



FACT SHEET: Rock Springs Final EIS and Proposed RMP

The Rock Springs Field Office manages more than 3.6 million acres of public land and 3.5 million acres of public subsurface minerals in southwestern Wyoming. It is land rich in wildlife habitat, rangeland, and natural resources. The purpose of the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan revision is to provide an updated, comprehensive framework for managing and allocating the uses of public lands and resources so that the Bureau can meet its mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for present and future generations.

The release of the Final EIS initiates a 30-day protest period and a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review period starting on August 23, 2024. The BLM can issue a Record of Decision upon completion of those processes, including incorporating any potential changes.

What public feedback did BLM receive on the Draft EIS?

The BLM published the Notice of Availability releasing the Draft RMP/EIS on August 18, 2023, initiating a 90-day public comment period, which was later extended an additional 62 days through January 17, 2024. During the comment period, the BLM held three in-person public meetings and received more than 35,000 comments. The BLM also worked closely with the Task Force that the Governor of Wyoming appointed to develop recommendations to the proposed plan.

The Final EIS and Proposed RMP reflect public comment, recommendations from the Greater Little Mountain Coalition, and proposals from the Governor's Task Force. The Task Force recommendations can be found on the RMP ePlanning site: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/13853/510>.

What are differences between the Draft EIS and the Proposed RMP?

Rights of Way Exclusions and National Historic Trails Corridors

In the draft EIS, the BLM proposed to designate and protect a 10-mile-wide corridor for all National Historic and Scenic Trails (Trails), as well as trails that were eligible for designation but not yet designated. The Proposed RMP applies the corridor restrictions to only Congressionally designated trails and now allows for some development within the corridors if mitigation can reduce impacts to Trails.

Mineral Development

Trona/Sodium

The availability of trona is similar in the Proposed RMP to the current plan, except for one additional closure: the South Wind River ACEC, to protect the high-quality wildlife habitat, clean air, cultural resources, and the area commonly referred to as the Golden Triangle.

Oil and Gas Development

The current management plan closes 15% of the field office to oil and gas development. The preferred alternative in the draft RMP would have closed 61% of the field office to oil and gas; the proposed RMP would close 30%. The Proposed RMP adds a fluid minerals closure to the Sweetwater County Growth Management Area, Little Mountain ACEC, and to the groundwater recharge areas for Superior and McKinnon.

Coal Development

The Preferred Alternative in the Draft EIS had proposed to close all the planning area outside of the Coal Occurrence and Development Potential Area. Coal leasing closures in the Proposed RMP are primarily focused on resource concerns and include the Sweetwater County Growth Management Area, the Little Mountain ACEC, and the Superior and McKinnon Groundwater Recharge Areas.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are public lands where special management is needed to protect important resources and unique scenic landscapes. There are 10 ACECs currently designated in the existing RMP for Rock Springs.

The preferred alternative in the draft RMP called for 16 ACEC designations covering a total of 1,605,660 acres. The Proposed RMP calls for 12 ACEC designations covering a total of 936,193 acres (see ACEC Designations below for specifics). The Governor's Task Force could not reach consensus on supporting or opposing any of the 10 ACECs in the Red Desert area of the field office.

Special Recreation Management Areas

The Preferred Alternative in the Draft EIS did not propose any Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs). The Proposed RMP includes five: the Killpecker Sand Dunes OHV Open Play Area SRMA, the Continental Divide Scenic Trail SRMA, the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail SRMA, the Wind River Front SRMA and the new Little Mountain SRMA.

Grazing

The preferred alternative in the Draft EIS, proposed a seasonal restriction on grazing within identified parturition areas for big game to protect birthing elk and mule deer. The Proposed RMP removes this restriction and allows grazing in all special management areas. In total, only 2,515 out of roughly 3.6 million acres are closed to grazing.

Greater Sage Grouse

The Draft and Final EIS documents do not analyze any proposed management for Greater sage-grouse due to the ongoing range-wide amendment planning process.

Rock Springs RMP Proposed ACEC Designations

Little Mountain Area

In the Proposed RMP, the BLM hews closely to the recommendations of the Greater Little Mountain Coalition. It designates the Little Mountain ACEC (115,573 acres) and creates a Little Mountain Special Recreation Management Area.

ACEC	Alt A: No Action	Alt B: DEIS Preferred	Proposed RMP
Greater Red Creek --Current Creek --Sage Creek --Red Creek (Renamed to Little Mountain ACEC)	131,604 acres	468,170 acres	115,573 acres --Removes checkerboard sections --Removes proposed expansion Sugarloaf Basin area ---Removes proposed expansion Salt Wells area

Red Desert Area

The Proposed RMP continues the existing ACECs in the Red Desert such as the Oregon Buttes and the South Pass Historic Landscape ACECs, expands the existing Steamboat ACEC, and designates the South Wind River ACEC.

The Proposed RMP drops the proposed designation in the Draft EIS for the Big Game Migration Corridor ACEC. Instead, the RMP incorporates direction for the corridor to be managed consistent with the Governor’s Executive Order (EO) 2020-1, “WY Mule Deer and Antelope Migration Corridor Protection.”

ACEC	Alt A: No Action	Alt B: DEIS Preferred	Proposed RMP
Steamboat Mountain	47,280 acres	439,330 acres	439,081 acres
South Wind River	0	374,710 acres	281,104 acres
South Pass Historic Landscape	53,940 acres	171,300 acres	53,772 acres
Oregon Buttes	3,440 acres	3,440 acres	3,441 acres
Greater Sand Dunes	39,290 acres	39,290 acres	26,746 acres
White Mountain Petroglyphs	20 acres	20 acres	22 acres
Big Sandy Openings	0	2,020 acres	1,994 acres
Pinnacles	0	1,340 acres	1,334 acres
Red Lakes East Sand Dunes	0	22,340 acres	0
Big Game Migration Corridor	0	226,335 acres	0

Other ACECs

Due to concerns about ACECs in the checkerboard area, BLM did not carry forward ACEC designations for Cedar Canyon or Monument Valley.

ACEC	Alt A: No Action	Alt B: DEIS Preferred	Proposed RMP
Natural Corrals	1,110 acres	1,110 acres	1,107 acres
Pine Springs	6,030 acres	6,480 acres	6,483 acres
Special Status Plants	1,200 acres	3,610 acres	4,469 acres
Cedar Canyon	2,540 acres	2,540 acres	0
Monument Valley	0	69,960 acres	0