

Planning Update



Butte Draft Resource Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement in Progress

Currently, the Butte Field Office is working to complete the Butte Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (Draft RMP/EIS).

The Butte Field Office plans to release the document for public comment this winter followed by a 90-day public comment period. The BLM will host public meetings and offer presentations on the Draft RMP/EIS to agencies and organized groups during the public comment period.

The printed document is expected to be at least two volumes containing several hundred pages each, as well as many oversized maps. Alternatively, the entire document will be available as Adobe PDF files on CD. The free Adobe reader will also be provided on the CD for your convenience. The document will also be available electronically on the Butte RMP website at <http://www.mt.blm.gov/bdo/rmp/index.htm>.

In the interest of reducing printing costs and tax dollars spent, we ask that you return the enclosed postcard by November 15, 2006 to indicate your document preference. Please include your name and mailing information. You may also respond by e-mailing the RMP secretary at Traci_Scott@blm.gov or the RMP Project Manager Timothy_LaMarr@blm.gov. *We will assume you want your name removed from the mailing list if we do not receive a response by November 15, 2006.*

Update on Alternative Development

After conducting public scoping meetings and enlisting the aid of public working groups to develop travel planning alternatives, the Butte Field Office has developed a range of preliminary RMP alternatives.

This bulletin includes a brief summary and some highlights of the draft alternatives included in the DEIS. BLM resource specialists developed these alternatives in order to present the overall range of management strategies. Alternatives include a "No Action" alternative

(Alternative A) which represents current management, and three "action" alternatives (Alternatives B, C, and D) that represent reasonable, yet varying responses to the issues identified as part of the planning process. The goal is to offer broad-scale options that simultaneously address all resource categories (as opposed to focusing on one particular resource).

Description of Preliminary Draft Alternatives

ALTERNATIVE A (NO ACTION) - Alternative A is the continuation of present management, referred to as "No Action". This alternative would continue present management practices based on existing land use plans and other management decision documents. Direction contained in the Headwaters Resource Management Plan would continue to be implemented. Direction contained in existing laws, regulations, and policies would also continue. The current levels, methods, and mix of multiple use management would continue, and resource values would receive attention at present levels. Motorized access and motorized recreational opportunities would not change from the current condition. Eligible Wild and Scenic River segments would continue to be managed to protect the values that make them eligible.

ALTERNATIVE B (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE) - This alternative includes moderate levels of resource protection, use and restoration. Alternative B places a priority on vegetative restoration. Production of forest-based commodity resources from vegetation restoration activities would be greater than with Alternatives A and C but less than in Alternative D. Project-level wildlife habitat and riparian protection measures would be greater than in Alternatives A and D, but less than in Alternative C.

Alternative B emphasizes a balance of motorized and non-motorized recreation and access opportunities compared to the other action alternatives (C and D). Two river segments would be recommended as "suitable" for Wild and Scenic River designation. Oil and gas leasing constraints would be more restrictive than in Alternatives

A and D, but less restrictive than in Alternative C. At this point, Alternative B has been identified as the "Preferred Alternative."

ALTERNATIVE C - This alternative provides less active vegetative restoration than the other alternatives. Production of forest-based commodity resources from vegetation restoration activities would be less than with the other alternatives. This alternative emphasizes more project-level wildlife habitat and riparian protection measures than in any other alternative.

Alternative C emphasizes non-motorized recreation opportunities more than the other alternatives. All potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern would be designated with this alternative. All four river segments eligible for Wild and Scenic status would be found suitable and recommended for Wild and Scenic designation. Oil and gas leasing constraints would be more restrictive in this alternative than in any of the other alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE D - This alternative emphasizes more active management to restore vegetative communities. Alternative D would produce the greatest level of forest-based commodities from vegetation restoration activities of all alternatives.

Alternative D emphasizes motorized access and recreation opportunities more than Alternatives B and C. No river segments eligible for Wild and Scenic status would be recommended as "suitable" for Wild and Scenic designation. Oil and gas leasing constraints would be the least restrictive of all the alternatives.

Butte RMP Tentative Schedule	
Task	Approximate Date
Draft RMP/EIS to Public/Start Public Comment Period	January 25, 2007
Public Meetings	February, 2007
90 Day Public Comment Period ends	April 26, 2007
Proposed Final RMP/EIS to Public/Start Protest Period	November 19, 2007
30 day Protest Period ends	December 19, 2007
Record of Decision (if unprotested)	February 14, 2008
Record of Decision (if protested)	May 15, 2008

Visit the Butte RMP website at
<http://www.mt.blm.gov/bdo/rmp/index.htm>
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Highlights of the Draft Butte Resource Management Plan Alternatives				
Issue	A (No Action)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Vegetation Communities				
Treatment Acres per Decade to Restore Vegetative Communities				
Grasslands	5,250	2,750 to 11,800	1,250 to 2,000	5,500 to 19,050
Shrublands	0	1,000 to 3,650	250 to 750	1,850 to 6,800
Dry Forest	5,100	4,150 to 14,750	2,050 to 4,800	7,300 to 18,200
Cool Moist Forest	2,400	450 to 3,750	50 to 550	1,000 to 5,050
Riparian	30	200 to 700	75 to 200	300 to 1,700
Noxious Weeds	20,000	21,000 to 50,000	16,000 to 38,000	25,000 to 61,000
Streamside Management Zone (SMZ)/Riparian Protection Zone (RPZ)	3,270 acres in SMZ, timber harvest allowed as per SMZ law.	10,461 acres in RPZs where primary focus is riparian health, some timber harvest allowed.	19,620 acres in RPZs where primary focus is riparian health, no timber harvest allowed.	Same as Alternative A.
Probable Sale Quantity per Decade	12 to 27 million board feet (MMBF) 40,000 to 97,000 hundred cubic feet (CCF)	9 to 25 MMBF 33,000 to 91,000 CCF	5 to 12 MMBF 19,000 to 41,000 CCF	10 to 30 MMBF 36,000 to 107,000 CCF
Livestock Grazing	273,000 acres 25,677 AUMs	265,000 acres 24,710 AUMs active use and 1,312 AUMs forage reserve	262,000 acres 24,710 AUMs active use and 936 AUMs forage reserve	Same as Alternative A.
Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat, Special Status and Priority Plant and Animal Species				
Permanent Open Road Densities	No limitations on permanent road densities.	Moderate restrictions on permanent open road densities in big game winter range/calving areas and grizzly bear distribution zone.	Greatest restrictions on permanent open road densities in big game winter range/calving areas and grizzly bear distribution zone.	Slight restrictions on permanent open road densities in big game winter range/calving areas and grizzly bear distribution zone.
Travel Management and Access				
Miles of Road Managed for Wheeled Vehicle Access	Open Yearlong – 471.8 Open with Restrictions – 157.4 Closed Yearlong - 172	Open Yearlong – 261 Open with Restrictions – 155.9 Closed Yearlong – 370.9	Open Yearlong – 244.3 Open with Restrictions – 128.1 Closed Yearlong – 425.3	Open Yearlong – 304.8 Open with Restrictions – 173.8 Closed Yearlong – 309.6
Snowmobiles	Existing management includes a variety of unrestricted area cross-country travel, seasonally restricted cross-country travel, travel on all wheeled designated routes and snowmobile use only routes.	With some exceptions (within site-specific travel plans) cross-country snowmobile use would be allowed, as well as travel on all existing routes, conditions permitting.	Restricted to designated routes only December 2 nd to May 15 th (except for under existing Elkhorn Mountains and Clancy-Unionville travel plans).	Same as Alternative B.
Recreation				
Scratchgravel Hills Motorized Recreation	Motorized vehicle use allowed.	Closed to motorized vehicle use after dark.	Closed to both motorized and non-motorized use after dark.	Same as Alternative A.
Visual Resource Management (acres by VRM)	VRM I = 31,500 VRM II = 25,400 VRM III and IV = 245,000	VRM I = 31,500 VRM II = 43,600 VRM III = 125,200 VRM IV = 101,700	VRM I = 31,500 VRM II = 62,300 VRM III = 151,700 VRM IV = 56,500	VRM I = 31,500 VRM II = 1,300 VRM III = 142,900 VRM IV = 126,300
Recreation Opportunity Spectrum ¹	No ROS classifications would be established to guide the management of appropriate settings and visitor opportunity experiences.	SPNM– 36,800 acres SPM – 66,500 acres RN – 171,000 acres RM – 16,600 acres R – 11,000 acres	SPNM –63,700 acres SPM –61,600 acres RN – 158,100 acres RM – 15,900 acres R – 2,700 acres	SPNM – 30,000 acres SPM – 32,300 acres RN – 186,100 acres RM – 19,600 acres RI – 34,000 acres
¹ SPNM = Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, SPM = Semi-Primitive Motorized, RN = Roaded Natural, RM = Roaded Modified , R = Rural				
Special Recreation Management Areas	Priority areas: Holter Lake/Sleeping Giant, Lewis & Clark National Trail, Upper Big Hole River, Humbug Spires and Scratchgravel Hills.	Priority areas: Holter Lake/Missouri River, Sleeping Giant, Hauser Lake/Missouri River, Toston Reservoir/Missouri River, Scratchgravel Hills, Sheep Mountain, Pipestone, Upper Big Hole River, Humbug Spires.	Same as Alternative B.	Priority areas: Holter Lake/Missouri River, Hauser Lake/Missouri River, Toston Reservoir/Missouri River, Pipestone, Upper Big Hole River.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	The suitability study would not be completed and protective management would continue indefinitely.	Recommended as suitable: • Muskrat Creek • Upper Missouri River (pending Forest Service concurrence)	Recommended as suitable: • Muskrat Creek • Upper Missouri River • Upper Big Hole River • Moose Creek	No river/stream segments would be recommended as suitable.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern				
	11,679 acres: • Sleeping Giant ACEC	Approximately 73,666 acres: • Sleeping Giant • Elkhorns • Humbug Spires • Spokane Creek • Ringing Rocks	Approximately 87,893 acres: • Sleeping Giant • Elkhorns • Humbug Spires • Spokane Creek • Ringing Rocks	Approximately 23,695 acres: • Sleeping Giant • Elkhorns • Humbug Spires
Oil and Gas Leasing				
Available for Oil and Gas Leasing	629,089 acres	649,367 acres	77,490 acres	649,324 acres