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324 25th Street
Ogden, UT 84401
www.fs.fed.usda.gov/htnf

USDI Bureau of Land Management

Idaho State Office
1387 South Vinnell Way
Boise, Idaho 83709-1657
www.blm.gov/nv

Montana State Office
5001 Southgate Drive
Billings, MT 59101
www.blm.gov/ca

June 2015

Dear Reader:

Enclosed is the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-regional Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment (Proposed LUPA) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), one of fifteen sub-regional efforts being conducted as part of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service National Greater-Sage Planning Strategy. The BLM and Forest Service prepared the Proposed LUPA/FEIS in consultation with cooperating agencies, taking into account public comments received during this planning effort.

The purpose of the Proposed LUPA is to amend the following: (1) BLM Idaho Resource Management Plans (RMPs) Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) (2008); Bruneau RMP revision (and existing 1983 Bruneau RMP); Challis RMP (1999); Craters of the Moon National Monument RMP (2006); Four Rivers RMP revision (and existing 1988 Cascade and 1983 Kuna RMPs); Jarbidge RMP revision; Jarbidge RMP Revision, Lemhi RMP (1987); Owyhee RMP (1999); Pocatello RMP; Shoshone-Burley RMP revision (and existing 1980 Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills, 1985 Cassia, 1975 Magic, 1985 Monument, 1981 Sun Valley, and 1982 Twin Falls Management Framework Plan (MFPs)/RMPs); Upper Snake RMP revision (and existing 1983 Big Lost, 1985 Medicine Lodge, 1981 Big Desert, 1981 Little Lost-Birch Creek MFPs/RMPs) and the Dillon (MT) RMP; and (2) the following Forest Service Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) Boise Revised Forest Plan (2010), Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest Plan (2009), Revised Caribou Forest Plan (2003), Curlew National Grassland Plan (2002), Challis Forest Plan (1987), Salmon Forest Plan (1988), Sawtooth Revised Forest Plan (2012), Targhee Revised Forest Plan (1997), to identify and incorporate appropriate conservation measures to conserve, enhance and/or restore GRSG habitat by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing threats to that habitat. The need for action is in response to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) March 2010, "warranted, but precluded" Endangered Species Act listing petition. The USFWS found that the inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms was identified as a significant threat to GRSG in their finding on the petition to list the GRSG. Land use plan conservation measures were identified as the BLM's and Forest Service's principal regulatory mechanism.

This Proposed LUPA/FEIS has been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, and the National Forest Management Act of 1976, as amended. The Proposed LUPA is largely based on Alternatives D and E, the co-preferred alternatives in the Draft LUPA/DEIS, which was released on November 1, 2013. The Proposed LUPA/FEIS contains the Proposed Plan, a summary of changes made between the Draft LUPA/DEIS and Proposed LUPA/FEIS, impacts of the Proposed Plan, a summary of the written and verbal comments received during the public review period for the Draft LUPA/DEIS, and responses to the comments.

In accordance with 36 C.F.R. § 219.59, the Forest Service will waive their objection procedures of this subpart and instead adopt the BLM's protest procedures outlined in 43 C.F.R. § 1610.5-2.

Pursuant to the BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the planning process for this Proposed LUPA and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the planning decisions may protest approval of the planning decisions within 30 days from date the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes the Notice of Availability of the FEIS in the Federal Register. For further information on filing a protest, please see the accompanying protest regulations in the pages that follow (labeled as Attachment #1). The regulations specify the required elements of your protest. Take care to document all relevant facts. As much as possible, reference or cite the planning documents or available planning records (e.g. meeting minutes or summaries, correspondence, etc.).

Emailed protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular mail or overnight delivery postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, the BLM will consider the emailed protest as an advance copy and will afford it full consideration. If you wish to provide the BLM with such advance notification, please direct emailed protests to: protest@blm.gov.

All protests must be in writing and mailed to one of the following addresses:

Regular Mail:	Overnight Delivery:
Director (210)	Director (210)
Attn: Protest Coordinator	Attn: Protest Coordinator
P.O. Box 71383	20 M Street SE, Room 2134LM
Washington, D.C. 20024-1383	Washington, D.C. 20003

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your protest, be advised that your entire protest – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your protest to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The BLM Director, in agreement with the responsible official for the Forest Service, will make every attempt to promptly render a decision on each protest. The decision will be in writing and will be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the BLM Director shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior on each protest.

Responses to protest issues will be compiled and formalized in a Director's Protest Resolution Report made available following issuance of the decisions.

Upon resolution of all land use plan amendment protests, the BLM and the Forest Service will issue an Approved LUPA and Record of Decision (ROD). The Approved LUPA and ROD will be mailed or made available electronically to all who participated in the planning process and will be available on the BLM website at http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa_register/sage-grouse_rmp_revision.html and the Forest Service website at http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r4/home/?cid=STELPRD3815825

Unlike land use planning decisions, implementation decisions included in this Proposed LUPA are not subject to protest under the BLM planning regulations, but are subject to an administrative review process, through appeals to the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA), Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) pursuant to 43 CFR, Part 4 Subpart E. Implementation decisions generally constitute the BLM's and the Forest Service's final approval allowing on-the-ground actions to proceed. Where implementation decisions are made as part of the land use planning process, they are still subject to the appeals process or other administrative review as prescribed by specific resource program regulations once the BLM and the Forest Service resolves the protests to land use planning decisions and issues an Approved LUPA and ROD. The Approved LUPA and ROD will therefore identify the implementation decisions made in the plan that may be appealed to the Office of Hearing and Appeals.

Sincerely,

Jeffery L. Foss
Acting Idaho State Director
Bureau of Land Management

Jamie E. Connell
Montana State Director
Bureau of Land Management

(For) Nora Rasure
Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service
Intermountain Region

Attachment 1

Protest Regulations

[CITE: 43CFR1610.5-2]

TITLE 43--PUBLIC LANDS: INTERIOR
CHAPTER II--BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PART 1600--PLANNING, PROGRAMMING, BUDGETING--Table of Contents
Subpart 1610--Resource Management Planning
Sec. 1610.5-2 Protest procedures.

(a) Any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the approval or amendment of a resource management plan may protest such approval or amendment. A protest may raise only those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process.

(1) The protest shall be in writing and shall be filed with the Director. The protest shall be filed within 30 days of the date the Environmental Protection Agency published the notice of receipt of the final environmental impact statement containing the plan or amendment in the Federal Register. For an amendment not requiring the preparation of an environmental impact statement, the protest shall be filed within 30 days of the publication of the notice of its effective date.

(2) The protest shall contain:

(i) The name, mailing address, telephone number and interest of the person filing the protest;
(ii) A statement of the issue or issues being protested;
(iii) A statement of the part or parts of the plan or amendment being protested;
(iv) A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party or an indication of the date the issue or issues were discussed for the record; and
(v) A concise statement explaining why the State Director's decision is believed to be wrong.

(3) The Director shall promptly render a decision on the protest.

(b) The decision shall be in writing and shall set forth the reasons for the decision. The decision shall be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the Director shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior.