BLM

Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments for the Rocky Mountain Region, Including the Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions

of

Lewistown
North Dakota
Northwest Colorado
Wyoming

and the Approved Resource Management Plans

for

Billings
Buffalo
Cody
HiLine
Miles City
Pompeys Pillar National Monument
South Dakota
Worland

Prepared by:
US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Washington, DC

September 2015

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United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Washington, D.C. 20240
http://www.blm.gov

SEP 18 2015

Dear Reader:

Enclosed are the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Record of Decision (ROD) and associated land use plans for the Rocky Mountain Region Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy. The associated land use plans include the Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments (RMPAs) for the Rocky Mountain Region Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions of Lewistown, North Dakota, Northwest Colorado, and Wyoming, and the Approved Resource Management Plans (RMPs) for Billings, Buffalo, Cody, HiLine, Miles City, Pompeys Pillar National Monument, South Dakota, and Worland.

The documents are the product of an unprecedented effort to respond to the deteriorating health of the sagebrush landscapes of the American West and the declining population of the Greater Sage-Grouse, a ground-dwelling bird that has been under consideration by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for protection under the Endangered Species Act. Based on the best available science and with extensive participation from the public, partners, and stakeholders, these documents, and those published today for the Great Basin, serve as the cornerstone of the broader, landscape-level National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy (Strategy).

This Strategy responds to the threats identified in the FWS's 2010 "warranted, but precluded" finding and was guided by over a decade of research, analyses, and recommendations for Greater Sage-Grouse conservation, including the FWS Conservation Objectives Team Report and the BLM National Technical Team Report. These underlying Reports were developed through a collaboration of state, Federal, and research scientists with extensive experience in sage-grouse management and research.

The BLM's actions are guided by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, which requires that RMPs for managing public lands be developed and maintained, and the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires that an environmental impact statement (EIS) be prepared for major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. In fulfillment of these requirements, the BLM prepared 15 EISs for the associated Draft RMPs and RMPAs, which were published in 2012 and 2013.[1] Each document incorporated analyses and input from the public; Native American tribes; cooperating agencies and other local, state, and Federal agencies and organizations; and BLM resource specialists.

The public had 90 days to comment following publication of the Draft RMPs, RMPAs and EISs. The BLM received 45,200 unique letters with more than 10,300 substantive comments on all the Rocky Mountain Region Draft documents. The BLM and the U.S. Forest Service reviewed, summarized, and took into consideration these comments when preparing the Proposed RMPAs/Final EISs and Proposed RMPs/Final EISs, which were published May 29, 2015, for a 60-day Governor's consistency review and a 30-day public protest period.

[1] The BLM published one of the 15 Draft EISs – that associated with the Lander RMP Revision – in 2011.

The BLM received consistency review letters from the Governors of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming and has worked closely with these States to address their concerns. Across all of the Proposed RMPAs, Proposed RMPs, and their associated EISs in the Rocky Mountain Region, government entities, private citizens, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders submitted 149 protest letters. Of those, 120 letters contained valid protest issues, in accordance with 43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.5-2. The BLM addressed these issues in the Director's Protest Resolution Reports. These Reports are available on the Internet at:http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/planning_overview/protest_resolution/protestreports.html.

The Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management of the U.S. Department of the Interior and I have signed the attached ROD, approving the RMPAs and RMPs. These plans will guide future land and resource management on BLM-administered land in this region to benefit Greater Sage-Grouse and more than 350 other species of wildlife that depend on healthy sagebrush-steppe landscapes, while maintaining multiple uses, including grazing and recreation.

This ROD applies to the BLM plans for the Rocky Mountain Region and applies only to BLM-managed lands and subsurface mineral estate. However, the complete Strategy on BLM- and U.S. Forest Service-administered lands consists of this ROD, the BLM ROD for the Great Basin Region, the BLM ROD for the Lander RMP, [2] and the two Forest Service RODs for each of these regions. Together these five RODs and the underlying plans implement the Strategy across the remaining range of the species.

Copies of the ROD, RMPAs, and RMPs can be obtained from the BLM's National Greater Sage-Grouse website at: http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse.html.

The BLM extends its sincere appreciation to the public; Native American tribal representatives; local, state, and other Federal agencies; and the cooperating agencies, all of whom contributed significantly to the completion of these plans. Your participation informed and improved the land use plans presented here. Together with our partners, we have taken action that ensures a bright future for wildlife, the sagebrush sea, and a thriving economy in the American West. We look forward to working with you to implement the Strategy.

Sincerely,

Neil Kornze
Director

Enclosure:
1. Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments and Approved Resource Management Plans

[2] The BLM signed the ROD approving the Lander RMP in June 2014.

SUMMARY

This Record of Decision (ROD) is the culmination of an unprecedented effort to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) habitat on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). It is consistent with the BLM's multiple-use and sustained yield mission and the joint objective established by Federal and State leadership through the GRSG Task Force to conserve GRSG habitat on Federal, State, and private land such that additional protections under the Endangered Species Act may be avoided.

In response to a 2010 determination by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that the listing of the GRSG under the Endangered Species Act was "warranted, but precluded" by other priorities, the BLM, in coordination with the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service, developed a landscape-level management strategy, based on the best available science, that was targeted, multi-tiered, coordinated, and collaborative. This strategy offers the highest level of protection for GRSG in the most important habitat areas. It addresses the specific threats identified in the 2010 FWS "warranted, but precluded" decision and the FWS 2013 Conservation Objectives Team (COT) Report.

This ROD and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments (ARMPAs) are for the Rocky Mountain Region Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions of Lewistown, North Dakota, Northwest Colorado, and Wyoming; and Approved Resource Management Plans (ARMPs) for the Billings Field Office, Buffalo Field Office, Cody Field Office, HiLine District, Miles City Field Office, Pompeys Pillar National Monument, South Dakota Field Office, and Worland Field Office. The ARMPAs and ARMPs include GRSG habitat management direction that avoids and minimizes additional disturbance in GRSG habitat management areas. Moreover, they target restoration of and improvements to the most important areas of habitat. Management under the ARMPs and ARMPAs is directed through land use allocations that apply to GRSG habitat. These allocations accomplish the following:

- Eliminate most new surface disturbance in the most highly valued sagebrush ecosystem areas identified as Sagebrush Focal Areas
- Avoid or limit new surface disturbance in Priority Habitat Management Areas, of which Sagebrush Focal Areas are a subset
- Minimize surface disturbance in General Habitat Management Areas

In addition to protective land use allocations in habitat management areas, the ARMPs and ARMPAs include a suite of management actions, such as establishing disturbance limits, GRSG habitat objectives, mitigation requirements, monitoring protocols, and adaptive management triggers and responses. They also include other conservation measures that apply throughout designated habitat management areas.

The cumulative effect of these measures is to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat across the species' remaining range in the Rocky Mountain Region and to provide greater certainty that BLM resource management plan decisions in GRSG habitat in the Rocky Mountain Region can lead to conservation of the GRSG and other sagebrush-steppe-associated species in the region. The targeted resource management plan protections in this ROD and the ARMPs and ARMPAs apply not only to the GRSG and its habitat but also to over 350 wildlife species associated with the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem; this is widely recognized as one of the most imperiled ecosystems in North America. In addition to protecting habitat, reversing the slow degradation of this valuable ecosystem will also benefit local rural economies and a variety of rangeland uses, including recreation and grazing. This also will safeguard the long-term sustainability, diversity, and productivity of these important and iconic landscapes.

This conservation strategy has been developed in conjunction with the 10 states in which the ARMPs and ARMPAs apply, including those ARMPAs for the four sub-regions in the BLM's Great Basin Region ROD. In combination with additional State and Federal actions underway and in development, this strategy represents an unprecedented coordinated collaboration among Federal land management agencies and the States to manage an entire ecosystem and associated flora and fauna. The goal is to achieve the COT Report objective of "conserv[ing] the sage-grouse so that it is no longer in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future." [Dan Ashe, Director, FWS. Transmittal letter to COT Report. 2013]

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1 Lewistown Field Office Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment
2 North Dakota Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment
3 Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment
4 Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment
5 Billings Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan
6 Buffalo Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan
7 Cody Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan
8 HiLine District Office Approved Resource Management Plan
9 Miles City Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan
10 Pompeys Pillar National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan
11 South Dakota Approved Resource Management Plan
12 Worland Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

	Full Phrase
ACEC	area of critical environmental concern
AML	appropriate management level
ARMP	Approved Resource Management Plan
ARMPA	Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
BSU	biologically significant unit
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
COT	Conservation Objectives Team
CSU	controlled surface use
DDCT	Density and Disturbance Calculation Tool
EIS	environmental impact statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
Forest Service	US Department of Agriculture Forest Service
FR	Federal Register
FWS	US Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service
GHMAs	general habitat management areas
GRSG	Greater Sage-Grouse
IM	instruction memorandum
LCHMAs	Linkage and Connectivity Habitat Management Area(s)
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MZ	management zone
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOA	notice of availability
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NSO	no surface occupancy
NTT	National Technical Team
OHV	off-highway vehicle
PACs	priority areas for conservation
PGH	preliminary general habitat
PHMAs	priority habitat management areas
PPH	preliminary priority habitat
RDF	required design feature
RHMAs	restoration habitat management area(s)
RMP	resource management plan
RMPA	resource management plan amendment
ROD	record of decision
ROW	right-of-way
SFAs	sagebrush focal areas
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
TL	timing limitation
USC	United States Code

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS *(continued)*

	Full Phrase
USGS	US Geological Survey
VRM	visual resource management
WAFWA	Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
WHB	wild horse(s) and burro(s)
WSA	wilderness study area

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This Record of Decision (ROD) approves the US Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) attached Resource Management Plan Amendments (RMPAs) for the Rocky Mountain Region Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) Sub-Regions of Lewistown, North Dakota, Northwest Colorado, and Wyoming and the Resource Management Plans (RMPs) for the Billings, Buffalo, Cody, HiLine, Miles City, Pompeys Pillar National Monument (PPNM), South Dakota, and Worland. The ROD and the attached Approved RMPAs (ARMPAs) and GRSG habitat management decisions in the attached Approved RMPs (ARMPs) provide a set of management decisions focused on specific GRSG conservation measures across the Rocky Mountain Region on BLM-administered lands. The ARMPs also provide overall resource management plan direction for managing all resources on BLM-administered land in their respective Planning Areas.

The BLM prepared the ARMPAs and ARMPs under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA; 43 United States Code [USC], Section 1701 et seq.), BLM planning regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 1600), and other applicable laws. The BLM prepared environmental impact statements (EISs) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, as amended (NEPA; 42 USC, Sections 4321-4347), and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) and the US Department of the Interior's regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1500.1 et seq., and 43 CFR 46.01 et seq., respectively).

Throughout the GRSG planning process, the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service) has been a cooperating agency on the Wyoming and Northwest Colorado ARPMAs. The Draft RMPs/EISs and Proposed RMPAs/Final EISs for the Rocky Mountain sub-regions included proposed GRSG management direction for National Forest System lands. The Forest Service has completed two separate RODs with associated Land and Resource Management Plan Amendments under its planning authority; these are available at http://www.fs.usda.gov/r4/.

This ROD, in conjunction with the ARMPAs approved through the Great Basin ROD, constitutes resource management planning decisions of the BLM to conserve the GRSG and its habitats throughout that portion of its remaining range administered by the BLM under the authority of FLPMA. The BLM, in coordination with the Forest Service on National Forest System lands within the remaining range of the

species, has a coordinated strategy for conserving the GRSG and the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem on most of the Federal lands on which the species depends. These decisions complement those implemented by Federal agencies through *An Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy: Final Report to the Secretary of the Interior* (US Department of the Interior 2015) and the Sage-Grouse Initiative, as well as those implemented by state and local governments, private landowners, and other partners.

This ROD also approves the decisions in the non-GRSG habitat management decisions in the ARMPs for Billings, Buffalo, Cody (portion of the Bighorn Basin Planning Area), HiLine, Miles City, PPNM, South Dakota, and Worland (portion of the Bighorn Basin Planning Area); these are full-scale resource management plan revisions for managing all BLM-administered lands for all BLM program areas (not limited to GRSG habitat management) in BLM-administered Planning Areas.

1.1 Rocky Mountain Region Planning Area

The Rocky Mountain Planning Area is composed of the following eleven sub-regional Planning Areas (see **Figure 1-1**, Rocky Mountain Region Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions):

- Bighorn Basin (which includes the Cody and Worland Field Offices)
- Billings and the Pompeys Pillar National Monument
- Buffalo
- HiLine
- Lewistown
- Miles City
- North Dakota
- Northwest Colorado
- South Dakota
- Wyoming

Each sub-region prepared its own separate EIS and conducted its own planning, with input from local cooperators, stakeholders, and members of the public. The sub-regional boundaries were constructed to align with BLM administrative offices, state boundaries, and areas that shared common threats to GRSG and their habitat. The boundaries for these sub-regions largely coincide with zones III, IV, and V identified by the *Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy* (Stiver et al. 2006) to delineate management zones (MZs) with similar ecological and biological issues.

The Rocky Mountain Region Planning Area boundaries are all lands regardless of jurisdiction (see **Figure 1-2**, Rocky Mountain Region Planning Area). **Tables 1-1a** and **1-1b** outline the number of surface acres that are administered by specific Federal agencies, States, local governments, and privately owned lands in the 11 sub-regional Planning Areas that make up the Rocky Mountain Region; 10 of these Planning Areas are addressed in this ROD. The ROD approving the Lander RMP was signed in June 2014.

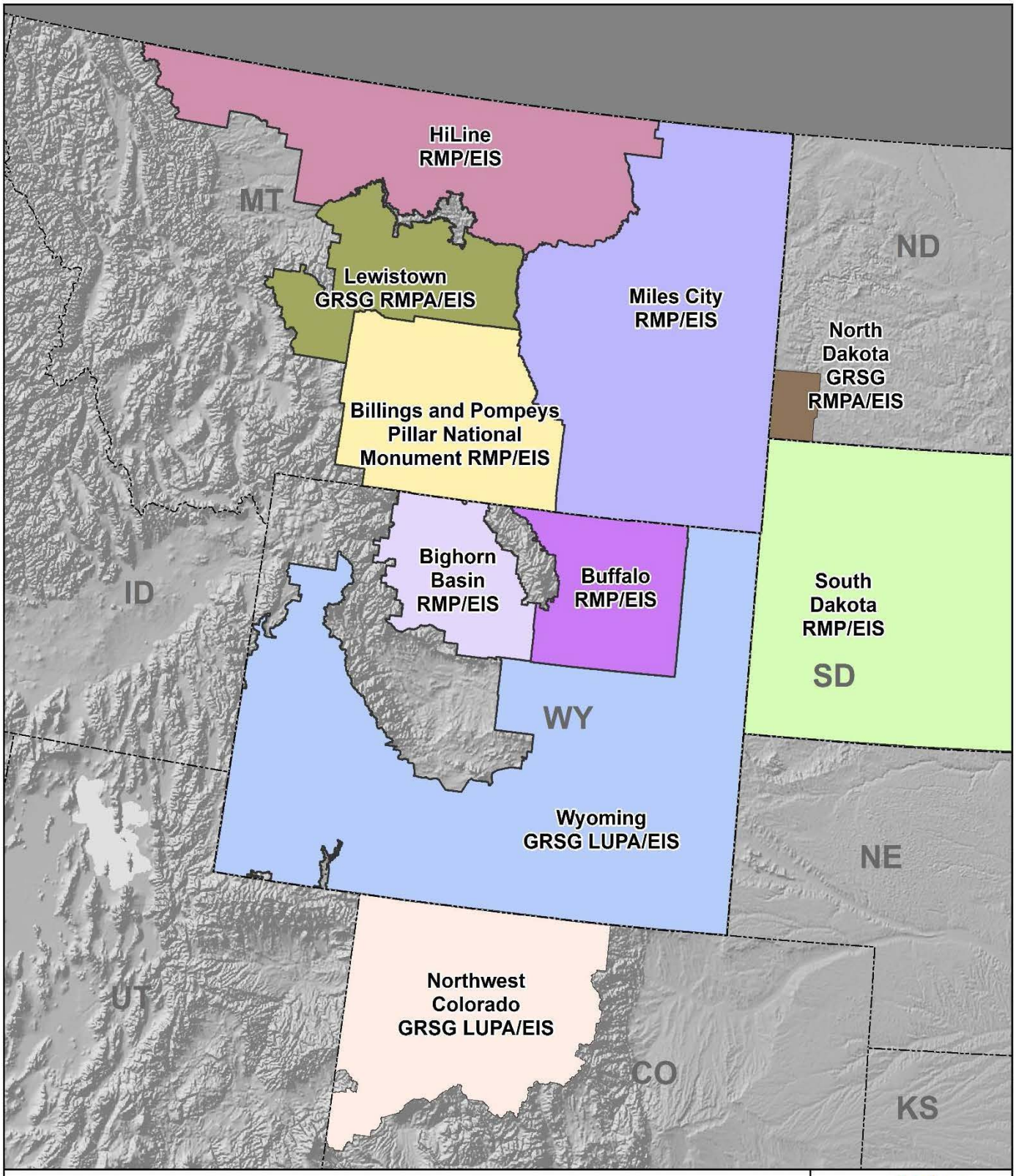

Figure 1-1: Rocky Mountain Region Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions

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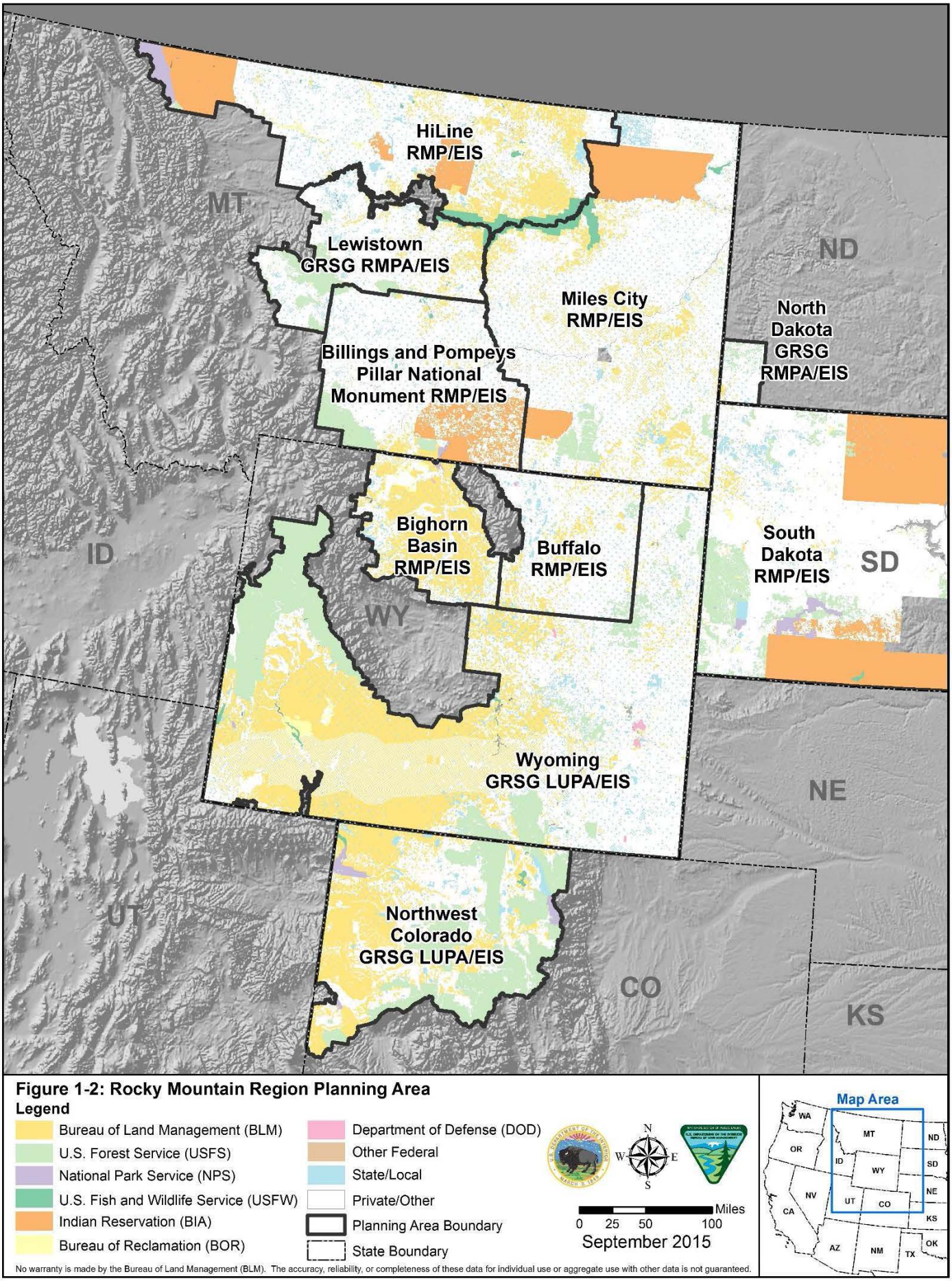

Figure 1-2: Rocky Mountain Region Planning Area

Table 1-1a
Land Management in the Rocky Mountain ARMPA Planning Areas (in Acres)

Surface Land Management	Lewistown	North Dakota	Northwest Colorado	Wyoming
BLM	594,510	33,030	4,900,000	11,133,600
Forest Service	896,302	140,432	4,606,000	5,223,200*
Private	5,168,725	741,607	4,836,000	19,286,800
Indian reservation	0	0	0	0
FWS	114,194	638	38,000	46,200
Other	12,178	6,416	360	168,500
State	526,605	40,894	352,000	2,522,200
National Park Service	0	0	272,000	10,800
Other Federal	1	0	0	11,800
Bureau of Reclamation	0	0	6300	244,800
Local government	0	0	193,000	9,200
Department of Defense	8	0	200	57,800
Total acres	7,312,522	963,017	15,203,860	38,564,400

Source: BLM GIS 2015
*This figure includes National Grasslands and Bankhead Jones lands that are administered by the Forest Service.

Table 1-1b
Land Management in the Rocky Mountain ARMP Planning Areas (Surface Acres)

Surface Land Management	Billings and PPNM[1]	Buffalo	Cody	HiLine	Miles City	South Dakota	Worland
BLM	434,154[2]	782,102	1,086,935	2,437,570	2,751,530	274, 329	2,100,879
Forest Service	884,459	862,087	0	28,954	524,909	2,017,435	0
Private	7,007,233	5,167,265	875,400	9,128,526	17,740,896	40,759,436	1,023,600
Indian reservation	1,915,781	0	0	2,125,972	2,569,756	5,351,497	0
FWS	15,674	0	0	489,008	426,963	205,128	0
Other	52,840	2,148	20,800	0	12,012	0	4,600
State	459,683	538,606	182,800	1,151,465	1,720,994	760,442	250,900
National Park Service	29,670	0	20,800	363,124	43	128,045	0
Other Federal	0	0	0	5,212	56,752	571,527	0
Bureau of Reclamation	837	0	79,900	131,373	1,400	43,607	1,500
Local government	4,217	0	0	10,186	11,392	1,196	0
Department of Defense	0	4,166	3,500	179	69	371,067	0
Total acres	10,370,394	7,356,374	2,270,135	15,871,569	25,816,716	50,483,709	3,381,479

Source: BLM GIS 2015
[1]Pompeys Pillar National Monument
[2]This acre figure includes 4,298 acres in Wyoming managed by the Billing Field Office as part of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) and 51 acres for the Pompeys Pillar National Monument (PPNM).

The Planning Area also includes other BLM-administered lands that are not identified as habitat management areas for GRSG. The ARMPAs for these lands (Lewistown, North Dakota, Northwest Colorado, and Wyoming) generally do not establish any additional management outside of GRSG habitat management areas, and they will continue to be managed according to the existing BLM resource management plans for these Planning Areas. However, the ARMPs for Billings, Buffalo, Cody (portion of the Bighorn Basin Planning Area), HiLine, Miles City, Pompeys Pillar National Monument, South Dakota, and Worland (portion of the Bighorn Basin Planning Area) are full-scale resource management plan revisions for all BLM-administered lands and all BLM program areas within their Planning Areas; that is, they are not limited to GRSG habitat management.

The decision area for GRSG habitat management in the Rocky Mountain Region ARMPs and ARMPAs is BLM-administered lands, including split-estate, where the BLM has subsurface mineral rights in GRSG habitat management areas (see **Figure 1-3**, Rocky Mountain Region Decision Area, Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas). For a description of habitat management areas, refer to **Section 1.5**.

The decision areas for the ARMPAs and ARMPs are the surface acres identified in **Tables 1-1a** and **1-1b** that the BLM manages. The decision areas also include subsurface mineral estate that the BLM administers within the ARMPAs and ARMPs Planning Area boundaries.

1.2 EARLY GRSG CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Currently, GRSG occupy an estimated 56 percent of its historically occupied range. The BLM manages most of the GRSG habitat on Federal lands (i.e., the range of GRSG that does not include the Columbia Basin or Bi-State populations). The BLM and other wildlife conservation agencies and organizations have been trying to conserve GRSG habitat for many years; this has provided an important foundation for the GRSG conservation strategy that guides these plans.

The WAFWA 2004 *Range-Wide Conservation Assessment for Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Habitats* (Connelly et al. 2004) was the first range-wide assessment of GRSG using the vast amount of population data collected over the previous 60 years, habitat information spanning the previous 100 years, and literature dating back 200 years. The goal of the assessment, which includes contributions from the BLM, was to present an unbiased and scientific assessment of dominant issues and their effects on GRSG populations and sagebrush habitats.

In November 2004, the BLM released its *National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy*, which encouraged GRSG habitat conservation through consultation, cooperation, and communication with WAFWA, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Forest Service, the US Geological Survey (USGS), State wildlife agencies, local GRSG working groups, and various other public and private partners.

In 2006, WAFWA completed a *Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy* (Stiver et al. 2006), with the assistance of the BLM, the Forest Service, and other contributors. The overall goal of the strategy is to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of GRSG by protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain those populations. The strategy outlined the critical need to develop the associations among local, State, provincial, tribal, and Federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals to design and implement cooperative actions to support

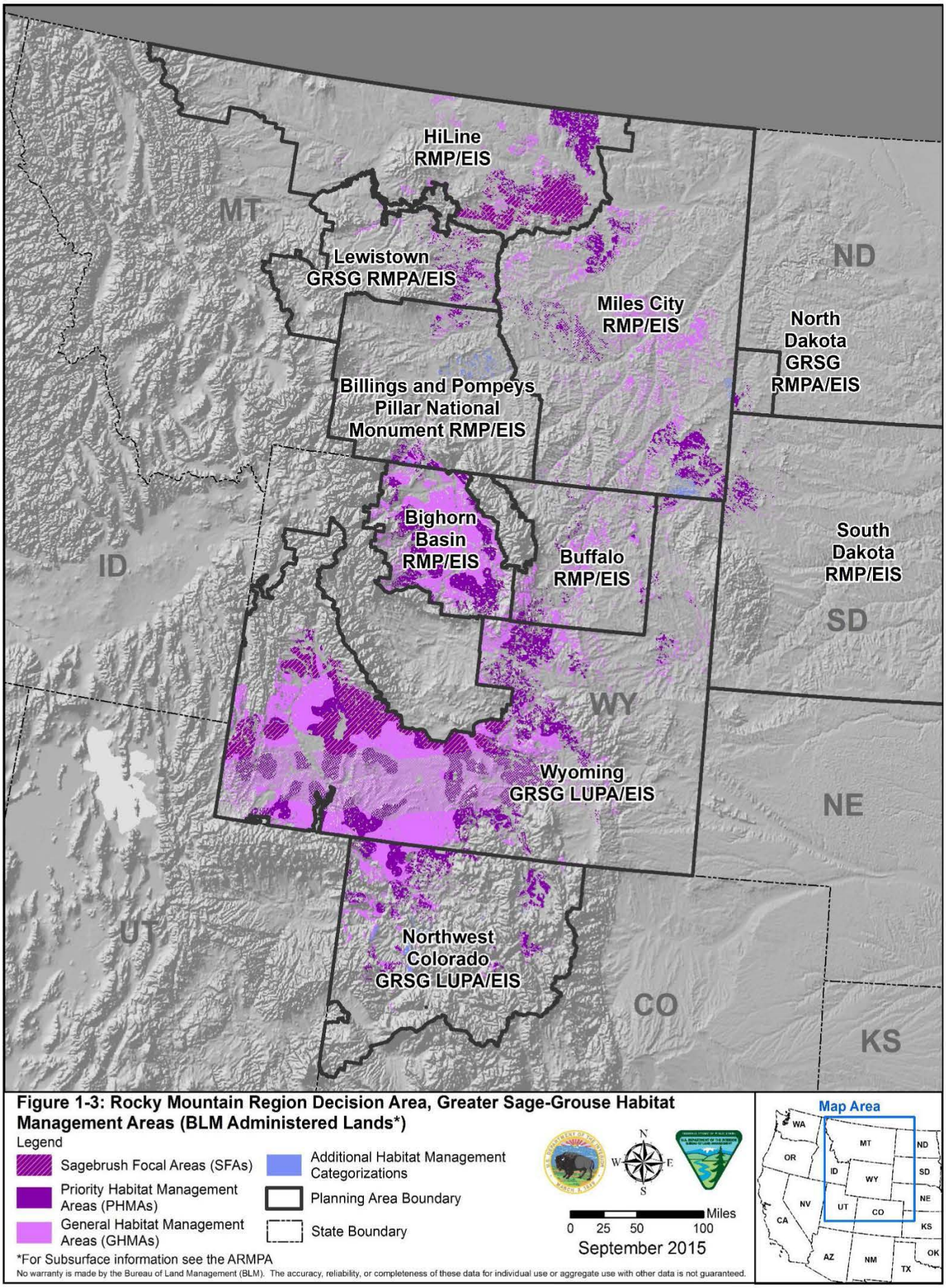

Figure 1-3: Rocky Mountain Region Decision Area, Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas (BLM Administered Lands*)

*For Subsurface information see the ARMPA

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robust populations of GRSG and the landscapes and habitats they depend on. The catalyst for this was widespread concern for declining populations and reduced distribution of GRSG.

In 2008, the BLM created two national teams to investigate possible BLM management options for GRSG conservation and to summarize the BLM's ongoing conservation efforts. A product of this investigation was one of the first range-wide maps of GRSG priority habitat, referred to as "key habitat." At the time, the primary purpose for the key habitat map was to inform and help prioritize fire suppression in GRSG habitat on BLM-administered lands.

An additional outcome of this team's work was signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among the WAFWA, the BLM, FWS, and USGS (in the US Department of the Interior) and the Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS; in the US Department of Agriculture). The MOU's purpose was to provide for cooperation among the participating State and Federal land managers and wildlife management and science agencies to conserve and manage GRSG sagebrush habitats and other sagebrush-dependent wildlife throughout the western US.

In 2010, the BLM commissioned the mapping and modeling of breeding GRSG densities across the West. It convened a conference with State wildlife agencies to coordinate the lek survey data needed for this project. Through an agreement with the FWS, this modeling project mapped known active leks across the West, which served as a starting point for all States to identify priority habitat for the species.

In March 2010, the FWS published its *12-Month Finding for Petitions to List the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) as Threatened or Endangered* (75 FR 13910, March 23, 2010). In that finding, the FWS concluded that GRSG was "warranted, but precluded" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This finding indicates that, although the species meets the criteria for listing, the immediate publication of a proposed rule to list the species is precluded by higher-priority listing proposals; that is, the species should be listed based on the available science, but listing other species takes priority because they are more in need of protection.

As part of its 2010 finding, the FWS reviewed the status of and threats to the GRSG in relation to the five listing factors provided in Section 4(a)(1) of the ESA. The FWS determined that Factor A, "the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the habitat or range of the GRSG," and Factor D, "the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms," posed "a significant threat to the GRSG now and in the foreseeable future" (75 FR 13910, March 23, 2010).

In addition, the FWS found that existing local, State, and Federal regulatory mechanisms were not sufficient to address threats to the habitat. The FWS identified the BLM's RMPs as the primary regulatory mechanisms. The BLM manages approximately 67 million acres of the remaining GRSG habitat (see **Figure 1-3**).

1.3 THREATS TO GRSG IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

In its 2010 finding, the FWS identified a number of specific threats to GRSG in the Rocky Mountain Region. The primary threats are the widespread human disturbances from energy development, mining, and infrastructure. Other threats, some of which are more localized, are habitat fragmentation due to recreation, urbanization, and sagebrush elimination, and impacts on habitat associated with free-roaming equids (horses and burros) and improper livestock grazing.

In 2011, the BLM established the GRSG National Technical Team (NTT), comprised of BLM, USGS, NRCS, and State specialists. The NTT's charge was to identify science-based conservation measures for the GRSG to promote sustainable populations. These measures would be focused on the threats identified in the FWS listing determination (75 FR 13910) in each of the regional WAFWA GRSG management zones (MZs) (**Figure 1-4**). The NTT produced *A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures* (NTT Report; NTT 2011), in which it proposed conservation measures based on habitat and other life history requirements for GRSG. The NTT Report described the scientific basis for the conservation measures proposed for each program area. It also emphasized the importance of standardizing monitoring across the WAFWA GRSG MZs.

In 2012, the FWS, with the support of the Western Governors Association Sage Grouse Task Force, convened the Conservation Objectives Team (COT), composed of State and Federal representatives. One of the team's tasks was to produce a peer-reviewed report identifying the principal threats to GRSG survival. Another task was to determine the degree to which these threats need to be reduced or ameliorated. The goal was to conserve GRSG so that they would no longer be in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future.

The COT Report, released in 2013, also identified priority areas for conservation (PACs) and emphasized that "Maintenance of the integrity of PACs…is the essential foundation for sage-grouse conservation" (FWS 2013). Finally, the COT Report identified present and widespread, as well as localized threats by GRSG population across the West (**Table 1-2**). The BLM also identified and explained additional threats in the Final EISs, which were published with proposed plans on May 29, 2015. **Figure 1-4** identifies the PACs, GRSG populations (and their names), and WAFWA MZs across the West.

Table 1-2 is a summary of the nature and extent of threats identified in the COT Report for each remaining identified population of GRSG in the Rocky Mountain Region, as highlighted in the 2013 COT Report.

1.4 National GRSG Conservation Strategy

The BLM recognized the need to incorporate explicit objectives and concrete conservation measures into RMPs[1] to conserve GRSG habitat and provide robust regulatory mechanisms. This was based on the identified threats to the GRSG, especially inadequate regulatory mechanisms, and the FWS's timeline for making a decision on whether to propose this species for listing. In August 2011, the BLM came up with a plan to revise and amend existing RMPs throughout the range of the GRSG. These revised and amended RMPs would incorporate management actions intended to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat. Separate planning began to address the conservation needs of the Bi-State GRSG populations in California and Nevada and the Washington State distinct population segment.

[1] BLM land use plans prepared under the present regulations (see 43 CFR 1601.0-5(n)) are generally known as resource management plans. Some BLM land use plans, including ones predating the present regulations, are referred to by different names, including management framework plans. For purposes of this ROD, the BLM land use plan and resource management plan interchangeably to refer to all BLM-administered land use plans.

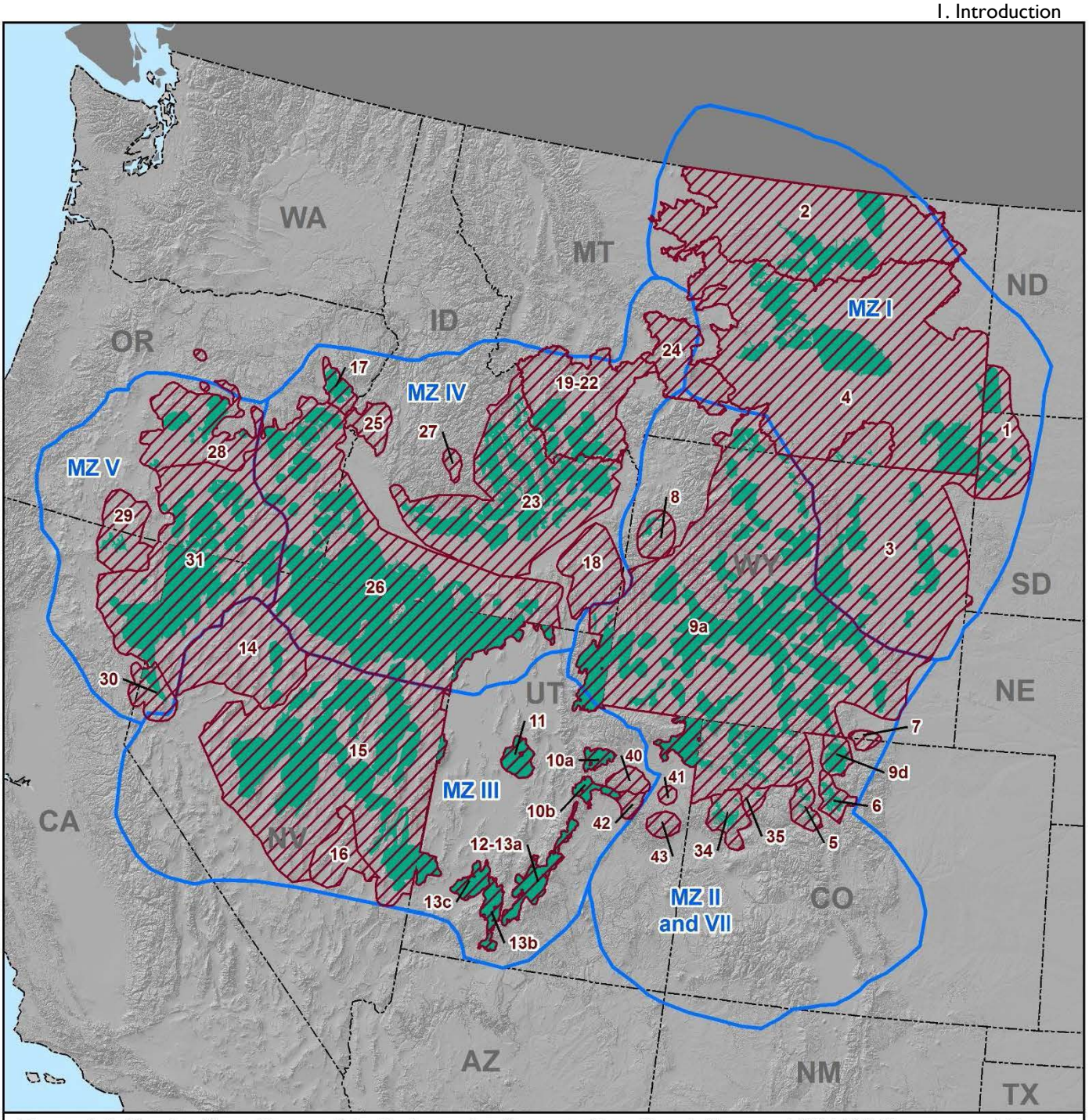

Figure 1-4: Greater Sage-Grouse Priority Areas for Conservation, Populations and WAFWA Management Zones

Legend

- WAFWA Sage-grouse Management Zones
- Greater Sage-grouse Priority Areas for Conservation (PAC)
- WAFWA Revised Sage-Grouse Populations 2015

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1	Dakotas	10a	Strawberry Valley	18	E-Central ID	30	Warm Springs Valley NV
2	Northern Montana	10b	Carbon	19-22	SW Montana	31	Western Great Basin
3	Powder River Basin	11	Sheeprock Mountains	23	Snake, Salmon, & Beaverhead	34	Parachute Piceance Roan
4	Yellowstone Watershed	12-13a	Parker Mountain-Emery			35	Meeker - White River
5	Eagle/S Routt CO	13b	Panguitch	24	Belt Mountains MT	40	Anthro Mountain
6	Middle Park CO	13c	Bald Hills	25	Weiser ID	41	S White River
7	Laramie WY	14	NW-Interior NV	26	Northern Great Basin	42	W Tavaputs
8	Jackson Hole WY	15	Southern Great Basin	27	Sawtooth ID	43	E Tavaputs Plateau
9a	Wyoming Basin	16	Quinn Canyon Range NV	28	Central OR		
9d	North Park	17	Baker OR	29	Klamath OR/CA		

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Table 1-2
Threats to GRSG in the Rocky Mountain Region as identified by the Conservation Objectives Team

Population	Population Number	Isolated Small Size	Sagebrush Elimination	Agriculture Conversion	Fire	Conifers	Weeds/Annual Grasses	Energy	Mining	Infrastructure	Improper Grazing	Free-Roaming Equids	Recreation	Urbanization	EIS/Plan(s)
Northern Montana	2		L	L	L		L	Y		Y	Y		L		HiLine
North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana	1	Y	L	L	Y	U	L	Y	Y	Y	L				North Dakota, South Dakota, and Miles City
Yellowstone Watershed (Montana)	4		L	Y	L	L	Y	Y		Y	Y		L		Lewistown, Miles City, and Billings
Powder River Basin (Montana and Wyoming)	3		L		L	L	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	L	Miles City, Buffalo, Worland, and Wyoming Amendments
Wyoming Basin (Montana and Wyoming)	9a		L		L	L	L	Y	L	Y	Y	L	Y	L	Billings, Worland, Cody, Lander, and Wyoming Amendments
Jackson Hole (Wyoming)	8	Y	L		L	L	Y						Y	L	Wyoming
Laramie (Wyoming, and Colorado)	7	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y		Y	Y	Wyoming and Northwest Colorado
Eagle-South Routt (Colorado)	5	Y	L	Y	L	L	Y	Y		Y	Y		L	Y	Northwest Colorado
Middle Park (Colorado)	6	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Northwest Colorado
North Park (Colorado)	9d		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Northwest Colorado
Northwest Colorado	9e		L	Y	Y	L	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	L	Y	L	Northwest Colorado
Parachute-Piceance-Roan Basin (Colorado)	34	Y	L		Y	Y	L	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Northwest Colorado
Meeker-White River (Colorado)	35	Y	Y	Y	Y		L	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Northwest Colorado

Source: FWS 2013
Threats are characterized as Y = threat is present and widespread, L = threat present but localized, and U = unknown.

The BLM found that additional management direction and specific conservation measures on Federal public lands would be necessary to address the present and anticipated threats to GRSG habitat and to restore habitat where possible. This finding was in light of the 2010 "warranted" determination by the FWS, the recommendations of the NTT, and specific threats summarized in the COT Report. The BLM proposed to incorporate the management direction and conservation measures into its RMPs. The goal was to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG and its habitat and to provide sufficient regulatory certainty such that the need for listing the species under the ESA could be avoided.

In December 2011, the BLM published a Notice of Intent to prepare EISs and a supplemental EIS to incorporate GRSG conservation measures into land use plans across the species' range.

The planning associated with the National GRSG Conservation Strategy has been coordinated under two administrative planning regions: the Rocky Mountain Region and the Great Basin Region. The regions were drawn roughly to correspond with the threats that the FWS identified in its 2010 listing decision, along with the WAFWA MZs framework (Stiver et al. 2006). Due to differences in the ecological characteristics of sagebrush across the range of the GRSG, the WAFWA delineated MZs I through VII, based primarily on floristic provinces. Vegetation found in an MZ is similar, and GRSG and their habitats in these areas are likely to respond similarly to environmental factors and management actions.

The Rocky Mountain Region is composed of BLM planning in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, and portions of Utah. (This includes plan revisions and plan amendments.) This region falls within WAFWA MZs I (Great Plains), II (Wyoming Basin), and a portion of VII (Colorado Plateau). The Great Basin Region is composed of plan amendments in California, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, and portions of Utah and Montana. That region falls in WAFWA MZs III (Southern Great Basin), IV (Snake River Plain), and V (Northern Great Basin).

Both the Rocky Mountain and Great Basin Regions are further divided into sub-regions. The BLM initiated 15 sub-regional planning efforts and associated EISs to analyze the alternatives developed for each of the Draft and Final RMPAs and ARMPs across the range of the species.[2] These sub-regions are based on the identified threats to the GRSG and the WAFWA MZs from the FWS 2010 listing decision, with additional detail on threats to individual populations and sub-regions from the COT Report. In the Rocky Mountain Region, some sub-regions correspond to BLM field or district office boundaries, specifically for planning that incorporates GRSG conservation measures through plan revisions that were began before the start of the National GRSG Conservation Strategy (December 2011). **Figure 1-5** illustrates the regional and sub-regional Planning Area boundaries across the western US.

The BLM used the best available science, including additional review and analysis from the USGS on specific issues that arose, in developing the ARMPs and ARMPAs. Additionally, the BLM considered State GRSG conservation strategies where they existed, as well as State recommendations for measures to conserve GRSG on BLM-administered lands, where relevant, in its planning. These are reflected in the

[2] The National GRSG Conservation Strategy consisted of 15 separate EISs. For ease of implementation, the Bighorn Basin RMP has been split between the two field offices that make up the Bighorn Basin Planning Area, the Cody Field Office ARMP and the Worland Field Office ARMP. The Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument RMP has also been split between the Billings Field Office ARMP and Pompeys Pillar National Monument ARMP. This results in a total of 17 ARMPs and ARMPAs.

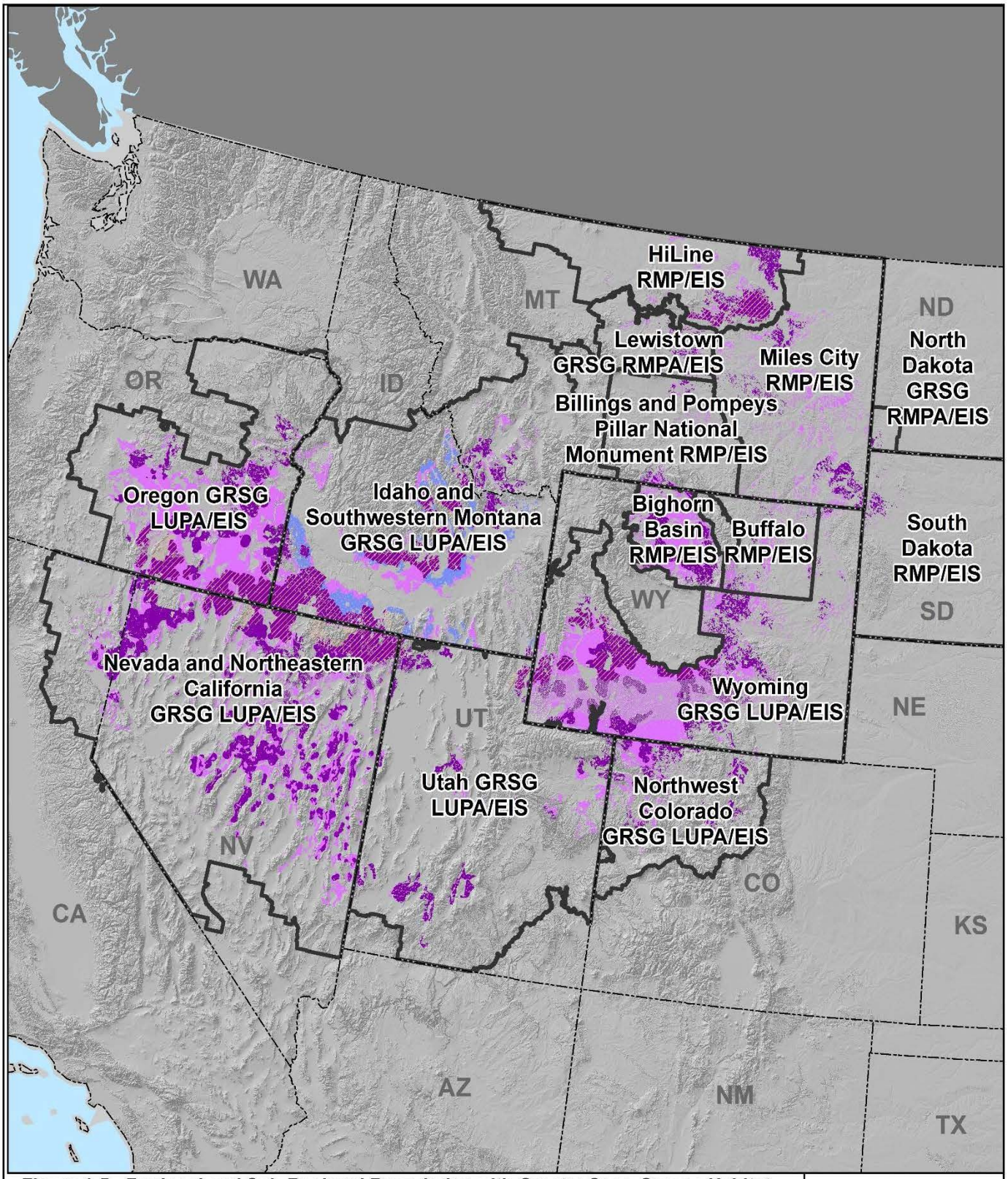

Figure 1-5: Regional and Sub-Regional Boundaries with Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas (BLM Administered Lands)

Legend

- Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs)
- Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMAs)
- General Habitat Management Areas (GHMAs)
- Additional Habitat Management Categorizations
- Planning Area Boundary
- State Boundary

*For Subsurface information see the ARMPA

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approved plans to the extent compatible with GRSG objectives to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat to address the threats identified in the FWS 2010 listing determination and the 2013 COT Report.

1.5 How the ARMPs and ARMPAs Address the Identified Threats to GRSG Conservation

The 2006 WAFWA *Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy* stated goal for GRSG management was to "maintain and enhance populations and distribution of GRSG by protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain these populations" (Stiver et al. 2006). The NTT Report also endorsed this goal "as a guiding philosophy against which management actions and policies of BLM should be weighed" (NTT 2011).

In establishing the COT, with the backing of the Sage-Grouse Task Force, the FWS Director affirmed the commitment to the goal for GRSG conservation originally articulated in the 2006 WAFWA report—reversing negative population trends and achieving a neutral or positive population trend—and emphasized the following:

> The Service interprets this recommendation to mean that actions and measures should be put in place now that will eventually arrest what has been a continuing declining trend. Conservation success will be achieved by removing or reducing threats to the species now, such that population trends will eventually be stable or increasing, even if numbers are not restored to historic levels. (Stiver et al. 2006)

The COT Report emphasized the need to avoid or minimize additional disturbance in GRSG habitat. Specifically, it stated "[m]aintenance of the integrity of PACs…is the essential foundation for sage-grouse conservation" (FWS 2013). To achieve this, the COT Report recommended "targeted habitat management and restoration" to be achieved by "eliminating activities known to negatively impact sage-grouse and their habitats, or re-designing these activities to achieve the same goal" (FWS 2013). The COT Report emphasized an "avoidance first strategy" and stressed those threats in GRSG habitat "must be minimized to the extent that population trends meet the objectives of the 2006 WAFWA Conservation Strategy" (FWS 2013).

The plans were developed to address specific identified threats to the species in order to conserve GRSG, such that the need to list it under the ESA may be avoided. Across ten western states, the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain Region ARMPs and ARMPAs contain land use plan direction on approximately 67 million acres of the GRSG's remaining habitat on BLM-administered lands (see **Figure 1-5**). These plans are the product of extensive coordination between the BLM and the Forest Service and the active engagement of the FWS which informed the BLM and Forest Service land allocation and related management decisions. The plans also benefit from strong collaboration with the States and reflect the unique landscapes, habitats, priorities, and approaches in each.

In order to protect the most important GRSG habitat areas, the planning began with mapping areas of important habitat across the range of the GRSG. In collaboration with State fish and wildlife agencies, the BLM identified areas as preliminary priority habitat (PPH) and preliminary general habitat (PGH). The Draft RMPs and RMPAs/EISs used PPH and PGH to analyze the impacts of the decisions the BLM was proposing in the plans. PPH and PGH were identified as Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMAs)

and General Habitat Management Areas (GHMAs) in the Proposed RMPs/Final EISs and Proposed RMPAs/Final EISs to identify the management decisions that apply to those areas. The designated GRSG habitat management areas on BLM-administered lands in the decision area as follows:

- PHMAs, which largely coincide with PACs in the COT Report (see **Figure 1-4**)
- GHMAs
- Restoration Habitat Management Areas (RHMAs, applicable only to Billings and Miles City)
- Linkage and Connectivity Habitat Management Areas (LCHMAs), applicable only to Northwest Colorado

Table 1-3a identifies surface acres of PHMAs, GHMAs, RHMAs, and LCHMAs in the decision area for the Rocky Mountain Region.

Habitat maps were based initially on state key habitat maps, which identified areas necessary for GRSG conservation. These areas were derived from breeding bird density maps and lek counts, nesting areas, sightings, and habitat distribution data. These data included occupied suitable seasonal habitats, nesting and brood-rearing areas, and connectivity areas or corridors. The BLM used this information to develop PPH and PGH maps and, subsequently, to identify PHMAs and GHMAs, respectively.

The COT Report also used state key habitat maps as a basis for identifying PACs. The COT Report notes that there is substantial overlap between PACs and BLM PPH areas (FWS 2013, p. 13). **Figure 1-5** illustrates the regional and sub-regional Planning Area boundaries, along with BLM-administered PHMAs and GHMAs across the western US.

PHMAs, GHMAs, RHMAs, and LCHMAs are defined below; the BLM-administered surface and Federal mineral estate of each designation (in acres) in the decision area for the Rocky Mountain Region are shown in **Tables 1-3a** and **1-3b**.

- **PHMAs**—BLM-administered lands identified as having highest habitat value for maintaining sustainable GRSG populations. The boundaries and management strategies for PHMAs are derived from and generally follow the PPH boundaries. PHMAs largely coincide with areas identified as PACs in the COT Report.
- **GHMAs**—BLM-administered GRSG habitat that is occupied seasonally or year-round and is outside of PHMAs, where some special management would apply to sustain GRSG populations. The boundaries and management strategies for GHMAs are derived from and generally follow the PGH boundaries.
- **RHMAs (Billings and Miles City only)**—BLM-administered lands where maintaining populations is a priority, a balance between ongoing and future resource use so that enough quality habitat is maintained to allow some residual population in impacted areas to persist and that emphasizes the restoration of habitat to reestablish or restore sustainable populations.
- **LCHMAs (Northwest Colorado only)**—BLM-administered lands that have been identified as broader regions of connectivity important to facilitate the movement of GRSG and maintain ecological processes.

Table 1-3a
Surface Acres of PHMAs, GHMAs, RHMAs, and LCHMAs in the Decision Area for the Rocky Mountain Region

BLM-Administered Surface Acres	PHMAs	GHMAs	RHMAs	LCHMAs
Lewistown	233,219	112,341	-	-
North Dakota	32,900	80	-	-
Northwest Colorado	921,500	728,000	-	81,900
Wyoming	4,895,100	6,032,500	-	-
Billings	158,926	176,734	78,927	-
Buffalo	137,451	627,824	-	-
Cody	317,307	740,797	-	-
HiLine	1,432,689	289,756	-	-
Miles City	817,000	1,395,000	87,000	-
Pompeys Pillar NM	-	-	-	-
South Dakota	127,735	23,684	-	-
Worland	799,391	1,290,562	-	-
Total Acres	**9,873,218**	**11,417,278**	**165,927**	**81,900**

Source: BLM GIS 2015

Table 1-3b
BLM-Administered Federal Mineral Estate of PHMAs, GHMAs, RHMAs, and LCHMAs in the Decision Area for the Rocky Mountain Region

BLM-Administered Federal Mineral Estate	PHMAs	GHMAs	RHMAs	LCHMAs
Lewistown	294,935	195,168	-	-
North Dakota	167,291	109,905	-	-
Northwest Colorado	1,241,700	896,000	-	81,900
Wyoming	6,929,000	13,416,700	-	-
Billings	205,254	299,166	88,642	-
Buffalo	674,923	2,613,535	-	-
Cody	437,045	1,012,335	-	-
HiLine	1,615,876	537,304	-	-
Miles City	1,395,000	4,647,000	216,389	-
Pompeys Pillar NM	-	-	-	-
South Dakota	412,822	247,771	-	-
Worland	1,021,583	1,632,171	-	-
Total Acres	**14,395,429**	**25,607,055**	**305,031**	**81,900**

Source: BLM GIS 2015

The ARMPs and ARMPAs also identify Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs) on a portion of the landscape. SFAs are a subset of PHMAs (see **Figure 1-3**) and are found only in the Lewistown, HiLine, and Wyoming ARMPA sub-regional Planning Areas. Across the Rocky Mountain Region, there are 2,911,000 acres of BLM-administered SFAs. They correspond to the areas identified by the FWS as GRSG "strongholds"

and represent "a subset of priority habitat most vital to the species persistence within which we recommend the strongest levels of protection" (FWS 2014a).

SFAs are areas of highest habitat value for GRSG and are managed to avoid new surface disturbance for the following reasons:

- They contain high-quality sagebrush habitat and the highest breeding bird densities
- They have been identified as essential to conservation and persistence of the species
- They represent a preponderance of current Federal ownership
- In some cases, they are next to protected areas that serve to anchor the conservation importance of the landscape

SFAs management is consistent with the recommendations provided by the FWS that these are the areas "where it is most important that the BLM and Forest Service institutionalize the highest degree of protection to help promote persistence of the species" (FWS 2014a).

Remaining habitat in GHMAs, RHMAs (applicable only to Billings and Miles City), and LCHMAs (applicable only in Northwest Colorado) would be managed consistent with the COT Report recommendation to recognize "that important habitats outside of PACs be conserved to the extent possible" (FWS 2013). Thus, land allocations in GHMAs, RHMAs, and LCHMAs provide for more flexibility for land use activities, while minimizing impacts on GRSG leks.

This tiered habitat management area framework is associated with the land use plan allocation decisions (explained more fully in **Section 1.6**) in the ARMPs and ARMPAs. It provides a high degree of certainty that the integrity of PHMAs can be maintained through management decisions to avoid or minimize additional surface disturbance. At the same time, it recognizes the potential importance of areas outside of PHMAs for maintaining connectivity between highly important habitats and their potential for addressing seasonal habitat needs (e.g., winter habitat areas not fully incorporated in PHMAs).[3]

In November 2010, the FWS notified the State of Wyoming that the GRSG Core Area Strategy (Executive Order 2010-4) "if implemented by all landowners via regulatory mechanism, would provide adequate protection for sage-grouse and their habitats in the state." As a result, the BLM's Wyoming ARMPA and Cody, Worland, and Buffalo ARMPs are largely consistent with the measures outlined in the State of Wyoming's Core Area Strategy.

[3] Recently completed analysis by Crist et al. (2015) highlights the importance of certain key "priority areas" across the species range as well as the importance of connectivity between priority areas as a component of successful GRSG conservation. Generally, these priority areas coincide with PHMAs across the landscape. It is important to note that BLM-administered SFAs also coincide with a number of the areas identified by Crist et al. (2015) as important for maintaining connectivity between the network of conservation areas that are of greatest importance to the integrity of the conservation strategy. To maintain connectivity between PHMAs across the remaining range, requirements were incorporated into the majority of the ARMPs and ARMPAs for applying lek buffers (consistent with guidance provided by the USGS), mitigation to a net conservation gain; and required design features for projects in GHMAs, as described later in this document. These measures are specifically intended to benefit GHMAs by maintaining connectivity and added habitat protection consistent with the Crist et al. (2015) findings.

Table 1-4 summarizes the major components of the attached ARMPs and ARMPAs that address the specific threats to GRSG and its habitat, as identified in the FWS 2010 listing decision and 2013 COT Report (many of which were also identified by the BLM's 2011 NTT Report).

Table 1-4
Key Management Responses from the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG ARMPs and ARMPAs that Address the COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and Its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Management Responses from the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG ARMPs and ARMPAs
All threats	• Implement adaptive management strategies to address declines in GRSG populations and habitat. • Monitor implementation and effectiveness of conservation measures in GRSG habitats in a consistent manner.
All development threats, including mining, infrastructure, and energy development	• PHMAs (except in Wyoming)—Implement a human disturbance cap of 3 percent within the biologically significant unit (BSU) and proposed project analysis areas in PHMAs. • PHMAs (only in Wyoming)—Implement a human disturbance cap of 5 percent at the project-area scale. • PHMAs (only in Wyoming)—Surface occupancy and surface-disturbing activities would be prohibited on or within 0.6 mile of the perimeter of an occupied lek. • GHMAs (only in Wyoming)—Surface occupancy and surface-disturbing activities would be prohibited on or within 0.25 mile of the perimeter of an occupied lek. • PHMAs—Apply a disturbance density cap of 1 energy or mining facility per 640 acres. • Apply buffers based on project type and location to address impacts on leks when authorizing actions in GRSG habitat. • Apply required design features (RDFs) when authorizing actions in GRSG habitat. • Minimize the effects of infrastructure projects, including siting, using the best available science, updated as monitoring information on current infrastructure projects becomes available. • Consider the potential for developing valid existing rights when authorizing new projects in PHMAs. • Require and ensure mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to the species, when authorizing third-party actions that result in habitat loss and degradation.
Energy development—fluid minerals, including geothermal resources	• PHMAs (except in Wyoming)—Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to a no surface occupancy (NSO) stipulation, without waiver or modification and with limited exceptions. • SFAs (in Lewistown and HiLine only)—Apply NSOs without waiver, modification, or exception. • PHMAs (only in Wyoming)—Open to fluid mineral leasing, subject to NSO stipulation within 0.6 mile of an occupied lek and a timing limitation (TL) stipulation from March 15 to June 30.

Table 1-4
Key Management Responses from the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG ARMPs and ARMPAs that Address the COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and Its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Management Responses from the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG ARMPs and ARMPAs
	• PHMAs and GHMAs (in Colorado only)—Closed to fluid mineral leasing within 1 mile of active leks. • PHMAs (Colorado)—Open to fluid mineral leasing beyond one mile of active lek subject to NSO. • GHMAs (only in Colorado)—Open to fluid minerals, subject to NSO, within 2 miles of an active lek. • GHMAs (only in Montana)—Open to fluid mineral leasing, subject to NSO within 0.6 mile of a lek and controlled surface use (CSU) within 2 miles of an active lek. • RHMAs (Billings)—Open to fluid mineral leasing, subject to NSO within 0.6 mile of an active lek and CSU and TL. • RHMAs (Miles City)—Open to fluid mineral leasing, subject to an NSO stipulation, without waiver or modification and with limited exceptions (West Decker and South Carter); open to fluid mineral leasing subject to CSU (Cedar Creek). • GHMAs (only in Wyoming)—Open to fluid mineral leasing, subject to NSO within 0.25 mile of an occupied lek and TL stipulations. • Prioritize the leasing and development of fluid mineral resources outside GRSG habitat.
Energy development—wind energy	• PHMAs (except in Wyoming)—Exclusion area (not available for wind energy development under any conditions). • PHMAs (only in Wyoming)—Avoidance area (may be available for wind energy development with special stipulations). • GHMAs (except in Wyoming)—Avoidance area (may be available for wind energy development with special stipulations). • RHMAs—Exclusion or avoidance areas.
Energy development—solar energy	• PHMAs and RHMAs (except in Wyoming)—Exclusion area (not available for solar energy development under any conditions). • GHMAs—Avoidance area (may be available for solar energy development with special stipulations). • RHMAs—Exclusion or avoidance areas.
Infrastructure—major rights-of-ways (ROWs)	• PHMAs and RHMAs—Avoidance area (may be available for major ROWs with special stipulations). • GHMAs (except in Wyoming)—Avoidance area (may be available for major ROWs with special stipulations).
Infrastructure—minor ROWs	• PHMAs and RHMAs— Avoidance area (may be available for minor ROWs with special stipulations). • GHMAs (only in Colorado)—Avoidance area (may be available for minor ROWs with special stipulations).
Mining—locatable minerals	• SFAs (in Lewistown, HiLine, and Wyoming ARMPA)—Recommend withdrawal from the Mining Law of 1872.

Table 1-4
Key Management Responses from the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG ARMPs and ARMPAs that Address the COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and Its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Management Responses from the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG ARMPs and ARMPAs
Mining—nonenergy leasable minerals	• PHMAs (except in Wyoming)—Closed area (not available for nonenergy leasable minerals, but expansion of existing operations could be considered if the disturbance were within the cap and subject to compensatory mitigation).
Mining—salable minerals	• PHMAs (except in Wyoming)—Closed area (not available for salable minerals), with a limited exception (may remain open to free use permits and expansion of existing active pits if criteria are met).
Improper livestock grazing	• Prioritize the review and processing of grazing permits and leases in SFAs (only in Lewistown, HiLine, and Wyoming ARMPAs), followed by PHMAs. • The NEPA analysis for renewals and modifications of grazing permits and leases will include specific management thresholds, based on the GRSG habitat objectives table, land health standards, and ecological site potential, to allow adjustments to grazing that have already undergone NEPA analysis. • Prioritize field checks in SFAs (only present in Lewistown, HiLine, and Wyoming) followed by PHMAs to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of grazing permits.
Free-roaming equid (wild horses and burros) management	• In the Wyoming ARMPA, prioritize gathers in SFAs, followed by other PHMAs. • Except in Wyoming, manage herd management areas in GRSG habitat within established appropriate management level (AML) ranges to achieve and maintain GRSG habitat objectives. • Except in Wyoming, prioritize rangeland health assessment, gathers, and population growth suppression techniques, monitoring, and review and adjustment of AMLs and preparation of HMA plans in GRSG habitat. • Only in Wyoming, review and consider amending BLM HMA plans to incorporate GRSG habitat objectives and management considerations for all BLM HMAs.
Range management structures	• Allow range improvements that do not impact GRSG or that provide a conservation benefit to GRSG, such as fences for protecting important seasonal habitats. • Remove livestock ponds built in perennial channels that are negatively impacting riparian habitats. Do not permit new ones to be built in these areas.
Recreation	• PHMAs—Do not construct new recreation facilities unless required for health and safety purposes or if the construction would result in a net conservation gain to the species. • In Colorado, Lewistown, North Dakota, and South Dakota only, allow special recreation permits only if their effects on GRSG and their habitat are neutral or result in a net conservation gain. • PHMAs—Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use limited to existing routes (routes to be designated through future travel management planning).

Table 1-4
Key Management Responses from the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG ARMPs and ARMPAs that Address the COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and Its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Management Responses from the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG ARMPs and ARMPAs
	• GHMAs (except in Colorado)—OHV use limited to existing routes (routes to be designated through future travel management planning).
Fire	• Restrict the use of prescribed fire for fuel treatments. • Prioritize post-fire treatments in SFAs (only found in Lewistown, HiLine, and Wyoming ARMPA), other PHMAs, and GHMAs.
Nonnative, invasive plant species	• Improve GRSG habitat by treating annual grasses. • Treat sites in PHMAs, RHMAs, and GHMAs that contain invasive species infestations through an integrated pest management approach.
Sagebrush removal	• PHMAs—Maintain all lands capable of producing sagebrush (but no less than 70 percent) with a minimum of 15 percent sagebrush canopy cover, consistent with specific ecological site conditions. • Ensure that all BLM use authorizations contain terms and conditions regarding the actions needed to meet or progress toward meeting the habitat objectives for GRSG.
Pinyon and juniper expansion	• Remove conifers encroaching into sagebrush habitats, prioritizing occupied GRSG habitat, in a manner that considers tribal cultural values.
Agricultural conversion and exurban development	• Retain most GRSG habitat Federal management unless disposal (including exchanges) would provide a net conservation gain to the GRSG or disposal (including exchanges) would have no direct or indirect adverse impact on GRSG conservation.

1.6 KEY COMPONENTS OF THE BLM GRSG CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The ARMPs and ARMPAs were developed to meet the purpose and need to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat by eliminating or minimizing threats to their habitat identified in the 2010 listing decision and highlighted in the Background and Purpose Section of the COT Report (FWS 2013). Consequently, consistent with guidance in the COT and NTT Reports, four essential components of the GRSG conservation strategy were identified, as follows:

- Avoiding or minimizing new and additional surface disturbances
- Improving habitat conditions
- Reducing threats of rangeland fire to GRSG and sagebrush habitat in the Great Basin
- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of conservation measures and implementing adaptive management, as needed

The land allocations and management actions included in the ARMPs and ARMPAs incorporate these components and are summarized below.

1.6.1 Avoid and Minimize Surface Disturbance

Land Use Allocations and Management Actions in SFAs, PHMAs, and GHMAs

The Rocky Mountain ARMPs and ARMPAs build on the designated habitat management areas described in **Section 1.5** by applying management actions to these areas to avoid and minimize disturbance associated with proposed projects as described below and shown in **Table 1-4**. Land use plan allocations specify locations within the Planning Area that are available or unavailable for certain uses and also prioritize conservation and restoration management actions applied to habitat management areas.

The COT Report states that "maintenance of the integrity of PACs…is the essential foundation for sage-grouse conservation" (FWS 2013, p. 36). Areas of PHMAs largely coincide with areas identified as PACs in the COT Report. Surface disturbance associated with energy development and infrastructure was identified as the primary threat to GRSG and GRSG habitat in the Rocky Mountain Region. To address this threat, allocations include requirements to avoid and minimize disturbance in PHMAs. The ARMPs and ARMPAs provide a layered management approach that offers the highest level of protection for GRSG in the most valuable habitat. Accordingly, the ARMPs and ARMPAs apply allocations that are most restrictive in SFAs, that limit or eliminate new surface disturbance in PHMAs, and that minimize disturbance in GHMAs.

SFAs—The most restrictive allocations are applied to SFAs, which are a subset of lands within PHMAs, with the highest habitat value for GRSG. Surface disturbance from fluid mineral development is avoided in SFAs in Montana by NSO without waiver, modification, or exception, and in Wyoming, consistent with the core area strategy. In addition, SFAs include additional protection from new surface disturbance by recommending those areas for withdrawal from mineral entry under the Mining Law of 1872, subject to valid existing rights. SFAs will also be prioritized for vegetation management and conservation actions in these areas, including land health assessments, wild horse and burro (WHB) management actions, livestock grazing permit and lease review, and habitat restoration. In Wyoming, a portion of SFAs are recommended for withdrawal, while in other areas SFAs are not recommended for withdrawal but are still subject to other protective measures. The State of Wyoming has permitting authority for locatable mining operations and has committed to use its authority to ensure that operations proceed in accordance with the core area strategy and a successful record of using this authority in the past. The area recommended for withdrawal in Wyoming SFAs covers an area where the potential for development has been identified and provides connectivity between the recommended withdrawal in the Lander Planning Area and existing withdrawals. There are no SFAs in Colorado.

PHMAs—In the rest of PHMAs, new fluid mineral leasing would be subject to NSO with no waivers or modifications. Exceptions would be granted only if the proposed action would not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat or if the action were proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel and would provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG. This is fully consistent with guidance in the NTT Report which states "Do not allow new surface occupancy on Federal lands within priority habitats" (NTT 2011, p. 23). In Wyoming, new fluid mineral leasing on all lands would be subject to NSO within a 0.6-mile radius around occupied leks. Additionally, PHMAs (except in Wyoming) would be closed to nonenergy leasable and salable mineral development, with limited exceptions. New wind and solar projects would be excluded from PHMAs,

except for Wyoming, where wind and solar projects are to be avoided but may be permitted with special stipulations.

In addition to the energy and mining land use allocations and management actions described above, the ARMPs and ARMPAs include restrictions on ROWs which are designed to avoid disturbance in PHMAs. These restrictions (**Table 1-4**) ensure that activities in PHMAs are permitted only if the resultant effect is a net conservation gain to the GRSG or its habitat.

High voltage transmission lines would be generally avoided in PHMAs. A limited number of priority transmission lines, such as Transwest Express and portions of Gateway South that are collocated with Transwest Express, have been proposed to expand access to renewable sources of energy and to improve the reliability of the western grid. These projects have been underway for several years and are currently being analyzed under NEPA. As part of the decision-making process for those projects, conservation measures for GRSG are being analyzed in the project-specific NEPA processes, which should achieve a net conservation benefit for GRSG.

Additionally, new recreation facilities would not be authorized in PHMAs, unless the development would result in a net conservation gain to the GRSG or its habitat or unless required for health and safety purposes. For the Wyoming ARMPA and ARMPs, construction of recreation facilities within PHMAs must conform with the avoidance and minimization measures of the plan. If the BLM were to determine that these management measures are inadequate for the conservation of GRSG, it would require and ensure compensatory mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to the species. OHV use is limited to existing routes in PHMAs (routes to be designated through future travel management planning).

A 3 percent human disturbance cap in PHMAs has been established in accordance with the recommendations contained in the NTT Report (except in Wyoming, where, consistent with the Core Area Strategy, the Wyoming BLM plans implement a 5 percent all lands/all disturbance approach). Outside of Wyoming, disturbance will be calculated at two scales: first at a BSU scale, determined in coordination with the state, and second for the proposed project area. BSUs are geographic units of PHMAs that contain relevant and important GRSG habitat. In the Rocky Mountain Region, BSUs are synonymous with PACs. If a 3 percent human disturbance is exceeded on lands (regardless of landownership) within PHMAs in any given BSU, no further discrete human disturbances (subject to valid existing rights) would be permitted on BLM-administered lands within PHMAs in that BSU until restoration of disturbed lands brings the BSU below the cap. If the 3 percent human disturbance cap were exceeded on all lands (regardless of landownership) within a proposed project analysis area in a PHMAs, then the BLM would permit no further human disturbance until disturbance in the proposed project analysis area had been reduced to maintain the area under the cap.

The Lewistown ARMPA and Billings, HiLine, and Miles City ARMPs will limit disturbance in PHMAs to 3 percent until the State of Montana's Sage Grouse Plan's disturbance calculation method is in effect, at which time disturbance would be permitted up to a 5 percent cap. This is to recognize, as with the Wyoming Core Area Strategy, the importance of the all lands/all disturbances strategy that Montana will institute for GRSG conservation under Montana Executive Order No. 12-2015.

The Cody, Worland, and Buffalo ARMPs and the Wyoming ARMPA include a 5 percent disturbance cap in PHMAs, consistent with the State of Wyoming's Core Area Strategy, which applies to both public and private lands at the project scale and considers all disturbance (including fire) using the Density and

Disturbance Calculation Tool (DDCT). As noted above, outside of Wyoming, disturbance will be calculated at both the BSU and at the project scale.

Additional information about the method for calculating human disturbance can be found in Appendix E of each of the attached Montana and Colorado ARMPs and ARMPAs. For the Cody, Worland, and Buffalo ARMPs and the Wyoming ARMPA, refer to **Appendix D** for information on how the DDCT is applied.

For those ARMPs and ARMPAs, except Wyoming, that have existing utility corridors within their Planning Areas, an exception to the disturbance cap is provided in designated utility corridors to achieve a net conservation gain to the species. This exception is limited to projects that fulfill the use for which the corridors were designated (e.g., transmission lines and pipelines) within the designated width of a corridor. This requirement will concentrate future ROW surface disturbance in areas of existing disturbance and will avoid new development of utility infrastructure in PHMAs, consistent with guidance in the COT Report.

The ARMPs and ARMPAs also incorporate a limit on the density of energy and mining facilities to encourage collocating structures to reduce habitat fragmentation in PHMAs. The limit is an average of one facility per 640 acres in PHMAs in a project authorization area, as recommended in the NTT Report. If the disturbance density in the PHMAs in a proposed project area is on average less than 1 facility per 640 acres, the project can proceed; if the disturbance density in the proposed project area is greater than an average of 1 facility per 640 acres, the proposed project would either be deferred until the density of energy and mining facilities is less than the cap or would be redesigned so facilities are collocated into an existing disturbed area, subject to applicable laws and regulations, such as the 1872 Mining Law and valid existing rights.

GHMAs—While restrictions on future development in PHMAs are intended to avoid or minimize additional surface disturbance, restrictions on development in GHMAs are intended to allow disturbance but minimize any its adverse effects. There would be restrictions on development to ensure compatibility with GRSG habitat needs; in addition, mitigation to avoid, minimize, and compensate for unavoidable impacts would be required for proposed projects in GHMAs and RDFs would be applied, as discussed below.

Disturbance associated with oil and gas development, for example, is subject to CSU and TL stipulations and NSO around leks. GHMAs are also an avoidance area for major ROWs (except in Wyoming). Avoidance areas are available only for ROW locations subject to special stipulations. Any disturbance is subject to mitigation, with the objective of first avoiding and minimizing potential impacts then compensating for unavoidable impacts on GRSG or its habitat, to a net conservation gain standard for the species, subject to valid existing rights. This is consistent with the COT Report, which states "[c]onservation of habitats outside of PACs should include minimization of impacts on sage-grouse and healthy native plant communities. If minimization is not possible due to valid existing rights, mitigation for impacted habitats should occur. …If development or vegetation manipulation activities outside of PACs are proposed, the project proponent should work with Federal, state or local agencies and interested stakeholders to ensure consistency with sage-grouse habitat needs" (FWS 2013).

These conservation measures are intended to ensure that areas of GHMAs are protected. GHMAs provide connectivity between PHMAs; may be important seasonal habitats not identified or

incorporated into previously mapped areas of PHMAs; or can provide important habitat to replace areas of important habitat lost to fire or human disturbance. This strategy is particularly important given the recent USGS report by Crist et al. (2015), *Range-Wide Network of Priority Aras for Grater Sage-Grouse—A Design for Conserving Connected Distributions or Isolating Individual Zoos?* In Wyoming, new fluid mineral leasing on all lands would be subject to NSO within a 0.25-mile radius around occupied leks. See **Table 1-4** for more details on GHMAs management decisions.

RHMAs and LCHMAs are designations unique to Montana and Colorado, respectively. Fluid mineral development in RHMAs are NSO within 0.6 mile of an active lek in the Billings Field Office and is either NSO (West Decker and South Carter areas) or CSU (Cedar Creek area) in the Miles City Field Office. RHMAs are also a ROW exclusion or avoidance area for solar and wind ROWs, depending on location, and a ROW avoidance area for all other types of ROWs. The Northwest Colorado ARMPA establishes management that would be applied to all designated habitat in Colorado, which includes LCHMAs.

Habitat Protection and Surface Disturbance Measures in PHMAs and GHMAs

The following measures related to habitat protect and surface disturbance will be applied in both PHMAs and GHMAs.

Prioritization Objective—In addition to allocations that limit disturbance in PHMAs and GHMAs, the ARMPs and ARMPAs prioritize oil and gas leasing and development outside of identified PHMAs and GHMAs. This is to further limit future surface disturbance and encourage new development in areas that would not conflict with GRSG. This objective is intended to guide development to lower conflict areas and as such protect important habitat and reduce the time and cost associated with oil and gas leasing development by avoiding sensitive areas, reducing the complexity of environmental review and analysis of potential impacts on sensitive species, and decreasing the need for compensatory mitigation.

Grazing—While improper livestock grazing can be a threat to GRSG habitat, grazing is not considered a discrete surface-disturbing activity for the purposes of monitoring and calculating disturbance. The ARMPs and ARMPAs address grazing management for the conservation of GRSG and its habitat and is further described in **Section 1.6.2**.

Lek Buffers—In addition to any other relevant information determined to be appropriate, the BLM will further assess impacts from certain activities using the lek buffer distances, as identified in the USGS report, *Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for GRSG—A Review* (Manier et al. 2014). Lek buffer distances will be applied at the project-specific level as required conservation measures to address the impacts on leks as identified in the NEPA analysis. The lek buffer distances vary by type of disturbance (such as road, energy development, and infrastructure), and justifiable departures may be appropriate, as fully described in Appendix B of the ARMPAs. In both PHMAs and GHMAs, impacts should be avoided, first by locating the action outside of the applicable lek buffer-distances, as defined in the ARMPs and ARMPAs. In PHMAs, the BLM will ensure that any impacts within the buffer distance from a lek are fully addressed; in GHMAs, the BLM will minimize and compensate for any unavoidable impacts to the extent possible. This approach to determining relevant lek buffer distances is consistent with the COT Report recommendation that "conservation plans should be based on the best available science and use local data on threats and ecological conditions" (FWS 2013).

The FWS has found that "the [State of Wyoming's] core area strategy, if implemented by all landowners via regulatory mechanism, would provide adequate protection for sage-grouse and their habitats in the state" (personal correspondence from Scott Hicks to Ryan Lance on November 10, 2010); therefore, the Cody, Worland, and Buffalo ARMPs and the Wyoming ARMPA do not apply the lek buffers outlined in the USGS Report but instead are consistent with those buffers specified in the State of Wyoming's Core Area Strategy.

Required Design Features—Additionally, RDFs are required for certain activities in GRSG habitat, including oil and gas development, infrastructure, and other surface-disturbing activities and are fully described in Appendix C of the attached ARMPs and ARMPAs. RDFs establish the minimum specifications for certain activities to help mitigate adverse impacts on GRSG and its habitat from threats (such as those posed by standing water that can facilitate West Nile virus or tall structures that can serve as perches for predators). The applicability and overall effectiveness of each RDF, however, cannot be fully assessed until the project level, project location, and design are known. Because of site-specific circumstances, some RDFs may not apply to some projects, such as when a resource is not present on a given site or may require slight variations (e.g., a larger or smaller protective area).

In summary, all forms of new development in PHMAs and GHMAs would be closed, excluded, avoided, or developed only if the resultant effect were a net conservation gain to the GRSG or its habitat, ensuring that existing habitat would be protected or restored through compensatory mitigation.

1.6.2 Improving Habitat Condition

In addition to prescribing land use allocations and managing resource uses in order to minimize and avoid surface disturbance, the ARMPs and ARMPAs identify management actions to restore and improve GRSG habitat.

Habitat Management—The ARMPs and ARMPAs contain an overall habitat management objective that "[i]n all Sagebrush Focal Areas and Priority Habitat Management Areas, the desired condition is to maintain all lands ecologically capable of producing sagebrush (but no less than 70 percent) with a minimum of 15 percent sagebrush canopy cover, consistent with specific ecological site conditions." To move toward this goal, the ARMPs and ARMPAs specify GRSG habitat objectives to be incorporated into land management programs, including WHBs, livestock grazing, and habitat restoration. These habitat objectives were developed for each of the GRSG's life history stages within each ARMP and ARMPA's Planning Area. These objectives will be used to meet the applicable land health standard in GRSG habitats.

Livestock Grazing—The BLM recognizes that improper grazing can be a threat to GRSG and its habitat. Because grazing is the most widespread use of the sagebrush steppe ecosystem, the ARMPAs address improper grazing. The COT Report recommendation for grazing says to "[c]onduct grazing management for all ungulates in a manner consistent with local ecological conditions that maintains or restores healthy sagebrush shrub and native perennial grass and forb communities and conserves the essential habitat components for sage- grouse (e.g., shrub cover, nesting cover)" (FWS 2013). To ensure that grazing continues in a manner consistent with the objective of conserving the GRSG and its habitat, the Rocky Mountain ARMPs and ARMPAs include requirements for incorporating terms and conditions informed by GRSG habitat objectives into grazing permits, consistent with the ecological site potential of the local areas, prioritize the review and processing of authorizations and field checks of grazing permits,

and take numerous actions to avoid and minimize the impacts of range management structures (see **Table 1-4**).

The BLM will prioritize its review and processing of grazing authorizations, as well as field checks of grazing permits, in the habitat that is most important to GRSG populations: first in SFAs, then PHMAs, followed by GHMAs, focusing first on riparian areas and wet meadows. The decision to prioritize in this way does not indicate that grazing is more of a threat or is an incompatible use in any given area; rather it reflects a decision to prioritize resources to ensure permittees and the BLM manage grazing properly in those areas most important to GRSG. If the BLM were to find that relevant habitat objectives were not being met due to improper grazing, it would work with the permittee to ensure progress toward meeting habitat objectives.

Wild Horses and Burros—To address the localized threat due to negative influences of grazing by free-roaming WHB in Wyoming and Colorado, the BLM will focus on maintaining WHB HMAs in GRSG habitat within established AML ranges. This will be to achieve and maintain GRSG habitat objectives, including completing rangeland health assessments, prioritizing gathers and population growth suppression techniques, and developing or amending herd management area plans to consider incorporating GRSG habitat objectives and management considerations. The BLM will prioritize WHB management first in SFAs, then the remainder of PHMAs, and then GHMAs. In SFAs and PHMAs, the BLM will assess and adjust AMLs through the NEPA process within herd management areas when WHBs are identified as a significant factor in not meeting land health standards, even if current AML is not being exceeded.

Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain—During the implementation of the ARMPs and ARMPAs, and, subject to valid existing rights and consistent with applicable law, when authorizing third-party actions that result in GRSG habitat loss and degradation, the BLM will require and ensure mitigation that provides a net conservation gain (the actual benefit or gain above baseline conditions) to the species. This would include accounting for any uncertainty associated with the effectiveness of such mitigation in PHMAs and GHMAs (except for the Wyoming ARMPs and ARMPAs, where this requirement only applies in PHMAs). It would do this by avoiding, minimizing, and compensating for unavoidable impacts and by applying beneficial conservation actions to offset remaining impacts associated with the action. This standard is consistent with the recommendation included in the *Greater Sage-Grouse Range-Wide Mitigation Framework: Version 1.0*, published by the FWS in September 2014. This document states that mitigation "should be strategically designed to result in net overall positive outcomes for sage-grouse" (FWS 2014b). Mitigation would follow the NEPA regulatory requirements (40 CFR 1508.20; e.g., it would avoid, minimize, and compensate) and would be implemented on BLM-managed lands in a manner consistent with guidance for landscape mitigation, in accordance with Secretarial Order 3330. If impacts from BLM management actions and authorized third-party actions were to result in habitat loss and degradation that remain after applying avoidance and minimization measures (i.e., residual impacts), then compensatory mitigation projects would be used to provide a net conservation gain to the species. Any compensatory mitigation would be durable and timely and would be in addition to what would have resulted without the compensatory mitigation.

To help achieve the mitigation goal of net conservation gain across the range, the BLM will establish GRSG Conservation Teams, based on WAFWA MZs, including members from the respective states, Forest Service, FWS, and NRCS. These Conservation Teams will facilitate cross-state issues, such as

regional mitigation and adaptive management monitoring and response. The teams will convene and respond to issues at the appropriate scale and will use existing coordination and management structures to the extent possible.

Climate Change—With regard to the threat of climate change, the ARMPs and ARMPAs set goals and objectives and describe actions intended to build resilience in the sagebrush steppe landscape to reduce the impacts of climate change through habitat conservation and restoration measures. Limiting or eliminating human surface disturbance, especially in SFAs, ensuring the integrity of PHMAs, and restoring habitat through fuels management, post-fire restoration, and mitigation, sagebrush habitat connectivity and availability would increase. This would help to increased sagebrush resilience.

As identified by the FWS 2010 listing decision and the COT Report, climate change can impact efforts to conserve GRSG and its habitat in a number of ways. While several ARMPAs acknowledge the potential impact of climate change on GRSG habitat and conservation, specific strategies to address the impacts of climate change are limited. The BLM and Forest Service, in coordination with the FWS, will continue to assess the potential impacts of climate change on GRSG and its habitat and will develop strategies to mitigate the anticipated effects on GRSG conservation, as necessary and appropriate. Changes to management decisions will require a plan revision or amendment, recognizing the need to ensure that future management direction improves the resilience of habitat areas essential to species conservation.

The ARMPs and ARMPAs also include specific decisions to improve habitat conditions and meet the habitat objectives by treating invasive annual grasses, removing encroaching conifers in SFAs, PHMAs, and GHMAs, and restoring degraded landscapes, including those impacted by fire (See **Section 1.6.3**.).

1.6.3 Reducing Threats of Rangeland Fire to GRSG and Sagebrush Habitat

Although rangeland fire and invasive annual grasses are found in the Rocky Mountain Region, they are not considered a primary threat. This is due to the higher elevations and generally more mesic conditions of GRSG habitat. This finding was recently confirmed by an analysis by Brooks, et al. (2015) which evaluated fire patterns in the range of the GRSG over the past 30 years. However, goals and objectives are included in the ARMPs and ARMPAs to prevent and limit the spread of invasive annual grasses and fire in PHMAs and GHMAs.

The COT Report emphasized the need to address the "feedback loop between exotic invasive annual grasses and fire frequency" (FWS 2013); for this reason, the ARMPs and ARMPAs seek to fight the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species, to position wildland fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response, and to accelerate the restoration of fire-impacted landscapes to native grasses and sagebrush.

Prescribed fire will not be used except under the following conditions: the NEPA analysis for the burn plan provides a clear rationale for why alternative techniques were not selected as a viable option, how GRSG habitat management goals and objectives would be met by its use, and how the COT Report objectives would be met. A risk assessment would be prepared to address how potential threats to GRSG habitat would be minimized.

In addition to and complementing the ARMPs and ARMPAs described in this ROD, Secretarial Order 3336, Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management and Restoration, made clear that "protecting, conserving, and restoring the health of the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem and, in particular, priority GRSG habitat,

while maintaining safe and efficient operations, is a critical fire management priority for the Department."

1.6.4 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Management

The COT Report noted that "a monitoring program is necessary to track the success of conservation plans and proactive conservation activities. Without this information, the actual benefit of conservation activities cannot be measured and there is no capacity to adapt if current management actions are determined to be ineffective" (FWS 2013). The NTT further notes that "Monitoring is necessary to provide an objective appraisal of the effects of potentially positive conservation actions, and to assess the relative negative effects of management actions to sage-grouse populations and their habitats" (NTT 2011).

A range-wide monitoring and evaluation framework will be established and implemented, as described in the monitoring framework (Appendix D of each attached ARMP and ARMPA). This monitoring strategy has two parts: implementation monitoring (i.e., are decisions being implemented in a timely manner? are actions taken consistent with the plan decisions?) and effectiveness monitoring (i.e., are the decisions and implementation actions achieving the desired conservation goals?). Through effectiveness monitoring, the BLM can determine how management decisions and actions implemented through the ARMPs and ARMPAs affect GRSG habitat. The goal would be to determine if the desired management objectives (e.g., avoiding and minimizing additional surface disturbance in PHMAs) have been achieved. Understanding the effectiveness and validating results of ARMP and ARMPA management decisions is an essential part of the GRSG conservation strategy and provides the means for determining if desired outcomes are being achieved.

Monitoring that is applicable for evaluating management effectiveness can also be used to address a number of other critical habitat variables (e.g., location, condition, habitat loss or gain, and size of patches). Ideally, monitoring the attributes of GRSG habitat, in coordination with state wildlife agencies and other partners monitoring populations, will allow linking real or potential habitat changes (from both natural events and management actions) to vital rates of GRSG populations. This analysis will enable managers to identify indicators associated with population change across large landscapes and to ameliorate negative effects with appropriate conservation actions. The WAFWA Zone GRSG Conservation Teams (as described in **Section 1.6.2**) will also advise regional monitoring strategies and data analysis, as described in the plans.

Each ARMP and ARMPA, except North Dakota, includes an overarching adaptive management strategy that includes soft and hard triggers and responses. These triggers are habitat and population thresholds that are based on two key metrics that are being monitored—habitat condition and population numbers. At a minimum, the BLM will assess annually whether hard and soft trigger thresholds have been met when the population or habitat information becomes available, beginning after this ROD is executed.

Soft triggers represent an intermediate threshold indicating that management changes are needed at the implementation level to address habitat or population losses. If a soft trigger were tripped during the life of the ARMP or ARMPAs, the BLM would implement more conservative or restrictive conservation measures on a project-by-project basis to mitigate for the specific factor in the decline of populations and habitats, with consideration of local knowledge and conditions. In each ARMP and ARMPA, a soft trigger begins a dialogue between the State, FWS, and the BLM to see if the factor can be determined

and what implementation-level activities can be used to reverse any trend. These adjustments will be made to preclude tripping a hard trigger, which signals more severe habitat loss or population declines.

Hard triggers represent a threshold indicating that immediate action is necessary to stop a severe deviation from GRSG conservation objectives set forth in the BLM ARMPs and ARMPAs. In the event that a hard trigger is tripped, the BLM would implement plan-level decisions, such as allocation changes, to immediately institute greater protection for GRSG and its habitat. If a hard trigger were tripped in a PAC that crosses state boundaries, the WAFWA MZ GRSG Conservation Team would convene to discuss causes and identify potential responses.

In the event that new scientific information becomes available, demonstrating that the hard trigger response is insufficient to stop a severe deviation from GRSG conservation objectives set forth in the ARMPs and ARMPAs, the BLM would immediately assess what further actions may be needed to protect GRSG and its habitat and ensure that conservation options are not foreclosed. This could include a formal directive, such as an instruction memorandum (IM) or a plan amendment.

1.7 Unique Aspects of the Rocky Mountain Region's ARMPs and ARMPAs

The ARMPs and ARMPAs and their associated EISs were developed through separate planning efforts across the Rocky Mountain Region (as described in **Section 1.1**). To develop these plans, the BLM used a landscape-scale approach to achieve a common set of management objectives across the range of GRSG, recognizing, in particular, measures to limit human disturbance in important habitats. Within this framework, management actions were developed and incorporated into the plans that are tailored to achieve these objectives and accommodate differences in resource conditions, severity of threats, and state-specific management approaches.

This flexible landscape approach provided the opportunity to incorporate recommendations resulting from collaboration with the states and local cooperators as well as public comments in each Planning Area. The plans and their future implementation are strengthened by the contributions of local partners and their knowledge, expertise, and experience.

Measures incorporated into the plans remain consistent with the range-wide objective of conserving, enhancing, and restoring GRSG habitat. This would be done by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing threats to GRSG habitat, such that the need for additional protections under the ESA may be avoided.

Below is a brief description of the unique aspects of each of the Rocky Mountain Region's ARMPs and ARMPAs.

Wyoming

This ROD approves three RMPs—Buffalo, Cody and Worland—and an amendment to six RMPs (Wyoming RMPA). All of the Wyoming plans are built on the foundation for GRSG management established by and complementary to the Governor's Executive Order 2011-05, Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection (Core Area Strategy; Wyoming Office of the Governor 2011) and updated Executive Order (2015-4), by establishing similar conservation measures and focusing restoration in the same key areas most valuable to GRSG.

Recognizing that the FWS has found "the core area strategy…if implemented by all landowners via regulatory mechanisms, would provide adequate protection for sage-grouse and their habitats in the

state, (personal correspondence from Scott Hicks to Ryan Lance on November 10, 2010)" the BLM plans commit to achieving a net conservation gain for GRSG in PHMAs only, consistent with the Core Area Strategy. This ensures that any impacts not addressed through avoidance and minimization would be addressed through compensation. Fluid minerals in PHMAs are limited to NSO within a 0.6-mile radius around occupied leks in PHMAs and 0.25-mile radius around occupied leks in GHMAs. There are TLs in core areas, as well as density and disturbance caps, consistent with the Wyoming Core Area Strategy approach. Additionally, consistent with the Core Area Strategy, the Wyoming BLM plans implement a 5 percent all-lands/all-disturbances cap and more inclusive formula for calculating disturbance (this DDCT calculation is further explained in Appendix D of the attached Wyoming ARMPA and Buffalo, Cody, and Worland ARMPs).

The BLM's Wyoming plans also allow for high-voltage transmission lines and major ROWs and wind energy, and leasable mineral and mineral material development in GHMAs with RDFs and best management practices (BMPs). The Wyoming ARMPs and ARMPA also establish screening criteria and conditions for new anthropogenic activities in PHMAs to ensure a net conservation gain for GRSG populations and habitat, consistent with the State of Wyoming Core Area Protection strategy.

SFAs were identified only in the Wyoming ARMPA and not in the other Wyoming Planning Areas. Additional conservation measures for these areas include recommending withdrawing a portion of the area from the General Mining Act of 1872 and prioritizing habitat management actions. The State of Wyoming has permitting authority for locatable mining operations and has committed to use its authority to ensure operations proceed in accordance with the Core Area Strategy. The State has a successful record of using this authority in the past. In addition, nearly 50 percent of the SFAs in the Wyoming Sage-Grouse Amendment Planning Areas had already been withdrawn from locatable mineral entry. For these reasons, after coordinating with the FWS, the BLM found that a recommendation for withdrawing all SFAs was not necessary to address the threat of locatable mineral development. Instead the area recommended for withdrawal has identified potential for development and provides connectivity between the recommended withdrawal in the Lander Planning Area and existing withdrawals.

The BLM Wyoming ARMPs and ARMPAs include changes between proposed and final in this ROD to be consistent with the updated Wyoming Executive Order (July 2015).

Northwest Colorado

This ROD approves one RMPA in Northwest Colorado. The ARMPA adopts key elements of the State of Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Steering Committee 2008). It is complementary to the Governor's Executive Order (Colorado Office of the Governor 2015) by establishing conservation measures and focusing restoration in the same key areas identified by the BLM as most valuable to the GRSG. The ARMPA includes additional stipulations for fluid mineral development resulting from public comments and discussions with cooperating agencies and state partners. Notably, in both PHMAs and GHMAs, there would be no new fluid mineral leasing for 1 mile around active leks and NSO stipulations for 2 miles around active leks in GHMAs. The remainder of PHMAs would also have an NSO stipulation. No SFAs were identified in Colorado, so there are no management actions for SFAs in the Northwest Colorado ARMPA.

In addition to PHMAs and GHMAs, the Northwest Colorado ARMPA includes a third habitat management area, LCHMAs. Colorado Parks and Wildlife delineates LCHMAs as areas between GRSG populations across the GRSG range in Colorado. The assumption is that habitat linkages will allow for movement between populations and will decrease the probability of species extinction by stabilizing population dynamics. These linkages should be considered only as potential areas for movements between populations.

Montana

This ROD approves four RMPs—HiLine, Miles City, Pompeys Pillar National Monument, and Billings—and one RMPA (Lewistown), all of which are in Montana. The Dillon RMP is amended through the Idaho and Southwestern Montana ARMPA, which is approved through the ROD for the Great Basin Region.

The Montana BLM plans are largely consistent with the objectives of the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (Montana Office of the Governor Executive Order No. 10-2014) by establishing conservation measures and strategies to minimize disturbance and habitat loss, particularly as a result of surface disturbance from energy exploration and development. The BLM plan will permit the disturbance limit to go from a 3 percent to a 5 percent cap, consistent with the Montana Plan, when their disturbance calculation method is implemented and effective. Additionally, if the State of Montana is implementing an effective GRSG habitat conservation program, the BLM would review their management actions to determine if additional GRSG-related management actions should be adjusted with coordination from the State of Montana and the FWS, to achieve consistent and effective conservation across all lands, regardless of ownership.

Within Montana, SFAs occur only in the HiLine ARMP and Lewistown ARMPA, and thus the management actions for SFAs appear in these plans only. In addition to PHMAs and GHMAs, the Billings and Miles City ARMPs include a third habitat management area category, RHMAs. It is designated to maintain GRSG populations, while providing for future resource uses, so that enough quality habitat is maintained to allow some residual population in impacted areas to persist. It emphasizes the restoration of habitat for reestablishing or restoring sustainable populations.

Also, oil and gas leasing is currently deferred in the Lewistown Field Office, so there are no oil and gas management actions in the Lewistown ARMPA for new leasing. Future fluid mineral management actions are being addressed in an ongoing Lewistown RMP revision, which will incorporate GRSG conservation measures.

North Dakota

This ROD includes an amendment to the RMP for North Dakota. With little undeveloped habitat and a small population of GRSG in the Planning Area, the North Dakota amendment does not include an adaptive management strategy. Instead, the BLM commits to regular reviews of the populations and habitats and appropriate responses to be developed with the FWS and North Dakota Game and Fish Department. There are no SFAs in North Dakota.

South Dakota

This ROD includes GRSG decisions in the South Dakota RMP revision. Similar to North Dakota, there is little BLM-managed GRSG habitat and a small population of GRSG in the Planning Area. However, the

GRSG-conservation decisions in South Dakota are the same as the other states. There are no SFAs in South Dakota.

1.8 DECISION RATIONALE

The ARMPs and ARMPAs provide a comprehensive, coordinated, and effective conservation strategy for addressing the threats to the GRSG identified by the FWS such that the need for additional protections under the ESA may be avoided. The ARMPs and ARMPAs strive to conserve the GRSG and its habitat on BLM-administered lands across the remaining range of the species. This is consistent with measures identified or recommended in the NTT and COT Reports, recent USGS studies, and other relevant research and analysis.

The BLM and Forest Service land use plans are an essential component of the effort to conserve GRSG and its habitat. This is in combination with the GRSG conservation actions taken by the individual States in the remaining range of the species and initiatives to address the threat of rangeland fire, to curb the spread of nonnative invasive grasses, and to promote conservation measures to benefit GRSG on private lands. Combined, all of the ARMPs and ARMPAs associated with the BLM's National GRSG Conservation Strategy and Forest Service land use plans would affect approximately 67 million acres of the remaining habitat for the species.

The BLM GRSG Conservation Strategy is built on the following key concepts:

- **Landscape level—**The planning effort encompasses the remaining habitat of the GRSG on BLM-administered lands, covering 10 western states in the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain Regions. As such, the strategy provides a coherent framework across the BLM land use plans to implement landscape-level conservation for GRSG; at the same time, it allows for flexibility essential to effectively address threats to the GRSG in the context of the agency's multiple-use and sustained yield mandates under FLPMA. The conservation measures included as part of landscape-level conservation address identified threats to the species. They also recognize local ecological conditions and incorporate existing conservation efforts where they are consistent with the overall objective of conserving GRSG across its remaining range.
- **Best available science—**The ARMPs and ARMPAs are grounded in the best available science, drawn from published literature and input from recognized experts, state agencies, the USGS, the FWS, and other sources. The COT Report provided a blueprint for GRSG conservation by identifying specific threats to each remaining GRSG population and recommending measures to address each category of threat. The NTT Report provided additional guidance for addressing the most significant threats to the GRSG. The concepts set forth in a number of reports prepared by the USGS regarding specific threats to GRSG, habitat connectivity, and related issues are reflected in the land allocation and resource management decisions. Also informing GRSG conservation was a series of reports on how to better reduce the threats of rangeland fire and invasive species, prepared in collaboration with the WAFWA, and a report to the Secretary of the Interior entitled *An Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy: Final Report to the Secretary of the Interior* (US Department of the Interior 2015).

- **Targeted, multi-tiered approach—**The ARMPs and ARMPAs were designed to incorporate a layered management approach to target habitat protection and restoration to the most important habitat management areas, as determined by State and Federal GRSG experts, largely consistent with the PACs identified in the COT Report, where land allocations and management direction avoid and minimize additional surface disturbance. These areas are designated as PHMAs. Within PHMAs, the ARMPs and ARMPAs provide an added level of protection to eliminate most surface disturbance by delineating SFAs, derived from areas identified by the FWS as strongholds essential for the species' survival. GHMAs recognize the potential value of habitat areas outside of PACs—as recommended by the COT Report—where surface disturbance is minimized, while providing flexibility for other land resource uses.
- **Coordinated—**The ARMPs and ARMPAs were developed through a joint planning process between the BLM and the Forest Service (as a cooperating agency); as a result, BLM- and Forest Service-administered land essential to the conservation of GRSG is managed in a coordinated manner. The FWS provided guidance and input throughout the process to aid land managers in understanding the threats to the GRSG and its habitat. The USGS and NRCS also provided key technical and scientific support.
- **Collaborative—**The ARMPs and ARMPAs reflect extensive input from the public, the States, collaborators, and stakeholders. The ARMPs and ARMPAs were developed with the benefit of input from the States and cooperators, who signed formal agreements with the BLM to provide input into the planning process. The Western Governors Association Sage Grouse Task Force was particularly useful in facilitating this kind of collaborative input. The ARMPs and ARMPAs incorporate State and local conservation measures, where they are consistent with the overall objective of implementing land use plan conservation measures for the GRSG, consistent with the multiple-use and sustained yield mission of the BLM.

The conservation measures in the ARMPs and ARMPAs reflect over a decade of research, analysis, and recommendations for GRSG conservation, including those produced by the WAFWA, the NTT, and the COT. Each of these entities produced a strategy or report that was developed through the collaboration of State and Federal biologists and scientists with extensive experience and expertise in GRSG management and research.

The COT Report—which identified threats to GRSG habitat as well as the most important habitat to protect—provided an important framework for developing the conservation strategy embodied in the sub-regional ARMPs and ARMPAs. The COT consists of State and Federal scientists, wildlife biologists, resource managers, and policy advisers. The Director of the FWS tasked them "with development of range-wide conservation objectives for the sage-grouse to define the degree to which threats need to be reduced or ameliorated to conserve sage-grouse so that it is no longer in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future" (FWS 2013).

In addition, the USGS compiled and summarized published scientific studies that evaluate the influence of human activities and infrastructure on GRSG populations, such as *Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage-Grouse—A Review* (Manier et al. 2014), and the *Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy: Final report to the Secretary* (US Department of the Interior 2015). These sources provided important guidance in developing critical aspects of the ARMPs and ARMPAs and the overall GRSG

landscape-level conservation strategy. Beyond these range-wide reports, each of the sub-regional plans used local science, where available, to tailor plan elements to reflect local ecological conditions, threats, and GRSG management experience, where consistent with the overall GRSG conservation objectives.

The ARMPs and ARMPAs are the product of extensive coordination, including the active engagement of the FWS in helping to inform land allocation and related management decisions by the land management agencies. This is to ensure that they limit or eliminate new surface disturbance and improve habitat condition in the most important habitat areas. The ARMPs and ARMPAs also benefit from strong collaboration with the States and reflect the unique landscapes, habitats, approaches, and priorities in each. While incorporating State-developed conservation measures in each of the ARMPs and ARMPAs has added complexity to the overall conservation strategy, the body of local knowledge of and expertise in conservation measures for the GRSG is extensive, and, ultimately, it strengthened the plans. Incorporating these measures in the plans is also likely to increase the commitment of all partners to the task of implementing the plans on completion.

In his transmittal letter accompanying the final COT Report, the FWS Director reaffirmed his charge, "I asked the team to produce a recommendation regarding the degree to which threats need to be reduced or ameliorated to conserve the greater sage-grouse so that it would no longer be in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future. … Conservation success will be achieved by removing or reducing threats to the species now, such that population trends will eventually be stable or increasing, even if numbers are not restored to historic levels" (FWS 2013).

The ARMPs and ARMPAs are designed to directly address the specific threats to the species identified by the FWS in its 2010 listing determination as more fully explained in the COT Report and the NTT Report. As previously noted, the COT Report stated, "Maintenance of the integrity of PACs … is the essential foundation for sage-grouse conservation" (FWS 2013). Specifically, the COT Report recommended "targeted habitat management and restoration" to be achieved by "eliminating activities known to negatively impact sage-grouse and their habitats, or re-designing these activities to achieve the same goal" (FWS 2013). The COT further recommended an "avoidance first strategy" and stressed that "threats in PACs must be minimized to the extent that population trends meet the objectives of the 2006 WAFWA Conservation Strategy" (FWS 2013).

In order to address the identified threats and meet the recommendations of the COT Report, the plans are based first on identifying important habitat areas for GRSG in which the plans protect remaining habitat and target habitat restoration and improvement actions. Specifically, the plans identify PHMAs, which align closely with PACs identified in the COT Report.

Within PHMAs, the plans identify SFAs, based on the FWS analysis of strongholds for the species; this in turn is based on such factors as population density, habitat integrity, and resilience to climate change. The SFAs serve as a landscape-level anchor for the conservation strategy and are closed or excluded from discretionary surface disturbances. SFAs are also used to prioritize fire protection, habitat restoration, and other habitat management actions (e.g., prioritizing reductions in WHB populations to achieve AML). This approach will allow the BLM to target limited resources to those areas identified by the FWS and reinforced by recent USGS analysis. These resources are those most important to long-term sagebrush ecosystem health and species persistence.

PHMAs and GHMAs boundaries are based on PPH and PGH. Consistent with the BLM's IM 2012-044, PPH and PGH are based on data and maps developed through a collaboration between the BLM and the respective State wildlife agencies. PPH and PGH (PHMAs and GHMAs in the Final EISs and now the ARMPs and ARMPAs) were developed using the best available data. Criteria for delineating PPH included breeding GRSG density (Doherty 2010), GRSG proportionality, lek density, and key seasonal habitats, such as known winter concentration areas. PGH (now GHMAs) are areas of occupied seasonal, connectivity, or year-round habitat outside of PPH.

As discussed in **Section 1.6**, allocations and management actions are targeted to habitat management areas to limit or eliminate surface disturbance. All forms of new development in PHMAs, such as energy development, transmission lines, and recreation facilities, are either excluded or avoided or they are allowed only if the resultant effect is neutral or beneficial to the GRSG. The ARMPs and ARMPAs will also prioritize future oil and gas leasing and development outside of identified GRSG habitat management areas (i.e., SFAs, PHMAs, and GHMAs) to reduce the potential for future conflict with GRSG.

The ARMPs and ARMPAs include additional measures to limit surface disturbance in PHMAs by establishing disturbance caps and density restrictions of, on average, one energy facility per 640 acres, as well as lek buffers. These requirements reflect recommendations contained in the NTT Report and are consistent with certain state strategies that were already in place the BLM began its National GRSG Conservation Strategy.

As described in **Section 1.6.1**, the BLM determined the appropriate lek buffers to analyze based on the USGS report *Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for GRSG—A Review* (Manier et al, 2014), based on best available science. The Wyoming ARMPA and Buffalo, Cody, and Worland ARMPs do not contain these buffer requirements, consistent with the State's Core Area Strategy.

The plans also include actions to improve habitat conditions in the most important areas for conservation through additional targeted efforts to protect and restore habitat, first in SFAs, then in PHMAs, and finally in GHMAs.

Mitigation for activities adversely impacting GRSG or GRSG habitat in PHMAs will be designed to a net conservation gain standard, consistent with the recommendation included in the September 2014 FWS document, *Greater Sage-Grouse Range-Wide Mitigation Framework Version 1.0* (FWS 2014b). According to the authors, the framework was prepared "…to communicate some of the factors the [FWS] is likely to consider in evaluating the efficacy of mitigation practices and programs in reducing threats to GRSG. The recommendations provided here are consistent with the information and conservation objectives provided in the 2013 Conservation Objectives Team (COT) Report for sage-grouse" (FWS 2014b).

Grazing, which is the most widespread use of the sagebrush ecosystem, will continue in a manner consistent with the objective of conserving the GRSG. Land health standards will incorporate GRSG habitat objectives and vegetative management objectives consistent with the ecological potential of the landscape as recommended by the COT to "…conduct grazing management for all ungulates in a manner consistent with local ecological conditions that maintains or restores healthy sagebrush shrub and native perennial grass and forb communities and conserves the essential habitat components for GRSG (e.g., shrub cover, nesting cover)" (FWS 2013).

The ARMPs and ARMPAs also address the adverse impacts of free-roaming WHBs on GRSG habitat by prioritizing gathers and removing WHBs to achieve AMLs in SFAs, PHMAs, and GHMAs (in that order). The BLM has been working with the National Academy of Sciences to conduct new research of methods to reduce WHB reproduction rates. Through a combination of targeted gathers and the development of an effective agent for controlling future free-roaming WHB reproductive rates, over time, this threat to GRSG may be effectively managed.

With regard to the threat of rangeland fire, the Department of the Interior took a series of actions over 2014 and 2015 to develop a more complete and comprehensive strategy for dealing with this threat; this led to Secretarial Order 3336 and the subsequent report, *An Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy: Final Report to the Secretary of the Interior* (US Department of the Interior 2015).

In accordance with Secretarial Order 3336 and subsequent rangeland fire management strategy, substantial changes in policy and management direction affect all aspects of the rangeland fire management program have been and will be made to enhance the BLM's ability to manage the threat from rangeland fire, such as the following:

- Better coordination between resource managers and fire management officers
- Identification and prioritization of prevention, suppression, and restoration in SFAs, PHMAs, and GHMAs
- Commitment of additional equipment and crews for rangeland firefighting
- Additional funding and policy direction to improve post-fire restoration
- Completion of an initiative to collect, store, and better use native seed and sagebrush in post-fire restoration of sagebrush steppe ecosystems

This and the initiative to fight the spread of nonnative invasive species that contributes to higher rangeland fire risk (e.g., cheatgrass) discussed below have fundamentally changed how rangeland fire is managed to benefit sagebrush ecosystems and GRSG habitat.

To further supplement these efforts, the Department of the Interior has recently committed $7.5 million to projects in GRSG habitat to create more resilient landscapes. In addition, the Department of the Interior has approved policy changes to increase the commitment, flexibility, and time frame for use of Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Restoration (ES & BAR) funding. By adopting a risk-based approach using a rolling average of the acres lost to fire during the previous five fire seasons, ES & BAR funding will be allocated to the BLM to permit an increased focus on restoring priority sagebrush-steppe habitats impacted by fire.

In addition, the Sage Grouse Initiative launched by the NRCS in 2010 also contributes to protecting and restoring important GRSG habitat. In collaboration with the states and private landowners on private lands, as well as with the BLM and the Forest Service on the lands they administer, the NRCS has worked to reduce the encroachment of pinyon-juniper trees and restore rangeland habitat on private and BLM-administered lands.

Consistent with recommendations contained in the 2006 WAFWA *Greater Sage-Grouse Range-Wide Conservation Strategy* (Stiver et al. 2006), the BLM and Forest Service conservation strategy relies heavily

on monitoring and evaluation to assess the success and effectiveness of implementing the management decisions in the ARMPs and ARMPAs. Monitoring plans will be developed in coordination with relevant State and Federal agencies and will incorporate evaluation of GRSG population trends by the States and changes in habitat condition by the Federal land management agencies. As the WAFWA report states, "Monitoring provides the 'currency' necessary to evaluate management decisions and to assess progress or problems. Adequate monitoring should be considered an integral and inseparable component of all management actions, and therefore, not optional. Lack of proper monitoring will undoubtedly hinder this large-scale conservation effort" (Stiver et al. 2006).

In addition, the ARMPs and ARMPAs (except that for North Dakota) incorporate an adaptive management framework that provides an early warning system of soft triggers. This is to alert resource managers to the need to evaluate the effectiveness of their management strategies should changes in population levels or habitat conditions occur. If the project-level management responses to soft triggers do not adequately address the causes for population or habitat declines and if hard triggers are reached, the ARMPs and ARMPAs identify measures that will be put in place, including plan-level responses, so as to reverse the declines.

In summary, the ARMPs and ARMPAs emphasize an "avoidance first" strategy, consistent with the recommendations in the COT Report, by limiting new disturbance and maintaining current intact GRSG habitat. This avoidance first strategy is accomplished by identifying important GRSG habitat areas and then applying allocations that exclude or avoid surface-disturbing activities, appropriately managing grazing, and aggressively suppressing fire that could degrade or fragment remaining GRSG habitat.

The plans also include decisions to restore degraded habitat, which although more difficult and requiring a longer time frame, are important to the long-term conservation of GRSG. Restoration decisions include specific habitat objectives and a priority on treating GRSG habitat for invasive species, particularly cheatgrass, and encroaching pinyon and juniper. These decisions are reinforced by Secretarial Order 3336 and the *Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy* (US Department of the Interior 2015) as well as the NRCS's Sage Grouse Initiative investments in private landowners' conservation efforts.

The GRSG Conservation Strategy reflects a high level of commitment by Federal partners to conserve GRSG and its habitat. The actions on BLM and National Forest System lands, which constitute nearly half of the GRSG habitat in the Planning Area, will anchor and complement the significant actions being taken by State and local governments and private landowners to conserve the species and its habitat.

The landscape-level strategy consists of new conservation actions that will go into effect through the BLM's ARMPs and ARMPAs and actions being implemented to conserve the species. They reflect a significant change in management direction and philosophy for the BLM since 2010 and a long-term commitment to assure the conservation of the species by protecting, restoring, and enhancing GRSG habitat consistent with the objectives set in the 2006 WAFWA conservation strategy and embraced by both the NTT and the COT.

This change represents a new paradigm in managing the sagebrush landscape for the BLM and amplifies the need for collaboration among Federal, State, tribal, and private partners to conserve the GRSG, consistent with direction articulated in the NTT report, as follows:

> Land uses, habitat treatments, and anthropogenic disturbances will need to be managed below thresholds necessary to conserve not only local sage-grouse populations, but sagebrush communities and landscapes as well. Management priorities will need to be shifted and balanced to maximize benefits to sage grouse habitats and populations in priority habitats. Adequacy of management adjustments will be measured by science-based effectiveness monitoring of the biological response of sagebrush landscapes and populations. Ultimately, success will be measured by the maintenance and enhancement of sage-grouse populations well into the future. (NTT 2011, p. 6-7)

The conservation benefits to the sagebrush ecosystem and GRSG habitats resulting from the ARMPs and ARMPAs provide an essential foundation for conserving the GRSG. This, in conjunction with the amended Forest Service Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs), affects approximately 59 percent of the most important GRSG habitat across the remaining range of the species. In conjunction with similar conservation efforts by other Federal and State agencies, private landowners, and local partners, the BLM National GRSG Conservation Strategy constitutes a historic conservation effort that will benefit more than 350 species and the sagebrush ecosystem upon which they depend. It is through these landscape-level, science-based collaborative efforts to conserve the imperiled sagebrush ecosystem that conservation of the GRSG and other sagebrush-obligate species can best be achieved and the listing of the GRSG under the ESA may be avoided.

1.9 IMPLEMENTATION

Future decisions made in conformance with the ARMPs and ARMPAs serve to continuously and actively implement its provisions.

Immediate Decisions—These decisions are the land use planning decisions that go into effect when the ROD is signed. These include goals, objectives, allowable uses, and management direction, such as the allocation of lands as open or closed for salable mineral sales, lands open with stipulations for oil and gas leasing, and OHV area designations. These decisions require no additional analysis and guide future land management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions in the Planning Area. Proposals for future actions, such as oil and gas leasing, land adjustments, and other allocation-based actions, will be reviewed against these RMP decisions to determine if the proposal is in conformance with the plan.

One-Time Future Decisions—These are the types of decisions that are not implemented until additional decision-making and site-specific analysis is completed. Examples are implementation of the recommendations to withdraw lands from locatable mineral entry or development of travel management plans. Future one-time decisions require additional analysis and decision-making and are prioritized as part of the BLM budget process. Priorities for implementing one-time RMP decisions will be based on the following criteria:

- Relative importance of the action to the efficacy of the GRSG conservation strategy
- National BLM management direction regarding plan implementation
- Available resources

General Implementation Schedule of One-Time Decisions—Future Decisions discussed in the attached ARMPs and ARMPAs will be implemented over a period of years, depending on budget and staff

availability. After issuing the ROD, the BLM will prepare implementation plans that establish tentative time frames for completing one-time decisions identified in these ARMPs and ARMPAs. These actions require additional site-specific decision-making and analysis.

This schedule will assist BLM managers and staff in preparing budget requests and in scheduling work. However, the proposed schedule must be considered tentative and will be affected by future funding, nondiscretionary workloads, and cooperation by partners and the public. Yearly review of the plan will provide consistent tracking of accomplishments and will provide information that can be used to develop annual budget requests to continue implementation.

1.9.1 Additional Implementation Guidance and Considerations

Instructional Memoranda—Additional instruction and management direction will be necessary to implement certain land allocation decisions and management direction included in the ARMPAs and ARMPs. For example, additional guidance will be provided to clarify how the BLM will implement the objective of prioritizing future oil and gas leasing and development outside of GRSG habitat. IMs and related guidance will be completed by the BLM Washington Office. The BLM shall complete IMs for the following management direction and intends to complete these IMs within 90 days of the RODs: oil and gas leasing and development prioritization and livestock grazing. Other IMs, including monitoring and mitigation, will be developed as necessary. Issuance of this national guidance will supersede any related national and field level guidance currently in effect. Additional national, State, and field level guidance will be developed subsequently as necessary to implement the decisions in the plans.

Map Adjustments, GRSG Seasonal Habitats, and Connectivity—PHMAs were designed to include breeding bird density, GRSG proportionality, density of leks, and key seasonal habitats, such as known winter concentration areas. GHMAs was designed to include the areas of occupied seasonal, connectivity, or year-round habitat outside of PHMAs. As additional important habitats are identified (e.g., winter habitat and key connectivity areas), the BLM will map and incorporate these habitats for GRSG, consistent with best available science, through subsequent plan maintenance, revision, or amendment, as appropriate. Priority should be given to ensuring that wintering habitat is identified and captured in all changes in habitat maps subsequent to this decision. In the interim, the BLM will use the existing maps included in the ARMPs and ARMPAs for all decisions.

Continued Commitment to Research and Use of Best Available Science—Through implementation of this strategy, new management issues and questions are likely to arise that may warrant additional guidance or study by technical experts, scientists, and researchers. The BLM is committed to continue working with individuals and institutions with expertise in relevant fields in order to ensure that land and resource management affecting conservation of the GRSG and the sagebrush ecosystem continues to be guided by sound peer-reviewed research and the best available science.

Training—Given the nature and complexity of the management direction in these ARMPs and ARMPAs, the BLM, in collaboration with the Forest Service and the FWS, will develop and implement a schedule of training for key functions, actions, and decisions associated with these plans. In this manner, the BLM will seek to better inform its personnel, partners, cooperators, and stakeholders of the changes in management that will result from this new management paradigm.

CHAPTER 2
DECISION

2.1 SUMMARY OF THE APPROVED MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

The decision is hereby made to approve the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG RMPAs for the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG Sub-Regions of Lewistown, North Dakota, Northwest Colorado, and Wyoming (attachments 1 through 4) and the RMPs for Billings, Buffalo, Cody, HiLine, Miles City, Pompeys Pillar National Monument, South Dakota, and Worland (attachments 5 through 12). This ROD serves as the final decision establishing the resource management plan decisions outlined in the ARMPAs and ARMPs and is effective on the date it is signed.

The decisions included in this ROD and attached ARMPAs and ARMPs amend and revise the resource management plans described in Sections 1.1 of attachments 1 through 4 and Chapter 1 of attachments 5 through 12.

The RMP decisions include management direction to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG and their habitat by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing threats to their habitat. RMP decisions are expressed as goals, objectives (desired outcomes), allowable uses, and management decisions anticipated to achieve desired outcomes. Although decisions identified in the ARMPAs and ARMPs are final and effective when this ROD is signed, implementing on-the-ground activities requires additional steps before any of them can begin. The BLM will conduct NEPA analyses, as necessary, for such implementation decisions.

2.2 WHAT THE ROD, ARMPAS, AND ARMPS PROVIDE

The ARMPAs and ARMPs include RMP-level management decisions in the form of the following:

- Goals
- Objectives (desired future conditions)
- Land use allocations
- Management decisions and actions

Goals are the broad statements of desired outcomes and are usually not quantifiable.

Objectives are specific desired conditions, usually quantifiable and measurable, and may have time frames for achievement.

Land use allocations specify locations in the Planning Area that are available or unavailable for certain uses and are also used to prioritize conservation and restoration management actions. Examples are decisions on the following:

- What lands are available for livestock grazing, mineral material use, oil and gas leasing, and locatable mineral development
- What lands may be available for disposal via exchange or sale
- What lands are open, closed, or limited to motorized travel

Note that all acreages presented in the ARMPAs and ARMPs are estimations, even when they are presented to the nearest acre.

Management decisions and actions are those provisions that help in meeting the established goals and objectives. They are the measures that will be applied to guide day-to-day activities on public lands, including but not limited to, stipulations, guidelines, BMPs, and RDFs.

The management decisions and actions contained in the ARMPAs (attachments 1 through 4) and within Chapter 2 of the ARMPs (attachments 5 through 12) were crafted to incorporate management decisions into RMPs to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing identified threats to GRSG and their habitats. The management decisions and actions contained in Chapter 3 of the ARMPs provide a single comprehensive RMP to guide management of public lands and minerals administered by the BLM for all resources and resource uses under the BLM's jurisdiction.

The EISs conducted for the Northwest Colorado and Wyoming ARMPAs sufficiently disclose and analyze all environmental issues associated with mineral leasing on National Forest System lands. The analyses would be relevant should the Forest Service consent to a lease or require consultation before it issues a lease. This would comply with applicable mineral leasing and NEPA regulations and would be subject to further site-specific environmental analysis where applicable.

2.3 WHAT THE ROD, ARMPAS, AND ARMPS DO NOT PROVIDE

The attached ARMPAs (attachments 1 through 4) do not contain decisions for public lands outside of GRSG habitat management areas.

The ARMPAs and ARMPs do not violate valid existing rights nor contain decisions for the mineral estates that are not administered by the BLM. ARMPA and ARMP decisions for surface estate apply only to BLM-administered lands. In addition, many decisions are not appropriate at this level of planning and are not included in the ROD. Examples of these types of decisions are the following:

- *Statutory requirements*—The decision will not change the BLM's responsibility to comply with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
- *National policy*—The decision will not change the BLM's obligation to conform to current or future national policy.

- *Funding levels and budget allocations*—These are determined annually at the national level and are beyond the control of the State, District, or Field Offices.

Implementation decisions (or activity-level decisions) are management actions tied to a specific location. They generally constitute the BLM's final approval allowing on-the-ground actions to proceed and require appropriate site-specific planning and NEPA analysis. Such decisions may be incorporated into implementation plans (activity or project plans) or may be stand-alone decisions. These ARMPAs and ARMPs do not contain implementation decisions. Implementation decisions and management actions that require additional site-specific project planning, as funding becomes available, will require further environmental analysis.

2.4 MODIFICATIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

The ARMPs and ARMPAs in the Rocky Mountain Region include minor modifications and clarifications from the Proposed RMPs and Proposed RMPAs. These minor modifications and clarifications were made as a result of internal reviews, response to protests, and recommendations provided to the BLM during the Governors' consistency reviews. These modifications and clarifications are hereby adopted by this ROD.

The following modifications and clarifications were made to all of the ARMPs and ARMPAs in the Rocky Mountain Region, excluding the Pompeys Pillar National Monument ARMP, as there is no GRSG habitat there:

- *ARMP/ARMPA Formatting*—The plans were reformatted between the proposed and approved RMP planning stages for consistency across the Rocky Mountain Region. The order of management actions and the prefixes for the goals, objectives, and management actions were changed in the ARMPs and ARMPAs to provide consistency among the amendments and revisions for GRSG goals and objectives.
- *Forest Service References (applicable only to the Northwest Colorado and Wyoming ARMPAs)*—All references to National Forest System lands in both text and on maps have been removed from the ARMPAs. The Forest Service has completed two separate RODs and land and resource management plan amendments under its own planning authorities.
- *Fire*—Management actions and decisions were modified to stress that protecting human life is the single overriding priority for fire and fuels management activities.
- *Livestock Grazing*—The statement, "This does not apply to or impact grazing preference transfers, which are addressed in 43 CFR 4110.2-3," was added to the management action and decision. It reads, "At the time a permittee or lessee voluntarily relinquishes a permit or lease, the BLM will consider whether the public lands where that permitted use was authorized should remain available for livestock grazing or be used for other resource management objectives, such as reserve common allotments or fire breaks."
- *Glossary*—Numerous glossary definitions were deleted because they were not used or referenced in the ARMPs and ARMPAs. If not already contained in the Proposed RMP and RMPA glossaries, the following terms and definitions were added for clarification:
  - **Grazing Relinquishment.** The voluntary and permanent surrender by an existing permittee or lessee, (with concurrence of any base property lienholder), of their

priority (preference) to use a livestock forage allocation on public land as well as their permission to use this forage. Relinquishments do not require the BLM's consent or approval. The BLM's receipt of a relinquishment is not a decision to close areas to livestock grazing.

  - **Transfer of Grazing Preference.** The BLM's approval of an application to transfer grazing preference from one party to another or from one base property to another or both. Grazing preference means a superior or priority position against others for the purposes of receiving a grazing permit or lease. This priority is attached to base property owned or controlled by the permittee or lessee.
  - **Valid Existing Right.** Documented legal rights or interests in the land that allow a person or entity to use said land for a specific purpose and that are still in effect. Such rights include, but are not limited to, fee title ownership, mineral rights, ROWs, easements, permits, and licenses. Such rights may have been reserved, acquired, leased, granted, permitted, or otherwise authorized over time.
  - **Mining Claim.** A parcel of land that a miner takes and holds for mining purposes, having acquired the right of possession by complying with the 1872 Mining Law and local laws and rules. A mining claim may contain as many adjoining locations as the locator may make or buy. There are four categories of mining claims: lode, placer, mill site, and tunnel site.
  - **Energy or Mining Facility.** Human-constructed assets designed and created to serve a particular function and to afford a particular convenience or service that is affixed to a specific locations, such as oil and gas well pads and associated infrastructure.

- *GRSG Habitat Mapping*—Information was added to the ARMPs and ARMPAs to clarify that when new information becomes available about GRSG habitat, including seasonal habitats, in coordination with the State wildlife agency and the FWS, and based on best available scientific information, the BLM may revise the GRSG habitat management area maps and associated management decisions through plan maintenance or plan amendment or revision, as appropriate.
- *Adaptive Management (excluding North Dakota)*—The GRSG Adaptive Management Strategy was revised to include a commitment that the hard and soft trigger data will be evaluated as soon as it becomes available after the ROD is signed and then will be analyzed, at a minimum, annually thereafter.
- *Vegetation*—The desired condition for maintaining a minimum of 70 percent of lands capable of producing sagebrush with 10 to 30 percent sagebrush canopy cover in SFAs and PHMAs was modified to read as follows: "In all Sagebrush Focal Areas and Priority Habitat Management Areas, the desired condition is to maintain all lands ecologically capable of producing sagebrush (but no less than 70 percent) with a minimum of 15 percent sagebrush canopy cover, consistent with specific ecological site conditions. The attributes necessary to sustain these habitats are described in Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health" (BLM Technical Reference 1734-6; Pellant 2005).

- *GRSG Habitat Objectives*—For clarification purposes, in each of the ARMP and ARMPA GRSG habitat objectives tables, native grasses were provided as an example of a perennial grass cover, and residual grasses were added to the perennial grass cover and height objective.
- *Sagebrush Focal Areas (applicable only to the Wyoming and Lewistown ARMPAs and the HiLine ARMP)*—Examples of the types of vegetation and conservation actions that will be prioritized within SFAs were provided for clarity in the management action and decision. These examples were land health assessments and WHB management and habitat restoration actions.
- *Required Design Features*—One of the criteria for demonstrating that a variation to an RDF is warranted was modified to include the following statement, "An alternative RDF, a state-implemented conservation measure, or a plan-level protection is determined to provide equal or better protection for GRSG or its habitat."
- *Lands and Realty*—The following management actions and decisions and objectives were clarified:
  - Effects of infrastructure projects, including siting, will be minimized using the best available science, updated as monitoring information on current infrastructure projects becomes available.
  - *Applicable only to the Northwest Colorado ARMPA and the South Dakota ARMP*—Within existing designated utility corridors, the 3 percent disturbance cap may be exceeded at the project scale if the site-specific NEPA analysis indicates that a net conservation gain to the species would be achieved. This exception is limited to projects that fulfill the use for which the corridors were designated (e.g., transmission lines and pipelines) and the designated width of a corridor would not be exceeded as a result of any project collocation.
- *Land Tenure*—Management action associated with land disposals was clarified to include land exchanges as a means of disposal.
- *WAFWA GRSG Conservation Team*—Additional clarification was added to the ARMPs and ARMPAs related to the WAFWA GRSG Conservation Teams that were identified in the Proposed RMPs and RMPAs: "WAFWA management zones will be used to facilitate cross-state issues, such as regional mitigation and adaptive management monitoring and response, through WAFWA GRSG Conservation Teams. These teams will convene and respond to issues at the appropriate scale, and will use existing coordination and management structures to the extent possible."
- *Cheatgrass*—The following management action was included consistent with the purpose and need and objectives of the ARMPs and ARMPAs: "Treat areas that contain cheatgrass and other invasive or noxious species to minimize competition and favor establishment of desired species."
- *Valid Existing Rights*—The following management action was added to the ARMPs and ARMPAs: "Consider the likelihood of developing not-yet-constructed surface-disturbing activities, as defined in Table 2 of the Monitoring Framework, under valid existing rights before authorizing new projects in PHMAs."

Additional modifications and clarifications specific to each ARMPA or ARMP are summarized below.

2.4.1 Lewistown

General Changes

- The third bullet point under Section 4.2, Maintaining the Plan, was deleted as the Lewistown Field Office sub-regional ARMPA does not include any decisions on new fluid mineral leases; thus, the statement does not apply.
- Clarification was added on how the ARMPA may be revised (through plan maintenance decisions), based on the effective implementation of the Montana GRSG Habitat Conservation Program.
- The term "Travel and Transportation Management (TTM)" was added and defined in the glossary.

Special Status Species (SSS)

- The addition of Management Actions SSS-1.6 Implement Adaptive Management Plan (Appendix I)
- The addition of Management Actions SSS-1.7 Implement Regional Mitigation Strategy (Appendix F)

Livestock Grazing

- The last sentence of Management Action LG-1.5 and LG-1.9 referencing Section 3.14.2 of the final EIS was removed in order to clarify how the processing of grazing permit and lease renewals will be prioritized.

2.4.2 North Dakota

General Changes

- The term "Travel and Transportation Management (TTM)" was added and defined in the glossary.

Appendix G—Oil and Gas Stipulations

- GHMAs CSU waiver criteria from Appendix C of the Proposed Plan/Final EIS was modified to read "The authorized office may waive this stipulation if no portion of the leasehold is within 2 miles of the perimeter of an active lek."
- PHMAs NSO stipulation exception criteria from Appendix C of the Proposed Plan/Final EIS was update to reflect the language in Chapter 2. The NSO was changed in the Final EIS to only allow for an exception to the NSO in Chapter 2 but was not updated in Appendix C (this is now Appendix G in the Approved Plan). The correct language from Chapter 2 is as follows:
  - Exception: The BLM Authorized Officer may grant an exception to a fluid mineral lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation only where the proposed action:
    - Will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or,

- Is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG.
- Exceptions based on conservation gain (ii) may only be considered in (a) PHMAs of mixed ownership where Federal minerals underlie less than fifty percent of the total surface, or (b) areas of the public lands where the proposed exception is an alternative to an action occurring on a nearby parcel subject to a valid Federal fluid mineral lease existing as of the date of this RMPA. Exceptions based on conservation gain must also include measures, such as enforceable institutional controls and buffers, sufficient to allow the BLM to conclude that such benefits will endure for the duration of the proposed action's impacts.

  Any exceptions to this lease stipulation may be approved by the BLM Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The BLM Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the applicable state wildlife agency, the FWS, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies (i) or (ii). Such finding shall initially be made by a team of one field biologist or other GRSG expert from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the appropriate BLM State Director, FWS State Ecological Services Director, and state wildlife agency head for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted. Approved exceptions will be made publically available at least quarterly.

2.4.3 Northwest Colorado

Special Status Species (SSS)

- Addition of Management Action SSS-1 Implement Adaptive Management Plan (Appendix H)
- Addition of Management Action SSS-2 Implement Analysis of Lek Buffers (Appendix B)
- Addition of Management Action SSS-3 Ensure Mitigation that Provides a Net Conservation Gain

Vegetation

- The habitat objectives table (Table 2-2 in the ARMPA) has been corrected, based on the Governor's consistency review, to be consistent with the GRSG habitat objectives in the Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (2008). The objectives that were included in the proposed plan were not correct and have been amended in response to the Governor's consistency review. In his Governor's consistency review letter, the Governor of Colorado requested that the objectives be consistent with those in the 2008 Colorado grouse plan.

Lands and Realty

- The following statement was added to management decision LR-4: "Conservation measures for GRSG are being analyzed through the projects' NEPA review process, which should achieve a net conservation benefit for the GRSG."

2.4.4 Wyoming

Greater Sage-Grouse Seasonal Habitat Desired Conditions (Tables 2-2 and 2-3)

- The introduction to the table was revised to clarify that all BLM use authorizations will contain terms and conditions to meet or progress toward meeting the habitat objectives.
- Footnote 1 was revised to allow for date shifts where supported by credible data, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- Corrections were made to metric conversions reported incorrectly in the Proposed RMP.
- In order to respond to protests to be more consistent with the Forest Service, the BLM changed the desired condition for the cover attribute perennial grass and forb height indicator to >7".

Recreation

- Management action 82a was revised to clarify that constructing recreation facilities within GRGS PHMAs must conform to the avoidance and minimization measures or provide a net conservation gain to the species. The revision was recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Special Status Species (Greater Sage-Grouse)

- Text revisions were made to management actions and fluid mineral lease stipulations to ensure consistency across the Wyoming RMPs and consistency with the most recent Governor's Executive Order (2015-4), as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Mineral Resources

- Management Action 79 from the Proposed RMPA, which is now MA MR 12 in the Wyoming ARMPA, was modified to remove 894,060 acres from consideration for recommendation for withdrawal, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

2.4.5 Billings

General Changes

- Goals, objectives, and management actions specific to the Pompeys Pillar National Monument have been removed. The Pompeys Pillar National Monument will have its own ARMP for ease of implementation.
- Clarification on new information changing existing resource inventories and implementation of the Montana GRSG Habitat Conservation Program has been added to Section 5.3, Changing the Plan.
- Section 2.1 includes a statement linking the GRSG Protection Priority Areas (PPAs) of the Draft RMP to the PHMAs boundaries in the Proposed RMP and ARMP.

- The GRSG Restoration Areas has been changed to RHMAs to follow the naming conventions of the PHMAs and GHMAs, as seen in the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument Proposed RMP/Final EIS.
- The term "Travel and Transportation Management (TTM)" was added and defined in the glossary.
- The Federal mineral estate acreages for the GRSG PHMAs, RHMAs, and GHMAs have changed, as the data used in the ARMP depended on broad lines and polygons, instead of aliquot parts. This modification did not change the impact analysis provided in the Final EIS.

Approved Resource Management Plan for GRSG

- Table 2-3 (Acres of GRSG Habitat by County in the Decision Area) was added to show the number of acres in PHMAs, RHMAs, and GHMAs GRSG habitat in the Planning Area. Table 2-3 (Threats to GRSG in the Billings Field Office Sub-Region as Identified by the COT) was added to identify the GRSG populations and the threats identified in the COT Report contained within the Billings Field Office Planning Area. Table 2-4 (Key Components of the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats) was added to provide a crosswalk as to how the ARMP for the Billings Field Office Planning Area addresses the threats from the COT Report. Table 2-5 was added to consolidate goals, objectives, and management actions to manage GRSG habitat.

Wildlife Habitat and Special Status Species

- Management Decision (WLH & SSS-71) has been modified to further address GRSG habitat loss and threats, which contribute to GRSG habitat loss.
- Management Decision (WLH & SSS-73) has been modified to further address sagebrush habitat objectives.
- The following new Management Decisions have been added for clarification purposes to the Wildlife Habitat and Special Status Species – Greater Sage-Grouse section: WLH and SSS-74, WLH and SSS -75, WLH and SSS -76, and WLH and SSS -83.

Appendices

- Appendix K (Biological Opinion) was added to the ARMP.
- The following statement has been deleted from the Coal Appendix: In 2010, Great Northern Properties (GNP) assumed control of the mine permitting effort.

2.4.6 Buffalo

Fluid Minerals

- Based on internal review, the minimum lease size requirement was removed from SS WL-4023 for consistency among Wyoming RMPs and because it would be extremely difficult to implement within the Buffalo Planning Area, given the complex mineral ownership pattern.
- An exception was added to O&G-2006 to allow for geophysical exploration within PHMAs when designed to minimize habitat fragmentation and in conformance with timing and

distance decisions, except where prohibited or restricted by existing RMP decisions as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

- Based on internal review, the noise stipulation for SS WL-4024 was removed for consistency with the other Wyoming RMPs and it was determined to be adequately covered by other lease stipulations such as the 0.6 mile lek NSO stipulation.

Greater Sage-Grouse Seasonal Habitat Desired Conditions

- Table 2.4 in the Proposed RMP and Table 2.6, Seasonal Habitat Desired Conditions for Greater Sage-Grouse (p. 26), in the ARMP was modified as follows, based on the Governor's consistency review:
  - The introduction to the table was revised to clarify that all BLM use authorizations will contain terms and conditions to meet or make progress toward meeting the habitat objectives.
  - Footnote 1 was revised to allow for date shifts where supported by credible data, as recommended.
- Corrections were made to metric conversions reported incorrectly in the Proposed RMP.
- In order to respond to protests to be more consistent with the Forest Service, the BLM changed the desired condition for the cover attribute perennial grass and forb height indicator to >7".

Livestock Grazing

- Compliance with Wyoming Executive Order 2013-3 was moved from management action SSWL-4010 to Grazing-6017 to consolidate the livestock grazing management actions and for consistency with the other Wyoming RMPs.

Lands and Realty

- Management action L&R-6012 was revised to clarify when public lands could be disposed of within GRSG habitat, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Other Leasable Minerals

- Management action OL-2001 was revised to allow nonenergy leasable mineral activities in PHMAs, provided that the activities can be completed in compliance with all occupancy, timing, density, and disturbance restrictions, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Recreation

- Management action Rec-6015 was revised to clarify that construction of recreation facilities within GRSG PHMAs must conform with the avoidance and minimization measures or provide a net conservation gain to the species. The revision was recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Riparian and wetland communities

- Management action Riparian-4008 was revised to clarify that a site-specific plan would be required prior to authorization of activities within 500 feet of riparian and wetland communities, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Special Status Species (Greater Sage-Grouse)

- Management actions were revised to consolidate the activity being managed. Power line-related actions were consolidated in SS WL-4022, and vegetation management actions were consolidated in SS WL-4013.
- Text revisions were made to management actions and fluid mineral lease stipulations to ensure consistency across the Wyoming RMPs and consistency with the most recent Governor's Executive Order 2015-4, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- Management action SS WL-4022 was revised to replace the requirement for raptor perch deterrents on overhead power lines to constructing power lines in accordance with Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) guidance, as perch deterrents have been proven to be ineffective, as recommended during protests and by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Water

- The following water management actions were revised, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review:
  - Water-1005, a statement on management of Source Water Protection Areas, was added.
  - Water-1010 and Water-1011, identification of the requirement to coordinate with the Wyoming State Engineer's Office, was added.
  - Water-1013 was revised to clarify that a site-specific plan would be required prior to authorization of activities within 500 feet of water resources.

Wildlife

- Management action WL-4014 was revised to clarify that power lines will be constructed in accordance with APLIC guidance, as recommended in the protests and by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

2.4.7 Cody

General Changes

- Goals, objectives, and management actions have been modified to be specific to the Cody Field Office. The Bighorn Basin Proposed RMP Planning Area has been divided into two separate ARMPs at this stage of planning process (one for the Cody Field Office and another for the Worland Field Office) for ease of implementation.

- All referenced record numbers within this section reflect the record number found in the ARMP; see Appendix P, Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision Crosswalk Tables, for reference to their location in the Final EIS.
- Table 2-6 has been updated to match the management actions in Table 2-3.1 in the ARMP.
- GRSG Habitat Objectives table in the Proposed RMP was Table 2-5 but is Table 2-6 in the ARMP.

Greater Sage-Grouse Seasonal Habitat Objectives (Table 2.6)

- The introduction to the table was revised to clarify that all BLM use authorizations will contain terms and conditions to meet or progress toward meeting the habitat objectives.
- Footnote 1 was revised to allow for date shifts where supported by credible data, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- Corrections were made to metric conversions reported incorrectly in the Proposed RMP.
- Footnote 7 was included, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- In order to respond to protests to be more consistent with the Forest Service, the BLM changed the desired condition for the cover attribute perennial grass and forb height indicator to >7".

Mineral Resources

- Record 2006 has been modified to recognize that the FWS has found "the core area strategy…if implemented by all landowners via regulatory mechanisms, would provide adequate protection for sage-grouse and their habitats in the state" when considering leasing coal in PHMAs under the criteria at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1).
- Record 2013 was clarified to ensure that leasing activities in PHMAs comply with GRSG RMP decisions and remain in compliance with laws, regulations, and policy.
- An exception was added to Record 2014 to allow for geophysical exploration within PHMAs when designed to minimize habitat fragmentation and in conformance with timing and distance decisions, except where prohibited or restricted by existing RMP decisions, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- Record 2023 was modified to exclude the Oregon Basin Oil and Gas Management Area from expansion of a 2-mile buffer, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- Record 2026 was modified to say that nonenergy leasable minerals would be considered in PHMAs, provided they could be completed in compliance with all occupancy, timing, density, and disturbance restrictions.
- Record 2033 allows for CO_2 sequestration projects in consideration of other resource objectives when sequestration is not associated with enhanced oil recovery projects.

Fire and Fuels Management

- Record 3008 was modified to stress that multiple tools for fuels would be considered and analyzed in site-specific NEPA documentation before selecting prescribed fire in PHMAs.

Vegetation—Grassland and Shrubland Communities

- Record 4029 has been modified to resolve an editing error.

Special Status Species (Greater Sage-Grouse)

- Record 4094 was modified to provide adequate rehabilitation of GRSG habitat.
- Text revisions were made to surface-disturbing and disruptive management actions and fluid mineral lease stipulations to ensure consistency across the Wyoming RMPs and consistency with the most recent Governor's Executive Order 2015-4, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review (Records 4107-4112).
- The noise stipulation for Record 4111 was revised for consistency with the other Wyoming RMPs, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- The minimum lease size requirement was removed from Record 4107 for consistency among Wyoming RMPs.

Lands and Realty

- Record 6016 was revised to clarify when public lands could be disposed of within GRSG habitat, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- Management actions were revised to consolidate the activity being managed; ROW-related actions were consolidated in Record 6032.
- Record 6033 was modified to address new ROW actions within PHMAs.

Recreation

- Record 6059 was revised to clarify that construction of recreation facilities within GRSG PHMAs must conform with the avoidance and minimization measures or provide a net conservation gain to the species. The revision was recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Livestock Grazing

- Compliance with Wyoming Executive Order 2013-3 was moved to Record 6126 to consolidate the livestock grazing management actions and for consistency with the other Wyoming RMPs.

Special Designations—National Historic Trails and Other Historic Trails

- Records 7096/7097/7098—Avoid surface-disturbing activities and protect the foreground of Historic Trails (defined in the glossary) up to 2 miles or the visual horizon within contributing portions of the trail, whichever is closer (the SCZ), where setting is an important aspect of the integrity for the trail. The buffer would also apply to areas unevaluated until it is determined if setting is an important aspect of the integrity for the

trail. Use BMPs (Appendix L) to avoid, minimize, or compensate for adverse effects, except within designated utility corridors.

Glossary

- The Core Habitat definition was updated, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- The winter concentration area definition was updated, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Maps

- Mineral Resources Map—Master Leasing Plans, Absaroka Front Zones, have been included in the map.

Appendix B

- Updates to sage-grouse timing stipulations have been made to resolve the inaccurate dates.
- Records 1041 and 1042 have been added to the appendix, as requested by the EPA.
- Data from the Wyoming Game and Fish have been clarified in all wildlife stipulations.

2.4.8 HiLine

General Changes

- Clarification was added on how the ARMP may be revised (through plan maintenance decisions), based on the effective implementation of the Montana GRSG Habitat Conservation Program.
- The Approved Plan Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Maps have been added to the ARMP and are presented in Appendix A1.
- The remaining Approved Plan Maps have been revised and are presented in Appendix A2.
- Appendix K (FWS Concurrence) was a new appendix added to the ARMP.

Approved Resource Management Plan for Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG)

- Table 2.1-2 (Acres of GRSG Habitat by County in the Decision Area) was added to show the number of acres in PHMAs, RHMAs, and GHMAs in the Planning Area. Table 2.2-1 (Threats to GRSG in the HiLine Planning Area as Identified by the COT) was added to identify the GRSG populations and the threats identified in the COT Report contained within the HiLine Planning Area. Table 2.2-2 (Key Components of the HiLine ARMP Addressing COT Report Threats) was added to provide a crosswalk as to how the ARMP for the HiLine Planning Area addresses the threats from the COT Report. Table 2.3-1 was added to consolidate goals, objectives, and management actions to manage GRSG habitat.

2.4.9 Miles City

General Changes

- Clarification was added on how the ARMP may be revised (through plan maintenance decisions), based on the effective implementation of the Montana GRSG Habitat Conservation Program.
- The term "Travel and Transportation Management (TTM)" was added and defined in the glossary.

Approved Resource Management Plan for Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG)

- Table 2-2 (Acres of GRSG Habitat by County in the Decision Area) was added to show the number of acres in PHMAs, RHMAs, and GHMAs in the Planning Area. Table 2-3 (Threats to GRSG in the Miles City Planning Area as Identified by the COT) was added to identify the GRSG populations and the threats identified in the COT in the Miles City Planning Area. Table 2-4 (Key Components of the Miles City ARMP Addressing COT Report Threats) was added to provide a crosswalk as to how the ARMP for the Miles City Planning Area addresses the threats from the COT Report. Table 2-5 was added to consolidate goals, objectives, and management actions to manage GRSG habitat.

Appendix G Oil and Gas Stipulations

- Waiver language for the GHMAs NSO stipulation was modified to read "The authorized officer may waive this stipulation if no portion of the leasehold is within 6/10 mile of the perimeter of an active lek."
- Waiver language for the GHMAs CSU stipulation was also modified to read "The authorized officer may waive this stipulation if no portion of the leasehold is within 2 miles of the perimeter of an active lek."

Appendices

- The following appendices are not provided in the ARMP but can still be found in the published Proposed RMP/Final EIS:
  - Economics
  - Lands and Realty/Renewable Energy
  - Minerals
  - Public Comment
  - Vegetation
  - Water
- Appendix Q (Biological Opinion) was added to the ARMP.

2.4.10 Pompeys Pillar National Monument

General Changes

- Goals, objectives, and management actions specific to the Pompeys Pillar National Monument are now contained in one ARMP, separate from those applicable to the Billings Field Office.

Appendices

- Appendix H (Biological Opinion) was added to the ARMP.

2.4.11 South Dakota

Approved Resource Management Plan for Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG)

- Table 2-2 (Acres of GRSG Habitat by County in the Decision Area) was added to show the number of acres in PHMAs, RHMAs, and GHMAs in the Planning Area. Table 2-3 (Threats to GRSG in the South Dakota Planning Area as Identified by the COT) was added to identify the GRSG populations and the threats identified in the COT Report in the South Dakota Planning Area. Table 2-4 (Key Components of the South Dakota ARMP Addressing COT Report Threats) was added to provide a crosswalk as to how the ARMP for the South Dakota Planning Area addresses the threats from the COT Report. Table 2-5 was added to consolidate goals, objectives, and management actions to manage GRSG habitat.

Paleontology and ROWs Summary in Lands and Realty

- MD-5 in Special Designations, Fossil Cycad Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) section. The ACEC was listed as a ROWs exclusion area for general ROWs in the Proposed Plan/Final EIS. In the ARMP, the exclusion restriction for ROWs in Fossil Cycad ACEC was changed to an avoidance area for ROWs associated with construction or maintenance of US Highway 18. This change was made based on concerns expressed during a BLM briefing to the State by the South Dakota State Highway Department. The briefing was part of the Governor's consistency review. During the briefing, the BLM learned of the Highway Department's plans to rebuild the highway bridge that is located in the ACEC. The bridge construction may require use of areas outside of the existing ROW that is held by the Highway Department. Furthermore, future highway maintenance may result in a modification or a new ROW to accommodate repairing the highway or its associated structures. An exclusion area restriction for the highway would not allow any exceptions; this was considered impractical because US Highway 18 is an important transportation route for this area, and an exclusion area restriction may infringe on maintenance of the existing ROW use and potential safety concerns. To protect the ACEC values, other types of ROWs are not allowed. The impacts of an avoidance area ROW restriction was previously evaluated in a separate alternative in the Draft and Proposed RMP.

Greater Sage-Grouse and Oil and Gas Stipulations

- GHMAs CSU waiver criteria for MA-11 and MA-16 of the Proposed Plan/ Final EIS (which are now MD-11 and MD-16 of the ARMP) was modified to read "The authorized office may waive this stipulation if no portion of the leasehold is within 2 miles of the perimeter of an

active lek." This change was made to the GRSG Section and Appendix E of the ARMP to provide consistency with other plans.

Appendices

- The Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Management Appendix was merged with the BMP Appendix (Appendix J).
- Appendix H (Biological Opinion) is a new appendix added to the ARMP.
- Some appendices were not included in the South Dakota ARMP but can still be found in the published South Dakota Proposed RMP and Final EIS. These appendices are still relevant to the management of public lands in South Dakota but were not included because they provided only background material or because important sections of these appendices are included in the management decision section of the ARMP.

2.4.12 Worland

General Changes

- Goals, objectives, and management actions have been modified to be specific to the Worland Field Office. The Bighorn Basin Proposed RMP Planning Area has been divided into two separate ARMPs at this stage of the planning process (one for the Cody Field Office and another for the Worland Field Office) for ease of implementation.
- All referenced record numbers within this section reflect the record number found in the ARMP; see Appendix P, Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision Crosswalk Tables, for reference to their location in the Final EIS.
- Table 2-6 has been updated to match the management actions in Table 2-3.1 in the ARMP.
- The GRSG habitat objectives table in the Proposed RMP was Table 2-5 but is Table 2-6 in the ARMP.

Greater Sage-Grouse Seasonal Habitat Objectives (Table 2.6)

- The introduction to the table was revised to clarify that all BLM use authorizations will contain terms and conditions to meet or progress toward meeting the habitat objectives.
- Footnote 1 was revised to allow for date shifts where supported by credible data, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- Corrections were made to metric conversions reported incorrectly in the Proposed RMP.
- Footnote 7 was included as a recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- In order to respond to protests to be more consistent with the Forest Service, the BLM changed the desired condition for the cover attribute perennial grass and forb height indicator to">7".

Mineral Resources

- Record 2005 has been modified to recognize that the FWS has found "the core area strategy…if implemented by all landowners via regulatory mechanisms, would provide

adequate protection for sage-grouse and their habitats in the state" when considering leasing coal in PHMAs under the criteria set for at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1).

- Record 2013 was clarified to ensure that leasing activities in PHMAs comply with GRSG RMP decisions and remain in compliance with laws, regulations, and policy.
- An exception was added to Record 2014 to allow for geophysical exploration in PHMAs, when designed to minimize habitat fragmentation and in conformance with timing and distance decisions, except where prohibited or restricted by existing RMP decisions, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- Record 2023 was modified to exclude the Oregon Basin Oil and Gas Management Area from expansion of a 2-mile buffer, to respond to protests and as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- Record 2025 was modified to say that nonenergy leasable minerals would be considered in PHMAs, provided they could be completed in compliance with all occupancy, timing, density, and disturbance restrictions.
- Record 2032 allows for CO_2 sequestration projects in consideration of other resource objectives when sequestration is not associated with enhanced oil recovery projects.

Fire and Fuels Management

- Record 3008 was modified to stress that multiple tools for fuels would be considered and analyzed in site-specific NEPA documentation before selecting prescribed fire in PHMAs.

Vegetation—Grassland and Shrubland Communities

- Record 4029 has been modified to resolve an editing error.

Special Status Species (Greater Sage-Grouse)

- Record 4093 was modified to provide adequate rehabilitation of GRSG habitat (Records 4106-4111).
- The noise stipulation for Record 4110 was revised for consistency with the other Wyoming RMPs, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- The minimum lease size requirement was removed from Record 4106 for consistency among Wyoming RMPs.

Lands and Realty

- Record 6014 was revised to clarify when public lands could be disposed of within GRSG habitat, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- Management actions were revised to consolidate the activity being managed; ROW-related actions were consolidated in Record 6028.
- Record 6029 was modified to address new ROW actions in PHMAs.

Recreation

- Record 6054 was revised to clarify that construction of recreation facilities in GRSG PHMAs must conform with the avoidance and minimization measures or provide a net conservation

gain to the species. The revision was recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Livestock Grazing

- Compliance with Wyoming Executive Order 2013-3 was moved to Record 6198 to consolidate the livestock grazing management actions and for consistency with the other Wyoming RMPs.

Special Designations—Regionally Important Prehistoric and Historic Trails

- Records 7042/7043/7044—Avoid surface-disturbing activities and protect the foreground of Historic Trails (defined in the glossary) up to 2 miles or the visual horizon within contributing portions of the trail, whichever is closer (the Setting Consideration Zone), where setting is an important aspect of the integrity for the trail. The buffer would also apply to areas unevaluated until it is determined if setting is an important aspect of the integrity for the trail. Use BMPs (Appendix L) to avoid, minimize, or compensate for adverse effects, except within designated utility corridors.

Glossary

- The Core Habitat definition was updated, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.
- The winter concentration area definition was updated, as recommended by the Governor during the Governor's consistency review.

Maps

- Mineral Resources Map—Master Leasing Plans, Absaroka Front Zones, have been included in the map.

Appendix B

- Updates to sage-grouse timing stipulations have been made to resolve the inaccurate dates.
- Records 1041 and 1042 have been added to the appendix, as requested by the EPA.
- Data from the Wyoming Game and Fish has been clarified in all wildlife stipulations.

2.5 PROTEST RESOLUTION

The BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2 allow any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest that may be adversely affected by the BLM's planning decisions to protest proposed planning decisions within 30 days of when the notice of availability (NOA) of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS was published in the *Federal Register* (May 29, 2015).

The BLM Director concluded that the BLM had followed all applicable laws, regulations, and policies and considered all relevant resource information and public input in developing the Proposed RMPs/Final EISs and Proposed RMPAs/Final EISs. Each protesting party has been notified in writing of the Director's findings and the disposition of their protests. The Director resolved the protests without making significant changes to the Proposed RMPs/Final EISs and Proposed RMPAs/Final EISs, though minor clarifications were made and are summarized in **Section 2.4**. The Director's decisions on the protests

are summarized in each of the Proposed RMPs/Final EISs and Proposed RMPAs/Final EISs Director's Protest Resolution Reports, which are available on the following BLM website: http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/planning_overview/protest_resolution/protestreports.html.

Below are descriptions of the protest resolution process for each of the Rocky Mountain Region's Proposed RMPs/Final EISs and Proposed RMPAs/Final EISs.

2.5.1 Lewistown

For the Lewistown Proposed RMPA/Final EIS, the BLM Director received seven timely protest submissions. All of the protesting parties had standing; however, one submission was dismissed because it did not contain any valid protest points, pursuant to 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Valid protest issues addressed in the Director's Protest Resolution Report are as follows:

- Compliance with FLPMA
- Compliance with NEPA
- Density and disturbance
- Data and inventory
- Adaptive management
- Livestock grazing
- Mitigation
- Compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act
- Compliance with the Energy Policy Act of 2005
- ACECs
- Fluid minerals
- Special status species
- Clarifications and clerical errors

2.5.2 North Dakota

For the North Dakota Proposed RMPA/Final EIS, the BLM Director received seven timely protest submissions. All of the protesting parties had standing; however, one submission was dismissed because it did not contain any valid protest points, pursuant to 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Valid protest issues addressed in the Director's Protest Resolution Report are as follows:

- Compliance with FLPMA
- Compliance with NEPA
- Density and disturbance
- Livestock grazing
- Compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act
- Compliance with the Energy Policy Act of 2005

- Air quality
- Climate change
- Noise
- ACECs
- Fluid minerals
- Special status species
- Travel and transportation management

2.5.3 Northwest Colorado

For the Northwest Colorado GRSG Proposed RMPA/Final EIS, the BLM Director received 25 timely protest submissions. All of the protesting parties had standing; however, five submissions were dismissed because they did not contain any valid protest points, pursuant to 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Valid protest issues addressed in the Director's Protest Resolution Report are as follows:

- Compliance with FLPMA
- Compliance with NEPA
- Density and disturbance
- Adaptive management
- Data and inventories
- GRSG habitat objectives
- Livestock grazing
- Mitigation
- Compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act
- Compliance with the Energy Policy Act of 2005
- ACECs
- Fluid minerals
- Special status species
- Travel and transportation management

2.5.4 Wyoming

For the Wyoming GRSG Proposed RMPA/Final EIS, the BLM Director received 29 timely protest submissions. All of the protesting parties had standing; however, seven submissions were dismissed because they did not contain any valid protest points, pursuant to 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Valid protest issues addressed in the Director's Protest Resolution Report are as follows:

- Compliance with FLPMA
- Compliance with NEPA

- Density and disturbance
- RDFs
- Data and inventories
- GRSG habitat objectives
- Livestock grazing
- Compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act
- Air quality
- Climate change
- Noise
- ACECs
- Fluid minerals
- Solid and nonenergy leasable minerals
- Special status species
- Lands with wilderness characteristics
- Travel and transportation management
- Clarifications and clerical errors

2.5.5 Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument

For the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument Proposed RMP/Final EIS, the BLM Director received 10 timely protest submissions. All of the protesting parties had standing; however, two submissions were dismissed because they did not contain any valid protest points, pursuant to 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Valid protest issues addressed in the Director's Protest Resolution Report are as follows:

- Compliance with FLPMA
- Compliance with NEPA
- Density and disturbance
- Adaptive management
- Monitoring
- Livestock grazing
- Mitigation
- Compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act
- Compliance with the Energy Policy Act of 2005
- Air quality
- Climate change
- Noise

- Fluid minerals
- Solid and nonenergy leasable minerals
- Special status species
- Travel and transportation management

2.5.6 Bighorn Basin (Cody and Worland Field Offices)

For the Bighorn Basin Proposed RMP/Final EIS (which includes the Cody and Worland Field Offices), the BLM Director received 23 timely protest submissions. All of the protesting parties had standing; however, five submissions were dismissed because they did not contain any valid protest points, pursuant to 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Valid protest issues addressed in the Director's Protest Resolution Report are as follows:

- Compliance with FLPMA
- Compliance with NEPA
- Density and disturbance
- RDFs
- Mitigation
- Livestock grazing
- Compliance with the Energy Policy Act of 2005
- Compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act
- ACECs
- Fluid minerals
- Solid and nonenergy leasable minerals
- Lands with wilderness characteristics
- Wild and scenic rivers
- Recreation and visitor services
- Clarifications and clerical errors

2.5.7 Buffalo

For the Buffalo Proposed RMP/Final EIS, the BLM Director received 18 timely protest submissions. All of the protesting parties had standing; however, five submissions were dismissed because they did not contain any valid protest points, pursuant to 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Valid protest issues addressed in the Director's Protest Resolution Report are as follows:

- Compliance with FLPMA
- Compliance with NEPA
- Density and disturbance

- RDFs
- GRSG habitat objectives
- Livestock grazing
- Compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act
- Air quality
- Climate change
- Noise
- ACECs
- Fluid minerals
- Special status species
- Lands with wilderness characteristics
- Clarifications and clerical errors

2.5.8 HiLine

For the HiLine Proposed RMP/Final EIS, the BLM Director received 12 timely protest submissions. All of the protesting parties had standing; however, one submission was dismissed because it did not contain any valid protest points, pursuant to 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Valid protest issues addressed in the Director's Protest Resolution Report are as follows:

- Compliance with FLPMA
- Compliance with NEPA
- Adaptive management
- Lands with wilderness characteristics
- Livestock grazing
- Mitigation
- Data and inventories
- Compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act
- Compliance with the Energy Policy Act of 2005
- Air quality
- Climate change
- Noise
- Fluid minerals
- Solid and nonenergy leasable minerals
- Special status species
- Cultural resources

- Travel and transportation management
- Environmental justice

2.5.9 Miles City

For the Miles City Proposed RMP/Final EIS, the BLM Director received 13 timely protest submissions. All of the protesting parties had standing; however, one submission was dismissed because it did not contain any valid protest points, pursuant to 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Valid protest issues addressed in the Director's Protest Resolution Report are as follows:

- Compliance with FLPMA
- Compliance with NEPA
- Density and disturbance
- Adaptive management
- Monitoring
- Livestock grazing
- Mitigation
- Compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act
- Compliance with the Energy Policy Act of 2005
- Air quality
- Climate change
- Noise
- Fluid minerals
- Solid and nonenergy leasable minerals
- Special status species
- Cultural resources
- Lands with wilderness characteristics
- Travel and transportation management

2.5.10 South Dakota

For the South Dakota Proposed RMP/Final EIS, the BLM Director received five timely protest submissions. All of the protesting parties had standing; however, one submission was dismissed because it did not contain any valid protest points, pursuant to 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Valid protest issues addressed in the Director's Protest Resolution Report are as follows:

- Compliance with FLPMA
- Compliance with NEPA
- Density and disturbance

- Data and inventories
- Livestock grazing
- Air quality
- Climate change
- Noise
- Special status species
- Travel and transportation management
- Reasonable foreseeable development scenarios

2.6 GOVERNOR'S CONSISTENCY REVIEW

The BLM's planning regulations require that RMPs be "consistent with officially approved or adopted resource-related plans, and the policies and procedures contained therein, of other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and Indian tribes, so long as the guidance and resource management plans also are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands" (43 CFR 1610.3-2(a)).

The general requirement in FLPMA and planning regulations is to coordinate the resource management planning process with plans of other agencies, States, and local governments to the extent consistent with law (see FLPMA Section 202(c)(9) and 43 CFR 1610.3-1(a)) and the respective duties to be consistent with both officially approved or adopted plans (to the extent those plans are consistent with Federal law, or to the maximum extent practical; see 43 CFR 1610.3-2(a)(b)). In accordance with FLPMA, the BLM was aware of and gave consideration to State, local, and tribal land use plans and provided meaningful public involvement throughout the development of the Proposed RMPs/Final EISs and Proposed RMPAs/Final EISs.

The BLM is aware that there are specific State laws and local plans relevant to aspects of public land management that are separate and independent of Federal law. However, the BLM is bound by Federal law; as a consequence, there may be inconsistencies that cannot be reconciled. The FLPMA and its implementing regulations require that the BLM's RMPs be consistent with officially approved State and local plans only if those plans are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands.

Where officially approved State and local plans or policies and programs conflict with the purposes, policies, and programs of Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands, there will be an inconsistency that cannot be resolved. With respect to officially approved State and local policies and programs (as opposed to plans), this consistency provision applies only to the maximum extent practical. While county and Federal planning processes under FLPMA are required to be as integrated and consistent as practical, the Federal agency planning process is not bound by or subject to State or county plans, planning processes, policies, or planning stipulations.

The 60-day Governor's consistency review period ended on July 29, 2015. In the Rocky Mountain Region, the Governors of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming submitted letters to their respective BLM State Directors, asserting inconsistencies between the BLM's Proposed

RMPs/Final EISs and Proposed RMPAs/Final EISs and their States' or local governments' resource-related plans, policies, and procedures, as well as other concerns that they had with the proposed planning documents.

On August 6, 2015, the BLM State Directors notified the Governors as to whether their recommendations were accepted or rejected. These Governors were then given 30 days to appeal the BLM State Director's decisions to the BLM Director. By September 8, 2015, the BLM Director received appeals from the Governors of North Dakota and South Dakota. The BLM Director reviewed these appeals and responded to them before this ROD was issued. The reasons for the Director's determinations on those appeals will be published in the *Federal Register* after this ROD is issued.

In some instances, modifications to the ARMPs and ARMPAs were addressed based on recommendations submitted to the BLM by the applicable Governors. These modifications were made and are summarized in **Section 2.4**.

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CHAPTER 3
ALTERNATIVES

3.1 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Each of the Rocky Mountain sub-regional planning efforts analyzed in detail a set of alternatives in the draft and final sub-regional EISs. The alternatives were developed to provide direction for resource programs. Their intent was to meet the purpose and need of this effort; namely, to identify and incorporate appropriate management direction in ARMPs and ARMPAs to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing threats to GRSG habitat.

Each alternative emphasized an altered combination of resource uses, allocations, and restoration measures to address issues and resolve conflicts among uses so that GRSG goals and objectives were met in varying degrees across the alternatives. The action alternatives offered a range of possible management approaches for responding to planning issues and concerns identified through public scoping and to maintain or increase GRSG abundance and distribution in the Planning Area. While the resource management plan goal was the same across alternatives for each sub-region, each alternative contained a discrete set of objectives and management actions constituting a separate RMPA. The goal was met to varying degrees, with the potential for different long-range outcomes and conditions.

In addition to developing alternatives that conserve and enhance GRSG and its habitat, the Draft and Proposed RMPs/Draft and Final EISs for the following BLM offices include alternatives to provide RMP management direction for all BLM program areas: the Bighorn Basin (the RMP revision for the Cody and Worland Field Offices), Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument, Buffalo, HiLine, Miles City, and South Dakota.

These documents analyzed the following resources or resource uses:

- Air quality
- Fish and wildlife
- Cultural
- Lands and realty
- Livestock grazing

- Minerals and energy
- Recreation and visitor services
- Soil and water
- Special management area designations (including ACECs)
- Travel and transportation
- Vegetation
- Visual resources
- WHBs
- Land with wilderness characteristics
- Wildland fire management

The relative emphasis given to particular resources and resource uses differed as well, including allowable uses, restoration measures, and specific direction pertaining to individual resource programs. When resources or resource uses are mandated by law, there are typically few or no distinctions between alternatives.

3.1.1 Alternatives Considered for the GRSG RMP Amendments

3.1.1.1 Alternative A—No Action Alternative

Alternative A meets the CEQ requirement that a no action alternative be considered. This alternative continues current management direction derived from the existing field office and district office RMPs, as amended. Goals and objectives for resources and resource uses are based on the most recent RMP decisions, along with associated amendments and other management decision documents. Laws, regulations, and BLM policies that supersede RMP decisions would apply.

Goals and objectives for BLM-administered lands and mineral estate would not change. Appropriate and allowable uses and restrictions pertaining to such activities as mineral leasing and development, recreation, utility corridor constructions, and livestock grazing would also remain the same. The BLM would not modify existing or establish additional criteria for identifying site-specific use levels for implementation activities.

This alternative was not selected for the ARMPAs because it did not meet the purpose and need of this plan amendment. Moreover, it did not include necessary changes to existing decisions based on the FWS 2010 listing decision, which identified the inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms as a significant threat to GRSG and its habitat. This alternative also did not incorporate the best available science pertaining to GRSG or its habitat.

3.1.1.2 Alternative B— National Technical Team Report Alternative

Alternative B was based on the conservation measures contained within the NTT Report. The GRSG NTT, comprised of BLM, Forest Service, FWS, USGS, NRCS, and State specialists, completed *A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures* in December 2011. The charge of the NTT was to identify science-based management considerations for the GRSG (i.e., conservation measures) necessary to promote sustainable GRSG populations, and which focused on the threats (75 FR 13910) in each of

the regional WAFWA MZs. The NTT Report preparers proposed conservation measures based on habitat requirements and other life history aspects of GRSG. It described the scientific basis for the conservation measures proposed within each program area. The report also provided a discussion and emphasized the importance of standardizing monitoring across the WAFWA MZs.

The BLM's Washington Office IM Number 2012-044 directed sub-regional planning to analyze the conservation measures developed by the NTT, as appropriate, through the resource management planning process and NEPA.

Alternative B would exclude ROW development in PHMAs and would avoid development in GHMAs. It would close PHMAs to fluid mineral leasing, mineral material sales, and nonenergy leasable minerals and would recommend withdrawal from locatable mineral entry in all PHMAs. These management actions would reduce surface disturbance in PHMAs and would minimize disturbance in GHMAs, thereby maintaining GRSG habitat.

Management actions for wildfire would focus on suppression in PHMAs and GHMAs, while limiting certain types of fuels treatments. Vegetation management would emphasize sagebrush restoration. Collectively, vegetation and wildfire management would conserve GRSG habitat. Grazing would continue, with similar impacts under Alternative B as under Alternative A. The BMPs proposed in the NTT Report would be included as RDFs as part of Alternative B and are listed in Appendix C, Required Design Features, of each of the attached ARMPAs.

Alternative B was not selected in its entirety for the ARMPAs because most of the conservation measures in the NTT Report, as appropriate and applicable, were applied primarily to PHMAs, and few conservation measures in the report were provided for in GHMAs. As a result, this alternative did not provide adequate conservation in GHMAs.

3.1.1.3 Alternative C—Citizen Groups' Recommended Alternative One

Alternative C was based on an alternative recommended by citizen groups. This alternative emphasizes improving and protecting habitat for GRSG and was applied to all occupied GRSG habitat (PHMAs and GHMAs). Alternative C limited commodity development in areas of occupied GRSG habitat and closed or excluded large portions of the Planning Area to many land uses. This included all PHMAs and GHMAs as being closed to livestock grazing (North Dakota analyzed reduced grazing), recommended for withdrawal from locatable mineral entry, closed to fluid mineral leasing, closed to salable mineral and nonenergy leasable mineral development, and exclusion areas for ROWs.

This alternative was not selected in its entirety for the ARMPAs because it limited the use of public land in PHMAs and GHMAs to such as extent that it did not give adequate accommodation to local needs, customs, and culture. Also, it included proposed actions that are not necessary for GRSG conservation. For example, it closed all allotments to livestock grazing, which, based on best available science, is not required to conserve GRSG and its habitats. Alternative C was also not selected in its entirety because it does not best achieve the mix of multiple uses necessary to fully implement the mandate of FLPMA.

3.1.1.4 Alternative D—Lewistown, North Dakota, and Northwest Colorado's Preferred Alternative

Alternative D was identified as the preferred alternative in the Lewiston, North Dakota, and Northwest Colorado Draft EISs. This alternative balanced opportunities to use and develop the Planning Area, as well as conserving, maintaining, and enhancing GRSG and its habitat. Protective measures were applied to GRSG habitat, while allowing for human disturbances with stringent mitigation measures. This alternative represents the mix and variety of management actions, based on the BLM's analysis and judgment, which best resolve the resource issues and management concerns while meeting laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to BLM management. As a result of public scoping comments, internal review, and cooperating agency coordination on the Draft RMPAs/EISs, this alternative was modified to become the Proposed RMPAs and was analyzed in the Final EISs. The preferred alternatives, with slight variations, became the proposed plans in the Final EISs.

In PHMAs under Alternative D, disturbance in GRSG habitat would be limited by excluding wind and solar energy development, avoiding most ROW development (subject to certain conditions), applying NSO stipulations to fluid mineral development, and closing PHMAs to nonenergy leasable mineral development and mineral material sales. These management actions would protect GRSG habitat, while allowing other activities, subject to conditions. In GHMAs under Alternative D, allocations are less stringent but still aim to protect GRSG habitat (for example, applying moderate constraints and stipulations to fluid minerals in GHMAs).

Under Alternative D, the BLM management would support sagebrush/perennial grass ecosystem restoration, would increase fire suppression in PHMAs and GHMAs, and would manage livestock grazing to maintain or enhance sagebrush and perennial grass ecosystems.

Wyoming's Alternative D

Wyoming's GRSG Proposed RMPA/Final EIS provides opportunities to use and develop the Planning Area while protecting GRSG habitat, based on scoping comments and input from the cooperating agencies involved in the alternatives development process. This alternative would increase the potential for development and resource use, with reduced GRSG habitat protections. Protective measures would be applied to GRSG habitat.

Under this alternative, a surface disturbance cap of 9 percent per 640 acres was considered within GRSG Core Habitat. This alternative was not selected in its entirety as the ARMPAs because the proposed lek buffers were insufficient to provide GRSG undisturbed habitat and prevent habitat fragmentation, although restrictions on density of disturbance could have allowed for some protection of contiguous habitat. Other management could provide protection of GRSG Core Habitat from wind development by reducing habitat loss, fragmentation, and direct impacts from wind turbines and overhead structures.

3.1.1.5 Alternative E

Wyoming

The BLM modified the preferred alternative, identified as Alternative E in the Draft RMPA/EIS, and presented as the Proposed RMPAs for managing BLM-administered lands in the Wyoming GRSG Planning Area in the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS. The modifications were based on public comments

received on the Draft RMPA/Draft EIS, internal BLM and Forest Service review, new information and best available science, the need for clarification in the plans, and ongoing coordination with stakeholders across the range of the GRSG. As a result, the Proposed RMPAs provide consistent GRSG habitat management across the range, prioritize development outside of GRSG habitat, and focus on a landscape-scale approach to conserving GRSG habitat.

The Proposed RMPAs provide a layered management approach that offers the highest level of protection for GRSG in the most valuable habitat. Land use allocations in the Proposed RMPAs would limit or eliminate new surface disturbance in PHMAs, while minimizing disturbance in GHMAs. In addition to establishing protective land use allocations, the Proposed RMPAs would implement a suite of management tools, such as disturbance limits, GRSG habitat objectives and monitoring, GRSG habitat desired conditions, mitigation approaches, adaptive management triggers and responses, and lek buffer-distances throughout the range. These overlapping and reinforcing conservation measures will improve GRSG habitat condition and provide clarity and consistency on how the BLM and Forest Service will manage activities in GSGS habitat.

3.1.1.6 Environmentally Preferable Alternative

CEQ regulations require that a ROD state which alternatives were considered to be "environmentally preferable" (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). Question 6A of CEQ's *40 Most-Asked Questions* regarding CEQ's NEPA regulations (46 FR 18026) defines that term to ordinarily mean the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources.

Under that definition, Alternative C, as presented in each of the sub-regional Proposed RMPAs/Final EISs, is the most environmentally preferable. However, Section 101 of NEPA expresses a continuing policy of the Federal government to "use all practicable means and measures…to foster and promote the general welfare, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans." FLPMA Section 302 requires the BLM to manage public lands for multiple-use and sustained yield, and Section 102(12) of FLPMA declares a policy of the United States that "the public lands be managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from the public lands including implementation of the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970 (84 Stat. 1876, 30 USC 21a) as it pertains to the public lands." For these reasons, Alternative C was not selected (in its entirety) as the sub-regional ARMPAs.

3.1.2 Alternatives Considered for the RMP Revisions

3.1.2.1 Alternative A—No Action Alternative

All RMP Revisions

Alternative A meets the CEQ requirement that a no action alternative be considered. This alternative continues current management direction derived from the existing field and district office RMPs, as amended. Goals and objectives for resources and resource uses are based on the most recent RMP decisions, along with associated amendments and other management decision documents. Laws, regulations, and BLM policies that supersede RMP decisions would apply.

Goals and objectives for BLM-administered lands and mineral estate would not change. Appropriate and allowable uses and restrictions pertaining to such activities as mineral leasing and development,

recreation, construction of utility corridors, and livestock grazing would also remain the same. The BLM would not modify existing or establish additional criteria to guide the identification of site-specific use levels for implementation.

This alternative was not selected for the ARMPs because it did not meet the purpose and need of the RMPs. It was not selected in its entirety because the Planning Areas would continue to be managed under outdated RMPs and would not apply the resource protections for all resources deemed necessary to meet the long-term goals and objectives of the RMP; specifically it would not meet those needed to be made to the existing decisions based on the FWS 2010 listing petition decision, which identified the inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms as a significant threat to GRSG and its habitat.

3.1.2.2 Alternative B

Bighorn Basin (which includes the Cody and Worland Field Offices)

Alternative B emphasizes conserving physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources and lands with wilderness characteristics with constraints on resource uses. This alternative emphasizes improving and protecting habitat for GRSG and defines different restrictions for PHMAs and GHMAs. Alternative B would limit commodity development in areas of occupied GRSG habitat and would close or designate portions of the Planning Area to some land uses. Alternative B conserves large areas of land for physical, biological, and heritage resources, designates 17 ACECs, and places a number of restrictions on motorized vehicle use and mineral development.

Under Alternative B, 3,888,990 acres are available and 314,223 acres are withdrawn or would be recommended for withdrawal or extension of an existing withdrawal from locatable mineral entry. In addition, approximately 2,464,745 acres of Federal mineral estate are closed to oil and gas leasing; the remaining Federal mineral estate is open to oil and gas leasing subject to the following constraints: 405,620 acres are subject to the standard lease form, 335,109 acres are subject to moderate constraints, and 932,551 acres are subject to major constraints. Alternative B does not delineate oil and gas management areas. It makes 1,612,993 acres available for mineral materials disposal, while 2,590,220 acres are closed to mineral materials disposal.

Under Alternative B, a large portion of the Planning Area is closed to livestock grazing (1,984,211 acres), as a result of such factors as crucial winter range for elk and bighorn sheep and GRSG key habitat areas. The remainder of the Planning Area is open to grazing where it does not conflict with other resource uses.

Alternative B was not selected as the ARMP for the Cody and Worland Field Offices because it did not achieve a balance between managing resources and resource uses. It also was not selected as the ARMP because it limited the use of public land in PHMAs and GHMAs to such an extent that it did not give adequate accommodation to local needs, customs, and culture.

Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument

Alternative B, the conservation alternative, emphasizes the conservation of physical, biological, and cultural resources over commodity production, mineral extraction, and motorized recreation. Relative to all alternatives, Alternative B conserves the most land area for physical, biological, and cultural resources. It is the most restrictive to mineral leasing and the most restrictive to renewable energy

development. Alternative B would establish GRSG PHMAs, GHMAs, and RHMAs. Under this alternative only, GRSG PHMAs (BLM-administered surface; 154,500 acres) would be administered as an ACEC.

Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative B would place the greatest emphasis on conserving physical, biological (including GRSG habitat), heritage, and visual resources (56,700 acres of Visual Resource Management [VRM] Class I and 14,377 acres of VRM Class II). Thirteen tracts would be managed for lands with wilderness characteristics (27,507 acres), while placing the most constraints on resource uses. Alternative B would conserve larger areas of land for physical, biological, and heritage resources, would emphasize natural processes for wild horse management, would retain nine ACECs, and would designate three new ACECs (181,175 acres), including one for GRSG habitat.

It also would place additional restrictions on resource uses, such as ROWs (exclusion areas 211,384 acres) and mineral development (39 percent of the Federal mineral estate closed to mineral materials sales and development, 33 percent would be recommended for withdrawal from mineral entry, 33 percent would be closed to coal leasing, and 34 percent would not be available for fluid mineral leasing).

Only 50 acres would be identified for disposal under Alternative B, and one ROW utility corridor would be identified. Renewable energy development would be closed on 80 percent of BLM-administered surface. Livestock grazing would be permitted on 386,092 acres (38,373 acres closed to livestock grazing).

Six special recreation management areas (SRMAs) and five extensive recreation management areas (ERMAs) would be designated, and 34,109 acres would be closed to target shooting for safety and resource concerns. Eleven travel management areas (TMAs) would be established under this alternative; OHV use would be limited to existing roads and trails, except in the 11 TMAs where OHV use is limited to designated routes. The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Herd Management Area would be the smallest under Alternative B 931,153 acres; all surface ownerships). All 14.08 miles of the seven eligible river segments would be recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. This would be to protect their outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing nature, and tentative classification.

While Alternative B represented an approach to land management that addressed most issues, management concerns, and the purpose and need, it was not selected because it did not sufficiently address GRSG habitat concerns and did not quite achieve a balance between managing resources and resource uses. Alternative B also was not selected because it does not best achieve the mix of multiple uses.

Buffalo

Alternative B emphasizes the conservation of physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources and areas with wilderness characteristics with constraints on resource uses. Relative to all alternatives, Alternative B conserves the most land area for physical, biological, and heritage resources; it designates the highest number of ACECs and is the most restrictive to motorized vehicle use and mineral development. Resource uses were restricted or prohibited within 4.0 mile of GRSG leks and winter concentration areas (NSO for fluid minerals).

Mineral resource uses are subject to more extensive constraints under Alternative B than under the other alternatives. The BLM would recommend withdrawals to locatable mineral entry on 618,256 acres (2,686,776 acres open to locatable mineral entry, should these withdrawals occur).

Approximately 2,612,920 acres of Federal fluid mineral estate are closed to fluid mineral leasing. The remaining Federal mineral estate is open for leasing, subject to the following constraints:

- 1,225 acres are subject to standard stipulations only
- 5,685 acres are subject to minor constraints,
- 124,467 acres are subject to moderate constraints
- 642,232 acres are subject to major constraints (Map 14)

Approximately 1,239,723 acres are open to leasing of other minerals, such as phosphates and sodium. Alternative B would open 129,431 acres to salable mineral exploration and development and would close or restrict 3,218,690 acres from salable mineral exploration and development.

Transportation management designations under Alternative B include 625,854 acres closed to motorized vehicle use and 137,126 acres limited to designated roads and trails for motorized vehicle use. In addition, Alternative B seasonally closes 18,259 acres to motorized vehicle use within big game crucial winter range.

Alternative B limits or prohibits livestock grazing where it has been determined to be incompatible with other uses, including areas within 4 miles of the perimeter of occupied or undetermined GRSG leks and winter concentration areas (467,897 acres), as proposed under this alternative.

This alternative was not selected in the ARMP because it does not best achieve the mix of multiple uses. Alternative B did not adequately balance resource protections with resource uses; resource protections were emphasized over sustainable uses.

HiLine

Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative B would place the greatest emphasis on conserving physical, biological (including GRSG habitat), heritage, and visual resources and lands with wilderness characteristics, while placing the most constraints on resource uses. Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative B would conserve larger areas of land for physical, biological, and heritage resources; it would designate two ACECs for GRSG conservation and would place some additional restrictions on resource uses, such as ROW and mineral development.

Alternative B would exclude wind energy ROWs on 90 percent of the Planning Area, would encourage the use of designated corridors for new ROWs, would close more than 90 percent of Federal minerals to leasing, and would recommend nine new mineral withdrawals. The BLM would not designate any ERMAs or SRMAs under Alternative B and would manage 2,390,000 as open to livestock grazing. This alternative would maintain contiguous blocks of vegetation and habitat on BLM-administered lands.

Alternative B was not selected because it does not best achieve the mix of multiple uses. Its emphasis was too focused on protecting resources over the multiple use/sustainability approach provided by the other alternatives.

Miles City

Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative B would focus on allowing resource uses (e.g., energy and mineral development and other commodity uses), while providing moderate protection to sensitive resources, including GRSG habitat and lands with wilderness characteristics. Alternative B would exclude wind and solar energy from 36 percent of the lands, would close 2 percent of the mineral estate to fluid mineral leasing, and would prescribe an NSO stipulation to 5 percent of the mineral estate that is available for leasing. This alternative would not recommend any areas for locatable mineral estate for withdrawal; it make less than 1 percent unavailable for livestock grazing and would exclude ROWs from 24 percent of the lands.

While offering some protection of sensitive resources, Alternative B was not selected because it did not provide for management of multiple uses in a manner to ensure the sustainability of the natural resources (including GRSG habitat) into the future.

South Dakota

Alternative B emphasizes commercial resource development and use while providing adequate levels of resource protection. Alternative B would propose a land transfer for the Fort Meade ACEC, which would reduce its size. This alternative would maintain contiguous blocks of vegetation and habitat on BLM-administered lands. Restrictions on surface-disturbing and disruptive activities in sensitive wildlife habitats would generally be more prohibitive under Alternative B than Alternative A, and the size of protective buffers (e.g., for ROWs) would increase around areas of specific management concern, such as occupied GRSG leks, big game/GRSG wintering areas, and sharp-tailed grouse leks.

Stipulations would be at the minimal level to protect resources. Under Alternative B, 267,445 surface acres (approximately 98 percent) would be available for locatable mineral entry, and only 6,900 surface acres would be recommended for withdrawal from locatable mineral entry. Approximately 1,708,777 acres (99 percent) of BLM-administered mineral estate (subsurface estate) would be available for locatable mineral entry.

The Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC (6,574 acres) and Fossil Cycad ACEC (320 acres) and subsurface estate (minerals) under Bear Butte (410 acres) would be recommended for withdrawal from locatable mineral entry. Under Alternative B, approximately 30,246 surface acres (11 percent) and 282,296 mineral acres (16 percent) would be open without BLM restrictions, other than standard terms and conditions. The Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC (6,574 acres) would be closed to exploration and development of leasable minerals. The Fossil Cycad ACEC (320 acres) would be closed to oil and gas leasing.

Alternative B was not selected because it did not provide adequate protections for GRSG. South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks did not develop Core Areas for GRSG until December 2014. The BLM reviewed these Core Areas and determined that the PHMAs in Alternative B were not adequate. In addition, Alternative B provided limited protection of other resources by leaving more acres open to renewable energy development and general ROWs. Alternative B provides less protection of special status species and less intensive management of recreation than Alternative D. For these reasons Alternative B was not selected.

3.1.2.3 Alternative C

Bighorn Basin (which includes the Cody and Worland Field Offices)

Alternative C emphasizes resource development and use and development and resource extraction, while placing fewer restrictions on protecting habitat for GRSG; it defines different restrictions for PHMAs and GHMAs. Alternative C emphasizes resource uses and reduces constraints on resource uses to protect physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources. Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative C conserves the least land area for physical, biological, and heritage resources, designates the fewest ACECs and SRMAs, and is the least restrictive to motorized vehicle use and energy and mineral development. It was not selected for the ARMP because it does not adequately protect resource values.

Under Alternative C, 4,155,119 acres are available for locatable mineral entry and 48,095 acres are withdrawn or would be recommended for withdrawal or extension of an existing withdrawal. Existing withdrawals and segregations not carried forward are allowed to expire. In addition, approximately 145,836 acres of Federal mineral estate are closed to oil and gas leasing in the Planning Area. The remaining Federal mineral estate in the Planning Area is open to oil and gas leasing, subject to the following constraints: 2,565,742 acres are subject to the standard lease form, 1,334,491 acres are subject to moderate constraints, and 91,956 acres are subject to major constraints. Alternative C delineates oil and gas management areas around intensively developed existing fields; the BLM manages these areas primarily for oil and gas exploration and development, with all other surface uses considered secondary. Alternative C makes 3,859,251 acres available for mineral materials disposal, while 343,962 acres are closed to mineral materials disposal.

Under this alternative, the BLM manages none of the 20 eligible wild and scenic river waterways as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System and releases these areas for other uses. Alternative C limits motorized vehicle use to designated roads and trails in the 10 wilderness study areas (WSAs).

Under Alternative C, the BLM generally manages physical resources similar to Alternative A but with fewer management requirements and more allowance for the case-by-case application of management actions.

Alternative C did not adequately balance resource protections with resource uses; resource protections were determined to be inadequate for most resources, including GRSG.

Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument

Alternative C emphasizes commodity production, such as forage and minerals, as well as motorized recreation access and services. Under this alternative, constraints on commodity production for protecting sensitive resources would be the least restrictive possible within the limits defined by law, regulation, and BLM policy; this includes the ESA, cultural resource protection laws, and wetland preservation. Under this alternative, constraints to protect sensitive resources would tend to be implemented in specified geographic areas rather than across the entire Planning Area. Generally, the impacts on GRSG would be greater than those described under Alternatives B and D, with less protection to wildlife resources due to smaller buffers and fewer avoidance areas for ROWs and other potential development.

Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative C would have the fewest restraints on commodity production and recreation access. Only 29,714 acres would be managed for VRM Class I and 26,569 acres for VRM Class II. Four tracts (3,379 acres) surrounded by WSA would be managed for lands with wilderness characteristics. Alternative C would conserve the smallest amount of land for physical, biological, and heritage resources; nine ACECs would be retained and two new ACECs would be designated, (67,079 acres); there would be some restrictions on resource uses such as ROWs (exclusion areas 39,491 acres) and mineral development (29 percent of the Federal mineral estate would be closed to mineral materials sales and development, 5 percent would be recommended for withdrawal from mineral entry, 30 percent would be closed to coal leasing, and 7 percent would not be available for fluid mineral leasing).

Under Alternative C, 4,223 acres would be identified for disposal, and two ROW utility corridors would be identified. Renewable energy development would be closed on 19 percent of the BLM-administered surface. Livestock grazing would be permitted on 386,822 acres (28,622 acres closed to livestock grazing). Eleven SRMAs would be designated and 24,049 acres would be closed to target shooting for safety and resource concerns.

Eleven TMAs would be established under Alternative C, and OHV use would be limited to existing roads and trails, except in the 11 TMAs where OHV use would be limited to designated routes. The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Herd Management Area would be the largest under this alternative—44,855 acres, or all surface ownerships. None of the 14.08 miles of eligible river segments would be recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System, and none would be managed to protect their outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing nature, and tentative classification.

While Alternative C represented an approach to land management that addressed many of issues, management concerns, and purpose and need, it was not selected because it did not sufficiently address GRSG habitat concerns and did not quite achieve a balance between managing resources and resource uses. Alternative C was also not selected as the ARMP because it does not best achieve the mix of multiple uses.

Buffalo

Similar to the Bighorn Basin, Alternative C for Buffalo also emphasizes resource uses by limiting conservation measures afforded to physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources. Relative to all other alternatives, Alternative C conserves the least land area for physical, biological, and heritage resources and is the least restrictive to motorized vehicle use and mineral development. It is not based on PHMAs and GHMAs; it represents historic GRSG management with a 0.25-mile permanent protective zone around leks (NSO for fluid minerals) and a 2-mile seasonally restricted zone around leks during the breeding and nesting seasons.

Alternative C allows additional recreation facilities in areas where they are supported by recreational use and are consistent with other resource values. Generally, Alternative C does not apply specific limitations on surface disturbance or mineral development and manages recreational areas consistent with other resource values.

Under Alternative C, mineral resource uses are subject to fewer constraints than under the other alternatives. No withdrawals from locatable mineral entry are recommended under Alternative C; all 3,319,535 acres currently open would remain open to locatable mineral entry within the Planning Area. Under Alternative C, the BLM would open all coal lands to exploration and leasing, resulting in zero acres closed to coal exploration and leasing and 4,775,136 acres open to coal exploration and leasing.

The entire Federal fluid mineral estate is open for leasing, subject to the following constraints:

539,499 acres are subject to standard stipulations only, 40,437 acres are subject to minor constraints, 2,472,472 acres are subject to moderate constraints, and 303,601 acres are subject to major constraints. Approximately 4,707,436 acres are open to leasing of other minerals, such as phosphates and sodium. Alternative C would also open 3,290,908 acres to salable mineral exploration and development and would close or restrict 57,213 acres to salable mineral exploration and development.

Livestock grazing under Alternative C is limited or prohibited only in those areas where it is currently prohibited under Alternative A. Livestock grazing is generally managed with less emphasis on providing for other resource values than the other alternatives. For example, Alternative C authorizes permanent increases in forage allocations to livestock grazing as the first priority and wildlife habitat and watershed protection as the second priority.

Alternative C does not designate any ACECs. Lands with wilderness characteristics are managed to follow the management within the surrounding areas and not to emphasize primitive recreational opportunities and natural values.

This alternative was not selected in the ARMP because it does not best achieve the mix of multiple uses. Alternative C did not adequately balance resource protections with resource uses; resource protections were determined to be inadequate for most resources, including GRSG.

HiLine

Alternative C would place fewer constraints on resource uses than Alternative B but more than Alternative A. Alternative C places moderate protections on land area for physical, biological, and heritage resources, while placing moderate restrictions on ROW and mineral development. Under this alternative, 37 percent of the Planning Area would be open to fluid mineral leasing with NSO stipulations, and 48 percent would be open with conditions on surface use and TLs. The total acres managed as RMAs would decrease, compared to Alternative A. Grazing use allocations would be the same as Alternative A. Alternative C would designate three new ACECs.

Alternative C would not designate SFAs and does not include the additional protections for GRSG habitat that are in Alternative E. This alternative offers a somewhat balanced approach to resource development and the protection of sensitive resources in the Planning Area. However, it does not include the recommendations of cooperating agencies and BLM specialists who provided knowledgeable information to enhance the proposed management actions; therefore, Alternative C was not selected for the ARMP.

Miles City

Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative C would focus on allowing resource uses (e.g., energy and mineral development and other commodity uses), while providing moderate protection to sensitive

resources (including GRSG habitat and lands with wilderness characteristics). Alternative C would exclude wind and solar energy from 36 percent of the lands. It would close 2 percent of the mineral estate to fluid mineral leasing and would prescribe an NSO stipulation to 5 percent of the mineral estate that is available for leasing. Alternative C would not recommend any areas for locatable mineral estate for withdrawal, would make less than 1 percent unavailable for livestock grazing, and would exclude ROWs from 24 percent of the lands.

While offering some protection of sensitive resources, Alternative C was not selected because it did not provide for management of multiple uses to ensure the sustainability of the natural resources (including GRSG habitat) into the future.

South Dakota

Alternative C would provide the highest level of resource protection and would place the most constraints on resource uses. While Alternative C would provide the greatest degree of protection of GRSG by closing leasable minerals and recommending a withdrawal of locatable minerals, it protects fewer acres of GRSG habitat because the PHMAs are smaller than Alternative D's PHMAs.

Under Alternative C, 173,663 surface acres (approximately 63 percent) would be available for locatable mineral entry; 100,576 acres (37 percent) would be recommended for withdrawal or extension of an existing withdrawal from locatable mineral entry. Areas recommended for withdrawal would include GRSG PHMAs, Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad ACECs, and Federal minerals under Bear Butte. In contrast to the other alternatives, Alternative C would manage all GRSG PHMAs as an ACEC and would close PHMAs to oil and gas development and exploration. Approximately 100,576 mineral acres (6 percent) would be recommended to be withdrawn from locatable mineral entry, and 1,615,101 acres of mineral estate would be available for locatable mineral entry (94 percent). Under Alternative C, only 26,674 surface acres (10 percent) and 258,650 mineral acres (15 percent) would be open to mineral leasing without BLM restrictions, other than standard terms and conditions.

Alternative C would provide for larger GRSG PHMAs than Alternative B but would provide smaller PHMAs than Alternative D (Alternative A would create no PHMAs). Total PHMAs acres would include 93,266 BLM-administered surface acres (34 percent) and 289,563 acres of Federal minerals subsurface estate (17 percent).

Alternative C was not selected as the ARMP because information from South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks revealed that larger PHMAs were needed to effectively manage GRSG habitat in a manner consistent with the GRSG Core Areas that were developed by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks. In addition, various restrictions under Alternative C were beyond the minimum needed to adequately protect resources. These restrictions would have been difficult to implement on landscape with a highly intermingled landownership pattern. Alternative C would have created the highest adverse economic impacts of the alternatives.

3.1.2.4 Alternative D

Bighorn Basin (includes the Cody and Worland Field Offices)

Alternative D (the preferred alternative, proposed plan, and now the ARMP) generally increases conservation of physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources compared to current management. Alternative D also emphasizes moderate constraints on resource uses, while applying specific

reclamation and mitigation requirements to reduce impacts on resource values. For example, Alternative D delineates oil and gas management areas to be managed primarily for oil and gas exploration and development, while vegetation resources are managed to maintain contiguous blocks of native plant communities.

Under Alternative D, approximately 292,353 acres of Federal mineral estate are closed to oil and gas leasing in the Planning Area; the rest is open to oil and gas leasing subject to the following constraints: 911,814 acres are subject to the standard lease form, 1,714,685 acres are subject to moderate constraints, and 1,221,142 acres are subject to major constraints. Alternative D delineates oil and gas management areas to be managed primarily for oil and gas exploration and development. Alternative D refines stipulations for protecting big game, geologic features, recreation, and limited reclamation potential soils for oil and gas-related surface disturbances within the Absaroka Front (130,872 acres), Fifteenmile (180,186 acres), and Big Horn Front (379,308 acres) master leasing plan analysis areas.

Alternative D designates more recreation management areas than Alternative A, including SRMAs, recreation management zones, and ERMAs. Other resource uses, such as minerals development, are typically allowed in these areas if the adverse impacts can be mitigated. Under Alternative D, the BLM closes the same acreage in the Planning Area to livestock grazing as Alternative A (5,009 acres). However, unlike Alternative A, grazing is allowed in closed areas as a tool to maintain or improve resource conditions. Alternative D includes 12 ACECs: the nine existing areas and three new ACECs.

Compared to current management (Alternative A), Alternative D generally applies greater restrictions on surface disturbance and disruptive activities to protect sensitive wildlife habitats, including occupied GRSG leks. Alternative D implements the State of Wyoming's Core Area Strategy. For GRSG, constraints on resource uses are greater in PHMAs than outside it. For example, the BLM would apply an NSO stipulation within 0.6 mile of GRSG leks in PHMAs and within 0.25 mile of occupied GRSG leks outside of PHMAs.

Alternative D was selected as the ARMP for the Cody and Worland Field Offices because it best achieves the mix of multiple uses. It balances resource protections, including GRSG, with resource uses to protect resources while achieving sustainable resource development.

Alternative D balances the use and conservation of Planning Area resources. This alternative allows resource use if the activity can be conducted in a manner that protects physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources. Alternative D emphasizes moderate constraints on resource uses (for example, mineral development) and reclamation and mitigation requirements to protect resource values.

In reviewing the alternatives, incorporating current knowledge on existing and reasonably foreseeable development opportunities, and comparing them to the existing decisions (Alternative A), the BLM determined that Alternative D, the Proposed Plan, provided the most balanced management direction. Issues brought forth during scoping coupled with the analysis conducted in the Draft EIS and Final EIS ultimately formed the basis of the ARMP. It achieves a balanced approach of key issues raised during the RMP process so that some areas are emphasized for resource development and others for resource protections.

Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument

Alternative D incorporates elements from each of the alternatives to strike a balance between long-term conservation of public land and resources in the Planning Area with commodity production, recreational access, and services. Alternative D also identifies resource management actions in accordance with the multiple-use and sustained yield mandates of FLPMA. The total acreage for the ACECs strikes a balance between the acreages of Alternative B and Alternative C; in some cases the management activities allowed in the ACECs is as restrictive as Alternative B. Alternative D provides a consistent framework for managing GRSG and its habitat on BLM-administered lands. It also provides a layered management approach that offers the highest level of protection for GRSG in the most valuable habitat.

Alternative D would strike a balance between long-term conservation of public land and resources with commodity production, recreation access, and services. Under Alternative D, 29,714 acres would be managed as VRM Class I and 55,883 acres as VRM Class II. Nine tracts in and next to WSAs would be managed for lands with wilderness characteristics (13,653 acres).

Alternative D strikes a balance in conservation of land for physical, biological, and heritage resources; nine ACECs would be retained and two new ACECs would be designated (38,786 acres). Some additional restrictions would be placed on resource uses, such as ROWs (exclusion areas 48,258 acres) and mineral development; 32 percent of the Federal mineral estate would be closed to mineral materials sales and development, 7 percent \would be recommended for withdrawal from mineral entry, 25 percent would be closed to coal leasing, and 7 percent would not be available for fluid mineral leasing.

Alternative D would identify 264 acres for disposal and two ROW utility corridors would be identified. Renewable energy development would be closed on 53 percent of the BLM-administered surface. Livestock grazing would be permitted on 386,057 acres (28,387 acres closed to livestock grazing). Nine SRMAs and two ERMAs would be designated, and 31,586 acres would be closed to target shooting for safety and resource concerns. Eleven TMAs would be established under this alternative, and OHV use is limited to existing roads and trails except in the 11 TMAs where OHV use is limited to designated routes. The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Herd Management Area would be 39,944 acres (all surface ownerships).

Two river segments would be managed for and recommended as eligible river segments (3.15 miles) for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System to protect their outstandingly remarkable values, free-flowing nature, and tentative classification.

Alternative D was selected as the ARMP because it represents an approach to land management that addresses the issues, management concerns, and purpose and need, while balancing resources and resource uses. The multitude of resources within the Planning Area, coupled with the requirement to manage for multiple uses and sustained yield, requires developing alternatives across a continuous spectrum from resource conservation to resource development.

Buffalo

Alternative D (the preferred alternative, proposed plan, and now the ARMP) generally allows for resource use if the activity could be conducted to conserve physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources. Under Alternative D, mineral resource uses are subject to less extensive constraints than

under Alternative B but more than either Alternatives A or C. Alternative D would designate the second most lands as SRMAs and ACECs, while emphasizing moderate constraints on resource uses to reduce impacts on resource values. Alternative D places few universal constraints on resource uses and instead allows activities if they meet certain requirements designed to mitigate impacts on resource values. Alternative D would emphasize the use of designated corridors and would manage fewer acres as ROW exclusion for renewable energy development, compared with Alternative B. Lands with wilderness characteristics would be managed to protect wilderness characteristics and emphasize ecosystem health, natural values, and primitive recreation opportunities.

Compared to current management (Alternative A), Alternative D generally applies greater restrictions on surface disturbance and disruptive activities to protect sensitive wildlife habitats, including occupied GRSG leks. Alternative D implements the State of Wyoming's Core Area Strategy. For GRSG, constraints on resource uses are greater in PHMAs than outside it. For example, the BLM would apply an NSO stipulation within 0.6 mile of GRSG leks in PHMAs and within 0.25 mile of occupied GRSG leks outside of PHMAs.

In reviewing the alternatives, incorporating current knowledge on existing and reasonably foreseeable development opportunities, and comparing it to Alternative A, the BLM determined that Alternative D, the Proposed Plan, provided the most balanced management direction. Issues brought forth during scoping, coupled with the analysis conducted in the Draft EIS and Final EIS, ultimately formed the basis of the ARMP. It achieves a balanced approach of key issues raised during the RMP process so that some areas are emphasized for resource development and others for resource protections.

This alternative was selected as the ARMP because it best achieves the mix of multiple uses. Alternative D balances resource protections, including GRSG, with resource uses to protect resources while achieving sustainable resource development.

HiLine

Compared to Alternatives B, C, and E, Alternative D emphasizes resource uses and reduces constraints on resource uses to protect physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources. Compared to other alternatives, Alternative D conserves the least land area for physical, biological, and heritage resources and is the least restrictive to ROW and mineral development. The BLM would manage slightly fewer acres as open to salable and leasable minerals compared to Alternative A. Alternative D would result in no designated utility corridors, 2 exclusion areas, and 13 avoidance areas. It would have fewer acres managed as open for wind energy ROWs but would also have the least amount of wind energy ROW exclusion area of any alternative (except Alternative A). Alternative D limits motorized vehicle use to designated roads and trails; it would designate 12 areas (97,100 acres) as SRMAs and 2 areas (200 acres) as ERMAs. Grazing use allocations would be the same as Alternative A. The BLM would manage ACECs and lands with wilderness characteristics consistent with other resource objectives. Three new ACECs would be established under this alternative.

This alternative was not selected as the ARMP because it provided too few protections for sensitive resources and sustainability of BLM lands in the Planning Area; therefore, it does not provide an appropriate balance of multiple uses.

Miles City

Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative D provides for the widest range of uses and emphasizes these commodity uses over the protection of sensitive resources (include GRSG habitat and lands with wilderness characteristics). Alternative D would result in the following:

- Exclude wind and solar energy from 4 percent of the lands
- Close 2 percent of the mineral estate to fluid mineral leasing
- Prescribe an NSO stipulation to 2 percent of the mineral estate that is available for leasing
- Not recommend any areas for locatable mineral estate for withdrawal
- Make less than 1 percent unavailable for livestock grazing
- Exclude ROWs from 4 percent of the lands

This alternative was also not selected as the ARMP for the Miles City Field Office because it provided too few protections for sensitive resources and sustainability of BLM-managed lands in the Planning Area; therefore, it does not provide an appropriate balance of multiple uses.

South Dakota

Alternative D (the preferred alternative, proposed plan, and now the ARMP), would provide an intermediate degree of restriction compared to Alternatives B and C, while providing more specific direction to protect resources and manage resource uses. It would emphasize moderate constraints on resource uses, including NSO stipulations on fluid minerals and ROW avoidance areas (e.g., in PHMAs and GHMAs) for major ROWs, with more restrictive exclusion areas in ACECs. Renewable energy ROW exclusion areas would apply in PHMAs and other sensitive habitat areas.

In general, the stipulations under Alternative D would provide an intermediate degree of restriction, compared to Alternatives B and C. Alternative D would provide more specific direction to protect resources and manage resource uses than Alternative A. Under Alternatives B, C, and D, stipulations would not be limited to oil and gas production; they may be applied to other resource uses when needed to protect or manage resources and resource uses.

Under Alternative D, 267,035 surface acres (97 percent) would be available for locatable mineral entry and 7,310 acres (3 percent) would be recommended for withdrawal. Areas recommended for withdrawal include the Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad ACECs and Federal minerals under Bear Butte. Approximately 1,708,367 acres of mineral estate would be available for locatable mineral entry. Under Alternative D, 62,236 surface acres (22 percent) and 500,399 mineral acres (29 percent) would be open to fluid mineral leasing without BLM restrictions other than standard terms and conditions.

Alternative D was selected as the ARMP because the PHMAs in Alternative D would include the same areas as South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks GRSG Core Areas. South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks did not develop GRSG Core Areas until late in the RMP planning process, and after reviewing its data, the BLM changed the areas that were included in PHMAs under Alternative D. This would allow more consistent management of GRSG and would protect more habitat. This alternative would apply specific management for all resources and resource uses, while balancing the long-term demand for resource uses throughout the Planning Area. It provides additional protection of special status species throughout

the Planning Area. Overall, this alternative provides the best balance of management actions to meet the long-term demand for resource use while conserving resources.

3.1.2.5 Alternative E

Bighorn Basin (which includes the Cody and Worland Field Offices)

Management under Alternative E is the same as under Alternative B, except that it designates GRSG Key Habitat Areas (PHMAs) as an ACEC (1,232,583 acres) for the conservation of GRSG priority habitat. Alternative E manages disturbances (e.g., roads, oil and gas wells, and pipelines) in the GRSG Key Habitat Areas ACEC to not exceed 1 disturbance per 640 acres and to cover less than 3 percent of the total GRSG habitat. It also requires beneficial reclamation and rehabilitation activities that prioritize reestablishment of native vegetation communities in sagebrush steppe communities.

Due to additional management actions associated with the GRSG Key Habitat Areas ACEC, Alternative E exceeds the other alternatives in the amount of land conserved for physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources, the number of designated ACECs (18), and restrictions on minerals, ROWs, and renewable energy development.

Under Alternative E, 2,433,901 acres are available and 1,759,312 acres are recommended for withdrawal or extension of an existing withdrawal from locatable mineral entry. Alternative E does not delineate oil and gas management areas and manages leasable minerals the same as Alternative B. Alternative E makes 1,059,062 acres available for mineral materials disposal, while 3,144,151 acres are closed to mineral materials disposal. Under Alternative E, travel management designations, including areas open to motorized vehicle use and over snow travel, are the same as Alternative B; however, Alternative E prohibits new road construction within 4 miles of active GRSG leks and requires the development of travel management plans that minimize impacts on their habitat. In addition, routes within GRSG Key Habitat Areas would be managed under a seasonal closure restricting motorized use from March 15 through June 30. The scale of this additional ACEC and the limitations on surface disturbances and road development, as well as withdrawal of locatable minerals, closure to mineral materials disposal, ROW development, and renewable energy development it includes result in greater overall resource protection under Alternative E than under the other alternatives.

Alternative E was not selected as the ARMP for the Cody and Worland Field Offices because it did not achieve a balance between managing resources and resource uses. Moreover, it limited the use of public land in PHMAs and GHMAs to such an extent that it did not give adequate accommodation to local needs, customs, and culture.

HiLine

Alternative E is similar to Alternative C but also considers the recommendations of cooperating agencies and BLM specialists. Under this alternative, six existing ACECs would be continued and four new ACECs would be designated. About 63 percent of the Planning Area would be exclusion areas for wind energy ROWs. Four existing mineral withdrawals would also be continued (20,058 acres). Alternative E also includes specific protections for GRSG habitat and designates PHMAs, GHMAs, and SFAs. Alternative E would provide a balanced approach to the amount of land conserved for physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources, while placing major constraints on minerals, ROWs, and wind energy development.

This alternative was selected as the ARMP because it provided the most balanced approach to multiple-use and sustainability of BLM-administered lands, while offering a high degree of resource protection in specific areas.

Miles City

Compared to other alternatives, Alternative E would allow resource uses (e.g., energy and mineral development and other commodity uses) while providing protection to sensitive resources, including GRSG habitat. It contains management actions that provide for the protection of an area for lands with wilderness characteristics. Additional management actions for four areas of lands with wilderness characteristics are designed to benefit and limit impacts by limiting surface disturbance and the intrusion of human presence.

Key components of Alternative E would exclude wind and solar energy from 33 percent of the lands; it would close 2 percent of the mineral estate to fluid mineral leasing and would prescribe an NSO stipulation to 39 percent of the mineral estate that is available for leasing. It would not recommend any areas for locatable mineral estate for withdrawal and would make less than 1 percent unavailable for livestock grazing. It would exclude ROWs from 3 percent of the lands.

Alternative E was selected as the ARMP because it provided the most balanced approach to multiple-use and sustainability of BLM-administered lands while offering a high degree of resource protection in sensitive areas.

3.1.2.6 Alternative F

Bighorn Basin (which includes the Cody and Worland Field Offices)

Management under Alternative F is the same as under Alternative D, except that Alternative F designates GRSG Core Areas (PHMAs) as an ACEC for the conservation of GRSG priority habitat. Additionally, Alternative F manages nine areas to maintain their wilderness characteristics; the remaining lands with wilderness characteristics under Alternative F would not be specifically managed to maintain their wilderness characteristics. Management for livestock grazing under Alternative F would be the same as Alternative D, except within the GRSG PHMAs ACEC, where additional restrictions on livestock grazing would incorporate GRSG habitat management objectives. Here, the BLM manages the density of disturbance to not exceed an average of 1 disruptive activity location per 640 acres and cover less than 3 percent of the total GRSG PHMAs. Alternative F delineates the same oil and gas management areas as Alternative D but applies additional restrictions for protecting GRSG where these areas overlap the GRSG PHMAs ACEC.

This alternative was not selected as the ARMP because it limited the use of public land in PHMAs and GHMAs to such as extent that it did not give adequate accommodation to local needs, customs, and culture and therefore did not provide an appropriate balance of multiple uses.

3.1.2.7 Environmentally Preferable Alternative

CEQ regulations require that a ROD state which alternatives were considered to be "environmentally preferable" (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). Question 6A of CEQ's 40 Most-Asked Questions regarding NEPA regulations defines that term to mean the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances

historic, cultural, and natural resources. Under that definition, the following alternatives, as presented in Proposed RMPs/Final EISs, are the most environmentally preferable:

- Bighorn Basin—Alternative B
- Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument—Alternative B
- Buffalo—Alternative B
- HiLine—Alternative B
- Miles City—Alternative B
- South Dakota—Alternative C

NEPA expresses a continuing policy of the Federal government to "use all practicable means and measures…to foster and promote the general welfare, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans" (Section 101 of NEPA). FLPMA Section 302 requires the BLM to manage the public lands for multiple-use and sustained yield. Section 102(12) of FLPMA declares a policy of the United States that "the public lands be managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from the public lands including implementation of the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970 (84 Stat. 1876, 30 USC, Section 21a) as it pertains to the public lands." For these reasons, the alternatives described as being environmentally preferable were not selected in their entirety as the ARMPs.

3.2 Alternatives Considered But Not Analyzed in Detail

The alternatives listed below by sub-region were considered but were not carried forward for detailed analysis because of one or more of the following reasons:

- They would not meet the requirements of FLPMA or other existing laws and regulations
- They did not meet the purpose and need
- The alternative was already captured within the range of alternative analyzed in the EIS
- They were already part of an existing plan, policy, or administrative function
- They did not fall within the limits of the planning criteria

For additional rationale as to why each of the alternatives listed below by sub-region were not carried forward for detailed analysis, refer to Chapter 2 of each of the sub-regional Proposed RMPs and RMPAs/Final EISs.

Lewistown

- NTT conservation measures not applicable to the Lewistown Field Office
- Elimination of livestock grazing from all BLM-administered lands

North Dakota

- NTT conservation measures not applicable to North Dakota

- Elimination of livestock grazing from BLM-administered lands

Northwest Colorado

- ACEC proposal applied to all GRSG designated habitat
- Garfield County Alternative

Wyoming

- Alternatives that include stipulations for protection of GRSG habitat from oil shale resources
- Closure of GRSG habitat to OHV use
- FWS listing with associated conservation measures
- Designation of all GRSG general habitat as ACECs or Forest Service special interest areas

Bighorn Basin

- Recommend mineral withdrawals across the Planning Area
- Suspend or eliminate all existing Federal minerals leasing
- Require directional drilling
- Remove all stipulations and restrictions from oil and gas leases
- Phased oil and gas development
- Phased oil and gas leasing
- No new oil and gas leasing
- Require reinjection of all produced water
- Emphasize the protection of resources by removing human uses
- Manage herd areas for wild horses within the original herd area boundaries
- Designate a wild horse or burro range
- Prohibit or exclude wind energy development, oil and gas leasing, OHV use, and livestock grazing
- Provide no net gain in BLM-administered public lands
- Limit travel to only existing roads and trails
- Permit no livestock grazing
- Allow no net loss of grazing animal unit months
- Close all big game crucial winter range to livestock grazing
- Open OHV "play" areas
- Remove existing ACECs
- Recommend withdrawals for WSAs

Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument

- Eliminating livestock grazing from BLM-administered lands
- OHV rock crawl area proposed in Petroglyph Canyon ACEC
- Steamboat Butte and Sykes Ridge ACEC proposals
- Conservation groups alternative

Buffalo

- Preserve minimum instream flows
- Recommend mineral withdrawal across the Planning Area
- Suspend or eliminate all existing Federal fluid mineral leasing
- Close to fluid mineral leasing
- Phase fluid mineral development
- Prohibit surface water disposal of produced water
- Require produced water to be returned to aquifers
- Require produced water to be put to beneficial use
- Emphasize the protection of resources by removing human uses
- Apply the NTT conservation measures to priority habitat
- Permit no development within occupied GRSG habitat
- Clearly mark the boundaries of public lands
- Close all public lands to motorized vehicles or limit travel to existing roads and trails only
- Permit no livestock grazing
- Permit no net loss of grazing animal unit months
- Allow new WSAs

HiLine

- Conservation groups alternative
- Master leasing plan
- No bison grazing
- No livestock grazing/reduced grazing
- Use a backcountry conservation area designation

Miles City

- Reevaluate WSA recommendations
- Consider alternative management for nonenergy leasable minerals
- Consider alternative management for geothermal resources

- Designate major transportation and energy corridors
- Theodore Roosevelt Partnership Sportsmen Area Alternative
- No livestock grazing alternative
- Conservation groups alternative

South Dakota

- Conservation groups alternative
- Develop a CSU for GRSG PHMAs
- Western Heritage alternative
- Eliminate or reduce livestock grazing

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CHAPTER 4
MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS—RATIONALE FOR ARMPS (PLAN REVISIONS)

Section 1.8 of this ROD has a discussion of management considerations (rationale for approving the RMP decisions) for the ARMPAs and the GRSG habitat management decisions in the ARMPs (plan revisions).

As mentioned previously, this ROD is also approving RMP decisions for several other BLM resources and resource uses, aside from GRSG habitat management for the RMP revisions (the Billings, Buffalo, Cody, HiLine, Miles City, Pompeys Pillar National Monument, South Dakota, and Worland ARMPs). **Table 4-1** is a summary of the major resources and resource uses management decisions contained in the ARMPs as compared to prior RMP management decisions.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Bighorn Basin (Cody and Worland Field Offices)		
Air	Analyze activities with expected impacts on air resources. Modeling may be performed on a case-by-case basis.	The ARMP would provide additional air emission control measures and strategies within the BLM's regulatory authority and in consultation with stakeholders if proposed or committed measures are insufficient to achieve air quality goals and objectives. Quantitative air quality analyses (i.e., modeling) for project-specific developments may be required on a case-by-case basis in consultation with state, Federal, and tribal entities to determine the potential

Table 4-1
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Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
		impacts of proposed air emissions. Modeling may be performed to determine the effectiveness of mitigation strategies.
Cultural Resources	Surface disturbance is restricted on or near cultural sites on a case-by-case basis.	CSU up to 3 miles where setting is an important aspect of the integrity for the cultural site.
Fire Ecology and Management	Use wildland fires (wildfires managed for resource benefit and prescribed fires) to restore fire-adapted ecosystems and reduce hazardous fuels. Use mechanical, chemical, and biological treatments across the landscape as needed to restore vegetative diversity and reduce the risk of unnatural fire within those ecosystems.	Use wildland fires (wildfires managed for resource benefit and prescribed fires) and other vegetation treatments to restore fire-adapted ecosystems, reduce hazardous fuels, and accomplish resource management objectives. Using wildland fire for these purposes will comply with the restrictions associated with GRSG habitat management.
Fish and Wildlife	Apply restrictions to sensitive, special status, and threatened and endangered species habitat. See resources uses for applicable allocation decisions that protect these areas.	The ARMP would provide more specific direction to protect resources and manage resource uses than prior management. Under the ARMP, stipulations would not be limited to oil and gas production; they may be applied to other resource uses as applicable and when needed to protect or manage resources and resource uses. Some discretionary seasonal restrictions would be relaxed for big game species in Oil and Gas Management Areas. Management in master leasing plan analysis areas would protect wildlife habitat.
Fluid Minerals	1,354,593 acres open with standard lease terms; 889,435 acres open with major constraints 1,633,204 acres open with moderate constraints. Fluid minerals are closed for leasing on 260,792 acres	911,814 acres open with standard lease terms; 1,221,142 acres open with major constraints; 1,714,685 acres open with moderate constraints. Fluid minerals closed for leasing on 292,353 acres; 348,617 acres open where some discretionary seasonal restrictions would be relaxed for big game species
Forest and Woodland Products	Allow pre-commercial thinning in overstocked areas and regenerated timber sale areas when trees in those areas reach the 20- to 30-year age class.	Allow pre-commercial thinning when trees reach the 10- to 20-year age class or when the regenerated trees are 5- to 15-feet tall.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
	In important seasonal wildlife habitat areas, generally restrict clear cuts to no more than 300 yards in any direction, unless a long-term benefit to wildlife habitat would result.	In important seasonal wildlife habitat areas, generally restrict clear cuts to no more than 300 yards in any direction, unless a long-term benefit to wildlife habitat would result. In addition, generally restrict clear cuts to no more than 100 acres unless salvaging dead or dying timber.
Lands and Realty	115,905 acres are available for disposal; 3,071,909 will be retained under Federal ownership; 940,943 acres would be managed as ROW avoidance areas; 61,147 acres would be managed as ROW exclusion areas. Existing ROW corridors are identified	66,363 acres are available for disposal; 3,071,909 will be retained under Federal ownership; 2,408,662 acres would be managed as ROW avoidance areas; 40,802 acres would be managed as ROW exclusion areas. No new ROW corridors are designated. New authorizations in existing corridors would be subject to management consistent with other resource objectives
Livestock Grazing	The BLM allows livestock grazing on all but 5,009 acres of the Planning Area.	Same as prior management direction.
Mineral Materials	228,649 acres are closed to mineral material sales.	374,894 acres are closed to mineral material sales.
Recreation	Seven areas managed as SRMAs and two areas managed as ERMAs.	Thirteen areas managed as SRMAs and five areas managed as ERMAs.
Renewable Energy	Renewable energy ROWs would be authorized on a case-by-case basis.	Renewable energy ROWs would be avoided on 1,500,395 acres and excluded on 372,110 acres.
Soils and Water	Soils—Apply guidelines and appropriate measures to all management actions (including reclamation) affecting soil health to decrease erosion and sedimentation, to achieve and maintain stability, and to support the hydrologic cycle by providing for water capture, storage, and release. Water—Prohibit surface-disturbing activities within 500 feet of surface water and riparian/wetland areas, except when such activities are necessary and when their impacts can be mitigated.	Soils—Same as prior management direction except require reclamation plans for all authorized surface-disturbing activities. Water—In addition to prohibiting surface-disturbing activities within 500 feet of surface water and riparian/wetland areas, the ARMP would also avoid surface-disturbing activities within ¼ mile of any waters rated by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department as Blue Ribbon or Red Ribbon (trout streams of national or statewide importance), and would avoid activities

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
		that could negatively affect water resources within a ¼ mile around public water supply wells, and ¼ mile on both sides of a river or stream, for 10 miles upstream of the public water supply intake.
Solid Minerals	72,861 acres recommended for locatable mineral withdrawal. Coal—Consider interest in exploration for, or leasing of, any Federal coal on a case-by-case basis. If an application for a Federal coal lease is received, conduct an appropriate land use and environmental analysis, including the coal screening process, to determine whether the area proposed for leasing is acceptable for coal development and leasing (43 CFR 3425). If public lands are determined to be acceptable for further consideration for coal leasing, amend the RMP as necessary.	83,321 acres recommended for locatable mineral withdrawal. Coal— At the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted to the BLM, the BLM would determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods pursuant to 43 CFR 3461.5. PHMAs are essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1).
Special Designations	Manage 1,638 acres as the Nez Perce National Historic Trail Management Corridor and 27,317 acres eligible for Wild and Scenic River under National Wild and Scenic River System. Retain nine ACECs.	Manage 15,816 acres as the Nez Perce National Historic Trail Management Corridor and no acres eligible for Wild and Scenic River under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Retain nine ACECs and designate three additional ACECs, for a total of twelve in the Planning Area.
Travel and Transportation Management	1,311 acres managed as open to OHV use; 3,112,973 acres managed as limited to OHV use (limited to existing and designated roads and trails); 68,115 acres managed as closed to OHV use.	5,885 acres managed as open to OHV use; 3,115,500 acres managed as limited to OHV use (limited to existing and designated roads and trails); 61,010 acres managed as closed to OHV use.
Vegetation	Manage 23,957 acres of riparian/wetlands towards proper functioning conditions.	Same as prior management direction.
Visual Resources Management	7141,127 acres managed as VRM Class I; 340,784 acres managed as VRM Class II; 890,482 acres managed as VRM Class III; 1,815,043 acres managed as VRM Class IV.	141,127 acres managed as VRM Class I; 731,812 acres managed as VRM Class II; 738,531 acres managed as VRM Class III; 1,580,470 acres managed as VRM Class IV.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Wild Horse and Burro Management	Manage the Fifteenmile Herd Management Area for an initial AML of 70 to 160 wild horses, not counting foals, in an attempt to maintain a population of 100 adult wild horses adjusted as necessary based upon monitoring. Manage the McCullough Peaks Herd Management Area for an initial AML of 70 to 140 wild horses, not counting foals, in an attempt to maintain a population of 100 adult wild horses adjusted as necessary based upon monitoring.	Same as prior management direction.
Wilderness Characteristics	0 acres managed for lands with wilderness characteristics.	Same as prior management direction.
Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument		
Air	The BLM-authorized activities would stipulate requirements to reduce fugitive dust emissions from construction and sites with surface disturbance and from travel on high-traffic unpaved roads. Engine and stationary source emission control requirements would need to ensure compliance with NAAQS, MAAQS, WAAQS, and the Montana SIP.	Same as prior management decisions.
Cultural Resources	Surface disturbance is restricted on 4,847 acres on or near cultural sites.	Surface disturbance is restricted on 14,988 acres on or near cultural sites.
Fire Ecology and Management	Prescribed and non-prescribed fire fuels treatments would treat 6,280 acres over a 10-year period. Over the 20-year life of this plan, approximately 20,806 acres of forest and woodlands would be available for potential treatment, with an estimated 840 acres available for the sale of wood products, 160 acres of crested wheatgrass in rangelands would be treated, and 366 to 5,548 acres of invasive species and noxious weeds would be treated per year.	Prescribed and non-prescribed fire fuels treatments would treat 21,700 acres over a 10-year period. Over the 20-year life of this plan, approximately 18,375 acres of forest and woodlands would be available for potential treatment, with an estimated 1,780 acres available for the sale of wood products, and 12,000 acres of crested wheatgrass would be treated; 400 to 2,000 acres of invasive species and noxious weeds would be treated per year.
Fish and Wildlife	Apply restrictions to sensitive, special status, and threatened and endangered species habitat. See resources uses for applicable allocation decisions that protect these areas.	The ARMP would provide more specific direction to protect resources and manage resource uses than prior management. Under the ARMP, additional protections would not be

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
		limited to oil and gas production; they may be applied to other resource uses when needed to protect or manage resources and resource uses. Also, the ARMP provides more NSO/CSU restrictions for the protection of fish and wildlife habitats.
Fluid Minerals	237,336 acres open with standard lease terms; 369,048 acres open with major and moderate constraints. Fluid minerals are not available for leasing on 61,100 acres.	44,142 acres open with standard lease terms; 835,720 acres open with major and moderate constraints. Fluid minerals are not available for leasing on 60,359 acres.
Lands and Realty	7,463 acres available for disposal, with an additional 2,088 acres identified for further study. ROW exclusion and avoidance areas encompass 68,217 acres of the BLM-administered surface (ROW exclusion 44,014 acres; ROW avoidance 24,203 acres). One designated ROW corridor.	264 acres available for disposal; ROW exclusion and avoidance areas encompass 397,616 acres of the BLM-administered surface (ROW exclusion 48,258 acres, ROW avoidance 378,958 acres). There are two designated ROW corridors.
Livestock Grazing	Livestock grazing would be permitted on 387,057 acres, and 37,408 acres would be closed to livestock grazing.	Livestock grazing would be permitted on 387,057 acres, and 28,387 acres would be closed to livestock grazing.
Locatable Minerals	1,855 acres are withdrawn from mineral entry, and an additional 39,709 acres are recommended for closure to the mining laws.	1,855 acres are withdrawn from mineral entry, and an additional 52,906 acres are recommended for closure to the mining laws.
Mineral Materials	44,583 acres are closed to mineral material sales.	281,597 acres are closed to mineral material sales.
Recreation	Two areas managed as SRMAs and seven areas managed as ERMAs.	Nine areas managed as SRMAs and two areas managed as ERMAs.
Renewable Energy	The BLM responds to proposals for renewable wind energy ROWs within the decision area on a case-by-case basis. The area of the BLM-administered surface closed to renewable wind energy ROWs is 47,496 acres.	BLM-administered surface open to renewable wind energy ROWs, but still subject to terms and conditions identified during the ROW application process, is 1,512 acres. The area of BLM-administered surface closed to renewable wind energy ROWs is 231,775 acres.
Soil and Water	Surface disturbance is restricted on 33,908 acres of highly erosive soils and surface disturbance is restricted on 10,114 acres in riparian areas and floodplains.	Surface disturbance is restricted on 169,719 acres of sensitive soils and rock outcrops, 7,563 acres in riparian areas and floodplains, and 2,068 acres in fishery habitats.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Solid Minerals	Coal is closed to leasing on 26,131 acres.	At the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted, the BLM would determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods, pursuant to 43 CFR 3461.5. PHMAs are essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1). Coal is closed to leasing on 225,655 acres.
Special Designations	Nine ACECs would be retained, totaling 37,896 acres. Special designations also include the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (37,494 acres) and the Lewis and Clark and Nez Perce National Historic Trails. Under Alternative A, the seven eligible river segments (14.08 miles) would be managed to protect their outstandingly remarkable values and free-flowing nature.	Nine ACECs would be retained and two new ACECs would be designated, totaling 38,786 acres. Special designations also include the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (39,944 acres), four WSAs (28,703 acres), and the Lewis and Clark and Nez Perce National Historic Trails. Two river segments (3.15 miles) are recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System.
Travel Management	TMAs are not delineated in the decision area. OHV use would be limited to existing roads and trails in the Planning Area; however, motorized travel in Pryors, Acton, Shepherd Ah-Nei, and Horsethief would be restricted to designated routes. South Hills would be designated open for motorcycle use only.	TMAs are delineated in the decision area. OHV use is limited to existing roads and trails, except in the 11 TMAs where OHV use is limited to designated routes. South Hills would be designated open for motorcycle use only.
Vegetation	Some restrictions for certain activities in sensitive vegetation areas (e.g., riparian and wetlands).	The ARMP would increase the amount of restrictions on uses within sensitive vegetation areas (e.g., riparian and wetlands). Priority areas for vegetation treatments (e.g., weeds and conifer removal) are identified.
Visual Resources Management	56,700 acres of VRM Class I; 13,507 acres of VRM Class II; 391,113 acres of VRM Class III; and 816 acres of VRM Class IV.	29,714 acres of VRM Class I; 55,883 acres of VRM Class II; 349,441 acres of VRM Class III; and 0 acres of VRM Class IV.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Wild Horse and Burro Management	Herd Management Areas consists of 24,595 acres of the BLM-administered surface.	Herd Management Areas consists of 27,094 acres of the BLM-administered surface.
Wilderness Characteristics	0 acres would be managed for wilderness characteristics.	13,653 acres would be managed for wilderness characteristics.
Buffalo		
Air	Analyze activities with expected impacts on air resources. Modeling may be performed on a case-by-case basis.	Requires quantitative modeling of industrial activities expected to result in emissions that may approach or exceed ambient air quality standards, in consultation with the Wyoming DEQ, to determine the potential impacts of proposed emission sources and potential mitigation strategies.
Cultural Resources	NSO on 19,971 acres on or near cultural sites to protect their setting and integrity.	CSU on 179,189 acres and NSO on 7,289 acres on or near cultural sites to protect their setting and integrity.
Fire Ecology and Management	14,000 acres available for planned ignitions.	Same as prior management decisions.
Fish and Wildlife	Provides sufficient habitat for fish and wildlife.	Alternative D emphasizes protection of fish and wildlife resources by applying moderate resource constraints and defining resource objectives.
Fluid Minerals	146,126 acres open with standard lease terms; 782,501 acres open with moderate constraints; 85,548 acres open with major constraints. Fluid minerals are closed for leasing on 2,346,307acres.	135,909 acres open with standard lease terms; 2,516,826 acres open with moderate constraints; 556,592 acres open with major constraints. Fluid minerals are closed for leasing on 72,276 acres.
Forest and Woodland Products	Balances forest and woodland health with other resource uses, such as commercial timber production. Offers 9 million board feet of saw timber and 1 million board feet of minor green forest products from BLM-administered forestlands over a 10-year period and limits individual clear-cuts to less than 20 acres.	Offers commodity production while managing for long-term ecological health of forestland. Managed to remain within ecologically sustainable limits while maximizing economic return. The designing/shaping of forest management areas is conducted in accordance with other resource values and within the limits of the Wyoming Forestry BMPs.
Lands and Realty	Acres avoided and excluded from ROWs—Not applicable under prior management direction; 351,133 acres would be designated as utility corridors;	321,149 acres would be managed as ROW avoidance areas; 79,777 acres would be managed as ROW exclusion areas; 29,126 acres would be designated

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
	108,243 acres available for disposal and 673,859 acres identified for retention.	as major utility corridors; 120,722 acres available for disposal and 661,380 acres identified for retention.
Livestock Grazing	772,102 acres are available for livestock grazing; 10,000 acres are incompatible for livestock grazing.	772,102 acres are available for livestock grazing; 9,992 acres are incompatible for livestock grazing.
Mineral Materials	3,319,248 acres open to mineral material development. Mineral material sales prohibited within the three WSAs' 28,931 acres.	2,725,060 acres open to mineral material development; 623,061 acres closed to mineral material development.
Recreation	No areas designated as SRMAs or ERMAs. Planning area generally managed as one ERMA, with specific areas of recreation emphasis.	Seven areas managed as SRMAs, totaling 54,160 acres. Eight areas managed as ERMAs, totaling 446,301 acres.
Renewable Energy	Acres avoided and excluded from renewable energy ROWs—Not applicable under prior management direction.	Renewable energy ROWs would be avoided on 374,518 acres and excluded on 352,068 acres.
Soils and Water	Limits surface-disturbing activities for the conservation of soil and water resources.	Land use activities to be considered where soil and water resource objectives can be met.
Solid Minerals	No areas recommended for locatable mineral withdrawal; 1,685,947 acres acceptable for further consideration of coal leasing.	82,691 acres recommended for locatable mineral withdrawal; 1,685,947 acres acceptable for further consideration of coal leasing. For any new coal lease application, the BLM will determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods, pursuant to 43 CFR 3461.5. Priority habitat (core population areas and core population connectivity corridors) is essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1).
Special Designations	No ACECs, byways, or wild and scenic rivers; three WSAs, totaling 28,931 acres; one eligible wild and scenic river, totaling 262,664 acres.	Two ACECs, totaling 2,847 acres; no byways or wild and scenic rivers; three WSAs, totaling 28,931 acres; one eligible wild and scenic river, totaling 262,664 acres.
Travel and Transportation Management	3,650 acres closed to OHV use; 37,646 acres seasonally closed to OHV use; 737,166 acres limited to designated roads and trails.	37,389 acres closed to OHV use; 81,948 acres seasonally closed to OHV use; 661,726 acres limited to designated roads and trails.

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Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Vegetation	Vegetation treatments are designed to meet overall resource management objectives, consistent with the policy to protect or improve biodiversity and water quality.	Allows for resource uses where activities can be conducted that conserve vegetation and other resource values to meet Healthy Rangeland Standards and resource objectives.
Visual Resources Management	0 acres managed as VRM Class I; 127,594 acres managed as VRM Class II; 65,583 acres managed as VRM Class III; 559,674 acres managed as VRM Class IV.	0 acres managed as VRM Class I; 112,329 acres managed as VRM Class II; 379,429 acres managed as VRM Class III; 260,238 acres managed as VRM Class IV.
Wild Horse and Burro Management	Resource not present.	Resource not present.
Wilderness Characteristics	0 acres managed for lands with wilderness characteristics.	One area of 6,864 acres would be managed for lands with wilderness characteristics.
HiLine		
Air	Actions authorized on BLM-administered land would comply with the Clean Air Act requirements, including the State of Montana Air Quality Implementation Plan, through the use of BMPs and the Air Resource Management Plan. Prescribed burns would be managed to comply with Montana DEQ smoke management rules and regulations.	Same as prior management decisions.
Cultural Resources	The Little Rocky Mountain Traditional Cultural Property (30,648 acres) is open to most resource uses. The Sweet Grass Hills Traditional Cultural Property (7,718 acres) is open to most resources uses but is withdrawn from locatable mineral entry and is open to oil and gas leasing, subject to NSO.	The Little Rocky Mountain Traditional Cultural Property (30,648 acres) is open to oil and gas leasing, subject to NSO (5,936 acres), and closed (32,166 acres) avoidance to ROWs, exclusion to wind energy ROWs, and closed (32,058 acre) to leasable and salable minerals. The Sweet Grass Hills Traditional Cultural Property (7,718 acres) is closed to oil and gas leasing, avoidance to ROWs, exclusion to wind energy ROWs, closed to leasable and salable mineral development, and recommended for withdrawal.
Fish and Wildlife	Apply restrictions to sensitive, special status, and threatened and endangered species habitat. See resource uses for applicable allocation decisions that protect	Species-specific direction to protect resources and manage resource uses is provided. Additional protections would not be limited to oil and gas production;

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Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
	these areas.	they may be applied to other resource uses when needed to protect or manage resources. Additional NSO/CSU restrictions to protect fish and wildlife habitats are applied across ACECs and will provide additional protections for fish and wildlife habitat.
Fire Ecology and Management	2,244,429 acres managed to meet Category B objectives; 193,046 acres managed to meet Category C objectives.	1,390,208 acres managed to meet Category B objectives; 1,047,266 acres managed to meet Category C objectives.
Fluid Minerals	282,062 acres of Federal minerals would be open to leasing subject to major constraints (NSO); 2,649,241 acres would be open to leasing, subject to minor constraints (TLS) and CSU, and 457,849 acres would be open to leasing, subject to standard lease terms only. Approximately 102,298 acres of Federal minerals would be closed to leasing.	1,711,378 acres of Federal minerals would be open to leasing, subject to major constraints (NSO); 1,460,096 acres would be open to leasing subject to minor constraints (TLS and CSU); and 167,273 acres would be open to leasing, subject to standard lease terms only. Approximately 152,702 acres of Federal minerals would be closed to leasing.
Forest and Woodland Products	The ASQ would not exceed 350 million board feet per year.	The Probable Sale Quantity (PSQ) of timber is 664 million board feet per year, along with 4,000 tons of biomass per year.
Lands and Realty	90,114 acres would be managed as Category 2 and 3 for disposal. One 4.5-mile-wide designated utility corridor, two ROW exclusion areas, and two ROW avoidance areas.	297,559 acres would be managed as Category 1 retention; 2,126,465 acres would be managed as Category 2 retention/disposal; 13,541 acres would be managed as category 3 disposal. Five designated utility corridors (each one mile wide), two ROW exclusion areas, and nineteen ROW avoidance areas.
Livestock Grazing	Livestock would continue to be allocated approximately 386,600 AUMs of forage each year. Approximately 2,390,000 acres would be open to livestock grazing, and 47,000 acres would be closed to livestock grazing, except as needed for resource management.	Same as prior management decisions.
Mineral Materials	74,506 acres would be closed to mineral material development.	1,666,720 acres would be closed to mineral material development.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Paleontological Resources	Potential impacts on paleontological resources will be considered on an individual basis.	Paleontological assessments will be completed for all projects proposed on Federal lands.
Recreation	Five areas managed as SRMAs and three areas managed as ERMAs. Manage 70 existing recreation sites and facilities.	Two areas managed as SRMAs and ten areas managed as ERMAs. Manage 49 recreation sites and facilities.
Renewable Energy	2,248,366 acres would be open to wind energy ROWs, with minor constraints (standard terms and conditions and BMPs); 189,138 acres of the Planning Area would be exclusion areas for wind energy ROWs.	33,119 acres would be open to wind energy ROWs, with minor constraints. Approximately 1,600 acres of open areas near Shelby, Montana, would be designated potential wind development areas; 885,661 acres would be avoidance areas; 1,518,695 acres of the Planning Area would be exclusion areas for wind energy ROWs.
Solid Minerals	76,477 acres would be closed to mineral leasing (including coal). Four mineral withdrawals would be continued (19,914 acres), including the Sweet Grass Hills TCP withdrawal, which would not be recommended for an extension. Two new withdrawals (1,991 acres) would be recommended. Areas closed to salable minerals would total 74,506 acres.	1,828,239 acres would be closed to mineral leasing (including coal). At the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted, the BLM would determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods, pursuant to 43 CFR 3461.5. PHMAs are essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1). Four existing mineral withdrawals would be continued (20,058 acres). The BLM would recommend a 20-year extension for the Sweet Grass Hills TCP withdrawal and modifications to the Camp Creek and Montana Gulch campgrounds withdrawals. Three withdrawals would be recommended for revocation. The BLM would consider the need for a new withdrawal or ROW for the Zortman/Landusky mine reclamation area. Three new withdrawals would be recommended (951,766 acres). Areas closed to salable minerals would total 1,666,720 acres.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Special Designations	Seven ACECs are retained. Several routes would be considered for backcountry byway status. No segments would be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.	Six ACECs are retained. Four new ACECs would be designated. The half-mile segment of the Marias River at the confluence of the Missouri River would be recommended as unsuitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
Travel and Transportation Management	124 acres managed as open to OHV use; 2,429,930 acres managed as limited to OHV use; 7,419 acres managed as closed to OHV use; 27,529 would be managed as high priority for TMAs; 694,735 acres managed as moderate priority for TMAs; 1,715,311 acres managed as low priority for TMAs.	165 acres managed as open to OHV use; 2,429,889 acres managed as limited to OHV use; 7,419 acres managed as closed to OHV use; 1,440,901 would be managed as high priority for TMAs; 121,440 acres managed as moderate priority for TMAs; 875,133 acres managed as low priority for TMAs.
Vegetation	Some restrictions for certain activities in sensitive vegetation areas (e.g., riparian and wetlands).	The ARMP would increase the amount of restrictions on uses within sensitive vegetation areas (e.g., riparian and wetlands). Priority areas for vegetation treatments (e.g., weeds and conifer removal) are identified. Additional management actions were added to protect special status plant species and their habitat.
Visual Resources Management	74,506 acres managed as VRM Class I; 342,828 acres managed as VRM Class II; 58,213 acres managed as VRM Class III; 1,961,928 acres managed as VRM Class IV.	74,506 acres managed as VRM Class I; 841,087 acres managed as VRM Class II; 521,868 acres managed as VRM Class III; 1,000,013 acres managed as VRM Class IV.
Wilderness Characteristics	0 acres managed for lands with wilderness characteristics.	The BLM would manage three areas (16,393 acres) for lands with wilderness characteristics and would apply management restrictions to reduce impacts on wilderness characteristics on 290,865 acres.
Miles City		
Air	Emission reduction mitigation measures and conservation actions would be considered during project-level planning. The BLM would adjust the timing of authorized activities as needed to accommodate long-term changes in seasonal weather patterns, while	Same as prior management decisions, except a decision that oil and gas leasing would be offered with a CSU for each diesel-fueled non-road engine with greater than 200-horsepower design rating.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
	considering the impacts on other resources and resource uses.	
Cultural Resources	Surface-disturbing activities would be allowed within the Planning Area.	The BLM would manage oil and gas leasing with an NSO stipulation in significant cultural sites, in National Historic Landmarks, and in historic battlefields. All other surface-disturbing activities would be allowed in significant cultural sites, as long as the activities would not have an adverse effect.
Fish and Wildlife	Apply restrictions to sensitive, special status, and threatened and endangered species habitat. See resources uses for applicable allocation decisions that protect these areas.	The ARMP would provide more specific direction to protect resources and manage resource uses than prior management. Under ARMP, additional protections would not be limited to oil and gas production; they may be applied to other resource uses as applicable and when needed to protect or manage resources and resource uses. Also, the ARMP provides more NSO/CSU restrictions for the protection of fish and wildlife habitats.
Fire Ecology and Management	Mechanical thinning of vegetation, biomass removal, and chemical and biological treatments would be allowed to reduce hazardous fuels or improve land health. Fuel treatment projects would be allowed in areas with high social or natural resource values as well as areas next to wildland urban interface areas considered a priority area for treatment. Prescribed fire would be allowed in Category B and C Fire Management Categories.	Same as prior management decisions, except prescribed fire would be allowed in the Planning Area with RDFs to meet resource goals and objectives.
Fluid Minerals	566,000 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to major constraints (NSO); 555,000 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to moderate constraints (CSU); 3,466,000 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to moderate constraints (TL); 1,316,000 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to standard constraints.	1,850,000 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to major constraints (NSO); 3,645,000 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to moderate constraints (CSU); 179,000 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to moderate constraints (TL); 987,000 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to standard constraints.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Forest and Woodland Products	Forestlands in the Planning Area with 10 percent or more canopy cover per acre would be managed for the enhancement of other resources, not for the production of forest products or saw timber.	Forestlands would be managed to enhance the health and resiliency of forest and woodland resources and for a diversity of forest products. PSQ for commercial saw timber would be allowed up to 1,100 million board feet per year.
Lands and Realty	35,830 acres would be ROW avoidance areas; 128,960 acres would be ROW exclusion areas; 83,160 acres would be managed as category 1 retention lands; 2,585,535 acres would be managed as category 2 retention lands and disposal; 82,835 acres would be managed as category 3 disposal lands; nine communication sites would be designated.	83,659 acres would be minor and major ROW exclusion areas. Major ROWs would be avoided on 2,222,701 surface acres, and minor ROWs would be avoided on 858,073 surface acres; 83,160 acres would be managed as category 1 retention lands; 2,585,535 acres would be managed as category 2 retention lands and disposal; 82,835 acres would be managed as category 3 disposal lands; nine communication sites would be designated.
Livestock Grazing	2,700,000 acres and an estimated 546,508 AUMs would be available for livestock grazing. Livestock grazing would be unavailable on approximately 240 acres (62 AUMs).	2,700,000 acres and an estimated 546,496 AUMS would be available for livestock grazing. Livestock grazing would be unavailable on approximately 140 (12 AUMs).
Mineral Materials	2,500,000 acres would be available to mineral material sales and permits; 236,000 acres would not be allowed or closed to mineral material sales and permits.	1,521,869 acres would be available to mineral material sales and permits; 978,131 acres would be closed to all mineral material sales, except free-use permits and expansion of existing active pits if certain conditions are met; 169,000 acres would not be allowed or closed to mineral material sales and permits.
Recreation	16,583 acres would be managed as SRMAs and 28,884 would be managed as ERMAs.	21,948 acres would be managed as SRMAs and 2,200 would be managed as ERMAs.
Renewable Energy	60,000 acres would be avoided to renewable energy ROWs; 125,700 acres would be excluded to renewable energy ROWs.	1,400,514 acres would be avoided to renewable energy ROWs; 1,002,687 acres would be excluded to renewable energy ROWs.
Soils and Water	Surface-disturbing activities on slopes 30 percent or greater would be avoided unless the activity can be mitigated (43,780	Surface-disturbing activities on sensitive soils would be allowed, with specialized design features to maintain or improve

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
	acres). Surface water impoundments would be allowed. Surface-disturbing activities would be allowed within State-designated source water protection areas.	the stability of the site. Surface-disturbing activities on badlands and rock outcrop would be allowed, with specialized design features to maintain or improve the stability of the site. Surface water impoundments would be allowed, with measures designed to maintain water quality and riparian and watershed functionality and resiliency. Surface-disturbing activities would be allowed within State-designated source water protection areas, with specialized design features to minimize impacts on surface or groundwater quality.
Solid Minerals	Areas identified in the Big Dry and Powder River RMPs as acceptable for further consideration for coal leasing would be carried forward; 2.18 million acres would remain open to mineral location (locatables).	Same as prior management decisions. At the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted, the BLM would determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods, pursuant to 43 CFR 3461.5. PHMAs are essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1).
Special Designations	Fifteen ACECs are retained. Sustain and enhance the Lewis and Clark Trail to complement its status as a National Historic Trail.	Thirteen ACECs are retained and five new ACECs would be designated. Sustain and enhance the Lewis and Clark Trail to complement its status as a National Historic Trail.
Travel and Transportation Management	2,372 acres are open to OHV use; 2,749,078 acres are limited to OHV use; 80 acres are closed to OHV use.	0 acres are open to OHV use; 2,748,730 acres are limited to OHV use; 2,800 acres are closed to OHV use.
Vegetation	Some restrictions for certain activities in sensitive vegetation areas (e.g., riparian and wetlands).	Compared to prior management, the ARMP would better maintain riparian and wetland areas. Vegetation treatments (e.g., weeds and conifer removal) are identified and prioritized.
Visual Resources Management	97,000 acres managed as VRM Class I; 400,000 acres managed as VRM Class II; 375,000 acres managed as VRM Class III; 1,890,000 acres managed as VRM Class IV.	83,000 acres managed as VRM Class I; 414,000 acres managed as VRM Class II; 695,000 acres managed as VRM Class III; 1,570,000 acres managed as VRM Class IV.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Wilderness Characteristics	0 acres managed for lands with wilderness characteristics.	5,236 acres would be managed for lands with wilderness characteristics.
South Dakota		
Air	Tier 4 nonroad diesel engines or engines emitting NOx at rates less than or equal to EPA emission standards for Tier 4 nonroad diesel engines would be required.	Tier 4 engines would be required for oil and gas drilling and completion activities as follows: Tier 4 nonroad diesel engines or engines emitting NOx at rates less than or equal to EPA emission standards for Tier 4 nonroad diesel engines.
Cultural Resources	Apply restrictions to cultural properties determined to be of importance to Native American tribal groups, sites determined to be TCPS or designated for traditional use. See resource uses for applicable allocation decisions that protect these areas.	Same as prior management decisions, except acres of restrictive resource use allocations may vary. See resource uses for applicable allocation decisions that protect these areas.
Fire Ecology and Management	All 274,000 acres of BLM-administered lands, including the Exemption Area, Fort Meade ACEC, and remainder of South Dakota Fire Management Units, would be designated as Category B	Same as prior management direction.
Fish and Wildlife	Apply restrictions to sensitive, special status, and threatened and endangered species habitat. See resources uses for applicable allocation decisions that protect these areas.	The ARMP would provide more specific direction to protect resources and manage resource uses than prior management. Under the ARMP, additional protections would not be limited to oil and gas production; they may be applied to other resource uses when needed to protect or manage resources and resource uses. Also, the ARMP provides more NSO/CSU restrictions to protect fish and wildlife habitats.
Fluid Minerals	15,489 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to major constraints (NSO); 2,954 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to moderate constraints (CSU); 115,204 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to moderate constraints (TL); 103,033 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to standard constraints; 6,894 acres would be closed to oil and gas leasing.	152,100 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to major constraints (NSO); 21,175 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to moderate constraints (CSU); 1,169 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to moderate constraints (TL); 62,236 acres would be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to standard constraints; 6,894 acres would be closed to oil and gas leasing.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Forest and Woodland Products	All lands would be available for the sale, use, and treatment of forest and woodland products, except sale would not be allowed on the Fossil Cycad ACEC. Forest and woodland products, such as firewood, posts, poles, biomass, and timber, would be managed to benefit other resources and offered for sale when they have an economic value. PSQ would be 7,000 tons/year for all forest and woodland products.	All lands would be available for the sale, use, and treatment of forest and woodland products, except sale would not be allowed on the Fossil Cycad ACEC. Forest and woodland products, such as firewood, posts, poles, biomass, timber, and other special forest products, would be managed to benefit other resources and offered for sale when they have an economic value and used or treated if there is no economic value. PSQ would be 7,000 tons/year for all forest and woodland products.
Lands and Realty	Consider landownership adjustments on a case-by-case basis, based on the criteria for retention, acquisition and disposal; 0 acres would be avoidance areas for ROWs; 5,522 acres would be exclusion areas for ROWs. No new ROW corridors.	Category 1—Retention area with no disposal (6,894 acres). Category 2—Retention with Limited disposal potential, based on specialist review (202,395 acres). Category 3—Disposal contingent on specialist review (64,030 acres); 247,551 acres would be avoidance areas for ROWs; 5,836 acres would be exclusion areas for ROWs. No new ROW corridors.
Livestock Grazing	Livestock grazing would be allowed on about 271,000 acres. The amount of forage available for permitted use on these lands would be about 73,400 AUMs.	Livestock grazing would be allowed on about 272,000 acres. The amount of forage that could be available for permitted use on these lands would be about 77,300 AUMs.
Mineral Materials	6,894 acres would be closed to mineral material development.	420,126 acres would be closed to mineral material development.
Recreation	Not applicable	11,652 acres would be managed as SRMAs.
Renewable Energy	0 acres would be renewable energy ROWs avoidance areas; 5,522 acres would be renewable energy ROWs exclusion areas.	107,147 acres would be renewable energy ROWs avoidance areas; 146,240 acres would be renewable energy ROW exclusion areas.
Soils and Water	Apply restrictions to perennial or intermittent streams, lakes, ponds, reservoirs, 100-year floodplains, wetlands, and riparian areas. See resource uses for applicable allocation decisions that protect these areas.	Same as prior management decisions, except acres of restrictive resource use allocations may vary. See resources uses for applicable allocation decisions that protect these areas.

Table 4-1
Summary of Major Resources and Resource Uses Management Decisions Contained in the ARMPs Compared to Prior RMP Management Decisions

Resource or Resource Use	Management Decisions Prior to the ARMP	Management Decisions Contained in the ARMP
Solid Minerals	6,894 acres would be recommended for locatable mineral withdrawal. No specific management decisions associated with coal.	7,304 acres would be recommended for locatable mineral withdrawal; 7,304 acres would be closed to solid leasable mineral development. At the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted, the BLM would determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods, pursuant to 43 CFR 3461.5. PHMAs are essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1).
Special Designations	Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad ACECs would be retained.	Fort Meade and Fossil Cycad ACECs would be retained.
Travel and Transportation Management	OHV use would be limited to existing roads and trails for the entire Planning Area.	Three TMAs would be developed. OHV use would be limited to existing roads and trails for the entire Planning Area until the implementation level route designation process is completed for each TMA.
Vegetation	Some restrictions for certain activities in sensitive vegetation areas (e.g., riparian and wetlands).	The ARMP would increase the amount of restrictions on uses within sensitive vegetation areas (e.g., riparian and wetlands). Priority areas for vegetation treatments (e.g., weeds and conifer removal) are identified.
Visual Resources Management	0 acres managed as VRM Class I ; 1,231 acres managed as VRM Class II; 4,993 acres managed as VRM Class III; 531 acres managed as VRM Class IV.	0 acres managed as VRM Class I; 1,544 acres managed as VRM Class II; 10,367 acres managed as VRM Class III; 259,841 acres managed as VRM Class IV.
Wilderness Characteristics	0 acres managed for lands with wilderness characteristics.	Same as prior management decisions.

Note: Acres depicted in this table represent BLM-administered surface estate. For more details regarding the management decisions for each of these resources and resource uses, please refer to the attached ARMPs.

The BLM is tasked to provide multiple use management for public lands under FLPMA and numerous other laws and regulations that govern the management of public lands. The BLM's objective in choosing the Proposed RMPs as the ARMPs was to address diverse needs and concerns in a fair manner and to provide a practical and workable framework for managing public lands. The BLM is ultimately responsible for preparing these ARMPs, consistent with its legal mandates that reflect collective professional judgment using the best available science.

Specific to the ARMPs, these documents provide for the conservation of physical, biological, heritage, and visual resources, while allowing for resource use if the activities can be conducted in a manner that preserves these resource values. In reviewing the alternatives analyzed in the EISs for these plan revisions, incorporating current knowledge on existing and reasonably foreseeable development opportunities, and comparing to the existing RMP and Management Framework Plan (MFP) decisions, the BLM determined that the Proposed RMPs provided the most balanced management direction. Additional specific management considerations for each of the ARMPs (plan revisions) are listed below.

Bighorn Basin (Planning Area for the Cody and Worland Field Offices)

- Monitoring, the availability of new information, and advances in science and technology since the release of the Washakie RMP (1988), Grass Creek RMP (1998), and Cody RMP (1990, which the Cody and Worland ARMPs replace) provided new data to consider (for example, new data from the Potential for Renewable Energy on Public Lands, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Inventory – 2011 Update, Visual Resource Inventory for the Cody Field Office, Washington Office IM-2012-044, Wyoming State Office IM-2012-019, and Wyoming Governor Executive Order 2011-05).
- In the Bighorn Basin Planning Area, approximately 476,000 acres of public lands were found to contain wilderness characteristics. These lands were also found to contain other resource values that provided protection to the important values. Therefore, the BLM determined that additional management, above the management assigned through wildlife timing and distance restrictions, travel and transportation management, and visual resource management was not warranted.
- The Cody and Worland Field Offices will consider interest in exploration for, or leasing of, federal coal, if any, by applying the coal screening process at the application stage. The coal screening process results would determine which lands may be available for further consideration for coal leasing and development. Appropriate NEPA analysis would be required prior to leasing. To emphasize the need for GRSG habitat protection, the following decision specific for GRSG PHMAs was added: At the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted to the BLM, the BLM will determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods pursuant to 43 CFR 3461.5. PHMAs are essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1).
- Although there is record of historic mining in the area, coal production in the Planning Area is generally not considered economically feasible due to the relative thinness of the coalbeds, thickness of the overburden, and low quality of the coal.

Buffalo

- Need to address the *Pennaco v. U.S.*, 377 F.3d 1147 (10th Cir. 2004) decision, which required analysis of coal bed natural gas development for fluid mineral leasing decisions in the Powder River Basin.
- Peer-reviewed research concluded GRSG population viability within the Planning Area was 8questionable under the current management (1985 RMP). The RMP revision analyzed new data and information to update GRSG management and comply with Washington Office IM-

2012-044 and Wyoming State Office IM-2012-019 and to ensure consistency with Wyoming Governor Executive Order 2011-05.

- In the Buffalo Planning Area, approximately 12,237 acres of public lands were found to contain wilderness characteristics; 6,864 acres will be managed for lands with wilderness characteristics in the ARMP. The lands not being managed for lands with wilderness characteristics were also found to contain other resource values that provided protection to the important values. Therefore, the BLM determined that additional management, above the management assigned through wildlife timing and distance restrictions, travel and transportation management, and visual resource management was not warranted.
- The ARMP brought forward the suitability determinations made through a past planning effort (1985 Buffalo RMP, as updated in 2001). This RMP found areas suitable and acceptable for further consideration for coal leasing. To emphasize the need for GRSG habitat protection, the following decision specific for GRSG PHMAs was added: At the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted, the BLM would determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods, pursuant to 43 CFR 3461.5. PHMAs are essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5 (o)(1).

Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument

- Monitoring, and the availability of new information and advances in science and technology since the release of the Billings RMP (1984), as amended, provided new data to consider.
- Need to incorporate special management considerations related to the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range to address resource conflicts.
- This comprehensive plan is needed to address competing resource uses and values in the same area. In addition, conditions have changed since the original RMP was approved, as follows
  - Changed ecological, socioeconomic, institutional, and regulatory conditions
  - Changing user demands and activities
  - Heightened public awareness and increased public demand for use of the lands
  - New laws, regulations, and policies that supersede previous decisions
  - Changing tolerance or acceptance of impacts
  - Increased conflict between competing resource values and land uses
- The RMP is also being prepared to incorporate consistent objectives and conservation measures for managing GRSG habitat. These conditions also drive the need for an inclusive comprehensive plan that provides updated and clear direction to both the BLM and the public.
- Fluid and solid minerals—Management considerations included split-estate (private surface/Federal minerals), activities, and human presence in fish and wildlife habitats and the potential effects of mineral development on fish and wildlife habitat, recreation values, forage use, air resources, scenic quality, cultural and heritage resources, and water quality.

- Motorized and nonmotorized travel management considerations provide for suitable and sufficient recreation uses and facilities, cultural, wildlife, and visual resource management direction and resource protection.
- Thirteen units contained wilderness characteristics (27,507 acres), and nine of these areas are being managed for lands with wilderness characteristics (approximately 50 percent of the acres). The lands not being managed for lands with wilderness characteristics (13,854 acres) were also found to contain other resource values that provided protection to the important values (for example, ACECs and small river islands).
- The Billings ARMP will consider interest in exploration for, or leasing of, federal coal, if any, by applying the coal screening process at the application stage. The coal screening process results would determine which lands may be available for further consideration for coal leasing and development. To emphasize the need for GRSG habitat protection, the following decision specific for GRSG PHMAs was added: At the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted to the BLM, the BLM would determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods pursuant to 43 CFR 3461.5. PHMAs are essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1). Appropriate NEPA analysis would be required prior to leasing. The prior RMP (BLM 1984) coal screening management decisions are current and relevant to the application area. Areas closed to coal leasing (225,655 acres) in the ARMP are WSAs, ACECs, lands with wilderness characteristics, and National Historic Trails.

The Pompeys Pillar National Monument ARMP complies with Presidential Proclamation 7396, and through implementation of this ARMP will conserve, enhance, and restore the nationally significant landscape, objects, and values for which Pompeys Pillar National Monument (51 acres) was designated for the benefit of present and future generations.

Pompeys Pillar National Monument would be managed to protect the historical and cultural objects for which is was nominated; the ARMP contains several management actions to protect these objects, such as:

- All Federal lands and interest in lands within the boundaries of PPNM are appropriated and withdrawn from all forms of entry, location, selection, sale, or leasing or other disposition under the public land laws, including, but not limited to withdrawal from location, entry, and patent under the mining laws, and from disposition under all laws relating to mineral and geothermal leasing, subject to valid existing rights. Consider acquiring minerals from willing sellers.
- The National Historic Landmark (6 acres within the National Monument) which includes the rock feature itself (Clark's signature), would be managed as a VRM Class II designation to protect the values associated with the landform.
- Opportunities for interpretation, education and enjoyment of the area would be emphasized.
- ROWs would be exclusion area, except for those necessary to serve the site facilities.
- Land disposal would not be allowed.

HiLine

- Monitoring, the availability of new information, and advances in science and technology since the release of the West HiLine RMP (1988) and the Judith-Valley-Phillips RMP (1994, which the HiLine ARMP replaces) provided new data to consider, for example, new data from an updated Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Inventory—2011 Update and the finding of 13 nominated ACECs that met the relevance and importance criteria.
- Fluid and solid minerals—Management considerations included split-estate (private surface/Federal minerals), activities and human presence in fish and wildlife habitats, and the potential effects of mineral development on recreation values, forage use, air resources, scenic quality, sensitive vegetation types, and water quality.
- Motorized travel—Management considerations included providing for suitable and sufficient recreation uses and facilities (both dispersed and commercial), visual resource management direction, and OHV use designations.
- Wildlife habitat and special status species, including GRSG management considerations included habitat identification, use, and quality and the interrelationships between these species and other resource uses and human activities. Specific management considerations in GRSG habitat were incorporated into the RMP for their conservation.
- Relationship to BLM Policies, Plans, and Programs—BLM plans relating to or otherwise governing management in the Planning Area provided perspective in developing the HiLine Approved Plan.
- Twenty-eight areas contained wilderness characteristics (399,000 acres), three of which (16,393 acres) will be managed for lands with wilderness characteristics. The 291,000 acres not being managed for wilderness characteristics are due to other management/resource priorities, such as ACECs and PHMAs (291,000 acres), which provide complementary management (e.g., NSO for leasing and ROW avoidance areas). The remaining 92,000 acres are being managed to emphasize other uses over wilderness characteristics (most of these acres are already held by oil and gas leases).
- Coal is a leasable solid mineral with low occurrence potential in the Planning Area. No leases have been issued in the Planning Area and no production is occurring because the potential for development is considered to be low enough that no interest has been shown in obtaining leases. At the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted, the BLM would determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods, pursuant to 43 CFR, CFR Part 3461.5. PHMAPHMAs is are essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR, CFR Part 3461.5(o)(1).

Miles City

- Most BLM-administered public lands in the Miles City Field Office are split-estate (10.6 million acres); BLM surface is 2.75 million acres (11 percent of the Planning Area).
- This comprehensive plan is needed to address competing resource uses and values in the same area. In addition, conditions have changed since the original RMPs were approved, as follows:

  - Changed ecological, socioeconomic, institutional, and regulatory conditions
  - New laws, regulations, and policies that supersede previous decisions
  - Changing user demands and activities
  - Changing tolerance or acceptance of impacts
- The ARMP was prepared to incorporate consistent objectives and conservation measures for the management of GRSG habitat. These conditions also drive the need for an inclusive comprehensive plan that provides updated and clear direction to both the BLM and the public.
- Five areas contained wilderness characteristics, one of which (5,200 acres) will be managed for lands with wilderness characteristics. The 23,600 acres not being managed for wilderness characteristics are due to other management and resource priorities, such as PHMAs and crucial big game winter range, which provide complementary management (such as NSO for leasing and ROW avoidance areas).
- The ARMP brought forward the suitability determinations made through past planning efforts, (Big Dry and Powder River RMPs). These RMPs found areas suitable and acceptable for further consideration for coal leasing. To emphasize the need for GRSG habitat protection, the following decision specific for GRSG PHMAs was added: At the time an application for a new coal lease or lease modification is submitted, the BLM would determine whether the lease application area is "unsuitable" for all or certain coal mining methods, pursuant to 43 CFR 3461.5. PHMAs are essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5 (o)(1).

South Dakota

- BLM-administered public lands in South Dakota are highly intermingled with many small tracts of public land surrounded by state or private land. Over 98 percent of public land in South Dakota is in the western half of the state.
- Monitoring, and the availability of new information, and advances in science and technology since the release of the South Dakota RMP (1986), as amended, provided new data to consider.
- Increased recreational use at Fort Meade ACEC and the Exemption Area has created a need to look at management opportunities for recreation.
- Increased interest in wind energy development in South Dakota has created a need to evaluate potential impacts and provide improved management direction.
- The BLM South Dakota Field Office contains no lands with wilderness characteristics.
- BLM-administered public lands in the Planning Area have low coal development potential, relative to adjacent states. The RMP planning team discussed coal development and dismissed it because 1) the South Dakota Field Office received no comments or expressions of interest in coal development during scoping and has not received applications or expressions of interest in the last ten years, and 2) coal beds in the Planning Area have a less profitable stripping ratio than adjacent states, making development unlikely.

CHAPTER 5
MITIGATION MEASURES FOR ARMPS (PLAN REVISIONS)

Mitigation measures required for actions in GRSG habitat for the ARMPAs and the GRSG habitat management decisions in the ARMPs (plan revisions) are discussed in **Section 1.6.2** of this ROD.

For lands within the Planning Areas described in the ARMPs that are outside of GRSG habitat, all practical means will be taken to avoid or minimize environmental harm. In developing the alternatives, the BLM used a variety of management methods and tools, including identifying allowable uses, temporal, spatial, and method restrictions on uses, where specific uses would be prohibited, and specific actions that are needed to achieve the goals and objectives. Restrictions on land uses are seasonal closures, stipulations on surface disturbances, and the application of BMPs.

The ARMPs provide a list of BMPs that are applicable to land use activities authorized by the BLM (these BMPs are listed in various appendices in each of the attached ARMPs). BMPs are state-of-the-art mitigation measures that may be applied on a site-specific basis to avoid, minimize, reduce, rectify, or compensate for adverse environmental or social impacts of land use activities. The BMPs included in each of the ARMPs are not intended to be a complete list; instead, they are displayed to show land use project proponents examples of commonly used practices the BLM may require to reduce impacts of surface-disturbing activities, use, or occupancy. More explicit BMPs based on local conditions and resource-specific concerns could be developed once a specific proposal is being evaluated through the environmental analysis process. Additional BMPs can be proposed by project applicants for activities on BLM-administered lands.

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CHAPTER 6
PLAN MONITORING FOR ARMPS (PLAN REVISIONS)

The method for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the ARMP GRSG management actions is discussed in detail in **Section 1.6.4** of this ROD.

For lands in the Planning Areas described in the ARMPs that are outside of GRSG habitat, land use plan decision monitoring will apply. Monitoring is a continuous process occurring over the life of the RMP. Monitoring data are collected, examined, and used to draw conclusions on the following:

- Whether planned actions have been implemented in the manner prescribed by the RMP (implementation monitoring)
- Whether RMP allowable use and management action decisions and the resultant implementation actions are effective in achieving program-specific objectives or desired outcomes (effectiveness monitoring)
- Calculating the cost of delivering a service or product (efficiency monitoring by program elements)

Conclusions are then used to make recommendations on whether to continue current management or determine what changes need to be made to implementation practices to better achieve RMP decisions. Indicators, methods, locations, units of measures, frequency, and action triggers can be established by national policy guidance, in RMPs, or by technical specialists in order to address specific issues.

Based on staffing and funding levels, monitoring is annually prioritized, consistent with the goals and objectives of the RMP. The BLM may work with local, State, and other Federal agencies, or it may use data collected by other agencies and sources when appropriate and available.

In accordance with the BLM's *Resource Management Planning Handbook* (H-1601-1), the approved RMP will be evaluated periodically to determine whether the RMP decisions and NEPA analysis are still valid and whether the plan is being implemented effectively. More specifically, the RMP will be evaluated to determine the following:

- If the decisions remain relevant to current issues
- If decisions are effective in achieving or making progress toward achieving the desired outcomes specified in the plan
- If any decisions are in need of revision
- If any decisions need to be dropped from further considerations
- If any areas require new decisions

In making these determinations, the BLM will consider whether mitigation measures—such as those presented in the ARMP—are satisfactory, whether there are significant changes in the related plans of other entities, and whether there is significant new information.

CHAPTER 7
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, CONSULTATION, AND COORDINATION

BLM resource management planning is conducted in accordance with NEPA requirements, CEQ regulations, and US Department of the Interior policies and procedures for implementing NEPA, as well as specific BLM planning and NEPA policies. NEPA and associated laws, regulations, and policies require the BLM to seek public involvement early in and throughout the planning process, to develop a range of reasonable alternatives to proposed actions, and to prepare environmental documents that disclose the potential impacts of proposed management.

Public involvement and agency consultation and coordination have been at the heart of the planning process leading to these Rocky Mountain Region ARMPs and ARMPAs. These efforts were achieved through *Federal Register* notices, formal and informal public meetings, individual contacts, media releases, planning bulletins, and a series of GRSG planning-related websites.

This section documents the outreach efforts that have occurred to date. For more plan-specific information related to the public involvement, consultation, and coordination processes that the BLM conducted, please refer to Chapter 3 of the attached ARMPAs and Chapter 4 of the attached ARMPs.

7.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The scoping period for the National GRSG Planning Strategy began with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* on December 9, 2011, and ended on March 23, 2012. Beginning in December and ending in February 2012, the BLM hosted a series of public open house scoping meetings across the Rocky Mountain Region. A final National GRSG Planning Strategy Scoping Report was released in May 2012 (BLM and Forest Service 2012).

The plan revisions (Bighorn Basin, which includes the Cody and Worland Field Offices; Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument, Buffalo, HiLine, Miles City, and South Dakota) also held separate scoping periods throughout their individual Planning Areas, before the National GRSG Planning Strategy began. Individual scoping reports for each plan revision were completed between September 2005 and March 2009.

A NOA for the Bighorn Basin Draft RMP/EIS was published in April 2011. Throughout 2013, the NOAs announcing the release of the Draft RMPs and RMPAs/Draft EISs for the remaining planning efforts in the Rocky Mountain Region were published, including an NOA announcing the release of a supplement to Bighorn Basin Draft RMP/EIS.

Comments on the Draft RMPs and RMPAs/Draft EISs were considered and incorporated, as appropriate, into the Proposed Plans and Plan Amendments/Final EISs. The Rocky Mountain Region received approximately 10,300 substantive comments, contained in 45,200 submissions during the Draft RMPs and RMPAs/Draft EISs comment periods. Comments on the Draft RMPs and RMPAs/Draft EISs received from the public and internal BLM review were carefully considered and incorporated as appropriate into the Proposed RMPs and RMPAs/Final EISs. Public comments resulted in the addition of clarifying text but did not significantly change the Proposed RMPs and Plan RMPAs.

On May 29, 2015, the BLM released an NOA for all of the Rocky Mountain Region GRSG Proposed Plan Amendments/Final EISs and for each of the Proposed Plans/Final EISs. The release of the NOA initiated a 30-day public protest period and a 60-day Governor's consistency review. Refer to **Sections 2.5** and **2.6** for a full description of the protest period and the Governor's consistency review outcomes.

7.2 COOPERATING AGENCIES

A cooperating agency is any Federal, State, or local government agency or Native American tribe that enters into a formal agreement with the lead Federal agency to help develop an environmental analysis. Cooperating agencies and tribes "work with the BLM, sharing knowledge and resources, to achieve desired outcomes for public lands and communities within statutory and regulatory frameworks" (BLM 2005). The benefits of enhanced collaboration among agencies in preparing NEPA analyses are as follows:

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

The BLM entered into a formal MOU for the National GRSG Planning Strategy with the FWS and the Forest Service. In addition, the Rocky Mountain sub-regions also invited local, State, other Federal, and tribal representatives to participate as cooperating agencies for these RMPs and RMPAs/EISs. In total, there were 172 MOUs signed with Federal, State, county, local, and tribal entities. The MOUs outline the interests, expertise, and jurisdictional responsibilities of both the BLM and its cooperating agency partners and their respective roles and responsibilities in the planning and NEPA processes. Additional information can be found in the Consultation and Coordination Chapter of each of the Proposed RMPs and RMPAs/Final EISs. These cooperating agencies divided by sub-region are provided below.

Rocky Mountain Region-Wide

US Fish and Wildlife Service
US Forest Service

Lewistown

Chain Buttes Cooperative State Grazing District
Fergus County
Judith Basin County
Indian Butte Cooperative State Grazing District
Lewis and Clark National Forest
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Petroleum County
Petroleum County Conservation District
Winnett Cooperative State Grazing District

North Dakota

North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Bowman County Commissioners
Bowman-Slope Conservation District

Northwest Colorado

Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado
Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge
Colorado Department of Natural Resources
Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife
Denver Water Board
Garfield County
Grand County
Jackson County
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest
Mesa County
Moffat County
Natural Resource Conservation Service
Rio Blanco County
Routt County
White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts

Wyoming

City of Laramie
Converse County
Crook County
Lincoln County
Lincoln County Conservation District
Lingle–Fort Laramie Conservation District
Little Snake River Conservation District
Medicine Bow Conservation District

Natrona County
Saratoga Encampment Rawlins Conservation District
South Goshen Conservation District
Sublette County
Sublette County Conservation District
Sweetwater County
Sweetwater County Conservation District
Uinta County
Uinta County Conservation District
US Environmental Protection Agency
US Department of Agriculture: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Weston County
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Wyoming Department of Agriculture
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Office of the Governor
Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office
Wyoming State Planning Office

Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument

Big Horn County (Wyoming)
Carbon County
Golden Valley County
Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council
Montana State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation – Northeastern and Southern Land Offices
Montana Association of Conservation Districts
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Musselshell County
Musselshell Planning Project
US Bureau of Indian Affairs, Rocky Mountain Region
US Bureau of Reclamation, Montana Area Office
Wheatland County
Yellowstone County

Buffalo

Campbell County Commission
Campbell County Conservation District
Crook County Commission
Johnson County Commission
Lake DeSmet Conservation District
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest
Northern Cheyenne Tribe
Powder River Conservation District
Sheridan County Commission

Thunder Basin National Grasslands
Wyoming Office of the Governor
Wyoming Department of Agriculture
Wyoming Department of Revenue
Wyoming State Geological Survey
Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments
Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office
Wyoming State Engineer's Office
Wyoming State Forestry Division
Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources
Wyoming State Trails Program
Wyoming Travel and Tourism
Wyoming Water Development Commission
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Wyoming Department of Transportation
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8
US Office of Surface Mining

Bighorn Basin (Cody and Worland)

Big Horn County Commission
Bighorn National Forest Ranger District
Cody Conservation District
Crow Tribe
Hot Springs Conservation District
Hot Springs County Commission
Meeteetse Conservation District
Northern Cheyenne Tribe Tribal Historic Preservation Office
Park County Commission
Powell-Clarks Fork Conservation District
Rosebud Sioux Tribe
Shoshone Conservation District
Shoshone National Forest/Wapati Ranger District
South Big Horn Conservation District
Washakie County Commission
Washakie County Conservation District
Wyoming Office of the Governor
Wyoming Department of Agriculture
Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Wyoming Office of Lands and Investments
Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
Wyoming State Engineer's Office
Wyoming State Geological Survey

Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office
US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8

HiLine

Badlands Cooperative State Grazing District
Blaine County
Buggy Creek Cooperative State Grazing District
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
North Blaine Cooperative State Grazing District
North Valley Cooperative State Grazing District
North Phillips Cooperative State Grazing District
Phillips County
South Phillips Cooperative State Grazing District
Wayne Creek Cooperative State Grazing District
Willow Creek Cooperative State Grazing District
US Bureau of Indian Affairs
US Bureau of Reclamation
Valley County

Miles City

Big Horn County
Carter County
Carter County Conservation District
Custer County
Daniels County
Fallon County
Fork Peck Tribe
Garfield County
Garfield County Conservation District
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
McCone County
McCone County Conservation District
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Powder River County
Prairie County Conservation District
Prairie County Cooperative State Grazing District
Richland County
Richland County Conservation District
Rosebud County
Sheridan County
Treasure County
US Bureau of Indian Affairs
US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8
Wibaux County Conservation District

South Dakota Field Office

Butte County Commission
Custer County Commission
Harding County Commission
Lawrence County Commission
Meade County Commission
Pennington County Commission
State of South Dakota

7.3 FWS SECTION 7 CONSULTATION

Under Section 7 of the ESA, Federal agencies must consult with the FWS when an action the agency carries out, funds, or authorizes *may affect* a listed endangered or threatened species or its designated critical habitat. For all ARMPs and ARMPAs in the Rocky Mountain Region where the BLM determined that it may affect a listed endangered or threatened species, the BLM initiated consultation by requesting a species list from the appropriate FWS office for Federally listed, Federally proposed, or current Federal candidate species that may be present in the Planning Area. The BLM subsequently prepared biological assessments based on the species lists in which a determination is made, pursuant to Section 7 of the ESA, as to whether the plans would affect a Federally listed, proposed, or candidate species. For all of the ARMPs and ARMPAs in the Rocky Mountain Region where consultation was required, the determinations from the BLM and the FWS concurrence letters or biological opinions from the FWS are an appendix to each of the attached ARMPs and ARMPAs.

7.4 NATIVE AMERICAN AND STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICERS CONSULTATION

In recognition of the government-to-government relationship between individual tribes and the Federal government, the BLM initiated Native American consultation in preparation of the Rocky Mountain sub-regional RMPs and RMPAs/EISs. Coordination with Native American tribes occurred throughout the planning process. The BLM sent 102 individual letters to tribal governments, providing initial notification of the RMP and RMPAs/EISs and background information on the project, an invitation to be a cooperating agency, and notification of subsequent consultation related to the planning process. Tribes have been participating in the RMP and RMPAs/EISs processes through numerous meetings and through personal BLM contacts, and in some cases, as cooperating agencies.

Lewistown, North Dakota, Northwest Colorado, and Wyoming ARMPAs, and HiLine ARMP

As part of the NEPA scoping and consultation process for the Lewistown, North Dakota, Northwest Colorado, and Wyoming ARMPAs and the HiLine ARMP, the BLM notified the Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) of the opportunities to comment on the planning and NEPA documents prepared for these efforts, as they relate to the RMP decisions included in the ARMPAs.

The BLM sought information about historic properties in consideration of resource management planning decisions, in accordance with the National Programmatic Agreement between the BLM, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, National Conference of SHPOs, and the state protocol agreements between the BLM and Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota SHPOs. If the BLM received comments and information from the SHPOs and tribes, it considered that information and

incorporated it into the Proposed RMP and RMPAs/Final EISs and the ARMP and ARMPAs. The BLM also considered such information in making the RMPA and revision decisions.

The BLM has met its obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 54 USC, Section 306108, as outlined in the National Programmatic Agreement and the state protocols. The BLM will satisfy the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for future implementation-level decisions, such as project proposals, including adequate consultation with SHPOs, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, Native American Tribes, and other interested parties, consistent with the alternative procedures set forth in the National Programmatic Agreement and relevant state protocols or, where applicable, the Section 106 regulations.

Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument, Bighorn Basin, Buffalo, Miles City, and South Dakota ARMPs

As part of the NEPA scoping and consultation process, BLM Montana/Dakotas and Wyoming invited the Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming SHPOs to participate in preparing the ARMPs regarding the resource management planning decisions included in the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument, Bighorn Basin (Cody and Worland Field Offices), Buffalo, Miles City, and South Dakota Planning Areas. The BLM sought information about the identification of historic properties in consideration of resource management planning decisions included in these ARMPs, in accordance with the National Programmatic Agreement between the BLM, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and National Conference of SHPOs and the Wyoming, Montana, and South Dakota State Protocol Agreement between the BLM and Wyoming, Montana, and South Dakota SHPOs, or, where applicable, the Section 106 regulations.

The BLM incorporated the information it received from the SHPOs into the Proposed RMPs and considered such information in making the RMP decisions. The BLM has met its obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 54 USC, Section 306108, as outlined in the National Programmatic Agreement and the state protocols or, where applicable, the Section 106 regulations. The BLM will satisfy the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for future implementation-level decisions, such as project proposals, including adequate consultation with SHPOs, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, Native American tribes, and other interested parties, consistent with the alternative procedures set forth in the National Programmatic Agreement and relevant state protocol or, where applicable, the Section 106 regulations.

As identified in **Section 7.2**, the Wyoming SHPO was a cooperating agency for all the Wyoming planning efforts identified in this ROD, and the Montana SHPO was a formal cooperating agency for the Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument planning efforts.

CHAPTER 8
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CHAPTER 9
APPROVAL

Land Use Plan Decisions

It is the decision of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to approve the Rocky Mountain Region Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendments for the Lewistown, North Dakota, Northwest Colorado, and Wyoming Sub-regions; and the RMPs for Billings, Buffalo, Cody, HiLine, Miles City, Pompeys Pillar National Monument, South Dakota, and Worland, as described in this Record of Decision. The Proposed RMPs and Proposed RMP Amendments and related Final Environmental Impact Statements were published on May 29, 2015, in the *Federal Register* (80 FR 30711). I have resolved all protests and, in accordance with BLM regulations 43 CFR 1610.5-2, my decision on the protests is the final decision of the Department of the Interior. The approval is effective on the date this Record of Decision is signed.

Approved by:

Neil Kornze
Director
Bureau of Land Management

Date Sept. 21, 2015

Approval

I hereby approve the land use plan decisions. My approval of the land use plan decisions constitutes the final decision of the Department of the Interior and, in accordance with regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2(b) and 43 CFR 4.410(a)(3), is not subject to appeal under Departmental regulations at 43 CFR Part 4. Any challenge to these land use plan decisions must be brought in Federal district court.

Approved by:

Janice M. Schneider
Assistant Secretary
Land and Minerals Management

Date 9-21-15

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ATTACHMENTS

The following approved resource management plan amendments and approved resource management plans are included in this Record of Decision and are bound as separate documents.

Attachment 1: Lewistown Field Office Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment

Attachment 2: North Dakota Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment

Attachment 3: Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment

Attachment 4: Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment

Attachment 5: Billings Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan

Attachment 6: Buffalo Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan

Attachment 7: Cody Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan

Attachment 8: HiLine District Office Approved Resource Management Plan

Attachment 9: Miles City Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan

Attachment 10: Pompeys Pillar National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan

Attachment 11: South Dakota Approved Resource Management Plan

Attachment 12: Worland Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan