THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

JAN 1 2 2001

MEMORANDUM

To: Director, Bureau of Land Management

Through: Sylvia V. Baca
Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management

From: The Secretary

Subject: Approval of New Mexico Standards and Guidelines and Final Decision regarding the Resource Management Plan Amendments

The standards and guidelines submitted by the New Mexico State Director in accordance with 43 CFR 4180.2(b) have been reviewed by the Departmental Review Team. With this memorandum I am transmitting my Record of Decision for the New Mexico Statewide Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (RMPA/EIS) for Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. To the extent that they are consistent with applicable statutes and regulations, the Standards for Public Land Health and the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management will be applied to Bureau of Land Management lands in New Mexico.

The New Mexico State Director has recommended four standards and seven guidelines for New Mexico, as analyzed in the RMPA/EIS. I am approving three of the recommended standards and five of the recommended guidelines. The Sustainable Communities and Human Dimension Standard and Guidelines Number Six and Seven were not approved because they are inconsistent with the pertinent regulatory requirements. This is not to suggest that the kinds of socio-economic factors addressed in the New Mexico Standards and Guidelines have no place in rangeland management decisionmaking. I have determined that the human dimension considerations are best dealt with in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) studies BLM conducts to analyze the socio-economic impacts of its actions rather than in rangeland health standards which focus on biotic and physical components of an ecosystem. In addition, Guideline Number Six will be replaced by a Guideline from the grazing regulations found at 43 C.F.R. § 4180.2(f)(2)(x).

Neither Guideline Number Six nor any other proposed guideline addresses the guiding principle that requires "the use of non-native plant species only in those situations in which native species are not available in sufficient quantities or are incapable of maintaining or achieving properly functioning conditions and biological health," as described in 43 C.F.R. § 4180.2(e)(12).

Accordingly, the following fallback guideline continues to apply in New Mexico: Non-native plant species are used only in those situations in which native species are not readily available in sufficient quantities or are incapable of maintaining or achieving properly functioning conditions and biological health. (43 C.F.R. § 4180.2(f)(2)(x))

The immediate implementation of the Standards and Guidelines utilizing the best resource information and data available should be undertaken to address landscapes of concern. Implementation of guidelines for activities other than livestock grazing will occur as a separate and distinct process.

Attachment

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Washington, D.C. 20240
http://www.blm.gov

Dear Reader:

Attached to this letter is the Secretary's Final Record of Decision for the New Mexico Statewide Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (RMPA/EIS) for Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. To the extent that they are consistent with applicable statutes and regulations, the Standards for Public Land Health and the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management will be applied to the approximately 13.5 million acres of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management in New Mexico.

The BLM New Mexico State Director has recommended four standards and seven guidelines for New Mexico as analyzed in the RMPA/EIS. The Record of Decision attached to this letter approves three of the recommended standards and five of the recommended guidelines. The Sustainable Communities and Human Dimension Standard and Guideline Number Seven were not approved because they are inconsistent with the pertinent regulatory requirements. Recommended Guideline Number Six does not conform with the directive set out in the Rangeland Regulations addressing the use of non-native species and accordingly was not approved. This Record of Decision is the Department of the Interior's final action amending the New Mexico Resource Management Plans implementing such Statewide Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

Approval of the New Mexico Standards and Guidelines as provided for in the Record of Decision allows for the immediate implementation of the Standards and Guidelines utilizing the best resource information and data available. Among other things, actions will be undertaken to address landscapes of concern. Accordingly, priority should be given to assessing resource conditions and evaluating standards attainment and guidelines conformance in areas believed to be in less than desirable condition with known issues and concerns, and/or in danger of losing potential site productivity (e.g. special status species habitats, water quality issues). Implementation of guidelines for activities other than livestock grazing will occur through a separate process.

Appreciation is extended to the State of New Mexico, the nine cooperating counties, the New Mexico Resource Advisory Council and the interested public all of whom participated in the planning process.

For further information contact John Fend, Senior Rangeland Management Specialist, BLM Washington Office, at (202) 452-0379 or J. W. Whitney, Project Manager, BLM New Mexico State Office, at (505) 438-7438.

Record of Decision

New Mexico

STANDARDS

for Public Land Health

and

GUIDELINES

for Livestock Grazing Management

January, 2001

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

ABSTRACT

Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management

Draft ( ) Final ( ) Record of Decision (X)

United States Department of the Interior

1. Type of Action: Administrative (X) Legislative ( )

2. Abstract: This is the Department of the Interior's final action regarding the Record of Decision for the New Mexico Statewide Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (RMPA/EIS) documenting the effects of adopting statewide Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management on BLM-administered lands in New Mexico.

The Decision is to approve the first three Standards and the first five Guidelines contained in the Modified RAC (Proposed Action) Alternative (Proposed Plan) described in the RMPA/EIS. In addition Guideline Number Six will be replaced by a fallback Guideline from the grazing regulations (43 C.F.R. § 4180.2(f)(2)(x)) that is already in use in New Mexico. The New Mexico State Director and RAC developed the alternatives, through public participation, including a review of public comments on the draft RMPA/draft EIS.

This document contains the Decision establishing Public Land Health Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management on BLM administered lands in New Mexico.

JAN 12 2001

Bruce Babbitt
Secretary of the Interior

Date

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SUMMARY

This Final Record of Decision (subsequently referred to as the Decision) approves New Mexico Statewide Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management on lands administered by the BLM and amends BLM land use plans to include the Standards and Guidelines. It also amends several specific land use decisions that needed to be modified in order to comply with the grazing regulations and the principles of public land health. The Decision is supported by the *Proposed Statewide Resource Plan Amendment / Final Environmental Impact Statement - New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management* (RMPA/ EIS) that was issued in January, 2000.

The Decision is to approve the first three Standards and the first five Guidelines contained in the Modified RAC (Proposed Action) Alternative (Proposed Plan) described in the RMPA/EIS. In addition Guideline Number Six will be replaced by a fallback Guideline from the grazing regulations (43 C.F.R. § 4180.2(f)(2)(x)) that is already in use in New Mexico.

There are three standards approved from the selected alternative: 1) the *Upland Sites* standard; (2) the *Biotic Communities, including Native, Threatened, Endangered and Special Status Species* standard; and, (3) the *Riparian Sites* standard. A fourth standard recommended by the New Mexico State Director, the Sustainable Communities and Human Dimension Standard, is not approved. Five of the seven guidelines recommended by the State Director were approved. The sixth and seventh recommended guidelines, addressing native and non-native species use in restoration and socioeconomic matters, were not approved.

Standards of land health are expressions of levels of physical and biological condition or degree of function required for healthy and sustainable lands, and define minimum resource conditions that must be achieved. This is not to suggest that the kinds of socio-economic factors addressed in the New Mexico Standards and Guidelines have no place in rangeland management decision-making. The human dimension considerations are best addressed in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) studies BLM conducts to analyze the socio-economic impacts of its actions rather than in rangeland health standards which focus on biotic and physical components of an ecosystem.

Guidelines are practices, methods or techniques determined to be appropriate to ensure that standards can be met or that significant progress can be made toward meeting those standards. Guidelines are tools such as grazing systems, vegetative treatments, or improvement projects that help managers and permittees achieve standards, either activity or use-specific. Guidelines for activities other than livestock grazing are not mandated through regulation; however, they may be developed should the need arise.

When BLM determines that authorized livestock grazing practices are a significant contributing factor to not attaining or progressing towards attaining the standards or conforming with the guidelines, BLM must timely take appropriate action to adjust those practices so significant progress toward fulfillment of the standards and conformance with the guidelines results.

DECISION

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Decision is to adopt Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for New Mexico and to approve the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) decisions which will amend the land use plans (Resource Management Plans, RMPs) in New Mexico. The BLM has administrative responsibilities for the management of approximately 13.5 million acres of land in New Mexico.

The BLM New Mexico State Director has prepared the *Proposed Statewide Resource Management Plan Amendment/Final Environmental Impact Statement - New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management* (RMPA/EIS), dated January, 2000. As described in a proposed Record of Decision, and based on the analysis in the RMPA/EIS, the State Director has recommended four standards and seven guidelines. This final Decision relies on the RMPA/EIS and adopts from the proposed Record of Decision three of the recommended standards and five of the recommended guidelines. An additional guideline from the fallback guidelines at 43 CFR § 4180.2(f)(2)(x) is also adopted. The Sustainable Communities and Human Dimension Standard and Guideline Number Seven described in the Modified RAC (Proposed Action) Alternative (Proposed Plan)) are not adopted because they are inconsistent with the pertinent regulatory requirements. Proposed Guideline Number Six does not conform with the direction set out in the Rangeland Regulations addressing the use of non-native plant species and accordingly was not adopted.

2. DECISION and MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Four alternatives were analyzed in detail in the RMPA/EIS:

The **No Action Alternative** (Present Management) was a picture in time of the management taking place when preparation of the RMPA/EIS was initiated. The No Action Alternative served as the benchmark to compare the other alternatives that were proposed.

The **Modified RAC Alternative** consisted of statewide Standards and Guidelines developed by the Statewide Resource Advisory Council (RAC). This alternative has four standards covering the physical, biological and human aspects of the environment. This alternative was the environmentally preferable alternative.

The **County Alternative** consisted of statewide Standards and Guidelines developed by the New Mexico members of the Coalition of Arizona/New Mexico Counties. This alternative has four standards, with three covering the physical and biological elements, with the social and economic elements built into each. It also has a separate standard which considered the social and economic elements.

The **Fallback Alternative** consisted of the national "fallback" Standards and Guidelines as described in the regulations (43 CFR Subpart 4180.2). The Standards and Guidelines were developed at the national level with public input from a variety of interested public from across the nation. This alternative has standards covering the physical and biological elements in four separate standards, but does not mention the social and economic elements.

The decision is to approve the first three Standards and the first five Guidelines in the **Modified RAC (Proposed Action) Alternative (Proposed Plan).** The fourth Standard and Guideline Seven are not approved because they do not fall within the regulatory provisions authorizing development of the Standards and Guidelines. The Solicitor's Office has concluded that approval of Standards and Guidelines outside of the authority of the regulations would not be legally supportable (see attached Memorandum to the Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals from the Solicitor).

The State Director's recommended Sixth Guideline is not approved because it does not satisfy the guiding principle that requires "the use of non-native plant species only in those situations in which native species are not available in sufficient quantities or are incapable of maintaining or achieving properly functioning conditions and biological health" as stated in 43 C.F.R. § 4180.2(e)(12). A guideline is adopted from the fallback guidelines at 43 CFR § 4180.2(f)(2)(x) which states: Non-native plant species are used only in those situations in which native species are not readily available in sufficient quantities or are incapable of maintaining or achieving properly functioning conditions and biological health. Contrary to the conclusion reached in the New Mexico RMPA/EIS (at page 2-12) this criterion is not "really the same" as another mandatory guiding principle which requires guidelines "[e]mphasizing native species in the support of ecological function" as found at 43 C.F.R. § 4180.2(e)(11). While related, the two separate principles are intended to complement one another and address the full spectrum of vegetation management for native species: the acquisition and application of native species in restoration and other management actions and the consideration of native species in management goals, objectives and decision-making. Guiding Principle Number Eleven as described in 43 C.F.R. § 4180.2 (e)(11) is adequately addressed in Guideline Number One of the Modified RAC (Proposed Action) Alternative. Guiding Principle Number Twelve as described in Section 4180.2 (e)(12) is adequately addressed by this Decision's adoption of the fallback guideline at Section 4180.2 (f)(2)(x).

The decision to approve the first three Standards and the first five Guidelines in the State Director's recommendation falls within and relies upon the analysis of the RMPA/EIS. Analysis for the Modified RAC (Proposed Action) Alternative and the analysis associated with the Fallback Standards, which did not include the fourth Standard nor Guidelines Number Six and Seven, examined all of the components of the final action approved in this Decision.

The Department has reviewed all of the alternatives discussed in the RMPA/EIS and the predicted environmental, economic and social consequences. Implementation of the first three Standards and the first five Guidelines in the Modified RAC (Proposed Action) Alternative (Proposed Plan) will promote progress toward achieving healthy public land in New Mexico and result in the resource benefits as stated in Chapter 1 of the RMPA/EIS. The first three Standards and the first five Guidelines in the modified RAC alternative have been approved based on the determination that: (1) the first three Standards and the first five Guidelines in the Modified RAC Alternative are consistent with the regulations at 43 CFR 4180.1 and 4180.2 to address the principles of public land health; (2) they are Standards and Guidelines developed by the New Mexico State Director in consultation with the Statewide Resource Advisory Council with statewide multiple interest input; (3) they are expected to have support within New Mexico as they were developed by New Mexicans; (4) they are the most consistent with the academic recommendations from those involved in Rangeland Science at New Mexico State University; (5) they are the easiest to understand and implement and are based upon sound science; and, (6) they provide for the greatest economic benefit in the long term.

In the short term and long term there will be beneficial impacts to water quality, riparian and terrestrial wildlife habitat, wildlife, riparian area functions, ecological processes, rangeland productivity and plant cover and diversity. In the long term, healthy public lands will be sustained both in amount and quality.

The economic analysis in the EIS indicates that in the short term there will be impacts to grazing permittees and lessees in the form of increased costs, restrictions or changes in the way BLM lands are used and/or reductions in allowable use. In the long term, impacts to grazing permittees and lessees will be either positive or negative based on individual circumstances. These circumstances may include: dependence on public land forage; current public land conditions; the livestock management implemented and the response of the land to that management; and, ranch management decisions made by permittees and lessees based on economic conditions and BLM management actions.

3. STANDARDS for PUBLIC LAND HEALTH and GUIDELINES for LIVESTOCK GRAZING MANAGEMENT in NEW MEXICO

Standards of land health are expressions of levels of physical and biological condition or degree of function required for healthy and sustainable lands, and define minimum resource conditions that must be achieved.

Guidelines are practices, methods or techniques determined to be appropriate to ensure that standards can be met or that significant progress can be made toward meeting those standards. Guidelines are tools such as grazing systems, vegetative treatments, or improvement projects that help managers and permittees achieve standards. Guidelines for activities other than livestock grazing are not mandated through regulation; however, they may be developed should the need arise.

STANDARDS for PUBLIC LAND HEALTH

Upland Sites Standard

Upland ecological sites are in a productive and sustainable condition within the capability of the site. Upland soils are stabilized and exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate for the soil type, climate, and landform. The kind, amount, and/or pattern of vegetation provides protection on a given site to minimize erosion and assist in meeting State and Tribal water quality standards.

Indicators for this standard may include but are not limited to:

- Consistent with the capability of the ecological site, soils are stabilized by appropriate amounts of standing live vegetation, protective litter and/or rock cover.
- Erosion is indicated by flow patterns characteristics of surface litter soil movement, gullies and rills, and plant pedestalling.
- Satisfactory plant protection is indicated by the amount and distribution of desired species necessary to prevent accelerated erosion.

Biotic Communities, Including Native, Threatened, Endangered, and Special Status Species Standard

Ecological processes such as hydrologic cycle, nutrient cycle, and energy flow support productive and diverse native biotic communities, including special status, threatened, and endangered species appropriate to site and species.

Desired plant community goals maintain and conserve productive and diverse populations of plants and animals which sustain ecological functions and processes.

Restoration should first be achieved with native, and when appropriate non-native plants.

Indicators for this standard may include but are not limited to the following:

- Commensurate with the capability of the ecological site, plant and animal populations are:

  Productive

  Resilient

  Diverse

  Sustainable.

- Landscapes are composed of communities in a variety of successional stages and patterns.

- Diversity and composition of communities are indicated by the kinds and amount of species.

- Endangered and special status species are secure and recovering, with the goal of delisting and ensuring that additional species need not be listed within New Mexico.

Riparian Sites Standard

Riparian areas are in a productive, properly functioning, and sustainable condition, within the capability of that site.

Adequate vegetation of diverse age and composition is present that will withstand high stream flow, capture sediment, provide for groundwater recharge, provide habitat and assist in meeting State and Tribal water quality standards.

As Indicated By:

Indicators for this standard may include but are not limited to:

- Stream channel morphology and stability as determined by:

  Gradient

  Width/depth ratio

  Channel roughness

  Sinuosity.

- Streambank stability as determined by degree of :

Shearing and sloughing

Vegetative cover on the bank.

- Appropriate riparian vegetation includes a mix of communities comprised of species with a range of:

  Age

  Density

  Growth form.

The Standard deleted in the final action, called the "Sustainable Communities and Human Dimension Standard," would have required the New Mexico BLM to, among other things, "best meet the present and future needs of the people, those being the permittees, lessees, other affected interests, and local communities." Indicators for this standard would have included income, community stability, values, and sense of community. The State Director's Record of Decision included a set of "mitigation measures" specifically for this proposed standard, as well as other "mitigation measures" and "procedures" associated directly with the "Sustainable Communities and Human Dimension Standard." Because the "Sustainable Communities and Human Dimension Standard" does not comply with pertinent regulatory requirements, these measures were not adopted in this Record of Decision.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING GUIDELINES

Introduction

Guidelines are reasonable and practical management options which, when applied, move rangelands toward statewide standards. Guidelines are based on science, past and present management experience, and public input. The guidelines are for public lands livestock grazing. They do not apply where public lands are deemed unsuitable or not used for livestock grazing. These guidelines will be used to develop grazing management practices that will be developed and implemented at the watershed, allotment, or pasture level.

Specific application of these guidelines (Livestock Grazing Management Practices--LGMPs) will occur at the local level in careful and considered consultation, cooperation and coordination with lessees, permittees, interested public, and land owners involved.

New Mexico's intermingled land ownership pattern creates a patchwork of resource management objectives. The resources and BLM's management objectives will be viewed as a whole with recognition for the impact that BLM's management objectives have on private land owners.

These guidelines are designed to encourage innovation and experimentation in the development of alternative livestock grazing management practices. They improve rangeland health and consider the natural migration patterns of wildlife.

Guidelines

1. LGMPs will promote native plant health, soil stability and micro-organisms, water quality, stream channel morphology and function, and habitat for native wildlife including special status, threatened and endangered species, by providing the following basic requirements of rangeland ecological sites:

(a) Allow for plant recovery and growth time;

(b) Allow residual vegetation on both upland and riparian sites to protect the soil from wind and water erosion, support infiltration, and soil permeability, maintain, improve, or restore riparian-wetland functions including energy dissipation, sediment capture, ground water recharge, and stream bank stability, and prevent excessive evaporation;

(c) LGMPs include the use of livestock to:

(1) Integrate organic matter into the soil,
(2) Distribute seeds and establish seedings,
(3) Prune vegetation to stimulate growth,
(4) Enhance infiltration.

2. Season, duration, frequency and intensity of use should be flexible and consider climate, topography, vegetation, wildlife, kind and class of livestock when developing and implementing livestock grazing management practices.

3. Facilities are located away from riparian-wetland areas wherever they conflict with achieving or maintaining riparian-wetland function.

4. Give priority to rangeland improvements and land treatments that offer the best opportunity for achieving standards.

5. Where LGMPs alone are not likely to achieve the desired plant community (including control of noxious weeds), land management practices including, but not limited to, prescribed fire, biological, mechanical, and chemical land management treatments should be utilized.

6. Non-native plant species are used only in those situations in which native species are not readily available in sufficient quantities or are incapable of maintaining or achieving properly functioning conditions and biological health.

The seventh Guideline recommended by the New Mexico State Director would have required the New Mexico BLM to, among other things, "provide opportunities for a variety of individual choice and risk taking ventures in a responsible manner" and consider "impacts to employment, earnings, per capita income, investment income, Federal government payments to the State, Tribal and local governments, and tax base." The State Director's Record of Decision included "mitigation measures" and "procedures" associated directly with this seventh guideline. Because guideline number seven does not comply with pertinent regulatory requirements, this guideline and the associated mitigating measures are not approved in this Decision.

4. PLAN AMENDMENTS

In accordance with the grazing administration regulations at 43 CFR 4100, existing land use plans (Resource Management Plans shown in Table 1) have been examined to determine their compliance with the new regulations and the principles of public land health. In several cases, these plans needed changes to existing decisions to be in compliance. With approval of this Decision, the land use plans are amended.

The land use plans identified below, as well as other activity level plans, are hereby amended to include the Standards and Guidelines as adopted in this decision. Where there are plan decisions that are contrary to the new regulations, the principles of public land health, and the Standards and Guidelines, those decisions will be amended to comply.

The RMPA/EIS includes a discussion of the economic and human dimension and other impacts of the Fallback Alternative. Since the Fallback Alternative does not include a Sustainable Communities and Human Dimension Standard nor Guidelines Six and Seven as recommended by the State Director, the RMPA/EIS is adequate to support the Decision, including the amendments of the RMPs shown on Table 1.

Each Field Office will make the physical changes to their land use plans, as necessary, to include the Standards and Guidelines approved and make the necessary changes to the existing decisions identified in Table 2. Table 2 contains the decisions that were analyzed for each alternative to determine what, if any, changes needed to be made. In addition, any plan maintenance will be completed. No additional NEPA analysis is necessary to complete these administrative actions.

TABLE - 1: NEW MEXICO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS

PLAN NAME	PLAN DATE	FIELD OFFICE
Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan	1986	Albuquerque
White Sands Resource Management Plan	1986	Las Cruces
Farmington Resource Management Plan	1988	Farmington
Taos Resource Management Plan	1988	Taos
Carlsbad Resource Management Plan	1988	Carlsbad
Socorro Resource Management Plan	1989	Socorro
Mimbres Resource Management Plan	1993	Las Cruces
Roswell Resource Management Plan	1997	Roswell

TABLE - 2: NEW MEXICO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS		
AMENDED RMP / FIELD OFFICE	**EXISTING RMP DECISION/OBJECTIVE**	**HOW THE PROPOSED ACTION WILL AFFECT DECISION**
Rio Puerco / Albuquerque	ACCESS/TRANSPORTATION/ORV **Decision:** Permitted competitive events such as the "Oh My God 100" will continue to be authorized as not limited to existing roads and trails. p. 81 **Objective:** To provide areas for motor bikes to hold competitive events on a limited basis.	Modify both the decision and objective. They will read: Decision: *Permitted competitive events such as the "Oh My God 100" will be evaluated on a case by case basis and limited to existing roads and trails.* Objective: *To evaluate areas for motor bikes to hold competitive events on a case by case basis.*
	Decision: Another area has been designated for competitive dune buggy events using existing routes (Map 16). p. 81 **Objective:** To provide a designated area for dune buggy competitive events.	Decision and/or objective will be modified to read: Decision: *Competitive dune buggy events will be evaluated on a case by case basis and limited to existing roads and trails.* Objective: *To evaluate dune buggy competitive events on a case by case basis.*
Taos / Taos	Wildlife The objective of the wildlife program is to maintain, improve, and expand wildlife habitat on the public lands for both consumptive and non-consumptive use. This program is also responsible for the protection and recovery of federal and state listed and candidate threatened and endangered plant and animal species. National legislation has directed the BLM to improve wildlife habitat. There are increasing demands on the wildlife resource for both consumptive and non-consumptive uses, as well as increasing competition with other resource uses, such as recreation, grazing, and fuelwood harvesting. Technical publications, studies, reports, and inventory data are used to update the Taos Resource Area with respect to management objectives and techniques.	Decision will not be modified.
	Transportation 1. OR use on all public lands retained in Federal ownership are limited to existing roads and trails. There are two area which have special designations for OR use; Rio Chama is closed to OR use; and Fun Valley is open to OR use with Special Stipulations for Cultural and Paleontological values.	Decision will not be modified.

TABLE - 2: NEW MEXICO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS		
AMENDED RMP / FIELD OFFICE	**EXISTING RMP DECISION/OBJECTIVE**	**HOW THE PROPOSED ACTION WILL AFFECT DECISION**
White Sands/ Las Cruces	White Sands RMP - 1986 Lands Decision L-3 Land Tenure Adjustment (...New rangeland developments, vegetation treatments, and access will not be proposed in land tenure adjustment areas.)	Decision will be modified by adding the following to the decision: areas), *unless it is determined that the development or treatment is necessary to keep the lands in compliance with the New Mexico Standards for Healthy Range.*
Roswell / Roswell	Appendix 19. Decisions from Previous Planning Documents 2.) All allotments will be classified as suitable for yearlong grazing unless future activity plans specify a need to change the season of use. (West Roswell MFPA/EIS Record of Decision)	Decision will be modified to read: *All allotments will be classified as suitable for yearlong grazing unless resource conditions reflect a need to change the season of use necessary to meet the Standards and Guidelines.*
	Appendix 19. Decisions from Previous Planning Documents 3.) Develop Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) for allotments where intensive management appears feasible. Grazing schedules incorporated in AMP's should be designed to achieve upward trend and fair or better condition in 6 TO 8 years and maximum sustained carrying capacity in 15 to 20 years. (East Chaves Framework Plan, initially)	Decision will be modified to read: *Develop Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) as consistent with the grazing guidelines, to implement management actions needed to move toward achieving the Standards and to respond to requests for plan development by individual permittees/lessees.*
	Appendix 19. Decisions from Previous Planning Documents 7.) Documented grazing programs and/or cooperative management plans (CMPs') will be implemented on "I" category allotments. Specific programs and plan will be applied to individual allotments on a priority basis beginning with those allotments with the highest potential for improvement. (West Roswell MFPA/EIS Record of Decision)	Decision will be modified to read: *Documented grazing programs and/or management plans will be implemented on allotments consistent with the grazing guidelines and to respond to requests by permittees/lessee for plan development and implementation.*
	Appendix 19. Decisions from Previous Planning Documents 8.) Revise AMP's that have been implemented and are not showing improvement. Revise or develop grazing schedules designed to achieve an improving trend and fair or better condition in 6 to 8 years and maximum sustained carrying capacity in 15 to 20 years.	Decision will be modified to read: *Revise AMP's that have been implemented and are not consistent with the Standards & Guidelines.*

TABLE - 2: NEW MEXICO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS		
AMENDED RMP / FIELD OFFICE	**EXISTING RMP DECISION/OBJECTIVE**	**HOW THE PROPOSED ACTION WILL AFFECT DECISION**
Roswell / Roswell (Continued)	Appendix 19. Decisions from Previous Planning Documents 9.) The following allotments do not require prescribed grazing management by BLM. Proper grazing use through the efforts of the rancher and the Soil Conservation Service should be encouraged for these allotments. "C" CATEGORY ALLOTMENTS 5001, 5002, 5003, 5004, 5006, 5008, 5009, 5011, 5013, 5014, 5015, 5016, 5017, 5022, 5023, 5026, 5027, 5030, 5031, 5033, 5035, 5039 (SHERMAN CATTLE), 5039 (RED TANK CORP.), 5042, 5045, 5052, 5054, 5056, 5059, 5060, 5061, 5064, 5070, 5071, 5081, 5093 (East Chaves Management Framework Plan, initially).	This decision will be dropped.
	Appendix 19. Decisions from Previous Planning Documents 12.) Implementation of rangeland improvement projects will be in accordance with the Final Rangeland Improvement Policy (Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 83-27). In allocating rangeland improvement funds, BLM procedures for evaluating, ranking, and budgeting range improvements will be applied. Appropriated funds available for investment in rangeland improvements will be allocated as follows: a. First, to the maintenance of improvements that continue to serve a valid purpose or objective and for which the BLM has maintenance responsibility. b. Second, for the design, construction and maintenance of new rangeland improvements that conform with a specific development plan for the area. Such plans may be Cooperative Management Plans (CMPs) -now Allotment Management Plans (AMPs), Habitat Management Plans (HMPs), Herd Management Plans (HMAPs) or other plans providing a rational decision-making framework for meeting multiple-use management objectives. c. Additional range improvements will be evaluated and implemented when the need is identified. (West Roswell MFPA/EIS Record of Decision)	Decision will be modified to read: *Implementation of rangeland improvement projects and treatments will be consistent with current laws, regulations, policies, land use plans and budgetary priorities. Rangeland improvements and treatments will be designed and implemented in a manner that is consistent and will promote rangeland health and achieve the Standards and Guidelines.*

TABLE - 2: NEW MEXICO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS

AMENDED RMP / FIELD OFFICE	EXISTING RMP DECISION/OBJECTIVE	HOW THE PROPOSED ACTION WILL AFFECT DECISION
Roswell / Roswell (Continued)	Appendix 19. Decisions from Previous Planning Documents 15.) Provisions should be made for planning revegetation of land to a level which is suitable for livestock production on land simultaneous with or upon abandonment of a site. Mining areas, oil and gas roads and pads, mineral sites should be protected either through stipulations or by Bureau action prior to disturbance. (East Chaves Management Framework Plan) Chapter 2 PRMP/EIS, pg. 2-42 - 43 LIVESTOCK GRAZING MANAGEMENT Goal: Provide effective and efficient management of allotments to maintain, improve, and monitor range conditions. Allotment categorization and initial grazing use allocations made in the East Roswell Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (1979) and the Roswell Resource Area Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (1984) would be used as the basis for continued livestock grazing. Changes in use allocations would continue to be made on the basis of monitoring data. Livestock grazing management decisions from previous land use plans, and the disposition of those decisions, are discussed in Appendix 19. Within the Macho WHA, new internal pasture fences constructed of netwire would not be allowed across public lands on allotments that currently support pronghorn or on allotments in the WHA with the potential to provide suitable pronghorn habitat. Future changes in class of livestock would necessitate reconsidering the fencing standard to be used in each situation. Exceptions to this requirement are: - The grazing permittee agrees to the construction of pronghorn passes on proposed interior fences; - The grazing pemittee agrees to allow the BLM to modify fences; - Netwire would be used in the construction of small traps or holding pens; - Netwire would be used in security fences around facilities such as microwave sites.	Decision will be modified to read: *The land will be revegetated to a level which is suitable to promote diversity and ground cover on land simultaneous with or upon abandonment of a site. Mining areas, oil and gas roads and pads, mineral sites will be protected either through stipulations or by Bureau action prior to disturbance.* Goal will not be modified. Proposed wording in the PRMP/EIS will be modified to read: *Livestock grazing management decisions made in the East Roswell Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (1979) and the Roswell Resource Area Management Framework Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement (1984) would be used as the basis for continued livestock grazing. Changes in use allocations would continue to be made on the basis of monitoring data. These decisions are discussed in Appendix 19.* Proposed wording in the PRMP/EIS will be modified to read: *Within portions of the Macho WHA meeting the antelope suitability criteria, new internal pasture fences constructed of netwire would not be allowed across public lands on allotments that currently support pronghorn or on allotments in the WHA with the potential to provide suitable pronghorn habitat.* Exceptions to this requirement are: - The grazing permittee agrees to the construction of pronghorn passes on *proposed* interior fences; - The grazing permittee agrees to allow the BLM to modify fences; -Netwire would be used in the construction of small traps or holding pens; - Netwire would be used in security fences around facilities such as microwave sites. Future changes in class of livestock would necessitate reconsidering the fence standard to be used in each situation.

TABLE - 2: NEW MEXICO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS		
AMENDED RMP / FIELD OFFICE	**EXISTING RMP DECISION/OBJECTIVE**	**HOW THE PROPOSED ACTION WILL AFFECT DECISION**
Roswell / Roswell (Continued)	Chapter 2 PRMP/EIS, pg. 2-69 Special Status Species Habitat Management Goal: Provide protection and recovery for all federal and state listed species. Manage occupied and potential habitat for federal and state-listed species on public land to maintain or enhance populations. Manage habitat for federal candidate species to avoid degrading habitat and further listing by either state or federal governments while allowing for mineral production and development, livestock grazing and other uses. Refer to Appendix 17 for listing of Special Status Species occurring or potentially occurring in the Roswell Resource Area.	*Goal statement will not be modified.* *Decision wording will not be modified.*
Farmington/ Farmington	Issue #6 - Vegetative Uses - Set the correct levels of vegetative use based on a 5 year monitoring plan. Re-examine the Grazing Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM, BIA, and Navajo Nation to expand the agreement for allotments in the exchange zone and cancel the agreement for allotments in the retention and acquisition zones and in allotments wholly or partially within designated wilderness. (pg 2-3)	Decision will be modified by changing the first sentence to read as follows: Set the levels of vegetative use *to achieve resource function commensurate with the Public Land Health Standards.*

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AMENDED RMP / FIELD OFFICE	**EXISTING RMP DECISION/OBJECTIVE**	**HOW THE PROPOSED ACTION WILL AFFECT DECISION**
Carlsbad / Carlsbad	**Vegetation (p. 4 RMP Record of Decision)** *Vegetation treatments will be applied to approximately 62,000 acres, or 6% of the total federal acreage, west of the Pecos River. Approximately 95% will be treated with prescribed fire, while the remainder will be treated chemically.	Decision will be replaced with the following wording: *Vegetation treatments may be applied as needed to achieve health rangeland standards.*
	Livestock Grazing **Livestock management east of the Pecos will be in accordance with East Eddy-Lea MFP grazing decisions (p.1 Carlsbad RMP)**	
	1.1 Revise 14 existing AMP's to maximize livestock forage on a sustained basis, and to incorporate rest periods to meet the physiological needs of key forage plants.	Decision will be replaced with the following wording: *Revise 14 existing AMPs so that livestock forage is available on a sustained basis, commensurate with public land health standards, and to incorporate rest periods to meet the physiological needs of key forage plants.*
	1.3 Develop grazing systems on 42 allotments to maximize livestock forage on a sustained basis, and to incorporate rest periods to meet the physiological needs of key forage plants.	Decision will be replaced with the following wording: *Develop grazing systems on 42 allotments designed to affect the objectives of the New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.*

5. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED but ELIMINATED from FURTHER STUDY

In addition to the four alternatives analyzed in the RMPA/EIS, two additional proposals were considered based on comments received during the early scoping process but eliminated from further detailed study.

A Suitability Alternative was suggested to eliminate grazing on areas with steep slopes, low amounts of precipitation, or certain soils be classified as unsuitable for livestock grazing. This alternative was not analyzed as the suitability approach historically has been used by BLM as part of the interpretation process for range surveys. The determination of suitability or unsuitability was one step in completion of a range survey. In that process, areas classified as unsuitable were rated as having a zero capacity by the survey. The unsuitable lands were often intermixed with suitable areas within a given area. Therefore, suitability was used only for a level of expected forage use and was not used to determine if grazing should be eliminated.

Currently, BLM uses rangeland monitoring data to adjust livestock grazing capacity information rather than the one-time forage surveys. By using monitoring to evaluate grazing capacity, BLM focuses on looking at the effects of grazing on-the-ground as opposed to projecting possible effects. Because BLM

now uses a more up-to-date technique of rangeland monitoring rather than the older method, suitability is no longer used and thus was not considered as a viable alternative.

A No Grazing Alternative was suggested to eliminate all grazing from the public lands. This alternative has been analyzed in detail in the national Rangeland Reform '94 EIS, and in previous EIS documents. Livestock grazing is authorized by law and regulation, and is well established within the BLMs multiple-use mandate. Resource conditions do not warrant a statewide prohibition of livestock grazing. Analysis of a No Grazing Alternative was not considered feasible or necessary.

6. IMPLEMENTATION, MITIGATION and MONITORING

Implementation

Implementation of the New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management will begin immediately. Any development and implementation of guidelines for activities other than livestock grazing will occur as a separate and distinct process. BLM will adopt a logical system of prioritization due to funding and staffing limitations. As provided in the RMPA/EIS, Chapter 1, Planning Amendment Process, pages 1-4, first priority for assessing resource conditions and evaluating standards attainment and guidelines conformance will be areas believed to be in degraded condition, downward trend or at risk of losing potential site productivity (e.g. a riparian area that is functioning-at-risk and demonstrates a downward trend). Resource assessments and standards evaluation will rely upon the best data and resource information available, including quantitative monitoring and inventory data, qualitative information, professional knowledge, and data and information provided by Tribes, State and County agencies, public land users, and the interested public.

To supplement the indicators as described in each standard, and as scheduling allows, site-specific indicators and associated criteria for each ecological site will be developed to aid in assessing resource conditions. An ecological site is "[a] kind of land with specific physical characteristics that differs from other kinds of land in its ability to produce a distinctive kind and amount of vegetation and [differs] in its response to management."[1] As they become available, these indicators and criteria will be used in resource assessments for specific sites being examined and the evaluation of standards attainment at the watershed or sub-watershed level. Based on recommendations from academic and other rangeland interests, these site indicators and criteria will be developed in consultation with an interagency team of rangeland specialists providing peer review. Consistent with the recommendation by the RAC, statewide priorities for development of ecological site indicators and criteria have not been developed. Each BLM field office will determine these priorities in consultation with the academic institutions, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, State Land Office, New Mexico Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Forest Service, Tribes, County representatives, other landowners, grazing permittee/lessee and other rangeland interests.

As described in the RMPA/EIS, Chapter 4, when an evaluation concludes that an area does not meet one or more standard(s), the BLM will determine the causal factor(s) in not meeting the standard(s). When current livestock grazing practices or levels of grazing use are determined to be significant factors, the BLM authorized officer shall take appropriate action as soon as practical, but no later than the next grazing year (43 CFR Section 4180.2 (c)). This will be done in consultation, cooperation and

[1] See definition of this term in *Glossary of Terms Used in Range Management*, Fourth Edition, Society for Range Management, 1998.

coordination with the grazing permittee/lessee, involved landowners, Tribes, and interested public, and within the framework of the guidelines, will propose, develop and implement actions that will result in making significant progress towards fulfillment of the standards and conformance with the guidelines. Implementation of proposed livestock grazing management practices developed to address attainment of standards and conformance with guidelines at the site-specific level (e.g. watershed, a group of allotments, or an allotment) may require additional NEPA analysis to address potential site-specific impacts. (RMPA/EIS, Chapter 5, page 5-91) Site-specific NEPA analysis includes environmental, social and economic effects of the alternatives (possible management actions) and appropriate mitigating measures and monitoring strategies. The human dimension considerations are best addressed in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) studies BLM conducts to analyze the socio-economic impacts of its actions rather than in rangeland health standards which focus on biotic and physical components of an ecosystem. When current activities, other than livestock, appear to be the reason the area is not meeting standard(s), management actions that address the activity will occur as rapidly as practical.

Consistent with the Implementation and Mitigation procedures described in Chapter 4 of the RMPA/EIS, and the Federal Land Management and Policy Act (FLMPA), BLM will consult, cooperate and coordinate, as appropriate, with Indian tribes and the following State and local governments, agencies and commissions, including:

State Engineer
Environmental Department
Department of Agriculture
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department
Department of Tourism
New Mexico Game and Fish Department
State Land Office
Department of Cultural Affairs
Oil and Gas Commission
New Mexico Oil Conservation Commission
Interstate Stream Commission
Water Quality Control Commission
Soil and Water Conservation Commission
New Mexico Game and Fish Commission

To ensure coordination with each of the affected County governments in implementation of the program, the BLM will:

- Notify the County as to which lands are scheduled to be assessed and evaluated.
- Request County and local governments to provide data they have that will be germane in evaluating which lands meet the standards.
- Notify the County of the inventory, assessment, and evaluation results for the areas achieving and not achieving standards.
- Invite the County, for areas that don't meet the standard(s), to provide input into identifying causal factors for non-attainment of the standard(s).
- Include the County in consultation, cooperation and coordination where existing livestock grazing practices are determined to be a significant factor in failing to achieve standard(s).

Mitigation

As stated above, when the authorized officer determines that current grazing management practices significantly contribute to not meeting one or more standards, the BLM will identify, propose, develop and implement adjustments in livestock grazing practices that are needed to make significant progress towards standards achievement and guidelines conformance in consultation, coordination and cooperation with the permittee/lessee, the interested public, the County government, and the State of New Mexico. When site-specific NEPA documentation occurs to analyze proposed changes in livestock grazing management practices, appropriate mitigating measures will be included. A full spectrum of possible mitigating measures and their respective feasibility was covered in detail in the RMPA/EIS, Chapter 4, Mitigation Measures. The decision document that follows the site-specific NEPA analysis will include the selection of mitigation measures and the basis for selecting the particular measure(s). The mitigation measures will also include roles and responsibilities of the respective parties.

Consultation

As described in the RMPA/EIS, Chapter 4, Special Status Species, the BLM consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, regarding Threatened and Endangered Species, on a state-wide basis for each RMP listed on Table 1 of the Decision. Subsequent Section 7 consultation and conferencing under the Endangered Species Act will be conducted on proposed site-specific management changes which may affect listed or proposed species or adversely modify critical habitat, in accordance with established regulations and BLM policy. The BLM will consult, cooperate and coordinate with participating cooperators to assist in developing additional management options that minimize adverse effects to listed species that are identified during the consultation process.

Monitoring

BLM will monitor public land health indicators, appropriate indicators as presented in the standards and ecological site indicators and any other pertinent components to determine trends, conditions and functionality of resources with respect to standards achievement. The BLM will also collect inventory and monitoring information to identify causal factors, including existing grazing management practices, for non-attainment of standards.

As provided in the RMPA/EIS, Chapter 4, page 4-97, BLM will request that the State agencies will monitor the following indicator data and keep BLM current:

- Water quality
- Water quantity
- Air quality
- Wildlife populations
- Watershed conditions.

When site-specific NEPA documentation occurs to analyze proposed changes in livestock grazing management practices, appropriate monitoring strategies will be included. BLM will actively solicit participation and monitoring information from affected grazing permittees or lessees, Tribes, the State, County and local governments and the interested public.

7. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

BLM has had extensive public involvement throughout the process of developing the Standards and Guidelines. Early phases of this involvement were described in the draft RMPA/draft EIS, and in Chapter 5 of the RMPA/EIS.

The State of New Mexico requested and was granted joint lead status for the project. In addition nine New Mexico Counties requested and were granted cooperator status for the project. The counties that requested and were granted cooperator status include Catron, Chaves, Eddy, Grant, Hidalgo, Lincoln, Luna, Otero and Sierra. A memorandum of understanding was developed among BLM, the State of New Mexico and each cooperator county to define the roles of those involved in the project. Further, BLM has consulted extensively with the Resource Advisory Council (RAC) on content and wording of the Standards and Guidelines.

As stated in the RMPA/EIS:

> Following the comment period on the draft RMPA/draft EIS, the RAC members were sent copies of all of the comment letters. The RAC discussed the comments and the draft RMPA/draft EIS in their meetings. Representatives of the RAC then made recommendations for modification of their original proposals.

Comments made by the public following the draft RMPA/draft EIS were individually analyzed by the RMPA/EIS Team. The comments were responded to in the RMPA/EIS. The Proposed Plan (Modified RAC Alternative) in the RMPA/EIS was based upon the original RAC proposals, with changes suggested by the RAC and by BLM, based upon analysis of the public comments.

Following release of the proposed RMPA/final EIS, BLM received fourteen protests. Following a review by the Director, it was determined that the New Mexico State Director followed applicable procedures, laws, regulations and policies and considered all relevant resource factors and public input in developing the proposed standards and guidelines and the protests were addressed..

In addition to the protest letters received in Washington D.C., the State Director received five comment letters. Each of the comment letters and letters of protest forwarded by the Director were carefully reviewed for information which might influence the decision.

8. BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

A biological evaluation (BE) addressing listed and proposed endangered and threatened species and designated and proposed critical habitat was completed for the Statewide RMPA on adopting the New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. A request for concurrence on the determinations identified in the BE was sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the determination identified in the BE in a letter dated March 28, 2000.

9. CONSISTENCY

The RMPA/EIS is consistent with the plans, programs, and policies of Indian tribes, Federal agencies, and State and local governments. The BLM State Director received a letter signed by Lt. Governor Walter Bradley in response to the Governor's consistency review dated March 2, 2000. In that letter it states, "The State has reviewed the FEIS for any inconsistent actions that may impact our programs, policies and laws. It appears that there are no problems with the document." The Lt. Governor went on to state, "I encourage the BLM to continue to collaborate with the New Mexico Game and Fish Department in addressing allocation of forage for elk and wildlife." He also pointed out the NM Department of Game and Fish has adopted a "Long Range Plan for the Management of New Mexico's Elk" that addresses riparian and habitat problems, along with strategies to resolve them in a collaborative effort with Federal land management agencies. Lt. Governor Bradley further states, "The State supports best management practices that support conditions of watershed and riparian areas as well as uplands." The Lt. Governor indicated that he continues to stress that the State work jointly with the BLM as outlined in the "Implementation Section" of the RMPA/EIS.

As indicated in the Lt. Governor's statements, the RMPA/EIS was developed in full compliance with the FLPMA, Section 202 (c)(9) which requires Land Use Plans be consistent with State and local plans to the maximum extent consistent with Federal laws. This Decision falls within and relies upon the RMPA/EIS.

10. CONCLUSION

This Decision is the Department of the Interior's final action regarding the Record of Decision for the RMPA/EIS adopting Statewide Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management RMPA. Any person adversely affected by a decision of a BLM official to implement any portion of an RMP or plan amendment may appeal such action to IBLA at the time the action is proposed for implementation (43 CFR 4), unless it is a site-specific livestock grazing decision. Any person affected by a site-specific livestock grazing decision of the BLM in carrying out any portion of this Standards and Guidelines Statewide Plan Amendment may protest a proposed decision to the appropriate Field Manager in accordance with 43 CFR 4160.2, at the time the action is proposed for implementation. In the absence of a protest, the proposed decision will become the final decision without further notice, per 43 CFR 4160.3. In accordance with 43 CFR 4160.4, any person whose interest is adversely affected by a final decision of the authorized officer may appeal the decision for the purpose of a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge by following the requirements set out in 43 CFR 4.470.