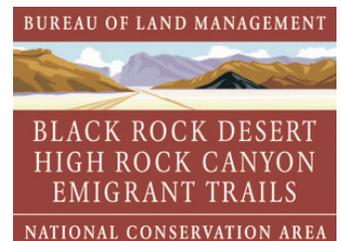


Chapter 8:

Proposed RMP Decisions



Chapter 8: Proposed RMP Decisions

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This section outlines objectives and decisions for the natural, physical and cultural resources described in the Act. Background information is provided for each of these resources to establish points of reference for the decisions that follow.

8.2 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

8.2.1 LAND HEALTH STANDARDS

Land Health Standards are expressions of physical and biological condition or degree of

function required for healthy, sustainable environmental health. They represent thresholds to meet the four fundamentals of healthy properly functioning ecosystems:

- Watersheds and Properly Functioning Conditions (PFC);
- Ecological processes are in order;
- Water quality complies with State standards; and
- Habitats of protected species are in order.

Standards are achieved through the use of guidelines developed for specific programs and uses. Because the Standards were originally applied to livestock grazing, guidelines for livestock grazing (as shown in Appendix C) would continue to apply to that use. Guidelines for other uses and programs would be adopted if they currently exist or developed if they do not exist.

8.2.1.1 Objective

To manage all lands to meet the fundamentals of land health.

LHS-1: Land Health Standards developed by the Resource Advisory Councils would apply

to all uses and programs as indicated on Map 8-1. The standards are specified in Appendix C.

8.2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND OHV ROUTES

Together, BLM system roads and routes; non-BLM roads, including State and county roads; and designated off-highway vehicle (OHV) areas constitute the transportation network for the planning area. This transportation network would be managed consistent with the intent of the NCA legislation, to provide reasonable access to visitors, local residents and property owners. (See Appendix D for road classifications and maintenance levels.)

BLM system roads would be managed to provide administrative and public access to the minimum level required to prevent resource damage and provide safe access.

The BLM transportation system consists of two types of vehicle routes. BLM system roads form the backbone of the transportation system and represent roads that are regularly maintained. BLM system roads are further subdivided into two functional classes depending on intended use: resource roads and collector roads. Definitions of the functional classes are contained in Appendix D.

All other routes within the planning area would be classified as motorized trails. Motorized trails are low standard vehicle routes that are maintained infrequently and site specifically in order to retain vehicular access. The term “motorized trails” was previously used in the No Action alternative. Motorized Routes replaces the concept of “designated routes” as used in the other Alternatives. The number of motorized routes was expanded in the proposed RMP to allow appropriate maintenance of all types of access routes using BLM funds when necessary.

8.2.2.1 Objective

To provide a transportation network for effective access, consistent with the Act, public safety, and resource objectives.

8.2.2.2 Transportation Management

TRAN-1: BLM system roads would be managed to provide primary access to the planning area consistent with the functional and maintenance classifications shown in Table 8.1 and Maps 8-2a-f.

Table 8-1. BLM System Roads (Proposed RMP)

Road Number	Road Name	Maintenance Level
Collector Roads		
2048	High Road	4
2049	Sulphur-Jackson	3
Resource Roads		
2094	Playa Access	4
37017	Stevens Camp	3
new	Playa Access associated with rail crossing	4

TRAN-2: Maintenance of BLM roads would occur in a manner that minimizes disturbance of resources and visual setting.

TRAN-3: All other roads and vehicle trails considered BLM system or county roads would be managed as motorized trails and maintained as necessary to maintain existing levels of access consistent with trail maintenance level 2.

TRAN-4: New roads or trails could be developed when required to protect resources and meet the objectives.

TRAN-5: One new access road and associated rail crossing between Sulphur and Gerlach would be managed as a BLM system road (maintenance level 4) to provide public access to the playa while meeting applicable rail crossing standards. Due to safety concerns associated with public use of rail crossings, the railroad has determined that none of the existing crossings between Sulphur and Gerlach can be managed for public use. Existing locations that cannot be managed safely or economically would be closed. There would be an interim period during which not all the existing crossings would be closed while the new crossing is being completed. New sites could be

evaluated to provide public access to the playa or the emigrant trail corridor.

TRAN-6: BLM would pursue agreements or other means to provide all weather access on the Pershing County portion of Soldier Meadows Road consistent with standards of the Humboldt County portion of the road. If Pershing County relinquishes the road, BLM would add the road to its transportation system as a Collector road, maintenance level 4, as shown on Map 8-2d.

TRAN-7:  Motorized trails associated with Wilderness access routes and routes defining wilderness boundaries would not receive scheduled maintenance. They would be maintained consistent with trail maintenance level 2 to provide continued vehicle access consistent with conditions at the time of wilderness designation. 

TRAN-8: Functional classification or maintenance levels of BLM system roads or motorized trails could be changed following an evaluation of vehicle use and resource issues. The evaluation could conclude (1) that the road should be either upgraded or downgraded in functional classification or maintenance level; (2) that other measures could be implemented that would resolve resource or safety issues; or (3) that no change in management would occur.

TRAN-9: Where public roads cross private property, BLM would acquire public access easements or develop road alignments to avoid the private property following a route analysis process that includes appropriate environmental analysis.

TRAN-10: Public access on the east side of the Black Rock Range from Humboldt County Road 214 would be managed to provide north-south access to Black Rock Point and east-west access to the Soldier Meadows area.

TRAN-11: Vehicles would be allowed to pull off to the sides of existing roads and motorized trails for distances up to 50 feet from road edges where minimal damage is done to vegetation and new parallel roads are not created. This would accommodate parking,

passage of vehicles on narrow roads and camping.

TRAN-12: Temporary closures of playa access points could be implemented to provide for recovery of visually intrusive vehicle ruts.

8.2.2.3 OHV Designations

OHV-1: OHV areas would be designated as open, closed or limited to designated routes as shown on Map 8-3.  Wilderness Areas would remain closed to vehicle use (751,892 acres).  A designated portion of the playa (not including the dunes) and two small playas at the south end of the Black Rock Range would be open to vehicle use (123,114 acres). Vehicle use, including OHV use, in the remainder of the planning area (345,969 acres) would be limited to the roads and routes shown on Map 8-3.

8.2.2.4 Directional Signage

SIGN-1: Directional signs could be added where monitoring indicates a need to prevent resource damage or known safety concerns.

SIGN-2: Sign locations, information content and installation specifications would be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that directional signs are the minimum needed to meet the intent of the objectives of the NCA.

SIGN-3: Alternative methods of providing location and directional information that would either supplement or replace traditional signing would be evaluated and implemented when the evaluation reveals that it would meet the objectives of the plan.

8.2.3 CULTURAL RESOURCES, INCLUDING EMIGRANT TRAILS

8.2.3.1 Objectives

- To protect the setting and physical traces of emigrant trails for the benefit of current and future generations.

To protect and interpret all other cultural resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

8.2.3.2 Cultural Resource Management, Including Emigrant Trails

CRM-1: BLM would establish criteria for evaluating emigrant trail traces to provide the basis for future monitoring, restrictions and stabilization activities. It would inventory the trails in coordination with Oregon-California Trails Association guidelines (Appendix E).

CRM-2: The emigrant trail viewsheds would be managed to retain the setting experienced by the emigrants as shown on Map 2-1.

CRM-3: Class B trail segments would remain closed to all mechanized vehicles (Map 2-1). Class B segments are generally parallel to existing roads or in areas closed to vehicle use. Some Class A and C trail segments that overlap the existing transportation system would be closed. These segments are included in the closures shown on Maps 8-2a-f. (Appendix E contains the definitions of the trail classes.) Parallel routes outside the immediate viewshed might be created to avoid impacts on trails. Some seasonal closures to vehicle traffic (including replica wagons used during reenactments) would occur on Class C trail segments.

CRM-4: A comprehensive overview and research design would be developed for the

planning area to guide future inventories, eligibility evaluations, research needs, and other management decisions.

CRM-5: Additional National Historic Preservation Act Sec. 110 Class III cultural resource inventories of large areas would be undertaken. Cultural resource inventories would be prioritized. The cultural resource inventories would focus first on the emigrant trail corridor, second on the Wilderness Areas, and finally on the remainder of the planning area, unless other needs are identified. Outstanding eligible resources identified and recorded as a result of these inventories could be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

CRM-6: Cultural resource sites would be identified by site type and placed into appropriate cultural resource use categories, as defined in Appendix I. The emphasis for this alternative would be public use; however, if site monitoring indicated a need for additional protection or site mitigation, the site would be reclassified into a use category appropriate for new management.

CRM-7: BLM would encourage scientific research into cultural resources, including public participation in inventories, excavations and scientific analyses where appropriate (Appendix M). Information would be disseminated through publications, museums and visitor centers.

8.2.4 NATIVE AMERICAN VALUES

As a result of government-to-government consultation with area Native American Tribes, the objectives and the decisions for Native American values were developed consistent with existing regulation and guidance.

8.2.4.1 Objective

To protect Properties of Cultural and Religious Importance for the use and benefit of current and future generations.

8.2.4.2 Native American Values Management

NAV-1: Regular coordination would be conducted with the Tribes related to Properties of Cultural and Religious Importance especially prior to cultural resource survey and documentation. BLM would maintain the confidentiality of these locations and would periodically monitor these areas for protection.

NAV-2: When cultural resource surveys are done, BLM would make a specific effort to coordinate with the Tribes prior to their initiation and when they are completed in order to relay information on sites and to get information on prehistoric and historic Native American site classification, treatment, and management.

NAV-3: Properties of Cultural and Religious Importance would be managed under the Traditional Use category, as defined in Appendix I. Uses that are consistent with resource objectives for that area and that do not interfere with the sustainability of the resources would be allowed.

8.2.5 PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

8.2.5.1 Objective

To manage paleontological resources in ways that prioritize research needs, facilitate educational and recreational needs, and protect important sites.

8.2.5.2 Paleontological Management

PAL-1: Additional inventories of paleontological resources would be undertaken.

BLM paleontological inventories would focus on:

- The West Arm of the Black Rock Desert
- Soldier Meadows
- The Black Rock Desert Wilderness.

Other priorities for paleontological inventorying could be developed in the future based on new information.

PAL-2: Paleontological sites would be identified by site type and placed into appropriate paleontological use categories, as defined in Appendix I. The emphasis would be on conservation supported by monitoring with some scientific use. If sites were damaged, use categories could be shifted to provide better protection or easier recovery of scientific values.

PAL-3: The Hanging Rock Petrified Forest area as shown on Map 8-4 would be closed to collection of petrified wood and other fossils, rocks, and minerals unless such collection was for scientific purposes and was authorized by a permit.

PAL-4: Collection of common invertebrates and petrified wood would be allowed, except in the Hanging Rock Petrified Forest, under the same terms stated for rock collection in the Recreation section.

PAL-5: BLM would encourage scientific research into paleontological resources, including public participation in inventories, digs and laboratory analyses (Appendix M). Information would be disseminated through publications, museums and visitor centers.

8.2.6 WILDERNESS

The Wilderness Areas would be managed consistent with the Wilderness Act of 1964. These areas were designated to protect and preserve their natural conditions, exceptional opportunities for solitude and the integrity of the viewshed of the historic emigrant trails. The wilderness related objectives and decisions in the RMP would provide broad direction for the protection of the wilderness values.

8.2.6.1 Objectives

- To maintain or enhance the natural untrammeled character of the Wilderness Areas.

- To provide outstanding opportunities for visitors to experience solitude and to participate in primitive and unconfined recreation, consistent with the preservation of the area's wilderness character.

Objectives and actions that support wilderness can also be found throughout the document in other resource sections. Wilderness decisions found in other sections are bracketed with icons.

8.2.6.2 Wilderness Areas Management

WILD-1: A Wilderness Management Plan (WMP) would be prepared following the completion of the RMP.

The WMP would contain specific objectives, management actions, and monitoring procedures for wilderness resources in the designated Wilderness Areas. The WMP would establish the type and level of environmental assessment necessary, including "minimum requirement and minimum tool analyses" for all site-specific management actions.

WILD-2: The NCA Act closed all "ways" to motorized and mechanized vehicle use within the Wilderness Areas. This did not include the 33 vehicle access routes designated by Congress in the NCA Act as amended and described in Chapter 3, Section 3.4, that provide vehicle access to the interior of the Wilderness Areas but are not themselves designated as Wilderness. Closed ways would be managed to maintain natural conditions and would require the occasional installation of:

Barriers at the point where ways enter Wilderness Areas, to discourage continued motorized trespass.

Gates on ways that could occasionally be used for authorized purposes.

WILD-3: Wilderness boundaries would be adequately signed to identify boundaries for the public. Signing would be concentrated in areas where motorized trespass occurs, including closed ways and along major boundary roads. To aid in the enforcement of the wilderness regulations some boundaries could require that signs be placed within sight of each other.

When trespass problems are reduced signs could be removed to decrease visual impacts. Wilderness boundaries based upon contour lines, surveyed lines or other map-based features that are not near vehicle access routes would be signed only as required to prevent trespass. Signs would be placed at the entrance to each wilderness access route identifying the route as open to motorized vehicles.

WILD-4: Emergency actions including the use of motorized and mechanized equipment and transport could be conducted in wilderness to protect human life, enforce laws and protect property.

8.2.6.3 LCT Area Management

In preparation of the Draft Resource Management Plan and DEIS for the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails NCA and Associated Wilderness Areas and other contiguous lands, a wilderness inventory was conducted on ten units totaling 1,092 acres of acquired lands inside the existing Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Wilderness Study Area.

This inventory found that all ten units when considered with the existing WSA contained wilderness characteristics (inventory results can be found in Chapter 3.6.2). The Draft Resource Management Plan contained a variety of alternatives for management of these ten parcels ranging from designating all ten as part of the existing WSA to not designating any of them as WSAs.

During the comment period for the Draft Plan, the Department of the Interior settled a lawsuit with the State of Utah by rescinding the BLM's authority to designate new WSAs through the land use planning process. This policy change does not affect WSAs that were designated prior to October 21, 1993. The existing Lahontan Cutthroat Trout WSA was not affected by the policy, but the authority to designate the ten inventoried parcels as WSAs was affected. Therefore, BLM will not designate the ten parcels as additions to the LCT WSA as was proposed in Alternatives A, B and C in the Draft Plan.

However, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) recognizes that wilderness is a resource within the spectrum of resource values and uses and that public lands

with wilderness character will be managed within the Bureau's multiple-use mandate. As directed in Section 201 of FLPMA, if lands are found to have wilderness characteristics through inventories, the Bureau through the land use planning process (defined in Section 202 of FLPMA) is required to address whether it will protect those wilderness characteristics against other possible resource values and uses.

LCT Area-1: The inventoried units with wilderness character within the LCT area and public lands between the existing WSA and the Summit Lake Reservation as shown on Map 8-5 would be managed consistent with the recovery of the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, maintaining surface water quality in the LCT Area and on the Reservation and to retain wilderness character. With specified exceptions, activities not allowed within these areas include:

- Commercial enterprises
- Construction of permanent roads
- Construction of temporary roads
- Use of motor vehicles off of designated routes
- Mechanical transport off of designated routes
- Use of motorized equipment
- Landing of aircraft
- Construction of structures or installations

The exceptions to these prohibitions are:

- **Valid Existing Rights.** Prior-existing rights may continue. New discretionary uses that create valid existing rights are not allowed.
- **Administrative Activities.** The BLM is allowed to use any of the above activities if it is necessary to meet the minimum requirements to administer and protect the important values of the LCT Area and to protect the health and safety of persons within the area.
- **Other General Allowances.** Subject to limitations determined by the State Director, general allowances could include actions necessary to control fire, insects, and diseases, recurring federal mineral surveys,

established livestock grazing, commercial services (such as outfitter and guides) to the extent necessary for activities which are proper for realizing the recreational or other wilderness character purposes and compatible with the defined values, and adequate access to non-federal lands.

LCT Area-2: Vehicle travel in the LCT Area would be limited to motorized trails shown on Map 8-5.

LCT Area-3: If monitoring indicates that impacts are occurring to the spawning habitat of the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, appropriate motor vehicle restrictions would be implemented in the LCT Area. These restrictions could be seasonal or permanent closures of trails. Where practicable, BLM would also construct hardened stream crossings where motorized trails cross streams in the LCT Area.

8.2.7 SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

8.2.7.1 Objectives

- To consider for designation as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) any area with important natural or cultural resources, systems or processes and any area that requires special management actions to retain its values.
- To protect free-flowing stream segments with outstandingly remarkable values.

8.2.7.2 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

ACEC-1: If lands are acquired adjacent to an existing ACEC and the acquired lands contain resources relevant and important to the resources for which the ACEC was established, the acquired lands would be incorporated into the ACEC and applicable special management requirements would be applied to the acquired lands.

ACEC-2: If the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Wilderness Study Area were released for purposes other than wilderness, the entire Lahontan Cutthroat Trout area would be designated as an ACEC with the objective of protecting the habitat of the trout.

8.2.7.2.1 High Rock Canyon ACEC

ACEC-3: An ACEC in High Rock Canyon would be designated on approximately 5,664 acres encompassing the High Rock Canyon Road corridor, Stevens Camp, and the Pole Corral areas (See Map 8-6a.). These areas would be managed to maintain the natural and cultural values of the ACEC while providing opportunities for human use and enjoyment of those resources. Additional special management actions would include the following:

Vehicle camping would be allowed only in designated camping areas as shown on Map 8-6b.

No rock climbing would be allowed, to protect the sensitive raptor nesting and cultural resources in the canyon.

The portion of the ACEC between the mouth of High Rock Canyon and 5 miles below Stevens Camp as shown on Maps 8-2a and 8-2b would be closed to vehicle use from the end of Chukar hunting season until the second weekend in May each year to prevent damage to the emigrant trail and reduce human disturbance of wildlife, including disturbance to lambing bighorn sheep and nesting raptors.

8.2.7.2.2 Soldier Meadows ACEC

Management actions would be designed to recover rare species in the Soldier Meadows ACEC, consistent with the Soldier Meadows Activity Plan and the Recovery Plan for the Rare Species of the Soldier Meadows Area.

ACEC-4: An ACEC would be designated in the Soldier Meadows area on approximately 2,077 acres of public land to include desert dace habitat, basalt cinquefoil populations and habitat for four endemic springsnails (See Map 8-6b). Special management actions would include:

Camping would be allowed only in designated camping sites.

The existing hot spring access road would be closed. Other roads that directly impact

resource values would be rerouted to avoid sensitive resources (Map 8-6b).

Grazing by livestock would be permitted within fenced portions of the ACEC when consistent with the recovery of the listed and rare species within the ACEC.

Wild horse use would not be allowed in the fenced portion of the ACEC.

8.2.7.3 Wild and Scenic Rivers

An explanation and findings of the Wild and Scenic River eligibility and suitability evaluations can be found in Appendix J. It was determined that the designation of the 16 eligible streams as Wild and Scenic Rivers would not provide additional protection for the outstandingly remarkable values associated with them because all eligible segments are within areas already under special designation.

WSR-1: No eligible stream segments would be recommended for designation as Wild and Scenic Rivers.

8.2.8 VEGETATION

Site-specific actions implemented to meet Land Health Standards would be the primary mechanism that drives changes in vegetation condition and distribution. These actions would be undertaken in response to evaluations of projects and activity plans conducted during the implementation phase of the RMP. Objectives and decisions in the RMP related to vegetation would provide broad direction for the implementation actions.

8.2.8.1 Objectives

- To retain sagebrush communities over at least 75 percent of the potential sagebrush habitat in the planning area with sagebrush cover sufficient to support sagebrush-dependent wildlife species, and to maintain more than 90 percent of sagebrush communities with desirable forb and grass composition for wildlife needs over the life of the plan.
- To retain non-sagebrush-dominated shrubland and woodland communities (e.g.,

salt desert shrub, mountain shrub, and Utah juniper) over greater than 75 percent of potential sites within the planning area with plant species composition that corresponds primarily to late seral ecological status over the life of the plan.

- To achieve native herbaceous vegetation composition consistent with late seral ecological status within the planning area and nonvascular plant species cover as appropriate to ecological site potential over the life of the plan.
- To retain all existing aspen clones, to expand the area occupied by existing aspen stands where possible, and to achieve mixed age classes in stands over the life of the plan.
- **WP** To consider the maintenance and enhancement of natural ecological processes as the dominant factor in determining the composition and distribution of plant communities in the Wilderness Zone. **W**
- To protect the natural condition and biodiversity of the planning area by preventing or limiting the spread of noxious weeds [as identified in the Nevada State Noxious Weed List (Nevada Revised Statute 555.0100)] that displace native vegetation; to use Integrated Weed Management principles to detect and eradicate all existing infestations; to eliminate new infestations before they begin to spread; and to prevent or limit the spread of established weeds into areas containing little or no infestation.
- To prevent the total acres dominated by invasive annual species (cheatgrass and other similar plants) within the planning area from increasing over the life of the plan.
- To maintain or achieve, within 15 years, Properly Functioning Condition status for 90 percent of wetland vegetation community sites within the planning area consistent with Land Health Standards.

8.2.8.2 Vegetation Management

VEG-1: Rehabilitation and restoration efforts would be conducted in areas that have been burned by wildland fires and invaded by invasive species. Seed mixes would be used that have a high probability of successful establishment of species that provide for site

stabilization and recovery. Native shrub and herbaceous species would be emphasized, but nonnative species could be used in restoration or rehabilitation to increase the likelihood of the eventual restoration of desirable native species.

VEG-2: Rangeland vegetation communities at risk of stand conversion from native species to introduced annuals because of wildfire could be protected through the establishment of green stripping or other techniques using appropriate seed mixes and project layouts consistent with the objective of maintaining a natural landscape.

VEG-3: Seed collection would be allowed by permit within the planning area to support restoration of native plant communities.

VEG-4: Management would maintain or establish diversity mosaics and connectivity of upland communities at multiple scales across the landscape. Management would include a variety of methods to increase or decrease sagebrush overstories to meet site-specific resource objectives.

VEG-5: Vegetation manipulation projects would be implemented primarily to move plant communities toward desired conditions, improve structural and species diversity, and protect soil and water resources.

VEG-6: The frequency, distribution and ecological function of stands of mountain shrubs would be restored to stable conditions, then maintained consistent with site potential and other management objectives.

VEG-7: Site-specific prescriptions would be created for restoration and maintenance of individual aspen stands to achieve the objectives.

VEG-8: On portions of rangelands that are dominated by monoculture stands of annual grasses, where the likelihood of restoration is high, habitat complexity and structure would be restored through seeding.

VEG-9: Mature sagebrush cover would be retained on sage-grouse habitats unless an evaluation conducted as part of an adaptive management process shows that alteration of

shrub cover would increase habitat values for sage-grouse and other sagebrush-dependent wildlife species.

VEG-10:  Vegetation treatments, including prescribed fire, would be allowed in all Wilderness Areas, consistent with a site-specific minimum required tool analysis, to restore the naturalness of areas that have been impacted by human activities. 

8.2.8.2.1 Noxious Weeds

VEG-11: Control of noxious weeds would be conducted using the best combination of treatment practices developed specifically for the target species and infested site, consistent with Nevada Revised Statute 555.010. Such treatments would include Best Management Practices consistent with Integrated Weed Management principles. Practices would include prevention of disturbing activities to maintain competitive vegetation cover and reduce the distribution and introduction of noxious weed seed; use of mechanical methods to physically remove noxious weeds; performance of management actions that limit the spread of noxious weeds by natural means; and application of herbicides and biological controls.

VEG-12:  Weed infestations in the Wilderness Zone would be controlled by methods consistent with minimum tool requirements and Integrated Weed Management principles. Noxious weeds in the Wilderness Zone would be controlled using hand tools and, where manual treatments alone would not affect the weed populations, with chemical and biological methods. 

8.2.9 LIVESTOCK GRAZING

The legislation designating the NCA and Wilderness Areas provided that livestock grazing would continue where permitted at the time of designation subject to applicable laws, regulations and executive orders. Adjustments in grazing could occur in the future following site-specific evaluations that apply the requirements of those laws, regulations and executive orders.

Land Health Standards and the guidelines associated with livestock grazing management would be among the primary considerations during these evaluations.

8.2.9.1 Objectives

- To promote healthy sustainable rangeland ecosystems and maintain or restore public rangelands to Properly Functioning Condition.
- To provide forage suitable for livestock on a sustainable basis for the foreseeable future, consistent with other resource objectives and with public land use allocations.

8.2.9.2 Grazing Management

GRAZ-1: The current livestock grazing use authorizations (Table 3-9) would be maintained until evaluations identify the need for adjustments in livestock grazing practices to meet Land Health Standards or other objectives. Changes in livestock management would conform to regulations and land use plans. Monitoring, field observations, ecological site inventories, or other BLM acceptable data would support management changes.

GRAZ-2: The class of livestock in allotments would not be changed by this plan. Domestic sheep trailing would be allowed in portions of the Buffalo Hills, Blue Wing–Seven Troughs, Jackson Mountains, and Majuba Allotments where it has been previously licensed.

GRAZ-3: Areas of the Black Rock Desert shown on Map 8-7 would remain unallocated for livestock grazing, except as noted below. The ungrazed portion of the Massacre Mountain Allotment associated with High Rock Canyon and the Little High Rock portion of the Bare Allotment would not be grazed on a regular basis. Grazing in these areas could occur under an approved grazing prescription developed specifically to accomplish the objectives of the plan.

GRAZ-4: The Mahogany Creek Enclosure portion of the Soldier Meadows Allotment as

shown on Map 8-5 would be excluded from grazing.

GRAZ-5: Massacre Ranch would be included in the Massacre Mountain Allotment and could be available for livestock grazing as part of a plan for the Massacre Mountain Allotment that includes specific objectives and actions for the meadows and grazing management facilities at the ranch.

GRAZ-6: Existing authorized structural rangeland projects would be maintained where beneficial to resource values. New rangeland projects could be developed when consistent with achieving Land Health Standards and the objectives of the plan. Projects no longer needed to meet livestock or other resource management objectives could be removed and the sites restored.

GRAZ-7: All spring developments would be modified where necessary to maintain, improve or restore the biotic integrity of the spring system in accordance with BLM Technical Reference 1737-17. These spring developments would also be modified to provide water for wildlife at ground level adjacent to the spring source.

GRAZ-8: Authorizations of grazing use including multiple use decisions and activity plans would incorporate specific grazing management prescriptions (covering, but not limited to, timing, duration, intensity, and frequency of livestock use) that an evaluation showed would provide the best opportunity to meet the objectives of the plan and the applicable Land Health Standards.

GRAZ-9: Adjustments in livestock and/or wild horse and burro forage would be implemented in an equitable manner on the basis of monitoring data or site-specific resource evaluations. If monitoring data indicate that impacts on resources are occurring as a result of livestock, or wild horse or burro use, appropriate adjustments would be made to the specific class of use. In the absence of monitoring data, adjustments in available forage would be proportional to applicable livestock active animal unit months (AUM) and wild horse and burro AMLs.

GRAZ-10: The Stanley Camp Pasture within the Soldier Meadows Allotment as shown on Map 8-5 would be excluded from livestock grazing on a regular basis. Grazing in this area could occur under an approved grazing prescription developed specifically to accomplish the objectives of the RMP.

GRAZ-11: Grazing within the fenced portions of the Soldier Meadows ACEC would be authorized when an evaluation process concludes that grazing is consistent with the resource management objectives for the ACEC.

GRAZ-12: The boundaries of the Buffalo Hills, Jackson Mountains and Paiute Meadows Allotments would be adjusted as shown on Map 8-7 to better conform to historical grazing patterns. No adjustment in permitted forage use would be made as a result of the boundary adjustments.

8.2.10 WILD HORSES AND BURROS

8.2.10.1 Objectives

- To maintain and manage sustainable populations of wild horses in nine herd management areas (HMA) and of wild burros in two of them, consistent with the objectives of the NCA and Wilderness Zone, at AMLs that ensure a thriving ecological balance among wild horse and burro populations, wildlife, livestock, vegetation resources, and other resource values.
- To maintain free roaming behavior of wild horses and burros.

8.2.10.2 Wild Horse and Burro Management

WHB-1: The HMAs referenced in Table 3-10 and shown on Map 3-6 would be retained and the wild horse or burro populations would be managed consistent with plan objectives.

WHB-2: The Antelope Range Herd Area as shown on Map 3-6 would not be designated as an HMA because it does not meet HMA criteria.

WHB-3: Contiguous HMAs with documented reproductive interaction would be managed as complexes to enable better management of genetic traits for the population and to improve coordination of monitoring and gathering.

WHB-4: No adjustments in HMA boundaries would occur as a consequence of this plan. However, if subsequent planning adjusted boundaries of HMAs partially contained in the planning area, those adjustments would also apply to this plan.

WHB-5: The initial and estimated herd sizes that could be managed while still preserving a thriving natural ecological balance and managing multiple use relationships of wild horses and burros for each HMA are shown in Table 3-10. Horses and burros would be gathered from the HMAs to achieve the AML. Aircraft would continue to be used for the management and, when necessary, removal of wild horses and burros. Gather activities would be scheduled to avoid high visitor use periods whenever possible.

WHB-6:  Gathers in Wilderness would continue to be conducted by herding the animals by helicopter or on horseback to temporary corrals, generally located outside of Wilderness. No landing of aircraft would occur in Wilderness Areas except for emergency purposes, and no motorized vehicles would be used in Wilderness in association with the gather operations unless such use was consistent with the minimum tool requirement for management of Wilderness. 

WHB-7: Adjustments in livestock and/or wild horse and burro forage would be implemented in an equitable manner on the basis of monitoring data or site-specific resource evaluations. If monitoring data indicates that impacts on resources are occurring as a result of livestock or wild horse or burro use, appropriate adjustments would be made to the specific class of use. In the absence of monitoring data, adjustments in available forage would be

proportional to applicable livestock active animal unit months (AUM) and wild horse and burro AMLs.

WHB-8: Holding corrals could be developed at one or more sites to facilitate gathers, sorting of gathered horses, recreational stock use, and to provide opportunities for viewing horse management activities by the public.

8.2.11 WILDLAND FIRE

8.2.11.1 Objectives

- To provide an appropriate management response (AMR) to all wildland fires, with emphasis on firefighter and public safety, considering the resource values to be protected, consistent with overall management objectives and fire suppression costs.
- To recognize fire as a natural process in vegetation change and to use fire to protect, maintain and enhance resources in plant communities within the planning area where consistent with objectives.

8.2.11.2 Wildland Fire Management

FIRE-1: Rehabilitation and restoration efforts would be conducted in areas burned by wildland fires and subject to invasion by invasive species (see Vegetation section).

FIRE-2: All of the planning area would be placed in one of two management categories with corresponding Appropriate Management Responses based on the criteria in Appendix K. As shown in Map 8-8, about 7,900 acres would be designated for an appropriate management response to wildland fire as described in Appendix K for Category A; approximately 1,215,000 acres would be designated for an appropriate management response to wildland fire as described in Appendix K for Category B.

FIRE-3: Fire Management Plans would be used to guide wildland fire suppression, fuels management and other aspects of fire

management. Fire Management Plans would be periodically evaluated and updated based on changes in technology, policy, scientific knowledge, and other factors in a manner consistent with the purposes for which the planning area is managed.

FIRE-4: Category A areas are associated with private lands, BLM facilities and other areas where fire would not be desired. Category B areas are diverse allowing for application of a variety of appropriate fire suppression techniques to meet the resource objectives specified in this plan and other site-specific activity plans. Fire Management Plan evaluations could be used to further subdivide Category B areas to better identify site-specific resource objectives or fire management needs.

FIRE-5: Prescribed fire and mechanical treatment of vegetation, where applicable to achieve resource objectives, could be used in both Category A and Category B lands outside of Wilderness.

FIRE-6: Suppression efforts would be managed to contain naturally-caused wildland fires in Category A areas to less than 100 acres 90 percent of the time. For human-caused fires, suppression efforts would be managed to contain fires to less than 50 acres 90 percent of the time.

FIRE-7: In all wildland fire situations, priority would be given to placing resources capable of initiating aggressive suppression in a position to evaluate the fire using the criteria contained in Appendix K to determine the best response for local conditions.

FIRE-8: Minimum impact suppression techniques would be used throughout the area (see Appendix F). Use of heavy, surface-disturbing equipment would be limited and would require prior approval by the field manager. Plans would be updated to provide appropriate fire suppression resources in or near the planning area for initial attack to achieve objectives.

FIRE-9: Prescribed fire would be used on a site-specific basis to accomplish local small-scale projects consistent with the vegetation objectives. Low-surface-disturbance mechanical

treatments, consistent with vegetation objectives, would be the preferred means of fuel reduction.

FIRE-10: Fire suppression techniques would be applied for each wildland fire situation to meet the resource objectives specified in this plan and other site-specific activity plans. Wildland fire and prescribed fire could be used throughout the planning area to manipulate the woody and herbaceous species to meet vegetation objectives.

8.2.12 FISH AND WILDLIFE

This plan shall not diminish the jurisdiction of the State of Nevada with respect to fish and wildlife management, including regulation of hunting, trapping and fishing on public land in the planning area.

BLM recognizes the roles of the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Tribal governments and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in the management of habitats and populations of fish and wildlife and will work cooperatively with them.

8.2.12.1 Fish and Wildlife Management

8.2.12.1.1 Objectives

- To provide habitat within the planning area to support a diverse range of game and non-game wildlife species and to give visitors high-quality opportunities to hunt, fish, trap, or view wildlife.
- To maintain, restore, or enhance riparian areas and wetlands within the planning area so they provide diverse and healthy habitat conditions for riparian and wetland obligate species and other wildlife species.
- To manage upland habitats in woodland and rangeland vegetation types to provide forage, water, cover, structure, and security necessary to sustain healthy populations of shrubland and woodland obligate and other wildlife species.
- To provide high-quality habitats for sagebrush-dependent species, including

sage-grouse, in the sagebrush steppe portions of the planning area. All existing lek, breeding, brood rearing, and winter sage-grouse habitats would be conserved during the life of the plan.

- To provide habitat for migratory birds, including forage, water, cover, structure, and security, to support healthy populations of resident and migrant species.
- To restore, maintain, or improve habitat to provide for diverse and self-sustaining communities of fish and other aquatic organisms in spring systems and streams throughout the planning area.
- To maintain High Rock Canyon, the South Jackson Range and the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Area as Watchable Wildlife Sites.
- To implement management actions for all uses and programs that sustain or improve sage-grouse winter, breeding, nesting, and brooding habitats. Activities that have a high risk of disturbing breeding or brooding sage-grouse would not be allowed within suitable habitats.

FW-1: Best Management Practices and guidelines would be regularly evaluated and updated to assure that the most current management solutions are used to solve resource and human use issues.

FW-2: Use of aircraft to survey and monitor wildlife populations would be continued, but flights would be scheduled to avoid high-visitor-use periods.

FW-3: Habitats for sage-grouse and other sagebrush obligate species would be managed to retain the vegetation and other attributes necessary for the long-term sustainability of sage-grouse and other sagebrush-dependent wildlife species. Management would be guided by Rangeland Health Standards, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies guidelines, and the local plans of the Washoe-Modoc and North Central working groups. Periodic adjustments to the management of sage-grouse habitats and the guidelines would be based on the best available information.

FW-4: Activities that may affect migratory bird species would include habitat and population conservation principles, measures

and practices appropriate for the affected species and the proposed activities.

Conservation principles, measures and practices would initially be based upon best management practices contained in the Nevada Bird Conservation Plan (1999) and Birds in the Sagebrush Sea (Ritter and Paige, 2000). Practices would be expected to change during the life of the plan to incorporate new research and experience gained through use of the practices.

FW-5: Construction of new water developments or other wildlife-related projects outside Wilderness, including water projects near High Rock Canyon, could be authorized when the project would promote healthy, viable, and more naturally distributed wildlife populations.

FW-6: Existing small game wildlife water developments would be repaired, maintained and reconstructed (see Map 3-10 for locations).

8.2.12.2 Wildlife Management in Wilderness

As stated in Section 8(e)(1) and (2) of the legislation that established the NCA, “Nothing in this Act diminishes the jurisdiction of the State of Nevada with respect to fish and wildlife management, including regulation of hunting and fishing on public land in areas designated as wilderness under subsection (a). Any action in the areas designated as wilderness under subsection (a) shall be consistent with the Wilderness Act.”

To remain consistent with the legislation this plan would not diminish Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) jurisdiction, but all actions proposed for the designated wilderness areas would be consistent with the law, regulation and policy that guides the BLM’s management of wilderness. A substantial amount of regulation and policy exists governing wildlife management in wilderness areas. The Wilderness Act outlines general management, Wilderness Regulations found in 43 CFR 6300 further specify what can and cannot be done in wilderness areas, and BLM Manual 8560 and Handbook 8560-1 provide policy guidance for specific wilderness management issues. Chapter III of Handbook 8560-1 was written in

conjunction with the International Association of Fish and Game Agencies and provides guidance for specific wildlife management actions in wilderness.

The Wilderness Act allows for the managing federal agency to conduct or authorize actions that are generally prohibited by the Act if they are the minimum required action for the management of the area as wilderness. To determine if a project is the “minimum required” action, a site-specific analysis must be prepared that demonstrates how the project would be required to maintain or enhance the wilderness characteristics (naturalness, opportunities for solitude, and primitive recreation) of the area. The analysis also examines how the project or action would be accomplished and determines which method would have the least impact on wilderness characteristics (Details on how this analysis is conducted can be found in Appendix F). This analysis is commonly referred to as the “minimum required/tool analysis”.

Wildlife projects and actions that are required to ensure that natural processes are maintained or that wildlife populations are allowed to operate as freely as possible with minimum interference from humans would be authorized. Examples of these types of projects may include reintroducing native California Bighorn sheep into a wilderness area where the sheep were extirpated due to human influence, or constructing a water development when the naturally occurring water sources in the wilderness have been impacted by human uses.

To streamline the “minimum required/tool” analysis a statewide MOU is being prepared in conjunction with NDOW that will specify the terms and conditions under which wildlife management activities in the wilderness areas may occur and will outline the process that will be used to authorize these actions. Part of that process will be an annual operations meeting between NDOW and BLM wilderness and wildlife staff. The operations meeting will focus on reviewing the prior year’s accomplishments and identifying proposed projects for the upcoming year. Those proposed actions that would require site-specific “minimum required/tool analysis” would be identified at the operations meetings.

As stated in the Wilderness Section of this plan a Wilderness Management Plan (WMP) would be prepared that would contain specific

objectives, management actions and monitoring procedures for wilderness resources in the designated Wilderness Areas within the planning area. The WMP could also incorporate site-specific authorizations for proposed projects.

8.2.12.2.1 Objectives

- Management activities in Wilderness would emphasize the protection of native species and natural population dynamics.
- Ensure that wildlife populations operate as freely as possible with only minimum human influence.

FW-7: Use of aircraft to survey and monitor wildlife populations would continue. Flights would be scheduled to avoid high-visitor-use periods. Landing of aircraft or dropping of supplies from aircraft would require a site-specific minimum requirement and minimum tool analysis.

FW-8: Trap and transplant activities associated with native wildlife species in Wilderness would be allowed if they were necessary to meet the minimum requirements for the administration of the Wilderness Areas. Use of gas or electric powered equipment and motorized vehicles, including aircraft, would be authorized in support of trap and transplant activities when they were determined through a site specific analysis to be the minimum tools required to implement the project.

FW-9: Animal damage control in Wilderness would be allowed only to protect threatened and endangered species, to prevent the transmission of disease to other wildlife or humans and to prevent serious losses to domestic livestock. Control of non-indigenous species may also be necessary to reduce conflicts with indigenous species, particularly if the latter species is threatened or endangered. Wildlife Damage control must be approved by the BLM on a case-by-case basis. Methods of control would be those causing the least impact to wilderness characteristics.

FW-10: Construction of new water developments or other wildlife-related projects could be authorized when the project would promote healthy, viable, and more naturally

distributed native wildlife populations and would enhance wilderness values; was required to preserve wilderness values; or was required to correct unnatural wildlife habitat conditions caused by human actions. Use of gas or electric powered equipment and motorized vehicles, including aircraft, would be authorized in support of project development activities when they were determined through a site-specific analysis to be the minimum tools for implementing the project. All projects constructed would be designed to minimize visual impacts.

An example of when construction of a water development could be considered the minimum required action within Wilderness could be a situation where monitoring identifies that vehicle use in High Rock Canyon is having an impact on the bighorn population's ability to obtain water in the canyon bottom. In such a case, a water development could be constructed inside the Wilderness on the rim of the canyon to mitigate the impacts caused to the canyon-bottom water source by human use.

FW-11: Stream surveys could be conducted using battery operated electro-shockers for population sampling. Access to the streams would be by foot or horseback.

FW-12: Existing small game wildlife water developments would be repaired, maintained and reconstructed (see Map 3-10 for locations). Maintenance of the 14 guzzlers in Wilderness would be limited to normal upkeep and repair of the catchment, tank, lid, ramp and protective fencing as necessary to maintain proper function of the unit and integrity of the enclosed area. Access to the guzzlers would be by foot or horseback unless major reconstruction requires the use of aircraft consistent with the minimum tool requirements contained in Appendix F.

FW-13: Natural or human-caused circumstances (e.g., flood, drought, vandalism, sick animal) requiring immediate action to mitigate direct risks to the survival of fish and wildlife under NDOW's jurisdiction, may be permitted if the following procedure is adhered to: (1) NDOW notifies the BLM as soon as practicable after the problem is known; (2) After notifying BLM concerning the nature and solution to the problem, NDOW agrees to use no

more than the "minimum tool" level of motorized vehicle, mechanical transport and/or motorized equipment necessary and practical to rectify the situation; and (3) NDOW agrees to submit to BLM a written assessment of the action requiring immediate attention within two weeks after resolution of the situation.

FW-14: Habitat rehabilitation and restoration projects and activities within Wilderness must be consistent with a site-specific minimum tool analysis (Appendix F). Examples of such activities and projects include changes in authorized uses; seeding following fires to enhance recovery of wildlife habitats and to prevent establishment and dominance of invasive, exotic plant species; and construction of protective fencing to recover, establish or enhance riparian systems.

8.2.13 SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES

8.2.13.1 Objective

To manage habitats and populations of special status plant taxa and animal species to meet the standards for "secure" ranking within 10 years. Any new listing of threatened or endangered species would require consultation with FWS.

8.2.13.2 Special Status Species Management

SSS-1: Actions and stipulations necessary to protect special status species and their habitats would be made part of this plan. Specific actions intended to protect special status species are included in the Vegetation (Section, 8.2.8) and Fish and Wildlife (Section 8.2.12). The Endangered Species Act and the BLM Policy on Management of Special Status Species would guide development of actions and stipulations. For information on special status species conditions, refer to the Vegetation and the Fish and Wildlife sections in Chapter 3, Section 3.6.3).

8.2.14 VISUAL RESOURCES

8.2.14.1 Objectives

- To provide a primitive and natural visual setting for visitors.
- To protect the visual integrity of the emigrant trail corridor.

8.2.14.2 Visual Resource Management

VRM-1:  Wilderness and the LCT WSA would be managed to meet the requirements for VRM Class I as shown on Map 8-9. 

VRM-2: The remainder of the planning area would be managed to meet the requirements of VRM Class II as shown on Map 8-9. VRM classification descriptions are provided in Appendix G.

8.2.15 WATER RESOURCES

8.2.15.1 Objectives

- To manage the quality of water resources in the planning area in a way that achieves the chemical, physical, and biological integrity that each resource is capable of producing, consistent with Nevada Revised Statute chapter 445A.
- To manage the use of water resources within the planning area to enhance the natural and cultural resource values that the NCA was created to protect, consistent with Nevada Revised Statute chapters 533–534.

8.2.15.2 Water Resource Management

8.2.15.2.1 Black Rock Range

WATER-1: The water quality of the Mahogany Creek, Summer Camp Creek, Pole

Creek, Battle Creek, Colman Creek, and Snow Creek watersheds would be managed to meet the life history requirements of populations of Lahontan cutthroat trout. The water quality of the Bartlett Creek and Paiute Creek watersheds would be managed to meet the life history requirements of the Lahontan cutthroat trout as potential recovery streams.

8.2.15.2.2 Calico Range

WATER-2: The water quality of the Donnelly Creek watershed would be managed to meet the life history requirements of the Lahontan cutthroat trout as a potential recovery stream.

8.2.15.2.3 Jackson Mountain Range

WATER-3: The water quality of the Jackson Creek watershed would be managed to meet the life history requirements of populations of the Lahontan cutthroat trout.

WATER-4: The water quality of the Happy Creek and Mary Sloan Creek watersheds would be managed to meet the life history requirements of the Lahontan cutthroat trout as potential recovery streams.

8.2.15.2.4 Soldier Meadows

WATER-5: The water quality of those areas within the Soldier Meadows Allotment that provide habitat for the desert dace (see Map 2-2) would be managed to meet the life history requirements of the desert dace and the springsnails (Soldier Meadows Activity Plan).

8.2.15.2.5 Remainder of the Planning Area (Other Watersheds)

WATER-6: Provide water quality for current and future uses through establishment of measurable water quality objectives consistent with EPA, State or Tribal water quality standards, and implement management practices to achieve those standards. Adjust objectives and practices to conform to changing resource and user conditions.

Permitted uses would be subject to Best Management Practices prescriptions, based on monitoring and evaluation, that provide the best opportunities to meet plan objectives and Land Health Standards related to water resources.

8.2.15.3 Water Rights

WATER-7: BLM would continue to file for water rights through the State of Nevada to support uses consistent with this plan that help to achieve resource management objectives and maintain healthy and functioning riparian and upland systems.

8.2.16 LANDS AND REALTY

8.2.16.1 Objectives

- To provide access to private lands, consistent with applicable laws, while minimizing environmental impacts.
- To establish utility corridors and grant rights-of-way when they are consistent with the management objectives of the NCA.
- When practical and appropriate, to pursue opportunities within the planning area to acquire private parcels or interests only from willing sellers who initiate the process.
- To allow development and establishment of new private interests on public lands that are consistent with the resource goals of the planning area.

8.2.16.2 Lands and Realty Management

LAND-1:  Access to private lands entirely surrounded by Wilderness (also known as inholdings) would be allowed for the reasonable purposes for which the property is held or used. Access would be limited to the routes and modes of travel that existed at the time of designation. When vehicle access is provided, it would be authorized through issuance of renewable land use permits. Until issuance of a land use permit, landowners would only be allowed to use non-motorized and non-mechanical means of accessing their property. 

LAND-2: Access to private lands and valid existing rights outside of Wilderness could be authorized by granting rights-of-way that provide for the reasonable use and enjoyment of

private lands by their owners while minimizing impacts on resources.

LAND-3: No new utility corridors would be established in the Planning Area.

LAND-4: Utility rights-of-way could be granted outside wilderness, where in conformance with the visual quality objectives and the intent of the legislation.

LAND-5: BLM could acquire private lands within the planning area or property interests that would provide public benefits. Land acquisitions could occur through exchange proposed by private owners, where no disposal of public land would occur within the NCA or Wilderness; through purchase from willing landowners or their agents; or through donation.

LAND-6: Recreation and public purposes leases and Section 302 leases would not be issued within the planning area.

LAND-7: Two existing utility corridors as shown on Map 8-10 would be retained. The east-west corridor would be modified to allow utilities only south of the railroad ROW.

LAND-8: Right-of-way grants for buried utilities consistent with VRM objectives could be granted, but no above ground facilities would be allowed on the playa.

LAND-9: Land use permits could be issued for commercial activities consistent with the guidelines for special recreation permits (see Section 8.2.20.2).

8.2.17 MINERAL RESOURCES

The Act withdrew all of the NCA and Wilderness Areas from entry under the Minerals Laws. Valid existing rights that existed at the time of designation would continue to be managed under existing regulations. Areas within the Planning Area but outside the NCA and Wilderness Areas, including the South Playa, the LCT Area and narrow strips of public land between Wilderness Areas and associated

with wilderness access routes in the eastern portion of the Planning Area are the focus of most of the decisions related to Minerals.

8.2.17.1 Objective

To recognize valid existing rights and allow development and establishment of property interests in the planning area, consistent with the resource goals of this plan.

8.2.17.2 Locatable Minerals Management

MIN-1: Subject to valid existing rights (see Map 3-15), federal lands within the NCA and designated Wilderness Areas are withdrawn from location, entry and patent under the 1872 General Mining Law. Valid existing rights for existing mining claims would be determined. Claims found to be valid would be managed under applicable laws and regulations.

MIN-2: Subject to valid existing rights, federal lands within the South Playa Area, the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Area and vehicle access routes outside the NCA, as shown on Map 8-11, would be withdrawn from location, entry and patent under authority of the 1872 General Mining Law and other applicable laws and regulations.

8.2.17.3 Leasable Minerals Management

MIN-3: Federal lands within the NCA and designated Wilderness Areas are withdrawn from the authority of the 1970 Geothermal Steam Act and the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920.

MIN-4: The South Playa Area would remain closed to sodium/potassium leasing and development.

MIN-5: Existing geothermal leases in the South Playa area as shown on Map 8-12 would be administered under the terms of the leases and applicable laws and regulations. Existing geothermal leases would be extended for 5 years and might be extended for two successive 5-year terms, if drilling, diligent efforts, production of byproducts, or unit commitment occurs by the

sixth year of the 10-year primary lease term. If commercial geothermal resources are produced during the primary lease term, the lease would continue as an additional lease term for up to 40 years, contingent upon continued production. If a leaseholder has a well capable of producing geothermal energy before the end of the primary or extended lease term, an additional lease term might be granted for up to 40 years. If at the end of the additional lease term the land is not needed for other purposes and production is ongoing, the leaseholder would have a preferential right to renew the lease for an additional 40-year period.

MIN-6: Subject to the terms of existing leases, federal lands within the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Area and vehicle access routes outside the NCA, as shown on Map 8-12, would be withdrawn from the mineral leasing laws.

MIN-7: The South Playa as shown on Map 8-12 would be open to new geothermal leasing subject to No Surface Occupancy requirements.

8.2.17.4 Salable Minerals Management

MIN-8: Within the Planning Area, the Secretary could permit the establishment and use of gravel pits for the maintenance of roads under the terms of the Mineral Materials Act of 1947, consistent with the NCA Act as amended, and the objectives of the plan.

8.2.18 SOILS

No decisions addressing soils are directly included in this plan. Soils would continue to be managed in accordance with existing laws, regulations and policies, as documented in Appendix A.

8.2.19 AIR QUALITY

The existing air quality in and surrounding the NCA is typical of undeveloped regions in the Western United States. Ambient pollutant levels are usually below or near the measurable limits. Exceptions include high,

short-term, localized concentrations of particulate matter (primarily windblown dust or smoke from wildland fires).

8.2.19.1 Objectives

- To ensure that BLM management activities and land use authorizations conform to local, State and federal laws, regulations pertaining to air quality.

AIR-1: The NCA and wilderness areas would continue to be managed as a Prevention of Significant Deterioration Class II area as designated by the Clean Air Act. All BLM actions and use authorizations would be designed or stipulated to protect air quality.

AIR-2: Site-specific project proposals affecting BLM and adjacent lands would be reviewed for compliance with existing air quality laws and policies. Mitigation would be incorporated into project proposals to reduce air quality degradation. Projects would be designed to minimize further degradation of existing air quality.

8.2.20 RECREATION

The NCA Act emphasized protection and enhancement of the cultural, ecological and recreational resources of the planning area while allowing opportunities to experience the terrain, sights and conditions as they were during the emigrant passage. The decisions in the following section are intended to allow for historical and traditional uses, while protecting significant resources from use-related impacts.

BLM would work cooperatively with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), recognizing its jurisdiction in the management of hunting, trapping and fishing. All hunting, trapping and fishing activities within the planning area would be managed by NDOW in accordance with applicable regulations.

8.2.20.1 Recreation Management

The planning area is divided into zones that emphasize the values or experiences available in each. This approach establishes three zoning

categories for the planning area that characterize the physical and social settings and the types of activities that may be encountered or anticipated by the area's visitors. The zones are Wilderness, Rustic and Front Country. For descriptions of these management zones, see Appendix B.

8.2.20.1.1 Objectives

- To provide opportunities for a diverse range of recreation experiences consistent with the intent of the NCA Act.
- To protect the physical and visual integrity of the Applegate-Lassen National Historic Trail from impacts associated with human uses, including organized events.
- To provide suitable alternatives to traditional camping areas to reduce resource conflicts, rehabilitate sensitive areas and reduce visitor conflict.

REC-1: The entire planning area would be administered as a Special Recreation Management Area.

REC-2: Camping would be restricted to areas more than 300 feet from springs, consistent with Nevada Revised Statute 503.660, unless otherwise designated.

REC-3: Open fires would be allowed, restricted or prohibited in accordance with applicable BLM Field Office fire management policies and restrictions and the decisions of this plan. In addition, cutting of green or standing trees in the planning area would be prohibited.

REC-4: Fires on the playa and within adjacent dune areas as shown on Map 8-4 would be allowed only with the use of a surface-protecting device, such as an elevated platform, open grill, fire blanket, or fire pan.

REC-5: a Recreation Area Management Plan developed through a public involvement process would guide Management. Thresholds/triggers (see Section 9.2) would be set for resource, visual and visitor interactions and would be evaluated through continual monitoring of appropriate indicators.

REC-6: Limits on human activities could be set in areas that experience adverse impacts

Chapter 8 – Proposed RMP Decisions

to resources or the visitor experience. These limits could affect areas of use, group size, duration of stay, number of people or vehicles, or types of activities allowed.

REC-7: Primitive campground sites could be used to concentrate overnight use if other management tools proved ineffective.

REC-8: In cases where facilities are found necessary to prevent resource degradation, they would be located and designed to be unobtrusive and aesthetically compatible with the landscape. Primitive and natural materials and colors would be used whenever possible.

REC-9: If monitoring indicates that unacceptable resource impacts are occurring in hot spring attraction areas or that public safety is unreasonably compromised by hazards, facilities such as fencing or boardwalks could be constructed around hot springs.

REC-10: Where visitation is causing resource damage, user conflict or crowding at attraction areas, or specific uses create safety concerns, a permit system could be implemented to mitigate resource impacts, limit numbers, increase education, or maintain public safety.

REC-11: The development of privately operated campgrounds would be encouraged on public lands outside of the NCA and on private or Tribal lands both inside and outside the NCA boundary. When monitoring data indicate that camping in the planning area is adversely impacting resources and camping is available on nearby private or Tribal lands, camping could be restricted without a need to designate new campsites on public land.

REC-12: Collection of rocks, minerals, and common invertebrate fossils would be authorized except in the Hanging Rock Petrified Forest as shown on Map 8-4. Permits could be required in areas experiencing resource damage or where desirable rocks are becoming depleted. Collection would be limited to 25 pounds per day plus one piece, with a maximum collection of 250 pounds per year. Collection using non-motorized hand tools and causing minimal surface disturbance would be allowed without

permit. Collection limits could be waived for scientific or educational use under permit.

REC-13: Non-motorized trails could be constructed, relocated or closed to mitigate human-caused impacts, if monitoring determines that human use is degrading specific resources. If conflict among different uses occurs or increased volume of use necessitates, non-motorized trails could be developed to separate different user types, or times and locations for certain modes of travel could be assigned.

REC-14: The National Desert Trail could be extended through Wilderness Areas and the NCA (See Map 8-4).

REC-15: All public lands within the planning area are assigned to one of the three zones (see Map 8-13). Management Zones would be used to guide management decisions in the planning area.

REC-16: Dispersed camping would be allowed throughout all zones except within one-half mile of designated campsites and within 300 feet of springs. Where monitoring indicates that large groups are causing resource damage or adversely impacting the visitor experience, limits on group size would be implemented.

REC-17: To protect resources in areas where monitoring data indicate that camping is causing resource damage, camping could be restricted, eliminated or assigned to new or relocated designated sites away from private property.

REC-18: Vehicle camping would be limited to designated sites in the following areas: portions of the High Rock Canyon ACEC outside of Wilderness; near cultural resource sites; in dune and hummock areas associated with the playa; and along designated routes in the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Area. Dune and hummock areas associated with the playa could be closed to camping if monitoring indicates negative impacts to sensitive soils, vegetation or critical wildlife habitat.

REC-19: Dispersed camping in the Front Country Zone would be allowed only on the Playa. Camping in the remainder of the Front

Country Zone would be allowed only at designated sites.

8.2.20.2 Special Recreation Permits

8.2.20.2.1 Objectives

- To maintain access across the playa, while retaining a sense of isolation.
- To provide opportunities for a diverse range of permitted activities consistent with the NCA Act while providing public access and solitude for users.

REC-20: All recreation permittees would be required to adhere to Tread Lightly! and Leave-No-Trace® principles (See Glossary). Permits would emphasize the Tread Lightly! and Leave-No-Trace® principles.

REC-21: A comprehensive permitting process for organized recreation events and other permitted activities would be developed based on a classification system for events of similar scale and potential impacts. This permit process would streamline permit issuance, set standards for when permits are required and support resource, visitor experience and other management objectives. Permits would be assigned to one of four classes of events (I through IV). A description of the classification system is provided in Appendix L.

REC-22: Class I events would be permitted throughout the planning area and would not include public closure areas.

REC-23: Class II events, except those requiring public closure areas, would be permitted throughout the Front Country and Rustic Zones. Class II events that require areas of public closure would be permitted within a designated area (See Map 8-14). The number of Class II events would not be limited, except to the extent that proposed closure areas overlap.

REC-24: Class III events would be permitted within a designated area of the Front Country Zone shown on Map 8-14 and along the emigrant trail for tours that are compatible with the objectives for the historic trails.

REC-25: Class IV permits would be permitted as shown on Map 8-14. To maintain solitude on northern portions of the playa, large-scale events would be concentrated on or near the South Playa. Northern portions of the playa could be made available for Class IV permits when playa conditions are unsuitable or public safety or public access could be compromised.

REC-26: An area of the playa, shown on Map 8-14 would be available rocket launching activities. A rocket launch area would be designated away from main travel corridors and high visitation areas.

REC-27: Special recreation permits would be permitted at times, in locations and for durations consistent with providing opportunities for solitude and full public access to the playa for at least one-half of the summer season (Memorial day through Labor Day).

REC-28: Two Class III and IV events could occur simultaneously, but only one could be a Class IV event.

REC-29: No more than two access points to the playa would be closed on the same weekend.

8.2.21 PUBLIC OUTREACH AND VISITOR SERVICES

8.2.21.1 Objectives

- To provide the public with a better understanding and appreciation of the area's natural, cultural and biological resources and its history and uses.
- To expand public awareness of the ethics of responsible land and resource use.
- To build and maintain positive relationships with local communities.
- To enhance visitor experiences, foster economic development, and protect area resources, encourage development of visitor services and facilities on private and Tribal lands or on those public lands that are located outside the planning area.

- To expand public awareness of the dangers and hazards in the area while stressing the need for self-reliance and personal safety.
- To develop an outreach and interpretive plan for the NCA and Wilderness Areas.

8.2.21.2 Public Outreach and Visitor Services Management

BLM would expand public awareness by implementing and supporting programs that would increase public appreciation for the values of the planning area.

The following partnerships and programs would be developed to assist in public outreach and a better understanding of the area resources.

VIS-1: BLM would work with Friends group(s) and other non-government organizations to recruit volunteers to assist in developing and implementing interpretive and environmental programs, and other resource and outreach projects.

VIS-2: Cooperative partnerships would be established with counties, Tribes and local communities in Cedarville, Winnemucca and Lovelock to provide public outreach and visitor services. BLM would work toward cooperatively developed and managed multifunctional visitor centers as well as an administrative site/visitor contact station near the NCA. The administrative site/visitor contact station would increase BLM's management presence in the NCA.

VIS-3: BLM would foster the development of resource stewardship programs (See Appendix M). It would also encourage scientific research into resources and uses that occur within the NCA and Wilderness.

VIS-4: Academic and public research would be encouraged through outreach and agreements with organizations, schools, universities, and qualified individuals (See Appendix M).

VIS-5: BLM's outreach and interpretive plan would identify the types of information to be provided to visitors, locations and techniques for distribution, and a monitoring process for evaluation and revision of materials and

distribution techniques. The plan would also establish guidelines for the location and construction of potential orientation sites, signs, or small kiosks. Offsite methods of public outreach would be emphasized.

Potential types of information and formats could include:

- Detailed Maps and Driving Guides
- Brochures
- Internet sites
- Resource and cultural site stewardship programs
- Day and evening interpretive programs
- Interpretive displays
- Academic Outreach
 - Teacher reference materials
 - Field trip programs
- Outreach strategies for local communities
 - Visitor contact programs and displays
 - Orientation points located near key NCA entrances
- Signing
- Kiosks
- Area Management and Restrictions
 - Rock and Mineral collection rules
 - Campfire regulations
- Leave No Trace!/Tread Lightly[®] workshops and materials distribution
- Museum displays
- Materials supporting heritage tourism
- Low power radio transmission systems

VIS-6: Information would be made available to visitors to the planning area off-site. Materials would be available at several locations and through various media sources, including key locations in the gateway communities, at BLM offices, online at BLM and private Web sites, through various stakeholder groups, and other outlets. Informational materials would emphasize visitor risks and safety, respect for private property, natural resources, wilderness values, and cultural and historic trail resources of the area, and relevant BLM and other agency regulations. Maps and narrative information would also be provided to potential visitors.

VIS-7: Interpretive techniques, including on-the-ground elements, could be deployed when monitoring and evaluation indicate they are needed to prevent resource damage or to

improve visitor safety. Where facilities are determined necessary inside the planning area, they would always be designed to cause the smallest possible impact on the ground.

VIS-8:  No outreach, interpretive or regulatory signs or other developments would be provided in the Wilderness Zone, except when required to protect resources. 

VIS-9: A variety of outreach methods could be used in the Rustic Zone to mitigate adverse resource impacts, such as motorized trespass in Wilderness, safety hazards, and impacts on private landowners. Methods could include:

- Small information kiosks
- Small unobtrusive signs located at a limited number of important sites to inform the public about specific resources or safety hazards
- Map and brochure-based interpretive trails and tours to increase awareness of threatened resources or interpret especially significant resources (minimal or no on-the-ground markers would be used)

VIS-10: On-site visitor facilities would be concentrated in the Front Country Zone. Visitor services could be provided through a variety of methods to increase public appreciation of the area, mitigate impacts caused by visitor use and enhance visitor safety.

These methods could include:

- Maps and related information in a few Front Country kiosks
- Small unobtrusive signs located at a limited number of important sites to inform the public about specific resources or safety hazards
- Map and brochure-based interpretive trails and tours to increase awareness of threatened resources or interpret especially significant resources (minimal or no on-the-ground markers would be used)
- Onsite interpretive panels, public awareness programs, and informational kiosks in high-use camp areas and along main travel corridors
- Scenic overlooks with interpretive and safety information along main travel corridors outside the NCA