

**Certification**

I hereby certify that the establishment of the Science Advisory Board is necessary and in the public interest in connection with the Secretary of the Interior's responsibilities to manage the public lands and resources administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

Dated: April 15, 1998.

**Bruce Babbitt,**

*Secretary of the Interior.*

[FR Doc. 98-10372 Filed 4-16-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-84-P

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

[MT-060-08-1610-00, 1613P]

**Notice of Intent to Prepare an Area of Critical Environmental Concern Plan Amendment for the Judith-Valley-Phillips Resource Management Plan**

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will amend the Judith-Valley-Phillips Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Bureau of Land Management is amending the RMP to address special management for two potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); Bitter Creek and Mountain Plover. The public land being considered is located in Valley County, Montana. An environmental assessment will be prepared by the Valley Resource Area to analyze the impacts of this proposal and any alternatives.

**DATES:** Comments and recommendations on this notice to amend the Judith-Valley-Phillips RMP should be received on or before May 18, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** Address all comments concerning this notice to Richard M. Hotaling, Area Manager, Valley Resource Area, RR1-4775, Glasgow, MT 59230.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jerry Majerus, 406-538-7461.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** An ACEC is an area within the public lands where special management attention is required to protect important historic, cultural or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards.

In November 1990, the BLM received the Mixed Grass Prairie ACEC nomination which encompasses

approximately 350,000 acres of public land in north Valley County. This area was nominated by several organizations for its natural integrity, scenic values, vegetation and on the basis that it is one of the largest and most intact sections of prairie remaining in the United States and a continuation of the Canadian Grasslands National Park. The BLM evaluated this nomination to determine it met both the relevance and importance criteria as outlined in the BLM's procedural guidance to ACECs (BLM Manual 1613). In summary, the entire nomination area was found to be relevant in terms of the scenic, cultural, and wildlife resources. In addition, two areas of approximately 100,000 acres in size were found relevant from a natural process or systems perspective. However, only the Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (59,660 acres) was found to meet the importance criteria due to the scenic diversity and variety of vegetation types and wildlife habitats. The Bitter Creek WSA does qualify for further consideration as an ACEC.

In addition to the Mixed Grass Prairie nomination, the BLM previously evaluated the Mountain River (9,600 acres) nomination in south Valley County and determined it is a potential ACEC. This area was nominated for the mountain plover, a candidate species identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The area provides natural habitat for the mountain plover which is not associated with black-tailed prairie dogs. It is one of the last areas of native plover habitat and is more than locally significant.

The next step before either of these areas could become designated ACEC's is to determine if they require special management. Alternatives for special management will be considered through this plan amendment to the Judith-Valley-Phillips RMP. Meetings for the plan amendment are not yet scheduled. If meetings are scheduled, the public will be notified through an informational letter and/or local news releases.

The BLM is seeking comments from individuals, organizations, and agencies who may be interested or affected by the potential ACECs. Specifically, comments on nominations, issues, concerns or alternatives that should be addressed in the plan amendment.

This notice meets the requirements of 43 CFR 1610.7-2 for designation of ACECs.

(Authority: Sec. 202, Pub. L. 94-579, 90 Stat. 2747 (43 U.S.C. 1712))

Dated: April 9, 1998.

**Scott Haight,**

*Acting District Manager.*

[FR Doc. 98-10187 Filed 4-16-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-DN-M

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

[WO-230-1110-00-24 1A]

**Science Advisory Board; Meeting**

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Announcement of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces a meeting of its Science Advisory Board on Thursday, April 30, 1998, at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 150 Anza Boulevard, Burlingame, California, telephone (650) 342-4600. Meeting hours will be 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The proposed agenda for the meeting is:

- Welcome by BLM Director Pat Shea;
- Existing needs and capabilities for inventory and monitoring within the BLM;
- Emerging research and assessment efforts;
- Inventory and monitoring assistance needed;
- Communication and coordination of needs and results;
- Suggestions for future action;
- Developing a coordinated inventory and monitoring strategy; and
- Public comment period.

All meetings of the Board are open to the public. Members of the public wishing to make oral statements to the Board will have an opportunity to do so beginning at 3:30 p.m. Persons wishing to make statements should register with the BLM by noon at the meeting location. Depending on the number of speakers, the Board may limit the length of presentations. Speakers should address specific issues listed on the agenda and provide a written copy of their statement.

**DATES:** Thursday, April 30, 1998. Science Advisory Board meeting.

**ADDRESSES:** The Board meeting will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 150 Anza Boulevard, Burlingame, California.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Christine Jauhola, Bureau of Land Management, 1849 C Street, N.W., LSB-204, Washington, D.C. 20240, 202-452-7761, or Jack E. Williams, Bureau of Land Management, 1387 South Vinell Way, Boise, Idaho 83709, 208-373-4049.