

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the information discussed throughout the remainder of the South Dakota Resource Management Plan. This chapter discusses why the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared the Proposed Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (Proposed RMP/Final EIS), how the public was involved in this planning process, how issues were defined, and a number of other topics. The information in this chapter is organized into the following headings and subheadings:

- Background
- Purpose and Need
- Planning Area
- National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy
- Collaboration
- Planning Process
- Scoping and Planning Issues
  - Issues Addressed
  - Issues Considered but Not Further Analyzed
- Planning Criteria
  - Relationship to BLM Policies, Plans, and Programs
- Related Plans
- Policy
- Vision and Management Goals
- Summary of Major Changes Made Between the Draft and Proposed Final Resource Management Plan
- Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement

## Background

The United States Department of the Interior (USDI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared this Proposed RMP to provide direction for managing the National System of Public Lands (herein referred to as BLM public lands or BLM-administered public lands) under the jurisdiction of the South Dakota Field Office (SDFO) and prepared this EIS to analyze the environmental effects that could result. The affected lands are currently being managed under the South Dakota (SD) RMP (BLM 1985).

Land use planning is used to manage resources and to designate uses on public lands in coordination with tribal, state, and local governments, land users, and the interested public. This Proposed RMP incorporates new information and regulatory guidance, and provides management direction where it may be lacking or requires clarification. Current management direction that is effective and requires no change will be carried forward into this revised Proposed RMP.

The RMP is being revised according to guidance in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 United States Code [USC] 1701 et seq.) and the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1. An EIS is incorporated into this document as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508) (CEQ 1978), and requirements of the BLM's NEPA Handbook, H-1790-1 (BLM 2008).

## Purpose and Need

The purpose of this RMP is to provide a single, comprehensive land use plan to guide management of public lands and minerals administered by the SDFO. The RMP provides goals, objectives, land use allocations, and management direction to maintain, improve, or restore resource conditions and to provide for the long-term benefits to the public, including economic needs of local communities. This is done in coordination with federal, tribal, state, and local governments; land

users; and the interested public. This RMP revision will also incorporate appropriate management actions and practices to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*; hereafter, ‘sage-grouse’) and its habitats on BLM-administered land.

The need for the revision is the result of considerable changes within the planning area since completion of the South Dakota RMP in 1985, including:

- changed ecological, socioeconomic, institutional, and regulatory conditions;
- new laws, regulations, and policies that invalidate or supersede previous decisions;
- changing user demands and activities, including increased demand for recreational use of public lands, renewable energy, and oil and gas exploration and development;
- increased conflicts between land use and wildlife/wildlife habitat; and
- heightened public awareness and interest in BLM management actions and permitted uses.

In March 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its listing decision for the Greater Sage-Grouse as “Warranted but Precluded.” Inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms was identified as a major threat in the USFWS finding on the petition to list the sage-grouse. The USFWS has identified the principal regulatory mechanism for the BLM as conservation measures in RMPs. Based on the identified threats to the sage-grouse and the USFWS timeline for making a listing decision on this species, the BLM needs to incorporate objectives and adequate conservation measures into RMPs in order to conserve sage-grouse and potentially reduce the need to list the species as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. This RMP revision incorporates specific management actions and conservation measures to conserve sage-grouse and its habitats on BLM land. Additional information on the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy can be found in this Chapter below in Table 1-1. Greater-Sage Grouse (GRSG) is referred to as sage-grouse throughout this document.

These conditions drive the need for an inclusive, comprehensive plan that provides updated, clear direction to the BLM, other agencies and entities, and the public.

## Planning Area

The BLM’s SDFO headquarters is located in Belle Fourche in Butte County, near the state’s western border. The planning area for the SDFO and this RMP covers the entire state of South Dakota, which includes approximately 49.3 million acres of public, private, state lands, and Native American reservations. Within the planning area, the BLM administers about 274,000 acres of BLM public land surface (Map 1-1), and approximately 1.7 million acres of federal mineral estate in 37 counties. Table 1-1 identifies BLM-administered acres and total acres within the planning area by county. Collectively, lands that the BLM administers (surface and mineral estate) are considered the “Decision Area.”

This RMP will provide guidance for leasing decisions for federal oil and gas resources managed by the BLM and only those federal Surface Management Agencies (SMA) with which the BLM has an agreement regarding oil and gas leasing.

Leasing decisions for federal oil and gas resources not managed by the BLM will be made by the SMA in cooperation with the BLM. The BLM will not issue federal oil and gas leases without consulting with the SMA. Examples of agencies which fall under this category in South Dakota are the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. This document will provide stipulations for split-estate situations involving federal oil and gas beneath private, Recreation & Public Purpose patented, or state-owned surface. The BLM will apply the leasing stipulations recommended by the agency whose land is being leased. The BLM may add other stipulations it deems necessary.

This RMP does not apply to lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), USFWS, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Trust lands, tribal lands, or private or state-owned mineral resources.

The USFS makes decisions on its own lands, although the BLM leases minerals under USFS-administered surface. The BLM is a cooperator or joint lead on plans with the USFS and makes decisions on leasing federal minerals underlying private surface within the USFS administrative boundary. The BLM has done this and prepared Records of Decision for the

Buffalo Gap and Sioux Ranger District Plans, but not the Black Hills National Forest Plan. Those actions do not fall under this RMP.

<i>County</i>	<i>BLM-Administered Public Lands</i>		<i>BLM-Administered Federal Mineral Estate (split estate lands)</i>	
	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent of County</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent of County</i>
Bennett	0	0	2,878	<1
Bon Homme*	56	<1	58	<1
Brule*	532	<1	947	<1
Butte	144,641	10	536,606	37
Campbell*	0	0	2,255	<1
Charles Mix*	122	<1	258	<1
Clark*	0	0	167	<1
Clay*	11	<1	11	<1
Corson	0	0	40,756	<1
Custer	3,693	<1	68,140	7
Dewey	0	0	8,264	<1
Edmunds*	0	0	625	<1
Fall River	7,205	<1	60,532	5.4
Faulk*	0	0	480	<1
Gregory	172	<1	1,866	<1
Haakon	2,178	<1	46,111	4
Hand*	0	0	362	<1
Harding	30,261	1.7	377,328	22
Hughes*	2	<1	500	<1
Hyde*	0	<1	1,285	<1
Jackson	240	<1	4,396	<1
Jones	3	<1	1,107	<1
Lawrence	5,078	1	7,038	1.4
Lyman	225	<1	399	<1
Marshall*	20	<1	20	0
McPherson*	0	0	360	<1
Meade	38,997	1.7	276,774	12
Mellette	0	0	1,612	<1
Pennington	16,088	<1	82,177	5
Perkins	7,973	<1	76,346	1
Potter*	0	0	159	<1
Stanley	15,922	1.7	111,833	12
Sully*	80	<1	1,331	<1
Tripp	160	<1	316	<1
Walworth*	0	0	1,819	<1
Yankton*	359	<1	359	<1
Ziebach	202	<1	202	<1
Totals	274,239	-	1,715,677	-

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census and BLM 2009a. The acreages may not be identical to other sources because these acreages are based on geographical information system (GIS) data.

\*South Dakota counties east of the Missouri River.

While the BLM has been a cooperator on various Forest Service Plans, for purposes of efficiency, the BLM can address federal minerals in its own plans within the administrative boundary of the USFS. The BLM has found a need to do so in this case for the townsite of Igloo and the Black Hills Army Depot (BHAD). Accordingly, this RMP would provide management direction for the federal minerals that underly private surface estate at this site even though it is within the administrative boundaries of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland. The BHAD and Igloo are eligible for listing as a National Register Historic Site. The BHAD also has historical issues with hazardous materials being inadequately handled and disposed of onsite resulting in some Superfund actions. These concerns have not been addressed in USFS Plans.

The boundary for the BHAD and the townsite of Igloo will be demarcated by the USFS administrative boundary map for illustrative purposes of the RMP. However, there are some issues and discrepancies with legal descriptions and boundary lines which may necessitate referencing and using Master Title Plats, as modified by the most current cadstral survey. The former townsite of Igloo and the abandoned BHAD are shown on Figure 2-4.

NPS and USFWS-administered lands are not subject to leasing under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920. However, if oil or gas is being drained from lands otherwise unavailable for leasing, there is implied authority to lease that oil and gas resource.

The BIA leases the lands which they administer. Tribes also do their own leasing. Those actions do not fall under this RMP.

Most of the BLM-administered public lands (surface estate) are located in western South Dakota (Map 1-2). Butte County contains 144,641 acres of BLM-administered public land, or 53 percent of the total BLM-administered public land and 536,606 acres (37 percent) of the federal mineral estate in the planning area. Other counties with substantial amounts of BLM-administered public land are also located in western South Dakota and include Custer, Fall River, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, Pennington, Perkins, and Stanley counties. Tracts of BLM-administered public land within these counties generally range in size, but most are between 40 and 320 acres of land and are intermingled with state and private lands. Nine counties east of the Missouri River contain small tracts of BLM-administered public land, including Bon Homme, Brule, Campbell, Charles Mix, Clay, Hughes, Marshall, Sully, and Yankton counties. Most of the BLM-administered public land tracts in eastern South Dakota are along the Missouri River and were flooded when reservoirs were built on the river in the 1940s and 1950s. Eastern South Dakota counties with federal minerals (split estate) are also identified in Table 1-1.

Lands managed by the SDFO include public domain (lands that have never left federal ownership), acquired lands and/or mineral interests (lands that left federal ownership and were later exchanged for or purchased), and federal mineral estate (subsurface) lands beneath private or state lands or lands administered by other federal agencies. Federal minerals included in the Decision Area are shown in Map 1-3 at the end of this chapter. The BLM does not administer land obtained through the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1935 in South Dakota; those parcels are administered by the USFS. The BLM will continue to coordinate with other federal and state agencies, especially for those resources and issues that cross boundaries.

## **Changes Between the Draft RMP and EIS and the Proposed RMP and Final EIS**

As a result of public comments, best science, cooperating agency coordination, and internal review of the Draft RMP and Final EIS, the BLM has developed the Proposed RMP and Final EIS for managing BLM-administered lands. The Proposed RMP and Final FEIS focuses on addressing public comments, while continuing to meet the BLM's legal and regulatory mandates. The Proposed RMP and Final EIS is a variation of the preferred alternative (D) and is within the range of alternatives analyzed in the DEIS.

Changes made to the Proposed RMP and Final EIS from the preferred alternative (D) in Draft RMP/EIS are the following:

Allocations for PHMA and GHMA — allocations in the proposed RMP/Final EIS provide more opportunities for uses in GHMA, while still maintaining conservation management by establishing screening criteria for project/activity review in GRSG habitat.

- USGS Buffer Study—Included a management action to incorporate the lek buffer-distances identified in the USGS report titled *Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage Grouse—A Review: USGS Open File Report 2014-1239* (Mainer et al. 2014) during NEPA analysis at the implementation stage. Although the buffer report was not available at the time of the DEIS release, applying these buffers was addressed in the DEIS and is qualitatively within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed. Specifically, Alternative C identified and analyzed allocation restrictions such as closure to fluid minerals, recommendation for withdrawal of minerals and exclusion of most ROWs. Alternative A and B identified and analyzed fewer restrictions on development in GRSG habitat. Accordingly, the management decision to require lek buffers for development within certain habitat types is within the range of alternatives analyzed.
- Adaptive management—Identification of hard and soft adaptive management triggers for population and habitat and identified appropriate management responses. Chapter 2 of the DEIS identified that the BLM would further develop the adaptive management approach by identifying hard and soft triggers and responses. All of the adaptive management hard trigger responses were analyzed within the range of alternatives. For example, if a hard trigger is reached in GHMA, and GHMA would be managed as open to saleable minerals in the Proposed Plan, the response would be to manage it as closed to saleable minerals. This closure was analyzed under Alternative C in the Draft RMP and EIS.
- Monitoring and Disturbance – The monitoring framework was further refined in the Proposed RMP and Final EIS, and further clarification as to how disturbance cap calculations would be measured were developed for the Proposed RMP and Final EIS. During the public comment period, BLM received comments on how monitoring and disturbance cap calculations would occur at implementation. The Draft and Final RMP outlined the major components of the monitoring strategy, as well as provided a table portraying a list of anthropogenic disturbances that would count against the disturbance cap. A BLM Disturbance and Monitoring Sub-team further enhanced Appendix V-2 and V-4.
- Mitigation Strategy; Net Conservation Gain –The net conservation gain strategy is in response to the overall landscape-scale goal which is to enhance, conserve, and restore GRSG and its habitat. All of the action alternatives provided management actions to meet the landscape-scale goal.
- WAFWA Management Zone Cumulative Effects Analysis on GRSG – a quantitative cumulative effects analysis for GRSG was included in the Proposed RMP and Final EIS. This analysis was completed to analyze the effects of management actions on GRSG at a biologically significant scale which was determined to be at the WAFWA Management Zone. The Special Status Species Section of Chapter 4 includes a qualitative analysis and identified that a quantitative analysis would be completed for the FEIS at the WAFWA Management Zone.
- Public Comment on Draft RMP and EIS—Updated the Proposed RMP based on public comment received on the Draft RMP and EIS (see Chapter 5 Comment Analysis Section and Appendix W, Public Comments and Responses).

Specific Changes to the Proposed RMP and Final EIS are listed in the section below:

## Changes to the Final RMP and EIS

The BLM published a Notice of Availability (NOA) for the South Dakota Draft RMP and EIS for public review and comment in the Federal Register on June 14, 2013. A total of 48 comment letters, forms, and emails were received during the 90 day public comment period. The comments covered a wide spectrum of thoughts, ideas, opinions and concerns. According to NEPA, BLM is required to identify and formally respond to all substantive public comments. Substantive comments about the alternatives were reviewed and changes made to the alternatives when appropriate. The majority of changes addressed the Management Common to All Alternative and the Proposed Action. The following is a description of the changes that were made to the South Dakota Draft RMP and EIS. Editorial or minor changes that result in little change to management are not listed.

## Summary of Changes to All Alternatives (Management Common to All Alternatives)

- Clarifications made about restrictions on fossil collecting at Fossil Cycad ACEC (Chapter 2). Fossil Cycad ACEC shown in Figure 2-6.
- Clarified access priority. As opportunities arise BLM would establish or maintain access easements for administrative and/or for public use with priority on public access to larger blocks of BLM administered lands (Chapter 2).
- To be consistent with manual direction for recreational areas, Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs) was changed to public lands not designated as Recreation Management Areas (Chapter 2).
- Clarification and specific details added to describe how BLM would address sites with potentially hazardous materials (Chapter 2).
- Clarification made that BLM would strive to resolve conflicts related to firearm shooting before taking other actions (Chapter 2).
- Revised sensitive soil criteria to follow Montana/Dakotas State Office Sensitive soil definition. Includes steep slopes which had been addressed separately in Draft RMP (Chapters 2, 4, Glossary and Appendix E).

## Summary of Changes to the Proposed Action

### Air Quality

- Additional background information was added to the Proposed RMP regarding emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) and national actions to reduce GHGs. The goals were revised for air quality and air quality-related values, and objectives were added for reducing air pollutant and GHG emissions from BLM-authorized activities (Chapter 2 and 3).
  - Addition of Tier 4 (low emission engine requirement) Lease Notice requirement for engines used to extract oil and gas (Chapter 2 and Appendix E).

### Best Management Practices

- Best Management Practices change over time as new information becomes available. BLM updated the BMPs in Appendix B to include new information (Appendix B). Required Design Features were added to address sage-grouse impacts (Appendix V-1)

### Coal Leasing

- Added discussion about coal leasing by explaining that once 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. Sage-grouse PHMA is essential habitat for maintaining GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1) and this consideration would be taken into account if an analysis of suitability is conducted (Chapter 2).

### Geothermal Leasing:

- Clarified that restrictions for oil and gas leasing would also address geothermal leasing (Chapter 2).

### Livestock Grazing

- Additional monitoring requirements would be required to monitor the impacts of grazing on sage-grouse on Allotments within PHMAs.

### **Mineral Closures**

- A change was made in the management of fluid minerals within the abandoned Black Hills Army Depot (BHAD) near Edgemont. In the Draft RMP, a No Surface Occupancy stipulation had been evaluated in the Preferred Alternative for the BHAD. This stipulation has been changed in the Proposed Action to close this area due to concerns about poorly documented hazardous materials present in the area. Refer to Figure 2-4 (Chapter 2 and Appendix E.4).
- Salable minerals would be closed in sage-grouse PHMAs except for free use permits. Refer to Map 2-5 for a display of PHMAs (Chapter 2).

### **National Trails**

- An addition to the management of fluid minerals actions will include an NSO stipulation within ½ mile of National Trails. Limits on surface disturbing and disruptive activities would also apply to these areas (Chapter 2 and Appendix E.4).

### **Recreation/Travel**

- The 100 foot restriction of off-road vehicle travel for camping purposes presented in the Preferred Alternative was changed to 300 feet in the Proposed Action because of comments from the USFS and the need to have consistency in direction between the BLM and USFS (Chapter 2).
- The Center of the Nation Travel Management Area for the Proposed Action will incorporate all sage-grouse habitat (PHMAs and GHMA). Refer to Chapter 2 and Map 2-1.

### **Wildlife and Special Status Species**

- A change was made in the management of fluid minerals to remove the one quarter mile NSO and two mile timing limit around sharp-tailed grouse leks. This stipulation was replaced with a two mile Conditional Surface Use (CSU) stipulation (Chapter 2 and Appendix E.4).
- Protection of habitat for species with limited or no habitat on BLM administered lands has been added in cases where potential habitat may exist in the future. This was done to offer protection if habitat is found or a species begins using previously unoccupied areas and expands its range onto BLM lands. Species addressed included colonial nesting waterbirds, black-footed ferret, and pallid and shovel-nosed sturgeon (Chapter 2 and Appendix E.4).
- A controlled Surface Use stipulation would apply in prairie dog colonies. Prairie dog colonies would be a ROW avoidance area for all types of ROWs (Chapter 2 and Appendix E-4).
- Sprague's pipit oil and gas Lease Notice was added. Sprague's pipit habitat would be an avoidance area for ROWs (Chapter 2 and Appendix E-4).

### **Special Status Species - Sage-Grouse**

- The term Protection Priority Areas (PPAs) was changed to Sage-grouse Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMAs). The PHMAs were expanded in the Proposed Action because the SD Game, Fish and Parks (SD GFP) recently identified core areas for sage-grouse that were larger and provided better edge-mapping with core areas in bordering states than the PPAs in the Draft RMP. South Dakota GFP recommended the core areas be considered for special management emphasis. Sage-grouse Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMAs) in

the Proposed Action are much larger than in those presented in the Draft RMP and match the SD GFP core areas. Refer to Chapter 2 and Map 2-5.

- The term Sage-grouse General Habitat (GH) was changed to Sage-grouse General Habitat Management Areas (GHMAs). The GHMAs would be smaller because the increase in PHMAs would encompass many areas previously identified as general habitat. Refer to Chapter 2, Glossary and Map 2-5.
- For sage-grouse related stipulations in PHMAs in Alternative D (Proposed Action), no waivers or modifications to a fluid minerals lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation will be granted. The Authorized Officer may grant an exception to a fluid mineral lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation in certain cases. 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) area 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 Record of Decision for this RMP (Chapter 2 and Appendix E.4).
- BLM-MT will use a 3% disturbance cap at the Biologically Significant Unit (BSU) and project scale. The density calculation (an average of 1 facility per 640 acres) applies to energy and mining facilities. If the 3% anthropogenic disturbance cap is exceeded on lands (regardless of land ownership) within GRS Priority Habitat Management Areas in PHMAs, then no further discrete anthropogenic disturbances (subject to applicable laws and regulations, such as the 1872 hard rock mining law, valid existing rights, etc.) will be permitted by BLM within PHMAs until the disturbance has been reduced to less than the cap. If the 3% disturbance cap is exceeded on all lands (regardless of land ownership) within a proposed project analysis area in PHMAs, then no further anthropogenic disturbance will be permitted by BLM until disturbance in the proposed project analysis area has been reduced to maintain the area under the cap (subject to applicable laws and regulations, such as the 1872 hard rock mining law, valid existing rights, etc.). (Chapter 2)
- Major ROWs (high voltage overhead lines 100kV and over, pipelines 24 inches or over) would be avoided in GHMAs. Minor ROWs would be avoided within 2 miles of leks and open in the other portions of the GHMAs. In the Draft RMP/EIS, ROWs were not split by minor and major categories and were open in GHMAs except near sage-grouse leks. Renewable Energy ROWs restrictions in GHMAs would include an exclusion within 1 mile of leks and avoidance in other portions of the GHMA (Chapter 2 and Appendices E.4 and R).
- The one mile NSO stipulation and four mile timing limit stipulation around sage grouse leks in GHMAs presented in the Preferred Alternative were changed to a six tenths of a mile NSO stipulation around leks in GHMAs within the Proposed Action. This would also apply to surface disturbing and disrupting activities (Chapter 2, Appendix E.4).
- Salable minerals would be closed in sage-grouse PHMAs except for free use permits (Chapter 2).
- Additional direction was included to better clarify or address management of sage-grouse within the following: land retention (see Map 2-2), prescribed fire direction, conifer encroachment, required design features, mitigation, adaptive management, buffers, travel and recreation facilities, management of split estate, grazing leases, monitoring, evaluation of impacts and vegetation objectives in sage-grouse habitat (Chapter 2).
- Appendices updated and new appendices added to provide direction for sage-grouse management including Required Design Features (Appendix V-1), Monitoring Framework (Appendix V-2), Sage-Grouse Effects Analysis (Appendix V-6), Applying Lek Buffer Distances (Appendix V-3) and Disturbance Caps (Appendix V-4).
- Goal added to address sage-grouse habitat in Priority Habitat Management Areas, stating the desired condition is to maintain a minimum of 70% of lands capable of producing sagebrush with 10 to 30% sagebrush canopy cover (Chapter 2).
- Adaptive management was refined to provide better details the use of hard and soft triggers and adaptive management responses (Chapter 2).
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- Mitigation language for sage grouse was modified to provide more detail about how mitigation measures would be carried out (Chapter 2).
- Additional tables added to Chapter 2 including sage-grouse habitat objectives table, allocations table for sage-grouse table that lists threats to sage-grouse with BLM actions to address threats (Chapter 2).

### Soils

- A badlands and rock outcrop NSO stipulation was added to the proposed action (Chapter 2 and Appendix E.4).
- The NSO for steep slopes was eliminated and steep slopes were incorporated as a CSU within the existing sensitive soil CSU (Chapter 2 and Appendix E.4).

### Water Quality

- An NSO stipulation and limits on surface disturbing and disruptive activities was added for source water protection areas to better protect water quality (Chapter 2 and Appendix E.4).
- Additional background information was added to the RMP regarding hydraulic fracturing (fracking) (Chapter 3).

NEPA requires agencies to prepare a supplement to the draft EIS: 1) the agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or 2) if there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts. A supplement is not necessary if a newly formulated alternative is a minor variation of one of the alternatives is qualitatively within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the Draft EIS.

The Proposed RMP includes components of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP and EIS. Taken together, these components present a suite of management decisions that present a minor variation of alternatives identified in the Draft RMP and EIS and are qualitatively within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed.

## National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

On December 9, 2011, a Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register to initiate the BLM/USFS Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) Planning Strategy across nine western states, including California, Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, and Southwest Montana in the Great Basin Region and Northwest Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota, and North Dakota in the Rocky Mountain Region. This Proposed RMP/Final EIS is one of fifteen separate EISs that are currently being conducted to analyze and incorporate specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG, consistent with National BLM and USFS policy.

On December 27, 2011, the BLM Washington Office released Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. 2012-044, which directed all of the planning efforts across the GRSG range to consider all applicable conservation measures when revising or amending its RMPs in GRSG habitat, including the measures developed by the National Technical Team (NTT) that were presented in their December 2011 document – A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures. IM-2012-044 directs all planning efforts associated with the national strategy to consider and analyze (as appropriate) the conservation measures presented in the report.

Along with the applicable measures that were outlined in the NTT Report, planning efforts associated with this National GRSG Planning Strategy will also analyze applicable conservation measures that were submitted to the BLM and USFS from various state governments and from citizens during the public scoping process. It is the goal of the BLM and USFS to make a final decision on these plans by the end of 2014, so that adequate regulatory mechanisms are incorporated in place before the USFWS makes a listing decision in 2015.

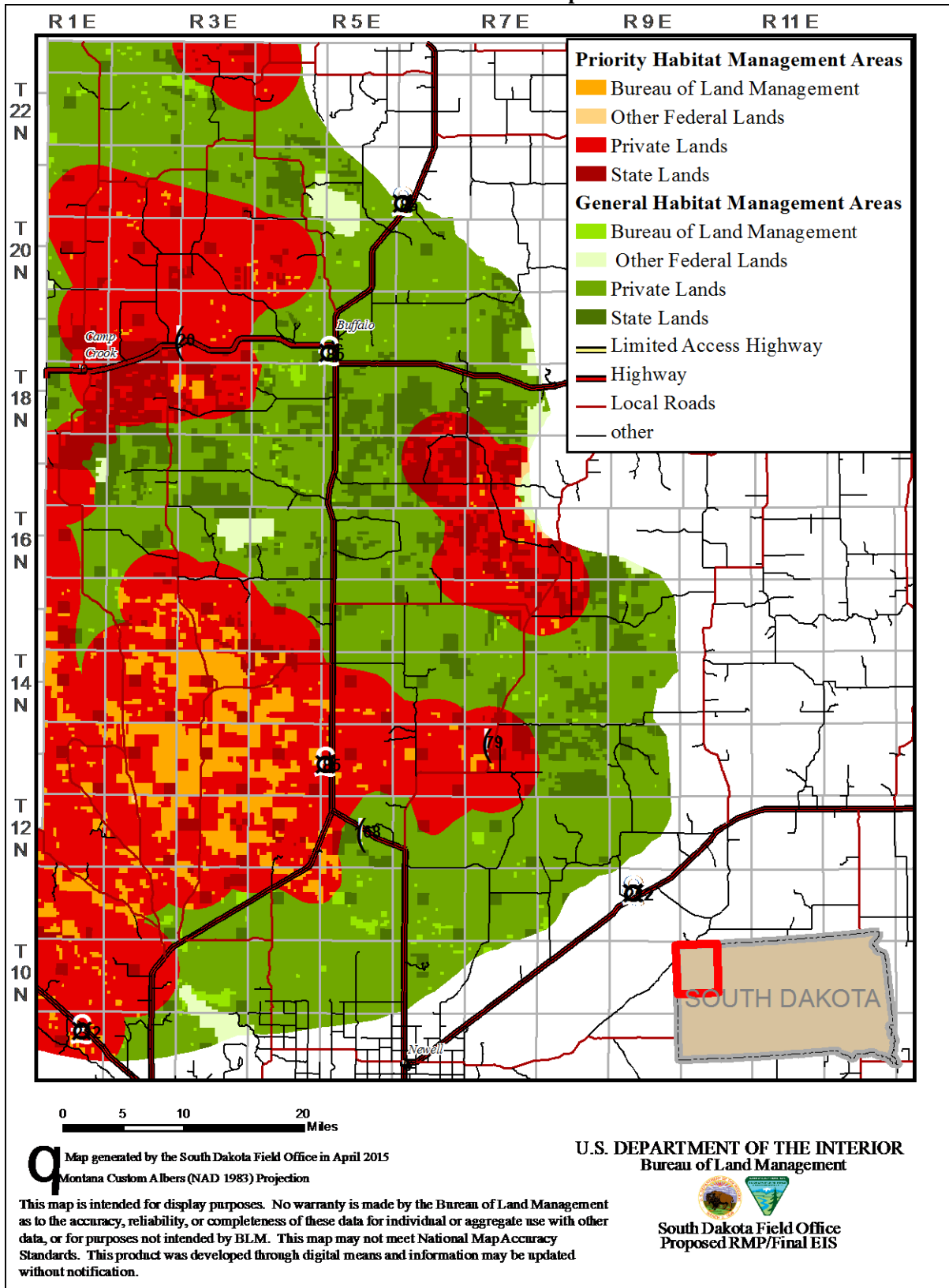
The Secretary of Interior issued Secretarial Order 3336 on January 5, 2015 which establishes the protection, conservation and restoration of “the health of the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem and, in particular, greater sage-grouse habitat, while maintaining safe and efficient operations as a critical fire management priority for the Department”. The Secretarial Order will result in a final report of activities to be implemented prior to the 2016 Western fire season. This will include prioritization and allocation of fire resources and the integration of emerging science, enhancing existing tools to implement the Resource Management Plan and improve our ability to protect sagebrush-steppe from damaging wildfires.

On October 27, 2014, the USFWS provided the BLM and Forest Service a memorandum titled “Greater Sage-Grouse: Additional Recommendations to Refine Land Use Allocations in Highly Important Landscapes” <http://www.fws.gov/greatersagegrouse/documents/ESA%20Process/GRSG%20Strongholds%20memo%20to%20BLM%20and%20USFS%20102714.pdf>. The memorandum and associated maps provided by the USFWS identify areas that represent recognized “strongholds” for GRSG that have been noted and referenced as having the highest densities of GRSG and other criteria important for the persistence of the species. The USFWS did not recognize areas within the South Dakota planning area as “strongholds” for GRSG.

The term Protection Priority Areas (PPAs) was changed to Sage-grouse Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMAs). The PHMAs were expanded in the Proposed Action because the SD Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP) recently identified core areas for sage-grouse that were larger and provided better edge-mapping with core areas in bordering states than the PPAs in the Draft RMP (SDGFP, 2014b). South Dakota GFP recommended the core areas be considered for special management emphasis. Sage-grouse Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMAs) in the Proposed Action are much larger than in those presented in the Draft RMP and match the SDGFP core areas. Please refer to Chapter 2 and Maps 2-3 through 2-5. Figure 1-2 depicts SDGFP core areas and BLM Sage-grouse management areas in the Proposed Action.

The term Sage-grouse General Habitat (GH) was changed to Sage-grouse General Habitat Management Areas (GHMAs). The GHMAs would be smaller because the increase in PHMAs would encompass many areas previously identified as general habitat. Please refer to Chapter 2, Glossary and Maps 2-3 through 2-5. Figure 1-2 depicts SDGFP core areas and BLM Sage-grouse management areas in the Proposed Action.

**Figure 1-1  
PHMA and GHMA for the Proposed Plan**



## **Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Objectives: Priority Areas for Conservation and how they correlate with Priority Habitat Management and General Habitat Management Areas**

In 2012, the Director of the USFWS asked the Conservation Objectives Team (COT), consisting of state and USFWS representatives, to produce recommendations regarding the degree to which the threats need to be reduced or ameliorated to conserve GRSG so that it would no longer be in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future. The COT Report (USFWS 2013a) provides objectives based upon the best scientific and commercial data available at the time of its release. The BLM/FS planning decisions analyzed in the LUP/EISs are intended to ameliorate threats identified in the COT report and to reverse the trends in habitat condition. The COT Report can be viewed online at the following address: <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/sagegrouse/COT/COT-Report-with-Dear-Interested-Reader-Letter.pdf>

The highest level objective in the COT Report is identified as meeting the objectives of WAFWA’s 2006 GRSG Comprehensive Strategy of “reversing negative population trends and achieving a neutral or positive population trend.”

The COT Report provides a WAFWA Management Zone and Population Risk Assessment. The report identifies localized threats from sagebrush elimination, fire, conifer encroachment, weed and annual grass invasion, mining, free-roaming wild horses and burros, urbanization, and widespread threats from energy development, infrastructure, grazing, and recreation (USFWS 2013a, p. 18).

Key areas across the landscape that are considered “necessary to maintain redundant, representative, and resilient populations” are identified within the COT Report. The USFWS in concert with the respective state wildlife management agencies identified these key areas as Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs).

Within the South Dakota planning area, PHMAs consist of a total of 544,157 to 983,544 acres of all lands regardless of ownership. The number of acres varies depending on the Alternative chosen. Under the Proposed Plan, PHMAs consist of 405,489 acres of lands managed by BLM.

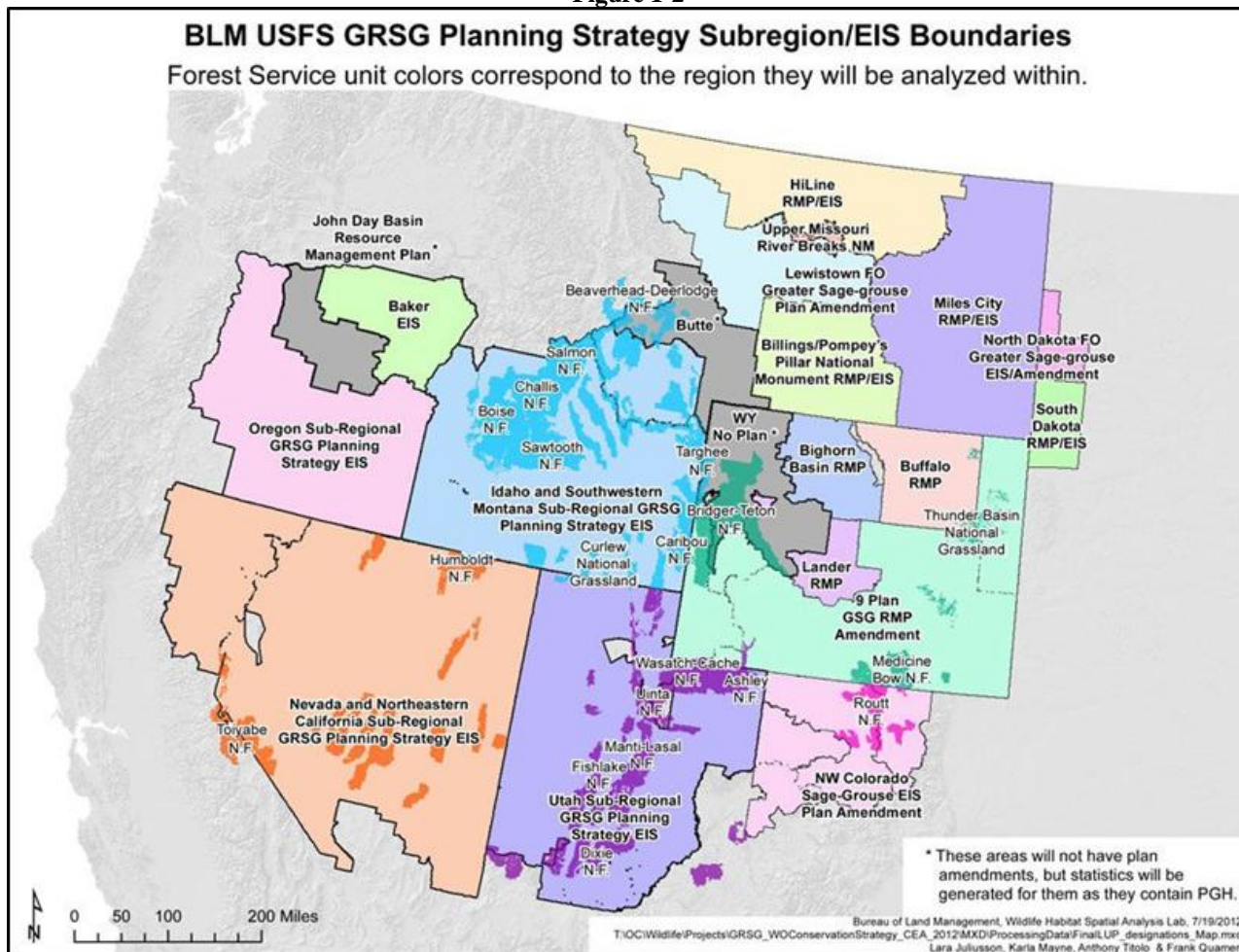
Total acres in GHMAs regardless of ownership consist of a total of 1,535,643 to 1,173,917 acres depending on the Alternative chosen. In GHMAs, BLM manages 23,684 to 84,384 acres in GHMA. Under the Proposed Plan, BLM manages 23,684 acres in GHMAs. There are no GRSG focal areas proposed for South Dakota.

While energy development has been identified as the primary threat to the greater sage-grouse within its eastern range, this area is not immune to the threat of wildfire. Within the Rocky Mountain Region wildfire was identified by the Conservation Objectives Team Final Report (2013) as a present and widespread threat in seven of thirteen priority areas of conservation (PACs) and as a present but localized threat in the remaining PACs. While fire is a naturally occurring disturbance in the sagebrush steppe, the incursion of non-native annual grasses is facilitating an increase in mean fire frequency which can preclude the opportunity for sagebrush to become re-established. As such the RMP includes requirements (referred to as Greater Sage-grouse Wildfire and Invasive Species Habitat Assessment in appendices in Draft documents) that landscape scale Fire and Invasives Assessments be completed and updated regularly to more accurately define specific areas to be treated to address threats to sagebrush steppe habitat. Within the Rocky Mountain region, assessments have not yet been completed but will be scheduled based on the need to identify and address potential threats.

## **Conservation Buffers for Greater Sage-Grouse**

On November 21, 2014 the USGS published “Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage-Grouse—A Review” (USGS 2014). The USGS review provided a compilation and summary of published scientific studies that evaluate the influence of anthropogenic activities and infrastructure on GRSG populations. The BLM has reviewed this information and examined how lek buffer-distances were addressed through land use allocations and other management actions in the Final Proposed SD RMP/EIS. Based on this review, in undertaking BLM management actions, and consistent with valid and existing rights and applicable law in authorizing third party actions, the he BLM will apply the lek buffer-distances in the USGS Report “Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage Grouse—A Review (Open File Report 2014-1239)” in both GHMA and PHMA as detailed in Chapter 2 . Refer to Appendix V-3 for additional details about conservation buffers for sage-grouse.

Figure 1-2



## Collaboration

The benefits of enhanced collaboration among agencies in the preparation of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS include 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, and establishing a mechanism for addressing intergovernmental issues. In addition to formal scoping, the BLM has implemented an extensive collaborative outreach and involvement process that has included coordinating with cooperating agencies and working closely with the Dakotas Resource Advisory Council (RAC). These efforts are summarized below, and additional information regarding collaboration with governments, agencies, and tribal representatives is provided in Chapter 5, Consultation and Coordination.

## Cooperating Agencies

A cooperating agency is any federal, state, or local government agency or Native American tribe that enters into an agreement with the lead federal agency to assist in the development of an environmental analysis. Early in the planning process, the BLM wrote local, state, federal, and tribal representatives, inviting them to participate as cooperating agencies for the South Dakota RMP revision process. The following agencies with jurisdiction, special expertise, or interest in the RMP revision process have agreed to participate as cooperating agencies:

- Butte County Commissioners
- Custer County Commissioners

- Harding County Commissioners
- Lawrence County Commissioners
- Meade County Commissioners
- Pennington County Commissioners
- State of South Dakota

The cooperating agencies made and entered into memorandums of understanding (MOUs) that set forth the roles and responsibilities for collaborative planning and production of a RMP/EIS for the SDFO. These agencies worked with the BLM to share knowledge and resources, and collectively work toward achieving desired outcomes for BLM lands and communities within statutory and regulatory frameworks in the planning area. Between 2008 and 2014, twelve cooperating agency meetings were held. These meetings focused on identifying and defining the planning issues and the alternatives development process for the SDFO Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

The USFWS and USFS are cooperators for the larger Greater Sage-grouse planning effort, which includes the South Dakota RMP. The MOU between the BLM, USFWS and USFS was signed in March 2012.

## Resource Advisory Council (RAC)

A RAC is a committee established by the Secretary of the Interior to provide advice or recommendations to BLM management. The Dakotas RAC was formed to address BLM-administered land in North Dakota and South Dakota. The BLM gave the Dakotas RAC initial presentation/briefing on the RMP process in the fall of 2007, with progress briefings and information on the planning process every six months.

During the initial RMP briefing, the BLM provided an overview of the RMP process, highlighting components and issues of the planning area, preliminary planning criteria, and project status. Subsequent briefings have focused on progress updates and slide shows of important aspects, such as selection of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), summaries of cooperating agency meetings and public involvement, and sage-grouse management. The RAC continued to be involved through briefings and updates during preparation of this Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

## Planning Process

The RMP provides basic program direction with establishment of goals, objectives, allowable uses and management actions or prescriptions. The RMP focuses on what resource conditions, uses and visitor experiences should be achieved and maintained over time. To do this, the RMP must provide a short-term and long-term perspective.

Defining planning issues and planning criteria represents the first steps in establishing the scope of the RMP revision. These, combined with public input, provide the framework in which RMP decisions are made. The RMP decisions refer to what is established or determined by the F RMP. The RMP provides guidance for land use planning decisions in accordance with the following categories:

- Physical, biological, and cultural resources
- Resource uses
- Special designations, such as ACECs

In the context of these categories, the planning team develops management strategies aimed at providing viable options to address planning issues. These management strategies provide the basis for future activity-level plans or specific projects. The resource management alternatives reflect a reasonable range of management options that fall within limits set by the planning criteria.

The planning process involves public participation, assessment, decision-making, implementation, plan monitoring, and evaluation, as well as adjustment through maintenance, amendment, and revision. This process ensures that land use plans and implementation decisions remain consistent with applicable laws, regulations, orders, and policies.

FLPMA requires the BLM to use land use plans as tools by which “present and future use is projected” (43 U.S.C. 1701 (a)(2)). The Act’s implementing regulations for planning, 43 CFR Part 1600, state that land use plans are a preliminary step

in the overall process of managing public lands, “designed to guide and control future management actions and the development of subsequent, more detailed and limited scope plans for resources and uses” (43 CFR Part 1601.0-2). Public participation and input are important components of land use planning.

Revision of existing land use plans is a major federal action for the BLM. NEPA, as amended, requires federal agencies to prepare an EIS for major federal actions such as RMPs (USDI, Departmental Manual, Part 516, Chapter 11.8 B(1)); thus, this Proposed RMP/Final EIS revises the existing plan. This Proposed RMP/Final EIS analyzes the impacts of four alternative scenarios for management of the public lands and resources within the planning area, including the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative is required by NEPA and reflects current management.

The BLM uses a nine-step planning process (refer to Table 1-2) when developing and revising RMPs, as required by 43 CFR 1600 and planning program guidance contained in the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1. The planning process is designed to help the BLM identify the uses of BLM-administered public lands desired by the public and to consider these uses to the extent they are consistent with the laws established by Congress and the policies of the executive branch of the federal government.

The planning process is issue-driven (Step 1). The plan revision process is undertaken to resolve management issues as well as to consider management opportunities. The BLM utilized the public scoping process to identify planning issues to direct revision of the existing plan. The scoping process was also used to introduce the public to preliminary planning criteria that help define the scope of RMP revision (Step 2).

As appropriate, the BLM used existing data from a variety of sources and collected new data as necessary to address planning issues and to fill data gaps identified during public scoping (Step 3). Using these data, the planning issues, and planning criteria, the BLM conducted an Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS; Step 4) to describe current management and identify management opportunities for addressing the planning issues. Current management reflects management under the existing plans and management that would continue through selection of the No Action Alternative. The existing affected environment is summarized from the AMS into Chapter 3 of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. The AMS is included as part of the administrative record for this plan.

Results of the first four steps of the planning process clarified the purpose and need and identified key planning issues that need to be addressed in the RMP. Key planning issues reflect the focus of the RMP revision and are described in more detail in the Issues Addressed section of this chapter.

Alternatives constitute a range of management actions which are anticipated to achieve identified goals or objectives. During alternative formulation (Step 5), the BLM collaborated with cooperating agencies to identify goals and objectives (desired outcomes) for resources and resource uses in the planning area.

These desired outcomes addressed the key planning issues, were constrained by planning criteria, and incorporated management opportunities identified by the BLM. Details of the alternatives were developed through identification of management actions and allowable uses anticipated to achieve the goals and objectives. The alternatives represent a reasonable range for managing resources and resource uses within the planning area under the multiple use and sustained yield mandate of FLPMA. Chapter 2 of this document describes and summarizes the alternatives.

This Proposed RMP/Final EIS also includes an analysis of the impacts of each alternative in Chapter 4 (Step 6). With input from cooperating agencies and BLM specialists, and in consideration of planning issues, planning criteria, and impacts of the alternatives, the BLM has identified a Proposed Action Alternative (Alternative D) from among the four alternatives (Step 7). This is documented in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, which will be distributed to the public for review and comment (also Step 7).

Step 8 of the land use planning process occurred following receipt and consideration of public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS. In preparing the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, the BLM considered all comments received during the public comment period. In developing the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, an alternative in its entirety or a combination of various alternatives analyzed may be selected, which prioritizes differing resources and/or uses consistent with the multiple use and sustained yield mandate. Prior to approval of the Proposed RMP, regulations at 43 CFR Part 1610 provide a 60-day “consistency review” period for the Governor of South Dakota, and a 30-day period for “any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the approval” of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS

to protest the Proposed RMP to the BLM Director. Step 9, Monitoring and Evaluation, occurs after a Record of Decision (ROD) is issued and the Approved RMP is being implemented.

Subsequent implementation decisions are carried out by developing activity-level or project-specific plans. Activity-level plans usually describe multiple projects for a single or multiple resource program(s). Project-specific plans usually describe a single project or several related projects.

<i>Step</i>	<i>Description</i>
Step 1	Scoping and Identification of Issues*
Step 2	Development of Planning Criteria*
Step 3	Inventory Data and Information Collection
Step 4	Analysis of the Management Situation
Step 5	Formulation of Alternatives
Step 6	Estimation of Effects of Alternatives
Step 7	Identification of the Preferred Alternative. This step includes preparation and public distribution of the Draft RMP/EIS for public review and comment.
Step 8	Selection of the Proposed Action. This step involves preparation and public distribution of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.*
Step 9	Monitoring and Evaluation**

\* Public participation is invited throughout the planning process but is formally requested at these steps.

\*\* The RMP will be revised as necessary based on monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, new or revised policy, and changes in circumstances consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

## Scoping and Planning Issues

The scoping process identifies land use issues and conflicts. These issues stem from new information or changed circumstances, the need to address environmental concerns, or a need to reassess the appropriate mix of allowable uses based on new information. Scoping is the first step in the planning process and closely involves the public with identifying issues, providing resource or other information, and developing planning criteria to guide preparation of the RMP.

Early in the planning process, the public was invited to identify planning issues and concerns related to management of BLM-administered public lands and resources/uses in the planning area. The formal scoping period began with publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on July 19, 2007. During scoping, the BLM requested public input on identifying resource issues and concerns, management alternatives, or other ideas to help in determining future land use decisions for the planning area. From August through October 2007, nine scoping meetings were held across the planning area. A total of 89 individuals attended the scoping meetings. In addition to the nine scoping meetings, four open house meetings were held specifically to address the concerns of Native American Tribes.

The South Dakota RMP website housed current information including background documents, maps and other related information (<http://blm.gov/m1kd>). Scoping information and newsletters were sent to a list of individuals, agencies and organizations compiled from a variety of sources, including those who participated in previous BLM planning efforts in the region, individuals who requested to be on the mailing list and those who participated during scoping meetings.

The SDFO received 24 written submissions as a result of scoping efforts. All submissions indicated an interest in the management of BLM-administered public lands and resources. Many of the submissions offered substantive comments, while other comments conveyed a desire or an opinion. Of the 24 written submissions and comments submitted during the scoping open houses, a total of 370 individual comments were analyzed and considered by resource specialists. Additional information on scoping and public participation is described in detail in Chapter 5.



## Issues Addressed

A planning issue is a major controversy or dispute regarding management of resources or uses and is developed from demands, concerns, conflicts, or problems about use or management of public lands and resources. These issues are usually expressed as potential adverse consequences or effects that a particular land or resource use may have on other lands or resources used or valued for other purposes. Planning issues drive the formulation of the range of alternatives considered in the RMP/EIS, such as what areas, if any, contain unique or sensitive resources requiring special management. A reasonable range of alternatives provides various scenarios for how the BLM and cooperating agencies can address this and other key planning issues, including the management of resources and resource uses in the planning area. In other words, key planning issues serve as the rationale for alternative development.

Preliminary planning issues were identified through an extensive review of the South Dakota RMP (1985) and associated amendments and decision documents. Through this review the BLM identified land management direction that will be proposed to be carried forward and land management direction that will be proposed to be changed. The preliminary planning issues were refined through collaborative efforts and through public scoping. The planning issues identified for developing alternatives in this Proposed RMP/ Final EIS are summarized below.

The issues that were identified and their goals (not in priority order) include:

- **Issue: Energy Development.** Manage energy development to provide for domestic energy production while protecting the integrity of other resources.
- **Issue: Vegetation Management.** Manage public lands to provide desired plant communities and meet objectives of the BLM Standards for Rangeland Health (Glossary and Appendix A).
- **Issue: Wildlife Habitat.** Manage public lands to conserve wildlife species, maintain or improve their habitats, and control invasive species.
- **Issue: Special Status Species.** Manage public lands to conserve and recover threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species. In March 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the sage-grouse warranted protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing the species was precluded by the need to address other, higher-priority species first (75 FR 13910, March 23, 2010). One reason for the USFWS decision was an identified need for “improved regulatory mechanisms” to ensure species conservation. The principal regulatory mechanisms for BLM are Resource Management Plans (RMPs); therefore, the BLM is using this opportunity to develop long-term and effective management for the species on the BLM administered lands (WO IM No. 2012-044).
- **Issue: Travel Management and Access.** Determine how transportation and access would be managed in the planning area to provide for use and enjoyment of public lands, while protecting significant resource values and providing for user safety.
- **Issue: Commercial Uses.** Determine what public lands would be available for commercial activities and how those activities would be managed.
- **Issue: Land Ownership Adjustments.** Determine criteria to make public land tenure adjustments, including disposal of public land and acquisition of nonpublic lands, and determine what public lands may be available for future adjustment activities.
- **Issue: Visual Resource Management.** Manage public land to conserve or improve visual resource values.
- **Issue: Climate Change.** Provide for adaptable, flexible management and diverse, healthy ecosystems that are resilient to the impacts of climate change. Consider the impacts of BLM actions on climate change.

A separate public scoping period was initiated on December 9, 2011 with the publication of a Notice of Intent to begin a planning effort in the Federal Register for the national greater sage-grouse planning strategy, which included the South

Dakota planning area. As part of this scoping process, the BLM requested that the public submit nominations for potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) for sage-grouse and their habitats.

The planning issues and associated statements, planning criteria, and other information collected in the early planning and scoping phases of the RMP/EIS process were used to help formulate a reasonable range of alternative management strategies.

## Issues Considered but Not Further Analyzed

Scoping also identified issues, concerns, or questions that can be addressed by current management, BLM policy, administrative action, or that were beyond the scope of this RMP/EIS. Some of these scoping comments are summarized below, while the Scoping Summary Report (BLM 2009a), which is available online at [http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/south\\_dakota\\_field/rmp/docs.html](http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/south_dakota_field/rmp/docs.html), provides a comprehensive list of issues and concerns that are outside the scope of the RMP or are addressed through administrative or policy action.

- **There is concern about water purity levels on the Pine Ridge Reservation.** The BLM does not control ground water or surface water quality on Native American reservations. During mineral exploration or development, the BLM may be involved with leasable or locatable minerals. The BLM applies stipulations and works closely with the State of South Dakota to ensure water sources are safeguarded.
- **Development of uranium on Pine Ridge or on Wild Horse Refuge would cause serious sickness among the people who are already suffering and would cause irreparable damage to the land and wildlife.** The BLM does not control ground water or surface water quality on Native American reservations or on the Wild Horse Refuge. During mineral exploration or development, the BLM may be involved with leasable or locatable minerals. The BLM applies stipulations and works closely with the State of South Dakota to ensure water sources are safeguarded.
- **Allow for Coal Development.** BLM-administered public lands in the planning area have low coal development potential relative to adjacent states. Coal development was discussed by the RMP planning team and was dismissed because 1) the SDFO received no comments or expressions of interest in coal development during scoping and has not received applications or expressions of interest in coal development 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.

## Planning Criteria

The BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-2) require planning criteria to guide RMP preparation. Planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that guide and direct the development of the RMP. They ensure that the RMP is tailored to the identified issues and that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided.

The following criteria were developed based on applicable laws and regulations, agency guidance, and public comment.

- The RMP would address BLM-administered public lands and federal minerals. Decisions would not be made for lands not managed by the BLM.
- The RMP would be in compliance with FLPMA and all other applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
- Impacts from the management alternatives considered in the RMP would be analyzed in the EIS and developed in accordance with regulations at 43 CFR 1610 and 40 CFR 1500.
- Broad-based public participation would be an integral part of the RMP planning and EIS process.

- Decisions in the RMP would strive to be compatible with existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, tribal and federal agencies as long as the decisions are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law and regulations applicable to BLM-administered public lands.
- The RMP would continue to recognize the State of South Dakota's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife. The BLM would consult with South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks as necessary. The RMP would incorporate state or region-wide planning efforts to the fullest extent possible.
- The National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy (BLM 2004) requires that impacts to sagebrush habitat and sagebrush-dependent wildlife species (including sage-grouse) be analyzed and considered in BLM land use planning efforts for BLM-administered public lands with sage-grouse/sagebrush habitats. Sage-grouse were recently found to be warranted but precluded from listing as an endangered species by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The BLM will utilize the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Habitats (Connelly, et al. 2004), and any other appropriate resources (e.g., peer-reviewed scientific literature, internal documents or guidance, other state or federal agencies, expert opinion, etc), to identify sage-grouse habitat requirements and best management practices (BMPs).
- The RMP would recognize valid existing rights.
- The RMP would incorporate management decisions brought forward from existing planning documents.
- The RMP/EIS would incorporate by reference the Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management; the Montana/Dakotas Fire/Fuels Management Plan; and the Off-Highway Vehicle EIS and Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota, and Portions of South Dakota.
- Based on the assumptions of adequate funding, this plan would be periodically reviewed and amended if necessary. Plans would be evaluated every five years per 43 CFR 1610.4-9. Information gathered from the five year evaluation would be used to determine planning needs and priority for plan revisions and/or amendments.
- The interdisciplinary team (planning team) would work cooperatively and collaboratively with the State of South Dakota, tribal governments, county and municipal governments, other federal agencies, the Dakotas Resource Advisory Council, and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals.
- The RMP would recognize federal land management agency obligations under tribal treaties and laws or executive orders on Native American reserved rights, religious freedoms, and traditional use areas.
- The BLM and cooperating agencies/governments would jointly develop alternatives to resolve resource management issues that are within the BLM's authority.
- The State Historic Preservation Office would be consulted and involved throughout the planning process.
- Areas with special environmental quality would be protected and, if necessary, designated as ACECs, Wild and Scenic Rivers, or other appropriate designations.
- The RMP would emphasize protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the planning area while, at the same time, providing the public with opportunities for compatible activities on BLM-administered public lands.
- The RMP would recognize local, statewide, and national concerns and lifestyles.
- Lands acquired by the BLM would be managed in the manner the RMP prescribes for adjacent or nearby BLM-administered public land, subject to any constraints associated with the acquisition.
- The RMP would provide management direction for lands returned to BLM management through revocation of withdrawals should any occur. The plan would also address lands acquired through other means.

- Fire Management strategies would be consistent with the 2009 Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, the National Fire Plan, the Fire/Fuels Management Plan for Montana and Dakotas, the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide with BLM supplemental guidance, the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Redbook), and other BLM handbooks.
- GIS and metadata information would meet Federal Geographic Data Committee standards, as required by Executive Order 12906, signed April 11, 1994. Other applicable BLM data standards would be followed. The goal is to develop an RMP with spatial and temporal data that can be easily accessed for use in subsequent environmental review.
- All proposed management actions would be based on best available scientific information, research and technology, as well as existing inventory and monitoring information.
- The RMP would establish new guidance and identify existing guidance upon which the BLM will rely in managing BLM-administered public lands within the Decision Area.
- The RMP would result in determinations as required by special program and resource-specific guidance in Appendix C of the BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook (BLM 2005).
- Resource allocations must be reasonable and achievable within available technological and budgetary constraints.
- The RMP would incorporate existing recovery plans, management strategies, and guidelines for federally listed threatened and endangered species. State management plans would be considered for delisted species.
- The RMP would recognize the State of South Dakota's authority on South Dakota water law and water rights.
- The BLM and USFS will consider allocative and/or prescriptive standards to conserve sage-grouse habitat, as well as objectives and management actions to restore, enhance, and improve sage-grouse habitat.
- The BLM and USFS will use a collaborative and multi-jurisdictional approach, where appropriate, to determine the desired future condition of public lands and National Forest System lands for the conservation of sage-grouse and their habitats.
- South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks sage-grouse data and expertise will be utilized to the fullest extent practicable in making management determinations on Federal lands.

## Relationship to BLM Policies, Plans, and Programs

This RMP incorporates new information and regulatory guidance and provides management direction where it may be lacking or requires clarification. Current management direction that has proven effective and requires no change is carried forward in this RMP. A list of the plans and plan amendments that guide current management direction is provided in Table 1-3.

A number of plans have been developed by the BLM that relate to or otherwise govern management in the planning area. Some of these plans have not been formally adopted through the land use planning process, but are considered by the BLM when implementation level planning is conducted or other specific actions are analyzed. These major plans and other major management guidance are listed below and provide a perspective of the many management considerations pertinent to the planning area.

<b>Table 1-3 Summary of Plans Guiding Management Directions</b>		
<i>Document Title</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Administrative Record Document Number</i>
South Dakota Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement	1986	BLM-MT-ES-86-001-4410
Miles City District Oil and Gas RMP/EIS Amendment	1995	BLM-MT-PL-94-004-4110
Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Assessment for the Fort Meade Recreation Area ACEC	1996	MT-034-06-8
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Environmental Assessment and Amendment of the Billings, Powder River and South Dakota Resource Management Plans	1999	BLM-MT-PL-98-006-1150
Montana/Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management EIS	1997	BLM-MT-PL-97-009-1020
Oil and Gas Leasing, Nebraska National Forest and Buffalo Gap National Grassland (USFS)	2002	Not Available
Exemption Area Wildland Urban Interface Project Environmental Assessment	2003	BLM-MT040-2002-0024
Fire/Fuels Management Plan Environmental Assessment/Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas	2003	BLM-MT-PI-03-108
Off-Highway Vehicle Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota and Portions of South Dakota	2003	BLM-MT-PL-01-002-1220
Custer National Forest, Sioux Ranger District Oil and Gas Leasing Document (USFS) and Record of Decision	2004	20050208
Fort Meade Recreation Area Forest and Rangeland Treatments Environmental Assessment	2008	BLM-MT-040-2008-001
*National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy	2004	Not Numbered

\*The National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy (BLM 2004) serves as guidance for managing, restoring and enhancing sagebrush habitat on BLM-administered lands. The guidance is designed to support and promote the range-wide conservation of sagebrush habitats for sage-grouse and other sagebrush-obligate wildlife species.

**Fire/Fuels Management Plan Environmental Assessment/Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas (BLM 2003)**

The Fire/Fuels Management Plan implements the National Fire Plan and 2001 Federal Fire Policy in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota and provides general guidance for fire management (including both fire suppression and fuels management) needed to protect other resource values.

**National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy (BLM 2004)**

This plan serves as guidance on managing, restoring and enhancing sagebrush habitat on BLM lands. The guidance is designed to support and promote the range-wide conservation of sagebrush habitats for sage-grouse and other sagebrush-obligate wildlife species. BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy (2012) provides direction to the BLM for considering sage-grouse conservation measures identified in the Sage-Grouse National Technical Team’s paper “A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures during the Land Use Planning Process.”

**Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Reburial Policy on BLM Lands, BLM Handbook 8120-1, Ch. II, Paragraph C3 (BLM 2006)**

This policy clarifies the BLM’s position that reburial of Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) items on BLM-administered public lands may be authorized on a case-by-case basis. Lands that may be considered for reburial activities include lands withdrawn from multiple uses and mineral entry.

### **Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic EIS (BLM 2007a)**

This plan assesses the environmental consequences of implementing a vegetation treatment program to manage a variety of vegetation species on BLM land in the Western United States. The vegetation treatment program responds to many different control requirements, including suppressing plants that are toxic to humans and animals, enhancing visibility, maintaining passages for transportation, facilitating drainage, reducing fuel for wildfires, and controlling the expansion of exotic species, which includes noxious weeds. The vegetation treatment methods include manual, mechanical, biological, prescribed burning, and chemical.

### **Montana Statewide Oil and Gas Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Amendment of the Powder River and Billings Resource Management Plans, Record of Decision for Final Supplement (BLM 2008a)**

Under this ROD and proposed amendment, development in the Billings and Powder River RMP areas would be done in a phased manner through restrictions imposed by the BLM. The phased approach is intended to reduce the overall cumulative impacts to any resource by managing the pace and place, as well as the density and intensity of federal coalbed natural gas development. In addition to the standard Plan of Development (POD) review, four evaluation screens for water, wildlife, American Indian concerns, and air would be applied when reviewing proposals to identify impacts, develop mitigation measures, and guide the decision-making process.

### **Recreational and Visitor Services Planning**

The BLM released Handbook H-8320-1, Planning for Recreation and Visitor Services on August 22, 2014. The handbook assists BLM staff in the planning and management of recreation and visitor services on public land. The release of the handbook coincided with the final development of the Proposed RMP and Final EIS. Accordingly, not all recreation and visitor services decisions in this Proposed RMP and Final EIS follow the recommended format provided in the handbook. However, the Proposed RMP and Final EIS complies with the requirements for establishing desired conditions, allowable uses and actions related to the management of recreation and visitor services as discussed in Handbook H-8320-1.

## **Related Plans**

Plans formulated by federal, state, local, and tribal governments that relate to the RMP have been reviewed and considered including:

### **Butte County Government Coordinating Ordinance for Actions Affecting Land and Natural Resources Use (Butte County 1995)**

Promote the protection of not only the physical environment, but also the customs, culture, and economic stability of the county; requires that federal and state agencies abide by existing laws that require them to conduct joint planning with the county on actions affecting land and natural resources use in the county; ensures full compensation to the county citizens when environmental protection necessitates use of private property and/or reduces the value of said private property; and provides a positive guide for federal and state agencies in their development and implementation of regulations affecting land and natural resources use in Butte County.

### **Harding County Environmental Review Plan (Harding County 1995)**

The overriding purpose of this ordinance is to assist federal and state agencies in coordinating governmental agency-initiated planning activities with Harding County. The nature and intent of this ordinance amendment is to protect the environment, the economic stability of the local community, and the custom and culture of Harding County's citizens through protecting private property rights, facilitating a free-market economy, and establishing a process to ensure self-determination by local communities and individuals.

**Black Hills National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (Revision) (USFS 1997)**

This plan provides for diversity of plant and animal communities. It updates standards and guidelines and projected outputs based on better science. This ROD also provides a high level of economic net value and includes an increase in acres managed for hardwoods or meadows. It emphasizes diversity in tree stand density, and several botanical areas would be created. Late succession landscapes and sites would be managed. Some riparian areas would be restored by raising the water table. Where possible, it would increase prescribed burning. Timber harvest would remain as an important tool to manage the forest ecosystem.

**Custer National Forest and National Grasslands Land and Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (USFS 1986)**

The decision for the Plan sets forth the direction and standards for management of the National Forest System (NFS) lands administered as part of the Custer National Forest and National Grasslands in Montana and South Dakota.

**Dakota Prairie Grasslands (Revision) (USFS 2002)**

The Revised Grasslands Plan established standards and guidelines that will provide for more diverse conditions than currently exist on the grasslands.

**Pennington County Comprehensive Plan (Pennington County 2003)**

This plan outlines the general approach for the development of Pennington County and examines a number of concerns that affect the quality of life, current development, and future growth of the county.

**Community Wildfire Protection Plans:**

- Butte County – completed May 2007
- City of Lead – completed 2002
- Custer County – completed October 2006
- Fall River County – completed April 2011
- Harding County – completed November 2006
- Lawrence County – completed December 2005, updated 2012
- Meade County – completed June 2006
- Pennington County – completed August 2006, updated 2013
- Perkins County – completed January 2009
- Stanley County – completed December 2007

The principle objective of these plans is to reduce the risk from wildfire to life, property, critical infrastructure, and natural resources in Wildland Urban Interface areas.

**Belle Fourche Reservoir Final Resource Management Plan (Bureau of Reclamation 2004)**

This plan provides overall long-term management direction to protect and manage lands and resources associated with the Belle Fourche Reservoir in Butte County, SD. This plan provides direction consistent with the purposes of the reservoir, which include irrigation, fish, wildlife, and recreation with irrigation as the primary reservoir use. The plan establishes land use categories for various activities and uses for specific areas at the Reservoir.

**Belle Fourche River Watershed Strategic Implementation Plan (Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership 2005)**

This plan summarizes water quality data, identifies impaired streams and provides recommendation for watershed improvement practices in the Belle Fourche River watershed in Butte, Lawrence and Meade counties. This plan provides desired future conditions for a healthy, functioning watershed, addresses nonpoint source pollution and total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) pursuant to section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.

**Black Hills National Forest Phase II Amendment #6 Record of Decision (USFS 2005)**

This Phase II Amendment ROD was expanded from the original purpose of species viability and Research Natural Areas to include fire and insect issues.

**Lawrence County Comprehensive Plan (Lawrence County 2005)**

The goals of this plan are to provide for:

- quality of life (including rural small town character, abundant recreation opportunities, economic livelihood, clean air and water, natural beauty, and adequate infrastructure and services);
- land use (including growth and development patterns, economic development, and environmental sensitivity);
- natural environment (including preserving the county's natural amenities for future generations, while allowing an appropriate level of development to ensure economic stability);
- economic development (including how to provide for economic health and vitality without compromising the reason that people enjoy living in the county);
- transportation (projected and planned for in an orderly manner); and
- public facilities and services.

**Custer National Forest Weed Management Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (2006)**

This decision provides a reasonable course of action to address weed problems and other undesirable plants.

**Livestock Grazing Record of Decision for Dakota Prairie Grasslands (USFS 2006)**

One key goal of the Demonstration Project is to maintain or improve current on-the-ground conditions, while maintaining, to the maximum extent possible, a grazing program at current Animal Unit Months (AUM) levels and providing sufficient habitat for grassland species.

**Natural Resource Plan for Meade County, South Dakota (Meade County 2006)**

This plan establishes a process for Meade County to coordinate with federal and state agencies on their proposed actions so that county citizens may preserve their custom, culture, and economic stability, while protecting and using their environment.

**Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Bear Butte National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS 2007)**

This plan provides overall long-term management direction to protect and manage lands and resources associated with the Bear Butte National Wildlife Refuge in Meade County, SD. Goals include maintaining wildlife and managing habitat, working with partners to provide quality wildlife-dependent recreation and awareness, recognizing the significance and sacredness of Bear Butte to Plains Tribes, and supporting existing partnerships. The Bear Butte Refuge is managed in coordination with the State of South Dakota.

**Sioux Ranger District Oil and Gas Leasing Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (2007)**

This decision approves leasing for oil and gas development on the National Forest System lands in the South Dakota portion of the Sioux Ranger District.

**Nebraska and South Dakota Black-tailed Prairie Dog Management on the Nebraska National Forest and Associated Units, Including Plan Amendment 3 (USFS 2008)**

The Final EIS for this ROD identified two distinct management areas within the Nebraska National Forest project area: (1) Non-Management Area 3.63 – those areas outside black-footed ferret management emphasis, and (2) Management Area 3.63 – Black-footed ferret management emphasis.



### **Sioux Ranger District Travel Management Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (2009)**

This decision sets forth travel management for the South Dakota Portion of the Sioux Ranger District and portions of southeastern Montana.

### **Travel Management on the Fort Pierre National Grassland (USFS 2008)**

Out of the 236 miles of routes on the Fort Pierre National Grassland (FPNG), 64 miles would be open year-round, eight miles would be open to permitted users only, and 164 miles of user-created routes would be closed to all motorized vehicles. The FPNG would be closed to over-snow vehicles, except for the rights-of-way (ROWs) of Highway 83.

### **Black Hills National Forest Travel Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (USFS 2010a)**

This EIS responds to the Travel Management Rule and discloses the effects of five alternative approaches to managing motorized vehicles on the Forest. These alternatives were developed after significant public involvement. The EIS considers which routes should be designated as open to motorized use, what types (class) of vehicles should be used on various routes, which routes should be open yearlong and which ones seasonally, and whether limited cross-country motorized travel should be allowed for purposes of retrieving harvested game and/or dispersed camping.

### **State of South Dakota Plans**

The following describes plans developed by the State of South Dakota. Some of the plans listed below are complete and others are being written or revised.

#### **South Dakota Statewide Forest Resource Strategy and Assessment (June 2010)**

The Strategy and Assessment are available at <http://sdda.sd.gov/conservation-forestry/assessment-of-forest-resources/>. South Dakota's forest resource strategy provides a long-term, comprehensive, coordinated strategy for investing state, federal, and partner resources. The purpose of this strategy is to provide a comprehensive management plan for priority areas identified in the assessment. The resource strategy details threats, strategies, existing resources, needs, and partners. The threats and strategies described here were assembled with input from the South Dakota Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee and the Community Forestry Advisory Council.

#### **South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan (2012)**

State wildlife agencies received federal funding for rare species work. In exchange, each state drafted a plan to address the needs of all fish and wildlife species, with priority on species of greatest conservation need. The South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan guides the state agency's priorities, but more importantly, serves as a framework for potential cooperators to work together to benefit wildlife and healthy habitats. While much of the focus of this plan is to work to avoid future endangered species listings, plans also help maintain common species in the face of known and likely future challenges. An important component of a state Wildlife Action Plan is a list of species of greatest conservation need. The species list is intended to represent declining species and species that can help indicate the effectiveness of habitat management and conservation. The list is not intended to include all rare species. Lists of South Dakota rare species that are found on or near BLM-administered lands are found in the Special Status Species section of Chapter 3. The South Dakota Wildlife Action plan is available at <http://gfp.sd.gov/wildlife/management/plans/species-list.aspx>.

#### **South Dakota Management Plans for Wildlife (specific plans for various species)**

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks develops and periodically updates management plans for various species. These plans are available at <http://gfp.sd.gov/wildlife/management/plans/default.aspx>.

The following is a description of South Dakota Wildlife Management Plans:

- South Dakota Greater Sage Grouse Management Plan, 2014-2018 (SDGFP 2014b).

The South Dakota Sage-Grouse plan identifies core sage-grouse use areas in western South Dakota.

This management plan is designed to provide biological information about sage-grouse, identifies factors that influence sage-grouse in South Dakota, and guides future management direction and actions by establishing objectives to:

- 1) Maintain or increase/improve the existing status and range of sage/steppe habitat in SD;
  - 2) Annually monitor sage-grouse population status and distribution;
  - 3) Use results from lek counts and inference from past hunting seasons to guide recommendations for the annual hunting season;
  - 4) Develop a public outreach and educational plan that informs the public, landowners, stakeholders, and wildlife/conservation agencies on sage grouse management and the issues of highest concern;
  - 5) Support local, interstate and interagency sage-grouse research projects and collaborative conservation planning efforts; and
  - 6) Document disease outbreaks and develop management responses.
- Prairie Grouse Management Plan for South Dakota (SDGFP 2011b) – Sharp-tailed grouse and greater prairie chickens, collectively prairie grouse, are the most abundant grouse species in South Dakota. The vast expanses of open grassland found throughout much of South Dakota provide ideal habitat for these two game birds. Although slight differences in micro and macro habitat requirements exist between these two species, management strategies are similar enough to warrant one management plan for prairie grouse in South Dakota.
  - Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep Management Plan (SDGFP 2007) – Provides management options from preservation of the existing herds, expansion of present herd numbers, transplanting to establish new herds.
  - Mountain Lion Management Plan (SDGFP 2010a) – Provides a concise, yet comprehensive overview of topics such as inventory and status, population monitoring, season summaries, response protocol, public attitudes, issues related to mountain lion management, and research results.
  - Private Lands Habitat and Access Strategic Plan (SDGFP 2008c) – Since approximately 80 percent of the state's land base is under private ownership, private landowners serve as the stewards with the most influence over wildlife habitat conditions for wildlife populations. Dating back to the mid-1970s, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks has offered voluntary private land habitat programs to cooperating landowners, if they desire to establish and enhance wildlife habitat. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks has developed this strategic plan to serve as an adaptive document to guide their efforts to manage habitat and provide public access to private land.
  - Wildlife Division Strategic Planning Framework (SDGFP 2006a) – This document is for general, strategic guidance for the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks and serves to identify the role that the agency plays, how they function, and what they strive to accomplish related to mountain lion management.
  - South Dakota Ring-Necked Pheasant Management Plan (SDGFP 2009a) – The vision is to maintain abundant populations of pheasants for South Dakotans and visitors by fostering a partnership-driven approach for habitat development and management, to ensure public access opportunities, and to increase public awareness of the broad benefits of quality habitat and hunting.
  - South Dakota Resident Canada Goose Management Plan (SDGFP 2010b) – The original South Dakota Resident Canada Goose Management Plan was compiled by the Game Staff in September 1998. An updated version (January 2005) served to guide management of resident Canada geese through 2009. The latest version (May 2010) will guide management through 2014 and should be updated in 2015.
  - South Dakota Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan (SDGFP 2008a) – This management plan was developed to address the prevention, control, and effects of Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) that have invaded or may invade South Dakota's waters. The South Dakota Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan serves as the initial step in establishing a program to specifically address ANS issues in South Dakota.
  - South Dakota All Bird Conservation Plan (SDGFP 2005a) – Ecological management of nongame land birds requires determining which species and habitats are most in need of conservation. The objectives of this plan are

to identify the priority species of concern in South Dakota, present their habitat requirements, and identify possible habitat management options.

- South Dakota Bat Management Plan (SDGFP 2004) – The main goal of the South Dakota Bat Management Plan is to provide guidance promoting long-term conservation of South Dakota bat species through research, management, and education.
- Topeka Shiner State Management Plan (SDGFP 2003) – The USFWS listed the Topeka shiner as endangered in January 1999. Prior to listing, limited survey data suggested the shiner occupied only 10 percent of its historic range. Recent studies in South Dakota have documented the Topeka shiner in 80 percent of historically known streams, along with many streams where Topeka shiners were not previously reported.
- South Dakota Prairie Dog Management Plan (SDGFP 2005b) – The primary goal of this plan is to manage for long-term, self-sustaining prairie dog populations in South Dakota while addressing landowner concerns and maintaining the viability of the unique grassland ecosystem. This state management plan was developed by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks and Department of Agriculture with the assistance of working groups.
- South Dakota River Otter Management Plan – This management plan is intended to provide general, strategic guidance for 5 years to the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department (SDGFP) and potential partners for the recovery and sustained management of the river otter in South Dakota. It identifies what they strive to accomplish related to river otter management. This plan includes working cooperatively with interested publics in both the planning process and the regular program activities related to river otter management.
- Pronghorn Management Plan for South Dakota – The pronghorn is native to North America. In the 1804 journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition, it was noted that pronghorn occurred in vast numbers over most of the Dakota Territory. In 1841, Maximillian recorded pronghorn as wintering west of the Missouri River along the Cheyenne River and during the spring they would swim the river to summer in the Coteau des Prairie. In the 1879 Yankton Daily Press, pronghorn were reported as abundant on the prairies east of the James River (SDGFP 1965). It has been estimated that over 700,000 pronghorn ranged in South Dakota prior to 1800.
- Management Plans for Threatened and Endangered Species on the Missouri River – South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks has developed a set of management plans for the four listed species that live along the Missouri. These species include the pallid sturgeon (SDGFP 2006b), bald eagle (SDGFP 2005c), least tern (SDGFP 2005d) and piping plover (SDGFP 2005b).
- Siting Guidelines for Wind Power Projects (SDGFP 2009b) – The South Dakota Bat Working Group in cooperation with South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks compiled these siting guidelines for wind power developers and other stakeholders to utilize as they consider potential wind power sites in South Dakota.

Other South Dakota wildlife plans that are pending development or revision will be considered as drafts until they are released or become finalized.

## Policy

No proclamations or legislative designations that would influence decisions or constrain the alternatives have been issued within the planning area.

Implementation of the RMP begins when the BLM Montana/Dakotas State Director signs the ROD for the RMP. Decisions in the RMP would be implemented in coordination with the BLM budgeting process. An implementation schedule would be developed, providing for the systematic accomplishment of decisions in the approved RMP. Implementation actions (project level) actions would require additional site specific NEPA analysis.

## Vision and Management Goals

The overall vision of the SDFO in preparing this Proposed RMP/ Final EIS is to manage BLM-administered public lands in the planning area in a manner that provides for multiple uses while sustaining a healthy and productive environment for present and future generations. The vision is supported by the guiding principle that would enhance the quality of life for all citizens through the balanced stewardship of America's public lands and resources. A number of management goals and objectives that guided alternative development for this RMP were developed from information collected from public scoping efforts, existing laws and regulations, cooperative efforts, and from the inter-disciplinary planning team. Management goals are identified and discussed in Chapter 2. All alternatives would meet these goals, with differing timelines or degrees of completeness.

The SDFO has considered the public's needs and stakeholder values in the management of resources and resource uses proposed in this management plan.

### Goals

#### Air Resources

- Ensure BLM authorizations and management activities protect the local quality of life and sustain economic benefits by complying with tribal, local, county, state, and federal air quality regulations, requirements, and implementation plans.
- Meet federal and state air quality standards.

#### Climate

- Evaluate the observed and anticipated long-term dynamic of climate change and minimize the impact of greenhouse gases from projects to the degree practicable and reasonably foreseeable.
- Provide for diverse, healthy ecosystems that are resilient to stresses such as climate change.
- Provide for flexible, adaptable management that allows for timely responses to changing climatic conditions.
- Maintain or improve the ability of BLM lands to reduce (sequester) atmospheric greenhouse gases.

#### Soil Resources

- Manage uses to minimize soil erosion, sedimentation to water sources, and compaction; and maintain surface soil water infiltration based on site-specific conditions.
- Maintain or improve soil health and productivity, while supporting multiple-use management.
- Soils are stable and provide for capture, storage, and release of water appropriate to soil type, climate, and land form.
- Soils are productive and support vegetation that provides forage, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and esthetic characteristic based on soil type.

#### Water Resources

- Maintain or improve the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of water resources to protect designated beneficial uses and achieve water quality standards and guidelines.
- Improve watershed function to minimize erosion and accelerated runoff to streams.
- Maintain or improve water quality for municipal, industrial, agricultural, recreational and residential purposes.
- Maintain or improve stream channel shape, form, and function within the natural range of variability to allow for hydrological processes that can fully support beneficial uses.
- Maintain existing or acquire new water rights on BLM lands to ensure water availability for multiple use management while adhering to the State of South Dakota water rights, and other water quality-related laws and regulations.
- Protect ground water quantity and quality.

- Meet water quality standards without adversely affecting prior existing water rights and uses and protect beneficial uses of water.

### **Vegetative Communities – Rangeland, Riparian, Forest and Woodlands**

- Manage public lands to provide plant communities that support the integrity of the ecological processes (water, energy, and nutrient cycles) and to provide forage, watershed protection, and a variety of wildlife habitat.
- Public lands meet the Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health (BLM 1997a).
- A variety of habitat is present with a diverse assemblage of native plant communities indicative of the Northern Great Plains.
- Native plants dominate the planning area and are resistant to invasive plants, noxious weeds, and invasive pests.
- The abundance of woody vegetation is maintained or improved on those riparian sites that have the potential to support woody vegetation.
- Stands of oak, aspen, box elder, ash, and other hardwoods are maintained and a variety of age classes are present.

### **Noxious Weeds and Other Invasive Non-Native Species (Plant and Animal)**

#### *Invasive plant species including noxious weeds:*

- Reduce existing acres infested by invasive plants and noxious weeds through Integrated Pest Management (IPM) treatment methods including restoration and elimination of new infestations through early detection and rapid response.
- New infestations are not common and existing infestations are declining across the landscape.
- Invasive plants and noxious weeds are not leading to a decrease in acres that are meeting Standards for Rangeland Health.

#### *Invasive terrestrial animals and insect species:*

- Manage invasive terrestrial animal and insect species, and state and locally declared pests. Reduce acres and/or density of infestations by invasive species through prevention, early detection and rapid response, and provide education opportunities for public land users.
- Infestations are not common across the landscape.

#### *Invasive aquatic species:*

- Keep the aquatic environment free from invasive aquatic species. Prevent the introduction of invasive species into the aquatic environment through education of public land users on prevention, early detection, rapid response, control, management and restoration.
- All lentic (lakeshore/wetland) and lotic (river/stream) areas remain free from invasive aquatic species.

### **Wildlife Species**

- Ensure that native wildlife species are provided with habitat of sufficient quality and quantity to enhance biological diversity and sustain their economic, social, and ecological values.
- Provide habitat and forage to support wildlife with consideration of South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan game management goals and the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture Program.
- Improve the resilience of wildlife habitats to protect wildlife communities from stressors and events such as severe wildfire and climate change.
- Movement of big game species between habitats would be facilitated.
- A full spectrum of biological communities' habitats and their ecological processes are present.
- Populations of native plants and animals are well distributed across the landscape.
- Provide suitable habitat condition to allow for movement between blocks of habitat and seasonal and specialized habitats on a local and landscape scale.
- Maintain or improve specialized habitats on a local and landscape scale.

## Special Status Species

- Ensure the long-term and self-sustaining persistence of special status species in South Dakota.
- Protect/maintain populations of special status species by minimizing direct mortality and impacts to habitat.
- Provide suitable habitat condition to allow for movement between large blocks of habitat and seasonal and specialized habitats on a local and landscape scale.
- Maintain or improve specialized habitats on a local and landscape scale.
- Maintain and/or increase sage-grouse abundance and distribution by conserving, enhancing or restoring the sagebrush ecosystem upon which populations depend in cooperation with other conservation partners.
- Within sage-grouse habitat areas, the BLM will maintain habitat for viable sage-grouse populations.
- Manage for the biological integrity and habitat suitability to facilitate the conservation, recovery, and maintenance of populations of fish and wildlife to avoid contributing to the listing of or jeopardizing the continued existence or recovery of special status species and their habitats.
- Maintain or enhance areas of ecological importance for special status wildlife species.
- Conserve and recover special status wildlife species by determining and implementing conservation strategies including restoration opportunities, use restrictions, and management actions.
- Manage specific environmental hazards, risks, and impacts in a manner compatible with special status wildlife species health.
- Identify habitat thresholds necessary to sustain well-distributed healthy populations of special status wildlife species to avoid future listings under the Endangered Species Act.
- Develop and implement the BMPs, activity plans, or use other mechanisms to protect high priority special status wildlife species.
- Manage special status fish and wildlife species in consideration of the working landscape and the intermingled land ownership pattern that is present.
- In all Priority Habitat Management Areas, the desired condition is to maintain a minimum of 70% of lands capable of producing sagebrush with 10 to 30% sagebrush canopy cover. The attributes necessary to sustain these habitats are described in Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (BLM Tech Ref 1734-6).

## Fish and Aquatics

- Ensure that aquatic habitat is of suitable quality to support a diversity of plant and animal communities.
- Promote public awareness, appreciation, and fisheries conservation, management, and ecology.

## Cultural Resources

- Identify, preserve, and protect significant cultural resources and ensure that they are available for appropriate uses by present and future generations.
- Seek to reduce imminent threats and resolve potential conflicts from natural or human-caused deterioration, or potential conflict with other resource uses by identifying priority geographic areas for new field inventory, based on a probability for unrecorded significant resources.

## Paleontological Resources

- Preserve and enhance paleontological resources on public land.
- Provide opportunities for scientific and recreational uses of paleontological resources within the planning area.
- Significant paleontological resources will be identified and preserved for their scientific values.
- Educational and recreational opportunities will be enhanced for the enjoyment of the public.

## Visual Resources

- Public lands provide natural appearing landscapes for recreational opportunities.

## Fire Management and Ecology

- Manage wildfire and fuels for the protection of public health, safety, property, and resource values, emphasizing firefighter and public safety as the single overriding priority.
- Manage hazardous fuels in areas of urban and industrial interface areas to reduce potential loss due to severe wildfire.
- Maintain and/or improve desired mix of seral stages within vegetation communities including forest and woodlands, grasslands, shrublands, and riparian/wetlands.
- Manage vegetation communities through cooperative efforts by restoring and maintaining natural fire regimes and fire frequency to the landscape, where appropriate.
- Maintain and promote partnerships with the public and interagency cooperators to develop and strengthen coordination of all fire management activities across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Utilize integrated management techniques unless otherwise restricted (defined as prescribed fire, mechanical, chemical, or biological, followed by desired seeding) to reduce fuels and to protect high priority areas or resource values.
- Burned areas pose minimal threat to public safety, property, cultural resources, and/or ecological function.
- Continued ecological improvements in the conifer, grassland, shrubland, and riparian strata. This is reflected in moving Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) 3 to 2, Class 2 to 1, and maintaining Class 1; with emphasis in wildland urban interface (WUI) areas.

## Forest and Woodland Products

- Manage public forest and woodlands to provide plant communities that support the integrity of the ecological processes (water cycle, energy cycle, and nutrient cycle) and improve or maintain wildlife habitat considering economically efficient methods.
- Forests and woodlands support diverse vegetative communities as indicated by wildlife habitat goals.
- Forests and woodlands would be managed for ecological resiliency, as indicated by fuels and fire management goals.
- Forest and woodland treatments may result in vegetative products being available for public or other use depending on local market demands.
- Manage forest resources to improve resilience to severe events and maintain and enhance their ability for the long-term sequestration of carbon.

## Livestock Grazing

- Manage for a sustainable level of livestock grazing while meeting or progressing toward the Dakotas Standards for Rangeland Health (Appendix A) recognizing the ecological benefits of moderate levels of large animal grazing in the Great Plains.
- Manage livestock grazing to provide economic opportunities in the planning area.

## Recreation

- Provide for a range of recreational opportunities, while minimizing adverse impacts to other resources.
- Encourage community partnerships with the BLM for the purpose of improving recreational opportunities in response to the needs of visitors and local communities.

## Travel Management and Transportation (including access)

- Manage transportation and access to provide for use and enjoyment of the public lands, while protecting resource values and providing for user safety.
- Access is available to larger blocks of BLM-administered surface lands.
- Manage transportation network to enhance a variety of uses of public lands.

## Lands and Realty

### *Land Use Authorizations:*

- Address needs of industry, utilities, the public, or government entities for land use authorizations (rights-of-way, leases and permits, etc.) while minimizing adverse impacts to other resource values.
- Locate new ROW facilities adjacent to existing ROWs to the extent practical.

### *Withdrawals:*

- Utilize proposed withdrawal actions with the least restrictive measures and minimum size necessary to accomplish the required purpose.
- Protect significant resources or significant government investments.

### *Land Tenure:*

- Retain public lands, with high resource values, in public ownership.
- Adjust land ownership to improve public land pattern and management efficiency.
- Acquire lands that enhance public access, high resource values, and meet public and community needs.
- Identify available access to larger blocks of the BLM-administered surface lands for public and users.
- Achieve a pattern of public land ownership that is more consolidated and more efficient for management purposes.

## Minerals

- Manage minerals to provide an opportunity for local economic benefits, while protecting the integrity of other resources.
- Minerals are developed while wildlife, cultural resources, air and water quality, and other resource values are maintained.
- As mineral development is completed, surface areas are restored similar to pre-existing conditions.

## Renewable Energy Resources

- Make lands available for renewable energy development, consistent with goals to manage other resources.
- Provide opportunities for renewable energy development, especially for wind energy, while avoiding or minimizing adverse impacts to wildlife, cultural, visual, and other resource values.
- Restore areas to near natural conditions when renewable energy development is decommissioned.

## Special Designations

- Protect relevant and important values through Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designation and apply special management where standard or routine management is not adequate to protect the areas from risks or threats of damage/degradation or to provide for public safety from natural hazards.
- Historic and cultural sites are preserved. Sites are interpreted as vulnerability to degradation and budget determine.
- Back Country Byway – Highlight and interpret scenic, historic, archeological, or other interest values associated with back country byways in partnership with communities, interest groups, and state and federal entities.



- National Trails – Assist in cooperative efforts to manage current and future National Trails to protect the values for which they were designated.
- Designated trails or portions of trails on BLM land are in good repair and meet the intent of the trail designation.
- Wild and Scenic River Designations – Evaluate river segments for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System.
- Fossil Cycad ACEC – Protect relevant and important values through ACEC designation and apply special management where standard or routine management is not adequate to protect the areas from risks or threats of damage/degradation or to provide for public safety from natural hazards.
- Paleontological resources at the Fossil Cycad ACEC are preserved. Sites are interpreted for vulnerability to degradation.

## Public Safety

### *Abandoned Mine Lands:*

- Reclaim Abandoned Mine Land (AML) sites on public land to improve water quality, plant communities, and diverse fish and wildlife habitat.
- Reduce and/or eliminate risks to human health from hazardous mine openings and other physical and chemical safety hazards.
- Protect historic resources and wildlife habitat commonly associated with AML sites.
- Remove the greatest risks, preserve bat habitat, restore the environment, and preserve representative or significant cultural resources.

### *Hazardous Materials:*

- Mitigate threats and reduce risks to the public and environment from hazardous materials.
- Healthy public lands.

### *Debris Flows:*

- Prevent debris flows on public lands from occurring if possible.
- Reduce risks from debris flows from public lands.
- Protect the public from debris flows on public land.
- No reasonably preventable debris flow potential caused by management or lack of management.

## Draft Resource Management Plan

Four alternatives for managing public lands in the planning area, including a No Action Alternative (current management), were described in the Draft RMP/EIS. The alternatives described various ways the BLM could address planning issues. Each alternative had a different emphasis, but all would meet the overall vision and management goals and FLPMA's multiple-use mandate.

The Draft RMP/EIS was released to the public in June 2013. The BLM provided a 90-day comment period and hosted a series of public meetings across the South Dakota planning area. Additional information on the public participation process is provided in Chapter 5.

## Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement

Following the 90-day public comment period on the Draft RMP/EIS, comments were analyzed and this Proposed RMP/Final EIS has been prepared and released to the public. A 30-day protest period and 60-day Governor's Consistency Review period will occur after the Proposed RMP/Final EIS is completed. No earlier than 30 days after the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a notice of the filing of the final environmental impact statement in the Federal Register and

pending final action on any protest that may be filed, the State Director shall approve the plan. Before such approval is given, there shall be public notice and opportunity for public comment on any significant change made to the proposed plan. The approval shall be documented in a concise public record of the decision, meeting the requirements of regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (40 CFR 1505.2).



Western Butte County, South Dakota

BLM Photo