

comment period has been considered in the preparation of this final revised recovery plan, and is summarized in the appendix to the plan. As we move forward to implement the final recovery plan, we welcome public input and comment regarding our implementation efforts.

The southern (California) sea otter was listed as threatened on January 14, 1977 (42 FR 2968). It is also recognized as a depleted population pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Reduced range and population size, vulnerability to oil spills, and the oil spill risk from coastal tanker traffic were the primary reasons listing of the sea otter. The southern sea otter population contains about 2,150 individuals and ranges between Half Moon Bay and Point Conception, California. Approximately 27 otters, including pups, are at San Nicolas Island as a result of translocation efforts to establish an experimental population. After review of new biological information, we, with the assistance of the Southern Sea Otter Recovery Team, drafted a revised recovery plan for public review and comment in 1991. A second draft revision was released for public review in 1996. After review of public comments on those drafts, and review of new technical information regarding oil spill risk to southern sea otters, we, with the assistance of the Southern Sea Otter Recovery Team and technical consultants, completed a new draft revised recovery plan, which was released to the public for comment in January 2000. Public comments were reviewed by the Southern Sea Otter Recovery Team and us, and changes based on these comments are incorporated into this final revised recovery plan.

The objective of the final revised recovery plan is to delist the southern sea otter through implementation of a variety of recovery measures including: Monitoring otter populations; implementing plans to minimize the risk of, and impacts from, oil spills; minimizing incidental and intentional take of sea otters; assessing and minimizing other threats; evaluating the sea otter translocation program; improving captive management techniques; and implementing an outreach program and providing information to the public.

**Authority:** The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533(f).

Dated: January 29, 2003.

**Daniel S. Walsworth,**

*Acting Manager, California/Nevada Operations Office, Region 1, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[ES-020-01-1310-EI]

#### Notice of Intent to Prepare Planning Analyses/Environmental Assessments

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare Planning Analyses/Environmental Assessments.

**SUMMARY:** This document provides notice that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Jackson Field Office, Eastern States intends to prepare Planning Analyses/Environmental Assessments (PA/EA) to consider leasing scattered tracts of Federal mineral estate for oil and gas exploration and development. The PA/EA will fulfill the needs and obligations set forth by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and BLM management policies. The BLM will work collaboratively with interested parties to identify the management decisions that are best suited to local, regional, and national needs and concerns.

**DATES:** This notice initiates the public scoping process. Comments on issues and planning criteria can be submitted in writing to the address listed below. Due to the limited scope of this PA/EA process, public meetings are not scheduled. BLM will, however, consider requests for one or more public meetings.

**ADDRESSES:** Send comments to: Bureau of Land Management, Jackson Field Office, 411 Briarwood Drive, Suite 404, Jackson, MS 39206.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** John Reiss, Lead for PA/EA, Jackson Field Office, (601-977-5400).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The BLM has responsibility to consider nominations to lease Federal mineral estate for oil and gas exploration and development. An interdisciplinary team will be used in the preparation of the PA/EAs. Preliminary issues, subject to change as a result of public input, are (1) potential impacts of oil and gas exploration and development on the

surface resources and (2) consideration of restrictions on lease rights to protect surface resources. The number of separate analyses that will be prepared for the tracts will depend on their proximity to each other. Tract locations, along with acreage, are listed below.

#### Alabama, Fayette County, Huntsville Meridian

T16S, R9W,  
Sec. 20, NWNE;  
Sec. 23, SW;  
Sec. 25, E2SW, SWSW;  
Sec. 26, NESE, S2SW;  
Sec. 30, SWNW;  
Sec. 36, NENW, SESW.

T16S, R10W,  
Sec. 1, SWNW;  
Sec. 10, NESE;  
Sec. 13, SWNW;  
Sec. 24, NWNE.

#### Alabama, Lamar County, Huntsville Meridian

T 15S, R 15W,  
Sec. 13, SESE.

#### Alabama, Tuscaloosa County, Huntsville Meridian

T17S, R9W,  
Sec. 14, E2NW;  
Sec. 34, NESE.

T17S, R10W,  
Sec. 1, NENE;  
Sec. 8, SESW;  
Sec. 10, SENE.

T18S, R7W,  
Sec. 7, NWNW.

T18S, R9W,  
Sec. 3, NWNE, NESE.

#### Alabama, Walker County, Huntsville Meridian

T16S, R8W,  
Sec. 21, NESW.

T17S, R7W,  
Sec. 6, NWSW.

#### Arkansas, Franklin County, Fifth Principal Meridian

T10N, R26W,  
Sec. 2, SESE, SESW, NENW, NWNE.

#### Louisiana, Bienville Parish, Louisiana Meridian

T16N, R10W,  
Sec. 4, lots 5-8:  
Sec. 5, lot 1:  
Sec. 8, lots 1-6:  
Sec. 9, lots 8-10:

#### Louisiana, Bossier Parish, Louisiana Meridian

T 16N, R 11W,  
Sec. 14, W2NW, SENW, E2SW, NWSW.

#### MS Wayne Mississippi, Wayne County, St Stephens Meridian

T7N, R7W,  
Sec. 2, W2NWNW, N2SWNW;  
Sec. 3, E2NENE.

T8N, R9W,  
Sec. 4, NWSW;

Sec. 19, SWNE.

**Bruce E. Dawson,**

*Field Manager, Jackson Field Office.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[OR-030-02-1610-DR: GP 2-0358]

#### Notice of Availability of the Record of Decision for the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Vale District.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability of the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan (SEORMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (40 CFR 1550.2), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has issued a ROD for the Proposed SEORMP EIS. The ROD documents approval of BLM's plan to manage the public lands within the Jordan and Malheur Resource Areas of the Vale District during the next 15-20 years and beyond. The SEORMP establishes direction for management on approximately 4.6 million acres of BLM administered public lands in southeast Oregon. The SEORMP is the same as the Proposed SEORMP published in November 2001.

**EFFECTIVE DATES:** Two protests were submitted during the 30-day protest period for the Proposed SEORMP. Both of the protests were responded to and resolved by the Director of the BLM. Resolution of the protests, signing of the ROD, and publication of this notice allows for immediate implementation of the approved SEORMP.

**ADDRESSES:** The approved plan is being published and will be mailed to all persons or groups who are on the current RMP mailing list. Additional copies will be available upon request at the District Office. The document will also be available on line at <http://www.or.blm.gov/Vale/>, and on compact disks available at the Vale District Office, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, OR 97918.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jerry Taylor, Jordan Field Manager; or Tom Dabbs, Malheur Field Manager by telephone at (541) 473-3144.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The SEORMP is a general land use plan that establishes guidance for managing a broad spectrum of land uses and allocations and contains resource objectives, land use allocations, management actions and direction needed to achieve program and multiple use goals. The Record of Decision documents selection of the preferred alternative as presented in the Proposed SEORMP and Final EIS issued November 2001, with associated Appendices, Tables and Maps, as the approved RMP.

The following are the major components of the approved RMP:

- Direction to meet or exceed Air Quality Standards.
- Provide opportunities for exploration and development of energy and mineral resources while protecting other sensitive resources.
- Provide for an appropriate management response on all wildfires, while providing for fire fighter and public safety and protecting resource values.
- Recognize and utilize fire as a critical natural process to protect, maintain, and enhance resources.
- Restore, protect, and enhance the diversity and distribution of desirable vegetation communities.
- Manage big sagebrush cover in seedings and on native rangeland to meet the life history requirements of sagebrush-dependent wildlife.
- Control the introduction and proliferation of noxious weed species and reduce the extent and density of established weed species to within acceptable limits.
- Manage ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and western larch communities to emphasize forest health.
- Manage western juniper and aspen woodlands to restore and promote productivity.
- Manage public land to maintain, restore, or enhance populations and habitats of special status plant and animal species.
- Manage public lands by ensuring that surface water and ground water influenced by BLM activities comply with or are making progress toward achieving State of Oregon water quality standards for beneficial uses as established per stream by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.
- Manage riparian/wetland areas for the restoration, maintenance, or improvement of riparian vegetation, habitat diversity, and associated watershed function to achieve healthy and productive riparian areas and wetlands.

- Restore, maintain, or improve habitat to provide for diverse and self-sustaining communities of fishes and other aquatic organisms.
- Manage upland habitats so that the forage, water, cover, and structure necessary for wildlife are available on public land.
- Maintain and manage wild horse herds in seven established herd management areas (HMA's) of Vale District and Heath Creek-Sheephead HMA of Burns District at appropriate management levels (AML's) to ensure a thriving natural ecological balance between wild horse populations, wildlife, livestock, vegetation resources, and other resource values.
- Provide for a sustained level of livestock grazing consistent with other resource objectives and public land use allocations.
- Provide and enhance developed and undeveloped recreation opportunities, while protecting resources, to manage the increasing demand for resource-dependent recreation activities.
- Manage off-highway vehicle (OHV) use to protect resource values, promote public safety, provide OHV use opportunities where appropriate, and minimize conflicts among various users. Designate public lands for OHV use as "Open" on 2,615,066 acres, "Limited" on 2,004,369 acres, and "Closed" on 15,826 acres.
- Manage public land actions and activities in a manner to be consistent with visual resource management (VRM) class objectives. Designate and manage 1,308,297 acres as VRM Class I, 217,226 acres as VRM Class II, 639,657 acres as VRM Class III, and 2,469,509 acres as VRM Class IV.
- Retain and/or designate 26 areas totaling 206,257 acres as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs).
- Manage the congressionally designated Main Owyhee (120 miles, 35,240 acres), West Little Owyhee (58 miles, 12,520 acres) and North Fork Owyhee (10 miles, 1,247 acres) components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- Recommend and manage four river segments (42.5 miles) as administratively suitable for designation as wild and scenic rivers. Release from further wild and scenic river consideration 145.5 miles of eligible study river segments determined to be non-suitable for wild and scenic river designation.
- Continue managing 32 wilderness study areas (WSA's—1,273,015 acres) under BLM's "Interim Management Policy for Land under Wilderness Review" (IMPLWR).