SUN VALLEY ANALYSIS UNIT

DESCRIPTION

The Sun Valley area includes public lands located in T. 5 N., R. 17 and 18 E., T. 4 N., R. 17 E., and the north half of T. 4 N., R. 18 E. (see Map SV-1). The topography varies from the flat valley bottoms of the Wood River Valley to the mountainous areas on each side of the valley. Vegetation varies from sagebrush-grass to Douglas-fir on northern mountain slopes. The cities of Ketchum and Sun Valley are located in this area. Blaine County has active and strict comprehensive planning and zoning ordinances.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

This area will be managed for recreation, local government needs, and open space. Other uses include intensive recreation development, watershed protection, and livestock grazing. All public lands within this analysis unit will be transferred to the Forest Service for administration through boundary adjustments. The following decisions will provide for interim management while the lands are under BLM jurisdiction.

SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

Lands

Decision Number 1

Public lands will not be disposed of except for local government needs or for public uses under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. These uses must be in compliance with the Blaine County land use planning and must be consistent with the general recreation and open space uses designated for this area. Uses in flood plains must be consistent with E.O. 11296 (see Appendix 2).

Rationale

This area includes flat lands along the Big Wood River and mountainous country. The public lands are the only lands in this area that are not planned for intensive development. Of particular note is the public lands along the Big Wood River.

This stream provides good fishing with good access and helps maintain the quality of life in the area. Therefore the public values are high.

There is little land available for the needs of local government and these public lands may fill part of that need. The local planning and zoning ordinances are strong and supported by local government.

This decision includes all disposal Step 1 recommendations L1.1, L2.1, L3.1, L3.2, L3.3, and L3.5.

Decision Number 2

Utility rights-of-way will be allowed if consistent with county planning and zoning ordinances. All construction will be designed to be as unobtrusive as practical (i.e. buried utility lines, placement of structures, color, design, etc.).

Rationale

The expanding population in this area will require increased utilities. Additional rights-of-way for all types of utilities will be needed. Step 1 recommendations included are L5.1, R12.2, and R12.3.

Decision Number 3

Road and trail rights-of-way, both private and public may be allowed when consistent with local planning and zoning ordinances and consistent with the general management criteria within this area and environmental impacts are minimal.

Rationale

The Sun Valley area has a rapidly growing population. With this growth is some requirement for additional roads and trails. Rights-of-way across public lands may be less damaging to the total environment than the alternatives would be. Local planning ordinances are strong and provide most of the needed protection. This decision incorporates Step 1 recommendations L5.1 and L5.2.

Decision Number 4

Do not allow disposal of public lands within flood plains, riparian areas, water frontage, water sources, except for public uses consistent with the general management of the area and E. O. 11296.

Rationale

Riparian areas are generally associated with spring areas and along streams. These zones have high wildlife values and are generally associated with flood plains. Step 1 recommendations included are L1.1, L2.1, L3.1, L3.2, L3.3, L3.4, L3.5 and L4.1.

Decision Number 5

Communication sites may be allowed if they meet the following:

a. They will not become a major intrusion in the visual resources.

b. Antennas will not exceed 15 feet above a ridge line.

c. All structures will be designed to blend into the natural contours of the area.

d. All structures will be painted to blend in with the surrounding areas.

e. All disturbed areas will be revegetated.

f. All development will comply with BLM Manual criteria for Visual Resource Management Class III.

Rationale

The population growth requires increased communications. The location of sites are not known at this time, however, there is potential on several of the mountain peaks. The stipulations will minimize adverse impoacts.

Decision Number 6

The public lands located in Section 13, T. 4 N., R. 17 E., B.M., Idaho, (see Map SV-2) will be made available to the Hemingway School through an R&PP for an environmental education area. This parcel includes 70 acres (E2NW4NW4, N2SE4NW4, SE4SE4NW4, E2NE4SW4).

Rationale

This area is presently under a cooperative agreement with Hemingway School for an environmental education area. This use is valuable as the area is close to the school and along the Big Wood River providing an excellent education area. This decision includes Step 1 recommendations L3.2 and 3.3.

Decision Number 7

Remove all classifications made under the authority of the Classification and Multiple Use Act.

Rationale

FLPMA provides adequate protection for the retention of these lands in federal ownership.

Minerals

Decision Number 1

Allow geothermal leases with the following stipulations:

a. Roads will be constructed to have the least impact on the visual resources.

b. Structures will be painted to blend in with the surroundings.

c. All developments must be in accordance with local planning.

d. Protect surface water from contaminantion.

e. All standard stipulations and specific stipulations developed through the environmental assessment process.

Rationale

This area has some geothermal potential, especially for space heating in Ketchum and Sun Valley. Through adequate stipulations, this resource can be developed with minimal adverse environmental impacts.

Decision Number 2

Withdraw the following areas from the function of the mining laws:

a. Hemingway School Environmental Education Area T. 4 N., R. 17 E., Section 13: E2NW4NW4, N2SE4NW4, SE4SE4NW4, E2NE4SW4, containing 70 acres (see map SV-2).

b. Bald Mountain Winter Sports Area - The area designated in the Cooperative Management Agreement with the USFS including public lands in Sections 13, 24, and 25, T. 4 N., R. 17 E. (see Map SV-2).

c. North Ketchum Recreation Area - T. 5 N., R. 17 E., B.M., Section 36: NW4NW4, SE4NW4, E2SW4 and T. 4 N., R. 17 E., B.M., Section 1: Lots 2 and 3, SW4NE4. The total area includes approximately 272 acres (see Map SV-3).

d. Areas shown on Map SV-4 that are private surface and public minerals.

Rationale

The areas along the Big Wood River, including the North Ketchum Recreation Area and the Environmental Education Area, are very valuable for public recreation and educational purposes. No mining claims are known to presently exist, but the river gravels may contain a small amount of gold. The cost of possible validity examinations would be precluded if these areas were withdrawn.

The Bald Mountain Winter Sports Area includes a multimillion dollar private investment in ski runs and lifts. This area is known world wide and is very important to the stability of the local economy. The potential mineral values are listed as undiscovered reserves. This indicates very low potential values.

The areas shown on Map SV-4 were patented under the Stock Grazing Homestead Act. They are now within the City of Sun Valley and include the Elkhorn Village development, many homes and condominiums, and several ski developments.

Decision Number 3

Material sales will not be allowed, except when consistent with the other decisions for this area, including visual resource management, local planning and zoning, general recreation, wildlife, etc.

Rationale

Most of the mineral materials (sand and gravel) are located along the river in areas that are to be protected for other uses. Other locations within the planning area can meet mineral material needs.

Decision Number 4

Protect paleontological and geological sites that have scientific or educational values.

PLAN AMENDMENT NO. SV-6-1

Plan Name Sun Valley MFP

Page SV-6

Chapter

Area Monument

Heading

(Summarize substance of text material change in amendment document.)

CHANGE : Designate the Sun Peak area as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (560 Acres)

T. 5 N., R. 18 E., Section 32: W½
Section 31: E½

R. 4 N., R. 18 E., Section 5: NW¼NW¼
Section 6: NE¼NE¼

(Describe rationale for above amendment and give reference to location of amendment document.)

REASON : The amendment document is included and analyzed as part of Environmental Assessment (ID050-90-23) and Decision Record dated January 14, 1991

SIGNATURE AS APPROPRIATE :

Program Leader _____ Date _____

Area Plan/Environ Coord [signature] Date 1/30/91

Area Manager _____ Date _____

Designate 560 acres of the Sun Peak as an ACEC for the primary objective of preserving the existing vegetation community. The area would: 1) Be open to domestic sheep grazing only. The allotment would be monitored periodically to evaluate whether the site continues development toward the potential natural community. Should the site show movement away from the potential natural community, then the adjustments will be made to livestock grazing until such time as studies show the trend is again toward the potential natural community; 2) Be closed to Off-road vehicles (ORVs); 3) Be open to Oil and Gas exploration and development with a no surface occupancy stipulation; 4) Be closed to all surface disturbing activities except for research activities approved by the Area Manager and less than one acre size; 5) Be closed to all vegetation harvesting and manipulation except for research activities approved by the Area Manager and less than one acre size; 6) Be withdrawn to mineral entry under the 1872 mining law. The area manager will prepare a site specific, fire management plan based on the ecosystem need for fire to maintain the vegetation community. Fire suppression may occur without the use of bulldozers.

Rationale

This is required by policy; there are no known values at the present time.

Forest Products

Decision Number 1

No timber or woodland products will be removed except for hazard reduction, disease and pest control, construction of approved projects, and salvage. Timber may be removed from the Bald Mountain Winter Sports Area for the location of facilities if provided for in the approved BLM and U.S. Forest Service Master Plan and Site Development Plan.

Rationale

The only wood products available in this area are on Bald Mountain and along the Big Wood River. Recreation and aesthetic values surpass the value of the forest products for lumber or wood products. These are high use areas for recreation. The reduction of hazardous conditions is important.

Livestock Forage

Decision Number 1

Allow livestock grazing on the Lake Creek Allotment as follows, subject to future modification consistent with the Rangeland Program Summary.

KIND OF LIVESTOCK	ACTIVE AUMS	SUSPENDED AUMS	TOTAL AUMS	ADDITIONAL AUMS 1/
Sheep	174	43	174	263

Season of Use - 5/20 to 10/30 Grazing System - Seasonal

1/ Additional AUMs may be used upon request on a temporary nonrenewable basis for a minimum of 5 years or until monitoring indicates that the range will properly accommodate these additional AUMs.

Rationale

Livestock grazing is consistent with the western life style in the area. This allotment is in relatively good condition with adequate forage to meet the needs of the sheep user while protecting other resource values.

Watershed

Decision Number 1

Maintain sufficient vegetative cover to protect public lands from accelerated erosion. Minimize soil compaction and disturbance due to livestock grazing, timber harvest, and construction and maintenance of all facilities. Consider time of year for the use, select techniques that are less disturbing, etc.

Rationale

Most of this unit is hilly to mountainous. Because of the steep slopes, extreme care must be taken not to increase erosion and reduce productivity.

Decision Number 2

Minimize stream sedimentation by stabilizing deteriorating streambanks. Improve to at least fair condition all riparian areas, and reduce sediment from high source areas such as mine tailings, poorly located or designed roads, areas of active channelling, etc.

Rationale

There are several streams in the unit. Water quality is generally good. Most of the streams drain into irrigation reservoirs, and any increase in sedimentation will shorten the life span of the reservoirs. Many of the streams are also good fisheries, which would be adversely effected by sedimentation.

Decision Number 3

Protect all ground water recharge areas. Uses that would adversely affect ground water quality or quantity, or reduce artesian pressure, should be restricted.

Rationale

Ground water quality and quantity are important for irrigation and domestic use within and outside the unit.

Decision Number 4

Protect all developed springs from livestock use at the water source.

Rationale

These water sources are important for all of the public land uses. The protection of the source areas will make a more dependable water supply, protect important wildlife habitat, and reduce the likelihood of spreading disease in livestock.

Wildlife

Decision Number 1

Provide forage for 42 deer months in the Lake Creek Allotment.

Rationale

There is adequate forage to provide for the existing deer numbers. Little competition exists with livestock.

Decision Number 2

Maintain the Big Wood River in good to excellent condition as a fishery and for recreation.

Rationale

The Big Wood River provides a good fishery for the public. The area above the Hulen Meadows Bridge is a "catch and release" area. A large number of people fish the river throughout the area. It is also an important scenic feature in this recreation oriented area.

Decision Number 3

Protect the riparian area along the Big Wood River. Trails may be constructed but in such a way as to minimize disturbance of the riparian zone.

Where possible any construction will be outside the riparian zone. Recreation facilities will be designed for the least disturbance to the zone.

Rationale

Riparian areas, particularly along the Big Wood River, are important wildlife habitat, particularly for non-game species. This area is particularly important in this populated area to maintain the wildlife species along the river. Protection enhances the quality of life in the area.

Decision Number 4

Protect riparian areas around springs from livestock by fencing or other means.

Rationale

Spring areas and their associated riparian areas are particularly important wildlife habitat.

Recreation

Decision Number 1

Manage the Bald Mountain area (see Map SV-2) for intensive ski development. Allow additional development that is in accordance with a master plan approved by BLM and the U.S. Forest Service in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding for the Management of the Bald Mountain Winter Sports Area.

Special Recreation Management Area 1-22-87 EC

Rationale

Bald Mountain is presently developed as one of the West's best ski areas. It is one of the major economic factors in this recreation-oriented county.

Decision Number 2

Special Recreation Management Area 1-22-87 EC

The North Ketchum Recreation Area (see Map SV-3) will be managed for its recreational values. Additional uses for public purposes may be allowed if in compliance with other sections of this plan. Additional recreation

development and upgrading of the existing recreation facilities may be made as the need arises. These will be limited to day use only.

Total Acreage 272.10 Acres
SC 6/6/84

Rationale

These lands provide access to the Big Wood River for recreation and open space in a growing population center. They also provide important land for other public uses, parks, playgrounds, etc. Overnight use of this area has been a problem. Many people have used these public lands for summer homes in tents, trailers, vehicles, etc., causing problems with other public land users, local law enforcement personnel or agencies, and local residents.

Decision Number 3

Noncompatible uses such as the material site right-of-way will be phased out as other acceptable sites are made available to the highway department. The site will be rehabilitated to the extent practical.

Rationale

The existing material site right-of-way is a nonconforming use. It is an intrusion into the landscape and visually offensive along scenic Highway 75 and the local residential areas. That portion between the highway and the river south of Hulen Bridge is critical to the Idaho Department of Highways for road maintenance purposes in this area. The Highway Department has expressed a willingness to relinquish their material site right-of-way on the west side of the river.

Decision Number 4

The public lands in this area will be managed under the "limited" off-road-vehicle (ORV) designation. The desigination will limit vehicle use to designated roads and trails. The Bald Mountain Winter Sports Area is closed to ORVs except for authorized use under the permit or for official business. The environmental education area is closed to all ORV use.

Rationale

The protection of the vegetation and visual resources of this area enhances the quality of life for the adjoining land owners. Noise is a problem in the residential areas. Bald Mountain is under a commercial permit, primarily for skiing. Should ORVs be allowed on the mountain, excessive hazards

to the using public would result. Thus the closed designation. The environmental education values would be diminished if any ORV use was allowed on the education site.

Decision Number 5

The entire area will be managed in a VRM Class III. New ski runs may be constructed on Bald Mountain in accordance with an approved master plan.

Rationale

This area has a large number of existing developments associated with a growing population and recreation development. The Class III will allow development to meet the needs of the area, but still minimize adverse impacts to the visual resources. The downgrade from VRM Class II is a result of the local growth demands and existing conditions including the many intrusions into the existing environment.

Decision Number 6

All areas will have cultural resource clearance prior to any construction.

Rationale

All cultural values in this area will be protected as required by policy and law.

Fire Management

Decision Number 1

This area will continue under maximum fire protection. Wildfires will be controlled.

Rationale

This area contains many residences and developments of all kinds near public land. Fires in this area would be serious threats to private property.

SUPPORT NEEDS FOR THE SUN VALLEY ANALYSIS UNIT

1. A recreation management plan for the North Ketchum Recreation Area to replace the interim management plan.

2. Habitat management plan for the Big Wood River within the entire area.

3. An allotment management plan (AMP) for the Lake Creek Allotment including necessary monitoring.

4. Mineral withdrawal for Bald Mountain, North Ketchum Recreation Area, and the environmental eduction area.

5. A cooperative hazard reduction plan between BLM and USFS for the timber stands on Bald Mountain.

6. Monitoring of sheep trail use at the Lake Creek Bridge.

7. ORV designations for the area.