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PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT

Jarbidge RMP

-PROPOSED RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

-Salmon Falls Creek ACEC

Twin Falls MFP

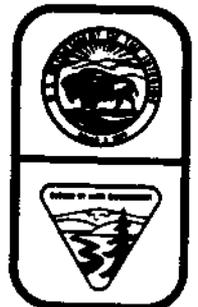
-Salmon Falls Creek ACEC

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Boise and Burley Districts

1989



Bureau of Land Management



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PROPOSED

LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT

JARBIDGE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

- Proposed Range Improvements
- Salmon Falls Creek Canyon ACEC

TWIN FALLS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN

- Salmon Falls Creek Canyon ACEC

Prepared by
Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Boise District
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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR AMENDMENT

The purpose of this amendment is to (1) modify the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan (RMP) to provide for sufficient range improvement projects to meet the RMP management objectives and (2) modify both the Jarbidge RMP and the Twin Falls Management Framework Plan (MFP) to designate a new Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in Salmon Falls Creek Canyon. The general guidelines and the management objectives in both the Jarbidge RMP and the Twin Falls MFP will remain the same as they are now.

Additional Range Improvements

The Jarbidge RMP was approved by the Idaho State Director on March 23, 1987. In implementing the plan it quickly became apparent that the proposed level of structural range improvements (water developments, pipelines, and fences) was not adequate to implement the 39 proposed Allotment Management Plans (AMP's). AMP's are the primary means used to achieve the overall objectives of the range management program; therefore, without sufficient range improvements, the objectives cannot be met. Generally, these objectives are to maintain or improve the soil, vegetation, and watershed conditions within the resource area and to provide adequate forage for identified numbers of livestock, wildlife, and wild horses. Also, without sufficient range improvements, specific objectives common to most Multiple Use Areas (MUA's) would not be met. These objectives include: (1) to improve lands in poor ecological condition, (2) to achieve projected forage use levels, (3) to maintain existing vegetative improvements, and (4) to manage big game habitat to support a specified number of animals.

Insufficient range improvement projects were included in the Jarbidge RMP because of inadequate information on what projects would be needed. Subsequent to gathering the data used in the RMP, the Boise District has completed a Sagebrush Management Plan, a Greenstripping Plan, and a Normal Fire Year Rehabilitation Plan. Information in these documents, plus observations and experience over the past few years relating to forage production and availability, have all indicated a need to amend the RMP.

The Jarbidge RMP Record of Decision, on page II-96, specifically allows for additional range improvements (ones not addressed in the RMP) to be developed without going through the land use plan amendment process. However, because range improvements were a controversial issue in preparation of the RMP, and the proposed increases in improvements would be relatively substantial in some MUA's, it was decided to use the amendment process to evaluate the additional improvements. Also, this process will provide an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the total level of proposed range improvements in the Jarbidge Resource Area.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

In the Jarbidge RMP, a portion of Salmon Falls Creek Canyon (MUA 14) is identified as an Outstanding Natural Area. The area is comprised of a

steep-walled canyon containing many pristine, scenic, natural features. Recent BLM Manual guidance (1623.31A1) indicates that any Outstanding Natural Area should be evaluated as an ACEC, following the RMP procedures. This plan amendment document will meet that requirement and provide for designation and continued protection of the Outstanding Natural Area as an ACEC.

Salmon Falls Creek forms a BLM district boundary, i.e., the west side of the Creek is in the Boise District, and the east side is in the Burley district. However, both sides have been identified as special management areas, have similar resource values, and are subject to similar management decisions. Therefore, both sides of the Creek will be addressed in this document as a single proposed ACEC, which would extend across the district boundary.

LOCATION

The proposed range improvements evaluated in this land use plan amendment would be located in the Jarbidge Resource Area (Boise District), which includes approximately 1,690,000 acres of public land in Elmore, Owyhee, and Twin Falls counties in southern Idaho, and in Elko County in northern Nevada. Map 1 indicates the general location of the Jarbidge Resource Area. In addition to the Jarbidge Resource Area, this plan amendment involves approximately 3,000 acres of public land in the Twin Falls Planning Unit of the Snake River Resource Area (Burley District), which lies adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Jarbidge Resource Area. This land is identified in the Twin Falls MFP for protection as the Salmon Falls Creek Natural Area and is evaluated in this amendment for designation as an ACEC. The remainder of the proposed ACEC is comprised of 2,947 acres of public lands (MUA 14) identified in the Jarbidge RMP for protection as an Outstanding Natural Area. The proposed ACEC includes the stretch of Salmon Falls Creek Canyon (from rim to rim) between Salmon Falls Dam on the south and Balanced Rock road on the north, which is a meandering distance of approximately 30 miles.

PLANNING PROCESS

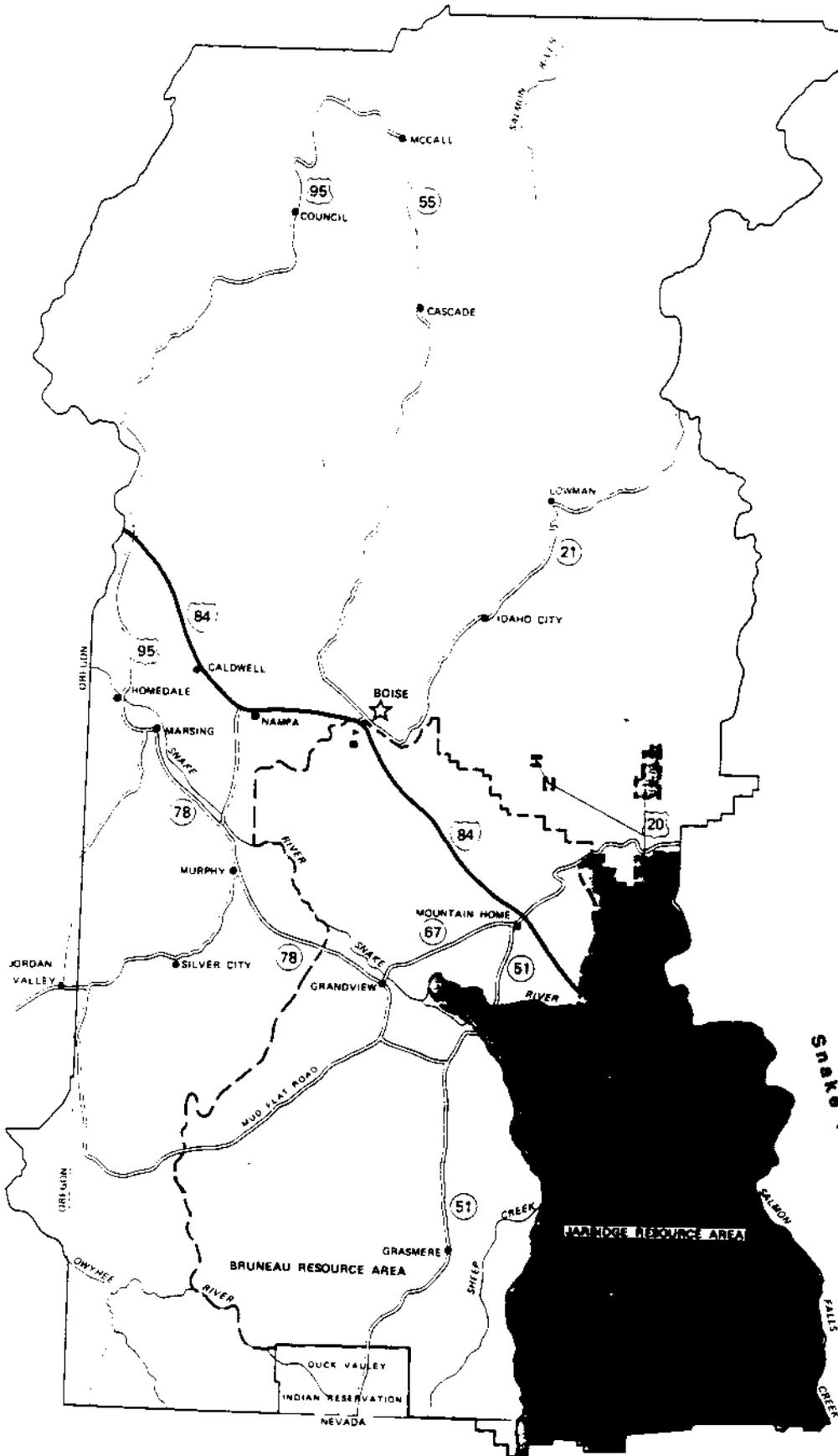
The BLM planning process consists of nine steps: (1) Issue identification, (2) Planning criteria, (3) Inventory, (4) Management situation analysis, (5) Alternative formulation, (6) Estimation of effects, (7) Selection of the preferred alternative, (8) Selection of the RMP, and (9) Monitoring and evaluation. These steps are followed to prepare an RMP and also, in a modified form, to prepare a plan amendment. Public participation is an integral part of the process for either an RMP or a plan amendment.

CONFORMANCE STATEMENT

BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.5-3) require that all resource management authorizations and actions shall conform to the approved land use plan. The number of range improvements now considered necessary to meet the Jarbidge RMP objectives exceeds what is listed in the RMP Record of Decision. Also, Salmon Falls Creek Canyon was not designated as an ACEC in either the Jarbidge RMP or the Twin Falls MFP. This plan amendment is being prepared to evaluate the proposed land use plan changes.

JARBIDGE RESOURCE AREA GENERAL LOCATION MAP

MAP 1



IDAHO KEY

LEGEND

- ☆ STATE CAPITOL
- BLM DISTRICT OFFICE
- (84)— INTERSTATE HIGHWAY
- (95)— U.S. HIGHWAY
- (67)— STATE HIGHWAY
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- - - RESOURCE AREA BOUNDARY

Snake River District Area
Bruley District Area

PLANNING ISSUES AND CRITERIA

PLANNING ISSUES

Planning issues were identified in the draft and proposed Jarbidge RMP. "Livestock grazing" and "special designations" are among the issues addressed in the RMP. Specific planning questions applicable to this amendment are: (1) "What major types of (range) improvements are needed?" and (2) "What areas should be identified for special designation and management (ACEC, etc.)?."

PLANNING CRITERIA

General planning criteria from the RMP will be applied to this amendment. These criteria are:

1. Social and economic values;
2. Plans, programs, and policies of other Federal, State, and local government agencies, and Indian tribes;
3. Existing laws, regulations, and BLM policy;
4. Future needs and demands for existing or potential resource commodities and values;
5. Public input;
6. Public welfare and safety;
7. Past and present use of public and adjacent lands;
8. Public benefits of providing goods and services in relation to cost;
9. Quantity and quality of noncommodity resource values; and
10. Environmental impacts.

In addition to the above criteria, BLM Manual 1622.31A3b indicates that grazing management actions addressed in the RMP are to include the general types, locations, and magnitude (miles, acres, numbers) of range improvements for allotments or groups of allotments. This guidance applies to the range improvements addressed in this amendment document.

BLM Manual 1623.31A1 states that natural areas (including Outstanding Natural Areas) are to be "...designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC's)..." in the RMP (or amendment) process. Two additional criteria also apply to identification of ACEC's: (1) Relevance (requiring special management), and (2) Importance (having special worth, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern). The proposed Salmon Falls Creek Canyon ACEC meets these criteria because it requires special management to restore and protect its unique natural ecosystem, and it has special importance because of the unusual natural and scenic values within the Canyon. These values were identified and recognized as being important in both the Jarbidge RMP and the Twin Falls MFP. Also, public comments have indicated a broad support for designating and protecting the proposed area.

ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

NO ACTION

The No Action Alternative would limit the amount of structural improvements in each MUA to the numbers identified in the Jarbidge RMP Record of Decision, or to those constructed between 1984 and 1989, whichever is greater. The RMP allowed for exceeding the number of projects identified in the plan, without preparing a plan amendment, provided that: (1) National Environmental Policy Act requirements were met, (2) additional projects were in conformance with objectives for the MUA, and (3) the projects would not conflict with the management guidelines and objectives of other resource activities. However, for this analysis, the No Action Alternative will be limited to the projects already constructed or specifically identified in the RMP, as stated above. This level of range improvements would include a total of 215 miles of fence, 165 miles of pipelines, and 12 water developments. The amounts of range improvements included in the approved Jarbidge RMP and the amounts completed to date in each MUA are presented in Table 1, on the left-hand side.

Under the No Action Alternative, Salmon Falls Creek Canyon would remain undesignated as an ACEC, but would continue to receive protective management. The portion of the proposed ACEC in Boise District is presently designated as an Outstanding Natural Area. The Jarbidge RMP requires special management for the area that consists of excluding livestock grazing; avoiding any overhead, surface, or underground utilities; closure to agriculture entry; closure to all motorized vehicles; and restriction of any mechanized fire suppression equipment in the canyon. The portion of the proposed ACEC in the Burley District is designated as "the Salmon Falls Creek Natural Area." The Twin Falls MFP includes decisions to (1) acquire certain intermingled private lands, (2) develop a cooperative agreement with the Boise District for management of the area, and (3) prepare a Natural Area Management Plan. To date, these decisions have not been fully implemented, and no detailed management requirements have been developed. However, past management of the proposed ACEC in the Burley District has been consistent with the above-listed decisions for the Boise District, and similar management would be expected to continue.

PROPOSED ACTION

Range Improvements

The Proposed Action would amend the Jarbidge RMP to identify all of the range improvements considered necessary to fully implement the RMP objectives. Based on a more detailed analysis of the AMP's needed to meet the land use plan objectives, it is proposed to: (1) increase miles of fence from 166 to 306, (2) increase miles of water pipelines from 131 to 444, and (3) increase water developments (wells, reservoirs, or springs) from 5 to 19. Table 1 lists the number of these improvements to be in each of the 16 MUA's. The proposed amendment is represented by the difference between "Approved RMP" and "Proposed Total" in the table. The geographical

TABLE 1

JARBIDGE RESOURCE AREA
RANGELAND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

MUA	APPROVED RMP			COMPLETED			ADDITIONAL			PROPOSED TOTAL		
	fence	pipln	watr	fence	pipln	watr	fence	pipln	watr	fence	pipln	watr
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	5	0	0	1	0	3	9	0	5	10	0	8
3	8	0	0	5	2	0	3	15	0	8	17	0
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	7	0	6	7	0
6	35	30	0	6	3	0	29	31	0	35	34	0
7	100	100	2	43	25	1	57	124	1	100	149	2
8	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
10	4	1	3	0	0	0	8	1	3	8	1	3
11	5	0	0	32	6	1	14	70	1	46	76	2
12	9	0	0	17	20	1	25	65	1	42	85	2
13	0	0	0	4	3	0	15	32	0	19	35	0
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	3	0	18	23	0	18	26	0
16	0	0	0	4	0	2	5	12	0	9	12	2
TOTL	166	131	5	118	62	8	188	382	11	306	444	19

Fences (fence) and pipelines (pipln) are shown by miles. Water developments (watr) are shown by number of sites and include wells, reservoirs, and springs.

Projects listed as "Completed" are those implemented between 1984 (when the original proposed project levels were developed for the RMP) and the present time (1989). "Additional" projects are the ones still needed to meet RMP objectives, including those in the approved RMP that haven't been implemented.

For MUA 10, which is a Wilderness Study Area (WSA), the levels of development shown are based on the Proposed Action analyzed in the Jarbidge Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement. Any projects that could impair wilderness characteristics would not be implemented unless or until Congress determines that the area is partially or entirely unsuitable for wilderness designation.

distribution of the proposed increases in range improvements is shown on Map 2 in relation to the MUA's in the Jarbidge Resource Area. The numbers shown on the map are the differences between the proposed totals in this amendment and the numbers listed in the approved Jarbidge RMP.

The numbers of proposed range improvements listed in Table 1 are estimates of what would be implemented over the next 20 years, based on the best information available at this time. The numbers could be modified, subject to National Environmental Policy Act requirements, as provided for in the Jarbidge RMP Record of Decision, page II-96. No changes in the level of land treatments identified in the RMP are being proposed.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern

The Proposed Action would amend both the Jarbidge RMP and the Twin Falls MFP to designate the stretch of Salmon Falls Creek Canyon between Salmon Falls Dam and Balanced Rock road as an ACEC. Although the lands to be designated lie within two BLM Districts (separated by Salmon Falls Creek), they are being considered as a unit because of their geographic, scenic, ecologic, and management similarities. The proposed designation would replace two existing designations: (1) the Outstanding Natural Area in MUA 14 of the Jarbidge RMP, and (2) the Salmon Falls Creek Natural Area in Decision NH-1.1 of the Twin Falls MFP.

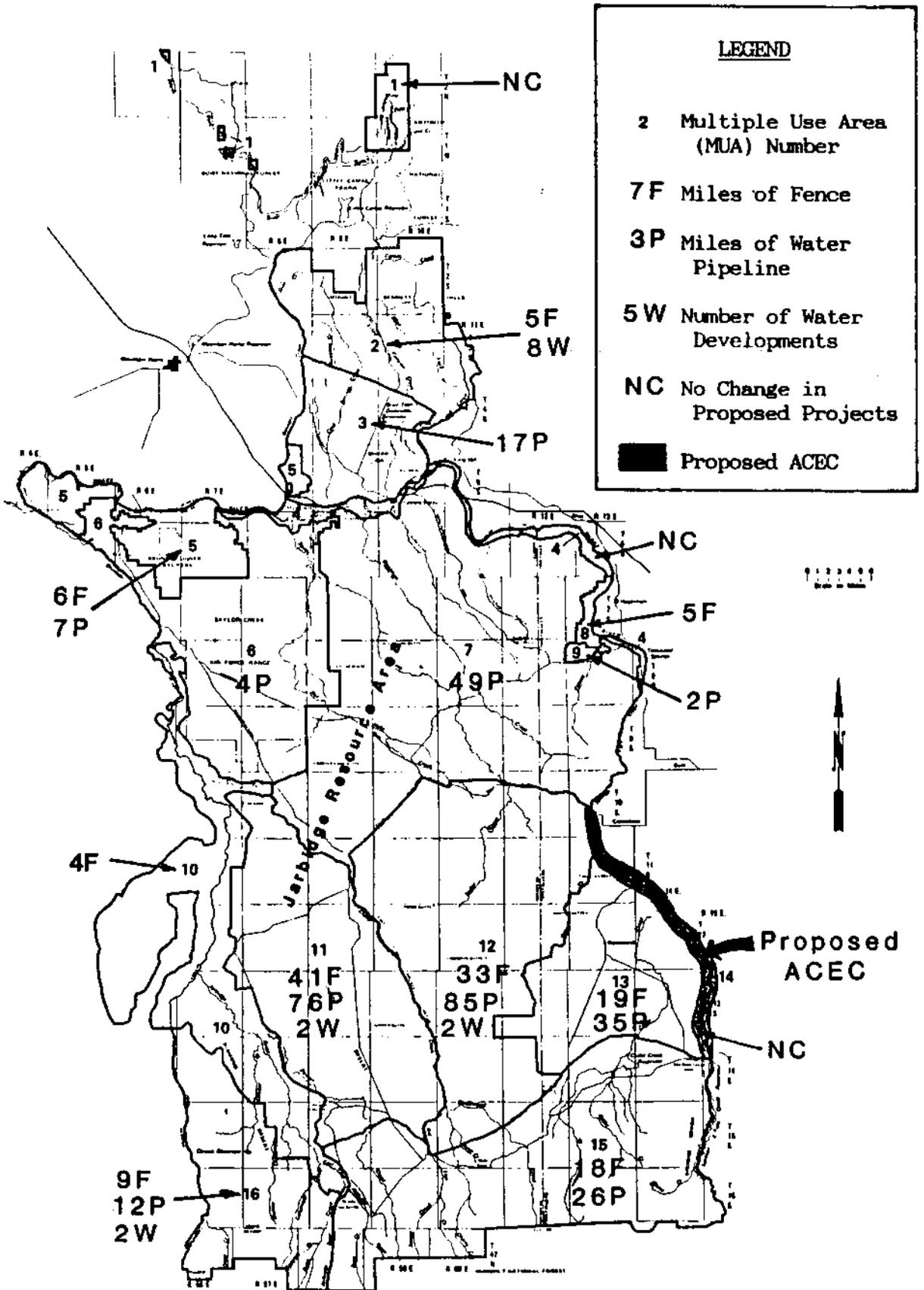
The Proposed Action would continue the existing planning decisions regarding the portion of Salmon Falls Creek Canyon in the Jarbidge Resource Area of the Boise BLM District, and would establish identical decisions for the eastern portion of the canyon, in the Snake River Resource Area of the Burley District. Although the Twin Falls MFP identified the Salmon Falls Creek Natural Area as extending 500 feet east of the canyon rim, the ACEC is proposed to include only the lands within the canyon (rim to rim), which have the unique values of concern. Proposed management of the canyon as an ACEC would be consistent with past actions to recognize and protect the area. Specific management decisions would be to exclude livestock grazing; avoid any overhead, surface, or underground utilities; close the area to agricultural entry; close it to all motorized vehicles; and restrict any mechanized fire suppression equipment from the canyon.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Descriptions of range and wildlife resources, along with related background information, are presented below. These descriptions are intended to provide a convenient reference and comparison for evaluating the anticipated impacts of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. Other resources are not expected to be affected and, therefore, are not described in this document. A more comprehensive description of the environment is included in Chapter 3 of the Proposed Jarbidge RMP and Final EIS, which is available from the Boise District BLM Office.

MAP 2

LOCATION OF PROPOSED ACEC AND PROPOSED CHANGE IN RANGE IMPROVEMENTS



RANGE RESOURCES

Livestock Grazing

The grazing program in the Jarbidge Resource Area encompasses virtually all of the 1,690,473 acres of public lands, much of the 102,509 acres of State lands, and some of the 302,537 acres of private lands located within the Area. Approximately 36,505 acres of the public land is ungrazed. This acreage is mostly comprised of isolated wildlife tracts, river canyons, or other isolated areas.

There are 79 grazing allotments in the Resource Area, used by 86 livestock permittees having a current active grazing preference of 166,318 animal unit months (AUM's) of livestock forage. Because of increased forage availability, primarily as a result of wildfire rehabilitation, the average annual use is approximately 190,000 AUM's. Total estimated forage production levels indicate that approximately 110,000 AUM's of forage are available above the current grazing preference. These AUM's are the result of extensive seedings developed in the past 15 years in MUA's 5, 6, and 7. Additional water and fencing would provide for this forage to be used more effectively.

There are currently seven allotment management plans (AMP's) and four coordinated resource management plans (CRMP's) in the Jarbidge Resource Area. All allotments have constraints on the timing and amounts of grazing use. Livestock seasons of use vary considerably throughout the resource area. Year-around grazing use (with rotation between pastures) is made in the Saylor Creek Allotments and in five of the allotments with existing AMP's. Most allotments have an eight-month continuous season or a split spring-fall season of use.

Vegetation

The vegetation on the higher slopes of Bennett Mountain and the Anderson Ranch area consists mostly of big sagebrush/bluebunch wheatgrass. On the lower elevations near the Snake River, the vegetation is predominantly big sagebrush/Sandberg bluegrass. The Saylor Creek Unit south of the River (MUA's 5, 6, and 7) has a native stand of depleted sagebrush range invaded with extensive amounts of cheatgrass. Large areas have been seeded to crested wheatgrass as a result of fire rehabilitation projects. Further south, the sagebrush community persists with an understory of Thurber's needlegrass and bluebunch wheatgrass. In the upland areas near the Nevada border, a mix of big sagebrush/Idaho fescue and low sagebrush/Idaho fescue grade into a mix of various mountain sagebrush and mixed mountain shrubs. Pockets of aspen are common near the Nevada border.

The range condition of the areas grazed by livestock is approximately 2 percent excellent, 5 percent good, 9 percent fair, 42 percent poor, 12 percent burned, 1 percent sprayed, and 29 percent seeded. Approximately 80 percent of MUA 2, which includes all or major portions of the allotments on Bennett Mountain, is in poor condition. In the Environmental Consequences section of this document, acres of poor condition range are displayed in

Table 3, by MJA, to facilitate comparison with projections for the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative.

Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plants

Threatened, endangered, and sensitive plant species occurring within the Jarbidge Resource Area are listed below:

<u>Plant</u>	<u>Status</u>
<u>Astragalus atratus</u> var. <u>inseptus</u>	Federal Category 2
<u>Erigeron latus</u>	Federal Category 2
<u>Leptodactylon glabrum</u>	Federal Category 2
<u>Astragalus atratus</u> var. <u>owyheensis</u>	State Sensitive
<u>Astragalus kentrophyta</u> var. <u>jessiae</u>	State Sensitive
<u>Cymopterus acaulis</u> var. <u>greeleyorum</u>	State Sensitive
<u>Eriogonum shockleyi</u> var. <u>shockleyi</u>	State Sensitive
<u>Glyptopleura marginata</u>	State Priority 1
<u>Gymnosteris nudicaulis</u>	State Sensitive
<u>Lepidium montanum</u> var. <u>papilliferum</u>	State Priority 1
<u>Malacothrix glabrata</u>	State Sensitive
<u>Mentzelia torreyi</u> var. <u>acerosa</u>	State Priority 2
<u>Penstemon janishiae</u>	State Sensitive

In addition, Lepidium davisii (Federal Category 2) is expected to occur, since it is present in resource areas on either side. It grows only in playas, of which there are many within the Jarbidge Resource Area.

"Federal Category 2" plants are defined as those for which inadequate data exist to support listing as either Threatened or Endangered. The State of Idaho also maintains a Sensitive Plant List, in which there are several categories. "State Priority 1" species are those in danger of becoming extinct or extirpated from Idaho in the foreseeable future if identifiable factors contributing to their decline continue to operate. "State Priority 2" species are likely to be classified as Priority 1 within the foreseeable future in Idaho if factors contributing to their population decline or habitat degradation continue. "Sensitive" species have small populations or localized distributions within Idaho and their populations and habitats may be jeopardized if current land use practices continue.

It is BLM policy to protect, conserve, and manage federally listed and State-listed or candidate sensitive, threatened, or endangered plants. Because of their habitat, the species in the Jarbidge Resource Area most likely to require consideration when laying out proposed range improvements include Astragalus atratus var. inseptus and var. owyheensis, Glyptopleura marginata, Lepidium montanum var. papilliferum, Gymnosteris nudicaulis, and Lepidium davisii, if it is present. As required by law and BLM guidance, threatened and endangered plant clearances will be completed prior to each project to eliminate any potential species destruction or habitat loss.

Wild Horses

The Saylor Creek wild horse herd management area (HMA) is located in MUA 7, includes approximately 106,000 acres, and supports an average of 50 horses year-around. Approximately 22,500 acres of the HMA was identified in the Jarbidge RMP for potential disposal for agriculture development under the Desert Land Act or the Carey Act. Therefore, the size of the HMA could be reduced in the future to approximately 83,500 acres. This proposed plan amendment would not entail any additional fencing within the HMA.

WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Big Game

A summary of estimated current big game population numbers is presented in Table 2. Mule deer are the most abundant big game species in the Jarbidge Resource Area. They range over habitat varying in elevation from 2,500 feet along the Snake River to about 7,400 feet on Bennett Mountain. Most of the summer use is on higher elevations of the Boise and Humboldt national forests. Principal summer use on public land occurs on Bennett Mountain, along the Bruneau/Jarbidge River complex, and on the Jarbidge upland along the Idaho/Nevada border. Riparian areas are key summer habitat for mule deer, wherever they occur. Mule deer make the greatest use of public lands during the winter and early spring months. Principal winter ranges include the south slopes of Bennett Mountain, Big Island, Columbet Table, Dorsey Table, Murphy Air Strip, Black Rock Pocket, and a band of habitat along the Rogerson-to-Murphy highway.

Elk are found in MUA's 1 and 2, mostly on Bennett Mountain during the winter. Most of the summer use is on higher elevations in the Boise National Forest. In the winter many of the elk share the slopes and hills on public land with wintering mule deer.

Pronghorn antelope are found in the Jarbidge Resource Area north and south of the Snake River. A small population is found on the north side in MUA 3. The largest population is found along the south end of the Resource Area in the vicinity of the Rogerson-to-Murphy Highway. A portion of the population is comprised of yearlong residents, while the remainder summer in Nevada and winter in Idaho. An additional small, isolated population is found in MUA's 10 and 16 on the Diamond A Ranch. These animals also summer principally in Nevada. Antelope crucial winter range is found on Murphy Air Strip, Browns Bench, and the northern tip of the Diamond A. Other significant wintering areas may also exist.

In December 1982 and December 1984, two groups of twelve California bighorn sheep were reintroduced in the West Fork of the Bruneau Canyon, and in February 1981 and March 1984 two additional groups of twelve were transplanted to the East Fork of the Jarbidge River in Nevada. Five lambs were counted from the West Fork population in 1983. Some of the sheep released in Nevada were lost to mountain lions, but a few survived and moved down the canyon to Idaho. Future transplants are proposed to increase the gene pool.

TABLE 2

JARBRIDGE RESOURCE AREA
CURRENT BIG GAME POPULATIONS

MUA #	Elk	Mule Deer	Antelope	Bighorn
1	70	200	---	---
2	125	350	---	---
3	---	3,350 W 60	10	---
4	---	300 W 50	---	---
5	---	50	---	---
6	---	25	---	---
7	---	50	15	---
8	---	5	---	---
9	---	5	---	---
10	---	200	105	21
11	---	1,320 W 300	100	---
12	---	150	50	---
13	---	125	250	---
14	---	50	25	---
15	---	995	900	2
16	---	1,200 W 520	140	2
		1,475 W		

All of the above population numbers represent resident (yearlong) animals, except those followed by a "W," which represent wintering animals.

Upland Game

Upland game birds in the Jarbridge Resource Area include sage grouse, ring-necked pheasant, Hungarian partridge, chukar partridge, mourning dove, California quail, and mountain quail. Sage grouse were once the most widely distributed and abundant game bird in the area. They are still scattered throughout, although their numbers have declined as a result of habitat lost through conversion of sagebrush lands to cropland, reduction of shrubs by wildfire, and the impact of livestock grazing on nesting and brood rearing associated with riparian areas.

Pheasant populations are principally found adjacent to agricultural lands along the Snake River. The public lands generally provide winter cover, which is an essential supplement to the food and nesting cover usually provided by private lands.