

Dillon Resource Management Plan

Update #4 November 2002

Bureau of Land Management
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This is the fourth in a series of update letters you'll be receiving as we move through the planning process and develop an RMP for BLM managed public lands in the Dillon Field Office.



If you received this letter, you are on our mailing and/or email list. If there is a problem with your address information, or you would like to be removed, please contact Andrea Wiggins at (406) 683-8022 or send an email to MT_Dillon_RMP@blm.gov. The BLM Dillon Field Office address is 1005 Selway Drive, Dillon, Montana 59725. If you know of someone who would like to be added to the mailing list, pass this information on and have them contact Andrea or the email box.

You may also visit our website at www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp.

Since you received our last newsletter in May, the planning team has been using information from the analysis of the management situation to prepare a variety of documents. We issued a final report on eligibility determinations for river segments being inventoried under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Work continues on a table organized by program outlining current management that will form the basis of the No Action Alternative. The planning team also identified overall goals by program and is finalizing a description of the affected environment to be incorporated into the Draft RMP. Finally, we have been evaluating nominations of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern to determine whether they meet the relevance and importance criteria and should be considered further in development of the plan.

Our Schedule

The original planning schedule we shared with you in our first *Update* indicated that alternatives would be formulated by now, and we would be working on the environmental consequences section of the Draft RMP/EIS. A variety of factors have prevented us from meeting this goal, including additional time provided for operation of the subgroups convened by the Western Montana Resource Advi-

sory Council (RAC). In addition, Beaverhead County, as a Cooperating Agency under NEPA, requested that BLM extend the timeframe to gather additional input from the public on the formulation of alternatives. Other stakeholders have also expressed interest in additional public involvement opportunities.

This extension has been approved and we have

adjusted our schedule accordingly. We will be working with Beaverhead County and the Montana Consensus Council over the next few weeks to finalize additional outreach efforts to assist in development of alternatives. Our anticipated schedule has been modified as follows, assuming proposed budget and staffing remains intact.

Task	Estimated Target Completion
Release ACEC Report	November 2002
Release RMP Digest/Workshop Materials	January 2003
Convene Public Workshops	February/March 2003
Feedback, Analysis, Document Preparation	April 2003 to March 2004
Release Draft RMP/EIS	March 2004
Public Comment Period	April through June 2004
Address Comments, Make Changes	June 2004 through March 2005
Release Proposed RMP/EIS	March 2005
Release Approved Plan/Record of Decision	August 2005

Additional Public Involvement Opportunities

Public workshops will be held throughout southwest Montana in early 2003 to gather information to be incorporated into plan alternatives. Watch for a future *Update* to announce the time and location of these workshops. Beaverhead County and the Montana

Consensus Council will be convening these workshops and providing feedback to the BLM planning team for use in formulating alternatives. As part of this effort, we are working on focus questions to assist the public in providing specific comments to address the ma-

ior planning issues. Our hope is that this new information coupled with comments received earlier in the RMP process will help the planning team develop the best possible alternatives from which to select and for the public to review.

Western Montana RAC Subgroups

The Western Montana RAC is the BLM's official advisory council for the Western Zone, including the Dillon Field Office. The RAC has been intensively involved in portions of the Dillon RMP and convened three subgroups to conduct work on the following three different components of the plan:

- Evaluation of nominated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)

- Travel management recommendations
- Suitability considerations for river segments found eligible as part of the Wild and Scenic River assessment

At their June and September meetings, the RAC heard reports from the subgroups and after discussion, made recommendations to the BLM to be incorporated

into the RMP. Subgroup topics of ACECs, Travel Management, and Wild and Scenic Rivers are discussed in this *Update*. The next RAC meeting is scheduled for December 19, 2002, in Butte. RAC meetings are open to the public and provide a comment period where members of the public may address the RAC regarding their concerns or suggestions on the management of public lands.

Update on ACECs

Work is almost complete on an informational report that documents the evaluation of relevance and importance for over 60 ACEC nominations being reviewed in this planning process. This report provides information to the public regarding the work completed by both the Western Montana RAC subgroup and the BLM planning team to evaluate the nominations

against the relevance and importance criteria. Potential ACECs that will be considered further in the RMP process will be identified in the report. However, the opportunity for the public to comment on the assessment of relevance and importance occurs when the Draft RMP/EIS is made available for public review. Therefore, we will not be request-

ing comment on this informational report. Suggestions for management related to potential ACECs will be part of the information collected from the public during workshop sessions on alternative development. Look for the ACEC report later in November!

Update on Travel Management

The RMP will designate routes across the planning area as open, closed, or limited. Because of the high level of interest in this issue, the Western Montana RAC convened a subgroup to work on this controversial task. After eight meetings, the travel management subgroup presented maps to be

used by the BLM as a baseline for routes to be designated open across BLM lands, along with several guiding principles for BLM to consider as work progresses on the plan. The RAC approved the guiding principles with some modification, and approved the base maps, contingent on removal

of the “play area” as delineated by the subgroup. These maps will be part of the information available to the public during the alternative workshop sessions to be held in early 2003. Eventually, route designations made in the RMP will be used to update the Inter-agency Travel Plan maps.

Update on Wild and Scenic Rivers

In July 2002, the Dillon Field Office finalized the determinations of eligibility on the rivers studied within the planning area. Everyone on the RMP mailing list received a copy of the Final Report that identified eight river segments as eligible for further study. These eight included Bear Creek in the Centennial Valley area, the Beaverhead River, two segments of the Big Hole River, Big Sheep Creek, and three segments of the Madison River. The

RAC convened a subgroup to make recommendations on which, if any, of the eight river segments should be recommended as suitable for designation based on a variety of criteria provided in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The RAC forwarded the subgroup recommendations to the BLM that five of the eight river segments should be considered unsuitable; no agreement was reached on the three segments along the Madison River. Because of this work, the

preferred alternative in the Draft RMP/EIS will include these findings, though the planning team will also present and analyze other alternatives to provide a range of options. Focus questions during the public workshop sessions on alternative development will provide an opportunity for additional public input to be considered as alternatives are formulated.

Want to Know More?

On the Web: You can visit our website at www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp. We update this site with new information as we develop it, and you can find previous releases of *Updates* and other information.

Over the Phone: We have a toll-free number that you can call to hear the latest information on particular topics. Dial 1-877-521-2889 and select your options from the menu.

In Person: Call us with your questions. Contact Andrea Wiggins at (406) 683-8022 or Renee Johnson at (406) 683-8016 and they will answer your questions or put you in touch with someone who can.

**Thank you for your interest and participation in the Dillon
Resource Management Plan!**

*For further information on the RMP and the planning process, contact
Renee Johnson, RMP Project Leader at (406) 683-8016.*



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