

ISSUE #4

How will conservation strategies and recovery plans for threatened and endangered and Species of Special Concern/Sensitive Species be applied in the planning area and how will that impact commercial uses?

A number of conservation strategies and recovery plans have been or are being developed for species listed under the Endangered Species Act. In efforts to prevent listing of species in the future, conservation strategies for certain other species are also in place or in progress. Interest is high in how BLM will integrate these strategies into the RMP and how any guidelines identified will be applied to actions in the planning area. The amount of flexibility available to the BLM in the adoption of recovery or conservation guidelines in the RMP will depend on whether the species is listed under the Endangered Species Act, and whether any NEPA analysis has been conducted for management strategies. However, the BLM is required by provisions in the Endangered Species Act to consider actions that would prevent the future listing of species, as well as to assist in the recovery of listed species.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The BLM does not manage populations, nor have jurisdiction over the listing or delisting of species under the Endangered Species Act. The RMP will focus on the management of habitat and the application of conservation and recovery guidelines to activities that occur on public lands. For listed species, this will require consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

At present, six (6) threatened or endangered species, one (1) proposed threatened species, and one (1) candidate species are present in the planning area (though not necessarily on public land managed by the BLM). These include:

- Whooping crane (*Grus americana*) (Endangered)
- Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) (Endangered)
- Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) (Threatened)
- Grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) (Threatened)
- Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) (Threatened)
- Ute ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) (Threatened)
- Mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*) (Proposed as Threatened)
- Arctic grayling–fluvial population (*Thymallus arcticus*) (Candidate)

Species of Special Concern and Sensitive Species

There are a number of plant, animal and fish species that the BLM considers “Species of Special Concern” (animals and fish) or “Sensitive” (plants). The Montana/Dakotas BLM lists were last updated in 1996. The Montana/Dakotas BLM has initiated an effort to review and update these lists in 2002. The RMP will consider appropriate tools for management of these species or their habitats across the array of alternatives that are developed in the plan. If conservation strategies are already in place (as in the case of the Westslope Cutthroat Trout), those strategies will be considered in the RMP.

Sage Grouse

While sage grouse is not listed as a Species of Special Concern on the BLM's 1996 list, sage grouse have received an increasing amount of attention as populations across the west have declined. It is anticipated sage grouse will become a Species of Special Concern as a result of updating the list. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is currently leading an interagency and public effort to develop a Statewide sage grouse management strategy. Again, this strategy and any guidelines it contains will be considered in the RMP.