

From the Proposed RMP:

### **Special Recreation Management Areas**

SRMAs are an administrative unit where the existing or proposed recreation opportunities and recreation setting characteristics are recognized for their unique value, importance and/or distinctiveness, especially as compared to other areas used for recreation. These areas are identified during the resource management planning process and are traditionally areas that experience higher recreation use, require extra recreation investment, or need more intensive recreation management. (p579)

### **Extensive Recreation Management Areas**

ERMAs are an administrative unit that requires specific management consideration in order to address recreation use, demand, or R&VS program investments. ERMAs are managed to support and sustain the principal recreation activities and the associated qualities and conditions of the ERMA. Management in all ERMAs is focused on custodial implementation actions that address visitor health and safety, user conflicts, resource protection issues, and maintaining access or appropriate activity participation. The BLM often designates multiple ERMAs in a planning area based on homogenous land type or recreational opportunity factors across a large area. Lands with public access are available for dispersed recreational use by the general public. Actions proposed under other resource management programs will generally affect the recreation resource more substantially in areas with legal public access. (p580)

### **Public Lands Not Designated as Recreation Management Areas**

Public lands that are not designated as SRMAs or ERMAs are managed to meet basic R&VS and resource stewardship needs. Recreation is not emphasized, however recreation activities may occur (except on any lands closed to public use). Currently, there are no lands identified as closed to public entry or use in the planning area. The R&VS for lands outside of RMAs are managed to allow recreation uses that are not in conflict with the primary uses of these lands. In general, these lands in the planning area will include BLM-administered parcels without legal public access. Recreation can and often does occur on lands without public access; these parcels are primarily used for recreation by adjacent private landowners or commercial outfitters and guides operating under a SRP. (p580)

### **Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

FLPMA section 103(a) defines an ACEC as an area within public lands where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historical, cultural, and scenic values, fish and wildlife, and natural systems or processes, and to protect human life and safety from natural hazards. ACEC implementation regulations are 43 CFR 1610.7-2(b). The land use planning process may officially designate an area found to meet ACEC criteria and would specify the special management direction needed to protect the relevant and important resource values. While the BFO does not currently have any designated ACECs, there are several areas that meet the relevant and important criteria. (p594)

## **Wilderness Study Areas**

In 1964, Congress passed the Wilderness Act, thereby establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System for the purpose of preserving lands in a natural condition for the benefit of present and future generations. Through FLPMA (Section 603), Congress directed the BLM to inventory, study, and recommend which public lands under its administration should be designated as Wilderness. WSAs are areas determined to meet Wilderness eligibility requirements but for which Congress has not acted on the managing agency's recommendation. WSAs often have special qualities, such as ecological, geological, educational, historic, scientific, and scenic values. They are managed in accordance with BLM Manual 6330 – Management of Wilderness Study Areas to prevent impairment of wilderness characteristics until Congress acts to designate such areas as Wilderness or release the areas from further study. (p605)

### *Indicators*

WSAs must be managed in such a manner as to preserve unimpaired their wilderness characteristics as discussed in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964, and incorporated in FLPMA (Section 603), which states: "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value." The BLM performed inventories of roadless areas in the planning area in 1979 and made recommendations to Congress of areas potentially suitable for designation as Wilderness. These recommendations are based on factors such as the manageability of the area, how well it meets the characteristics of wilderness, conflicts or potential for conflicts with other users and uses, and other relevant factors. (p605)

### *Current Condition*

While there are no congressionally designated Wilderness areas in the planning area, the BFO does manage three WSAs. The three BLM-administered WSAs in the planning area include Gardner Mountain, North Fork Powder River, and Fortification Creek (Map 75). The BLM completed the Wyoming Statewide Wilderness Study Report in 1991 (BLM 1991b). In this study, the BLM inventoried and documented the features of all WSAs in Wyoming. In addition, each WSA was recommended or not recommended for designation as Wilderness. Regardless of the BLM recommendation, all WSAs included in the 1991 report continue to be managed as WSAs and must be addressed as WSAs in RMP revisions. The BLM recommendations were incorporated in the 1985 Buffalo RMP. As of October 1, 2012, Congress had not acted on these recommendations. Congress requires the BLM to manage WSAs to preserve the wilderness characteristics under the non-impairment standard until Congress designates the lands under wilderness review as Wilderness, or releases the lands to uses other than Wilderness.

### *Trends*

Congress has not taken action on the WSAs within the planning area since 1979. Given the historic, regional and political context of wilderness, Congress is not expected to take action regarding the WSAs

during the life of this plan. BLM management continues to manage the WSAs within the Buffalo planning area to the non-impairment standard.

#### **Gardner Mountain WSA (WY-060-201)**

The Gardner Mountain WSA, which encompasses approximately 6,423 acres with no state or private inholdings, is in Johnson County 40 miles southwest of Buffalo. The area is characterized by the rugged terrain of the southern Big Horn Mountains and dominated by ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, limber pine, scattered mountain mahogany, and meadows. Deep, steep-walled canyons of Beartrap Creek and the North Fork of the Red Fork Powder River are the dominant perennial water sources. The area provides winter habitat for elk and mule deer and other wildlife resources including mountain lions, black bears, turkeys, blue grouse, golden eagles, and red-tailed hawks, among others. Solitude, excellent fishing opportunities, wildlife-based recreation, historic landscapes, and naturalness are some of the wilderness opportunities in this WSA.

#### **North Fork Powder River WSA (WY-060-202)**

The North Fork Powder River WSA, which encompasses approximately 10,089 acres with no state or private in holdings, is in Johnson County 30 miles southwest of Buffalo. The area is dominated by two deep, rugged and scenic canyons – Pass Creek and North Fork Powder River. Vegetation in the steep terrain is dominated by ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and limber pine, while mixed with open, native-grass covered areas. The area provides winter range for elk, is a pronghorn migration route, and provides habitat for black bear and a variety of other species and raptors. Solitude, excellent fishing opportunities, primitive and unconfined recreation, and naturalness are some of the wilderness opportunities in this WSA. (p606)

From the Approved RMP:

**Table 3.26. 6000 LAND RESOURCES (LR) – RECREATION (p143-146)**

<b>GOAL LR:7</b> Diverse recreational opportunities are provided.		
<b>Objectives:</b>		
LR:7.1 Manage SRMAs and ERMA's in partnership with stakeholders.		
LR:7.2 Manage recreation to protect resources, maintain public health and safety, and to provide a diverse array of benefits to the public.		
LR:7.3 Manage recreation opportunities to maintain a minimal level of user conflict.		
<b>GOAL LR:8</b> Recreation facilities balance public demand with other resource values.		
<b>Objective:</b>		
LR:8.1 Design and maintain recreation sites to meet acceptable health and safety standards while supporting other resource values.		
<b>GOAL LR:9</b> Awareness, education, and support for BFO recreation programs and opportunities.		
<b>Objective:</b>		
LR:9.1 Emphasize and support collaborative public outreach.		
Record #	Goal/Objective	Decisions
Rec-6001	LR:7.1 LR:7.2	Develop or revise RAMPs for the SRMAs and ERMA's as public demand and management needs dictate.
Rec-6002	LR:7.2	Allow casual use of the public land for hiking, bicycling, hunting, fishing, camping and similar uses.
Rec-6003	LR:7.2 LR:8.1 LR:9.1	Open the planning area to dispersed recreation where consistent with other resource values.
Rec-6004	LR:9.1	Provide general and interpretive information as well as information designed to prevent trespass to visitors of SRMAs and other high-use recreation areas.
Rec-6005	LR:8.1	Maintain existing facilities consistent with the recreational setting.
Rec-6006	LR:7.2	Provide diverse recreational opportunities in cooperation with a variety of user groups.
Rec-6007	LR:9.1	Work with state, local groups, and adjacent landowners to identify and develop recreational facilities and trails and to improve public access to public lands.
Rec-6008	LR:7.2 LR:8.1	Design any new recreation facilities within a SRMA to be ADA compliant. Upgrade existing recreation facilities to be ADA compliant as time and funding allow.
Rec-6009	LR:7.2	Pursue access to public lands for recreational purposes.
Rec-6010	LR:7.2	Avoid riparian habitat or develop and manage recreational sites, recreation facilities, and recreational access in a manner that minimizes impacts to riparian habitats.

Rec-6011	LR:7.2	Prohibit dispersed camping and commercial camps within 200 feet of perennial surface water.
Rec-6012	LR:7.2	Manage access to caves for recreationists under a Cave Management Plan.
Rec-6013	LR:7.2	Use the best available technology to minimize noise and light pollution potentially affecting recreation facilities and sites.
Rec-6014	LR:7.2	Close developed recreation sites such as picnic areas, campgrounds, and environmental education areas to livestock grazing.
Rec-6015	LR:7.2 LR:8.1	<p>Allow additional recreation facilities in areas where they are supported by recreational use and are consistent with other resource values.</p> <p>Construction of recreation facilities within Greater Sage-Grouse PHMA (Core Population Areas and Core Population Connectivity Corridors) must conform with the avoidance and minimization measures of this plan. If it is determined that these conservation measures are inadequate for the conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse, the BLM will require and ensure compensatory mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to the species.</p>
Rec-6016	LR:7.2 LR:7.3	Allow camping for no more than 14 days within any 28 consecutive days. After reaching this time limit, the visitor must relocate to another site at least 1.0 mile away.
Rec-6017	LR:7.1	<p>Divide the planning area into the following ERMA (Map 3-32):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cabin Canyon (1,369 acres): Includes lands adjacent to State of Wyoming lands north of Bishop Road.</li> <li>● Face of the Bighorns/North Fork ERMA (34,477 acres): Includes lands from the Poison Creek Trail area south along the Face of the Bighorns, the Horn, and the North Fork WSA.</li> <li>● Gardner Mountain ERMA (55,181 acres): Includes lands along and south of the Mayoworth-Slip Road and north of Barnum Mountain Road.</li> <li>● Kaycee Stockrest ERMA (2,685 acres)</li> <li>● North Bighorns ERMA (2,926 acres): Includes parcels in Sheridan County adjacent to the Bighorn National Forest.</li> <li>● Powder River Basin ERMA (224,483 acres): This ERMA includes the public lands in the planning area with reasonable public access of sufficient size to support recreation that are not included in the other ERMA or SRMA.</li> <li>● Southern Bighorns ERMA (25,535 acres): Lands in southwestern Johnson County adjacent to the Middle Fork Powder River and Hole-in-the-Wall SRMA.</li> <li>● Walk-in Area ERMA (3,007 acres): Includes BLM-administered lands adjacent to WGFD walk-in areas not designated in another SRMA or ERMA.</li> </ul>

		Strategically emphasize a variety of recreation opportunities along with the protection of natural and cultural resources. R&VS management will be recognized as an important affected resource in ERMA. ERMA will be managed to allow continued recreation opportunities and to protect RSCs in concert with other resource values or uses.
Rec-6018	LR:7.1	<p>Designate the following areas as SRMAs and delineate discrete recreation management zone boundaries (Map 3-32):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Burnt Hollow (17,280 acres)</li> <li>● Dry Creek Petrified Tree (2,567 acres)</li> <li>● Hole-in-the-Wall (11,952 acres)</li> <li>● Middle Fork Powder River (10,083 acres)</li> <li>● Mosier Gulch (1,026 acres)</li> <li>● Welch Ranch (1,748 acres)</li> <li>● Weston Hills (9,504 acres)</li> </ul> <p>Strategically emphasize a variety of recreation opportunities along with the protection of natural and cultural resources. R&amp;VS management will be recognized as the predominant land use focus in SRMAs. Manage SRMAs under site-specific management plans. Site-specific management plans will be consistent with and implement the provisions specified for SRMAs in Appendix T (p. 679).</p>
Rec-6019	LR:7.1 LR:7.2	<p>Do not lease minerals within the boundary of the following SRMAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Burnt Hollow (17,280 acres)</li> <li>● Dry Creek Petrified Tree (2,567 acres)</li> <li>● Hole-in-the-Wall (11,952 acres)</li> <li>● Middle Fork Powder River (10,083 acres)</li> <li>● Mosier Gulch (1,026 acres)</li> <li>● Welch Ranch (1,748 acres)</li> </ul> <p>Lease fluid minerals with a CSU stipulation to be consistent with SRMA management in the following SRMA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Weston Hills (9,504 acres)</li> </ul>
Rec-6020	LR:7.1 LR:7.2 LR:8.1	Do not institute a mineral leasing buffer surrounding SRMAs.
Rec-6021	LR:7.1 LR:7.2 LR:8.1	Allow surface disturbance within designated SRMAs for administrative use only, where consistent with other resource values.
Rec-6022	LR:7.1 LR:7.2 LR:8.1	Recommend withdrawals from mineral entry under the mining laws in designated SRMAs.
Rec-6023	LR:7.1 LR:7.2 LR:8.1	Allow salable mineral development within designated SRMAs for administrative use only.

Rec-6024	LR:7.2 LR:7.3	Evaluate fees for access to eligible areas, as allowed by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, when resource condition and/or documented public desire for expanded services are warranted.
Rec-6025	LR:7.2 LR:7.3 LR:8.1	<p>Close the following areas to recreational target shooting, to protect natural and cultural resources, promote human health and safety, and reduce user conflicts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Burnt Hollow (17,280 acres)</li> <li>● Welch Ranch (1,748 acres)</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: All developed recreation sites (including trailheads, picnic areas, etc.) are closed to target shooting per 43 CFR 8365.2-5(a).</i></p> <p>Establish RMA standards and indicators, monitor recreational target shooting, and increase education and enforcement of target shooting regulations in the following RMAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cabin Canyon (1,369 acres)</li> <li>● Dry Creek Petrified Tree (2,567 acres)</li> <li>● Hole-in-the-Wall (11,952 acres)</li> <li>● Kaycee Stockrest ERMA (2,685 acres)</li> <li>● Middle Fork Powder River (10,083 acres)</li> <li>● Mosier Gulch (1,026 acres)</li> <li>● Walk-in Area ERMA (3,007 acres): Includes BLM-administered lands adjacent to WGFD walk-in areas not designated in another SRMA or ERMA.</li> <li>● Weston Hills (9,504 acres)</li> </ul> <p>Establish partnerships with shooting sports advocacy organizations or other interested agencies or organizations to accommodate opportunities for shooting sports on public lands, where consistent with other resource values.</p>

**Table 3.29. 7000 SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS (SD) – AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (p152)**

<p><b>GOAL SD:1</b> The integrity of unique resources are protected and opportunities for compatible uses are provided.</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <p><b>SD:1.1</b> Identify areas for potential special designation that contain important scenic, ecological, and/or cultural values that are currently unprotected.</p> <p><b>SD:1.2</b> Utilize special designations to meet resource protection needs within appropriate geographical areas.</p>
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<b>SD:1.3</b> Interpret sites of high public interest.		
<b>Record #</b>	<b>Goal/Objective</b>	<b>Decisions</b>
ACEC-7001	SD:1.2	Evaluate BLM authorized activities and develop mitigation to protect the integrity of the characteristics for which the ACEC was designated.
ACEC-7002	SD:1.3	Develop educational materials describing access and features of ACECs and appropriate use protocols.
ACEC-7003	SD:1.1	Designate the following areas as ACECs (Map 3-34): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pumpkin Buttes (1,731 acres)</li> <li>● Welch Ranch (1,116 acres)</li> </ul>
ACEC-7004	SD:1.2	Manage ACECs under site-specific management plans. Site-specific management plans will be consistent with and implement the provisions specified for ACECs in Appendix V (p. 757).

**Table 3.32. 7000 SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS (SD) – WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS (p155)**

<b>GOAL SD:4</b> Existing WSAs will meet the “non-impairment standard” under BLM Manual 6330 – Management of Wilderness Study Areas.		
<b>Objectives:</b>		
<b>SD:4.1</b> Monitor and document condition and use of each WSA at least once per year.		
<b>SD:4.2</b> Manage and protect the characteristics of each WSA so as to maintain their existing size, naturalness, unique values, and outstanding opportunities.		
<b>Record #</b>	<b>Goal/Objective</b>	<b>Decisions</b>
WSA-7001	SD:4.2	If Congress acts to either designate as Wilderness or release WSAs from further consideration (Fortification Creek, Gardner Mountain, North Fork) (Map 3-35), the RMP will be amended as necessary.
WSA-7002	SD:4.2	Manage WSAs for the preservation of natural conditions and processes, and to provide opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. Under the guidance of BLM Manual 6330 – Management of Wilderness Study Areas, manage WSAs to emphasize primitive, nonmotorized activities to maintain the current natural values.
WSA-7003	SD:4.2	If Congress decides not to designate a WSA as wilderness, do not lease mineral rights until a plan amendment is completed. Additionally, motorized travel, surface-disturbing activities and any other activities (except valid existing rights) that may impair wilderness characteristics will be prohibited until a plan amendment is completed. WSAs released by Congressional for uses other than wilderness would then be considered pursuant to Manuals 6310 and 6320 to maintain wilderness characteristics.
WSA-7004	SD:4.2	Prohibit all motorized and mechanized equipment within WSAs.

BLM. 2015. Bureau of Land Management Buffalo Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan, September 2015. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. Buffalo Field Office. Buffalo, Wyoming.

BLM. 2015. Bureau of Land Management Buffalo Field Office Proposed Resource Management Plan, May 2015. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. Buffalo Field Office. Buffalo, Wyoming.