

Alturas - Eagle Lake - Surprise Resource Management Plans

and

Environmental Impact Statement

Preliminary Scoping Report

October 2003

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Introduction

Overview

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is developing management direction for the public lands and resources in northeast California and northwest Nevada (see Map 1). This management direction will be contained in three resource management plans (RMPs) for the Alturas, Eagle Lake, and Surprise Field Offices. At the completion of the planning process, each field office will have a stand alone RMP that contains the management direction for the lands and resources administered by each office. The development of the three RMPs will be supported by a single environmental impact statement (EIS). The BLM will develop these RMPs and EIS through a collaborative planning process, involving all interested parties at each step.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this planning effort is to develop resource management plans (RMPs) that will provide the overall management direction for the public lands and resources administered by the Alturas, Eagle Lake, and Surprise Field Offices of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The RMPs are needed for the three field offices to address current management issues in the planning area and to consolidate the existing management direction to make it more useful. Current management direction is contained in 18 land use plans or amendments that were developed in the 1970s and early 1980s (see Appendix B). These plans lack detailed direction, do not address current issues, and, in some cases, are not internally consistent.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act requires BLM to “develop, maintain, and, when appropriate, revise land use plans which provide by tracts or areas for the use of the public lands [43 U.S.C. 1712 (a)].” The BLM planning regulations define a resource management plan as “a land use plan as described by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act [43 Code of Federal Regulations Section 1601.0-5 (k)].”

Given the age, content, and disjunction of current land use plans, and the authority and mandates set forth in laws and regulations, the BLM will develop three stand-alone RMP's, one for each field office area with a Record of Decision for each office, and one Environmental Impact Statement that analyzes the impacts for planning alternatives for all offices.

Geographic Area

The Alturas - Eagle Lake - Surprise Planning Area includes three million surface acres of public land (see Map 1). Decisions in the RMPs will apply only to BLM lands in the three field offices.

Field Office	BLM Lands (in acres*)	Total Land (in acres*)
Alturas	503,562	4,117,465
Eagle Lake	1,088,165	4,858,254
Surprise	1,230,187	2,651,143
Total	2,821,914	11,625,000

These lands are in Butte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Yuba counties in California and in Humboldt and Washoe counties in Nevada.

County	Land in Planning Area (in acres*)
Lassen, CA	2,967,647
Modoc, CA	2,690,229
Washoe, NV	1,906,851
Plumas, CA	1,669,945
Siskiyou, CA	889,956
Sierra, CA	615,586
Humboldt, NV	412,826
Shasta, CA	331,334
Nevada, CA	139,533
Tehama, CA	289
Butte, CA	160
Yuba, CA	42
Placer, CA	18
Total	11,625,000

** All acreages are approximate*

Public Participation and Scoping Process

Scoping is a requirement set forth in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and in the BLM planning regulations. BLM sees the scoping requirement as an early step in a collaborative, community-based public involvement process. Scoping helps identify planning issues to be addressed in the development of the RMPs. A planning issue is a “matter of controversy or dispute over management activities or land use that is well defined or topically discrete and entails alternatives between which to choose.” The process of scoping should set the context for planning by framing the planning issues to be addressed in the land use plans.

In January 2003, the Alturas/Eagle Lake/Surprise Field Offices mailed letters to tribes, state agencies, federal agencies, and local county planning departments with information about the beginning of the planning effort.

The planning process officially began on July 22, 2003 with the publication of the “Notice of Intent” in the Federal Register. This notice announced BLM’s intention to prepare three resource management plans (RMPs) and an associated environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Alturas, Eagle Lake, and Surprise Field Offices. This notice was followed up with press releases and mailings about the project, public meeting times, and field tours.

BLM held six public scoping meetings for the new land use plans and three field tours during August and September 2003. Attendees provided BLM with comments and issues for the RMPs at these meetings (see Appendix A).

BLM has been in contact with a number of tribes, county governments, and state and federal agencies about the planning project. These entities have been invited to participate as cooperating agencies in the development of the RMPs and EIS.

BLM has, to date, has received approximately 25 letters and 1200 emails.

For a more detailed summary of public participation and scoping activities, see Appendix A.

Issue Summary

Planning Issues

The comments and issues submitted to date and the issues identified by the BLM that will be addressed in the planning process are summarized here.

Issue Area 1: How should upland ecosystems be managed?

Vegetation has numerous values, both consumptive and non-consumptive, including wildlife habitat, wild horses, livestock grazing, forest products, and watershed protection. There is concern that resource use may be affecting the natural function and health of upland plant communities, soil productivity, and cultural resource site stability. The Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management adopted by the Secretary of the Interior in July 2000 will help frame decisions in the RMPs. Management objectives are needed for upland vegetation, which will help determine allowable uses, treatment methods, and other activities.

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Current health, ecologic status, and trend of the various ecosystems and plant communities, including those lands subject to juniper encroachment and other invasive species and noxious weeds (cheatgrass, star thistle, medusa head).
- Current status and condition of habitat needed to support guilds or suites of species, including threatened and endangered and special status species, neo-tropical birds, and species disjoint from their population center or at the edge of their range
- Options to restore and maintain healthy native plant communities
- A mix of consumptive and non-consumptive uses
- Options to improve and maintain water quantity and quality and to promote hydrologic recovery
- Options to maintain or improve soil productivity, and site stability
- Potential vegetative treatments, including seeding, grazing, mechanical, herbicides, biomass harvesting, fuel wood harvesting, and prescribed burning
- Appropriate management of livestock grazing; ensure compliance with Water Quality Control Board objectives
- Appropriate management of wild horses and burros
- Forest and woodland management
- Visual impacts of treatments

Issue Area 2: How should riparian areas and wetlands be managed?

Riparian and wetland vegetation provides the foundation for many resource uses on public lands, including habitat for wildlife and forage for domestic animals. Healthy riparian areas stabilize the soil, store water during spring, and release it throughout the year, prevent erosion, and improve water quality. There is a concern that resource uses may be affecting the natural function and health of riparian areas and wetlands. Management objectives are needed for riparian and wetland areas, which will help determine grazing use, treatment methods, and other activities needed to sustain the resources and uses that depend on them.

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Current health, ecologic status and trend of riparian/wetland plant communities
- Current status of riparian and aquatic systems relative to habitat quality for and population status of fish, wildlife, plants and invertebrates
- Options to maintain or improve soil productivity, and soil and cultural resource site stability
- Whether current management practices are working in achieving desired water quality
- Current condition of water quality and quantity
- Opportunities to manage watersheds/basins with other agencies
- Options to meet BLM standards and to promote hydrologic recovery including:
 - Meeting State numeric, narrative, and non- degradation standards
 - Meeting needs of aquatic assemblage of native species
 - Meeting needs of other beneficial uses

Issue Area 3: How will wildland fire and prescribed fire be managed and utilized?

Wildland fire is recognized as having a vital role in the health of ecosystems in the planning area. It can also have significant impacts on the communities, economies, and infrastructures. A full range of fire management activities will be considered.

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Fire history in the area, and its effect and anticipated fire trends
- The role of fire in upland and riparian ecosystems
- Prescribed fire
- Appropriate fire management response
- Fuels management
 - Mechanical treatment
 - Chemical treatment
 - Biological treatment
- Wildland-urban interface considerations and the National Fire Plan
- Management of areas after fires
 - Public access
 - Re-seeding
 - Priorities

Issue Area 4: How should vehicular access be managed on public lands?

Currently, public lands in the area are generally accessible by motorized vehicles to agency personnel for resource management, to commercial enterprise for permitted use or extraction of public resources, and to the general public for recreation and enjoyment of public lands. There is a need to balance access to public lands with resource management and protection.

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Areas where OHV use or season of use or the existing transportation system is in conflict with other goals and objectives
- Appropriate area designations of open, closed, or limited OHV use and selection of routes of travel to meet goals and objectives
- Existing roads and ways or other travel routes and their condition
- Acquisition of legal access to promote resource management and public use
- Clear delineation of adopted roads and trails network and limitations or restriction on use.
- Water Quality Control Board objectives for sediment runoff from roads.
- Impacts from OHV activity on other resources
 - Sensitive resources: eg. Water, cultural resources, sensitive plants or habitats. Rather than just water resources.
 - Property
 - Maintenance costs
 - Health and safety

Issue Area 5: How should the public lands be managed to sustain the traditional practices and traditional cultural properties of Native American cultures?

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Tribal consultation and input
- Inventories of archaeological and cultural resources
- Impacts to sites from land uses
- Archaeological looting
- Development of a Tribal consultation protocol
- Management of traditional cultural properties and ethnographic sites, including rock art/petroglyph and other types of sites
- Resource extraction
- Future monitoring and partnerships

Issue Area 6: How should the public lands be managed to meet the needs of local communities?

The small communities which are associated with public lands in this area depend on public land resources for economic and social benefits.

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Economic and social benefits to local and regional communities that are derived from the public lands
- The importance of these benefits to local and regional economies

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- Lifestyle and quality of life of local communities
- Dependency of private ranch land on public land grazing and impacts from private land conversion

Issue Area 7: What lands will be identified for retention, exchange, disposal and acquisition?

Scattered tracts of public lands present throughout the area often complicate management or limit access or opportunity for enjoyment by the public. Opportunity exists to increase public benefits by disposing of some public lands through sale or exchange, or to acquire offered lands in areas which would enhance public enjoyment and facilitate resource management.

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Public lands that are central or not central to BLM's mission or RMP goals and objectives
- Isolated parcels of BLM lands and private in-holdings

Issue Area 8: What lands are available for energy and mineral development?

Potential for and interest in the development of renewable and non-renewable energy occurs across the planning area. Extraction of a variety of mineral materials occurs on public lands in the area and constitutes an important economic use of public land resources. Interest in decorative rock collection has also increased. Energy and mineral development may not be appropriate for all lands, such as those having special resource values.

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Oil and gas potential
- Potential for renewable energy, such as wind, geothermal, and biomass
- Occurrence and demand for minerals
- Compatibility of energy and mineral development with other resource uses, goals, and objectives
- Establishment of utility corridors
- Migratory bird routes
- Impacts of mining on ground and surface waters

Issue Area 9: How will recreation opportunities be managed?

With the rapid population growth of urban areas in northeastern California and northwestern Nevada, the demand for recreation opportunities has increased substantially in recent years. In addition, a significant shift in the demographics of these urban areas, as well as in some of the more rural small communities, has noticeably changed the types of recreation experience traditionally sought on public lands.

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Current extent and nature of demand for recreational opportunities in the analysis area
- Recreation opportunities that are currently provided in the planning area,
- Effects of recreation uses on other resources and uses
- Compatibility with adjacent land uses and resources

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- Impacts of mining and other uses on recreational opportunities
- Opportunities for cooperative management of recreation and visual resources
- Changing demands for recreation on public lands
 - Hang gliding
 - Additional water sources
 - Primitive camping
 - Scenic driving
 - Rock hounding
 - Accessible to disabled populations

Issue Area 10: How will fish, wildlife, and special status species be managed?

Lands in the planning area are habitat for a range of fish, wildlife, and special status species. The habitat needs for healthy populations will be integrated into management decisions in the plan. Hunting and fishing activities are popular throughout the planning area as well and must be considered

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Habitat needs of special status species, including species listed as threatened or endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Habitat needs of fish and wildlife in the planning area
- Importance of habitats on BLM lands to overall populations
- State agency populations of interest
- Demand for hunting and fishing
- Interest in reintroduction of bighorn sheep
- Sage grouse conservation strategies

Issue Area 11: How should special values and special management areas be managed?

Existing special management areas, including Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), and Wild and Scenic Rivers require special management to protect particular values and/or resources. New areas may require special management, including free-flowing rivers and streams; unique vegetation types; habitats for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; cultural resources and unique geologic resources.

Specific concerns that BLM will consider:

- Resources and values to be managed
- Manageability of the areas
- Current and potential land uses
- Existing special management area effectiveness and appropriateness
- Appropriate new designations
- Visitor educational opportunities

Issues Beyond the Planning Scope

The public submitted the following issues/comments which are beyond the scope of the Alturas - Eagle Lake - Surprise RMPs and EIS or are beyond the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management.

BLM should ticket those not using land properly.

BLM enforces existing laws, regulations, and decisions to the best of our ability, given our law enforcement and budgetary constraints

BLM should provide more funding to support law enforcement of OHV use.

The AELS RMPs will not address funding levels for BLM programs. This comment has been forwarded to management for consideration in the development of future budgets.

BLM should issue stiffer fines and/or penalties for violations.

The AELS RMPs will not address fines associated with citations. This comment has been forwarded to the appropriate BLM office to address.

Use of BLM lands for small hydroelectric facilities for private home use

The Regional Water Quality Control Boards have jurisdiction over in-stream uses.

Army should mitigate for hazards before BLM acquiring land

The Army is responsible for hazards that are a result of their activities.

Local fire districts should be involved in fire training

BLM currently coordinates many training opportunities for local fire districts, including classes at Lassen College, refresher courses, and periodic joint training sessions with local volunteers.

Public involvement in treatment activities

BLM will work with the public near the completion of the resource management plans to develop an implementation strategy for the plans. This will include volunteer opportunities and other public opportunities for implementation of the plans.

BLM should use funds from extractive activities to fund plan implementation

Funds gathered as part of the sale or lease of minerals and timber are deposited into the United States Treasury. The distribution of these Treasury funds is the authority of Congress. BLM will propose funding from Congress for plan implementation when the plan is complete.

Planning Criteria

Planning Criteria

BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610) require preparation of planning criteria to guide development of all resource management plans. Planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that guide and direct the development of the plan and determine how the planning team approaches the development of alternatives and ultimately, selection of a Preferred Alternative. They ensure that plans are tailored to the identified issues and ensure that unnecessary data collection and analysis are avoided. Planning criteria are based on standards prescribed by applicable laws and regulations, agency guidance, the result of consultation and coordination with the public, other Federal, state and local agencies and governmental entities, and Native American Indian tribes, and analysis of information pertinent to the planning area. Planning criteria may change as the planning process proceeds. Planning criteria are as follows:

- Resource Management Plans will be developed in compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), BLM planning regulations, and all other applicable laws, regulations, Executive orders, and policies
- Economic and social baselines and consequences will be developed in coordination with local governments.
- Initiate government to government consultation with tribal interests. Reflect Federal land management agency obligations under applicable Tribal treaties and laws or Executive Orders relating to Native American reserved rights, religious freedoms, and traditional use areas
- OHV designations and specific route selection will be identified in the planning process.
- The plans will address Wild and Scenic River eligibility and suitability.

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- All new data collected will have information about the data collected (metadata) stored in a data base. All metadata will meet the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) standards.
- Incorporate Land Health Standards and Guidelines. Special circumstances where they cannot be met will be described and justified in the RMPs.
- Coordinate Bureau of Land Management (BLM) resource inventory, planning, and management activities with other Federal agencies, state and local governments, and Native American Tribes to the extent consistent with the administration of the public lands.
- Provide opportunities for public involvement, including early notice and other opportunities for citizens, interested groups, and others (including Native American Tribes) to participate and comment on the plan.
- The planning effort will closely coordinate with fire management planning in order to provide necessary program direction.

Data Description and Utilization

Overview

BLM will use data from a number of sources to develop the Alturas - Eagle Lake - Surprise Resource Management Plans and Environmental Impact Statement.

Sources of data for the project include:

- Information and data supplied by the public as appropriate. Through scoping, BLM received information regarding wilderness characteristics, off highway vehicle use and management, recreational use and management, potential areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs), cultural sites, wildlife habitat (deer, elk, wolves), and potential wild and scenic river segments.
- Inventory and assessment data collected by BLM field office staff and contractors in the planning area.
- Peer reviewed research available to resource specialists
- Data and information from other government entities

BLM will use these data to understand the existing condition of resources and demand for use and activities within the planning area. BLM will describe the area first in the Analysis of the Management Situation, which BLM plans to publish in the early part of 2004. This description will also be used in developing the “Affected Environment” section of the environmental impact statement (EIS).

Summary of Future Steps in the Planning Process

- Issue the Analysis of the Management Situation
- Hold public workshops and solicit input to collaboratively develop a range of alternatives for analysis
- Select a preferred alternative
- Publish Draft Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Hold public meetings and solicit comments on the Draft RMPs and Draft EIS
- Develop Proposed RMPs and Final EIS
- Publish Proposed RMPs and Final EIS
- 30 day protest period on Proposed RMP
- Resolution of protests
- Issue Record of Decisions

Public Outreach and Scoping Activities

Notice of Intent	Jul 22, 2003	Federal Register
Public meeting announcement	Jul 30, 2003	Mailed to approx. 600 individuals and organizations
Press releases	August 12, 2003	CA-N-03-80
Newspaper notices		Lassen County Times
Scoping meetings	August 6, 2003	Surprise Field Office
	August 13, 2003	Eagle Lake Field Office
	August 20, 2003	Alturas Field Office
	August 27, 2003	Redding Field Office
	August 28, 2003	Nevada State Office
	September 10, 2003	Fall River Mills (U.S. Forest Service Hat Creek Ranger Station)
Field tours	August 9, 2003	Surprise Field Office
	August 16, 2003	Eagle Lake Field Office
	August 23, 2003	Alturas Field Office

Communications

As of September 25, 2003

Tribal Governments

Summit Lake Paiute Tribe	Winnemucca, NV
Fort McDermitt Shosone/Paiute Tribe	McDermitt, NV
Cedarville Rancheria	Alturas, CA
Ft. Bidwell Indian Community Council	Ft. Bidwell, CA
The Redding Rancheria	Redding, CA
The Modoc Tribe	Miami, OK
The Shasta Nation	Macdoel, CA
The Shasta Tribe	Ft. Jones, CA
Modoc Indian Health Project	Alturas, CA
The Klamath Tribes	Klamath Falls, OR
Alturas Rancheria	Alturas, CA
Pit River Tribe	Burney, CA

Counties

Modoc County Board of Supervisors	Agenda: August 5, 2003
Shasta County Board of Supervisors	Agenda: August 12, 2003
Lassen County Board of Supervisors	Agenda: August 19, 2003
Washoe County Board of Supervisors	Agenda: September 23, 2003

State Agencies

California Resources Agency
California Department of Natural Resources
California Department of Fish and Game
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
California Department of Water Resources
California State Water Control Board
Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
California Coastal Commission
Nevada Department of Wildlife

Federal Agencies

Environmental Protection Agency
Bureau of Reclamation
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Current Land Use Plans

Field Office	Land Use Plan	Effective Date
Alturas	Alturas RMP; Tablelands IRMP RMP Amen. Nelson Corral/Delta RMP	Aug 28,1984
	RMP Amend-ACEC Ash Valley	Dec 15,1988
	Mt. Dome MFP and Update	July 1972, Nov.24,1981
	Cinder Cone MFP	July 1973
Eagle Lake	Cal-Neva MFP	Aug 1992
	Willow Creek MFP	June 27, 1983
	Honey Lake-Beckworth MFP	Aug 6,1984
	HL-B MFP Amend-LTA	Dec. 1984
	HL-B MFP Amend FT Sage	May 10,1998
Surprise	Tuledad-Homecamp MFP	1979
	T-H MFP Amend-Range Mgt.	Nov. 21, 1989
	Cowhead-Massacre MFP	April 1981
	C-M, T-H MFP Amends- Range Mgt., ACEC	Nov 3, 1983
	T-H MFP Amend-Mass Mtn	April 9, 1997
	Alturas RMP (Mgt. area 11)	Aug 28, 1984