

Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area
and
Bruneau Planning Area
Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

SCOPING REPORT



Bureau of Land Management
Lower Snake River District
3948 Development Avenue
Boise, ID 83705
October 2002



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Lower Snake River District
Boise Field Office
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<http://www.id.blm.gov>

In Reply Refer To:

1610/1785 (090)

October 15, 2002

Dear Reader:

This report contains information regarding the Bruneau Planning Area and Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Resource Management Plans that are currently underway in the Bureau of Land Management's, Lower Snake River District office.

The public has shown extensive interest in these two plans and has indicated a strong desire to be actively involved in the planning process. Because of this interest and our desire to promote public ownership and involvement at every step, the "normal" scoping process has been expanded.

Participation at the meetings and in the form of written comments and telephone conversations has been exceptional. The level of commitment and the knowledge of the lands and resources demonstrated by participants has been outstanding and the time and efforts of all who have been involved in these two plans is greatly appreciated.

We will continue to work with the groups identified in this report and encourage the public to stay actively involved throughout the entire process.

Sincerely,

/s/

Dave Krosting
Acting District Manager

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Introduction

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is preparing two Resource Management Plans (RMPs), one for the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) and one for the Bruneau Planning Area. Public involvement is a vital component of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for vesting the public in the decision-making process and allowing for a full environmental disclosure. Public involvement for both RMPs is conducted simultaneously, whenever possible, to: (1) alleviate redundancy, (2) reduce the public's time commitment, and (3) avoid confusion by the public in understanding the two planning initiatives. Public involvement for the two plans is being conducted in two phases, with a variety of public involvement activities for each phase.

1. Scoping prior to NEPA analysis to obtain public input on issues and proposed alternatives, and
2. Public review and comment on the Draft RMP/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Scoping is a public process designed to determine the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in a NEPA document. This report documents the results of the public scoping phase of both RMPs.

Overview/Purpose and Need for the Plans

Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area

The proposed plan will develop a management strategy to implement the purposes of the NCA, as stated in Section 3 of the enabling legislation, Public Law 103-64 (16 USC 460iii-2; 107 Stat. 304), to wit:

“...to provide for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of raptor populations and habitats and the natural and environmental resources and values associated therewith, and of the scientific, cultural, and educational resources and values of the public lands in the conservation area.”

Because of changing ecological conditions, the burgeoning human population in the surrounding area, and the proposed listing of slickspot peppergrass (*Lepidium papilliferum*) as an endangered species, there is a compelling need to develop a plan that ensures that: 1) authorized uses are compatible with the purposes for which the NCA was established, 2) uses of the area are sustainable over the long-term, and are balanced with the demands of the increasing population, and 3) neighboring communities continue to benefit economically and socially from their use of the public lands

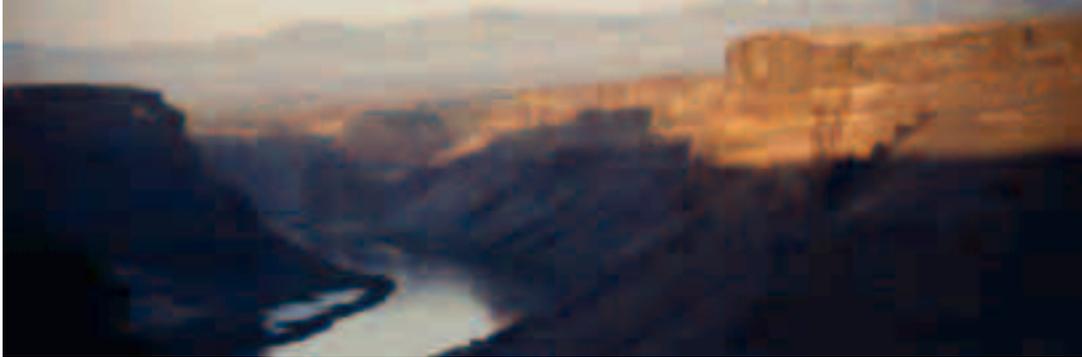
Bruneau Planning Area

The Bruneau Planning Area Resource Management Plan is being prepared to provide a comprehensive framework for managing public lands administered by BLM over the next 20 years. The new management strategy will be responsive to current guidance for rangeland health and will address the need to continue to improve riparian habitat conditions. This new strategy will address the increased demand for recreational use and changing activities.

Planning Area Description (See [Attachment 1 for Map of the Planning Areas](#))

Snake River Birds of Prey NCA

The Snake River Birds of Prey NCA is located in southwest Idaho. The NCA encompasses 485,000 acres of public land along 81 miles of the Snake River. It is located in Ada, Canyon, Elmore and Owyhee Counties and is within a 30-minute drive of Boise and almost half of Idaho's population.



The NCA contains the greatest concentration of nesting birds of prey in North America. About 700 pairs, representing 15 species, nest here each spring, including golden eagles, burrowing owls, and the greatest density of prairie falcons in the world. Nine other raptor species use the area during migrations. The NCA is a unique habitat for birds of prey because the cliffs of the Snake River Canyon provide ideal nesting sites, while the surrounding upland plateau historically supports unusually large populations of prey species.



The Idaho Army National Guard and other military units have conducted military training in portions of the NCA since the 1940's. The existing military training area, called the Orchard Training Area, consists of an 80,000 acre maneuver area used for practicing tank and wheeled vehicle maneuvers, and a 58,000 acre impact area into which live tank artillery and small arms weapons are fired.

Bruneau Planning Area

The Bruneau RMP planning area, located in southwestern Idaho's Owyhee County, encompasses approximately 1,400,000 acres administered by BLM. The planning area adjoins the eastern side of the Owyhee RMP planning area. The Owyhee River, Deep Creek and Castle Creek form the western boundary. The Bruneau River forms the eastern boundary. The Duck Valley Indian Reservation and Nevada stateline form the southern boundary. The northern boundary adjoins the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. Most of the public lands are contiguous, with only a few scattered or isolated parcels.

The planning area contains diverse landforms and vegetation types, ranging from sagebrush-covered plateaus to rugged mountains blanketed with juniper woodlands and grasslands.



Public Involvement Activities

Concerted efforts to devise new and innovative methods to involve interested individuals have been sought at every opportunity and significant efforts have been made to include everyone with an interest in either of these two planning efforts. A mailing list of over 600 individuals was developed and is continually updated. Below is a brief description of public involvement activities.

Assessing Prospects for Collaborative Planning and Public Participation

In the fall of 2001, the BLM Lower Snake River District contracted with the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (ECR) to conduct an assessment for collaborative planning and public participation for the two RMPs. A situation assessment report was written by CDR Associates (CDR) through the contract with ECR and is available as [attachment 2](#).

CDR recommended a public involvement strategy for the LSRD that falls in the center of a spectrum for collaboration. It was recommended that under this approach, LSRD would identify specific roles and tasks for existing structures such as the Resource Advisory Council (RAC), Intergovernmental Coordination Group, and Wings and Roots Native American Campfire. The broader public, including user groups such as OHV riders, would be given opportunities for meaningful participation through a mix of public meetings and workshops. Based on these recommendations, BLM developed the public involvement strategy that is found in [attachments 3 and 4](#).

Public Meetings and Outreach

The scoping process for both the NCA and the Bruneau Planning Area RMPs began on August 7, 2001 with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* ([attachment 5](#)), which notified the public of BLM's intent to develop a plan for those BLM-managed lands within the Planning Units. The NOI also solicited public comments.

In October 2001 a BLM Idaho Planning website (www.id.blm.gov) was launched to serve as a clearinghouse for project information regarding the BLM planning activities throughout Idaho. The web site contains information regarding public involvement, public comments and how to contact BLM for more information about the plans.

In early November 2001, the *RMP News* newsletter was mailed to nearly 600 contacts on the distribution list. The purpose of this newsletter was to inform interested parties of the two planning efforts, location of public scoping open houses, and the opportunity to comment. Newspaper advertisements and a press release were also issued to notify the public of the project, to announce the five open houses, to request public comments, and to provide contact information. Because winter weather conditions precluded the public's attendance at one of the meetings, a sixth meeting was scheduled and additional news releases and advertisements were published.

Public open houses, i.e., scoping meetings, provided an opportunity for the public to receive information, ask questions, and provide input. Attendees had the opportunity to view a variety of handouts, maps and other information related to the plans ([attachment 6](#)) contains documents distributed at the meeting). In addition to BLM and Lower Snake River District Resource Advisory Council (RAC) representatives, a total of 128 people attended the open houses. In general, the meetings were well attended, providing a good mix of representation from recreational users, the environmental community, commodity users, and government.

The schedule for public meetings was:

- November 27, Kuna High School, Kuna, ID
- November 28, BLM LSRD Conference Room, Boise, ID
- December 3, Rim Rock Jr/Sr. High School, Bruneau, Idaho
- December 11, Caldwell Court House, Caldwell, ID
- December 13, Mountain Home Elks Lodge, Mountain Home, Idaho
- January 9, 2002, BLM Idaho State Office, Boise, ID 83709

In addition to the above meetings, a second set of public meetings was held in July, 2002 to provide the public with feedback on the issues that BLM developed from their earlier scoping comments. Approximately 79 people attended the four meetings that were held as follows:

- July 8, Marsing Community Center, Marsing, ID
- July 9, Nampa Civic Center, Nampa, ID
- July 10, Mountain Home Fire Station, Mountain Home, ID
- July 11, Rimrock Jr/Sr High School, Bruneau, ID.

The four meetings were advertised in various newspapers and radio stations. In addition, post cards and flyers were sent to individuals, businesses, and interest groups announcing the public meetings. A summary report of the meetings and a list of participants can be found in [attachment 7](#).

During the July meetings, BLM offered to meet individually with any person or interest group(s) wanting more detailed information regarding the planning process. These meetings can be scheduled at any time throughout the process. Thus far, meetings have been held with:

- Owyhee Gem & Mineral Club, Aug 21, 2002, approximately 45 participants
- Wilderness Society & Idaho Conservation League, Aug 27, 2002, 8 participants
- Some grazing permittees

As a final step in the scoping/issue development process, the public was invited to observe the interdisciplinary planning teams, county cooperators, and members of the RAC subgroup finalize the RMP issues by incorporating appropriate changes suggested by the public. Approximately 45 people participated in this process on September 10 at the Nazareth Retreat Center in Boise. The public was also afforded a final opportunity to feedback on the issues that were refined during the process. The final issue statements were arrived at through a consensus process are provided in the section “Issues Identified” on pages 10-13 and the report from the meeting is available as [attachment 8](#).



Other Briefings and Coordination Efforts

Congressional Staff

Briefings have been, and continue to be, held at regular intervals with staff from the Boise offices of U.S. Senator Larry Craig, U.S. Senator Mike Crapo, and First District Congressman C.L. “Butch” Otter to provide updates regarding the ongoing activities of both planning efforts. These regular updates provide an opportunity for congressional staff to meet directly with BLM Managers and the RMP Team Leader to receive advance notification of upcoming activities and to address potential areas of concern regarding the plans.

County - Elected Officials and Coordination Groups

As the Preparation Plans were completed, BLM LSRD staff and management met with elected officials from Ada, Canyon, Elmore and Owyhee Counties to apprise them of the upcoming RMPs and the scope of the plans. These individuals are continually updated on the planning activities and their continued involvement is encouraged as the plans progress.

In addition, BLM LSRD Management and the planning team leader meet with the Owyhee County Coordination Group on a regular basis to provide information and answer questions regarding the planning efforts, as well as other issues. These meetings are an effective tool for providing the county more detailed and comprehensive information regarding the plans.

Cooperating Agencies

On May 31, 2002 the LSRD invited counties within the two planning areas to partner with the BLM as a cooperating agency in the planning process. This status was offered to the counties, in addition to their involvement in the Intergovernmental Coordination Group, to ensure the RMPs conform with the counties' plans and policies, to the maximum extent consistent with federal law. BLM signed an agreement formally recognizing Owyhee County as a Cooperator (See [attachment 9](#)) and it is anticipated that an agreement with Elmore County will be signed in the near future. In addition, an agreement was signed with the Idaho Army National Guard making them a full cooperator for the NCA planning effort.

Intergovernmental Coordination Group

BLM is required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) to coordinate with other federal agencies, and State and local government officials in developing land use decisions for public lands. FLPMA also requires, to the extent practical, that BLM keep itself informed of other federal agency and State and local land use plans, to assure that consideration is given to those plans that are germane to the development of BLM land use plan decisions, and assist in resolving inconsistencies between federal and non-federal plans. As part of this requirement, BLM formed an

The ICG is a group of intergovernmental individuals meeting to increase two-way information sharing about natural resource guidance, documents, data and initiatives to ensure that information is considered, and to assist in resolving inconsistencies between federal and State/local plans.

Intergovernmental Coordination Group (ICG), the first meeting of which was held on November 14, 2001. The group meets regularly to determine consistency and share data before information is released to the public. Information regarding ICG membership, as well as the purpose and objectives of this group can be found in [attachment 10](#).

Resource Advisory Council

The Lower Snake River District has an active Resource Advisory Council (RAC) that has received regular updates on the two plans since April 2001, when the original Preparation Plans were developed. The RAC formed an RMP subgroup to assist BLM with all phases of the RMPs and has been actively participating in scoping and issue development. A copy of the subgroup roles and goals is found in [attachment 11](#).

Tribal Involvement

The tribes play an important role in the planning process and have been, and will continue to be, updated as part of the Wings to Roots forum. The wings and Roots forum is the forum identified by the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes for consultation. Monthly *ad hoc* planning meetings are held to ensure that Nation-to-Nation status is recognized and consultation is completed.

Issue Summary

Overview

North Country Resources, Inc. conducted the analysis of the scoping responses (Scoping Content Analysis), using a Microsoft Access database to catalog and sort the comments received. Prepared reports from this database ([attachment 12](#)), as well as the database itself, can be downloaded from the BLM planning website.

It is necessary to define some of the terminology used in the database to understand how comments were analyzed:

Contacts: The database defines “contacts” as any individual letter, phone call, e-mail or fax containing a scoping response received by the BLM. In addition, each of the scoping meetings was considered a separate “contact.” Each “contact” was given an identification number (Contact ID). A total of 57 contacts are logged in the database.

Participants: Participants are defined as individuals or organizations that submitted comments by letter, phone call, e-mail or fax. Each person or organization that commented was assigned an identification number (Participant ID). In addition, each of the scoping meetings was considered a “participant.” A total of 52 participants are logged in the database.

In some instances, a participant may have submitted more than one letter. Thus, each Contact ID is linked to its respective Participant ID.

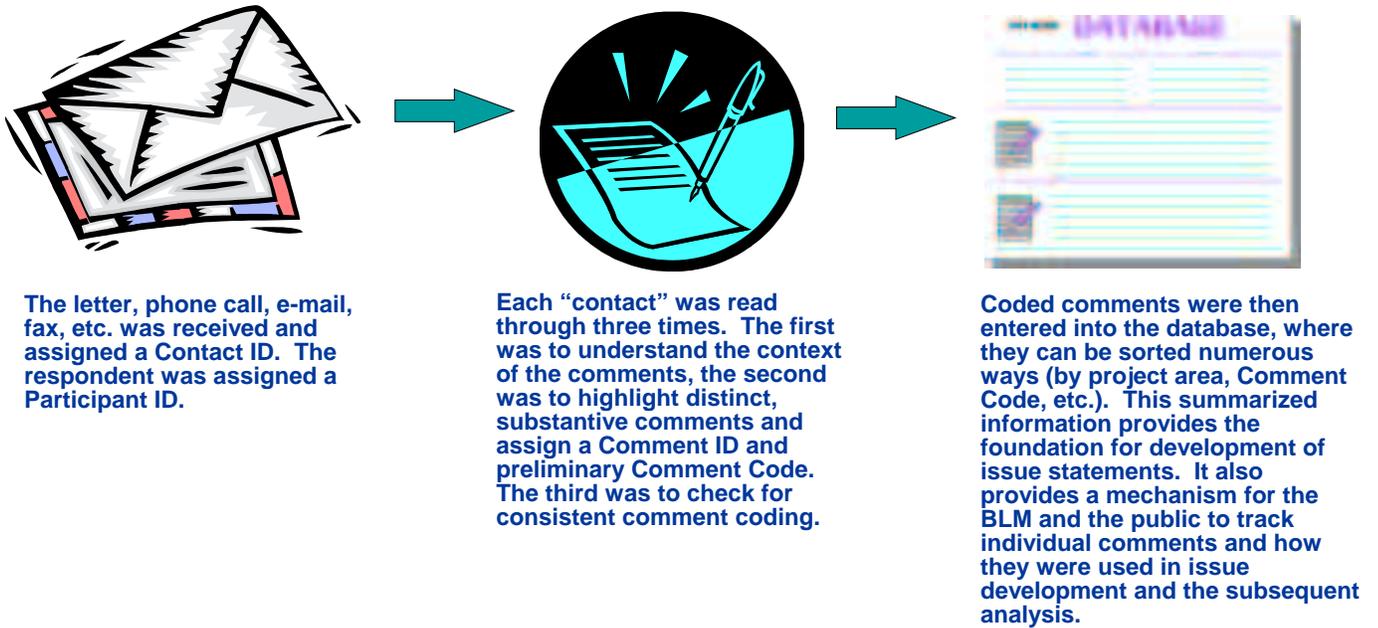
Comments: The database defines “comments” as individual, substantive comments made within a particular contact. For instance, a single letter may have contained 50 separate substantive comments. Or, with regard to scoping meetings, each of the comments recorded on flip charts during a particular meeting was considered a distinct comment within that specific contact. Within the database, comments are assigned an identification number (Comment ID). A total of 1031 separate, distinct comments are logged in the database.

Each Comment ID is linked to its respective Contact ID (the letter, phone call, e-mail, fax, or scoping meeting where the comment was made).

Comment Codes: A coding structure was necessary to facilitate analysis of the comments. Categories of comments, usually defined by a given resource or topical area, were established and numbered. Subcategories were established to provide a finer distinction between individual comments. For example, several comments within a given letter might refer to wildlife habitat. However, one sentence might talk about habitat conditions, another about a conflict the participant feels exists regarding habitat conditions, and other about a potential solution the participant offered to resolve this conflict.

In total, 143 comment categories, each assigned a distinct Comment Code, are logged in the database. Comment Codes are linked to their respective Comment ID.

Figure 1: Process Schematic



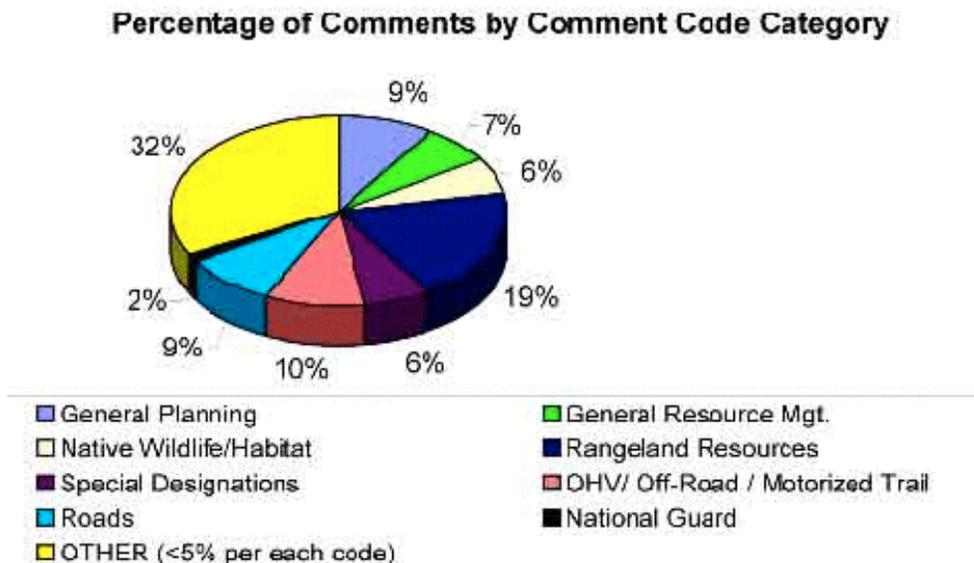
Comment Overview

The comments received in response to scoping provided many types of information. Some identified conflicts with certain types of management activities and/or uses of the public lands in the planning areas. Others presented potential management activities that might address resource conflicts or degraded conditions. Still others offered information on resource conditions within the project areas, or provided references on research that might be relevant to existing conditions within the project area.

Figure 2 on the following page displays the distribution and percentage of total comments received as coded by resource or management activity categories (see [Attachment 13](#) for the coding structure). Categories representing 5% or more of the total comments are represented – the “other” category is for those resource or management categories that received less than 5% of the total comments with the exception of National Guard.

Comments that identified conflicts were evaluated as potential issues – many were incorporated into the initial issue statements presented to the public in a series of meetings July 8-11, 2002. The remaining comments will be evaluated by the BLM Interdisciplinary Team for their potential contribution in the environmental analysis.

Figure 2: Distribution of Comment Codes



Issues Identified and Decisions to be Made

The table on the following pages represents the issues as they were finalized at the September 10 meeting/workshop. No changes have been made to the wording that was developed on September 10. For additional information regarding these issues and how they were developed refer to [attachment 8](#).

It should be noted that during the Owyhee County Coordination Group meeting held on September 12, Owyhee County requested to review these issues again before they are considered “final”.

Public ISSUE STATEMENTS

BRUNEAU	SNAKE RIVER BIRDS OF PREY NCA
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VEGETATION

<p>Balance livestock grazing, recreation and other allowable uses to provide for native plant communities, watershed health, soil stability, wildlife habitats and special status species.</p> <p>Fire management, including fuels treatments, need to protect wildland, urban and rural interfaces and the existing native habitats. Fire use and other management tools need to be considered for enhancement and restoration of native plant communities. Rehabilitation considers use of native and adapted non-native plants as appropriate.</p> <p><i>Balance means that appropriate management opportunities will be applied to minimize conflicts between uses and resource values.</i></p>	<p>Loss of native shrub/perennial bunchgrass habitat has resulted in a decline of the raptor prey base, influencing some raptor populations.</p> <p>Livestock grazing, military training, and other human uses have an effect on soil stability and watershed health.</p> <p>Existing land use plans do not adequately address the protection, enhancement and restoration of native plant communities (sagebrush, salt desert shrub) that provide unfragmented core habitat for dependent plant and animal species.</p> <p>Livestock grazing, recreation, and other uses may be impacting water quality and riparian habitat conditions.</p> <p>Fire management, including fuels treatments, need to protect the existing native habitats, wildland, and urban and rural interfaces. Fire use and other management tools need to be considered for enhancement and restoration of native plant communities. Rehabilitation considers use of native and adapted non-native plants as appropriate.</p>
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SOCIO ECONOMIC

<p>Current land use and recreation trends may affect traditional uses* and values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does BLM manage public lands for sustainable use and resource health in order to maintain the custom, culture and economic health of local communities? - How can emerging activities and traditional uses be managed in order to maintain the sustainable use and resource health that supports local economies? <p>Recreational use of public lands increases counties' infrastructure costs. What actions can BLM take to minimize adverse effects on local communities and governmental entities?</p>	<p>Current land use and recreation trends may affect traditional uses* and values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does BLM manage public lands for sustainable use and resource health in order to maintain the custom, culture and economic health of local communities? S How can emerging activities and traditional uses be managed in order to maintain the sustainable use and resource health that supports local economies? <p>Recreational use of public lands increases counties' infrastructure costs. What actions can BLM take to minimize adverse effects on local communities and governmental entities?</p>
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BRUNEAU	SNAKE RIVER BIRDS OF PREY NCA
TRIBAL AND CULTURAL VALUES	
<p>Historical, tribal and cultural values may be affected by a variety of land use activities. The Shoshone-Paiute and Shoshone-Bannock tribes consider the area part of their aboriginal homelands and want to continue to have access to the land for ceremonial and religious purposes, as well as hunting, fishing and gathering.</p> <p>At times, current management conflicts with both tangible and intangible Native American interests; therefore, the RMP needs to address the protection of cultural resources and traditional cultural properties, including plants, wildlife, sacred places, water**, etc. Tribal governments are sovereign nations which have special status through treaties, statutes, and executive orders that must be honored and protected.</p>	<p>Historical, tribal and cultural values may be affected by a variety of land use activities. The Shoshone-Paiute and Shoshone-Bannock tribes consider the area part of their aboriginal homelands and want to continue to have access to the land for ceremonial and religious purposes, as well as hunting, fishing and gathering.</p> <p>At times, current management conflicts with both tangible and intangible Native American interests; therefore, the RMP needs to address the protection of cultural resources and traditional cultural properties, including plants, wildlife, sacred places, water**, etc. Tribal governments are sovereign nations which have special status through treaties, statutes, and executive orders that must be honored and protected.</p>
RECREATION	
<p>Demand for recreational opportunities in SW Idaho is increasing.</p> <p>There is a need to provide for recreation use while addressing the associated impacts to other resources and conflicts with other uses. BLM needs to provide reasonable recreational access consistent with private property rights and a range of recreational opportunities.</p>	<p>Demand for recreational opportunities in SW Idaho is increasing.</p> <p>There is a need to manage recreation use in a manner compatible with the protection and enhancement of raptor populations and their habitats.</p> <p>BLM needs to provide reasonable recreational access consistent with private property rights and a range of recreational opportunities. ***</p>
GRAZING	
<p>Livestock grazing is an important component of multiple use management. Livestock grazing practices need to be compatible with a sustainable environment for vegetation, wildlife and fish as well as providing sustained economic benefit to local communities.</p>	<p>Livestock grazing is an important component of multiple use management. Livestock grazing practices need to be compatible with a sustainable environment for vegetation, wildlife and fish as well as providing sustained economic benefit to local communities.</p>
WILDLIFE	
<p>Human uses affect wildlife populations. How can aquatic, riparian and upland habitat be managed to support healthy, sustainable wildlife populations?</p>	<p>Is management of the NCA consistent with the protection and enhancement of raptor populations and their habitat?</p>

BRUNEAU	SNAKE RIVER BIRDS OF PREY NCA
LAND AND REALTY	
<p>The planning area consists of scattered tracts of intermingled ownerships which present challenges for management and use of public resources.</p> <p>Purchases, sales and exchanges should consider economic, environmental, cultural, economic and social resource values.</p> <p>An increasing demand for road, utility and communication services impacts public lands and users</p> <p>Where can utility corridors be located to prevent or lessen resource degradation caused by proliferation of rights-of-way?</p>	<p>The planning area consists of scattered tracts of intermingled ownerships and a confusing boundary which presents challenges for management and use of public resources.</p> <p>Purchases and exchanges should consider environmental, cultural, economic and social resource values.</p> <p>An increasing demand for road, utility and communication services impacts public lands and users.</p> <p>Where can utility corridors be located to prevent or lesson resource degradation caused by proliferation of rights-of-way?</p>
SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS	
<p>Special designations, i.e., ACEC, WSA, RNA, proposed for the protection of natural and cultural resources may impact current uses and conditions.</p> <p>Special designations need to be monitored to see if the objectives are being met.</p>	<p>Special designations, i.e., ACEC, WSA, RNA, proposed for the protection of natural and cultural resources may impact current uses and conditions.</p> <p>Special designations need to be monitored to see if the objectives are being met.</p>
NATIONAL GUARD	
<p><i>None.</i></p>	<p>Military activities need to be conducted in a way that is consistent with the protection and enhancement of raptor populations and their habit.</p> <p>BLM may receive future requests to authorize new types or increased levels of use.</p> <p>Areas potentially affected by hazardous materials or unexploded ordnance should be evaluated for possible withdrawal to the Department of Defense.</p> <p>A withdrawal would not change the use of the area, but would transfer the liability for clean up and remediation to the agency responsible for the problem.</p>

* The group requested that BLM define traditional uses: grazing, minerals, farming, etc., as identified by past +/- 60 years use.

** There was some discussion about how to interpret the reference to water—whether the reference was to water rights, water quality, or some other distinction about which the BLM may or may not be able to influence. The group agreed that BLM would seek this clarification and potential (or not) revision at a subsequent Wings and Roots meeting among the Tribe and the BLM. (Done 9/20/02 - Tribes mean “water” in the broadest sense including quality and necessity for life)

***BLM asked to provide for a definition of “reasonable” either in the definitions or via a footnote to explain that it does not necessarily mean convenient or condemnation but consistent with a prudent person’s approach.

Issues Raised That Won't Be Addressed

One of the key recommendations that resulted from the "Assessment" was the need to be consistent and clear on the decisions to be made in the RMP. As a result of this recommendation, we have very specifically identified the planning criteria that will be used for the RMP, and have informed the public through newsletters and meetings concerning the types of decisions to be made in the RMP. Key themes presented to the public as being outside the scope of the RMP include site specific decisions such as range improvement projects. Although they must be consistent with the RMP, these implementation decisions are not addressed specifically in the RMP.

Decisions that are beyond the scope of BLM's delegated authority will also not be addressed in the RMP. This includes actions such as releasing areas from WSA status, resolving Native American treaty rights, and providing public access across private lands. To help the public understand the types of decisions to be made in the RMP we have provided Appendix C, program specific and resources specific guidance, from the BLM planning handbook on the Internet planning page.

Valid Existing Management To Be Carried Forward

Both RMPs may carry forward decisions from existing plans. The actions are identified below:

Snake River Birds fo Prey NCA

The NCA is currently managed under five management plans. The RMP will bring valid decisions from these plans forward under one plan and assure compatibility with the purposes for which the NCA was created. All decisions addressed in the existing plans will be reviewed to assure they are consistent with the purposes of the NCA. The RMP will not eliminate existing special designations; however, they may be expanded or additional designations made. Grazing allotment boundaries will not change and the Idaho Army National Guard will continue some level of military training within the NCA.

Bruneau Planning Area

The Bruneau Planning Area is managed under a Management Framework Plan (MFP) completed in 1983. Many of the MFP decisions are still valid, but were never fully implemented. The MFP did not have adequate NEPA analysis, and all MFP decisions carried forward will be reviewed in the EIS being prepared for the RMP. Special Designations will be carried forward from the MFP, as will grazing allotment boundaries.

Special Designation Nominations

Through the RMP Newsletter we have informed the public that we will review and analyze nominations from the public for special designations, including WSA and ACEC. In addition to public nominations, the planning teams will identify unique and sensitive resources that may need protection through special designation. Wild and Scenic River eligibility and suitability determinations will be made in the RMP as well.

Draft Planning Criteria

Preliminary planning criteria were published in the Preparation Plans for both planning areas in April 2001. The final draft of planning criteria will be released to the ICG in late October and to the public in early November. A copy of the draft planning criteria can be found in [attachment 14](#).

Data Summary and Gaps

Data needs for both planning areas were identified in the original preparation plans and can be found in [attachment 15](#). Contracts for procuring some of this data have been let and work with cooperators and user groups in data gathering is underway.

Data gaps for vegetation mapping, roads and trails, special status species, and socio-economic analysis still exist and need to be addressed through contracts and cooperative agreements with other agencies and organizations. There is also the need for content analysis of the comments that will be received once the draft is released.

Summary of Future Steps

The BLM will continue to keep the public informed and involved throughout the development of these two RMPs. The BLM Planning website www.id.blm.gov will be updated as appropriate and newsletters and/or postcards will be sent as pertinent news becomes available. See [attachment 3 and 4](#) for additional details on the public involvement process.

Although the BLM welcomes public input at any time during the project, the next big steps in the RMPs will be development of the desired future conditions and the draft alternatives. Processes for involving the public in these two major steps are expected to be similar to the processes used during scoping and may include open house meetings and/or workshops. However, the next required public comment period will be upon publication of the Draft RMP/EIS, which is anticipated in the summer of 2003 for both plans. The draft documents will be widely distributed and will be available on the project web site. The availability of the draft documents will be announced in the *Federal Register*, and a 90-day public comment period will follow. Public meetings will be held in a variety of locations during the 90-day period and will be announced prior to the meetings.

At the conclusion of the public comment period, the Draft RMP/EIS will be revised. A Proposed RMP/Final EIS for both plans will then be published. The availability of the proposed plans will also be announced in the *Federal Register*, and a 30-day public protest period will follow. Public meetings will be held during the 30-day period.

At the conclusion of the public protest period, the documents will again be revised, and the Final RMP and Record of Decision for both plans will be published. Their availability will be announced in the *Federal Register*.