nevada is also preparing a Nevada/Northeastern California

considering RMP-level sage-grouse conservation measures for all RMPs in Nevada. The Jarbidge Field Office is included in the decision area for these two amendments.

The Relationship between the Two Processes With Respect to the Jarbidge Field Office

The Idaho/SW Montana RMPA EIS and the NV/NE California RMPA EIS are components of the national planning strategy described above. The record of decision (ROD) for the Idaho/SW Montana RMPA is expected to amend up to 29 BLM and Forest Service land use plans, including the a portion of the lands within the Jarbidge Field Office that are within the State of Idaho. The ROD for the NV/NE California RMPA will amend up to 21 BLM and Forest Service land use plans, including a portion of the lands within the Jarbidge Field Office that are within the state of Nevada.

The specific dates for completion of the RODs for the Idaho/SW Montana RMPA, the NV/NE California RMPA, and the Jarbidge RMP revision are unknown. At the completion of these planning efforts (the RMPAs and the Jarbidge plan revision), the BLM's goal is to have a land use plan for the Jarbidge planning area that includes the following: (1) sage-grouse specific conservation measures that help to alleviate threats to sage-grouse in the Jarbidge Field Office, and (2) updated management actions and goals for other resources and uses in the Jarbidge Field Office that will guide BLM management of the public lands in the Field Office.

Because BLM is already considering and analyzing the conservation measures from the NTT Report in the Idaho/SW Montana RMPA, which includes the Jarbidge RMP planning area, it is unnecessary to duplicate that effort in this PRMP/FEIS. The Idaho/SW Montana RMPA EIS is also considering other alternatives, including an alternative submitted by Idaho Governor Butch Otter. The BLM determined that it would be unnecessary and unreasonable to include alternatives that are being considered in the Idaho/SW Montana RMPA EIS in the Jarbidge PRMP/FEIS. The BLM expects that the Jarbidge RMP revision ROD will post-date the sage-grouse RMPA RODs, in order to provide consistent management direction throughout the life of the Jarbidge RMP revision.

Grazing Range of Alternatives and the Stipulated Settlement Agreement

In September 2005, BLM entered into a Stipulated Settlement Agreement (SSA) with Western Watersheds Project (WWP) and livestock grazing operators to settle ongoing litigation tied to livestock grazing and grazing permit renewals for 28 grazing allotments located within the Jarbidge Field Office (*WWP v. Ellis et al.* (Case No. CV-04-181-S-BLW) (D. Idaho)). In the SSA, the BLM agreed to embark on an RMP revision to the Jarbidge RMP to address livestock grazing throughout the field office rather than a more targeted analysis of grazing on the 28 allotments. The SSA provides that in developing the revised RMP "BLM will consider no grazing and other alternatives. BLM will retain full authority to determine which alternatives are to be analyzed in detail, consistent with law; however, BLM will analyze in detail at least one alternative in the EIS addressing significantly reduced grazing levels in those areas demonstrating livestock-related conflicts with other multiple use values."

A no grazing alternative was considered in this planning effort, but eliminated from detailed study because a) it did not meet the purpose and need for this RMP, and b) no issues or conflicts that would require the complete elimination of any uses, including grazing, within the planning area for its resolution were identified (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study).

Consistent with the requirements in the SSA, the BLM analyzed in detail significantly reduced grazing alternatives. Alternative V analyzes the impacts of reducing forage allocated to livestock grazing (in animal unit months) by 78% relative to the No Action Alternative. Alternatives IV-A and IV-B reduce the forage available to livestock grazing, relative to the No Action Alternative, as much as 60%.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Timothy M. Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Timothy M. Murphy
Acting Idaho State Director