

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 RECORD OF DECISION

This Record of Decision (ROD) approves the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) attached Winnemucca Resource Management Plan (RMP). This ROD and RMP provide overall direction for management of all resources on BLM-administered land in the Winnemucca District (WD) planning area.

The BLM maintains a project website which contains an electronic version of the ROD and approved RMP and all of the maps referred to in the approved RMP, as well as the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and other documents pertinent to the approved RMP. The electronic copy of the approved RMP will be updated as the BLM performs maintenance actions or if the RMP is subsequently amended. The location of this website could change, but as of the signing of the ROD the project address is:

http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo/blm_information/rmp.html.

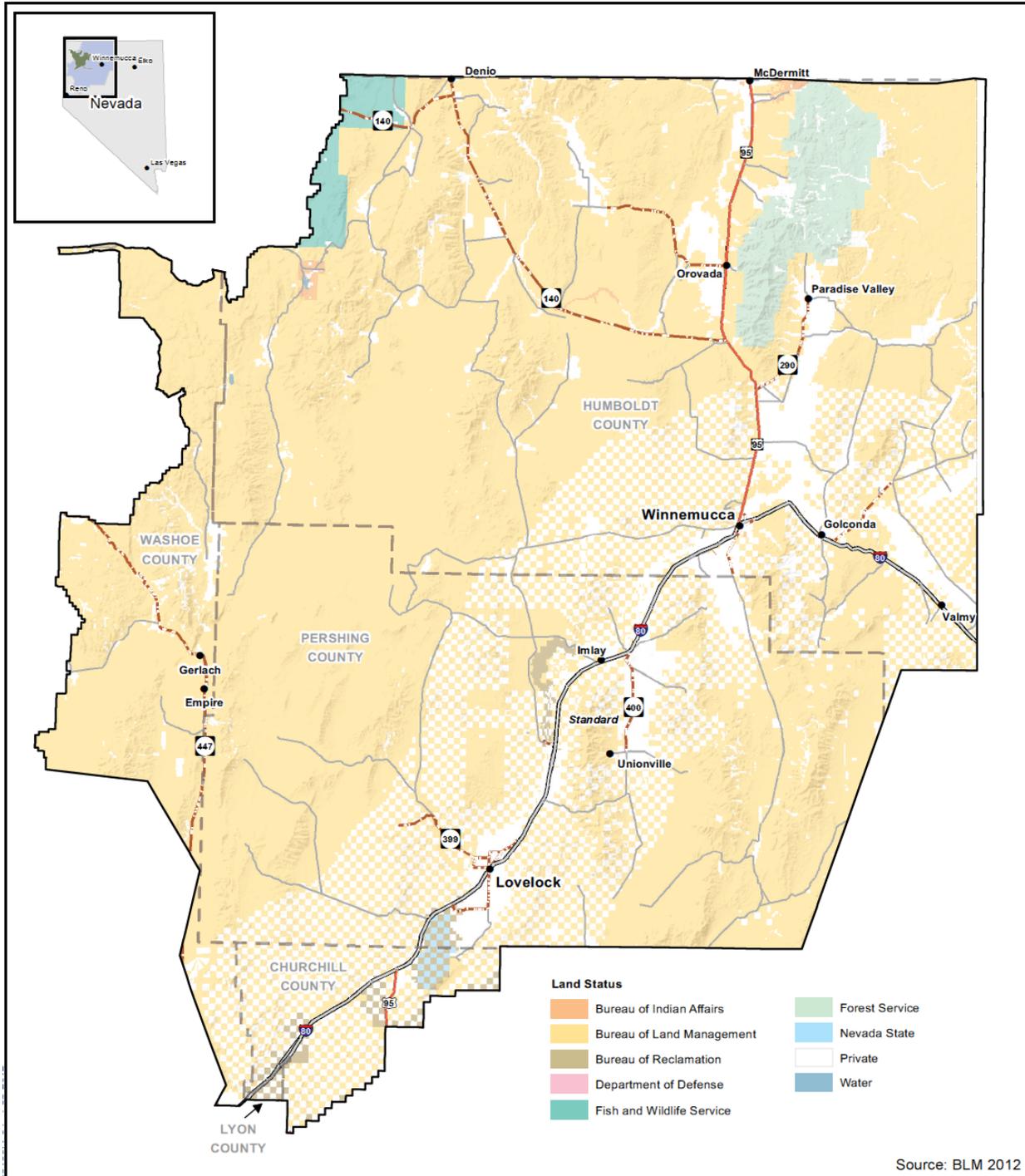
1.2 PLANNING AREA

The WD administrative boundary encompasses about 11.3 million acres and includes all of Humboldt and Pershing Counties and parts of Washoe, Lyon and Churchill Counties. This area includes all lands within the WD administrative boundary regardless of ownership and includes public lands within the NCA (Figure 1-1). The BLM manages about 75 percent, or about 8.4 million acres, of public lands within this administrative boundary. The WD RMP planning area considered in this RMP encompasses about 7.2 million acres of public lands and does not include private lands, federal lands not administered by the BLM, Tribal Lands, or state lands. Public lands within the NCA are also not included in the planning area as they are managed under the Black Rock Desert High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails NCA (BRDHRCET NCA) RMP (Figure 1-2). Where program administrative boundaries overlap (e.g., grazing allotments, priority wildlife areas, herd management areas [HMAs]), public lands will be managed in full conformance with the BRDHRCET NCA RMP and the WD RMP.

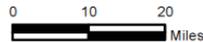
The BLM manages the surface and subsurface of federal lands under its jurisdiction and, in some cases, has administrative duties for mineral activities on lands managed by other federal agencies or on private split-estate lands. In addition, the WD administers certain resources and resource uses (such as grazing, wild horses, and wildlife) on allotments and HMAs outside the WD administrative boundary through memorandums of understanding with other BLM administrative offices. For example, portions of the Bullhead Allotment and Little Owyhee Allotment are located within the administrative boundary of the Elko District. Although these areas extend beyond the WD administrative border, they are included in this RMP’s decision area (Figure 1-3). The WD RMP’s decision area therefore includes all lands identified within this RMP’s planning area, as well as these outlying allotments.

1.3 DECISION

The decision is hereby made to approve the RMP (Chapter 2) for the WD. The decisions included in this ROD and RMP supersede and replace the two land use plans: the Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan (MFP) and the Sonoma-Gerlach Management Framework Plan



No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.

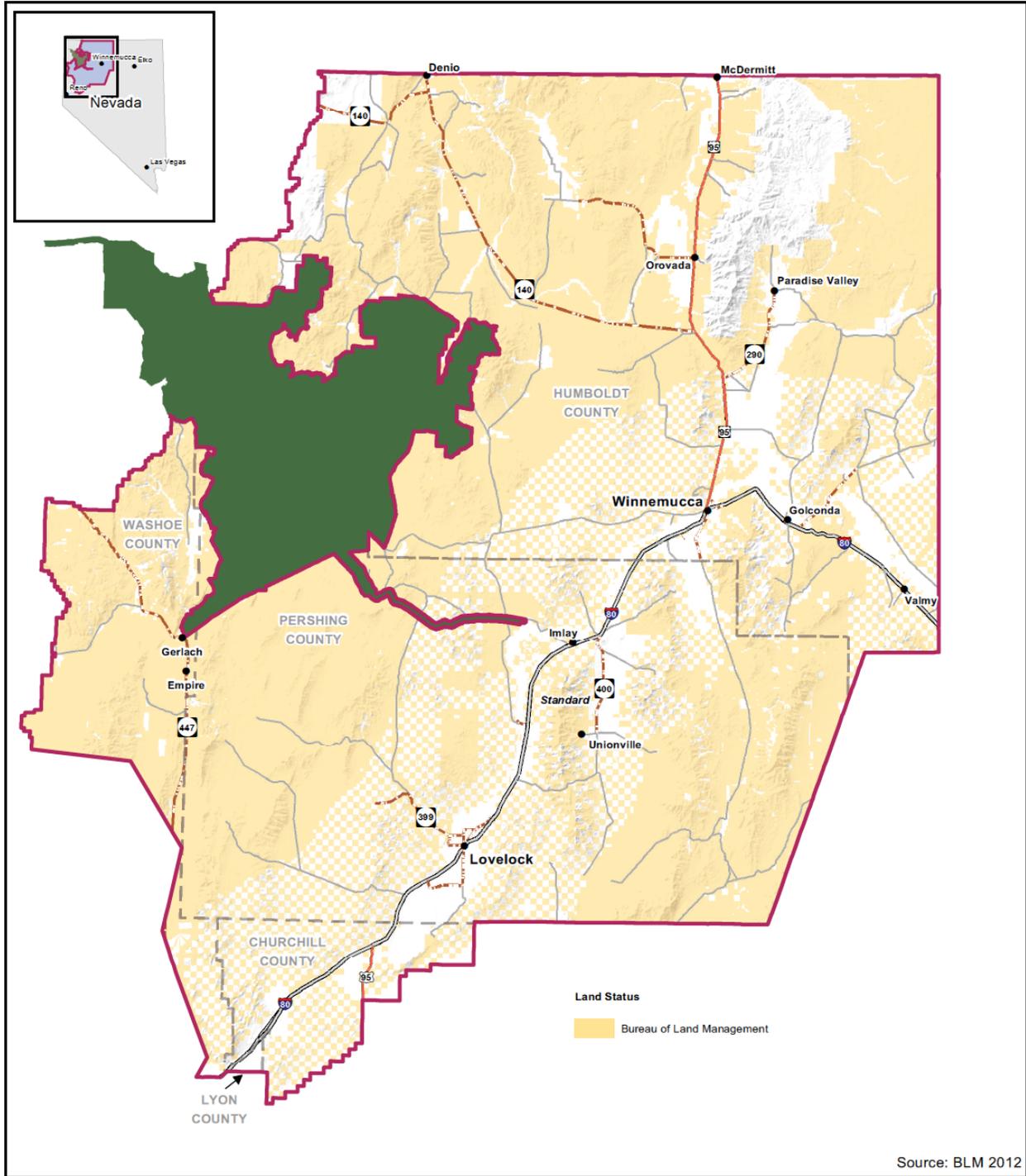


Legend
 [Solid line] BLM Winnemucca District Administrative Boundary
 [Dashed line] County Boundaries

● Towns
 U.S. Highway
 U.S. Interstate
 County Road
 State Highway

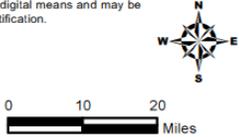
Winnemucca District RMP Administrative Area

Northwest Nevada
Figure 1-1



Source: BLM 2012

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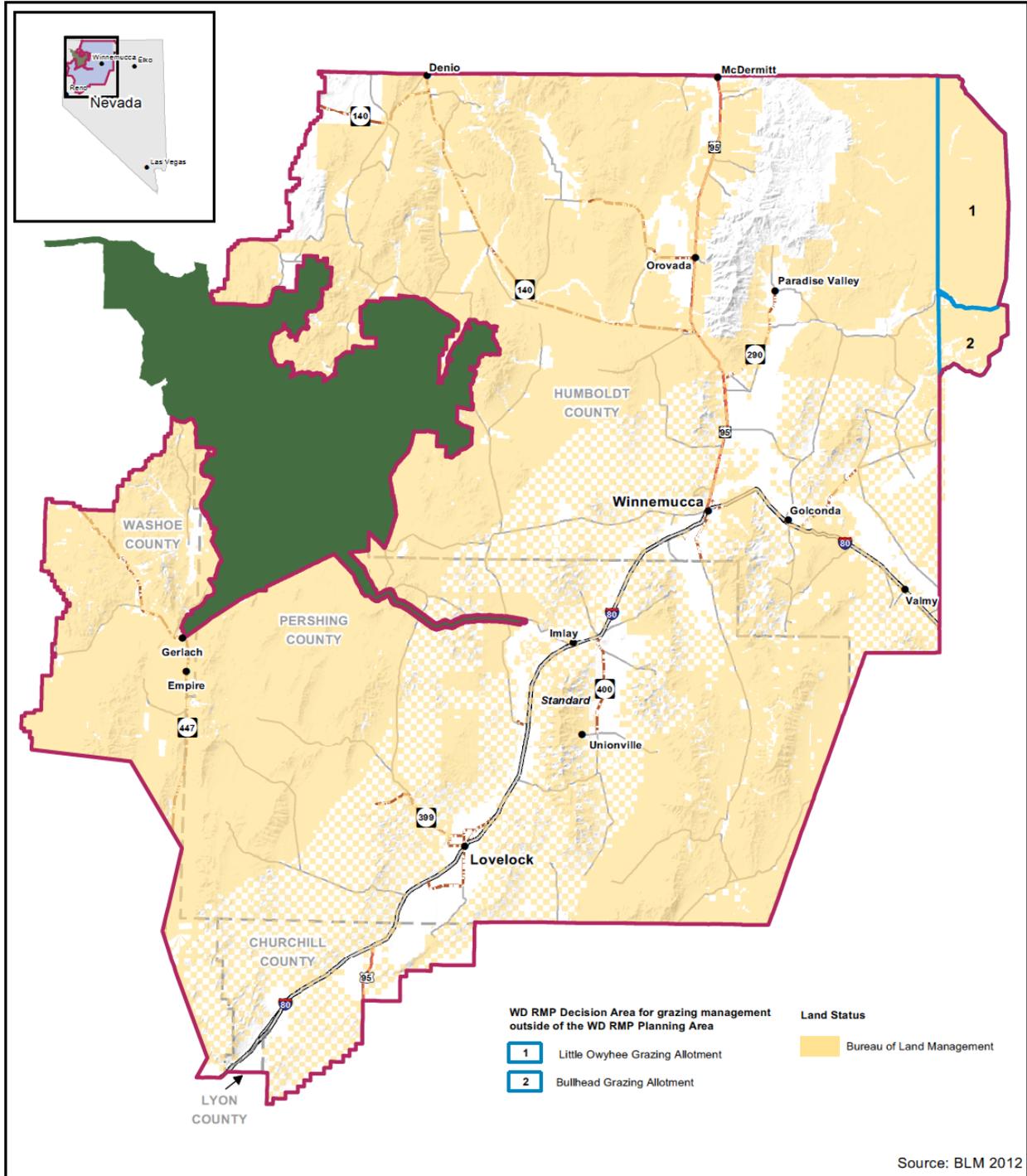
Legend

- BLM Winnemucca RMP Planning Area
- Black Rock/High Rock NCA RMP Area
- County Boundaries
- Towns
- U.S. Highway
- U.S. Interstate
- County Road
- State Highway

Winnemucca District RMP Planning Area

Northwest Nevada

Figure 1-2



Source: BLM 2012

No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.



Legend

- BLM Winnemucca RMP Decision Area
- Black Rock/High Rock NCA RMP Area
- County Boundaries
- Towns
- U.S. Highway
- U.S. Interstate
- County Road
- State Highway

Winnemucca District RMP Decision Area

Northwest Nevada
Figure 1-3

(MFP), and a 1999 Land Use Plan Amendment that amended both MFPs for land tenure adjustments. This ROD and RMP become effective on the date this ROD is signed.

The BLM prepared the RMP under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) (43 United States Code [U.S.C.] 1701 et seq.) and other applicable laws. The BLM prepared an EIS in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347) as amended (NEPA), and BLM planning regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 1601 et seq.). The land use decisions provide overall direction for management of resources and resource uses in the Winnemucca District planning area. Land use plan decisions are expressed as goals and objectives (desired outcomes), allowable uses, and management actions anticipated to achieve desired outcomes. Land use decisions made by this ROD and RMP are provided in Chapter 2, “Resource Management Plan,” of this document.

Although decisions identified in the RMP are final and effective upon signing of this ROD, they generally require additional implementation decision steps before on-the-ground activities can begin. Subsequent NEPA analysis will be conducted, as necessary, for such implementation decisions.

1.3.1 Summary of Approved Management Decisions

Listed below are the key management decisions in the approved RMP:

Water Resources

The BLM will manage priority watersheds containing threatened and endangered species habitat as no surface disturbance and no surface occupancy to protect existing and potential threatened and endangered species habitat. The BLM will also manage priority watersheds containing municipal water supplies as avoidance areas to protect municipal water supplies.

Wildlife and Special Status Species

The BLM designates priority wildlife habitats in accordance with the Program/Resource-Specific Decision Guidance in Appendix C of the Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-I). The RMP designates five priority wildlife habitat areas (Figure 2-3, Appendix A). These areas will be managed to achieve desired population and habitat conditions for wildlife, including a number of sensitive and threatened species, by applying use restrictions and/or mitigation measures.

Several factors went into the determination of priority wildlife habitat areas. As a starting point, with cooperation from Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), important Population Management Unit (PMU) areas were included in the Draft and Proposed RMP as designated priority wildlife habitat areas, preliminary priority sage-grouse habitat (PPH), and preliminary general sage-grouse habitat (PGH). These areas contain some of the most important habitat remaining for Greater sage-grouse (GSG) and other important wildlife. Many of these areas are also within the Healthy Land Initiative (HLI) boundary. The HLI is a cooperative conservation effort to restore important wildlife habitat on a landscape scale. In particular, the priority wildlife areas fall within the HLI Oregon–Idaho–Nevada shrub steppe landscape project area. These areas are also inhabited by the threatened species Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT), pygmy rabbit, and several sensitive plant species. Priority wildlife areas were also delineated because all provide nesting, summer and winter habitat for GSG and contain areas with high lek densities. In some areas within the WD RMP planning area, the

priority wildlife habitat areas also overlap with preliminary priority habitat areas, data, and maps for GSG identified in the Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Amendment (GSG Land Use Plan Amendment). The WD RMP provides resource management actions for maintaining, protecting, improving, and restoring GSG habitat. All priority wildlife habitat areas contain important resource values for other wildlife and many contain important habitat for sensitive and threatened and endangered species. The following PMU boundaries correspond to priority habitat areas designated by the approved RMP: Massacre (north – adjacent to Black Rock PMU), Black Rock, Pine Forest, Lone Willow, and Santa Rosa.

The GSG Land Use Plan Amendment is also considering amendments to the WD RMP. The GSG Land Use Plan Amendment and EIS will fully analyze a range of alternatives for GSG conservation, including recommendations from the December 2011 National Technical Team (NTT) Report consistent with BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2012-044. The BLM expects to make a comprehensive set of decisions for managing GSG on lands administered by the WD in the Record of Decision for the GSG Land Use Plan Amendment.

As noted above, the WD RMP provides resource management actions for maintaining, protecting, improving, and restoring GSG habitat. In addition, until the GSG ROD is signed, management of activities in sage-grouse habitat will continue to protect GSG habitat under the interim management policy, Instruction Memorandum (IM) (WO-IM-2012-043). This IM provides guidance on the protection of un-fragmented habitats, minimization of habitat loss and fragmentation, and management of habitats in order to maintain, enhance or restore conditions that meet GSG life history needs. Specifically, this policy provides interim conservation policies and procedures to be applied to ongoing and proposed authorizations and activities that affect the GSG and its habitat.

Wild Horse and Burro

The BLM will adjust HMA boundaries (Figure 2-5, Appendix A) to existing fences or topological barriers where these features act as a physical boundary. These boundaries will not expand beyond original HA (Figure 2-4, Appendix A) boundaries and will be located where little loss of HMA area would occur, including HMAs within the NCA. These fences and barriers include:

- Black Rock East (north) – fence;
- Black Rock West and Warm Springs Canyon – fence;
- Buffalo Hills – topological barriers;
- Calico Mountains and Warm Springs Canyon – topological barriers;
- Fox and Lake Range – fence;
- Jackson Mountain – fence (Desert Valley Allotment);
- Kamma Mountains – fence;
- Lava Beds – fence;
- McGee Mountain – fence;
- Nightingale– fence; and
- Seven Troughs – fence; and
- Snowstorms Mountains-fence.

Wildland Fire Ecology

The BLM will manage 110,167 acres as conditional suppression areas where fire may be used to improve or provide habitat or other resource benefits.

Visual Resource Management

The BLM will manage visual resources on BLM lands under the following VRM class designations (Figure 2-7, Appendix A):

- Class I – 418,201 acres;
- Class II – 2,793,312 acres;
- Class III - 3,073,906 acres; and
- Class IV - 961,504 acres.

In December of 2014 the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) designated the Pine Forest Range Wilderness (see Wilderness section below). Some areas were added to what was the Blue Lakes Wilderness Study Area, while some areas were released from further study in the Alder Creek WSA. The acres listed here for Class I reflect the change in designation. The areas released will be inventoried to determine appropriate VRM classification.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

During the RMP process, citizen groups nominated five areas as having wilderness characteristics. The WD reviewed these areas and determined four of them met the criteria for identification of lands with wilderness characteristics as outlined in BLM Manual 6310 – Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory on BLM Lands (2012). Two additional units meeting the criteria were identified during the inventory process for a lands acquisition. The BLM also determined during this planning effort that one unit, previously evaluated for wilderness characteristics during the Ruby Pipeline project contain wilderness characteristics.

BLM Manual 6320 – Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the BLM Land Use Planning Process (2012) – includes three potential outcomes for the agency to consider when examining options for managing lands with wilderness characteristics. The agency may 1) manage lands with an emphasis on other multiple uses as a priority over protecting wilderness characteristics; 2) manage lands with an emphasis on other multiple uses while applying management restrictions such as conditions of use or mitigation measures; or 3) manage lands to protect wilderness characteristics as a priority over other multiple uses. For the seven units BLM identifies during the inventory process as containing wilderness characteristics, the decision is to manage primarily for other multiple use while maintaining the areas wilderness character and applying appropriate mitigation measures at the project level after the appropriate level site-specific NEPA analysis. The BLM's analysis shows that the wilderness character of these areas will be maintained through management prescriptions in the RMP for other resource uses. These prescriptions include but are not limited to: visual resource classifications, rights-of-way avoidance; fluid mineral leasing stipulations of controlled surface use or no surface occupancy. Implementation and effectiveness monitoring, as described in section 1.8, will be part of routine plan evaluations. Consistent with applicable policies for lands with wilderness characteristics, including BLM Manuals 6310 and 6320, the WD will conduct inventories for lands with wilderness characteristics after the ROD is signed in

areas not inventoried during this planning process, and, if warranted, will initiate a land use planning process to address management changes to lands in the planning area. Areas that were not inventoried during this planning process that are subsequently found to have wilderness characteristics through later inventories will be evaluated through project-level NEPA analysis.

Livestock Grazing

The BLM makes 398,860 AUMs of livestock forage (at current permitted levels) available for grazing. Any adjustments increasing or decreasing AUMs will be made using a combination of monitoring data, field observations, ecological site inventory or other data in order to make progress towards or achieve resource objectives and standards for rangeland health.

The BLM designates 8,016,754 acres as available to livestock grazing (including 823,483 acres managed within the NCA) (Figure 2-8, Appendix A) and designates 319,328 acres closed to livestock grazing (including 192,612 acres managed within the NCA) (Figure 2-9, Appendix A). The following areas will be closed to livestock grazing: Old Gunnery Range, Smoke Creek Desert, Rose Creek, Dolly Hayden (north of Ballard-Sweeney Fence), Thomas Creek (west of Westmoreland Fence), Mahogany Creek Enclosure, Water Canyon Enclosure, Oreana, Reymundo Parcel (closed until Pole Creek meets proper functioning condition [PFC], and then the Reymundo Parcel will be incorporated into the Crowley Creek and Pole Creek allotments), Green Saddle Estates, and on BLM parcels along I-80 between the ROW fence and the railroad fence.

Minerals

The BLM will manage areas for saleable minerals as either open with standard stipulations, open with standard and special stipulations, open to government entities only, or closed. Areas for fluid and solid mineral leasing will be managed as open with standard stipulations, open with special stipulations, open with no surface occupancy, or closed. Areas for locatable mineral claims will be managed as open with proposed operations subject to standard conditions, open with proposed operations subject to special mitigations, or withdrawn from mineral entry.

Recreation

The BLM designates and will manage four Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA) in the WD – Nightingale, Winnemucca, Pine Forest, and Granite Range SRMAs. The BLM designates 26,345 acres as closed, 6,900,236 acres as limited, and 288,105 acres as open to OHV travel (Figures 2-23 and 2-24, Appendix A). Acres reflect areas recently designated as the Pine Forest Wilderness.

Lands and Realty

- 1,298,544 acres of public lands are identified as potentially suitable for disposal through sale or exchange (Figure 2-28).
- The BLM will manage 1,773,192 acres as avoidance areas (Figure 2-26, Appendix A) to protect resources. The granting of ROWs in avoidance areas will require special stipulations to mitigate any adverse impacts to resources.
- The BLM will manage 1,330,420 acres as exclusion areas (Figure 2-27, Appendix A) to protect priority wildlife habitat and wildlife populations. Exclusion areas are not available for location of rights-of-way unless, based on specified management criteria; a determination is made by the Authorized Officer.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

The ROD designates the following four ACECs (Figure 2-30, Appendix A):

- Pine Forest (16,431 acres);*
- Stillwater (55,322 acres);
- Raised Bog (42 acres); and
- Osgood Mountains (55 acres).

* Reduction in size of the Pine Forest ACEC is due to the Pine Forest Wilderness designation, addressed below.

These areas will be subject to restrictions and stipulations associated with visual resource management (see Action VRM 1.3); mineral development management (see Actions MR 2.2 [mineral materials], MR 4.2 [fluid mineral leasing], MR 6.2 [solid mineral leasing], and MR 9.3.1 [locatable minerals]); and lands and realty management (see Action LR 7.1 [communication sites]).

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The WD assessed 165 drainages and identified 13 streams (approximately 115 miles) as potentially eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation. Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) values were based on scenic and recreational qualities for the majority of the potentially eligible streams. Several were identified as having LCT habitat. The stream segments meeting all three ORV values for scenic, recreational, and LCT habitat were Crowley and Washburn Creeks. The N. Fork of the Little Humboldt River contained geological and pre-historical values in addition to the scenic and recreational qualities. None of the evaluated segments are suitable under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. ORV values will be maintained through management prescriptions based on other resource uses. These prescriptions include but are not limited to: visual resource classifications, rights-of-way exclusion; fluid mineral leasing stipulations of controlled surface use or no surface occupancy, etc. Implementation and effectiveness monitoring, as described in section 1.8, will be part of routine plan evaluations.

1.3.2 What the Record of Decision and RMP Provide

The approved RMP provides overall direction for management of all resources on BLM-administered lands. Many land use plan decisions are implemented or become effective upon publication of the ROD for the approved RMP. Such decisions were attained using the planning process found in 43 CFR 1600 and guide future land management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions. When presented to the public as proposed decisions, land use plan decisions can be protested to the BLM Director; however, they are not appealable to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

Land use plan decisions represent the desired outcomes and the actions needed to achieve them. The RMP is the summation of desired future conditions, land use allocations, special designations, and management actions, along with the associated administrative actions and standard operating procedures that represent day-to-day actions.

Brief descriptions of the types of land use plan decisions are presented below.

Desired Future Conditions

Land use plans express desired future conditions as outcomes in terms of specific goals, standards, and objectives for resources and/or uses. They direct the BLM actions in most effectively complying with legal mandates, numerous regulatory responsibilities, national policy, BLM State Director guidance, and other resource or social needs. Land use plans are designed to most effectively meet these desired future conditions through land use allocations, special designations, or management actions.

Land Use Allocations (Allowable Uses)

Allowable, restricted, or prohibited uses define land use allocations that identify lands where uses are allowed, including any restrictions needed to meet goals and objectives. Areas may be identified to exclude specific uses in order to protect resource values. Examples of these decisions include areas to be managed for priority wildlife habitat; and management zones where certain types of resource use or facilities will or will not be permitted. Land use allocations have geographic boundaries. It is common for specific resource or use allocations to overlap with other resource or use allocations.

Special Designations

Special designations include those that are designated by Congress for special protection, such as wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, or national historic or scenic trails. Such designations are not land use plan decisions. However, recommendations for designation can be made to Congress at the land use plan level. Congress may then act on these recommendations at a later time.

Administrative designations made by the BLM (e.g., designating Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) or watchable wildlife viewing sites) are also considered special designations and can be made in the land use plan.

Management Actions

Management actions include those provisions that help in meeting the established goals and objectives, and include measures that will be applied to guide day-to-day activities on public lands to meet desired future conditions. Management actions are categorized as actions to achieve desired outcomes and may include but are not limited to stipulations, guidelines, best management practices, and design features.

Administrative Actions

Administrative actions are not land use plan decisions. They include day-to-day activities conducted by the BLM, often required by FLPMA. BLM administrative actions do not require NEPA analysis or a written decision by a responsible official to be accomplished. Examples of administrative actions include mapping, surveying, inventorying, monitoring, and collecting needed information through research and studies. Administrative actions also include developing and sustaining partnerships to achieve desired future conditions.

This ROD serves as the final decision establishing the land use plan decisions outlined in the RMP and is effective on the date it is signed. No further administrative remedies are available for these land use plan decisions.

1.3.3 What the Record of Decision/RMP Does Not Provide

The approved RMP does not contain decisions for actions outside the jurisdiction of the BLM. In addition, many decisions are not appropriate at this level of planning and are not included in the ROD. Examples of these types of decisions include:

- *Statutory requirements.* The decision will not change the BLM's responsibility to comply with applicable laws and regulations.
- *National policy.* The decision will not change the BLM's obligation to conform to current or future national policy.
- *Funding levels and budget allocations.* These are determined annually at the national level and are beyond the control of the field office.

1.3.4 Implementation Decisions

Implementation decisions (or activity-level decisions) are management actions tied to a specific location that take action to implement land use plan decisions. Implementation decisions generally constitute the BLM's final approval allowing on-the-ground actions to proceed and require appropriate site-specific planning and NEPA analysis. Such decisions may be incorporated into implementation plans (activity or project plans) or may exist as stand-alone decisions.

This RMP does not contain implementation decisions. Future activity-level plans will address the implementation of the RMP. Implementation decisions and management actions that require additional site-specific project planning, as funding becomes available, will require further environmental analysis.

1.3.5 Protest Resolution

The BLM received eleven protest letters during the protest period provided for the proposed land use plan decisions in the Proposed RMP/ Final EIS in accordance with 43 CFR Part 1610.5-2. Protesting parties are listed below:

Protester	Organization
Darin Bloyed	Pershing County Commissioners
Randi DeSoto	Summit Lake Paiute Tribe
Katie Fite	Western Watersheds Project
Don Jones	Nevada State Grazing Board N2 District
Mike Stremmler	Pershing County Natural Resource Committee
Suzanne Roy	American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign
John DeLong	DeLong Ranches, Inc.
Suzanne Roy	American Wild Horse Preservation Campaign
Mike and Barb Stremmler	
James Buell	
Jim Estill	

The following are summaries of issues raised by protestants.

- Resources
 - Air Quality
 - Inadequate air quality analysis with regard to adverse effects of dust and airborne soil erosion caused by livestock, adverse effects of dust and airborne soil erosion caused by livestock, dust erosion from increased OHV and other playa disturbances, and measures to prevent or minimize dust.
 - Inadequate analysis of Class I airsheds and of haze, and ways to minimize it.
 - Unnatural air pollution from agency prescribed burns in both spring and fall that cause health problems, mar visual settings and recreational uses, and promote cheatgrass.
 - Lack of analysis and consideration of the amount or degree of herbicide use and risk associated with that use
 - Soil
 - No current information on the rates, levels, and causes of soil erosion, and no identification where soil horizons have been lost and the level and severity of desertification.
 - Water Resources (including Nevada State Water Law and water rights)
 - Violation of Nevada State water law by implying Nevada State water law allows for the acquisition of water rights for WH&B. Need to clearly discuss if the water provisions for horses and burros extends to pumped wells or water resources on unfenced private property, and provide sufficient justification or compensation for the proposed use of water resources to water WH&B on private land.
 - Compliance with Pershing County's Natural Resource Plan, existing state water rights, and Executive Order 12630.
 - Insufficient baseline data on water resources to make informed decisions, and lack of adequate data and information on mining impacts on aquifers, stream flows, springs, riparian areas, and effect of priority wildlife designations on surface water resources and streams.
 - Need cumulative impacts on lentic resources.
 - Vegetation
 - Lack of compliance with Land Use Planning Policy (H-1601-1) by not establishing desired outcomes, allowable uses, or management actions for sage scrub and salt scrub vegetation; invasive vegetation; other upland vegetation; and biological crusts.
 - Inadequate data for analysis with respect to herbicide treatments.
 - Riparian
 - Need to follow BLM technical recommendations in conducting riparian assessment its use of Multiple Indicator Monitoring (Technical Reference 1737-23) and Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) (Technical Reference 1737-9).

- Inadequate baseline riparian resource data (including characteristics of streams, stream brooks, meadows, and lentic areas), for complete, adequate environmental analysis of impacts to riparian resources from livestock grazing, as mandated by the NEPA.
 - Special Status Species
 - Prohibit or restrict livestock disturbance when LCT and other aquatic species may have young populations present and address the impact of removing livestock and beaver recovery to enhance LCT recovery.
 - Inventory and map whitebark pine occurrences.
 - Provide adequate protections for pygmy rabbit habitat.
 - Provide an adequate baseline for habitat quality and quantity for rare plant and animal populations.
 - Sufficiently address the risk of contact between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and goats.
 - Greater Sage Grouse (GSG)
 - No baseline discussion or data for sage grouse habitat and populations to understand the impacts to commodity allocations and mitigation.
 - No discussion of priority or special habitat areas as analyzed by the Nevada Department of Wildlife, specific crucial habitat areas and inadequate analysis for seasonal ranges or local population use. Lack of substantive discussion of existing sage grouse studies and reports.
 - No analysis of the risk to habitats from potential development under the programmatic solar EIS.
 - Discrepancies for sage grouse habitat where there are no sage grouse leks present.
 - Inadequate discussion of the cumulative impacts to sagebrush and sage grouse habitat following wildfires in the region.
 - Wild Horses and Burros
 - Conversion of free roaming herds to non-reproducing herds involving sterilization methods is illegal under the Wild Horse Act. Other BLM proposals to slow population growth are not justified and at odds with the NAS study.
 - Impacts to burros in McGee Mtn. HMA may be significant in the future.
 - Inconsistency with National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Study finding proposed AML for burros is not large enough to maintain genetic health of the animals, and failure to analyze direct and cumulative impacts of conversion of wild horses to burros AMLs and vice versa.
 - HMAs
 - Inadequate cumulative effects analysis for Blue Wing/7 Troughs HMA.
 - Reduction of HMA acreage in favor of livestock grazing not justified, no scientific basis for zeroing out wild horses in an HMA, and failure to specify losses to each HMA.

- Several mathematical acreage miscalculations.
- Consolidation of HMAs not based on science.
- AMLs
 - Methods used for establishing, monitoring, and adjusting AMLs are "not transparent to stakeholders, supported by scientific information, or amenable to adaptation with new information and environmental and social change".
 - No scientific basis for allocating forage and habitat resources. Allocations in adjusting AML with wild horses is confusing and unclear as to what will occur; there is no systematic science based guidance for developing an AML BLM must provide a credible rationale for how it arrives at the AMLs in question in the first place.
- Fire and Fuels
 - Inadequate analysis of the effects of fuels management in the Winnemucca PRMP/FEIS. Fire discussions are based on outdated or insufficient data.
- Wilderness/Wilderness Characteristics
 - Adequately address light pollution/night skies.
 - Need to accurately illustrate lands with wilderness characteristics that were identified in the Ruby pipeline figures.
- Special Designations
 - ACECs
 - Need to consider ACEC management policy (BLM Manual 1613) and the NEPA process when considering establishment or management of ACECs, specifically with respect to Montana Mountains, Bilk Creek and the Stillwater range.
 - Non-compliance with NEPA by not fully disclosing all nominated ACECs in the EIS analysis and not considering ACEC nominations made for the Regional Sage Grouse EIS.
 - Wild and Scenic Rivers
 - Specify the federal actions related to implementation of Action D-WSR 1.1 and its effects on permitted livestock grazing. The information on p. 2-275 is confusing and contradictory.
- Resource Uses
 - Mineral Resources (including Valid Existing Rights)
 - Address aquifer drawdown effects and cumulative effects related to mining activity.
 - Stream right-of-way policies and plans in Alternative D conflict with Pershing County's Natural Resource Plan. Protections for bats, which may have populations in existing or active mine claims in the region, place restrictions on valid existing rights.

- Livestock Grazing (including conflicts with Livestock Grazing)
 - Violation of the Taylor Grazing Act by proposing to close allotments identified as "chiefly valuable for grazing" and by providing for use restrictions in certain areas.
 - Failure to comply with NEPA in both alternatives development and impacts analysis.
 - Failure to follow its implementing regulations (43 CFR 1610.4–9) and the Land Use Planning Handbook by not outlining a monitoring process or management actions for the protection of native forbs.
 - Lack of consistency with guidelines set forth in the 2006 Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook, particularly with respect to monitoring and setting RMP objectives.
 - Lack of clarity with respect to the mechanism for developing new stock waters, and lack of an adequate rationale for closing portions of the planning area to livestock grazing.
 - The BLM favors livestock grazing over WHB and is silent on the economic value of WH&B in Chapter 4 of the FEIS, despite economic impact of citizens who pay money to view these animals in the wild.
- Lands and Realty (including RS2477)
 - Misleading the public by only showing the lands for exchange or sale and not the potential transfer land allocation, and thus not the full scale of the land loss the RMP would allow.
- Socioeconomics
 - Flawed information with regard to its economic analysis; need to consider the costs of resource use activities such as livestock grazing allocations on other resources, and clearly discuss the costs of restoration actions on the habitats or watersheds for sensitive species.
- Tribal Interests
 - Address issues related to the transfer of approximately 841 acres that are of critical environmental and cultural concern to the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe.
- EIS Process
 - NEPA Process
 - Consistency with Other State, County, or Local Plans
 - Discuss FLPMA conformance in regard to proposal in Alternatives B, C, and D to change land status designations for locatable mineral claims, Pershing County's Natural Resource Plan with specific concerns on potential reductions in grazing allotments, residual forage requirements, and water resource development.
 - Stream right-of-way policies and plans in Alternative D that conflict with Pershing County's Natural Resource Plan. Also, the protections for bats, which may have populations in existing or active mine claims in the region, place restrictions on valid existing rights.

- Provide a strategic plan and template for conducting ecological restoration on degraded lands within or near blocks of remaining better condition lands.
- Cumulative Effects
 - Analyze the tremendous ecological footprint from livestock water developments across Winnemucca lands.
 - Analyze indirect and cumulative impacts of overlapping sheep and cattle use in the same allotments, of private lands grazing actions, livestock facilities, or grazing impacts and degradation of adjacent BLM lands that impact watersheds, sage-grouse seasonal habitats and populations, pygmy rabbit habitats, big game seasonal habitats and populations, etc.
- Public Participation
 - Numerous changes from the DRMP/DEIS that require additional assessment and public input, including emphasis on the causal factor for not attaining PFC, selecting key areas apparently only in riparian areas.
 - The breeding season of March 1 through August 31 (as determined by species); dates were changed from April 15 through July 15 to March 1 through August 31.
 - Language to protect cliff nesting sites and other raptor nests was not included as Alternative D in the DRMP.
 - The “Maintain or improve existing vegetative cover, litter, biological soil crusts, and vegetation as appropriate for soil type for native vegetative communities” language was not Included in the DRMP/EIS
 - Language with regard to implementing permit stipulations and mitigation measures.
 - Maintain, improve, protect, conserve and restore native forbs that are similar in structure and composition to the site potential” language to emphasize native forbs.
 - Responses to many comments are inadequate. Examples are cited covering WHB, water developments, land health standards, and scientific references, which were ignored almost entirely.
- Anti-Deficiency Act
 - Should have extended or reopened the protest period due to the Federal government shutdown, which blocked public access to important policy and scientific documents and hindered meaningful review of the PRMP/FEIS.

The protest letters are available on the project website, along with the BLM Director’s protest resolution report at http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo/blm_information/rmp.html.

The BLM Director resolved the protests without making significant changes to the Proposed RMP, though minor clarifications were made and have been explained in the Considerations, Modifications, and Clarifications section below. In accordance with 43 CFR 1610.5-2(b), the decision of the BLM Director is the final decision of the Department of the Interior and there are no further administrative remedies available.

1.4 CONSIDERATIONS, MODIFICATIONS, AND CLARIFICATIONS FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATION OF PROPOSED RMP AND FINAL EIS

During preparation of the approved RMP, minor changes were made to the Proposed RMP to correct errors and to clarify decisions. Clarifications and corrections made since the Proposed RMP and hereby adopted by this ROD and RMP are discussed below. The management action number cited below are those used in the Proposed RMP and Final EIS.

In March 2013, USFWS published the Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Objectives: Final Report. Following the release of the Conservation Objectives Team Report (COT Report), the BLM thoroughly analyzed the report and the science on which it was based. The WD RMP was one of the plans identified during the development of the GSG Land Use Plan Amendment and EIS as one that will be amended as a result of the decision on that EIS.

Vegetation-Range

1. Actions VR 3.1, VRW 1.4, LG 1.3 *et seq.*, LG 1.5 in the Proposed RMP/EIS: Monitoring is to be completed by the BLM, although cooperative monitoring efforts with the permittee will be encouraged. Monitoring data could be the basis for changes in management tools employed to meet resource needs. The available tools will be identified in the selected management action. For example, Action LG 1.3.1: BLM will determine if cause for non-attainment of standards (WHB vs livestock grazing) then implement appropriate action (adjust AUM/AML or season of use, install fences, etc.). Changes in management tools used will be on a case-by-case basis.

Vegetation-Wetlands/Riparian

2. Action VRW 1.1.1 in the Proposed RMP/EIS has been revised to reflect that adaptive management will occur on a site specific and case-by-case basis.

Fish and Wildlife

3. Action D-FW 4 in the Proposed RMP/EIS: April 15-July 15 in the DEIS was changed to March 1 – August 31 in the FEIS. The BLM must comply with the MBTA. The BLM does not have authority to permit activities that lead to noncompliance with the Laws of the United States (see DRMP at Section 3.2.9.4), nor does the BLM control the nesting seasons of migratory birds protected under U.S. law. Moreover, as discussed elsewhere in this report, the WD planning area is much too expansive to allow for complete and continuous inventory of all resources, including the presence of migratory birds. Different species breed and nest at different times in different micro-environments, thus a range of possible breeding and nesting times is appropriate.

Special Status Species/Sage Grouse

4. The WD received several comments regarding sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat management during public review of the Draft RMP/EIS and during the protest period for the Proposed RMP/FEIS. The WD RMP was one of the plans identified during the development of the GSG Land Use Plan Amendment and EIS as one that will be amended as a result of the decision on that EIS. This was presented to the public in the Notice of Intent (Federal Register Notice #76 FR 77008 12/09/2011). A copy of this Federal Register

Notice is available on the Nevada/California Greater Sage Grouse website: https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/lup/21152/29302/30502/NOI_2011-31652_.pdf. ACEC nominations are being analyzed in the GSG Land Use Plan Amendment and EIS.

One issue identified pertained to sage-grouse habitat mapping. The WD RMP relied on data from NDOW during the development of the RMP. Proposed management actions focused on habitat at the Population Management Unit (PMU) level. This provided the WD a snapshot of sage-grouse habitat needed to conduct the analysis. Over time, more data was collected from wildlife management agencies. IMs 2012-039 and 2012-043 require the BLM to consider habitat maps and updates when considering authorizing activities in sage-grouse habitats. The GSG Land Use Plan Amendment and EIS considers a comprehensive set of data. During the life of the WD RMP, data for management of GSG. During the life of the WD RMP, data will be reviewed during the five-year evaluation cycles and management can be revised through the plan amendment process as needed.

Wild Horse and Burro

5. Proposed RMP/FEIS Action D-WHB 1.2 was corrected to reflect that the boundary changes will include the Snowstorm Mountains fence (as identified in the Draft EIS).
6. The analysis regarding boundary changes is clarified as follows:

The Jackson Mountains HMA is 283,000 acres. Removal of 18,800 acres is equivalent to about 6% of the HMA. The WHB section was revised from draft to final based on public comments (see for example comments from NGO-AWI 5 & 6) and subsequent internal reviews at the district and state office levels. Note however that the management action identifying the Jackson Mountains HMA as an HMA where boundaries would be adjusted did not change between draft and final EIS.

Action D-WHB 1.4 in the Proposed RMP/FEIS would combine the Black Rock East and West HMAs. This would result in the Black Rock HMA and would be a total of 183,520 acres (FEIS p. 4-355). This would be a net loss of 3,080 acres or approximately 2% of the total between the two HMAs. This was not specifically stated in the Proposed RMP/FEIS.

The total acres for Shawave and Nightingale HMAs is 183,100 acres (see FEIS Table 3-19, p. 3-83). The new HMA would comprise 139,551 acres (FEIS p. 4-355). The net loss would be 43,549 or 24% of the original acres. FEIS page 4-355 states “this action along with the proposed boundary changes above would return approximately 43,969 acres to HA status.” This is a typographical error; it should have been the 3,080 acres.

7. In analyzing the impacts of the alternatives for wild horse and burro management, the analysis in the FEIS mentioned under Alternative C1 that structural improvements would not be used to protect the riparian areas from hot season livestock grazing. (PRMP/FEIS, page 4-336 and page 4-507). The proposals under management actions C-WHB 2.1 and C-VRW 1.2 (both in the DEIS and FEIS) did not allow for structural improvements (e.g.,

fences). Proposed action C-LG 1.2 allowed for structural improvements and was therefore inconsistent with the proposed management actions under WHB and VRW for Alternative C.

The two referenced sections of the impacts analysis referred to impacts from management actions specifically for vegetation management, not specifically from livestock grazing management. Regardless, the contradiction is confusing. The assumptions in the impacts analysis were correct. The management action outlined in Proposed RMP/FEIS Action C-LG 1.2 should have been corrected to reflect that fence construction was not one of the management tools available under Alternative C.

Cultural Resources

8. Proposed RMP/FEIS Action CR 2.1.1 was revised to clarify fluid and solid mineral leasing would not be allowed in cultural sites listed on the NRHP. Sites considered to be eligible for listing on the NRHP would be subject to a no surface occupancy stipulation.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

9. Lands with wilderness characteristics section was moved from the special designations resources, now located after the cave and karst section. Lands with wilderness characteristics is not a designation made, either congressionally or during the land use planning process. These are areas identified as meeting wilderness characteristics criteria of size (at least 5,000 contiguous acres of public lands), naturalness, and opportunities for primitive recreation or solitude. The presence or absence of these criteria are determined through the wilderness characteristics inventory process. The WD has not completed the inventory process for the entire district. The WD will continue to inventory public lands within its administrative jurisdiction.

Livestock Grazing

10. In reference to Proposed RMP/FEIS Action LG 1.2: In analyzing the impacts of the alternatives on wild horse and burros, the analysis in the FEIS mentioned under Alternative C1 that structural improvements would not be used to protect the riparian areas from hot season livestock grazing. (PRMP/FEIS, page 4-336 and page 4-507). The proposals under management actions C-WHB 2.1 and C-VRW 1.2 (both in the DEIS and FEIS) did not allow for structural improvements (e.g. fences). Proposed RMP/FEIS Action C-LG 1.2 allowed for structural improvements and was therefore inconsistent with the proposed management actions under WHB and VRW for Alternative C.

Alternative C-LG 1.2 should have been corrected to reflect that fence construction was not one of the management tools available under Alternative C.

Alternative D-LG 1.2 was meant to include the uses of fences under structural improvements.

11. In reference to Proposed RMP/FEIS Action LG 1.3, the response to public comment received on the Draft EIS is revised. Response to comment L&SA-PCBCC-1 (Appendix M,

Pt. 1, Local & State Agencies-39) and I-Bell-5 (Appendix M, Pt. 11, Individuals-11) is revised as follows:

Alternative D does not propose to close the Humboldt River Ranch parcels. Although Alternative D does not propose to close the entire Humboldt House or Rye Patch allotments, portions within these allotments were proposed to be closed. The I-80 parcels are located within the Rye Patch Allotment (40,019 BLM acres) (incorrectly identified as the “East Rye Patch Allotment” in the response to comments), the Humboldt House Allotment (22,550 BLM acres), and the Coal Canyon-Poker Allotment (97,828 BLM acres). The proposed closure area is 1,573 acres. This would close approximately 3.8% of BLM acres within the Humboldt House Allotment, 1% of BLM acres within the Rye Patch Allotment and less than 1% of BLM acres from the Coal Canyon-Poker Allotment.

12. Action D-LG 5.4 in the Proposed RMP/FEIS was revised between the Draft and Final in order to allow opportunities to develop cooperative agreements with permittees. At the implementation-level, the cooperative agreement process includes developing terms and conditions of the agreement. These terms and conditions will include, for example, how water will be made available to wildlife/wild horses and burros if the BLM has acquired a water right for beneficial use for wildlife. Other conditions of the agreement could include how water will be made available to wildlife/wild horses and burros on allotments that may become unavailable for livestock grazing after the agreement has taken effect. The cooperative agreement process will be subject to its own NEPA analysis which will include impacts to livestock grazing from wild horse and burro use.

If BLM were to acquire any water right, that acquisition would go through a separate NEPA process and the acquisition must be made in accordance with Nevada State laws. Laws in Nevada pertaining to water rights, in general, do not define what is and what is not a beneficial use. To date, the Nevada Revised Statutes do not contain any specific wording regarding wild horses and burros. The Nevada State Engineer has and continues to grant water rights for wild horses and burros to the BLM under the umbrella of wildlife, so long as the place of use is inside an HMA (Ruling #54889). The total amount of water that has generally been approved is based on the AML.

Regulations allow discretionary authorizations of range improvements, but a cooperative agreement is required if an improvement is to be permitted. See 43 CFR 4120.3-2b: “The authorization for all new permanent water developments such as spring developments, wells, reservoirs, stock tanks, and pipelines shall be through cooperative range improvement agreements.”

13. The analysis of impacts to livestock grazing from livestock grazing management contains the following statement:

Under Alternative C, Option 1, where new waters are developed for livestock in big game habitat or HMAs, the permittee will be required to provide water for wildlife and WHB even when livestock are not present.

This statement was made with the assumption that BLM will have acquired a water right for beneficial use for wildlife.

14. Proposed RMP/FEIS Table 3-29 (Number of Allotments and Total Area by Rangeland Health Category). During the protest period it was pointed out that the total of acres for all the categories equaled 5,549,446 acres but the “Total Allotments Assessed” is stated as being 6,361,876 acres. The footnote explains some allotment areas were re-assessed over time, in other words the same areas were counted more than once. These re-assessed acres were included in the total figure.

Minerals

15. Proposed RMP/FEIS Actions MR 4.1.3 and 6.1.3 were revised to clarify the no surface occupancy stipulation for fluid or solid mineral leasing would be applied for cultural sites determined to be eligible for listing on the NRHP.
16. Proposed RMP/FEIS Actions MR 4.2 and 6.2 were revised to clarify cultural sites listed on the NRHP would be closed to fluid or solid mineral leasing.
17. MR 9.1 and 9.3.1 were revised to reflect the change in available areas to locatable mineral development due to the designation of the Pine Forest Wilderness Range (see Wilderness section below).

Recreation

18. The RMP expands the Pine Forest Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) established by the 1982 Paradise-Denio MFP, and adds three Recreation Management Zones (RMZs) within the SRMA (R 8.6.3.1 and 8.6.3.2). Management action R 8.6.3 was revised due to the designation of the Pine Forest Range Wilderness in that management will now be guided by BLM Manual 6340 (Management of Wilderness Areas) instead of BLM Manual 6330 (Management of Wilderness Study Areas).
19. The Blue Lakes and Alder Creek WSAs comprised one of the RMZs, the other two are outside of the WSA (now wilderness) boundaries (see Figure 2-21). Management actions for the Pine Forest Lakes RMZ comply with the Wilderness Act and policies outlined in BLM Manual 6340, and therefore will not be revised at this time. However, boundaries of the RMZs have changed to reflect the boundary of the wilderness designation and management action R 8.6.3.2 has been revised to reflect these changes. The RMZ boundaries may be revised upon completion of the wilderness boundary legal description.
20. The Proposed RMP identified an OHV closure area in the Pine Forest Range (R 10.1). This action has been revised to reflect the wilderness designation. All wilderness areas are closed to motorized use.

Lands and Realty

21. Proposed RMP/FEIS Action LR 2: A discrepancy in acreages between lands identified for retention and disposal was raised during the protest process. A total of 5,930,512 acres were

identified for retention under Alt D. This leaves 1,299,425 acres were identified as being available for disposal. The sum of these is 7,229,938, or rounded of to 7.2 million acres.

Due to the designation of the Pine Forest Range Wilderness, 871 acres were removed from being available for disposal to lands to be retained.

22. Proposed RMP/FEIS Action LR N.2: During the development of the RMP and associated EIS, the mineral withdrawals for Lovelock Cave and McDermitt Station Administrative Site expired. Rights-of-way have been issued for each site, and the BLM intends to pursue renewing these withdrawals. A new petition for withdrawal for the Lovelock Cave has been initiated, but it is still in the early stages of the process. The following Proposed RMP/FEIS management actions were corrected to reflect the intent of the proposed management action relating to withdrawals: LR 10.2, MR 2.2, MR 4.2, MR 6.2, MR 9.2, and CR 3.2.
23. LR 5.2 and LR 5.3 were revised to reflect the recent designation of the Pine Forest Range Wilderness and release of approximately 1,151 acres from further study.

Wilderness

On December 19, 2014 President Barrack Obama signed the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)-Public Law 113-291. A provision-Section 3064 within the NDAA designated approximately 26,000 acres as the Pine Forest Range Wilderness. This new wilderness area is located in the north western part of the district, and is comprised of the Blue Lakes Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and a large portion of the Alder Creek WSA. In addition to designating the wilderness area, the NDAA provides specific direction pertaining to roads and access, withdrawal from mineral entry, wildland fire management, and land exchanges. The NDAA released approximately 1,150 acres from further study around the Alder Creek WSA. The new wilderness will be managed consistent with section 3064 of the NDAA, the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131), and BLM policy implementing the Wilderness Act.

The Pine Forest Range is located within the area identified as priority wildlife habitat (FW 1.3), old growth forest (VF 6), and a watchable wildlife viewing site (WWV 1.3). The Pine Forest Range was also identified as an area for pro-active cultural surveys (CR 3.8). Need and opportunity for the Blue Lakes-Knott Creek by-way will be evaluated (BCB 1.3). These actions will not change as a result of the wilderness designation.

All WSAs and designated wilderness are managed as VRM I, and the wilderness designation does not change this for those areas within the WSAs designated as wilderness. Areas released from further study are located within the Pine Forest ACEC, which is to be managed to meet VRM II objectives. The area released will be inventoried using the VRM system to establish VRM classification (WSA 2.4).

The WSA section of the RMP was revised to reflect the change of Blue Lakes and Alder Creek WSAs. A wilderness management plan will be developed to outline specific guidance for the new wilderness area.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

The PRMP proposed to designate 42,398 acres as the Pine Forest ACEC (ACEC 1.1). Of the proposed ACEC, 25,967 acres are now designated as wilderness. The area of the proposed ACEC outside of the new wilderness will be designated as the pine Forest ACEC. Wilderness management is more protective than prescriptions offered under ACEC designation; therefore the resources located within the wilderness will be afforded a higher level of protection. The WD RMP will designate the remaining portion, 16, 431 acres, as the Pine Forest ACEC. (ACEC 1.1). Management will be implemented as proposed (i.e., closed to mineral material disposal, fluid and solid mineral leasing, and new communications sites; open to locatable minerals with special mitigation; prioritized wildfire response; and VRM Class II).

1.5 OVERVIEW OF ALTERNATIVES PRESENTED IN THE PROPOSED RMP AND FINAL EIS

This section describes the alternatives considered in the WD RMP process. Some were eliminated from detailed study because they did not meet the purpose and need for the proposal or were outside of the technical, legal, or policy constraints of developing a land use plan for public land resources and uses. Four alternatives (A through D) were developed and carried forward for detailed analysis.

Section 2 of the Proposed RMP and Final EIS, *Detailed Description of Alternatives*, described the goals and management actions for each alternative analyzed in detail. Chapter 4 of the Proposed RMP and Final EIS presented the impacts associated with each of the alternatives considered.

1.5.1 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated From Detailed Analysis

The following alternatives were eliminated from detailed study because they did not meet the purpose and need for the proposal or were outside of the technical, legal, or policy constraints of developing a land use plan for public land resources and uses.

Exclusive Use or Protection

Alternatives and general management options proposing exclusive use or maximum development, production, or protection of one resource at the expense of other resources and uses were not considered. FLPMA mandates BLM to manage public lands for multiple use and sustained yield, so certain alternatives have been eliminated from detailed analysis. An example of such an alternative is closing all public lands to multiple uses, such as excluding mineral development or recreation use or managing only for fish, WHB, wildlife, and wilderness values at the exclusion of other resource considerations. In addition, resource conditions do not warrant planning area wide prohibition of any particular use. Alternatives eliminating multiple traditional uses where resource conditions do not justify such measures are not reasonable. Each alternative considered allows for some level of support, protection, or use of all resources present in the planning area. In some instances, the alternatives analyzed in detail do include various considerations for eliminating or maximizing individual resource values or uses in specific areas where conflicts exist.

Designation of All Areas as Either Open or Closed to Off-Highway Vehicle Use

Suggestions to designate all areas on public lands as entirely open for yearlong off-highway vehicle (OHV) use without regard to current travel restrictions or to entirely close lands to OHV use were

considered but dismissed. BLM policy requires public land management to include restrictions to address travel concerns and recreation demands but also to protect resource values.

Elimination of All Wild Horses, Burros, and Herd Management Areas

This alternative would be viable only if the management of wild horses and burros were not possible in any Herd Management Area (HMA) located in the planning area. As this is not the case, this alternative would contravene the intent and letter of the Wild Horse and Burro Act of 1971, which states "... they [wild horses and burros] are considered in the area where presently found as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands" and should be "protected and managed as components of the public lands." This alternative was considered and was dismissed.

1.5.2 Alternative A (No Action or Current Management)

Alternative A, referred to as the No Action Alternative, provided the baseline against which to compare the other alternatives. This alternative would have continued present management practices based on existing land use plans and plan amendments incorporated into the existing plans. Decisions contained in the 1982 Sonoma-Gerlach MFP, the 1982 Paradise-Denio MFP, and the 1999 Lands Amendment would have continued to be implemented. Direction contained in existing laws, regulations, policies, and standards would also have continued to be implemented, sometimes superseding provisions of the 1980 MFPs and the 1999 Lands Amendment. The current levels, methods, and mix of multiple use management of public lands in the WD area would have continued, and resource values would have generally received attention at present levels. The objectives and actions that were associated with Alternative A are presented in Table 2-1 of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Key components of Alternative A were as follows:

- No allowance for conditional fire suppression areas where fire may be used to improve or provide habitat or other resource benefits.
- Continue to manage the Pine Forest Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) (37,259 acres).
- On greater than 93 percent of BLM-administered lands in the WD, continue to allow the public to travel cross-country ("open" designation) with motorized vehicles. On six percent of BLM-administered lands, limit motorized vehicle to designated routes within wilderness study areas (WSA) ("limited" designation).
- On less than one percent of BLM-administered lands, prohibit motorized vehicle travel by the public yearlong ("closed" designation).
- Continue to manage special management areas, which include one 60-acre ACEC at the Osgood Mountains.
- Maintain 3,207,789 acres of BLM-administered lands as available for disposal, based on established criteria identified in the 1999 Paradise-Denio and Sonoma-Gerlach Management Framework Plan Lands Amendment.
- Make available 399,073 AUMs for livestock forage.

1.5.3 Alternative B

Alternative B emphasized resource use (e.g., livestock grazing, energy, and mineral development, and recreation) in the planning area. This alternative would have had the fewest protected areas and restrictions to development and use. Potential impacts on sensitive resources (e.g., soils and sensitive plant habitat) would have been mitigated on a case-by-case basis. Sustainable development concepts were included to maintain economic productivity, especially related to post-use of mining sites. For example, restoration actions that would enhance resource use or commodity production would have been used. Sustainable principles promoted the disposal of public lands that have been developed if it would foster post-operation reuse. The objectives and actions that were associated with Alternative B are presented in Table 2-1 of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Key components of Alternative B included the following:

- Allow 110,167 acres for conditional fire suppression areas where fire may be used to improve or provide habitat or other resource benefits;
- Manage three new SRMAs: the Nightingale SRMA (925,593 acres), the Winnemucca SRMA (151,824 acres) and the Granite Range SRMA (44,911 acres), and expand the area for the Pine Forest SRMA (98,874 acres);
- Allow the public to travel cross-country (“open” designation) with motorized vehicles on 21 percent of BLM-administered lands in the WD. On greater than 78 percent of BLM-administered lands, limit motorized vehicles to designated routes (“limited” designation). On less than one percent of BLM-administered lands, prohibit motorized vehicle travel by the public yearlong (“closed” designation);
- Continue to manage existing special management areas, which include one 60-acre ACEC at the Osgood Mountains;
- Identify 2,131,367 acres of BLM-administered lands as available for disposal; and
- Make available 399,073 AUMs for livestock forage.
- Lands with wilderness characteristics would be managed to meet multiple use and sustained yield objectives and mitigation measures would be implemented on a case-by-case basis.

1.5.4 Alternative C

Alternative C - Option 1

Alternative C, Option 1 would have developed management strategies to preserve and protect ecosystem health across the planning area, while providing multiple uses. Resource development would have been more constrained than under Alternatives B or D, and in some cases and some areas, uses would have been excluded to protect sensitive resources. This alternative included the most special designations, with specific measures to protect or enhance resource values within these areas. This alternative emphasized active and specific measures to protect and enhance vegetation and habitat for special status species, fish, and wildlife. Likewise, this alternative would have reflected a reduction in resource production goals for forage, harvestable wood products, and minerals. Production of products would generally have been secondary to restoring and protecting important habitats, such as sagebrush and riparian areas. Sustainable development principles focused

on preserving ecological functions and environmental values. The objectives and actions associated with Alternative C (Options 1 and 2) are presented in Table 2-1 of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Key components of Alternative C, Option 1 were as follows:

- Manage two new SRMAs, the Winnemucca SRMA (151,824 acres) and the Granite Range SRMA (44,911 acres), and expand the area for the Pine Forest SRMA (98,874 acres);
- On BLM-administered lands in the WD, prohibit the public from cross-country travel (“open” designation) with motorized vehicles. On greater than 99 percent of BLM-administered lands, limit motorized vehicle to designated routes (“limited” designation);
- Create new special management areas where special values warrant such designation. Management would create or expand four ACECs (for a total of 97,816 acres).
- Recommend three eligible river segments of the North Fork of the Little Humboldt River, Washburn Creek, and Crowley Creek (19 miles total) as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS);
- Identify 1,217,926 acres of BLM-administered lands as available for disposal;
- No surface occupancy or disturbance within known sage-grouse nesting, summer, or winter habitats. Known habitats are those areas identified as nesting, summer, and winter habitats within PMUs;
- Make available 399,073 AUMs for livestock forage; and
- Manage about 716,528 acres as rights-of-way avoidance areas that require special stipulations to mitigate impacts to resources.
- Lands with wilderness characteristics would be managed to protect wilderness characteristics through restrictions to mineral leasing, saleable mineral disposal, and ROWs.

Alternative C - Option 2

To fully explore the impacts from livestock grazing, Alternative C, Option 2 evaluated a no grazing option. The objectives and actions associated with Alternative C (Options 1 and 2) were presented in Table 2-1 of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Key components and management strategies of Alternative C, Option 2 would have been the same as Alternative C, Option 1 with the addition of designating zero acres open to livestock grazing.

1.5.5 Alternative D (Proposed RMP)

In the Draft RMP/EIS (May 2010), the WD proposed Alternative D to be the Preferred Alternative. The WD IDT recommended management action alternatives based on issues identified through the assessment of current management and concerns raised during scoping. Changes and updates in BLM regulations, policy, and guidance developed during the preparation of the Final RMP/EIS. The WD IDT reviewed and revised Alternative D based on responses to public comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS as well as input from cooperating agencies and Tribal governments. The IDT recommended adjustments based on input from external sources and as necessary to meet current policy and guidance. Alternative D in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS represented a mix and variety of objectives and management actions that best resolve the issues identified from the assessment of

need for changing management, concerns raised during public scoping, and future management considerations. Changes particularly relating to GSG habitat management were incorporated into the Proposed RMP. This and other changes are addressed in Section 1.6, Management Considerations.

Alternative D in the Proposed RMP emphasized an intermediate level of protection, restoration, enhancement, and use of resources and services to meet ongoing programs and land uses. This management strategy is being selected to be the approved RMP because it represents the mix and variety of actions that the BLM believes will best resolve the issues and management concerns in consideration of all values and programs. Additionally, Alternative D, unlike the other alternatives, will provide sustainable development criteria for determining the suitability of reusing developed sites.

The management goals and objectives will be accomplished by using an array of proactive and prescriptive measures that will protect vegetation and habitat and will promote the continuation of multiple resource management. Vegetation and special status species habitat will be restored and enhanced to provide for the continued presence of an ecologically healthy ecosystem using a suite of proactive and specific prescriptive management tools and implementation measures. Commodity and development-based resources such as livestock grazing and minerals production will be maintained on public lands through specific actions to meet resource goals and protect ecosystem health. Management strategies will continue to provide for recreational opportunities and access to and on public lands and will take into consideration the result of management actions on the economies of communities within the region.

The objectives and actions of proposed Alternative D are presented in Table 2-1 of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Key components of Alternative D are summarized above in section 1.3 Decision.

1.5.6 Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations require that a ROD state which alternatives were considered to be "environmentally preferable" (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). Question 6A of CEQ's 40 most-asked questions regarding CEQ's NEPA regulations defines that term to ordinarily mean the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Under that definition, Alternative C is the most environmentally preferable. However, NEPA expresses a continuing policy of the federal government to "use all practicable means and measures...to foster and promote the general welfare, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans" (Section 101 of NEPA).

FLPMA requires the BLM to manage the public lands for multiple use and sustained yield (See FLPMA § 302). And section 102(12) of FLPMA declares a policy of the United States that "the public lands be managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from the public lands including implementation of the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970 (84 Stat. 1876, 30 U.S.C. 21a) as it pertains to the public lands."

Alternative C is most protective of resources in the planning area and thus would be the most "environmentally preferable" as that term is defined in Question 6A of CEQ's 40 asked questions regarding NEPA, but both NEPA and FLPMA recognize resource uses as part of the policy of the

United States and under the standard of FLPMA's multiple-use mandate, the Proposed Plan was determined to be the most balanced.

1.6 MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The BLM is tasked with managing the public lands in accordance with the principles of multiple-use and sustained yield as mandated under FLPMA and other laws and regulations governing the management of public land. The RMP provides conservation of physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources while allowing for resource use if the activity can be conducted in a manner that preserves these resource values. In reviewing the alternatives, incorporating current knowledge on existing and reasonably foreseeable development opportunities, and comparing to the existing decisions in the 1989 MFPs, the BLM determined that Alternative D, the proposed RMP, provided the most balanced management direction. Issues brought forth during scoping (see RMP Section 2.1.2 "Planning Issues"), coupled with the analysis conducted in the Draft EIS and Final EIS ultimately formed the basis of the approved RMP. Upon this basis, the BLM worked collaboratively with nine cooperating agencies and the sub-group of the Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council. The RMP also considered input through coordination and consultation with Native American/Tribal Interests.

The RMP responds to the key issues and the concerns and comments submitted during the EIS process. The RMP achieves a balanced approach for these issues so that some areas are emphasized for resource development and others for resource protections.

1.7 MITIGATION MEASURES

All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm are encompassed in the RMP and its appendices. Mitigation measures, including geothermal lease stipulations, and best management practices are identified in the attached appendices.

1.8 PLAN MONITORING

BLM planning regulations (43 CFR Part 1610.4-9) call for the establishment of standards and intervals for monitoring RMPs. Monitoring is the repeated measurement of activities and conditions over time with the implied purpose to determine if resource goals and objectives are being achieved. Monitoring data provide the basis in determining if the plan needs to be revised or amended, which may occur when the monitoring data demonstrates goals and objectives are not effective; if there are significant changes in the plans of other Federal, State or local government agencies or Indian tribes; or if there are changes in resource data that affect the decisions implemented in the plan.

Plan implementation also includes the use of an adaptive management strategy. As part of this process, the BLM will review management actions in the RMP periodically to determine whether the objectives set forth in this and other applicable planning documents are being met. Where they are not being met, the BLM will consider appropriate adjustments. Where the BLM considers taking or approving actions that would alter or not conform to overall direction of the RMP, the BLM will prepare a plan amendment, including appropriate level of NEPA compliance in making its determinations and in seeking public comment.

1.8.1 Implementation Monitoring

Implementation monitoring, known by some agencies as compliance monitoring, is the most basic type of monitoring and simply determines whether planned activities have been implemented in the manner prescribed by the RMP. This monitoring documents the BLM's progress toward full implementation of the land use plan decision. There are no specific thresholds or indicators required for this type of monitoring, but progress towards plan compliance will be evaluated and reported at 5 year intervals from the date of plan approval. Aspects of the effectiveness monitoring may also be addressed in this periodic evaluation.

1.8.2 Effectiveness Monitoring

Effectiveness monitoring determines if the implementation of activities has achieved the desired future conditions (i.e., goals and objectives) set forth in the RMP. Effectiveness monitoring asks the following question: "Was the specified activity successful in achieving the objective?" The answer requires knowledge of the objectives established in the RMP, as well as indicators that can be measured. Indicators are established by technical specialists in order to address specific questions through the collection and analysis of appropriate data. Monitoring indicators are as follows:

**Table 1-1
Monitoring Indicators**

Major Uses and Resources	Indicators to be Monitored
Land Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of Ground Cover • Evidence of Erosion • Vegetation Composition, Vigor and Structure • Riparian Functional Condition • Achievement of Water Quality Standards • Population and Habitat Diversity and Viability • Special Status Species Viability • Levels of Invasive Species
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road Condition • Numbers of Vehicle Accidents • Numbers of Search and Rescue Incidents • Erosion/Resource Damage Associated with Roads
OHV Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurrences of New Tracks
Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of Looting/Vandalism • Changes in Site Integrity • Erosion of Trail Traces
Paleontological Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of Looting/Vandalism • Changes in Site Integrity
ACECs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Health Indicators • Cultural Resources Indicators
Livestock Grazing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Health Indicators

**Table 1-1
Monitoring Indicators**

Major Uses and Resources	Indicators to be Monitored
Wild Horses & Burros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population Levels • Demographics • Herd Health • Land Health Indicators
Wildland Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel Characteristics • Burn Area Recovery • Rehabilitation Success • Fire Regime Condition Class
Fish & Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population Numbers/Trends • Impacts on Habitat
Special Status Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Health Indicators • Fish and Wildlife Indicators • Species Distribution
Visual Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in Visual Quality • Changes to Visual Intrusions/Contrast • Uses Comply with VRM Class
Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Health Indicators
Lands & Realty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with Stipulations • Numbers of Trespass Incidents • Access to Public Lands
Mineral and Energy Resource Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with Stipulations
Vegetation and Soil Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Health Indicators
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of Litter, Garbage, Excrement • Vandalism • Area of Impact • SRP Stipulation Requirements • Surface Permeability • Loss of Vegetation
Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement • Well-being of People • Well-being of the Environment • Well-being of the Economy

**Table 1-1
Monitoring Indicators**

Major Uses and Resources	Indicators to be Monitored
Wilderness Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in acreage of roadless unit • Change in naturalness (i.e., presence of structures, vegetation manipulation or other impacts to naturalness) • Impacts to solitude/primitive recreation (i.e., changes in mechanized/motorized recreation use, changes in use levels).

Success is measured against the benchmark of achieving the objectives (desired future conditions) established by the RMP, which may include regulated standards for resources such as endangered species, air, and water. The interval between these efforts will vary by resource and expected rate of change, but effectiveness monitoring progress will generally be reported to the field manager on an annual basis. These reports will include trends and conclusions, when appropriate, and be incorporated into the evaluation reports completed at 5-year intervals.

The BLM will monitor the RMP to determine whether the objectives set forth in this document are being met and if applying the land use plan direction is effective. If monitoring shows land use plan actions or best management practices are not effective, the BLM may modify or adjust management without amending or revising the plan as long as assumptions and impacts disclosed in the analysis remain valid and broad-scale goals and objectives are not changed. Where the BLM considers taking or approving actions that will alter or not conform to overall direction of the RMP, the BLM will prepare a plan amendment or revision and environmental analysis of appropriate scope.

1.8.3 Plan Maintenance

As the RMP is implemented, the BLM may update the plan to reflect minor changes in data, as allowed under BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 4610.5-4).

1.9 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, CONSULTATION, AND COORDINATION

1.9.1 Public Involvement

The public involvement process, consultation, and coordination conducted for the RMP are described in Chapter 5 of the Proposed RMP and Final EIS. As required by regulation, public scoping meetings were conducted following the publication of the Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS in the *Federal Register* on March 25, 2005.

A Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft RMP/EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on June 25, 2010. The NOA initiated a 90-day public comment period. The BLM held public comment open houses for the Draft RMP/EIS on four consecutive afternoons and evenings in late July 2010: Monday, July 26 in Winnemucca, Tuesday, July 27 in Lovelock, Wednesday, July 28 in Gerlach, and Friday, July 29 in Reno. All meetings were from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. Due to public interest, the BLM extended the comment period an additional 30 days until October 25, 2010. The comments received

on the Draft RMP and EIS and BLM's responses were summarized in Appendix M of the Proposed RMP and Final EIS.

The NOA for the Proposed RMP and Final EIS was published on September 6, 2013 initiating a 30 day public protest period and a 60 day Governors Consistency review period. The 30-day protest period was scheduled to end on October 7, 2013. The protest period was extended 7 days from October 22, 2013 to October 29, 2013 due to the federal government shutdown in October 2013. Eleven protest letters were received.

1.9.2 Consultation and Coordination

Cooperating Agency Status

The BLM collaborated with numerous agencies, municipalities, and tribes throughout the preparation of this RMP. The BLM outreach efforts and collaboration with cooperating agencies are described in Section 5.3 of the Proposed RMP and Final EIS.

Nine agencies (Humboldt County, City of Winnemucca, Washoe County, Pershing County, NDOW, N-2 Grazing Board, NDOA, Bureau of Reclamation, and USFWS) accepted the offer to participate in the BLM WD planning process as cooperating agencies. The BLM formally invited the cooperating agencies to participate in developing the alternatives for the RMP and EIS and to provide data and other information related to their agency responsibilities, goals, mandates, and expertise.

The Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) includes a panel of mixed expertise ranging from natural resources and Native American culture to mining, transportation, and politics. The RAC elected to form a subgroup to provide assistance and input to the WD RMP. The RAC subgroup assisted in developing the Alternatives.

BLM continued collaboration among cooperating agencies, the RAC subgroup, and Tribal governments during the preparation of the Proposed RMP. The BLM also provided the RAC subgroup with the opportunity to review the preliminary proposed management actions for the RMP because they were instrumental in providing information for development of the Draft RMP/EIS.

Governor's Consistency Review

The BLM initiated the Nevada Governor's Consistency Review required by 43 CFR 1610.3-2(e) on September 6, 2013 via notice through the Nevada State Clearinghouse. The BLM has not received any comments from the Nevada Governor's office. The BLM did receive notification from Nevada's State Historic Preservation Office on October 29, 2013 stating the proposed RMP was consistent with the State Comprehensive Preservation Plan. A letter dated October 14, 2013 from the Governor's Sagebrush Ecosystem Program stated there was no apparent conflict between the proposed RMP and the State's conservation goals for the Greater sage-grouse or sagebrush ecosystem, and that they were aware the RMP would be amended by the Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-regional RMP/EIS.

Section 7 Consultation

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended, BLM requested a species list from USFWS of any federally listed, federally proposed, or current federal candidate species that may be present in the RMP planning area on February 8, 2005. Updated species lists were requested on August 27, 2007, March 25, 2010, and January 26, 2012. The most recent list (USFWS 2012) can be found in Appendix D. The BLM initiated formal consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the ESA on March 9, 2012. Formal Section 7 consultation was completed on July 27, 2012, when the USFWS provided a Biological Opinion.

Native American Consultation

In accordance with FLPMA and BLM guidance, the BLM engaged in consultation with Native American representatives for the RMP planning process. Coordination with Native American tribes occurred throughout the planning process. All Native American tribes and organizations with interests in the WD planning area were contacted by mail and encouraged to be cooperating agencies. Tribes have been participating in the RMP/EIS process through meetings and other contacts. A request for a consultation meeting and copies of the RMP were sent to the following tribes and reservations on July 12, 2010: Battle Mountain Band, Burns Paiute Tribe, Cedarville Rancheria, Confederate Tribes of Warm Springs, Fallon Paiute Shoshone Paiute Tribe, Fort Bidwell Tribe, Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe, Klamath Indian Tribe, Lovelock Paiute Tribe, Pit River Tribe, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley, Summit Lake Paiute Tribe, Walker River Paiute Tribe, Washoe Tribe, Winnemucca Indian Colony, Yerrington Paiute Tribe, and Yomba Reservation. A copy was also sent to the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada.

Consultation meetings to discuss the RMP occurred with the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe in September and December 2010, and Summit lake Paiute Tribe in October 2010. Other tribes declined or did not respond to BLM requests for consultation on the RMP. An additional Native American consultation meeting was held in July 2012.

Coordination with the Environmental Protection Agency

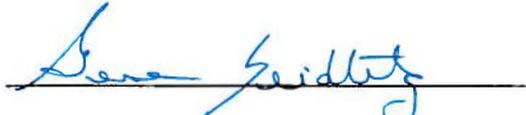
The BLM coordinated with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) throughout the WD RMP development process. The EPA provided a rating of EC-2 (Environmental Concerns - Insufficient Information) on the Draft RMP and EIS. They expressed concerns with the lack of specific measures to protect sensitive resources and the number of acres open to OHVs. They also asked for more information regarding the effect of climate change on the planning area. The EPA's recommendations were considered during the development of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. During the protest resolution process, the EPA commended BLM's efforts in addressing their concerns. The EC-2 rating does not preclude decision-making on the EIS.

1.10 AVAILABILITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Copies of the Record of Decision and the Winnemucca District Resource Management Plan may be obtained by viewing or downloading the document from the BLM website located at http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo/blm_information/rmp.html.

1.11 APPROVAL

The Winnemucca District RMP is hereby approved by the following signees:


Gene Seidlitz, Winnemucca District Manager

5/21/15
Date


John F. Ruhs, Acting Nevada State Director

21 May 2015
Date

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