

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Bureau of Land Management**

[NV-010-2811-01]

Battle Mountain District Fire Management Plan Amendment**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare a plan amendment and environmental analysis and invitation for public participation.

SUMMARY: The Battle Mountain District Office of the Bureau of Land Management proposes to amend the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan (RMP) to address the management of fire within the former boundaries of the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area of the Battle Mountain District. Fire is an integral part of the ecosystem of the Battle Mountain District. The *Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review* states: “* * * wildland fire is a natural occurrence that plays a fundamental role in natural resource management.” The current RMP does not address fire management and its role in the natural ecosystem. The land use plan amendment and its associated National Environmental Policy Act environmental assessment provides the opportunity for the public to share their thoughts and concerns related to implementation of this proposal. Ultimately, the final RMP amendment, having taken into account public input, will provide the basis for decisions on the management of fire in the Shoshone-Eureka planning unit.

DATES AND ADDRESSES: Written comments on the plan amendment and the proposed environmental analysis are welcomed until September 30, 1997. Comments on the land use plan amendment, as well as issues the public feel should be addressed in the environmental assessment should be sent to Dave Davis, Team Leader, U.S.D.I. Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 1420, 50 Bastian Road, Battle Mountain, NV 89820. Comments should be received by the BLM by the close of business, September 30th.

Four public meetings soliciting public input related to the fire management proposal are scheduled:

- (1) Battle Mountain BLM Office, 50 Bastian Road, Battle Mountain, Nevada September 2, 1997.
- (2) Eureka Opera House, 10201 Main Street, Eureka, Nevada, September 4, 1997.
- (3) Crescent Valley Senior Center, 6024 Ruby Way, Crescent Valley, Nevada, October 1, 1997.

(4) Austin High School, Highway 305 North, Austin, Nevada, October 2, 1997. All meetings are to be held from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. each evening.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The public is invited to participate in the identification of issues related to the management of fire in the Battle Mountain District, the Shoshone-Eureka Planning Unit. Anticipated issues for the plan amendment include: protection of human life, protection of property, protection of natural/cultural resources, safe reintroduction of fire into natural ecosystems, reducing the cost of fire suppression, integration of fire and resource management strategies, air quality, recreation, watershed management, livestock grazing, visual resources, wildlife habitat.

The plan amendment will focus on the following proposed management strategies for fire management in the Planning Unit:

- Wildland fire is not desired at all. Full suppression of all wildland fire is warranted.
- Unplanned wildland fire is likely to cause negative effects, but these effects may be mitigated through fuels management, i.e. prescribed fire, green stripping, chaining.
- Fire is desired, but there are constraints.
- Fire is desired and there are no constraints.

Planning documents and other pertinent materials may be examined at the Bureau of Land Management office in Battle Mountain between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Dated this 12th day of August, 1997.

Gerald M. Smith,

District Manager, Battle Mountain District.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Bureau of Land Management**

[NM-030-07-1620-00]

Otero County Areas of Environmental Concern (ACECs) for the Caballo Resource Area, New Mexico**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Interior.**ACTION:** Notice of Availability.

SUMMARY: The BLM, Las Cruces District, Caballo Resource Area announces the availability of a Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment/ Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and supporting Environmental Assessment (EA). The document

discusses the designation of five new ACECs and revision of one existing ACEC in Otero County, south-central New Mexico. Approximately 18,806 acres are proposed for designation. In addition to designation, the plan amendment, when approved, will guide BLM programs and management practices within the ACECs. The Proposed Plan is a modified version of the Preferred Alternative presented in the Draft. The Proposed RMP Amendment/FONSI and supporting EA is available for public review. A 30-day protest period is provided as required by BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.5-2).

DATES: Protests on the Proposed Plan must be postmarked on or before September 22, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Protests must be sent to Director (WO-210), Bureau of Land Management, ATTN: Brenda Williams, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Timothy M. Murphy, Area Manager, BLM, Caballo Resource Area at (505) 525-4372, or Mike Howard, Team Leader, Caballo Resource Area at (505) 525-4348, email mhoward@nm0151wp.nmso.nm.blm.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: ACECs are land designations unique to the BLM. The purpose of ACECs is to recognize, protect, and manage unique or sensitive resources or potential hazards to the public. Each area receives management or protection based on its unique needs, in consultation and coordination with the public.

The Caballo Resource Area has completed an inventory of areas in Otero County, New Mexico containing unique or sensitive biological resources suitable for designation as ACECs. In addition, the Resource Area has received nominations both internally and from the public to consider several areas as ACECs based on visual, cultural, and biological values.

Three alternatives were considered in the Draft RMP Amendment and supporting EA. Alternative A was the No Action alternative, Alternative B represented the highest level of resource protection, and Alternative C would generally have provided an intermediate level of resource protection. BLM's Preferred Alternative in the draft RMP Amendment and supporting EA was Alternative B. After evaluation of the comments received on the draft, a modified version of the Preferred Alternative (Alternative B) was selected as the Proposed Plan. Following is a summary of the management actions in the Proposed Plan for each ACEC.