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**Scoping Report**

**Environmental Impact Statement and Coordinated Activity Plan**

**2.1 Introduction**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) completed the Green River Resource Management Plan (GRRMP) in 1997. Management decisions in the GRRMP on leasing fluid minerals and on locatable minerals were deferred from a portion of the Green River Resource Area referred to as the "Core Area". These deferrals were necessary because information regarding potential mineral leasing or locations for mining claims was not yet sufficiently developed to make sound management decisions.

The deferred mineral issues and management of other resources were addressed in a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Jack Morrow Hills (JMH) Coordinated Activity Plan (CAP). The draft EIS was published in June 2000. The public review of the draft EIS resulted in additional resource information and public comments that warranted reformulation and analysis of land management alternatives. Completion of the project was thus delayed to evaluate the comments and new information.

Additional public scoping was conducted to help identify issues to be addressed in developing a full range of land management alternatives. This report describes the public scoping process undertaken for the preparation of a comprehensive, supplemental draft EIS for the JMH CAP. The comments received from the public during the scoping process are categorized based on the issues raised and are summarized in this report.

**2.0 Scoping Process**

Scoping is the term used in the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) [40 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Parts 1500 et. seq.] to define the early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed in the planning process. The scoping process serves a number of purposes. It provides an avenue to involve the public in identifying significant issues related to potential land use management actions, and helps identify any issues that are not significant and can thereby be eliminated from detailed analysis. The list of stakeholders and other interested parties is also confirmed and augmented during the scoping process. The scoping process for the JMH CAP encompassed a number of venues.

**2.1 Notice of Intent**

The Notice of Intent (NOI) is the legal forum notifying the public of the BLM's intent to initiate the planning process and to prepare an EIS for a major federal action. The NOI invites the participation of the affected and interested agencies, organizations, and members of the general public in determining the scope and significant issues to be addressed in the planning alternatives and analyzed in the EIS. The NOI for the JMH CAP was published in the Federal Register on December 6, 2001. The official close of the scoping period was January 11, 2002.

**2.2 Information Open Houses**

Prior to the publication of the NOI, two information open houses were scheduled. The open houses were held in Lander and Rock Springs, Wyoming, on December 11 and 13, 2001, respectively.

The format of the open houses was informal. Attendees signed a registration sheet as they entered the room and received handouts on the background of the JMH CAP, the proposed schedule for completing the planning process and NEPA documentation, and a comment sheet. A number of stations were set up around the room. The stations were organized according to the resource areas and issues identified during the workshops and scoping conducted previously by BLM. The stations displayed various GIS inventory maps for the different resources. The stations included general location and relief maps of the JMH area, cultural resources, minerals, geological resources, wildlife and vegetation resources, special management areas, recreation areas, and the planning process. Attendees viewed the stations and had one-on-one conversations with BLM and Booz Allen Hamilton staff about their questions and concerns. All attendees were encouraged to write their comments on the sheets provided.

**2.3 Press Releases**

Local and regional newspapers and radio stations throughout the planning area were used to disseminate information on the JMH CAP scoping and planning process. Press releases were prepared by the BLM announcing the information open houses and the official scoping meetings, and invited the public to provide input. Copies of the press releases are included in Appendix C. The press releases were provided to the following print and broadcast media.

Newspapers	
Bridger Valley Pioneer	Casper Star-Tribune
Daily Rocket-Miner (Rock Springs)	Green River Star
Lander Journal	Kemmerer Gazette
The Riverton Ranger	Rawlins Daily Times
Laramie Daily Boomerang	Sublette County Examiner
Uinta County Journal	Worland Northern Wyoming Daily News
Wyoming Tribune Eagle (Cheyenne)	Jackson Hole Guide
Jackson Hole News	Sheridan Press
The News-Record (Gillette)	Pinedale Roundup

Radio - Television	
KEVA - Evanston	KMER - Kemmerer
KRKK/KQSW - Rock Springs	KPIN - Pinedale
KTWO-TV - Casper	KUGR/KYCS - Green River

Other venues for release of information regarding the scoping process included federal elected officials and local chambers of commerce.

Other
Green River Chamber of Commerce
Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce
Bonnie Cannon for U.S. Congresswoman Cubin in Rock Springs
Lyn Shanaghy for U.S. Senator Enzi in Jackson
Pati Smith for U.S. Senator Thomas in Rock Springs

#### 2.4 Public Scoping Notice and Planning Criteria

A public scoping notice was prepared and mailed to federal, state, and local agencies, interest groups, and members of the general public on December 18, 2001. The mailing list was compiled from the initial scoping process and draft EIS, and included a total of 645 entities. The notice invited the public to participate in the scoping process and to comment on the planning criteria. The mailing address and email address for comments were provided in the scoping notice. Since the BLM email address was unavailable, a separate email account (JMH\_CAP@bah.com) was established specifically for this scoping process.

The notice served to inform the recipients of the public scoping process for the preparation of the supplemental EIS for the JMH CAP and the scheduled scoping meetings. The notice included background information on the location of the JMH area and the purpose and need for the planning activity. The preliminary resource issues identified during the preparation of the initial draft EIS were summarized in the notice.

The preliminary planning criteria were also included in the public scoping notice. The planning criteria serve as ground rules for the planning process. They guide the identification and development of land management alternatives.

#### 2.5 Scoping Meetings

Public scoping meetings were held in Lander and Rock Springs, Wyoming, on January 8 and 9, 2002, respectively. The BLM provided the local media with press releases announcing the time, location, and purpose of these meetings.

The format for the scoping meetings was similar to the information open houses. Attendees signed a registration sheet as they entered the room. Handouts available at the registration table included the complete list and description of the planning criteria, the proposed schedule for completing the planning process and NEPA documentation, and the comment sheet. Stations were set up around the room and organized according to the resource areas and issues identified during the workshops and scoping conducted previously by BLM. These stations displayed various GIS inventory maps and included general location and relief maps of the JMH area, cultural resources, minerals, geological resources, wildlife and vegetation resources, special management areas, recreation areas, and the planning process.

A PowerPoint® presentation was given at two different times during the meeting by the Assistant Field Manager of the Rock Springs Field Office. The presentation explained the purpose for public scoping and the background of the JMH CAP planning process. The location of the planning area and the numerous land uses were highlighted. The presentation concluded with an explanation of the planning process and the mailing address to submit comments.

Handouts were prepared on the different land uses and resources. The comments and issues, as heard from the public, were summarized on each handout and a list of questions was posed regarding the management of the resources. The handouts were available at each of the stations.

The GIS databases for the different land and resource uses were available as an interactive tool at the scoping meetings. The attendees were able to request and visualize first-hand how the different land and resource uses overlap.

#### 3.0 Scoping Summary

The scoping period officially closed on January 11, 2002. The public scoping process provided sufficient opportunity for federal, state, and local agencies, interested organizations and industries, and members of the general public to express their comments and provide meaningful input to the planning process. The BLM provided adequate notice of the scoping process and offered different venues for the public to learn about the JMH CAP planning process and to provide their input.

#### 3.1 Attendance

Based on the attendance at the open houses and scoping meetings in Lander and Rock Springs, the notification to the public regarding the scoping process should be considered a success. The following table summarizes the number of attendees that registered.

Attendance			
	Open House	Scoping Meeting	Total
Lander	115	84	199
Rock Springs	85	77	162
Total	200	161	361

#### 3.2 Comments

Comments were received through all venues. Written comments were received from the attendees at both the open houses and the scoping meetings, at the BLM Rock Springs Field Office, and at the JMH\_CAP@bah.com email account.

Based on a review of the comments received on the initial draft EIS, categories of issues were identified. The comments could generally be categorized as follows:

- Minerals
- Wildlife
- Realty
- Other
- Grazing
- Cultural/Historic
- Transportation

A database was established to initially capture comments based on these categories. As the comments received during the

scoping process were reviewed, other categories were created as needed. The database was then expanded to accommodate the additional categories.

A total of 325 comment letters were received and entered into the database. This total includes 125 comments received in the email account and 200 comments received at the open houses and scoping meetings and by mail. Petition-type comment letters were entered into the database only once using the name and address of the person/organization/industry that forwarded the letters. Two different petition-type letters were received. One was a mass mailing of a form letter signed and sent by individuals, whereas the other was a standard petition where numerous individuals signed a "proclamation". There were 31 other letters that contained similar wording of particular issues but presented in different formats. These letters were entered into the database as individual records.

There were 1,356 issues/comments identified from the 325 comment letters. These issues/comments were placed in the initial seven categories and additional categories were created as needed. New categories included air, alternatives, recreation, socio-economics, water, wilderness, and vegetation. The "Other" category primarily included comments addressing multiple use, preservation, and conservation issues. The comments are summarized as follows (percentages are rounded):

- Air - <1%
- Alternatives - 4%
- Cultural/Historic - 3%
- Grazing - 9%
- Minerals - 30%
- Other - 24%
- Realty - <1%
- Recreation - 3%
- Socio-economic - 3%
- Transportation - 5%
- Vegetation - <1%
- Water - 2%
- Wilderness - 6%
- Wildlife - 11%

Comment letters were received from a number of states, as indicated in the following table.

State	Number of Letters
Arizona	2
California	5
Colorado	18
Idaho	1
Indiana	1
Kentucky	1
Missouri	1
Minnesota	1
New Mexico	1
Nevada	1
New York	1
Texas	1
Utah	2
Virginia	1
Wisconsin	1
Wyoming	253
Total	325

The 253 letters that were received from inside the State of Wyoming accounted for 78 percent of the total. The majority of the comment letters were from Lander addresses. Approximately 78 percent of the total number of letters from Wyoming originated from within or in close proximity to the JMH planning area.

Location	Number of Letters
Atlantic City	3
Eden	4
Farson	4
Green River	7
Lander	74
Laramie	18
Pinedale	2
Reliance	4
Riverton	36
Rock Springs	41
South Pass	2
Superior	3
Others	55
Total	253

### 3.3 Issues to Incorporate in the Development and Analysis of Alternatives

Several comments requested that an alternative be formulated that would not allow any minerals development within the JMH planning area, but still provide for other multiple use activities such as recreation and sustainable grazing. Other comments requested that mineral development and grazing be removed from the planning area so that existing wildlife, cultural resources, and "pristine" areas could be preserved. These issues will be analyzed as part of the development of alternatives; however, pre-existing rights in the JMH planning area must be honored unless specifically mandated otherwise by legislation or through compensation.

Other comments requested that the no action alternative be less restrictive to equal out the range of alternatives analyzed, given that the scoping notice stated conservation and preservation alternatives would be developed. The purpose would be to sufficiently balance the range of alternatives and provide an adequate analysis for both agencies and the public. The basis of the no action alternative will be reviewed and revised to appropriately portray the existing management decisions

throughout the JMH planning area.

The majority of the comments that addressed the development of alternatives requested compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) mandate of managing public land for multiple uses. The issue focused on the potential social and economic impacts should the preferred alternative remove or significantly reduce the amount of recreation, mineral exploration, and/or grazing in the planning area. The comments stated that the existing multiple use management of the planning area was working sufficiently for all stakeholders.

The addition of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in the JMH planning area was another popular comment, both in support of and in opposition to further designations. Planning guidance on the process for designating new WSAs was released in January 2001. The BLM will follow this guidance during the alternatives development process to ascertain whether additional proposed wilderness areas should be evaluated further.

### **3.4 Issues to Address in the EIS**

The designation of the planning area boundary generated particular input. There were comments that stated the planning area boundary should only include the "core area", while other comments requested the boundary be expanded further to the checkerboard area to the south. The establishment of the planning area boundary and its relation to the GRRMP will be explained in more detail in the purpose and need section of the EIS.

The scope of the EIS was also an issue. Commentors requested that the supplemental EIS address only mineral management decisions that were deferred from the GRRMP and not the interrelationship of these decisions with the other resources in the area. The comments stated that management actions relative to other resources were sufficiently analyzed in the GRRMP documents. The interrelated resources are addressed in order to fully understand and analyze the impacts of various alternatives. The scope of the analysis will be explained in more detail in the purpose and need section of the EIS.

The accuracy and validity of the data and information used in developing and analyzing alternatives were raised in some comments. The areas mentioned were socioeconomic data, accurate wildlife and feral horse numbers, accurate habitat boundaries for wildlife, and the potential for mineral production and development. All resources will be examined under the existing conditions section of the EIS and appropriate, updated information will be added.

Many scoping comments were in regard to the June 2000 draft EIS. These comments requested reanalysis of socioeconomic, wildlife, grazing, and mineral development impacts based on new or supplemental information submitted during the previous draft EIS comment period. Many comments also requested that a full scope of realistic "reasonably foreseeable" actions be evaluated in order to accurately ascertain cumulative impacts of each alternative. A full analysis of impacts, including cumulative impacts, will be conducted for each reasonable alternative in the environmental consequences section of the EIS.

### **3.5 Issues Outside the Scope of the EIS**

There were many letters that referred to the number of public comments that were received on the June 2000 draft EIS. Specifically, these comments cited the statistic that approximately 12,000 comments were received on the previous draft EIS and that 93 percent were in favor of protecting the JMH planning area from large-scale oil and gas development. The letters stated that BLM should take this volume of response into consideration when developing alternatives. The NEPA process does not consider the quantity of a particular comment but rather each unique comment. The BLM will evaluate unique comments as they are submitted throughout the NEPA process, but will not consider quantities of comments that state the same terms.

Several comments requested that the JMH planning area be designated as a National Conservation Area. Congress establishes National Conservation Areas through specific legislation for each area. This designation is beyond the jurisdiction of the BLM.