



Ruckelshaus
Institute



School of
Energy Resources

SUMMARY OF: Rock Springs Resource Management Plan Public Workshops

NOVEMBER 17-18, 2023



Contributors

Weston M. Eaton¹, Birch Dietz Malotky¹, Alyssa Halls³, Siobhán Lally³, Selena Rose Gerace², Kate Blyth Gamble³, Temple Stoellinger¹, Melanie Armstrong¹, and Steve Smutko¹

Author Affiliations:

1. Ruckelshaus Institute, University of Wyoming
2. School of Energy Resources, University of Wyoming
3. University of Wyoming

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Acknowledgments

On behalf of Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon's office, the following entities facilitated these public workshops in the capacity of neutral conveners.

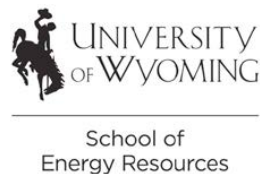


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Executive Summary

This report presents the range of perspectives offered by approximately 300 participants in four interactive public workshops held November 17-18, 2023. Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon asked the University of Wyoming to organize these workshops so that the public could offer input on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Rock Springs Field Office draft Resource Management Plan (RMP), which is a blueprint for future land and resource management decisions. Public input from these workshops will inform a governor-appointed task force representing multiple Wyoming interests that will collaboratively develop recommendations for responsible and durable management of the Rock Springs Field Office in southwest Wyoming. In each workshop, participants had a chance to express their perspectives, and hear others' views, in response to three prompts:

- What about these lands is important to you?
- If you were writing the RMP, what would you prioritize to support the things that are important to you?
- What advice would you give the task force for how to balance multiple priorities?

In response to the first prompt, participants expressed a strong desire to maintain access to the land for a range of purposes, from agriculture, industry, and other economic development to personal enjoyment and access to private property. Participants highlighted the capacity of the land to support balanced multiple use as essential to the nature of public lands. Many said that access and multiple-use are critical to the economic vitality of their local communities and all of Wyoming. Overall there was strong sentiment that the local people have been successfully stewarding the land for decades, know the area best, and would be the most impacted by the RMP. Therefore, many said that the needs, concerns, and knowledge of area residents should be given priority in shaping the final RMP. Participants also shared the importance of wild, open spaces, both for the solitude and scenic beauty they provide and their ability to support wildlife. These various attributes of the land were often linked to a sense of identity, heritage, and a way of life that participants wanted to preserve for current and future generations.

When asked what they would prioritize in the RMP, participants emphasized many of the same qualities as they did in response to the first question, with additional suggestions on how to actualize them in a management document. To prioritize access, for example, participants suggested starting with the current RMP and making revisions only where necessary, with the minimum restrictions needed to address the issue. Ensuring equal access amongst users, preserving



“

Participants expressed a strong desire to maintain access to the land for a range of purposes, from agriculture, industry, and other economic development to personal enjoyment and access to private property. ”

current access, allowing for future access, and clarifying how the RMP would be enforced were also part of the discussion. Suggestions for prioritizing multiple use included ensuring equal treatment of all uses, rather than prioritizing one use over others. Participants also suggested that multi-use-driven management could mean prioritizing each use in the area most appropriate for it (i.e., industrial development in the most resource-rich areas and protection in the best wildlife habitat). Expressing a general concern over local voices not being heard, participants asked decision-makers to prioritize the experience and expertise of local people, including local land-use plans, when deciding how to manage these lands. Participants also wanted to prioritize protecting local livelihoods by emphasizing long-term economic vitality for the area. Many also emphasized using the most accurate and timely scientific and technical information to determine both management needs and the economic implications of management decisions. Others emphasized that resource development should be balanced with protecting wildlife and natural settings, with priority given to migration corridors, critical habitat, invasive species management, and endangered and threatened species. Many also asked for a more streamlined and accountable process for developing, implementing, and enforcing a revised RMP.

Given the various priorities discussed, workshop participants were then asked to advise the governor’s task force on how to balance those priorities. Many reiterated that the balance should reflect the priorities of the users and in particular, the local people. They also called for concerted efforts to build trust between the community, local decision-makers, and federal agencies. Others felt that the current management plan was already doing a good job of balancing multiple priorities, and advised changing current management only where necessary. Participants also emphasized the need for flexibility, both in the plan as it responds to technological innovation and ongoing change and among the task force members as they work together to develop a recommendation that represents various Wyoming interests. Again, participants emphasized the need to use the best available data and expressed concern that the draft RMP’s integrity was compromised by outdated information. Other suggestions included ensuring the full range of stakeholder voices are represented and working within the existing legal and regulatory framework that mandates multiple use of BLM lands.

This report will be submitted to the governor’s office and the task force. The task force will use this information as they develop a consensus recommendation for a revised RMP, which they will submit to the governor and as a comment to BLM.

Find more information about this process at uwyo.edu/rmp.



Background

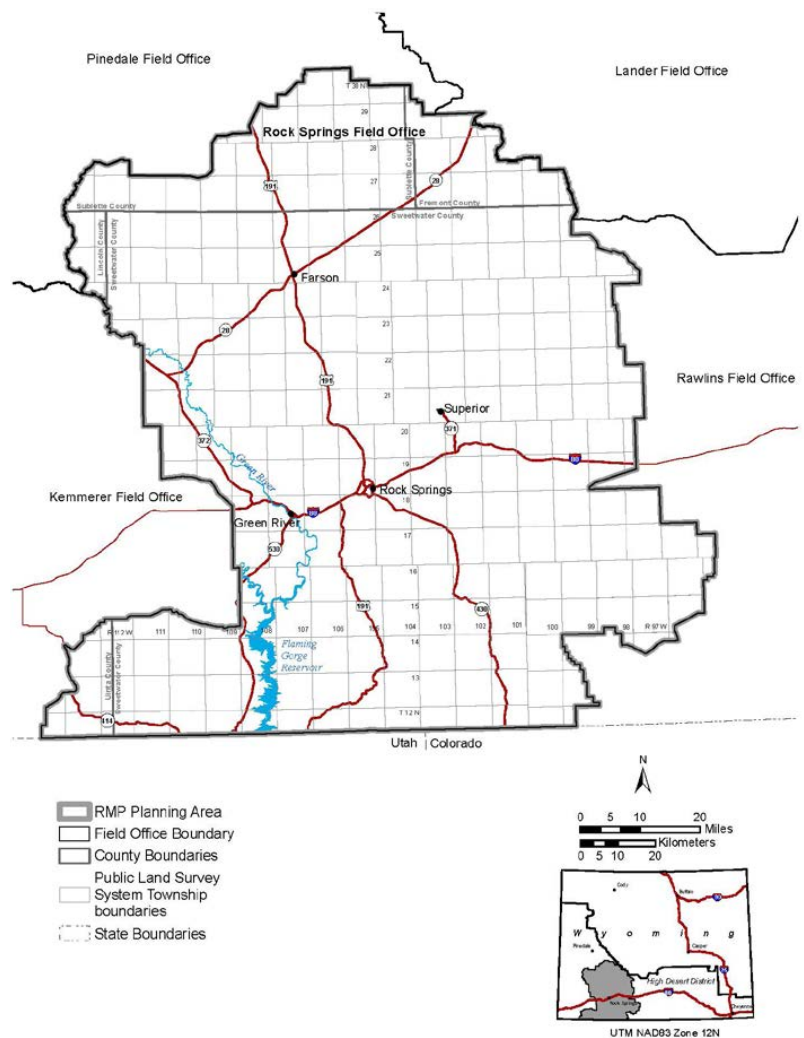
In 2023, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released the Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Rock Springs Field Office in Wyoming. The planning area includes 3.6 million acres of surface land and 3.7 million acres of mineral estate in portions of Lincoln, Sweetwater, Uinta, Sublette, and Fremont counties in southwest Wyoming. The RMP is a planning document, required by federal law, that sets goals and objectives that will guide future land and resource management actions.

The 90-day public comment period was originally set for August 18, 2023 to November 16, 2023 and was subsequently extended to January 17, 2024. The additional time gives local stakeholders who use and enjoy the lands within the Rock Springs BLM management area the opportunity to shape an acceptable, well-reasoned final proposal.

Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon formed a task force charged with developing recommendations for revising the draft RMP to meet the interests of Wyoming stakeholders. The task force is composed of 11 members representing various Wyoming interests: the Wyoming House of Representatives, the Wyoming Senate, conservation groups, economic development, livestock, local government, mining and trona, motorized recreation, oil and gas, renewable energy and utilities, and sportsmen.

The task force will incorporate public input from the interactive workshops organized by the University of Wyoming's Ruckelshaus Institute, along with the UW College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources, the UW School of Energy Resources, and the Wyoming County Commissioners Association.

In addition to sharing input with the task force via the public workshops, the public may also submit a comment directly to the BLM. Find more information about how to do so at uwyo.edu/rmp.



Map 1-1 from the Rock Springs draft RMP depicting the planning area.

Overview of Public Workshops

The purpose of these public workshops was to provide an opportunity for members of the Wyoming public to share their perspectives on the draft Resource Management Plan for the Rock Springs Field Office.

A total of four workshops were held November 17-18, 2023. The locations, dates, times, and number of participants at each meeting are described below in Table 1. Workshop locations and times were designed to welcome a wide variety of people with ties to the land managed by the Rock Springs Field Office.

The University of Wyoming’s [Ruckelshaus Institute](#) organized the workshops on behalf of Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon’s office. The Ruckelshaus Institute, the [UW School of Energy Resources](#), the [UW College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources](#), and the [Wyoming County Commissioners Association](#) facilitated the public workshops in the capacity of neutral conveners.



Table 1: Workshop Locations, Dates, and Participants

Location	Rock Springs #1	Rock Springs #2	Green River	Farson
Date & times	November 17, 2-4pm MT	November 17, 5-7pm MT	November 18, 9-11am MT	November 18, 2-4pm MT
Number of participants	103	71	49	~80

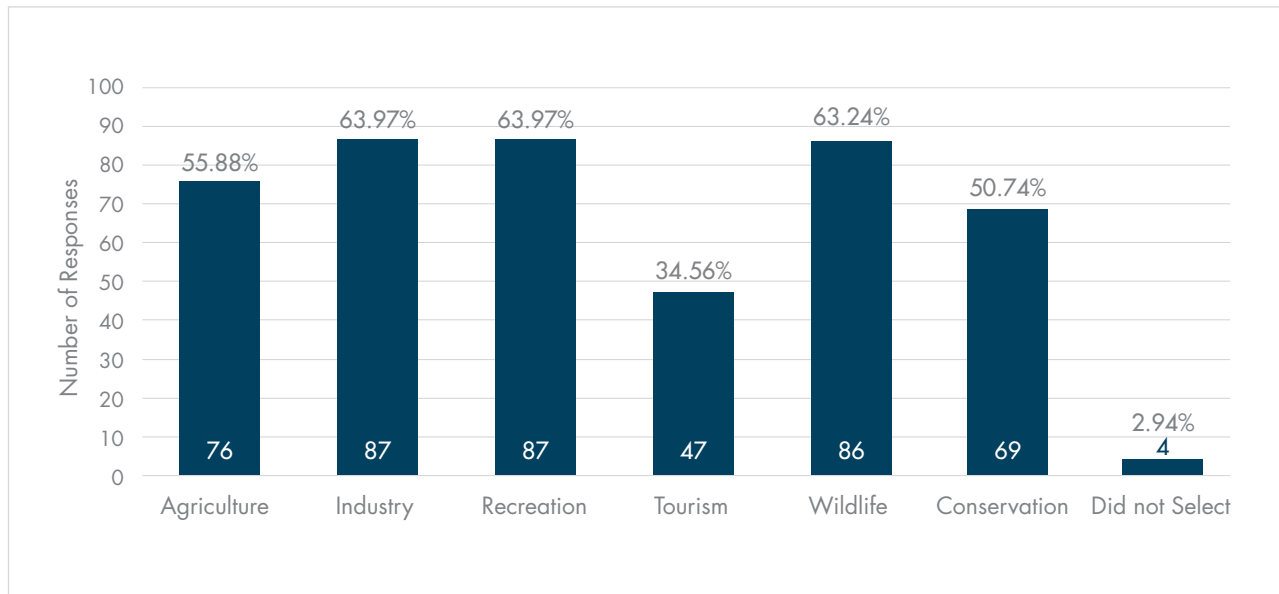
Workshop participants

Total workshop participation was approximately 300. The workshops were non-exclusive; individuals were welcome to attend more than one of the four workshops, and many did. Participants had the option to sign in and share their email addresses but were not required to do so.

Based on a voluntary workshop evaluation survey that participants were asked to complete at the end of each workshop, we know that workshop participants were primarily local, and came to discuss a range of interests relevant to the Rock Springs Field Office area (Figure 1).

The evaluation asked participants to indicate their home zip code. Of the 136 workshop participants who completed a post workshop evaluation survey, 24 total zip codes were listed, with the predominant zip codes being 82901 (n=49), 82932 (n=31), and 82935 (n=16).

Figure 1: Interests of workshop evaluation respondents



When asked “What category best reflects what you came to discuss at the public workshop?” over half of the evaluation respondents selected agriculture, industry, recreation, wildlife, and conservation, while about one-third selected tourism. Respondents could, and did, select more than one category.

Workshop design

The workshops were designed to provide an opportunity for participants to learn more about the RMP process, share their perspectives on the draft RMP, and listen to the perspectives offered by other participants.

Each workshop began with 30 minutes of introductory presentations that provided an overview of both the NEPA process—including how to submit a substantive comment—and the Rock Springs Draft RMP. Slides used in these presentations, and related information, are available online at uwyo.edu/rmp. Following these presentations, workshop facilitators organized people into breakout groups of 15 to 30 participants.

Each breakout session was led by one facilitator and one notetaker and lasted approximately 90 minutes. Using the prompts described below, facilitators first asked participants to talk in small groups of 3-5 for about 10 minutes and then led a full group discussion for another 10 minutes. During these full group discussions, notetakers in each breakout group aimed to capture verbatim statements. They took notes in real time, using a shared document displayed on a screen in the breakout room. This provided participants visual confirmation that their statements were accurately captured and the opportunity to correct the statement if they felt it was not accurate.

Facilitators included Weston M. Eaton, Temple Stoellinger, Selena Rose Gerace, Birch Dietz Malotky, Steve Smutko, Melanie Armstrong, Bridger Feuz, Barton Stam, and Hudson Hill. Notetakers included Temple Stoellinger, Kate Blyth Gamble, Alyssa Halls, Siobhan Lally, McKenna Marie Julian, and Dagan W. Montgomery.

Breakout room discussion prompts

Facilitators led breakout session discussions using the following script. Facilitators also provided a handout with a map of the planning area, an executive summary of the four alternatives, and the BLM's primary planning issues. The handout can be found in the appendices.

Script used by facilitators to lead breakout sessions:

We're here to talk about how the Bureau of Land Management Rock Spring Field Office manages these lands [With map on handout]. This includes 3.6 million acres of surface land and 3.7 million acres of mineral estate in portions of Lincoln, Sweetwater, Uinta, Sublette, and Fremont counties in southwestern Wyoming.

1. People are connected to these lands in many different ways.
 - a. Q: What about these lands is important to you?
2. The Resource Management Plan is a blueprint the BLM uses to keep lands healthy and productive. It establishes goals and objectives to guide future land and resource management actions.
 - a. Q: If you were writing the Resource Management Plan, what would you prioritize to support the things that are important to you?
3. We've heard a range of priorities throughout this discussion. The BLM has also identified 14 primary issues they want to address through this planning process [On handouts].
 - a. Q: Given all that, what advice would you give the task force for how to balance these priorities?
4. What additional comments would you like to share with the task force?



Methods for Analysis of Public Input

The workshops resulted in a comprehensive set of notes from each breakout session that provided the data analyzed in this report. Specifically, this data consists of separate sets of notes from breakout sessions from workshops held in Rock Springs (10 sets of notes), Green River (3 sets of notes), and Farson (4 sets of notes).

The overall goal of this analysis is to identify both the main themes as well as the full range of views and perspectives shared by workshop participants. A team of five analysts undertook a rigorous data analysis to achieve this goal following these steps:

1. *Data cleaning.* Each set of notes was reviewed and formatted consistently so that each speaker statement was separated by a line break to allow for analysis of all individual statements.
2. *Thematic coding.* Thematic coding is a form of qualitative data analysis where analysts, or coders, analyze the patterns and themes within a data set to identify underlying meaning in response to a research objective. Our research objective is to identify main themes as well as the full range of views and perspectives shared by workshop participants. Thematic coding took place in the following steps:
 - a. *Theme development.* The lead coder reviewed all data and identified central themes and sub-themes in accordance with the facilitation prompts described above. These themes and sub-themes are listed in the codebook.
 - b. *Codebook development.* The lead coder developed a codebook to guide analysis of all data. This codebook is available in the appendices.
 - c. *Coding statements.* The coding team then read the complete text from all notes taken from each breakout session (the data) and coded, or “tagged,” each individual statement according to the themes as defined in the codebook.
 - i. Coders employed multiple coding where an individual statement could be coded as reflecting more than one theme and/or sub-theme.
 - ii. The number of occurrences of individual statements reflecting each theme is described in tables listed below in the Findings section.
 - iii. Coders used Taguette, a free online qualitative software to assist this process (www.Taguette.org).
 - d. *Developing narratives.* Next, coders read all the text grouped under each theme and sub-theme, developed short narratives to summarize the main points as well as range of perspectives captured within each theme, and identified select verbatim quotes useful for illustrating the main themes.
 - e. *Reviewing and revising.* The coding team reviewed and revised the collective body of work to ensure the narratives and illustrative quotes were comprehensive and representative of the data.
 - f. *Data compiled.* All raw data was then sorted and compiled in a separate document that is available at uwyo.edu/rmp.

Findings

What people care about

Workshop participants first answered, “What about these lands is important to you?” Perspectives included several sub-themes including access, multiple use, economic interests, local people and communities, and other ways the land is important. Below we describe each and provide illustrative quotes from the public workshops. Table 2 (below) lists the number of occurrences for each sub-theme within the responses recorded by notetakers during the public workshops for this first prompt.

Table 2: “Important” and Related Sub-Theme Attributions

Theme	Important: Total	Important: Access	Important: Economic	Important: Local	Important: Multiple use	Important: Other
# of occurrences	290	78	54	68	39	51

PEOPLE VALUE ACCESS TO THE LAND

Participants emphasized the need for access to public lands for a range of purposes including personal use and enjoyment as well as industry and economic development. In particular, motorized access was often considered essential to the following uses, and others:

- Motorized and non-motorized recreation
- Grazing and managing lands for grazing
- Mineral extraction, including trona and lithium
- Oil and gas extraction, maintenance, and development
- Provision of utilities
- Access to private lands in the checkerboard
- Supporting public health and mental health
- Family and cultural traditions
- Higher quality of life for residents

“

Protection of the rights of the people to use the land for hunting, fishing, camping, mineral extraction. Protection for future generations. Protection for grazing. Protection for wildlife, vegetation, aesthetic value of Wyoming’s wide open spaces and there is a fine line there. ”

– FARSON

MULTIPLE USE IS ESSENTIAL

Participants emphasized that public lands are and should be synonymous with multiple use. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- These lands can support both natural resource development for industry, agriculture, and tourism and also conservation of wild, open spaces.
- Reducing multiple use could impede upon participants' freedom and individual rights to use the land.
- Some participants stressed the importance of specific uses, while others emphasized that all uses are valid and should be reflected in a resource management plan.

“

We value multi-use access. Between industry and recreation, the surface lands are the same. But with multi-use, a wide range of uses can make use of the land and take advantage of the resource. ”

– ROCK SPRINGS

THE REGION'S ECONOMIC VIABILITY DEPENDS ON THE LAND

Workshop participants made direct links between public land access, multiple use of public land, and the economic vitality of their local communities and all of Wyoming. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- Economic development on these lands supports local industries, contributes substantially to the tax base, and provides critical resources to the nation.
- A new emphasis on conservation would be to the detriment of economic development and stability by restricting natural resource extraction, agriculture, and tourism.
- Restrictions on industry would have ripple effects, such as the loss of jobs and other local businesses, reduced funding for schools and infrastructure, and diminished opportunities for future generations.
- Restriction on natural resource utilization here could create the need to obtain these resources from outside of Wyoming.
- The economic data and impact analysis in the RMP is out-of-date.

“

If you take away the ability for industry to use land for natural resources, you kill everything else, you kill the communities. ”

– FARSON

THE PEOPLE MOST IMPACTED BY THE RMP ARE THE ONES MOST CONNECTED TO THE LAND

Workshop participants shared how revisions to the RMP will have the greatest impact on local people and communities and how their connection with the land is foundational to their identity, culture, and way of life. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- Prioritize the needs, concerns, and knowledge of local residents in shaping a final RMP.
- The lands within the planning area, and access to these lands, shape people's sense of community.
- People's heritage and family traditions are rooted in the land and it's important that their children and future generations continue to have this connection.
- Recognize that the local people have been successful stewards and caretakers of these lands for generations and want their expertise to inform management now and in the future.

ADDITIONAL WAYS THE LAND IS IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE

Wilderness, wildlife, and water

Another theme was the importance of wilderness, wildlife, and water. This included protecting and conserving wild lands and water resources, both for the solitude and scenic beauty they provide and their ability to support healthy wildlife populations including fish, ungulates, and birds.

Other

Participants raised several other topics in response to this prompt ("what about these lands is important to you?") that were not captured in the above sub-themes, including:

- Government overreach and encroachment on personal freedom
- The length, lack of transparency, and other flaws in the RMP process
- The accuracy and timeliness of the data driving the revision
- Wild horse management

“

Heritage. Generations of families have been here. A lot of history is here and we want to be able to use it and share it with the next generation of family. ”

– ROCK SPRINGS

“

Providing habitat so animals can make it through the winter, especially after last year's winter. Water conservation, air quality. Everyone is talking about getting water to California and protecting water quality is so important. The most important thing to me is the protection of resources for future generations. ”

– FARSON

What should be done

In response to the second prompt, “If you were writing the RMP, what would you prioritize to support the things that are important to you?” participants said they would maintain access to the land, allow local people and communities to inform decision making, embody the principle of multiple use, and strengthen economic vitality. While similar to the “important” sub-themes described above, the responses to this prompt provided additional specificity for how to actualize these interests in the RMP. “Science and information” arose as an additional sub theme. Participants also shared perspectives on prioritizing wildlife and natural settings and streamlining the processes for permitting and related requirements. Table 3 (below) lists the number of occurrences for each sub-theme within the responses recorded by notetakers during the public workshops for this “what would you prioritize” prompt.

Table 3: “Prioritize” and Related Sub-Theme Attributions

Theme	Prioritize: Total	Prioritize: Access	Prioritize: Multiple use	Prioritize: Local	Prioritize: Economic	Prioritize: Science and Information	Prioritize: Other
# of occurrences	251	44	50	43	18	31	65

MAINTAIN EXISTING ACCESS AND PROTECT FUTURE ACCESS

Participants offered numerous suggestions for prioritizing access in a revised RMP. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- Start with the current RMP and make changes only where necessary.
- Restrict use as little as possible to achieve the necessary protections (for example, around a cultural site or wildlife habitat). Avoid painting protections with a broad brush that excludes access over large areas of land.
- Prioritize industry access as a means of economic development. Maintain current right-of-ways, roads, etc., for existing leases and plan for emerging energy and resource uses.
- Clarify how a revised RMP will be enforced or otherwise put into practice.
- Ensure equal access for all interests versus picking and choosing who gets access.
- Consider how restricting access could displace and concentrate use elsewhere in a way that increases impacts.
- Ensure clarity and agreement between BLM, the public, and other actors on definitions and terms of access for dirt roads, service roads, and emergency access routes, etc.

“

Micro-siting ACECs, trail buffers, and right-of-way exclusions. Avoiding blanket closures of buffer zones, deferring to lead agencies (e.g., Fish and Wildlife Service) for migratory birds and raptor nest buffers. ”

– ROCK SPRINGS

SUPPORT MULTIPLE USE ACROSS THE PLANNING AREA

Workshop participants offered a range of pragmatic suggestions for how a revised RMP could prioritize multiple-use. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- Make management decisions on a case-by-case basis; certain uses are more appropriate in some areas than others. For example, the “golden triangle” is important for wildlife protection, while elsewhere major trona deposits are important for economic development.
- Ensure equal treatment among uses, rather than a focus on one type of use over others, to be truly multiple use.
- Engage stakeholders representing all interests concerned.
- Conduct a close review of ACECs—how they actually work and how specific requirements and scale have been determined (particularly for Alternative B).
- Take into account the special significance of wildlife in certain parts of the planning area.
- Some participants focused on multiple use as meaning several uses occurring on the same land. Others emphasized different uses being spread out across the landscape.
- To some, conservation was an important part of multiple use, whereas others explicitly stated that conservation shouldn’t count as a “use.”

“

I would prioritize a healthy landscape throughout. Not implying it isn’t now, it is, let’s keep it that way. The plan should be flexible enough to allow for development. Keep those ecosystems healthy and do what makes sense on the ground. This RMP struggles with that - being high level enough but also applicable. Room for nuance and fine-tuning. Especially for the folks who spend their daily lives out there. ”

– ROCK SPRINGS

LISTEN TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Expressing a general concern over local voices not being heard, participants asked decision-makers to consider the experience, knowledge, insights, and expertise of local people when deciding how best to manage these lands. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- Engage local stakeholders and recognize their long history of good stewardship of the land.
- Use existing land management plans developed by local government entities, including county commissioners, as the basis for any changes to the existing RMP.

“

I would say that the main priority with RMP is that local people—who have the experience and knowledge and work in each area and know what is on the ground—they should have the strongest voice in preparing the RMP and evidence is showing that they were cut out. ”

– FARSON

- Strongly consider impacts on the livelihoods and quality of life of the people and communities with historic connections to these lands.

PROTECT PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOODS

Participants shared how local communities depend directly on the many industries that utilize the land and mineral estate of the planning area and said they would prioritize the long-term vitality of the local economy. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- Prioritize responsible economic growth that minimizes unnecessary negative impacts on the land by employing industry best practices.
- Recognize the value of industry, agriculture, scenic lands, and recreation.
- Make economic development easier by removing barriers and streamlining permitting.

“

There needs to be a priority on economic welfare for all of Sweetwater County. Shutting down trona, oil and gas will greatly impact Sweetwater County's economy and way of life. ”

– FARSON

USE THE BEST AVAILABLE INFORMATION

Participants voiced the need for accurate and up-to-date scientific and technical information for determining management needs and the economic implications of management decisions. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- Update the RMP to include the most current science and data.
- Make the RMP flexible to account for future transformation and innovations; technology and science both change rapidly, particularly in the energy sector.

“

Scoping was developed years ago—in the last 10 years science and technology has changed completely, making the original scoping no longer reliable. We must use local and current knowledge. The plan is no longer based on the best, most innovative information. There are major industrial projects coming in. The RMP needs to consider what the impacts of those industrial projects will be. ”

– ROCK SPRINGS

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE RMP

Wildlife and natural settings

Some participants said they would prioritize wildlife and natural settings within the RMP, noting the need for effective predator management and control, invasive species management, and protections for critical habitat and migration corridors that are in balance with resource development.

Streamlined process

Several participants raised the need for a streamlined process for developing, implementing, and enforcing the next RMP.

Other

Participants offered several other suggestions in response to this prompt (“what would you prioritize?”) that were not captured in the above sub-themes, including:

- Begin with a thorough review of the existing RMP as a baseline for making choices about what a future RMP ought to prioritize.
- Consider other regulations and statutes to ensure the RMP is consistent with them.
- Prioritize enforcing existing rules before adding more restrictions.
- Minimize or eliminate impacts on private land of visual resource management, right-of-way restrictions, and other management actions.
- Curb wind and solar development.
- Consider how the final Rock Springs RMP will impact other BLM field offices and other federal land management decisions.

“

Critical habitat needs to be considered. Keep the industry from developing the habitat and impacting the golden triangle, adobe town, sage grouse, migration corridors. The economic concerns should not spoil the untouched lands. ”

– GREEN RIVER

“

If I was writing this, I would set deadlines for the specific FLPMA and NEPA process and live to them. ”

– ROCK SPRINGS

How to balance priorities

Workshop perspectives on the third and final prompt—“What advice would you give the task force for how to balance multiple priorities?”—included focusing on local people and communities, starting by assessing the status quo, ensuring flexibility, and considering up-to-date scientific information. Participants also asked the task force to bring in multiple voices and to embrace the existing set of rules found in current regulations and plans. Table 4 (below) lists the number of occurrences for each sub-theme within the responses recorded by notetakers during the public workshops for this “how to balance these priorities” prompt.

Table 4: “Balance” and Related Sub-Theme Attributions

Theme	Balance: Total	Balance: Local people and communities	Balance: Start with the status quo	Balance: Lean into flexibility	Balance: Science and current information	Balance: Additional points
# of occurrences	182	41	33	22	18	68

FOCUS ON LOCAL NEEDS AND KNOWLEDGE

Participants suggested that the knowledge, experience, and needs of local people and users equip them to make critical and nuanced decisions about balancing multiple priorities and capturing this within a revised RMP. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- The RMP was a top-down process implemented by people who don’t understand the land or communities and failed to incorporate local perspectives. This severely eroded trust between the community and institutions responsible for decision making about management.
- Ensure that the RMP reflects the values and priorities of the users, particularly local residents.
- Make concerted efforts to build trust among local people, local decision-makers, and federal agencies, including making the process more accessible to a wider range of people.

“Involve the local people. If you do, you can get together multiple interests that are pretty good for everyone. A plan will come up that is balanced. It may not be perfect, but will be as balanced as possible.”

– FARSON

START WITH THE STATUS QUO

Others responding to the challenge of balancing multiple priorities advised the task force to first ask what exactly is in need of change. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- The balance of priorities in the current management plan is mostly working.
- Start with the current management plan and only slightly revise it to address clearly identified and data-driven problems.

“I don’t feel that there is an imbalance, or a need to change the balance. The BLM is trying to fix something that is not broke.”

– ROCK SPRINGS

LEAN INTO FLEXIBILITY

Participants emphasized that balance requires flexibility and responsiveness: over time, on the ground, and with each other. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- The RMP needs to account for the quickening pace of change, including technological change affecting energy development and evolving conservation approaches.
- The RMP should write with the fine lines of a pencil rather than the broad strokes of a paintbrush.
- Task force members should listen to each other and be willing to accept other opinions. They need to work together, rather than only pursuing their own particular interests.

FOLLOW THE DATA

Other participants pointed to scientific research and recent data as being vital information for making decisions about how to balance the range of priorities at stake. Suggestions and perspectives included:

- Out-of-date data threatens the integrity of the RMP. It needs to be updated.
- The reasons and data behind specific decisions in the RMP should be more transparent and clearly communicated.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR BALANCE

Bring in multiple voices

Participants also advised the task force to include multiple voices and said that compromise would be needed and highly valuable. They suggested that task force members should connect not only with members of their own interest groups but also talk to those they disagreed with in order to broaden their perspective.

Embrace current rules

Other participants offered that a key to balancing the multiple priorities at stake would be recognizing and working within existing regulations, including the multiple-use mandate and related laws.

“

The issues constantly change, so we need to be flexible enough make the reaction reasonable and reliable. But, flexibility needs to also be applicable to the future. Emerging issues and development will impact the future and the RMP does not take account of that. ”

– GREEN RIVER

“

Decisions need to be based on data and current data. Data from ten years ago is not valid and should not be the basis for making these changes. Data from today is only good for a short time. ”

– FARSON

“

Consider who is using the land, and who wants access to it. Environmentalists, hunters, recreators, industry, livestock. Compromise so everyone is at the table and gets a piece, but no one gets everything they want. Bring all stakeholders to the table. ”

– GREEN RIVER

“

The bottom line is staying with the multiple use concept. ”

– FARSON

Other

Participants raised several other topics and suggestions in response to this prompt (“how to balance these priorities?”) that were not captured in the above sub-themes, including:

- Focus less on what a specific management action is called and more on what outcome people want.
- Have a forward-thinking mindset. Protect wildlife, water, and open spaces for future generations.
- Prioritize reliable energy.
- Make sure everyone gets something they want.
- Work towards clarity and consistency in the plan.
- Ensure fair representation in the decision-making process. Don't allow a few people to make decisions for everyone.

Summary and Conclusion

In response to a request from the Governor's office, the University of Wyoming and supporting partners convened four public workshops during the extended comment period for the Rock Springs Field Office draft RMP. These workshops were held in Rock Springs, Green River, and Farson, Wyoming on November 17 and 18, 2023, and provided an opportunity for approximately 300 participants, from at least 24 Wyoming zip codes, to share their perspectives on, and vision for, the Rock Springs RMP.

The workshops began with 30 minutes of presentations on the NEPA process and the draft RMP, and the remaining 90 minutes were dedicated to small-group, facilitated discussions of three prompts: (1) What about these lands is important to you? (2) If you were writing the RMP, what would you prioritize to support the things that are important to you? and (3) What advice would you give the task force for how to balance multiple priorities?

These workshops were novel: they provided an opportunity for individual participants to not only share their perspectives, but also listen to the perspectives of others. This approach generated rich discussion and engagement that notetakers captured in real time. A team of data analysts used this comprehensive set of notes to identify key themes and sub-themes in workshop responses, which they captured in short narratives and representative quotes. This report's executive summary distills key insights from the workshops, while the findings section provides in-depth description of each theme and sub-theme.

Workshop conveners also asked participants to share their experience with these workshops through a post-event evaluation survey. Complete survey results are listed below. Importantly, most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops provided an opportunity for them to share their perspectives, concerns, and values and to listen to those shared by others. Nearly all agreed or strongly agreed that their overall experience was positive.

Next, this report will be shared with the Governor's Task Force on the Rock Springs RMP to inform their collaborative development of recommendations for the responsible and durable management of the Rock Springs Field Office Management Area of Southwest Wyoming. The report is also made available to the public through the Ruckelshaus Institute's website at uwyo.edu/rmp.

Evaluation of Public Workshops

At the conclusion of each workshop, facilitators requested that participants fill out a post-event survey to evaluate participant views of the workshop’s effectiveness. Participants could either fill out a paper form that facilitators distributed or scan a QR code to access the form online. The QR code was available at the sign-in tables and in each breakout room.

The survey asked respondents to select which meeting(s) they attended and their topics of interest, and provide their home zip code. Then it asked respondents to rank several statements about the workshops on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. Finally, the survey provided an opportunity for any further comments. There were a total of 136 responses. The results of this survey are included in the tables below.

Chart 1. Responses to Evaluation by Meeting

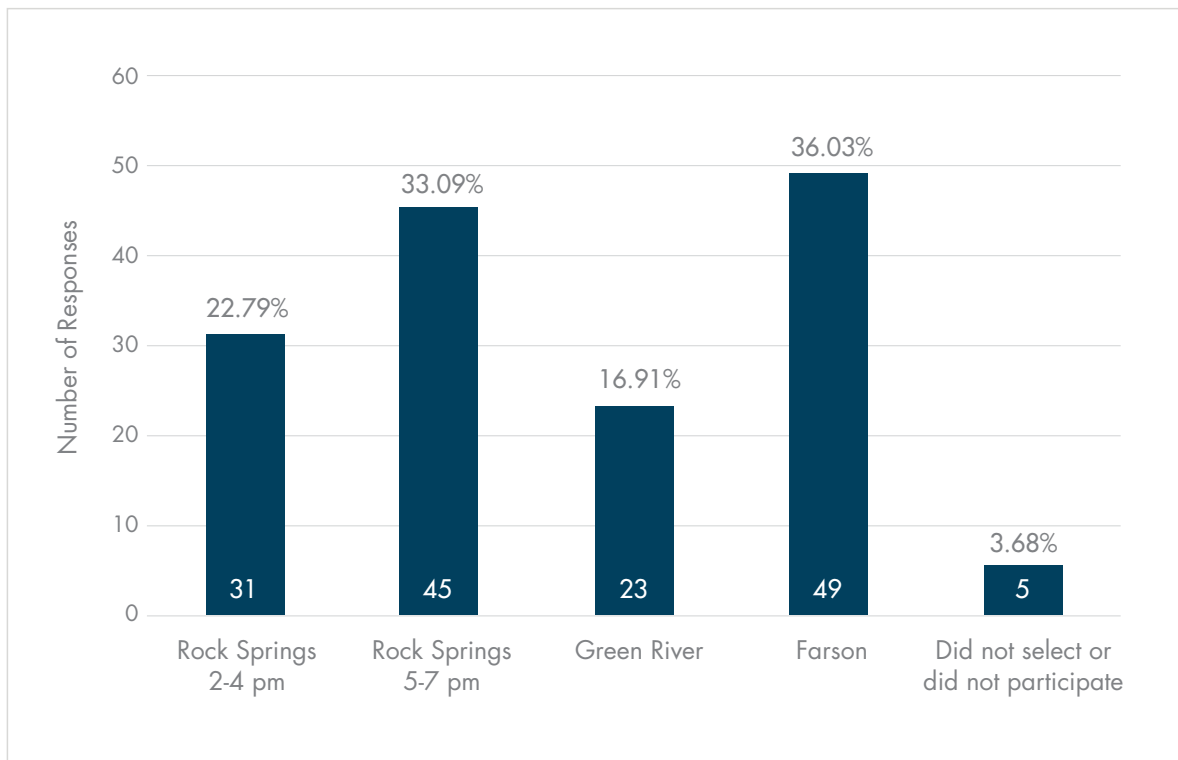


Chart 2. Interests Represented

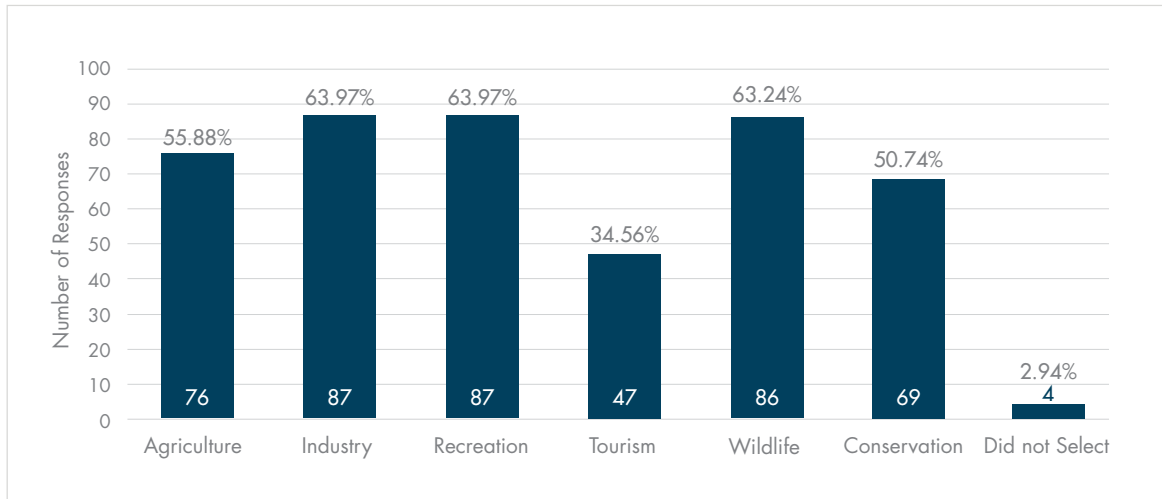


Chart 3. Quality of Workshop Experience

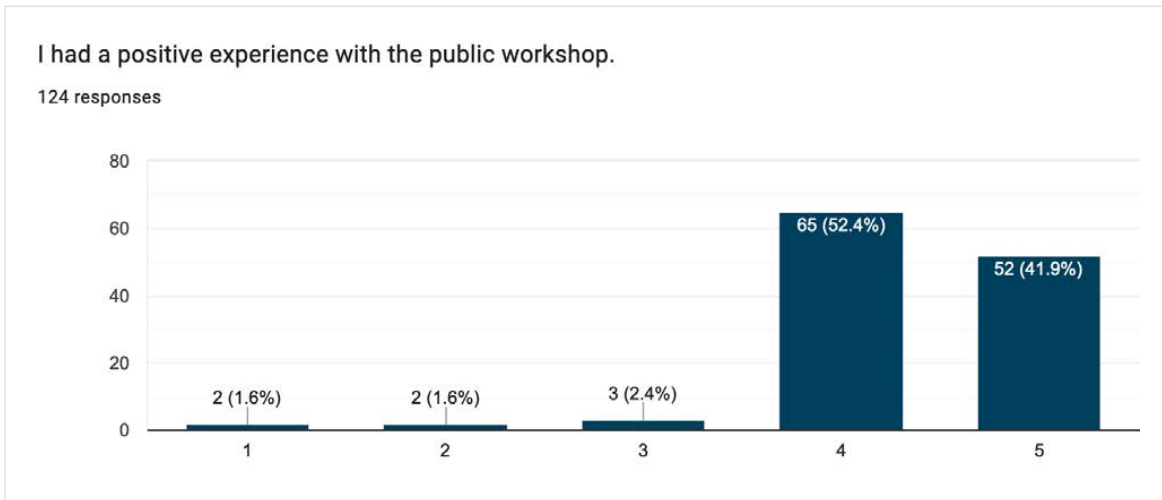


Chart 4: Opportunity to Share

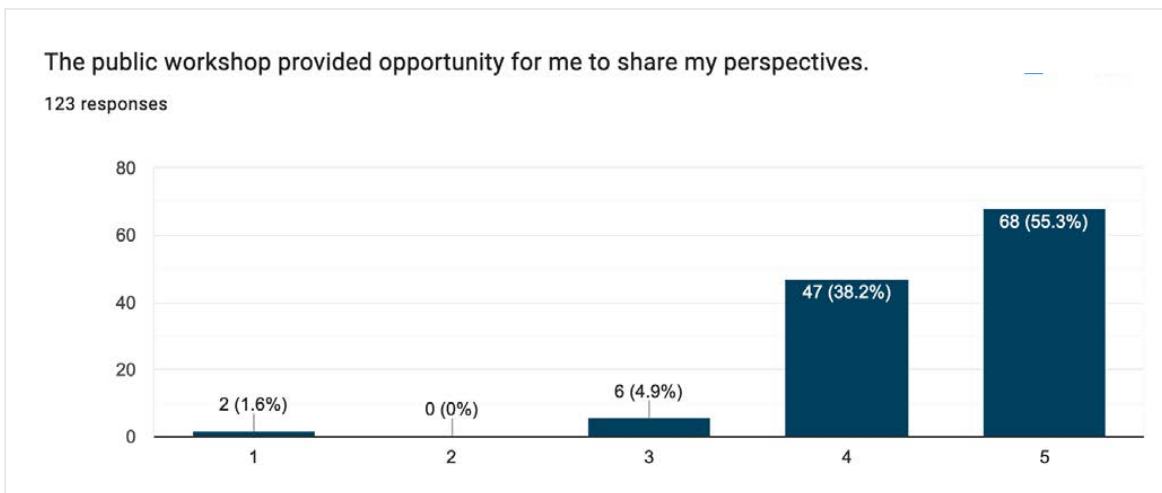


Chart 5: Concerns Taken Seriously

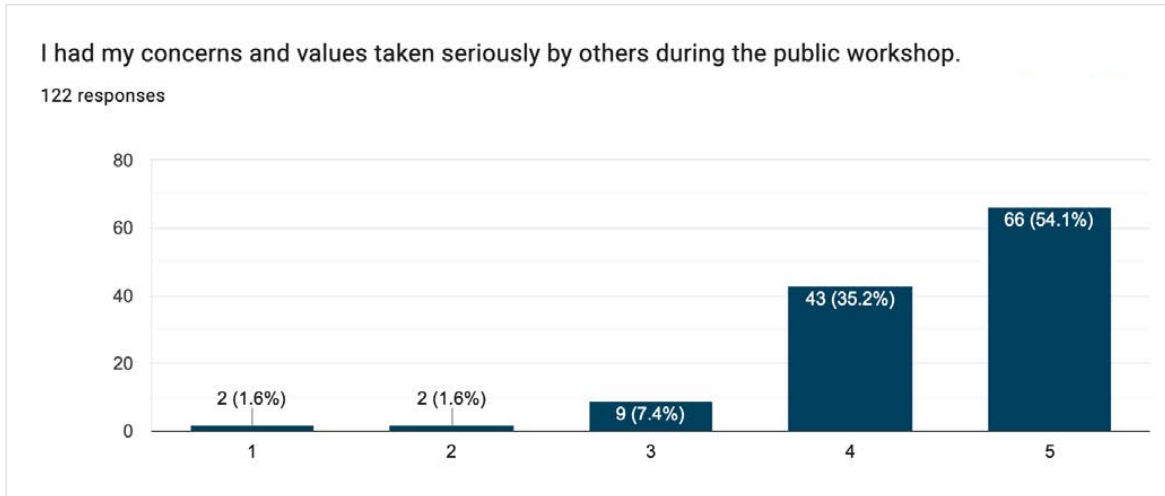
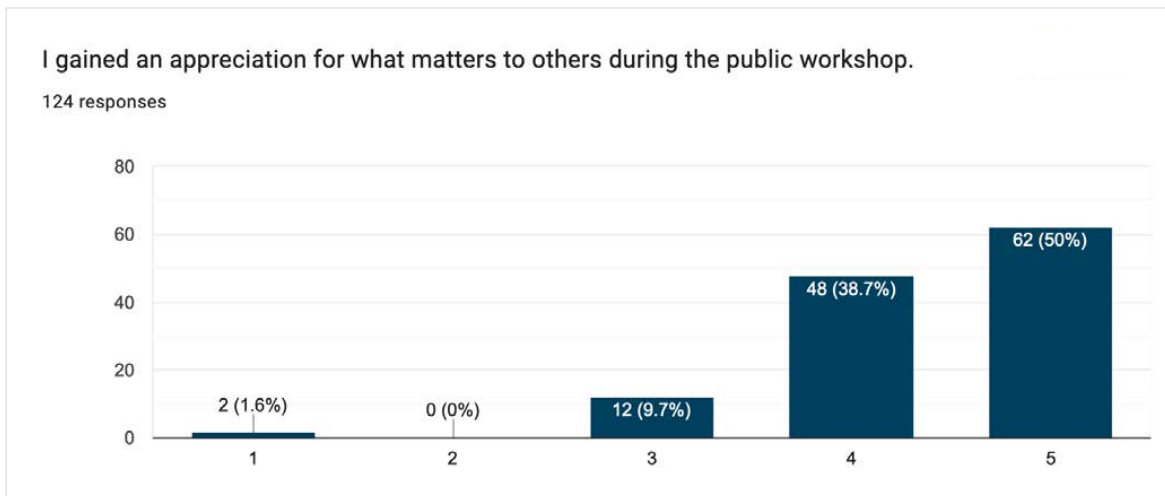


Chart 6: Appreciation for Other Perspectives



Data Summary

The overall consensus from the majority of respondents shows that they agreed (4) to strongly agreed (5) that the public workshops were beneficial to their understanding of the issue and felt that their comments and concerns were heard by the facilitators and other participants.

Appendices

CODEBOOK

SECTION 1 IMPORTANT: USE THE “IMPORTANT” CODES / HIGHLIGHTS FOR DATA (SPEAKER TURN UNITS) THAT FALL UNDER THE FIRST QUESTION

A Important: Access: Access includes discussion of any means or access for any purpose, from recreation to industry, motorized, or non motorized.

B Important: Economic: Economic includes discussion of similar terms including development, community livelihood, other livelihood including agriculture or recreation.

C Important: Local: Local includes discussion of local control, Wyoming, community, family, way of life, identity, local influence on a plan, or how the land is or should be managed.

D Important: Multiple Use: Multi use includes discussion of how the land should, is, had been managed, and typically in reference to the rules for how the BLM ought to manage land

E Important: Other: Other topics discussed that do not fit well in the above categories.

SECTION 2 PRIORITIZE: USE THE “PRIORITIZE” CODES / HIGHLIGHTS FOR DATA (SPEAKER TURN UNITS) THAT FALL UNDER THE SECOND QUESTION

F Prioritize: Access: Access includes discussion of any means or access for any purpose, from recreation to industry, motorized, or non motorized.

G Prioritize: Local: Local includes discussion of local control, Wyoming, community, family, way of life, identity, local influence on a plan, or how the land is or should be managed.

H Prioritize: Multiple Use: Multiple use includes discussion of how the land should, is, had been managed, and typically in reference to the rules for how the BLM ought to manage land

I Prioritize: Science: Science refers to various discussions on information, data, integrity of data, validity of information, experts, agency experts, reports, any other source of expert knowledge relevant for the RMP. Includes what is, should, ought, or could happen with science.

J Prioritize: Economic: Economic includes discussion of similar terms including development, community livelihood, other livelihood including agriculture or recreation.

K Prioritize: Other: Other topics discussed that do not fit well in the above categories.

SECTION 3 BALANCE: USE THE “PRIORITIZE” CODES / HIGHLIGHTS FOR DATA (SPEAKER TURN UNITS) THAT FALL UNDER THE THIRD QUESTION

L Balance: Science: Science refers to various discussions on information, data, integrity of data, validity of information, experts, agency experts, reports, any other source of expert knowledge relevant for the RMP. Includes what is, should, ought, or could happen with science.

M Balance: Status quo: Status quo includes discussion of how land is currently managed, and whether, how, why that should, could, is, should not change.

N Balance: Flexibility: Flexibility includes discussion of prioritizing flexibility, adaptability, local influence on land decisions, including recognizing that making decisions, rules, agreements, etc., may decrease flexibility.

O Balance: Local: Local includes discussion of local control, Wyoming, community, family, way of life, identity, local influence on a plan, or how the land is or should be managed.

P Balance: Other: Other topics discussed that do not fit well in the above categories.

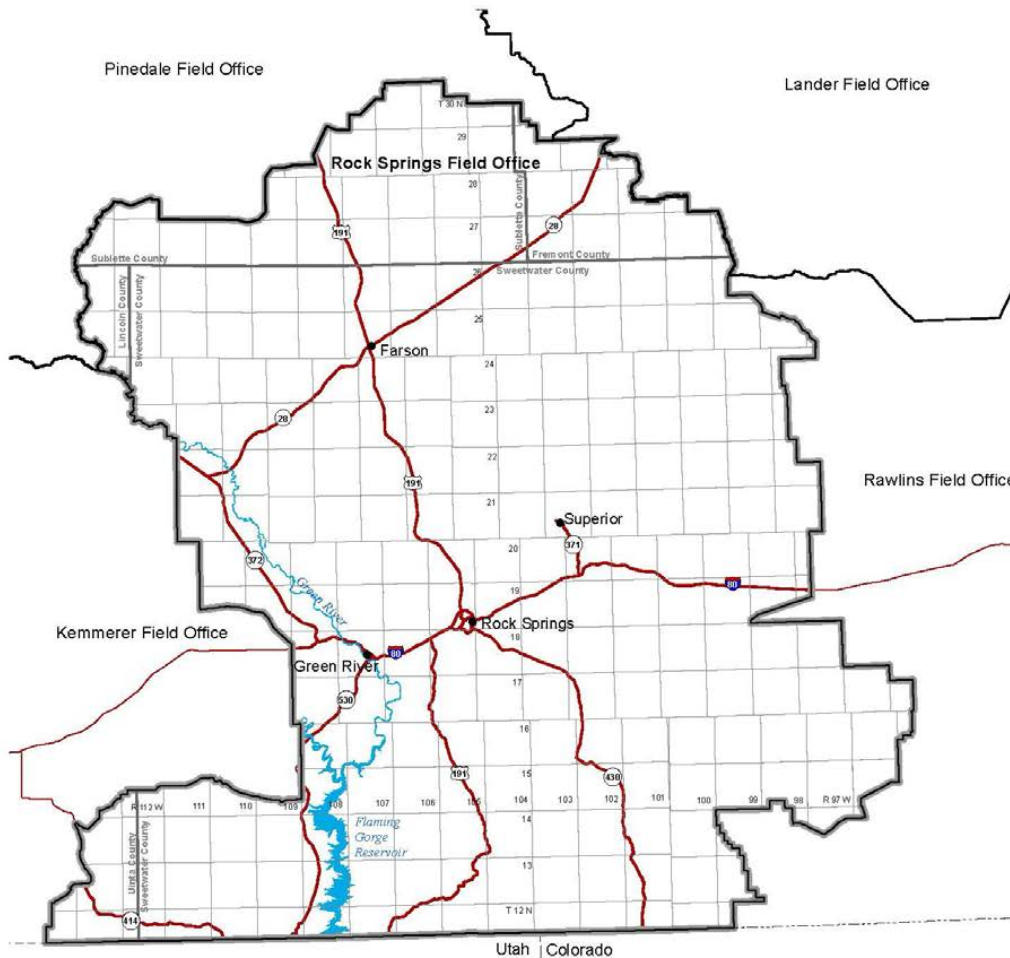
SECTION 4 ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS: REVIEW ANY DATA CAPTURED HERE AND ASK FIRST, IS THIS SUITED FOR THE ABOVE CODES? IF NOT, TAG IT HERE IN Q

Q Any additional thoughts: Content from the final open question that does not fit neatly in one or more of the above categories.

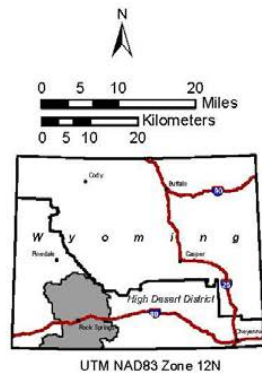
Rock Springs RMP – Public Workshop References

MAP OF AREA UNDER DISCUSSION (DRAFT RMP, MAP 1-1)

Map 1-1: Rock Springs RMP Planning Area



- RMP Planning Area
- Field Office Boundary
- County Boundaries
- Public Land Survey
- System Township boundaries
- State Boundaries



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PLANNING ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (RMP DRAFT, ES-2)

- Renewable energy development and associated transmission infrastructure
- Energy and minerals development
- Lands and realty actions
- Special designations and lands with wilderness characteristics
- Visual resource management
- Cultural and historic resources
- Native American concerns
- Urban interface issues
- Recreation management
- Healthy landscapes initiative
- Livestock grazing/rangeland management
- Wildlife habitat management, including protection of sensitive species habitat
- Fire and fuels management
- Air quality

*Please note that wild horse, sage grouse, and travel management are addressed by plans separate from the RMP

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES (RMP DRAFT, ES-3)

Alternative A (No Action Alternative)

Resources on lands administered by the BLM within the planning area are currently managed under the Green River RMP (1997) and Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan (CAP) (2004), as amended. Management under Alternative A represents a continuation of these management plans, which balances protection of resource values with the use and development of resources.

Alternative B (Agency Preferred Alternative)

Alternative B emphasizes conservation of resource values with constraints on resource uses. Relative to all alternatives, Alternative B conserves the most land area for physical, biological, and cultural resources.

Alternative B emphasizes the improvement and protection of habitat for wildlife and sensitive plant and animal species, improvement of riparian areas, and implementation of management actions that improve water quality and enhance protection of cultural resources.

Alternative C

Alternative C emphasizes resource uses (e.g., energy and mineral development and other commodity uses). Relative to all alternatives, Alternative C proposes the least restrictive management actions for energy and commodity development and the least protective management actions for physical, biological, and cultural resources while maintaining protections required by laws and regulations. Under this alternative, development and use of resources within the planning area would occur with intensive management of surface disturbing and disruptive activities.

Alternative D

Alternative D explores a management approach that is less restrictive for resource uses than Alternative B, while also having a greater conservation focus than Alternative C. This approach allows for opportunities to use and develop resources within the planning area while promoting environmental conservation.