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D1 LAND USE

The Lost Creek Permit Area (Permit Area) is located in the northeastern corner of Sweetwater County, south-central Wyoming. The Permit Area is in an unpopulated area about 15 miles southwest of Bairoil, Wyoming, about 38 miles northwest of Rawlins, and about 90 miles southwest of Casper. The Permit Area covers approximately 4,254 acres. The main portion of the Permit Area consists of 201 unpatented federal lode claims and one state lease totaling approximately 4,194 acres. The east and west access roads, which are described in Appendix D - East and West Roads, cover about 26 and 34 acres, respectively. [Figure D1-1a](#) shows the general location of the main portion of the Permit Area. [Figure D1-1b](#) shows the boundary of the main portion of the Permit Area superimposed on an aerial photo, taken in 1994.

The regional landscape consists of rolling plains with some draws, rock outcroppings, ridges, bluffs, and some isolated mountainous areas. Vegetation is primarily sagebrush and rabbit brush (see [Appendix D8](#)). The weather is dry and windy, with short, hot summers and cold winters (see [Appendix D4](#)). There is no perennial surface water, although there are a few ephemeral drainages that can convey surface water during spring snowmelt and following intense rainstorms (see [Appendix D6](#)).

The land within the Permit Area is entirely publicly owned. Eighty-five percent is federal land, managed by the United States (US) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) through the Rawlins and Lander Field Offices. Fifteen percent is owned by the State of Wyoming. The primary study area for land use includes a two-mile radius from the Permit Area boundary. Within the study area, 96 percent of the land is federally owned, three percent is state owned, and one percent is privately owned ([Figure D1-2](#)). The primary land use in the study area is rangeland for cattle and wildlife habitat, but the area is also used for dispersed recreation such as hunting, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, and antler collecting. Regional land uses include grazing, industry, wildlife habitat, hunting and dispersed recreation, mining, oil and gas extraction, and energy infrastructure.

D1.1 Rangeland and Grazing

There is no crop production within the Permit Area or within two miles of the Permit Area; the only agricultural production is related to grazing. The study area includes portions of three BLM grazing allotments: Stewart Creek, Cyclone Rim, and Green Mountain ([Figure D1-3](#)).

D1.2 Wildlife Habitat and Hunting

Wildlife use of the Permit Area is discussed in detail in **Appendix D9**. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) hunting areas for antelope, deer, elk, and mountain lion include the Permit Area. Hunting seasons run from September through December, but hunting occurs primarily in October and November. Hunter days for the hunt areas that include the Lost Creek Project (Project) area are shown in [Table D1-1](#). There are no designated wildlife viewing locations in the study area.

D1.3 Recreation and Special Use Areas

There are no designated recreation areas or facilities within two miles of the Permit Area, but there is some dispersed recreational use. Dispersed recreation consists primarily of hunting, antler collecting, and OHV use. The general area is designated by BLM as an Extensive Resource Management Area (ERMA), which does not have restrictive use compared to a Special Recreation Management Area (SMRA) or Wilderness Study Area (WSA). According to BLM's Natural Resource Recreation Settings, the area is managed for Middle Country Designation. This designation does not restrict natural resource development and allows motorized and mechanized uses in most areas with some restrictions (BLM, 1987 and 2004c).

D1.4 Minerals and Energy

Wyoming is a state with active mineral development. The types of development in the region include oil and gas, coal and other minerals. About half the oil produced in the Resource Management Plan Planning Area (RMPPA) during 2000 and 2001 was from the Lost Soldier-Wertz Fields near Bairoil. This field complex is in a tertiary phase of oil recovery via CO₂ injection; it is expected that no future oil production enhancement can be accomplished.

Uranium exploration in the Permit Area is described in detail in **Appendix D2** and **Appendix D5**. There are several conventional uranium mills and mines and In Situ Recovery (ISR) projects within 50 miles of the Permit Area; the locations are shown on [Figure D1-4](#). Other than Kennecott Uranium Company's Sweetwater Mill (NRC License No. SUA-1350; Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality [WDEQ] Permit No. 481), which is currently on stand-by, and the PRI Gas Hills Project (NRC License No. SUA-1511-Amendment; WDEQ Permit No. 603), which is a new ISR project not yet in operation, all of the operations shown in [Figure D1-4](#) are in

decommissioning or reclamation or have been reclaimed by the operator or the WDEQ Abandoned Mine Lands Division. The closest facility to the Project is the Sweetwater Mill, which is located about five miles south-southwest of the center of the Project, with about two miles separating the permit boundaries.

D1.5 Transportation and Infrastructure

The transportation system serving the Project relies almost exclusively on existing public roads and highways. The local and regional transportation network relevant to the Project consists of primary, secondary, local, and unimproved roads ([Figure D1-5](#)). The Permit Area is served by: an Interstate Highway (I-80); a US Highway (US 287); Wyoming State routes (SR 220 and 73 to Bairoil); local Carbon, Sweetwater, and Fremont County roads; and BLM roads. In addition to the designated routes, there are a number of four-wheel-drive routes that traverse the area for recreation and grazing access, as well as various other uses, including oil, gas, and mineral exploration. The road network within two miles of the permit area consists exclusively of un-maintained two-track roads that are passable with four-wheel drive vehicles (see [Section D7.7](#), [Figure D7-3](#) and [Figure D7-4](#)).

A power line runs in a north-south direction along the western boundary of the Permit Area. The right-of-way easement for this power line is 25 feet wide.

D1.6 Population Distribution

The Project is located in a remote area in the Great Divide Basin. There are no population centers within two miles of the Permit Area. The nearest town, Bairoil with a population of less than 100, is about 15 miles northeast of the Permit Area. [Figure D1-6](#) shows the population centers within a 50-mile (80-kilometer) radius of the center of the Permit Area.

[Table D1-2](#) presents the population information for Sweetwater and Carbon Counties. The Sweetwater County population in 2000 was 37,613 people. Sweetwater County had a population density of 3.6 people per square mile. The majority of the population (89.1 percent) lived in urban clusters. The Carbon County population was 15,639 in 2000.