

Lewistown RMP Update

A BLM newsletter for the Lewistown Resource Management Plan

Volume 3

Spring 2016

BLM

The Lewistown Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will provide direction for managing 651,200 acres of public land surface and 1,196,800 acres of federal mineral estate in central Montana encompassing Cascade, Judith Basin, Meagher, Petroleum, Pondera, and Teton counties and portions of Fergus, Chouteau, and Lewis and Clark counties. These lands and minerals are managed by three Bureau of Land Management (BLM) offices located in Lewistown, Butte, and Great Falls.

Where Are We Now ?

The BLM planning team, in conjunction with cooperating agencies, developed four alternatives containing unique goals, objectives, and actions that explore a range of opportunities to enhance public land management and best resolve conflicts among resources and resource uses. Each component of these four alternatives has been examined to compare the likely direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the human and natural environment that could occur from implementing one of the alternatives.

An internal administrative draft is currently under review. The Lewistown Draft RMP/EIS is expected to be published and available for public comment during late Summer/Fall 2016.

RMP-related Documents Available Online

Since the last newsletter, BLM has been inventorying and evaluating resource data to use in development of the Lewistown RMP revision and EIS. The following new documents associated with this effort have been posted to the Lewistown RMP website at <http://blm.gov/ngld>:

- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Report - January 2015
- Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Report – January 2016
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility Report – January 2015 (east half)

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Report

Section 201 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires the BLM to maintain an inventory of all public lands, their resources, and other values. This requirement directs the BLM to maintain and update, as necessary, its inventory of lands having wilderness characteristics. The land use planning process will be used to determine how to manage those lands containing wilderness characteristics as part of its multiple-use mandate.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Report

As part of the process for developing the Lewistown RMP revision and EIS, the LFO interdisciplinary team reviewed BLM-managed lands in the planning area to determine whether any areas should be considered for designation as ACECs. These areas are defined as “areas within the public lands where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values; fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes; or to protect life and safety from natural hazards.” The report contains the analysis and the findings for existing and proposed ACECs within the planning area.



Lewistown Field Office



What's Next?

The Draft RMP/EIS is expected to be available to the public for a 90-day comment period during late Summer/Fall 2016. The public will be notified of its availability for review and comment by newsletter, mailings, press releases, and the Lewistown RMP website.

During the public comment period, the BLM will host a series of public meetings throughout the planning area to help introduce the Draft RMP/EIS. Each meeting will provide an opportunity to talk individually with various resource specialists focusing on topics of interest, and will offer guidelines on how to comment effectively during the official comment period.

During the Fall/Winter of 2016, the BLM will review the public comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS. These comments will help refine the alternatives and will be incorporated into the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. We anticipate the Proposed RMP/Final EIS will be distributed to the public during the Summer of 2017.

Following the Governor's consistency review and the protest period, two Records of Decision (RODs), one for the Lewistown Field Office and another for the Butte Field Office, will be prepared and signed by the Montana State Director.

Lewistown Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility Report (East Half)

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 directs federal agencies to consider potential Wild and Scenic Rivers in their planning processes. To fulfill this requirement, whenever a land use planning effort is undertaken, the BLM inventories and analyzes those river and stream segments that might be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (National System). The Lewistown Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility Report (West Half) was completed in 2010 and the report for the eastern half was completed in 2015. Both documents are available online in the Documents and Reports section of the Lewistown RMP website.

Lewistown Draft RMP/EIS Progress Update

Alternatives Development

Alternatives development is the heart of the RMP process. Land use planning requires BLM to formulate a reasonable range of alternatives to produce distinct, potential scenarios that address the major land management issues identified during the public scoping period.

Between September 2014 and January 2015, the planning team, in conjunction with cooperating agencies, developed a range of four alternatives containing management goals, objectives, and actions that address deficiencies with current decisions, explore opportunities to enhance public land management, and resolve conflicts among resources and resource uses.

Environmental Consequences

Each component of the four alternatives is examined to present the likely direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the human and natural environment that could occur from implementing any of the alternatives. Careful consideration of the environmental effects is essential to provide a logical and accurate basis for the selection of an alternative.



Lewistown RMP Timeline

Projected dates are approximate

Preparation Plan: May 2013

Analysis of Management Situation: May 2014

Notice of Intent published in the *Federal Register*: February 10, 2014

Alternatives development and preparation of the Draft RMP/EIS: Fall 2014 - January 2016

Internal review of the Administrative Draft RMP/EIS: January 2016 - Summer 2016

Publish the Draft RMP/EIS: Summer/Fall 2016

90-day public comment period: Summer/Fall 2016

Public meetings will be held throughout the planning area to provide information and receive comments to the Draft RMP/EIS.

Proposed RMP/Final EIS available: Summer 2017

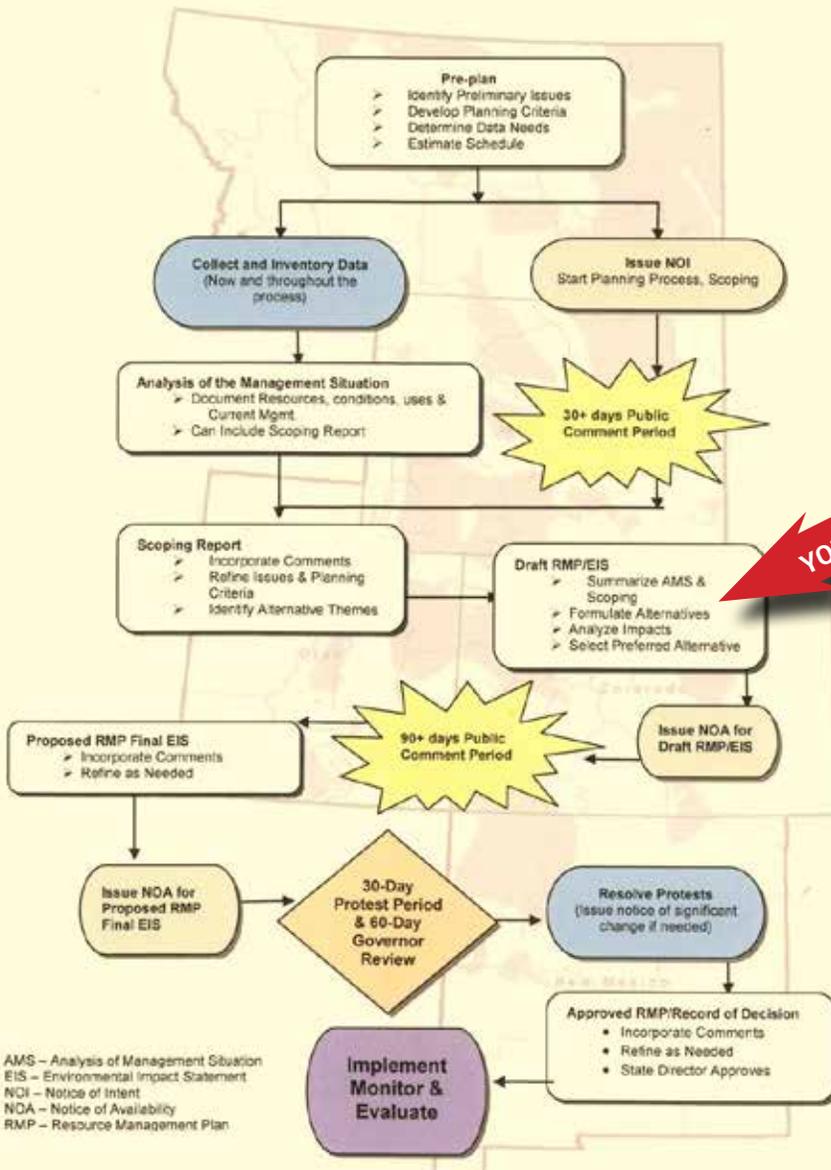
60-day Governor's Consistency Review: Summer/Fall 2017

30-day protest period: Fall 2017

Prepare Records of Decision (RODs): Winter 2017

 Completed

 Work in progress



AMS – Analysis of Management Situation
 EIS – Environmental Impact Statement
 NOI – Notice of Intent
 NOA – Notice of Availability
 RMP – Resource Management Plan



How to Stay Involved and Informed

The Lewistown Draft RMP/EIS is currently undergoing internal review. Our goal is to have the draft available for a 90-day comment period by Summer/Fall 2016. We will be contacting you with information about open houses scheduled throughout the planning area.

Briefings regarding the RMP planning process can be requested anytime and BLM representatives are available to speak to organizations or groups about the Lewistown RMP.

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Visit our website at <http://blm.gov/ngld>.



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BLM/MT/GI-16-003

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