
1.0 INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains background information on the planning process and sets the stage for the information that is presented in the rest of the document. There are 11 main sections in Chapter 1, including:

- Background
- Purpose and Need for the Plan
- Planning Area Description
- Planning Process
- Scoping
- Identification of Issues
- Issues Beyond the Scope of the Plan
- Planning Criteria and Legislative Constraints
- Related Plans
- Summary of Changes Made between the Draft RMP/Draft EIS and the Proposed Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

1.2 BACKGROUND

On March 12, 2001, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register to prepare an RMP and an associated EIS for public lands administered by the VFO. As defined by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, the "public lands" are those federally owned lands and interests in lands (for example, federally owned mineral estate) that are administered by the Secretary of the Interior, specifically through the BLM.

The approved RMP would meet the BLM statutory requirement for a land-use plan (LUP) as mandated by Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), which specifies the need for a comprehensive LUP consistent with multiple-use and sustained-yield objectives. The RMP/EIS also fulfills requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, to disclose and address environmental impacts of proposed major federal actions through a process that includes public participation and cooperation with other agencies.

The BLM is the lead agency in preparing the RMP/EIS. Uintah (August 2003), Daggett (May 2002), and Duchesne (April 2002) counties have been cooperating agencies in this effort as local governments with special expertise. The Ute Indian Tribe and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) also became cooperating agencies with special expertise in September 2004. The State of Utah

became a cooperating agency in this effort in January 2003. The BLM is also coordinating closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) of the Department of Interior (DOI), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Utah Division of State History in this planning effort.

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PLAN

1.3.1 PURPOSE

The purpose for this project is to revise and integrate the Book Cliffs and Diamond Mountain RMPs into a single new comprehensive RMP that would guide management of public lands in the Vernal Planning Area (VPA). Through completion of an RMP/EIS, the BLM proposes to provide a single, comprehensive LUP that would guide management of the public lands and interests administered by the VFO into the future. The revised RMP, also referred to as the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan (VFO RMP), would coordinate the management of the VPA with other BLM offices. As appropriate, the VFO would collaborate with other land management agencies and private entities, including the State of Utah; the NPS; the USFS; the BIA; Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah counties; and municipalities would be conducted. The revised RMP would also coordinate the management of federal subsurface mineral estates with private landowners, the Ute Indian Tribe, or other nonfederal surface owners.

1.3.2 NEED

Current management of these public lands is guided by the Book Cliffs and Diamond Mountain RMPs. This RMP revision process is necessary because of the dated nature of the Book Cliffs RMP, completed in 1985, and to ensure consistency between the Book Cliffs and Diamond Mountain RMPs. Significant changes have occurred since completion of the Diamond Mountain and Book Cliff RMPs. Population growth and increased need for resource development has occurred, while concern for the environment has also increased. In addition to traditional consumptive uses (e.g., oil and gas development, mining and livestock grazing), there is now an increased interest in uses that emphasize aesthetic values such as open space and increased recreational opportunities. These often conflicting uses need to be addressed in terms of how they affect local communities; national, regional, and state interests; and ecosystem health. Additionally, policy guidance has resulted in the initiation or completion of local and national activity plans, recovery plans, and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements (PEISs) that have changed land management direction in the VFO since the Book Cliffs RMP was written.

A large block of 188,500 acres of federal mineral estate within the Hill Creek Extension of the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation has not been previously analyzed for oil and gas leasing. This issue has been addressed as part of this RMP revision.

Ownership of federal land formerly managed by the U.S. Department of the Navy and more recently the Department of Energy (DOE) was transferred to the Ute Indian Tribe. The BLM managed certain resource programs for the DOE on these 47,978 acres. This Vernal RMP will not analyze management of these programs.

These changes have been addressed as part of this RMP revision and integration process. See Section 1.5 for a description of the BLM's land-use planning process.

1.4 PLANNING AREA DESCRIPTION

1.4.1 GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

The VFO is located in the northeast corner of Utah and administers lands within Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah counties, plus a small portion of Grand County. The VFO also has Native American Trust responsibilities for Northern Ute Tribe and allotted mineral trust lands located within these counties.

There are 5,518,859 acres within the boundary of the VFO, of which 1,725,512 acres (approximately 30%) are BLM-managed surface lands. The VFO administers energy-related mineral activities on 3.9 million acres of federal mineral lands (including 1.3 million acres of USFS lands) and post-lease mineral operations on Indian trust mineral lands. The 1,911,000 acres of BLM-managed mineral estate includes the split estate mineral lands within the Hill Creek Extension (comprises 185,500 acres of mineral estate underlying Indian trust surface).

Most of the land that the BLM manages is in the eastern and southern portions of the planning area and is generally characterized by habitats associated with the Uinta Basin and Colorado Plateau. Other agencies that manage land in the vicinity of the VFO include the USFS, BIA, NPS, USFWS, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR), and Utah Division of Lands and Forestry. Additional lands are held in private ownership or in trust by the United States for the Ute Indian Tribe or for individual Native Americans.

The Diamond Mountain portion of the planning area includes BLM-administered lands and minerals in Daggett and Duchesne counties and a portion of Uintah County northwest of the Green River. The plan is responsible for the administration of public land in Browns Park and the Diamond Mountain Plateau for the Little Snake Field Office of Colorado. The Little Snake Field Office administers public land in Browns Park for some resources. Administration of these agreed-upon resources is in accordance with the parent resource area's management plan. There is also a fire-suppression agreement between the VFO and Little Snake Field Office.

The Book Cliffs portion of the planning area is located in northeastern Utah. It is bounded by the Utah–Colorado state line on the east, the Book Cliff Mountains to the south, the Green River to the west, and Blue Mountain to the north (see Map Figure 1). The Book Cliffs area includes public land and minerals in Uintah and Grand counties. The VFO boundary officially ends at the Uintah County line; however, a small portion of the public lands in Grand County of the Moab Field Office are administered by the VFO under a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

A small portion of the Flume Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) lies within the VPA. However, this WSA is managed by the Moab Field Office due to easier access to this area from Moab.

A small portion of the West Cold Springs and Diamond Breaks WSAs lie within the VPA. An MOU is in place between the Little Snake Office in Craig, Colorado, and the VFO. The Little Snake Office has administrative responsibility for managing both of these areas.

A small number of grazing allotments straddle the Utah–Colorado border. An MOU is in place between the White River Field Office and the VFO, where each office, depending on the allotment boundaries, administers livestock grazing for the other office.

Land ownership patterns within both the Diamond Mountain and Book Cliffs planning areas range from large blocks of BLM-administered public lands to small, privately owned blocks. This is complicated by lands where the BLM administers a percentage of the minerals, while other owners hold the other interests in the land. Land ownership, surface administration, and mineral management responsibilities within the VPA are shown in Map Figure 1 and described in Table 1.4.1.

Decisions and actions of the RMP only fully apply to BLM lands. In the case of split estate lands, such as lands within the planning area that are split between the BLM and the Uintah and Ouray Indian Tribe, actions affecting the surface must be coordinated with the surface owner. Undertakings conducted on lands not wholly or partly administered by the BLM are subject to the laws, regulations, conditions, and policies of the relevant land management agency or other landowner.

1.4.2 RESOURCE SETTING

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 directed the implementation of management guidance that would allow energy-related minerals to be leased, explored for, and developed in an environmentally responsible manner. Programmatic EISs have been initiated and completed to carry out the following programs: Oil Shale/Tar Sands Development, West-wide Energy Corridors, and Wind/Solar Energy Development. A series of interim and permanent policy guidance were formulated and released under the policy act direction. These incorporated best management practices (BMPs), application processing timeframes, increased NEPA document consistency, and timeliness. In addition, under the policy act, the VFO was designated as a pilot office. Additional positions were identified for the VFO to provide needed expertise in renewable resource specialties and energy-related exploration, development, and monitoring. Memorandums of understanding were signed with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the EPA, and the Army Corp of Engineers. Transferred funds were used to identify employees of these entities who would provide to the VFO needed expertise for consultations and other regulatory issues.

Resources within the VPA include botanical (including listed and non-listed sensitive species), cultural resources, fisheries, mineral resources, paleontological resources, rangeland, recreational resources, riparian resources, visual resources, water resources, wetlands, wild horses, wilderness, and wildlife. Land-use and economic resources include building stone, Gilsonite, livestock grazing, oil and gas, phosphate, rights-of-way tar sands, and woodland products. Opportunities for camping, fishing, hiking, hunting, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, sightseeing, and viewing historic sites provide public enjoyment, as well as additional revenues to businesses

in and adjacent to the VPA. Unique features within the planning area include the Book Cliffs, an area rich in resources with abundant management opportunities; Browns Park, which provides crucial big game winter range and a high density of cultural and historical sites; Nine Mile Canyon, with its rock art; the Pariette Wetlands, which provide habitat for over 100 species of wildlife; Red Mountain, with its high mountain vistas and plentiful recreational opportunities; and the White and Green rivers.

Table 1.4.1. Land Ownership in the VPA and the Surrounding Area

| Federal | Acres | Percent |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Vernal Field Office (VFO) | 1,697,039 | 30.75% |
| BLM Moab Field Office (MFO) | 28,473 | 0.52% |
| Forest Service (USFS) | 1,248,651 | 22.63% |
| National Park Service (NPS) | 50,113 | 0.91% |
| Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) | 10,898 | 0.20% |
| Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) | 3,046 | 0.06% |
| Bureau of Indian Affairs [BIA (Indian Trust Lands for the benefit of the Ute Indian Tribe and Allottees)] | 846,669 | 15.34% |
| Total | 3,884,889 | 70.39% |
| State of Utah | Acres | Percent |
| Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) | 32,210 | 0.58% |
| School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) | 377,969 | 6.85% |
| Total | 410,179 | 7.43% |
| Private | Acres | Percent |
| Total | 1,223,791 | 22.17% |
| Total Acreage in Vernal Planning Area (VPA) | 5,518,859 | 100.00% |

1.5 PLANNING PROCESS

The RMP is the master LUP that guides the management of public lands in a particular area or administrative unit. Resource management plans are usually prepared to cover the lands administered by a certain field office.

An approved RMP establishes the following items in a written document:

- Resource condition 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
- Intervals and standards for monitoring the plan

Preparation of an RMP involves several interrelated steps as illustrated and described below. Teams typically develop planning documents and complete other planning activities. The shapes in the image below represent minimum planning requirements, with different shapes representing different activities and documents.

The BLM frequently goes above and beyond the minimum requirements. For example, BLM strives to involve the public throughout the planning process—not just during the formal comment periods. Field offices may produce a wide variety of documents in addition to those shown below in Figure 1.5.1. The white rectangles represent planning documents. The green ovals represent the point at which the BLM is required to issue Federal Register Notices. The orange hexagons are minimum requirements for public comment and review. The purple ovals are other required steps.

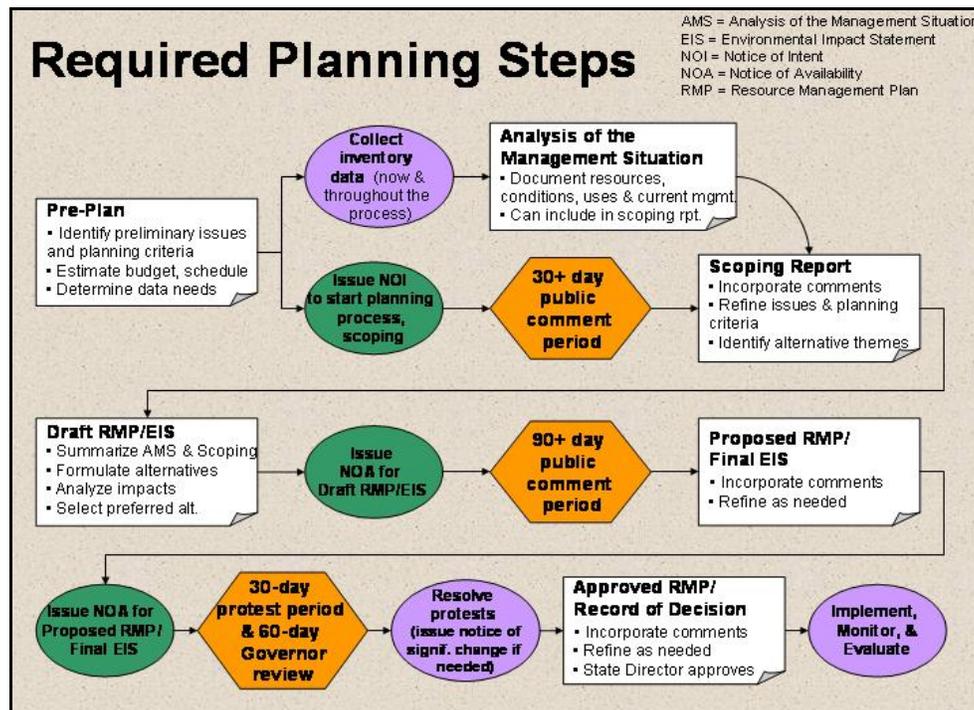


Figure 1.5.1. Required planning steps.

| Steps in the BLM Land-use Planning Process | |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Step 1 Identification of Issues | This planning step is designed to identify major problems, concerns, or opportunities associated with public land management in the planning area. Issues are identified by the public, the BLM, and other governmental entities. The planning process is then focused on resolving the planning issues. |
| Step 2 Development of Planning Criteria | Planning criteria are identified to guide development of the RMP and prevent the collection of unnecessary information and data. |

| Steps in the BLM Land-use Planning Process | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Step 3 Collect and Compile Inventory Data | This planning step involves the collation and collection of various kinds of environmental, social, economic, resource, and institutional data. In most cases, this process is limited to information needed to address the issues. The data required for land-use planning decisions is usually at a broader scale than data required in implementation level planning and analyses. |
| Step 4 Analysis of the Management Situation | This step calls for the deliberate assessment of the current situation. It identifies the way lands and activities are currently managed in the planning area, describes conditions and trends across the planning area, identifies problems and concerns resulting from the current management, and identifies opportunities to manage these lands differently. It also forms the basis for the "No Action" alternative. |
| Step 5 Formulate Alternatives | During this step, the BLM formulates a reasonable range of alternatives for managing resources in the planning area. Alternatives include a continuation of current management (No Action) alternative and other alternatives that strive to resolve the major planning issues while emphasizing different management scenarios. Alternatives usually vary by the amounts of resource production or protection that would be allowed, or in the emphasis of one program area over another. |
| Step 6 Estimation of Effects | This step involves estimating the physical, biological, economic, and social effects of implementing each alternative in order to provide a comparative evaluation of impacts in compliance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500). |
| Step 7 Selection of Preferred Alternative | Based on the information resulting from the estimation of effects, the BLM identifies a Preferred Alternative. The Draft RMP/EIS is then prepared for printing and distributed for a 90-day public review. |
| Step 8 Selection of RMP | <p>Following review and analysis of public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS, the BLM makes adjustments as warranted and selects a Proposed Plan. The Proposed Plan and a Final EIS is then published. A final decision is made after a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review and a 30-day public protest period are completed. The BLM then publishes the Record of Decision (ROD) and prepares the approved RMP.</p> <p>When the BLM prepares the final RMP and ROD, it may select one of the alternatives in its entirety or management actions from more than one of the alternatives analyzed in the planning process. With respect to management of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, it means the BLM may choose to protect all, some, or none of the non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, or select all or some of the actions of the protective management prescription.</p> |

| Steps in the BLM Land-use Planning Process | |
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| Step 9 Monitoring and Evaluation | <p>Step 9 is the monitoring and evaluation process. Monitoring is the repeated measurement of activities and conditions over time. Evaluation is a process in which the plan and monitoring data are reviewed to see if management goals and objectives are being met and if management direction is sound. Monitoring data gathered over time is examined and used to draw conclusions on whether management actions are meeting stated objectives, and if not, why. Conclusions are then used to make recommendations on whether to continue current management or what changes need to be made in management practices to meet objectives.</p> <p>The two types of monitoring that are tied to the planning process include implementation and effectiveness monitoring. Land-use plan monitoring is the process of (1) tracking the implementation of land-use planning decisions and (2) collecting and assessing data/information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of land-use planning decisions. The two types of monitoring are described below.</p> <p>Implementation Monitoring: Implementation monitoring is the most basic type of monitoring and simply determines whether planned activities have been implemented in the manner prescribed by the plan. Some agencies call this compliance monitoring. This monitoring documents the BLM's progress toward full implementation of the LUP decision. There are no specific thresholds or indicators required for this type of monitoring.</p> <p>Effectiveness Monitoring: Effectiveness monitoring is aimed at determining if the implementation of activities has achieved the desired goals and objectives. Effectiveness monitoring asks the question: Was the specified activity successful in achieving the objective? This 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, and thus avoid collection of unnecessary data. Success is measured against the benchmark of achieving desired future conditions established by the plan.</p> <p>Regulations at 43 CFR 1610.4-9 require that the Proposed Plan establish intervals and standards, as appropriate, for monitoring and evaluation of the plan, based on the sensitivity of the resource decisions involved. Progress in meeting the plan objectives and adherence to the management framework established by the plan is reviewed periodically. CEQ regulations implementing NEPA state that agencies may provide for monitoring to assure that their decisions are carried out and should do so in important cases (40 CFR 1505.2(c)). To meet these requirements, the BLM will review the plan on a regular schedule in order to provide consistent tracking of accomplishments and provide information that can be used to develop annual budget requests to continue implementation.</p> <p>Land-use plan evaluations will be used by the BLM to determine if the decisions in the RMP, supported by the accompanying NEPA analysis, are still valid. Evaluation of the RMP will generally be conducted every five years per BLM policy, unless unexpected actions, new information, or significant changes in other plans, legislation, or litigation triggers an evaluation. Land-use plan evaluations determine if decisions are being implemented, whether mitigation measures are satisfactory, whether there are significant changes in the related plans of other entities, whether there is new data of significance to the plan, and if decisions should be changed through amendment or revision. Evaluations will follow the protocols established by the BLM Land-use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 in effect at the time the evaluation is initiated. Specific monitoring and evaluation needs are identified by resource/uses throughout Chapter 2.</p> |

1.6 SCOPING

1.6.1 THE SCOPING PROCESS

Early in the planning process, the public and other agencies were invited to help the BLM identify planning issues and concerns relating to the management of BLM-administered lands and resources in the planning area. The formal scoping period began with publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register in March 2001. The scoping process included five scoping meetings conducted in locations within and outside of the planning area March 12, 2001 through December 31, 2001. News releases and radio announcements were also used to notify the public of the planning process and how to become involved. Management concerns were identified through discussions with BLM resource specialists.

As part of this scoping process, the following public meetings were held to solicit input:

- Duchesne County Courthouse, Duchesne, Utah; October 17, 2001
- Vernal Western Park, Vernal, Utah; October 18, 2001
- Utah Department of Natural Resources, Salt Lake City, Utah; October 25, 2001
- Daggett County Courthouse, Manila, Utah; November 1, 2001
- Green River City Offices, Green River, Utah; November 8, 2001

On January 14, 2005, the BLM published a notice of availability (NOA) of the Draft RMP/EIS in the Federal Register to announce and solicit public comment on the alternatives and impacts and effects of those alternatives on the human environment. The BLM distributed to relevant agencies and the interested public the Draft RMP/EIS for review and comment. The comment period ended April 14, 2005. The comments and the BLM's responses thereto are addressed in Chapter 5 of this Proposed Plan/Final EIS (PRMP/FEIS, or the Proposed Plan). The BLM received approximately 360 substantive letters during this comment period. Out of these comment letters, approximately 320 comments necessitated changes to the Draft RMP/Draft EIS. A more detailed breakdown of the letters and comments received are shown in the chart below.

Separate from the Draft RMP and EIS for the VFO planning area, the BLM published a NOA in the Federal Register on December 13, 2005, announcing the availability of information on existing and potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) considered within the Draft RMP and EIS, as required in 43 CFR 1610.7-2. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) also provided an associated 60-day comment period beginning December 13, 2005. The BLM received 5 substantive letters during this comment period. Out of these comment letters, 10 comments necessitated changes to the Draft RMP/Draft EIS. A more detailed breakdown of the letters and comments received are shown in the chart below.

In order to adequately address the management of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics, a supplemental EIS (SEIS) fifth alternative (Alternative E) was published by the BLM in 2007. An NOA of the SEIS was published in the Federal Register on October 5, 2007. The 90-day public comment period to solicit public comment on Alternative E began October 5, 2007, and ended on January 3, 2008. The BLM received 191 substantive letters during this

comment period. Out of these comment letters, approximately 500 comments necessitated changes to the Draft RMP/Draft EIS. A more detailed breakdown of the letters and comments received are shown in the chart below.

Table 1.6.1 Letters and Comments Breakdown

| | Draft RMP/Draft EIS | ACEC Comment Period | Supplement to the Draft RMP/Draft EIS |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Total Substantive Letters | Approximately 320 | 5 | Approximately 52 |
| Total Non-Substantive Letters | Approximately 1,774 | 6,835 | Approximately 20,000+ |
| Total Letters | Approximately 2,094 | 6,840 | Approximately 20,000+ |
| Total Substantive Comments | Approximately 2,500 | 30 | Approximately 500 |
| Total Non-Substantive Comments | Approximately 438 | 32 | Approximately 65 |
| Total Comments | Approximately 2,938 | 37 | Approximately 565 |
| Total Comments that Changed the RMP | Approximately 320 | 10 | Approximately 34 |

1.7 IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

The key planning issues identified as a result of the scoping process for developing alternatives in the RMP and EIS are outlined below.

1.7.1 AIR QUALITY

How can natural resources such as air quality be addressed in order to comply with the State of Utah and the EPA standards?

1.7.2 CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

How can cultural and paleontological resources be protected from resource uses such as motorized recreation, livestock grazing, and mineral development?

Note: The Proposed Plan provides for enhanced management of cultural and paleontological resources in the planning area. Many new discoveries, excavations, and analyses in the field of paleontology have occurred. These new findings are enhancing the BLM's understanding of these resources in the VPA.

1.7.3 RELATED CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL ISSUES

- *What management practices (i.e., method of development and location) can be applied to human activities and uses in order to protect cultural and paleontological resources?*

- *Where can cultural and paleontological resources be used for scientific, educational, recreational, and traditional purposes?*

1.7.4 FIRE MANAGEMENT

Where is fire desired and not desired, and in what areas could fire be used as a management tool for vegetative treatments?

Note: Fire management planning is necessary to address high risk areas, fire prevention, prescribed burns, rehabilitation and restoration, hazardous fuels reduction, protection of life and property, and other wildfire-related issues.

1.7.5 LANDS AND REALTY

What lands within the VPA should be identified as targets for acquisition, disposal, or withdrawal?

Note: As mandated by Section 102 (a)(1) of FLPMA (43 U.S.C. § 1701), public lands are retained in federal ownership, the exception being those public lands that have future potential for disposal (i.e., sale or exchange), as described under Section 203(a) and Section 206 of FLPMA (43 U.S.C. §§ 1713 and 1716). Public lands cannot be effectively administered without legal and physical access. Therefore, public lands have potential for disposal when they are isolated and/or difficult to manage. Lands identified for disposal must meet public objectives, such as community expansion and economic development. The preferred method of disposal is land exchange. Other lands can be considered for disposal on a case-by-case basis. Disposal actions are usually in response to a public request or an application and result in a title transfer, wherein the lands leave the public domain.

Methods used to acquire legal rights to lands that meet resource management needs include negotiated purchase, donation, and exchange. In a withdrawal of lands, an area of public land is withheld from settlement, sale, location, or entry, for the purpose of limiting activities in order to maintain other public values.

Related Lands and Realty Issues

- How will transportation and utility right-of-way corridors (including avoidance areas and exclusion areas) be managed?
- What specific land-use authorization decisions will be determined to be appropriate in meeting specific resource goals and objectives?
- How will access needs and tenure adjustment proposals (all lands identified for disposal or retention) be addressed?
- How will land-tenure adjustments or ownerships and management agreements be addressed when they have not previously been addressed because they occurred since the completion of previous planning? (For example, Hill Creek federal minerals and private

lands were acquired as a part of the Book Cliffs initiative and the lands near the mouth of Nine Mile Creek were acquired as mitigation.)

1.7.6 MINERALS MANAGEMENT

What areas will be available for mineral development, and what restrictions should be imposed?

Note: Historically, the mineral industry has been an important aspect of the local economy in the VPA. Mineral development is considered a major issue for this planning area not only for economic reasons but also for the degree to which it can potentially affect other resources.

Related Minerals Management Issues

- How can hazardous materials issues be identified when they arise due to proposed oil, gas, and mineral development that are regulated by the state?
- How can conflicts be reduced between mineral development and increasing recreation?
- Where can mineral leasing and development occur, while protecting other resources?
- What are the economic benefits of mineral development?

1.7.7 NON-WSA LANDS WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

How should non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics be managed?

Note: Certain non-WSA lands in the area managed by the VFO are proposed by members of Congress and/or members of the public for wilderness designation. After updating its wilderness inventory, the BLM found that some of these lands have wilderness characteristics as defined in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964, and others do not.

The Land-use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 guides the consideration of non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics in land-use planning. The handbook provides that the BLM may not establish new WSAs. However, the BLM may consider information on wilderness characteristics in land-use planning efforts and manage such lands in a way that would protect or preserve some or all of those characteristics. This may include protecting certain lands in their natural condition and providing outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

1.7.8 OHV USE AND TRANSPORTATION

How can increased recreation use, especially motorized vehicle access, be managed while protecting natural resource values?

Note: Growth of OHV use has become a significant issue within the planning area due to increased conflicts between OHV users and other recreationists, as well as the potential for increased soil damage, while protecting the natural and cultural values of the public lands. With the number of visitors growing, recreation is expanding further into the backcountry, while

resource and user conflicts are becoming more common. Although all recreational uses need to be managed, OHV use needs particular attention, including identifying areas to be open, restricted, or closed for the protection of other resource values.

1.7.9 RELATED OHV AND TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

- *Which areas should be designated as open, limited, or closed to OHV use, and which OHV routes should be designated within the limited category?*
- *What types of recreation travel should be available on which designated routes and under what limitations?*

1.7.10 RANGELAND MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH

Are there areas where grazing should not be allowed due to resource conflicts?

Note: The Secretary of the Interior, through the BLM, manages approximately 264 million acres of public rangelands throughout the western U.S. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, the FLPMA, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 together guide the BLM's management of livestock grazing on public lands. The objectives for grazing administration regulations are to "promote healthy sustainable rangeland ecosystems; to accelerate restoration and improvement of public rangelands to properly functioning condition; to efficiently and effectively administer domestic livestock grazing; and to provide for the sustainability of the western livestock industry and communities that are dependent upon productive, healthy public rangelands" (43 CFR Part 4100.0-2).

Resource concerns and potential conflicts have arisen regarding the allocation and season of use of forage within the planning area. The BLM's grazing regulations recognize suspended non-use if carried on a permit prior to 1995. If a permit is reduced after 1995, the animal unit months (AUMs) are not carried on the permit. A permittee may apply for temporary non-renewable AUMs; however, the BLM must determine if forage is available. Isolated instances of resource degradation have occurred in site-specific areas particularly associated with seasons of use and forage allocation.

The BLM incorporates standards for rangeland health by:

- Evaluating adjustments in livestock and wildlife numbers and seasons of use.
- Evaluating forage allocation and carrying capacity for wildlife, wild horses, and livestock.
- Evaluating range capability, including potential impacts to range health for both wildlife and wild horse populations and permitted livestock use.

Related Rangeland Management and Health Issues

- *How should grazing be managed during times of drought?*
- *How should grazing be managed in riparian areas?*

1.7.11 RECREATION RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT

Where should adaptive management practices be applied in response to unacceptable resource impacts?

Note: Recreation management is of significant concern within the planning area because it contains world-class recreational resources. Use has grown rapidly and is expected to continue to grow. This increase in recreational activities may bring additional risk of wildfire within Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas. Recreation uses and projected needs are reviewed on all lands to determine appropriate management for the following:

- **Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs)** requiring enhanced or special management for recreational uses, or for protection of recreation-related resource values;
- **Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs)** are areas where dispersed recreation is encouraged and where visitors have recreational freedom of choice with minimal regulatory constraint. These areas usually receive very little recreation use.

Related Recreation Resource Management Issues

- *How should recreational uses be managed to limit conflicts among recreational users?*
- *How should camping, human waste, fires, and wood collection be managed?*
- *Where should SRMAs be managed for recreational uses or for protection of recreation-related values?*
- *How should conflicts with other, non-recreational uses be reduced?*
- *What management actions should be implemented to mitigate damage caused by recreational uses, including vehicles, on other resources and sensitive areas, especially riparian areas?*
- *How should recreation in the VPA be managed to ensure public health and safety?*
- *Where and under what circumstances should permitted recreation uses be available?*
- *What types of recreational facilities and uses should be available, and what limitations should be required?*

1.7.12 SPECIAL MANAGEMENT DESIGNATIONS

What areas should have special designations such as ACECs and Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR)?

Note: FLPMA and BLM policy require the BLM to give priority to designation and protection of ACECs during the land-use planning process. The Wild and Scenic River Act directs federal agencies to consider the potential for including watercourses into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System during the land-use planning process.

As a cooperating agency involved with the development of the VFO RMP/EIS, the State of Utah has proposed that a statewide WSR review be completed. In accordance with Section 5(d) of the

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the BLM would continue to make WSR recommendations through the land-use planning process.

Related Special Management Designation Issues

- *What management prescriptions should be applied to areas with special designations?*
- *What resources need the protection provided by a special designation?*

1.7.13 VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (VRM)

How will visual resources be managed?

Note: Changes in visitor use patterns and frequency, as well as intensive development, are causing concerns in some areas and enhanced protection of visual resources may be necessary. The VRM designations would be consistent with overall management plan goals and objectives.

1.7.14 WATERSHED MANAGEMENT, SOILS, AND VEGETATION

How can resources such as watersheds, soils, and vegetation be protected, maintained, or restored?

Note: Some resource uses (i.e., grazing, mineral development, OHV use, and recreation) can affect the natural function and condition of watersheds. A healthy cover of perennial vegetation stabilizes the soil, increases infiltration of precipitation, reduces runoff, provides clean water to adjacent streams, and minimizes noxious weed invasion. Plant communities provide habitat for wildlife as well as forage for domestic animals.

Related Watershed Management, Soils, and Vegetation Issues

- *Which watersheds may require special protection?*
- *Where and with what methods can noxious weeds be controlled?*
- *How should activities and uses be managed during drought?*
- *How should soil and vegetative resources be managed?*
- *What management prescriptions should be in place to allow for appropriate consideration to water quality concerns related to activities on public lands, including but not limited to, the requirements mandated by the Clean Water Act and the state water classifications in the 303D state water inventories, as well as at-risk water quality due to naturally occurring formations?*
- *What management prescriptions should be in place to ensure compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Unified Federal Policy for a Watershed Approach, and the Colorado River Basis Salinity Control Act?*
- *What management prescriptions are appropriate and consistent for flood plain protection?*

- *How will the VFO management for the inventory and protection of riparian areas in accordance with current BLM policy?*

1.7.15 WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT

How should wild horses be managed in the VPO?

Note: Management of wild horses remains difficult due to disease (e.g., EIA), trespass of private horses, and manageability of the herd. The Proposed Plan addresses the following:

- *Wild or feral horses will be gathered and removed.*
- *Forage allocation has been allocated until removal.*

1.7.16 WILDLIFE HABITAT AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

How can wildlife habitat and fisheries be managed to be protected, maintained, or restored?

Related Wildlife Habitat and Fisheries Management Issues

- *What restrictions could be placed on resource uses in identified areas to maintain the existence or promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, or to prevent the listing of additional species?*
- *How should wildlife corridors and unfragmented, crucial wildlife habitat be protected or improved?*
- *What considerations should be made for state-listed sensitive plant and animal species and their associated habitats?*
- *What consideration should be made for animal damage control within the scope of the national and local MOU with Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and UDWR?*
- *What consideration should be made for reintroduction or transplants of native fish and wildlife species into the planning area that were not addressed during the previous planning efforts, including allocating AUMs, where appropriate?*
- *What consideration should be made for species not recognized during the previous planning efforts—such as newly listed threatened and endangered species, species proposed for listing, candidate species, and other non-listed special status species, including those on the Utah BLM State Director's Sensitive Species List?*

1.7.17 WOODLAND AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

What treatments and management prescriptions will be employed to address forest health, land health, sustainability, and resiliency to disturbances, fuel loadings, fire hazard, composition, structure, and function?

Note: Treatments across the planning area would need to be implemented to meet desired future conditions. Existing RMPs also do not address special forest vegetation product management such as seed collection [private and commercial]. In recent years the public demand for these types of products has grown significantly.

Related Woodland and Forest Management Issues

What areas should be available for fuel wood harvesting?

1.8 ISSUES BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THE PLAN

Issues beyond the scope of the RMP planning process include all issues not related to decisions that would occur as a result of the planning process. They include decisions that are not under the jurisdiction of the MFO or are beyond the capability of the BLM to resolve as part of the planning process. Issues identified in this category include:

- The State of Utah, Uintah, Duchesne and Daggett counties may hold valid existing rights-of-way in the planning area pursuant to Revised Statute (RS) 2477, Act of July 28 1866, Chapter 262, 8, 14 Stat. 252, 253, codified at 43 USC 932. On October 21, 1976, Congress repealed R.S-2477 through passage of FLPMA. This RMP does not adjudicate, analyze, or otherwise determine the validity of claimed rights-of-way. However, nothing in the RMP extinguishes any valid right-of-way or alters in any way the legal rights the state and counties have to assert and protect RS-2477 rights or to challenge in federal court or other appropriate venue any use restrictions imposed by the RMP that they believe are inconsistent with their rights.
- New wilderness or WSA proposals.
- Eliminating grazing, mineral development, and OHV use on all public lands.
- Activities and uses beyond the jurisdiction of the BLM.
- Changing existing laws, policies, and regulations.
- Availability of funding and personnel for managing programs.
- Considering alternative energy sources as substitutes for activities related to mineral development.

1.9 PLANNING CRITERIA

The FLPMA is the primary authority for the BLM's management of public lands. This law provides the overarching policy by which public lands would be managed and establishes provisions for land-use planning, land acquisition and disposition, administration, range management, rights-of-way, designated management areas, and the repeal of certain laws and statutes. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides the basic national charter for environmental responsibility and requires the consideration and public availability of information regarding the environmental impacts of major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. In concert, these two laws provide the guidance for administration of all BLM activities.

Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and guidelines that help to guide data collection, alternative formulation, and alternative selection in the RMP development process. In conjunction with the planning issues, planning criteria assures 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 following criteria were developed by the BLM and reviewed by the public as part of the scoping process:

- The principles of multiple use and sustained yield as set forth in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act have been applied in the RMP.
- The RMP has complied with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.
- All decisions made in the RMP and subsequent implementation decisions would be subject to valid, existing rights.
- The RMP is accompanied by an EIS that would comply with NEPA requirements.
- RMP decisions apply to lands under jurisdiction of the VFO.
- The RMP relies on available inventories of public lands and their resources.
- Boundaries and recommendations on WSAs identified as a result of inventory conducted prior to October 21, 1993, under Section 603 of FLPMA and awaiting action by Congress would not be changed by the RMP.
- Although the formal Section 603(a) wilderness review process expired on October 21, 1993, the BLM has continuously maintained an inventory of current public land attributes, including lands that may have wilderness character, but which were either not analyzed in earlier planning efforts as having those characteristics, or which were determined presently to have these characteristics that may not have been present during earlier inventory efforts. It is not within the BLM's authority to designate additional WSAs.
- The RMP incorporates the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing as set out by the RAC.
- The RMP considers provisions of the Vernal Fire Management Plan.
- The RMP considers the existing recovery plans and management strategies and guidelines in place for federally listed threatened and endangered species that use the planning area. State management plans have been considered for delisted species.
- The RMP has considered conservation and management strategies developed for the protection, conservation, and restoration of westslope cutthroat trout, fluvial arctic grayling, and Greater Sage-grouse.
- The RMP recognizes the State of Utah's responsibility to manage fish and wildlife populations, including hunting and fishing uses.
- The RMP recognizes the State of Utah's authority regarding Utah water law and water rights.

- RMP decisions are compatible to the extent possible with the plans and mandates of other agencies and governments that have jurisdiction in the region.
- The RMP recognizes private land owner obligations under applicable tribal treaties and laws or executive orders relating to Native American reserved rights, religious freedoms, and traditional use areas.
- The RMP considers and integrates local, statewide, and national interests.

1.10 RELATED PLANS

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

Management of federal and state lands immediately adjacent to public land administered by the BLM was considered in the formulation of alternative management scenarios and land-use allocations. As cooperating agencies in development of the Vernal RMP, Uintah, Daggett, and Duchesne counties have evaluated consistency with appropriate county plans as the Proposed Plan/Final EIS has been developed. The main major planning documents of other federal, state, local, and tribal governments considered in development of the RMP are included below. (Note: This may not be a complete list.)

1.10.1 COUNTY LAND-USE PLANS

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Daggett County, Utah | Daggett County General Plan |
| Duchesne County, Utah | Duchesne County General Plan |
| | Duchesne County Public Land Implementation Plan |
| Grand County, Utah | Grand County General Plan |
| Uintah County, Utah | Uintah County General Plan |
| | Uintah County Plan for Management of the Book Cliffs Resource Area Ordinance No. 9-25-2000A, Wild Horse Habitat on Public Land |
| Garfield County, Colorado | Garfield County General Plan |
| Moffat County, Colorado | Moffat County General Plan |
| Rio Blanco County, Colorado | Rio Blanco County General Plan |
| Sweetwater County, Wyoming | Sweetwater County General Plan |

1.10.2 STATE OF UTAH

| |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Division of State Parks and Recreation, Steinaker, and Red Fleet State Plans |
| 2003. State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan |
| 2001. Utah's Water Resources Planning for the Future |
| 1999. Uintah Basin Water Plan |
| 1990. Utah State Water Plan |

1.10.3 OTHER FEDERAL PLANS

| |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ashley National Forest Land-use Plan |
| Dinosaur National Monument Plan |
| Ouray National Wildlife Refuge Plan |
| Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge Plan |
| Price BLM Field Office RMP |
| Moab BLM Field Office RMP |
| Green River BLM Field Office RMP |
| Little Snake BLM Field Office RMP |
| White River BLM Field Office RMP |
| Park City Management Framework Plan (Salt Lake City BLM Field Office) |

1.10.4 ACTIVITY PLANS

| |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1979. Desolation & Gray Canyons on the Green River—River Management Plan |
| 1988–1989. John Jarvie Historic District Site Management Plan, completed in 1988 and amended in 1989 |
| 1994. Recreation and Cultural Management Plan for Nine-Mile Canyon; Joint Management Plan; Vernal and Price Field Offices |
| 1996. Green River Management Plan; Joint Management Plan; VFO and Ashley National Forest |

1.10.5 HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLANS

| |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1979. Myton Habitat Management Plan |
| 1983. Diamond Mountain/Ashley Creek Habitat Management Plan |
| 1987. Browns Park Habitat Management Plan |

1.10.6 ENDANGERED SPECIES RECOVERY PLANS

| |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1983. Northern States Bald Eagle Recovery Plan |
| 1987. The Recovery Implementation Plan for the Endangered Fish Species in the Upper Colorado River Basin |
| 1988. Black-footed Ferret Recovery Plan |
| 1990. Bonytail Chub Recovery Plan |
| 1990. Humpback Chub Recovery Plan |
| 1990. Uinta Basin Hookless Cactus Recovery Plan |
| 1991. Colorado Squawfish Recovery Plan |
| 1999. Razorback Sucker Recovery Plan |
| 1995. Mexican Spotted Owl Recovery Plan |
| 1995. Draft Ute Ladies-tresses Recovery Plan |
| 2003. Conservation and Research Plans for Four Plant Species in Northeastern Utah (White River Beardtongue, Goodrich Beardtongue, Graham Beardtongue, and Horseshoe Milkvetch) |

1.10.7 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS

| |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1983. Uinta Basin Synfuels Development EIS |
| 1983. Wild and Scenic River Study, Green and Yampa Rivers EIS |
| 1984. Utah Combined Hydrocarbon Leasing Regional EIS |
| 1985. PR Spring Combined Hydrocarbon Lease Conversion EIS |
| 1990. Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness EIS |

1.10.8 DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1991. Final Environmental Impact Statement Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States and associated Records of Decision. BLM Wyoming State Office, Casper Wyoming (BLM-WY-ES-91-036-4320) |
| 2007. Final Vegetation Treatments on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and associated Record of Decision. USDI, Bureau of Land Management (FES 07-21) |
| 2007. Final Vegetation Treatments on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Report. USDI, BLM (FES07-21) |

1.10.9 NATIONAL PROGRAMMATIC EIS FOR TAR SANDS AND OIL SHALE RESOURCES

The VFO contains areas of tar sands and oil shale resources. The tar sand resources have been, and currently are, available for lease under the Combined Hydrocarbon Leasing Act of 1981 and in accordance with decisions in the existing BLM LUPs/plan amendments. There are, at present, no regulations in place to allow for leasing oil shale, nor any existing commercial oil shale leases upon BLM-managed lands. The VFO contains one research and development oil shale lease.

In Utah, the major tar sand resources lie within 11 designated Special Tar Sands Areas (STSAs) managed by the Vernal, Price, Richfield, and Monticello Field Offices. One of these STSAs lies within the Grand Staircase–Escalante National Monument where leasing is prohibited. The VFO wholly or in part manages seven of the remaining 10 STSAs.

Lands containing oil shale resources were originally identified through an inventory that portrayed the occurrence of the Green River geologic formation in Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado. Once identified, lands containing oil shale resources were withdrawn from mineral entry through a 1930 Executive Order, which was later modified to allow for oil, gas, sodium leasing, and leasing of U_A U_B Oil Shale tracts. Since that time, the economic potential for the oil shale resource has been further defined, now comprising a much smaller area in Utah, primarily in the southern part of the BLM VFO area with a small area in the northeast portion of the lands managed by the Price Field Office.

When the Vernal RMP revision was initiated in 2001, there was no reasonable foreseeable development (RFD) expectation for tar sands or oil shale over the life of the plan. The mineral report identified these resources, but did not foresee any leasing or development due to prevailing and anticipated economic factors.

Since the start of this RMP revision, Congress enacted the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Section 369 of the Energy Policy Act requires the Secretary of Interior to "complete a programmatic environmental impact statement for a commercial leasing program for oil shale and tar sands resources on public lands, with an emphasis on the most geologically prospective lands within each of the States of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming." On December 13, 2005, the BLM published a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register initiating a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to support a commercial oil shale and tar sands leasing program on federal lands in these three states. Since that time, the scope of the PEIS has been revised. The BLM is no longer using the PEIS as the document that supports the NEPA requirements for leasing. Given that the development technologies for *in situ* production of oil shale are just emerging, there is a lack of information regarding resource use and associated impacts. Consequently, the BLM has changed this document to a resource allocation document that identifies the BLM-managed lands for which applications to lease oil shale and tar sands resources would be accepted in the future. However, although applications would be accepted, additional NEPA analysis would be performed before any leasing of the area would be considered.

All land-use planning decisions related to oil shale and tar sands resources (areas open to application for potential leasing) in this RMP will be made by the ongoing PEIS for oil shale and tar sands resources. The ROD on the final PEIS will amend the existing Diamond Mountain and

Book Cliffs RMP or the Vernal RMP by making land-use planning decisions on whether or not lands will be available for future application, leasing, and development of oil shale and tar sands on public lands for those areas where the resource is present. Additional site-specific NEPA analysis will be completed on each lease application before any leases would be issued.

As part of the site-specific NEPA analysis, the environmental consequences to specific resource values and uses within the areas and any alternative actions would be analyzed. Any decision to offer the lands for lease would be made based on a full disclosure of the impacts. If a decision is made to offer the lands for lease, specific mitigation measures will be developed to ensure that the commercial operations use practices that minimize or mitigate impacts.

This pre-leasing NEPA analysis would include the same opportunities for public involvement and comment that are part of this PEIS process and every other land-use planning and NEPA process the BLM undertakes. The decisions associated with the PEIS will be incorporated into the Vernal RMP as it is finalized or will amend the Vernal RMP. Additional opportunities for public involvement and comment will occur when the Proposed Plan Amendment/ Final PEIS is available.

This RMP will, however, provide allocation and leasing decisions for conventional oil and gas leasing in the STSAs and oil shale areas.

1.10.10 RELATIONSHIP TO THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY AND THE SCIENTIFIC INVENTORY OF ONSHORE FEDERAL LANDS' OIL AND GAS RESOURCES AND RESERVES, AND THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF RESTRICTIONS OR IMPEDIMENTS TO THEIR DEVELOPMENT

The President's comprehensive National Energy Policy, issued in May 2001, directed the Secretary to "...examine land status and lease stipulation impediments to federal oil and gas leasing, and review and modify those where opportunities exist (consistent with the law, good environmental practice and balanced use of other resources)."

Under this directive the assistant secretary for Lands and Minerals Management delivered to Congress an inventory of U.S. oil and gas resources in five western basins, as well as the extent and nature of any restrictions or impediments to their development. This report was prepared at the request of Congress under the provisions of the 2000 EPCA).

In April 2003, the BLM specified four EPCA integration principles as follows:

- Environmental protection and energy production are both desirable and necessary objectives of sound land management practices and are not to be considered mutually exclusive priorities.
- The BLM must ensure the appropriate amount of accessibility to energy resources necessary for the nation's security while recognizing that special and unique non-energy resources can be preserved.

- Sound planning would weigh the relative resource values consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.
- All resource impacts, including those associated with energy development and transmission, would be mitigated to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation.

By July 29, 2003, the BLM started to provide direction necessary to outline a strategy for integrating EPCA inventory results into LUPs.

The VFO is located partially within the Uinta–Piceance oil and gas basin, one of seven areas identified as priority basins in the EPCA inventory. The VFO and their contractors conducted an extensive review of the inventory data regarding energy resources within the planning area. That data is profiled in the Proposed Vernal RMP and consists primarily of two types of information as outlined in EPCA: 1) data on oil and gas resources (volumetric data), and 2) data on leasing constraints. This data is considered an important part of the BLM's administrative record for the RMP.

The EPCA volumetric data is documented in the Affected Environment section of the EIS. The BLM also considered many other sources of energy-related data, including USGS and Utah Geologic Survey (UGS) information, industry information, as well as some academic work completed on oil and gas plays and areas with potential for occurrence of mineral resources. This information is part of the more detailed Mineral Potential Report prepared in support of the planning effort.

In 2002, the BLM prepared a projected reasonable foreseeable development (RFD) scenario to project environmental impacts across a 15-year period; this RFD has been modified (2008) for oil and gas development only to project environmental impacts for up to 5 years. Development projections included in-depth reviews of potential for occurrence, past well production, current well production, and future potential for production. During the pendency of this planning effort (beginning with public meetings in 2001 and 2002 for scoping purposes through the notification in the Federal Register on January 14, 2005, of the availability of the Draft RMP/EIS), the RFD scenario, which is a planning tool and not a prediction or limit to development, did not track completely with the pace of development in the Uinta Basin. The BLM has carefully monitored industry trends and believes that the RFD used as an analytical tool in this Proposed RMP can be considered accurate up to approximately 5 years from the time the Record of Decision (ROD) is signed.

Within the next 5-year timeframe, the BLM would monitor the impacts to resources of continued development in the VPA and ensure that the impacts disclosed in this Proposed RMP are not exceeded by the pace of development.

The BLM also conducted additional support work regarding energy-related management and energy benefits in the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), as well as the Socioeconomic Baseline Report; these characterize the significant beneficial impacts of energy and mineral development for the Uinta Basin.

Also, as part of EPCA, a review was provided outlining existing leasing constraints within the focus areas. Data on proposed and existing leasing constraints specific to the proposed Vernal RMP are provided in Table 2.1.9 (Minerals and Energy Resources) as found in Chapter 2.

1.10.11 ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2005 AND THE WEST-WIDE ENERGY CORRIDOR PROGRAMMATIC EIS (PEIS)

Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (designation of West-wide energy corridors) is being implemented via the current development of an interagency, Programmatic EIS (PEIS). The Final PEIS could amend numerous RMPs in the western U.S., providing decisions that would address numerous energy corridor-related issues, including the use of existing corridors (with enhancements and upgrades), identification of new corridors, supply and demand considerations, and compatibility with other corridor and project planning efforts.

1.11 SUMMARY OF CHANGES MADE BETWEEN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS AND THE PROPOSED RMP/FINAL EIS

The BLM has made numerous changes between the Draft RMP/EIS and Proposed RMP/Final EIS. These changes are described below and detailed in Appendix N. BLM has prepared this Appendix to document if changes between the Draft RMP/EIS and the Proposed RMP/Final EIS resulted in a significant change in circumstances or conditions, or if the Proposed RMP/Final EIS contains different information from that which was presented to the public in the Draft RMP/EIS. Finally, BLM wanted to confirm that all changes made to the Proposed RMP/Final EIS fall within the range of alternatives presented and analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS and the Supplement to the Draft RMP/EIS.

The regulation controlling whether or not a supplement is required is found at 40 CFR 1502.9(c), which provides that agencies:

- (1) *Shall prepare supplements to either draft or final environmental impact statements if:*
 - (i) *The agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or*
 - (ii) *There are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impact.*
- (2) *May also prepare supplements when the agency determines that the purposes of the Act will be furthered by doing so.*
- (3) *Shall adopt procedures for introducing a supplement into its formal administrative record, if such a record exists.*
- (4) *Shall prepare, circulate, and file a supplement to a statement in the same fashion (exclusive of scoping) as a draft and final statement unless alternative procedures are approved by the Council.*

All changes to the Vernal Field Office Draft RMP/EIS were made in response to public comment and/or internal review. The majority of the changes were editorial changes made to add clarity to the document. In some cases, alternatives presented in the Draft RMP/EIS were modified in the Proposed RMP to reflect technical corrections and data updates. In other cases, such as in

Chapter 3, incorporation of updated information was necessary to refine the analysis in Chapter 4 that was incomplete or needed augmentation.

None of the changes described above and further detailed in Appendix N meet the regulatory definition for significance in 40 CFR 1508.27(a) and (b). These regulations require an agency preparing a NEPA document to review the changes for significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the Proposed RMP or its impacts, using context and intensity as the trigger for significance. BLM has reviewed each substantive change through this regulatory standard and has determined that none of the changes, individually or collectively, require a supplement to this Final EIS.

Following is an executive summary of the major changes between the Draft RMP/EIS and the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. The summary of changes has been broken into two parts:

- Summary of Changes to Decisions Between the Draft RMP/EIS Preferred Alternative (Alternative A) and the Proposed RMP/Final EIS
- Summary of Editorial Changes Made Between the Draft RMP/Draft EIS and Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

1.11.1 ES.7.1. SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO DECISIONS BETWEEN THE DRAFT RMP/EIS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE A) AND THE PROPOSED RMP/FINAL EIS

- **Air Quality** decisions were refined based upon State of Utah, Department of Air Quality correspondence included in Appendix O.
- The Draft RMP alternatives made proposed decisions for **Combined Hydrocarbon Areas/Special Tar Sand Areas**. The Proposed RMP now defers those decisions to the Programmatic Tar Sands Oil Shale EIS discussed in Section 1.10.9 of Chapter 1.
- **Wild horses** would no longer be permitted in the Winter Ridge Herd Area and Hill Creek Herd Area due to disease (e.g., EIA) and trespass of private horses because of mixed surface ownership with the Ute Indian Tribe, State of Utah, and privately held lands. The Draft RMP Preferred Alternative allocated 2,340 AUMs for wild horses in the Winter Ridge Herd Area and the Hill Creek Herd Area.
- The Proposed RMP provides **Greater Sage-grouse** additional protection during breeding, nesting, brooding, and during winter by selecting the protections in Alternative C.
- All or portions of 15 areas, approximately 106,178 acres, would be managed as **non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics**: Beach Draw, Bourdette Draw, Bull Canyon, Cold Spring Mountain, Daniels Canyon, Dead Horse Pass, Diamond Breaks, Diamond Mountain, Lower Flaming Gorge, Moonshine Draw, Mountain Home, Stuntz Draw, Vivas Cake Hill, White River, and Wild Mountain. The Draft RMP Preferred Alternative did not specifically provide management for non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics. The Proposed RMP preserves and maintains management prescriptions in these areas and does not allow for surface disturbing activities.

- Bitter Creek, Coyote Basin, Lower Green River Expansion **ACECs** were not brought forward from the Draft RMP Preferred Alternative.
- White River, Browns Park, and Nine Mile Canyon **ACECs** were brought forward, with a reduction in acreage.
- Manage 24,259 acres in Red Mountain-Dry Fork as a **SRMA** to provide for maintenance and development of OHV or non-OHV trails, minimal facilities necessary for human health and safety, watershed values, relict vegetation communities, and crucial deer and elk winter habitat. An activity plan for the SRMA would be developed to determine what areas are appropriate for day use only.
- The Draft RMP Preferred Alternative proposed 24,183 acres as the White River **SRMA**. The Proposed RMP identified 2,831 acres as a SRMA. A portion of the lands not included in the SRMA in the Proposed RMP are being carried forward for management as non-WSA with wilderness characteristics.
- The Draft RMP Preferred Alternative recommended two segments of the White River, the Upper Green River and the Lower Green River, for inclusion in the **National Wild and Scenic River System** as well as the Upper and Lower Green River. The Proposed RMP recommends only the Upper and Lower Green River.
- In the Draft RMP Preferred Alternative, the BLM identified the **Hill Creek Extension** as available for leasing. The BLM, in cooperation with Ute Indian Tribe, identified in the Proposed RMP specific oil and gas leasing constraints for the Hill Creek Extension.

1.11.2 ES.7.2. SUMMARY OF EDITORIAL CHANGES MADE BETWEEN THE DRAFT RMP/DRAFT EIS AND PROPOSED RMP/FINAL EIS

Throughout the Plan

- The Supplement to the Draft RMP/EIS has been merged into the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. The Supplement presents an analysis of the effects of managing non-Wilderness Study Area (WSA) lands with wilderness characteristics in a protective manner. This analysis is identified as Alternative E in the combined RMP.
- Acreage numbers and figures have been revised and clarified based on refined GIS techniques throughout all chapters.

Chapter 1

- Chapter 1 has been rewritten to emphasize the decisions brought forward in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.
- Discussion on monitoring and evaluation and how it plays into the planning process has been added in Chapter 1.
- Chapter 1, Language Added: Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Wildlife Habitat Classification System Change and included specific language regarding exceptions, modifications and waivers (Appendix K). This information has been graphically displayed on all maps highlighting wildlife habitat.

Chapter 2

- In Chapter 2 an additional column has been added to the matrices Tables 2.1.1 through 2.1.27 reflecting the Proposed RMP.
- All implementation–level decisions in Tables 2.1.1 through 2.1.27 have been italicized and asterisked with a footnote at the bottom of each page as follows: *This is an implementation-level decision that cannot be protested under the planning regulations. Please see the cover letter for further information.
- Language provided by the State of Utah regarding Air Quality has been added to Chapter 2, Table 2.1.2 “Common to All” section.
- Language provided by the State of Utah concerning compressor engine emission controls has been added to Chapter 2, Table 2.1.9.
- Revised the WSR “Common to All” management actions in Table 2.1.19 to work with upstream and downstream water users and applicable agencies to ensure that water flows are maintained at a level sufficient to sustain the values from which affected river segments were designated.
- Table 2.4 in Chapter 2 of the Draft RMP/EIS was removed in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

Chapter 3 & 4

- Completely revised the Socioeconomics section of Chapters 3 and 4 to include the information provided by the State of Utah and cooperating counties included in the new Appendix M.

Chapter 5

- Chapter 5 – Table 5.7 has been added to show consistency findings between the Proposed RMP/EIS, Utah state law, and county plans.

References Added

- BLM, 2007. Northeast National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska Draft Supplemental Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. USDO I BLM, August 2007. Available on the Internet:
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Appendices Added

- Utah Public Lands Study – Key Social Survey Findings for Daggett, Duchesne, and Uintah Counties (Appendix M)
- Document Change Appendix (Appendix N)
- Air Mitigation Strategies Appendix (Appendix O)
- SHPO 106 Concurrence Letter (Appendix P)

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