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PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that will guide the planning effort for the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan (JMHCAP) and that will guide the scope of the various management prescriptions and alternatives that are considered and analyzed. The planning criteria serve the following purposes:

1. To ensure that the planning effort is focused on the issues, follows and incorporates legal requirements, addresses management of all public land resources and land uses in the planning area, and that plan preparation is accomplished efficiently;
2. To identify the scope and parameters of the planning effort for the decision maker, the interdisciplinary planning team, and the public; and

The JMHCAP will focus on the potential environmental consequences of reasonably foreseeable development and other land use activities in the planning review area, such as staking mining claims and mineral exploration and development, construction of rights-of-way, and the transfer or patenting of public lands through mineral patent, recreation uses and livestock grazing. Other criteria in relation to reasonably foreseeable development include vehicular use and transportation, and construction of range and watershed improvement projects and recreation site developments.

Criteria for Hydrocarbon Leasing and Development. As an aid in developing alternatives for the EIS, special criteria were developed relative to the leasing and development of carbon-based minerals (oil, gas, and coalbed methane). By inference from available geologic information, reports of past production, and information from the minerals industry, parts of the planning area were determined to have a high potential for the occurrence of oil and gas, and to have high and moderate potential for the occurrence of coal and related coalbed methane.

This information, along with analysis of past mineral leasing and development activity and production, was then utilized to project Reasonably Foreseeable Development scenarios for carbon-based mineral development. These scenarios are used as assumptions to aid in analysis of impacts. Because they are so broad, these resource occurrence and development potential classifications, projected for planning purposes, are not appropriate for or intended to predict future activity or the exact locations of new discoveries.

Criteria for Locatable Minerals. Areas of potential for occurrence of locatable minerals were developed from the Green River RMP to help analyze effects of other land and resource uses and management actions on locatable mineral development and vice versa. These areas of potential were refined for the JMHCAP. This evaluation is based on a

representative analysis by inference and does not imply that there may or may not be undiscovered locatable minerals, of economic value in the planning area.

Areas identified as having potential for the occurrence of locatable minerals, include areas with current or past mining activity, areas where mining claims are located, areas where mineral occurrence has been proven from some type of activity (such as stratigraphic test holes), and areas where geologic formations are known to include locatable mineral occurrences (like zeolite, gold, jade, etc.).

Criteria for Use of Wyoming BLM Mitigation Guidelines. A consistent aspect of the activity planning process will be considering the application of mitigation or protective measures for surface disturbing or disruptive activities. These would be based on using the Wyoming BLM Mitigation Guidelines for Surface Disturbing and Disruptive Activities. Mitigation or protective measures would be applied as conditions of land and resource use:

- (a) to minimize soil movement;
- (b) to minimize disturbance of vegetation in sensitive areas such as riparian areas;
- (c) to protect important cultural and paleontological resources, recreational values, wildlife and wildlife habitat resources and threatened or endangered plant and animal species); and
- (d) to protect visual quality.

Criteria for Healthy Rangelands. Another consistent aspect of the activity planning process will be considering the application of measures to achieve the four fundamentals of rangeland health. These would be based on using the Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands. Appropriate management prescriptions and protection measures would be applied. The fundamentals are:

- (1) watersheds are functioning properly;
- (2) water, nutrients, and energy are cycling properly;
- (3) water quality meets State standards; and
- (4) habitat for special status species is protected.

Criteria for Livestock Grazing Management. Another consistent aspect of the activity planning process will be considering the application of measures to meet the Wyoming Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management, and the Implementation plan for the Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. Appropriate management prescriptions and protection measures would be applied. However, such prescriptions may not be allotment specific. Site specific measures would be applied on an allotment basis after a site specific standards and guidelines review, and in developing allotment management plans.

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Some issues that directly or indirectly apply to the planning area were raised and addressed in the Green River RMP planning effort. These same issues will not again be raised and addressed in the EIS for the JMHCAP. These include:

Criteria for the Coal Screening/Planning Process. The coal screening/planning process for management of the federal coal resources in the planning area was conducted in the Green River RMP planning process. A complete application of the coal screening process, including application of the Coal Unsuitability Criteria (43 CFR 3461), (documented in Appendix 3-2 of the RMP) was completed in the course of the Green River RMP planning effort. The coal screening/planning process will not be revisited in the JMHCAP planning effort. However, potential coalbed methane development in the area will be considered.

Criteria for Wilderness Study Areas. Interim management of Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) will not be addressed in the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan. Management of WSAs within the planning area is addressed in the Rock Springs District Final Wilderness EIS (August 1990). Within the planning area, there are approximately 117,100 acres of BLM-administered public land in WSAs, of which approximately 70,000 acres have been recommended for designation as wilderness and are pending Congressional decision (see Map 4). When Congress makes decisions regarding the WSAs in the planning area, they will be incorporated into the Green River RMP. Until Congress acts, these WSAs will be managed under the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review (USDI 1987). No other potential wilderness areas in the planning area have been identified for wilderness review.

Should Congress designate any of the WSAs (partially or wholly) as wilderness, the management of the designated areas will be in conformance with the Wilderness Act of 1964 and as described in the above-mentioned Wilderness EISs and/or in the designation legislation. Wilderness activity plans will be prepared for any wilderness areas designated by Congress.

Should Congress not designate part or all of any of the WSAs as wilderness, the nondesignated areas will lose their identity as WSAs and will be managed along with the adjoining land area as prescribed in the approved Green River RMP.

It must be understood that this Coordinated Activity Plan will not address management prescriptions specifically for the WSAs. If WSAs are included in an area with management prescriptions that are more stringent than wilderness management prescriptions, the WSA would be managed under those more stringent prescriptions. Where this occurs, it is to be assumed that the more stringent management prescriptions would apply, whether or not the areas involved were designated as wilderness.

Criteria for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The relevance and importance criteria for ACEC designation, found in BLM Manual 1613, were applied and documented in the Green River RMP EIS. These criteria and their application, and the determinations made in the RMP regarding the designation or non designation of ACECs, will

not be revisited in developing the JMHCAP. However, if new areas are identified that meet the ACEC relevance and importance criteria, this information will be included in the EIS for the JMHCAP.

Criteria for Wild Horses. The Green River RMP EIS considered appropriate management levels for wild horses. These will not be revisited in developing the JMHCAP.

Criteria for Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Green River RMP EIS identified BLM-administered public lands along waterways that meet the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act suitability factors to be given further consideration for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Wild and scenic river reviews will not be revisited in developing the JMHCAP.

Criteria for Livestock Grazing. The Green River RMP EIS addressed and provided for livestock grazing management. As a result, the JMHCAP will consider some level of grazing use in all alternatives and a no grazing alternative will not be revisited in developing the JMHCAP.

GENERAL CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE FORMULATION

The following factors will be considered in one or more of the alternatives of the JMHCAP EIS:

Fire management and fire suppression options.

Intensive management of cultural and historic resources, including rock art occurrences, historic trails and Native American respected places.

Various types and levels of vegetation uses, including wildlife habitat, watershed protection, livestock grazing, etc.

Minerals exploration and development, authorizations related to rights-of-way and other lands and realty actions, off-road vehicle use, and other activities that may result in surface disturbance.

Opportunities for land disposal or acquisition that could be useful in meeting goals for resource manageability and condition.

Acquisition of access to provide reasonable levels of resource uses for the public and for resource development and manageability.

Recommendation of protective withdrawals needed to improve resource manageability.

Identification of right-of-way concentration areas, exclusion areas, and avoidance areas to provide for development needs and protection of resource values.

Various levels of livestock grazing.

Management of recreational use.

Protecting unique and nonrenewable geological, cultural, paleontological, and recreational values.

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Management options for protecting or enhancing wetlands and riparian areas.

The big game population goals of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD).

Protection and enhancement of habitat for sensitive or important wildlife and plant species, including the protection of key elk and deer habitat.

Protection of recovery and essential habitat for threatened or endangered wildlife and plant species.

Criteria for Effects to be Considered

The following types of effects will be addressed in identifying and analyzing the environmental consequences of the planning alternatives:

Effects of wild horse use and management .

Effects of surface disturbing land uses and other disruptive human activities on air quality, cultural resources, recreational opportunities, watershed, and wildlife resources.

Effects caused by livestock grazing, disposal or acquisition of land, and use of or restrictions on Off Road Vehicular use.

Effects of fencing on wildlife movement and migration.

Effects of all types of land and resource uses on the vegetation resource.

Economic impacts of land use restrictions on economic sectors that are heavily dependent on the use of public lands and resources (for example, minerals exploration and development, livestock grazing, recreation activities).

Effects in all alternatives generally use existing data for analysis.

Criteria for Selection of the Preferred Alternative

Answers to the following questions will be used to guide selection of the preferred alternative:

Does the alternative(s) meet guidelines for reduction of sedimentation and salinity, as stated in water quality plans of the State of Wyoming and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)?

What levels of land use restrictions are needed to provide adequate protection of resource values?

Does the alternative(s) retain reasonable accessibility of public lands for purposes of public access, public land use, and resource development?

In proposing resource allocations that would affect the availability of lands for mineral development, has the BLM considered the potential of those lands for occurrence and development of energy and mineral resources?

Is/Are the alternative(s) consistent with plans, programs, and policies of other federal agencies, state and local governments, and Indian tribes?

Is/Are the alternative(s) consistent with the objectives established in the Green River RMP?

ACEC CRITERIA

As part of the process for developing the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan, BLM planning team members reviewed all BLM-administered public lands in the planning area to determine if any areas should be considered for designation as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Existing ACECs were not reviewed to determine if any existing ACEC designations should be modified or terminated because this task was recently accomplished and documented through preparation of the Green River RMP. Only BLM-administered public lands (i.e., public land “surface”) can be considered for ACEC designation.

To be eligible for designation as an ACEC, an area must meet the relevance and importance criteria described in 43 CFR 1610.7-2 and BLM Manual 1613.

Relevance and Importance are defined as follows:

- (1) Relevance. There shall be present a significant historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard.
- (2) Importance. The above described value, resource, system, process, or hazard shall have substantial significance and values. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to life or property.

An area meets the “relevance” criterion if it contains one or more of the following:

1. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (including but not limited to rare or sensitive archeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native Americans).
2. A fish and wildlife resource (including but not limited to habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species, or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).
3. A natural process or system (including but not limited to endangered, nonsensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relic plants or plant communities which are terrestrial, aquatic, or riparian; or rare geological features).
4. Natural hazards (including but not limited to areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action may meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of a natural process.

An area meets the “importance” criterion, if it further meets one or more of the following:

1. Has more than locally significant qualities which give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared to any similar resource.

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2. Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to adverse change.
3. Has been recognized as warranting protection in order to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.
4. Has qualities which warrant highlighting in order to satisfy public or management concerns about safety and public welfare.
5. Poses a significant threat to human life and safety or to property.

Table A1-1 shows the areas that were identified in the review and the BLM relevance and importance determinations that were made.

The Green River RMP Interdisciplinary Team identified potential expansions to two of the existing ACECs, to be addressed during the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity planning effort.

Based on the criteria, expansions were reviewed for two areas. The existing ACECs were not reevaluated. One of the proposed expansions would add an additional species to the existing Special Status Plant Species ACEC. The other expansion would add the wildlife habitat and migration corridors of the core area to the Steamboat Mountain ACEC.

**TABLE A1-1
EVALUATION OF ACEC RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE CRITERIA**

Existing or Proposed ACECs	Relevance Criteria (resources)	Importance Criteria	Recommended	Comments
SPECIAL STATUS (CANDIDATE) PLAN SPECIES (proposed expansion) <i>Lesquerella macrocarpa</i>	Criterion 3	Criteria 1, 2, 3	No	Meets the relevance criteria for natural processes or systems and importance criteria of more than local significant qualities, fragile, sensitive, rare and vulnerable to adverse change, and warrants protection to satisfy national priority concerns and carry out the mandates of FLPMA. The plant already receives special emphasis as a candidate species. Populations of this plant are found outside the planning area. The status of this plant has not changed since completion of the Green River RMP. The ACEC designation is unnecessary.
STEAMBOAT MOUNTAIN (Proposed expansion)	Criteria 1, 2, 3	Criteria 1, 2	Undetermined	Meets the relevance and importance criteria for wild life and cultural values of national significance. Unique habitat features found nowhere else in the planning area. The values in this area need special emphasis to be effectively managed.