



For Immediate Release – February 14, 2020

Missoula RMP: Maggie Ward, mlward@blm.gov, 406-361-0964

Lewistown RMP: Dan Brunknorst, dbrunkho@blm.gov, 406-538-1981

Proposed plans to guide federally managed lands in western and central Montana released

*Each plan contains Backcountry Conservation Areas to support wildlife habitat, wildlife populations,
and wildlife-dependent recreation and hunting opportunities*

(BILLINGS, Mont.) – The proposed plans to guide decisions on how to manage federal lands in western and central Montana for the next two decades were released today by the Montana/Dakotas State Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The Lewistown Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) and associated Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) covers 651,200 acres of BLM-administered surface and 1.2 million acres of federal mineral estate in central Montana. The Missoula Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement addresses the management of about 163,000 surface acres and 268,000 acres of federal mineral interests in northwestern Montana.

“These new plans reflect Administration priorities including recreation, public access, forest and wildland fire management, livestock grazing, and responsible development of minerals and energy resources,” **said Casey Hammond, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management.** “Management under these plans will allow for economic growth in rural communities while ensuring the special nature of Big Sky Country endures for this and future generations.”

Both proposed RMPs are responsive to public input and reflect changing resource conditions as well as new issues and policies that have arisen since the previous management documents were completed in the 1980s and early 1990s.

“We are proud of the fact that both plans include lands to be managed under the new Backcountry Conservation Area designation,” **noted William Perry Pendley, the BLM’s Deputy Director for Policy and Programs.** “These designated areas underscore our commitment to protecting and enhancing opportunities for public hunting and other wildlife-dependent recreation across these unique landscapes.”

Backcountry Conservation Areas (BCAs) promote public access to support wildlife-dependent recreation and hunting opportunities and facilitate the long-term maintenance of big game wildlife populations, while also permitting other activities consistent with the BLM’s multiple, use, sustained yield mission. The proposed Lewistown RMP has two BCAs, the Arrow Creek BCA which is 12,800 acres and the Crooked Creek BCA which covers 93,400 acres. The proposed Missoula RMP contains three BCAs: The 6,100-acre Hoodoos BCA, the 4,539-acre Ram Mountain BCA, and the 2,365-acre Wales BCA.

(– more –)

BLM Montana-Dakotas State Office • 5001 Southgate Drive • Billings, MT 59101 • www.blm.gov/montana-dakotas

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land located primarily in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. In fiscal year 2018, the diverse activities authorized on BLM-managed lands generated \$105 billion in economic output across the country. This economic activity supported 471,000 jobs and contributed substantial revenue to the U.S. Treasury and state governments, mostly through royalties on minerals.

Designation of these BCAs aligns with [Secretarial Order 3356](#): *Hunting, Fishing, Recreational Shooting and Wildlife Conservation Opportunities and Coordination with States, Tribes and Territories*, which directs Department of the Interior bureaus to incorporate analysis of the impacts of Federal land and water management actions on hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting access in planning and decision-making; as well as [Secretarial Order 3362](#): *Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors*.

“From the river breaks of the mighty Missouri to the mountain parks of the John Long Range, the BLM administers some of the finest hunting country found anywhere on the planet,” said **Whit Fosburgh, President and CEO of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership**. “The TRCP expresses our appreciation to the Interior Department and BLM for recognizing the value of both the wildlife habitat and public access that these celebrated landscapes provide. By adding special management emphasis to the highest-quality public lands, today’s decision helps ensure that future generations of sportsmen and women will enjoy the same outstanding opportunities currently offered by these wild places.”

"Montana is home to some of the best public-land hunting in the nation, and the Boone and Crockett Club has successfully advocated for enhanced public access to hunt on federal land in the state," said **Tim Brady, President of the Boone and Crockett Club**. Brady said: "The Club applauds the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Land Management for including innovative Backcountry Conservation Areas--to protect and enhance public hunting and recreation--in these Proposed Resource Management Plans released today."

“The BLM is making important commitments in the Lewistown plan that the Wild Sheep Foundation values greatly,” commented **Gray N. Thornton, President and CEO of the Wild Sheep Foundation**. “The Backcountry Conservation Area emphasis on habitat conditions and hunting access, combined with the resolution of disease risks, can make this plan an example of Congressionally-directed solutions for wild sheep. We appreciate the BLM for taking this approach and will work closely with them on its implementation.”

The final Lewistown RMP documents are available online at <https://go.usa.gov/xUPsP>. The Missoula RMP documents can be found at <https://go.usa.gov/xmyyG>.

The release of the RMPs and EISs initiates a 30-day protest period and a 60-day Governor’s consistency review. Any person who participated in the planning process for either of these Proposed RMPs and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the planning decisions may protest approval of the planning decisions. Final revisions will be made based on the feedback received from these two processes before Records of Decision are issued.

– BLM –

Producers/Editors note: Digital still images of the Backcountry Conservation Areas can be found online at https://www.flickr.com/photos/blm_mtdks