

July 13, 2004

BUTTE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (RMP) REVISION

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

The Butte Field Office will be revising the Headwaters Resource Management Plan (RMP) over the next three years. Because the new RMP will apply only to the lands in the Butte Field Office area (instead of being split between the Butte and Lewistown field offices as the Headwaters RMP is), the new document will be called the Butte RMP. Land under the jurisdiction of the Lewistown Field Office will continue to be managed under the Headwaters RMP.

ISSUES:

The issues and management concerns are based on the Preparation Plan and public scoping results. Preparation of the RMP will afford many opportunities for collaboration with local, state, federal and tribal governments and land management agencies, public interest groups, and public land users. As a result, issues and concerns may need modification during this process.

Issues identified are: vegetation management, special status species, water quality/quantity/aquatic species, travel management and access, special management area designations (wild and scenic rivers, wilderness study areas, areas of critical environmental concern), commercial uses (including oil and gas), and land ownership adjustments. Other management concerns identified for the RMP revision include: air quality, abandoned mine lands, soil resources, cultural and paleontological resources, visual resource management, and social/economic concerns.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

In December 2002 the Montana State Office approved a Preparation Plan; in August 2003 a contractor (Tetra Tech) was hired to assist in the preparation of the Butte RMP. Public scoping began December 19, 2003, with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI), and ended February 17, 2004. A scoping report has been completed and will be available on the internet. The field office is currently developing the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) and working on travel planning. The proposed action and alternatives will be developed in FY 2005, with a draft EIS being released in FY 2006.

The State of Montana, eight counties, and four Native American tribes were invited to be cooperating agencies in this process, but no official agreements were signed. Although agencies and tribes want to stay informed during the RMP process, none wish to be a formal cooperating agency, mostly due to budget and time constraints. The Butte FO will work closely with the counties, tribes, public, Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, EPA, and the Western Montana Resource Advisory Council throughout the RMP process.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Public interest is expected to be high because the RMP will set the direction for how the field office will be managed over the next 10-15 years. There is growing concern (based on past and current projects) over the management of roads and trails, wildlife and vegetation, fuels, and special area designations.

CONTACT:

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