



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Final

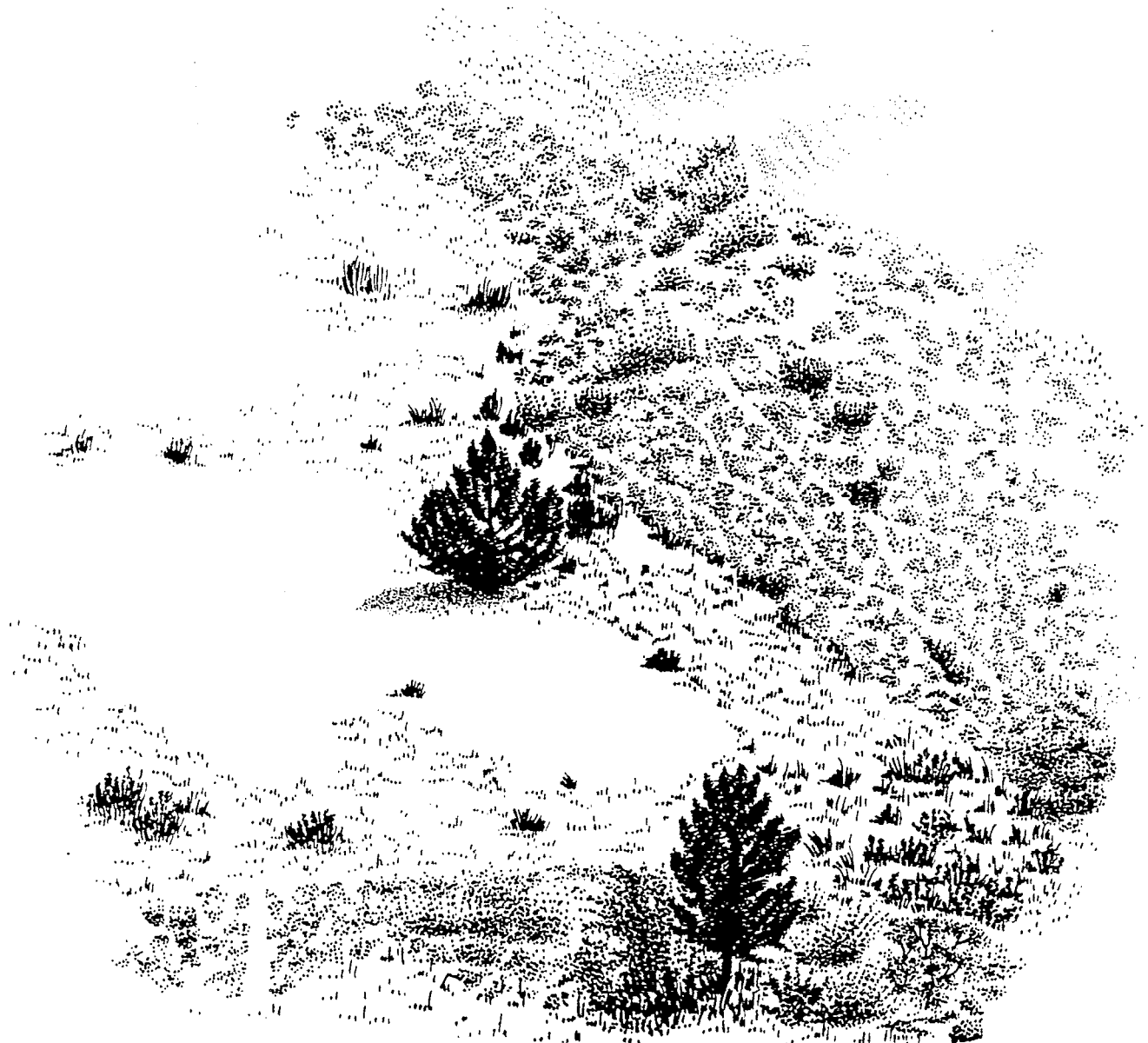
Spokane District Office
East 4217 Main Avenue
Spokane, Washington 99202

June 1993



Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment

for
Department of the Army, Corps of Engineer's application for land
withdrawal-Yakima Firing Center



As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

BLM/OR/WA/PL-93/32+1792



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SPOKANE DISTRICT OFFICE
EAST 4217 MAIN
SPOKANE, WASHINGTON 99202



IN REPLY REFER TO:

June 17, 1993

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is the Final Resource Management Plan Amendment Environmental Assessment for Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers Application for land withdrawal Yakima Firing Center. The Draft Plan Amendment was published in March 1993, and was followed by a 45-day public comment period. Changes based upon public comments have been incorporated into this document and all unchanged portions of the draft have been reprinted in order to portray those changes. The Bureau of Land Management has prepared this document in partial fulfillment of its responsibilities under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

If you wish the District Manager to consider your comments in the development of the decision record for this plan amendment, please submit them by July 17, 1993. Your comments should be sent to:

Spokane District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
East 4217 Main Avenue
Spokane, Washington 99202

The proposed plan cannot be approved until after the Governor of Washington State has had an opportunity to review it to identify any inconsistencies and provide recommendations in writing to the BLM.

The resource management planning process includes an opportunity for administrative review via a plan protest to the BLM Director if you believe approval of the plan amendment would be in error (See 43 CFR 1 610.52.). Careful adherence to these guidelines will assist in preparing a protest that will assure the greatest consideration to your point of view.

Only those persons or organizations who participated in our planning process leading to this plan amendment may protest. If our records do not indicate that you had any involvement in any stage in the preparation of this plan amendment, your protest will be dismissed without further review.

A protesting party may raise only those issues which he or she submitted for the record during the planning process. New issues raised in the protest period should be directed to the District Manager for consideration in plan implementation, as potential plan amendments, or as otherwise appropriate.

The 30-day period for filing a plan protest will close on July 17, 1993. There is no provision for any extension of time. To be considered "timely," your protest must be postmarked no later than the last day of the protest period. Also, although not a requirement, we suggest that you send your protest by certified mail, return receipt requested. Protests must be filed in writing to:

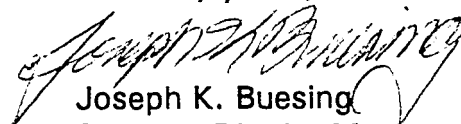
Director (760)
Bureau of Land Management
1849 "C" Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

In order to be considered complete, your protests must contain, at a minimum, the following information:

1. The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest.
2. A statement of the issue or issues being protested.
3. A statement of the part or parts of the plan amendment being protested. To the extent possible, this should be done by reference to specific pages, paragraphs, sections, tables, maps, etc. included in the document.
4. A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that you submitted during the planning process or a reference to the date the issue or issues were discussed by you for the record. Only those persons or organizations who participated in this planning process leading to the Resource Management Plan Amendment may protest.
5. A concise statement explaining, why the BLM State Director's decision is believed to be incorrect. This is a critical part of your protest. Take care to document all relevant facts. As much as possible, reference or cite the planning documents, environmental analysis documents, available planning records, such as meeting minutes or summaries, correspondence, etc. A protest which merely expresses disagreement with the Oregon/Washington State Director's proposed decision, without any data, will not provide us with the benefit of your information and insight. In this case, the Director's review will be based on the existing analysis and supporting data.

Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely yours,



Joseph K. Buesing
Spokane District Manager

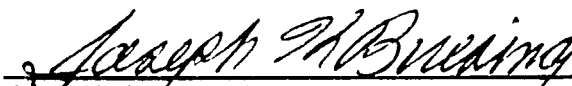
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Final
Resource Management Plan
Amendment
Environmental Assessment
for

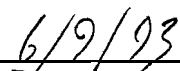
Department of the Army, Corps of Engineer's
application for land withdrawal-
Yakima Firing Center

Recommendation

I recommend adoption of Alternative One, the Preferred Alternative in the following resource management plan amendment.



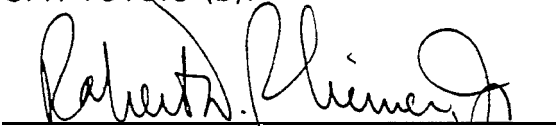
Joseph K. Buesing
District Manager, Spokane



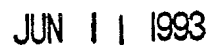
Date

State Director Approval

I approve the proposed decision for the attached, "Resource Management Plan Amendment Environmental Assessment for the Department of the Army, Corps of Engineer's application for land withdrawal-Yakima Firing Center," as recommended. This document meets the requirements for agency decision making as provided by 40 CFR 1505 and 43 CFR 1610.8 (b).



D. Dean Bibles
State Director, Oregon/Washington State Office



Date

for

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

FONSI: On the basis of the information contained in the attached environmental assessment and all other information available to me as summarized below, it is my determination that this proposed decision does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is unnecessary and will not be prepared.

Rationale: Based on the analysis contained in the attached environmental assessment and public comments, recreation opportunities lost as a result of the land withdrawal would be minimized the most under alternative one (1) because of the acquisition of mitigation lands. Wildlife habitat lost through disturbance caused by the change in land use would also be partially mitigated provided similar habitats are acquired and managed accordingly.

Under alternative two (2), no mitigation lands would be acquired. This could result in recreation uses occurring on other public or private lands that are incompatible with the existing resources. Wildlife habitat lost as a result of disturbance would be slow in recovering.

Under alternative three (3), recreation use would be practically eliminated due to the loss of public access. As a result, the impacts to recreation would be similar in intensity and effect as those described for alternative two (2). Direct impacts to wildlife habitat would be minimal. However, the indirect impacts of potential habitat transformation, resulting from the expected higher incidence of wildfires in the area, could be severe to shrub dependent species. Therefore, the acquisition of mitigation lands as described in Alternative 1 could minimize the affect of these losses.

In addition to the above, the following considerations also indicate that there would not be any significant impacts resulting from the proposed decision.

The analysis of Alternatives did not reveal any actions that would constitute an irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

The analysis did not reveal any significant adverse impacts to society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, or the locality.

Public health or safety would not be affected.

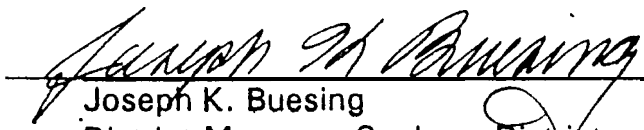
None of the alternatives violate Federal, State, or local law requirements regarding flood plain, wild and scenic river, prime or unique farmlands, or known paleontological resources within the area.

None of the alternatives would result in cumulative significant adverse impacts to the important and relevant resource values of the areas involved.

There are no known cultural resources present that would be affected by any of the alternatives.

None of the alternatives would significantly affect endangered or threatened species or their habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

There are no known inconsistencies with officially approved or adopted Federal, State or local natural resource related plans, policies or programs.



Joseph K. Buesing
District Manager, Spokane District

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CHAPTER I - PURPOSE AND NEED

Introduction:

This Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) is being prepared to address the U.S. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers' application to withdraw certain public lands as part of an overall expansion of the Yakima Firing Center. The Spokane District RMP identified this area as important for leasable minerals, recreation, and range. However, the RMP did not specifically mention or anticipate the requested withdrawal, nor is a withdrawal of this type consistent with the management objectives of the plan. Therefore, this amendment is being prepared to address the Army's withdrawal application. The environmental review included in this document also meets the requirements contained in the Bureau's interim withdrawal handbook (H-2310-1).

Planning Area:

The subject public lands are located in Kittitas County in an area extending west of the Columbia River for about 20 miles and south from Interstate 90 to the present boundary of the Yakima Firing Center. There are 9,745.82 acres of public land included in the withdrawal application; 6,655.02 acres are public surface/federal minerals and 3,090.80 acres are private surface/federal minerals. (See maps 1 & 2)

Background:

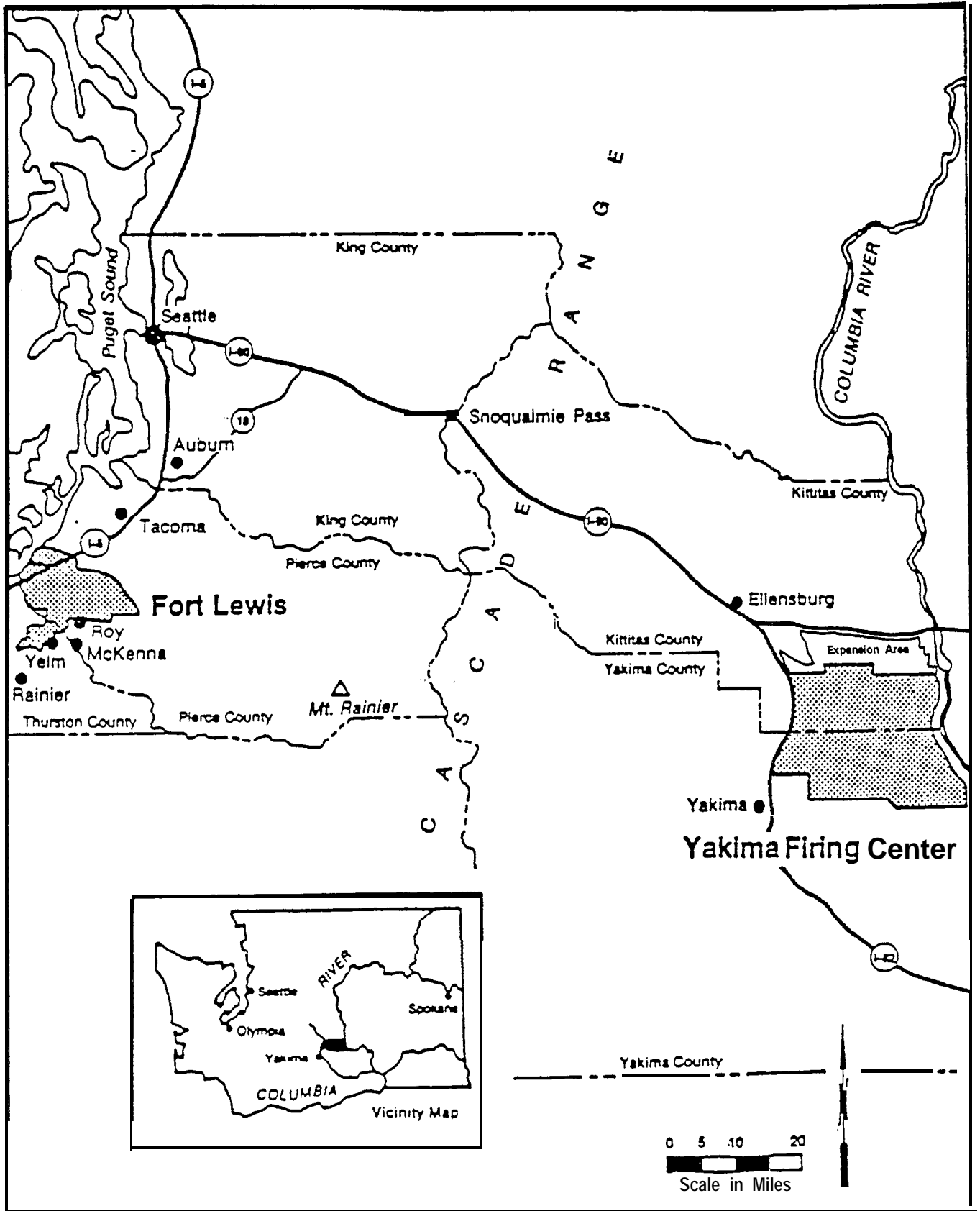
On May 18, 1992, the Department of the Army, Seattle District Corps of Engineers filed an application with the Bureau of Land

Management Oregon/Washington State Office to withdraw 9,745.82 acres of public lands for the purpose to expand the Yakima Firing Center. The U.S. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, has canceled this original application in part as to the withdrawal of the public lands from the mineral leasing laws. The public lands involved in this withdrawal will remain open to mineral leasing. However, they would still be closed to settlement, sale, location, and entry under the general land laws, including the U.S. mining laws (30 U.S.C. ch. 2).

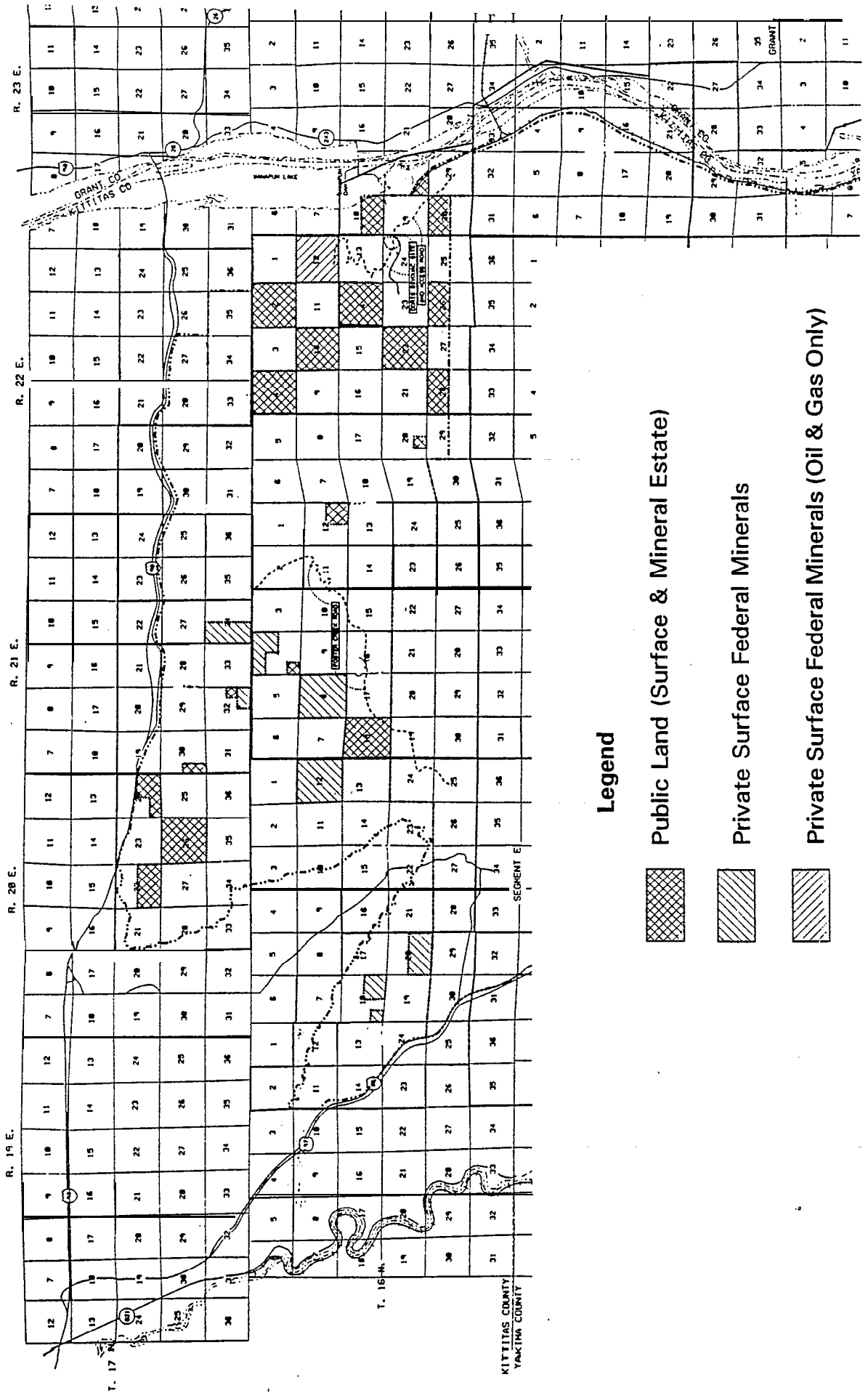
Previous to this application, in June 1987, the Department of the Army (DA) had prepared and made available for public comment a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the overall proposal of acquiring approximately 63,000 acres of land for the Yakima Firing Center expansion, of which the subject withdrawal is part. The review and comment period for this document ended on December 27, 1989. During this period, five public meetings were held to explain the DEIS and to receive comments. Over 300 letters were received in response to the DEIS. The Final EIS was subsequently prepared and made available to the public for comment on February 1, 1991. Over 90 comments were received before the end of the comment period. The Record of Decision (ROD) for the Army's preferred alternative was approved on July 25, 1991.

The Spokane District BLM recently completed an RMP Amendment EIS that addressed fluid mineral leasing in Eastern Washington. This plan identified these public lands as being in a high potential area and as being open for mineral leasing.




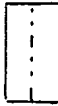
Map 1 - General Location



Map 2 - Yakima Firing Center Expansion Area



Legend

-  Public Land (Surface & Mineral Estate)
-  Private Surface Federal Minerals
-  Private Surface Federal Minerals (Oil & Gas Only)
-  Yakima Firing Center Expansion Area Boundary

Planning Process:

The procedure for preparing the plan amendment involves the same interrelated steps that were required for preparation of the Spokane District RMP.

The amended Resource Management Plan issued from this planning process will result in a recommendation from BLM to either deny or approve the application in total or in part. If the recommendation is to deny the application in total or in part, the State Director will request a voluntary cancellation of the application in total or as to such part. If the applicant agency objects to such findings and recommendation, the applicant agency may, within 30 days from the date of the receipt of such notification, state its objections in writing and request the BLM director to review the findings and recommendation.

Planning Criteria:

The planning criteria serves various functions, including the following: guide resource inventories, establish an outline for the management situation analysis, aid in formulating alternatives, and highlight factors to be considered in evaluating alternatives and selecting a preferred alternative. Planning criteria specific to this plan amendment effort are listed below:

- Existing data will be used. No new inventories will be conducted.
- Give consideration to oil and gas leasing stipulations identified in the Spokane District Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement for this area.
- Consider the Department of Army to be

responsible for complying with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended in all undertakings after the withdrawal has been completed.

- Consider the Department of Army to be responsible for complying with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended in all undertakings after the withdrawal has been completed.
- Evaluate the differences in policy between the agencies in the management of rare, threatened and/or endangered species.

Planning Issues:

The issues included in this report were developed as a result of public response generated during the initial scoping period for this RMP amendment, which ended on October 8, 1992. They were also derived from information obtained in the preparation of the Spokane Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement of June 22, 1992, which included this area.

Mineral Resources:

- BLM's policy has been to encourage the orderly development of mineral resources. With the change in administrative authority to the Department of the Army, how should mineral resources (i.e. locatable, saleable, and leasable minerals) in the proposed expansion area be managed?
- Should the subject public lands remain closed to settlement, sale, location and entry under the general land laws, including the United States mining laws (30 U.S.C. ch.2)?
- Should the federal oil and gas resources

continue to be leased as per the stipulations identified in the Spokane Resource Management Plan Amendment of June 22, 1992?

Recreation Resources:

- Most of the land available for recreation in the Columbia Basin is under private ownership. Recreational activities are either dependent upon permitted access to private lands, confined to established parks or to public lands where legal access exists. Therefore, how should the recreation opportunities foregone as a result of this withdrawal be mitigated?

Other Issues Considered:

Threatened or Endangered Species:

- BLM and the Department of Army are responsible for complying with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. This obligation pertains to species that are federally listed, not state listed species or candidates for federal or state listing. However, both BLM and the Department of the Army have a written policy to consider the effects of their actions on Federal candidate and state listed and candidate species as well. A biological assessment was conducted to evaluate the potential impacts to bald eagles, sage grouse, Swainson's hawk, long-billed curlew, ferruginous hawk and peregrine falcon and Columbia milkvetch, Hoover's desert parsley and Hoover's tauschia resulting from acquisition of additional lands at the Yakima Firing Center. As a result of this assessment, formal Section 7 consultation was conducted for the Proposed Northern and Eastern Acquisition Expansion at the Yakima Firing Center, Benton, Grant, Kittitas and Yakima Counties,

Washington was held in May of 1988. The peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), federally listed as endangered, and the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), federally listed as threatened in the State of Washington, were the subjects of this consultation. This consultation indicated the acquisition and operation on the northerly expansion area is not likely to adversely affect the bald eagle or the peregrine falcon. (Documentation of the Section 7 consultation was included as Appendix I in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Yakima Firing Center Proposed Land Acquisition-Yakima Firing Center, Washington. The biological report is contained in the Draft EIS as appendix B). Based on the information contained in these reports and discussions with the Washington Department of Game Biologists and Biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the potential impacts relative to Threatened or Endangered Species from this action is not believed to be an issue.

No other issues were considered.

Interagency Coordination:

During development of this RMP amendment, existing county plans within the planning area were reviewed to assure consistency. Informal meetings were held with the Washington Department of Wildlife and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Contacts with tribal governments were and will continue to be made throughout the planning process.

This type of coordination between the Bureau and other federal agencies, state, and local governments and Indian tribes is required under Bureau planning regulations and by several cooperative agreements or memorandums of understanding.

CHAPTER 2 - ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Introduction:

This chapter presents three alternatives considered by BLM and a summary of the impacts of these alternatives. This range of alternatives is reasonable, given the existing Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision compiled by the Army, which addresses the overall Yakima Firing Center expansion project and includes the subject public lands. The Army's Record of Decision for the proposed expansion was approved on July 25, 1991. A total of three alternatives are presented below for discussion and analysis. These alternatives are considered reasonable and practical. As mentioned above, the no action alternative is also presented to comply with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Since 1940 over 92,000 acres of public land have been withdrawn from public use in eastern Washington. The withdrawals were basically for military purposes (65,000 acres, Department of Energy, Hanford Reservation; 27,000 acres, Department of the Army, Yakima Firing Center). Along with these withdrawals over 533,800 acres of private land were also acquired to compliment or complete the respective reservations. (Hanford Reservation 299,800 acres, YFC 234,000 acres.) When the affects of these withdrawals and acquisitions were combined with the

dramatic increase in agricultural development in the Columbia Basin, severe cumulative impacts to wildlife habitat resulted, such as a reduction of the sagebrush steppe plant communities. It also caused a reduction in the availability of land for recreation and mineral development.

Alternative One: (The Preferred Alternative)

Under this alternative, the Spokane Resource Management Plan would be amended to permit processing of the Army's application for a withdrawal of public lands and public mineral estate (including private surface/federal minerals) within the expansion area. The subject public domain lands would be removed from settlement, sale, location and entry under the general land laws, including the United States mining laws (30 U.S.C. Ch. 2). However, applications and offers under the mineral leasing laws would be permitted. This alternative would require the Department of the Army to acquire mitigation lands for recreation and other multiple use purposes to offset the effects of the withdrawal.

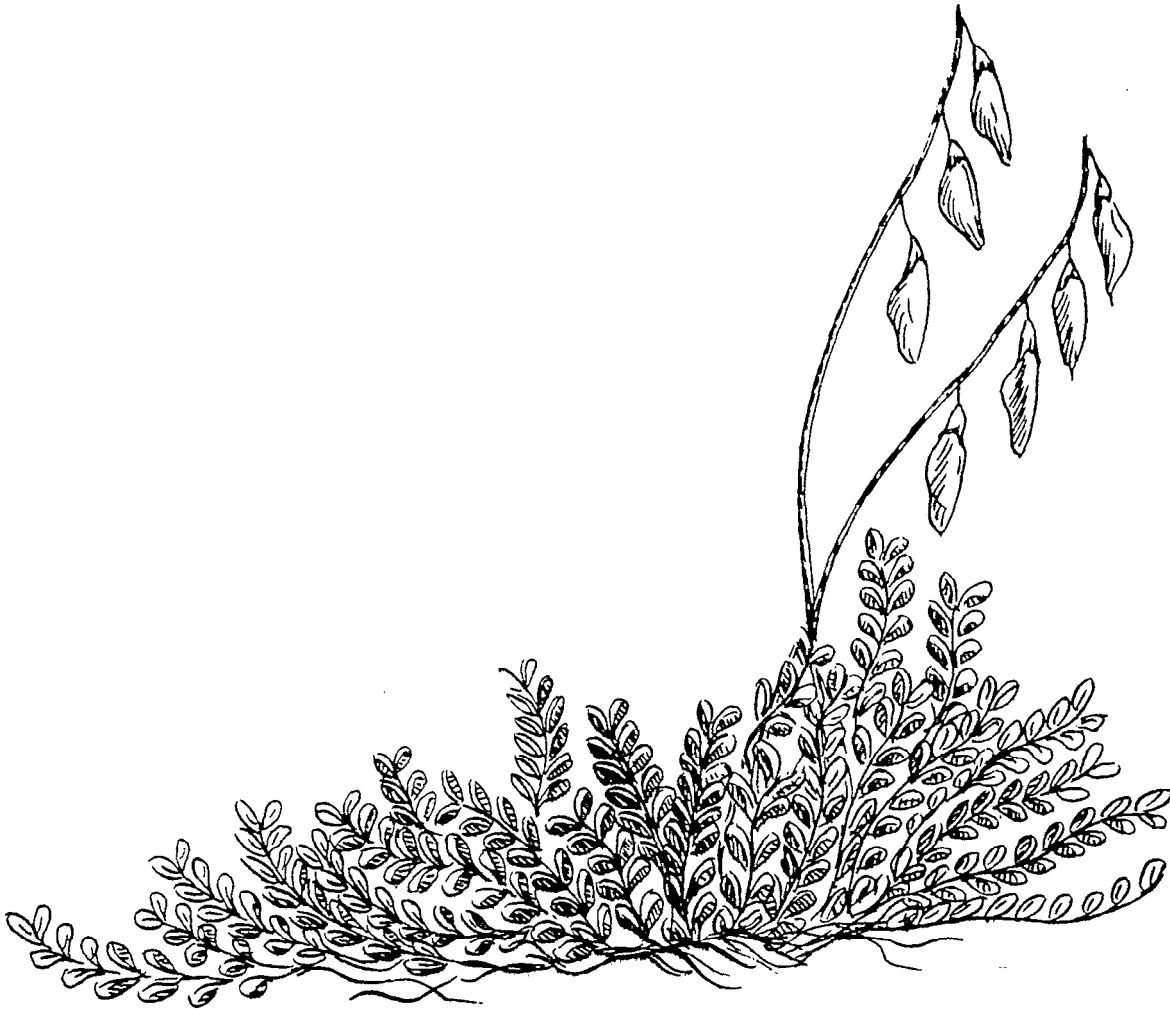
Alternative Two: (Department of the Army's Proposal)

Under this alternative, the Spokane Resource Management Plan would be amended to permit the processing of the Army's application as filed. (No lands would be acquired for mitigation.)

Alternative Three: (No Action Alternative)

This alternative describes the continuation of the existing situation. Under this alternative the Spokane Resource Management Plan would not be amended to permit processing of the Army's withdrawal application.

Consequently, the subject public domain lands could not be withdrawn for a specific use, and would instead continue to be open to the full range of public land laws, including the mining and mineral leasing laws. Activities such as livestock grazing, public recreation (where legal access is available), and mineral exploration would be permitted.



CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

This chapter provides a brief description of the resources that would be affected by the proposed plan amendment and a description of the RMP decisions. A portion of this information has been taken from the Army's Final EIS for the Yakima Firing Center Proposed Land Acquisition (YFCPLA) and the Record of Decision (ROD) for this action. More detailed information is available upon request from either the Spokane District or Wenatchee Resource Area office.

Existing Resource Management Plan Decisions:

The 1985 Spokane Resource Management Plan (page 70 Alternative B Preferred Alternative) committed to managing the public lands in the proposed expansion area as follows:

Minerals Management: Emphasize the exploration, development, and production of oil and gas resources through the Federal Oil and Gas Leasing System. Manage other resource activities in a manner to minimize conflicts with oil and gas operations.

Grazing Management: Develop a Coordinated Resource Management Plan that would place equal emphasis on these programs. This plan would include, but would not be limited to the following: establishing livestock use levels, wildlife management, managing ORV use and rock collecting ***. Acquire 1,500 acres of State grazing land in *** C1 allotments *** to enhance grazing management and multiple

use of the management area.

Recreation Management: Restrict ORV use *** limit ORV use in other areas to designated roads and trails. *** Acquire access through easement acquisition or land exchange to key parcels for recreational rockhounding *** in the Johnson Creek area.

Wildlife Habitat Management: Protect and improve high value riparian habitat along Johnson Creek (1 mile) and six miles of its tributaries.

Soil and Water Management: Minimize surface disturbing activities in favor of watershed values."

Affected Resources:

Soils:

The soils of the subject public lands generally consist of varying thicknesses of well drained loams, silt loams and clay loams. These soils are derived from colluvium, alluvium and loess deposits overlying basalt bedrock. This particular bedrock is mapped as the Saddle Mountain unit of the Yakima Basalt, which is the upper member of the Columbia River basalt group. This flood basalt flow is generally interbedded with pumicite, tuffaceous sandstone, silt, clay or conglomerate, as well as beds of diatomite.

Minerals:

Mineral resources known to occur in the vicinity of the subject public lands include natural gas, coal, diatomite, basalt, sand and gravel, caliche, and pumicite. Petrified wood is also known to occur in this area. The likelihood of the occurrence of any locatable minerals, metallic minerals such as gold, lead, and silver, is extremely low.

Previous mineral reports of lands in the vicinity have shown that natural gas, a leasable mineral, has a high potential based on minimal direct evidence, and basalt, a salable mineral, has a high potential based on direct evidence (although development potential is low). The mineral reports have noted that the other listed mineral resources have either low or moderate potentials based on direct and indirect evidence. The exact ratings will not be known for the public lands in the expansion area until the specific mineral report for this area is completed.

Water:

Water resources on the subject public lands include a one mile portion of Johnson Creek and various springs. The BLM has also installed four wildlife guzzlers (i.e. watering cisterns) on the subject public lands, which provide for the collection of rainwater for wildlife use. The portion of Johnson Creek located on the public land is perennial, and has a high enough quality and quantity of water to support fisheries.

Vegetation:

Vegetation on the public lands included within the expansion area can be described as sagebrush-steppe. The predominant species include big sage, bluebunch wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass and cheatgrass. Other species include basin wildrye, Idaho fescue, stiff sage, rabbit brush and balsamroot, among others. Noxious weeds (knapweed) are found along stream corridors and in heavily disturbed areas near Doris. (See map 2.)

There are no known occurrences of threatened or endangered plant species on the public lands included in the withdrawal

request; however, a complete inventory of these lands is lacking. Federal candidate species found in the general expansion area include Columbia milkvetch, Hoover's desert parsley and Hoover's tauschia. All three of these species are also state-proposed threatened. Besides these plants, there are numerous other threatened, endangered, sensitive and monitor plants that possibly may be found in the expansion area and could be present on the public lands.

Besides the lack of data on individual species, the area has also not been evaluated for plant community resource values. There are several ecosystem elements in the Columbia Basin Providence listed in the Washington State Natural Heritage Plan (1991) which may be found on these lands. If present, the protection of these elements is needed in order to preserve biodiversity in the state.

Wildlife Habitat:

Wildlife using the public lands within the expansion area include a variety of aquatic, terrestrial and avian species. In general, Johnson Creek and the various springs are of prime importance to wildlife and contribute to the diversity of species present. Included under aquatic species is a population of rainbow trout that use the perennial portion of Johnson Creek, part of which is located on public land. Steelhead have been noted in the lower portion of Johnson Creek, but apparently do not travel as far as the public land due to small falls and beaver dams on the creek.

Both large and small mammals are found within the general area of the proposed expansion. Species potentially using the public lands include elk, mule deer, bighorn

sheep, coyote, beaver, raccoon, mink, whitetail hare, blacktail hare, cottontail rabbit, bobcat, yellow-bellied marmot, northern pocket gopher, kangaroo rat, western harvest mouse, bushytail woodrat, shrews, and voles. Bird species include a variety of gamebirds; raptors and songbirds, among others. Examples include chukar, California quail, pheasant, Hungarian partridge, sagegrouse, great horned owls, burrowing owls, short-eared owls, red-tailed, rough-legged, Swainson's and ferruginous hawks, golden and bald eagles, osprey, northern harriers, prairie falcons, American kestrels, ravens, and magpies. Representative songbirds include the sage thrasher, loggerhead shrike, and sage sparrow.

Several of the species on the above list are regarded as species of concern. Examples include the bald eagle, which is federally listed as threatened; and others such as the prairie falcon, ferruginous and Swainson's hawk, and sagegrouse, which are either candidates for federal listing, or considered state sensitive.

Cultural Resources:

Current inventories of public lands (as well as other lands) in the expansion area for cultural resources are incomplete. Inventories performed to date have assessed about half of the expansion lands, and revealed more than 120 prehistoric sites. Types of sites found include quarries, camp areas and rock cairns.

Historic resources on the public lands include several portions of the abandoned Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (CMStP&P), which was completed in 1910. Approximately three and one-half

miles of the rail line are located on public lands included in the expansion area.

Recreation:

Recreational uses of the subject public lands include hunting, the riding of off-road vehicles, hiking, mountain-bike riding, camping, bird watching, horse-back riding and rock hounding. The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission's (WSPRC) John Wayne trail, which follows the abandoned CMStP&P railroad bed, adjoins five parcels of BLM, providing access via permit across intervening state owned portions of the trail (which cross private lands). Initial visitor use estimates range between 400 - 500 horseback riders over the first year of use. Kittitas County roads access three of the above five tracts, and one additional BLM parcel next to the Columbia River.

On the adjacent private lands, organized off-road vehicle events have been conducted over the past 10 years by the Stump Jumpers Motorcycle Club of Seattle. This event attracted from 2,000 - 3,000 individuals annually. This event results in an increase in incidental use of the public lands a few weeks prior to the event and for a few weeks afterwards.

Land Status:

According to the BLM master title plats, the United States owns the surface and mineral estate of 6,655.02 acres of lands within the proposed expansion area. The U.S. owns an additional 3,090.80 acres of minerals located beneath privately owned surface lands. All of the U.S. owned land in the expansion area is under the jurisdiction of the BLM. Of the federal mineral estate under private surface, a portion includes the

entire mineral estate and a portion embraces only oil and gas resources.

Rights-of-way and existing water power withdrawals that affect the subject public lands are listed below. Both the R/W's and the water power designations are existing rights to which the proposed land use will be subject to:

WAOR 45722 - R/W grant for transmission line and access road issued to Puget Sound Power and Light Company.

WAOR 146 - R/W reservation (44 LD 513) for access road issued to Bonneville Power Administration.

WAOR 4741 - R/W grant for transmission line and access road issued to Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company.

WAOR 8634 - R/W grant for transmission line issued to Pacific Power & Light Company.

WAW 05045 - R/W reservation (44 LD 513) for transmission line and access roads issued to Bonneville Power Administration.

Rights held by Kittitas County under Revised Statute 2477 to the portions of the Boylston and Doris County roads that cross portions of the subject public lands.

Power Site Reserve No. 257

Power Site Classification No. 349

Power Site Classification No. 405

Power Project No. 2114 (Project licensee is the Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County).

Two oil and gas leases existed on portions of the land until recently (WAOR 42127 and WAOR 40386). The former lease was terminated on July 1, 1992, and the latter on August 1, 1992. Grazing leases on the subject lands are held by Howard Clerf (GR 0799) and J.S. Paul (GR 0797). Two year cancellation notices were sent to both lessees on July 30, 1992. A total of 1,024 AUM's are involved in these grazing leases. According to regulation, they will retain their grazing privileges for a full two year period. Finally, there are no mining claims on the subject public lands and no other rights or encumbrances known to affect these lands.

Economics:

Payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) to Kittitas County from BLM amounts to about \$665 annually for the public land located within the proposed expansion area.

CHAPTER 4 - ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Introduction:

This chapter describes the environmental consequences that would result from implementing each of the alternatives with respects to impacts as they relate to the land management decisions made in the Spokane Resource Management Plan and to the specific resources in general.

Existing Resource Management Plan Decisions:

Under Alternative One (the Preferred Alternative), activities under the general mining laws would not be permitted however, the withdrawn public lands would remain open for mineral leasing such as oil and gas. The acquisition of lands would result in minimal affects to livestock grazing in the Johnson Creek area. The specific changes would include a likely change in livestock operators and the elimination of a need to develop a Coordinated Resource Management Plan. Proposed land exchanges would not be pursued. Recreation opportunities for off-road or off-highway vehicle riding, rockhounding and other recreational activities would be foregone. The acquisition of mitigation lands would alleviate some of the impacts relative to recreation by improving opportunities elsewhere. Riparian enhancement projects along Johnson Creek and its tributaries would not be implemented.

Under Alternative Two (Proposed

Withdrawal), the affects would be similar to those stated in alternative one above except that affects relative to the acquisition of mitigation lands would not be realized.

Under Alternative Three (No Action) the District would continue to implement the 1985 RMP. The exploration and development of mineral resources under the general mining laws would be permitted to continue. The decrease in access to the respective parcels, would curtail and possibly eliminate recreation opportunities. Since the BLM would maintain administrative access, the efforts to protect and improve wildlife habitat along Johnson Creek and its tributaries would continue. Livestock grazing would be permitted to continue. However, because of the restriction in access, the management of livestock most likely would be incorporated into grazing systems/plans prepared for the adjacent Dept. of Army lands.

Affected Resources

Soils:

Under Alternative 1 (Preferred) the impacts to soil and geologic resources would be similar in intensity and effect to those described in page 4-5 of Chapter 4 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Yakima Firing Center Proposed Land Acquisition (YFCPLA) and on page 38 of Chapter 4 of BLM's Spokane RMPA/EIS. Both of these documents indicate that the greatest impact from the expansion of the YFC would be soil erosion resulting from vehicular traffic associated with military maneuvers and/or by vehicular activities associated with oil and gas exploratory and development work. These actions would result in an increase in soil compaction and minor amounts of soil erosion. Soil

compaction and erosion would increase puddling, surface runoff erosion, and sediment delivery to streams such as Johnson Creek. These impacts would be caused by the construction and use of roads and trails, and other related activities that would expose the soil. Surface erosion would be short term, lasting from two to three growing seasons following reclamation.

Under Alternative 2 the impacts to soil resources would be similar to that described above, but greater than under Alternative 3 (No Action), since under alternative 3, military maneuvers would not occur.

Minerals:

Under all alternatives the impact to mineral resources would focus on the leasing and production of natural gas and coal-bed methane. Other leasables, such as oil and carbon dioxide are not likely to be present in any significant quantities. If production occurs, this would result in the irreversible and irretrievable loss of those resources that are extracted from the ground and utilized. The extent of the impacts would vary greatly depending on particular reservoirs and development methods employed.

Under Alternatives 1 & 2 there would be no impact relative to the development of locatable and mineral material resources, such as gold lead, zinc, Sand and gravel, because all minerals would be withdrawn from appropriation under existing laws. On the contrary, there would be no economic gain realized over the life of the withdrawal either.

Under alternative 3, there would be a low likelihood of extraction of any mineral

materials from the area due to the readily available sources in other areas.

Water:

Under Alternatives 1 and 2 the impact to water quality and quantity would be as described in the YFCPLA on page 4-4 under Water Quality and to those described in the RMPA/EIS on page 34, Water Resources. The YFCPLA indicates: "Increased vehicular traffic in the immediate vicinity of streambeds, as well as stream crossings, would result in localized increases in turbidity and temperature from direct physical disturbances to the streambeds and the surrounding riparian vegetation. There would be indirect long-term increases in sedimentation of streams, Johnson Creek and its tributaries, due to vehicular activity in the watershed." The RMPA/EIS indicates: "There would be a decrease in water quality from vehicular activity near streams due to surface runoff and increased sedimentation. "Long-term sediment increases would be minor and directly associated with active well sites and road surfaces, subsurface flows from seismic or geophysical activities utilizing explosive charges, thumpers, etc. could occur if these activities are within close proximity of springs. This could result in reduced flows or even the loss of all waters to existing springs and wells. Conversely, the flows could be increased. The event of either decreased or increased water flows could have long lasting and possibly permanent impacts."

Under Alternative 3, the impacts would be similar to those described in the RMPA/EIS Water Resources on page 34 relative to oil and gas leasing operations. Impacts relative to military maneuvers would not pertain.

Vegetation:

Under Alternatives 1, and 2, the impact to the vegetation resource would be as described in the YFCPLA document under Vegetation/Habitat Types on pages 4-7. Primary impacts include loss of vegetation due to trampling by wheeled and tracked vehicles, an increased spread of noxious weeds by off-road vehicle traffic, and modification of existing vegetative communities by fire. ("Because of the type of activity occurring on YFC, there are more wild fires at YFC than on adjacent lands.") These impacts will occur in both riparian and upland areas. Overall, there will be a loss in vegetative cover due to the establishment of maneuver corridors and trails. Because of the heavy composition of sagebrush in the expansion area, and its inability to sprout from roots after fire, wildfires could substantially alter the habitat association. Consequently, changes could occur in the native shrub-steppe vegetation type, with an increase in the number of perennial and annual grasses and forbs.

Generally impacts relative to endangered plant species would be minimal due to the adherence to the Endangered Species Act and to written policy to consider the effects of the department of the Army's actions on federal candidate and state listed and candidate species as well. However, the YFCPLA document does indicate potential impacts to the Columbia milkvetch, Hoover's tauschia, and Hoover's desert parsley (page 4-9). It is noted that vehicle traffic may have a direct adverse affect on the first two species, but little is known about their response to disturbance. Two studies suggest that populations of Columbia milkvetch may respond favorably to disturbance for the short term, with a later crash in population size. The latter species,

because of its specific habitat requirements, would likely not be impacted (if it is present in the expansion area). It is also unknown whether there would be any secondary impacts to these species due to alteration of the ecosystem. However another study suggests there is an increase of insect seed predators affecting seed set in disturbed areas of Columbia milkvetch.

Under Alternative 3 the impacts would be as described in the RMPA/EIS on page 35. "Vegetative communities disturbed by vehicles during oil and gas leasing and operations would take at least 10-15 years to recover completely. Seismic lines may become ORV routes and cattle trails, resulting in permanent loss of vegetation in limited areas. Similar impacts could be expected during the development stages. Although considered important locally, these impacts are not expected to significantly affect the human environment."

Wildlife:

The potential impacts to wildlife are addressed in the Army's YFCPLA document on pages 4-10. In summary, under Alternatives 1, and 2, indirect impacts will arise from modification of the existing vegetation, and direct impacts will be caused by actual disruption of wildlife by Army maneuvers (the likely impacts on the vegetation and soil resource are discussed above). These impacts would likely cause a decrease in both the numbers and diversity of species present. Regarding fisheries, the increases in off-road vehicle traffic, road construction and wildfire would cause an increase in the sedimentation and exposure of the Johnson Creek stream bed, resulting in a lowered water quality, thus reducing the fish carrying capacity of the stream. As

noted above under vegetation, the Army is subject to the Endangered Species Act (as is the BLM). The Army has completed an ESA Section 7 consultation with the FWS about the effect of the overall expansion project on the bald eagle and peregrine falcon (see Appendix 1 of the Final EIS/YFCPLA). A Biological Assessment is also presented in Appendix B of the draft EIS/YFCPLA.

Impacts relative to State listed and those proposed for State listing would be minimal due to the adherence to the Endangered Species Act and to written policy to consider the effects of the department of the Army's actions on Federal candidate and State listed and candidate species as well.

Under Alternative 3 the impact would be as described in the RMPA/EIS on page 37. "Direct losses to wildlife habitat would be limited to areas disturbed by geophysical lines, construction of roads and drill pads. Oil and gas leasing and operations could also result in a loss of nesting habitat for some special status species. These impacts could be both short term and long term depending upon degree of habitat alteration."

Cultural Resources:

Because of the amount of surface disturbance to the subject public lands by the Army's use and maintenance for military maneuvers under Alternatives 1, and 2, the impacts to unknown or unidentified cultural resources could be high. The potential impacts are discussed in detail in the YFCPLA document (pages 4-22 through 4-23). Under BLM administration, any undertaking that could have an effect on cultural resources is subject to the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act

(ARPA). The Army is likewise subject to these acts, and must comply with its provisions prior to engaging in activities that could disturb known cultural sites. Because the Army is bound by the same law as BLM, the actual transfer of the administration of the public lands through the proposed withdrawal is not subject to NHPA review.

Recreation:

Under Alternative 2 another 6300 acres of public land would be removed from wildlife based recreation. Under Alternative 1 this effect would be mitigated by the purchase of other lands opened to the public.

Under Alternatives 1 and 2, the following would occur. The FEIS/YFCPLA indicates in section 4 Environmental & Socioeconomic Impacts, 4.4.1 Land Use, pg. 4-13, Non motorized recreation use of the original corridor would also be available on a permit basis when training permits. The John Wayne Trail would be relocated to the northern boundary and would be made available year round. Hunting would be allowed but on a permit basis as training allows. Recreational use of the expansion areas would not be open to ORVs. However, club sponsored events, not for profit, may be requested and would be considered on a case by case basis. The same rules that apply to other non-military uses would be applied to these requests. Rock hunting activities normally would not be permitted in the expansion area, however, Fort Lewis is requesting permission to make specific areas of the YFC available for rock hunting activities.

Except for the activities authorized by permits such as hunting, and club sponsored events, and use of the John Wayne Trail as

explained above, recreation opportunities would basically be eliminated from the public lands within the YFC expansion area. Indirect activities associated with the motorcycle outing that has been occurring annually for the last 10 years would be eliminated. Precluding these activities could result in a shift of recreation use patterns to other areas less suited to these respective forms of recreation, or the subsequent elimination of some forms of recreation to specific groups or individuals.

Under Alternative 3, except for the activities the Department of the Army authorizes by permit as indicated above, recreation activities would be basically eliminated due to limited access.

Land Use:

Under Alternatives 1 & 2, the affects to land uses other than recreation and mineral extraction focus primarily on livestock grazing. The other uses of the lands, rights-of-way and water power withdrawals, will continue and the Army's use of the lands will be subject to them. The exception may be the rights held by the county for the Boylston and Doris roads. Once the lands served by these roads are under Army control, they would presumably petition the county to vacate the roads.

The two existing grazing lessees will lose their grazing privileges in approximately two years time. Together, they provide 1024 Animal Unit Months of Livestock forage. The impact on the land economy would be negligible.

Under Alternative 3, the effective use of the public lands may be rendered impossible prior to the end of the two years, because

the Army is in the process of acquiring the private lands that adjoin and provide access to the public lands, The permanent loss of these grazing privileges is a definite impact, given the large amount of acreage involved. However, even if the public lands were not withdrawn and the leases continued, the lessees would have difficulty using the lands given the Army's planned acquisition and control of the adjacent checkerboarded private lands. The Army has stated that they will offer similar 5 year competitive livestock grazing leases for the expansion area lands as they currently do for the lands within the existing YFC boundary. However, there is no guarantee that the existing lessees will be able to obtain a lease from the Army, therefore continuing their use of the public lands. An Army offer might not be acceptable if local ranchers are out of business.

Economics:

Under Alternatives 1 and 2, the annual PILT payments of \$665 to Kittitas County from BLM would cease as a result of the withdrawal. PILT payments would not be affected under Alternative 3.

CHAPTER 5 - CONSULTATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Introduction

This document was prepared by an interdisciplinary team of specialists from BLM's Wenatchee Resource Area of the Spokane District. The process used to develop this RMPA included public participation, interagency coordination, and review and updating of the existing resource information. The actual writing of this amendment began in September of 1992. Consultation and coordination with a number of agencies, organizations, and individuals occurred in various ways throughout this planning process.

Public Participation

A notice was published in the Federal Register on August 26, 1992 announcing commencement of a 30-day scoping period and the start up of this planning process. Notice was also made at that time of a public meeting to be conducted on September 23 in Ellensburg, Washington to discuss this proposal. A draft Plan was prepared and distributed for a 45-day public comment period beginning on March 15, 1993. Ten responses were received. A summary of the respondents, their comments, and BLM responses is included in the Appendix.

Agencies Groups and Individuals Consulted

The planning team consulted with and/or received input from the following:

Federal Agencies

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Bureau of Mines
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Department of Energy
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. Soil Conservation Service
U.S. Department of the Army Fort Lewis,
Yakima Firing Center

State and Local Governments

Washington State Department of Natural
Resources
Washington State Department of Wildlife

Copies of the draft have been sent to those listed above as well as the officials, and agencies listed below:

Government Agencies

Federal

U.S. Bureau of Indian affairs
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. National Park Service
U.S. Agricultural Stabilization and
Conservation Service

State

Office of the Governor
Office of the Secretary of State
Washington State Commissioner of Public
Lands
Washington State Conservation Commission
Washington State Department of Agriculture
Washington State Department of Ecology
Washington State Department of Fisheries

Washington State Department of
Transportation
Washington State Division of Geology and
Earth Resources
Washington State Farm Bureau
Washington State Library

Washington State Parks and Recreation
Commission

Washington State Superintendent of Public
Instruction

Washington State Treasurer

County

Benton County Planning Department
Benton County Board of Commissioners
Grant County Planning Department
Grant County Board of Commissioners
Kittitas County Planning Department
Kittitas County Board of Commissioners
Yakima County Planning Department
Yakima County Board of Commissioners

Congressional

U.S. Senator Patricia Murray
U.S. Senator Slade Gorton
U.S. Representative Maria Cantwell,
District 1
U.S. Representative Allan B. Swift,
District 2
U.S. Representative Jolene Unsoeld,
District 3
U.S. Representative Jay Inslee, District 4
U.S. Representative Thomas Foley,
District 5
U.S. Representative Norman O. Dicks,
District 6
U.S. Representative Jim McDermott,
District 7
U.S. Representative Jennifer Dunn,
District 8
U.S. Representative Mike Kreidler,
District 9

State Legislature

Senator Marilyn Rasmussen, District 2
Senator John A. Moyer, District 3
Senator Bob McCaslin, District 4
Senator Kathleen Drew, District 5

Senator James E. West, District 6
Senator Scott Barr, District 7
Senator Jim Jesernig, District 8
Senator Eugene A. Prince, District 9
Senator George L. Sellar, District 12
Senator Harold Hochstatter, District 13
Senator Alex A. Deccio, District 14
Senator Irv Newhouse, District 15
Senator Valoria H. Loveland, District 16
Senator Dean Sutherland, District 17
Representative Lisa J. Brown, District 3
Representative Dennis A. Dellwo, District 3
Representative George Orr, District 4
Representative Mike Padden, District 4
Representative Jean Silver, District 6
Representative Todd Mielke, District 6
Representative Steve Fuhrman, District 7
Representative Bob Morton, District 7
Representative Curtis Ludwig, District 8
Representative Lane Bray, District 8
Representative Mark G. Schoesler, District 9
Representative Larry Sheahan, District 9
Representative Clyde Ballard, District 12
Representative Dale Foreman, District 12
Representative Gary Chandler, District 13
Representative Mick Hansen, District 13
Representative Betty L. Edmondson,
District 14
Representative Dave Lemmon, District 14
Representative Margaret Rayburn,
District 15
Representative Barbara Lisk, District 15
Representative Richard Neher, District 16
Representative Dave Mastin, District 16
Representative W. Kim Peery, District 17
Representative Holly Myers, District 17

Canadian Agencies

International Boundary Commission,
Canadian Section
Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing, British
Columbia

List of Preparers

Dana Peterson, Range Conservationist, BLM

Pamela Camp, Botanist, BLM

Neal Hedges, Wildlife Biologist, BLM

Brent Cunderla, Geologist, BLM

Gary Yeager, Planning & Env. Coord.

Recreation Planner, BLM

William Schurger, Realty Specialist, BLM

James Fisher, Wenatchee Resource Area

Manager, BLM

Appendix

Summary of Comments

Copies of the draft plan amendment were sent to over 800 individuals, groups, and organizations who expressed an interest in the use and management of the BLM administered land in eastern Washington.

Summary of Comments and Responses

Comments received were from both individuals and organizations. A list of the respondents and responses to their comments follows.

Comment letters

1. Mr. Lenard Steiner, Conservation Committee of East Lake Washington Audubon Society.
2. Mrs. E. Zahan, of Port Ludlow, Washington.
3. Office of the Commissioners, Whitman County Courthouse.
4. Mr. Ted A. Clausing, of Washington Department of Wildlife, Habitat Management Division.
5. Mr. Michael L. Estes, of Richland Rod & Gun Club, Richland, Washington.
6. Mr. Ray L. Wondercheck, District Conservationist, Soil Conservation Service, Yakima, Washington.

7. Mr. Robert D. Panther, Executive Director, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, Spokane, Washington.

8. Mr. Edward P. Branstoettner, of Spokane, Washington.

9. Mr. Ken Bevis, President, Kittitas Audubon Society, Ellensburg, Washington.

10. Mr. Jeff Haas, of U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Olympia, Washington.

Summary of Comments and Responses

1. Comment - What does a land withdrawal involve?

Response - This land withdrawal would result in a shift of land management administration from the Bureau of Land Management to that of the U. S. Department of the Army. The withdrawal would change the management emphasis from multiple use to a more single use purpose. In this case for military training purposes.

2. Comment - Who is responsible for land management after the withdrawal is completed.

Response - The Department of the Army would be responsible for management of the public land after the withdrawal.

3. Comment - What does protection of six miles of Johnson Creek riparian habitat mean?

Response - This statement refers to the existing decisions made in the Spokane District Resource Management Plan. In this plan, emphasis would be made to minimize disturbance to riparian areas by limiting disturbance to stream banks and riparian areas such as the construction of fences to exclude livestock or ORVs.

4. Comment - What type of management policies will be used on all of these lands to ensure that the sensitive species of wildlife now dependent upon the area do not become endangered in the State of Washington because of loss of habitat.

Response - Impacts relative to State listed and those proposed for State listing would be minimal due to the adherence to the Endangered Species Act and to written policy to consider the effects of the department of the Army's actions on federal candidate and state listed and candidate species as well. The text has been amended to indicate this point. See the section entitled "Wildlife" on page 15 of Chapter 4 "Environmental Consequences."

5. Comment - Eliminate mechanized recreation.

Response - Under Alternative 3 mechanized recreation (ORV use) would be limited to designated roads and trails. Under Alternatives 1 and 2 ORV use would be authorized by permit only.

6. Comment - We support Alternative One with emphasis on the acquisition of mitigation lands for their wildlife and recreation values.

Response - The continued degradation of high value wildlife habitat and loss of

recreation land is an ever increasing problem in the Columbia Basin. This was the reason for the including the acquisition of mitigation lands into one of the alternatives.

7. Comment - Evaluate replacement lands for their recreational as well as their wildlife potential.

Response - Any lands that may be acquired as a result of this plan amendment will be evaluated for both wildlife habitat, recreation potential and general management opportunities.

8. Comment - If land transactions were to occur in Whitman County, concern was expressed that PILT should be at a minimum equal to and stay equal with tax revenues generated from such lands now and in the future.

Response - In Whitman County PILT payments would not exceed \$0.75 per acre of entitlement land within the boundaries of the county. This fee, however, would be reduced by the amount of certain Federal land payments that were received by the unit of government in the preceding fiscal year. Fees such as those received from federal grazing leases or mineral lease are the types of payments that would reduce the PILT entitlements.

9. Comment - We are opposed to the expansion of the Yakima Firing Center, and therefore support Alternative 3, No Action.

Response - The Department of the Army is in the process of acquiring all of the private land surrounding the public lands identified in this plan amendment. (See maps 1 & 2.) This in itself will preclude or severely restrict use of the public lands by the general public.

10. Comment - Are the public lands proposed for withdrawal located within the Yakima Firing Center's Northern Expansion Area, and were these lands analyzed in the environmental impact statement that was prepared for the proposed land acquisition?

Response - Yes, the public lands are located within the Northern Expansion Area. They were addressed on a general basis in the environmental impact statement for the Yakima Firing Center's proposed land acquisition. However, this type of land withdrawal was not specifically analyzed or considered in BLM's existing Resource Management Plan. Therefore, a resource management plan amendment and environmental assessment was needed to address the potential impacts of this type of withdrawal.

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SPOKANE DISTRICT OFFICE
EAST 4217 MAIN AVENUE
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