

Call to Action

Friends, can you help us stop a recent development that threatens the land surrounding the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument?

Immediate action is needed on the revised draft Resource Management Plan for the BLM's Lewistown District. This plan will decide how more than 650,000 acres of public lands will be managed for the next 20 to 30 years. It will control the future more than 200,000 acres of wildlands, eight Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Outstanding Natural Areas, three Wilderness Study Areas, and countless acres of critical habitat for mule deer, elk and sage grouse. It is the heart of the last remaining intact grasslands in our country.

BLM's proposed management (the "preferred" alternative) would open 99 percent of the area to oil and gas leasing. Many of the affected areas are adjacent to or near our beloved Breaks monument, and the proposed management changes will undoubtedly change forever the wild experience of the Breaks that we inherited from countless generations of our ancestors.

The deadline for submitting comments to BLM is just days away: Aug. 15.

The only way to change the direction BLM has proposed is to overwhelm the agency with local, personal, passionate comments. Even a short, personal comment can make a difference in the outcome of this critical decision.

You can read the draft RMP at <https://go.usa.gov/xUPsP>. Just click on the Documents & Reports tab.

Email your comments to Blm_mt_lewistown_rmp@blm.gov. Or you can mail your comments to Bureau of Land Management Lewistown Field Office, Lewistown Resource Management Plan, 920 N.E. Main St., Lewistown, MT 59457. Mailed comments must be postmarked by **Aug. 15**.

Our official comment is below, and below that you'll find some talking points and tips for writing effective comments. Feel free to edit these comments to make them your own. **The most important thing is that you send in something by**

the 15th!!!

*The future of our monument and the public lands that surround it is at stake.
Please take a few minutes to help protect this special place.*

Official Comment from the Friends

Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument

*Comments on the Future of the Public Lands in and around the
Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument: Lewistown
Resource Management Plan*

For the record, we are the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument, an organization dedicated to the protection of the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

The Friends was formed in 1999 by residents from Fort Benton, Havre, Coffee Creek, Great Falls, Helena, Bozeman and Billings, who felt it was critical to provide an organized, local voice of support for the creation of a national monument to ensure the public lands in and around the Upper Missouri River Breaks would be protected in its wild state for future generations to experience.

We have actively participated in every public decision-making process BLM has initiated since 1999. We have worked locally, statewide and nationally to educate, energize and engage people who care about this special place. We have engaged hundreds of volunteers for thousands of hours of public service projects on the monument and work closely with BLM to ensure the area is managed according to the conservation standards laid out in the proclamation that designated the monument in 2000.

We currently have more than 160 members and more than 565 supporters who embrace our vision of a monument and surrounding areas managed for the protection of the natural, wild prairie experience that is one of the most threatened natural systems left in our country.

Overall, we are deeply disappointed that the “preferred” alternative, Alternative C, in the new draft Lewistown RMP would open 99 percent of public lands managed by the Lewistown District of the BLM to oil and gas leasing. That’s not consistent with BLM’s mandate to manage for multiple uses, and it’s not in the interest of the vast majority of Montanans, who value natural places and want to keep them that way.

We will direct our comments specifically to the areas near the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

The new Alternative C would not manage any land to protect wilderness characteristics. We propose instead that the more than 200,000 acres of lands with wilderness characteristics identified by BLM in 2014, including those adjacent to the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, be managed to protect wilderness characteristics.

We note that Alternative C would eliminate all Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. This is unexplained and also unacceptable. Specific to our area, the many values of Square Butte, a magnificent and iconic formation near Stanford in north-central Montana, would not be protected if Congress were to drop its Wilderness Study Area designation. The ACEC for Square Butte should be retained and expanded to 2,700 acres.

We would prefer to see a Backcountry Conservation Area designation for Arrow Creek and Cemetery Road. This type of management is essential to protect primitive recreation and hunting opportunities in these areas.

The Sacagawea River meets all of the qualifications to be included in the National Scenic and Wild Rivers System, and so it should be. Unfortunately, your preferred alternative rejects all of the 27 river segments considered suitable under the existing RMP for inclusion in the system.

Signed,

Board of Directors

Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument

- Hugo Tureck, president

- Noel Birkland, vice president
- Martha Vogt, treasurer
- Karen Datko, secretary
- Betsy Buffington
- Nicolle Fugere
- Joe Offer

Talking points

Here are some talking points to help you prepare your own comments:

- The BLM's preferred alternative, Alternative C, would open 99 percent of the Lewistown District to oil and gas leasing. No land in this plan would be managed to protect wilderness characteristics, all Areas of Critical Environmental Concern would be eliminated, and no streams or rivers would be included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. BLM is supposed to manage for multiple use.
- The RMP should manage the lands with wilderness characteristics to protect those qualities.
- The RMP should retain the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, particularly the ACEC at Square Butte near Stanford in Chouteau County. That ACEC should be expanded to 2,700 acres.
- The RMP should manage Arrow Creek and Cemetery Road as Backcountry Conservation Areas to preserve wildlife habitat and primitive recreation.
- The Sacagawea River should be included in the National Scenic and Wild Rivers System.

To make your comment more effective, please follow these tips:

- Write in your own words.
- Make specific recommendations about specific places.

- Make it personal. If these special places are important to you, share your story.
- Be polite.

***Thank you for your help in protecting an area
that means so much to the Monument.***

Don't forget to submit your comments by August 15th!