APPENDIX 4—AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN CRITERIA

As part of the process for developing the Pinedale Resource Management Plan (RMP), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) planning team members reviewed all BLM administered public lands in the planning area to determine if any areas should be considered for designation as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) or if any existing ACEC designations should be modified or terminated. Only BLM-administered public lands can be considered for ACEC designation.

To be eligible for designation as an ACEC, an area must meet the relevance and importance criteria described in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §1610.7-2 and BLM Manual 1613.

Relevance and importance are defined as follows:

(1) Relevance. There shall be present a significant historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard.

(2) Importance. The above described value, resource, system, process, or hazard shall have substantial significance and values. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to life or property.

An area meets the "relevance" criterion if it contains one or more of the following:

1. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).

2. A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species; or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).

3. A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, nonsensitive, or threatened plan species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).

4. Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.

An area meets the "importance" criterion if it further meets one or more of the following:

1. Has more than locally significant qualities, which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared with any similar resource.

2. Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.

3. Has been recognized as warranting protection to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).

4. Have qualities, which warrant highlighting to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.

5. Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.

Table A4-1 shows the areas that were identified in the review and the BLM relevance and importance determinations that were made.

Table A4-1. Evaluation of ACEC Relevance and Importance Criteria

Existing or Proposed ACECS	Relevance Criteria	Importance Criteria	Recommended	Comments
Beaver Creek (existing)	2	1	Yes	Meets the relevance and importance criteria for fisheries and wildlife values, as identified when originally designated an ACEC. The ACEC designation should be retained.
Beaver Creek Expansion (proposed)	2	No	No	Expansion areas in the South Beaver, North Beaver, and Trail Ridge watersheds were proposed. The areas meet the relevance criteria for fisheries values (Colorado River cutthroat trout [CRCT]). The areas did not meet the importance criteria. It was determined that CRCT habitat management actions should apply to the planning area as a whole, rather than to only special management areas.
Miller Mountain (proposed)	2, 3, 4	No	No	Meets the relevance criteria for fisheries, wildlife, and vegetation values and for unstable soils. The area did not meet the importance criteria.
Muddy Creek (proposed)	No	No	No	The area did not meet the relevance and importance criteria.
New Fork Potholes (proposed)	1, 2, 3	1, 2	Yes	Meets the relevance and importance criteria for scenic, fisheries, wildlife, and unique geologic values. The values in this area need special emphasis to be effectively managed.
North Cottonwood Creek (proposed)	2	No	No	Meets relevance criteria for fisheries values (CRCT). The area did not meet the importance criteria. It was determined that CRCT habitat management actions should apply to the planning area as a whole, rather than to only special management areas.
Rock Creek (existing)	1, 2, 3	1, 2	Yes	Meets the relevance and importance criteria for scenic, fisheries, and wildlife values, as identified when originally designated an ACEC. The ACEC designation should be retained.

Existing or Proposed ACECS	Relevance Criteria	Importance Criteria	Recommended	Comments
Rock Creek Expansion (proposed)	2	No	No	It was proposed to expand the Rock Creek ACEC to include the LaBarge Creek watershed. Meets relevance criteria for fisheries values (CRCT). The area did not meet the importance criteria. It was determined that CRCT habitat management actions should apply to the planning area as a whole, rather than to only special management areas.
Ross Butte (proposed)	2, 3	2	No	Meets the relevance and importance criteria for wildlife and sensitive plant association values. It was determined that management actions other than ACEC designation are more appropriate to protect the values.
South Beaver Watershed (proposed)	2	No	No	Meets relevance criteria for fisheries values (CRCT). The area did not meet the importance criteria. It was determined that CRCT habitat management actions should apply to the planning area as a whole, rather than to only special management areas.
South Cottonwood Creek (proposed)	2	No	No	Meets relevance criteria for fisheries values (CRCT). The area did not meet the importance criteria. It was determined that CRCT habitat management actions should apply to the planning area as a whole, rather than to only special management areas.
The Mesa (proposed)	2, 3	No	No	Meets relevance criteria for wildlife values (big game migration and sage-grouse habitat). The area did not meet the importance criteria. It was determined that wildlife habitat management actions should apply to the planning area as a whole, rather than to only very large special management areas.
Trapper's Point (proposed)	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 4	Yes	Meets the relevance and importance criteria for cultural, historic, and wildlife values. The area is a big game migration bottleneck. The values in this area need special emphasis to be effectively managed.
White-Tailed Prairie Dog (proposed)	2	1, 2	No	Meets the relevance and importance criteria for wildlife values (white-tailed prairie dog habitat). The values in these areas already receive special management emphasis, and the ACEC designation is unnecessary.

Existing or Proposed ACECS	Relevance Criteria	Importance Criteria	Recommended	Comments
Wind River Front (proposed)	1, 2, 3	1	No	The area meets relevance criteria for scenic and recreation values, fish and wildlife habitat values, and geologic values. It was determined that management actions other than ACEC designation are more appropriate to protect the values.
Wyoming Range Front (proposed)	No	No	No	The area was proposed by cooperators during the alternative formulation process. It was determined that wildlife habitat management actions should apply to the planning area as a whole, rather than to only very large special management areas.

The Pinedale RMP Interdisciplinary Team identified two existing ACECs, a potential expansion to one of the existing ACECs, and six potentially new ACECs, to be addressed during the Pinedale RMP planning effort.

Of the areas and expansions reviewed, the BLM-administered lands on 12 areas were found to not meet the criteria and were dropped from further consideration. The BLM-administered lands on the two existing ACECs were found to meet the criteria and were retained. Two of the six potential new ACECs were also found to meet the criteria and were recommended in the Preferred Alternative of the draft Environmental Impact Statement. Further information on each area's qualifications under the relevance and importance criteria is available at the Pinedale Field Office and on the project website at www.blm.gov/rmp/wy/pinedale.