

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Bureau of Land Management**

[NV-010-2811-01]

Battle Mountain District Fire Management Plan Amendment

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare a plan amendment and environmental analysis and invitation for public participation.

SUMMARY: The Battle Mountain District Office of the Bureau of Land Management proposes to amend the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan (RMP) to address the management of fire within the former boundaries of the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area of the Battle Mountain District. Fire is an integral part of the ecosystem of the Battle Mountain District. The *Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review* states: “* * * wildland fire is a natural occurrence that plays a fundamental role in natural resource management.” The current RMP does not address fire management and its role in the natural ecosystem. The land use plan amendment and its associated National Environmental Policy Act environmental assessment provides the opportunity for the public to share their thoughts and concerns related to implementation of this proposal. Ultimately, the final RMP amendment, having taken into account public input, will provide the basis for decisions on the management of fire in the Shoshone-Eureka planning unit.

DATES AND ADDRESSES: Written comments on the plan amendment and the proposed environmental analysis are welcomed until September 30, 1997. Comments on the land use plan amendment, as well as issues the public feel should be addressed in the environmental assessment should be sent to Dave Davis, Team Leader, U.S.D.I. Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 1420, 50 Bastian Road, Battle Mountain, NV 89820. Comments should be received by the BLM by the close of business, September 30th.

Four public meetings soliciting public input related to the fire management proposal are scheduled:

- (1) Battle Mountain BLM Office, 50 Bastian Road, Battle Mountain, Nevada September 2, 1997.
- (2) Eureka Opera House, 10201 Main Street, Eureka, Nevada, September 4, 1997.
- (3) Crescent Valley Senior Center, 6024 Ruby Way, Crescent Valley, Nevada, October 1, 1997.

(4) Austin High School, Highway 305 North, Austin, Nevada, October 2, 1997. All meetings are to be held from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. each evening.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The public is invited to participate in the identification of issues related to the management of fire in the Battle Mountain District, the Shoshone-Eureka Planning Unit. Anticipated issues for the plan amendment include: protection of human life, protection of property, protection of natural/cultural resources, safe reintroduction of fire into natural ecosystems, reducing the cost of fire suppression, integration of fire and resource management strategies, air quality, recreation, watershed management, livestock grazing, visual resources, wildlife habitat.

The plan amendment will focus on the following proposed management strategies for fire management in the Planning Unit:

- Wildland fire is not desired at all. Full suppression of all wildland fire is warranted.
- Unplanned wildland fire is likely to cause negative effects, but these effects may be mitigated through fuels management, i.e. prescribed fire, green stripping, chaining.
- Fire is desired, but there are constraints.
- Fire is desired and there are no constraints.

Planning documents and other pertinent materials may be examined at the Bureau of Land Management office in Battle Mountain between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Dated this 12th day of August, 1997.

Gerald M. Smith,

District Manager, Battle Mountain District.

[FR Doc. 97-21914 Filed 8-18-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-HC-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Bureau of Land Management**

[NM-030-07-1620-00]

Otero County Areas of Environmental Concern (ACECs) for the Caballo Resource Area, New Mexico

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Availability.

SUMMARY: The BLM, Las Cruces District, Caballo Resource Area announces the availability of a Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment/ Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and supporting Environmental Assessment (EA). The document

discusses the designation of five new ACECs and revision of one existing ACEC in Otero County, south-central New Mexico. Approximately 18,806 acres are proposed for designation. In addition to designation, the plan amendment, when approved, will guide BLM programs and management practices within the ACECs. The Proposed Plan is a modified version of the Preferred Alternative presented in the Draft. The Proposed RMP Amendment/FONSI and supporting EA is available for public review. A 30-day protest period is provided as required by BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.5-2).

DATES: Protests on the Proposed Plan must be postmarked on or before September 22, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Protests must be sent to Director (WO-210), Bureau of Land Management, ATTN: Brenda Williams, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Timothy M. Murphy, Area Manager, BLM, Caballo Resource Area at (505) 525-4372, or Mike Howard, Team Leader, Caballo Resource Area at (505) 525-4348, email mhoward@nm0151wp.nmso.nm.blm.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: ACECs are land designations unique to the BLM. The purpose of ACECs is to recognize, protect, and manage unique or sensitive resources or potential hazards to the public. Each area receives management or protection based on its unique needs, in consultation and coordination with the public.

The Caballo Resource Area has completed an inventory of areas in Otero County, New Mexico containing unique or sensitive biological resources suitable for designation as ACECs. In addition, the Resource Area has received nominations both internally and from the public to consider several areas as ACECs based on visual, cultural, and biological values.

Three alternatives were considered in the Draft RMP Amendment and supporting EA. Alternative A was the No Action alternative, Alternative B represented the highest level of resource protection, and Alternative C would generally have provided an intermediate level of resource protection. BLM's Preferred Alternative in the draft RMP Amendment and supporting EA was Alternative B. After evaluation of the comments received on the draft, a modified version of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative B) was selected as the Proposed Plan. Following is a summary of the management actions in the Proposed Plan for each ACEC.

The *Three Rivers Petroglyph Site ACEC* is located 30 miles north of Alamogordo, New Mexico. The area was nominated to protect and manage cultural resources. The total area proposed is approximately 1,036 acres. Management actions in the Proposed Plan include: acquisition of State trust land through a cooperative land exchange, acquisition of private subsurface mineral estate from a willing seller, issuance of realty actions subject to protective stipulations, closure to mineral entry, improvement and protection of riparian areas, improvement of recreation facilities, limiting off-road vehicle use to designated roads and trails, closing of county road B031, except for administrative and ranch access following relinquishment by Otero County, management of fire for maximum fire suppression and use of prescribed fire, and fencing of the ACEC boundary.

The *Sacramento Escarpment ACEC* is located 2 miles south of Alamogordo, New Mexico along the west face of the Sacramento Mountains. This area is currently a designated ACEC for the management of visual resources. This RMP Amendment proposes to expand the area to provide for increased protection and management of visual resources and an endangered and sensitive plant community. The existing ACEC would be expanded to encompass 5,365 acres. Management actions in the Proposed Plan include: limitations or exclusion of new realty actions (2920 permits), exclusion of rights-of-way, acquisition of access easements and private land from a willing seller, closure to all forms of mineral development, improvement and protection of riparian areas, permitting of existing spring developments, management under Visual Resource Management Classes I and II, limitation of off-road vehicle use to designated roads and trails, closure of approximately 5 miles of redundant roads and trails (including closure of approximately 1/4 mile of road in San Andres Canyon, except for administrative and ranch pipeline maintenance access), management of fire for conditional least-cost suppression with no surface disturbance in Visual Class I or arroyo areas. Prescribed fire could be used for vegetation management, if needed.

Cornudas Mountain is located 60 miles southeast of Alamogordo, New Mexico and near the Texas border. The area was nominated to protect and manage visual resources, cultural resources, and sensitive plants. The total area to be considered is

approximately 850 acres. Management activities in the Proposed Plan include: exclusion of the area from authorization of rights-of-way, permitting of other realty actions subject to protective stipulations, closure to all forms of mineral development, closure to vegetation sales, management of barbary sheep, designation of a BLM sensitive species, management as Visual Resource Management Class I, limitation of off-road vehicle use to designated roads and trails, allowing public access to portions of the ACEC by permit, closure to camping, closure to the establishment of new roads and trails, fire management for conditional least-cost suppression with no surface disturbance and no use of slurry or blading in certain areas.

Alamo Mountain is located 61 miles southeast of Alamogordo, New Mexico and near the Texas border. The area was nominated to protect and manage visual and cultural resources. The total area proposed is approximately 2,690 acres. Management actions in the Proposed Plan include: exclusion of the area from authorization of rights-of-way, permitting of other realty actions subject to protective stipulations, closure to all forms of mineral development, closure to vegetation sales, management of barbary sheep, designation of a BLM sensitive species, management as Visual Resource Management Class I, limitation of off-road vehicle use to designated roads and trails, establishment of a vehicle parking area, closure to camping in portions of the ACEC, fire management for conditional least-cost suppression with no surface disturbance and no use of slurry or blading in certain areas.

Wind Mountain is located 64 miles southeast of Alamogordo, New Mexico and near the Texas border. The area was nominated to protect and manage visual resources, cultural resources, and unique and sensitive plants and animals. The total area proposed is approximately 2,506 acres. Management actions in the Proposed Plan include: exclusion of the area from authorization of rights-of-way, permitting of other realty actions subject to protective stipulations, closure to all forms of mineral development (subject to valid existing rights), closure to vegetation sales, management of barbary sheep, designation of a BLM sensitive species, management as Visual Resource Management Class I, limitation of off-road vehicle use to designated roads and trails, fire management for conditional least-cost suppression with no surface disturbance and no use of slurry or blading in certain areas.

The *Alkali Lakes* area is located 80 miles southeast of Alamogordo, New

Mexico and near the Texas border. This area was nominated to protect and manage endangered and sensitive plants and the plant community in which they occur. The total area proposed is approximately 6,359 acres. Management actions in the Proposed Plan include: exclusion of the area from authorization of rights-of-way, permitting of other realty actions subject to protective stipulations, acquisition of State trust land through a cooperative land exchange, closure to all forms of mineral development, closure to vegetation sales, management as Visual Resource Management Class III, limitation of off-road vehicle use to within 30 feet of the center line of designated roads and trails, closure to camping and the use of campfires, fire management for conditional least-cost suppression with no surface disturbance and no use of vehicular equipment off of established roads and trails.

Any person who is on record for participating in the planning process and has an interest that may be adversely affected may protest approval of the Plan Amendment. Protest should be made to the BLM Director with the following information: (1) Name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest; (2) a statement of the concern or concerns being protested; (3) a statement of the part or parts being protested; (4) a copy of all documents addressing the concern or concerns that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party or an indication of the date the concern or concerns were discussed for the records; and (5) a concise statement explaining why the BLM New Mexico State Director's decision is wrong. At the end of the 30-day protest period, the Proposed Plan, excluding any portions under protest, will become final. Approval will be withheld on any portion of the Plan under protest until final action has been completed on such protest. Individuals not wishing to protest the Plan, but wanting to comment, may send comments to the BLM, Las Cruces District, Caballo Resource Area, 1800 Marquess, Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005. All comments received will be considered in preparation of the Decision Record.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the BLM Las Cruces District Office, 1800 Marquess, Las Cruces, New Mexico, during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the RMP Amendment/EA. Individual respondents may request

confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Public participation has occurred throughout the RMP Amendment process. A Notice of Intent was filed in the **Federal Register** (Vol. 59, No. 73, Page 18151-18152) on April 15, 1994. Since that time, several public meetings, mail-outs, and group briefings were conducted to solicit comments and ideas, or familiarize various groups with the proposal and the BLM planning process. A notice of a 60-day comment period on the designation of the ACECs and a Notice of Availability of the draft RMP Amendment/preliminary FONSI and supporting EA was published in the **Federal Register** (Vol. 61, No. 102, page 26203-26204) on May 24, 1996. Comments received during the 60-day comment period were considered in preparation of the Proposed RMP Amendment and supporting EA. Single copies of the Proposed RMP Amendment/FONSI and supporting EA for the Otero County ACECs may be obtained from the BLM Las Cruces District Office, 1800 Marquess, Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005. Public reading copies are available for review at the BLM State Office, 1474 Rodeo Rd., Santa Fe, New Mexico, and public and university libraries in Las Cruces, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, and El Paso, Texas.

Dated: August 13, 1997.

Stephanie Hargrove,

Acting District Manager.

[FR Doc. 97-21886 Filed 8-18-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[NV-040-1020-001]

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council—Notice of Meeting Locations and Times

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management.

ACTION: Resource Advisory Council Meeting Locations and Times.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (FACA), 5 U.S.C., the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), council meeting of the Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC) will be held as indicated below. The agenda includes a public comment period, and discussion of public land issues.

The Resource Advisory Council develops recommendations for BLM regarding the preparation, amendment, and implementation of land use plans for the public lands and resources within the jurisdiction of the council. For the Mojave-Great Basin RAC this jurisdiction is Clark, Esmeralda, Lincoln and Nye counties in Nevada. Except for the purposes of long-range planning and the establishment of resource management priorities, the RAC shall not provide advice on the allocation and expenditure of Federal funds, or on personnel issues.

The RAC may develop recommendation for implementation of ecosystem management concepts, principles and programs, and assist the BLM to establish landscape goals and objectives.

All meetings are open to the public. The public may present written comments to the council. Public comments should be limited to issues for which the RAC may make recommendations within its area of jurisdiction. Depending on the number of persons wishing to comment, and time available, the time for individual oral comments may be limited. Individuals who plan to attend and need further information about the meetings, or need special assistance such as sign language interpretation or other reasonable accommodations, should contact Michael Dwyer at the Las Vegas District Office, 4765 Vegas Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89108, telephone, (702) 647-5000.

DATES, TIMES: Date is September 11, 1997, from 1:00 p.m., to approximately 4:30 p.m. and will reconvene on June 17, 1997 and meet from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The council will meet at the Las Vegas District Office, 4765 West Vegas Drive, Las Vegas, NV. The public comment period will begin at 11:30 a.m. on September 12.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dan Netcher, District Minerals Specialist, Ely, NV, telephone: (702) 289-1872.

Dated: August 6, 1997.

Timothy B. Reuwsaat,

Acting Ely District Manager.

[FR Doc. 97-21854 Filed 8-18-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[MT-960-1990-00-CCAM; MTM 84500]

Public Land Order No. 7282; Withdrawal of Federal Lands and Minerals for Watershed Protection; Montana

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Public Land Order.

SUMMARY: This order withdraws approximately 22,065 acres of Federal lands from location and entry under the mining laws and the mineral leasing laws, except oil and gas, for a period of 20 years to protect watersheds, water quality, and fresh water fishery resources. In addition, approximately 4,158 acres of non-Federal lands, if acquired by the United States, would be withdrawn by this order. The lands have been and remain open to surface uses authorized by the Forest Service.

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 19, 1997.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cooke City Area Mineral Withdrawal Team, PO Box 36800, Billings, Montana 59107, 406-255-0322.

By virtue of the authority vested in the Secretary of the Interior by Section 204 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1714 (1994), it is ordered as follows:

1. Subject to valid existing rights, Federal lands within the following described area are hereby withdrawn from location and entry under the United States mining laws and the mineral leasing laws, except oil and gas, 30 U.S.C. Ch. 2 (1994), to protect watersheds within the drainages of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone, Soda Butte Creek, and the Stillwater River, and the water quality and fresh water fishery resources within Yellowstone National Park:

Principal Meridian, Montana

Custer and Gallatin National Forests

T. 8 S., R. 14 E.,

Sec. 25 and secs. 33 to 36, inclusive, those portions lying outside of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Boundary, partly unsurveyed.

T. 9 S., R. 14 E.,

Secs. 1 to 5, inclusive, secs. 8 to 17, inclusive, secs. 21 to 28, inclusive, and secs. 33 to 36, inclusive, those portions