

Wild Horses in the Planning Area



Chapter 7:

Proposed RMP Introduction

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



BLACK ROCK DESERT
HIGH ROCK CANYON
EMIGRANT TRAILS

NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

Chapter 7: Proposed RMP Introduction

7.1 PURPOSE AND NEED

This volume comprises the Proposed RMP for the Black Rock–High Rock planning area. The purpose of the RMP is to provide broad guidance for BLM’s management and allocation of uses of the public lands and resources in the planning area that is consistent with the spirit and intent of the NCA Act and other existing statutes, regulations and policy. The plan also responds to public input received during the scoping and draft EIS comment periods.

The Black Rock–High Rock NCA and Wilderness Areas were established by Congress to conserve, protect and enhance resources associated with the Applegate and Nobles Trails corridors and the surrounding areas for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. These resources can be historical, cultural, paleontological, scenic, scientific, biological, educational, wildlife, riparian, Wilderness, endangered species, and recreational.

Establishment of Wilderness Areas, administered under the Wilderness Act of 1964, ensures that certain lands are preserved and protected in their natural, primitive condition.

Overall, the NCA Act found that the Black Rock–High Rock planning area contained nationally significant historic trails; an absence of development; unique Great Basin biota; and significant cultural, archaeological, paleontological, and geographical resources. The NCA Act also identified Wilderness, grazing, and special recreation permit events as valuable existing land uses that are expected to continue in conjunction with the NCA.

The NCA Act directed the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management, to manage the NCA and Wilderness Areas in a way that conserves and protects the resources identified. The Act required that a comprehensive land use plan be prepared within three years. This Resource Management Plan is that land use plan.

The RMP replaces four land use plans that provided management direction for the planning area. Each of these plans, Tulead/High Camp Management Framework Plan (MFP)(1976), Cowhead/Massacre MFP (1983), Sonoma/Gerlach MFP (1982) and Paradise/Denio MFP (1982), previously

provided guidance for a portion of the planning area.

7.2 ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The RMP is organized into three sections:

Chapter 7 includes the purpose and need for the plan, the vision and objectives for the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System, which includes National Conservation Areas and Wilderness units, the management goals for the Black Rock-High Rock planning area, and information on how the existing Resource Advisory Committees functioned as important mechanisms for continuing public involvement in the RMP implementation process.

Chapter 8 contains resource and program specific objectives and decisions. The chapter was developed following public comment on the Draft EIS and RMP, consultation with Native American Tribes, the RAC subgroup, and other agencies.

Chapter 9 includes information on how the plan would be implemented. Topics covered include adaptive management, implementation time frames, monitoring of resources and plan decisions, evaluation of the plan and the objectives, and coordination with other plans and agencies.

7.3 MISSION AND VISION

7.3.1 NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION SYSTEM

An essential consideration in developing the RMP was that it be consistent with the overall vision of BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). The NLCS assembles BLM's premier designations, including NCAs and Wilderness Areas, into an organized system to increase public awareness of the cultural, scientific, educational, ecological, and other values associated with these areas. The overall vision of the NLCS is –

“BLM's Great American Landscapes: healthy, wild and open.”

Five NLCS objectives help achieve this vision:

- Above all, commit to conserving, protecting and restoring special values of the landscape, as directed by BLM's organic act (the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 [FLPMA])
- Build and sustain community relationships to foster collaborative stewardship.
- Continue to manage compatible uses and valid existing rights, consistent with the values for which the area was designated.
- Provide opportunities for the individual to explore and discover these special areas.
- Foster scientific research and public education and acquire a better understanding of how to manage these landscapes.

7.3.2 PLANNING AREA GOALS

The planning process included development of broad goals to assure that the RMP would be consistent with the spirit and intent of legislative and other constraints and with the overall mission of the National Landscape Conservation System.

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BLM worked with the Resource Advisory Council (RAC) NCA Subgroup, a 26-member group composed of representatives of the Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin and Northeastern California RACs, as well as citizen members with particular interests in the planning area, including representatives of Tribal governments to identify goals for the planning area. These goals are listed below.

Goal 1: Provide current and future generations of Americans with unique opportunities to experience what the emigrants experienced.

- Preserve significant segments and the setting of the national historic emigrant trails within the planning area.
- Preserve opportunities for solitude and primitive experiences within the viewshed of historic emigrant and exploration trails.

Goal 2: Protect a large area of the Northern Great Basin in its current, predominantly natural state and prevent further decline of associated resources.

- Preserve archaeological, paleontological, geological, and geographical resources of the region.
- Protect the remote and undeveloped character of the landscape.
- Foster scientific inquiry and research to enhance resource management and public education..

Goal 3: Support visitor services and resource management activities in a manner that protects the planning area's resources.

- Provide educational materials to the public to assist in the protection and interpretation of the area's resources.
- Provide opportunities for visitor activities, including large-scale permitted activities on the Black Rock Desert Playa, recognizing that the playa is the primary destination for the majority of visitors to the NCA.
- Maintain access for the reasonable use and enjoyment of the planning area.

Goal 4: Manage the planning area's plant and animal species in a way that would provide for

their continued presence as part of a healthy ecological system.

- Manage wild horses and burros to achieve identified appropriate management levels (AMLs).
- Recover populations and habitats of special status, previously eliminated, or declining plant and animal species.
- Enhance native and desired naturalized wildlife.

Goal 5: Manage Wilderness Areas for visitors' use and enjoyment, in a manner that would provide opportunities for solitude and primitive experiences while leaving the areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.

- Manage Wilderness Areas under a principle of non-degradation, by using the minimum tools, equipment and structures necessary to successfully, safely and economically accomplish effective wilderness management.
- Allow for spontaneity of use and preserve as much freedom from regulation as possible
- Manage nonconforming but accepted uses in a way that prevents unnecessary degradation of the area's wilderness character.

Goal 6: Allow for social and economic uses that benefit local communities compatible with the protection of the area.

- Maintain permitted grazing activities in a manner compatible with the rangeland health of the area and consistent with standards and guidelines.
- Manage and sustain multiple-use activities consistent with applicable legislation.
- Provide reasonable access to privately owned land or interests (including valid and existing rights) on land within the boundaries of the planning area, consistent with historical multiple use.

Goal 7: Provide for the protection of cultural, religious and agricultural values developed through historical practices in the planning area.

Goal 8: Cooperate and partner with local, State, Tribal, and other collaborating agencies and private interests to support resource management activities and ensure consistency among plans

and policies where these are consistent with federal laws and regulations.

7.4 RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCILS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Development of the Resource Management Plan (RMP) was greatly aided by the participation of a subgroup formed by the Northeast California and Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Councils (RACs). Known as the RAC NCA Subgroup, the group was composed of RAC members and representatives of constituent and stakeholder groups, State, local and Tribal governments, and the general public. Over a 2½-year period the Subgroup frequently met with BLM’s local managers and the NCA staff.

In June of 2001, the Winnemucca Field Office sponsored a three-day training session entitled “Community-Based Partnerships and Ecosystems: Ensuring a Healthy Environment.” This course, presented by BLM’s National Training Center in Phoenix, Arizona, was attended by about 60 people from BLM, State, Tribal, and other federal agencies, and the general public, including several members of the RAC NCA Subgroup. The course showcased successful collaborative planning and management efforts from around the nation and provided guidance on how to achieve similar results in the local area. This training set the stage for the successful collaborative planning process that developed the Resource Management Plan for the NCA.

Subgroup members donated hundreds of hours of their time learning the details of all of the most controversial and difficult issues connected with management of the Black Rock-High Rock area. The subgroup members worked hard with BLM planners to try to reach consensus on these issues and develop the best management alternatives. In most cases consensus was reached and in the remainder

majority positions emerged with differing views noted. Reports were made to the parent RACs on this work and the RACs used the information provided by the Subgroup to advise BLM on how various issues should be addressed in the RMP.

The highly successful collaborative planning work of the RAC NCA Subgroup provides a model for how a similar group could help BLM to better manage the many diverse and sometimes conflicting uses in the NCA, associated Wilderness areas and South Playa. One of the RAC NCA Subgroup’s final recommendations to the parent RACs was that some kind of similar group be formed to help BLM and the parent RACs with future management of the planning area. Both RACs support this proposal.

Therefore, BLM would ask the Northeast California and Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Councils to form a Collaborative Community Involvement Group (CCIG) with a suggested composition of not more than one or two members of each parent RAC and not more than 12 other members representing local and Tribal governments, and constituencies, groups and individuals with interests in the Black Rock-High Rock area (16 members in total) to work with BLM on a regular basis to gain an in-depth understanding of management of the NCA, associated Wilderness areas and South Playa.

Individual members of the CCIG would serve as information conduits between BLM and the groups and interests they represent, which would greatly enhance community involvement in management of the NCA. As a group, the CCIG’s purpose would be to provide detailed information and recommendations to the parent RACs concerning management of the area. The CCIG would not be an oversight or advisory group. The advisory function would remain where it currently is and where it belongs: solely within the authority and purpose of the parent Resource Advisory Councils. The CCIG would, as the name implies, be a collaborative group, and as such would be an invaluable asset to BLM, the RACs and the general public.