

Reclamation Releases Resource Management Plan

RMP NEWSBRIEF #3

This is the third and final Newsbrief prepared as part of the Teton River Canyon resource management planning process. The Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) are the culmination of a 3+ year planning effort by the Bureau of Reclamation to direct the future use and management of Reclamation lands and resources for the next 15 years in the Teton River Canyon.

The RMP will provide direction to:

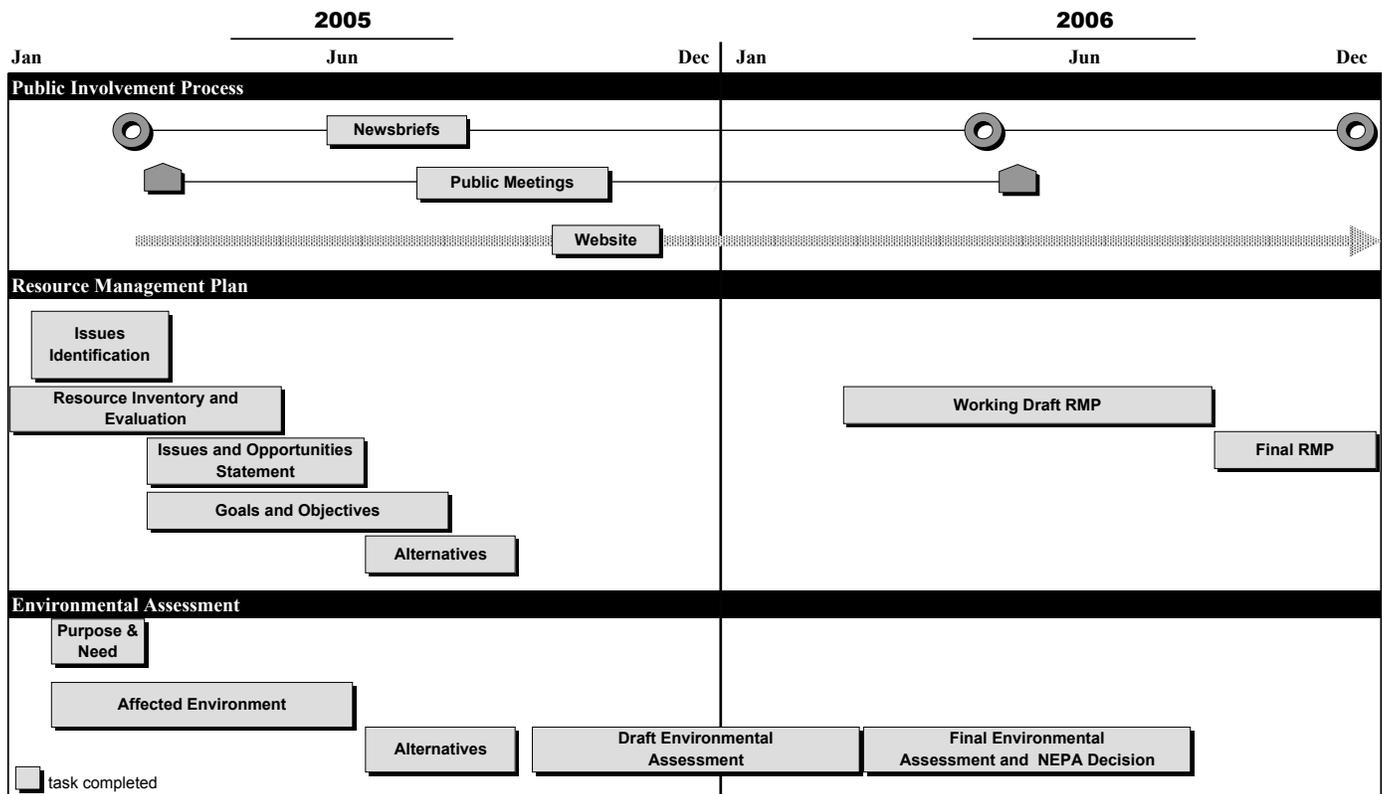
- Meet increasing demands associated with growth in eastern Idaho
- Balance land use & recreation with natural & cultural resource management needs
- Fulfill Reclamation's responsibilities for resource protection and public benefit
- Confirm responsibilities of entities involved in managing the area

- Improve interpretation about the site

This final Newsbrief focuses on the findings of the Final EA and the management direction provided in the RMP.

Findings of the Environmental Assessment

Reclamation released a Draft EA for review in May 2006. The purpose of the EA was to evaluate potential impacts associated with implementing the RMP.



In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the EA examined a range of alternatives. The effects of a No Action Alternative were compared to the effects of two Action Alternatives.

Reclamation hosted a series of public meetings at Fort Hall, Rexburg, and Driggs, Idaho during the 30-day public review period in May of 2006. People expressed concerns about public access and corresponding safety concerns; noxious weed control; stream habitat restoration and associated benefits for native cutthroat trout; protection of cultural resources in the river canyon; and stated their preferences for the alternatives.

Reclamation's responses to all written comments can be found in the Final EA.

The Final EA, released in October 2006, formally identifies Reclamation's Preferred Alternative (Alternative C). In addition, the Final EA includes a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), indicating that implementing the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to the natural and human environment.

As part of the Preferred Alternative, Reclamation will work to:

- Enhance native vegetation and reduce noxious weeds
- Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat
- Reduce erosion and protect water quality
- Renew some agricultural leases with terms consistent with RMP Goals & Objectives and consider some leases for conversion to wildlife habitat
- Improve some recreation facilities at existing use areas
- Provide public access while maintaining a semi-primitive experience
- Protect cultural resources
- Maintain the existing visual quality of the area
- Provide information and interpretive messages to the public

The Preferred Alternative, in comparison with the other alternatives, provides for more public access and allows for greater review of agricultural leases in

consideration of the RMP Goals and Objectives.

As the RMP is programmatic in nature, additional NEPA-related analysis and documentation will be prepared for site-specific actions. The Preferred Alternative and RMP do not consider rebuilding the dam, de-authorizing the Project, selling Teton Basin Project Land, or withdrawing or purchasing additional lands.

RMP Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions

The RMP is designed to balance resource management of Reclamation's Teton River Canyon lands by establishing resource management goals. To implement the Preferred Alternative, the RMP presents broad Goals, organized by six resource categories:

- (1) Land Use and Management
- (2) Natural Resources
- (3) Cultural Resources
- (4) Indian Trust Assets
- (5) Recreation, Access, and Visual Quality
- (6) Interpretation, Education, and Information

For each resource Goal, the RMP presents specific Objectives to achieve the Goal, as well as relevant Management Actions that apply. Goals and Objectives represent the broader management intent, whereas Management Actions often provide site-specific guidance or strategies.

RMP Goals for each resource category are listed below.

Goals for Land Use and Management

Reclamation's general land use approach is to:

- (1) Manage the lands in a manner consistent with Federal laws and regulations, and the principles of good stewardship to



accomplish Project purposes and serve the public interest;

- (2) Seek opportunities for coordinated and cooperative land use planning with other Federal, state, and local agencies; and
- (3) Develop RMPs that best support the public interest, preserve and enhance environmental quality, and are compatible with Project purposes and needs.

RMP Goals for land use and management include:

- Provide comprehensive land use management based on a range of natural and socio-cultural resources.
- Ensure protection of the public and public resource values and facilities.
- Achieve timely implementation and coordination of RMP programs and projects.

Goals for Natural Resources

Reclamation's approach to managing natural resources is to preserve and enhance native wildlife populations and their habitat in accordance with an approved resource management plan and encourage its land-management partners to follow suit.

The Goal for the Teton River Canyon includes:

- Conserve, restore, and enhance natural ecosystems.

Goals for Cultural Resources and Indian Trust Assets

Cultural resources are historic properties that reflect our nation's heritage. Historic properties include prehistoric and historic archeological sites, buildings, traditional cultural properties (TCPs), and historically significant places that are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register).

TCPs are National Register-eligible properties that have special heritage value to contemporary communities (usually Indian communities) because of association with cultural practices or beliefs that are important in maintaining the cultural identity of that community. Indian Trust Assets (ITAs) are legal interests in property held in trust by the U.S. for Indian Tribes, or individuals, such as lands, minerals, and hunting and fishing rights. When formulating Goals for these resources, Reclamation considered relevant legislation, in particular the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

Specific Goals include:

- Protect and preserve cultural resources, including prehistoric and historic-period archaeological sites and traditional cultural properties.
- Comply with requirements of Executive Order 13007 (Indian Sacred Sites).
- Conduct Government-to-Government Consultation with Tribes to discuss the RMP.

Goals for Recreation, Access, and Visual Quality

Reclamation's approach to providing and maintaining public recreational opportunities, facilities, and interpretive programs is to work with non-Federal managing partners, where possible, in accordance with an approved RMP. As Reclamation does not currently have a non-Federal managing partner for the Teton River Canyon, recreation improvements are generally limited to minimum, basic facilities. Recreation facilities will be operated and maintained in a safe and healthful manner and be accessible to people with disabilities.

Specific Goals for recreation, access, and visual quality include:

- Provide for recreation use within Reclamation's authorities, to afford a quality recreation experience consistent with natural and cultural resource management objectives.
- Preserve and enhance existing scenic quality.



Goals for Interpretation, Education, and Information

It is Reclamation's approach to provide information to visitors to improve their experience in the area, as well as to increase their awareness of natural and cultural resource values, public health, and safety.

The RMP Goal for interpretation, education, and information includes:

- Provide informational, educational, and interpretive messages through a variety of means to increase the public's awareness of opportunities, restrictions, safety, and natural and cultural resource values in the Teton River Canyon area.

Where to Find and How to Get the RMP and Final EA Documents

Copies of this Newsbrief have been sent to everyone on the Newsbrief mailing list, which includes about 175 addresses. The RMP and Final EA documents are each over 200 pages long, plus appendices; therefore, they are not being mailed to everyone on the mailing list. Digital versions of the RMP and EA documents can be accessed on Reclamation's website (<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/>) – follow links to the Teton River Canyon RMP. Hard copies of the RMP and EA may be requested from Vicki Kellerman at 208/378-5326. In addition, hard copies of the RMP and Final EA documents are being sent to several places where the public can review them. Locations were chosen for their convenience and public accessibility. Copies of the documents are available at the following locations:

Teton County Library, Alta Branch
15 Alta School Road
Alta, WY

Madison Library District
73 North Center Road
Rexburg, ID

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
PN Regional Office
1150 N Curtis Rd
Boise, ID

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Snake River Area Office
1359 Hansen Avenue
Burley, ID

A Final Note

Reclamation wants to thank everyone who participated in the development of the RMP.



Vicki Kellerman PN-3906
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
PN Regional Office
1150 N Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234