

WHITE SANDS RESOURCE AREA

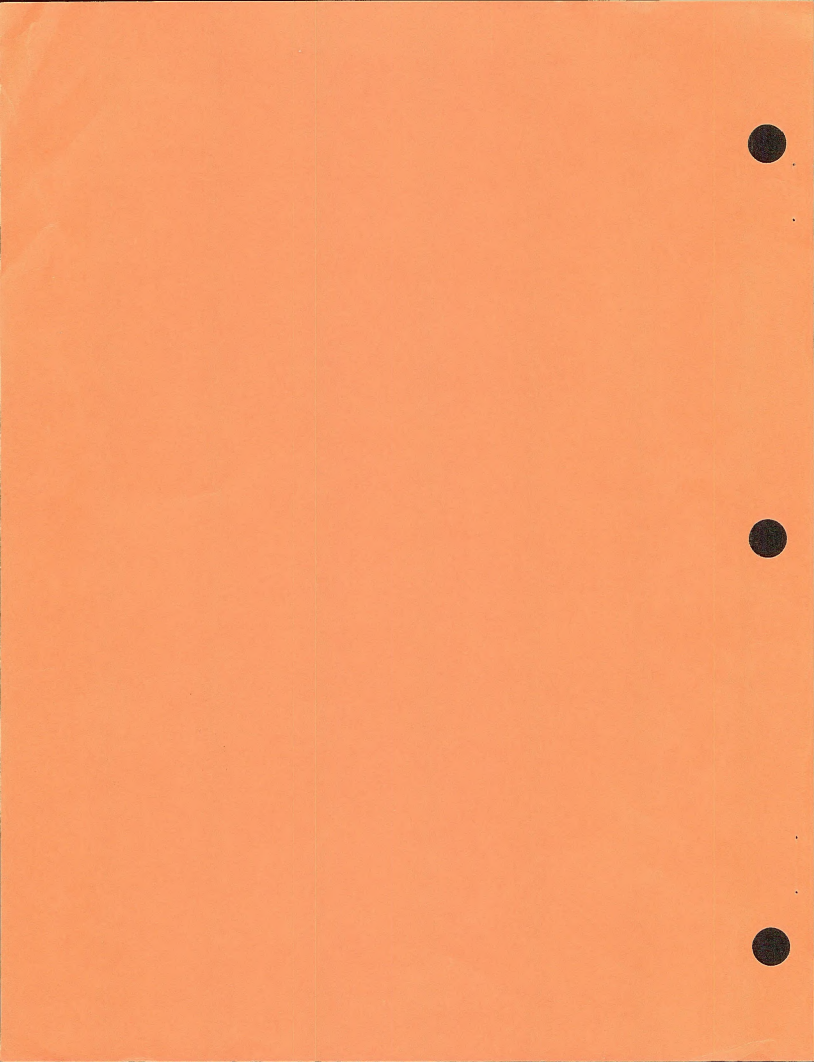
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN RECORD OF DECISION

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT OFFICE
NEW MEXICO



SEPTEMBER 1986

BLM-NM-PT-86-017-4410



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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT OFFICE
1800 Marquess St.
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005

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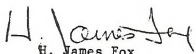
Dear Reader:

Enclosed is a copy of the Record of Decision (ROD) for the White Sands Resource Management Plan (RMP). This ROD records the decisions reached by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for managing approximately 1.8 million surface acres of public land and 3.6 million subsurface acres in the White Sands Resource Area. The ROD also formally designates the Sacramento Escarpment Scenic Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

This document has been sent to all recipients of the White Sands Resource Area Final RMP/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Review copies of the Draft and Final RMP/EIS, and additional copies of the ROD are available from the Area Manager, White Sands Resource Area, 1800 Marquess Street, Las Cruces, New Mexico, 88005, telephone (505) 525-8228.

As the ROD states, the Proposed RMP has been accepted as the land use plan for the White Sands Resource Area. The approved plan will be extracted from the Final RMP/EIS and decisions carried forward into the Draft RMP/EIS from previous planning documents. If you would like to receive a copy of this forthcoming document or the ACEC Plan, please provide the information requested on the enclosed form and return.

Sincerely,


H. James Fox
District Manager

Enclosure

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RECORD OF DECISION

This document records the decisions reached by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for managing approximately 1.8 million surface acres of public land and 3.6 million subsurface acres in the White Sands Resource Area (WSRA).

DECISION

The decision is hereby to approve the proposed plan as described in the September 1985 Final Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) including decisions carried forward from previous planning documents as the land use plan for the WSRA. (Decisions were carried forward from the Southern Rio Grande Management Framework Plan (MFP), Southern Rio Grande Rangeland Program Summary, Mesa MFP, McGregor Rangeland Management Program Document, White Sands Oil and Gas Record of Decision, and the Mineral Material Disposal Record of Decision.) This Plan was prepared under the regulations for implementing the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1600). An EIS was prepared for this Plan in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Approval of the Plan will also constitute formal designation of the Sacramento Escarpment Scenic Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The ACEC is designed to protect and prevent irreparable damage and enhance the scenic value of the escarpment.

THE PROPOSED PLAN AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Five alternatives were developed and analyzed for consideration in the selection of an RMP for the WSRA. Each alternative addressed the significant impacts that were anticipated to result from implementation of each of the alternatives. Each alternative addressed the planning issues in a different way and was developed to cover a range of possible resource uses. The environmental consequences of various management options were available for consideration in selecting the RMP.

Each alternative proposal combined with the "Management Guidance Common to All Alternatives" forms a separate feasible land

use plan to guide management of the WSRA public land in accordance with FLPMA requirements for multiple-use and sustained yield. The "Management Guidance Common to All Alternatives" section describes how those resources that are not at issue will be managed in the coming years. The five alternatives are summarized below, while the "Management Guidance Common to All Alternatives" is located in Chapter 2 of the the Plan.

The RMP for the WSRA is a modified version of the Preferred Alternative from the Draft RMP/EIS. The modifications incorporate planning concepts from the Protection Alternative and input from the public and management.

Proposed Plan (Modified Balanced Alternative)

Rangeland Management

A rangeland management program will be initiated on 66 Category I and selected Category M allotments which cover 860,098 acres. These allotments have high potential for improvement and resolution of resource conflicts or have wildlife concerns. The program will be developed in consultation, cooperation, and coordination with permittees/lessees, the District Grazing Advisory Board, and other affected interests. The programs will prescribe the livestock grazing practices necessary to properly manage the renewable resources of the allotments. The remaining allotments proposed for Categories M and C will be inspected periodically to determine if resource conditions are changing. Forage production will be increased in the long-term through chemical vegetation treatments on 58,742 acres. In addition, 2,381 acres of prescribed burning and 1,597 acres of seeding are planned. In the long-term, projected livestock forage will be 181,864 animal unit months (AUMs). Construction of rangeland developments in the short-term will include pipelines, fences, wells with pumps or windmills, storage tanks, drinking troughs, earthen stock tanks, and a catchment. Watershed values on 73,601 acres of rangeland will be improved. Off-road vehicle (ORV) use on this same acreage will be limited to

existing roads and trails. Forage will be provided for 12,588 mule deer and 1,666 pronghorn while the wild burro herd will be captured and made available for adoption.

Special Management Areas

All land not limited or closed to ORV use will be designated as open. This will encompass 1,526,180 acres in the two-county area. At the same time, several areas will be designated as Special Management Areas. Improvement and protection of 280 acres in the Percha Creek riparian area will be accomplished by monitoring riparian habitat conditions and developing management objectives and planned actions for a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and limiting ORV use to existing roads and trails. Forty-acre study plot enclosures typifying each of the forty-one range sites and one Standard Habitat Site (SHS) will be fenced and closed to ORV use. In the Sacramento Escarpment, 3,640 acres will be designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) for visual resources. In addition to the existing 3,270 acres designated No Surface Occupancy (NSO), an additional 370 acres will be designated NSO. The ACEC will be managed as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class I and ORV use will be limited to designated roads and trails. To improve and protect 1,160 acres of Lake Holloman and adjacent lands, livestock grazing will be eliminated. ORV use will be limited to existing roads and trails on 15,490 acres of the Cornudas Mountains, 7,779 acres of the Brokeoff Mountains, 6,160 acres of the Cuchillo Mountains, and 116,000 acres of McGregor Range, north of State Road 506.

In an effort to preserve and protect various cultural resources within the Resource Area, ORV use and surface occupancy will be limited or curtailed at specific sites. At the 960-acre Three Rivers Petroglyph Site and Picnic Area, ORV use will be limited to existing roads and trails and an additional 120 acres will be fenced from livestock grazing. In the Rattlesnake Hill archaeological district, 640 acres will be closed to ORV use and closed to future rangeland improvements. A total of 200 acres of the Alamo Mountain petroglyph area will be designated NSO and closed to ORV use. In the Lone Butte area, ORV use will be limited to existing roads and trails on 100 acres while 120 acres of the

Jarilla Mountains will be closed to ORV use. No surface-disturbing activities will be allowed in a area 1/4 mile from each side of well-preserved segments of the Butterfield and Jornada del Muerto Trails.

Land Tenure Adjustment

Approximately 184,000 acres of public land within the Resource Area will be considered for land tenure adjustment (23,000 to be acquired and 161,000 to be disposed) including isolated and difficult to manage parcels, lands needed for community expansion, and public purposes, lands where interest has been shown, potential acquisition lands, and potential exchange lands.

Public land not identified for disposal will be retained in BLM ownership, except that within the retention areas, only those parcels which will enhance overall consolidation of public land will be considered for exchange.

Access

To provide additional legal access to public land, 238 miles of new roads are proposed for construction while 36 miles of easements are proposed for acquisition.

Other Alternatives Considered

Production Alternative

The Production Alternative placed primary emphasis on making public land and resources available for use and development. The principles of multiple-use and sustained yield would have been observed, and environmental values protected to the extent required by applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The goal of this alternative was to change management direction in the WSRSA so that the four issues were resolved in a manner that generally placed highest priority on the production of resources from the public land.

Protection Alternative

The Protection Alternative placed primary emphasis on maintaining or improving important environmental values. Commodity or non-renewable resource use would have been permitted only to an extent compatible with this alternative. The goal of this alternative

was to change present management direction so that the identified issues were resolved in a manner that placed highest priority on the maintenance or improvement of environmental values.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative placed primary emphasis on continuing present management direction. Resource use levels would have generally remained the same as present levels. Minor changes from the present could have occurred and management actions required to implement existing activity plans could have been accomplished. New uses could have occurred subject to environmental review.

No Livestock Grazing Alternative

The No Livestock Grazing Alternative would have eliminated livestock grazing from the public land. No new rangeland developments would have been constructed for livestock and existing developments would have been abandoned or maintained only for non-livestock resources.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The decision is based on (a) the need to resolve the four issues identified through the planning process; (b) the input received from public land users, other Federal and State land management agencies, as well as State, local, and tribal Governments during the 90-day comment period on the Draft RMP/EIS; (c) the planning criteria used to evaluate the alternatives; and (d) the environmental analysis for the alternatives considered in the RMP/EIS.

IMPLEMENTATION

The White Sands RMP will provide the framework and guidelines for making management decisions for the Resource Area over the next 20 years. Priorities for implementation of the management decisions will be contingent upon funding levels established through the budget process. Program priorities will be reviewed and updated

annually to reflect new administrative policy, new departmental directives, or new BLM goals.

MITIGATION

All decisions made under this Plan will require that adequate consideration be given to all resources prior to implementation. The RMP has been designed so that all practical measures will be taken to ensure that adverse impacts are mitigated in a manner consistent with those measures identified in the Plan. The Plan's mitigation measures will be expanded upon in environmental assessments or EISs for site-specific actions.

MONITORING

Monitoring will be performed to ensure conformance with the Plan and to indicate how effective these measures are in minimizing environmental impacts. Additional measures to protect the environment may be required as a result of monitoring studies. Individual resource program monitoring will be described in Chapter 2 of the Plan.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The views of the public have been sought throughout the planning and decision-making process. Public participation in the process is summarized in Chapter 1 of the Plan.

CONSISTENCY

No inconsistencies with the plans, programs, and policies of other Federal agencies or State and local Governments were identified during the RMP process, including the Governor's Consistency Review.

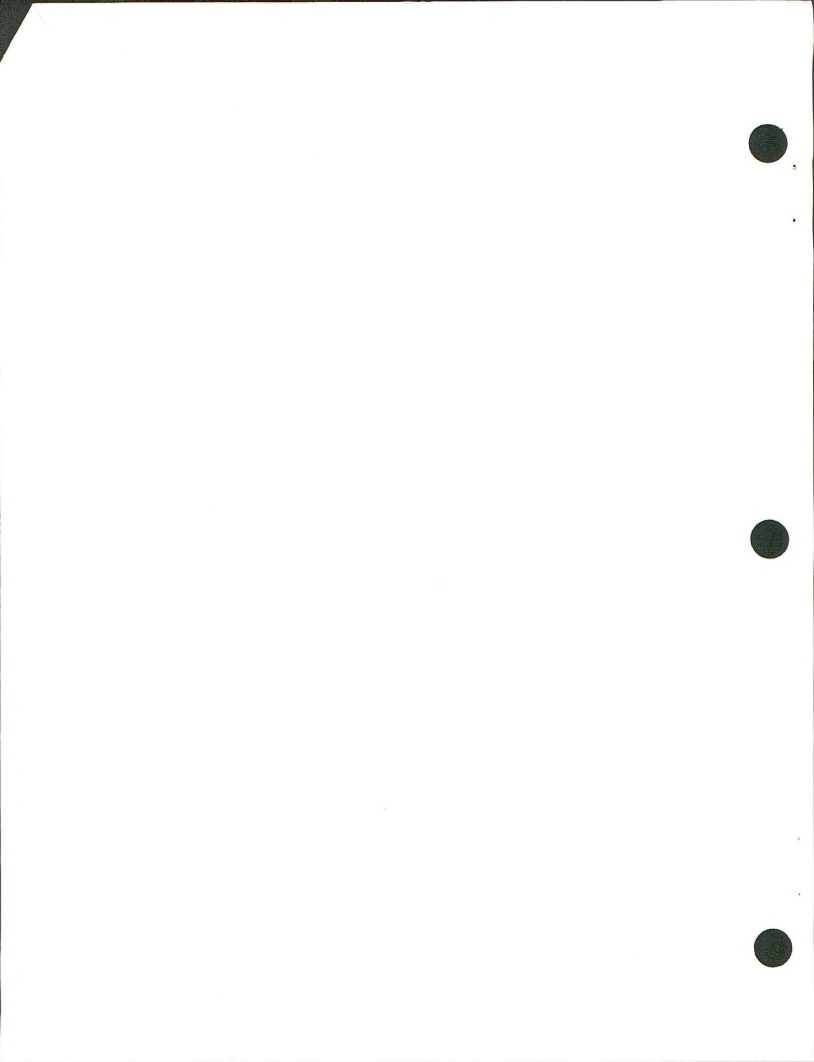
PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF THE RMP

Copies of the White Sands RMP will be available on request by contacting the Bureau of Land Management, Area Manager, White Sands Resource Area, 1800 Marquess Street, Las Cruces, New Mexico, 88005; telephone (505) 525-8228 (FTS 571-8312).

9/15/86

Date


Monte G. Jordan
Acting State Director, New Mexico
Bureau of Land Management



S T A M P

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
White Sands Resource Area
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, NM 88005

FOLD

COMPLETE THIS FORM IF YOU WOULD LIKE
A COPY OF THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS

WHITE SANDS RESOURCE AREA
MANAGEMENT PLAN

SACRAMENTO ESCARPMENT AREA
OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL
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NAME _____

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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