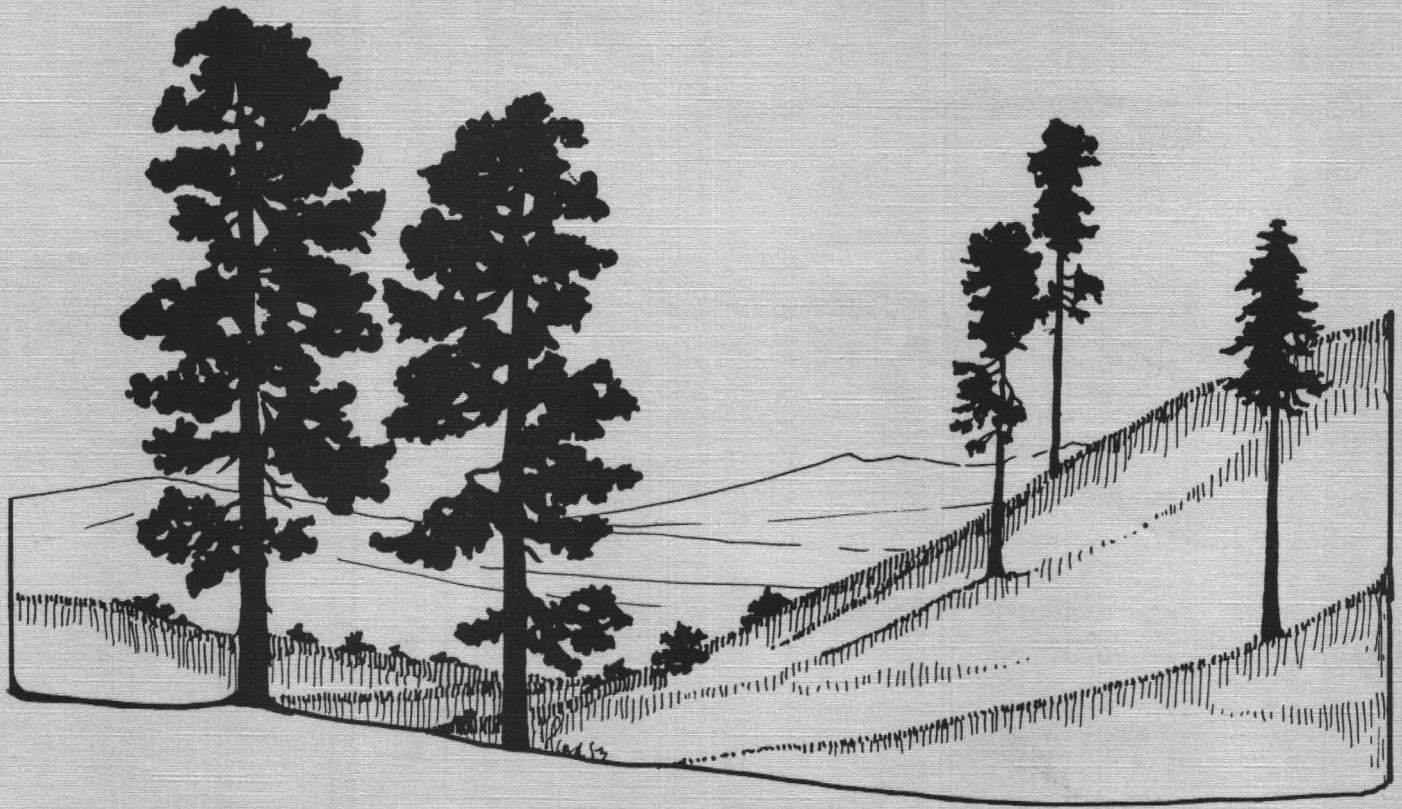


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WFOA

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SCHELL RESOURCE AREA Decision Summary and Record of Decision

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ELY DISTRICT OFFICE
ELY, NEVADA



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Ely District Office
Star Route 5, Box 1
Ely, Nevada 89301

IN REPLY
REFER TO:

1601
(N-047)

Release Date: July 1, 1983
Protest Period Ends: July 30, 1983

Dear Reader:

This document is a summary of the Schell Management Framework Plan (MFP III) Decisions. We hope that you will take this opportunity to look this document over. These Summary Decisions represent the culmination of the planning process for the Schell Resource Area. The actual Schell Management Framework Plan is maintained at the Ely District Office Bureau of Land Management in Ely, Nevada. The decisions reached as a result of the Schell Grazing Environmental Impact Statement were included in the Schell Management Framework Plan during April 1983. Another document, the Rangeland Program Summary, will present a more detailed assessment of the range program. It will be prepared after the public comment period on this document has been completed.

If you have participated in the planning process and wish to protest any decisions in the land use plan you must submit your protest in writing to the State Director, Bureau of Land Management, 300 Booth Street, P.O. Box 12000, Reno, Nevada 89520, within thirty (30) days from the release of this document. Your letter should contain a clear statement of the issue(s) and specific part or parts of the plan being protested. You should also clearly and concisely state why you feel that the decision(s) of the land use plan is wrong.

As the management of the public lands is a dynamic process with a great many specific on-the-ground decisions yet to be made, subsequent updates will be issued to keep you informed of our progress. Public participation plays a vital role in developing management plans. Consequently, we encourage your continued participation and feel confident that together we can put our planning efforts to work to best meet our public and resource needs.

Sincerely yours,

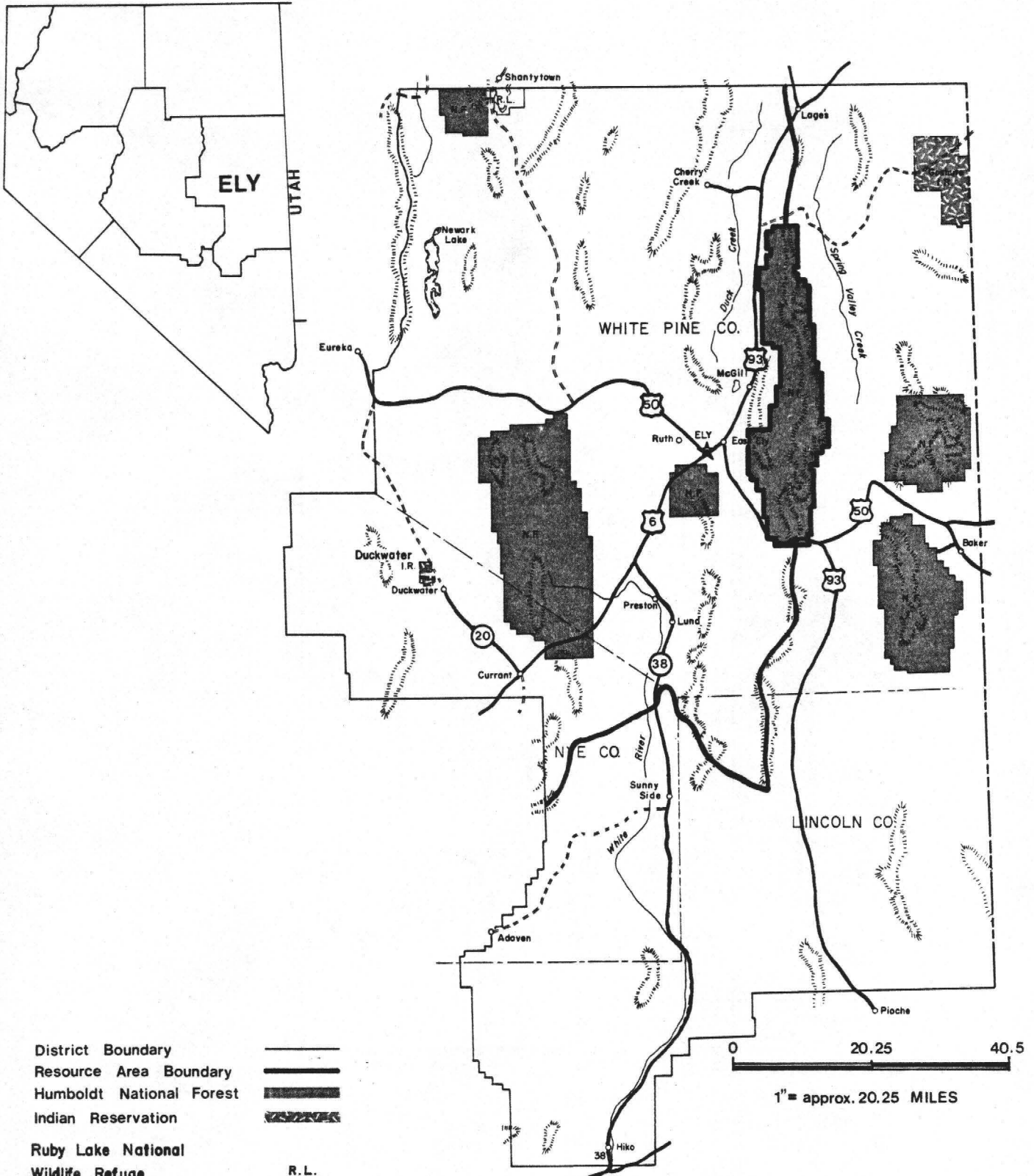
Merrill L. Despain
District Manager

INTRODUCTION

The Schell Management Framework Plan was completed in April 1983. It is a land-use plan designed to guide the management of 4,239,352 acres of public land located in the Schell Resource Area. The Schell Resource Area covers 5,026,591 acres of basin and range geography in eastern Nevada. Figures 1, 2, and 3 provide location maps and acreage statistics. The region is very sparsely populated. The population of White Pine County was estimated at 9,527 people by the White Pine Chamber of Commerce for 1982. There are no incorporated towns within the Resource Area. The majority of the people employed in the Resource Area work in ranching and mining.

One of the required elements of the Schell Management Framework Plan was the preparation of the Schell Grazing Environmental Impact Statement. The final Schell Grazing Environmental Impact Statement was completed in September 1982. Following the completion of the EIS, the grazing decisions were made and included as part of the Schell Management Framework Plan. As a result this summary of the Schell Management Framework Plan also includes the Record of Decision for the Schell Grazing Environmental Impact Statement.

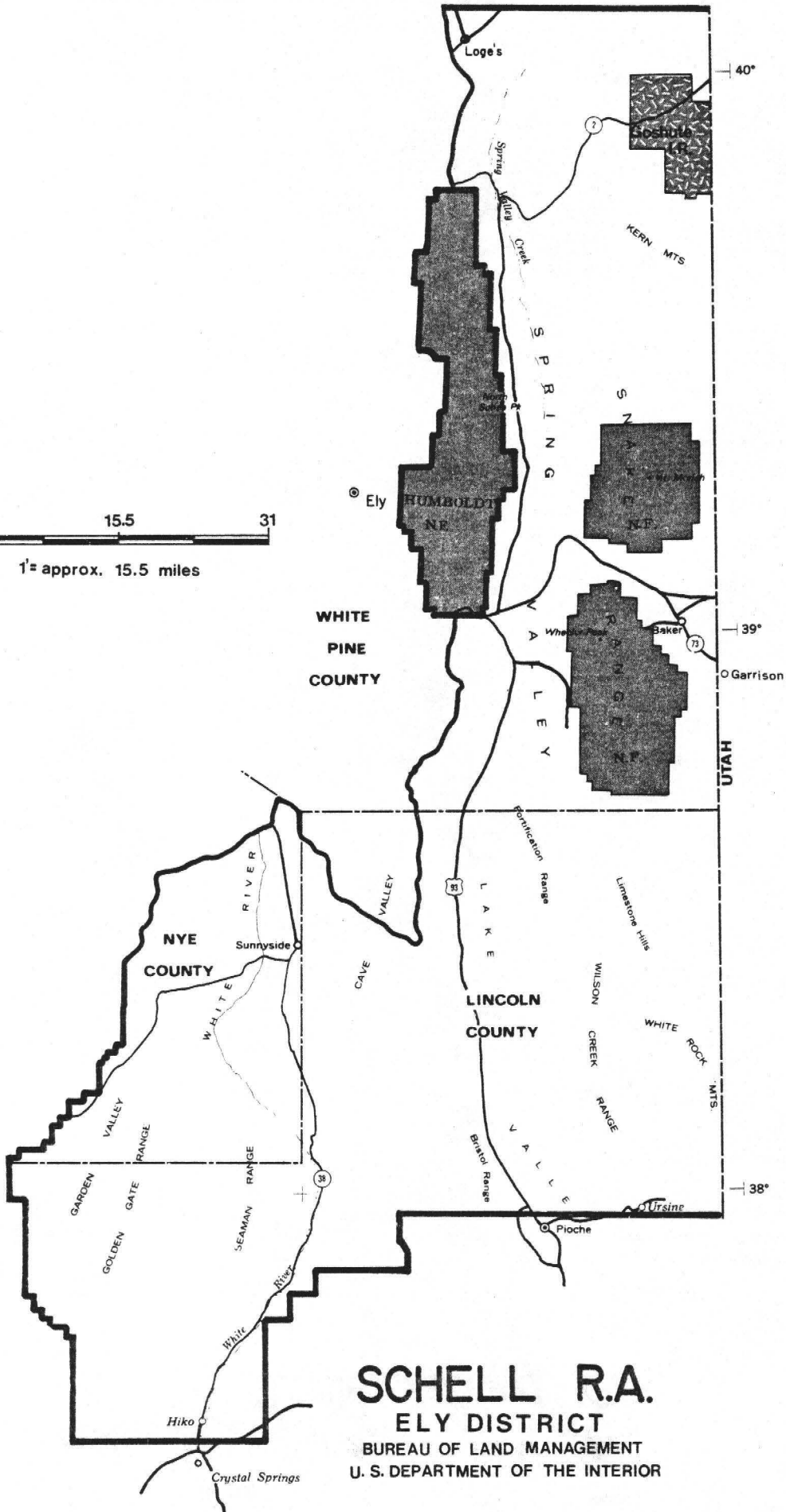
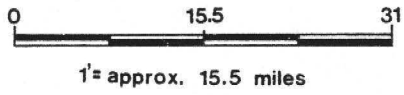
Final recommendations regarding the wilderness study areas will be made to the BLM Director by September 1983. A Draft Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared and released for public review during April 1983. Copies of this Environmental Impact Statement may be obtained by writing to the Ely District Office, Bureau of Land Management, Star Route 5, Box 1, Ely, Nevada 89301. Comments will be accepted through July 8, 1983.



- District Boundary
 - Resource Area Boundary
 - Humboldt National Forest
 - Indian Reservation
 - Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge
- R.L.

ELY DISTRICT

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



SCHELL R.A.
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 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

SCHELL RESOURCE AREA LAND ADMINISTRATION AS OF JUNE 12, 1981

Administration (in Acres)	White Pine County	Lincoln County	Nye County	Total
Bureau of Land Management	1,457,949	2,231,133	550,270	4,239,352
Private Land	71,841	33,991	8,814	114,646
State Land		1,982	9,149	11,131
BLM Withdrawals	166		5,542	5,708
Forest Service	575,000			575,000
Private Land within the Forest Service Boundary	9,781			9,781
Indian Reservation	66,296			66,296
Private Land within the Indian Reservations	4,037			4,037
National Park Service	640			640
FAA BLM Agreement (Included in top line)		(80)		(80)
Public Water Reserves (Included in top line)	(801)	(430)	(40)	(1,271)
Total	2,185,710	2,267,106	573,775	5,026,591

DECISION SUMMARY

LANDS

1. Transfer the administration of 80 acres in T. 21 N., R. 65 E. to the U.S. Forest Service. The 80 acres are surrounded by U.S. Forest Service land on three sides and by private land on the fourth. Because of this factor the land would be better managed by the U.S. Forest Service . (L-1.10)

2. Provide approximately 16,100 acres of public land for disposal under Federal Land Policy and Management Act criteria in the following areas:

Near Pioche	2600 ac
Near Baker	8200 ac
Near Sunnyside	40 ac
Near Hiko	40 ac
North Spring Valley	500 ac
Central Spring Valley	1200 ac
Lake Valley	160 ac
Snake Valley	3200 ac
Mt. Wilson	160 ac

These are lands that are without any known conflicts.

In addition to these lands there are approximately 15,860 acres of Public Land that could potentially be made available for disposal once the known conflicts are resolved. These lands are:

Near Pioche	1800 ac
Near Baker	300 ac
Central Spring Valley	7200 ac
Snake Valley	6200 ac
Mt. Wilson	360 ac

Final determination on the suitability for disposal will be made through the Land Report/EA process.

3. Transfer up to 4,400 acres of public lands under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act to the Division of State Parks in T. 2 N., R. 69 E.; T. 2 N., R. 70 E.; and T. 3 N., R. 70 E. This land will be used to enlarge the Eagle Valley State Park.

4. There are approximately 150 Desert Land Entry Applications in the Schell Resource Area. Suitable land will be made available for this program to promote agriculture within the Resource Area. Before any of the lands can be transferred the State Water Engineer must certify that sufficient water is available. The

State Water Engineer will be notified that sufficient water should be saved to preserve the integrity of Shoshone Ponds and Hot Creek Spring. Riparian habitats will be considered as a best use of the land as it applies to these DLE Applications.

5. Establish transportation and utility corridors along the proposed/planning routes as shown on the corridor map. Use the proposed/planning corridors as a guideline. When an application is received, work it into the appropriate proposed/planning corridor and then evaluate the corridor for total suitability. Based upon the evaluation, designate the most acceptable area as the corridor.

MINERALS

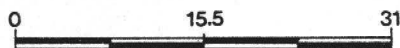
1. Keep the Resource Area open to exploration, leasing and development of the mineral resources except as provided by legislative action or policy. There is an increasing demand for minerals by our nation and it is important to keep as much of the public land open to exploration and development as possible. Areas will only be withdrawn from mineral entry/leasing where there is a need to protect other resources, such as the protection of threatened and endangered species. (M-1.1, M-1.2, M-3.1, and M-3.2)

2. Investigate non-producing and possibly abandoned mining claims for possible hazardous conditions. Appropriate action will be determined once areas have been identified as dangerous. The State Inspector of Mines has the responsibility of actually closing mines that are considered a hazard, if they are brought to the State's attention. (M-2.1)

3. Continue to provide sand, topsoil, and gravel to the using public. In order to prevent the duplication of pit sites, pits should be located at a minimum of ten miles apart. If possible, pits should be available to all users. Examine status of existing material sites to ensure compliance with stipulations and to determine which sites may be relinquished. (M-4.1, M-4.2, and M-4.3)

FORESTRY

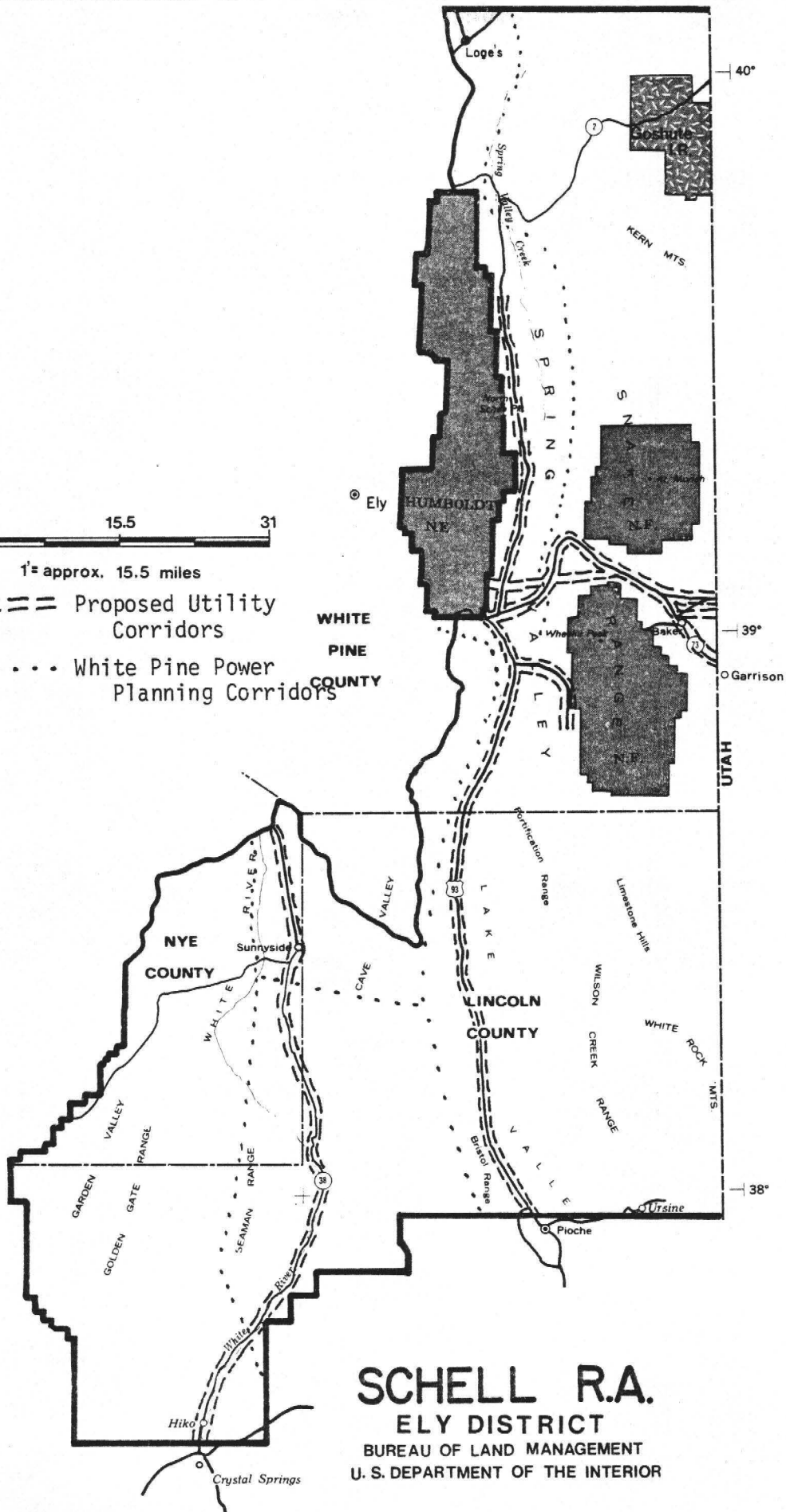
1. The demand for forest products is increasing, especially for Christmas trees and firewood. A minimum of 50,000 acres within the Schell Resource Area will be managed for these products. The annual objective will be to sell 2,000 cords of firewood, 3,000 posts, and 5,000 Christmas trees. Christmas tree and firewood cutting will not be permitted in areas proposed for wilderness designation until Congress makes its final wilderness decisions.



1" = approx. 15.5 miles

=== Proposed Utility Corridors

..... White Pine Power Planning Corridors



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2. Designate cutting areas for firewood in the Kern Mountains, South Schell Creeks, Rosencrans, and Pony Springs-Squaw Peak. Designate Christmas tree management areas in the Kern Mountains, North Schell Range, East Bench, Sacramento Pass, and Mount Wilson. Designate as cedar post cutting areas sections of North Spring Valley, Pony Springs-Squaw Peak, and the Kern Mountains. The predication of areas suitable for pine nut collecting is uncertain at best. Indicator trees will be monitored and pine nut collecting areas will be designated based on the monitoring program. (FM-1.2, FM-1.3, FM-1.4, and FM-1.5)

3. Precede any vegetation conversion in pinyon-juniper areas with commercial firewood and post sales. (FM-3.1)

4. Local custom and cutting practices have favored the removal of pinyon over juniper. The commercial sale of firewood will require that the amount of juniper removed will be equal to or greater than the proportion of juniper in the sale area. The utilization of juniper should be encouraged as the heat output of juniper equals that of pinyon. If the juniper is not removed previously mixed stands will become pure juniper stands. Further, all tree removal areas will be regulated to insure that sufficient seed trees are left to insure regeneration. (FM-4.1, and FM-1.8)

5. Establish a fire management program utilizing prescribed, and controlled burns to open stands and stimulate the reproduction of trees. Under the present fire management policy fires are vigorously suppressed. Fire is a necessary part of the reproductive process for some trees such as aspen. Further, many sites now occupied by brush were previously tree sites; a fire management program could be used to remove the brush and to encourage tree growth. (FM-5.1, and FM-5.3).

6. Only allow the cutting of white fir, bristlecone pine, limber pine, and aspen when it is necessary as a protective measure or to encourage regeneration. These trees are limited in distribution within the Schell Resource Area and are important for their aesthetic, wildlife and scenic values. (FM-6.2)

7. In certain aspen stands grazing may be prohibited if it is necessary to protect the stand. Associated benefits should include riparian and/or watershed values. This will be handled on a case-by-case basis. (FM-6.6)

WILDLIFE

1. Work with the Nevada Department of Wildlife to establish resident herds of Bighorn sheep into the Pahrangat, South Egan,

Pahroc, Golden Gate, Worthington, Hiko, Timber Mountain, and Deep Creek Ranges. These sheep have been classified as sensitive due to the loss of habitat and subsequent decline in population. The reintroduction of Bighorn sheep will be dependent on forage being in excess of existing demand. Further, it is recommended that Bighorn sheep not be reintroduced into areas where domestic sheep now graze. Habitat management plans should be prepared before any reintroduction is actually authorized. Any allotment management plans prepared for these areas will consider Bighorn sheep potential. (WL-1.1)

2. Cooperate with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the event of their release of Peregrine Falcons in Smith Creek Canyon, Hendry's Creek and Williams Canyon. The responsibility for releasing these birds rests with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The Peregrine Falcon once bred throughout the North America continent, including Nevada. Because of human disturbances the population of this bird has declined to the point that it is now considered to be an endangered species. (WL-1.2)

3. Devise a livestock grazing system that will remove livestock from the Spring Valley waterfowl portion of the Taft Creek Allotment between January 1 to June 30 to encourage sandhill cranes to breed. The sandhill crane probably nested in Spring Valley at one time. The establishment of additional breeding grounds will help to insure the survival of this bird. (WL-1.3)

4. Cooperate with the Nevada Department of Wildlife to prepare Habitat Management Plans for nine streams within the Schell Resource Area. We recommend that a maximum of two streams should be converted for Utah cutthroat trout introductions per year. These streams should remain open for fishing. (WL-1.4)

5. When monitoring data indicates that enough forage is available pronghorn and elk can be reintroduced. Pronghorn can be introduced to Dry Lake, White River, Garden, Coal, and Cave Valleys. Elk can be introduced to Mt. Grafton and Mt. Wilson. Habitat management plans should be prepared before any introductions are undertaken. The responsibility for releasing these animals rests with the Nevada Department of Wildlife. Any land treatment proposed for these areas will consider the potential for pronghorn and elk. (WL-1.5, WL-1.6)

6. A series of recommendations were made for increasing forage production to meet wildlife demand. The majority of the decisions effecting this issue have been placed in the Range Management section. The goal of the wildlife program, with respect to forage, will be to promote plant diversity, vegetation conversion projects will be designed with irregular boundaries, to make improvements in grazing management that take into account wildlife needs, promote riparian vegetation, and to provide water. (WL-2.0, WL-3.0, WL-4.0, WL-5.0, WL-7.0)

7. Exchange 480 acres of private land for public land. This exchange is vital for the implementation of the Spring Valley Habitat Management Plan and the preservation of wetland. The current owner of the land is supportive of this exchange. (WL-5.2)

8. Protect the crucial habitat of twelve significant species of wildlife. These species are: mule deer, pronghorn antelope, sage grouse, blue grouse, golden eagle, prairie falcon, red-tail hawk, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, ferruginous hawk, Cooper hawk, and goshawk. Crucial habitat is the habitat absolutely needed to sustain the existence of the wildlife during critical periods of its life cycle. Degradation or loss of this habitat would cause a significant drop in wildlife populations.

9. Restrict off-road vehicle use to protect certain wildlife habitat. Between January 1 and March 15 restrict off-road vehicle use on 23,846 acres of mule deer winter range, in the Fairview, Dutch John, and West Range Mountains. Between April 1 and July 31 restrict off-road vehicle use in the Spring Valley Wetland after the Habitat Management Plan is implemented. Restrictions apply to activities which the Bureau has discretionary authority and not to casual uses. (WL-7.1, WL-7.3)

10. Accomplish management objectives on riparian areas. If monitoring shows that the objectives are not being obtained through application of management practices then fencing will be considered.

11. The initial stocking level for wildlife will be the actual number of animals that could be expected to use the public lands in the Schell Resource Area (during their respective season-of-use) at the time of approval of this MFP.

WILD HORSES

1. Develop wild horse management plans for the six Herd Management Areas within the Schell Resource Area in the following priority order: Antelope Herd, Wilson Creek Herd, Dry Lake Herd, Seaman Herd, White River herd and the Moriah herd. (WH-2.1)

2. Increase the availability of water and forage for wild horses. The Range Management section of this document will discuss the forage decisions. Wherever possible, year long water will be made available at all water sources within Herd Use Areas. Further, reservoirs that are fenced will be improved so wild horses may obtain water. (WH-2.2, WH-2.3, WH2.4 and WH-2.11)

3. The initial stocking level for wild horses will be the number present in each herd area as determined by the 1983 inventory.

WATERSHED

1. Reduce soil loss and sediment production in the Schell Resource Area. The highest priority for improvements will be given where the soil surface factor is highest, where there is a downward trend, and where there is a potential for treatment as indicated from the Phase I watershed inventory. (WH-1.2, W-1.4)
2. Conduct a prescribed burn in the Muncy Creek and O'Neal watersheds (T. 20, 17, 18 N., R. 68, 69 E.) to reduce the overstory of pinyon-juniper. Reseed with grasses to stabilize the watersheds and to reduce the surface runoff that is causing the soil erosion in these areas. (W-1.5)
3. Limit surface disturbing activities in areas with severe erosion potential. Organized off-road vehicle events will not be permitted in areas with a soil surface factor (SSF) greater than 60. Otherwise all forms of casual and commercial off-road vehicle use will be allowed. (W-1.6, W-1.11)
4. Rehabilitate areas which have had vegetation cover destroyed by wildfire, flood or mechanical disturbance. For wildfires, treatment should be initiated within 90 days of the fire. For others, action should begin as soon as possible after the event. Utilize seeding and other appropriate watershed stabilization techniques as required. Rehabilitation area must be protected from grazing until adequate seedling establishment has been attained. (W-1.8)
5. Establish a system of recording paleontological artifacts. While paleontological artifacts are not protected, collection of these artifacts should not be encouraged. (W-6.1 and W-6.2)

CULTURAL RESOURCES

1. Develop protective resources for specific culturally significant sites. Protection and stabilization are two key components of the Bureau's cultural resources program. Develop a Cultural Resources Management Plan for the following locations: the Spring Valley Slough Archaeological District, and the Mt. Irish Archaeological District. The question of permitted surface land uses should be examined in these documents. A record of decision will then be made outlining allowable uses for these areas. (CR-1.1 and CR-1.2)
2. Historic sites with structures can be severely damaged by fire. They should, therefore, be included in the fire protection program.

Historic resources which will require full protection under the Fire Management Action Modification Plan are listed below:

1. Kern Mountain Mining Camp
2. Bristol Well and Townsite
3. Pony Express Stations (located on private lands)
 - A. Eight Mile Station
 - B. Antelope Spring Station
 - C. Spring Valley Stations
4. Crescent Mill
5. Rice Family Cemetery

Archaeological Resources which will require partial protection under the Fire Management Action Modification Plan are listed below:

1. Baker Pueblo Site
2. Baker Creek Site
3. Garrison Pueblo Site
4. Snake Creek Cave
5. Spring Valley Slough
6. Mt. Wilson Archaeological District
7. Mt. Irish Archaeological District
(CR-1.3, and CR-1.4)

3. Off-road vehicle usage at the following archaeological sites will be restricted: Baker Pueblo site, Garrison Pueblo site, and the Spring Valley Slough. No organized recreational off-road vehicle usage will be allowed, normal casual use will be permitted. (CR-1.5)

4. Establish a one-half mile buffer zone on each side of the Pony Express Trail. No surface disturbing activities will be permitted within this zone. Exploratory drilling for oil, gas, minerals, and geothermal resources will be the only exception allowed. Rehabilitation will be required upon completion of the exploratory activities. (CR-1.6)

RANGE

1. Maintain existing AMPs as they are now approved until further information obtained from monitoring indicates that changes are necessary. (RM-1.10)

2. Land treatments (burning, spraying, and chaining with subsequent seeding of more productive species) will be implemented in the following order of priority:

1. In areas where there is competition for forage between livestock, wildlife and wild horses.
2. In areas of vegetation in poor condition with downward trend.
3. To maintain livestock, wildlife, and wild horses at existing use levels.
4. In areas with an SSF rating of 60 or greater
5. In areas where more forage is needed by wildlife to reach reasonable numbers.
6. To increase livestock and wild horses above existing levels.

All seedings will be designed for multiple use, except where a multiple use seed mixture or design would not meet requirements for watershed protection or enhancement purposes. EAs will be done to analyze site specific impacts and develop mitigations. This will be consistent with the Grazing EIS. (RM-1.2)

3. Maintain seedings to protect initial investments. On nonproductive seedings where reseeding is desirable, determine the cause of failure and either reseed, relocate, or abandon the seeding. Environmental review will be completed to determine impacts and mitigations for such maintenance. (RM-1.3)

4. Season of use adjustments will be used to improve management of category I allotments where an AMP and/or land treatments are not feasible. (RM-1.4)

5. Encourage permittee cooperation to convert more cattle to sheep use and promote dual use for more efficient use of the forage resource. Do not convert from cattle to sheep use on ranges where bighorn sheep exist or will be reintroduced within 5 years. (RM-1.5)

6. Establish an initial stocking rate for livestock and base future adjustments of the initial levels on adequate monitoring data. Stocking rates will be determined by obtaining written agreements to establish the initial stocking rate with a goal of active use being consistent with the 3 year average shown in the EIS. The difference between total active preference and the agreed upon initial stocking rate will be shown as either regular non-use or will be within the limits of flexibility documented in an existing approved AMP. If an agreement cannot be reached then a decision will be issued identifying the data needed and the procedure to be used for arriving at the adjustments in authorized grazing.

When adequate monitoring data becomes available adjustments to the livestock grazing capacity will be made that are compatible with the multiple use objectives.

7. Write a fire prescription, EA, and burn plan for seeding areas where fire could be used to prepare the site. Establish a priority ranked schedule for prescribed burning, but allow natural fires to burn on proposed sites as long as the conditions of the burn plans are met. (RM-6.1 and RM-6.2)

RECREATION

1. Place simple, yet efficient, mechanisms on BLM gates for opening and closing the gates. Many gates are unduly difficult to open and close. Difficulty of use discourages proper use and as a result many gates have been left open. Cattle guards should be installed where feasible. (R-1.1)

2. Maintain public ownership of the following class "A" recreation opportunities. Where land sales and transfers impact public access to these class "A" recreation opportunities, include a provision guaranteeing public access.

1. Whipple Cave (Spelunking)
2. Leviathan Cave (Spelunking, Geologic Sightseeing)
(R-1.2)

3. Currently, the upper and lower accesses into the Blue Mass Scenic Area cross private land. To resolve this problem the Bureau should acquire public road access to the Blue Mass Scenic Area through an easement agreement with the landowners. (R-1.3)

4. Develop an interpretive program for the Schell Resource Area that will identify major natural, and cultural themes. Interpretive programs should be intensified to promote the understanding of natural, scientific, and historic values. (R-2.2)

5. Designate 1,920 acres in the Sacramento Pass area (T. 15 N., R. 68 E, and T., 15 N., R. 67 E.) as an outstanding natural area for geologic values. This area contains Bat Cave, Guano Mine, Osceola Arch, Osaceola Tunnel, and Sacramento Cave. Only ten acres around and including the specific sites mentioned will be withdrawn from mineral entry. (R-4.2)

6. Establish a comprehensive visitor orientation program to familiarize interested people with the recreational opportunities. Use the visitor orientation program to encourage minimum impact behavior as part of this program. Develop a recreational map of the Ely District to draw the location of recreational opportunities. (R-5.0, R-5.5)

7. Provide dumpsters during hunting season at key access points, but away from camping areas. Place these along access routes in Cave Valley, Garden Valley, South Spring Valley, Antelope Range, Kern Mountains, White Rock, Wilson Creek Range, South Egan and South Schell Creeks. Place "pack it in - pack it out" signs on fences and gates leading into key hunter-use areas. Use the fire crew to clean-up dispersed hunter camps during the summer. (R-6.1, R-7.1)

8. Stabilize Piermont Creek to provide for a fishing opportunity. Stabilization will be accomplished through using riprap and check dams to create pools and by establishing stream side vegetation. (R-7.3)

9. Manage the backcountry recreation opportunities in the Schell Resource Area to maintain their primitive values with minimum evidence of regulation. Employ techniques of indirect visitor management rather than obvious direct controls. (R-8.0)

10. Every five years examine the following fishing, creeks for contamination: Snake Creek, Silver Creek, Baker Creek, Cleve Creek, Kalamazoo Creek, and Geyser Creek.

11. Leave the Resource Area open to off-road vehicle use except as constrained by other activity decisions in the MFP.

VISUAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

1. Manage the designated scenic areas as Class I areas: Mount Grafton, Blue Mass, and North Creek. These areas were designated as Class I areas in 1970. WSA's designated as wilderness will be managed as Class I areas. (Vm-1.1)

2. Manage the following areas as Class II Visual Resource areas: Schell Creek Range, Fortification Range, Wilson Creek, White Rock, Table Mountain, Eagle Valley, Dry Valley, West Egans, Seamans, and White River Narrows. Although not quite of the same quality as the designated scenic areas, these areas still represent outstanding visual values. (VM-1.2)

3. Manage the following areas as Class III Visual Resource Areas: North Becky Peak, East Antelopes, Schellbourne Pass, Kern Mountains, North Snake Range, East Schell Bajada, Swamp Cedar, Sacramento Pass, Schell Foothills, Fortification Bench, Rosencrans Creek, Spring Valley Wash, Fairview, Dutch John, Bristol Range, East Egans, Seaman Range, Golden Gates, Worthingtons, and Kious Spring Scenic Area. These areas represent above average visual values. These areas contain a great deal of variety and contribute strongly to the rural character and charm found throughout much of the resource area. (VM-1.3)

4. Manage the following areas as Class IV visual resource areas: Becky Springs, Spring Valley, Snake Valley, Antelope Valley, Hamblin Valley, Lake Valley, Camp Valley, Burnt Canyon, White River Valley, and Weaver Creek Scenic Area. These areas represent visual values that are quite common within the resource area. (VM-1.4)

5. Rescind the present designation of the Weaver Creek Scenic Area. It was originally designated as a scenic area because Utah cutthroat trout inhabited Weaver Creek. Since then the stream has dried up and transmission lines have been built along the length of the scenic area.

WILDERNESS

1. The following areas are being recommended for wilderness designation: Far South Egans, White Rock Range, Parsnip Peak, Worthington Mountains, and Weepah Springs. It should be realized that a final decision regarding wilderness designation will probably not be made until after 1987 and will be made by Congress. A draft wilderness environmental impact statement has been prepared to evaluate the environmental impact of these wilderness recommendations. A copy of this document may be obtained by writing to the address shown in the introduction. Public comments on the environmental impact statement will be accepted through July 8, 1983. (WD-1.0)

FIRE MANAGEMENT

1. Develop a fire management plan for the Schell Resource Area. The present fire program is based on the policy that all wild-fires will be suppressed; specific burn plans must be written and approved. This will permit greater flexibility in how wildfires will be managed within the Resource Area. (FR-1.0)

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

1. Nominate the calcareous outcrop area near the Adam's-McGill Reservoir as an area of Critical Environmental Concern to protect the rare plant Frasera gypsicola. This federally listed sensitive plant is dependent on a stable environment for its survival. (ACEC-1.4)

2. Should the area surrounding Leviathan Cave not be designated by Congress as a Wilderness Area, nominate the cave as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. This designation would provide protection for the unique geologic formations found in the cave. (ACEC-1.5)

SCHELL GRAZING EIS
RECORD OF DECISION

On October 1, 1982, a notice appeared in the Federal Register announcing that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had filed a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for livestock grazing within the Ely District, Schell Resource Area. The BLM has decided to adopt a modification of the Preferred Alternative (Proposed Action) in the Final EIS. It is intended to guide the range management program within the framework of the Management Framework Plan as summarized earlier in this document.

Alternative Including the Proposed Action as Analyzed in the Schell Grazing EIS

1. Proposed Action

Initially, license livestock use at the past 3-year (1977-1979) average licensed use level, or 136,669 AUMs. Increases in this level of licensed use would only be made when monitoring shows additional forage is available. This would lower active preference levels for all but 2 allotments in the Schell RA from 7 to 94 percent--a 48 percent reduction for the area as a whole. The difference between licensed and preference use would be placed in suspended nonuse.

Initially, leave wild horse use at present levels (5,581 AUMs). Adjustments would be made following monitoring to achieve sustained yield utilization. Numbers of wild horses and livestock would be adjusted on a case by case basis on each allotment.

Manage habitat to provide for existing levels of big game (mule deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, and bighorn sheep).

Develop 4,000 acres of multiple use seedings to increase available forage for livestock and big game. The additional AUMs would be divided into 70 percent for livestock and 30 percent for big game.

Develop 2 guzzlers and 750 acres of fenced seeding for wildlife.

Develop 10 springs, 10 mile of pipeline, and 2 mile of fence to aid in distribution of livestock.

Develop 71.9 mile of fence to improve distribution of livestock and therefore utilization of vegetation.

Fence 9.8 mile of riparian stream habitat, including 3.0 mile on Cherry Creek, 5.0 mile on Negro Creek, and 1.8 mile on Silver Creek. These areas have the poorest bank cover and stability in the Schell Resource Area. Fences would be constructed 100 feet on either side of the streams and have openings for wildlife, wild horse, and livestock at least every .5 mile.

Place 15 mile of fence to protect 9,700 acres of wetlands in Spring Valley. The area would continue to be grazed, but at a sustained yield level.

Continue to manage 5 allotments under Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) and develop AMPs on an additional 12 allotments and a grazing system on one allotment.

2. Resource Protection Alternative

License livestock initially at levels that would provide forage for reasonable numbers of big game by reducing present use by the total wildlife demand for each allotment. This would be a 16 percent decrease (22,156 AUMs) from the past 3-year (1977-1980) average licensed use, and a 56 percent decrease from active preference. Allotment reductions would range from 0 to 100 percent. Monitoring data would be available in 3 years on which to base additional proportionate adjustments of livestock and wild horses to provide for sustained yield utilization. Livestock would not be licensed above the initial level until additional forage is available above that required for reasonable numbers of wildlife and existing livestock use.

Reduce wild horse use by 1,219 AUMs to provide for reasonable numbers of big game. Further proportionate adjustments in wild horse utilization would be made if utilization monitoring data indicate the need.

Seed 3,400 acres to provide a grass, forb, and browse mixture to attain additional summer deer habitat.

Fence or otherwise improve 31.7 mile of stream riparian habitat that was in less than good condition in the 1976 survey. The total area to be improved would be about 750 acres. The habitat improvement technique to be used depends on the individual stream. Willows, cottonwoods or other riparian plants may be planted in those areas in which riparian vegetation is presently very sparse or missing. Other improvement techniques include instream pool development, meander development to reduce velocity and increase the riparian zones or a combination of these and perhaps other techniques. These improvements would provide part of the forage to meet the demand for reasonable numbers of big game.

Fence 11,700 acres of wetlands, including 9,700 acre in Spring Valley, 600 acres in southern Spring Valley, and 1,400 acres around Big Springs Creek to exclude livestock.

Reduce licensed livestock and wild horse use to provide forage for 300 pronghorn antelope, 400 bighorn, and 80 elk to be introduced. Domestic sheep would be replaced with cattle in all areas proposed for bighorn introductions. Livestock and wild horse use could be adjusted following the introductions if utilization is not at target levels.

Continue to manage 5 allotments as AMPs, develop AMPs on an additional 12 allotments, and develop a grazing system on one allotment, as in the Proposed Action.

Institute a 2-month period of rest during the spring on each allotment that does not have an AMP or grazing system proposed for it. This would not affect AUMs.

3. Grazed at Preference Alternative

License livestock grazing at active preference, or above if present use is higher than preference. Two allotments, Geyser Ranch and Grassy Mountain, are presently grazed at 4,512 AUMs above preference. Therefore, initial licensing of livestock would be 266,736 AUMs. Monitoring would be conducted and adjustments made to achieve sustained yield utilization within 3 years.

Remove all wild horses from the Schell RA to provide forage for livestock.

Maintain big game at present levels.

Develop AMPs on 22 allotments with the objective to increase AUMs for livestock, and implement grazing systems on an additional 20 allotments. Continue to manage 5 allotments under AMPs and manage the remaining allotments as custodial.

Seed and fence 2,000 acres for livestock and 475 acres for multiple use (livestock and wildlife) in the Wilson Creek Allotment.

Construct 84 miles of fence, 15 miles of pipeline, 15 spring developments, 6 wells, and 2 reservoirs to improve utilization and distribution of livestock.

4. No Livestock Grazing Alternative

All forage on public lands would be available for wildlife and wild horses under this alternative. Springs or wells on public land would be maintained by BLM for wildlife, wild horses, or recreational uses as needed. Springs or streams that receive heavy use from wild horses would be fenced to protect associated riparian and wetland habitats. One guzzler would be built in either the Chin Creek or Tippet allotment for pronghorn antelope and other wildlife. About 65 mile of fence would be removed to enhance the wild and free-roaming behavior of wild horses and to provide access to forage previously used by livestock. This includes 11.5 miles from the Antelope Herd Unit, 39 miles from the Wilson Creek Herd Unit, and 14.2 miles from the Dry Lake Herd Unit. New management facilities would be built as needed to manage and enhance wild horse and wildlife use. Existing facilities would not be maintained unless they were necessary for resource uses other than livestock. Monitoring would be conducted to assure that wildlife, wild horses, or other users of public land would not create problems such as severe overgrazing and erosion. Potential problem areas would be monitored as key areas.

5. No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no major grazing developments would be initiated. Existing use and season of use of livestock would remain as they are at present. Present trends in vegetation would continue. The analysis of this alternative is based on the assumption that neither BLM nor ranchers in the Schell RA would alter present livestock grazing practices. Existing management facilities would be maintained (such as fences, seedings, and water developments), and BLM would determine trespass and conduct as usual their other activities related to grazing. Five allotments would continue to be managed under existing AMPs. Year-long use would continue on many allotments. Allotments with no present use due to transfer or change over during the past 3 years, would be estimated to have livestock use at 50 percent of preference.

Wildlife and wild horse use would remain as at present. Wildlife and wild horse populations that are presently increasing or decreasing would continue that trend. Removal of wild horses would continue in order to maintain present levels.

The Plan and Implementation

The Plan consists of accepting the Proposed Action as modified below:

1. Establish an initial stocking rate for all large herbivores and base future adjustments of the initial levels on adequate monitoring data or through agreement.

Wild Horses -

The number present in each herd area as determined by the 1983 inventory.

Wildlife -

The actual number of animals that could reasonably be expected to use the public lands in the Schell Resource Area (during their respective season-of-use) at the time of approval of this MFP.

Livestock -

Obtain written agreements to establish the initial stocking rate with a goal of active use being consistent with the 3 year average shown in the EIS. The difference between total active preference and the agreed upon initial stocking rate will be shown as either regular non-use or will be within the limits of flexibility documented in an existing approved AMP. If an agreement cannot be reached then a decision will be issued identifying the data needed and the procedures to be used for arriving at the adjustments in authorized grazing use.

When adequate monitoring data becomes available adjustments to the grazing capacity will be made that are compatible with the multiple use objectives.

2. Projects will be implemented on the Priority "I" Category Allotments as defined through the Selective Management Process. The actual projects will be identified through consultation with the effected interest groups. Projects will be consistent with those analyzed in the EIS.

3. Accomplishment of management objectives on riparian areas will first be through application of management practices. If monitoring shows that the objectives are not being attained then fencing will be considered.

The implementation of the Plan will be as follows:

1. Implementation of the range management program will take place through monitoring and consultation and coordination with all interests concerned with the management of resources in a given local area; landowners, land management agencies, wild-life groups, wild horse groups, conservation organizations, etc. Grazing adjustments, if required, will be based upon reliable vegetation monitoring studies, consultation and coordination, baseline inventory, or a combination of these.

Prior to initiating grazing adjustments, the Bureau, within the guidance of the Management Framework Plan and consultation and coordination, will consider the specific management objectives for an allotment and other resource values (e.g., riparian habitat, water quality, wildlife, recreation, wild horses and livestock) to be evaluated in determining progress in meeting these objectives. Changes in the resource values may warrant a modification of the scheduled adjustments and thus indicate the intensity and types of monitoring that will be required in each allotment.

2. Range improvements will be specifically identified and developed through the consultation and coordination process during development of activity plans.

3. Wild horse numbers to be managed for will be determined through consultation and coordination during preparation of the activity plans.

4. All practical means to avoid or minimize environmental damage have been adopted where applicable, and the standard operating procedures listed in the EIS will be followed. All proposals will be implemented in compliance with applicable laws, executive orders, regulations and agreements.

Rationale for the Decision

The Plan strives to initially maintain existing livestock, wildlife and wild horse use while improving range conditions through management. In addition, through consultation and coordination, all resource values will be considered in range management programs and subsequent decisions.


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