DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The Monument Planning Area encompasses 2,059,441 acres north of the Snake River in southcentral Idaho. It includes all of Jerome and Minidoka counties and portions of Gooding, Lincoln, Blaine, Butte, and Power counties. The area is generally bounded by Bliss on the west, American Falls on the east, the Snake River on the south, and Craters of the Moon National Monument on the north. Of the 2,059,441 acres, 57 percent (1,178,989 acres) is public land administered by BLM, 2 percent (39,576 acres) is public land administered by other Federal agencies, 3 percent (65,932 acres) is land belonging to the State of Idaho, and 38 percent (774,944 acres) is privately owned land.

The planning area is divided among three resource areas in two BLM Districts. In the Shoshone District, the Bennett Hills Resource Area contains 179,926 acres of public land administered by BLM west of the Gooding-Milner Canal, and the Monument Resource Area contains 744,682 acres. In the Burley District, the Snake River Resource Area contains 254,381 acres of BLM-administered public lands. These figures differ from the ones in the EIS for the Monument RMP because of a boundary change effective January 6, 1986.

The Monument RMP decision map that accompanies this document shows the location of the area.

GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR MULTIPLE USE AND TRANSFER AREAS

Resource management plans in Idaho establish multiple use and transfer areas in the planning area. Multiple use and transfer areas are used to:

1. Clearly distinguish retention and transfer decisions;

2. Provide a geographic basis for presenting land use decisions;

3. Help ensure consistency and uniformity in Idaho RMPs; and

4. Indicate the level of resource protection, management, use, and development provided for on the public lands.

All public land in the Monument Planning Area was categorized into one of the following multiple use or transfer areas. These categories reflect the general intent of the management decisions made for the included areas. More site-specific categories were established within those discussed below. These site-specific categories are discussed later in this RMP under "Management Prescriptions."

Limited Use Areas

Limited use areas are designated where legal and policy constraints necessitate stringent environmental control. These areas will be managed for protection of sensitive and significant wildlife habitat, scenic values, cultural resources, watershed and other resources, or areas preliminarily recommended as suitable for wilderness.

Because these areas involve relatively greater environmental constraints than other areas of public lands, special attention will be given to finding appropriate locations for potentially conflicting uses. Generally, lower intensities of use are required under carefully controlled conditions to protect and preserve the values found in these areas. Public lands in a limited use area will be retained in Federal ownership.

Moderate Use Areas

Moderate use areas are generally suitable for a wide range of existing and potential uses and will be managed for production and use of their forage, timber, minerals and energy, recreation, or other values. Where conflicts occur with resources or uses, full consideration of all benefits and costs will be taken into account in resolving such conflicts. Sensitive and significant values will always be protected consistent with Federal and State law. Public lands in a moderate use area will be retained in Federal ownership.

Intensive Use/Development Areas

These areas will generally be managed for a major or large-scale intensive use/development such as a major campground, off-road vehicle (ORV) area, mine, or public utility installation. No intensive use/development areas were established in the Monument RMP.

Transfer Areas

Transfer areas are the only areas which may be transferred out of Federal ownership under this plan. Public lands declared eligible for transfer by their inclusion in this category are subject to detailed consideration prior to the final decision regarding transfer. Transfer areas are delineated in response to specific demands and needs identified during the planning process, such as agricultural development, community expansion, and other transfers, including transfer to the State of Idaho. Transfer areas will be managed on a

custodial basis until transferred from Federal jurisdiction. New public investments in these lands will generally be kept to a minimum.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are general states or conditions that resource management is designed to achieve. They are generally not quantifiable. Goals are the basis for developing objectives.

For the Monument RMP, a variety of resource uses would be allowed. Production and use of commodity resources and commercial use authorization would occur, while protecting fragile resources and wildlife habitat, preserving natural systems and cultural values, and allowing for nonconsumptive resource uses.

Objectives are resource specific conditions to be achieved. They are well defined to guide future management and preparation of activity plans. Where possible, they are quantified.

Objectives for the Monument RMP are included in the following discussion of Management Prescriptions.

MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

The following management prescriptions will guide resource management activities under the Monument RMP. The Statewide Resource Management Guidelines and the District Standard Operating Procedures, presented later in this RMP, will also apply.

The discussion of the management prescriptions is divided into three sections. First is a discussion of management prescriptions for <u>multiple use and transfer areas</u>. Included is a letter designation (M for moderate use, L for limited use, T for transfer) and key number, the name of the area, the acreage, objectives for the area, and required actions to accomplish the objectives.

Next is a discussion of <u>other resource decisions</u> that occur in more than one multiple use area.

Last is a <u>summary of activity plans required for implementation of the RMP</u>. Activity plans are site-specific, detailed plans to be developed after approval of the RMP.

Multiple Use and Transfer Areas

The Monument RMP decision map that accompanies this document shows the multiple use and transfer areas.

M1-Moderate Use - 826,577 acres

No special limitations or restrictions on the type or intensity of resource use will be applied in this area. Valid uses will be allowed subject to environmental review and stipulations or special conditions to protect resources. This area will be open to ORV use.

L1-WSA Recommended Suitable - 87,902 acres.

These areas are preliminarily recommended suitable for designation by Congress as a part of the Wilderness Preservation System. This includes the Raven's Eye and Sand Butte wilderness study areas (WSAs).

If designated wilderness by Congress, the areas would be closed to off-road vehicle (ORV) use. New mining claims would be prohibited. Mineral leasing would not be prohibited by wilderness designation, but wilderness character would be considered in making mineral leasing decisions. Land uses would be restricted to those compatible with BLM's Wilderness Management Policy. Utility developments would be effectively prohibited. A wilderness management plan would be prepared for each WSA designated. The wilderness management plans would include fire suppression guidelines designed to protect or enhance wilderness character.

If not designated wilderness by Congress, the areas would generally be managed as M1 areas as described above. The exception is 3,258 acres of areas of geologic interest within the Raven's Eye and Sand Butte WSAs which would be managed as L12 areas as described below. Sand Butte (the volcanic cone, not the entire WSA) would be closed to ORV use to protect its naturalness (approximately 220 acres). No other special designations or developments would be proposed. The other restrictions on ORVs, minerals, land uses, and fire described in the preceding paragraph would not apply.

WILDERNESS STUDY AREA NOTE

Six wilderness study areas (WSAs) covering a total of 154,015 acres were considered for suitability recommendations in the environmental impact statement for the Monument RMP. Two WSAs covering 87,902 acres were preliminarily recommended suitable for designation by Congress as a part of the Wilderness Preservation System. The other four WSAs totalling 66,113 acres were preliminarily recommended nonsuitable for designation.

Only Congress can add an area to the National Wilderness Preservation System. BLM and the Secretary of the Interior make suitability recommendations to the President, who in turn makes recommendations to Congress. Therefore, the wilderness suitability recommendations in the Monument RMP are not final.

Until Congress acts on the President's suitability recommendations, BLM will manage all WSAs in accordance with the Interim Wilderness Management Policy.

L2-Great Rift WSA Recommended Suitable - 179,990 acres

This WSA is recommended suitable for wilderness designation in a previous study. Objectives for management of the area are outlined in the Great Rift Proposed Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement. The 179,990-acre figure represents that portion of the Great Rift WSA lying within the Monument Planning Area on BLM-administered public lands. Another 142,460 acres of public land lies within the Idaho Falls BLM District.

L3-Sand Butte Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Closure - 1,751 acres

This area is closed to ORV use. Otherwise, management will be the same as described for M1 areas. The ORV closure will make a more easily managed, definite boundary along a road for exclusion of ORVs from the Sand Butte WSA. If the Sand Butte WSA is not designated wilderness by Congress, this area would no longer be closed to ORV use.

L4-ACEC-Substation Tract Relict Vegetation Area - 440 acres

This area is designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values. The area contains a natural vegetation community representative of a range site that occurred commonly in the planning area prior to human caused disturbances. It is the only known remaining relict of this condition and size in the Shoshone District, and is therefore highly valuable for research and reference.

Management to protect the relict vegetation community will entail retention in Federal ownership and aggressive fire control efforts. Other opportunities to reduce the risk of loss to fire will be pursued, including cooperative agreements with adjacent landowners. ORV use is limited to designated roads and trails to protect the vegetation while allowing movement of local farm traffic. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development will be allowed. Livestock grazing is prohibited to protect the vegetation.

An activity plan will be prepared to guide management and protection of the relict vegetation community, especially protection from fire.

The area will be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan and will be under full fire suppression.

L6-ACEC-Vineyard Creek Natural Area - 105 acres

This area is designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values.

Vineyard Creek is the only known spawning habitat for a unique cutthroat/ rainbow hybrid trout. The habitat is threatened by sedimentation from irrigation return flow from private land. Management to protect this habitat will entail coordinating with private landowners to reduce or eliminate sedimentation caused by the irrigation return flow entering Vineyard Creek. The objective is to lower the sediment load of the return flow below 100 ppm or to stop the return flow from entering the stream.

Vineyard Creek contains habitat that may be suitable for the Bliss Rapids snail, a candidate endangered species. The habitat in Vineyard Creek is similar to that of Box Canyon which supports a population of the snail. Future resource uses and proposals will be closely examined to ensure that snail habitat is not adversely affected or that adverse effects can be mitigated.

This area lies within the proposed Dry Cataracts National Natural Landmark. Geologic formations associated with the Bonneville Flood, including alluvial gravel deposits, will be protected from human disturbances that would degrade their naturalness. Mineral material sales and free use are prohibited.

The Vineyard Creek area is a very scenic and unique area. Future resource uses and proposals will be closely examined to prevent degradation of scenic quality and naturalness. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development will be allowed.

An activity plan will be prepared to guide management of the unique resources of the area. This plan will specify measures to reduce sedimentation of Vineyard Creek.

The area is closed to ORV use to protect scenic quality and promote visitor safety. It is near an area heavily used by ORVs.

The area will be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan and will be under full fire suppression.

L7-ACEC-Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs Sensitive Area - 128 acres

This area is designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values. Box Canyon and Blueheart Springs contain the largest populations of Shoshone sculpin (*Cottus greenei*), a federal candidate threatened species, known to exist on public land. Various proposals that might degrade the sculpin habitat have been made in the past.

Since approval of the Monument RMP on April 22, 1985, additional studies have been conducted in the Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs Sensitive Area ACEC. These studies have determined that populations of two other federal candidate threatened species exist on public lands in Box Canyon. These are the Bliss Rapids snail (no formal name) and the snail *Valvata utahensis* (no common name). The ACEC may also contain populations of the giant Columbia River limpet (*Fisherola nuttalii*), another federal candidate threatened species.

Box Canyon is very scenic and is a unique natural area. It has been evaluated for eligibility for national natural landmark designation.

Future resource uses and proposals will be closely examined to prevent degradation of habitat for the four federal candidate threatened species, scenic quality and naturalness. If a proposal would adversely affect habitat for the federal candidate threatened species, it would be rejected. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development will be allowed. An activity plan will be prepared to guide management of the unique resources of the area.

The area is open to ORV use. ORV use in the general area is light and is not expected to be a problem in Box Canyon.

The area will be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan and will be under full fire suppression.

L8-Little Wood River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) - 2,787 acres

The riparian habitat and fishery of this area will be maintained or improved to support quality sport fishing opportunities. This will be done by excluding livestock from most of the streamside area. Most of the fencing to accomplish this has already been completed. Management emphasis will be placed on ensuring the fencing is maintained to protect the streambank. A recreation activity management plan will be prepared for the area. The area is open to ORV use.

L9-Snake River Rim Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) - 5,102 acres

This area will be managed to provide for a wide variety of recreation activities including rifle shooting, archery, motorcycle riding/racing, picnicking, sightseeing, and float-boating, while resolving conflicts among various uses and protecting cultural resources and fragile soils. The demand for these activities is expected to increase as is the potential for user conflicts.

Sub-area L9a, 345 acres in Devil's Corral, is closed to ORV use to protect cultural resources and soils. The remaining 4,757 acres is open to ORV use.

Sub-areas L9a and L9d, totalling 1,159 acres, lie within the proposed Dry Cataracts National Natural Landmark. Geologic formations associated with the Bonneville Flood, including alluvial gravel deposits, will be protected from human disturbances that would degrade their naturalness. Mineral material sales or free use is prohibited.

Sub-area L9e, 374 acres, will be managed for protection, maintenance, and enhancement of wildlife habitat. These tracts are included in the existing Cooperative Wildlife Management Areas Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and will be covered by the revised HMP prepared for L11 areas in this RMP.

Livestock grazing will not be restricted by recreation oriented management in L9.

The existing Snake River Rim Recreation Area Management Plan will be revised to reflect changes from existing ORV designations, acreage within the Snake River Rim SRMA, transfer area designations, float-boating management, protection of geologic formations associated with the Bonneville Flood in sub-areas L9a and L9d, and wildlife management on sub-area L9e.

A cultural resource management plan will be prepared for Devil's Corral (L9a). This plan will specify the degree of protection and the interpretive measures appropriate for the area. Fire suppression guidelines to limit surface disturbance will be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

L10-Cedar Fields Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) - 2,240 acres

This area will be managed to provide a variety of recreation activities including ORV use, sport fishing, and river floating; to maintain or enhance wildlife habitat; and to protect scenic quality, fragile soils, and cultural resources.

ORV use is limited. Restrictions will be applied only where significant damage to high quality and highly visible scenic areas, fragile soils, significant wildlife values, and significant cultural resources is occurring. ORV