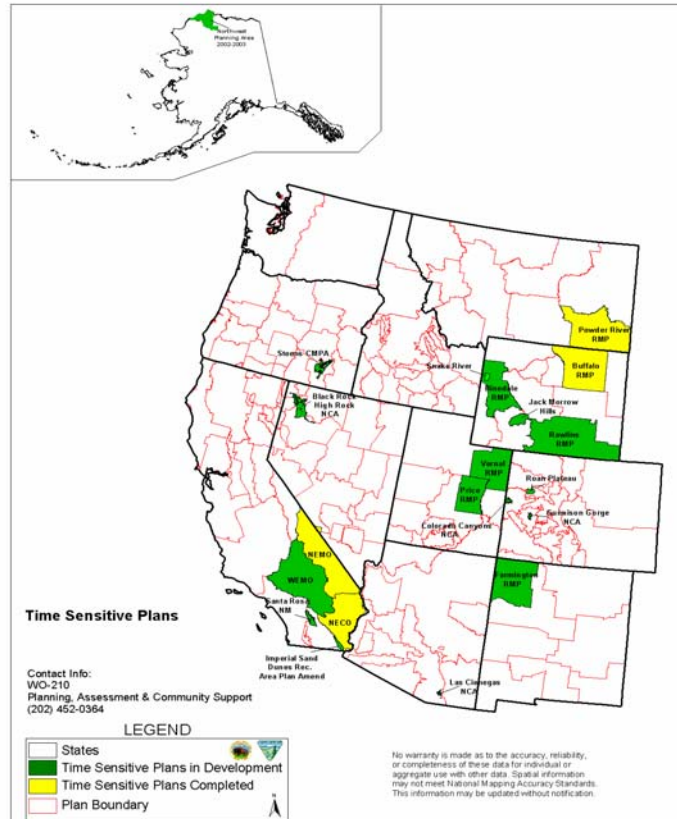


## BLM Makes Progress on Time Sensitive Plans

Since the last edition of the Time Sensitive Plan News, BLM has issued Records of Decision and completed the planning process for the Montana Statewide Oil and Gas RMP Amendment/EIS and the RMP Amendment for the Powder River Basin Oil and Gas Project in Wyoming, issued Draft RMP/EISs for Santa Rosa/San Jacinto (California), West Mojave (California), Gunnison Gorge (Colorado) and Black Rock/High Rock (Nevada), and issued a Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS for the Farmington Field Office. Records of Decisions (ROD) are expected within the next 60 days for the Las Cienegas (Arizona) and Farmington plans.

## BLM issues Records of Decision for Powder River Land Use Plan Amendments

On April 30, 2003, the BLM in Montana and Wyoming published Records of Decision (ROD) announcing the publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statements (FEIS) and Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendments for the Powder River Basin. The amendments address natural gas and oil development on BLM-administered public lands and federal mineral leases within the Powder River Basin in Wyoming and Montana. The completion of the land use plan amendments represents a significant step in implementing the President's National Energy Plan. The Powder River Basin straddles the Wyoming-Montana border



Time Sensitive Plans. Plans shaded in yellow have been completed.

### What are "Time Sensitive Plans?"

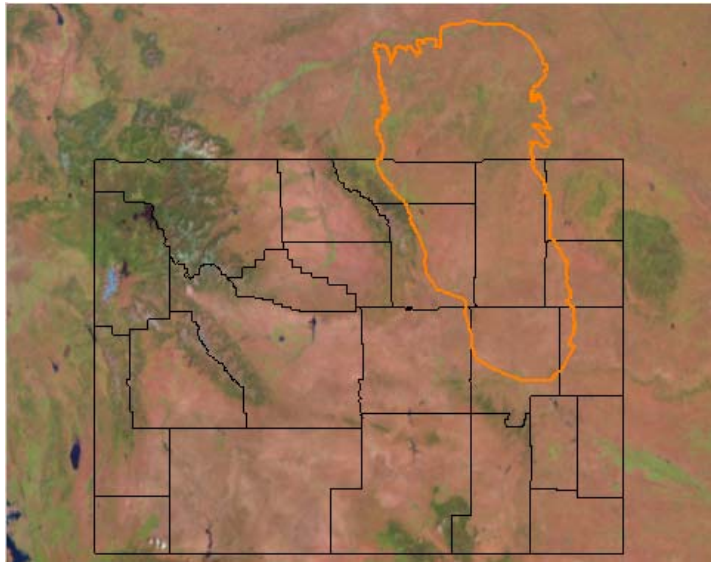
Starting in FY 2001, BLM began its largest and most concentrated effort in land use planning in more than 15 years, with National, regional, and local expectations. Over the next 10 years, BLM plans to update its entire planning base, consisting of more than 160 land use plans. Establishing clear priorities is key to managing increasing workload demands and vital to the overall success of the planning initiative. Accordingly, the BLM has identified 21 high priority land use plans as TSPs. These plans are the most critical of the more than 80 land use planning efforts on-going in FY 2003. The TSPs were selected because they are related to development of energy resources, respond to nationally significant lawsuits or have legislatively mandated time frames.

# BLM issues Records of Decision for Powder River Land Use Plan Amendments (cont.)

and is one of the country's most mineral-rich regions, supplying approximately one-third of the nation's coal and significant quantities of natural gas and oil. These 2 Records of Decision represent the culmination of a comprehensive planning process involving the public, Tribes, and numerous cooperators at the federal, state and local level to analyze options for developing natural gas and oil resources.

The plan amendments outline a series of mitigation measures that address a range of environmental concerns, including threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, air and water quality, reclamation, noxious weeds, water wells, split-estate lands, and soil. Further, the Bureau will implement monitoring processes.

Throughout the planning process, the BLM worked cooperatively with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Montana Board of Oil & Gas Conservation, and the Wyoming and Montana Departments of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The BLM and State DEQs are currently establishing a working group to



Landsat imagery of Wyoming and the Powder River Basin (outlined in orange; image by U. of Wyoming)

address issues associated with natural gas and oil development. With the RODs approved, BLM is able to consider drilling or development proposals in the geographic area studied. However, before any specific proposals are approved, BLM will conduct an additional round of environmental review to identify site-specific environmental impacts and appropriate mitigation measures. Throughout the Powder River Basin, the BLM will conduct monitoring as needed to ensure that mitigation measures are effective in reducing environmental impacts. Information gathered from monitoring will guide mid-course corrections in adapting to the inevitable changes that will occur because of the new information. Monitoring will be a primary focus for the working group.

The Powder River planning process addressed many practical methods to reduce environmental impacts, while still allowing for appropriate development. The preferred alternatives provide a balanced approach to managing public lands in an environmentally sensitive manner consistent with the BLM's multiple use mission.



Coalbed Methane Development, Powder River Basin, WY

# National Science and Technology Center Prepares Information Synthesis for the Colorado Plateau

Improving the health and productivity of public lands requires that BLM managers have access to current and scientifically sound information. A critical agency need is to develop a timely, cost-effective means of assessing resource conditions, trends, and cumulative impacts on a regional scale. This information is often available from a variety of sources and is critical for making land use planning decisions. Properly constructed and analyzed regional data can be used to discern areas of relative sensitivity, relative value, and multiple-use management opportunities - information that can become the basis for developing alternatives in the land use planning process. This article outlines a recent effort to develop a strategy for synthesizing regional resource information and integrating it into management decisions.

Acquiring the relevant regional resource information, evaluating its quality and utility, and integrating the appropriate findings into decision-making can be overwhelming for many reasons.



Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area; Grand Junction Field Office, Colorado

First, we generally know that information has been compiled, but often do not know the specifics of what, why, who, where, when, or how the data was collected. Second, in many cases similar and related information has been collected and processed by multiple entities with overlapping needs.

We do not know if these efforts have been redundant, resulted in inconsistent findings, or if the information is adequate to address BLM's needs. Finally, available information is often constructed or formatted in a manner that renders it inaccessible or limits its utility to BLM for the purposes needed.

In FY 2002, the National Science and Technology Center (NSTC) developed and tested a strategy to quickly synthesize, analyze, and interpret regional information related to high-priority public land management issues. The Colorado Plateau Managers Group (CPMG) agreed to participate in the project as a pilot area. The Colorado Plateau was chosen as the test site because of the high level of ongoing interagency cooperation on public land management issues and the relative abundance of existing scientific information on resource conditions and trends.

The goal of the test project was to determine the following: 1) how much information can be gathered in a relatively short period of time for an administratively complex geographic area; 2) which information is of most value to public land managers; and 3) what are the reasonable and necessary costs associated with regional information analysis activities. Based on the initial results of the test, managers can obtain, at a reasonable cost, regional resource (next page)



OHV use in the Price RMP planning area, UT



# National Science and Technology Center Prepares Information Synthesis for the Colorado Plateau (cont.)

information that can be used to document current resource conditions and trends, prepare alternatives, analyze environmental effects and make land use planning decisions.

To prepare the “test” strategy, staff at NSTC reviewed many approaches to synthesizing information for the purpose of improving the understanding about a region so that one or more resource management problems could be resolved.

For the Colorado Plateau, the NSTC synthesized information on:

- The characteristics of the Colorado Plateau’s vegetative resources;
- Significant agents or vectors of change on the Colorado Plateau and the impacts of change;
- Risks and opportunities related to resource management;
- Information needed to support best management practices; and,
- Gaps in science-based information important to resource management decision-makers.

NSTC focused on the CPMG’s interests to frame and test a biogeographic regional information synthesis and analysis strategy. NSTC’s findings and recommendations for similar endeavors are the subject of a final report. The outcomes of this report include pragmatic lessons learned as a result of the experiment, a summary of the Colorado Plateau resource characteristics and specific habitat fragmentation issues, and the results of two landscape fragmentation application tests designed to explore potential risks and opportunities for resources management on the Colorado Plateau. The report is available at [ftp://ftp.blm.gov/pub/nstc/Colorado\\_Plateau\\_report.pdf](ftp://ftp.blm.gov/pub/nstc/Colorado_Plateau_report.pdf)

Based on the Colorado Plateau case study and lessons learned, the NSTC recommends the following four-step strategy for synthesizing regional resource information:

**Step one:** Interested managers identify a regional issue of shared concern. With subject matter assistance, they:

- Clearly and concisely articulate the problem;
- Decide which questions, if answered, will contribute substantially to resolving a regional problem; and
- Agree on the regional resource assessment goal and objectives.

**Step two:** Subject-matter experts identify required data and the appropriate geospatial scale to characterize these data. They:

- Establish data requirements criterion: consider social, economic, and biological information;
- Delineate assessment boundaries based on the management issue, agency need, biogeographic and socio-economic attributes of the area;
- Determine temporal/ spatial domain and scale of analysis; and
- Identify and investigate potential data sources.

**Step three:** Collect and process relevant data. The project lead:

- Establishes processing standard operating procedures;
- Collates and, as appropriate using subject-matter experts, analyzes data; and
- Documents findings in a spatial context and in a written report.

**Step four:** The project lead is responsible for determining if the goals and objectives of the resource information synthesis were met. S/he:

- Obtains managers’ feedback;
- Monitors product use; and
- Reports findings.

For more information on the project, contact Charisse Sydoriak at the BLM National Science and Technology Center at 303-236-0582.

# Status Report for the TSPs – June 2003

## **(1) Alaska: National Petroleum Reserve Alaska (NPRA)**

The Northern Alaska Field Office is responding to comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and is preparing to issue the Proposed Integrated Activity Plan/EIS. A Record of Decision (ROD) is currently scheduled for November 2003.

**Plan Contact:** Mike Kleven, 907-474-2317

## **(2) Arizona: Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (NCA)**

The Tuscon Field Office has resolved all protests for the Las Cienegas NCA RMP/EIS and will issue the ROD within the next 60 days.

**Plan Contact:** Karen Simms, 520-258-7210

## **3,4,5) California: NECO, NEMO, and WEMO Amendments**

The California Desert District Field Office / Barstow Field Office published and distributed the proposed RMP/Final EIS for Northeast Colorado (NECO) and Northeast Mojave (NEMO) in August 2002; RODs were approved in December 2002. The Barstow Field Office published the Draft EIS for the Western Mojave (WEMO) Plan this month.

**Plan contacts:** Dick Crowe (NECO; California Desert), 909-697-5216; Edyth Seehafer (NEMO; Barstow), 760-252-6021; Bill Haigh (WEMO; Barstow), 760-252-6080

## **(6) California: Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Plan**

The El Centro Field Office released the proposed RMP/Final EIS in May 2003. A ROD is currently planned for September 2003.

**Plan contact:** Roxie Trost, 760-337-4420

## **(7) California: Santa Rosa / San Jacinto National Monument (NM)**

The Palm Springs Field Office released the Draft RMP/EIS in March 2003. A ROD is scheduled to be issued in October 2003.

**Plan contact:** Connell Dunning, 760-251-4817



Drill rig, Northwest National Petroleum Reserve, AK

## **(8) Colorado: Colorado Canyons NCA**

The Grand Junction Field Office is currently analyzing the effects of alternatives. A Draft RMP/EIS is currently scheduled to be issued in October 2003.

**Plan contact:** Jane Ross, 970-244-3000

## **(9) Colorado: Roan Plateau**

The Glenwood Springs Field Office expects to release a Draft RMP/EIS for publication in August 2003 and a ROD in May 2004.

**Plan contact:** Greg Goodenow, 970-947-2900

## **(10) Colorado: Gunnison Gorge**

The Uncompahgre Field Office released a Draft RMP/EIS in March 2003. The ROD is currently scheduled for October 2003.

**Plan contact:** Bill Bottomly, 970-240-5337

## **(11) Montana: Billings / Powder River**

The Miles City Field Office issued the ROD for the Proposed RMP/EIS in April 2003, following a 30-day protest period and the resolution of protests.

**Plan contact:** Mary Bloom, 406-233-3649

### **(12) New Mexico: Farmington RMP Revision**

The Farmington Field Office released the Proposed RMP/Final EIS in March 2003, initiating the 30-day protest period. The office is currently responding to protests filed and currently plans to issue the ROD within the next 60 days.

**Plan contact:** *Jim Ramakka, 505-599-6307*

### **(13) Nevada: Black Rock/High Rock NCA**

The Winnemucca Field Office is currently responding to comments received after publishing the Draft RMP/EIS in March 2003. The ROD is scheduled to be released in November 2003.

**Plan contact:** *Ester Hutchison, 775-623-1500*

### **(14) Oregon: Steens Cooperative Management and Protection Area (CMPA)**

The Andrews Field Office is currently reviewing preliminary draft material, with an expected Draft RMP/EIS publication date in August 2003.

**Plan contact:** *Gary Foulkes, 541-573-4541*

### **(15) Utah: Price RMP Revision**

The Price Field Office is currently working on the Draft RMP/EIS. Publication of the draft plan is expected in December 2003.

**Plan contact:** *Floyd Johnson, 435-636-3600*

### **(16) Utah: Vernal RMP Revision**

The Vernal Field Office is currently developing a Draft RMP/EIS for the Vernal RMP Revision. Publication of the Draft RMP/EIS is expected in September 2003.

**Plan contact:** *Dave W. Moore, 435-781-4467*



Visitors' Center, Santa Rosa San Jacinto National Monument, CA

### **(17) Wyoming: Buffalo/Powder River Amendment**

The Buffalo Field Office issued the ROD for the Proposed RMP/EIS in April 2003, following a 30-day protest period and the resolution of protests.

**Plan contact:** *Paul Beels, 307-684-1168*

### **(18) Wyoming: Jack Morrow Hills CAP/RMP Amendment**

The Draft Supplemental EIS (SEIS) for the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan (CAP)/RMP Amendment was published in February 2003. The Rock Springs Field Office is responding to comments received on the plan in preparation for the release of the Proposed plan in the upcoming months.

**Plan contact:** *Renee Dana, 307-352-0227*

### **(19) Wyoming: Snake River RMP**

The Snake River Draft RMP/EIS was published in February 2003. The Pinedale Field Office currently plans to publish the Proposed RMP/EIS in September 2003.

**Plan contact:** *Kellie Roadifer, 307-367-5309*

### **(20) Wyoming: Pinedale RMP Revision**

The Pinedale Field Office is currently selecting the preferred alternative in preparation for the release of the Draft RMP/EIS in October 2003.

**Plan contact:** *Kellie Roadifer, 307-367-5309*

### **(21) Wyoming: Great Divide/Rawlins RMP Revision**

The Pinedale Field Office is currently in the alternative formulation stage of this planning effort, in preparation for the release of the Draft RMP/EIS in October 2003.

**Plan contact:** *John Spehar, 307-328-4264*