

# CHAPTER 1

## PURPOSE AND NEED

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### OVERVIEW

The United States Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared this revision of the Resource Management Plan (RMP) to provide direction for managing public lands under the jurisdiction of the Butte Field Office in mid-western Montana and an environmental impact statement (EIS) to analyze the environmental effects that could result. The affected lands are currently being managed under two plans: the Headwaters Resource Management Plan (USDI-BLM 1983) and the Dillon Management Framework Plan (MFP) (USDI-BLM 1979). The Headwaters RMP has been formally amended on eight occasions and the Dillon MFP has been formally amended on three occasions. In addition, several new laws, regulations, and policies have affected management of public land since approval of both plans. For lands administered by the Butte Field Office, this RMP revision will replace the Headwaters RMP and the Dillon MFP.

Land use planning is used to manage resources and to designate uses on public lands in coordination with tribal, state, and local governments, land users, and interested public. This RMP: 1) incorporates new information about resources and resource uses, and regulatory guidance that has come into existence since establishment of the Headwaters RMP and Dillon MFP over 20 years ago, and 2) provides management direction where it may be lacking or requires clarification. Current management direction that has proven effective and requires no change will be carried forward into the revised RMP.

The RMP is being revised according to guidance in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 US Code [USC] 1701 et seq.) and BLM's Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1 (USDI-BLM 2005a). An EIS is incorporated into this document as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508) (CEQ 1978), and requirements of BLM's NEPA Handbook, H-1790-1 (USDI-BLM 2008a).

### PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR REVISING THE PLAN

The purpose of the RMP is to provide a single, comprehensive land use plan to guide management of public lands administered by the Butte Field Office. The plan provides goals, objectives, land use allocations, and management direction to maintain, improve, or restore resource conditions and to provide for the long-term economic needs of local communities.

Since the original plans were approved, several conditions have changed. These include:

- Changed ecological, socioeconomic, institutional, and regulatory conditions;
- Many new laws, regulations, and policies that invalidate or superseded previous decisions;
- Changing user demands and activities;
- Changing acceptance of impacts; and
- Changes in the Butte Field Office boundaries.

These conditions drive the need for an inclusive, comprehensive plan that provides updated, clear direction to both BLM and the public.

The purpose of site-specific travel planning is to develop travel plans that meet the needs of public and administrative access, are financially affordable to maintain, and minimize user conflicts and natural resource impacts associated with roads and trails, largely as per 43 CFR 8342. There is a need to do this because in many portions of the BFO, travel planning has not ever been conducted in a manner to establish a managed transportation network that meets these regulations and fully considers public and administrative needs, user conflicts, and natural resource impacts.

Planning for the management of BLM-administered lands is a tiered process. Documents produced during each successive tier are progressively more focused in scope and more detailed in terms of their identification of specific measures to be undertaken and impacts that may occur. The four tiers are described briefly below:

The RMP provides an overall vision of the future (goals and objectives) and includes measurable steps, management actions, and allowable uses to achieve the vision.

Subsequent implementation decisions are carried out by developing activity-level or project-specific plans. Activity-level plans usually describe multiple projects for a single or multiple resource programs. Project-specific plans usually describe a single project or several related projects.

The RMP provides basic program direction with the establishment of goals, objectives, allowable uses, and management actions or prescriptions. The RMP focuses on what resource conditions, uses, and visitor experiences should be achieved and maintained over time. To do this, the RMP must take a long-term view.

**Planning Area** is all the land within the Butte Field Office administrative boundary regardless of jurisdiction.

**Decision Area** is comprised of only those lands administered by the BLM (surface and mineral estate).

Defining planning issues and planning criteria represent the first steps in establishing the scope of the RMP revision. These, combined with public input, provide the framework in which RMP decisions are made. RMP decisions refer to what is established or determined by the final RMP. The RMP provides guidance for land use planning decisions in accordance with the following categories:

- Natural, biological, and heritage resources
- Resource uses
- Special designations such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

In the context of these categories, the planning team develops management strategies aimed at providing viable options to address planning issues. These management strategies provide the basis for future activity-level plans or specific projects.

In addition to the RMP type decisions described above, several implementation decisions associated with activity plans for several site-specific travel plans will be made based on this document. Travel route-specific management decisions will be made for the following five Travel Planning Areas (TPAs): Helena, East Helena, Lewis and Clark County Northwest, Upper Big Hole, and Boulder/Jefferson City.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The Butte Field Office administrative area is located in mid-western Montana (**Map 1**). The Planning Area is all the land within the Butte Field Office administrative boundary. Within the Planning Area, BLM administers about 307,300 acres of public land surface and 652,200 acres of federal mineral estate in Broadwater, Deer Lodge, Gallatin, Jefferson, Lewis and Clark (southern portion), Silver Bow, Park, and the northern portion of Beaverhead County. **Table 1-1** identifies BLM-administered acres and total acres within the Planning Area by county. Collectively, the lands that BLM administers (surface and mineral estate) are considered the

County	BLM Surface Acres	BLM Mineral Estate	County Acres in Planning Area
Beaverhead	12,660	22,372	31,429
Broadwater	70,679	106,032	792,866
Deer Lodge	5,227	141,648	473,932
Gallatin	7,250	34,656	1,683,558
Jefferson	94,397	116,161	1,061,462
Lewis & Clark	63,510	113,119	895,925
Park	8,365	53,505	1,793,054
Silver Bow	45,221	64,701	460,124
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>307,309</b>	<b>652,194</b>	<b>7,192,349</b>

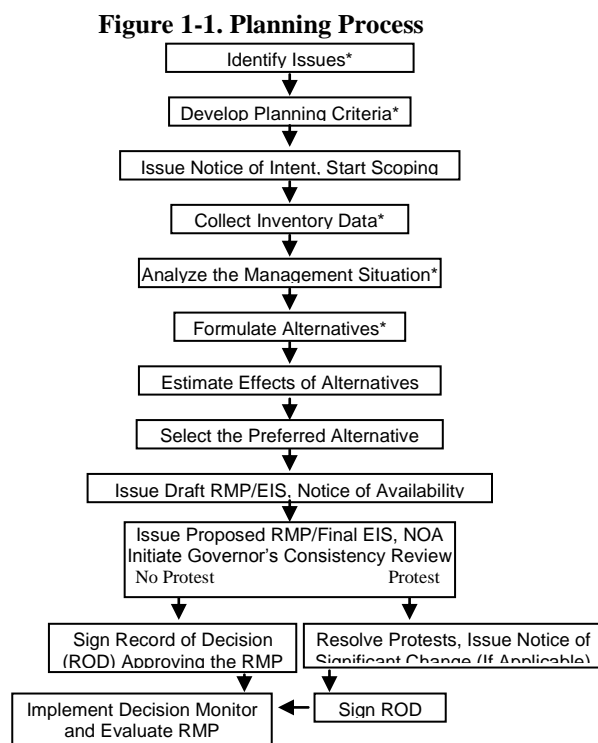
“Decision Area”. Surface lands within the Planning Area administered by other federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS), and U.S. Department of the Army are not subject to decisions made in association with this RMP. Approximately 1,800 acres of land administered by the Bureau of Reclamation surrounding Canyon Ferry Lake near Townsend; 65,500 acres of land administered by the State of Montana including several wildlife management areas, and approximately 277,585 acres of private land for which the BLM holds subsurface mineral rights are also subject to fluid mineral leasing decisions in this document.

The Decision Area consists of many tracts ranging in size from less than one acre to over 20,000 acres. BLM-administered lands are mixed among private, State of Montana, Bureau of Reclamation, and USFS-administered lands, each of which may be influenced or directly affected by BLM decisions.

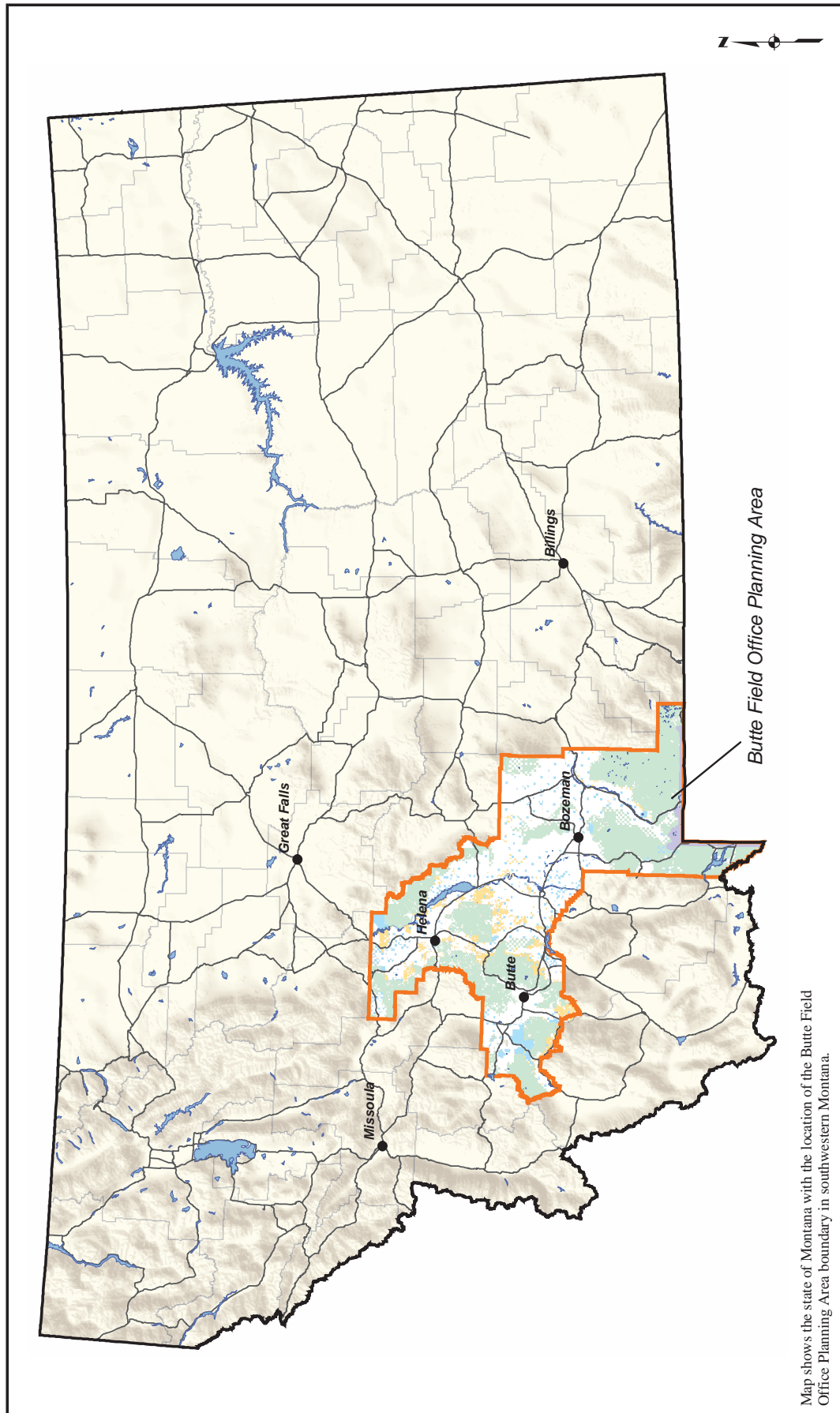
The BLM will coordinate with other federal and state agencies, especially for those resources and issues that share boundaries.

## PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process involves public participation, assessment, decision-making, implementation, plan monitoring, and evaluation, as well as adjustment through maintenance, amendment, and revision. This process ensures that land use plans and implementation decision remain consistent with applicable laws, regulations, orders, and policies. The steps of RMP preparation are interrelated as illustrated in **Figure 1-1** and **Table 1-2**.



\* These steps may be revisited throughout the process.



Map shows the state of Montana with the location of the Butte Field Office Planning Area boundary in southwestern Montana.

## Map 1: Project Location Map

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Bureau of Land Management



Butte Field Office  
Proposed RMP/Final EIS

Map Scale 1:4,000,000  
0 100 Miles  
Albers Equal Area, NAD83 Projection

Map generated by the Butte Field Office in February 2007

This map is intended for display purposes. No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data, or for purposes not intended by BLM. This map may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and information may be updated without notification.

**Table 1-2**  
**Steps in the BLM Land Use Planning Process**

<b>Step</b>	<b>Process</b>
Step 1 – Identification of Issues	This planning step is designed to identify major problems, concerns, or opportunities associated with the management of public land in the Planning Area. Issues are identified by the public, the BLM, and other governmental entities. The planning process is then focused on resolving the planning issues.
Step 2 – Development of Planning Criteria	Planning criteria are identified to guide development of the RMP and prevent the collection of unnecessary information and data.
Step 3 – Collect and Compile Inventory Data	This planning step involves the collation and collection of various kinds of environmental, social, economic, resource, and institutional data. In most cases, this process is limited to information needed to address the issues. The data required for land use planning decisions is usually at a broader scale than data required in implementation level planning and analyses.
Step 4 – Analysis of the Management Situation	This step calls for the deliberate assessment of the current situation. It identifies the way lands and activities are currently managed in the Planning Area, describes conditions and trends across the Planning Area, identifies problems and concerns resulting from the current management, and identifies opportunities to manage these lands differently. It also forms the basis for the “No Action” alternative.
Step 5 – Formulate Alternatives	During this step, BLM formulates a reasonable range of alternatives for managing resources in the planning area. Alternatives include a continuation of current management (no action) alternative and other alternatives that strive to resolve the major planning issues while emphasizing different management scenarios. Alternatives usually vary by the amounts of resource production or protection that would be allowed, or in the emphasis of one program area over another.
Step 6 – Estimation of Effects	This step involves estimating the physical, biological, economic, and social effects of implementing each alternative in order to provide a comparative evaluation of impacts in compliance with CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500).
Step 7 – Selection of Preferred Alternative	Based on the information resulting from the estimation of effects, the BLM identifies a Preferred Alternative. The Draft RMP/EIS is then prepared for printing and distributed for a 90 day public review.
Step 8 – Selection of RMP	Following review and analysis of public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS, BLM makes adjustments as warranted and selects a proposed RMP. The Proposed RMP and a Final EIS is then published. A final decision is made after a 60-day Governor’s Consistency Review and a 30-day public protest period are completed. BLM then publishes the Record of Decision (ROD) and prepares the Approved Resource Management Plan.
Step 9 – Monitoring and Evaluation	This step involves the collection and analysis of resource condition and trend data to determine the effectiveness of the plan in resolving the identified issues and achieving desired results. Implementation of decisions requiring subsequent action is also monitored. Monitoring continues from the time the RMP is adopted until changing conditions require revision of the whole plan or any portion of it.

## SCOPING AND PLANNING ISSUES

### SCOPING PROCESS

Early in the planning process, the public was invited to identify planning issues and concerns relating to the management of BLM-administered public lands and resources/uses in the Planning Area. The formal scoping period began with publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on December 19, 2003. The scoping period ended February 17, 2004, which provided 60 days for comment submittal.

The Butte RMP website housed current information including background documents, maps, meeting announcements, published bulletins, and other documents ([http://www.blm.gov/mt/en/fo/butte\\_field\\_office.html](http://www.blm.gov/mt/en/fo/butte_field_office.html)). After April 2005 the BLM was required to take the website down and it was unavailable until approximately January 2006. Scoping information and newsletters were sent to a list of individuals, agencies, and organizations compiled including those who participated in past BLM events, those who requested to be on the mailing list, or

individuals who participated in the scoping meetings or submitted a comment.

Advertisements were published in Montana newspapers and a press release was sent to newspapers, radio stations, and television stations to: notify the public of the project, announce six public open houses, request public comments, and provide contact information for the BLM.

Six public meetings were held in January 2004. **Table 1-3** illustrates the attendance at each scoping meeting. At the six scoping meetings, 37 people registered their attendance. Comment forms were available at the six scoping meetings to collect comments. No written comments were received during the public meetings; however, verbal comments were offered and recorded.

<b>Table 1-3 Scoping Meeting Summary</b>		
<b>Meeting Location</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Helena, MT	January 6, 2004	7
Boulder, MT	January 8, 2004	2
Wise River/Divide, MT	January 13, 2004	6
Butte, MT	January 13, 2004	14
Bozeman, MT	January 14, 2004	4
Townsend, MT	January 15, 2004	4

Representatives from the Butte Field Office also met with several groups during the scoping period, including County Commissioners (Lewis and Clark, Silver Bow, Broadwater, Deer Lodge, and Jefferson counties); the Big Hole Watershed Committee, the Western Montana Resource Advisory Council; American Wildlands; and the East Pioneers Stewardship Group.

During initial scoping, the public submitted a total of 17 responses containing 554 comments.

## Proposed Planning Scenario

Using comments received during the initial scoping period, the BLM interdisciplinary team developed the "Proposed Planning Scenario", which describes possible management prescriptions and goals for individual programs. The Proposed Planning Scenario (PPS) was distributed on June 6, 2005 to gather public and agency comment on issues and concerns regarding the plan. The comment period closed July 6, 2005. Comments on the PPS were contained in 34 written letters, which included 691 specific individual comments that were considered during development of RMP alternatives.

On August 10, 2005, the PPS was sent to tribal governments, local, state, and federal agencies asking them to comment. The deadline for these comments was September 6, 2005. No comments were received.

Public meetings were held on the PPS, June 9, 2005 in Helena and June 13 and 29, 2005 in Butte. These meetings were attended by a total of about 30 people. Public comment forms were provided at the meetings. Few comments were received at the public meetings. Most comments were subsequently received in writing during the comment period.

In an effort to solicit more public feedback on the RMP, 29 organizations or groups were contacted and offered BLM briefings on the PPS. Of those, 10 requested briefings. The briefings were held during June and July 2005. Of the ten organizations that received briefings, six were county commissions, the remainders were advocacy groups.

## Travel Management Planning

Travel management and access is addressed at two levels in this document. Proposed management is described at the Field Office level as part of the RMP decision to be made. In addition, there are five Travel Planning Areas for which site-specific management by individual travel routes is proposed by alternative. Site-specific travel plan decisions for each of these five areas will be made separately from the RMP level decisions as implementation type decisions.

Five public meetings were held over a two-week period in November and December 2004. Separate meetings were held specific to each of the five following Travel Planning Areas: Upper Big Hole, Boulder/Jefferson City, East Helena (North Hills), Lewis and Clark County Northwest (Marysville) and Helena (Scratchgravel Hills). To advertise the meetings, BLM sent a mailer to all people on its mailing list and advertised the meetings on its public website. In addition, BLM sent a press release to the appropriate newspapers, radio stations, and television stations announcing the meetings. Table 1-4 presents a summary of attendance at the five meetings.

A formal presentation was given by the Butte Field Office management. After the presentation the participants were asked to state issues and concerns and proposed solutions before the group. Participants were also encouraged to submit written comments which were

<b>Table 1-4 Travel Planning Meeting Summary</b>		
<b>TPA</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Upper Big Hole	November 15, 2004	4
	November 3, 2005	11
Boulder/Jefferson City	November 16, 2004	7
East Helena	November 30, 2004	24
Helena	December 1, 2004	101
Lewis and Clark Co. NW	December 2, 2004	16

used to formulate the alternatives for travel management in these areas.

Two additional public meetings (one in Divide, the other in Butte) were held on November 3, 2005, to scope public feedback on the Upper Big Hole Travel Planning Area. A total of 11 people attended these meetings.

### ***Working Group Proposal Development***

BLM initiated *community based collaborative working groups* (comprised of non-BLM personnel and sponsored/overseen by Lewis and Clark County) in an effort to help BLM develop site-specific travel management alternatives agreeable to the public as well as the agency. Refer to **Appendix A – Travel Planning** for further details on the working group process. Additional information on this topic can be found in Chapter 5.

## **PLANNING ISSUES**

Planning issues were identified through an extensive review of the Dillon MFP (1979), Headwaters RMP (1984), and associated amendments and decision documents. This resulted in the Butte RMP Preparation Plan, which identified land management direction that could be carried forward, and management direction that needed to be changed (see the Purpose and Need section above).

Public comments were reviewed, categorized, and analyzed to identify specific planning issues and concerns to be addressed in the Butte RMP.

Planning issues and management concerns identified and the land management direction to be developed in the Butte RMP are described in **Table 1-5** (page 9).

### **Issue Identification**

Issue identification is the first step of the nine-step BLM planning process (see Planning Process below). A planning issue is a major controversy or dispute regarding management of resources or uses. These issues drive the formulation of the range of alternatives considered in this EIS.

The criteria used to identify issues included identifying if the effects:

- Would approach or exceed standards or a threshold.
- Would substantially change a resource.
- Would be controversial.
- Would offer a wide range of opportunities.
- Would cause disagreement regarding their environmental impact.

Analysis of the public comments was completed and a Scoping Summary Report finalized in September 2005 (USDI-BLM 2005b). After consideration of public responses, 5 major planning issues and 12 management

concerns were identified. These issues and management concerns were used to develop alternatives.

### ***Issue 1: Vegetation Communities***

***How will vegetation on BLM lands be managed to achieve healthy ecosystems while providing for a broad range of multiple uses?***

This issue highlights concerns over management of vegetation resources and communities. There is considerable interest in insuring that vegetation management provides a range of commodity uses such as timber and other forest products, and livestock grazing, while maintaining or restoring vegetative communities to provide other resource values such as high quality wildlife and aquatic habitats.

Ecosystems within the Planning Area have evolved over time in response to periodic fire disturbance, and sustainable ecosystems are those that are in balance with the inherent frequency, size, and severity of the natural disturbance cycle. Many acres in the Decision Area have missed one or two fire disturbance cycles due to long-term fire suppression efforts. The vegetative response to this lack of fire disturbance is a change in species presence or prominence, and fuel quantity and continuity.

Management of noxious weeds and other non-native, invasive species is a critical part of public land management. Noxious weeds are one of the largest threats to maintaining and restoring ecosystem health because they usually spread aggressively and have a history of substantial negative impacts on soils, water, habitat, wildlife, and fire cycles. They can also affect local economies with regard to recreation, grazing, forestry, and mining activities.

### ***Issue 2: Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat, Special Status and Priority Plant and Animal Species***

***How will BLM lands be managed to provide wildlife and fish habitat, and to conserve and recover special status and priority species?***

The RMP will focus on a multi-species, ecosystem approach to managing habitat for wildlife, fish, and special status plants and animals. There is a need to protect habitat for viable populations of all native species, manage habitat at scales large enough to accommodate natural disturbances such as fire, wind, and insect outbreaks, provide diversity of vegetative communities, and manage human uses in a manner that conserves and enhances ecological processes. Areas where restoration activities could restore or enhance terrestrial and aquatic habitat will also be identified.

Special status species include species that are listed, proposed for listing, or are candidate species under the Endangered Species Act; and sensitive species identified by BLM. BFO lands provide habitat for species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), including the Ute ladies' tresses, Canada

lynx, grizzly bear, bull trout, and three species that have been de-listed under the ESA, the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, and gray wolf. In addition, the area provides habitat for 45 “sensitive species” identified by the BLM. Sensitive species are those for which BLM must manage in a manner to minimize the risk of a future federal listing under the ESA. The RMP will identify strategies that contribute to conservation and recovery of special status species in the PA in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as required under the ESA for listed species.

### ***Issue 3: Travel Management and Access***

***How should the BLM manage motorized public travel to meet the needs for public access and resource uses while minimizing user conflicts and impacts to air, soil, watershed, vegetation, wildlife, and other resource values?***

Travel and access considerations are of major importance to hunters, off-highway recreationists, livestock grazers, miners, wildlife advocates, non-motorized recreationists, and others.

Travel and access issues are driven by the need to manage for the use and enjoyment of the public lands while protecting resource values and providing user safety. Travel management also involves the need to adequately address increased conflict between motorized and non-motorized users, particularly at urban/rural interfaces.

RMP alternatives for five Travel Planning Areas (TPAs) were developed in consideration of the public’s interest and demand for motorized as well as non-motorized travel opportunities while minimizing and/or mitigating resource impacts and user conflicts.

### ***Issue 4: Recreation***

***How should recreation be managed to accommodate the full range of recreational uses enjoyed by the public on BLM lands?***

This issue focuses on the need to set direction for recreation management in light of: increased demands on developed recreation sites and the need for new strategies to improve management efficiency, appropriate services and facilities, and public experiences; the need for management of Special Use Permits to better protect natural resources, minimize user conflicts, provide for needed opportunities and ensure fair value returns for both the permittee and BLM; and the need to classify recreation settings using the Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) system and modify existing Special Recreation Management Areas to provide a wide range of appropriate activities that foster beneficial experiences for the public.

### ***Issue 5: Special Designations including Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), National Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)***

***Which areas, if any, should be managed as special designations? How should they be managed to protect values that warrant their special designation status?***

In the Butte RMP process, nine nominated areas were reviewed for ACEC designation. In order to qualify as potential ACECs, nominated areas must meet relevance and importance criteria that are established in regulation and in BLM guidance. Five areas met the relevance and importance criteria and are being considered in the RMP. Inclusion of particular potential ACECs within specific alternatives was based in part on the focus of the alternatives.

Concerns with ACEC designation revolve around limitations that special management might place on current and future uses. Proponents of ACEC designation see it as a way of preventing loss of or impact to values of particular interest.

FLPMA states that priority should be given to the designation and protection of these areas when developing land use plans. A potential ACEC is designated in the approved RMP if it requires special management to protect its relevant and important values. Management is considered special if it is outside of the ordinary or routine requirements of the BLM or if it is not covered by provisions already stipulated in the RMP; special management is unique to the area and includes terms and conditions specifically designed to protect the values in the ACEC.

Each of the five potential ACECs have been proposed for designation in at least one alternative in accordance with ACEC guidance found in BLM Manual 1613 (USDI-BLM 1980a).

The RMP also provides protective strategies and appropriate uses for the management of National Trails to protect their resource values and characteristics.

The approved RMP will determine whether any rivers in the Planning Area are recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River system. Four river segments were assessed as to whether they would be suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. Recommendations were incorporated into the plan alternatives.

Six Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) are located within the Butte Field Office. RMP alternatives consider management options for WSAs that would take effect if Congress releases them from wilderness consideration.

## **Management Concerns**

Management concerns are topics that involve a resource, resource management activity, or land use that generally do not have enough controversy surrounding them to generate different RMP alternatives to address them. While these concerns are addressed in the plan, management related to them may or may not vary by alternative. Concerns were raised outside of the issues described above. These are described below.

### ***Air Quality***

This management concern is driven by the need to identify area-wide standards that apply to activities authorized by the Butte Field Office that might affect air quality. Yellowstone National Park is a Federal Class I airshed, and a portion of Silver Bow County is a non-attainment area. These could be affected by activities authorized under the plan.

Air quality concerns include public health impacts from wildland and prescribed fires. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends following the Interim Air Quality Policy on Wildland and Prescribed Fires (May 15, 1998) to assure that an air quality analysis is completed for prescribed burns.

### ***Soil***

This management concern focuses on the need to reduce accelerated soil erosion and compaction from occurring within the Decision Area and the potential impacts on soil productivity and other resources.

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use has created new roads and trails in areas with steep terrain, causing accelerated soil erosion. Other roads and trails have been constructed to a new standard and these disturbances create areas with some short-term and potential long-term soil erosion. In some places, historic cattle grazing has impacted soil and caused localized soil erosion and compaction. The spread of noxious weeds and conifer encroachment may have also had a detrimental effect on soils.

### ***Water Resources***

Management concerns associated with water resources involve preventing water quality degradation and improving watershed function to support beneficial uses. Additional concerns stem from water rights issues including management of existing water rights and acquiring water rights when feasible and with willing holders where acquisition of the water right meets a management objective or need.

Over the next decade, several total maximum daily load (TMDL) plans (restoration plans for water quality impaired streams) will be developed by the State of Montana. This will result in new water quality goals intended to improve water quality where beneficial uses are impaired.

## ***Cultural Resources, Traditional Cultural Properties and Paleontological Resources***

Management concerns include compliance with new laws, guidelines, and directives to ensure that significant cultural, traditional, and paleontological resources are identified and evaluated prior to surface disturbing activities to ensure protection of resources through appropriate mitigation. The alternatives present options for inventory of archeological and historical sites, coordination with tribal governments to identify religious or traditional lifeway values, education and public outreach programs, mitigation of cultural sites, maintenance of historic buildings, and mapping of fossil localities.

### ***Visual Resources***

Management concerns focus on the need to establish Visual Resource Management (VRM) Classifications to guide the management of public land based on scenic quality, sensitivity levels, and distance zones.

### ***Lands and Realty***

Management concerns for lands and realty focus on establishing conditions for disposal, retention, or acquisition of land or interests in land. Utility corridors would be designated where placement of future utility facilities would be encouraged. Another concern is the need to develop criteria to assess the impacts of land disposal and acquisition when considering land tenure adjustments.

### ***Minerals and Energy***

Management concerns associated with minerals and energy include development of a consistent approach to recognition of mineral rights under the General Mining Law and mineral leasing acts to identify the need for environmentally acceptable exploration, development, and production. The BLM Energy and Non-Energy Mineral Policy, which references several existing acts, recognizes the nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, energy, and other resources and the responsibilities concerning the discovery, development, production and acquisition of minerals and metals. The RMP alternatives provide management options for leasable, saleable, and locatable minerals. These management policies will ensure that federal minerals are available for national economic and energy needs.

### ***Abandoned Mine Lands***

Management concerns associated with Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) sites include: the threats posed to human health and the environment from contaminated water, acid rock drainage, or airborne contamination from mine or smelter sites; and public safety issues related to hazardous mine openings such as adits, shafts, open pits, and subsidence over buried mine openings. RMP alternatives incorporate information in accordance with bureau policy to guide the elimination or reduction of physical hazards and safety issues on public lands.



### ***Hazardous Material Management***

Management concerns associated with hazardous material management consist of the need to protect employees, the public, and the environment from exposure to hazardous materials in public facilities or on public land. The RMP alternatives comply with all appropriate laws and regulations regarding hazardous material management.

### ***Social and Economic Environment***

The Planning Area includes land within eight counties, and near many communities ranging from small cities like Butte and Helena to towns such as Townsend, Whitehall, and Boulder. The concerns among residents and the impacts to communities from public land management decisions vary.

Management concerns associated with the social and economic environment focus on changes to recreation, forestry, mining, livestock grazing, and other land-uses as a result of increased population, economic growth, and continuing development in the Planning Area.

### ***Environmental Justice***

Management concerns associated with environmental justice focus on the requirement that BLM evaluate and disclose whether actions would place a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequence on populations covered by Executive Order 12898.

### ***Tribal Treaty Rights including Native American Religious Concerns***

Management concerns focus on the requirement to notify and consult with appropriate Native American tribes on BLM authorized actions.

<b>Table 1-5</b> <b>Description of Planning Issues/Management Concerns,</b> <b>their Desired Future Conditions/Visions, and Management Goals</b>	
<b>Issue or Management Concern</b>	<b>Description of Desired Future Conditions/Visions and Management Goals</b>
Issue 1: Vegetation Communities	<p>The desired future condition is for vegetation to fall within the historic range of variability, with diverse, site-appropriate plant communities that contain healthy populations for native species.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) maintain and/or improve ecological health of woodland communities for sustainability and diversity; 2) manage dry forest types to contain healthy stands of site-appropriate species; 3) manage moist forest types to contain healthy stands that combine into a diversity of age classes and structure; 4) manage old forest structures in a sustainable manner; 5) minimize infestations of invasive plants and noxious weeds; 6) manage upland vegetation communities by including a full range of herbaceous and shrub species; 7) maintain or enhance communities in priority habitats to provide desired ecological functions and values; 8) manage riparian and wetland communities for the appropriate composition, density and age structure; and, 9) manage wetland and riparian habitats to support healthy, diverse and abundant populations of fish and associated aquatic and riparian dependent species.</p> <p>Management direction for forests and woodlands is needed to: 1) restore and/or maintain the health and productivity of public forests to provide a balance of forest and woodland resource benefits to present and future generations; and, 2) manage forestry resources to provide a sustained flow of local economic benefits and protect non-market economic values.</p> <p>Management direction for livestock grazing is needed to: 1) maintain, restore, or enhance BLM rangelands to meet the Land Health Standards; and, 2) manage livestock grazing to provide a sustained level of local economic benefits and protect non-market economic values.</p> <p>Direction for wildland fire management is needed to: 1) provide an appropriate management response to all wildland fires, emphasizing firefighter and public safety; 2) move toward restoring and maintaining desired ecological conditions consistent with appropriate fire regimes; 3) minimize the adverse effects of fire on resources, resource uses and Wildland Urban Interface areas; 4) promote seamless fire management planning across jurisdictions within the boundaries of the Butte Field Office; and, 5) protect life and property by treating hazardous fuels on BLM lands near Wildland Urban Interface areas.</p>

**Table 1-5**  
**Description of Planning Issues/Management Concerns,**  
**their Desired Future Conditions/Visions, and Management Goals**

<b>Issue or Management Concern</b>	<b>Description of Desired Future Conditions/Visions and Management Goals</b>
Issue 2: Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat, Special Status and Priority Plant and Animal Species	<p>The desired future condition is for BLM lands to provide a diverse landscape with native vegetation communities that provide suitable habitat to maintain viable and well distributed populations of native wildlife species on public land.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) conserve, enhance, restore, or contribute to the recovery of threatened, endangered, or candidate plant or animal species; 2) conserve or enhance habitat of BLM sensitive plant and animal species to prevent the federal listing of these species; 3) conserve special-status species and habitats across the landscape through collaboration and cooperation; 4) provide a variety of well-distributed diverse plant communities to support a diversity of habitats; 5) conserve, enhance, or restore areas of important wildlife habitat such as rare or limited seasonal habitats, corridors, blocks of intact functional habitat across the landscape, areas of low road-density, foraging areas, and riparian areas; and, 6) conserve, enhance or restore special habitat features or mitigate/minimize impacts to special habitat features including, but not limited to caves, cliffs, riparian areas, wetlands, snags, and down woody material.</p>
Issue 3: Travel Management and Access	<p>The vision is to provide a range of quality motorized and non-motorized opportunities, and reasonable access for management while protecting natural resources, now and in the future.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) provide a balanced approach to travel management that provides a sustained flow of local economic benefits, minimizes or mitigates user conflicts, safety concerns, and resource impacts while taking into consideration the unique attributes of the various travel management Planning Areas; and, 2) maintain facilities, roads and trails to provide for public and/or administrative use and safety while mitigating impacts to resources.</p>
Issue 4: Recreation	<p>The vision is to provide a range of quality recreation opportunities, services, and appropriate facilities for public use and enjoyment.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) provide a diverse array of recreational opportunities while maintaining healthy public land resources; 2) establish, manage and maintain quality recreation sites and facilities to meet a broad range of public needs subject to resource constraints; 3) manage commercial, competitive or special events with special recreation permits that eliminate or mitigate impacts to resources and conflicts with other users; and, 4) manage recreation opportunities to provide a sustained flow of local economic benefits and protect non-market economic values.</p>
Issue 5: Special Designations including ACEC, National Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers and WSAs	<p>The vision is to protect relevant and important ACEC values and manage for appropriate uses; protect established National Trail values and manage for appropriate uses; protect Outstandingly Remarkable Values in Wild and Scenic River-eligible river segments and manage for appropriate uses; protect wilderness characteristics in Wilderness Study Areas.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) designate ACECs where special management attention is required to protect relevant and important values; 2) manage National Trails to promote public enjoyment and protect their designated values; 3) manage preliminarily eligible river segments so that their suitability for potential National Wild and Scenic Rivers System designation is not impaired; and 4) manage WSAs so that their suitability for potential wilderness designation is not impaired.</p>
Air Quality	<p>The desired future condition is for air quality to be maintained in a condition that protects human health and the environment.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to ensure BLM authorizations and management activities protect the local quality of life and sustain economic benefits by complying with tribal, local, state, and federal air quality regulations, requirements and implementation plans.</p>

<b>Table 1-5</b> <b>Description of Planning Issues/Management Concerns,</b> <b>their Desired Future Conditions/Visions, and Management Goals</b>	
<b>Issue or Management Concern</b>	<b>Description of Desired Future Conditions/Visions and Management Goals</b>
Soils	<p>The desired future condition is for stable soils to contribute to properly functioning watersheds and support productive plant communities consistent with site potential.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) manage uses to minimize accelerated soil erosion and compaction and maintain surface soil water infiltration based on site-specific conditions; and, 2) maintain or improve soil health and fertility, prevent or minimize erosion and compaction while supporting multiple use management.</p>
Water Resources	<p>The desired future condition is for water bodies to have sufficient water quality to meet state and federal standards, and support designated beneficial uses.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) <b>restore and/or maintain</b> the chemical, physical and biological integrity of water resources to protect designated beneficial uses and achieve water quality standards; 2) maintain existing or acquire new water rights on BLM land to ensure water availability for multiple-use management; 3) minimize erosion and accelerated runoff to streams to improve watershed function; and, 4) protect water quality for municipal, industrial, agricultural, recreation, and residential purposes by adopting protective measures to meet tribal, state, and local water quality requirements.</p>
Cultural Resources/ Traditional Cultural Properties/ Paleontological Resources	<p>The desired future condition is for there to be a minimal loss or degradation of cultural resources and traditional cultural properties within the Butte Field Office.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) preserve and protect eligible cultural resources, and traditional cultural properties within the Butte Field Office; 2) identify cultural resource sites and traditional cultural properties and mitigate impacts when necessary, from natural or human-caused deterioration; and, 3) preserve and protect eligible cultural resources to ensure that they are available for appropriate uses by present and future generations.</p>
Visual Resources	<p>The vision is that a spectrum of visual qualities are provided and protected for the public.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to manage visual resources in accordance with VRM classifications described in <b>Appendix C – Visual Resource Management Classes.</b></p>
Lands and Realty	<p>The vision is for the needs of the public to be met and support for all BLM resource programs is provided.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) look for opportunities to acquire non-federal land or interest in non-federal land with important resources and resource uses; and, 2) provide for land-use opportunities to provide a sustained flow of economic benefits and meet local infrastructure needs while protecting or minimizing adverse impacts to resources and resource uses.</p>
Minerals and Energy	<p>The vision is for the use of geologic resources to recognize the need for domestic sources of energy and minerals.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) ensure that federal minerals are available for energy and mineral exploration and development; 2) manage exploration and development of mineral resources and ensure they are conducted in an environmentally sound manner; and, 3) where possible, conserve significant or unique geological features.</p>
Abandoned Mine Lands	<p>The vision is for threats to human health and the environment from historic mining activities on public land to be reduced.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) reclaim AML sites on public land to improve water quality, plant communities, and diverse fish and wildlife habitat; 2) reduce and/or eliminate risks to human health from hazardous mine openings; and, 3) protect historic resources and wildlife habitat commonly associated with AML sites.</p>

**Table 1-5**  
**Description of Planning Issues/Management Concerns,**  
**their Desired Future Conditions/Visions, and Management Goals**

<b>Issue or Management Concern</b>	<b>Description of Desired Future Conditions/Visions and Management Goals</b>
Hazardous Materials Management	<p>The vision is for employees, the public, and the environment to be protected from exposure to hazardous materials in public facilities or on public land.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to mitigate threats and reduce risks to the public and environment from hazardous materials.</p>
Social and Economic Environment	<p>The vision is for conservation, stewardship, and partnerships on public land are cultivated for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.</p> <p>Management direction is needed to: 1) provide opportunities for economic benefits while minimizing adverse impacts to resources and resource uses; 2) provide for a diverse array of activities that result in social benefits for local residents, businesses, visitors, interested citizens, and future generations, while minimizing negative social effects; 3) sustain, and where appropriate, restore the health of forest, rangeland, aquatic, and riparian ecosystems administered by the BLM to provide a sustained flow of economic benefits within the capability of the ecosystem; 4) protect visual quality, wildlife habitats, and recreation opportunities on BLM lands to sustain non-market economic values; and, 5) make resource commodities available to provide a sustainable flow of economic benefits within the capability of the ecosystem.</p>
Environmental Justice	<p>Management direction is needed to identify and remediate to the extent possible disproportionate negative effects to minority or low income populations per Executive Order 12898.</p>
Tribal Treaty Rights	<p>Management direction is needed to accommodate treaty and legal rights of appropriate Native American groups in management of public lands.</p>

Note: Unnumbered items are management concerns.

## ISSUES CONSIDERED BUT NOT FURTHER ANALYZED

During scoping, several concerns were raised that are beyond the scope of this planning effort or that represented questions on how the BLM would go about the planning process and implementation. There are several issues raised in scoping that are clearly of concern to the public but which are governed by existing laws and regulations (for example, water quality). Where certain management is already dictated by law or regulation, alternatives have not been developed; rather, management will instead be applied as “Management Common to All Alternatives.”

The Scoping Report (USDI-BLM 2005b) and the BLM Final Surface Management Regulations EIS (USDI-BLM 2000a) provides a comprehensive list of issues outside the scope of the RMP or issues addressed through administrative or policy action. Some major issues were considered but not analyzed further because they are inconsistent with existing laws or higher level management direction, or because they are beyond the scope of the RMP purpose and goals. These issues are listed below.

- It would be useful if the EIS discussed the Hard Rock Mining Act of 1872, its benefits and impacts, and potential conflicts with the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and Endangered Species Act.
- Minerals management should be greatly restricted.
- OHV recreationists in Montana generate total State and Federal annual gas tax revenue on the order of \$8 million. A Federal excise tax refund program for gasoline used for off-road purposes does not exist at this time. Excise tax on gasoline used for off-road fuel use should either be refunded to off-highway recreationists or used to fund programs that benefit off-highway recreationists.
- OHV recreation and tourism has not been promoted or supported by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) as aggressively as other recreation and tourism associated with fish and wildlife programs. OHV users request that MFWP actively promote OHV recreation and tourism.
- OHV use should be eliminated from BLM lands.
- Commercial use of public lands should be encouraged and promoted over all other considerations.

## PLANNING CRITERIA AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

FLPMA is the primary authority for BLM's management of public lands. This law provides the overarching policy by which public lands will be managed and establishes provisions for land use planning, land acquisition and disposition, administration, range management, rights-of-way, designated management areas, and the repeal of **certain pre-FLPMA** laws and statutes.

NEPA requires the consideration and public availability of information regarding the environmental impacts of major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.

BLM planning regulations (43CFR1600, Subpart 1610) require preparation of planning criteria to guide development of all resource management plans. Planning criteria guide the development of the plan and determine the approach to developing alternatives, and ultimately, the selection of a Preferred Alternative. The criteria serve to help ensure that plans are tailored to the identified issues and avoid unnecessary data collection and analyses.

Preliminary planning criteria were developed prior to public scoping meetings to set the side boards for focused planning and to guide decision making by topic. These criteria were introduced to the public for review in January 2004 at all scoping meetings. The public was encouraged to comment on, and suggest additions to, these criteria at the meetings, and through written correspondence. Final planning criteria included:

- The plan will comply with FLPMA and all other applicable laws.
- The planning process will include an EIS that will comply with NEPA standards.
- The plan will establish new guidance and identify existing guidance upon which the BLM will rely in managing public lands within the Decision Area.
- The RMP/EIS will incorporate by reference the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management; the Montana/Dakotas Statewide Fire Management Plan; Off-Highway Vehicle EIS and Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota, and Portions of South Dakota; the Final Statewide Oil and Gas Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Amendment of the Powder River and Billings Resource Management Plans; and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Wind Energy Development on BLM-Administered Lands in the Western United States.
- The RMP/EIS will incorporate by reference all prior Wilderness Study Area findings, suitability studies, and reports that affect public lands.

- The plan will result in determinations as required by special program and resource specific guidance in Appendix C of the BLM's Planning Handbook.
- The plan will recognize the state's responsibility to manage wildlife populations, including uses such as hunting and fishing, within the Planning Area.
- Decisions in the plan will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, tribal, and federal agencies as long as the decisions are in conformance with legal mandates on management of public lands.
- The scope of analysis will be consistent with the level of analysis in approved plans and in accordance with Bureau-wide standards and program guidance.
- Geospatial data will be automated within a Geographic Information System (GIS) to facilitate discussions of the affected environment, alternative formulation, effects analysis, and displaying the results.
- Resource allocations must be reasonable and achievable within available technological and budgetary constraints.
- The RMP will consider conservation and management strategies developed for protection, conservation, and restoration of Yellowstone and westslope cutthroat trout, bull trout, fluvial Arctic grayling and sage grouse.
- The RMP will incorporate existing recovery plans and management strategies and guidelines for federally listed threatened and endangered species, including Ute Ladies' Tresses, the Northern Continental Divide population of the grizzly bear, and lynx (the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy). State management plans will be considered for delisted species including the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, wolf, and Yellowstone population of grizzly bear.
- The RMP will recognize the State of Montana's authority on Montana water law and water rights.
- The RMP will recognize federal land management agency obligations under tribal treaties and laws or executive orders on Native American reserved rights, religious freedoms, and traditional use areas.

## RELATIONSHIP TO BLM POLICIES, PLANS, AND PROGRAMS

A number of plans have been developed by the BLM that relate to or otherwise govern management in the Planning Area. Some of these plans amended the Dillon MFP and Headwaters RMP while others, though they have not been formally adopted through the land use

planning process, are considered by BLM when implementation level planning is conducted or other specific actions are analyzed. Specific management actions from these plans must be in conformance with the Butte RMP and Record of Decision when completed. These major plans and other major management guidance are listed below and provide a perspective of the many management considerations pertinent to the Planning Area.

## LAND USE PLANS AND AMENDMENTS

- Mountain Foothills Rangeland Management Program Document (USDI-BLM 1981a).
- Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota ROD (USDI-BLM 1997).
- Elkhorns Travel Management Plan/Amendment (USDI-BLM *et al.* 1995).
- Off-Highway Vehicle ROD and Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota, and Portions of South Dakota (USDI-BLM 2003c).
- Clancy-Unionville Travel Management Plan/Amendment (USDI-BLM 2000b).
- Whitetail-Pipestone Travel Management Plan/Amendment (USDI-BLM 2003b).
- Suitability Report and EIS for Wilderness Designation of Humbug Spires Instant Study Area (USDI-BLM 1980).
- Sleeping Giant and Sheep Creek Wilderness Study Areas EIS (USDI-BLM 1991a).
- Fire/Fuels Management Plan Environmental Assessment/Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas (USDI-BLM 2003a).

## OTHER NATIONAL, STATEWIDE, AND FIELD OFFICE PLANS

- Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Seventeen Western States (USDI-BLM 2007).
- Bull Mountains Exchange Final EIS/ROD (USDI-BLM 1991b).
- The Montana Weed Management Plan (Duncan 2005).
- Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDI-BLM 1985).
- Montana Statewide Wilderness Study Report (USDI-BLM 1991c).
- National Fire Plan and 2001 Federal Fire Policy.
- Oil and Gas Environmental Assessment of BLM Leasing Program, Butte District (USDI-BLM 1981b).

- Draft National BLM Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy (USDI-BLM 2003e).
- Healthy Forests Restoration Act.
- Interim Bull Trout Habitat Conservation Strategy and Implementation (USDI-BLM 1996a).

## RELATED PLANS

BLM planning regulations require that BLM plans be consistent with officially approved or adopted resource related plans of other federal, state, local, and tribal governments as long as those plans are consistent with federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. Plans formulated by federal, state, local, and tribal governments that relate to the RMP have been reviewed and no proposed management in this RMP is known to be inconsistent with these plans:

- Canadian Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (Ruediger *et al.* 2000).
- Forest Plan – Helena National Forest (USDA-FS 1986a).
- Forest Plan – Beaverhead National Forest (USDA-FS 1986b).
- Forest Plan – Deerlodge National Forest (USDA-FS 1987).
- Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan (USFWS 1993).
- Grizzly Bear Management Plan for Southwestern Montana (MFWP 2002a).
- Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Plan (USFWS 1987).
- Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (USBOR 1994).
- Pacific Bald Eagle Recovery Plan (USFWS 1986).
- Final PEIS on Wind Energy Development on BLM Administered Lands in the Western US, June 2005.
- Montana Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (MFWP 2004a).
- Montana Nonpoint Source Management Plan (MDEQ 2007).

## POLICY

No proclamations or legislative designations that would influence decisions or constrain the alternatives have been issued within the Decision Area.

Implementing the RMP begins when the Montana BLM State Director signs the ROD for the RMP. Decisions in the RMP would be implemented tied to the BLM budgeting process. An implementation schedule would be developed, providing for the systematic accomplishment of decisions in the approved RMP.

## COLLABORATION

There are no formally designated cooperating agencies for the Butte RMP planning process. Collaboration and consultation with federal, state, and local agencies, and tribal governments is discussed further in Chapter 5.

## CHANGES FROM THE DRAFT RMP TO THE PROPOSED RMP

Changes from the Draft RMP to the Proposed RMP are indicated with gray shading. Changes related to correcting typographical or grammatical errors, and other similar adjustments were considered minuscule and not to have any effect on alternative proposals or analyses. Such changes are not shaded in the document.

As a result of public comment and internal review of the Draft RMP/EIS, Alternative B (the Preferred Alternative in the Draft RMP/EIS) has been adjusted and represents the BLM's Preferred Alternative in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Changes regarding alternatives focused on adjustments to "Management Common to Action Alternatives" sections and for Alternative B in order to address public concerns and internal reviews while continuing to meet the BLM's legal and regulatory mandates. Changes are a result of:

- Adjustments to Management Common to Action Alternatives in some areas
- Adjustments to Alternative B
- Clarifications to better explain the management proposed in the Draft RMP/EIS
- Updates to information based on inventory updates after August 2005
- Updates to maps
- Other minor corrections

Some public comments suggested that alternatives to maximize particular uses or to maximize protection of certain resources should be analyzed in detail. While these types of alternatives were considered, they were not analyzed in detail because they did not meet BLM's multiple use and sustained yield mandate established in the FLPMA or the planning criteria set out in the Draft RMP/EIS. Other comments suggested consideration of items outside the scope of the BLM's decision authority. These items were not considered in this plan.

Other suggested modifications were within the range of alternatives analyzed by the BLM. The following descriptions of changes to proposed management in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS were within the range of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS. Proposed management changes are indicated in Chapter 2. However, additional minor clarifications of analyses of effects have occurred in some places in Chapter 4 relative to changes to proposed management. These changes are

located in the pertinent sections of Chapter 4 relative to the type of proposed management changed.

## ADJUSTMENTS TO "MANAGEMENT COMMON TO ACTION ALTERNATIVES" – RMP LEVEL DECISIONS

Proposed "Management Common to Action Alternatives" for RMP decisions have been added or revised as follows.

Under Vegetation Communities in the Management Common to Action Alternatives section, under Forests and Woodlands, the following prescription has been added in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS: "The BLM would strive to maintain and/or restore stands with old forest structure within historic range of variability to maintain and/or enhance habitat for old growth dependent species."

Under Wildlife, Fish, Wildlife Habitat, Special Status and Priority Plant and Animal Species, the following prescriptions have been added under Management Common to Action Alternatives:

- "The BLM would emphasize providing habitat of sufficient quantity and quality, including connectivity and wildlife movement corridors, habitat complexity, forest openings, edges, and ecotones, to enhance biological diversity and provide quality, sustainable habitat for native wildlife species."
- "The BLM would emphasize maintaining and/or restoring the structure, composition, and function of aquatic ecosystems to support a diversity of aquatic plant and animal species and emphasize hydrologic connectivity within watersheds to maintain and/or restore habitat and connectivity needs for populations of aquatic dependent species."
- "The BLM would restore and/or maintain riparian structure, composition, and processes, including physical integrity of riparian ecosystems, amount and distribution of woody debris to sustain physical and biological complexity, adequate summer and winter thermal regulation, water quality and hydrologic processes, distribution and diversity of riparian vegetative communities and source habitats for riparian dependent species."

Under Wildlife, Fish, Wildlife Habitat, Special Status and Priority Plant and Animal Species, a newly developed prescription for managing big game security habitat has been included in the Management Common to Action Alternatives section which reads: "Functional Blocks of security habitat for big game species would be maintained across the landscape. Where minimum-size blocks of security habitat (250 acres), as described by Hillis et al. (1991), are located, they would be retained in a suitable condition during project planning and implementation. Protection of larger blocks of security habitat would also be addressed during project or watershed

level planning. Where security habitat is limited or fragmented across the landscape, the BLM would emphasize improving habitat through vegetation treatments and road closures (including seasonal closures) to increase security habitat for big game species.” This prescription replaces alternative-specific prescriptions for Alternatives B, C, and D presented in the Draft RMP/EIS.

Under Travel Management and Access, the following prescriptions have been added in the Management Common to Action Alternatives section:

- “The BLM would emphasize management of the transportation system to reduce impacts to natural resources from authorized roads and trails. The BLM would also stress closing and restoring unauthorized user created roads and trails to prevent resource damage. Ecologically sensitive areas within 300 feet of roads and trails could be closed to dispersed camping if resource damage is found to be occurring in these areas.”
- “Snowmobile use would be subject to restrictions outline in specific travel plans. It is the rider’s responsibility to avoid locations where wind or topographic conditions may have reduced snow depth and created situations where damage to vegetation or soils could occur, or where vegetation is taller than the protective snow cover. Ecologically sensitive areas could be closed to snowmobiling if resource damage caused or exacerbated by snowmobile activity is found to be occurring in these areas.”

Under Lands and Realty, in the Land Ownership Adjustment section, Management Common to Action Alternatives, the potential disposal acreage has been revised from 7,472 acres in the Draft RMP/EIS to 8,901 acres in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS through identification of additional isolated parcels of land that may be suitable for disposal.

Under Leasable Fluid Minerals, the Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenario for oil and gas leasing has been changed for all action alternatives to the following: “Based on the analysis in the RFD scenario, it was estimated that up to 19 conventional oil and gas wildcat wells (exploratory wells drilled in an area with no existing production) might be drilled in the PA in the next 15 to 20 years. Of these 19 wells, it is estimated that 13 would be “dry” holes. Dry holes would be plugged and abandoned with surface reclamation occurring shortly afterward. It is further estimated that six of the wells could be completed for production. Each of the discovery wells would probably prompt additional step-out wells. A “step-out well” is a well drilled adjacent to or near a proven well to establish the limits and continuity of the oil or gas reservoir or to assist with production. It was estimated that 12 step-out wells would be drilled, two for each discovery. For analysis purposes seven of the producing wildcat and step-out wells are assumed to

be BLM.” This is a slight increase in the forecasted activity compared to the Draft RMP/EIS. Additional changes in the fluid minerals appendix (Appendix M of Proposed RMP/Final EIS) have also been made to reflect this slight increase.

## **ADJUSTMENTS TO ALTERNATIVE B – RMP LEVEL DECISIONS**

Key proposed management that would be adopted through RMP decisions have been adjusted for Alternative B as follows based on public comment and internal review:

Under Vegetation Communities, in the Wildland Fire Management section, Fire Management Unit (FMU) polygon mapping has been adjusted to provide more flexibility for managing fire and fuels in the Big Hole River watershed in the vicinity of Wise River and Dewey. Approximately 9,000 acres that were identified in the C category in the Draft RMP/EIS have been moved to the B category.

Under Vegetation Communities, in the Noxious Weed Management section, the management prescription pertaining to aerial spraying of herbicides to treat noxious weeds has been modified to eliminate the provision for a 300-foot no-spray zone near riparian areas described in the Draft RMP/EIS. This prescription in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS now indicates that standard operating procedures and mitigation measures identified in the newly finalized Record of Decision for Vegetation Treatments using herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement would be followed under Alternative B.

Under Travel Management and Access, the prescription pertaining to competitive motorized events has been revised as follows to provide more management flexibility: “Organized competitive and non-competitive motorized events would be considered and evaluated on a case-by-case basis for the Pipestone area only (existing management). Non-competitive motorized events would not be allowed outside Pipestone. However, competitive motorized events (timed/speed based) proposed on BLM lands outside Pipestone would be considered, but only if held in conjunction with use of adjacent lands (public or private).”

Under Recreation Management, under Alternative B the prescription pertaining to outfitter guides has been changed to the following to ensure consistency with BLM policy: “Day-use Special Recreation Permits would be issued for commercial fishing and floating uses at BLM river access sites. Outfitters would be annually billed an advance flat fee (currently \$90.00) established by the Director based on the Implicit Price Deflator Index. In the long-term, the BLM would continue to coordinate with MFWP to enhance river/corridor land management and to develop a multi-



agency statewide fee system for the commercial uses of river access sites.”

Under Recreation Management, under Alternative B the prescription pertaining to variances to the 14-day camping limitation has been changed as follows to provide for management flexibility: “Variances to the 14-day camping limit during the hunting season would be considered on a case-by-case basis subject to the following considerations: resource impacts, social conflicts, sanitation concerns, no livestock, or commercial activities would be involved. Preference will be given to developed recreation sites during this low use period since they provide hardened camping units, toilet facilities, and good access.”

Under Special Designations, The Spokane Creek potential ACEC has been dropped from Alternative B because the BLM believes that it can adequately manage the values in this area without the ACEC designation.

Under Special Designations, boundaries of the Elkhorns potential ACEC have been modified for Alternative B to exclude the Graymont Mine permitted area, the proposed expansion area for Graymont Mine, and the proposed Montana Army National Guard withdrawal area. The boundary was also expanded under this alternative to include the newly acquired Iron Mask property. These changes have altered the size of this potential ACEC from 53,439 acres in the Draft RMP/EIS to 50,431 acres in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS under Alternative B.

Under Leasable Fluid Minerals, an additional stipulation has been added to Alternative B for no surface occupancy within ½-mile for streams identified as having high restoration potential for native fish species. No such streams have been identified at this point for the Butte Field Office, but this could change in the future.

Under Locatable Minerals, the proposed mineral withdrawal for Muskrat Creek (180 acres in the riparian area) has been dropped from Alternative B because the BLM believes that aquatic resources there can be adequately protected using the existing mining regulations found at 43 CFR 3809 in the context of the proposed inclusion of this area in the Elkhorn Mountains ACEC as well as the proposed finding of suitability of Muskrat Creek for Wild and Scenic River designation.

## **ADJUSTMENTS TO ALTERNATIVE B – IMPLEMENTATION DECISIONS**

A number of changes have been made to Alternative B for three of the five site-specific travel plans being analyzed with this RMP revision. These are implementation decisions and are described in detail in the Travel Management and Access section, Activity Level Planning for Five High Priority Travel Planning Areas in Chapter 2.

In the Helena Travel Planning Area, Alternative B has been changed to essentially close the interior of the Scratchgravel Hills to wheeled motorized use year-round

with the exception of a few right-of-way routes and routes needed for residential access. This change has been made to minimize ongoing illegal activity and reduce user conflicts associated with this area.

In the Boulder/Jefferson City Travel Planning Area, Alternative B has been slightly modified to provide an additional open route (with seasonal restrictions).

In the Upper Big Hole Travel Planning Area, a number of route-specific changes have been made to Alternative B to address public comments and management needs on the ground.

## **ADDRESSING GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE**

A section on global climate change has been added to Chapter 3 (under the Air Quality heading, Climate sub-heading) to describe global climate change and its potential effects on resources and resource uses in the Planning Area. A Global Climate Change section has also been added to Chapter 4 (after the Cumulative Effects on Social and Economic Conditions section) to discuss potential effects of BLM activities associated with the Butte RMP on global climate change.

## **CLARIFICATIONS/MINOR CHANGES**

A number of text changes have been made to clarify certain aspects of specific proposed management prescriptions under the alternative descriptions in Chapter 2. These are highlighted in Chapter 2 where they appear. An example of this is additional specification on how forage reserve allotments would be managed in the Livestock Grazing section.

Under Recreation Management, in the Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) section, some minor changes have been made to SRMA boundaries and titles under all the action alternatives. None of these changes have a marked effect on management of these areas compared to the Draft RMP/EIS.

Two additional appendices have been added: **Appendix B**, Laws, and **Appendix N**, Implementation and Monitoring.

**Appendix A** has been revised to include additional discussion of the process used by the BLM in developing site-specific travel plan alternatives.

The Biological Opinion received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Endangered Species Act consultation for this RMP revision has been added to **Appendix G**, Wildlife.

## **UPDATES TO DATA**

Data and inventory information was frozen in August 2005 to ensure consistent analysis in the Draft RMP/EIS. Since then, there have been revisions to the BLM sur-

face land acreage total as a result of various land acquisitions/transactions as follows:

Draft RMP surface lands – 302,034 acres.

Proposed RMP surface lands – 307,309 acres.

The majority of newly acquired acres are in the Iron Mask acquisition in the Elkhorn Mountains, adjacent to pre-existing BLM lands.

Minor changes have been made throughout Chapter 2 by RMP alternative to address the increase in surface lands to account for management of newly acquired lands. Changes have been made to proposed travel management area designation acres, Fire Management Unit acreages, Visual Resource Management acreages, and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum acreages to match and be consistent with proposed management for adjacent BLM lands nearby the newly acquired acres.

There has also been refinement to the federal mineral estate acreage used in the Draft RMP/EIS based on some of the surface land administration changes as well as improved GIS information.

Draft RMP federal mineral estate – 678,189 acres.

Proposed RMP federal mineral estate – 652,194 acres.

Changes associated with the refined acreage of federal mineral estate have been made in Chapters 2 and 4 wherever analyses and discussion associated with acres available for oil and gas leasing, or acreages associated with specific oil and gas stipulations are involved. While most of these actual acreages have changed, there have been no substantive changes to proposed oil and gas stipulations that have caused any substantial relative changes in available acres compared to the Draft RMP.

A section on Wild Horses and Burros was added to Chapter 2 to describe that while the Butte Field Office does not have any wild horses or burros, there is a congressionally designated herd area in the Butte Field Office that would not be actively managed under all alternatives.

Information must continue to be considered dynamic and will continue to be updated as the plan is implemented. The BLM is required to continue inventorying public lands and to maintain the best available current information.

## MAP CHANGES

The Proposed RMP/Final EIS is designed to be used in conjunction with map information provided in the Draft RMP/EIS. Only maps that have changed since release of

the Draft RMP/EIS have been produced for the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. In cases where maps have been produced for less than all of the alternatives in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, readers should refer back to analogous maps in the Draft RMP/EIS for comparison with currently depicted management proposals on maps in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

Maps 2, 3, 4, and 5 have all been adjusted for the Proposed RMP/Final EIS to display mapping only for the BLM surface acres, including the newly acquired Iron Mask property near Townsend. Map 3 has been adjusted to reflect the change in FMU designations described above in the Big Hole River watershed.

Map 7 has been adjusted to reflect changes to Alternative B for the Helena Travel Planning Area.

Map 11 has been produced to display a change in Alternative B to the Ward Ranch trailhead location in the East Helena Travel Planning Area compared to its initial proposed location under this alternative in the Draft RMP/EIS.

Map 19 has been adjusted to reflect changes to Alternative B for the Boulder/Jefferson City Travel Planning Area.

Map 23 has been adjusted to reflect changes to Alternative B for the Upper Big Hole River Travel Planning Area.

Maps 26, 27, and 28 have been adjusted to reflect surface land adjustments in proposed management for Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.

Map 30 has been adjusted to reflect minor boundary and name changes to Special Recreation Management Areas under Alternatives B and C.

Map 32 has been reproduced to provide additional clarifying information on potential ACECs.

Maps 37, 38, and 39 have been adjusted to reflect surface land adjustments in proposed Visual Resource Management designations under Alternatives B, C, and D.

Map 41 has been updated to show additional mapped parcels for potential disposal.

Maps 42, 43, 44, and 45 have all been adjusted to reflect refinements to the federal mineral estate lands.

Map 46 has been adjusted to reflect the dropping of the Muskrat Creek mineral withdrawal proposal from Alternative B.

A new map, Map 47 has been created to depict a wild horse/burro herd area that exists in the Butte Field Office.