

Final Public Scoping Report Upper Snake Field Office Resource Management Plan

September 2008

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Scoping Report and Planning Criteria Approval

This report documents the public scoping process for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Upper Snake Field Office planning effort. This report includes a description of the scoping process and activities, a summary of the comments submitted by the public, an overview of the issues identified through review of all scoping comments. In addition, this report identifies and describes the final planning criteria the Upper Snake Field Office planning effort will use. These criteria set the temporal boundaries for focused planning and will guide decision making by topic.

Preliminary planning criteria were introduced to the public for review during the public scoping period. The public was encouraged to comment on and suggest additions to these criteria in person at the public open house meetings and or through written comments submitted during the scoping period. The comment scoping period end June 27, 2008. BLM regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.4-2) require that planning criteria be approved by the District Manager.

Recommendation

Having reviewed all planning criteria public comments and incorporating such comments as appropriate, the Upper Snake Field Office resource management plan interdisciplinary team recommends approval of the planning criteria described in this report.


Upper Snake Field Office RMP Project Manager

30 Sept 08
Date

Concurrence


Upper Snake Field Office Manager

9/30/08
Date

Approval


Idaho Falls District Manager

9/30/08
Date

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Executive Summary

This report details and documents the public scoping process and identifies the final approved planning criteria for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Upper Snake Field Office (FO) Resource Management Plan (RMP) planning effort. Public scoping is a requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act and is conducted to determine the extent or "scope" of issues to be addressed in the planning process. The issues identified through scoping will guide development of alternatives that will be evaluated in the EIS and will ultimately guide development of the RMP. The scoping process also provides an opportunity to educate the public about the management of public lands.

The following entities responded to the Upper Snake Field Manager's invitation to be participating agencies/parties in the RMP planning process: the Department of Energy, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Department of Agriculture, and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game also is a participating agency and provides an employee who sits as a full member of the RMP planning team.

The scoping period began with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement in the Federal Register on February 28, 2008. As part of the scoping process, BLM prepared and mailed an informational package to the public and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. The intent of this package was to solicit comments on identified planning issues, areas where new or updated management direction would need to be developed and invite the public and Tribes to open-house scoping meetings. Approximately 1,000 information packages were mailed and, in response, 60 people registered their attendance at the open-house meetings. Comments were requested at the meetings and resulted in BLM receiving 68 pieces of correspondence that, through the comment analysis process, generated 684 unique comments, and the following seven planning issues. These planning issues will be used to develop alternatives to be evaluated in the EIS.

- Acquiring and Maintaining Public Access: How will the planning process address the need for acquiring and maintaining access to public lands while also protecting private property rights?
- Land Tenure Adjustment: How will the planning process identify lands for land tenure adjustment; including retention, acquisition, exchange, and disposal, and what will be the priority for such land tenure adjustments?
- Livestock Grazing: How will conflicts associated with livestock grazing be managed within the planning area?
- Sagebrush Steppe: How will plant communities within the sagebrush ecosystem be managed to maintain long-term health and sustainability for terrestrial and aquatic species while maintaining the principles of multiple use?
- Socioeconomics: How will social and economic benefits of commodity and amenity uses use balanced within the planning area?
- Recreation Management: How will the increase in recreational use and demand for quality recreational opportunities be balanced within the planning area?
- Travel Management: How will motorized, non-motorized, and mechanized travel be managed to provide commodity, amenity, and recreation opportunities, as well as to protect natural resources?

Through scoping, the public also provided feedback to the preliminary planning criteria. Their comments were reviewed and incorporated, and result in the final approved planning criteria

presented within this report. This scoping report also includes a detailed description of the scoping process and activities, summary of the comments submitted by the public, an in-depth discussion of the planning issues raised, and an overview of the planning schedule.

Chapter 1. Introduction

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1.1. Overview

Public scoping is a requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 40 *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] 1501.7) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.2 and 43 CFR 1610.4-1). Scoping is the term used by the Council on Environmental Quality in their regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500 et seq.) to define the early and open process for determining the extent or “scope” of issues to be addressed in the planning process. Scoping for the Upper Snake Field Office (FO) Resource Management Plan (RMP) was initiated by a *Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare a Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*, published in the *Federal Register* on February 28, 2008.

Scoping is a collaborative public involvement process to identify planning issues to be addressed in the planning process. Planning issues are disputes or controversies about existing and potential land and resource allocations, levels of resource use, production, and related management practices. Issues include resource use, development, and protection opportunities for consideration in the preparation of an RMP. These issues may stem from new information, or changed circumstances, and the need to reassess the appropriate mix of allowable uses. Planning issues provide the major focus for the development of alternatives.

Scoping also involves the introduction of preliminary planning criteria to the public for comment. Planning criteria guide development of the plan by defining the decision space of the planning effort. Planning criteria are generally based upon applicable laws, guidance from both BLM’s Washington D.C. Director and Idaho’s Director, and the results of public and governmental participation (43 CFR 1610.4-2).

Results are documented through summarization of the individual comments received during the formal scoping period of the planning process and description of the issues and management concerns from public scoping meetings, internal scoping meetings, and the RMP preparation plan.

1.1.1. Background

The Idaho Falls District, Upper Snake FO, is preparing a new land use plan with new and updated management direction for approximately 1.8 million acres of public lands located in southeastern Idaho.

This planning effort will replace four existing land use plans and result in a single, updated source of comprehensive land use management direction for the Upper Snake FO. The four land use plans currently in place are the Big Desert Management Framework Plan (MFP), 1981; Big Lost McKay MFP, 1983; Little Lost/Birch Creek MFP, 1985a; and the Medicine Lodge RMP, 1985b.

An EIS will be prepared to analyze the potential impacts of management direction, in compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA, 43 *United States Code* [U.S.C.] 1701 et seq.), NEPA, and BLM policies and handbooks. Public scoping was conducted to help identify issues to be used in the development of alternatives to be addressed in the EIS.

1.1.2. Purpose and Need

The purpose for undertaking the planning effort is to develop a new, comprehensive RMP that maintains, improves or restores resource conditions; identifies desired future conditions; and provides for the economic needs of local communities over the long term.

The need for undertaking the planning effort is to respond to resource conditions that have changed over time, respond to new issues, and provide the Upper Snake FO a comprehensive framework under which to administer public lands into the future.

There is also a need to prepare a reasonable foreseeable development scenario for leasing fluid minerals (oil, gas, geothermal). This scenario would serve as the basis for issuing future fluid mineral leases within the Upper Snake FO. The scenario will be included as part of the Upper Snake FO RMP EIS.

1.2. Planning Area

1.2.1. Location

The Upper Snake FO area boundary defines the planning area and encompasses approximately 7,130,600 acres of varied land management and ownership in eastern Idaho. About 1.8 million acres (25%) are administered by the BLM. In addition, the US Department of Interior, through the BLM, is the agency responsible for administering the federal mineral estate, which includes split estate lands and most federal lands with surfaces managed by other agencies, such as the US Forest Service (USFS). BLM-administered public lands within the planning area are interspersed with other federal government lands, private property, and State of Idaho lands. Over 57 percent of the planning area land is administered by the federal government. Table 1.1 highlights the land status within the planning area; Figure 1.1 shows land status as a map.

Table 1.1. Land status within the Upper Snake FO planning area.

Land Status	Acres	Percentage of Planning Area
Bureau of Land Management	1,807,300	25
Forest Service	1,666,500	23
Department of Energy	568,600	8
National Park Service	35,900	1
Other Federal Lands ¹	30,500	<1
Idaho State Lands ²	378,800	5
Private	2,572,300	36
Other	300	<1
Water	70,400	1
Total	7,130,600	100

1. Inclusive of Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Defense and US Fish and Wildlife Service.
2. Inclusive of Idaho Department of Lands, Fish and Game, and Parks and Recreation lands.

1.2.2. Description

The Upper Snake FO planning area is briefly characterized as having elevations from approximately 4,500 feet in the “Big Desert” of the Snake River Plain to around 8,600 feet in

the Little Lost River valley. The majority of the area lies between 4,500 and 5,500 feet and is covered with sagebrush steppe (98%). Coniferous forest (2%) is scattered around the northern and eastern portions of the planning area in the higher and wetter locations. The planning area contains habitat for four listed and one candidate species as follows: Gray wolf, Yellow-billed cuckoo (candidate), bull trout, Utah valvata snail, and Ute ladies'-tresses orchid. Game species include elk, deer, pronghorn, waterfowl, and upland game birds such as Hungarian and chuckar partridge, and ring-necked pheasants. Important sagebrush steppe habitat remains available to the host of sagebrush obligate species, including the sage grouse.

The Henrys and South Forks, the main stem of the Snake River, and several lakes and reservoirs provide important habitat for many of the 29 species of fish found in the planning area. Included in this group are Yellowstone and fine spotted cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout, bull trout, lake trout, kokanee salmon, coho salmon, and mountain whitefish. The bull trout is listed as endangered and the Yellowstone and fine spotted cutthroat trout are categorized as sensitive species by the BLM and the State of Idaho.

Along with hunting and fishing, the public lands within the area are increasingly being discovered by outdoor recreation enthusiasts throughout the region. The popularity of the St. Anthony Sand Dunes for off-road vehicle (OHV) use has drawn the attention of the large populations of the Wasatch Front of Utah and other states surrounding Idaho. River floating, rock climbing, spelunking, mountain biking, skiing, and hiking are also popular.

Major geologic features include sand dunes, lava flows, lava caves, dormant volcanoes, and the northernmost extension of the Basin and Range physiographic province in the Lost River and Lemhi Mountain Ranges. Also included is a large internally-drained basin where runoff from the south side of the Centennial Mountains and much of south-central Idaho sinks into the Snake River Plain aquifer near Arco. The water returns to the surface outside of Hagerman, Idaho, at Thousand Springs.

The largest single use of the public lands within the area is livestock grazing. The 372 BLM-administered grazing allotments provide approximately 151,000 AUMs¹ of cattle forage; 785 AUMs of forage for domestic horses; 3,900 AUMs for bison; and 86,000 AUMs for sheep. Livestock grazing is critical to the economies of the many small to medium sized towns within the Upper Snake FO planning area.

¹ Animal unit months: the amount of forage eaten by one cow-calf pair in one month (approximately 800 lb).

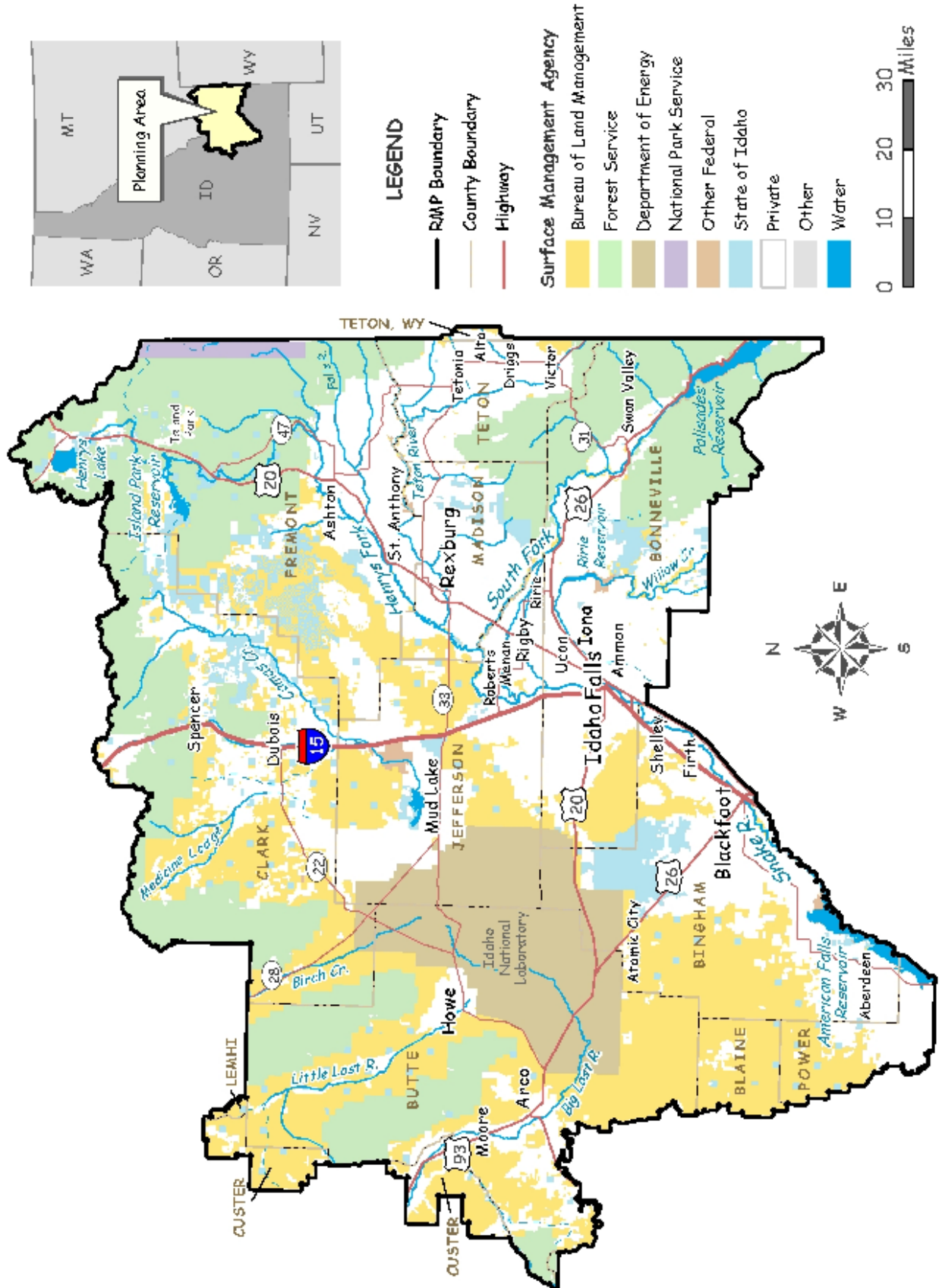


Figure 1.1. Land status of the Upper Snake FO planning area.
Chapter 1 Introduction

1.3. Scoping Process

The scoping process serves a number of purposes. It provides an avenue to involve the public in identifying issues and concerns related to potential land management decisions and helps identify issues and concerns pertinent to the planning effort. The list of stakeholders and other interested parties is also confirmed and augmented during the scoping process. The scoping process for the Upper Snake FO RMP encompassed a number of activities, which are presented separately in following subsections.

1.3.1. Notice of Intent

The NOI is the legal document notifying the public of the BLM's intent to initiate the planning process and to prepare an EIS for a major federal action. The NOI invites the participation of the tribes, affected and interested agencies, organizations, and members of the general public in determining the scope and issues to be addressed and analyzed in the EIS. The NOI to prepare the RMP and EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on February 28, 2008, which initiated the public scoping period.

1.3.2. Media Releases and Public Service Announcements

Newspapers

Local and regional newspapers throughout the planning area were used to disseminate information about the Upper Snake FO RMP scoping and planning process. News releases were prepared by the BLM announcing the official scoping open houses and inviting the public to provide input. The releases were sent by e-mail to newspapers serving the planning area on May 2, 2008. A follow-up series of news releases was sent to the print media on June 2, 9, and 11, 2008, specific to local open-house meetings that were planned to be held. The news releases were provided to the print media as shown in Table 1.2

Table 1.2. Publications where news releases were sent for the Upper Snake FO RMP planning process and scoping open houses.

Publication	Location (Idaho)	Publication	Location (Idaho)
Aberdeen Times	Aberdeen	Arco Advertiser	Arco
Caribou County Sun	Soda Springs	Challis Messenger	Challis
Idaho Enterprise	Malad	Idaho Examiner	Pocatello
Idaho State Journal	Pocatello	Island Park News	Island Park
Jefferson Star	Rigby	Morning News	Blackfoot
News Examiner	Montpelier	Post Register	Idaho Falls
Power County Press	American Falls	Preston Citizen	Preston
Recorded Herald	Salmon	Rexburg Standard Journal	Rexburg
River City Weekly	Idaho Falls	Associated Press	Boise
Idaho Statesman	Boise	Shelley Pioneer	Shelley
Sho-Ban News	Fort Hall	Teton Valley News	Driggs

Television and Radio Stations

Local and regional television and radio stations throughout the planning area were also used to disseminate information about the Upper Snake FO RMP scoping and planning process. In a similar manner to the process used for the print media, news releases prepared by the BLM announcing the official scoping open houses and inviting the public to provide input were sent by e-mail to television and radio stations that serve the planning area on May 2, 2008. A follow-up series of news releases was sent to the same stations on June 2, 9, and 11, 2008, specific to local open-house meetings that were planned to be held. The news releases were provided to the television and radio stations as shown in Tables 1.3 and 1.4.

Table 1.3. Television stations where news releases were sent for the Upper Snake FO RMP planning process and scoping open houses.

Station	Location (Idaho)	Station	Location (Idaho)
KIFI Channel 8	Idaho Falls	KIDK Channel 3	Idaho Falls
KPVI Channel 6	Pocatello	Tight Line Media	Idaho Falls

Table 1.4. Radio stations where news releases were sent for the Upper Snake FO RMP planning process and scoping open houses.

Station	Location (Idaho)	Station	Location (Idaho)
KACH	Preston	KADQ	Rexburg
KBLJ	Blackfoot	KBYU	Rexburg
KBYR	Rexburg	KCHQ	Driggs
KCVI	Blackfoot	KECN	Blackfoot
KFTZ	Idaho Falls	KGTM	Idaho Falls
KID	Idaho Falls	KITT	Soda Springs
KLCT	Blackfoot	KLLP	Chubbuck
KMGI	Pocatello	KPKY	Pocatello
KQEO	Pocatello	KRTK	Pocatello
KSEI	Pocatello	KRSA	Salmon/Challis
KTHK	Pocatello	KUPI	Idaho Falls
KVSI	Montpelier	KWIK	Pocatello
KZBQ	Idaho Falls	—	—

1.3.3. Public Scoping Notice and Planning Criteria

A scoping letter and informational briefing package were prepared and mailed to federal, state, and local agencies; interest groups; Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Business Council; and members of the general public on May 23, 2008. The mailing list was compiled from data kept by the Upper Snake FO and included approximately 1,000 entries. This package informed the recipients of the public scoping process for the preparation of the EIS for the Upper Snake FO RMP and the scheduled open-house scoping meetings.

The briefing package included background information on the purpose and need for the planning activity, identified “need for change,” topics and preliminary resource issues. Preliminary planning criteria were also included, which serve as the temporal boundaries for the planning process to help ensure efforts are tailored to pertinent issues that will lead to the development of alternatives. The scoping letter invited the public to participate in the scoping process and to

comment on the planning criteria. The mailing, e-mail, and web site addresses for submitting comments were provided in the scoping letter and informational briefing package.

1.3.4. Web Site

The Upper Snake FO RMP website, http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/upper_snake/Planning/upper_snake_rmp.html, was established on March 4, 2008. The RMP e-mail address, upper_snake_rmp@blm.gov, was established and active on March 7, 2008. The NOI was also made available via the website on the same day. Public open-house information, including the informational package and accompanying letter from the Upper Snake FO Manager inviting the public to participate, were available through the website on May 27, 2008. The open-house display boards in smaller post-document format (pdf) were uploaded to the website on June 11, 2008, prior to the first scheduled public scoping open house.

1.3.5. Public Scoping Meetings

Public scoping meetings were held in Arco on June 6, Idaho Falls on June 11, and Rexburg on June 16. As previously presented, the BLM provided the local media with press releases announcing the time, location, and purpose of these meetings. The format for the scoping meetings was an informal, open house where attendees could self-tour, or have a one-on-one walkthrough presentation by an interdisciplinary team (IDT) member. Attendees signed a registration sheet as they entered the room, informational briefing packages were offered, and the open-house format was explained. Attendees were shown to the presentation boards set up around the room, which detailed the need for change topics, resource issues, planning criteria, and a proposed schedule for completing the planning process. Information on presentation boards was augmented by map boards that highlighted various resources. Following the tours, attendees were encouraged to mail in written comments/questions or to sit and fill out comment forms specific to the Upper Snake FO planning effort.

Given the thoroughness of the notification process, attendance was lighter than hoped for at all meetings with only 60 registered attendees; the distribution of which is shown in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5. Public scoping meeting dates, locations, and attendance.

Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Number in Attendance
June 9, 2008	Business Center, 159 N Idaho Street, Arco, Idaho	9
June 12, 2008	Bureau of Land Management District Office/Upper Snake Field Office, 1405 Hollipark Drive, Idaho Falls, Idaho	36
June 16, 2008	Chamber of Commerce, Madison Room 450 West 4th South, Rexburg, Idaho	15
Total		60

1.4. Cooperating Agencies and Collaboration

Collaboration is a process in which interested parties, often with widely varied interests, work together to seek solutions with broad support for managing public and other lands. Collaboration mandates methods, not outcomes, and does not imply that parties will achieve consensus.

Depending on local circumstances and the judgment of the FO Manager, varying levels of collaboration may be used in specific involvement processes.

The following entities were invited through a personal letter (February 1, 2008) from the Upper Snake FO Manager to participate in the RMP planning process: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Caribou-Targhee National Forest (NF), Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Bureau of Reclamation, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Department of Energy (DOE), Yellowstone National Park, Clearwater NF, Idaho Wildlife Services, Office of Species Conservation, Idaho Department of Transportation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), Idaho Department of Agriculture (IDA), Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ), and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR). Recipients of the letter were invited to become involved in the Upper Snake FO planning process as either a cooperating or participating agency.

Response to this letter resulted in IDL, IDA, and IDPR identifying their interest as participants in the RMP planning effort. The following discussion identifies how the invited entities responded and whether or not they provided scoping comments.

Federal: Participating agencies for the Upper Snake FO RMP include the DOE, who manages the nearby Idaho National Laboratory (INL), and the Caribou-Targhee NF. The DOE provided comments to the Upper Snake FO RMP IDT through the scoping process.

State: Participating agencies include IDA, IDL, and IDPR. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) is also a participating agency and provides an employee who sits as a full member of the IDT. The IDA, IDPR, and IDL provided comments to the IDT through the scoping process.

Counties: There were no county leaders who indicated that their respective county governments wanted to be included as participating agencies. County commissioners were sent public scoping materials as part of the public mass mailing prior to the scoping meetings. County commissioners participated in the community assessment workshops conducted in May 2008, and their comments were recorded for the planning effort through that process. On September 8, 2008, the Clark County Commissioners were briefed on the USFO planning effort. They expressed a general interest in travel management planning and the desire to stay informed of the planning effort as it progresses. Briefings with other County Commissioners are ongoing.

Local Communities: There were no local community leaders who indicated that their respective local governments wanted to be included as participating agencies. Local leaders were sent public scoping materials as part of the public mass mailing of these materials prior to the scoping meetings. Local leaders participated in the community assessment workshops with their comments recorded for the planning effort through that process.

1.5. Tribal Consultation

The BLM works with Native American tribes on a government-to-government basis. This relationship was reaffirmed by the federal government on May 14, 1998, with Executive Order (EO) 13084 and strengthened with EO 13175. The BLM consults with tribal governments whose tribal treaty rights and interests might be directly and substantially affected by activities on public lands. The BLM strives to provide the Tribes with ample opportunities for participation in BLM planning efforts and through government-to-government consultation to listen to their concerns

and appropriately address them. In addition, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA, 16 U.S.C. 470) requires federal agencies to consult with Tribes for activities authorized on public lands and for historic properties of significance to the tribes that may be affected by an undertaking.

With the initiation of the Upper Snake FO planning effort, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes were formally invited through a February 1, 2008, FO Manager letter to participate in the planning effort and on the IDT.

As previously described in Section 1.3.3, prior to the scoping open houses, both the Northwest Band of the Shoshone Nation (Pocatello, Idaho) and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (Fort Hall, Idaho) were sent informational briefing packages regarding the planning effort and future scheduled open houses. In addition to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Business Council and Chairman being sent informational briefing packages (May 2008) the following tribal members also received an informational briefing package: C. Colter, Fish and Wildlife Director; Y. Tuell, Environmental Program Manager; Land Use Policy Committee; and the Cultural Resource Coordinator, via their post office box (306) in Fort Hall, Idaho.

To date, neither the Northwest Band of the Shoshone Nation nor the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes have provided comments or identified issues pertinent to the Upper Snake FO planning effort.

On September 10, 2008, the Upper Snake FO Manager met with Mr. Coulter and discussed the Tribes' participation on the IDT and offered an opportunity for a briefing to the Tribal Counsel. The Tribes indicated that they will contact the BLM to schedule a briefing in the future.

1.6. Public Interaction: Community Assessments

The BLM, in conjunction with the University of Idaho, organized and held interactive community assessment workshops with a diverse range of community leaders in eight community areas throughout the planning area. The purpose of the workshops was to identify and discuss the social, economic, and environmental importance of nearby public lands as they related to leaders' concerns, constituents, and communities. Communities were selected in such a way to cover both the geographic area involved and to capture the diversity of communities throughout the planning area (e.g., large to small; affluent to non-affluent; urban, rural, and tribal communities). Traditional ideas of community were expanded to include the landscapes and/or areas of interest surrounding identifiable, physical community "boundaries." Some of the topics of concern identified through the workshops included agriculture/ranching, residential expansion, nature-based tourism and recreation, and access to public lands. It was also anticipated that the workshops would help identify current and future (approximately 25 years) key recreation-tourism areas of interest for BLM to consider during the analysis phase of the RMP process. Information gleaned from the assessments was included as part of the issue identification process of the public scoping phase of the RMP process.

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Chapter 2. Issue Summary

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2.1. Comment Processing and Analysis

Three correspondence types were received during the comment response period for the scoping open-house meetings. These included completed BLM-provided comment forms, letters, and e-mail submitted through the Upper Snake FO RMP website. The comment response period closed on June 27, 2008. All original correspondence received was logged into an Microsoft Excel spreadsheet correspondence log, scanned to the electronic project file, and photocopied (for use in comment analysis) with the original correspondence being entered to the physical project file.

For correspondence tracking purposes, each piece of correspondence was assigned an alpha-numeric code where alpha represented the recipient type and where numbers were sequential, starting with “001” for each alpha code. Thus, a letter from an individual was identified as I-001, the next individual as I-002, and an agency as A-00X.

Initial comment coding and entry of the comments to the database was performed by an analyst as a precursor to the IDT multi-day meeting (July 14-17, 2008) to review all the scoping comments received. When the IDT met, they went through the database, comment by comment, reviewing coding, and assigning action codes; the purpose being to determine how best to address the concerns raised through the comments.

For example, many of the comments will be considered in the development of the EIS, i.e., affected environment, environmental consequences, cumulative effects, alternative development and or management actions, and were assigned the appropriate action codes. Some comments were determined to be outside the scope of the EIS and could not be addressed by the BLM nor assigned an action code (e.g., a comment may have requested that the IDFG implement specific hunting seasons/closures; while BLM can pass the request along, hunting seasons/closures are regulated by the State and are not addressed in BLM planning efforts. Thus, the comment was considered outside the scope of the planning effort).

2.2. Summary of Public Comments Received

Sixty-eight (68) separate pieces of correspondence (submissions) were received by the IDT. A demographical breakdown of this total is shown in Tables 2.1 through 2.3. Table 2.1 shows the submissions made by respondent type i.e., individual, group, agency, tribal governments, and Table 2.2 shows that the majority of submissions was made from within Idaho.

Table 2.1. Number of submissions by respondent type.

Respondent Type	Number of Submissions
Individual	56
Organization or Group	7
Federal Agency	2
State Agency	3
Local Agency	0
Tribal Government	0
Elected Officials	0
Total	68

Table 2.2. Number of submissions by state.

State	Number of Submissions
Idaho	63
Montana	2
Texas	1
Virginia	1
Wyoming	1
Total	68

Of the 63 submissions that were received from respondents located in Idaho, the majority came from communities located within the Upper Snake FO planning area as shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3. Number of submissions by community.

Community	Number of Submissions
Idaho	
Blackfoot	4
Boise	2
Dubois	1
Howe	1
Idaho Falls	32
Irwin	2
Lewiston	1
Lewisville	1
Moore	1
Pocatello	2
Rexburg	3
Rigby	4
Shelly	2
Soda Springs	1
Springfield	1
St. Anthony	2
Swan Valley	1
Terreton	1
Victor	1
Montana	
Dillon	1
Missoula	1
Texas	
San Antonio	1
Virginia	
Arlington	1
Wyoming	
Cody	1
Total	68

2.2.1. Summary of Public Comments by Topic

There were 684 unique comments identified among all 68 letters. Unique comments may or may not have had supporting information provided. Differentiating unique comments and supporting

information provides better evaluation of comments and the subsequent assignment of topic codes to comments.

A database was established to capture these comments. Topic codes and analysis topics were preliminarily assigned by the analyst. The IDT reviewed all the comments, supporting information, and code and topic assignments. The resulting comment analysis database was completed in June 2008.

Following is a list of topics taken from the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1), which was used as a guide to categorize public comments received (not all topics are presented; only those to which the public made actual comments).

- Cave and karst resources
- Comprehensive trails and travel management
- Cultural resources
- Fish and wildlife
- Lands and realty
- Livestock grazing
- Minerals: locatable, salable, leasable
- Minerals: oil and gas (also known as fluid minerals)
- Recreation and visitor services, including law enforcement, extensive recreations management areas (ERMAs)/special recreation management areas (SRMAs)
- Soil and water, including riparian areas
- Special designations, including administrative designations (e.g., area of critical environmental concern [ACEC])
- Special status species vegetation, including weeds management
- Visual resources
- Wilderness characteristics
- Wildland fire management.

Additional topics raised by the public included the following:

- General comments (not fitting into any specific category)
- Monitoring
- NEPA process
- Tribal treaty rights
- Wilderness study areas (WSAs).¹

Table 2.4 shows the distribution of comments by topic.

Table 2.4. Number of comments by topic.

Topic	Number of Comments
Cave and Karst	3
Comprehensive Trails and Travel Management	185
Cultural Resources	8
Fish and Wildlife	30
General Comments	35

¹ WSAs are a type of special designation where BLM's responsibility is to make recommendations of areas appropriate for formal designation by Congress. However, the topic is sometimes confusing and, as such, the public often submits comments using the terminology "WSAs" when they are/may also be referring to the concept of "wilderness characteristics." For the purposes of the comment analysis, WSAs and wilderness characteristics were considered to be in the same category.

Topic	Number of Comments
Lands and Realty	58
Law Enforcement	11
Livestock Grazing	62
Minerals: Fluid (Oil, gas, and geothermal)	16
Minerals: Locatable, Saleable, Leasable	3
Monitoring	3
NEPA Process	19
Recreation	61
Riparian Areas	26
Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs, SRMAs)	3
Special Designations (ACEC)	14
Special Status Species	3
Soil and Water	45
Tribal Treaty Rights	2
Vegetation Non-riparian	19
Visual Resources	3
Weeds Management	8
Wilderness Characteristics/Study Areas	29
Wildland Fire Management	38
Total	684

2.3. Issues Identified During Scoping

Public comment analysis conducted by the RMP team in July 2008 resulted in identifying seven relevant issues based on specific criteria. The criteria included identifying if the effects of a proposed action would approach or exceed standards or a threshold, would substantially change a resource, would be controversial, would offer a wide range of opportunities, or would cause disagreement regarding their environmental impact.

Following comment analysis, IDT members returned to the comment database to fully develop and describe the relevant issues. All issue statements included here were identified through public scoping comments except the socioeconomic issue statement, which was brought to the RMP planning process via the Community Assessment workshops. Language used in the issue statements, where possible, was kept verbatim as the public provided, aside from the socioeconomic statement, which was written by the IDT.

2.3.1. Issue 1. Acquiring and Maintaining Public Access

How will the planning process address the need for acquiring and maintaining access to public lands while also protecting private property rights?

Improving and maintaining public access has been identified a concern prior to the initiation of the Upper Snake FO RMP planning process. Public complaints and inquiries regarding access to public lands have increased significantly in the last 5 years. Along with private individuals, agencies have expressed their concerns regarding access to public lands. The IDL commented that securing or improving legal access to endowment lands as well as the potential for both traditional [grazing] and nontraditional [transition to residential/commercial/industrial in areas

impacted by the path of growth and development] revenue generation is a key concern. It was commented that BLM should ensure public access to public recreation resources (rivers and lakes) and that it should be high priority. Several individuals provided comments on specific areas where public access is needed, for example, to public lands located on the southern side of Sheridan Reservoir. Another individual commented that they would like to see a public right of way on BLM land along the rim of the South Fork River, for horses and motorized vehicles. The public expressed concerns that disposal of land may result in the loss of recreational access to other federal or state lands. It was suggested that BLM establish criteria associated with opportunities for the acquisition of interests in land, such as acquiring access easements.

2.3.2. Issue 2. Land Tenure Adjustment

How will the planning process identify lands for land tenure adjustment; including retention, acquisition, exchange, and disposal, and what will be the priority for such land tenure adjustments?

Many comments were received regarding land tenure adjustments with a range of opinions on how this issue should be addressed. One individual commented that trades for consolidation should be done, but not sales, unless there are special reasons. One group stated that BLM should prioritize lands that would be beneficial to acquire and lands that if they were disposed of would have little impact. The same group expressed the opinion that BLM should retain all lands that have a common boundary with NF lands and no lands within an ACEC traded away either. It was suggested that before any land parcels are considered for disposal their value to remain in BLM ownership/management be critically considered and close coordination with other agencies and resources users be determined. When disposing of land, several groups wanted the BLM to outline a protocol for land disposal and asked the agency to consider the use of conservation easements and other protective covenants. These groups emphasized the need to not dispose of threatened, endangered, or sensitive fish and wildlife habitats, stating that it is critical that the BLM maintains in public ownership wetlands and riparian habitat, crucial winter range for big game, and strutting/dancing and nesting grounds for sage grouse. One agency offered that in some instances, it may be more appropriate for another agency/entity, such as BLM, to possess and manage these types of lands, for example where there are special status species. Where a BLM parcel is surrounded by other federal or state land, a land exchange may be possible or a cooperative management arrangement developed with the other agency. For identifying land tenure priorities it was expressed that lands that are of a low priority for acquisition include lands that have been managed poorly by private landowners and have soil health problems, noxious weeds, high road densities, and other impacts that would require immediate expenditure of funds to restore. On the other hand, lands identified for high priority for acquisition include important wildlife winter range, wetlands, native fish habitat, threatened and endangered species habitat, unroaded lands and lands within or next to WSAs or ACECs. Management direction must be established for lands that may come under BLM jurisdiction in the future.

2.3.3. Issue 3. Livestock Grazing

How will conflicts associated with livestock grazing be managed within the planning area?

Some members of the public expressed a concern with the direct and cumulative impacts of the livestock grazing program to vegetation, wildlife habitat, water quality, sensitive species, riparian areas, fuel loading, and soils. They believe livestock grazing should only be permitted in areas

where it does not conflict with the maintenance of plant and litter cover, nutrient recycling, forage for wildlife species, seed production, and the restoration and maintenance of riparian communities. Comments received also suggested consideration of allowing for the natural dispersal of bighorn sheep in their historic habitat without the risk of contact with domestic sheep and goats and others stated that not all areas should be grazed by livestock.

Members of the public made several statements indicative of their support to continued grazing: livestock production and ranching are a critical part of Idaho's agricultural economy, accounting for almost a quarter of Idaho's agricultural commodity cash receipts; public lands are an essential component of livestock production; the RMP should recognize livestock grazing as an economically viable and ecologically sustainable use of public lands; livestock grazing on public lands uses a relatively small amount of energy compared to other sources of food production and utilizing range resources can help the United States be more self-sufficient.

Comments also suggested that the current level of permitted use be retained so long as long-term vegetation trend studies and [Idaho] Standards for Rangeland Health (BLM 1997) assessments show that these rangelands can support that level of grazing. It was also suggested that consideration should also be given to increasing the amount of permitted use on allotments that can sustain an increase. With regard to the scoping topic of existing and proposed lands unavailable for grazing, it was suggested that instead of making these lands unavailable for grazing, to consider leaving these areas as possible grazing allotments in case the opportunity arises in the future to properly make use of them as an allotment or as a forage reserve area. It was also suggested that grazing should be utilized as a way to stop and prevent wildfires and that the BLM should not give up on extractive resources; "we can all exist out there together."

2.3.4. Issue 4. Sagebrush Steppe

How will plant communities within the sagebrush ecosystem be managed to maintain long-term health and sustainability for terrestrial and aquatic species while maintaining the principles of multiple use?

The main theme heard from the public with regard to the sagebrush steppe related to protection and conservation of this landscape type for multiple resource benefit and use. There was a consensus that vegetation should be managed to maintain the long-term health of the plant community for the benefit of native wildlife and human uses. Respondents focused attention on BLM's need to protect riparian areas and water quality sources to maintain habitat requirements for native fish and wildlife and overall ecosystem health. Respondents requested that the BLM consider specific conservation measures to enhance and restore current conditions. One individual suggested that standards be developed to protect amphibian habitat. Another individual suggested using protective designations to manage sage grouse, citing livestock grazing and wildfire/prescribed fire management as major causes for habitat decline. Several comments made related to maintaining habitat connectivity for wildlife by preserving and/or re-establishing corridors and migration routes. One group felt that BLM should manage for large, unfragmented sagebrush habitats that are important to land health and wildlife species. There were several comments made that suggested that seasonal use stipulations should be implemented to protect wildlife from OHV and recreational uses. Other comments were made that suggested that public lands not be restricted because a sensitive resource is present. Groups and individuals expressed concern regarding the potential interaction between bighorn and domestic sheep and the need to address management direction in the RMP. Many comments received were focused on methods and procedures to improve current rangeland conditions as a result of altered fuels and fire

regimes. A couple groups commented that hazardous fuels reduction projects should occur only adjacent to developments rather than miles from the nearest structure. Respondents have requested that the RMP EIS should include a fire management plan that allows natural fire to burn as long as it does not threaten public structures or, in some cases, private property adjacent to public lands. Respondents noted that the BLM needs to place emphasis on fire and rehabilitation management, commenting that techniques such as fuel breaks and other techniques to minimize the size of wildfires should be developed. Respondents also requested that the BLM aggressively address the noxious and invasive species problem. An individual suggested that restoration and fire rehabilitation efforts should consider a variety of species for reseeding, not just natives. One individual stated that livestock grazing, motorized use, and other ground disturbing activities should be eliminated from the burned areas for a minimum of 3 years after the fire. Several individuals also noted that livestock grazing should be used as a fire management tool and that allotment closures have increased fuel loads and fire frequency.

2.3.5. Issue 5. Socioeconomics

How will social and economic benefits of commodity and amenity uses be balanced within the planning area?

Some members of the public stated that BLM's potential for preserving open space in Eastern Idaho should be considered in the RMP. Several comments addressed open spaces, defined as including agriculture and ranching lands, as helping to retain "our character." Other comments expressed the importance of keeping grazing leases to keep our ranchers on the land and that the BLM should promote land management programs that are supportive of responsible and sustainable agriculture and grazing. Other individuals spoke to the importance of grazing to the economy:

- Livestock production and ranching are a critical part of Idaho's agricultural economy, accounting for almost a quarter of Idaho's agricultural commodity cash receipts
- Public lands are an essential component of livestock production
- The RMP should recognize livestock grazing as an economically viable and ecologically sustainable use of public lands
- Livestock grazing on public lands uses a relatively small amount of energy compared to other sources of food production and utilizing range resources can help the United States be more self-sufficient
- BLM should not give up on extractive resources, "we can all exist out there together."

Some individuals stated that public lands should be managed for a sustainable and diverse economy where agriculture, tourism, and the federal laboratory [INL] remain key while others commented that the BLM needs to rethink how the recreation management program might provide more year-round access to recreation opportunities that would assist with the local economy. Some members of the public also commented that a naturally functioning ecosystem that provides wildlife habitats, free flowing water, hunting, fishing, and other quality recreation opportunities has the potential to influence the economy and local communities.

2.3.6. Issue 6. Recreation Management

How will the increase in recreational use and demand for quality recreational opportunities be balanced within the planning area?

Many members of the public expressed the desire for management of public lands to have a priority emphasis on recreation and provide for recreation opportunities. Some members of the public stated that increasing recreation pressure dictates the need to include more lands within recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classes that protect the land's undeveloped, wild character, i.e., primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation classes. To ensure the continued viability of these desired experiences, the BLM must manage public lands under an ROS. Recreation opportunities for visitor exploration and discovery should focus on activities in an undeveloped, primitive setting.

Common concerns identified by the public were developed and undeveloped recreation opportunities. One suggestion was that recreational facilities should be developed to limit impacts to select areas where mitigation and monitoring of the impacts can be more effective. Another stated that restrictions can and should be developed concerning dispersed camping and other recreational opportunities in these areas, and that BLM should be specific in identifying the uses that will be acceptable and allowable in certain designated areas and settings. One individual stated that family recreation is important to them and asked that dispersed camping remain available. They asked that none of these activities [4-wheel trail rides, hiking, rock climbing, rock hounding] be curtailed in any way.

Another common concern expressed among the public related to special recreation permitting for different recreational uses. One individual stated that there are enough commercial permits for the area [South Fork Area] already, if not to [sic] many, while another stated that BLM should be very cautious in issuing special use permits for recreational or commercial purposes. But others commented that there should be opportunities for a hunting outfitter for whitetail, turkey, mule deer, moose, and elk. And yet another individual stated that there does not seem to be a need to add additional guiding permits on the South Fork as a result of a need to fill public recreational use requirements. Instead, a reallocation of the unused dates and/or permits seems to be appropriate under the circumstances of the management of this particular resource.

2.3.7. Issue 7. Travel Management

How will motorized, non-motorized, and mechanized travel be managed to provide commodity, amenity, and recreation opportunities, as well as to protect natural resources?

Many people perceive travel management as primarily a recreational OHV issue, and many comments provided by the public reflected this perspective. However, travel management encompasses the full range of motorized and non-motorized uses, as well as recreational, administrative, and commodity uses. Some members of the public consider OHV use a "divisive activity [that] is unhealthy and [an] unproductive use of public lands." The public reported that, in some cases, OHV users were impacting other recreation uses, wildlife, and livestock. Some individuals suggested that BLM prohibit motorized vehicle use in legislatively or administratively proposed wilderness [study] areas and other wilderness quality lands. In one individual's words, "the Upper Snake Field Office has a great opportunity at this time to protect roadless lands that exist in the analysis area and ensure that the ones that already are in WSA status are being managed as such." Many individuals commented on their desire to see public lands remain or be reclassified as "open" to OHV use; not limited. Advocates for OHV use express concerns that public lands are being increasingly closed to OHV use. Some individuals requested to "not be shut out, leave the trails open so we can take our kids and grand kids to the areas they will never see by car or truck. Not everyone has access to horses or rivers to float." One individual stated, "Being a grazing permittee and land owner in the Birch Creek Valley, we are concerned

about your proposed travel restrictions. We use motorcycles and various motorized vehicles to conduct our day-to-day operations, such as herding cattle, checking waterlines and gates on our allotments. Because of your new proposal it would be a major hindrance to us as this has been a routine practice of ours and other permittees for years.”

Between those who want to close areas to OHV use and those who want to leave areas open are a wide range of individuals who support limitations on BLM’s roads and trails system, but how to limit use is open to broad interpretation. Some individuals supported the idea of limiting off-road use to existing roads. Some individuals suggested restricting OHV use to designated routes under a “closed unless posted open” policy, and prohibit cross country travel by OHVs. Some individuals advocated special designated open areas, for example, jeep routes for rock crawling (in highly modified jeeps); others wanted to see some trails designated as “jeep trails,” as is seen in some surrounding states, instead of just all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails or graded roads. Another individual suggested limitation might be to close certain areas at certain times to cut down on numbers [of users] during hunting periods, or sage grouse breeding times, etc. One individual said, “In some places there is more than one route leading to the same destination and one or more should be closed.” Another suggested connecting areas via hike/bike paths. One individual noted that BLM should not create additional, separate, and vehicle-specific trail systems as, “there will be no end to the demand for each new vehicle (e.g., motorized skateboards) to have its own trail network or trails built to their standards and desires.” Another concern expressed was that administrative access needs to be extended to grazing permittees to maintain range improvements for proper rangeland management, and to state agencies to manage endowment lands and other areas under their responsibility.

2.4. Concerns and Issues Raised that Will Not be Addressed

During the public scoping period, several concerns/issues were raised by the public and identified by the IDT as outside the scope of the planning effort or represented questions on how BLM would go about conducting the planning process and implementation of land use plan decisions. Following is a brief discussion of issues/concerns raised and deemed outside the scope of this planning effort.

Buyout Grazing Permits/Eliminate Livestock Grazing: FLPMA (1976) recognizes livestock grazing as a valid use of the public lands and mandates the multiple use and sustained yield of public lands. Comments suggested the BLM buyout grazing permits to remove livestock grazing from public lands. Changes in livestock grazing (e.g., numbers, AUMs, season of use) are decisions made after the land use plan is approved. These implementation decisions are guided by the final, approved land use plan as well as adaptive management conducted in conjunction with continued monitoring and assessment of allotment conditions.

Wilderness Study Area Inventories: Several comments suggested the continued inventory of public lands to identify new WSAs in accordance with Section 603 of FLPMA (1976). This inventory of public lands and recommendation to Congress has been completed within the timeframe allowed in Section 603. At this time, the BLM cannot propose any additional WSAs. However, as part of the planning effort, should areas be found to contain wilderness characteristics, management direction will be developed to protect and preserve identified wilderness characteristics (Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1, Appendix C).

Fire Management/Wildland Urban Interface: Several comments suggested the strengthening of zoning ordinances and making it clear what is expected of adjacent landowners regarding the

effectiveness of thinning hazardous fuels to protect structures. The Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1, Appendix C) clearly identifies the types of decisions this planning effort must make regarding fire management. Proposing zoning ordinances and describing what is expected of adjacent land owners are county and community planning issues that need to be addressed in local plans. The BLM does work with counties and communities on the development of action plans in this regard.

2.5. Valid Management Direction

The IDT reviewed existing land use plans from January to March 2008 to identify valid management direction for all resources and resource uses that could be carried forward into this planning effort. In addition, this review also identified those resources and resource uses where management direction was no longer valid or non-existent based upon Appendix C of the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1). This review resulted in the identification of valid management direction that will be used to describe the current direction/situation (i.e., No Action alternative) in the forthcoming draft RMP/EIS. The review also identified need for change topics developed for discussion and comment during the scoping period.

Table 2.5 identifies in general those resources/resource uses in which valid management direction was found in one or several of the existing land use plans that could be carried forward while management direction for other resources/resource uses was identified as being non-existent or lacking. It should be noted that even though valid management direction was identified for some resources/resource uses, these same resources/resource uses may have been identified as needing additional direction to be developed per Appendix C of the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1).

Wild horses and burros, coal, and oil shale will not be addressed in this planning effort because these resources do not occur within the Upper Snake FO planning area.

The Analysis of Management Situation will provide additional information concerning valid management direction carried forward from existing plans into this planning effort.

Table 2.5. Resources and resource uses and management direction availability.

Resources and Resource Uses	
Management Direction Carried Forward	Management Direction Lacking or Non-Existent
Cultural Resources	Air
Fish and Wildlife ¹	Cave and Karst Resources
Fluid Minerals ¹	Lands and Realty
Forestry	Paleontology
Livestock Grazing ¹	Soils
Locatable Minerals	Special Status Species
Mineral Materials	Trails and Travel Management
Non-energy Leasable Minerals	Vegetation
Recreation and Visitor Services ¹	Wilderness Characteristics
Special Designations ¹	—
Visual Resources	—
Water	—

Wildland Fire Management	—
1. Resources and resource uses also identified as needing additional direction to be developed per Appendix C of the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1).	

2.6. Special Designations, Including Nominations

2.6.1. Administrative Designations

The planning area contains existing and potential areas requiring possible administrative designations for protection of unique resource values. These include ACECs, research natural areas (RNAs), WSAs, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. These special designations provide specific management direction designed to protect the resource or unique characteristics for which the area was designated. There may be resources that are best protected by additional designations, and some designations may no longer be needed. Existing WSAs will remain unchanged by this planning process.

ACECs and RNA

All existing ACEC/RNA designations have been reviewed by the planning team to determine if the current designation is still valid. An expansion of the Nine Mile Knoll ACEC to 56,000 acres from 40,090 acres needs to be considered as well as the possible reclassification of five existing RNAs located within existing ACECs (i.e., North Menan Butte, Reid Canal Island, Pine Creek Island, Squaw Creek Island, and the St. Anthony Sand Dunes RNAs).

Nominations

Three new ACECs proposed by the IDT will be considered during the development of alternatives for the draft RMP/EIS. These three areas involve approximately 17,900 acres, in total, and include the Southwest Lemhi Range (about 5,500 acres), the Teton River (about 3,500 acres), and Main Snake River (about 2,800 acres). The Southwest Lemhi Range ACEC would protect cultural and botanical values. The Teton River ACEC would protect scenic values, the riparian and upland communities, and important aquatic and wildlife habitat; and the Main Snake River ACEC would protect the cottonwood ecosystem, scenic values, and important aquatic and wildlife habitat.

In addition, two comment letters, received from the Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC) and Western Watersheds Project (WWP), proposed a sage grouse ACEC within the Upper Snake FO that would not allow livestock grazing. Neither GYC or WWP proposed a specific geographic area nor supporting information for the proposed ACEC designation.

The IDT discussed the following items related to sage grouse habitat in the Upper Snake FO:

- Occupied sage grouse habitat makes up approximately 80 percent of the landscape in the Upper Snake FO.
- Leks are scattered throughout the FO; thus, making any attempts to manage these “breeding areas” as ACECs a difficult proposition.
- Although some sage grouse are resident birds, most are migratory, utilizing thousands of acres while traveling between seasonal ranges.

The team looked at setting aside one area exclusively for the protection of sage grouse, but by doing so admits essentially “disadvantaging” sage grouse in other areas that may warrant an equal

level of protection. To look at “Relevance and Importance Criteria” for a sage grouse ACEC proposal, the IDT discussed the possibility of a designated area collocated to the Sagebrush Steppe Reserve on the INL, which would encompass the Sinks, Wigwam Butte, and Mahogany Butte grazing allotments. Although two relevance criteria would be met in this circumstance, none of the importance criteria would be met; thus, disqualifying this area from consideration as an ACEC.

The IDT concluded that a sage grouse ACEC designation is not feasible to protect the FO’s sage grouse population as a whole. Rather, FO-wide conservation measures would be needed and could be developed through the RMP process to enhance habitat suitability for sage grouse. Conservation measures would coincide with the *Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho* (Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee 2006) and may include, but not be limited to, such items as habitat restoration efforts, grazing management changes, seasonal restrictions around leks, fire management in altered fire regimes, and establishing minimum habitat requirements for brood rearing, breeding and winter range.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires BLM to assess river and stream segments as part of the planning process. Before a river corridor may be considered for designation as a “recreation,” “scenic,” or “wild river area,” the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires a determination that the river and its immediate environments possess one or more specific, outstandingly, remarkable values. An eligibility study for the Upper Snake FO has been completed as a baseline for the RMP planning effort. A suitability study is underway, including analyses of current and future uses of the eligible stream segments, and the results will be incorporated into the development of the RMP. Suitability determination and management direction needs to be determined for eligible river segments within the Upper Snake FO. There are numerous opportunities for interested parties and the public to be involved in this process, including through the RMP development process.

Chapter 3. Final Planning Criteria

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Preliminary planning criteria were determined by the IDT prior to public scoping meetings to set the temporal boundaries for focused planning of the Upper Snake FO RMP and to guide decision making by topic. These criteria were introduced to the public, through the information briefing package and via the RMP website, in May 2008, in advance of the June public scoping open-house meetings. The public was encouraged to comment on, and suggest additions to, these criteria at the scoping open-house meetings and via the Upper Snake FO RMP website. Comments on the preliminary planning criteria were collected through June 27, 2008, incorporated, and are presented in this chapter as the final planning criteria to be approved by the Idaho Falls District Manager

3.1. Air Quality

In conducting the Upper Snake FO planning effort, BLM will ensure compliance with all applicable local, state, tribal, and federal air quality laws, statutes, and regulations. The RMP will identify desired future conditions and area-wide criteria or restrictions, in cooperation with the IDEQ and the EPA, to ensure that air quality standards are being met.

Planning Questions

How will management activities be conducted to meet or exceed air quality standards? How will applicable smoke management requirements be achieved?

Planning Criteria

- Federal Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401–7626)
- Record of Decision for the Fire, Fuels, and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment (2008)
- Guidance from the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group (Operating Guide 2006) to minimize or prevent smoke impacts from management-ignited fire
- Compliance with applicable local, state, tribal, and federal air quality laws, statutes, regulations, standards, and implementation plans. This includes applicable “conformity” regulations for BLM initiated or authorized activities within designated non-attainment or maintenance areas.

3.2. Water Quality

Prescribed fire, vegetation treatments, livestock grazing, road location and design, and recreational activities can all affect water quality and quantity on public lands. These activities are especially important when they occur on or near floodplains along streams and rivers. Natural events such as wildfire or floods can also have large effects. Several Idaho Section 303(d) listed streams within the planning area are affected by BLM management activities. Fragmented, complex ownership patterns often require that coordinated management across watersheds be employed. Both ground and surface water originating in municipal watersheds on public land can serve as sources of potable water. Adjudication of water rights within the Snake River Basin requires that BLM continue to claim and inventory water resources on public lands.

Planning Questions

How will uses and activities be managed to maintain or improve water quality and quantity for both ground and surface water? How should public lands along streams, rivers, and floodplains be managed? How will vegetation management projects be mitigated to protect water quality and quantity?

Planning Criteria

- Federal Clean Water Act (CWA, 33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.)
- State of Idaho Non-Point Source Management program plans
- State of Idaho Total Maximum Daily Load implementation plans
- State of Idaho Agricultural Pollution Abatement Plan.
- State of Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act
- State of Idaho Ground Water Protection plan
- Idaho State Water Law and Snake River Basin Adjudication Procedures
- Approved best management practices (BMPs) (e.g., Best Management Practices for Mining in Idaho, IDL 1992; BMPs Forestry for Idaho, Forest Stewardship Guidelines for Water Quality, Idaho Forest Products Commission [IFPC] 2005; Selenium Management Practices, IDL et al. 2004).

3.3. Soils Management

Road construction, mining, timber harvest, vegetation treatments, livestock grazing, recreation and OHV use, and fire can all contribute to accelerated soil erosion. Natural events such as wildfire and floods can also cause large amounts of erosion. Allowed to continue, excessive erosion can deplete site productivity such that the site can no longer support sufficient vegetation to protect soils from further losses. The planning area contains some erodible soils that are sensitive to management or catastrophic events.

Planning Question

How will public lands be managed to protect and maintain soil productivity?

Planning Criteria

- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (BLM 1997)
- Approved BMPs (e.g., Best Management Practices for Mining in Idaho, IDL 1992; BMPs Forestry for Idaho, Forest Stewardship Guidelines for Water Quality, IFPC 2005; Selenium Management Practices, IDL et al. 2004).

3.4. Vegetation, Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds

Invasive plant species and noxious weeds negatively impact indigenous plant communities, special status plants, wildlife habitat, and soils. The BLM is required by the Idaho State Noxious Weed Law to control noxious weeds listed on the State of Idaho noxious weed list. Successful

management of these aggressive species requires the use of integrated weed management, which includes use of mechanical, chemical, and biological control agents; use of selected cultural practices; working cooperatively with landowners; and educating the public. Most human activity affects the introduction, establishment, and spread of noxious weeds and these effects must be considered in management actions. Recently introduced species can be eradicated with early detection and application of control measures; however, once well established, noxious weed infestations generally cannot be eradicated, but can only be managed for containment. While not on the noxious weed list, continued spread of cheatgrass within the planning area threatens to dramatically alter the function of most upland plant communities.

Planning Questions

How will public lands be managed to reduce the invasion and spread of noxious weed species? How will public lands be managed to minimize the effects of well established noxious weed infestations? What management actions can be used to minimize the spread of cheatgrass?

Planning Criteria

- EO 13112, Invasive Species, February 3, 1999 (64 *Federal Register* 6183)
- Record of Decision, Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Final) (BLM 2007a)
- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (BLM 1997)
- Federal and state laws and executive orders requiring control of invasive species on federal land
- Cooperate with established Coordinated Weed Management Areas
- Protection of non-target and special status plant species during weed treatments
- Incorporate weed management considerations into all natural resource management activities.

3.5. Riparian and Wetland Area Management

Riparian and wetland zones are some of the most productive and intensely-used areas on the landscape. Inventory and monitoring data over the past 15 years show that very few riparian habitats in the planning area are “nonfunctional” and many areas that formerly were nonfunctional have either reached or are making significant progress toward proper functioning condition. Livestock grazing, road construction, mining, timber harvest, and recreation are the primary activities that have affected these areas. While the riparian and wetland zones in the planning area cover less than 1 percent of the landscape, they are critically important for many natural resource functions. Healthy riparian and wetland communities have high plant and animal species diversity and structural stability; provide fish and wildlife habitat, soil stabilization, stream bank building, and filtration of surface runoff; help improve water quality, water storage, and aquifer recharge; and provide enhanced recreation and aesthetic values. Riparian and wetland areas in the planning area include large and small rivers, streams, wet meadows, lakes, reservoirs, potholes, ponds, seeps, and springs. These areas contain a variety of riparian community or habitat types including coniferous and deciduous tree types, willow and non-willow shrub types, and herbaceous types.

Planning Question

How will public lands be managed to maintain or improve (restore) riparian and wetland habitats?

Planning Criteria

- EO 11990, Protection of Wetlands, May 25, 1977 (42 *Federal Register* 26961)
- EO 12372 as referring to the CWA non-point source management plan
- BLM Idaho Riparian Policy guidance
- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (BLM 1997)
- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment (Quigley et al. 1999)
- IDFG requirements
- BMPs for water quality
- Maintenance, improvement, and restoration of natural riparian functions to benefit species diversity, structural stability, water storage, groundwater recharge, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitats.

3.6. Upland Vegetation Management

Many land use activities continue to affect the natural function and condition of upland vegetation communities. Livestock grazing, mining, rights-of-way, wildfire, roads, recreation, and OHV operation are the major examples. Structurally diverse and healthy upland plant communities provide habitat for wildlife, soil stabilization, increased infiltration of precipitation, and for moving clean water to adjacent streams. Threats to these values include invasion by noxious and invasive plant species, increased wildfire frequency, deteriorating forest health, improperly managed livestock grazing, and OHV use. Sagebrush-dependent wildlife species have specific habitat needs that have been widely impacted.

Planning Questions

How will sagebrush steppe be managed to maintain or improve healthy upland plant communities? How will forest and woodland health be maintained or restored? How will old growth forests, if present, be managed?

Planning Criteria

- President's Healthy Forests Initiative (August 2002), Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-148), and National Fire Plan (2000)
- Record of Decision for the Fire, Fuels, and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment (BLM 2008)
- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment (Quigley et al. 1999)
- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (BLM 1997)

- BLM Interim Guidance for sage grouse habitat management (BLM 2004) and/or State of Idaho guidance
- Protect unique and critical habitats in consultation with the IDFG and USFWS.

3.7. Special Status Species

Special status species are plant and animal species listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened or endangered, under the State of Idaho's Special Status Species lists, and/or BLM's sensitive species list. The planning area supports habitat for a number of special status species, both plants and animals. Habitats for special status species are affected by roads, timber harvest, wildfire and wildfire suppression, livestock grazing, recreation activities, and invasion of non-native species. Fragmentation of land ownership increases the complexity of meaningful habitat protection.

Planning Question

How will public lands be managed to promote recovery of listed species and prevent listing of sensitive species?

Planning Criteria

- A Framework for Incorporating the Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Component of the Interior Columbia Basin Strategy into the BLM and Forest Service Plan Revisions (BLM and USFS 2004)
- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (BLM 1997)
- BLM Interim Guidance for sage grouse habitat management (BLM 2004) and/or State of Idaho Guidance
- Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-Grouse in Idaho (Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee 2006)
- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment (Quigley et al. 1999)
- Conservation agreements and strategy plans (e.g., Greater sage-grouse)
- Aquatic conservation strategy components of the Inland Native Fish Strategy
- Biological opinions and/or letters of concurrence from the USFWS.

3.8. Fish and Wildlife Habitat

The planning area contains a diversity of habitats for a wide variety of fish and wildlife species. Habitat quality has been affected by roads, timber harvest, wildfire and wildfire suppression, livestock grazing, recreation activities, urbanization and invasion of non-native species. Fragmentation of land ownership increases the complexity of meaningful habitat protection. Maintaining fish and wildlife habitats requires retention of the range of diverse, healthy plant communities, reliable water sources, connectivity of habitat, and recognition of the unique needs of some species.

Planning Question

How will public lands be managed to enhance fish and wildlife habitats?

Planning Criteria

- A Framework for Incorporating the Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Component of the Interior Columbia Basin Strategy into the BLM and Forest Service Plan Revisions (BLM and USFS 2004)
- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment (Quigley et al. 1999)
- Preserving biodiversity, genetic integrity and high quality fish and wildlife habitats
- Recognition of the intrinsic and recreational values associated with native and non-native wildlife and fish species
- Coordination with IDFG, on habitat needs and consultation with USFWS as necessary
- Limit introduction and spread of invasive species and noxious weeds
- Recognition and protection of habitats for migratory bird species.

3.9. Cultural Resources

The planning area contains many significant prehistoric and historic cultural resources, which provide a record of Native American and Euro-American use of public lands and associated natural resources. Approximately 20 percent of the planning area has been inventoried for cultural resources. This information is beneficial in protecting cultural resources from activities authorized by the BLM or being degraded by recreation activities, theft, or vandalism while also making them available for scientific, social-cultural, and other authorized uses. Protection of cultural resources includes the identification and evaluation of, monitoring, stabilization, data recovery, and interpretation.

Planning Question

How will cultural resources, including TCPs, be protected and managed?

Planning Criteria

- Federal laws requiring protection of cultural resources (e.g. Antiquities Act of 1906, Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended)
- Consultation with Tribal Governments and the SHPO
- Protect, preserve, and enhance sites eligible or listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

3.10. Tribal Treaty Rights and Interests

Because of the proximity of the planning area to the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, there is a high probability of the existence of sacred sites, cultural landscapes, and traditional use areas. While some of these are known, there are others that have not been identified for protection, which will require inventory, protection, and interpretation. The Fort Bridger Treaty (USA and Sho-Ban

Tribes 1868) confers special legal rights (i.e., hunt, fish, gather, and exercise other traditional uses) on unoccupied public lands by the Shoshone–Bannock Tribes. Effective consultation and coordination is the key to achieving management goals for both the Tribes and BLM.

Planning Questions

How can tribal treaty rights and interests be met to protect sacred sites, landscapes, tribal cultural practices, and significant tribal historical areas?

Planning Criteria

- Fort Bridger Treaty 1868
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (25 U.S.C. 3001)
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470)
- Protection of cultural use areas in consultation with Tribal Governments.

3.11. Socioeconomic Effects of Public Land Management

Most of the resources and resource uses of public lands have effects on local economies. The traditional extractive industries such as livestock grazing, logging, and mining continue to use the public lands as a source of resources. Livestock grazing makes a considerable contribution to local rural economies. Forest health concerns with emphasis towards fuels management may increase the importance of extracting timber products from public lands which, in turn, create jobs. Demand for recreational opportunities is increasing competition with the traditional uses both for space on the public lands, and in the amount of revenue generated.

Planning Question

How will public land management affect the social and economic resiliency and sustainability of local economies?

Planning Criteria

- Recognize dependence of local communities upon goods and services from public lands
- Recognize increasing demand for outdoor recreational opportunities
- Allow for social and economic diversification of local economies.

3.12. Visual Resource Management

BLM is required to analyze impacts to scenic values from public land management actions and uses. The visual resource is managed by identifying visual resource values, establishing objectives for managing those values, and taking action to achieve the objectives. Conflicts with visual resource management values within the planning area are presented by unauthorized roads and trails, rights-of-way, urban encroachment, range improvements, and gravel pit development.

Planning Question

Are the current visual resource classes appropriate to protect scenic values?

Planning Criterion

- Guidance described in BLM Manual Section 8400—Visual Resource Management.

3.13. Wildland Fire Management

Wildfires occur within all plant communities in the planning area. The majority of these communities are sagebrush steppe, which has a historic fire-return interval of approximately 30 to 60 years. Fire suppression has led to unnatural accumulation of fuels, expansion of junipers into adjacent rangelands, and increased outbreak of insects and disease in forested areas. In addition, invasion by cheatgrass since the 1950s has decreased the fire return interval in some areas. These changes have altered fire regimes across the planning area by increasing the potential for large, severe fires and increased fire frequency. Native plant communities, especially those containing sagebrush, and the wildlife that depend upon them have been severely affected. Fire and fuels management is necessary to return fire's natural role into the ecosystem.

Planning Questions

What should be the landscape-level fire management goals and objectives? What is the appropriate management response to naturally occurring wildland fires? When and where should wildland fire use or prescribed fire be an accepted action in meeting overall resource management objectives? How can fire suppression activities be managed to minimize the adverse effects to resources while providing public health and safety and protecting private property? How will fire and fuels management activities be addressed throughout the field office area, including within the wildland-urban interface?

Planning Criteria

- President's Healthy Forests Initiative (August 2002), Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-148), and National Fire Plan (2000)
- National Fire Plan: Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (National Interagency Fire Center 2001)
- A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment – 10 Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan (BLM 2006a)
- Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy for the National Fire Plan (Idaho State Fire Plan Working Group, 2006)
- Record of Decision for the Fire, Fuels, and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment (BLM 2008)
- Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in Fire-Adapted Ecosystems. A Cohesive Strategy (USFS 2000)
- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment (Quigley et al. 1999).

3.14. Cave and Karst Resources

The planning area has several cave and karst formations that provide both educational and recreational opportunities as well as habitat for various species. Conflicts between recreational use and wildlife resources may exist. It is important to identify how these unique resources should be managed within Upper Snake FO to assure public safety as well as reduce conflicts. Significant cave resources within the planning area need to be identified.

Planning Questions

How should cave resources be managed to reduce resource and use conflicts? Which cave resources require special designations (e.g., ACEC) to protect unique characteristics?

Planning Criterion

- Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 (16 U.S.C. 4301).

3.15. Forest and Woodland Management

The planning area contains approximately 49,880 acres of forests and woodlands and includes conifer stands dominated by Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine, aspen stands, and juniper. These areas provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, watershed protection, recreational and aesthetic values, and production of forest products. Fire suppression, plant succession, and recent prolonged drought conditions have changed the character of tree species composition and have increased stand densities in many forested areas. These changes have increased the risk of wildfire, forest insects, and disease epidemics and have created forest ecosystems that are less drought resistant. Encroachment of juniper into sagebrush steppe is causing a decline in forage and habitat loss for many wildlife species.

Planning Questions

What areas are available and have the capacity for planned, sustained-yield timber harvest or special forest product harvest? Where should juniper and aspen stands be actively managed for improved plant community health?

Planning Criteria

- President's Healthy Forests Initiative (2002), The Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-148), and National Fire Plan (2000)
- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (BLM 1997)
- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment (Quigley et al. 1999)
- Eastern Idaho Sustained Yield Unit Timber Management Environmental Analysis Record (BLM 1978)
- BLM Manual 5400, Sale of Forest Products
- BLM Manual 5000-1, Forest Management

- Recognize public access needs, demand for forest products, and effects on local economies.

3.16. Livestock Grazing

Livestock can be properly managed to reduce conflicts with other resource values and public land uses. However, improper livestock grazing can be detrimental to many important ecological functions such as water quality, soil stability, wildlife and fisheries habitat, and native plant communities. The Upper Snake FO currently authorizes livestock grazing on 369 allotments.

Planning Questions

How should livestock grazing be managed along riparian areas? How should livestock grazing be managed to reduce user conflicts and meet standards for rangeland health? What public lands are or are not available to livestock grazing?

Planning Criteria

- Idaho Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management (BLM 1997)
- Recognize importance of public land livestock grazing to local economies
- Authorize use as provided for in the grazing regulations
- Manage livestock grazing under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield (FLPMA 1976, as amended).

3.17. Recreation Management

Public lands within the planning area provide for a wide array of recreation opportunities within varied settings. Water-based forms of recreation such as boating and fishing are popular on the Henry's Fork and South Fork of the Snake River. The St. Anthony Sand Dunes is a very popular regional destination for motorized recreation. Use levels in both developed and undeveloped settings are increasing rapidly, accompanied by an increasing demand for commercially permitted activities. Increased use has elevated demand for facilities, user information, and access. There are currently two SRMAs in the planning area: the St. Anthony Sand Dunes SRMA and Snake River SRMA.

Planning Questions

How will resources be managed to enhance recreation experiences and quality of life while reducing impacts to other resources? How will management of public lands affect the social and economic resiliency and sustainability of local economies?

Planning Criteria

- FLPMA Sections 201 and 202.
- BLM's Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services and A Unified Strategy to Implement "BLM's Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services" Workplan (BLM 2007b)

- IM 2006-060, Incorporating Benefits-Based Management within Recreation and Visitor Services Program Policy Changes (BLM 2006b)
- BLM Manual 8351, Wild and Scenic Rivers Policy
- Recognize the rapidly increasing demand for recreation opportunities to minimize effects to other resources
- Consider availability of law enforcement
- Ensure proper maintenance of existing recreation facilities.

3.18. Travel Management

Many tracts of public land within the planning area have no legal, or inadequate, public access. Population growth, rural and urban development, and increasing recreational activities have increased public desire and need for more access to public lands. If landowners are willing and funding is available, the BLM can negotiate and purchase easements for public access. A goal of BLM's Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services is to "improve access to appropriate recreation opportunities on ... managed or partnered lands and waters." Under this goal, a primary objective is to "address comprehensive travel management through the land-use planning process and through statutorily required planning efforts to improve access and recreation opportunities and experiences." OHV and over snow vehicle (OSV) use has grown rapidly in recent years. The BLM has initiated new strategies to provide a foundation for the development of a comprehensive travel management program that includes provisions for limits on motorized recreation in some areas and for non-motorized recreation.

Planning Questions

Where is public access to public lands needed? Where are the appropriate areas to meet increased OHV/OSV demand or use? How will OHV/OSV use on public lands be managed to protect resources, reduce user conflicts, protect public safety, and provide quality recreation opportunities for all users of the public lands? Should single use designations be made as a part of resolving visitor use conflicts?

Planning Criteria

- EOs 11644 and 11989
- FLPMA Section 205
- Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services, BLM Workplan Fiscal Years 2003-2007 (BLM 2003)
- National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands (BLM 2001)
- Idaho BLM Off-Highway Vehicle Travel and Access Management Strategy (BLM 2005a)
- National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan (BLM 2002)
- The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project: Scientific Assessment (Quigley et al. 1999).

3.19. Land Tenure Adjustment

Land tenure adjustments can improve land management efficiency through consolidation of ownership. In addition, the public interest can be served through acquisition of lands containing

values of high public interest or to improve legal access. The planning area contains many parcels of small acreages and presents opportunities for acquiring other lands containing values desirable for public ownership.

Planning Questions

What criteria should be used to identify lands appropriate for acquisition, retention, and disposal? What resource values should remain in public ownership regardless of parcel size?

Planning Criteria

- Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act of 2000 (43 U.S.C. 2301)
- FLPMA Sections 203 and 206
- The need to retain and acquire access to public lands and resources
- Acquisition of resources valuable for public ownership
- Maintaining or enhancing local social and economic values
- Consider improving management efficiency of public lands where possible.

3.20. Rights-of-Way

The planning area contains utility, transportation, and communication rights-of-way. There has also been recent increased interest in development of wind energy resources. The locations of some of these sites may not be suitable for expansion into utility corridors, communication sites, and/or wind energy sites. It is important to identify or delineate those public lands suitable for rights-of-way to effectively manage the public lands and to minimize the impacts from the proliferation of separate rights-of-way.

Planning Questions

What lands will be available for right-of-way corridors and wind energy development? What limitations should be placed on further development within existing or new utility, transportation, and communication rights-of-way?

Planning Criteria

- FLPMA Section 503
- CWA, Sections 401, 402 and 404
- Record of Decision, Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program and Associated Land Use Plan Amendments (BLM 2005b)
- Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Land in the 11 Western States, draft (Department of Energy and the Bureau of Land Management 2007) and future documents as appropriate
- Minimize proliferation of separate rights-of-way by utilize existing/common rights-of-way to the extent possible

3.21. Minerals and Energy Management

The planning area has potential for the discovery of locatable minerals, geothermal energy, leasable minerals, and salable minerals. Mineral and energy development can affect a variety of other resources such as recreation, visual quality, fish and wildlife habitat, forage availability, and soil stability. These effects can be reduced through carefully developed mitigations such as reclamation, containment of hazardous materials, and avoidance areas. Abandoned mine tunnels and shafts may present potential public safety hazards while, at the same time, serve as important habitat for wildlife, for example, bats.

Planning Questions

How will mineral and energy authorizations and activities be managed to provide for exploration and development while protecting natural resources? How should abandoned mine structures be managed to protect public safety while providing for wildlife habitat and historic values?

Planning Criteria

- Mining and Mineral Policy Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.)
- National Minerals & Minerals Policy Research and Development Act (1980)
- Make public lands available for the orderly and efficient development of energy and mineral resources
- Develop a reasonably foreseeable development scenario for oil, gas, and geothermal production
- Identify areas that are to be withdrawn to protect non-mineral resource values
- Identify areas where special stipulations or requirements are necessary to minimize effects of development. Identify abandoned mine lands, including those that may be important for wildlife habitat.

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Chapter 4. Data Summary and Data Gaps

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4.1. Introduction

At the onset of the planning effort, management direction was to use the best available data and limit collection of new data deemed necessary for the effort. The Upper Snake Preparation Plan, approved April 2005, identifies data needs for this planning effort. At this time, baseline resource data has been prepared and is available for use in a spatial data format for this planning effort.

4.2. Data Gaps and Relevant Data Provided or Identified during Scoping

Comments received through the public scoping process did not identify a need to collect or obtain new data or information. No significant data gaps have been identified. Sufficient information and spatial data are available to address issues and conduct analysis for this planning effort.

The IDPR, a participating agency, brought to the BLM's attention the availability of the *2006-2010 Idaho Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (IDPR 2006) as having useful information for the planning process. The IDFG, also a participating agency, supports a staff member who participates as a core member on the RMP IDT. As a core team member, data and important information pertaining to wildlife is being exchanged between the two agencies. The IDL, also a participating agency, attended one day of the RMP team's comment analysis meetings in which they identified the availability of updated spatial data regarding state lands acreages. They also educated the team to the IDL's mission and how actions on BLM-managed public lands, particularly those adjacent to IDL state lands, may negatively impact their ability to accomplish their agency's mission.

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Chapter 5. Summary of Future Steps in the Planning Process

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5.1. Timeline

It is anticipated the Upper Snake FO draft RMP/EIS will be published and made available for public comment during the winter of 2009. A Notice of Availability will be published in the *Federal Register* announcing the 90-day comment period. In addition, press releases will also announce the availability of the draft RMP/EIS. Public meetings to review and comment on the draft RMP/EIS will be held approximately 45 days after the start of the public comment period. Meeting dates and locations will be publicized in local media well in advance.

If the draft RMP/EIS is published as anticipated, the Proposed Plan/Final EIS should be published during summer of 2010. Delay in release of the draft will result in delay in the release of the final. An NOA will be published in the *Federal Register* announcing the 30-day protest period with press releases submitted to local media. Signing of the Record of Decision for the Upper Snake FO RMP is expected to follow during summer of 2011.

5.2. Contact Information

Further information regarding the status of the Upper Snake FO planning effort and opportunities for public participation may be obtained through the following contact:

Bureau of Land Management

Terry Lee Smith, RMP Project Manager

1405 Hollipark DR, Idaho Falls, ID, 83401

(208) 524-7500

http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/fo/upper_snake/Planning/upper_snake_rmp.html

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Chapter 6. References

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