

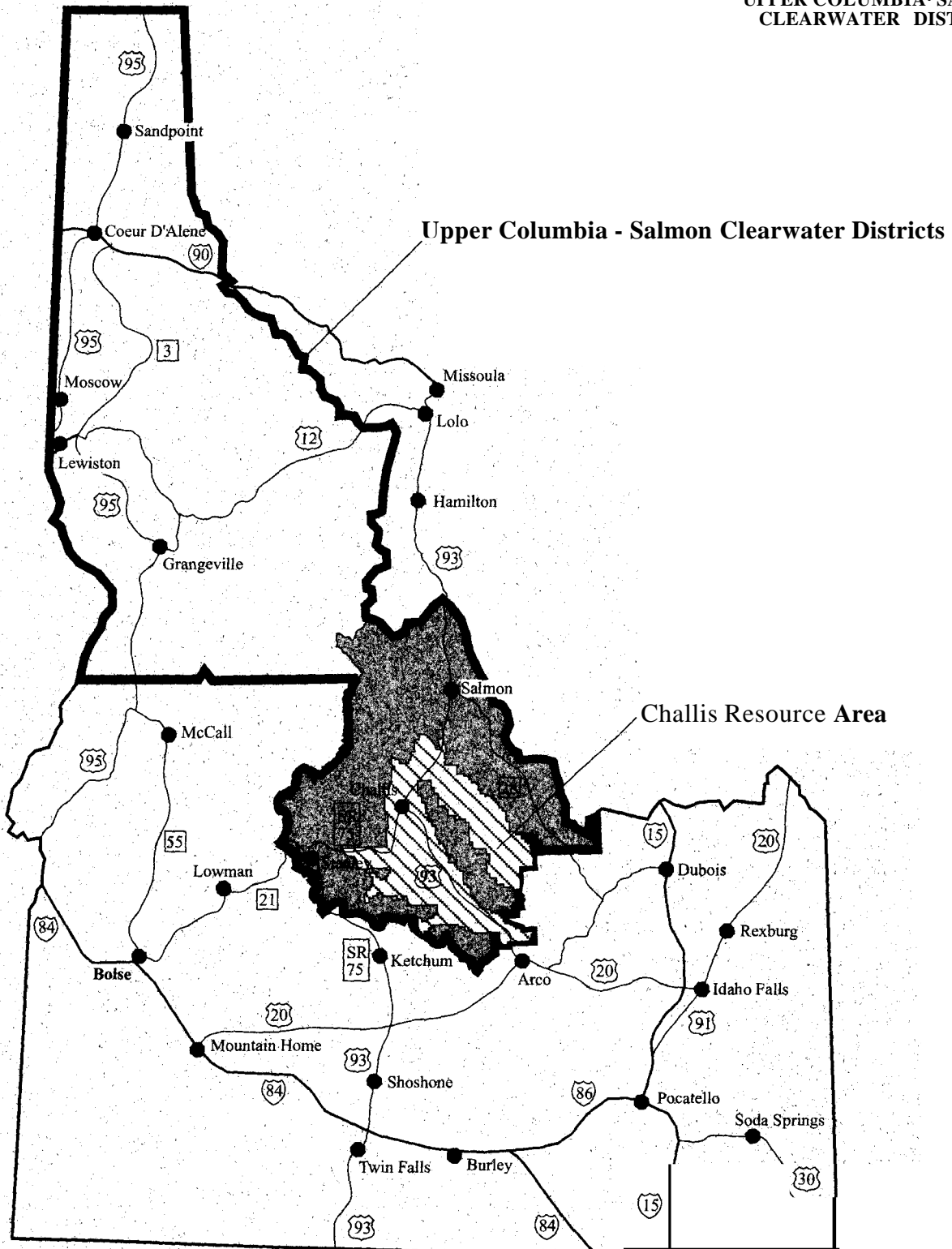
Section I

Record of Decision

for the

Challis Resource Management Plan

**CHALLIS
RESOURCE AREA**
UPPER COLUMBIA · SALMON
CLEARWATER DISTRICTS



Note: Land Ownership Status is shown on Map E.
Management Actions apply to BLM public land only.

Record of Decision for the Challis Resource Management Plan

This Record of Decision (ROD) approves the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) plan to manage the public lands within the Challis Resource Area (RA) during the next 15 to 20 years. The Challis Resource Management Plan (RMP) is based upon the Challis Proposed Resource Management Plan (PRMP) published in October 1998, as modified through internal review and in response to public protests received on the PRMP.

The Challis RMP is a general management plan which applies to approximately 792,567 acres of public lands administered by the Challis Resource Area, Upper Columbia - Salmon Clearwater Districts, BLM within Lemhi and Custer counties, Idaho (see General Location Map on facing page). The RMP contains resource condition objectives, land use allocations, and other management actions and direction needed to achieve program or multiple use goals. The Challis RMP replaces the BLM's existing land management guidance for the Challis Resource Area contained in the Ellis-Pahsimeroi Management Framework Plan (MFP) (1982), the Challis MFP (1979), and the Mackay MFP (1983). The Challis RMP also amends the portions of the Little Lost - Birch Creek MFP (1981) pertaining to management of public lands in the Donkey Hills Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) which lie within the boundaries of the Big Butte Resource Area (Idaho Falls Field Office).

Decision.

The BLM's decision is to select a modification of the Proposed RMP, with accompanying Attachments, Glossary, and Maps (see Section II), as the approved Challis RMP. The following paragraphs summarize the major management emphases of the approved RMP:

- Manage soils and vegetation to (a) ensure properly functioning watersheds, (b) reduce noxious weed infestations, (c) maintain the sustainable productivity of forest lands, and (d) provide habitat for special status plant, animal, and fish species, habitat for a natural abundance and diversity of wildlife (including stable big game populations), habitat for a wild horse herd of 185 to about 253 animals, and up to 50,911 AUMs of forage for grazing cattle, horses and sheep on 62 allotments (grazing allocations as of April 1999). Manage livestock grazing activities so goals for rangeland health and aquatic habitat condition are achieved. Manage 23,578 acres of commercial forest land (3% of the RA) for multiple uses, including timber harvest of up to 6.60 million board feet per decade.
- Manage land uses and activities within watersheds to ensure properly functioning riparian zones, fully support identified beneficial uses, and provide quality habitat for fish, wildlife, and plant communities.
- Recommend and manage two river segments (approximately 13.3 miles) as suitable for designation as Wild and Scenic Rivers. Recommend and manage three additional segments (approximately 5.3 miles) as suitable for designation only if part of a system of Wild and Scenic Rivers. Manage 10 river segments (approximately 134.3 miles) as eligible for further study.
- Designate 14 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) totaling 88,206 acres (11% of the RA), in order to highlight the following resources for management and protection: unique plant communities, petrified trees, fragile soils, crucial bighorn sheep habitat, a geological area of interest, unique riparian areas, fisheries habitat, roadless, primitive and scenic values, crucial elk habitat, and unique cultural resources. Within these ACECs, designate 9,846 acres as Research Natural Areas.

- Continue management of 140,260 acres (17.7% of the RA) as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) (38,930 acres recommended to Congress as suitable for Wilderness designation).
- Manage resources (vegetation, fisheries, wildlife) and public lands uses in a manner which fulfills the Federal government's trust responsibility to Native American tribes under treaty.
- Manage ground disturbing activities to protect paleontological and cultural resources.
- Manage land uses and activities to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the Resource Area and otherwise benefit recreation opportunities: i.e., maintain existing good air quality, improve vegetation condition and water quality, and maintain existing good visual quality by designating 88% of the Resource Area (699,925 acres) as Class I (Preservation) or Class II (Retention).
- Designate off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on almost the entire Resource Area "limited" to existing roads, vehicle ways and trails (additional restrictions apply in some areas). Close approximately 13,379 acres and 8 miles of roads/trails to off-highway vehicle (OHV) use.
- Retain approximately 729,500 acres (92%) in public ownership, while providing 63,075 acres for potential disposal. Seek to acquire additional lands having high public values.

Changes Between Proposed RMP and Approved RMP.

The Challis RMP incorporates the following changes to the PRMP, for the reasons stated below.

- (1) *Revise the statement introducing the Donkey Hills ACEC decisions #6 through 12 (PRMP, p. 32) as follows: "Donkey Hills ACEC Management ... Note: Actions #6 through 12 amend the" Wording is changed from "would amend" to "amends" to reflect that the Record of Decision implements the amendment to the Little Lost-Birch Creek MFP.*
- (2) *Revise the decisions referring to OHV management within the Maim Gulch/Germer Basin ACEC (PRMP, p. 36: ACECs, Maim Gulch/Germer Basin ACEC, #4; and p. 70: OHV Use, Goal 1, #2(b)(1)) to state that OHV use is limited to the existing road from Highway 75 to a point of closure in the NW 1/4 of Section 28, T12N, R19E. The PRMP decisions incorrectly referred to Highway 93 instead of Highway 75.*
- (3) *Revise ACECs, Maim Gulch/Germer Basin ACEC, #9 (PRMP, p. 36) as follows: "Provide a wayside along Highway 75" The PRMP decision incorrectly referred to Highway 93 instead of Highway 75.*
- (4) *Delete mention of Appendix E in the Cultural Resources, Goal 3 statement (PRMP, p. 43). Appendix materials are not duplicated in the Challis RMP. Deleting this reference to Appendix E, Item 1 does not change the meaning or intent of the goal statement.*
- (5) *Clarify Floodplain/Wetland Areas, Goal 1, #3 (PRMP, p. 48) to read as follows: "To the extent practicable, design and conduct management activities to minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of floodplains and wetlands, and to preserve and enhance their natural and beneficial*

values, in accordance with applicable Executive Orders (#11988 and 11990)." The decision in the PRMP did not appropriately reflect the language and intent of Executive Orders #11988 and 11990.

- (6) Clarify Land Tenure and Access, Goal 3, #2 (PRMP, p. 57) to read as follows: "New rights-of-way would not be considered within existing WSAs. Rights-of-way in WSAs released from wilderness review would be considered under normal BLM procedures." This revision clarifies that the BLM will honor existing approved rights-of-way within Wilderness Study Areas.
- (7) Revise the first sentence of Livestock Grazing, Goal 1, #2 (PRMP, p. 59) to read as follows: "Continue existing livestock grazing preference allocations for the short term (see Attachment 24: Grazing Management Summary, p. 142)." This statement is revised to include reference to Attachment 24 (see Section II: Challis Resource Management Plan, p. 142), which lists initial stocking levels for each allotment.
- (8) Revise Livestock Grazing, Goal 1, #3(b) (PRMP, p. 59) to read as follows: "In addition, for safety reasons, close the south half of the Highway Allotment (976 acres) to livestock grazing (see Map 27: Grazing Closures)." Add the reason for the closure to this decision, and delete this information from Livestock Grazing, Goal I, #12 (PRMP, p. 61).
- (9) Revise the knowledgeable and reasonable practices evaluation criteria in Livestock Grazing, Goal 1, #7 (PRMP, pp. 60-61) to read as follows: "... Any alternative utilization levels other than those listed above would be based on the following: (a) current scientific rationale, applicable study results, or other information which documents the biological effects of the alternative levels of use on the key species; (b)" This change is intended to more clearly state the BLM's criteria for applying knowledgeable and reasonable practices.
- (10) Clarify Livestock Grazing, Goal 1, #9 (PRMP, p. 61) and Riparian Areas, Goal 1, #8 (PRMP, p. 80) to read as follows: "Continue existing management of the Anderson Ranch riparian pasture, including provision for periodic grazing, **if** appropriate, to ensure progress" The BLM's intention was to allow, but not require, periodic grazing of the Anderson Ranch riparian pasture.
- (11) Delete the second sentence of Livestock Grazing, Goal 1, #12 (PRMP, p. 61). Reference to the Highway Allotment closure is more appropriately made in Livestock Grazing, Goal I, #3(b). The north half of the Highway Allotment will continue to be managed as a separate allotment, at least for the short term.
- (12) Delete mention of Appendix F in Livestock Grazing, Goal 2, #4 (PRMP, p. 63). Allotment categorizations are dynamic and can be revised, so it is inappropriate to link this decision to information in Appendix F.
- (13) Delete Off-highway Vehicle Use, Goal 1, #3(a)(1) and 3(b)(1) (PRMP, pp. 70-71) and Wilderness Study Areas - Management **if** Released from Wilderness Review, Goal 1, #3(a)(1) and 3(b)(1) (PRMP, pp. 91-92), to reflect that the Dry Creek Road will remain open to OHV use. Revise Map 33: OHV Use to delete the Dry Creek Road closure. The Dry Creek Road will remain open to OHV use, in conformance with an approved Forest Service right-of-way for the Dry Creek Road. Renumber OHV Use, Goal I, #3(a)(2) as #3(a)(1) and #3(b)(2) as #3(b)(1). Renumber WSAs -

Management if Released from Wilderness Review, Goal 1, #3(a)(2) as #3(a)(1), and #3(b)(2) as #3(b)(1). Revise the wording in OHV Use, Goal 1, #3(a) and #3(b) and WSAs - Management if Released from Wilderness Review, Goal 1, #3(a) and #3(b) to read as follows: "...Except for the road and trail closures stated below,...." These changes are included to (a) reorganize the decisions after deleting the portions regarding the Dry Creek Road closure and (b) clarify that both a road and trail closure will be implemented in the Jerry Peak WSA.

- (14) *Revise the knowledgeable and reasonable practices evaluation criteria in Riparian Areas, Goal 1, #4 (PRMP, p. 79) to read as follows: "...provided that the alternative practices are based on the following: (1) current scientific rationale, applicable study results, or other documentation which reasonably demonstrates that riparian improvement would result from implementing the practices; (2) ••."* This change is intended to more clearly state the BLM's criteria for applying knowledgeable and reasonable practices.
- (15) *Delete Wildlife Habitat, Goal 1, #1 (PRMP, p. 94).* This decision is redundant with the Wildlife Habitat, Goal 1 statement (PRMP, p. 94), but is misleading because it refers to Table 3-35 (PRMP, p. 316) and implies "target" management numbers. *The PRMP decisions shown as Wildlife Habitat, Goal 1, #2 through #6 (PRMP, pp. 94-95) have been renumbered in the approved RMP as #1 through #5. In addition, other RMP decisions which refer to management described under Wildlife Habitat, Goal 1 have been revised to refer to the appropriate decision number.*
- (16) *Revise Attachment 23: Beneficial Use Classifications for Drainage Segments (PRMP, pp. 159-163).* This attachment is revised to more appropriately reflect the most recent Idaho Administrative Code for Water Quality and Wastewater Treatment (IDAPA 16.01.02; March 23, 1998).
- (17) *Add Attachment 24: Grazing Management Summary (see Section 1/: Challis Resource Management Plan, p. 142).* The information in this attachment is provided to enhance implementation of the livestock grazing portion of the RMP.
- (18) *Revise the Glossary definition of knowledgeable and reasonable practices (evaluation criteria) (PRMP, p. 175) as follows: "... Any knowledgeable and reasonable practice ... would be based on the following: (1) current scientific rationale, applicable study results, or other documentation which reasonably demonstrates that improvement would result from implementing the practice; (2)"* This change is intended to more clearly state the BLM's criteria for applying knowledgeable and reasonable practices.

Alternatives Considered and Rationale for the Decision.

The Challis RMP fulfills requirements of Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, which specifies the need for a comprehensive land use plan consistent with multiple-use and sustained yield objectives. The resource condition objectives, land use allocations, and other management actions ("decisions") contained in the RMP are based upon approved planning criteria (Challis Draft RMP/EIS, BLM, May 1996, pp. 12-13) and were developed and analyzed consistent with BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1600) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500). RMP decisions address the issues and management concerns identified during scoping, and are expected to achieve all goals stated in the Plan.

In the Challis Draft RMP/EIS (May 1996) the BLM described and analyzed five alternatives which addressed identified issues and management concerns and contained a varied emphasis on commodity uses and values, non-commodity uses and values, and protection of natural values. **Alternative 1 - Existing Management**, maintained the uses and levels of resource protection which existed in the Challis Resource Area when the RMP planning process began in approximately 1991. **Alternative 2 - Preferred Alternative** balanced the protection of natural values with the need to provide commodity and non-commodity land uses on a sustained basis. **Alternative 3** emphasized commodity uses of lands within the Challis RA, including wood fiber production, forage production, and mineral development. **Alternative 4** emphasized non-commodity uses such as recreation and wildlife habitat. **Alternative 5** emphasized the maintenance, restoration, and enhancement of natural values.

The "Comparison of the Alternatives" (DRMP/EIS, pp. 36-42) indicated Alternative 5 could be an environmentally preferable alternative, eventually maintaining air quality, visual quality, water quality, soil and vegetative condition, biodiversity, fisheries, wild horse and wildlife habitat, and primitive values at near natural conditions. However, Alternative 2 was selected as the Preferred Alternative, because it proposed management to improve and sustain properly functioning resource conditions, while simultaneously considering economic needs and demands for existing or potential resource commodities and values. Changes to the Preferred Alternative which were included in the PRMP (PRMP/FEIS, p. 24) made the PRMP the environmentally preferable alternative, when one considers the human (social and economic) environment, as well as the natural environment, of the planning area.

Decisions in the Challis RMP incorporate management to monitor resource condition and trend and mitigate adverse resource impacts. All practical means to avoid or minimize environmental harm have been adopted. However, implementation of the Challis RMP may result in the following residual (unmitigated) resource impacts:

- *Cultural resources loss, disturbance, or damage may still occur in localized areas, due to (a) unauthorized collection and vandalism, or (b) land sales, transfers, or surface disturbing activities on sites which were not identified during Class III intensive inventories. RMP actions to prevent these adverse impacts include Cultural Resources, Goal I, #2, 3, 10, and 11 and Cultural Resources Standard Operating Procedure #1.*
- *Some surface disturbing activities, such as road construction or campground development, would cause an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of the soil resource on a localized basis, **when and if** these activities are proposed and implemented. Project proposals which could result in an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of the soil resource would receive further site-specific environmental analysis; appropriate mitigation to minimize adverse impacts would be proposed at the project planning level.*
- *Primitive values may decline in some portions of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), if released from wilderness review. This loss of values may be irreversible and irretrievable. Resource objectives for management of primitive recreation and biodiversity within WSAs released from wilderness review would be developed through the activity planning process (WSAs - Management if Released from Wilderness Review, Goal I, #2); appropriate mitigation to minimize adverse impacts to primitive values could be proposed at this activity planning level.*

Public Involvement.

Members of the general public and representatives of Indian tribes, organizations, public interest groups, and Federal, State and local agencies were invited to participate throughout the planning process for the Challis RMP, including the following stages of planning: review of proposed planning criteria, scoping of issues and management concerns, Wild and Scenic Rivers eligibility evaluation, review of the Challis Draft RMP/EIS, and review of the Challis Proposed RMP/Final EIS. These groups and individuals were kept informed during RMP development through mailings, public meetings, media announcements, *Federal Register* notices, personal meetings, telephone conversations, briefings, and distribution of the Wild and Scenic Rivers eligibility evaluation documents, Challis Draft RMP/EIS, and Challis Proposed RMP/Final EIS. The BLM responded in detail to comment letters on the Draft RMP/EIS, and considered public comments when revising the Preferred Alternative and preparing the Proposed RMP. The BLM also considered protests of the Proposed RMP when developing the RMP approved by this Record of Decision.

Implementation.

Implementation of the Challis RMP will begin upon signing of this Record of Decision (ROD) and public notification via a Notice of Availability published in the *Federal Register*. Some RMP decisions require immediate action and will be implemented upon signature of the ROD. Other RMP decisions do not require immediate action, but are identified for implementation sometime during the life of the RMP. Still other Plan decisions will require action only when (and if) an activity is initiated externally.

RMP implementation will occur according to an Implementation Plan developed by the Challis Resource Area Manager after this Record of Decision is signed. The Implementation Plan serves as a link between the BLM's planning and budgeting processes. Information in the Implementation Plan will help the BLM

- ensure that existing or on-going management activities and resource uses are brought into conformance with RMP decisions;
- establish priorities, time frames, and costs for implementing RMP decisions;
- develop budget proposals;
- ensure that future management actions conform with the RMP; and
- provide a basis for tracking and documenting progress in RMP implementation.

The Challis RMP will be monitored and evaluated on an on-going basis in order to determine the effectiveness of the RMP and the need for Plan maintenance, revision, or amendment as provided for in 43 CFR 1610.4-9 and 1610.5-4 through 5-6.



Martha G. Hahn

Idaho State Director, Bureau of Land Management

7.29.99

Date