

**PREPARATION PLAN ANALYSIS
FOR THE LITTLE SNAKE FIELD OFFICE
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN REVISION**

RECOMMENDED:

John Husband, Field Manager

Date:

APPROVED:

Ron Wenker, Colorado State Director

Date:

Table of Contents

I. Introduction and Background.....	3
A. Planning Area Description.....	3
B. Little Snake Resource Management Plan (RMP).....	3
C. Background.....	4
D. Purpose of this Preparatory Plan Analysis.....	5
E. Need for the Revision of the RMP.....	6
F. Implementing Consensus-based Management throughout the Revision Process.....	6
G. Applying Adaptive Management into the Revision Process.....	9
II. Anticipated Planning Issues and Management Concerns.....	14
Issue 1: Upland Management.....	15
Issue 2: Riparian Management.....	16
Issue 3: Energy and Minerals.....	17
Issue 4: Special Management Areas.....	18
Issue 5: Recreation Management.....	18
Issue 6: Roads and Travel Management.....	19
Issue 7: Cultural Resources.....	20
Issue 8: Native American Concerns.....	21
Issue 9: Wildlife.....	21
Issue 10: Socio-Economic Values.....	22
Issue 11: Land and Realty.....	22
Issue 12: Water Quality.....	23
III. Preliminary Planning Criteria.....	23
IV. Data and GIS Needs.....	25
V. Participants in the Process.....	26
VI. Format and Process for the Plan.....	27
A. <u>General Steps and Format</u>	27
B. <u>Selecting a Neutral to Facilitate the Collaborative Process</u>	27
C. <u>Design a Collaboration Strategy</u>	27
D. <u>Design a Statement of Work</u>	28
E. <u>Perform Community Assessment/Scoping</u>	28
F. <u>Prepare the Management Situation Analysis (MSA)</u>	29
G. <u>Develop Goals and Desired Outcomes</u>	29
H. <u>Alternative Formulation</u>	29
I. <u>Effects Analysis/Environmental Consequences</u>	30
J. <u>Review of the Plan</u>	30
K. <u>Form of Input from Reviewers</u>	30
VII. Plan Preparation Schedule.....	30
VIII. Public Participation Process.....	31

I. Introduction and Background

A. Planning Area Description

The Little Snake Field Office (LSFO) encompasses approximately 3,258,000 acres of federal, state and private lands in Moffat, Routt & Rio Blanco Counties. The area is bordered on the north by the state of Wyoming; on the west by Dinosaur National Monument and the state of Utah; on the south by the White River Field Office, the Routt National Forest and the White River National Forest; and on the east by Routt National Forest.

Of the total area, 1.3 million acres (40 percent) are BLM-administered public lands and 1.1 million acres of the private and state lands are underlain by federally owned minerals. Fifty-three percent is privately owned, and 7 percent is administered by the state of Colorado.

Table 1: LSFO-managed Surface Acres in Moffat, Routt, and Rio Blanco Counties

County	Approximate total acres in county	LSFO-managed surface acres	% of county total managed by LSFO
Moffat	3,025,000	1,285,248	42.5%
Routt	1,512,000	59,374	3.9%
Rio Blanco	2,061,000	4,318	0.2%
Total Acreage:	6,598,000	1,348,940	20.4%

B. Little Snake Resource Management Plan (RMP)

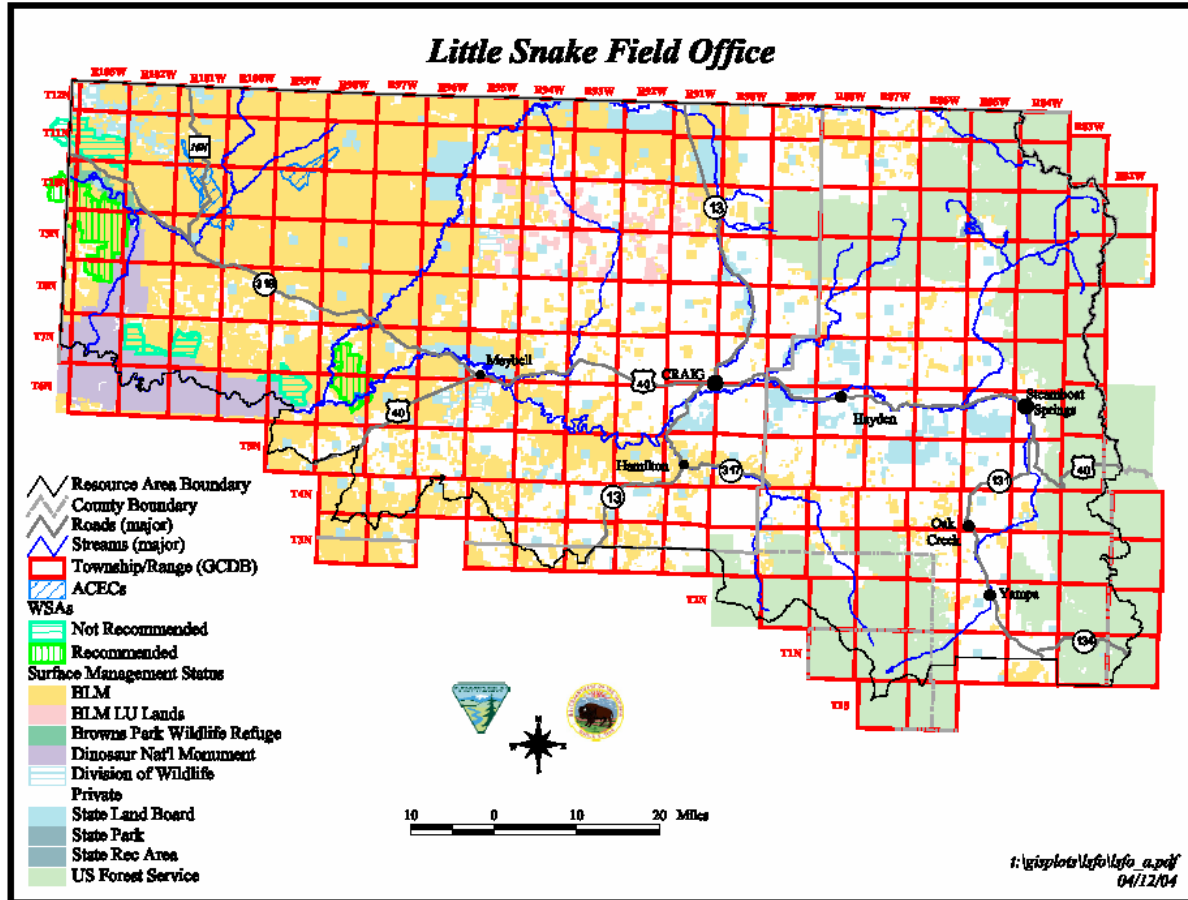
The Little Snake Resource Management Plan (RMP) was approved in April, 1989. Since being approved, the RMP has been amended three times.

1991 – Amendment for Oil and Gas Leasing and Development

1996 – Amendment for Black-Footed Ferret Reintroduction

1997 – Amendment for Colorado Land Health Standards

Map of the Little Snake Field Office



C. Background

The LSFO was budgeted \$452,000 for FY2004 to initiate a RMP amendment for Vermillion Basin. During the months following the allocation of FY2004 funds for a Vermillion Basin plan amendment, the LSFO again explored the option of initiating a plan amendment for this area. Moffat County and several environmental organizations preferred that the BLM undergo a RMP revision for the entire resource area to address other issues outside of Vermillion Basin. The LSFO was scheduled to initiate a revision in 2007.

In February, 2004, the LSFO proposed to undertake a RMP revision for the LSFO to demonstrate active engagement of the community in a collaborative planning effort. The revision would also seek to incorporate adaptive management decision making and outcome-based management where appropriate during the public scoping process.

D. Purpose of this Preparatory Plan Analysis

The purpose of this Preparatory Plan is to:

1. Identify anticipated planning issues and management concerns;
2. Identify preliminary planning criteria and outstanding questions that must be addressed to

support management decisions;

3. Identify a standard document format (documents, maps, tables, figures, photographs, etc.) for the internal and external presentation of the process, information, and decisions, including presentation on the internet;
4. Identify information or data needed to resolve or address identified issues, management concerns, planning criteria and outstanding questions or to perform the requisite analysis;
5. Identify available data and data collection/format standards employed, and provide an explanation of how the data supports the plan itself, and how the data addresses the planning requirements and addresses anticipated issues or outstanding questions;
6. Identify any known or anticipated data gaps and provide an explanation of why the data is needed to support the plan itself, how the data supports the planning requirements and how the data address anticipated issues or outstanding questions;
7. Establish a data inventory and collection activity plan which include data standards, work-month costs, staffing and skill requirements, and estimated time-frames needed to establish an integrated, automated geospatial database for filling in data gaps;
8. Establish a communication process for direct communication with the public and to ensure greater public involvement in the planning process and to ensure wide distribution of relevant information;
9. Establish a work plan which identifies the staffing and technology needs to support public involvement and communication through use of the internet; and
10. Identify the analytical process required to answer or address outstanding questions, issues or concerns.

In addition to addressing the items above, this prep-plan will also lay-out the procedures for incorporating consensus-based management and collaborative adaptive management practices throughout the revision process. The up-front community assessment will help refine the application of the above procedures along with how the public and the NWCOS will participate throughout the revision process. Thus, the planning process will require some flexibility to account for the lack of formal Bureau guidance on incorporating consensus-based management and collaborative adaptive management practices.

E. Need for the Revision of the RMP

Section 202(a) of FLPMA as amended (43 USC 1701 et seq.) requires the Secretary of Interior to develop, maintain, and when appropriate, revise land use plans with public involvement, which provide for the use of public lands by tracts or areas.

There are a number of new issues that have arisen over the years which were not included in the previous RMP and will need to be addressed in the revision. A comprehensive list of issues is detailed in section **II: Anticipated Planning Issues and Management Concerns**. Major issues include:

- Recent developments in the management of several wildlife species and their habitats, including white-tailed prairie dog, black-footed ferret, Canadian lynx, sage grouse, and grey wolf.

- Wilderness characteristics identified in a BLM wilderness inventory in 2001, and in a public wilderness proposal, for the Vermillion Basin area.
- The appropriate management of energy and mineral resources, including identifying areas where mineral development should be recognized as being the highest and best use, minimizing resource conflicts, and determining types of activities or practices that are suitable.
- The creation of the Moffat County Land Use Plan in 2001. This document states the Moffat County's positions on the many public land issues in the region and includes recommended action steps to support Moffat County's positions.
- Increased OHV and non-motorized visitation over the years in areas such as Sand Wash Basin, leading to increased concerns about resource protection and conflicting uses.
- Appropriate livestock grazing levels, areas, and practices required to sustain resource values while maintaining stable watersheds and the continued production of forage.
- The appropriate balance between providing for cultural site preservation or conservation and recreational enjoyment, and allowing other activities that can affect the use of the cultural site and its setting, such as fire, mining, oil and gas extraction, grazing, and dispersed recreation.
- Conducting the Wild and Scenic Eligibility and Suitability studies on river segments on the Yampa River and Little Snake River.

F. Implementing Consensus-based Management throughout the Revision Process

The Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) issued Environmental Statement Memorandum No. ESM03-7 titled "Procedures for Implementing Consensus-Based Management in Agency Planning and Operations." The memorandum focused on methods to incorporate consensus-based management throughout the planning and NEPA process in order to achieve agreement from diverse interests on goals, purposes, and needs of the Bureau plan.

Specifically, the memorandum detailed the following five procedures where consensus-based management could be applied:

1). *"Bureaus should establish a network of communication with diverse interest groups that represent the community affected by a proposed project. Community-based training that precedes the NEPA process is useful in developing the network of communication. Training will also allow the participants the opportunity to understand the NEPA process and their roles. This also provides a focal point for assembling the diverse interest group that make-up the relevant community."*

The Northwest Colorado Stewardship (NWCOS), an independent community-centered stewardship group, was established in April 2003 with the mission of fostering a working relationship between a diverse range of interests and empowering the affected public with greater input to the decision making process for federal land management. In May, 2003, the NWCOS attended the Partnership Series workshop entitled, "Community-Based Stewardship and Ecosystems: Ensuring a Healthy Environment." This course provided the group with the concept of community-based collaboration, and from the workshop the group began to plan an on-the-ground project to build trust and practice collaboration. The NWCOS decided to initiate a fire

management project on an allotment in the LSFO. The Nature Conservancy proposed to facilitate the Fire Learning Network, which consists of a series of workshops where local participants help develop a fire management plan to meet collective landscape-scale objectives on the private and public lands in the project area. The workshop served as an excellent opportunity for the group to work together and enhance the collaborative decision making process. Active participants in the NWCOS include Moffat County and a wide variety of interested groups and individuals. Participation in NWCOS is wide open to anyone interested.

In February 2004, the RMP revision proposal was brought before the NWCOS by the LSFO. In March of 2004, the group decided it would like to participate in the revision process. In response to the NWCOS' willingness to participate in the process, the LSFO has initiated the following tasks:

a). The LSFO and the NWCOS has sought the assistance of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (USIECR) to develop a Collaboration Strategy to design ways in which the NWCOS can assist the BLM throughout the revision process in a collaborative manner, yet within the limits of existing laws and regulations. A professional team of facilitators/conflict mediators from the Keystone Center were sub-contracted through the USIECR in May, 2004. NWCOS involvement in the selection of this facilitator was critical in hiring a team that fits well and is respected by the community. This team is referred to as the "community facilitators" throughout this preparatory plan.

As part of the first task, the BLM and NWCOS requested the assistance of Kristi Parker Celico, of the Keystone Center, to resolve internal organizational issues and draft the organizational Protocols of the group. The Protocols establish NWCOS as a community group independent of BLM or any agency. The Protocols, which were finalized by the group on August 18, 2004, contain the background of NWCOS, and the mission, goals, principals and ground rules the group will abide by. The Protocols also state that NWCOS will be open to any member of the public, NWCOS will actively encourage a balanced and diverse membership, and will ensure all documents available to the public. The intent of NWCOS is to make all substantive decisions by consensus. In the rare instance that NWCOS cannot achieve consensus on an issue, NWCOS will write up a detailed summary of points of agreement and disagreement instead. Given the transparent nature of the NWCOS process, such a summary would include which parties or interests agreed or disagreed. Dissenters will be asked to participate in the development of this summary. NWCOS will be lead by a balanced Planning Committee of three members, with one representative from a resource user interest, one from an environmental or cultural interest, and one from the public-at-large.

As part of the second task, the BLM requested assistance in drafting a Collaboration Strategy outlining the role of the community group in the revision process. The BLM has established sideboards to participation, including telling NWCOS where participation will be off limits. The Collaboration Strategy will guide the group in prioritizing their involvement, focusing their time and effort on the tasks which provide BLM with the most meaningful public input, such as the up-front community assessment and the community vision process.

BLM has worked closely with the Regional Solicitors in finding an appropriate way to address FACA while still allowing NWCOS to retain principals important to the group, such as open membership and consensus-based decision making. In an effort to ensure that BLM will not direct NWCOS efforts, agendas, and decisions, the BLM will hire a contractor to manage the group. The GSA FACA regulations at CFR § 102-3.40(d) specifically exempt from FACA groups that are managed not by a federal agency, but by contractors. Therefore, a federal agency will comply with FACA when a group is organized and managed by a third party that provides council to an agency. The Keystone Center will act as that contractor. The NWCOS Planning Committee or the Keystone Center will set NWCOS' agenda, schedules meetings, and presides over the meetings, not BLM. The BLM and all attorneys involved in this discussion feel the Contractor Exemption will meet BLM and NWCOS short-term needs.

The long-term goal is for NWCOS to become a stand-alone group, without the assistance of a facilitator. The Keystone Center is currently building the capacity within NWCOS to manage itself. After the departure of Keystone, NWCOS will be able to call meetings, set agendas, and operate independently.

b). The LSFO arranged for the Bureau's National Training Center (NTC) to conduct a NEPA course titled "Place-based NEPA: Linking Communities to the Process" in May 2004. The goal of the course was to provide the NWCOS and community members with up-front training on the Bureau's NEPA and Planning process, and providing the community with ideas of how they can fit into the planning process. The meeting was well attended by NWCOS participants and there was a lot of positive feedback about this workshop.

2). *"Bureaus should initiate the scoping process with full and direct involvement by the community, identifying and evaluation issues and impacts of concern relating to the project or activity. This applies to any NEPA compliance document."*

The LSFO is investing heavily in community participation in the beginning stages in order to obtain community buy-in into the plan up front. Disengaged communities often result in litigation, political posturing, and back-door maneuvers which are not constructive to the agency or the public. As part of the initial assessment, the community will help define how they participate throughout the planning process, and not just in the traditional public participation stages, such as formal scoping. Cooperating agencies are provided by law a special role and will be involved throughout the planning process.

3). *"When feasible and practicable, one alternative evaluated in the NEPA analysis should be the community alternative if one exists."*

4). *"When feasible and practicable, the community alternative should be designated as the Bureau's preferred alternative in the NEPA process, so long as a consensus exists within the community for support of that alternative. This designation is also subject to statutory, regulatory and policy constraints. For the purpose of designating the community alternative as the preferred alternative, consensus exists when one or both of the following two conditions hold: (1) no objections to the alternative that would undermine or nullify the action under*

consideration, or (2) in the judgment of the Bureau decision maker, the community alternative clearly enjoys the broad support of a fair and representative cross-section of the community.”

The LSFO anticipates the participation of the Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council (NWRAC), the community, and a representative community group (NWCOS) in developing a range of alternatives. The assessment described above will assist the BLM in determining how NWCOS will participate in the alternative development.

Central to the process of developing alternatives is the concept of a “community vision.” This is a powerful means for the community to come to a consensus about how they envision the future conditions of public lands, and how to realize that vision. This vision will serve as an important foundation for other collaborative activities later in the process, such as developing goals and desired outcomes and collaborative alternative formulation. Coming to a consensus on a community vision may be the easiest task, since even opposing interests can agree on broad missions, such as a healthy ecosystem, vibrant local economy, etc. Using this community vision and the strategic goals and strategies from the DOI Strategic Plan as a guide, the BLM, with input from NWCOS and cooperating agencies, will formulate goals and desired outcomes. This step will most likely be more contentious than the developing a community vision, so it is important that there is a community consensus already in place, which the group can work from. Likewise, when the time comes for collaborative alternative formulation, the community and the BLM now have two foundations in place to guide this potentially divisive task. Implementing Consensus-based Management by this process will allow the community to build on previous agreements.

5). *“Bureaus should use various dispute resolution processes as necessary.”*

The LSFO and the NWCOS has sought the assistance of the USIECR to provide initial facilitation skills to the revision process. The LSFO has also planned to seek the assistance of a facilitator throughout the planning process. The specific tasks of the community facilitators are detailed in Section VI: Format and Process for the Plan.

G. Applying Adaptive Management into the Revision Process

A key component of incorporating consensus-based management into the Bureau’s planning and NEPA process is to integrate Adaptive Management (AM) practices. AM is particularly appropriate for complex processes or where impacts are uncertain. It is a process where interested publics participate in every aspect of the planning process from before scoping, to determination of alternatives, through implementation. The Bureau needs to understand community goals, and where we can align our goals (a shared vision), engage in joint problem solving and implementation.

The OEPC recently issued ESM03-6 providing initial guidance to all Interior agencies on implementing AM practices in NEPA. In ESM03-6, AM is defined as:

“a system of management practices based on clearly identified outcomes, monitoring to determine if management actions are meeting outcomes, and if not facilitating

management changes that will best ensure that outcomes are met or to re-evaluate the outcomes.”

The Bureau is in the process of developing policies and procedures to integrate AM into the NEPA and planning processes. Until formal policies and procedure are in place, the LSFO will be using the following “filter” at specific steps of the revision process to determine when AM should be employed.

1). AM Filter

AM decision-making should be limited to those situations where **all of the following conditions are met**. Where all of these conditions are not met, proposed decisions should be changed, reconsidered or modified to satisfy traditional planning requirements to most effectively manage the public lands.

- a). The decision is outcome/performance based and defined by performance standards.
 - Outcome or performance based decisions focus on the desired outcome rather than the means to achieving the outcome. Since an outcome or performance based decision might be subject to varying interpretations, to be meaningful, it must also contain performance standards which define how and when the outcome is considered achieved.
 - If the decisions cannot be written as an outcome or performance based decision with clearly defined and measurable performance standards, then AM should not be employed.
- b). The actions to achieve the outcome can be adapted based upon monitoring or other new information.
 - If there are not alternative actions to achieve the outcome based plan decision, then AM should not be employed.
- c). The effects of the action are unknown or uncertain due to incomplete information about resource conditions or development scenarios or potentially changing or new practices and treatments.
- d). There are firm funding and workload priority commitments to conduct monitoring.
 - Effective implementation of AM is heavily dependent upon a long-term commitment to detailed monitoring. Without monitoring of performance standards, performance based decisions are meaningless. AM should not be employed without defining how those commitments will be honored. Absent funding and resources to honor the monitoring commitment, proposed decisions should be changed, reconsidered or modified; or plan decisions should be written with traditional prescriptive decisions as a fallback to most effectively manage the BLM-administered public lands.
- e). The land use plan decisions control the outcome.

- AM should only be considered in situations where management actions resulting from the land use plan decisions have effective control over the outcome.
- For example, in the situation where BLM manages a small acreage surrounded by private land and the plan applies only to the BLM-administered public lands, the management actions on the private lands more than likely have a controlling influence on the outcome on the public lands. Therefore, AM should not be employed.

2). Applying AM to Steps of the Revision Process.

OEPC's ESM03-6 also provided guidance on the procedures to implement AM practices. The following are steps of the revision process where AM will be employed.

a). Community Assessment (Pre-Scoping)

- The Collaboration Strategy will design an effective role for NWCOS and collaborative public involvement strategy. During development of the Collaboration Strategy, BLM will introduce the collaborative AM concept and process to the larger community. The broader community will then work with the BLM in brainstorming how collaborative AM could fit into the planning process and the RMP/EIS.

b). Scoping

- OEPC ESM03-6 states: *"In carrying out initial public participation in the NEPA evaluation process, bureaus should strive to ensure public input into and understanding of the principles of adaptive management."*
- Consideration of AM will begin at the scoping stage. The public will be made aware of the possible use of AM in the revision process. This will provide the public the opportunity to identify issues and outcomes and possibly suggest AM applications.
- The AM filter will be used in the scoping process, both as an educational tool and as a way to possibly rule out the use of AM in some cases.

c). Alternative Development

- 40 CFR 1502.22 states *"As part of the NEPA evaluation process, bureaus should make a determination of environmental effects of a project and identify the mitigation needs along with other permitting and regulatory requirements. The NEPA analysis should also indicate where data are lacking and uncertainty exists with respect to the intended outcomes and the significance of this lack."*
- Further application of the AM filter will be used to determine which plan decisions or desired outcomes (goals, standards, and objectives) lend themselves to AM decision-

making. If, after the application of the filter criteria, it appears that AM is the appropriate approach, the plan and supporting EIS documentation will reflect that choice.

- A monitoring/implementation plan will be prepared as part of the revision. The plan will lay out methodologies, protocols, funding and timeframes that will be employed to gather data necessary to evaluate if the outcome is being achieved.
- The proposed plan will identify potential decisions as desired outcomes with clearly defined, measurable performance standards defining those outcomes. The plan will also identify the indicators that will be used to evaluate the performance standards.
- Included in the range of potential actions for each adaptive management decision, a “fallback” decision will be prepared, which would be expected to achieve the outcome. These fallback decisions will apply if unforeseen circumstances arise, such as lack of data or funding, which would make it impossible or unreasonable to apply adaptive management.

d). Estimation of Effects of Alternatives

- OEPC ESM03-6 states: *“Monitoring designed for adaptive management must be able to result in appropriate adjustments in project activities as the project is constructed and planned mitigation is installed. This monitoring needs to be built into the project and considered in the NEPA analysis and documentation.”*
- The NEPA documentation will analyze the impacts of a range of actions to achieve the outcomes and identify mitigation measures to ensure that the actions achieve the outcomes. In the case of potentially conflicting outcomes, the plan must identify, and the NEPA document must analyze, a process for resolution of those conflicts.
- In addition, the plan will identify, and the EIS will analyze, the post decision responses, “if this, then what”, related to monitoring observations. The plan will describe the process that will be employed to change or modify initial actions to achieve outcomes if evaluation of monitoring data indicates a need for change. It will identify the continuing role of the public in the post decision AM process and identify factors for determining when additional review is needed.

e). Plan Approval

- The RMP Record of Decision (ROD) will identify the outcome or performance based decision and performance standards defining the outcome. Management actions addressed in the plan and analyzed in the EIS to achieve that outcome will be implemented.

f). Plan Monitoring

- The BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-9) require monitoring of RMPs on a continual basis with formal evaluations conducted at periodic intervals.
- OEPC ESM-03-6 states: *“Bureaus should maintain open channels of information to the public and affected regulatory and permitting agencies during the application of adaptive management, including transparency of the monitoring process that precedes adaptive management and the decision-making process that implements it. This involves: (a) identifying indicators of change, (b) assessing monitoring activities for accuracy and usefulness, and (c) making changes in tactics, activities and/or strategies.”*
- After implementation of the management actions designed to achieve the outcomes has occurred, monitoring in accordance with the identified monitoring plan will be conducted.
- Monitoring data will be collected, analyzed and interpreted as prescribed in the monitoring plan and a report prepared. Volunteers, members of the NWCOS, or other public land users may provide additional monitoring information.
- Communication with the public during the monitoring phase, including public disclosure of the monitoring results, will be in accordance with the provisions prescribed in the monitoring plan.

g). Evaluation

- After the appropriate monitoring as prescribed in the monitoring plan, the monitoring data is evaluated against the performance standards established in the plan.
- Communication with the public during the evaluation phase will occur in accordance with the monitoring plan.
- Questions that will need to be answered include: Were thresholds exceeded? Is the outcome being achieved? Is adaptive management triggered? What is the appropriate action to take to achieve the outcome? Was that action analyzed in previous NEPA? Is supplemental NEPA required?

h). Adapt

- OEPC ESM03-6 states: *“Bureaus should provide post-activity opportunity for public and affected outside agency review of adaptive management practices, including practices that were exceptions to any resource management plans or that had permitting and other regulatory requirements not satisfied by prior coordination.”*
- If evaluation of the monitoring data demonstrates that the performance standards are not being met and outcome not achieved, a change or modification in management actions may be warranted.

- In cases where the evaluation of monitoring data indicates the need for change of an outcome-based decision, this would require re-initiation of the planning and NEPA process.
- In cases where the evaluation of the monitoring data shows that the outcome-based decision is still valid, but that the outcome as defined by the performance measures is not being achieved, a change or modification to the management action would be needed. The degree in which the possible changes have been analyzed in the original RMP/EIS, would determine if additional NEPA would be required.

This proposal to initiate a community-based adaptive management plan should in no way be interpreted as an effort by the Bureau to transfer decision making authority. It is as an effort to better engage communities and cooperating agencies in decisions that affect the health and well being of their communities and landscapes they value and depend on for economic viability as well as recreational and aesthetic purposes.

II. Anticipated Planning Issues and Management Concerns

Preliminary issues and management concerns have been surfaced internally by BLM personnel, identified by BLM and other agencies at meetings, and/or brought up by individuals and user groups by way of phone calls, e-mails, letters, and past meetings concerning proposed management of public lands. They represent BLM expectations to date as to what challenges exist with current management. Planning issues and management concerns are defined as:

A planning issue is a matter of controversy or dispute over resource management activities or land use that is well defined or topically discrete and entails alternatives between which to choose. This definition suggests that one entity or more is interested in a resource on federal land, that each entity may have different values for the resource, and that there are different ways (alternatives) in which to resolve the competition or demand.

Management concerns are topics or points of dispute that involve a resource management activity or land use. While some concerns overlap issues, a management concern is generally more important to an individual or a few individuals, as opposed to a planning issue which has a more widespread point of conflict. Addressing management concerns in the Plan/EIS help ensure a comprehensive examination of federal land use management. Management concerns will be modified as the planning process continues. They will usually not be addressed as thoroughly as an issue.

A list of the major issues which may be addressed in the Plan is listed below. This list is not comprehensive, but names the major issues currently facing the LSFO. The issues will be addressed in some manner in the RMP revision. Some may be addressed through prescribing management actions, while others may be addressed as conditions or outcomes to be achieved through the adaptive management framework at the landscape level.

Issue 1: Upland Management

The vegetation on upland range provides the foundation for many uses of resources on public land. Structurally diverse plant communities provide habitat for wildlife as well as forage for domestic animals. A healthy cover of perennial vegetation stabilizes the soil, increases infiltration of precipitation, slows surface runoff, prevents erosion, provides clean water to adjacent streams, and enhances the visual quality of public land. Concern has been expressed that the resource uses may affect the natural function and condition of upland communities.

Questions to Address:

- How will livestock grazing be managed to sustain resource values while maintaining stable watersheds and the continued production of forage?
- What are the areas of highest priority for protecting, maintaining, and restoring sage-grouse habitat?
- What is the importance of the planning area to habitat for sagebrush-obligate species from a regional perspective?
- Upon review, what areas previously excluded from grazing could be grazed, and under what circumstances? Are there areas where, or situations when, grazing should be excluded? Should there be a grazing rest on vegetative treatments?
- What practices will be authorized and implemented to provide adequate habitat and forage for wildlife while maintaining other uses and values of public land resources?
- What grazing practices and other upland practices are necessary to protect T&E species? What about sensitive resource values such as sensitive plants and Special Status species?
- How much grazing should be allowed? What types of grazing systems and practices should be used for which classes of livestock? Should the BLM adjust grazing capacities to fit with ESI data?
- Are the current allotment boundaries suitable? Do the allotments need to be updated? How will the BLM deal with allotments that cross state lines and unallotted parcels? Will the BLM utilize reserve common allotments? Should the BLM reexamine M, I, C classifications?
- What are the visual considerations relating to upland conditions, and how will the BLM's Visual Resource Management (VRM) play a role? How will the BLM's Visual Resource Management (VRM) inventory be updated and what role will it play in resource management?
- What indicators will be used to identify levels of wild horse use compatible with sustaining a thriving, natural ecological balance? What is the appropriate management level (AML)? Is the current AML of the Sand Wash Basin HMA appropriate?
- What new and existing rangeland projects are needed to improve rangeland resource values? What are appropriate standards for range improvements?
- How should the BLM prioritize implementation of management practices to maintain desired future conditions and improve undesirable conditions where feasible? Are there disturbed areas where BLM should look into reseeding/reclamation?

- How will noxious weeds and other pests, including Mormon Crickets, be managed in these areas?
- How will OHV use be managed in upland areas to avoid soil erosion problems and conflict with other resources?
- Is the current Fire Management Plan compatible with upland management objectives? What will be the criteria for implementing fuel treatments to improve upland and riparian condition?
- How will the BLM maintain or improve forest and woodland communities, and how will woodlands be managed to maintain or improve rangeland and wildlife habitat?
- Are the current strategies for protecting cultural resources in grazing allotments working? How can BLM more efficiently carry out its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for grazing permit renewals?

Issue 2: Riparian Areas

Riparian areas, along stream and river corridors, are among the most productive and ecologically valuable resources. Riparian areas attract and concentrate populations of area mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, provide habitat for diverse vegetation communities not found elsewhere in the area, and help protect water quality by filtering sediments and protecting banks from erosion. Riparian areas, however, are affected by uses such as foot and hoof trampling, improperly managed OHV use, removal of natural vegetation, and other surface disturbances which can cause bank disturbance, destabilization of stream channels, increased erosion and siltation, disruption to riparian-dependent plants and wildlife, and degradation of water quality.

Questions to Address:

- How will riparian vegetation communities be managed to improve or maintain ecological condition, species diversity, bank stability, and the timing of watershed discharge while providing for resource uses such as grazing, recreation, water development, mineral exploration and development, and timber harvest?
- Upon review, what areas previously excluded from grazing could be grazed, and under what circumstances? Are there areas where, or situations when, grazing should be excluded? Are there areas where riparian restoration is needed?
- How will noxious weeds and other pests be managed in riparian areas?
- How will riparian systems be managed to improve or maintain habitat quality for fish, wildlife, plants, and invertebrates?
- How will management on riparian areas classified as "functioning-at-risk, downward trend" or "non-functional" be changed in those cases where management changes can lead to improvements in riparian conditions?
- How does increasing OHV use in "open" designated areas impact vegetative and riparian resources, and at what level of use would open areas need to be restricted to protect these resources?

Issue 3: Energy and Minerals

The planning area contains known deposits of coal, oil and gas, bituminous sandstone, gold, rare-earth elements, uranium, copper, lead, zinc, silver, sand, and gravel. Based on known occurrences and/or known favorable geologic relationships, the area has the potential for other significant deposits of these commodities, as well as other mineral resources, including base and precious metals, oil shale and associated commodities, geothermal energy, zeolites, construction stone, and clays.

Questions to Address:

- What lease stipulations and Conditions of Approval are appropriate on oil and gas exploration and development to protect the natural resources?
- Are existing lease stipulations appropriate given the current conditions?
- Are there areas where mineral development should be recognized as being the highest and best use?
- How will energy and mineral development, including pipelines and other infrastructure, be managed to minimize resource conflicts? Are there public lands that should be withdrawn from mineral entry because of conflicts with other public land uses? What types of activities or practices are suitable?
- How should the cumulative impacts of oil and gas development be addressed?
- Are there areas where some types of energy and mineral development should be restricted or prohibited?
- How can the RMP best protect existing mineral rights?
- What are the impacts and other pertinent issues surrounding access to oil and gas sites?
- How will the required Coal-bed Methane (CBM) Resource Assessment and development fit into the plan revision?
- What are the potential conflicts between coal development and CBM development?
- What are the pertinent issues surrounding split-estate lands and impacts to surface owners? What can be done to resolve these issues?
- What should the BLM do to protect fragile soils? Should provisions to protect them be included in NSOs?
- What are the monetary impacts to the oil and gas and industry from lease stipulations and conditions of approvals for APDs? Will the increased cost stifle exploration and development of the resource within the LSFO area?
- How much of the oil and gas resources will be left in the ground as a result of severe mitigation measures or to lands being withdrawn from oil and gas leasing?
- What are the visual considerations relating to management of energy and mineral resources, and how will the BLM's VRM play a role?
- What should the BLM do to protect sub-surface water quality?
- How should recreational rock collecting be managed?
- What reclamation practices will be implemented following mineral development activities?
- How will changes in resource use and management practices affect the economic stability of small rural communities in Northwest Colorado?

- How should wind energy resource development potential be incorporated into the revision process?
- Are cultural resources being adequately considered during the leasing process? How will LSFO implement the APD process improvements identified for cultural resources (See WO IM No 2003-147)

Issue 4: Special Management Areas

Land use plan decisions may include establishing goals and objectives that describe the desired future condition of the land and resources, desired recreation activities, recreation experiences and other benefit opportunities and outcomes, recreation setting character, and allowable uses. Plans may also identify the management actions necessary to achieve the intended goals and objectives, including the conditions of use that would be attached to permits, leases, and other authorizations to avoid or minimize impacts to the affected natural, biological, and cultural resources and other land uses. Land designated and managed for unique or significant features or values include:

- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), including possible Research Natural Areas or Outstanding Natural Areas as types of ACECs.
- Existing Wilderness Study Area (WSA)
- Eligible river segments suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Questions to Address:

- Are there areas or sites in the planning area that warrant special designations to protect unique or special values? If so, where are they located, and what are their values?
- How will the LSFO River Wild and Scenic Wild and Scenic River Study be completed (preliminary eligibility and classification have been done and suitability study is still required). Should the LSFO recommend any of its waterways for National Wild and Scenic River System designation? What management is appropriate for public land on waterway segments under study?
- Are there any management actions beyond the Interim Management Guidelines needed to prevent unnecessary and undue degradation of wilderness characteristics in the existing WSAs. If so, what are they?
- What management actions, if any, should be taken to protect possible wilderness characteristics in public wilderness proposals in the planning area?
- Have the past management actions been effective in protecting the prehistoric rock art in the Irish Canyon ACEC?
- How will the BLM evaluate ACECs that are nominated by the public?

Issue 5: Recreation Management

Recreational activities occur throughout the area and include motorized and non-motorized vehicle touring, big and small game hunting, backpacking, horseback riding, hiking, mountain

bike use, sight-seeing, pleasure driving, and off-highway vehicle use by motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and full size four-wheel drive vehicles such as jeeps and sport utility vehicles (SUVs). Increased visitation over the years in areas such as Sand Wash Basin, has led to increased concerns about resource protection and conflicting uses.

Questions to Address:

- Should the existing Little Yampa Canyon SRMA continue to be managed as an SRMA? If not, why not? If so, should the existing SRMA boundaries be adjusted, and if so, where?
- Should Sand Wash Basin be identified as an SRMA? (SRMAs are identified through the planning process, not designated). If so, what, if any, restrictions should be placed on non-recreation uses?
- What types and levels of recreation should the planning area emphasize, discourage or limit? Do we need to determine and enforce carrying capacity for Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) or other recreation uses?
- What mix and emphasis of recreation opportunities on the public lands best accommodates a wide variety of users while ensuring resource protection?
- To what extent, and where (general areas), should the BLM develop facilities and generally improve recreation access opportunities to meet public demand, to provide for public health and safety, and to direct use away from areas of conflict?
- Should fees be charged for recreation uses? If so, in which geographic areas and/or for which uses?

Issue 6: Roads and Travel Management:

Often the BLM views travel management together with recreation, as recreation is the primary activity associated with travel management, but other land management activities are also associated with travel management, such as oil and gas exploration and range management. Roads are one of the biggest contributors to resource impacts and user conflicts.

Comprehensive Travel Management:

Comprehensive Travel Management is the proactive management of public access, natural resources and regulatory needs to ensure that all aspects of road and trail system planning and on the management are considered. This includes resource management, road and trail design, maintenance, and recreation and non-recreation uses of the roads and trails. Travel activities in this context, incorporates access needs and the effects of all forms of travel both motorized and non-motorized.

Travel Management Planning:

Travel Management Planning is defined as the identification of a transportation system by provider agencies and organizations through interdisciplinary assessments, analyses, and a resulting set of objectives, prescriptions, and actions that explain what, why, and how identified road and trail systems and associated lands are to be managed and used to meet transportation needs.

Questions to Address:

- Do we need to ensure consistency in BLM travel management strategies with the U.S. Forest Service and other agencies? If so, how? What other jurisdictional issues, including with local counties, need to be addressed?
- Are there resources or areas that are significantly impacted negatively by either motorized or non-motorized modes of travel? Where does the BLM need to restrict motorized or non-motorized use? Where do we need to address planning for motorized and non-motorized routes?
- How will we design our travel system for designated routes and areas? Does resource damage and conflicts with other uses warrant the designation of “existing,” “designated,” or “closed” routes?
- How is the current road system impacting other resources and uses? How will future increased use impact resources?
- How should the road system be managed to provide access while protecting resources (seasonal closures, designated routes, maintenance, upgrades, reclamation, new roads, etc)?
- What roads and trails should be added to the official road system to protect resources through active maintenance? What roads and trails should be maintained, upgraded, abandoned, or constructed?
- If the BLM decides to change the area designation to "limited to existing routes," how should the BLM manage routes that are not on the official BLM road and trail system?

Issue 7: Cultural Resources and Paleontology

The complex landscape and remarkable cultural resources of the Little Snake Field Office have been a focal point for archaeological interest. Cultural resources provide a major source of public education, recreation, and cultural identity in this country. Concentrations of very unique and significant archaeological regions exist among numerous cultural resources located throughout the planning area. The LSFO will engage in consultation with Native American groups throughout the planning process.

Besides the inventory and planning requirements in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), which apply to all resource management programs, the BLM is required to consider the short- and long-term management of cultural resources under Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Section 14 of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA), and the BLM's national Programmatic Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (PA).

Manual Handbook H-1601-1 and Manual Section 8110 require that every new, revised, and amended RMP incorporate:

- A. Sufficient information to identify the nature and importance of all cultural resources known or expected to be present in the RMP area;
- B. Goals for their management;

- C. Land use allocation decisions in support of the goals; and
- D. Management actions and prescriptions that will contribute to achieving the decisions.

Questions to Address:

- What is the appropriate balance between providing for site preservation or conservation and recreational enjoyment, and allowing other activities that can affect the use of the cultural site and its setting, such as fire, mining, oil and gas extraction, grazing, and dispersed recreation?
- What kinds of cooperation are needed between the BLM, the tribes, other agencies, and private individuals to protect these areas?
- Where and how will interpretation be used as an education tool to increase the public's awareness and appreciation of the cultural resources?
- Have new historic properties (i.e. National Register sites) including places of traditional cultural importance been identified since the last RMP that require special designation or site-specific use restrictions? Should they be designated a "heritage area" with a land management prescription that emphasizes the properties' unique and nonrenewable character?
- Has a paleontological and cultural resource management plan been developed for the Sand Wash Basin?

Issue 8: Native American Concerns

- Have appropriate Native American tribes been consulted for the plan?
- What are the new issues and concerns related to (a) protection of sacred sites or needs for access to them and (b) needs for protection or use of areas for gathering plants for traditional purposes?

Issue 9: Wildlife

Public lands in the planning area provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Special management attention may be needed to restore, maintain, or enhance priority species and their habitats. Increased uses throughout the planning area, including recreational use, grazing, motorized & mechanized vehicle use, etc., have the potential for significantly impacting wildlife populations and their habitat if not properly managed. Integrating habitat management with other resource programs requires careful planning to minimize impacts to wildlife species and their habitats, while still providing for other uses on the public lands. Special attention will be paid to many species, including, but not limited to the following: big game, white-tailed prairie dog, black-footed ferret, Canadian lynx, sage grouse, gray wolf, raptors, migratory birds, and native fish.

Questions to Address:

- Which management practices avoid conflicts between wildlife and livestock for vegetation and other resources? What are the cumulative impacts of resource uses on wildlife and wildlife migration corridors?
- What effects do wildlife populations, especially elk, have on the ecosystem? Should anything be done to affect population sizes?
- What areas are important for big-game winter range? How should they be managed? How is winter range changing?
- What are the areas of highest priority for protecting, maintaining, and restoring sage-grouse habitat?
- What is the importance of the planning area to habitat for sagebrush-obligate species from a regional perspective?
- To what extent should Chronic Wasting Disease influence the RMP development?
- What role can fuel treatments play in wildlife habitat?
- What land use practices are necessary to protect T&E, Sensitive, and Special Status species?

Issue 10: Socio-economic Values

People value Northwest Colorado for a variety of reasons, including as a scenic backdrop, a place to recreate and to find spiritual renewal, and as a source of livelihood.

Questions to Address

- How can all local values provided by public lands best be sustained?
- What is the appropriate balance between various uses of the public lands in the planning area?
- How can the cultural relationships people have with the public lands best be sustained?
- How responsive should the BLM be to the social, political, and economic environment of this region? How much relative weight should the BLM give to local, regional, state, and national interests in management decisions?
- How should the BLM work with state and local governments in addressing public land issues?
- What revenues do the public lands provide to the local and regional economies (cities, counties, and state)? How much weight should economic values carry in resource decisions?
- What role do the public lands play in the local economies?

Issue 11: Land and Realty:

Questions to Address:

- What criteria should be used to identify lands for disposal and acquisition in the Land Tenure Policy Plan?
- Under what conditions should private land, with high resource values, be purchased from willing sellers?

- How much access to the public lands is needed, and what types? How should the agencies deal with increased pressure to access private inholdings? How can the increasing demands for utility corridors and access to communication sites be best addressed?
- What areas within the planning area should be identified as unsuitable for right-of-way routes for major utilities and roads?
- Are public access easements needed in some areas?
- How can the BLM better address trespass situations?

Issue 12: Water Quality

Maintaining high quality water is essential to any ecosystem. Water quality is also important for human health and safety. Impacts to water quality may come from cross-country vehicle travel, historic mining activities, oil & gas development, use of vehicles on poorly constructed routes, livestock grazing, irrigation augmented flows, improper disposal of human waste, and increased visitor use in sensitive riparian areas. Water quality problems coming from natural sources such as high sediment content from inflowing streams and oxidation of exposed mineral formations may also pose threats to the aquatic and riparian resources.

Questions to Address:

- How will riparian vegetation communities be managed to improve or maintain water quality?
- How will water quality be maintained and restored over time to protect downstream beneficial uses of water and riparian habitat?

III. Preliminary Planning Criteria

Planning regulations covering public land managed by the BLM (43 CFR 1610.4-2) require preparation of planning criteria to guide development of all resource management plans or revisions. Planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that guide and direct the development of the plan and determine how the planning team approaches the development of alternatives and ultimately, selection of a Preferred Alternative. They ensure that plans are tailored to the identified issues and ensure that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided. Planning criteria are based on standards prescribed by applicable laws and regulations, agency guidance, the result of consultation and coordination with the public, other Federal, state and local agencies and governmental entities, and North American Indian tribes, analysis of information pertinent to the planning area, and professional judgment.

The following preliminary criteria were developed internally and will be reviewed by the public before being used in the RMP/EIS revision process. The criteria will be included in a Federal Register Notice along with notices of public scoping meetings. After public input analysis, they become proposed criteria, and can be added to or changed as the issues are addressed or new information is presented. The LSFO Manager will approve the issues and criteria and any changes.

- The plans will be completed in compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.).
- The planning process will include an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) standards.
- Complete the planning work on time and on budget.
- Focus the collaborative effort so that the collaborators can see that they make a difference, within a timeframe that is reasonable and achievable.
- Provide a strategy for reaching desired conditions and outcomes, and meeting objectives.
- The plan will recognize valid existing rights.
- Recognize the specific niche that federal lands provide both to the nation and to the surrounding community. A successful plan will be one that is responsive to both national needs and community needs.
- Public participation will be encouraged throughout the process as per the attached Public Participation Plan. Collaborate and build relationships with tribes, state and local governments, federal agencies, local stakeholders and others in the community of interest of the plan as normal business. Collaborators are regularly informed and offered timely and meaningful opportunities to participate in the planning process. The Northwest Colorado Stewardship will manage the collaborative process to find a common vision and strategy for the plan.
- Decisions in the plan will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, State and Federal agencies as long as the decisions are in conformance with Federal laws and regulations that direct resource management on the public lands
- Road and trail access (and OHV management) guidance will be incorporated into the plan to ensure public and resource needs are met. At a minimum, the Plan will divide planning areas into OHV area designations that are open, limited or closed. The plan will include a map of area designations. Specific criteria for open, limited and closed designations are provided in definitions outlined in 43 CFR 8340.0-5 (f), (g) and (h). Additional criteria are provided by existing law, proclamation, executive order, regulation or policy.
- The Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) inventory results will be integrated into land use planning and energy use authorizations.
- Environmental protection and energy production are both desirable and necessary objectives of sound land management practices and are not to be considered mutually exclusive priorities;
- For all stipulations developed in new land use plans and to further improve consistency and understanding of lease stipulations, State and Field offices will use the Uniform Format for Oil and Gas Lease Stipulations prepared by the Rocky Mountain Regional Coordinating Committee in March 1989. Lease stipulations will be reviewed for consistency with neighboring field offices and States, and where there are discrepancies, efforts will be undertaken to try and get consistency.
- The lifestyles and concerns of area residents will be recognized in the plan.
- A capable organization or individual will prepare a socio-economic assessment of the planning area that will identify, analyze and review the social and economic considerations of the plans. They will also facilitate community discussions on resolving community issues generated by agency land use plans.

- The plan will incorporate the Colorado Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines. It will lay out a strategy for ensuring that proper grazing practices are followed. Grazing will be managed to maintain or improve the health of the public lands by incorporating conditions to enhance resource conditions into permitted operations.
- Contain an adaptive framework that incorporates regular monitoring and evaluation to adjust management within the direction of the existing plan; or when that is not possible, with a focused plan amendment process.
- Have realistic desired conditions and achievable objectives consistent with likely budgets and the design criteria.
- Lands with wilderness characteristics may be managed to protect and/or preserve some or all of those characteristics. This may include protecting certain lands in their natural condition and/or providing opportunities for solitude, or primitive and unconfined types of recreation.
- Identify existing and potential corridors (potential corridors include existing ROW routes that can be considered for additional facilities and thus be considered a corridor if not already so designated);
- Identify existing and potential ROW development sites such as energy development areas (e.g., wind energy sites) and communication sites;
- Describe likely development of potential corridors and other ROW sites as a basis for impact assessment

IV. Data and GIS Needs

Production of the proposed RMP revision will utilize a variety of data sources. This includes GIS data, BLM files, existing management plans, data from partners, and local knowledge.

The GIS data needs associated with this project are driven by the above identified issues and concerns, as well as the preliminary planning criteria. Review of these concerns indicates that currently available BLM GIS data will satisfy the majority of the resource data needs associated with the project. Initial negotiations with potential project contractors have identified a possible data gap related to social/economic issues. Any data gaps associated with social/economics or other resources will be solidified as a result of public scoping and **a joint fact finding** exercise as it is presumptuous to attempt to identify the magnitude of this need without public input. In a joint fact finding process, the BLM and its partners compile and pool relevant information and translate it into a form that can be used by decision-makers and others to create the foundation for broad-based consensus. Joint fact finding will be conducted by the RMP/EIS contractor during the meeting between the contractor and the BLM to discuss existing data and data needs for the RMP/EIS. This will take place no later than 9/24/04. Without public scoping and joint fact finding, the need to convert potential data gaps to geospatial data is also speculative. Pending public scoping, that estimate appears very realistic. Any new geospatial data collected during the planning process will be developed in concert with Bureau data standards.

The Little Snake Field Office is committed to working with partners to gather available data on the identified landscape and to be sure that data is gathered from all sources, including asking people how they use the land and ascertaining local knowledge. This can be initiated through the

process of identifying informal networks identified above. Using the joint fact finding process can help build relationships as well as get agreement on data and monitoring strategies critical to long term agreement and development of adaptive management strategies.

A list of currently available GIS data is provided in Appendix A.

V. Participants in the Process

Core Team:

Jeremy Casterson	Planning and Environmental Coordinator Project Coordination
Rob Schmitzer	Outdoor Recreation Planner Recreation/Wilderness/Travel Management
Andrea Minor	Range Management Specialist Range Management/T&E Plants, Forestry, Wild Horse & Burro, Noxious Weeds
Tim Novotny	Wildlife Biologist Wildlife/Fisheries/T&E Animals
Frederick Conrath	Geologist Oil and Gas/Minerals/Realty
Cooperating Agencies	Moffat County, Colorado Department of Natural Resources

To facilitate efficient communication and coordination, the Core Team will serve as contact points for the rest of the Little Snake staff. John Husband, the Little Snake Field Manager will be highly engaged in the entire process. Archeologist Henry Keesling and GIS Specialist Pam Levitt will be called upon to attend Core Team meetings, as needed.

The Northwest Colorado Stewardship will be a key participating body in this planning effort as an independent, community-centered stewardship group. The Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council has established a sub-committee to participate specifically in the revision process. BLM has requested Cooperating Agency Status for the RMP revision from Moffat County, Routt County, Colorado Department of Natural Resources, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, City of Craig, City of Steamboat Springs and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. Moffat County and Colorado Department of Natural Resources accepted the invitation and an MOU is currently being drafted between the BLM and these agencies. This MOU outlines responsibilities of the cooperating agencies, and resources they can contribute to the planning effort. A follow-up letter will be drafted to those agencies which declined cooperating agency status, reminding them of the advantages of this special status, and inviting them to sign on as cooperating agencies later in the process.

Booz Allen Hamilton was selected to assist the BLM in preparing the RMP/EIS. This contractor will work closely and coordinate with the other participants in the process, the community facilitators, cooperating agencies, and NWCOS.

VI. Format and Process for the Plan

A. General Steps and Format

The format and outline for the EIS/RMP revision will come from the BLM NEPA, the BLM Planning Handbook, and other related BLM guidance and manuals. All legal and policy requirements will be met in the EIS/RMP revision and in the process regarding public notices, required elements, distribution of draft and final documents, and specific laws; the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality guidelines (CEQ) will be met. The draft and final EIS will be published with the draft and final versions of the RMP revision.

Public comments will be analyzed after a 90 day review period for the draft RMP revision and EIS. All comments will be considered by the agencies before the EIS/RMP revision, and Record of Decision is published.

In May, 2004, the BLM utilized the USIECR to sub-contract a neutral facilitator to guide NWCOS and the community through the two important tasks outlined in the Consensus-based Management section of this preparatory plan. The LSFO realizes the importance of keeping the community facilitators involved throughout the planning process, since this team was hand picked by the community, and has vast experience in conflict mediation. In the steps below, the tasks are performed by either the community facilitators, or the RMP/EIS contractor. The Statement of Work will clearly delineate the tasks for these two separate contractors, and define the coordination that must take place between them.

B. Selecting a Neutral to Facilitate the Collaborative Process

An outside neutral party will be required to facilitate this collaborative, community-based planning effort. The workload of NWCOS is very substantial, and a facilitator is needed to manage the group and the community vision process. Furthermore, a neutral insures NWCOS acts independently from BLM. The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution has worked directly with the NWCOS and the LSFO in selecting the neutral. The neutral party will serve as a contact for community members with specific issues and concerns, coordinate the designing of the Collaboration Strategy, participate in and/or coordinate the community assessment, facilitate the drafting of the community vision and community alternative. Kristi Parker Celico and Rebecca Turner of The Keystone Center were selected by the BLM and the NWCOS on May 3, 2004.

C. Design a Collaboration Strategy

The BLM is committed to working with the NWCOS in planning the process of this community-based collaborative planning effort. A Collaboration Strategy would detail the most effective and efficient means for community involvement throughout the entire planning process. During the drafting of the Collaboration Strategy, the stewardship group will help determine the role

they will play in the planning process, and outline a public involvement strategy. The community facilitators will guide the NWCOS in drafting this document.

Deliverables: A Collaboration Strategy, containing a public involvement strategy, tasks of the NWCOS, BLM, community facilitators, and the RMP/EIS contractor, a detailed timeline, and concrete phases and steps of the RMP revision process.

Due Date: August 25, 2004

D. Design a Statement of Work

The LSFO requires the assistance of a contractor in preparation of the Little Snake RMP/EIS revision. A Statement of Work was drafted in June, 2004, and the selection panel met at the National Business Center later that month to select a contractor. Booz Allen Hamilton was selected.

Deliverables: A statement of work, containing objectives, scope, issues and management concerns, government furnished materials, and tasks to be performed by the contractor. The later section includes detailed phases and tasks to be performed by the contractor, quality standards, specific deliverables, and due dates. It also breaks out the tasks to be performed by the company preparing the RMP/EIS, the community facilitators, and the necessary coordination between these contractors.

Due date: Statement of Work submitted to NBC by June 1, 2004. Booz Allen Hamilton was selected to prepare the LS RMP.

E. Perform Community Assessment/Scoping

The Little Snake Field Office will ensure an experienced contractor performs the comprehensive community assessment and public scoping, which aim to identify the underlying issues and concerns of the communities of place and interest. The process will include identifying informal community networks using a community-based, informal process to identify potential partners, issues, and opportunities. This assists in developing a better understanding of community goals and use patterns. A proper community assessment will also include identifying and developing leadership in the community (capacity building) for participation in defining landscape goals and monitoring and implementation strategies. This step will also comprise of formal scoping, including 4 – 5 public meetings throughout the planning area. LSFO staff and community members will participate in all aspects of the community assessment. The BLM will also capture issues and concerns from the communities of interest, both regionally and nationally, throughout this planning process.

The community assessment will be conducted by the community facilitators. By this point, the team will be very familiar with the NWCOS and the communities of Northwest Colorado, and will be serving as a contact point for community members. Therefore, the facilitators will be well qualified to perform the assessment, and the community will be comfortable working with the team.

Deliverables: The community facilitators will prepare a comprehensive Report of Citizen Issues and Opportunities, incorporated into the Management Situation Analysis section of the EIS. The facilitation team will also prepare and submit a Scoping Report to the BLM for review and comment that includes all scoping meeting records and written and verbal scoping input.

Due Date: December 13, 2004

F. Prepare the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS)

The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) is an in-depth assessment of the various resources and uses on public land. It is a comprehensive look at present conditions of resources, current management practices, and the issues. Foremost, the AMS provides baseline information for developing management alternatives. The AMS will be prepared by Booz Allen Hamilton, with input from the BLM (maps and data) and the community facilitators (Report of Citizen Issues and Opportunities and the Scoping Report). A summary of the AMS will be made available to the public.

Deliverables: Five bound copies of review version and Final Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) document in paper form, and an electronic version on a CD-ROM.

Due Date: January 17, 2005

G. Develop Goals and Desired Outcomes

Developing outcome-based performance measures for landscapes should be instrumental in bringing the gaps between stakeholders. This approach brings BLM and the community together to develop a shared landscape vision. With the direct guidance of the community facilitators and oversight by the RMP/EIS contractor, the NWCOS will assist the BLM in defining broad but measurable land management outcomes for all resources, including desired future conditions for plant communities, as well as social and economic values. Outcomes serve as a basis for formulating management alternatives and are a crucial element in determining the indicators of an adaptive management plan. Meetings with the community will be organized and facilitated by the community facilitators. Members of the RMP/EIS contracting team will be present at all meetings, as they will need to incorporate these goals and outcomes into the RMP/EIS.

Deliverables: A shared community vision of the landscape, drafted by the community facilitators, to guide the BLM and community in alternative formulation; a series of broad goals, which can be inserted into the RMP/EIS by the RMP/EIS contractor.

Due Date: June, 2005

H. Alternative Formulation

A range of alternatives, including a No Action alternative, will be developed to respond to the issues identified at the outset of the process. Each alternative will provide different solutions to the issues and identified concerns. This step will be divided into two separate but coordinated tasks. First, the community facilitators will guide the BLM and community in developing a “community alternative.” This will be done through a series of workshops organized and facilitated by the community facilitators. Using the desired outcomes and vision of the

landscape developed by the community as a foundation, the group will work towards formulating a management alternative. This will potentially be the last task for the community facilitators.

The RMP/EIS contractor shall attend and participate in the alternative formulation workshops. The second task will be for the RMP/EIS contractor to write the Alternatives section of the draft RMP/EIS, and create new alternatives as necessary. The Alternatives section shall include, for each alternative, an Implementation and Monitoring sub-section in tabular or graphic form that describes the monitoring actions, purposes for monitoring, and monitoring schedule.

Deliverables: A review and a final version of Alternatives section, and a separate Alternatives Summary Table, for the internal review version of Draft RMP/EIS.

Due Date: Community workshops end by October, 2005. Alternatives section to BLM by December, 2005.

I. Effects Analysis/Environmental Consequences

An Effects Analysis will be developed by the RMP/EIS contractor with assistance from the BLM. The Effects Analysis shall contain potential environmental impacts and benefits from implementing each alternative, including social and economic factors and cumulative impacts. The Environmental Consequences section of the RMP/EIS shall contain a discussion and analysis of the cumulative impacts, and range of impacts, that might occur as a result of implementing each alternative.

Deliverables: A review and final version of Environmental Consequences section of the Draft RMP/EIS.

Due Date: January, 2006. Draft RMP/EIS will be submitted to CSO for review by March, 2006.

J. Review of the Plan

The EIS and RMP revision will be prepared by the RMP/EIS contractor, under the direction of the BLM and cooperating agencies. Throughout the entire preparation process, the BLM, with the participation of the cooperating agencies, will review and approve certain contractor-prepared products prior to proceeding to the next task identified in the schedule. A six week period is permitted for the internal review of the DEIS, and a four week period is permitted for the internal review of the FEIS.

K. Form of Input from Reviewers

Inputs will be in standard electronic format. Additionally, input will also be provided verbally, on flipcharts, via e-mail, or other medium at group and one-on-one meetings and contacts.

VII. Plan Preparation Schedule

Milestone:
Select a Neutral Facilitator

Timing:
Completed May 3, 2004

Design Statement of Work for RMP/EIS	Completed June 2004
Submit Preparatory Plan	August 2004
Develop a Collaboration Strategy w/ community	July – Aug 2004
Community Assessment/Scoping	June – Dec 2004
Publish NOI, 30-Day public review	Oct – Nov 2004
Prepare Analysis of the Management Situation	Dec 2004 – Jan 2005
Develop Community Vision	Jan – June 2005
Alternative Formulation	June – Oct 2005
Effects Analysis	Dec 2005 – Jan 2006
Socio-Economic Assessment	Feb 2006
Publish NOA/Draft RMP/EIS, 90-day public review	July 2006
Comment Review	July – Oct 2006
Conduct Comment Content Analysis and prepare Responses	Oct – Nov 2006
Publish Notice of Filing/Final RMP/EIS	April 2007
60-day Governor’s, Review and 30-Day protest period	April – June 2007
Print & Distribute Record of Decision (ROD)	Jan 2008

See **Appendix A: RMP/EIS Schedule** for a detailed timeline including responsible parties.

VIII. Public Participation Process

The goal of the Public Participation Process is to ensure receipt of meaningful public involvement throughout the planning process. The collaborative, community-based framework described in this Preparatory Plan is designed to engage the community through the Northwest Colorado Stewardship in the EIS/RMP revision. This collaborative planning effort requires a structure that will keep the community engaged in issue scoping, developing landscape management goals, monitoring the process, and making adjustments when goals are not being met. Actively listening to the issues, concerns, and recommendations of the communities of interest and place will be an ongoing process throughout the planning effort.

The public participation opportunities for the major stages of the planning process are listed below. Every effort will be made to assure that meaningful public involvement continues throughout the process. This includes using World Wide Web Internet technology. Plans are for an interactive website that provides information and solicits comments from users and interested public. Field trips and collaborative work shops will be conducted to include individual and community perspectives and knowledge in development of the plan. Training in the Community Partnership Series from the National Training Center will be used to implement collaboration with the community.

To a large extent, the participation of the community and the NWCOS will be defined during the drafting of the Collaboration Strategy and community assessment in August to November, 2004. This up-front work will describe the stages in which NWCOS will participate and their role in the revision process.

Identify Issues, Planning Criteria, and Management Concerns

Federal Register Notice of Intent, media articles, website information regarding the preparation and content of the plan, and an announce schedule of upcoming scoping meeting will be sent to people on the BLM and the NWCOS mailing list by e-mail and letters.

Informal public open house scoping meetings will be organized and facilitated by a neutral facilitator to gather public input on the issues, management concerns to be resolved in the plan, and on the planning criteria and process. Written and electronic web comments on issues/scope of the Plan will be requested with a 30-day comment period.

Develop Goals, Outcomes and Formulate Alternatives

It is important to keep the community involved in developing a common vision for the landscape, including goals and outcomes, as well as participating in formulating management alternatives and solutions to their issues and concerns. The Little Snake Field Office anticipates the NWCOS coming to a consensus about their vision of public lands in Northwest Colorado, as well as a set of goals to realize this vision. This group vision would serve as a building block for later, more contentious discussions about management alternatives. Informal public open house meetings will be held with the public, interested groups, agencies, etc. to discuss alternatives and make sure issues are addressed. Newsletters will be developed to provide background information on issues and alternatives.

Issue the Draft Plan/EIS

Federal Register Notices regarding the availability of the draft plans/EIS and a 90-day period for public comments to be submitted will be published; newspaper articles will be published in local/regional papers advertising the availability of the draft plan/EIS; the 90-day comment period, and the schedule of the public meetings to be held during the comment period.

Public meetings and informal workshops will be held locally during the 90-day public comment period to gather verbal or written input on the draft plan/EIS. Public will be encouraged to use web planning site for submission of comments. All comments will be entered into a web based database for storage and analysis.

Publish the Proposed Final Plan/EIS

The final plans/EIS will be sent to those on the mailing list as well as to all those that participate in the planning process during the preparation of the plan. The availability of the plans will be advertised in regional newspapers and other media. A notice explaining the protest period of 30 days will be included. Informal public input, written, verbal, and through the web comment tool will be welcomed any time in the process. A summary of comments will be produced for web publication. A Governor's consistency review (60 days) will be solicited.

Respond to Protests

Written responses will be sent to the public to address any protests/comments. Federal Register Notice requesting comments on significant changes will be published, as necessary, as result of a protest. Protests and appeals will follow BLM protocols as appropriate.

Publish Approved Plans

Public will be notified via news articles, website, and transmittal letters of the availability of the approved Plan.