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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

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### I.1 INTRODUCTION

The United States (US) Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared this draft resource management plan (RMP) revision and environmental impact statement (EIS). The purposes of this document are:

- To provide direction for managing public lands under the jurisdiction of the BLM Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO); and
- To analyze the environmental effects that could result from implementing the alternatives addressed in the RMP.

The affected lands are managed under the 1987 Grand Junction RMP (BLM 1987) and associated plan amendments.

The land use planning process is the key tool the BLM uses to manage resources and to designate uses on its lands, in coordination with tribal, other federal, state, and local government, land users, and interested members of the public. Generally, an RMP does not result in a wholesale change of management direction; accordingly, this RMP incorporates new information and regulatory guidance that has been adopted since the previous plan (BLM 1987) and provides management direction where it may be lacking or where it requires clarification to resolve land use issues or conflicts. Current management direction that has proven effective and requires no change has been carried forward into this RMP and will be considered throughout the analysis process.

This RMP is being prepared using BLM planning regulations and guidance issued under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 US Code [USC] 1701 et seq.) and the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1 (BLM 2005a). An EIS is incorporated into this document to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

(NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), BLM NEPA regulations (43 CFR Part 46), and requirements of the BLM's NEPA Handbook, H-1790-1 (BLM 2008a). Because this RMP/EIS contains a broad range of information, **Diagram I-1**, Document Organization, provides an outline of the RMP/EIS and describes the information found within each section. All maps for the RMP/EIS are provided in **Appendix A**, Figures. The management alternatives are presented in **Chapter 2**, Alternatives, and are supported by the stipulations contained in **Appendix B**, Stipulations Applicable to Fluid Mineral Leasing and Other Surface-disturbing Activities.

## I.2 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The purpose of this RMP revision is to ensure that public lands are managed in accordance with the intent of Congress, as stated in the FLPMA, under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. This will be accomplished by establishing desired goals, objectives, allowable uses, and management actions needed to achieve the desired conditions for resources and resource uses. The RMP incorporates new data, addresses land use issues and conflicts, specifies where and under what circumstances particular activities would be allowed on BLM lands, and incorporates the mandate of multiple uses in accordance with the FLPMA. The RMP does not describe how particular programs or projects would be implemented or prioritized; rather, those decisions are deferred to more detailed implementation-level planning.

The FLPMA requires that the BLM “develop, maintain, and, when appropriate, revise land use plans” (43 USC 1712 [a]). The public lands within the GJFO planning area are currently managed in accordance with the decisions in the 1987 Grand Junction RMP (BLM 1987). The BLM has completed approximately 50 maintenance actions and 12 RMP amendments since the 1987 Record of Decision (ROD) was signed. There is a need to revise the GJFO RMP due to new issues that have arisen since the original plan was prepared. Major issues contributing to the RMP revision include the following (additional planning issues identified for this plan are outlined in Section I.6.1:

- Management of public land to support numerous wildlife species and their habitats.
- Management of public lands containing both wilderness character and oil and gas potential, including areas not designated as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).
- Management of energy and mineral resources, including identifying areas and conditions in which mineral development can occur.
- Management of increased visitation by way of off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and nonmotorized uses (e.g., mountain biking and hiking) that have led to increased concerns regarding resource protection and conflicting uses.

## Diagram I-1 Document Organization

### Volume I

#### **Executive Summary**

Provides a concise overview of the Draft RMP/EIS

#### **Chapter 1 Introduction**

Summarizes the proposed action, purpose and need, and decisions to be made in the RMP/EIS

#### **Chapter 2 Alternatives**

Describes and compares the proposed management alternatives

#### **Chapter 3 Affected Environment**

Presents the existing biological, physical and socioeconomic resources that could be affected by implementing the management alternatives.

### Volume II

#### **Chapter 4 Environmental Consequences**

Evaluates the impacts of the alternatives on the human and natural environment in terms of environmental, social and economic consequences projected to occur from implementing the alternatives.

#### **Chapter 5 Consultation and Coordination**

Describes the scoping and public comment process, agencies consulted, and government-to-government consultation, and lists the preparers of the RMP/EIS.

#### **Chapter 6 References**

Lists the documents and other sources used to prepare the RMP/EIS.

#### **Glossary**

Provides definitions for important terms used in the RMP/EIS.

#### **Index**

Lists where significant issues, resource descriptions, NEPA terms, and agencies and groups discussed in the RMP/EIS are located.

#### **Appendix A Figures**

### Volume III

#### **Appendices B through Q**

B	Stipulations Applicable to Fluid Mineral Leasing and Other Surface-disturbing Activities
C	Wild and Scenic River Suitability Report
D	Summary of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Report on the Application of Relevance and Importance Criteria
E	BLM Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management in Colorado
F	Wilderness Characteristics Assessment
G	Draft Air Resources Management Plan
H	Best Management Practices and Standard Operating Procedures
I	Cultural Resources Allocation to Use Categories
J	Allotments and Allotment Levels
K	Description of Recreation Resources
L	Special Recreation Permits
M	Travel Management Plan
N	Coal Screening Criteria
O	Air Emissions Inventory
P	Leasing Reform and Master Leasing Plan Analysis
Q	Proposed Route Designations Maps (see enclosed CD-ROM)

- Completion of Wild and Scenic River (WSR) eligibility and suitability studies on river segments within the GJFO planning area.
- Consideration of opportunities for land tenure adjustment to improve public lands manageability.
- Expansion of communities and the urban interface.
- Consideration of right-of-way (ROW) exclusion areas and corridors.
- The needs of local government and citizens to be heard on an array of issues regarding both traditional and emerging uses of public land and their potential social and economic effects on local communities and values.

In addition, new resource assessments and scientific information is available to help the GJFO in revising previous decisions. Specifically, there may be a need to evaluate management prescriptions and resource allocations to address the increase in uses and demands on BLM lands (such as natural gas development and recreation), as well as the interest in protecting natural and cultural resources. There is also the need to revise the RMP to allow for updated BLM management direction, guidance, and policy. Land use plan decisions may be changed only through the amendment or revision process.

### **I.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA**

The GJFO planning area is composed of BLM; US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service (US Forest Service); US Bureau of Reclamation (US BOR); and State of Colorado lands (**Table I-1**, Land Status within the GJFO Planning Area) in Garfield, Mesa, Montrose, and Rio Blanco Counties in western Colorado. There are nearly 1.1 million acres of BLM-administered public lands and 1.2 million acres of federal mineral estate in the planning area. The McInnis Canyons and Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Areas (NCAs), while managed by the BLM and within the GJFO boundary, are or will be managed under separate RMPs. As such, these NCAs are not within the GJFO RMP decision area and are not part of this planning effort, with the exception of the portion of the Colorado River within the McInnis Canyons NCA that is being studied under the WSR Suitability Report (**Appendix C**). This is because the Colorado River is not part of the McInnis Canyons NCA (Public Law 106-353). If the segment is found suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, a separate activity-level plan will be prepared to provide for the management of the river as suitable. In addition, the Colorado National Monument, managed by the National Park Service (NPS), is within the GJFO boundary but is not included in the planning area or this RMP effort. A map of the planning area is provided as **Figure I-1**, Project Planning Area, in **Appendix A**, Figures.

**Table I-1  
Land Status within the GJFO Planning Area**

<b>Land Status</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percentage of Planning Area</b>
BLM	1,061,400	50
US BOR	7,900	less than 1
Local (State, County, and City)	3,400	less than 1
Private	714,100	30
State Wildlife Areas and State Recreation Areas (Colorado Parks and Wildlife [CPW])	1,400	less than 1
US Forest Service	380,000	20
Other	370	less than 1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,168,600</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: BLM 2010a

The decision area for the RMP revision—those lands on which the RMP will make decisions—is composed of GJFO BLM lands within the larger planning area only, which comprise nearly 50 percent of the planning area (**Table I-1**, Land Status within the GJFO Planning Area). Management direction and actions outlined in the RMP apply only to these BLM lands in the planning area and to federal mineral estate under BLM jurisdiction that may lie beneath other surface ownership. Federal mineral estate under BLM jurisdiction is composed of mineral estate underlying BLM lands, privately owned lands, and state-owned lands (**Table I-2**, Mineral Status within the GJFO Planning Area by County). As such, federal mineral estate acres are greater than BLM surface acres. No specific measures have been developed for private, state, or other federal lands, but given that these lands are interspersed with BLM lands, they could be influenced or be indirectly affected by BLM management actions. BLM management authority on lands with a split estate (e.g., private surface but federal minerals) is limited to activities (both surface and subsurface) related to exploration and development of the minerals. The BLM adopts the leasing

**Table I-2  
Mineral Status within the GJFO Planning Area by County**

<b>Land Status (acres)</b>	<b>Garfield County</b>	<b>Mesa County</b>	<b>Montrose County</b>	<b>Rio Blanco County</b>	<b>Total</b>
BLM/Federal Minerals	322,600	721,700	17,100	0	1,061,400
Private Surface/Federal Minerals	33,300	132,700	200	400	166,600
State Surface/Federal Minerals	0	1,200	0	0	1,200
Local Surface/Federal Minerals	0	2,100	0	0	2,100

Source: BLM 2010a

requirements determined by other surface-managing agencies when leasing the mineral estate under those lands with a split estate. Lands administered by the Forest Service would have leasing decisions made in the appropriate Forest Service Land and Resource Management Plan/EIS. In its plans, the Forest Service analyzes impacts from oil and gas leasing and development on National Forest System Lands and describes where the Forest Service will or will not consent to leasing.

#### **I.4 PLANNING PROCESS**

The process for developing, approving, maintaining, and amending or revising the RMP was initiated under the authority of Section 202(f) of FLPMA and Section 202(c) of NEPA. The process is guided by BLM planning regulations codified in 43 CFR 1600 and Council on Environmental Quality regulations codified in 40 CFR 1500 and has two tiers:

1. The land use planning tier; and
2. The implementation tier.

In the land use planning tier, the BLM develops the RMP. The RMP prescribes the allocation of and general future management direction for the resources and land uses of BLM-managed lands in the GJFO planning area. The RMP then guides the implementation tier, which includes site-specific activity or implementation planning and daily operations. Activity or implementation planning converts the resource and land use decisions of the RMP into site-specific management decisions for smaller geographic units of public lands within the GJFO planning area. Activity planning includes elements such as allotment management plans (AMPs), habitat management plans, and interdisciplinary or coordinated activity plans that issue various land and resource use authorizations. Activity planning also may include identification of specific mitigation needs and development and implementation of other similar plans and actions.

An RMP guides the management of BLM lands in a particular area or administrative unit and is usually prepared to cover the lands administered by a certain BLM field office. As part of this RMP revision, published documents will include a draft RMP/EIS, proposed RMP/final EIS, and approved RMP/Record of Decision (ROD). The approved RMP/ROD will describe the following:

- Resource conditions goals and objectives;
- Allowable resource uses and related levels of production or use to be maintained;
- Land areas to be managed for limited, restricted, or exclusive resource uses or for transfer from BLM administration;
- Program constraints and general management practices and protocols;

- General implementation schedule or sequences; and
- Intervals and standards for monitoring the RMP.

Preparation of an RMP involves interrelated steps, as illustrated in **Diagram I-2**, BLM Planning Process, and described in **Table I-3**, BLM Planning Steps.

## **I.5 SCOPING AND PLANNING**

Public involvement is a vital component of both the RMP and EIS processes. Public involvement includes the public in the decision-making process and allows for full environmental disclosure. The regulatory requirements for public involvement in NEPA procedures are addressed in 40 CFR 1506.6. Section 202 of FLPMA directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish procedures for public involvement during land use planning actions on public lands. These procedures can be found in 43 CFR 1610.2 and the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1 (BLM 2005a). Public involvement for the GJFO RMP/EIS includes the following four phases:

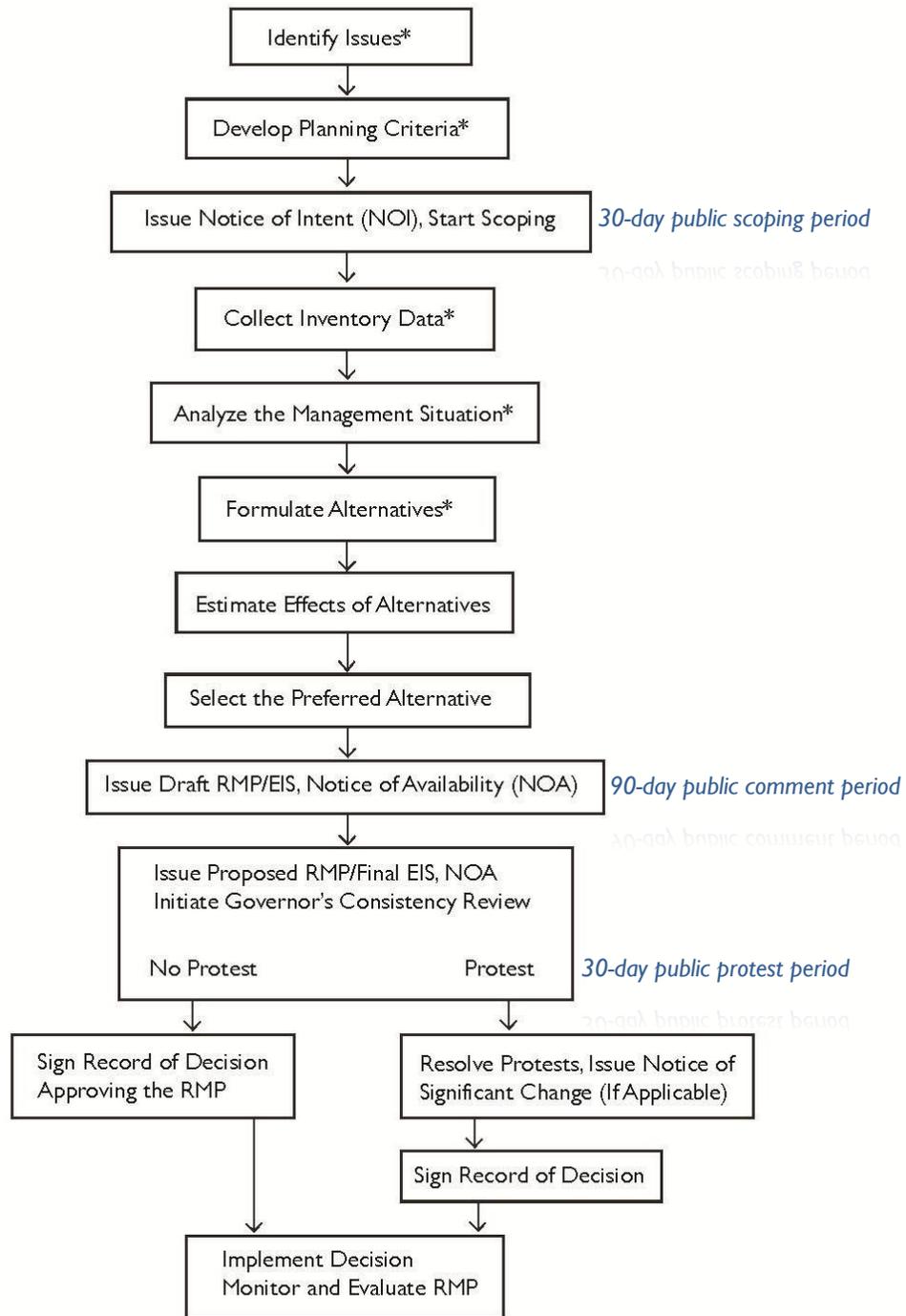
- Public scoping before NEPA analysis begins, to determine the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the RMP/EIS;
- Public outreach via newsletters and news releases;
- Collaboration with federal, state, local, and tribal governments, the BLM Colorado Northwest Resource Advisory Council (RAC), and cooperating agencies; and
- Public review of and comment on the draft RMP/EIS, which analyzes likely environmental effects and identifies the BLM's preferred alternative.

The public scoping phase of the process has been completed and is described in Section 1.5.1, Public Scoping. The public outreach and collaboration phases are ongoing, while public review of the draft RMP/EIS is estimated for Fall 2012. Information about the RMP/EIS process can be obtained by the public at any time on the project Web site at <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo/rmp.html>. This Web site contains background information about the project, a public involvement timeline and calendar, maps and photos of the planning area, and copies of public information documents released throughout the RMP/EIS process.

### **1.5.1 Public Scoping**

The formal public scoping process for the GJFO RMP/EIS began on October 15, 2008, with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register (Vol. 73, No. 200, page 61164). The Notice of Intent, also posted on the project Web site, notified the public of the BLM's intent to develop an RMP for the GJFO; it also initiated the public scoping period, which closed on January 9, 2009. Public scoping activities included the following:

**Diagram I-2  
BLM Planning Process**



\*These steps may be revisited throughout the planning process and may overlap other steps.

**Table I-3  
BLM Planning Steps**

<b>BLM Planning Process Step</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Step 1—Prepare to Plan	A properly prepared preparation plan provides the foundation for the entire planning process.	July to November 2008
Step 2—Analyze the Management Situation	The current management of resources in the planning area is assessed.	March to August 2009
Step 3—Issue Notice of Intent to Prepare the RMP/EIS and Start Scoping	Notify the public, Indian Tribes, other Federal agencies, and state and local governments about the BLM's intent to engage in land use planning for the GJFO.	October 2008
Step 4—Conduct Scoping	Issues and concerns are identified through a scoping process that includes the public, Indian tribes, other federal agencies, and state and local governments.	October 2008 to January 2009
Step 5—Formulate Alternatives	A range of reasonable management alternatives is developed to address issues identified during scoping.	September 2009 to October 2010
Step 6—Analyze Effects of Alternatives	The effects of each alternative are estimated.	October 2010 to April 2011
Step 7—Select a Preferred Alternative	The alternative that best resolves planning issues is identified as the preferred alternative.	April 2011
Step 8—Prepare a Draft RMP/Draft EIS	This document describes the purpose and need for the plan, the affected environment, the alternatives for managing public lands within the planning area (including the preferred alternative), the environmental impacts of those alternatives, and the consultation and coordination in which the BLM engaged in developing the plan	May 2011 to December 2012
Step 9—Publish Notice of Availability	Provide a 90-day public comment period.	January 2013 to April 2013
Step 10—Prepare a Proposed RMP/Final EIS	After comments on the draft document have been received and analyzed, it is modified as necessary.	<i>Estimated</i> Spring 2013 to Winter 2014
Step 11—Publish Notice of Availability	Provide a 30-day public comment period.	<i>Estimated</i> Winter 2014
Step 12—Provide a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review Period	Concurrent with the 30-day public comment period.	<i>Estimated</i> Winter 2014
Step 13—Prepare a Record of Decision/Approved RMP	A Record of Decision is signed to approve the RMP/EIS.	<i>Estimated</i> Summer 2014
Step 14—Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate Plan Decisions	Management measures outlined in the approved plan are implemented on the ground, and monitoring is conducted to test their effectiveness. Changes are made as necessary to achieve desired results.	Ongoing after RMP approval

- The BLM issued a news release to local news organizations on November 6, 2008, announcing the scoping period for the GJFO RMP/EIS process and providing information on the scoping open houses.
- The BLM compiled a mailing list of over 680 individuals, agencies, and organizations that have participated in past BLM projects. Attendees at the scoping open houses were added to the mailing list if they wanted to receive or continue to receive project information. In addition, all individuals or organizations who submitted scoping comments were added to the mailing list. Through this process, the mailing list was revised to include approximately 870 entries.
- The BLM mailed a newsletter on November 11, 2008, announcing the start of the scoping period for the GJFO RMP/EIS to the over 680 individuals, agencies, and organizations on the initial mailing list. The newsletter provided the dates and venues for the three scoping open houses, included a comment form for submitting scoping comments, and described the various methods for submitting comments, including dedicated email and postal addresses.
- The BLM hosted three scoping open houses to provide the public with opportunities to become involved, to learn about the project and the planning process, to meet the GJFO RMP team members, and to offer comments. Open houses were held in Grand Junction, Colorado on December 2, 2008; in Moab, Utah on December 3, 2008; and in Collbran, Colorado on December 4, 2008. In total, 114 people attended these open houses.

The BLM received 149 unique written submissions containing 953 separate comments during the public scoping period. Detailed information about the comments received and about the public outreach process can be found in the Grand Junction Field Office RMP Revision Scoping Summary Report, finalized in April 2009 (BLM 2009a), and available on the project Web site. A summary of the issues identified during public scoping and outreach is included in Section 1.6, Issues, of this RMP/EIS.

## 1.6 ISSUES

The GJFO enacted a multi-step issue-identification process for the RMP planning effort. The GJFO provided numerous opportunities to the public, various groups, other federal agencies, Native American tribal members, and state and local governments to participate meaningfully and substantively and to give input and comments to the BLM during the preparation of the RMP/EIS. Early in the planning process, the public was invited to identify planning issues and concerns for managing BLM lands, resources, and uses in the planning area.

### I.6.1 Issue Identification

Issue identification is the first step of the nine-step BLM planning process (**Diagram I-2**). A planning issue is a major controversy or dispute regarding management of resources or uses on BLM lands that can be addressed in a variety of ways, which is within the BLM's authority to resolve.

The issue-identification process began with the creation of a preparation plan for the GJFO RMP/EIS in January 2008. This plan, used by the interdisciplinary team to begin the planning process, highlighted anticipated planning issues, management concerns, and preliminary planning criteria developed internally by the BLM interdisciplinary team. Based on the lands and resources managed in the planning area, preliminary issues fell into 20 planning issue categories in the pre-scoping analysis. The comments received during the public scoping process were analyzed, and the pre-scoping planning issues were reorganized into 17 planning issue categories. Based on the issues and concerns heard during public scoping, a planning issue statement was developed for each planning issue category. The 17 planning issue categories and statements are presented in **Table I-4**, Planning Issue Categories and Statements. The BLM used the planning issues and statements to help guide the development of a reasonable range of alternative management strategies for the RMP.

**Table I-4**  
**Planning Issue Categories and Statements**

Issue	Planning Issue Category	Planning Issue Statement
1.	Travel Management	How will motorized, nonmotorized, and mechanized travel be managed to provide commodity, amenity, and recreation opportunities, reduce user conflicts, enforce route designations and closures, reduce fragmentation and habitat degradation, and protect natural and cultural resources?
2.	Energy Development	Which areas should be open to oil and gas leasing, coal mining, and uranium development, and what restrictions should be employed to protect natural and cultural resources and minimize user conflicts?
3.	Recreation Management	How will recreation be managed to provide for a variety of recreational activities, while protecting natural and cultural resources, minimizing user conflicts, and providing socioeconomic benefits to local communities?
4.	Lands and Realty / Community Growth and Expansion	What opportunities exist to make adjustments to public land ownership that would increase the benefit to the public, local communities, and natural resources, while working towards BLM management goals? Should the BLM designate areas to accommodate major ROW corridors across the GJFO planning area, and are there areas that should be avoided or excluded from ROWs?

**Table I-4  
Planning Issue Categories and Statements**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Planning Issue Category</b>	<b>Planning Issue Statement</b>
5.	Wildlife and Fish	How will land uses be managed to maintain and improve terrestrial and aquatic habitats? How will the BLM manage the public lands to provide for the needs of fish and wildlife species?
6.	Special Designation Areas	Where and what types of special designations should be enacted to protect and enhance unique resources and educational and research opportunities, and how will the BLM manage them to maximize recreational opportunities and socioeconomic benefits?
7.	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	How will the BLM protect and manage lands with wilderness characteristics?
8.	Water, Soil, and Riparian Areas	What measures will be implemented to protect water resources and source water protection areas from the effects of other uses while rehabilitating areas with soils degradation?
9.	Special Status Species Management	How will the BLM manage the public lands to provide for the needs of sensitive fish, wildlife, and plant species?
10.	Vegetation Management	What measures should be implemented to protect native vegetation and riparian areas, prevent the spread of noxious weeds, and manage wildland fires?
11.	Air Quality	What measures and monitoring should the BLM implement to maintain air quality standards?
12.	Grazing	How will the BLM manage livestock grazing on public lands, while protecting, managing, and restoring the land?
13.	Cultural, Heritage, and Paleontological Resources and Native American Religious Concerns	How can the BLM protect and conserve cultural and paleontological resources while allowing for other land and resource uses, and where should BLM manage heritage resources and areas?
14.	Social and Economic Considerations	How can the BLM promote or maintain activities that provide social and economic benefits to local communities?
15.	Public Health and Safety	What measures should be undertaken to promote a healthy environment for local communities?
16.	Noise	What measures should the BLM implement to preserve the natural soundscape in the planning area?
17.	Drought Management / Climate Change	How will the BLM incorporate the analysis of the impacts of a changing climate on natural resources in the planning area?

### **I.6.2 Issues Considered but Not Further Analyzed**

In addition to planning issues, public scoping comments also addressed issues that are policy or administrative actions; issues that have been or will be addressed by the GJFO outside of the RMP; and issues that are outside the scope of the RMP. The Grand Junction Field Office RMP Revision Scoping Summary Report (BLM 2009a) provides a comprehensive list of issues outside the scope of the RMP.

## **I.7 LEGISLATIVE CONSTRAINTS AND PLANNING CRITERIA**

The FLPMA is the primary authority for the BLM to manage its lands. This law establishes provisions for land use planning, land acquisition and disposition, administration, rangeland management, ROWs, and designated management areas, and the repeal of certain laws and statutes. NEPA requires the consideration and public availability of information on the environmental impacts of major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.

Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and guidelines that help guide data collection and alternative formulation and selection in the RMP-development process. In conjunction with the planning issues, planning criteria ensure that the planning process is focused. The criteria also help guide the final plan selection and provide a basis for judging the responsiveness of the planning options.

The BLM developed preliminary planning criteria before public scoping meetings to set the side boards for focused planning of the GJFO RMP revision and to guide decision making by topic. The BLM introduced these criteria to the public for review in December 2008 at all scoping meetings and encouraged the public to comment on and suggest additions to these criteria through written correspondence and at the GJFO RMP revision Web site, <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo/rmp.html>. The planning criteria are:

1. Only public lands and mineral resources managed by BLM are covered in the RMP. No decisions will be made relative to non-BLM-administered lands.
2. The planning process will follow the 14 stages of an EIS-level planning process: 1) prepare to plan; 2) issue a notice of intent to prepare the RMP/EIS and start scoping; 3) conduct scoping; 4) analyze the management situation; 5) formulate alternatives; 6) analyze the effects of the alternatives; 7) select a preferred alternative; 8) prepare a draft RMP and draft EIS; 9) publish a notice of availability and provide a public comment period; 10) prepare a proposed RMP and final EIS; 11) publish a notice of availability, provide a protect period, and resolve protests; 12) provide a Governor's consistency review period; 13) determine need for a notice of significant change and provide a comment period if necessary; and 14) prepare a record of decision and approved RMP.

For specific information, refer to the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1 (BLM 2005a).

3. For program-specific guidance of land use planning level decisions, the process will follow the Land Use Planning Manual 1601 (BLM 2000) and Handbook H-1601-1, Appendix C (BLM 2005a).
4. Broad-based public participation will be an integral part of the planning and EIS process.
5. Decisions in the RMP will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, federal, and tribal agencies, as long as the decisions are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law and regulations applicable to public lands.
6. The RMP will recognize the state's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife.
7. The RMP will recognize the Office of Surface Mining's responsibility and authority to regulate coal activities.
8. The BLM will recognize the State's responsibility for permitting related to oil and gas activities and in regulating air quality impacts.
9. The BLM will recognize the State's and counties' responsibilities for permitting related to mineral extraction activities (i.e., uranium, gold, coal, and sand and gravel), and in regulating water quality impacts.
10. The National Sage-grouse Strategy directs that impacts to sagebrush habitat and sagebrush-dependent wildlife species be analyzed and considered in BLM land use planning efforts for public lands with sagebrush habitat in the planning area.
11. The RMP will recognize valid existing rights.
12. The RMP/EIS will incorporate existing adequate management decisions brought forward from existing planning documents.
13. The planning team will work cooperatively and collaboratively with cooperating agencies and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals.
14. The BLM and cooperating agencies will jointly develop alternatives for resolution of resource management issues and management concerns.
15. The planning process will incorporate the BLM Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management in Colorado (BLM 1997a) as goal statements.

16. Areas with special environmental quality will be protected and, if necessary, designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), WSRs, or other appropriate designations.
17. Any public land surface found to meet the suitability factors to be given further consideration for inclusion in the National WSR System will be addressed in the RMP revision effort in terms of developing interim management options in the EIS alternatives.
18. The WSAs will continue to be managed under the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review, H-8550-1 (BLM 1995a) until Congress either designates all or portions of the WSA as wilderness or releases the lands from further wilderness consideration. It is no longer the policy of the BLM to make formal determinations regarding wilderness character, to designate additional WSAs through the RMP process, or to manage any lands other than existing WSAs in accordance with the Interim Management Policy.
19. Forest management strategies will be consistent with the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.
20. The planning process will involve American Indian tribal governments and will provide strategies for the protection of recognized traditional uses.
21. Any location-specific information pertaining to cultural or paleontological resources (map, description, or photo) is proprietary to the BLM and will not become the property of any contractors working on the EIS or attached to any document (paper or electronic), nor is this information subject to any public release or Freedom of Information Act requests (43 CFR 7.18).
22. All proposed management actions will be based upon current scientific information, research, and technology, as well as existing inventory and monitoring information.
23. The RMP will include adaptive management criteria and protocol to deal with future issues.
24. The planning process will use applicable BLM Colorado mitigation guidelines to develop management options and alternatives and to analyze their impacts. The guidelines will also be part of the planning criteria for developing the options and alternatives, as well as for determining mitigation requirements.
25. A reasonable foreseeable development scenario for fluid minerals will be developed from analysis of past activity and production, which will aid in the environmental consequences analysis.

26. Planning and management direction will be focused on the relative values of resources and not on the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or economic output.
27. Where practicable and timely for the planning effort, current scientific information, research, and new technologies will be considered.

Additional criteria received in public scoping comments suggested during the scoping period (October 15, 2008, to January 9, 2009) and added to the list of planning criteria include the following:

1. The BLM will address lands with wilderness characteristics as a separate and unique issue in the planning process, including in its planning criteria.
2. The BLM will incorporate key aspects of its OHV regulations, as well as ecological metrics, in planning criteria.
3. The National Sage-grouse Strategy criteria should state that impacts to sagebrush-dependent wildlife will be minimized whenever possible. Current scientific information should be used, especially regarding buffer areas around leks, nesting areas, and brood rearing areas for both sage-grouse species.

All management direction and/or actions developed as part of the BLM planning process are subject to valid existing rights and must meet the objectives of BLM's multiple-use management mandate and responsibilities (FLPMA Section 202[c] and [e]). Valid existing rights include all valid lease, permit, patent, ROWs, or other land use rights or authorizations in effect on the date of approval of this RMP. Current BLM policy does not allow BLM to consider unadjudicated Revised Statute 2477 claims as valid existing rights. The current moratorium precluding the BLM from processing Revised Statute 2477 claims is still in effect, making Revised Statute 2477 assertions a legal issue beyond the scope of this planning effort.

## **I.8 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION-LEVEL PLANS**

Since the GJFO RMP (BLM 1987) was developed and approved, it has been necessary to amend it to respond to new issues and conditions. As the land use plan guidance is put into practice on the ground, implementation-level (activity-level) planning is directed by the land use plan (RMP), BLM policy, and program-specific guidance. **Table I-5**, RMP Amendments and Implementation-level Plans, identifies approved plan amendments incorporated into the current land use plan and implementation-level plans. These amendments and plans provide a perspective of the many management considerations pertinent to the decision area.

**Table I-5  
RMP Amendments and Implementation-level Plans**

<b>Amendments to 1987 RMP</b>
Environmental Assessment (EA) for Hawxhurst Land Exchange and RMP Amendment (BLM 1993a)
Withdrawal of Public Lands from Location and Entry Under the Mining Laws, and Amendment to the Grand Junction Resource Area RMP (Walker Field Airport) (BLM 1993b)
EA for Grand Mesa Slopes Special Management Area Management Plan (BLM 1995b)
EA for Gunnison River Bluffs Plan and Powerline Road Public Access (BLM 1997b)
EA for Mineral Withdrawal for UnawEEP Seep/West Creek Area (BLM 1999a)
EA for Oil Shale Withdrawal Revocation/RMP Amendment (BLM 2001)
North Fruita Desert Management Plan and Grand Junction RMP Amendment (BLM 2004a)
EA for Bangs Canyon Management Plan Implementation (BLM 2004b)
Record of Decision for Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program and Associated Land Use Plan Amendments (BLM 2005b)
BLM Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in 17 Western States – Final Programmatic EIS Record of Decision (BLM 2007)
Approved RMP Amendments and Record of Decision for Oil Shale and Tar Sands Resources to Address Land Use Allocations in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, and Final Programmatic EIS (BLM 2008c)
Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan Amendments for Geothermal Leasing in the Western United States (BLM 2008d)
Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/Record of Decision for Designation of Energy Corridors on Bureau of Land Management-Administered Lands in the 11 Western States (US Department of Energy [US DOE] and BLM 2009)
<b>Implementation-Level Plans</b>
Grand Junction Grazing Management, Proposed Domestic Livestock Grazing Program, Final EIS (BLM 1979)
Badger Wash, Pyramid Rock, and Rough Canyon Combined Activity Plan and EA (BLM 1992a)
Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Management Plan (BLM 1992b)
Grand Mesa Slopes Special Management Area Management Plan (BLM et. al. 1993)
Gunnison River Bluffs Public Use Plan (BLM 1995c)
Bangs Canyon Management Plan (BLM 1999b)
UnawEEP Seep Natural Area Management Plan and EA (BLM 1999c)
Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range Population Management Plan (BLM 2002)
Fire Management Plan for the Colorado National Monument and BLM Grand Junction Field Office (BLM 2008b)
EA for Integrated Weed Management (BLM 2010b)

## I.9 COLLABORATION

The benefits of enhanced collaboration among agencies in preparing NEPA analyses include the following:

- Disclosing relevant information early in the analytical process;
- Applying available technical expertise and staff support;
- Avoiding duplication with other federal, state, tribal, and local procedures; and
- Establishing a mechanism for addressing intergovernmental issues.

Additional information regarding collaboration with governments, agencies, and tribal representatives is provided in **Chapter 5**, Consultation and Coordination.

## I.10 RELATED LAND USE PLANS

The BLM's planning regulations require that its RMPs be consistent with officially approved or adopted land use-related plans of other federal, state, local, and tribal governments, to the extent that those plans are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. Plans formulated by federal, state, local, and tribal governments that relate to managing lands and resources have been reviewed and considered as the RMP/EIS has been developed. These plans are listed below.

### I.10.1 Other Federal Plans

#### **National BLM**

- National Sage-grouse Planning Strategy (in progress)

#### **Neighboring BLM Offices**

- Colorado River Valley Field Office RMP revision (in progress)
- Uncompahgre Field Office RMP revision (in progress)
- Dominguez-Escalante NCA RMP (in progress)
- McInnis Canyons NCA RMP (BLM 2004e)
- Moab Field Office RMP (BLM 2008e)
- White River Field Office RMP revision (BLM 1997c)

#### **US Fish and Wildlife Service, Colorado**

- Programmatic Biological Opinion for Water Depletions Associated with BLM's Fluid Minerals Program Within the Upper Colorado River Basin in Colorado, issued December 19, 2008 (#ES/GJ-6-CO-08-F-0006)
- Programmatic Biological Opinion for Water Depletions Associated with BLM Projects (excluding Fluid Minerals Development)

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Authorized by BLM in the Upper Colorado River Basin in Colorado, issued February 25, 2009 (#ES/GJ-6-CO-08-F-0010)

### **US Forest Service, Colorado**

- Noxious and Invasive Weed Management Plan for Oil and Gas Operators (US Forest Service and BLM 2007)
- US Forest Service Roadless Inventory and Associated EIS (US Forest Service 2001)
- Proposed Forest Plan for Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (US Forest Service 2007)
- Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests Oil and Gas Leasing Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA Forest Service 1993)
- White River National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA Forest Service 1993)

### **I.10.2 State Plans**

- Colorado Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan (CPW 2008a)
- Colorado Division of Wildlife Strategic Plan 2010-2020 (CPW 2009a).
- Gunnison Sage-grouse Conservation Plan, Piñon Mesa, Colorado (Piñon Mesa Gunnison Sage Grouse Partnership 2000)
- Gunnison Sage-grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan (Gunnison Sage-grouse Rangewide Steering Committee 2005)
- Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-grouse and Sagebrush Habitats (Connelly et al. 2004)
- Colorado Sagebrush: A Conservation Assessment and Strategy (Boyle and Reeder 2005)
- Colorado's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CPW 2006)
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife Data Analysis Unit Plans (CPW undated)
- Parachute-Piceance-Roan Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan (Parachute-Piceance-Roan Greater Sage-grouse Work Group 2008)

### **I.10.3 Local Government Plans**

- Mesa County Noxious Weed Management Plan (Mesa County 2009a)
- Mesa County Mineral and Energy Resources Master Plan (Mesa County 2011)

- Mesa Countywide Land Use Plan (Mesa County 1996)
- City of Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan (City of Grand Junction 2009)
- Fruita Community Plan (City of Fruita 2008)
- Town of Palisade Compressive Plan (Town of Palisade 2007)

### **I.11 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Implementation of the RMP would begin when the Colorado BLM State Director signs the ROD for the RMP. Decisions in the RMP would be tied to the BLM budgeting process. An implementation schedule would be developed, providing for systematic accomplishment of decisions in the approved RMP. The BLM will prepare supplementary rules in order to provide full authority to BLM Law Enforcement to enforce management decisions made in the approved RMP pursuant to the BLM's authority under 43 CFR § 8365.1-6.

During implementation of the RMP, site-specific analysis may be required, which can vary from a simple statement of conformance with the ROD to more complex documents that analyze several alternatives. For example, an EA could be required for some large-scale implementation decisions, such as travel management decisions. An EA documents the NEPA requirements for site-specific actions.

The RMP would be monitored and periodically evaluated based on guidance in the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1 (BLM 2005a). Monitoring is the process of tracking and documenting the implementation (or the progress of implementation) of land use plan decisions. Evaluation is the process of reviewing the land use plan and the periodic plan monitoring reports to determine whether the land use plan decisions and NEPA analysis are still valid and where the plan is being implemented. As outlined in BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1, the plan should be periodically evaluated (at a minimum every 5 years) as documented in an evaluation schedule. Revisions or amendments to the RMP may be necessary to accommodate changes in resource needs, policies, or regulations. Other decisions would be issued in order to fully implement the RMP.