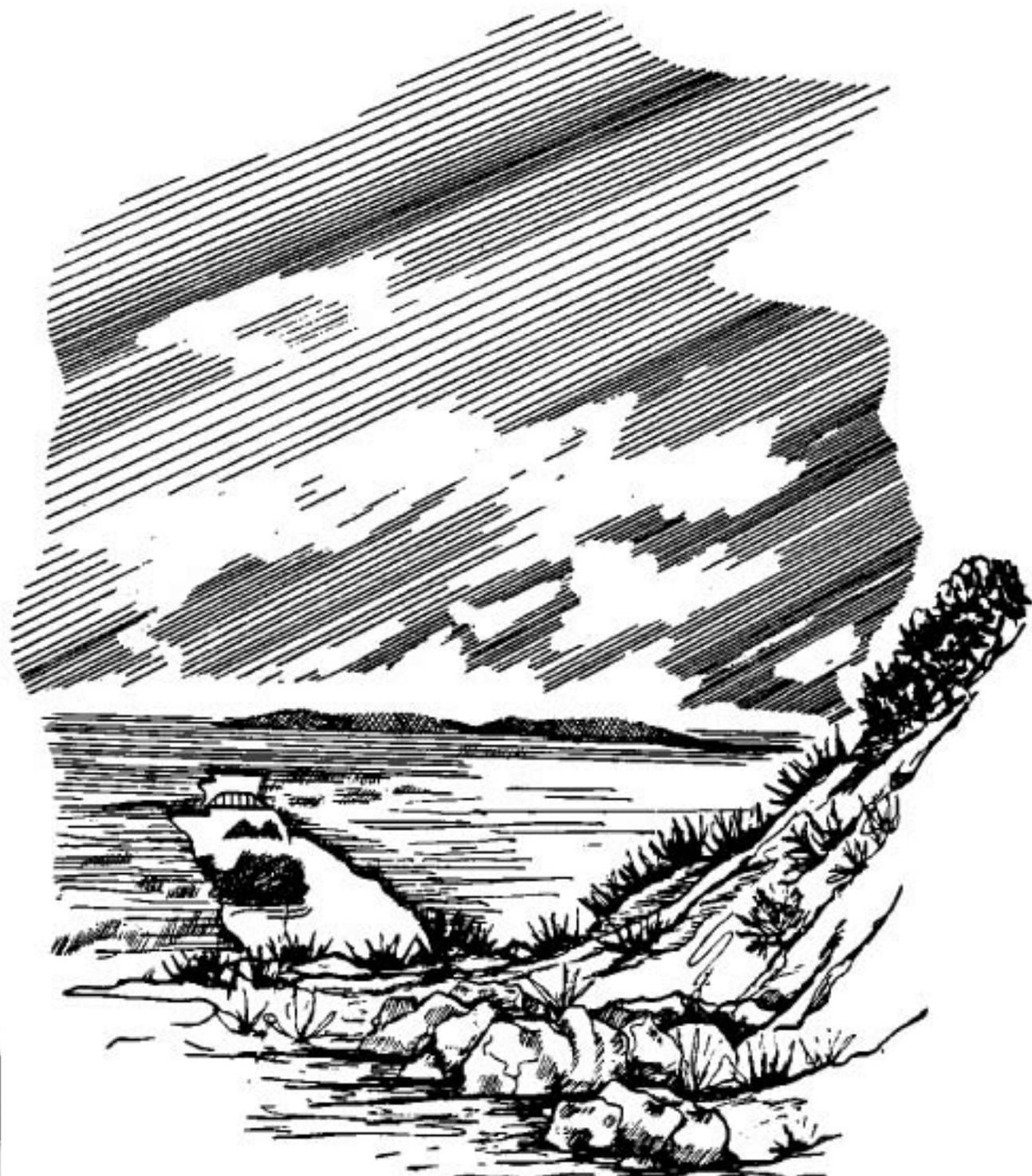


# MEDICINE LODGE

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**  
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**  
Idaho Falls District, Idaho  
December 1985



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Idaho Falls District

940 Lincoln Road

Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401

IN REPLY  
REFER TO:

1610

December 24, 1985

Dear Reader:

The enclosed Record of Decision (ROD) is the last step in completing a land use plan for the public lands that are managed by the Bureau of Land Management in the Medicine Lodge Resource Area. During the planning process, we received a number of helpful comments and suggestions. We used those comments in refining a plan for the area.

The plan chosen for the area is "Alternative C" that was discussed in the draft and final environmental impact statement (EIS). Your copy of the Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final EIS, pages 25 through 40, describes this plan. In the near future, we will have copies of the final plan available on request - primarily for people who did not receive a copy of the Final EIS.

The final plan does not address wilderness. We must prepare a separate final wilderness EIS and a wilderness study report for the Sand Mountain and Snake River Islands wilderness study areas. All individuals and organizations that receive a copy of this ROD will also receive a copy of the final wilderness EIS. However, it will take 1-3 years before the wilderness EIS is ready for public distribution. This is because of the extensive reviews necessary to finalize the Secretary of the Interior's wilderness recommendations to the President.

We will begin to implement the plan this year. I want to thank all of you for your interest and help in developing this plan for Medicine Lodge. If we can further explain any item of concern you may have, please contact me or Don Watson.

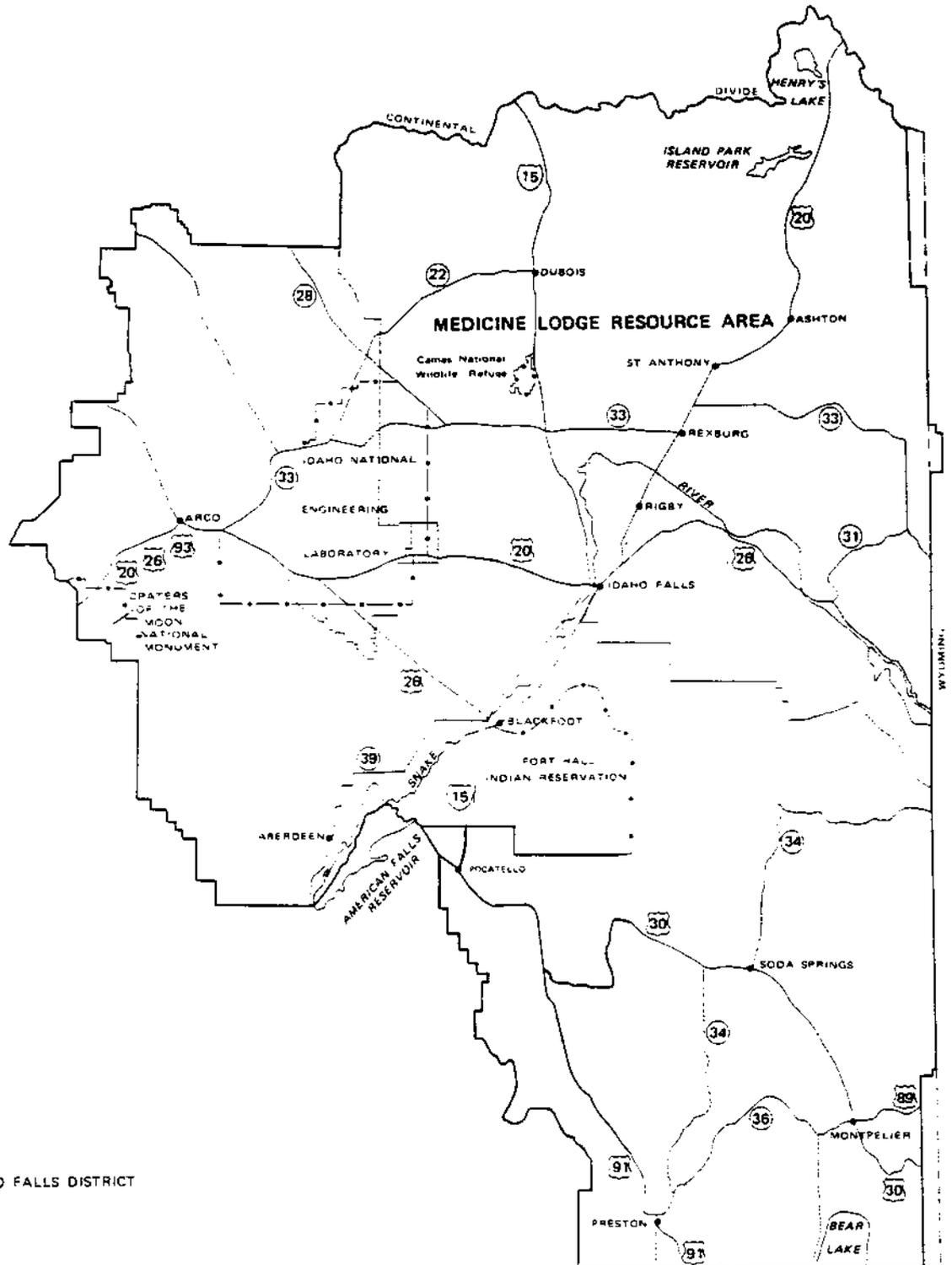
Sincerely,

  
O'dell A. Frandsen  
District Manager

Enclosure

MEDICINE LODGE RESOURCE AREA  
GENERAL LOCATION MAP

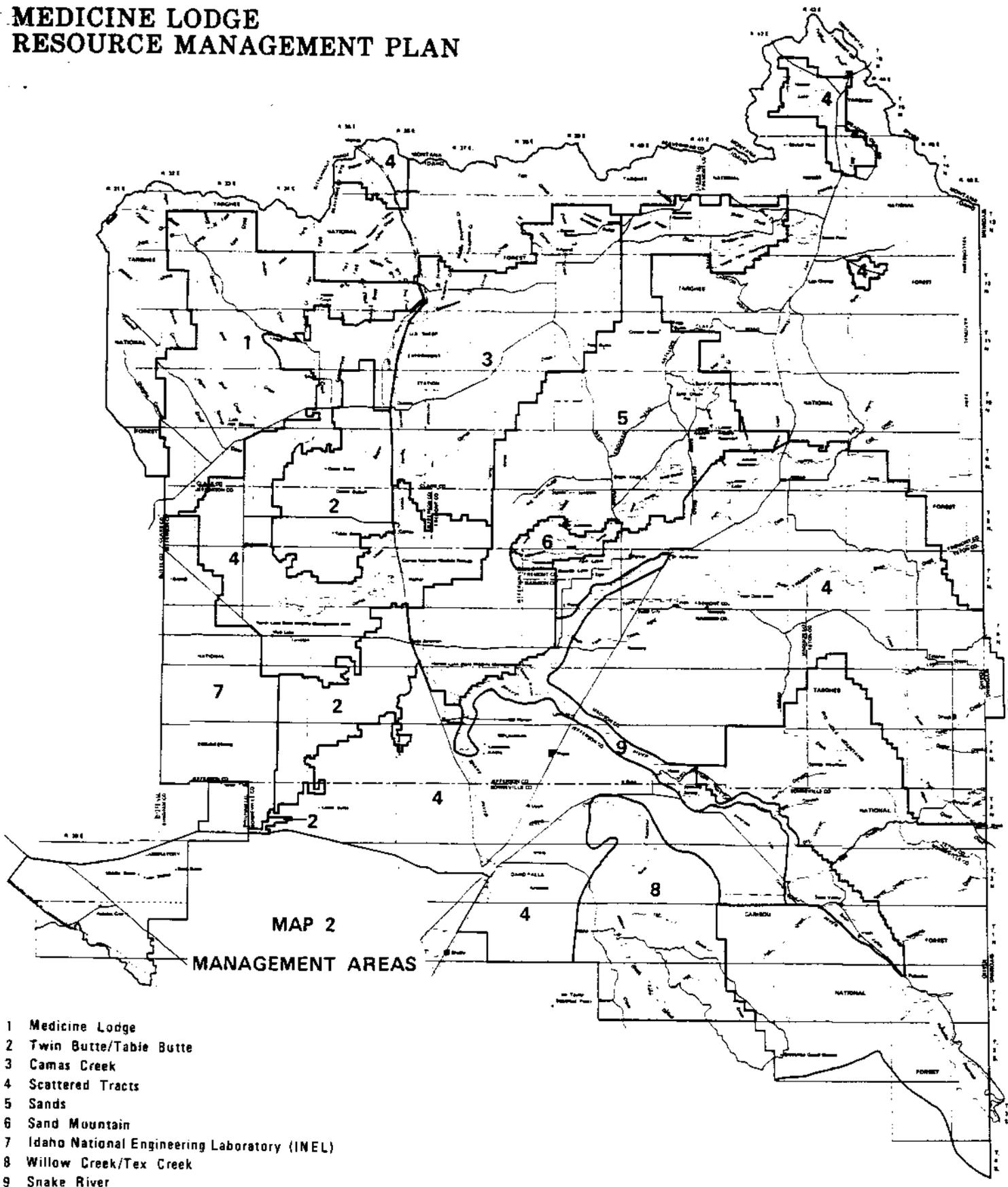
MAP 1



IDAHO KEY

IDAHO FALLS DISTRICT

# MEDICINE LODGE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN



RECORD OF DECISION FOR THE  
MEDICINE LODGE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

Introduction

This record of decision (ROD) documents the approval of the Medicine Lodge Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Medicine Lodge RMP is a land use plan that will guide resource management in the Medicine Lodge Resource Area for the next 10 to 15 years.

The Medicine Lodge Resource Area contains 647,719 acres of public land in Southeastern Idaho administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Falls District Office. The Resource Area was divided into 9 management units for purposes of organizing and presenting decisions. These management units generally contain lands having similar resource features and characteristics. The Management units are covered in detail in the proposed Medicine Lodge RMP published June, 1985.

The final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Medicine Lodge RMP was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on June 7, 1985. This ROD meets the requirements of 40 CFR Part 1505.2 pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

Decision

Alternative C of the Medicine Lodge Final EIS Proposed Medicine Lodge RMP is the approved Medicine Lodge RMP.

Protests

One protest letter was received concerning the proposed Medicine Lodge RMP. Upon review of this letter of protest and planning records, it was concluded the Bureau of Land Management's Idaho State Director and Idaho Falls District Manager followed the applicable planning procedures, laws, regulations, policies and resource considerations in developing the Medicine Lodge RMP. It is believed that the protest did not warrant any change in the proposed Medicine Lodge RMP and as such the Idaho State Director's decision was upheld.

Alternatives

Five alternatives were developed for consideration in the selection of an RMP for the Medicine Lodge Resource Area. Each alternative addressed the planning issues in a different way and was developed to cover a range of possible resource uses. The environmental consequences of various management options were available for consideration in selecting an RMP.

### Alternative A

The "No Action" alternative would continue present management direction. Resource use levels would generally remain the same as present levels. Minor changes from the present could occur and management actions required to implement existing activity plans could be accomplished. New uses could occur subject to environmental review.

### Alternative B

This alternative would favor production and use of commodity resources and commercial use authorizations. Management direction would favor higher livestock stocking levels, more range improvements, land disposal for agricultural development, and transfer of isolated or difficult to manage parcels out of federal ownership. Restrictions on mining, mineral leasing, mineral material removal, and off-road vehicle use would be minimized.

### Alternative C

This alternative is now the approved Medicine Lodge RMP. In this alternative a variety of resource uses will be allowed. Production and use of commodity resources and commercial use authorization will occur, while protecting fragile resources and wildlife habitat, preserving natural systems and cultural values, and allowing for nonconsumptive resource uses. Resource use levels in Alternative C will be within the range set by Alternatives B, D and E.

Approximately 8,249 acres of public land is available for transfer from federal ownership by sale, exchange or agricultural entry.

A total of 515,040 acres is open to fluid mineral leasing with standard stipulations, 341,820 acres with seasonal occupancy restrictions and 44,870 acres under no surface occupancy restrictions. Only 28,300 acres will be closed to mineral leasing and 857 acres closed to solid mineral leasing. This alternative includes opening about 106,840 acres of the INEL to mineral leasing. Areas open to locatable mineral entry total 786,673 acres and there will be 143,357 acres closed. A total of 869,960 acres are open to sale of mineral materials and 60,070 acres will be closed to protect other resource values.

There are 11,330 acres of public land open to commercial timber harvest under existing regulations, restrictions and stipulations. Deferred from harvest will be 1,966 acres, predominately in the Box Canyon Area north of Ashton, which are uneconomical or not feasible to cut at this time. There will be 296 acres withdrawn from timber harvest because of slope, soils or inability of the site to reproduce timber. An additional 818 acres will be withdrawn from harvest because of protection of other resource values or the acreage would be lost through transfer actions. There will be 2,925 acres of woodland along the South-Fork of the Snake River withdrawn from harvesting.

A total of 100,449 AUMs of livestock forage will be provided. Approximately 620,539 acres of public land and 180,419 acres within the INEL boundary are included in grazing allotments.

The Sands Habitat Management Plan will continue to be used and updated as needed. A total of 49,163 AUMs of forage will be provided. This should provide forage for expected herd numbers over the next 20 years. The Tex Creek Cooperative Agreement and the South Fork of the Snake River Memorandum of Understanding with the Idaho Fish and Game will continue to be followed. A management plan for the South Fork of the Snake River will be developed. Wildlife values will be one of the key resources planned for in that area.

A total of 30.5 miles of stream will be managed to improve riparian systems, fisheries and/or water quality. This will require 13.6 miles of fence to be built to protect 6.8 miles of stream. Another 53 miles of stream will be managed to maintain existing fisheries, water quality and riparian habitat in current satisfactory condition. Public lands within the SCS Willow Creek 208 Watershed Project area will be managed in cooperation with other land owners and agencies to implement the watershed protection plan.

Off-road vehicle closures will be made on 18,907 acres. An additional 69,400 acres will have seasonal closures to ORV use and 27,889 acres will have vehicle restrictions to existing roads and trails. The remaining 601,923 acres will be open to off-road vehicle use. The National Natural Landmark designation will be maintained on 1,120 acres on North Menan Butte and recommended on 27,350 acres of the St. Anthony Sand Dunes. Three areas are designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern: Nine Mile Knoll, North Menan Butte, and the Snake River. A Special Recreation Management Area designation will be applied to the Sand Dunes complex and also the Snake River. Research Natural Areas are designated for North Menan Butte, Game Creek, the North Junipers and three islands of the Snake River. The Cress Creek Trail will be nominated as a National Recreation Trail.

The 21,870 acres in the two Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) will be recommended as nonsuitable. These areas will be managed under the Interim Management Policy until Congress makes final determination.

Approximately 429,301 acres will be provided full fire suppression. The remaining 217,196 acres will be included in a limited suppression plan. Included are the 51,505 acres that are being considered for prescribed burning over the next 20 years.

#### Alternative D

The partial Wilderness alternative considers part of the Sand Mountain and Snake River Island WSAs as potential Wilderness. All use levels, except for Wilderness, Energy and Minerals and Lands, would remain the same as for Alternative C, the selected alternative.

## Alternative E

In this alternative, protection of fragile resources and wildlife habitat, preservation of natural systems and nonconsumptive resources use would be favored. Management direction would favor habitat management to increase wildlife populations, protection of wilderness qualities and opportunities for general dispersed recreation.

## Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The alternatives considered in the EIS would all achieve the requirements of sections 101 and 102(1) of NEPA and other environmental laws and policies. Each alternative is environmentally acceptable. Each of the alternatives is designed to use practicable means to create and maintain conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, but the emphasis is different in each alternative.

In terms of effects on biological and physical components of the environment, Alternatives D and E would be the environmentally preferable alternatives. Alternative E would preserve the most wilderness values, natural history values, and special values in ACECs. Alternative E would result in the greatest increase in wildlife populations. Both would result in the most vegetation in good ecological condition, the least in downward trend, the most in upward trend, the lowest average erosion rate, and the least area in a severe erosion category.

In terms of economic benefits, Alternative B would be the preferable alternative. It would generate the greatest increase in income and jobs for the Medicine Lodge Resource Area. It would make the most land available for transfer to private ownership and development for agriculture. It would also have the highest management cost. The average erosion rate would be highest and wildlife populations would decrease.

In terms of social benefits, no alternative is clearly preferable to another. Alternative D would protect the most high-density cultural resource occurrence areas from surface disturbance. Alternative B would have the highest level of grazing, but would also adversely affect the largest number of permittees by allowing transfer of significant portions of grazing allotments to private ownership for agricultural development. Alternative A would have the lowest management cost.

Alternative C, the proposed Medicine Lodge RMP is the approved alternative. In comparison with the other alternatives considered in the EIS, it should attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment while preserving important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage. The effects on the various resource uses and values would be between those of the other alternatives. Considering the effects of the alternatives, including effects on biological and physical components of the environment, economic effects, and social effects, Alternative C is the environmentally preferable alternative in terms of the overall human environment.

## Consultation and Coordination

BLM's Resource Management Plans must agree with and support officially approved and adopted resource-related plans (or in their absence, policies or programs) of other Federal agencies, state and local governments, and Indian tribes, so long as BLM's plans also agree with and support Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. A special effort has been made to ensure that the proposed RMP is consistent with approved plans. No inconsistencies have been identified by the Governor of the State of Idaho, other agencies, governments, or Indian tribes.

## Monitoring, Evaluation, and Mitigation

The results of implementing the selected RMP will be examined periodically to inform the resource managers and public of the progress of the plan. The results being achieved under the plan will be compared with the plan objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation help the resource managers:

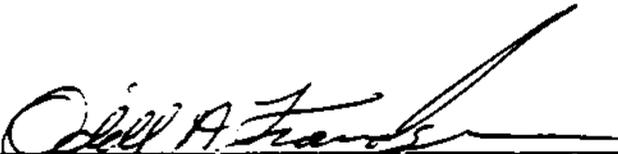
- to determine whether an action is accomplishing the intended purpose,
- to determine whether mitigating measures are satisfactory,
- to determine if the related plans of other agencies, governments or Indian tribes have changed, resulting in an inconsistency with the RMP,
- to identify any unanticipated or unpredictable effects, and
- to identify new data of significance to the plan.

The proposed monitoring and evaluation plan for the Medicine Lodge Resource Area RMP was shown in Appendix G of the Medicine Lodge Draft RMP/EIS. The plan specifies resource components to be monitored, how they will be monitored, where they will be monitored and when they will be monitored. Monitoring intensity (the number of studies and the frequency of studies) will vary among allotments according to the amount of information that is needed to determine if the plan objectives are being met. If future monitoring shows a variation from RMP objectives warranting management concern, the reasons for the variation will be examined closely. Modification of an RMP decision may be needed, or the variation may be due to factors beyond BLM's control, such as climatic or economic fluctuations.

The selected Resource Management Plan incorporates measures for mitigating undesirable environmental effects. These measures are identified in the draft and final RMP/EIS documents and will be applied during implementation of the RMP. In some cases, additional mitigating measures will be developed and applied during activity planning.

SIGNATURE PAGE

Submitted By:

 11/21/85  
District Manager, Idaho Falls

Approval

 11-29-85  
State Director, Idaho

For further information, contact Donald L. Watson, Medicine Lodge Resource Area Manager, Bureau of Land Management, 940 Lincoln Road, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401.