What is the Difference Between a RMP and an EIS?

An RMP is a set of comprehensive, long-range decisions concerning the use and management of resources administered by the BLM. The RMP will:

- Establish goals and objectives for resource management and the measures needed to achieve those goals and objectives.
- Identify lands that are open and available for certain uses, including any restrictions, and lands that are closed to certain uses.
- Provide comprehensive management direction for and/or allocate use of all resources.

An EIS is required by Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) when the BLM revises the RMP. The EIS analyzes the environmental effects of a number of management alternatives, including a no action alternative and preferred alternative, each of which represents an alternative RMP.

How You Can Participate

Now that the scoping period is complete and we have published a Scoping Report, we have moved on to alternatives formulation. Although the official scoping period is closed, we invite you to continue to follow the progress of the RMP revision on-line at **www.id.blm.gov/offices/pocatello/pocrmp/index.htm** The website will be updated with information, documents, and announcements. Individuals and groups that are already receiving this type of information in the mail will continue to be on the mailing list. Anyone wishing to be added or deleted from the list may do so by contacting Terry Smith at the Bureau of Land Management, Pocatello Field Office, 4350 Cliffs Drive, Pocatello, ID 83204 or by calling 208-478-6347.

Who is Our Contractor?

Tetra Tech Inc. and Maxim Technologies, Inc., a subsidiary of Tetra Tech Inc., have been contracted to work with the BLM to gather information and develop the RMP/EIS. They will also assist in identifying relevant issues, and are currently assisting the RMP IDT with the development of a reasonable range of alternatives for the RMP/EIS based upon the need for change items. Tetra Tech has prepared over 500 resource management plans and NEPA compliance documents. They have assembled a highly qualified and experienced team of scientists and planners that are experienced in incorporating a diverse array of decisions, regulations, and policies into management planning. This team will utilize their experience to assemble an RMP that intergrates public and resource management needs specific to current and future land use decisions.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Pocatello Resource Management Plan

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Pocatello Field Office
4350 Cliffs Drive
Pocatello, Idaho 83204

U.S. Bureau of Land Management

Pocatello Field Office

RMP News

Spring 2004

Letter from the Field Office Manager

This is our first of several newsletters that will provide you with information regarding the Pocatello Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision process. We have chosen to use a newsletter format to ensure you are kept up-to-date on important aspects of the planning process. In addition to the newsletter, you can visit the BLM Pocatello web site at **www.id.blm.gov/offices/pocatello/pocrmp/index.htm** for additional information. The newsletter will be our primary means to keep you informed of our progress and important milestones during the planning process.

The RMP revision process started with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* on November 14, 2001. This NOI identified that the Malad Management Framework Plan (1981) and the Pocatello RMP (1988) were to be updated and revised resulting in one Resource RMP for the entire Pocatello Field Office (PFO) area. The NOI also initiated the public "scoping", a process used to identify issues and concerns relevant to the RMP revision process.

Our planning effort was temporarily delayed during 2002, but we have made great strides to catch up and get back on track. In the spring of 2003, BLM held public scoping meetings to obtain tribal, public, and agency input. Scoping comments were logged into a database, categorized, reviewed and analyzed by the Pocatello BLM planning team to better understand the issues and concerns. These issues and concerns are presented in the newsletter and will be addressed in the draft plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

During the past summer, the BLM selected Tetra Tech Inc. to be the contractor assisting the Pocatello BLM planning team in preparing the revised Pocatello RMP. We also invited a representative from the Shoshone Bannock tribes, Idaho Fish and Game, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Upper Snake River District Resource Advisory Council to participate in the RMP planning process.

Since September 2003, the interdisciplinary team (IDT) has been working together to accomplish the numerous tasks associated with preparing a draft plan and EIS. Currently this team is focused on the development of alternatives as a result of comments received during the scoping period.

This is just a quick overview of the activities taking place in the development and preparation of the revised Pocatello RMP. This first issue of our newsletter provides additional information about our planning activities to date. Please read on about specific tasks the IDT is working on now and future milestones. We hope that your interest in this planning effort continues and that you respond with comments and ideas at key milestones in the process.

Philip L. Damon
Field Office Manager
Pocatello Field Office

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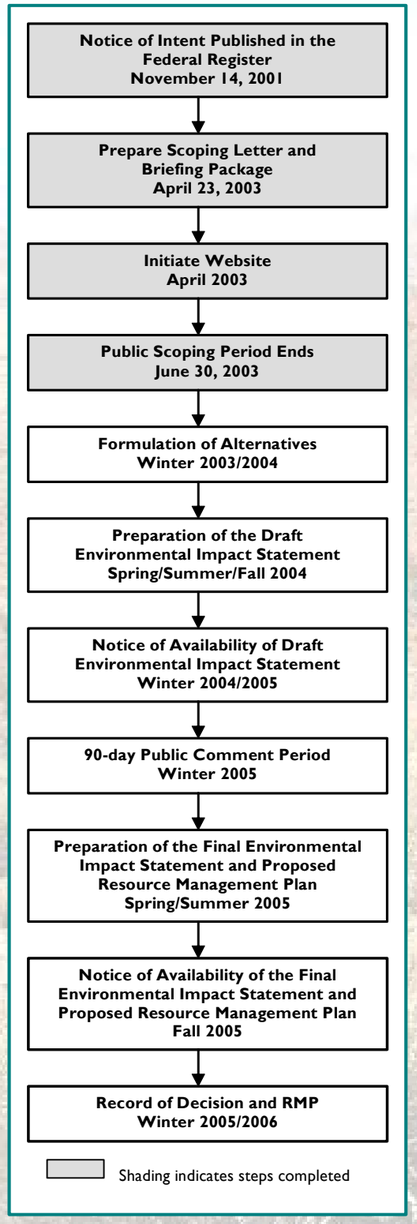
Commonly Used Acronyms

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
IDT	Interdisciplinary Team
NOI	Notice of Intent
OHV	Off Highway Vehicle
PFO	Pocatello Field Office
RMP	Resource Management Plan

TIMELINE: Where we were and where we are going



What is a "Need for Change Item"?

Need for Change Items discuss land use direction that needs to be addressed in the revised RMP. These items would establish broad scale direction to guide future land management actions for resources and uses of public land managed by the PFO. This direction serves as the basis for future actions to implement land use plan decisions on a site-specific basis. The PFO commonly classifies land use decisions into two categories: **Desired Outcomes** (goals, standards, and/or objectives) and **Allowable Uses** (the actions to achieve the identified outcomes).

An extensive review by the RMP IDT of current land management decisions/directions from the Malad Management Framework Plan (1981) and Pocatello RMP (1988) resulted in: **1)** the identification of key direction for resources/uses that could be carried forward into a revised plan and **2)** the identification of direction for resources/uses that need to be changed to address current laws, regulations, policies, or address changed conditions on the public lands managed by the PFO.

Currently the following need for change items have been identified:

- *Vegetation* – Direction is needed to identify the desired future condition of vegetation types occurring with the PFO area. This includes riparian areas and disturbed lands.
- *Special Status Species* – Direction is needed for the management of all special status species and habitat.
- *Fire Management* – Direction is needed to identify wildland fire use areas, treatment levels, and fire management restrictions. Information from the Upper Snake River District Fire, Fuels and Related Vegetation Management Plan Amendment.
- *Recreation* – Direction is needed to identify areas as "limited" or "open" depending on seasonal needs for the entire PFO area. It also suggests the need to identify the Oneida Narrows as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and that enhanced management direction is needed for the Blackfoot SRMA.
- *Lands and Realty* – Direction is needed to identify management areas or zones of public lands planned for retention or considered for disposal. Also, utility corridor needs have to be identified within the PFO area, and direction is needed for the development of alternative energy sources.
- *Minerals* – mineral management direction is needed for the Malad portion of the PFO consistent with Land Use Planning Handbook. Emphasis and a consistent approach is also needed on the management of selenium mobilizing activities.

The Purpose of Scoping

Public involvement is an integral part of revising the Pocatello RMP and preparing the EIS. Scoping has been designed as a process by which lead agencies solicit input from the public and other interested agencies on the nature and extent of issues and impacts to be addressed in the RMP revision and the methods by which they will be examined. The official scoping period began with the publication of the NOI to revise the Pocatello RMP in the *Federal Register* on November 14, 2001 and ended June 30, 2003. During the scoping period, several articles appeared in local and regional newspapers soliciting comments, a formal scoping letter with a briefing package was sent to the names on the PFO mailing list, several open house-style public meetings were held at locations throughout the planning area. In addition, an official Pocatello RMP website went on-line in April 2003 providing updates and information about the revision process, and several public agencies were invited to participate in the revision process.

How We're Using Your Comments

Upon completion of the scoping period, we analyzed your comments to identify relevant issues to address in the PFO RMP revision. After all the comments were collected and the scoping period was closed on June 30, 2003, we performed a comment analysis to organize the comments in a way that provided more clarity as to the significant issues in the planning area. After we organized the comments, we published a document called the Scoping Report, which is available for your review on our website and by request from our office.

We will be using the Scoping Report to ensure that the RMP revision and EIS address significant issues important to the people who will be affected by BLM's decisions. This report does not make decisions or set forth policies; rather, it summarizes the issues received by the BLM up to the end of the scoping period. Comments received after the end of the scoping period will be considered, as applicable, in the next steps of the planning process.

Issues Identified During the Scoping Period

During the scoping period, we received 44 comment letters via mail, email, and at the scoping meetings. Public comment analysis conducted by the RMP IDT resulted in identifying six relevant issues based on specific criteria. The six issues are: **OHV management, phosphate mining and selenium release, public access (acquiring/maintaining), recreation management, sagebrush ecosystems, and socioeconomics**. In this newsletter we discuss, in greater detail, the phosphate mining and selenium release and sagebrush ecosystems issues. We plan to discuss the other issues in newsletters to come.

Phosphate Mining and Selenium Release *How does the BLM best manage the process of mining and reclamation to ensure containment and control of hazardous substances such as selenium and other potential contaminants?* Phosphate is the largest mineral resource in the PFO area. The BLM is mandated to promote orderly and efficient mining operations which maximize recovery of mineral resources for the economic benefit of the public, while avoiding or minimizing environmental damage. Phosphate mining and processing are key components of the SE Idaho and Star Valley, Wyoming economies. Operators are required to return disturbed land back to beneficial use at the completion of mining through monitoring, reclamation and reclamation bonds.

In 1996, the BLM and other regulatory agencies became aware of selenium releases from both active and inactive phosphate mines in the region. Investigations have shown that mining of phosphate ore promotes the oxidation and increased mobility of selenium and other metals, found as naturally occurring constituents in some of the waste rock associated with phosphate ore. Elevated levels of selenium have been found in surface water, groundwater, vegetation, and in biota associated with the mining activity. Locally, these occurrences exceed some State and Federal water quality standards. Federal and State investigations are currently evaluating the nature and extent of selenium releases and their effects on grazing, recreation, wildlife and human populations with actions being taken to clean up impacted sites.

Sagebrush Ecosystems *What effects will future management of sagebrush ecosystems have on sage-grouse and sagebrush-obligate species?* Sagebrush plant communities are affected by an array of threats such as wildfire, weed invasions, conversion to agricultural land and grazing. Given the wide scale loss, fragmentation, and degradation of low elevation big sagebrush communities, the IDT recommends the RMP identify strategies to protect, improve and restore them.

Connectivity of sagebrush communities is a key component of sage-grouse habitat. Reestablishing connectivity of sagebrush communities, particularly communities occupied by sage-grouse, have long-term, benefits for sage-grouse populations. Actions are needed to ensure that there will not be a need in the future to list sage-grouse or sagebrush dependent species in Idaho as Threatened or Endangered. As such the RMP will focus on unfragmented core habitat for sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, antelope, sage-steppe obligate migratory birds, as well as gray flycatcher and other juniper dependent species.

In many instances, managing sagebrush stands by creating a "mosaic" of vegetation benefits weedy species and results in fragmentation of habitat for other native species like sage-grouse and sage-steppe obligate migratory songbirds. In the long-term fragmentation of sagebrush dependent wildlife can influence size, stability and success of wildlife populations.