

BLM's Ecoregional Strategy

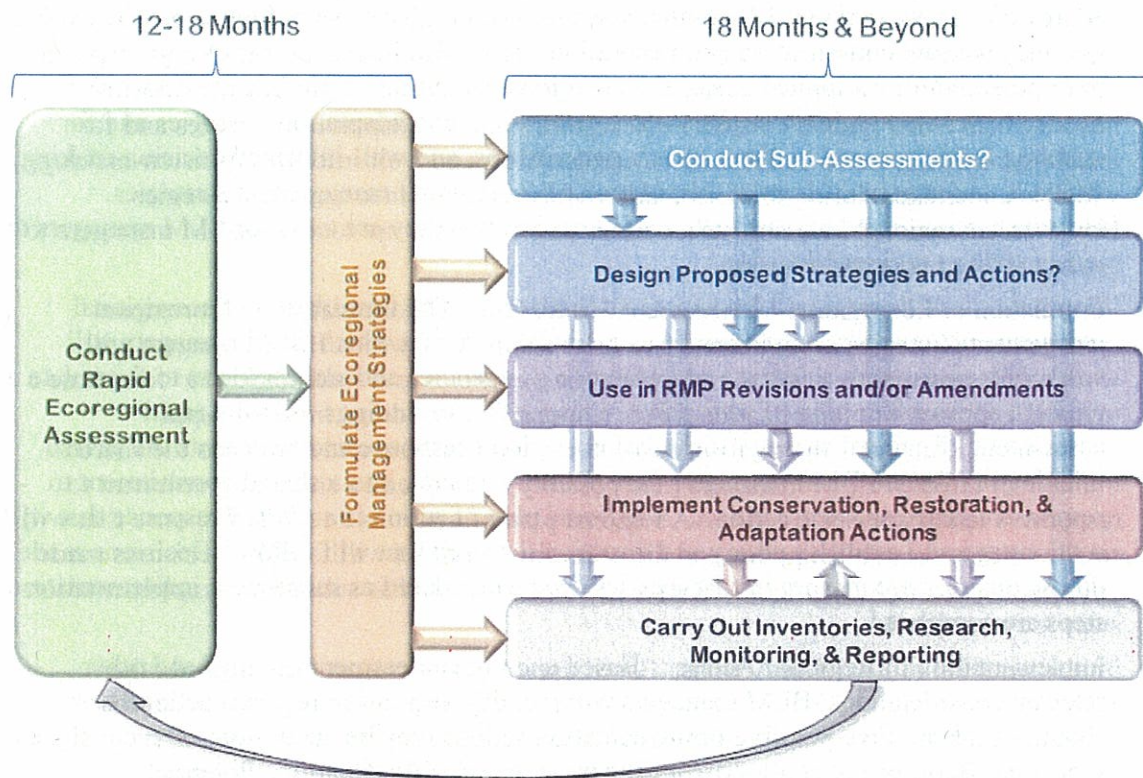
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land use policies and authorizations historically have been driven by local and national considerations with decisions made at the local, Field Office level. Many resource issues, however, extend across Field Office boundaries and sometimes across State boundaries. Unfortunately, the ecological consequences of some best decisions made for a local area can accumulate at intermediate *landscape* scales where they may contribute to ecosystem change caused by invasive species, altered wildland fire cycles, climate change, urban and industrial development, and other agents. With current ecological understanding and the availability of new tools, the BLM is beginning to systematically identify landscape-scale, ecologically-based conservation and restoration needs and place them on an equal footing with other land management and resource use objectives.

To better address these issues, the BLM has decided to use an ecoregional approach that will allow the agency to more efficiently and effectively address broad, landscape-scale issues across administrative boundaries. This ecoregional approach has three major sequential components, with each of these components having several sub-components. The three components of the BLM's ecoregional approach are:

- **Rapid Ecoregional Assessment.** Rapid ecoregional assessments are collaborative scientist-manager exercises in assembling and synthesizing targeted information about an ecoregion. These rapid (< 18 months) assessments identify areas of high ecological value that may warrant conservation and restoration. They also identify areas of high exposure to or potential for ecological change. Ecoregional assessments provide the information needed to develop regional conservation, restoration, and adaptation strategies and for enabling landscape-scale collaboration, partnerships, and well-informed decision-making, which is undertaken during the formulation of ecoregional management strategies. However, ecoregional assessments are not decisions—they are tools for BLM managers to use in making regional decisions.
- **Formulation of Ecoregional Management Strategies.** The formulation of ecoregional management strategies is envisioned as a brief step during which BLM managers will work with assessment scientists and others (e.g., agencies and stakeholders) to formulate a regional approach or plan of action that is responsive to findings from the rapid assessment. Regional strategy formulation is a joint response and represents the shared thinking of affected BLM managers (and possibly others), and a shared commitment to responsive landscape-scale action. A regional plan of action is an *initial* response that will set the stage and establish policy and direction for work that will follow. Decisions made during this step are *interim* in that they will be reconsidered as subsequent implementation steps are completed.
- **Implementation of Regional Actions.** Based upon the assessment findings and other relevant considerations, BLM managers will identify responsive regional actions that should be taken. Five possible implementation actions may be taken—simultaneously, as sequential steps, or not at all—depending upon the specific situation. Potential implementation actions are:
 - **Conduct Sub-Assessments.** Some management decisions and actions may require finer-scale information and/or better understanding than provided from the rapid assessment. Targeted sub-assessments will provide that more-detailed information.



- **Design Proposed Strategies and Actions.** This action will largely be a continuation of work started during interim strategy development; will incorporate information obtained from sub-assessments, partners, collaborators, and other sources; and will firm up strategies and actions for achieving conservation, restoration, and adaptation objectives.
- **Use in Resource Management Plans and/or Amendments.** Some proposed actions may be in conformance with existing Resource Management Plan guidance and be readily implemented. However, plan amendments, revisions, or even legislation may be required before other proposed actions can be put in place.
- **Implement Conservation, Restoration, and Adaptation Actions.** Upon completion of resource management planning and after ecoregional conservation, restoration, and adaptation strategies are in place, the BLM will be positioned to fully integrate ecoregional strategies and actions into BLM resource management.
- **Carry Out Inventories, Research, Monitoring, and Reporting.** Inventories, research, monitoring, and reporting all contribute to an information platform essential to ecoregional collaboration, decision making, and cumulative effects analysis. This step will integrate into the BLM's Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) Strategy and provide guidance for further adaptive management strategy development and potential future ecoregional assessments.



GENERAL CYCLE: ECOREGIONAL ASSESSMENT, STRATEGY FORMULATION, IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS, AND MONITORING