

Chapter 1—Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The land use planning process is the key tool used by the United States Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), to manage resources and designate uses on public lands, in coordination with state and local government, tribes, land users, and interested public. Land use planning, at its highest levels, results in land use plans (LUPs). Every BLM field office (FO) throughout the country functions under the auspices of a specific LUP for the public lands over which it has responsibility. Decisions made in LUPs establish the basis for goals and objectives for resource management (i.e., desired future conditions, protective measures, or best management practices), the measures needed to achieve these goals and objectives, and parameters for resource uses on BLM-administered public lands. These goals and objectives, measures, and parameters are carried from the LUP to the project level through implementation-level plans and guidance. Thus, the land use planning process covers the spectrum of BLM resource/resource use management activities with broad, overarching LUP guidance at one end and detailed, site-specific, on-the-ground direction at the other end.

The BLM, Idaho Falls District (IFD), Upper Snake FO in southeastern Idaho, manages approximately 1.8 million (M) acres of public land (hereinafter referred to as “public lands”) in 12 southeastern Idaho counties and one adjoining county in Wyoming¹. These 1.8M acres of public lands are also referred to as the Upper Snake “FO area” (FOA).

The Upper Snake “planning area” (PA) is the larger area of 7.13M acres in which the Upper Snake FOA lies. Within the PA the Upper Snake FO is also responsible for managing the federal mineral estate underlying both the public lands (1.8M acres) and certain private and state lands (approximately 257,000 acres). Both the Upper Snake PA and FOA are shown on **Figure A-1, Appendix A–Maps**, and discussed in more detail in **Section 1.3**.

An evaluation (BLM 2004a)² conducted by the Upper Snake FO of its current LUPs (Big Desert Management Framework Plan [MFP] (BLM 1981a), Big Lost MFP (BLM 1983), Little Lost/Birch Creek MFP (BLM 1981b), and Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan [RMP] (BLM 1985) identified a need for new or revised decisions in several of the FO’s resource programs. The evaluation ultimately led to the conclusion that the Upper Snake FO should undertake a full plan revision (i.e., RMP), to achieve consistency with tribal, federal, state, and local agency plans, and with BLM policy. A revision was also determined to be needed to address new information and changed circumstances with respect to resource conditions and demands for resource uses.

An RMP is comprehensive, long-ranging, and provides management direction of public lands in accordance with Congress under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, as stated in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA, 43 *United States Code* [U.S.C.] 35 § 1701 et seq.). The preparation and adoption of an RMP by BLM is considered a major federal action significantly

¹ The parcels in Wyoming are managed under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the BLM Pinedale FO in Teton County, Wyoming.

² Citations are referenced in Chapter 9, References.

affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the RMP the Upper Snake FO develops is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 55 § 4321 et seq.), which requires that an environmental impact statement (EIS) also be prepared.

When the Upper Snake FO RMP/EIS is completed, it will describe and analyze a reasonable range of management alternatives for the public lands and resources administered by the Upper Snake FO. The final decision, a record of decision (ROD) that will result from the planning process, will not include private lands, state lands, Indian reservations, and federal lands not administered by the BLM. However, the RMP/EIS analysis area describes certain resources in the context of the larger landscape, such as air quality, water resources, wide-ranging species, and socioeconomics, which may extend beyond the Upper Snake FO administrative boundaries.

1.2. Purpose of Analysis of the Management Situation

The analysis of the management situation (AMS) is the first step in the RMP process and conforms to the BLM planning regulations, 43 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) II § 1600 et seq. (i.e., § 1610.4-4), to provide for the study and assessment of resources covered within the RMP PA. The purpose of the AMS is threefold: to summarize the existing conditions, trends, and management guidance for a defined PA; to explain the need for change by identifying preliminary issues and management opportunities; and to provide an initial description of the biological, physical, social, and economic components of the environment that will be affected by the decisions made in an RMP.

The AMS will also serve as the basis for formulating reasonable alternatives, including the types of resources for development or protection. The alternatives and analysis of environmental consequences (43 CFR II §§ 1610.4-5, 4-6) will be documented in the draft and final EIS. In addition, BLM will use the AMS to develop an information base that addresses the following: current resource conditions and trends; current management direction; management opportunities; consistency and coordination with other federal, state, and local plans, mandates and authorities; and results from public scoping.

1.2.1. AMS Format

The BLM Land Use Planning manual (BLM 2000a) and handbook (H-1601-1, BLM 2005a) both implement the land use planning requirements established by Sections 201 and 202 of FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 35 § 1701 et seq.) and the regulations in 43 CFR II § 1600 et seq., providing guidance for preparing, revising, amending, and maintaining LUPs. Appendix F-3 of the handbook, Annotated Outline of the Analysis of the Management Situation, provides the overall format for the AMS (BLM 2005a). In Appendix F-3, the AMS is explained as a description of

“...the current conditions and trends of the resources and the uses/activities in the planning area in sufficient detail to create a framework from which to resolve the planning issues through the development of alternatives.”(BLM 2005a)

All data, maps, and figures presented in the AMS are based on preliminary analyses of datasets as of February 2008. As such, the numbers, acreages, and maps presented may only be used for illustrative and comparative purposes and are not intended for use beyond this document. Prior to the publication of the draft RMP, new data may be added and existing data may be refined. Specific analyses, uses, and displays of data may vary from those that appear in the draft RMP/EIS as appropriate to the needs of that

document. The AMS represents an early component of the resource management planning process. The AMS is not intended to be an exhaustive review of resources or uses within the PA. It is intended to provide an overall analysis and presentation of current conditions; existing management practices, including direction from existing plans and agency policy; local resources and resource uses; and social and economic conditions. The AMS will be made available to the public for informational purposes.

1.2.2. Planning Process Overview

The BLM Land Use Planning manual and handbook (BLM 2000a, 2005a) provides guidance for the required steps of the Upper Snake FO RMP planning process. The major steps, and supporting tasks, are shown in the following list:

Conduct Public Scoping

- Publish Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare a Resource Management Plan and EIS.
- Develop planning criteria and identify planning opportunities.
- Invite public to participate and collect public comment.
- Identify issues raised by the public.
- Refine issue descriptions and prepare scoping report.

Prepare AMS

- Characterize management situation with an AMS.

Prepare Draft EIS and RMP

- Refine issues, alternatives, and impact analysis input.
- Provide 90-day public comment period.

Prepare Final EIS and Proposed RMP

- Develop an implementation and monitoring plan on the preferred alternative.
- Provide 30-day protest period and 60-day Governor's review.

Prepare ROD and Approved RMP

- Identify selected alternative and respond to public comments and protests.
- Implement, monitor, and evaluate.

The Upper Snake FO RMP interdisciplinary team (IDT) has completed the public scoping phase, which is discussed in Chapter 6. The IDT has completed the AMS phase with the publication and public availability of this document, the *Upper Snake Field Office Analysis of the Management Situation*.

1.3. General Description of Planning Area, Geographic Scope, and Resources/Programs

1.3.1. General Description

The Upper Snake PA covers 12 counties in Idaho: Bingham, Blaine, Bonneville, Butte, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison, Power, and Teton. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008), the PA's 12 counties were home to an estimated 270,875 individuals as of January 1, 2008. Population

centers within the PA are found in Idaho Falls, Blackfoot, Arco, Dubois, Ashton, St. Anthony, Rexburg, Ririe, and Rigby.

Figure A- 1, Appendix A–Maps, (Land status for the Upper Snake Field Office PA, BLM 2008a) shows the patchwork nature of public land ownership within and adjacent to the Upper Snake PA boundary. Public lands administered by the Upper Snake FO are adjacent to, an intermingled with, other federal, tribal, State of Idaho, and private lands as well as to federal and state wildlife refuges. As summarized in **Table 1-1**, approximately 36% of the lands within the Upper Snake PA are privately owned and 5.4% is administered by the State of Idaho. Roughly 3%, or 257,000 acres, of the private and state lands are underlain by federally-administered minerals. Less than 1% of the PA, or 70,434 acres, is water surface.

Table 1-1. Upper Snake PA land status.

| Land Administration/Ownership | Planning Area (acres) | Planning Area (percent) |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Bureau of Land Management | 1,809,640 | 25.38 |
| U.S. Forest Service | 1,670,343 | 23.43 |
| Private Lands | 2,597,096 | 36.42 |
| Department of Energy (Idaho National Laboratory, including withdrawn public lands) | 569,072 | 7.98 |
| All State of Idaho Lands (e.g., Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho Parks and Recreation) | 387,697 | 5.44 |
| All Other Federal (e.g., Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Defense, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service) | 96,549 | 1.40 |
| Fort Hall Indian Reservation | 83 | < 0.001 |
| Total | 7,130,480 | 100 |

Data from: BLM, 2008a. Surface Management Agency for Upper Snake Field Office (Federal, State, and Private Lands) 2008, map and data. Upper Snake Field Office and Idaho State Office, Geographic Sciences. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Falls District. Idaho Falls, Idaho. August 26.

Other BLM FOs and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), Department of Energy (DOE), Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) play important roles in and around the PA, as follows:

- Adjacent to the Upper Snake FO, to the west, south, and east, the BLM Pocatello and Burley FOs manage public lands.
- To the northwest of the Upper Snake FO, the BLM Salmon and Challis FOs manage adjacent public lands.

- To the north and east of the Upper Snake FO, the USFS manages the higher elevations of the Caribou–Targhee National Forest all the way to the Continental Divide and the Wyoming state line. While not immediately adjacent, the PA also borders Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.
- Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve is jointly managed by the BLM Shoshone FO and the NPS and comprises most of the Upper Snake FO’s western boundary.
- Approximately 569,072 acres of the Upper Snake FO are withdrawn by the DOE for the Idaho National Laboratory (INL).³ The BLM manages approximately one-half of the withdrawn area for livestock grazing.
- The BLM is also a partner with DOE, the IDFG, and the USFWS for management of the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem Reserve, a 73,000-acre area on the northern edge of the INL that has been set aside for long-term sagebrush steppe research.
- The USFWS manages the Camas National Wildlife Refuge 36 miles (mi) north of Idaho Falls.
- The IDFG manages the Sand Creek WMA, one of eastern Idaho’s most valuable sagebrush/grassland ranges, known region-wide for its wintering big game herds. The WMA and surrounding lands provide winter forage and shelter for one of the largest migratory, high-desert elk herds in North America and the only desert wintering moose herd in the world.
- The IDFG manages Tex Creek WMA for wildlife, with an emphasis on big game habitat management.
- The IDFG manages Market Lake, a unique wetland sanctuary preserved in 1956 and home to a variety of wildlife, this expansive wetland is noted for its broad array of waterfowl and shorebirds. Since the original land purchase, several adjacent parcels have been acquired
- The IDFG manages Mud Lake WMA, which was established primarily to preserve and improve nesting habitat for waterfowl.
- The IDFG, BLM, and Shoshone–Bannock Tribes cooperatively manage the Deer Parks WMA, which is an area purchased from willing sellers as partial mitigation for the 16,000 acres flooded by the Palisades Dam and Reservoir in eastern Idaho.
- The IDFG manages Cartier Slough WMA located along the west side of the Henrys Fork of the Snake River west of Rexburg. The WMA is primarily a habitat for waterfowl that also provides habitat for a diverse variety of over 200 wildlife species. It is also managed to provide public access for hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife viewing. Wildlife viewing now accounts for more user days than does hunting within the WMA.
- The Upper Snake PA borders the Fort Hall Indian Reservation along the area between Blackfoot, Idaho, and American Falls Reservoir.

1.3.2. Geographic Scope

The Upper Snake FO manages numerous blocks of public land ranging in size from a few acres to tens of thousands of acres. Elevations range from approximately 4,500 feet (ft) in the “Big Desert” of the Snake

³ The Atomic Energy Commission withdrew the land for the INL (formerly the National Reactor Testing Station) in 1949 to build, test, and operate various nuclear reactors, fuel processing plants, and support facilities. Prior to 1949, parts of the site were used by the Department of Defense.

River Plain to around 9,700 ft at Hawley Mountain east of the Little Lost River Valley. The majority of the area lies between 4,500–5,500 ft and is covered with sagebrush steppe (98%). Coniferous forest (2%) is scattered around the northern and eastern portions of the PA in the higher and wetter locations. Major geologic features include sand dunes, lava flows, lava caves, dormant volcanoes, the northernmost extension of the Basin and Range physiographic province in the Lost River and Lemhi Mountain Ranges, and the Snake River. Also included is the expansive eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer (SRPA), underlying a large portion of the Upper Snake PA, which discharges to the Snake River through springs near American Falls Reservoir and at Thousand Springs, west of Twin Falls, Idaho.

Climate in the PA can be hot, although extended periods over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) are unusual. Hot summer days are tempered by low relative humidity and cool evenings during summer months. Winters can be cold, although extended periods of bitter cold weather below 0°F are also unusual. Precipitation ranges from about 8 inches (in.)/year (yr) in the lower elevations to about 14 in./yr in the higher elevations in the PA. Annually, wind patterns and transport flows are dominated by westerly flows. Presently, the air quality is good within the majority of the PA. There are occasional, intermittent, short-term periods, mainly during late spring, summer, and early fall, when dust/particulate concentrations from agricultural activities (stubble field burning and plowing), wild fires, and/or vehicle and other urban emissions (e.g., home wood burning) can become elevated in localized areas. The PA sometimes experiences lingering smoke and haze that passes through from very large wildfires in other states (e.g., October 2007 and summer 2008 California wildfires).

Southeast Idaho is an important agricultural area, growing most of Idaho's seed potato and potato crops, making it one of the Nation's most productive potato-growing areas. Other important agricultural products are alfalfa hay, beans, lentils, sugar beets, cattle, dairy products, wheat, and barley. The Upper Snake FO manages grazing on 1,968,137 acres, and the majority of this acreage (81%) is located directly in the PA (note: the FO manages more acreage for grazing than the size of the PA as a result of cooperative agreements that are discussed in more detail in chapter 2). Agriculture and grazing activities are critical to the economies of the many small-to-medium sized towns within the PA. Lands within the Upper Snake PA have a history of mineral development that dates back to the early 1880s with several mines producing significant amounts of gold, silver, lead, zinc, and copper through the mid-1940s. However, the production of locatable, leasable, and salable minerals is no longer a significant component of the local or regional economy of the PA.

Other important industries in Idaho are food processing, lumber and wood products, machinery, chemical products, paper products, electronics manufacturing, silver and other mining, and tourism. The INL, a government lab for nuclear energy research, is also an important part of the southeastern Idaho economy.

The Snake River is the lifeblood of the Upper Snake PA. Besides providing irrigation for millions of acres of agricultural land, the river is also a haven for dozens of bird, fish, and big game species, in part because one of the largest cottonwood gallery forests in the western U.S. is found in the PA. The river is also an international draw for recreational opportunities and provides an inflow of cash to local economies.

Recreational opportunities in the PA include world-class fly-fishing and picturesque views along the South Fork of the Snake River; motorized recreation at St. Anthony Sand Dunes; innumerable miles of undeveloped camping, hiking and exploring; pleasure driving; rock collecting; river floating and water

sports; winter sports; wildlife viewing/photography; motorized and mechanized trail biking; rock climbing and spelunking; and hunting.

Lands administered by the Upper Snake FO support a variety of wildlife such as elk, deer, pronghorn, and waterfowl, and upland game birds such as ruffed, blue, sharp-tailed, and sage grouse. Important sagebrush steppe habitat remains available to the host of sagebrush obligate species. The Henry's and South Forks, the main stem of the Snake River, and several lakes and reservoirs provide important habitat for many of the 29 species of fish found in the PA including Yellowstone cutthroat, rainbow, brown, brook, bull, and lake trout; kokanee and coho salmon; and mountain whitefish. The PA contains habitat for five federally listed (i.e., endangered or threatened) and one candidate species, under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA, 16 U.S.C. 35 § 1531 et seq.), as shown in **Table 1-2**.

Table 1-2. Species within the Upper Snake PA listed under the ESA.

| Common Name | Scientific Name | Status ^a |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Utah valvata snail | <i>Valvata utahensis</i> | E |
| Ute ladies'-tresses | <i>Spiranthes diluvialis</i> | T |
| Grizzly Bear | <i>Ursus arctos horribilis</i> | T |
| Bull trout | <i>Salvelinus confluentus</i> | T |
| Yellow-billed cuckoo | <i>Coccyzus americanus</i> | C |

a. E = endangered, T = threatened, C = candidate

1.3.3. Resources/Programs

The BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (BLM 2005a), Appendix C, Program/Resource-Specific Decision Guidance directs BLM to address each resource and program (resource use),

"...in conjunction with the guidance presented for other resources to maintain an integrated, interdisciplinary approach to planning." (BLM 2005a)

In Chapter 2, after a presentation of the PA's regional context and ecoregions, the following resources are presented in detail: air, geology, soils, microbiotic soil crusts, water, vegetation (upland and riparian), special status species, wildlife, fisheries and aquatic species, cultural resources and paleontology, visual resources, wildland fire ecology and management, wilderness characteristics, and cave and karst resources. After the resources, the following Upper Snake FO resource uses/programs are described: forestry, livestock grazing, recreation and visitor services, comprehensive trails and travel management, lands and realty (including renewable energy), energy and mineral resources, and transportation facilities.

Also presented in Chapter 2 is a special designations section, which includes wilderness study areas (WSAs), wild and scenic rivers (WSRs), areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) including research natural areas (RNAs), and national historic, scenic, and recreation trails discussions. The chapter ends with a social and economic features section that includes tribal interests and public safety. Wild horses and burros, coal, and oil shale are not found in the PA and, as such, are not further discussed in this document.

1.4. Key Findings

The IDT conducted a review of present conditions in existing WSAs to determine the status of potential wilderness characteristics in areas outside of the existing WSAs. The areas analyzed outside of the WSAs were those areas previously analyzed in intensive and initial wilderness inventories in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as well as other public lands that met the “roadless” size criteria under the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 23 § 1131 et seq.) in their entirety on BLM-administered public lands or in coordination with adjacent National Forest System Lands (NFSL)⁴ recommended wilderness lands. In all, 62 areas (including the WSAs) were reviewed and no areas outside of existing WSAs were found to exhibit wilderness characteristics.

An extensive review of current land management decisions/direction was also conducted by the Upper Snake FO RMP IDT (BLM 2004a). The team reviewed the Big Desert MFP, Big Lost MFP, Little Lost/Birch Creek MFP, and the Medicine Lodge RMP. This review was conducted to determine the following:

- key direction, where appropriate, for resource and resource uses that may be carried forward into the new RMP,
- direction for resource and resource uses that needs to be updated to address current laws, regulations, and policies,
- direction to address changed conditions on the public lands managed by the Upper Snake FO,
- any new or expansion of resource considerations that may require decisions, and
- any tribal cultural and heritage practices or concerns not previously addressed.

The key findings can be categorized into management direction that has been effective and will likely be carried forward and areas where a change in management direction is needed.

1.4.1. Direction Carried Forward

BLM has two main categories for natural resources management, resources and resource uses. Resources are natural, biological, and cultural features that BLM has a responsibility to protect, and resource uses are the products, either tangible or intangible, that are managed from resources.

Current land management direction that has proven to be effective and requires no change will be “carried forward” through the analysis process. Direction carried forward would be, at a minimum, an element of the no action alternative, but also may be a component of any or all of the action alternatives developed for the RMP/EIS. An example of a management direction carried forward, which the Upper Snake FO currently follows and has been reviewed as needing no further change for consideration under the Upper Snake RMP, is for the area of water quality, surface water:

Manage public land uses so that water quality in streams complies with Idaho State water quality standards under the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 26 § 1251 et seq.).

⁴ The NFSL are administered by the USFS.

Comply and be consistent with the memorandum of understanding that implements the non-point source water quality program for the State of Idaho.

Chapter 3, Current Management Direction and Management Opportunities, presents management carried forward in more detail.

1.4.2. Need for Change Topics

Need for change topics were identified for the following resources and resource uses to address current laws, regulations, and policies; changed conditions; and new or expanded conditions or opportunities on BLM public lands. Need for change topics are presented in more detail in Chapter 3, Current Management Direction and Management Opportunities.

Air Resources

Direction is needed to identify desired outcomes and areawide criteria, or restrictions, that apply to direct or authorized emission-generating activities and that are also in compliance with the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 85 § 7401 et seq.) requirements.

Water

Direction is needed to prioritize streams for water quality improvement, according to section 303 of the Clean Water Act, and to stay in compliance with the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 26 § 1251 et seq.). Direction is needed to maintain or improve water resources throughout the entire FOA.

Soil

Direction is needed to identify specific soils that may need special protection from the standpoint of ecosystem health or public uses.

Fish and Wildlife

Direction is needed to identify desired outcomes or possible priority species or habitats essential for fish and wildlife species.

Vegetation

Direction is needed to identify the desired future condition of the vegetation types that occur within the Upper Snake PA. Existing plans provide direction for the uses of vegetation by livestock and wildlife, but do not provide direction for the desired future condition of the vegetative resources.

Direction is needed for rehabilitating, reclaiming, and/or restoring public lands after ground disturbing activities, including disturbance that results from permitted/authorized activities. Existing plans do not provide direction for rehabilitation, especially with regard to concerns such as minimizing weed establishment and reducing weed spread.

Special Status Species—Flora (Plants)

A special status species (flora) is generally a native plant that because of its limited presence, or existence of threats to its persistence, has been placed on the State of Idaho Special Status Plants List, BLM Special Status Species List, or federally listed as a threatened or endangered species. Special status species lists

do not state what specifically should be done to protect a special status species and existing management plans provide little or no direction.

For the Upper Snake FOA, it is desired to identify management direction not only for individual species, but also, where appropriate, for the habitats in which they occur. Currently over 45 species have status in the State of Idaho that may need management direction. This direction would be based on a review of the scientific literature and current policies for the management of the affected species and their habitats.

Special Status Species—Fauna (Animals: Vertebrates and Invertebrates)

A special status species (fauna) is generally a native animal, which because of its limited presence, or existence of threats to its persistence, has been placed on the Idaho Species of Greatest Conservation Need List (i.e., the IDFG list), BLM Special Status Species List, or federally listed as a threatened or endangered species. Other than recovery plans for federally listed species, special status species lists do not state what specifically should be done to protect these species. Existing management plans also provide little or no direction.

The species in need of management direction include, but are not limited to, bald eagle, greater sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, Townsend's big-eared bat, sharp-tail grouse, Sand Dune tiger beetle, wolf, grizzly bear, yellow-billed cuckoo, ferruginous hawk, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, bull trout, Utah valvata snail, and shorthead sculpin. Direction for special status species would be based on a review of the scientific literature and current policies for the management of the affected species and, as applicable, their habitats.

Cultural Resources

Management direction is needed to better address traditional cultural properties (TCPs), which are places in the environment that have special significance to individuals and human communities because of their cultural connections. Examples of TCPs may include indigenous sacred and ceremonial places, trails, medicinal and other plant collecting areas, and ethnic architectural styles or patterns of land use. Management direction is also needed to better address vandalism and public uses of cultural resources.

Paleontology

When it comes to the fossil record, most people are familiar with vertebrate fossils such as dinosaur bones, mammoth tusks, and sharks teeth, but much less familiar with plant fossils and invertebrate fossils such as ammonites, trilobites, pelecypods, and other marine invertebrates that are also a part of the Upper Snake FOA's rich geological history. Current management direction is being carried forward for vertebrate fossils, but new direction is needed for plant and invertebrate fossils.

Visual Resources

The visual resource management (VRM) system provides a way to identify and evaluate scenic values to determine the appropriate levels of management. VRM is a tool used by the BLM to identify and map essential landscape settings to meet public preferences and recreation-related experiences today and into the future. Management direction is needed to better address VRM for landscape settings for the entire Upper Snake FOA.

Wildland Fire Management

The Record of Decision for the Fire, Fuels, and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment (FMDA, BLM 2008b) provides fire management direction for implementation into the

future. However, planning direction for fire management continues to evolve and direction may be needed to identify and delineate areas of appropriate management response (AMR) for wildland fires. AMR includes any action taken to meet resource objectives identified in LUPs and incorporates a spectrum of tactical operations ranging from simply observing the behavior of the fire to aggressive and intensive suppression actions.

Cave and Karst

In keeping with the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 (FCRPA, 16 U.S.C. 63 § 4301 et seq.), there is a need to identify and develop management direction for significant caves that occur, or that may be found in the future, within the Upper Snake PA.

Forestry

Much of the forested/woodland areas in the PA is susceptible to insects, diseases, and catastrophic fires, primarily as a result of 90 years of fire suppression. Management direction is needed to identify desired forest/woodland conditions (i.e., healthy forest conditions); actions which include appropriate harvest, reforestation, and forest development methods; best management practices that can be applied to meet desired outcomes, and a probable sale quantity for areas determined available for harvest.

Livestock Grazing

Grazing allotments can become vacant over time as a result of a number of scenarios. Vacant and unallocated lands may be problematic for continued grazing use. Management direction is needed to address vacant and unallocated areas to determine if they should, or should not, be made available for grazing, and especially with regard to areas found in the Teton Canyon and Tex Creek areas and along the Snake River.

Recreation/Visitor Services

Special recreation management areas (SRMAs) are designated administrative units where a commitment has been made to emphasize recreation by managing for specific recreation opportunities and settings on a sustained or enhanced, long-term basis. There are two SRMAs in the planning in area, the Snake River (South Fork, Henry's Fork, and the Main Snake Rivers) and the St. Anthony Sand Dunes. Improved management direction is needed for the St. Anthony Sand Dunes SRMA to address increased recreational demand.

Extensive recreation management areas (ERMAs) are identified areas where recreation is planned for and actively managed on an interdisciplinary-basis in concert with other resources/resource uses. ERMAs offer recreation opportunities that facilitate visitors' freedom to pursue a variety of outdoor recreation activities and attain a variety of outcomes.

There is a need to identify ERMAs and associated management direction to resolve user conflicts. Eight specific areas being considered include Teton River, Birch Creek, Henry's Lake, Main Snake, Hell's Half Acre, Big Southern Butte, Box Canyon climbing area, and King Mountain hang gliding area. All remaining lands would be considered as another ERMA.

Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management (CTTM)

Travel and transportation management is the process of planning for and managing access and transportation systems on the public lands. CTTM planning should be approached in an interdisciplinary

way and address all resource values and uses and accompanying modes and conditions of travel on public lands, not just motorized or off-highway vehicle (OHV) activities. It should also address resource effects associated with the travel network. Existing travel and transportation management direction for the Upper Snake FO provides a mix of designations including open, limited, and closed areas. There is a need to include travel and transportation access needs for all the BLM-administered programs and resource management activities, including activities and access associated with mineral and energy development, rights-of-way (ROWs) and utility corridors, range management, wildlife and vegetation management, fire, lands and realty, and recreation.

In addition, management direction is needed to address over snow vehicle (OSV) use. Existing plans provide no OSV direction.

Lands and Realty

Direction is needed to identify and designate zones of public lands for retention or disposal. Existing plan direction only identifies specific parcels by legal description available for disposal.

The adoption of utility corridor(s) direction, which will result from the decisions made from the West-Wide Energy Corridor Programmatic EIS, is needed. The existing plans provide little or no direction for designated utility corridors.

Direction is also needed to allow for the development of alternative energy sources, such as wind energy, consistent with the National Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 149 § 15801 et seq.). Existing plans do not provide management direction for the development of alternative energy sources.

Minerals (Leasable, Locatable, and Common Variety Minerals)

There is a need to prepare a reasonable foreseeable development scenario for leasing fluid minerals (oil, gas, and geothermal). This scenario would serve as the basis for issuing future fluid mineral leases within the Upper Snake FO.

Administrative Designations

The BLM uses “administrative designations” as a tool to afford unique protections to resources and resource uses. Need for change topics have been identified for ACECs and WSRs.

All existing ACEC designations need to be reviewed. The designation of three new ACECs needs to be considered, which involves approximately 11,402 acres, in total, in the Southwest Lemhi Range (5,225 acres) and the Teton River (3,412 acres) and Main Snake River (2,765 acres) areas. A 12,207-acre expansion of the Nine Mile Knoll ACEC (from 42,343 to 54,550 acres) needs to be considered as well as the possible reclassification of five existing RNAs that are already located within existing ACECs (involving North Menan Butte, Reid Canal Island, Pine Creek Island, Squaw Creek Island, and the St. Anthony Sand Dunes RNAs).

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 U.S.C. 28 § 1271 et seq.) requires BLM to assess river and stream segments as part of the planning process. The wild and scenic rivers study process consists of two main components: eligibility and suitability. River or stream segments must be found eligible *and* suitable to be considered for designation in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS), and only Congress or the Secretary of Interior can designate segments. To be eligible for designation, a river must

be free flowing and contain at least one of the following outstandingly remarkable values: scenic, recreational, geological, fish related, wildlife related, historic, cultural, botanical, hydrological, paleontological, or scientific.

Eligibility for the Upper Snake FO has been completed as a baseline for this planning effort. The BLM will be completing the suitability phase for all streams found to be eligible during the RMP development process. Each eligible river segment will be evaluated for suitability or non-suitability to assess whether or not it is a potential candidate for inclusion in the national system. The draft RMP/EIS will incorporate each of the eligible rivers into one or more alternatives and will provide an assessment of potential impacts from recommending each river as either suitable or non-suitable. The BLM will then seek public review and comment on the draft RMP/EIS. The proposed RMP/final EIS will include the final suitability determinations on the eligible rivers. Congressional legislative action is required for actual designation and final classification of suitable river segments.

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