

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**SCOPING REPORT
for the
Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve
Management Plan Amendment
Environmental Impact Statement**

DOI-BLM-ID-T031-2013-0001-EIS

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INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS) completed the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve (Craters of the Moon) Management Plan in 2006. In 2008, Western Watersheds Project (WWP) filed a complaint in the United States District Court for the District of Idaho (Court) alleging the Secretary of the Interior and the BLM violated National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) when the BLM issued Records of Decision on 16 Resource Management Plans between 2004 and 2008, including the Craters of the Moon Management Plan. In 2012 the Court remanded the Craters of the Moon Management Plan to the BLM with instructions to remedy the FLPMA and NEPA violations. Specifically, the BLM must analyze a range of reasonable alternatives for grazing in Craters of the Moon, including a no grazing and a reduced grazing alternative; and identify and resolve significant land use conflicts with conservation of greater sage-grouse habitat. The BLM Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-regional Sage-Grouse Amendments Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is currently in progress and scheduled to be completed by the end of 2014, will resolve the issue of conservation of greater sage-grouse habitat in the Craters of the Moon. The Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be focused solely on analyzing a range of reasonable alternatives for grazing in the Craters of the Moon to address the Court's order.

This report documents the public scoping process used during the preparation of the BLM, Shoshone Field Office, Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment EIS. The Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment EIS is being prepared to analyze a range of reasonable alternatives for grazing on the BLM lands in the Craters of the Moon which lies on central Idaho's Snake River Plain. The Scoping Report includes a description of the scoping process, a summary of the issues submitted by the public, a summary of issues that will be addressed in the EIS, issues that will not be addressed in the EIS with the reasons why, and an overview of the participants and their views.

SCOPING PROCESS

Scoping is the process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed in an EIS. As part of the scoping process, the BLM solicits input from the interested and affected publics, agencies, Tribes, and other organizations.

The BLM initiated scoping for this project on June 28, 2013. The scoping period was open for two months, and closed on August 23, 2013 although through communications with interested parties, comments will be accepted throughout the process. A number of comments were

received after August 23 and are included in this scoping report. The BLM held four public meetings. Public scoping meetings were held on July 30, August 1, August 6, and August 9 in Rupert, Carey, Arco, and American Falls, respectively.

A press release was sent out on July 22, 2013. Letters to interested parties and permittees were sent on July 23, 2013. Public Notices of the scoping meetings were placed in five newspapers and ran in July and August. Newspapers included: The Times-News, The Arco Advertiser, The Post Register, The Idaho Mountain Express, and the Idaho State Journal.

As a result of public scoping efforts, twenty-six responses were received. Responses were submitted in the form of comment forms provided during public scoping meetings, letters, e-mails, and faxes.

Cooperating Agency invitations were sent to 5 Counties, 5 Cities, and 14 State and Federal agencies. Blaine County, Power County, the city of American Falls, and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture requested Cooperating Agency status. Memorandums of Understanding have recently been signed for all five cooperators. Blaine County was briefed on the status of the Craters of the Moon Plan Amendment EIS in August 2013.

The BLM initiated formal government-to-government consultation with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribe through the Wings and Roots process in August 2013. Government-to-government consultation with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes was initiated through correspondence in September 2013. No comments have been received to-date from the Shoshone-Bannock. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribe has indicated that they are interested in any action that would result in ground disturbances or impact sage grouse.

ISSUES

For the purposes of the BLM NEPA analysis, an “issue” is a point of disagreement, debate, or dispute with a proposed action. An issue is more than just a position statement. An issue:

- Has a cause and effect relationship with the proposed action
- Is within the scope of the analysis
- Has not already been decided by law, regulation, or previous decision, and
- Can be the subject of scientific analysis rather than conjecture.

Issues can shape the proposal or lead to the development of alternatives. Issues can lead to the development of design features or mitigation measures. Issues can also identify potential environmental effects that lead to detailed analysis.

The Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment EIS interdisciplinary team reviewed every letter, email, and fax and identified issues that warrant analysis in the environmental impact statement and other issues that will not be addressed. Every comment was read and considered. Some comments were combined with similar comments, while other comments were modified slightly for clarity.

ISSUES THAT WILL BE ADDRESSED IN THE EIS

The following list of issues warrant analysis in the Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment EIS because they (1) suggest a reasonable alternative, (2) contribute to developing reasonable alternatives, (3) contribute to developing design features or mitigation measures, (4) suggest credible information or methodologies that should be considered during the analysis, (5) present information that is relevant to the analysis, (6) describe changes to the proposed action along with supporting reasons why the changes should be made, or (7) suggest analysis that is necessary to make a reasoned choice among alternatives.

Livestock grazing has a beneficial impact by reducing the amount of fine fuels in the Craters of the Moon which lead to larger and more frequent wildfires. Livestock grazing can also have a beneficial effect on recovery of sage-grouse habitat.

Representative Public Comments:

We believe it is just as reasonable to consider raising the stocking rate in some areas, and/or providing for more intensive grazing during certain specific times to better achieve the desired future conditions and to help prevent wildfire or to reduce the spread of noxious weeds or invasive annual grasses.

However, we believe that an additional alternative must be included which is enhanced grazing. The Court did not prohibit the consideration of enhanced grazing opportunities and we believe that there is an opportunity for increasing stocking rates and/or allowing for more intensive grazing at certain specified times to help reduce wildfire (the number one threat to sage grouse) and to help improve habitat by selectively grazing to reduce annual invasive grasses and noxious weeds. There is convincing data from studies done recently in Nevada by the UNR Range Science Department that shows definitively that cheat grass invasion can be diminished and native grasses can once again become established when proper grazing timing is applied.

Prescriptive grazing can beneficially impact direct recovery of greater sage-grouse habitat.

BLM Response:

The BLM will develop alternatives that are consistent with achieving the Desired Future Conditions found in the 2006 Craters of the Moon Management Plan which was not vacated by the Court.

The BLM will be analyzing all potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from livestock grazing management on wildlife and wildlife habitat. (Impacts may be negative or positive.) The analysis will include potential impacts from livestock presence (i.e., trampling, flushing wildlife), potential impacts from allotted and prescriptive livestock grazing (i.e., potential impacts to wildlife habitat, including food, cover, and security, potential fuel reduction/large wildfire hazard reduction, and the potential for habitat recovery), and potential impacts from livestock infrastructure (i.e., fences, range improvements, and roads used solely for grazing management).

Effects to vegetation, including existing vegetation, noxious weeds, and invasive plant species, as a result of livestock grazing management alternatives analyzed in the Plan Amendment will be addressed as part of the affected environment and effects analysis.

Traditional and historic grazing in the Craters of the Moon has important socioeconomic value for the local communities and permittees. Changes in the amount of livestock grazing allowed in the Craters of the Moon could impact revenue for state endowment lands as well as the economies of the five counties within the Craters of the Moon.

Representative Public Comments:

The BLM's decision has the potential to impact the way of life in both Butte County and Blaine County and the effects are not just limited to permittees. The surrounding community is dependent on the vitality of local ranching operations and severe cuts could have deleterious impact on the counties' economy.

If grazing were to be stopped or even reduced, my viability as a cattle rancher would be impossible to maintain.

Laidlaw Park Allotment, North Pasture Under Alternative 2, North Pasture of Laidlaw Park Allotment would be unavailable for livestock use. This alternative does not consider the impact to state endowment trust lands and potential revenue loss due to no livestock grazing of 1,160 acres, represented by 154 unavailable AUMs, by State lessees.

BLM Response:

The BLM will develop alternatives that are consistent with achieving the Desired Future Conditions found in the 2006 Craters of the Moon Management Plan which was not vacated by the Court.

All potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from livestock grazing management on socioeconomics of the region will be analyzed. Effects to the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) endowment, permittees and local economies from livestock grazing alternatives, including no grazing and reduced grazing alternatives, will be addressed in the Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment EIS affected environment discussions and effects analysis.

Allowing spring and fall grazing will improve the health and diversity of plants in the Craters of the Moon. Age diversity in plants helps with recovery of vegetation following wildfires.

Representative Public Comments:

The Park is lacking much needed fall grazing. During late season or fall grazing, perennial plant seeds shatter, fall to the ground and are worked into the soil by being stepped on by cloven-hoofed animals. The next spring these seeds may sprout and young perennials are added to the plant mix which accomplishes vital age diversity. It is important to have young plants in our rangelands because they will survive a fire to provide the seed for the recovery. The old plants, because of all their growth and fuel and resulting heat will die. In the no grazing option this situation is made much worse because the plants are mostly old and will not survive a fire leaving very few seed-producing plants and no animals to help reestablish a healthy plant community.

Increase fall grazing to add age diversity to plants.

My studies confirm that livestock benefit the health of range lands. Plant seeds are tropped into the soil and thereby assisted in the sprouting and growing of grass and forbes. The brief grazing time in the spring of each year by cattle is not extreme, but could be of increased benefit if recommendations as outlined here were to be considered and consequently adopted by the BLM.

BLM Response:

The BLM will develop alternatives that are consistent with achieving the Desired Future Conditions found in the 2006 Craters of the Moon Management Plan which was not vacated by the Court.

All potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from livestock grazing management on vegetation in the Craters of the Moon will be analyzed. Effects to vegetation, including existing vegetation, noxious weeds, and invasive plant species, as a result of livestock grazing management alternatives analyzed in the Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment EIS will be addressed as part of the affected environment and effects analysis.

Livestock grazing has negative impacts on ecological conditions in the Craters of the Moon including degradation of native vegetation and soils, leading to infestation and spread of weeds and subsequently larger and more frequent wildfires.

Representative Public Comments:

Continued livestock grazing disturbance impacts to soils, microbiotic crusts, native vegetation and native animal habitats will thwart the goals of passive restoration, and solid ecological recovery following active restoration in the fragile weed-vulnerable Craters of the Moon landscape.

The BLM must overcome its own long-standing entrenched resistance to considering the adverse impacts of livestock grazing. A range of alternatives must include actions that remove livestock grazing disturbance and a significant portion of the battery of harmful fences, water developments, salt/supplement and other weed spawning sites from large portions of the landscape in important habitats for sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit and other species conservation. This provides essential habitat security and reduces disturbance, degradation and fragmentation.

Livestock grazing disturbance across uplands especially in post-fire settings, promotes large windblown exotic weeds like tumble mustards and tumbleweeds. These weeds dry out, break off at the plant base, and blow into scenic lava features, creating a highly unnatural and ugly appearance. The weeds mask and mar the natural lava landscape and important and unique geological features. They also blow and lodge against harmful fencelines, and can form a barrier preventing antelope or other big game movement, as well as posing a fire hazard. In fact, the BLM in livestock-degraded lands of Idaho and Oregon conducts tumbleweed burns. Burns of weeds piled and lodged by wind on rocks would mar lava surface with a weathered patina, kill

colorful orange, green and other lichen, and other wise harm geologic features and the aesthetics of recreational use.

Livestock trailing to salting/feeding sites - and the impacts of concentrated use at these sites – severely alters and reduces native vegetation. These disturbed sites provide centers for cheatgrass, medusahead, and other weeds to spread outward from.

Concerns about grazing (overgrazed) impacts in sage steppe habitat such as areas in and around Craters of the Moon where grazing is allowed: •Soil erosion and compaction (we believe in most cases, the degree of severity is limited only by topography); •Loss of mesic and riparian areas; •Loss of riparian vegetation and bank integrity; •Gulley and wash formation; •Lowering of the water table; •Dysfunctional watersheds; •Invasive weeds and grasses; •Loss of mosses and biotic soils; •Loss of native vegetation such as forbs, shrubs, trees, and grasses; •Loss of ground cover, including little or no litter in many areas; •Trampling of nesting and brooding areas of ground nesting birds including CEUR; •Little or no understory in many areas; •Over-utilized crested-wheat seedings; •Plant pedestalling, surrounding bare ground, and exposed roots; •Large areas of open and connecting bare ground; •Large “sacrifice” areas near streams, springs, seeps, and water developments (improvements?); •Loss of water quality, silt and pollution (introduction of livestock feces and urine); •Fencing unfriendly to wildlife, netting and any strand fencing still found on the BLM •Loss of native habitat to wildfire and encouraging repeated fire cycle; •Loss of reseeded areas, burns and vegetation treatment projects by allowing livestock back before plants have sufficient growth to survive (two full years or less); •Grazing in early spring, late winter, prolonged wet seasons, and year round; •Insufficient cover for wildlife; •Frequent aerial gunning (observed and documented by PFA members in Burley F.O.); •Failure to maintain water troughs or substituting with ponds that quickly become polluted and encourage the spread of West Nile Virus and, •Failure to rehabilitate pipelines and burns (invasive weeds, grasses and bare ground).

Grazing and extensive treatment disturbance plus use of herbicides or fire on unknown acreages will harm air quality. For example, in the Idaho Falls BLM Big Desert Fuelbreaks project, the BLM used a long-term persistent herbicide to kill big sagebrush. This is not “short term”. There are no efforts to address the destruction of microbiotic crusts, which help protect the soil from both wind and watercaused erosion. Plus, as the “restoration” alt. proposes shifting livestock use to other portions of grazed lands while its “treatments” are carried out, the impacts on nearby lands could be significant, and lead to further de-stabilization of soils and dust pollution. We have elsewhere discussed dust concerns.

BLM Response:

The BLM will develop alternatives that are consistent with achieving the Desired Future Conditions found in the 2006 Craters of the Moon Management Plan which was not vacated by the Court.

All potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from livestock grazing management on vegetation in the Craters of the Moon, whether beneficial or adverse to desired future conditions will be disclosed and analyzed. Effects to vegetation, such as the potential expansion or reduction of noxious weeds and invasive plant species, as a result of livestock grazing management alternatives analyzed in the Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment EIS will be addressed as part of the affected environment and effects analysis. Mitigation measures will be identified where necessary.

Livestock grazing negatively impacts wildlife.

Representative Public Comments:

Recent research has shown that fence collisions by sage-grouse and other avian species can be an important source of mortality (Stevens 2011). The locations of allotment and pasture fences should be evaluated to minimize threats to sage-grouse and other bird species. We recommend all fences are built and/or modified to BLM wildlife-friendly standards as detailed in BLM Manual Handbook H1741-1. Use of this design will help facilitate wildlife movements and prevent potential entanglement.

Heavy cattle grazing near springs, seeps, and riparian areas can remove grasses used for cover by grouse.

Wildlife disturbance occurs from physical presence of livestock and associated human activities, and the loss and degradation of habitat leads to declines or extirpation of native species. This harms recreational use and enjoyment of wildlife and pursuits ranging from photography to scientific study to enjoying the sheer beauty of sage-grouse flying in early morning.

Cattle or sheep grazing in sage-grouse nesting and brood-rearing habitat can negatively affect habitat quality; nutrition for gravid hens; clutch size; nesting success; and/or chick survival. Livestock may directly compete with sage-grouse for grasses, forbs and shrub species; trample vegetation and sage-grouse nests; disturb individual birds and cause nest abandonment.

BLM Response:

The BLM will develop alternatives that are consistent with achieving the Desired Future Conditions found in the 2006 Craters of the Moon Management Plan which was not vacated by the Court.

All potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from livestock grazing management on wildlife and wildlife habitat in the Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment EIS will be analyzed. Impacts may be negative or positive. The analysis will include potential impacts from livestock presence (i.e., trampling, flushing wildlife), potential impacts from allotted and prescriptive livestock grazing (i.e., potential impacts to wildlife habitat, including food, cover, and security, and the potential for habitat recovery), and potential impacts from livestock infrastructure (i.e., fences, range improvements, and roads used solely for grazing management).

Livestock grazing developments and infrastructure (including roads and fences) have negative impacts on resource values explicitly protected by Proclamation 7373.

Representative Public Comments:

Livestock grazing affects and/or degrades values and components of significance associated with the Monument. These components include: Volcanic features, scientific, educational and interpretive activities; wilderness character including naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation; perpetuation of scenic vistas; protection of kipukas and other values and Objects of the Monument. Laidlaw Park, where harmful grazing continues, is the world's largest kipuka.

Livestock trample and disturb geologic surfaces at interfaces with sagebrush-steppe.

Livestock facilities and disturbance affect visual quality, ecological integrity and visitor use and enjoyment. In the previous EIS, the BLM allowed the location of livestock facilities to be a primary influence on how it defined zones. Please conduct new analysis under a new range of alternatives that emphasize restoration and facilities removal. For example, a "Passage" zone was described as a "high" degree of livestock encounters and maintained roads, primitive has "medium" degree of livestock encounters and 2-track or high clearance roads. Pristine has a "low. The BLM's goal under this current plan should be to have NO zones as "passage" zones – as the entire Monument in many areas is surrounded by such degradation - and there is no place for this in the Monument.

Roads whose sole purpose is often for the convenience of livestock grazing permittees entice visitors to drive over cheatgrass, tumbleweeds, etc. and increase the risk of igniting wildfires.

The EIS should provide for removal of livestock facilities in primitive and pristine zones, and any locations where they are causing harm to soils, waters, vegetation, leading to weed increases/invasion, fragmenting/altering wildlife habitats, etc.

Many of the current roads and livestock facilities conflict with the old EIS's "continuity of habitat for special status species and general wildlife will be emphasized" –as roads serve as conduits for weed spread that will thwart any "restoration" projects, lead to increased fires and fragmentation, etc.

Roads facilitate archaeological looting and other impacts to cultural sites, lead to greater likelihood of human-caused fires, more disturbed right-of-way areas and more places for vehicle tires to pick up weed seeds and spread them to new areas.

Fences can impede migration travel and increase predator presence. The BLM should remove unnecessary fences, modify fences as practical to reduce impediments to movement and analyze areas where seasonal fences may be more appropriate. The BLM should also limit new fencing in priority sage-grouse habitat, particularly in nesting and early brooding/rearing areas.

BLM Response:

The BLM will develop alternatives that are consistent with achieving the Desired Future Conditions found in the 2006 Craters of the Moon Management Plan which was not vacated by the Court.

All potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from livestock grazing management on Proclamation values in Craters of the Moon will be analyzed. Effects to the values and resources specifically protected by Proclamation 7373, including kipukas, geological features, greater sage-grouse, and traditional uses, as a result of livestock grazing management alternatives analyzed in the Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment EIS will be addressed as part of the affected environment and effects analysis.

Cultural resources are threatened by livestock grazing management, infrastructure, and disturbance associated with restoration of playas.

Representative Public Comments:

Status quo livestock and maximum open and upgraded roads will lead to maximum erosion, disruption of site stratigraphy, exposure of artifacts to the surface and subsequent looting, maximum difficulty in controlling vandalism, etc.

Minimize digging in any site due to likely cultural resources conflicts as well as risk of mixing soil layers increasing susceptibility to weeds.

BLM Response:

The BLM will develop alternatives that are consistent with achieving the Desired Future Conditions found in the 2006 Craters of the Moon Management Plan which was not vacated by the Court.

All potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from livestock grazing management on cultural resources in the Craters of the Moon will be analyzed. Effects to cultural resources as a result of livestock grazing management alternatives analyzed in the Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment EIS will be addressed as part of the affected environment and effects analysis.

Removing livestock grazing and associated developments from the Craters of the Moon will have beneficial impacts to native vegetation and rehabilitation of greater sage-grouse habitat.

Representative Public Comments:

Furthermore, improved environmental conditions that would result from decreased grazing would likely create more jobs and economic development related to outdoor recreation such as hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, and the associated benefits to restaurants, hotels, convenience stores, and other in the area.

Many roads on wild public lands were unplanned, and simply were driven in as livestock facilities and salting/supplement feeding sites, and sheep camp and water haul sites proliferated. With rollbacks in the infrastructure and disturbance footprint many of these can be removed and rehabbed to limit weed spread and provide greater habitat security.

Additionally, the BLM should conclude that the entire Monument has potential for natural recovery and implement a decision to remove livestock from the Monument or explain why the entirety of this nationally significant monument should not be recovered through the removal of livestock grazing.

This includes actions such as removal of harmful fences and water developments (wells, pipelines, troughs, water haul sites – no water hauling can be allowed), salt/supplement sites, and associated roading or other disturbance – especially since these sites serve as epicenters for

initial weed invasion and then subsequent outward spread. The concentrated disturbance at these sites promotes degradation and weeds, and incrementally eats away at the fabric of the sagebrush ecosystem. It degrades crucial sagebrush habitat components required by sage-grouse. These sites promote habitat for nest and egg predators that are a particular problem to sage-grouse. Example: Restoration of sage-grouse nesting, brood rearing, winter habitat where habitats are altered and degraded by seedings, facilities, developments and linked roading.

The benefits of passive restoration (allowing ecosystem components to heal through removal of grazing disturbance and other degrading activities) must be a fundamental basis for this EIS under all alternatives.

The BLM must act to remove or greatly curtail livestock disturbance. The BLM must act to remove or greatly reduce livestock conflicts with sagebrush species needs for food, covers, space, water and habitat security. This will also help reduce weed infestations, windblown weeds that mar viewing and visual appreciation of geological features and other actions.

Removal of livestock grazing associated disturbances must occur so that the composition, function and structure of the components of the native sagebrush ecosystem can recover before weeds choke out remaining sagebrush understories, and before further loss, desertification or irreparable harm such as cheatgrass infestation occurs.

By far the cheapest and most cost-effective method to recover and restore plant communities is to remove livestock grazing and trampling disturbance from those communities that have not yet undergone significant weed invasion. These communities will be buffered to help limit weed infestations. This will also maximize site resiliency if fires occur. Understories will be in better condition and more readily able to heal.

BLM Response:

The BLM will develop alternatives that are consistent with achieving the Desired Future Conditions found in the 2006 Craters of the Moon Management Plan which was not vacated by the Court.

All potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from livestock grazing management on vegetation and rehabilitation will be analyzed. Effects to vegetation, including existing vegetation, planned treatments, noxious weeds, and invasive plant species, as a result of livestock grazing management alternatives analyzed in the Plan Amendment will be addressed as part of the affected environment and effects analysis.

Removing livestock grazing from the Craters of the Moon will have negative impacts on ecological conditions.

Representative Public Comments:

Along with fertilizing the land, grazing has the benefit of helping control wildfires.

It seems like a large wildfire at Craters of the Moon would be catastrophic to the sage grouse, and grazing protects against that.

While the State understands that the BLM is required to develop and analyze reduced grazing alternatives in order to comply with the Court Order, the State has concerns on those alternatives that close pastures, reduce AUMs, and/or totally eliminate livestock grazing from the planning area. Implementation of these types of alternatives will lead to increased fine fuel loads which will greatly increase the likelihood of catastrophic wildfires within the Craters of the Moon National Monument.

The BLM needs to seriously consider livestock grazing management alternatives which will begin to reduce fine fuel loads on our public lands in the BLM's future Resource Management Plans.

With implementation of alternatives identified in the scoping document that include reductions in AUMs, closing pastures to grazing, and the total elimination of grazing from the Craters of the Moon National Monument, increased fine fuel loading in the sagebrush steppe habitat will occur. The BLM will need to explain in their EIS analysis how increasing fine fuels loads will proactively protect vegetation resources and sagebrush steppe communities from future catastrophic wildfires. These wildfires will result in further sage-grouse habitat fragmentation from what is already occurring this year in southern Idaho.

BLM Response:

The BLM will develop alternatives that are consistent with achieving the Desired Future Conditions found in the 2006 Craters of the Moon Management Plan which was not vacated by the Court.

All potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from livestock grazing management on vegetation and rehabilitation will be analyzed. Effects to vegetation, including existing vegetation, planned treatments, noxious weeds, and invasive plant species, as a result of livestock grazing management alternatives analyzed in the Plan Amendment will be addressed as part of the affected environment and effects analysis.

ANTICIPATED DECISION TO BE MADE

The BLM Idaho State Director is the deciding official responsible for approving this land use plan amendment. Given the purpose and need for the action, the deciding official will review the proposed action, the alternatives, and the environmental consequences in order to make the decision of whether and how to amend the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve Management Plan in such a way as to comply with the Court's November 2012 order.

ISSUES THAT WILL NOT BE ADDRESSED IN THE EIS

Several types of comments do not warrant analysis in the EIS because they do not provide information that is helpful to make a reasoned choice among alternatives. Comments that are not helpful include, but are not limited to, (1) stating a personal opinion with no supporting reasons, (2) discussing other projects or other project areas, (3) stating a disagreement with BLM policy, (4) discussing decisions that have already been made, or (5) simply stating agreement or opposition to the project.

Controlling predatory populations will benefit greater sage-grouse populations.

The BLM should accept the Governor's Sage-Grouse Alternative.

The BLM should look beyond livestock grazing in the Craters of the Moon and update all components of the 2006 Craters of the Moon Management Plan.

The BLM should consider an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designation for greater sage-grouse.

These comments/issues are outside of the scope of the purpose and need for this project, are being analyzed in another project, or are outside of the authority of the BLM.

VALID EXISTING MANAGEMENT TO BE CARRIED FORWARD

Desired future conditions, management goals, and management actions that are not directly related to livestock management in the Craters of the Moon will be unchanged.

DRAFT PLANNING CRITERIA

Draft planning criteria were published in the June 28, 2013 Federal Register Notice which has been included in this report under Appendix B.

PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR VIEWS

Individuals

Comments received by individuals were equally divided between maintaining livestock grazing and removing or reducing livestock grazing on the Craters of the Moon.

Grazing Interests

Permittees

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Comments received from grazing interests were overwhelmingly in favor of maintaining or increasing the amount of livestock grazing on the Craters of the Moon.

State Agencies

State of Idaho

Idaho Department of Lands

Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Idaho Office of Species Conservation

Comments received from state agencies were overwhelmingly in favor of maintaining or increasing the amount of livestock grazing on the Craters of the Moon.

Environmental Organizations

Western Watersheds Project

Prairie Falcon Audubon Inc

National Parks Conservation Association

The Pioneers Alliance

Comments received from environmental organizations were mixed between maintaining a sustainable livestock grazing program or significantly reducing/removing livestock grazing on the Craters of the Moon.

Federal Agencies

National Park Service

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Comments received from the National Park Service and EPA were consistent with recommendations to follow our NEPA process to consider impacts of livestock grazing on significant resources in the Craters of the Moon.

DATA SUMMARY

The interdisciplinary planning team will use the most accurate and current data available when analyzing the impacts of alternatives, so it is essential that data is from reliable and reputable scientific sources. In addition to the BLM, federal agencies such as the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and Department of Energy, and State of Idaho agencies, including Fish and Game, Department of Lands, Office of Species Conservation, Department of Commerce, and Department of Agriculture, will provide high-quality geographic information systems (GIS) data that is used in land use planning analysis.

Efforts throughout 2012 and 2013 included Habitat Assessment Framework data collection for allotments in the Craters of the Moon. Data were collected at nearly 400 sites and the information has been used to determine seasonal greater sage-grouse habitat suitability within the Craters of the Moon. In addition, a number of telemetry studies have been initiated in the Twin Falls District over the last several years. Data collected from those studies regarding the movement of greater sage-grouse within and in the vicinity of the Craters of the Moon will be used in this plan amendment/EIS.

New and existing resource information in the Shoshone Field Office, including existing GIS thematic maps (i.e. fire history, range improvements, vegetation treatments, land status, etc.), monitoring data, and grazing files, will be used in formulating alternatives and in decision analysis for the Plan Amendment/EIS.

The interdisciplinary planning team has reviewed, updated, and evaluated its data collection and has no additional data needs. The interdisciplinary planning team is working to compile the data and put it into a digital format to use during the planning process and to develop resource maps for the Plan Amendment/EIS.

Pre-existing digital data has been updated to the same standards required for new data to the best of our ability. The process of reviewing and updating data is important to the adequacy of the planning process, as the data is needed to quantify resources, create updated maps, and analyze information during alternative formulation. New data generated as part of the Plan Amendment/EIS process will meet applicable established standards and will be available to the public upon request at the completion of the project.

Metadata must be created and appropriately maintained for GIS data to be used in NEPA planning. Metadata is information about data and/or geospatial services, such as content, source, vintage, spatial scale, accuracy, projection, responsible party, contact phone number, method of collection, and other descriptions. Reliable metadata development, structured in a standardized manner, is essential to ensuring that data are used appropriately and any resulting analysis is creditable.

The interdisciplinary planning team did not receive any new data from sources outside of the BLM during scoping.

SCHEDULE OF FUTURE STEPS IN THE CRATERS OF THE MOON PLAN AMENDMENT/EIS PROCESS

With formal scoping completed, the interdisciplinary planning team has now begun work with cooperating agencies to build a set of management frameworks, referred to as alternatives. The analysis of these alternatives forms the basis of the draft Plan Amendment/EIS. A biological assessment is also conducted, and an analysis of impacts from all the alternatives begins. A preferred alternative is selected through this process. The alternatives are presented in the draft Plan Amendment/EIS and a Notice of Availability (NOA) is published in the Federal Register to inform the public that the document is ready for review during a public comment period.

November 2014	Publish draft Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment/EIS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete development of alternatives, complete effects analysis• Issue NOA for the draft Plan Amendment/EIS
Winter 2014/2015	Public comment period – 90 days
August 2016	Publish Proposed Final Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment/EIS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze public comments, develop Proposed Final Plan Amendment/EIS• Issue NOA for the Proposed Final Plan Amendment/EIS
Fall 2016	Public protest period and governor’s consistency review
December 2016	NOA for Record of Decision

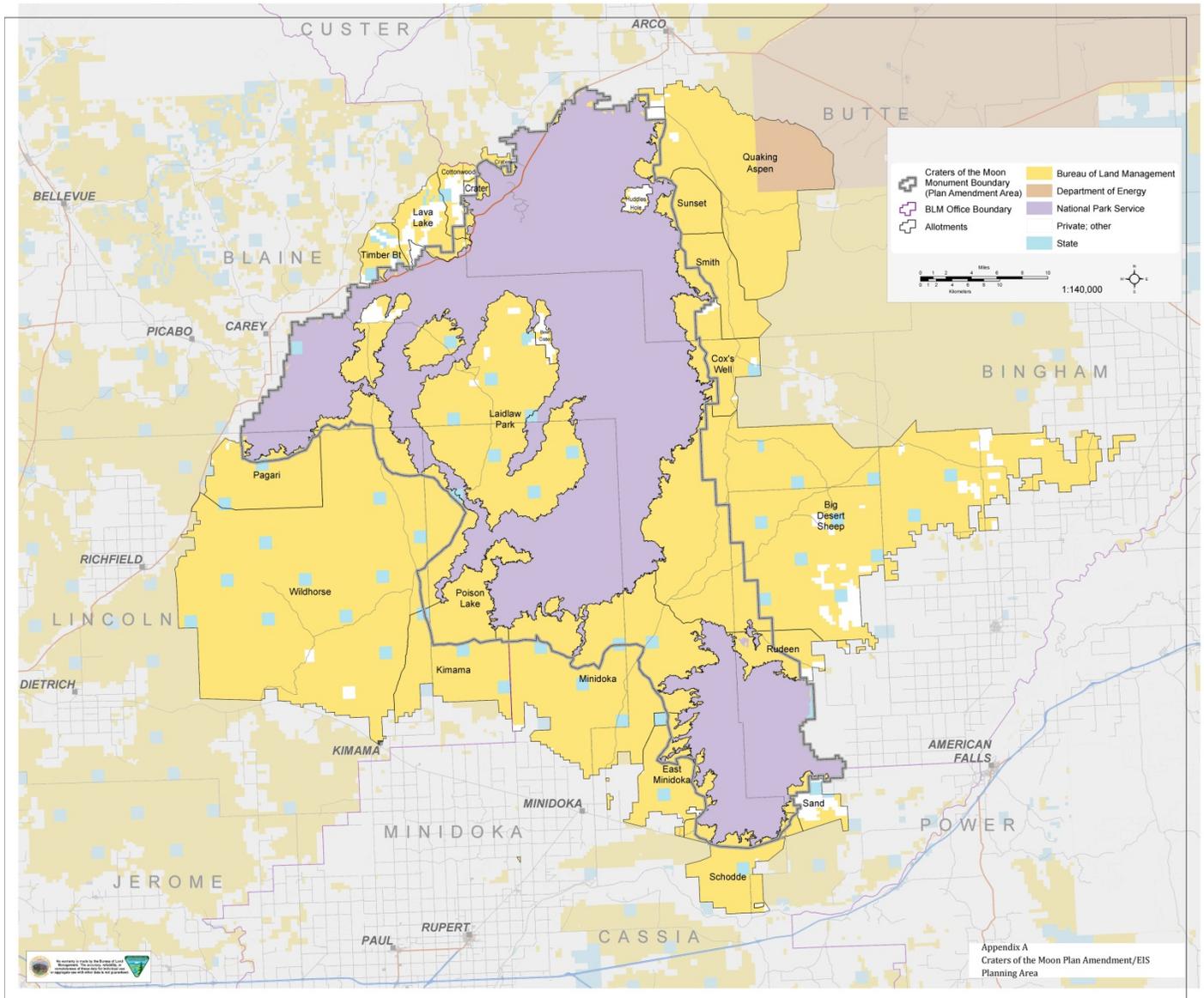
After the public has commented, the interdisciplinary planning team will address the comments and develop a proposed final Craters of the Moon Management Plan Amendment/EIS, which

will be published and made available to the public. A 30-day public protest period immediately follows after the NOA is issued announcing that proposed final document. The Idaho State Governor also is provided a 60-day period to conduct a consistency review.

If there are no public protests and no new issues are raised during the governor's consistency review, the BLM will then publish a NOA in the Federal Register and publish a Record of Decision (ROD) late December 2016. The ROD could be delayed if protests or new issues are raised.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Map of the Planning Area



As required at 5 CFR 1320.8(d), the BLM published a 60-day notice in the **Federal Register** on January 24, 2013 (78 FR 5194), and the comment period ended March 25, 2013. The BLM received no comments.

The BLM now requests comments on the following subjects:

1. Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper functioning of the BLM, including whether the information will have practical utility;
2. The accuracy of the BLM's estimate of the burden of collecting the information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;
3. The quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and
4. How to minimize the information collection burden on those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other forms of information technology.

Please send comments as directed under **ADDRESSES** and **DATES**. Please refer to OMB control number 1004-0073 in your correspondence. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The following information is provided for the information collection:

Title: Coal Management (43 CFR Parts 3400 through 3480).

OMB Control Number: 1004-0073.

Summary: This collection enables the BLM to learn the extent and qualities of Federal coal resources; evaluate the environmental impacts of coal leasing and development; determine the qualifications of prospective lessees to acquire and hold Federal coal leases; and ensure lessee compliance with applicable statutes, regulations, and lease terms and conditions.

Frequency of Collection: On occasion.
Forms:

- Form 3440-1, Application and License to Mine Coal (Free Use); and
- Form 3400-12, Coal Lease.

Description of Respondents:

- Applicants for, and holders of, coal exploration licenses;
- Applicants for, bidders for, and holders of coal leases;
- Applicants for, and holders of licenses to mine coal; and

- Surface owners and State and tribal governments whose lands overlie coal deposits.

Estimated Annual Responses: 2,159.

Estimated Annual Burden Hours: 39,809.

Estimated Annual Non-Burden Cost: \$625,883 in document processing fees.

Jean Sonneman,

Bureau of Land Management, Information Collection Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 2013-15676 Filed 6-27-13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-84-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[LLIDT03100.L17110000.DO0000.241A.00]

Notice of Intent To Amend the Management Plan for the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve and To Prepare an Associated Environmental Impact Statement, ID

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Intent.

SUMMARY: In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Shoshone Field Office, Shoshone, Idaho, intends to prepare a Land Use Plan amendment (Plan amendment) with an associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve (Craters of the Moon). This notice announces the beginning of the scoping process for the Plan amendment and associated EIS to solicit public comments and identify issues.

DATES: Comments on issues related to management of livestock grazing and conservation measures for sage-grouse in the Craters of the Moon may be submitted in writing until July 29, 2013. The date(s) and location(s) of any scoping meetings will be announced at least 15 days in advance through local media, newspapers and the BLM Web site http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/blm_special_areas/craters_of_the_moon.html.

To be included in the analysis, all comments must be received prior to the close of the 30-day scoping period or 30 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later. We will provide additional opportunities for public participation as appropriate.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on issues and planning criteria related

to the Craters of the Moon Plan amendment by any of the following methods:

- **Web site:** http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/blm_special_areas/craters_of_the_moon.html.
- **Email:** BLM_ID_CRMO@blm.gov.
- **Fax:** 208-732-7317.
- **Mail:** 400 West F Street, Shoshone, ID 83352.

Documents pertinent to this proposal may be examined at the Shoshone Field Office or online at <http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Holly Hampton, Monument Manager, telephone 208-732-7200; address 400 West F Street, Shoshone, ID 83352; email BLM_ID_CRMO@blm.gov. Contact Ms. Hampton if you wish to have your name added to our mailing list. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact the above individual during normal business hours. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with the above individual. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The BLM Shoshone Field Office, Shoshone, Idaho, intends to prepare a Plan amendment with an associated EIS for the Craters of the Moon Management Plan. This notice announces the beginning of the scoping process and seeks public input on issues and planning criteria. The planning area is located in south central Idaho and encompasses approximately 750,000 acres of BLM and National Park Service (NPS) managed lands in the Craters of the Moon. The purpose of the public scoping process is to determine relevant issues that will influence the scope of the environmental analysis, including alternatives, and guide the planning process.

In 2008, Western Watersheds Project (WWP) filed a complaint in the United States District Court for the District of Idaho (Court) alleging the Secretary of the Interior and the BLM violated NEPA and FLPMA when the BLM issued Records of Decision on 16 Resource Management Plans (RMP) between 2004 and 2008, including the Craters of the Moon Management Plan. After briefing and oral argument, the Court found that although livestock grazing was deemed by the agency to be a major contributing factor to the decline of sage-grouse habitat in the Craters of the Moon, the Management Plan/EIS failed to adequately address the best science and the agency's own policies designed to

protect that habitat. Moreover, the Management Plan/EIS failed to discuss alternatives to the status quo regarding livestock grazing in Craters of the Moon. Specifically, the Court found that the EIS supporting the Management Plan violated NEPA and FLPMA by failing to:

- (1) Consider a no-grazing alternative;
- (2) Consider the recommendations for sage-grouse conservation contained within a 2004 Nature Conservancy Report and the 2004 Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Conservation Assessment;
- (3) Fully discuss the agency's Special Status Species Policy and National Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy; and
- (4) Consider any alternative that would have reduced grazing levels.

In November 2012, the Court remanded all issues concerning the Craters of the Moon Management Plan to the BLM, without vacatur, for the purpose of revising the Management Plan. Accordingly, through the amendment process announced in this Notice, the BLM will analyze a no-grazing alternative and reduced grazing alternative(s) for BLM-managed lands within the Craters of the Moon.

The BLM's ongoing Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Regional EIS/RMP amendment process (Sub-Regional EIS/RMP amendment) will address measures for sage-grouse conservation and is expected to result in a plan amendment to the existing Craters of the Moon Management Plan. The BLM anticipates that the Sub-Regional EIS/RMP amendment effort will be completed in the fall of 2014. The amendment announced in this Notice is expected to primarily address issues related to management of livestock grazing in the Craters of the Moon planning area. However, the BLM may also address additional issues relating to the conservation measures for sage-grouse identified in the U.S. District Court's Orders that are not addressed in the Sub-Regional EIS/RMP amendment process.

The BLM has identified the following preliminary issues: The need to comply with the Idaho District Court's September 28, 2011, and November 20, 2012, Orders by analyzing Land Use Plan-level grazing allocations, including a no grazing alternative and a reduced grazing alternative in Craters of the Moon; and the need to develop conservation measures for sage-grouse in Craters of the Moon. Preliminary planning criteria include: Compliance with FLPMA, NEPA, and all other relevant Federal law, Executive orders, and management policies of the BLM; valid existing rights will be recognized; and Native American Tribal consultations will be conducted in

accordance with policy and tribal concerns will be given due consideration.

You may submit comments to the BLM on issues and planning criteria for the plan amendment at any public scoping meeting, or you may submit them using one of the methods listed in the ADDRESSES section above. The public is encouraged to help identify concerns specifically related to livestock grazing and sage-grouse conservation that should be addressed during the plan amendment process. To be most helpful, you should submit comments by the close of the 30-day scoping period or within 30 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later.

The BLM will use the NEPA public participation requirements to assist the agency in satisfying the public involvement requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (16 U.S.C. 470(f)) pursuant to 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3). The information about historic and cultural resources within the area potentially affected by the proposed action will assist the BLM in identifying and evaluating impacts to such resources in the context of both NEPA and Section 106 of the NHPA.

The BLM will consult with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis in accordance with Executive Order 13175 and other policies. Federal, State, and local agencies, along with tribes and other stakeholders that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action that the BLM is evaluating, are invited to participate in the scoping process.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. The BLM will evaluate all submissions and identify issues to be addressed in the Plan amendment.

The BLM will use an interdisciplinary approach to develop the Plan amendment. Specialists with expertise in the following disciplines will be involved in the planning process: rangeland management, outdoor recreation, archaeology, wildlife, botany, fire ecology, and soils.

Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 43 CFR 1610.5–5(b).

Holly Hampton,

Monument Manager.

[FR Doc. 2013–15512 Filed 6–27–13; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-GG-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

**[LLWYP0700.L16100000.
DP0000.LXSS041K0000]**

Notice of Availability of the Draft Resource Management Plan and Associated Environmental Impact Statement for the Buffalo Resource Management Plan Revision, Buffalo Field Office, WY

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared a Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Buffalo Field Office and by this notice is announcing the opening of a 90-day comment period.

DATES: To ensure that comments will be considered, the BLM must receive written comments on the Draft RMP/EIS within 90 days following the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft RMP/EIS in the **Federal Register**. The BLM will announce future meetings or hearings and any other public participation activities at least 15 days in advance through public notices, media releases, and/or the project Web site: <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/buffalo.html>.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- **Web site:** <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/buffalo.html>.

- **Email:** BRMP_Rev_WYMail@blm.gov;

- **Fax:** (307) 684–1122;
- **Mail:** Buffalo RMP, BLM Buffalo Field Office, 1425 Fort Street, Buffalo, WY 82834; or

- By personal delivery to the Buffalo Field Office or at a BLM-hosted public meeting.

Copies of the Draft RMP/EIS are available in the Buffalo Field Office at

Appendix C: Data Summary Table

Dataset	Resource	Availability	Extent	Potential use
2009 Park Service Veg Map	Vegetation/Habitat	Currently in use	Within Monument Only (extends slightly past)	Existing vegetation; Analysis
Vegetation for entire extent	Vegetation/Habitat	Have in house, needs work	Out to SG sub-pops	Universal
USGS Sagebrush and Grass % Cover	Vegetation/Habitat	Draft version around end of calendar year	District wide	Existing vegetation, Analysis
HAF data	Vegetation/Habitat	Complete; BLM internal	Craters Allotments Only	Existing vegetation; Analysis; Suitability map
Long Term Trend	Vegetation/Habitat	BLM internal	SFO, BFO, USO	Current situation and Analysis
Suitability	Vegetation/Habitat	Craters Internal	Total coverage CRMO	Current situation and Analysis
ESDs	Vegetation/Habitat	Craters Internal	Total coverage CRMO	Current situation and Analysis
Vegetation Production	Vegetation/Habitat	Craters Internal	Total coverage CRMO	Current situation and Analysis
Fire occurrence (Last 30 years from 2013)	Vegetation/Habitat	BLM internal	Total Coverage	Analysis, Fire Occurrence map
Rehab Treatments	Vegetation/Habitat	BLM internal	Geometry available	Current situation and Analysis
Allotments and Pastures	Range	BLM internal	Total coverage	Current situation and Analysis
Range Improvements	Range	BLM internal	Total coverage	Current situation and Analysis
Use Pattern Mapping	Range	BLM internal	Limited availability, One year of data	Current situation and Analysis
S&G Information	Range	BLM internal	Total coverage CRMO allotments	Current situation and Analysis
RAS Data	Range	BLM internal	Total coverage CRMO allotments	Current situation and Analysis
Supplemental if Possible: -Bed Grounds, -Water Haul sites, -Salt	Range	BLM internal	Partial coverage CRMO	Analysis

Dataset	Resource	Availability	Extent	Potential use
Locations				
Sage-grouse sub-populations	Wildlife	Complete (national, on Q:\pub)	Focused to N Side Snake and Big Lost Sub-pops	Used as extent for Analysis
SG: IDFG Telemetry – Wedge Butte & Wapi	Wildlife	External – IDFG (end of July currently in use)	Localized	Current situation and Analysis
SG: BLM observation points	Wildlife	BLM internal	Shoshone Field Office	Current situation and Analysis
SG: Other agency observation points	Wildlife	Requesting	NPS Monument	Current situation and Analysis
SG: Lek Data – Historical counts	Wildlife	IDFG	Total coverage	Analysis, Suitability Map, current situation
Big game: Habitat or seasonal surveys	Wildlife	IDFG	No coverage	Current situation and Analysis
Raptors	Wildlife	BLM internal	Partial coverage CRMO	Current situation and Analysis
Burrowing Owls	Wildlife	BLM internal	Partial coverage CRMO	Current situation and Analysis
Land Bird Grids	Wildlife	BLM internal	Total coverage	Current situation and Analysis
Herp Surveys	Wildlife	IDFG	Partial coverage CRMO	Current situation and Analysis
Pygmy Rabbits	Wildlife	IDFG and in house observation points	Partial Coverage	Current situation and Analysis
Routes	Supplemental	BLM internal	Total coverage CRMO	Current situation and Analysis
Craters Admin Boundary	Supplemental	BLM internal	Total coverage	Universal
Elevation	Supplemental	30m or 10m from USGS NED	Currently have 30m for District	Analysis

Dataset	Resource	Availability	Extent	Potential use
Transmission Lines	Supplemental	Available on MTPs, will need to see if are already digital	Total coverage	Current situation and Analysis
Communication Towers	Supplemental	BLM internal	Total coverage	Current situation and Analysis
Riparian	Supplemental	BLM internal	Allotment boundaries	Current situation and Analysis