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# RECORD OF DECISION

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## INTRODUCTION

This Record of Decision (ROD) approves the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) proposal to manage public lands within the Butte Field Office as described in the attached Approved Resource Management Plan (Approved RMP). The Proposed RMP/Final EIS was published in September 2008.

The Butte Field Office administers about 307,309 surface acres of BLM land and a total of about 660,819 acres of federal subsurface mineral estate in western Montana. These lands are dispersed throughout a 7.2 million acre planning area in eight counties.

The Butte RMP includes two levels of decisions in accordance with the NEPA and BLM regulations. These are land use planning decisions and implementation decisions. Land use planning decisions were protestable during the September 26, 2008 to October 27, 2008 protest period in accordance with BLM regulations at 43 CFR§1610.5-2. Six unique protest letters were received. Implementation decisions (described below) may be appealed in accordance with 43 CFR Part 4 upon publication of the Notice of Availability of this document in the Federal Register by the Environmental Protection Agency.

## PROTEST REVIEW RESULTS

The BLM received six unique protest letters during the 30-day protest period provided for the Proposed RMP/Final EIS in accordance with 43 CFR 1610.5-2. Most concerns were focused on the NEPA process associated with site-specific travel planning (implementation decisions). There were some concerns that the Proposed RMP would establish "de facto" wilderness areas. One party expressed disagreement with the BLM's decision to omit listing some particular parcels of land on the disposal list.

The BLM Director addressed all protests without making changes to the Proposed RMP.

## DECISION

The decision is hereby made to approve the attached plan as the Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) for lands administered in Beaverhead, Broadwater, Deer Lodge, Gallatin, Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, Park, and Silver Bow counties by the Bureau of Land Management's Butte Field Office in Montana. This Plan was prepared under the regulations implementing the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 CFR §1600). An environmental impact statement was prepared for this Plan in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

The Approved RMP is nearly identical to the preferred alternative (Alternative B) set forth in the Butte Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement published in September 2008. Specific management decisions for public lands under the jurisdiction of the Butte Field Office are presented in the Management Decisions section of the enclosed Approved RMP. Land use plan decisions include identification of goals, allowable uses and management actions for different resources and resource uses. Major decisions include: quantitative objectives for active vegetation treatments, provision for Riparian Management Zones to focus on site-specific riparian values, continuation of livestock grazing, Field Office-wide area designations for motorized vehicle use, identification of nine Special Recreation Management Areas, designation of 70,644 acres as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, finding of one river segment (2.6 miles) as suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation, and finding of one river segment (3.1 miles) as preliminarily suitable pending Forest Service concurrence.

## IMPLEMENTATION DECISIONS COVERED UNDER THIS RECORD OF DECISION

A number of implementation decisions are covered by this Record of Decision. While designation of areas as open, closed, or limited to motorized vehicle use is a land use planning decision, travel route-specific decisions are implementation decisions. Implementation decisions for route-specific management in the Helena, East Helena, Boulder/Jefferson City, Lewis and Clark County NW, and Upper Big Hole River travel planning areas (TPAs) are covered by this Record of Decision and are appealable under the Department of Interior's appeal regulations (43 CFR Part 4) upon publication of the Notice of Availability of this document in the Federal Register by the Environmental Protection Agency. Decisions for each of the five individual travel planning areas are considered to be five separate decisions so any appeals must indicate which travel planning area(s) is/are being appealed.

The travel route designations for the five travel planning areas listed above, described in the Travel Management and Access sub-section of the Management Decisions section of the Approved RMP, and identified on **Maps 4, 5(a-d), 6(a-b), 7, and 8(a-c)** are effective upon issuance of this Record of Decision, unless a stay of the decision is granted (see below). In accordance with 43 CFR Part 8342.2(b) public notice of these decisions was provided with publication of the Federal Register Notice of Availability of this Record of Decision and Approved RMP.

## APPEAL PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION DECISIONS

Any party adversely affected by the route designations in the Helena, East Helena, Boulder/Jefferson City, Lewis and Clark County NW, or Upper Big Hole River travel planning areas may appeal within 30 days of the publication of the Notice of Availability of this ROD/Approved RMP in the Federal Register in accordance with the provisions of 43 CFR Part 4, Subpart E. Decisions for each of the five individual travel planning areas are considered to be five separate decisions so any appeals need to indicate which travel planning area(s) is/are being appealed. The appeal should state the specific route(s) by township, range and section on which the decision is being appealed, or by route number taken from the travel plan maps enclosed with this document (**Maps 4-8**). The appeal must include a statement of the reasons when the notice of appeal is filed, or you may file the statement of reasons within 30 days after filing the appeal. The appeal must state if a stay of the decision is being requested in accordance with 43 CFR 4.21 and must be filed with the Butte Field Manager at the following address:

Bureau of Land Management  
Butte Field Office  
106 North Parkmont  
Butte, Montana 59701

A copy of the appeal, statement of reasons, and all other supporting documents must also be sent to the Field Solicitor at the following address:

USDI Field Solicitor's Office  
P.O. Box 31394  
Billings, MT 59107-1394

If the statement of reasons is filed separately, it must be sent to the following address:

USDI Office of Hearings and Appeals  
801 N. Quincy Street, MS 300-QC  
Arlington, VA 22203

It is suggested that any appeal be sent certified mail, return receipt requested.

### Request for Stay

Any party wishing to file a petition for stay pending the outcome of an appeal must show sufficient justification for the stay based on the following standards listed under 43 CFR Part 4.21(b):

- The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,

- The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm to the appellant or resources if the stay is not granted, and
- Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

The request for stay must be filed with the Butte Field Manager at the address listed above.

## MODIFICATIONS

Since development of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, an error was found in the GIS mapping of the federal mineral estate lands. The Proposed RMP/Final EIS reported 652,194 acres in federal mineral estate. Since publication of that document, an additional 8,625 acres in Jefferson County near the town of Boulder were found to be federal mineral estate, for a total of 660,819 acres of federal mineral estate covered by decisions in the Approved RMP. The additional acres found to be in federal mineral estate are in granitic geology with "very low" potential for fluid mineral development as described in the Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario (Appendix M of Proposed RMP/Final EIS). Oil and gas leasing stipulations identified in the Approved RMP will apply to these lands based on resources present just as they do for all other federal mineral estate lands covered by the RMP. These additional acres do have high potential for locatable minerals and were recognized and addressed throughout the RMP planning process as being in the federal mineral estate for locatable minerals.

After the Proposed RMP/Final EIS was released, the Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan Amendments for Geothermal Leasing in the Western United States was finalized in December 2008 (USDI – BLM 2008). Decisions in that Record of Decision amended the Headwaters RMP and are brought forward in this Approved RMP.

After the Proposed RMP/Final EIS was released, Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/Record of Decision (ROD) for Designation of Energy Corridors on Bureau of Land Management-Administered Lands in the 11 Western States was published in January 2009 (USDI-BLM 2009). That document amended the Headwaters RMP and its decisions are brought forward in this Approved RMP.

## CLARIFICATIONS

During the Endangered Species Act section 7 consultation process on the preferred alternative of the RMP, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) identified a number of non-discretionary terms and conditions associated with minimizing incidental take of grizzly bear. These terms and conditions were included in the Wildlife appendix (Appendix G) of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. They are directly stated as management actions in the Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat, Special Status

and Priority Plant and Animal Species section of the Approved RMP. A new map (**Map 3**) in this document displays the area (approximately 8,196 BLM acres) to which these terms and conditions will apply in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem.

The total mileage of BLM roads in the Upper Big Hole River Travel Planning Area (TPA) was under-reported in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. A main route south of Humbug Spires, the Soap Gulch Road (Road #0105 on **Map 8a** enclosed), was errantly treated as an “access” (non-BLM) route, “open yearlong”, in the road mileage calculations in the Upper Big Hole River TPA in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. This route was mapped as a BLM route in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS and was considered as a BLM route during the planning process. However, it was omitted from the calculations in mileage figures previously displayed in the Draft RMP/EIS and Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Since it is a heavily used main access route to many BLM and Forest Service lands, it is carried forward as “open yearlong” in the Approved RMP. This adds an additional approximately 9 miles of “open yearlong” routes to the Upper Big Hole River TPA (depicted in **Table 16** below) compared to the values previously reported in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

The following error was discovered in the Final EIS. During the formatting/printing of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, a passage of text in Chapter 4 was inadvertently misplaced relative to its intended location. On page 680, the heading entitled “Effects of Five Site-Specific Travel Plans at RMP Decision Area Scale” and the first paragraph beneath that heading were inadvertently placed in the left column of the page. This content was intended to be placed in the right column of this same page immediately above the heading “Effects of Alternative A”. This content was in its proper location on page 655 of the Draft RMP/EIS.

A number of minor edits have been applied throughout the Approved RMP to provide more clarity to descriptions of management actions and/or allowable uses.

## OVERVIEW OF THE ALTERNATIVES

There were four alternatives considered in detail. This section provides a brief overview of each of those alternatives. Alternatives considered in detail include one “No Action” alternative (Alternative A), and three “action” alternatives (Alternatives B-D) that would reflect various levels of change from the existing Headwaters RMP and Dillon MFP direction.

### ALTERNATIVE A – NO ACTION

Alternative A is the continuation of present management, referred to as “No Action”. This alternative would continue present management

practices based on existing land use plans and other management decision documents. Direction contained in the Headwaters Resource Management Plan and the Dillon Management Framework Plan would continue to be implemented. The current levels, methods, and mix of multiple use management would continue, and resource values would receive attention at present levels. Motorized access and motorized recreational opportunities would not change from the current condition. Eligible Wild and Scenic River segments would continue to be managed to protect the values that make them eligible.

### ALTERNATIVE B – PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

This alternative emphasizes moderate levels of resource protection, use, and restoration. Alternative B places a priority on vegetative restoration. Quantities of forest-based commodity resources from vegetation restoration activities would be similar to Alternative A, greater than in Alternative C, but less than in Alternative D. Forest commodities would be derived from projects planned with a more holistic vegetative community perspective than under Alternative A. Project-level wildlife habitat and riparian management measures would be greater than in Alternatives A and D due in part to establishment of Riparian Management Zones (RMZs) where managing for riparian values would be the focus, but less than in Alternative C where RMZs would be wider and with more protective management than under Alternative B.

Alternative B emphasizes a balance of motorized and non-motorized recreation and access opportunities compared to the other action alternatives (C and D). Two rivers would be recommended as “suitable” for Wild and Scenic River designation. There would be more oil and gas leasing management measures than in Alternatives A and D, but less than in Alternative C. Alternative B represents the mix and variety of actions that in the opinion of BLM, best resolves the issues and management concerns and is therefore considered BLM’s Preferred Alternative.

### ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C emphasizes a lesser degree of vegetative restoration than any of the other alternatives. Production of forest-based commodity resources from vegetation restoration activities would be lowest of all alternatives. This alternative emphasizes a greater degree of project-level wildlife habitat and riparian management measures (wider Riparian Management Zones than Alternative B, no RMZs under Alternatives A or D) than in any other alternative.

Alternative C emphasizes non-motorized recreation opportunities more than the other alternatives. All potential ACECs would be designated with this alternative. All four river segments eligible for Wild and

Scenic status would be found suitable and recommended for Wild and Scenic designation. Alternative C provides for the most oil and gas leasing management measures of any alternative.

## **ALTERNATIVE D**

Of all the alternatives, Alternative D emphasizes the greatest degree of active management to restore vegetative communities and would produce the greatest quantities of forest products from vegetation restoration activities of all alternatives. Alternative D features fewer wildlife habitat and riparian management measures than Alternatives B and C, but more than Alternative A. This alternative emphasizes motorized access and recreation opportunities more than Alternatives B and C. No river segments eligible for Wild and Scenic status would be found suitable or recommended for Wild and Scenic designation with this alternative. Alternative D would have the fewest oil and gas leasing management measures of all the alternatives.

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE**

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has defined the environmentally preferable alternative as the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of the NEPA. This section lists six broad policy goals for all federal plans, programs, and policies as follows:

- Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
- Achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
- Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Based on these criteria, identification of the environmentally preferable alternative involves balancing current and potential resource uses with the need to protect resources, as well as consideration of the

human environment. Overall, the BLM considers Alternative B to best meet the criteria for the environmentally preferable alternative. Alternative C would be the most protective of riparian and aquatic resources, while Alternative D would provide for the most aggressive pursuit of upslope vegetation restoration, potentially resulting in the greatest long-term environmental benefits to vegetation and wildlife but with more short to mid-term adverse impacts.

## **MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS IN SELECTING THE APPROVED RMP**

The BLM is tasked with the job of multiple use management, as mandated under the FLPMA and other laws and regulations governing the management of public lands for various purposes and values. Selection of this Approved Resource Management Plan is based on careful consideration of relevant issues, public input, and anticipated environmental effects of all the alternatives that were analyzed and described in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. The primary rationale for selecting Alternative B as the Approved RMP is based on the need to balance resource protection and restoration with the need to provide for appropriate levels of resource uses.

As the EIS indicates, the Approved RMP provides for proactive vegetation restoration in riparian and upslope areas while providing forest products. Vegetation restoration and project-level protection measures will result in improved wildlife habitat for a wide range of special status and priority species. Establishment of Riparian Management Zones where riparian ecosystem values will be the focus during project-level planning will lead to improved riparian and aquatic habitats. Livestock grazing will continue with Standards for Rangeland Health as the benchmark for appropriate levels of use compared to resource impacts.

The Approved RMP also identifies conditions for permitted activities such as fluid mineral leasing, use of designated utility corridors, right-of-way avoidance and exclusion areas, and other commercial uses. These conditions were considered in the context of balancing the need to provide for these uses with the need to protect resources.

The Approved RMP designates several Areas of Critical Environmental Concern based on relevant and important values. Special management direction is also indicated to manage for these values while providing for appropriate types of resource uses in these areas.

Consistency of the Approved RMP with other local, state, tribal and federal plans was also considered. The Governor's Office did not identify any inconsistencies between the Draft RMP/EIS and state or local plans,

policies, and programs; nor were any inconsistencies noted following the 60-day Governor's Consistency Review of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. No formal comments were received from federal agencies or tribal governments indicating the Proposed RMP was inconsistent with other existing plans or policies.

In general, the rationale for travel planning (implementation) decisions was guided by the results from a combination of sources including: the interdisciplinary team process used to rate specific routes for resource impacts and resource uses based on the process described in **Appendix A** of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS (**Appendix D** of Approved RMP); recommendations from community-based working groups for routes in the Helena Travel Planning Area (TPA), portions of the East Helena TPA, and portions of the Lewis and Clark County NW TPA; and public involvement through scoping as well as public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS. Where necessary throughout all TPAs, the BLM coordinated with the U.S. Forest Service on decisions for BLM routes accessing National Forest lands in effort to ensure that BLM decisions are consistent with Forest Service management.

The decision to close the majority of routes in the Scratchgravel Hills portion of the Helena TPA to wheeled motorized access yearlong also stems from an existing high degree of user conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users and illegal activity taking place in this area. The BLM believes that the decision to close the majority of the routes in the Scratchgravel Hills will reduce problems with motorized vehicle-based trash dumping and illegal activities; and reduce user conflicts.

## MITIGATION MEASURES

Measures to avoid or minimize environmental impacts were built into the Approved RMP where practicable. Many of the standard management provisions will minimize impacts when applied to activities proposed in the Decision Area. The *Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management* (**Appendix A**) will be used as the base standards to assess the health of BLM lands. Best management practices (**Appendix B**) will be used when applicable for a number of uses such as livestock grazing, vegetation treatment activities, road maintenance or decommissioning, mineral activities, oil and gas development, and wind energy development. Additional measures to mitigate environmental impacts may also be developed during project level planning processes based on site-specific resources and conditions.

## PLAN MONITORING

BLM planning regulations (43 CFR §1610.4-9) require continuous monitoring of RMPs and periodic formal evaluations. The BLM will monitor the Approved RMP

to determine whether the management actions set forth in this document are being implemented and whether RMP objectives are being effectively met.

The BLM will primarily use two types of monitoring: implementation monitoring and effectiveness monitoring. Implementation monitoring simply determines whether planned activities have been implemented in the manner prescribed by the plan. This monitoring documents BLM's progress toward full implementation of the land use plan decision. There are no specific thresholds or indicators required for implementation monitoring. Effectiveness monitoring determines if implementation of activities under the plan has achieved the desired goals and objectives. Effectiveness monitoring asks the question: Was the specified activity successful in achieving the objective? Answering this question requires knowledge of the objectives established in the Approved RMP as well as indicators that can be measured. Indicators are established by technical specialists to address specific questions and avoid collection of unnecessary data. Success is measured against the benchmark of achieving the goals and objectives established in the Approved RMP. Monitoring for each program area is outlined in the Management Decisions section of the Approved RMP.

If monitoring shows land use plan actions or BMPs are not effective, the BLM may modify or adjust management without amending or revising the plan, as long as assumptions and impacts disclosed in the analysis (EIS for the RMP) remain valid and broad-scale goals and objectives are not changed. Where the BLM considers taking or approving actions that alter or do not conform to overall direction of the plan, the BLM will prepare a plan amendment or revision and appropriate environmental analysis.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A number of opportunities were available to members of the public to educate themselves about the planning process and participate in development of the plan. Public scoping meetings, press releases, an internet website, and occasional newsletters were used to provide information, promote awareness, and solicit public input and involvement in development of the RMP. A Proposed Planning Scenario was developed and used as an additional scoping tool in effort to generate public feedback on initial proposed management activities. Briefings of local governments, the Montana congressional delegation, and organized groups (upon their request) were also provided by the BLM. The Western Montana Resource Advisory Council was briefed periodically and given opportunities to provide input.

Various potential cooperators including tribes, the Governor's Office, state and federal agencies, and local

governments within the Planning Area were solicited to become cooperators for development of the RMP. No agencies or governments signed on as cooperators for the development of this plan. In spite of the lack of interest in becoming cooperating agencies, these entities were included in all scoping activities throughout the process.

To generate public input on site-specific travel plans (implementation decisions), additional public scoping meetings were held. For three travel planning areas, community-based collaborative working groups were developed to generate recommendations to the BLM on route-specific management.

Throughout the planning process, tribal governments have been consulted to generate input. Formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service took place based on the Preferred Alternative in the Draft RMP/EIS. The BLM also consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office to meet BLM requirements and responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act.

More detailed descriptions of these public involvement activities are provided in the Draft RMP/EIS and Proposed RMP/Final EIS in Chapter 5, Consultation and Coordination.

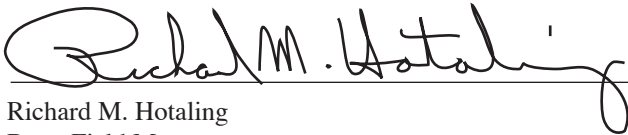
In addition to anticipated environmental effects described in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, comments and input received from the public, land users, and other agencies throughout the planning process were also important considerations in selecting the Approved RMP.

#### **AVAILABILITY OF THE APPROVED RMP**

Copies of the Record of Decision and Approved Butte Resource Management Plan are available upon request from the Butte Field Office, 106 North Parkmont, Butte, Montana 59701, (406) 533-7600, and on the Butte Field Office website at: [www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/butte\\_field\\_office.html](http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/butte_field_office.html).

### **FIELD MANAGER RECOMMENDATION**

Having considered a full range of reasonable alternatives, associated effects, and public input, I recommend adoption and implementation of the attached Butte Resource Management Plan.



Richard M. Hotaling  
Butte Field Manager

4-17-2009

Date

### **APPROVAL**

In consideration of the foregoing, I approve the Butte Resource Management Plan.



Gene R. Terland  
State Director, Montana/Dakotas

4-20-2009

Date

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# APPROVED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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## INTRODUCTION

This Approved RMP is now the base land use plan for all lands managed by the Butte Field Office. It replaces the Headwaters RMP approved in 1984, as well as the Dillon Management Framework Plan approved in 1979 as these two previous plans have applied to lands managed by the Butte Field Office since reconfiguration of the field office boundaries in 1983. The Approved RMP adopts the management described in Alternative B as well as Management Common to All Alternatives and Management Common to Action Alternatives described in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

## PURPOSE AND NEED FOR 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, allowable uses, 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, as per 43 CFR 8342. There is a need to do this because in many portions of the Butte Field Office, travel planning has not ever been conducted in a manner to establish a managed transportation network that meets the criteria within 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. Different levels of planning 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.

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 Approved 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.

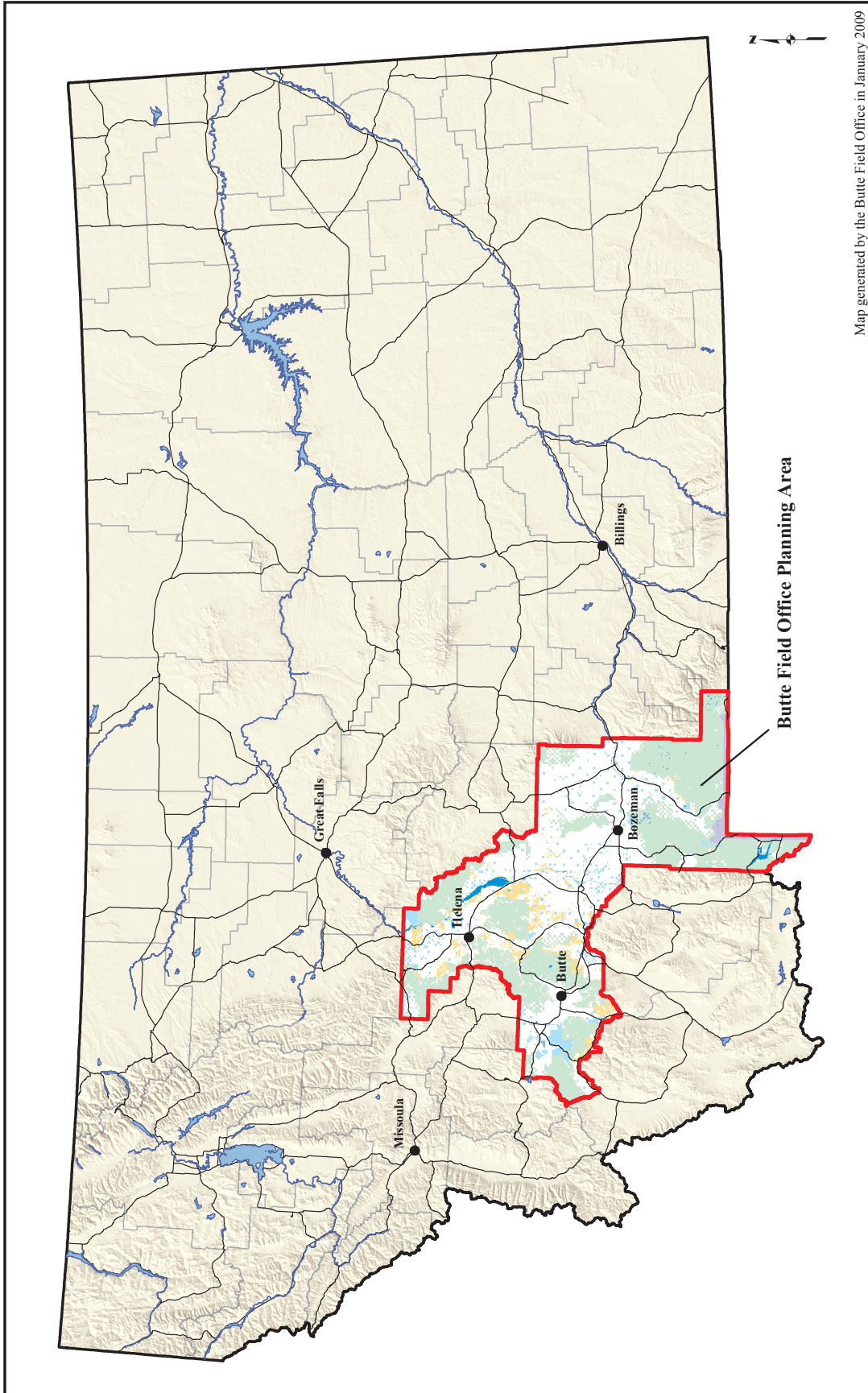
In the context of these categories, the planning team developed management strategies aimed at providing viable options to address planning issues. These management strategies provide the basis for future activity-level plans or specific projects.

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

## PLANNING AREA AND MAP

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 307,309 acres of public land surface and 660,819





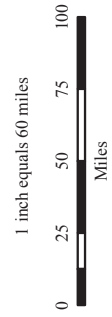
Map generated by the Butte Field Office in January 2009

**Map 1: Project Location Map**

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



Butte Field Office  
Approved Resource Management Plan



Montana State Plane (NAD 83) Projection

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.



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 counties. **Table 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 “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 286,210 acres of private land for which the BLM holds subsurface mineral rights are also subject to fluid mineral leasing decisions in this document.

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	124,786	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>660,819</b>	<b>7,192,349</b>

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 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).

## SCOPING/ISSUES

A planning issue is a relatively substantial controversy or dispute regarding management of resources or uses. Based on internal and public scoping, the following issues drove the formulation of the range of alternatives considered in the planning process for this RMP.

### 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?*

### 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?*

### 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?*

### Issue 4: Recreation

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

### Issue 5: Special Designations including ACECs, National Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and 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 addition to issues, a number of management concerns were identified and addressed in the planning process. Management concerns are topics that involve a resource, resource management activity or land use that generally did not have enough controversy surrounding them to generate different RMP alternatives to address them.

Management concerns included:

- Air Quality;
- Soil Resources;
- Water Resources;
- Cultural Resources, Traditional Cultural Properties and Paleontological Resources;
- Visual Resources;

- Lands and Realty;
- Minerals and Energy;
- Abandoned Mine Lands;
- Hazardous Materials;
- Social and Economic Environment;
- Environmental Justice; and
- Tribal Treaty Rights including Native American Religious Concerns.

## **PLANNING CRITERIA/LEGISLATIVE CONSTRAINTS**

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 (43CFR 1600, 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. Planning criteria for this planning effort included:

- The plan will comply with FLPMA and all other applicable laws pertinent to the BLM.
- 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; Off-Highway Vehicle EIS and Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota, and Portions of South Dakota; Record of Decision on Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program and Associated Land Use Plan Amendments; Record of Decision for Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Seventeen Western States; Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/Record of Decision (ROD) for Designation of Energy

Corridors on Bureau of Land Management-Administered Lands in the 11 Western States; and Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan Amendments for Geothermal Leasing 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 Decision 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.

## 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 decisions remain consistent with applicable laws, regulations, orders, and policies. The steps of RMP preparation (**Table 2**) are interrelated.

## 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 undertaken under these plans must be in

<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.

conformance with the Butte RMP and Record of Decision. These plans and amendments (listed below) 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 1981)
- 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 2003a)
- Clancy-Unionville Travel Management Plan/Amendment (USDI-BLM 2000)
- 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)
- December 2005 Record of Decision on Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program and Associated Land Use Plan Amendments (USDI-BLM 2005a)
- December 2008 Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan Amendments for Geothermal Leasing in the Western United States (USDI-BLM 2008)
- January 2009 Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/Record of Decision (ROD) for Designation of Energy Corridors on Bureau of Land Management-Administered Lands in the 11 Western States (USDI-BLM 2009)

### ***Other National, Statewide, and Field Office Plans***

- Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (USDI-BLM 1991b)
- Partners Against Weeds: An Action Plan for the BLM (USDI-BLM 1996)
- Record of Decision for Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Seventeen Western States (USDI-BLM 2007)
- Bull Mountains Exchange Final EIS/ROD (USDI-BLM 1991c)
- 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 1991d)
- National Fire Plan and 2001 Federal Fire Policy
- National BLM Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy (USDI-BLM 2004)

### **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 are described in Chapter 5 of the Draft RMP/EIS and Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

### **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 Butte 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)
- Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Revised Land and Resource Management Plan – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (USDA-FS 2009)
- Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan (USFWS 1993)
- Grizzly Bear Management Plan for Southwestern Montana (MFWP 2002)
- Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Plan (USFWS 1987)
- Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (MBEWG 1994)
- Pacific Bald Eagle Recovery Plan (USFWS 1986).
- Montana Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (MFWP 2004)
- Montana’s Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy (MFWP 2005)
- 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 Butte RMP Decision Area.

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

## OVERALL VISION

The overall vision of the Butte RMP is to: Manage resources in a balanced manner to provide for appropriate levels and types of social and economic benefits, while maintaining and restoring upland vegetation and riparian areas to provide healthy and diverse habitats for aquatic, wildlife and plant communities.

## MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

This section is organized by resource and resource use as they were embodied in the issues and management concerns in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Program-specific goals are listed for each program area with a letter/number designation. For example, Forest and Woodland Goal 1 is identified as “Goal FW1”. Within the descriptions of objectives and management actions for each program area, goals across *all* program areas are listed to which these objectives and actions contribute. For example, management action #1 for Grasslands and Shrublands contributes to many different goals identified in the RMP, indicated as “(Goals *GS1*, *LG2*, *FM2*, *NW1*, *WF1*, *WF2*)” listed at the end of the management action.

Management decisions for resources and resource uses are described in the following order (goal abbreviations for each program area in parentheses):

### Goals Common to All BLM Activities

#### Vegetation Communities

##### Vegetation Management Approach and Tools

##### Emphasis and Priorities for Vegetation Treatments

##### Grassland and Shrubland Vegetation (GS)

##### Forests and Woodlands (including Forest Products) (FW)

##### Riparian Vegetation (RV)

##### Livestock Grazing (LG)

##### Wildland Fire Management (FM)

##### Noxious Weed Management (NW)

##### Wildlife, Fish, Wildlife Habitat, Special Status and Priority Plant and Animal Species (WF)

##### Travel Management and Access (TM)

##### Transportation and Facilities (TF)

##### Recreation Management (RM)

##### Special Designations

##### Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (AC)

##### National Trails (NT)

##### Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR)

##### Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)

##### Air Quality (AQ)

##### Soil Resources (SR)

##### Water Resources (WR)

##### Visual Resources (VR)

##### Cultural Resources, Traditional Cultural Properties and Paleontological Resources (CP)

##### Lands and Realty (LR)

##### Energy and Minerals (EM)

##### Abandoned Mine Lands (AM)

##### Hazardous Materials Management (HM)

##### Wild Horses and Burros (None)

##### Social and Economic Environment (SE)

##### Environmental Justice (EJ)

##### Tribal Treaty Rights (TT)

## GOALS COMMON TO ALL BLM ACTIVITIES

Throughout the BFO, BLM authorized activities associated with all resource and resource use programs will meet or move toward meeting the following standards to the extent practicable:

- Uplands are in proper functioning condition;
- Riparian and wetland areas are in proper functioning condition;
- Water quality meets state standards;
- Air quality meets state standards; and
- Provide habitat as necessary, to maintain a viable and diverse population of native plant and animal species, including special status species.

These standards were originally described as rangeland health standards (USDI BLM 1997), but will be applied to all BLM authorized activities as “Land Health Standards.” More detailed descriptions of characteristics associated with these standards can be found in the

Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management Butte District section of the publication *Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota*, (USDI-BLM 1997).

## VEGETATION COMMUNITIES

### Vegetation Management Approach and Tools

Vegetation management will emphasize maintaining and restoring healthy, diverse, and productive native plant communities appropriate to local site conditions. There will be a focus on actively restoring vegetation on the landscape to conditions more consistent with landform, climate, biological, and physical components of the ecosystem. Vegetation structure, density, species composition, patch size, pattern, and distribution will be managed to provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species while reducing the risk of uncharacteristically large and severe disturbances (such as forest insect epidemics, high intensity/severity wildland fires). Actions will maintain or mimic natural disturbance regimes (such as low intensity wildland fires) to provide for diverse and sustainable ecosystems so that plant communities will be resilient to periodic outbreaks of insects, disease and wildland fire.

A number of different vegetation management tools or activities will be used in implementing the approach described above.

Mechanical treatments will include tree removal through the use of ground based equipment, horses, helicopters, or any other appropriate methods. This will include thinning/removing medium (9 to 15 inch DBH) and large (greater than 15 inch DBH) trees and obtaining commercial wood products, thinning non-commercial-sized trees, and cutting non-commercial conifers that have “encroached” into grassland or sagebrush habitats. It would also include mechanical on-site treatments of non-commercial trees and biomass (vegetative materials that are by-products of management including 4 to 8 inch DBH trees) such as chipping, grinding, piling, or portable biomass/energy production. Mechanical treatments will be used to restore vegetative communities to desired future conditions as well as to reduce fuels in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas.

While in most cases vegetation treatments will be geared toward meeting historic vegetation conditions, it is recognized that this will not necessarily be the case in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas where more substantial fuels reductions may be needed to address site-specific conditions and objectives for public safety.

Prescribed burning will be used to treat forest, grassland, or shrubland vegetation types. In grasslands or shrublands, prescribed burning will be used to kill

encroaching conifers; remove dead finer fuels created by years of grass or shrub growth; and stimulate grass and shrub re-growth. In forests, prescribed burning will be used to reduce fuels generated by mechanical treatments, thin understories, recycle nutrients, eliminate ladder fuels, create small openings, or create and maintain a more savannah-like habitat in stands dominated by medium and large-sized trees.

Methods to address noxious weeds will include, but not be limited to, hand-pulling; chemical spray; use of biological agents such as insects, goats, or sheep; cultural treatments such as modifying timing or intensity of other management activities; and public outreach education. Other appropriate methods will be applied as they are developed and approved for use.

Changing grazing management or prescription grazing will also be used as a vegetative treatment. Management may include changing the season of use, the intensity of the use, or the kind of livestock.

Proposed vegetation management actions described in this Approved RMP refer to “project area” and “treatment area”. A project area is a large area within which some type of management activity will occur and encompasses a region defined by logical boundaries such as watersheds, ridges, highways or blocks of BLM lands. The project area can be both the analysis area and a starting point to determine where treatments should occur. A treatment area is a smaller block of land within the project area. A treatment area is the boundary of the area where the actual management activity, such as timber harvest or burning, would occur.

Proposed vegetation treatments are characterized in the sub-sections below by numbers of acres (ranges) per decade. Multiple activities could occur within a single treatment area, concurrently or over time. For example, if 500 acres of grassland are proposed for treatment, then there could be a conifer removal, or “slashing” treatment on these acres. This may be followed by a separate prescribed burning treatment on the same acres, but since these treatments were applied to the same acres, they would be considered as a total of 500 acres of treatment in the context of RMP implementation and meeting RMP objectives for quantities of treatments.

### Emphasis and Priorities for Vegetation Treatments

The major emphasis areas for vegetation treatments will be fuels reduction in the WUI; reduction of conifer encroachment in grasslands and shrublands, particularly in big game winter range areas; restoration of sagebrush habitat; enhancement of bighorn sheep habitat; and restoration of dry forest types. Treatments of cool, moist forests have lower priority. Priority for restoration and protection treatments will be given to forested areas with heavy fuel concentrations, limited vegetative diversity, and declining forest health. Areas with an increasing risk



of insect infestation or loss of important habitat values will also be given precedence for treatment. Priority geographic areas for treatment are the Jefferson, Upper Missouri, and Big Hole watersheds.

Major sub-sections below addressing specific goals, objectives, management actions, and monitoring associated with vegetation treatments include: grasslands and shrublands, forests and woodlands (including forestry and forest products), riparian vegetation, livestock grazing, wildland fire management, and noxious weeds.

### Grassland and Shrubland Vegetation

Prior to effective fire suppression, foothill grasslands were maintained free of invading trees and shrubs by periodic fires associated with natural fire return cycles. With successful long-term fire suppression, many grasslands are becoming woodlands or shrublands, and many shrublands are being converted to woodlands. These vegetation types will be treated to remove conifer encroachment and move towards a more desired ecological condition of open grasslands and shrublands with a low density of trees species. Grasslands and shrublands will also be assessed to ensure that uplands are in properly functioning condition. If these habitat types are not in properly functioning condition due to management activities, management will be modified to improve conditions.

#### Goals

**Goal GS1** – Manage upland vegetation communities to move toward or remain in proper functioning condition, including a full range of herbaceous and shrub species.

**Goal GS2** – Maintain or enhance communities of priority species or habitats (for example, mountain mahogany, sagebrush, bitterbrush) to provide desired ecological functions and values.

#### Objectives (Goals GS1, GS2, LG2, FM2, FM5, WF1, WF2, WF7, SE3, SE4)

One objective is to treat up to 850 acres of crested wheatgrass seedlings, agriculture fields, and weed infestations in the McMasters and Ward Ranch acquisitions to convert their communities from non-native vegetation to native vegetation.

Field Office-wide objectives for mechanical or prescribed burning treatments of grasslands and shrublands are as follows. The total amount of grassland proposed for conifer reduction per decade is 2,750 to 11,800 acres (**Table 3**). The total amount of shrubland proposed for conifer reduction per decade is 1,000 to 3,650 acres (**Table 4**). These acres are displayed by major watershed in **Tables 3** and **4**. The current acres of shrublands and grasslands shown by major watershed in **Tables 3** and **4** are approximations with built-in limitations associated with distinguishing between these two habitat types during mapping. The current and

proposed treatment acres of these two habitat types were separated to provide an indication of the relative amount of these habitats. However, due to the limitations in mapping these habitat types, the total number of shrubland and grassland acres proposed for treatment should be considered in combination. Objectives for proposed treatment acres include only those acres that will be treated to reduce conifer encroachment.

Watershed	Treatment Acres per Decade
Big Hole	500 to 2,500 (of 16,344)
Blackfoot	0 to 50 (of <100)
Gallatin	0 to 200 (of 860)
Jefferson	500 to 3,000 (of 39,720)
Upper Missouri	1,750 to 6,000 (of 73,965)
Yellowstone	0 to 50 (of 4,409)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,750 to 11,800 (of 135,398)</b>

Watershed	Treatment Acres per Decade
Big Hole	550 to 2,000 (of 12,126)
Blackfoot	0 to 50 (of <100)
Gallatin	0 to 50 (of <100)
Jefferson	300 to 1,000 (of 5,452)
Upper Missouri	150 to 500 (of 1,714)
Yellowstone	0 to 50 (of 366)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,000 to 3,650 (of 19,858)</b>

#### Management Actions

1. When necessary, sagebrush and grassland distribution and vigor will be restored through vegetative treatments such as reducing conifer encroachment, reducing noxious weeds, and ensuring proper grazing practices (season of use or intensity). (Goals GS1, LG2, FM2, NW1, WF1, WF2)
2. Management of sagebrush habitats will be a priority based on concerns over the conservation status of sage grouse, pygmy rabbit, and other species

associated with sagebrush and grassland habitats. (Goals *GS1, GS2, WF1, WF2, WF5, WF7*)

3. Priority areas for treatment will include big game winter range, sagebrush, bighorn sheep habitat, and the Wildland Urban Interface. (Goals *GS1, GS2, LG2, FM2, FM5, NW1, WF1, WF2, WF5, WF7*)
4. Native or low impact, non-invasive seed mixtures will be used when restoring vegetation on disturbed ground. (Goals *GS1, LG2, NW1, WF1*)

### **Monitoring**

Measuring trends in vegetative production, structure, and composition, soil/site stability, watershed function, and integrity of biotic community will be accomplished through periodic rangeland health assessments following procedures outlined in *Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health* (Pellant et al. 2005), *Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines* (USDI-BLM 1997), *BLM Manual 4180 and Handbook H-4180-1* guiding implementation of the rangeland health standards, and methodologies found in the 4400 BLM Technical References and handbook series.

Case-specific monitoring will be conducted for activities that may affect (either positively or adversely) priority species such as sagebrush, bitterbrush, and mountain mahogany. Such monitoring will be focused on assessing the extent to which these communities are being maintained or restored.

### **Forests and Woodlands (including Forest Products)**

Examination of BLM forest inventory data and analysis using the SIMPPLLE model indicates that the overall character of the forests found on BLM lands have changed over time with a reduction in the size and age class diversity within the majority of forest stands, and a reduction in the number and sizes of forest openings.

Lower to mid-elevation dry forests are dominated by Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine. These forest types are typically interspersed with limber pine, Rocky Mountain juniper, grasses, and shrubs. Fire suppression and historic grazing practices have resulted in unusually high tree densities on many sites as well as excessive wildland fuels.

Treatments in dry forest areas will be designed to mimic pre-fire suppression conditions and promote healthy and diverse forest ecosystems and wildlife habitat. Smaller diameter thinning along with low intensity understory burning will occur in seedling, pole and some medium (9 to 15 inch diameter at breast height (DBH)) sized trees to open the canopy and allow understory vegetation to become re-established. In the WUI, treatment emphasis will include mechanical or hand thinning, while prescribed burning will be minimized to lessen smoke impacts to local communities. Where burning is restricted, material could be mechanically reduced and

left on site or mechanically reduced and removed. Outside the urban interface, prescribed burning will be emphasized except when not economically feasible or when the effects could be detrimental to vegetation or soils.

Mechanical treatments, which may include harvest of trees, will be used to accomplish restoration and thinning of dry forests. Trees in the small to large size classes will produce commercial forest products including lumber, posts and poles, and biomass.

Cool, moist forest types are found at mid to high elevation and are dominated by Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, subalpine fir and spruce. These forest types typically have higher tree densities with open parks and grass or shrub dominated meadows interspersed. Whitebark pine occurs as an incidental species in some of these areas, but is not a prevalent species anywhere in the Butte Field Office because it is generally found at higher elevations than are present on BLM lands here.

Treatments in cool, moist forests will focus on protecting healthy and diverse forest systems by reducing stem densities and creating appropriate openings to mimic pre-fire suppression conditions. In lodgepole pine stands, mechanical treatments which may include timber harvest will be used to create openings to mimic stand-replacing fire events and to regenerate lodgepole pine.

### **Goals**

**Goal FW1** – Restore and/or maintain the health and productivity of public forests, to provide a balance of forest and woodland resource benefits, as well as wildlife and watershed needs to present and future generations.

**Goal FW2** – Manage forestry resources to provide a sustained flow of local social and economic benefits and protect non-market economic values.

**Goal FW3** – Maintain and/or improve sustainability and diversity of woodland communities to meet ecological site potential.

**Goal FW4** – Manage dry forest types to contain healthy, relatively open stands with reproducing site-appropriate, desired vegetation species.

**Goal FW5** – Manage moist forest types to contain healthy stands that combine into a diversity of age classes, densities, and structure (including dead and down material).

**Goal FW6** – Manage old forest structure in a sustainable manner. (Note: old forest structure is defined by the following: large, old trees; large standing dead trees [snags]; fallen trees or logs on the forest floor; multiple canopy layers; and a developed, patchy understory. In forest types subject to frequent, low-intensity fire such as dry Douglas-fir or ponderosa pine, old forest structure

is typically characterized by relatively open understories and fewer large fallen trees.)

**Objectives**

**Dry Forest Types (Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, FW4, FM2, WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, SR2, SE1, SE3, SE5)**

Restoration priorities include dry forests with medium (9 to 15 inch DBH) to large (>15 inch DBH) sized trees, with high tree densities relative to historic conditions. In dense, old, and mature Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine forests, stand density will be moved toward stands that consist of fewer trees per acre with a larger average diameter. Over time, treatments will produce a variety of stands with more open canopies of multiple age groups of native conifers and healthy and more diverse shrub, grass, and forb understories.

The objective for total amount of dry forest treatments per decade is 4,150 to 14,750 acres. These acres are displayed by major watershed in **Table 5**.

<b>Watershed</b>	<b>Treatment Acres per Decade</b>
Big Hole	1,150 to 2,500 (of 19,906)
Blackfoot	0 to 100 (of 368)
Gallatin	0 to 150 (of 533)
Jefferson	1,000 to 4,000 (of 31,936)
Upper Missouri	1,900 to 7,000 (of 59,988)
Yellowstone	100 to 1,000 (of 2,196)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,150 to 14,750 (of 114,926)</b>

A range of 3,350 to 10,750 acres per decade of medium to large sized tree-dominated stands of this forest type will be treated (as a subset of the total acreage objectives in **Table 5**). Historically, these habitat types were more open “savannah” forests interspersed with grassland and shrubs.

Dry forest stands that are in an ecologically “healthy” condition (those that can sustain the growth of larger trees while successfully producing and maintaining growth of younger trees) will also be treated. Treatments will promote the large, overstory trees and natural regeneration that will provide diverse age and size classes. Maintenance of existing dry forests is considered a “moderate priority” with 400 to 2,000 acres per decade anticipated for treatment (as a subset of the total acreage objectives in **Table 5**).

Dry forest treatments may also include thinning in limber pine habitats, amounting to approximately 100 to 1,000 acres per decade, and approximately 300 to 1,000 acres per decade of small diameter thinning of seedling/sapling and pole sized conifer stands (both as subsets of the total acreage objectives in **Table 5**).

The majority of ponderosa pine, dry forest treatments will occur in the Upper Missouri Watershed.

**Cool and Moist Forest Types (Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, FW5, FM2, WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, SR2, SE1, SE3, SE5)**

Cool and moist forest types will be treated when necessary to maintain or improve stand conditions. Restoration of these habitat types may also be done to meet desired future conditions for ecosystem function and diversity as well as for wildlife habitat including creating forage for lynx in lodgepole pine forests.

Treatments in cool and moist forest types will include the creation of openings to simulate natural disturbance (i.e. fire) to allow for regeneration of lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir, and to reduce the threat of stand-replacement fire in decadent stands. Areas may also be pre-commercial or commercially thinned. Commercial products such as timber and biomass will be produced from these treatments.

Treatment in cool and moist forest types will be considered a low to moderate priority. The priority watershed for implementation of treatments in cool and moist forest is the Big Hole.

The objective for total amount of cool and moist forest treatments per decade is 450 to 3,750 acres. These acres are displayed by major watershed in **Table 6**.

<b>Watershed</b>	<b>Treatment Acres per Decade</b>
Big Hole	200 to 1,600 (of 9,868)
Blackfoot	0 to 100 (of <500)
Gallatin	0 to 50 (of <100)
Jefferson	50 to 300 (of 2,059)
Upper Missouri	200 to 1,600 (of 7,165)
Yellowstone	0 to 100 (of 551)
<b>Total</b>	<b>450 to 3,750 (of 20,243)</b>

Approximately 350 to 3,350 acres of stands dominated by medium to large sized trees, with high tree density in cool and moist forest will be treated (as a subset of the

total acreage objectives in **Table 6**). Small diameter tree thinning will also occur on approximately 100 to 400 acres per decade in seedling/sapling and pole-sized cool and moist Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine forests.

### **Forest Products**

The objective for quantities of forest products (Probable Sale Quantity) is based on the expected numbers of treatment acres (including Wildland Urban Interface projects) and is 33,000 to 91,000 CCF or 9 to 25 MMBF per decade. (*Goal FW2*)

### **Management Actions**

1. Vegetation structure, density, species composition, patch size, pattern, and distribution will be managed in a manner to reduce the occurrence of unnaturally large and severe wildland fires and forest insect outbreaks. Natural disturbance regimes will be maintained or mimicked so that plant communities are resilient when periodic outbreaks of insects, disease, and wildland fire occur. (*Goals FW1, FW3, FW4, FW5, FM2, FM5, WF1, WF2, WF3*)
2. Forest and woodland health assessments will be incorporated into Land Health Standards at the activity plan level to determine forest health conditions in project areas. Forest health is defined as the degree to which the biological and physical components of forest stands and their associated ecosystems and relationships are present, functioning, and capable of self-renewal. (*Goals FW1, FW3, FW4, FW5, WF1, WF2, WF3*)
3. Vegetation planning will be coordinated with managers of federal or state lands adjacent to site-specific proposals to provide for a collaborative approach. (*Goals FW1, FW3, FM4, WF6*)
4. Vegetation manipulation projects will be designed to minimize impacts to wildlife habitat and improve it when possible. (*Goals FW1, FW6, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5*)
5. Residual stands left by disturbance events will be maintained to provide for natural regeneration and diversity of forest systems. (*Goals FW1, FW3, FW4, FW5, WF1*)
6. Stands with characteristics indicating a substantial risk of developing epidemic levels of forest insects and/or disease will be high priority for treatments to reduce risk. (*Goals FW1, FW3, FW4, FW5, WF1*)
7. Silvicultural prescriptions will be consistent with accepted methods related to site, species, habitat types, and the individual requirements of the forest stand. (*Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, FW4, FW5*)
8. Tractor logging generally will be limited to slopes with average gradients of less than 40 percent and the season of logging will be limited to reduce soil compaction and rutting (**Appendix B**). (*Goals FW1, FW2, SR1, SR2, WR1, WR3, SE1*)
9. Adequate access will be maintained for management activities and treatments. Road locations will be determined on the basis of topography, drainage, soil type, and other natural features to minimize erosion. Skid roads will be rehabilitated by appropriate methods that disperse runoff, reduce erosion, and promote revegetation as needed. (*Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, FW4, FW5, TM1, SR1, SR2, WR3, SE1*)
10. Some new permanent roads may be built for long-term management of areas where multiple entries will be necessary to meet objectives. New permanent and temporary road construction will be kept to a minimum. Temporary roads will be decommissioned (route will be closed and rehabilitated to eliminate resource impacts such as erosion, and rendered no longer useable for public or administrative uses) within one year of project completion. In addition, replacement, maintenance, or decommissioning of existing roads to meet transportation planning and management objectives may also occur as part of forest product removals or stewardship treatment projects. (*Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, FW4, FW5, WF2, WF5, TM1, SR1*)
11. Treatments utilized for disposal of slash will be beneficial for site reforestation, revegetation, or big game passage. These treatments may include physical removal, mechanical treatment, burning or other appropriate methods necessary. All slash treatments will be in conformance with Best Management Practices (**Appendix B**). (*Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, FW4, FW5, FM2, WF5*)
12. Mechanical treatments will be laid out to minimize the risk of windthrow and to improve the genetic composition of the regenerated stand to meet resource objectives. Whenever possible, openings larger than 20 acres in size resulting from forest treatment or large scale events in forested habitats will be planted when natural regeneration does not become established to desired levels within 15 years or cannot be reasonably expected in five to fifteen years. (*Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, FW4, FW5, WF1*)
13. To maintain site productivity (organic matter and nutrients), provide for special wildlife features, and discourage cross-country motorized travel, much of the fine material not utilized as forest products (seedlings, saplings, tops, and branches less than 4 inches in diameter, cull logs and identified down woody material) will be left scattered on the forest floor where it will not contribute to increased ladder fuels. (*Goals FW1, FW3, FW4, FW5, WF2, WF3, SR2*)
14. BLM will design fire restoration/rehabilitation standards on a case-by-case basis, compatible with

landscape resource management objectives and long-term (25-year) vegetation health protection and fuel management. (*Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, FW4, FW5, FM3, SRI, SR2, WRI, WR3*)

### **Forest and Woodland Products**

15. Commercial harvest of forest products will normally be associated with vegetative restoration (including forest health) and fuels treatments, and will be designed to meet objectives for forest management, wildlife habitat management, fire hazard reduction, hazard tree removal, special status species management, visuals, recreation, and travel management. (*Goals FW1, FW2, FM2, FM5, WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, VR1, RM1, RM2, TM1, SE1, SE2, SE3, SE5*)
16. Raw material for a variety of forest products will be made available. Special forest and range products will be managed according to sustainability limits and where consistent with other resource management objectives. These products will be harvested under the appropriate written, BLM approved authorization only. (*Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, SE1, SE2*)
17. The small sale program will maintain the current types of activities as well as the development of treatment areas to help meet public demand for small sale products. The small sales will only occur where sufficient physical access currently exists. No new permanent roads will be constructed to meet the demands of the small sale program. (*Goals FW2, WF2, TM1, SE1, SE2*)
18. The forest product small sale program will continue to maintain a balance between public demand and the health and productivity of native and desired vegetation communities. Small forest product sales include over-the-counter sales of firewood, Christmas trees or other products for personal use, small amounts of materials removed as a result of other authorizations such as rights-of-way, road use agreements, grazing leases or other land uses, and public demand sawtimber or salvage sales. These activities will usually take place in small areas or on scattered or isolated parcels often concurrent with similar activities on adjacent private lands. (*Goals FW2, SE1, SE2, SE5*)
19. The following permit types and estimated quantities are anticipated to be permitted per decade under the small sales program:
  - 450 Permits of all types including for:
    - 5,500 Christmas trees
    - 1,000 cords of firewood
    - 2,100 MBF sawtimber (included with PSQ)
- 77 CCF posts, poles, biomass, other woody materials. (*Goals FW2, SE1, SE2, SE5*)
20. Other forest products will include: house logs, posts and poles, vegetative cuttings, conifer boughs, wildlings and ornamentals, grape stakes, juniper products, specialty cuttings, and wildflowers. (*Goals FW2, SE1, SE2, SE5*)
21. Personal use firewood permits valid for wood collection from both BLM and Forest Service lands in Western Montana will continue to be offered by BLM in cooperation with the Forest Service. (*Goals FW2, SE2*)
22. Unless specifically designated, only standing dead and down wood will be allowed to be taken as firewood. The BLM, however, may designate specific areas for firewood cutting of live trees to meet other resource objectives or BLM-authorized uses such as leases and rights-of-way. (*Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, SE2*)
23. To protect existing snag habitat for wildlife, no dead trees greater than 24 inches DBH will be allowed to be cut for firewood. (*Goals FW1, FW6, WF3*)
24. Firewood cutting will not be allowed in WSAs. (*Goals FW1, WF3, WSA1*)
25. Firewood cutting will not be allowed within 100 feet of live (yearlong flow) streams or within 50 feet of intermittent streams. (*Goals FW1, FW3, RV1, RV2, WF2, WF3, WF5, WR4*)

### **Timber Salvage**

26. Salvage of forest products resulting from wildland fire, prescribed fire, forest insects and disease, weather-induced, or other forest mortality events will be considered on a case-specific basis. (*Goals FW2, SE1, SE5*)
27. When salvage is proposed in dead and dying forests, contiguous acres of undisturbed standing and down woody material will be retained in adequate amounts for those wildlife species that depend on this type of habitat. Rationale for this is as follows. Many bird and mammal species require dead and dying forests for maintenance of viable populations. Methods of timber salvage that homogenize stands (such as selective removal of all trees of a certain size, density and/or species) will not maintain the structure or variety of microclimates required by bird and mammal species that use this type of habitat. (*Goals FW1, FW2, FW6, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, SE4, SE5*)
28. Outside of contiguous areas identified for retention, harvest treatments may include: 1) forest openings appropriate for the site and retention patches of uncut dead and dying trees; or 2) forest openings appropriate for the site with selective thinning

between openings and retention patches of uncut dead and dying trees; or 3) selective thinning and retention patches of uncut dead and dying trees. (*Goals FW1, FW2, FW3, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, SE4, SE5*)

29. Bark beetle suppression treatments, which may target large tree removal, will be permitted to contain outbreaks and to reduce the risk to other forest stands in the vicinity. (*Goals FW2, FW3*)
30. In all areas with dead and dying trees (including retention patches), tree cutting will be allowed for human safety, fire rehabilitation and stabilization, and forest or stream restoration activities. (*Goals FW1, FW2, RV1, RV2, FM3, SRI, WRI, WR3, WR4*)

### **Old Forest Structure**

31. The BLM will strive to maintain and/or restore stands with old forest structure within historic range of variability to maintain and/or enhance habitat for species dependent on this type of habitat. Existing and developing old forests will be retained and protected from uncharacteristically severe natural disturbances such as; stand replacing wildland fire, and insect and disease epidemics. (*Goals FW1, FW6, WF3, WF4, WF5, SE4*)
32. Old forest structure and conditions will be maintained and promoted through active treatments and restoration activities. Actions will be designed to develop and maintain healthy stand structures that are relatively complex with highly variable tree densities, healthy and diverse understory composition, and abundant snags, large diameter trees, and downed logs. Where deficient on the landscape, snags and down woody material will be created in appropriate areas. (*Goals FW1, FW6, WF3, WF4, WF5, SE4*)

### **Monitoring**

Forest monitoring will be focused on tree density (i.e., number of trees per acre or basal area), structure, canopy cover, tree size, tree height, age class, down wood and number of snags. Some forest types will also be measured for regeneration/recruitment which can be measured through visual observation or counts. Other woodland types such as quaking aspen and mountain mahogany stands will be monitored for their presence or absence, recruitment, and for their response to other forest/woodland management activities and uses.

Forests and woodlands will also be monitored in relation to disturbance processes. Stands may be assessed for the presence of insects and/or disease. Fire history and/or fire intervals may also be monitored in forest and woodlands. These disturbances may be monitored for severity and response to management actions.

Forest products generated from management actions in forests and woodlands will be monitored by measuring

the type and volume of product removed (i.e. tons of biomass, board feet of timber, etc).

Data will be collected within forest stands or woodlands using the FORVIS data collection format and other appropriate plot sampling. In commercial treatment units, the pre-treatment basal area of the live and dead component, the average stand diameter at-breast height, the average stand total height, and fuel loading information will be collected. Estimated volume per acre or biomass tons per acre will be obtained, if applicable, in stands that will be treated. Post treatment monitoring may include transect and/or plot sampling to determine if goals and objectives were met for canopy cover, trees per acre, basal area, stand structure, understory species, down wood, and snags.

In commercial and non-commercial treatment units, photo points will be established to show approximate percent cover, habitat types, understory development and occurrence of insect infestations and diseases before and after treatments.

The number of acres treated and number of small sale/public use permits issued each fiscal year will be tracked and reported as necessary.

## **Riparian Vegetation**

### ***Goals***

**Goal RV1** – Manage riparian and wetland communities to move toward or remain in proper functioning condition (appropriate vegetative species composition, density, and age structure for their specific area). Manage these communities to be sustainable and provide physical stability and adequate habitat for a wide range of aquatic and riparian dependent species.

**Goal RV2** – Manage wetland and riparian habitats to support healthy, diverse and abundant populations of fish and associated aquatic and riparian dependent species.

### ***Objectives (Goals RV1, RV2, WF1, WF3, WF4, WF5, WRI, WR4, SE4)***

Riparian and wetland areas will be assessed and monitored for proper functioning condition and other specific objectives, by using proper functioning condition and/or other appropriate stream survey methodologies. For proper functioning condition in streams, entrenchment, width/depth ratio, sinuosity, channel substrate, and slope should be within the range identified for channel types.

The objective for total amount of riparian vegetation habitat proposed for mechanical and/or prescribed burning treatments is 200 to 700 acres per decade (this includes vegetative treatments and not changes in grazing practices). These acres are displayed by major watershed in **Table 7**.



Table 7. Riparian Vegetation Acres to be Treated per Decade	
Watershed	Treatment Acres per Decade
Big Hole	50 to 200 (of 3,139)
Blackfoot	0 to 40 (92)
Gallatin	0 to 10 (of 22)
Jefferson	50 to 200 (of 2,846)
Upper Missouri	100 to 200 (of 4,651)
Yellowstone	0 to 50 (of 350)
<b>Total</b>	<b>200 to 700 (of 11,000)</b>

**Management Actions (Goals RV1, RV2, WF1, WF3, WF4, WF5, WR1, WR4, SE4)**

**Allowable Uses**

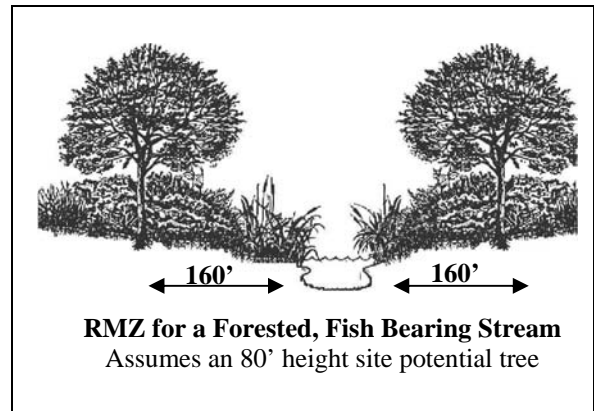
Riparian Management Zones (RMZs) are areas where riparian values will receive primary emphasis with all activities to the extent possible. Maintaining and restoring quality riparian habitat (including vegetation) is important: 1) as habitat for many wildlife species; 2) to maintain water quality, appropriate woody material, and nutrient routing to aquatic habitats; and 3) to maintain appropriate stream channel morphology.

Riparian Management Zones are intended to: maintain and restore riparian structures and functions; benefit fish and riparian-dependent resources; enhance conservation of organisms that depend on the transition zone between upslope and aquatic habitats; and improve connectivity of travel and dispersal corridors for terrestrial animals and plants, and aquatic organisms. At the Field Office scale, projects in RMZs will generally be designed to protect or restore the ecological function of riparian areas and streams.

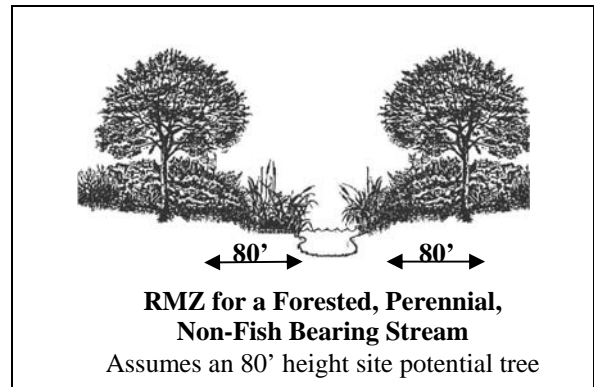
Beyond adhering to the Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) Law, Riparian Management Zones will be established from the edge of aquatic habitats as follows.

**Forested Areas**

Streams, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs containing fish: The riparian management zone (RMZ) consists of the water body and a zone located on all sides of the water body. This zone extends from the outer edges of the bankfull channel, full pool, or adjacent wetland a slope distance equal to the height of two site-potential trees. (Site potential tree height – within forested areas, a site potential tree height would be the average maximum potential height of dominant trees, in the riparian management zone).



Perennial non-fish bearing streams: The RMZ consists of the stream and a zone located on both sides of the channel. This zone extends from the outer edges of the bankfull channel (or adjacent wetland) a distance equal to one site-potential tree height.



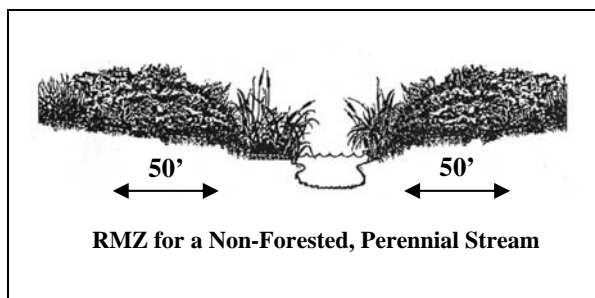
Non-fish bearing ponds, lakes, reservoirs, or wetlands greater than 1 acre: The RMZ extends from the outer edge of the full pool or wetland a distance equal to one site-potential tree height or to the edge of seasonally saturated soil or wetland vegetation, whichever is greater.

Intermittent streams and wetlands less than 1 acre: The RMZ consists of the water body and a zone located on all sides of the water body. This zone extends from the outer edges of the bankfull channel or adjacent wetland a distance equal to at least 50 feet.

**Non-forested Areas**

For fish-bearing and non-fish bearing perennial streams, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs, the RMZ consists of the water body and a zone located on all sides of the water body. This zone extends from the outer edges of the bankfull channel (average high-water mark), full pool, or adjacent wetland a distance that encompasses the active floodplain. The RMZ extends 50 feet above the break in slope leading down from the lowest terrace to the floodplain, or in segments where trees are present, to a distance equal to one site-potential tree height (two site-

potential tree heights for fish-bearing waters) from the edge of the feature, whichever is greatest.



For intermittent streams and wetlands less than 1 acre, RMZs are 50 feet from the edge of wetland vegetation or active stream channel as indicated by riparian vegetation, saturated soil, or water. The criteria for selecting the width may be different for each side of the water body.

Riparian livestock use and vegetative treatments will occur within RMZs. Riparian areas will continue to be evaluated using Land Health Standards and grazing practices will be modified when necessary. The condition and importance of riparian resources to natural systems locally will serve as primary emphasis for management activities and uses.

Because stream types and riparian functions significantly vary across the Planning Area, RMZs based on a minimum linear distance will not be applicable for every project. Although the minimum distances will always apply, the width necessary to protect the stream and riparian structure and function may be wider than the minimum distances and will be determined from site-specific analysis.

Each project will incorporate specific design features to maintain or improve the key ecological functions of the Riparian Management Zones.

Commercial timber harvest will be allowed in Riparian Management Zones to meet riparian restoration or maintenance objectives and only if adequate woody material remains in the riparian area to meet site-specific (project level) riparian objectives.

### Actions

1. At the Field Office scale, management will maintain, protect, restore and/or improve riparian areas and wetlands. Riparian areas that are functioning at risk will be a high priority for restoration. (*Goals RV1, RV2, WF1, WF3, WF4, WF5, WR1, WR4, SE4*)
2. Riparian and wetland management will be consistent with all state and federal laws and regulations, including the Montana Streamside Management Zone Law (77-5-301 through 307 MCA). Actions will be taken to cooperatively conserve riparian/wetland habitat, minimize the

impacts, loss or degradation of wetlands, and preserve values served by floodplains where occurring on public land while reducing hazards to human safety. (*Goals RV1, RV2, FW1, FW2, FW3, WF3, WF5, WF6, WR1, WR3, WR4, SE1, SE4*)

3. BLM will cooperate with federal, tribal, and state wildlife management agencies and private landowners to identify activities that prevent meeting riparian standards. In cooperation with those agencies, projects or management measures will be designed to minimize impacts. (*Goals RV1, RV2, WF3, WF6, WR1, WR3, WR4, SE4*)
4. Authorized activities within riparian areas will strive to maintain and restore riparian structure and function, benefit fish and riparian-dependant species, enhance conservation of organisms that depend on the transition zone between upslope and the stream, and maintain or improve the connectivity of travel and dispersal corridors for terrestrial animals and plants. When projects that cause detrimental effects on riparian resources cannot be located outside of riparian areas, short-term and long-term effects will be minimized. (*Goals RV1, RV2, WF3, WF5, WR1, WR3, WR4, SE4*)
5. Restorative treatments in riparian areas will focus on re-establishing willows, aspen, and cottonwood stands as well as other riparian vegetation, and to move towards pre-fire suppression stem densities in conifer stands. (*Goals RV1, RV2, FW1, FW2, FW3, WF1, WF3, WF5, WR1, WR4, SE4*)
6. Where conifers are outcompeting or precluding regeneration of aspen, or preventing establishment of aspen or cottonwood stands, conifers will be removed (via mechanical methods and/or prescribed burning) to provide suitable habitat for expansion of these species. Commodity removal of juniper will be encouraged when applicable. (*Goals RV1, RV2, FW1, FW2, FW3, WF1, WF3, SE4*)
7. Where the primary project objective is aspen restoration, treated aspen stands will be fenced from livestock and wildlife when recovery could be suppressed by grazing and browsing. Fencing could consist of using native, on-site materials as barriers. All fences (with the exception of barriers created from native, on-site materials) will be maintained and removed within 10 years or when the aspen is fully re-established or recovered. (*Goals RV1, RV2, FW1, FW2, FW3, WF1, WF3, SE4*)
8. Forested riparian habitats will be managed to accelerate the development of mature forest communities to promote shade, bank stability, and down woody material recruitment. Late-successional riparian vegetation will be promoted in amounts and distribution similar to historic

conditions. (*Goals RV1, RV2, FW1, FW2, FW3, WF1, WF3, WR1, WR3, WR4, SE4*)

9. Riparian areas will be managed to provide the amount and distribution of large, woody material characteristic of natural aquatic and riparian ecosystems. Trees may be felled in riparian areas when they pose a safety risk or are needed to enhance riparian function/condition. Felled trees will be kept on site when needed to meet site-specific down woody material objectives. (*Goals RV1, RV2, WF3, WR1, WR3, WR4, SE4*)
10. Streams and riparian habitats that have been degraded or lost due to the effects of historic mining operations, including placer mining, will continue to be restored to improve water quality as well as aquatic and riparian habitats. The BLM Hazardous Materials/AML Program(s) will continue to cooperatively work on a watershed-by-watershed basis reducing exposures to human health and the environment from AML sites. Reclamation of these areas typically includes removing contaminated soils and tailings, preventing run-off of heavy metals, reconstructing/stabilizing streambeds and banks (including providing habitat features such as down woody material and planting or restoring riparian vegetation), reducing sedimentation, closing physical safety hazards, and closing/stabilizing roads. Following reclamation, sites will be monitored to evaluate if the reclamation risk reduction project goals were achieved; whether additional restoration efforts are necessary to restore or improve aquatic and/or riparian habitats; and the effectiveness of the project(s) to determine if a viable fishery has been or could be established. (*Goals RV1, RV2, WF3, WR1, WR3, WR4, AM1, HMI, SE4*)

### **Monitoring**

Changes in miles or acres of riparian/wetland habitat in proper functioning condition will be determined during rangeland health and watershed assessments using the procedures outlined in BLM Technical References TR 1737-15 and TR 1737-16 (Prichard et. al 1998, 2003). Changes in vegetation communities will also be determined during these assessments.

Riparian/wetland plant community characteristics will be inventoried and monitored to establish trends in plant composition, canopy, age class diversity, and utilization that indicate progress toward desired plant communities and properly functioning riparian conditions. Rosgen or other appropriate inventories may be used to provide baseline channel morphology information and identify site potential. Simple stream cross sections can also be used to provide measurements of width:depth ratios and to help assess channel types. Monitoring methods for riparian and wetlands may include but are not limited to: Proper Functioning Condition assessments; Rosgen

channel type assessments; greenline transects; browse transects; photo points; channel cross sections; vegetation cover, density, composition, frequency assessments; and other methodologies and procedures found in the BLM Technical References 1737 series.

## **Livestock Grazing**

### **Goals**

**Goal LG1** – Manage for a sustainable level of livestock grazing while meeting or progressing toward Land Health Standards.

**Goal LG2** – Maintain, restore, or enhance BLM rangelands to meet the Land Health Standards.

**Goal LG3** – Manage livestock grazing to provide a sustained flow of local economic benefits and to protect non-market economic values.

### **Objectives (Goals LG1, LG2, LG3, GS1, WF1, WF7)**

Objectives for livestock grazing are to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management, Butte District section of the publication *Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota*, (USDI-BLM 1997), which will be incorporated into livestock grazing permits and leases.

### **Management Actions**

#### **Allowable Uses (Goals LG1, LG3, SE1, SE3, SE5)**

Livestock grazing will be allowed on about 270,000 acres of public land. The amount of forage available on these lands will be 24,710 AUMs active use and 1,312 AUMs forage reserve, temporary non-renewable AUMs. Approximately 37,000 acres of public land will be unavailable for grazing permits or leases (**Table 8**). The allotments unavailable for grazing permits generally lack forage or water, are small, are on steep terrain, are covered with timber, are adjacent to subdivisions, or lack infrastructure.

After the current permittee ceases livestock grazing, the McMaster Hills and Spokane Hills individual allotments will be established as forage reserve allotments (an allotment without a term grazing permit that is grazed on a temporary nonrenewable basis). This type of allotment will be used to provide temporary grazing to rest other areas following wildfire, habitat treatments, or to allow for more rapid attainment of rangeland health. Forage reserve allotments will be managed to meet, or move toward meeting, Land Health Standards. Use will be authorized on a temporary, nonrenewable basis. The amount of use will be determined by the BFO. Applicants will be required to meet qualifications per the grazing regulations, and show the ability and

<b>Table 8</b> <b>Areas Unavailable for Long Term Permits</b>		
<b>Allotment Name</b>	<b>Allotment Number</b>	<b>Allowed Grazing Use</b>
Alder Creek	351	Unavailable for grazing permit
Centennial Gulch	7715	Unavailable for grazing permit; prescription grazing
Charcoal Mountain Cust.	10363	Unavailable for grazing permit
Dickie	20364	Unavailable for grazing permit
Free Coinage	20254	Unavailable for grazing permit
Indian Creek	20233	Forage Reserve Allotment
Maiden Rock Custodial	20367	Unavailable for grazing permit
Spokane Hills	7720	Forage Reserve Allotment
Medicine Creek Riparian Area	N/A	Prescription Grazing
McMasters Hills	7721	Forage Reserve Allotment
Quinn Creek	5487	Unavailable for grazing permit
Wineglass Mountain	15452	Unavailable for grazing permit

commitment to repair and maintain improvements and infrastructure. The BFO will rank qualified applicants according to the following criteria in priority order:

1. Implementing projects or vegetation management on BLM lands.
2. Facilitating a change in management to improve resource conditions on BLM allotments.
3. Accommodating permittees or lessees displaced by natural causes (i.e. wildland fire, drought, insect infestations, etc.)

The criteria found at 43 CFR §4130.1-2 (USDI-BLM 2006) will be used to determine priority when conflicting applications are submitted.

The existing Indian Creek allotment will be expanded up to 5,566 additional acres and 700 AUMS by the Iron Mask acquisition. This allotment located in the Elkhorns Cooperative Management Area will be managed as a forage reserve allotment. The allotment will be managed to meet, or move toward meeting, Land Health Standards. Use will be authorized on a temporary, nonrenewable basis. The amount of use will be

determined by the BFO. Applicants will be required to meet qualifications per the BLM grazing regulations, and show the ability and commitment to repair and maintain improvements and infrastructure. The BFO will rank qualified applicants for the Indian Creek allotment according to the following criteria in priority order:

1. Be a state or federal permittee or lessee, or private landowner within the boundaries of the Elkhorns Cooperative Management Area (ECMA).
2. Implementing projects or vegetation management on ECMA lands.
3. Facilitating a change in management to improve resource conditions on ECMA lands.
4. Accommodating permittees or lessees displaced by natural causes (i.e. wildland fire, drought, insect infestations, etc.)
5. The criteria found at 43 CFR §4130.1-2 (USDI-BLM 2006) when conflicting applications are submitted.

The Centennial Gulch (Ward Ranch) allotment and Medicine Rock (Northeast Helena) riparian area will be available for prescription livestock grazing to meet specific resource objectives as determined through a site-specific interdisciplinary planning and NEPA process.

**Actions**

1. Allotment Management Plans and Coordinated Resource Management Plans will continue to be implemented, including utilization objectives and associated range improvement projects. (*Goals LG1, LG3, GS1, WF1, SE1, SE5*)
2. Land Health Standards will be used with Best Management Practices for livestock grazing that meet or exceed those approved by the State of Montana in order to maintain, restore, or enhance water quality and site-specific vegetation conditions. (*Goals LG1, LG2, RV1, RV2, WF1, WF3, WR1, WR3*)
3. Cooperatively managed allotments with the USFS, Dillon, Lewistown, and Missoula Field Offices will continue under existing Memoranda of Understanding. Cooperative management of the Bull Mountain Game Range will continue with the USFS. (*Goals LG3, SE1, SE5*)
4. Applications for unleased allotments and vacant available lands (areas of land not segregated into allotments open to leasing by qualified applicants) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. (*Goals LG3, SE1, SE5*)
5. Existing utilization objectives set through interdisciplinary NEPA, Allotment Management Plan, or Coordinated RMP planning processes will continue to be in effect. (*Goals LG1, LG3, GS1, WF1, SE1, SE5*)

6. Adjustments to livestock management practices or livestock numbers, including increases or decreases, will be made based on results of monitoring studies, rangeland health assessments, allotment evaluations, and interdisciplinary review. (*Goals LG1, LG3, GS1, RV1, WF1, SRI, WR1, WR3, SE1, SE5*)
7. The health and integrity of riparian areas and wetlands will be maintained and improved by using tools such as livestock fencing, alternate upland water sources or livestock grazing adjustments (timing and stocking rates). (*Goals LG1, LG2, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE1, SE3, SE5*)
8. Grazing practices in riparian areas (accessibility of riparian areas to livestock, length of grazing season, stocking levels, timing of grazing, etc.) that retard or prevent attainment of riparian goals or proper functioning condition will be modified. Where livestock grazing is the cause of degraded conditions, grazing will be suspended on a case-by-case basis if adjusting practices is not effective in meeting riparian goals or proper functioning condition. (*Goals LG1, LG2, RV1, RV2, WR1, WR3, WR4, SE1, SE4, SE5*)
9. Functional wildlife escape ramps will be installed and maintained on all water tanks on BLM lands. (*Goals LG2, WF5, SE4*)
10. All new fences will be built to standard BLM wildlife specifications (USDI – BLM 1989) in the Bureau of Land Management Fencing Manual, (H-1741-1) to allow wildlife passage, with the exception of fences built specifically to keep ungulates out of an area or fences built to meet specific public safety or other administrative purposes. Existing fences not meeting standard BLM wildlife specifications will be modified to meet the standard when reconstruction is done. (*Goals LG2, WF5, SE4*)
11. Wildlife habitat, grassland, sagebrush, and shrubland health of individual allotments will be assessed. Livestock grazing guidelines will be implemented to maintain or improve conditions when degradation due to grazing has been identified. Livestock grazing guidelines for residual cover and monitoring measures for forage utilization will be developed for new or revised Allotment Management Plans. (*Goals LG1, LG2, GS1, GS2, WF1, WF2, WF5, SE4*)
12. Because of fencing issues, a need to reduce conflicts between recreational use and grazing use, as well as a need to improve water quality, no new term grazing permits will be authorized on river islands. (*Goals LG1, LG2, RV1, RV2, RM1, WR1, WR3, SE2, SE4*)
13. Water developments for livestock generally will not be established in areas where substantial conflicts with wildlife forage and habitat could occur. (*Goals LG1, LG2, WF5, SE4*)
14. Range improvements generally will be designed to achieve both wildlife and range objectives. (*Goals LG1, LG2, LG3, WF5, SE4*)
15. Sufficient forage and cover will be provided for wildlife on seasonal habitat. (*Goals LG1, LG2, WF5, WF7, SE4*)
16. For allotments without specific management objectives set through an interdisciplinary planning process, the utilization objective as measured at the end of the grazing season will be 55 percent on non-native seedlings and 45 percent on native herbaceous forage plants, on a pasture average basis. (These utilization percentages will maintain or enhance most plant communities found in the Decision Area to achieve or make progress toward meeting Land Health Standards.) Lower or higher utilization objectives may be acceptable when set through an interdisciplinary planning or NEPA process to achieve resource objectives. (*Goals LG1, LG3, GS1, WF1, SE1, SE4, SE5*)
17. Grazing uses on lands proposed for acquisition will be considered on a case-by-case basis based on the values identified for the acquisition. (*Goals LG3, SE1, SE2, SE4, SE5*)
18. No new kind of livestock conversions from sheep or cattle to horses will be allowed on existing allotments smaller than 160 acres. No new horse permits or leases will be offered on available vacant parcels less than 160 acres in size. In both cases, exceptions may be granted in rare cases of intermingled ownership where Land Health Standards are met and/or where standards are expected to be maintained under horse use. (*Goal LG1*)
19. BLM will develop and implement appropriate grazing strategies in grizzly bear distribution zones. (*Goals LG2, WF4*)
20. Allotments where grazing preference is relinquished during the life of this plan will be evaluated for suburban/urban interface issues, important wildlife habitat, riparian values, or recreational considerations before re-offering the grazing preference on the allotment for permit or lease. (*Goals LG1, LG3, WF3, WF5, RM1, SE4*)
21. Areas identified for prescribed burning will be rested from livestock grazing up to one year prior to treatment, if necessary, to produce fine fuels to carry the burn. Treatment areas will be rested for a minimum of two growing seasons following treatment to promote recovery of vegetation. Livestock rest for more or less than two growing seasons could be justified on a case-by-case basis. (*Goals GV1, LG1, LG3, GS1, FM2, WF1, SE4*)

22. Range projects will be maintained as long as needed to meet management objectives. Maintenance will be assigned to grazing permittees, other authorized public land users, or the BLM. Routine maintenance will be completed according to the maintenance schedule per the terms and conditions of existing cooperative agreements. (*Goals LG1, GS1, RV1, RV2, WF1, WR1, WR3, SE4*)
23. No change in livestock conversions from cattle to domestic sheep or goats will be allowed in allotments within occupied wild sheep habitat. New sheep and goat allotments or conversions from cattle to sheep or goats will be permitted a minimum of 5 miles from known bighorn sheep habitat. This distance will be greater if deemed necessary through site-specific analysis or a cooperative agreement with other federal or state agencies. (*Goals LG1, WF5, SE4*)

### **Monitoring**

The BLM will record and update the number of allotments and acres that meet the Land Health Standards and the total number of allotments and acres assessed.

Measuring trends in vegetative production, structure, and composition, soil/site stability, watershed function, and integrity of biotic community will be accomplished through periodic rangeland health assessments following procedures outlined in Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (Pellant et al. 2005), Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines (USDI-BLM 1997), BLM Manual 4180 and Handbook H-4180-1 guiding implementation of the rangeland health standards, and methodologies found in the 4400 BLM Technical References and handbook series.

## **Wildland Fire Management**

### **Goals**

**Goal FM1** – Provide an appropriate management response to all wildland fires, emphasizing firefighter and public safety.

**Goal FM2** – Move toward restoring and maintaining desired ecological conditions consistent with appropriate fire regimes.

**Goal FM3** – Minimize the adverse effects of fire and fire suppression activities on resources, resource uses, and wildland-urban interface.

**Goal FM4** – Promote seamless fire management planning across jurisdictions within the boundaries of the BFO.

**Goal FM5** – Protect life and property by treating hazardous fuels on BLM lands.

### **Management Actions**

#### **Allowable Uses (*Goals FM1, FM2, FM3, FM4, FM5*)**

BFO lands are designated into fire management categories described below.

#### Category B Areas

These are areas where unplanned fire (natural or human-caused) is likely to cause negative effects, but these effects can be minimized or avoided through fuels management, prevention of human caused fire, or other strategies. Prevention and mitigation programs to reduce unwanted fire ignitions and resource threats will be emphasized. Full fire suppression will generally be the appropriate management response for unplanned wildland fire. Fire and non-fire fuels treatments reduce the effects of unplanned wildland fire. Restorative treatments may consist of one or more non-fire treatments before the use of fire will be considered.

#### Category C Areas

These are areas where wildland fire use and prescribed fire are desired to manage ecosystems but there are substantial constraints that must be considered for their use. These constraints include important wildlife habitat, air quality, or threatened and endangered species. Additional considerations may include maximum acreage burned under wildland fire use, time of year, or number of acres burned per decade from all types of fire. These areas will receive lower suppression priority in multiple wildland fire situations. Fire and non-fire fuels treatments will be utilized to ensure constraints are met or to reduce any hazardous effects of unplanned wildland fire.

Fire management objectives are associated with Fire Management Units (FMUs). BFO-administered lands are broken into nine FMUs. The FMUs have B and C designations applied. Approximately 52,000 acres are designated in Category B, with 255,000 acres in Category C (**Table 9** and **Map 2**).

Fire Management Unit (FMU) boundaries are generally based on watershed boundaries. The FMUs follow watershed boundaries with the following two exceptions: The Missouri and the Big Hole watersheds are each broken into two FMUs due to the urban interface areas surrounding Helena and Wise River. The Missouri watershed FMUs are Central Missouri and Upper Missouri, and the Big Hole watershed FMUs are Big Hole and Wise River.



<b>FMU</b>	<b>Category<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>BLM Acres<sup>2</sup></b>
Big Hole	C	51,000
Blackfoot	B	1,000
Central Missouri	B	37,000
Gallatin	B	2,000
Jefferson	C	82,000
Upper Clark Fork	B	1,000
Upper Missouri	C	115,000
Wise River	B	10,000
Yellowstone	C	8,000

<sup>1</sup>Category and associated treatments only apply to BLM land within each unit.

<sup>2</sup>Acres are approximate and rounded to nearest 1,000.

### Actions

- The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Helena National Forest, Gallatin National Forest, and the State of Montana DNRC in conjunction with the Butte Field Office will implement fire preparedness, prevention, and suppression on BLM administered lands through the interagency offset and six party fire protection agreements, and other interagency agreements. (*Goals FM1, FM4*)
- BLM will provide assistance to communities in developing and maintaining community wildland fire protection plans. (*Goals FM1, FM5*)
- Priority of fire management activities will be placed on fuels reduction in WUI areas in conjunction with completed Community Wildfire Protection Plans. (*Goals FM1, FM4, FM5*)
- Fire management activities (wildland fire suppression; fuels treatments; and fire mitigation, education and prevention) will be prioritized by their risk to life and property across the Decision Area. Fires that are adjacent to or near WUI will have highest priority for fire suppression. (*Goals FM1, FM5*)
- BLM will implement management actions that maintain or move plant communities to the historic fire regime and condition classes. In areas where the environment has changed substantially and a return to historic conditions is not possible or ecologically desirable, the appropriate fire regime will be determined based on existing conditions and current management. (*Goals FM2, GS1, FW1, WF1*)
- Fire management will focus on maintaining fire dependent ecosystems and restoring or maintaining those areas outside their natural balance through mechanical, chemical, and/or prescribed fire treatments. (*Goals FM2, FM3, GS1, FW1, WF1*)
- Fire management activities outside of the WUI areas will use Fire Regime, Condition Class (FRCC) to determine level of fuels treatments. (*Goals FM2, FM3*)
- For all prescribed fire projects, BLM will evaluate habitat type, soils, fuel conditions, project objectives, and risk when determining seasonality for burning. (*Goals FM3, GS1, FW1, WF1, SRI, SR2, SE4*)
- Planned prescribed fire unit size will be determined by an interdisciplinary team through site-specific NEPA analysis. (*Goals FM2, FM3*)
- Any wildland fire that is eligible for Wildland Fire Use (WFU) will require a site-specific Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) before it can be managed as such. (*Goals FM2, FM3*)
- BLM will manage naturally ignited wildland fires in the Elkhorn Mountains under the prescription guidelines established in the Elkhorn Mountains Fire Management Plan. (*Goals FM2, FM3*)
- Incident bases, camps, helibases, staging areas, and other incident management activities will be located outside of riparian areas. If unavoidable, an exemption could be made by a line officer. (*Goals FM3, RV1, RV2, WF3, WRI, WR3, SE4*)
- Use of retardant in Wilderness Areas or WSAs will be avoided and will require line officer approval. (*Goals FM3, RM1, WSA1, SE2, SE4*)
- Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics will be used when working in Wilderness Areas or Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), following the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands under Wilderness Review (BLM Handbook H-8550-1). (*Goals FM3, RM1, WSA1, SE2, SE4*)
- Use of heavy equipment will be restricted to areas outside of Wilderness or WSAs. (*Goals FM3, RM1, WSA1, SE2, SE4*)
- Spread of non-native invasive aquatic species as well as additional resource issues will be addressed in the Butte Field Office Fire Management Plan to be revised after finalization of this RMP. (*Goals FM3, WF3, WRI, SE4*)
- Management-ignited prescribed fire will not be conducted between May 1<sup>st</sup> and August 30<sup>th</sup> to protect nesting migratory birds, unless breeding bird surveys document low potential impact to breeding birds. (*Goals FM3, WF5, SE4*)
- In grassland and shrubland habitats, BLM will plan for prescribed burns that do not consume above-ground vegetation on more than 80 percent (on average) of each unit by surface area. (*Goals FM2, FM3, GS1, WF1, WF5, WF7, SE4*)

19. Delivery of chemical retardant, foam or additives to live streams will be avoided. Fish screens (1/8 inch diameter holes) on hoses will be required when removing water from fish bearing streams during fire management activities. Maps of fish bearing streams will be included in the BFO Fire Management Plan for use in initial attack of wildland fires. Aerial delivery of retardant will meet Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (USDI-BLM et al. 2009). (*Goals FM3, RV2, WF3, WF5, WR1, SE4*)
20. Following large wildland fires, burned areas will be evaluated for appropriate timber salvage as well as biological and physical rehabilitation activities. (*Goals FM1, FM3, FM5, SR1, SR2, WR1, WR3, SE1*)
21. BLM will use the BLM's Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Handbook (H-1742-1) outlining the process for implementing emergency fire rehabilitation projects following wildland fires and wildland fire use. (*Goal FM3*)
22. Emergency fire rehabilitation funds will be used to:
  - Protect life, property, and soil, water and vegetation resources;
  - Prevent unacceptable onsite or offsite damage;
  - Facilitate meeting land use plan goals and other federal laws; and
  - Reduce the invasion and establishment of undesirable or invasive vegetation. (*Goals FM3, NW1, SR1, SR2, WR1, WR3*)

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring will determine whether fire management cooperation, planning, strategies, practices, and activities are meeting safety issues for personnel involved in fire operations and resource management objectives and concerns. Fire management plans and policies will be updated as needed to keep current with national and state fire management direction. Scheduled pre/post-season fire meetings will be conducted to evaluate fire management effectiveness in meeting goals and to re-assess program direction.

Monitoring of the Fuels program will be done annually based on acres treated by treatment type and by set priority (utilizing National and State guidance for Wildland Urban Interface prioritization). The effectiveness of treatments will be noted for changes in FRCC. Databases will be used in tracking the Fuels program.

An indication of pre-fire condition and post-fire effects will be captured by monitoring wildland fuels loads, vegetative conditions, and other ecological parameters as appropriate for resource objectives. Monitoring methods

may include fuels and vegetation transects, photo points, density, cover and frequency plots, and ocular estimates.

Wildfire rehabilitation effectiveness monitoring studies will be encouraged to determine whether emergency rehabilitation objectives are met. Monitoring requirements and methods will be project specific.

## **Noxious Weed Management**

### **Goal**

**Goal NW1** – Minimize infestations of invasive plants and noxious weeds.

### **Objective (Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, LG2, WF1, SR2, SE3)**

The Butte Field Office objective for noxious weed treatments is to treat an estimated 21,000 to 50,000 acres of weeds per decade, not including biocontrol measures such as insect releases, grazing, or use of pathogens. Approximately 10 to 15 percent of proposed weed treatment acres are expected to be newly treated acres. Most of the treated acres will be repeated treatments on the same areas because successful weed control usually requires multiple treatments and/or combinations of treatment methods.

### **Management Actions**

1. BLM will manage Montana state and county designated noxious weeds and invasive plants according to the principles of Integrated Weed Management, Partners Against Weeds: An Action Plan for the BLM (USDI-BLM 1996), Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (USDI-BLM 1991b), Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in 17 Western States (USDI-BLM 2007), the Montana Weed Management Plan (Duncan 2005), the Noxious Weed Control Plan, Bureau of Land Management, Butte District, Headwaters Resource Area (USDI-BLM 1986) or the most current BFO noxious weed control plan, and other applicable federal, state, and local laws, statutes, plans, and regulations. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, LG2, WF1, SR2, SE3*)
2. BLM will encourage the development of weed management areas where the landowners and users are cooperatively working to manage noxious weeds within designated areas. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, SR2, SE3, SE4*)
3. BLM will continue cooperative agreements with county and state entities. Management efforts will be coordinated with other federal, state, and county agencies, weed management areas, and private landowners and organizations. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, WF1, SR2, SE3, SE4*)
4. Prevention and control of weed infestations in special designation areas and weed management

- areas will be a high priority. (*Goals NW1, AC1, NT1, WSA1, WSRI, SE2, SE4*)
5. BLM will focus prevention of weed spread along roads, trails, waterways, recreation sites, and disturbed sites associated with project implementation. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, RV1, WF1, RM2, SE4*)
  6. Where applicable, plant communities will be restored to promote resistance to weed invasion, using accepted management techniques, methods, and procedures. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, WF1, SR2, SE3, SE4*)
  7. BLM will continue to use a combination of cultural, physical, chemical, and biological treatments for weed control. Chemical and biological treatment techniques will conform to BLM guidelines and state and federal laws. Standard operating procedures described in the September 2007 Record of Decision for the Final Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement will be used. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, WF1, SR2, SE3, SE4*)
  8. Weed management prescriptions will be included in all new vegetation treatment projects and incorporated where possible in all existing contracts, agreements, and land use authorizations that would result in ground-disturbing activities. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, WF1, SR2, SE3, SE4*)
  9. Weed seed free forage will be used on BLM lands. Forage subject to this rule will include hay, grains, cubes, pelletized feeds, straw, and mulch. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, WF1, SR2, SE3, SE4*)
  10. Noxious weed control using domestic sheep and/or goats in occupied bighorn sheep habitat will generally be prohibited. Goats and sheep could be used for weed control on wild sheep winter ranges when wild sheep are absent. To minimize contact with bighorn sheep, domestic sheep and goats used for weed control will only be allowed to graze for up to 1 month near occupied bighorn sheep habitat and there will be a minimum buffer of 2 miles between domestic and wild sheep. Bedding grounds will be located a minimum of 4 miles from known bighorn sheep habitat. The use of domestic sheep and goats will only be allowed from May 1 to July 31 unless coordinated with MFWP. A herder will be required to be on site at all times and to be able to communicate with the BLM, the herd owner and MFWP. If bighorn sheep and domestic sheep and goats come into contact, the herder will be required to contact the BLM and MFWP immediately. (*Goals LG1, NW1, WF5, SE4*)
  11. To minimize the risk of inadvertently spraying desirable riparian vegetation and waterways, aerial spraying of herbicides or pesticides will not occur when eye-level winds are greater than 6 miles per hour, or within a minimum of 100 feet from streams, or wetlands or in occupied or high value habitat for sensitive species of plants or animals. Aerial spraying will be conducted in a way that minimizes the effects on native forbs, grasses, and shrubs. Additionally, no herbicides or pesticides which may negatively affect sagebrush will be used aerially in sensitive sagebrush habitats. (*Goals NW1, GS2, RV1, RV2, WF3, WF7, WR1*)
  12. To prevent special status plants from being sprayed with herbicides, BLM, county, and contractor personnel participating in weed treatment activities will be provided with training to identify special status plants and maps of special status plant populations associated with weed treatment areas. (*Goals NW1, WF4, WF5, WF6*)
  13. All contractor and BLM equipment will be power-washed to remove weed seed before entering ground disturbing project areas. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, WF1, SR2, SE3, SE4*)
  14. BLM will actively conduct noxious weed outreach and education for BLM personnel, public land users, and the general public. Outreach and education will consist of identification, prevention and control methods, and the benefits of restoration. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, WF1, RM1, RM2, SR2, SE3, SE4*)
  15. Outreach/education on noxious weeds will be provided to the public at campgrounds and trailheads. (*Goals NW1, GS1, FW1, WF1, RM2, SR2, SE3, SE4*)

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring will be conducted to determine if weed treatment strategies are effective at the project level and Planning Area- and Decision Area-wide.

Monitoring will be focused on identification of new infestations, spread of existing infestations, effectiveness of treatments activities, and response of vegetative communities to weed treatments and other specific influences. Monitoring will provide information on the success of management strategies defined for the Field Office and for site-specific projects and weed plans. Monitoring will also provide feedback in order to evaluate management strategies, decisions, and implementation, and will provide the evaluation necessary to adapt management strategies to provide the best weed control and prevention.

Noxious weed monitoring will be designed to correctly monitor the weed species and desired community/species, relative to the known or predicted influence to the vegetation. Areas with little or no resource use could require only minimal monitoring, such as occasional visual observation. Areas of higher

use or resource concern may require more intensive monitoring. Monitoring for new infestations will usually be accomplished through inventories, surveys, and mapping most commonly in areas previously disturbed by fire or other activities, and in areas with high resource values where early detection is critical to maintain those values. Spread of existing infestations, treatment effectiveness, and effects on desired community/species will often be monitored simultaneously using stem counts, various estimation techniques, mapping of weed changes over time, and/or calculations using calibrated herbicide application equipment.

## NON-VEGETATION RESOURCES/USES

### Wildlife, Fish, Wildlife Habitat, Special Status and Priority Plant and Animal Species

For the sake of this description of goals, objectives, and management actions, fish and aquatic habitat are considered a subset of wildlife and wildlife habitat.

#### Goals

**Goal WF1** – Manage to provide a variety of well-distributed plant communities to support a diversity of habitats.

**Goal WF2** – Conserve, enhance, restore, or minimize impacts to 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, and foraging areas.

**Goal WF3** – Conserve, enhance, or restore special habitat features or minimize impacts to special habitat features including, but not limited to caves, cliffs, riparian areas, wetlands, snags, and down woody material.

**Goal WF4** – With all management activities or authorizations: conserve, enhance, restore, minimize impacts to, or contribute to the recovery of threatened, endangered, or candidate plant or animal species.

**Goal WF5** – With all management activities or authorizations: conserve or enhance sensitive and priority species and habitats; or minimize adverse effects to habitat of BLM sensitive plant and animal species to prevent the federal listing of these species.

**Goal WF6** – Collaborate and cooperate with non-BLM entities to conserve special status species and habitats.

**Goal WF7** – Protect, maintain, restore, and rehabilitate sagebrush habitat in occupied or historic sage grouse habitat (as mapped by MFWP).

#### Objectives

1. BLM will implement recovery activities for federally listed species by complying with and

adopting current and future recovery plans (such as Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan (USFWS 1993)), Ute's Ladies' Tresses Recovery Plan, Grizzly Bear Management Plan for Southwest Montana (MFWP 2002), Interim Bull Trout Habitat Conservation Plan Strategy, Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Plan (USFWS 1987), Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (see **Appendix C**), National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (USFWS 2007), and the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (MBEWG 1994). (*Goals WF2, WF4, WF5, WF6, SE4*)

2. The BLM will manage habitat for sensitive terrestrial and aquatic species in a manner consistent with current and future restoration, conservation and recovery plans, and conservation agreements (westslope and Yellowstone cutthroat trout, Arctic grayling and prairie dog). Management activities will be designed and implemented consistent with adopted conservation strategies, including Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy (MFWP 2005), and current, accepted science for special status and priority species. (*Goals WF2, WF4, WF5, WF6, SE4*)
3. The BLM will maintain functional blocks of security habitat for big game species across BLM lands. Where minimum-size blocks of security habitat (250 acres), as defined by Hillis et al. (1991), are located, they will be addressed and retained in a suitable condition throughout project planning and implementation. Protection of larger blocks of security habitat will also be addressed during project or watershed level planning. Where security habitat is limited or fragmented across the landscape, the BLM will emphasize improving habitat through vegetation treatments and road closures (including seasonal closures) to increase security habitat for big game species. (*Goals WF1, WF2, SE4*)
4. To minimize disturbance to big game and grizzly bears, there will be no net increase in permanent roads built in areas where open road densities are 1 mi/mi<sup>2</sup> or less in big game winter and calving ranges, and within the current distribution of grizzly bear unless this is not possible due to rights-of-way, leases, or permits. All practicable measures will be taken to assure that important habitats with low road densities remain in that condition. Open road densities in big game winter and calving ranges, and within the current distribution of grizzly bear will be reduced where they currently exceed 1 mi/mi<sup>2</sup>. (*Goals WF2, WF4, WF5, SE4*)
5. The BLM will manage for adequate numbers, species and sizes of snags and levels of downed wood to contribute to the needs of wildlife, invertebrates, fungi, bryophytes, saprophytes, lichens, other organisms, long-term soil

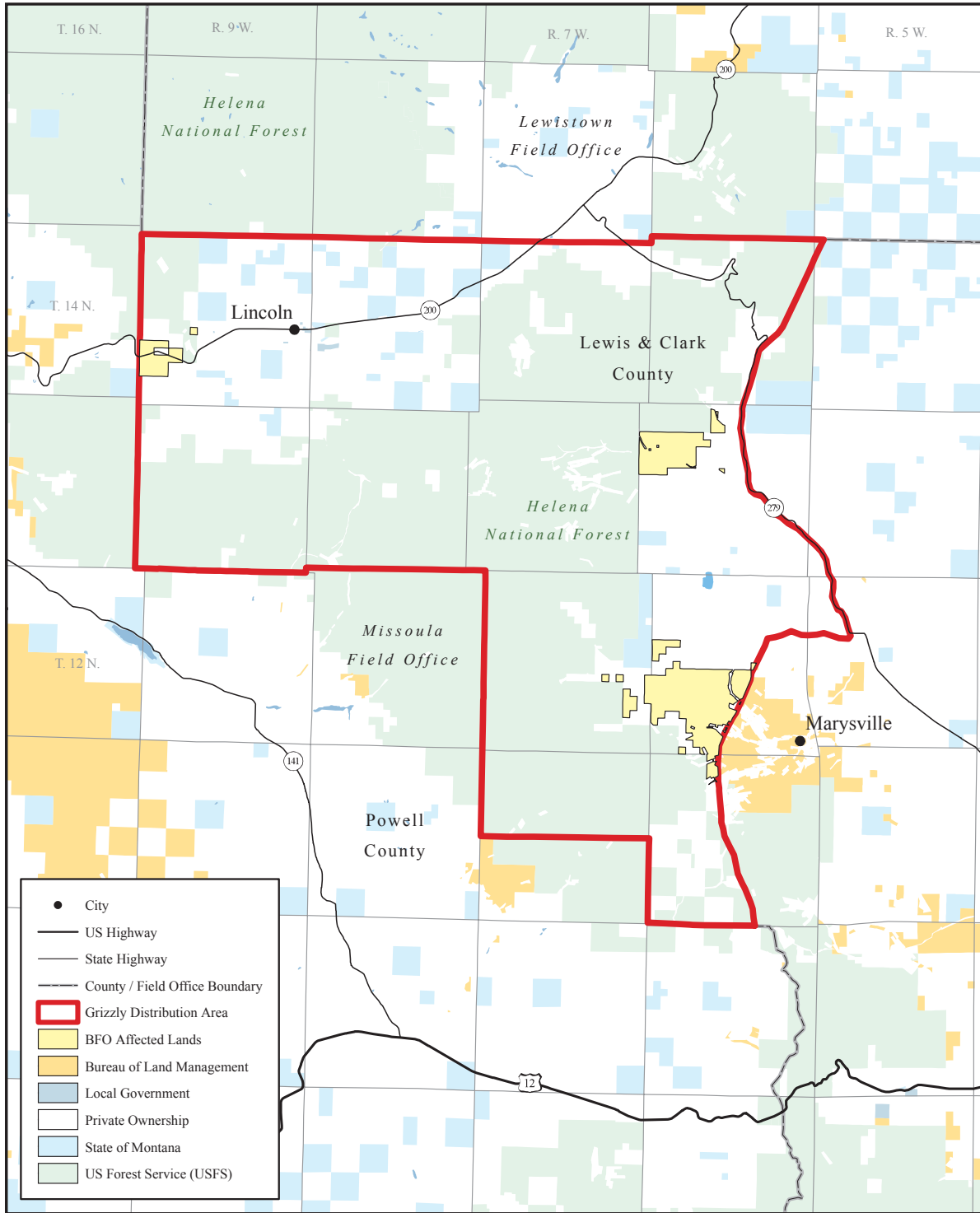
productivity, nutrient cycling, carbon cycles and other ecosystem processes. To determine the "range of natural conditions" for snag densities, the BLM will follow the "Northern Region Snag Management Protocol" (USDA-FS 2000) until more current or site-specific information becomes available. Prescribed fire, mechanical treatments, inoculation, or other appropriate methods will be used to create snags and down woody material, where deficient, in appropriate vegetation types across the landscape. (*Goals WF3, WF4, WF5, SE4*)

### ***Management Actions***

Management actions are organized by sub-categories below.

#### **Special Status/Priority Species and RMP Emphasis**

1. The BLM will emphasize actions that promote conservation of special status wildlife species and the ecosystems on which they depend. BLM will also emphasize maintaining and supporting healthy, productive, and diverse populations and communities of native plants and animals (including big game species such as deer, elk, and bighorn sheep) appropriate to soil, climate, and landform. (*Goals WF1, WF4, WF5, GS1, GS2, FW1, FW4, FW5, FW6, RV1, RM1, SE4*)
2. Consistent with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act (1973) and BLM policy, the BLM will ensure that actions are consistent with the conservation needs of special status species. The BLM will seek opportunities to conserve and improve special status species habitats and habitats for native plants and wildlife in project level planning and in other BLM authorized, funded, or approved activities (BLM Manual 6840 – Special Status Species Management, Endangered Species Act). (*Goals WF4, WF5, WF6, SE4*)
3. For federally listed species (grizzly bear, Canada lynx, gray wolf [if listed]), the BLM will apply the threatened or endangered species screens described in **Appendix C** to assess effects of projects to these species and determine the need for consultation with USFWS under the Endangered Species Act. BLM will comply with the standards and guidelines in the Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (**Appendix C**). (*Goals WF4, SE4*)
4. Within the grizzly bear distribution area of the Northern Continental Divide ecosystem (**Map 3**), the BLM will implement non-discretionary terms and conditions identified in the USFWS biological opinion (BO) for this RMP. These terms and conditions are intended to ensure that actions conducted under the plan do not result in unexpected consequences that affect more grizzly bears than indicated in the incidental take statement in the BO, or result in additional effects to grizzly bears. In order to be exempt from the prohibitions of section 9 of the Endangered Species Act, the BLM will comply with the following terms and conditions:
  - a. The BLM will include a clause in all new and revised grazing permits for allotments within the grizzly bear distribution area, requiring the permittee to notify the BLM as soon as is practical of any grizzly bear depredation on livestock or conflicts between grizzly bears and livestock, even if the conflict does not result in the loss of livestock. The BLM will coordinate with MFWP and USDA APHIS Wildlife Services personnel to determine appropriate action.
  - b. BLM will include a clause in all new and revised grazing permits for the area within the grizzly bear distribution line requiring the permittee to properly treat or dispose of livestock carcasses as deemed necessary on a case-by-case basis by BLM in coordination with USFWS, so as to eliminate any potential attractant for bears. BLM will include guidance to permittees to contact MFWP if they need carcass disposal assistance.
  - c. The BLM will maintain an up-to-date record of the grizzly bear conflicts and management actions that occur on lands managed by the Butte Field Office. "Conflict" is defined by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC 1986) as "a confrontation between man and/or his property and bear(s) in which the safety of man and/or bear(s) is jeopardized and/or property loss occurs." This information will be submitted to the USFWS' Montana Field Office in written form annually by June 1 for the preceding calendar year.
  - d. The BLM will notify the USFWS Montana Field Office if a change in the status of sheep grazing in the field office is being considered and if the change could increase sheep grazing in or adjacent to occupied grizzly bear habitat. Changes that increase sheep grazing include increased sheep AUMs in established allotments or conversion of cattle allotments to sheep.
  - e. The BLM will notify the USFWS Montana Field Office, within 72 hours of discovery of any livestock depredation by grizzly bears, grizzly bear-human conflict resulting from improper storage of food or attractants or the management removal or human-caused death of a grizzly bear. (*Goal WF4*)



- City
- US Highway
- State Highway
- County / Field Office Boundary
- ▭ Grizzly Distribution Area
- ▭ BFO Affected Lands
- ▭ Bureau of Land Management
- ▭ Local Government
- ▭ Private Ownership
- ▭ State of Montana
- ▭ US Forest Service (USFS)

0 10 Miles  
1 inch equals 5 miles

Map generated by the Butte Field Office in January 2009

UTM Zone 12 North (NAD 1983) Projection

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.



**Map 3: BFO Area Affected by Grizzly Bear Terms and Conditions**

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



Butte Field Office  
Approved Resource Management Plan



5. If more than one grizzly bear is incidentally taken as a result of authorizations made under the RMP related to sanitation/food storage and/or livestock grazing during any ten year period, the BLM will reinstate consultation with the USFWS. Additionally, if the level of incidental take associated with the RMP reaches, but does not exceed, the anticipated incidental take level, the BLM will informally consult with the USFWS regarding the adequacy of existing mechanisms to minimize potential take. (*Goal WF4*)
6. BLM will implement the following conservation actions recommended by USFWS as discretionary actions to minimize or avoid adverse effects to the grizzly bear:
  - a. The BLM will participate in ongoing interagency efforts to identify, map and manage linkage habitats essential to grizzly bear movement between ecosystems.
  - b. The BLM will continue to manage roads on BLM lands to achieve lower road densities.
  - c. Where grizzly bear use is known or likely to occur and where practicable, the BLM will delay disturbing activities during the spring in spring habitats to minimize displacement of grizzly bears. (*Goal WF4*)
7. BLM will determine the distribution, abundance, and management needs of special-status plant and animal species and species of local interest occurring on BLM administered lands, and evaluate needed management for the conservation of these species. (*Goals WF4, WF6, SE4*)
8. Field inspections will be conducted to identify special status plant species prior to authorized surface disturbing activities. Waivers for on-the-ground inventory may be granted in areas determined to have low potential based on previous research. (*Goals WF4, WF5, SE4*)
9. Conservation actions, inventories, and monitoring for special status wildlife and aquatic species will be prioritized based on habitats at risk and rarity. (*Goals WF4, WF5, SE4*)
10. BLM will maintain and improve critical or essential habitat to prevent deterioration and provide recovery for federally listed plant species. (*Goals WF4, SE4*)
11. Timing restrictions on some activities may be used in special status species habitat. Human activities that disrupt special status species habitats during their seasons of use, particularly during the breeding and winter seasons will be avoided or minimized. (*Goals WF4, WF5, SE4*)
12. The BLM will maintain, protect, and restore habitat for priority wildlife species. All federally listed and BLM sensitive species and their habitats are considered priority species and habitats. Additional priority wildlife species are based on public interest, density, diversity or population size including big game (such as elk, bighorn sheep, deer, and antelope) and migratory birds listed by USFWS and Level 1 and Level 2 species listed under the Montana Bird Conservation Plan (Partners in Flight 2000). Tier I and Tier II habitat and species from Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy (MFWP 2005) are also considered priority species and habitats. Priority habitats include habitat for all special status species as well as riparian areas, dry savannah forest, special habitats including caves, cliffs, and snags and down woody material, sagebrush, bitterbrush communities and mountain mahogany communities. (*Goals WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, WF6, WF7, GS1, GS2, FW4, RV1, FW6, SE4*)
13. The BLM will emphasize protection and restoration of habitats for native wildlife, plants, and special status species. There will be a focus on biological diversity by restoring vegetation cover types and structural stages that have declined substantially including dry, open forest habitats with low tree densities, meadow habitats, shrub and hardwood dominated riparian systems, as well as open grasslands and shrublands with low tree densities. Vegetation treatments will be designed and implemented to restore wildlife habitat to become more consistent with natural disturbance regimes and with the landform, climate, and biological and physical characteristics of the ecosystem. Management will emphasize moderate to large vegetation patch sizes and distribution to be more consistent with natural disturbance regimes and ecosystem characteristics. (*Goals WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, WF7, GS1, FM2, FW1, FW4, RV1, SE4*)
14. Management techniques, including but not limited to prescribed and managed wildland fire, prescriptive livestock grazing, planting, exclusion to intense disturbance, timber harvest and other mechanical methods will be used to restore, maintain or improve the ecological conditions of vegetation communities for the purpose of improving forage, nesting, breeding, and security habitat, hiding cover and travel corridors for a wide diversity of terrestrial and aquatic species. (*Goals WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, WF7, GS1, FM2, FW1, SE4*)
15. The BLM will maintain suitable habitat conditions and minimize fragmentation in linkage corridors among habitats for priority species. The BLM will emphasize providing habitat of sufficient quantity and quality, including habitat complexity, forest

openings, edges, and ecotones, to enhance biological diversity and provide quality, sustainable habitat for connectivity of native wildlife species in movement corridors. BLM land will be managed to consider the relationship between large special status species populations and smaller isolated populations whenever possible. The intent is to maintain the function and diversity of all habitats in large areas (patches) distributed across the landscape, and minimize long-term human disturbance to wildlife to provide habitat for wildlife movement, dispersal, and home ranges. In the context of wildlife habitat fragmentation, the size of “patches” will be related to the size of the BLM parcel(s) and adjacent federal or state lands. (Goals WF1, WF2, WF4, WF5, WF6, SE4)

16. For habitat enhancement, fire rehabilitation and other restoration projects, a variety of techniques will be considered to protect plantings and seedlings from wildlife and domestic grazing including rest, fencing, netting, and wildlife repellants. (Goals WF1, FW1, FM3)
17. Habitat improvement projects will be implemented where necessary to restore wildlife habitat and/or to improve unsatisfactory or declining wildlife habitat. (Goals WF3, WF4, WF5, WF7, SE4)
18. At the Field Office scale, BLM will enhance and improve big game winter range by protecting and restoring mountain mahogany stands where conifers have become established. Detrimental effects on mountain mahogany stands will be avoided with projects in big game winter range whenever possible. When detrimental effects are unavoidable, loss of mountain mahogany will be minimized. BLM will also proactively restore the distribution and vigor of bitterbrush stands through vegetative treatments designed to reduce competing plants, create a variety of age classes, and create conditions conducive to bitterbrush natural regeneration. (Goals WF1, WF2, GS2, RM1, SE3, SE4)

#### **External Coordination**

19. BLM will coordinate with MFWP to determine whether habitat and other conditions exist that would allow successful reintroduction of locally or regionally absent species, such as westslope cutthroat trout, sage grouse, beaver, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, and prairie dogs. (Goals WF4, WF5, WF6, SE4)
20. BLM will cooperate and collaborate with federal, tribal, and state wildlife management agencies as well as private landowners to improve habitat for wildlife (including game species as per Executive Order 13443) and special status plants. (Goals WF4, WF5, WF6)

21. Where consistent with habitat capabilities and national conservation direction, the BLM will contribute to meeting state wildlife species management objectives for big game, special status, and priority species. (Goals WF4, WF5, RM1)

#### **Planning**

22. Fish and wildlife will continue to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as part of project level planning. Such evaluation will consider the significance of the proposed project and the effects to fish and wildlife habitat. Measures to reduce impacts will be attached as appropriate to assure compatibility of projects with management objectives for fish and wildlife habitat. (Goals WF4, WF5, SE4)
23. During project level planning, key habitat components that will be emphasized include: winter range, seasonal migration corridors, breeding sites, roosting sites, and foraging habitats adjacent to raptor nest sites. Important blocks of hiding, security, and thermal cover for big game will be considered during project planning. (Goals WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, SE4)
24. Existing fences identified as barriers to wildlife movement will be considered for removal or reconstruction to follow BLM fence specifications for wildlife (USDI-BLM 1989) described in the Bureau of Land Management Fencing Manual, (H-1741-1). (Goals WF2, WF4, WF5, SE4)
25. Sage grouse management activities will be designed and implemented to be consistent with adopted conservation strategies such as the Bureau of Land Management National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy (USDI-BLM 2004) and Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage Grouse in Montana – Final (MSGWG 2005) and current, accepted science. (Goals WF6, WF7, GS1, GS2, SE4)
26. To the extent possible, BLM will: maintain large patches of high quality sagebrush in occupied or historic sage grouse habitat (as mapped by MFWP); maintain connections between sagebrush habitats; and enlarge the size of sagebrush patches in occupied or historic sage grouse habitat. (Goals GS2, WF2, WF5, WF6, WF7, SE4)
27. Vegetation altering activities could occur in sage grouse habitat where they do not result in long-term loss of habitats or contribute to the need to federally list sage grouse. Sufficient sagebrush densities and cover will be retained in sage grouse habitat. (Goals WF5, WF7, SE4)

#### **Snags and Down Wood**

28. Within appropriate habitats, snags and down woody material will be managed to be well-distributed across the landscape in sufficient quantity and

- quality to support species dependent upon these habitats. (*Goals WF1, WF3, WF5, FW6, SE4*)
29. At the project level, dead and down woody material will be retained in amounts that are within the range of natural variability for the plant community, to the extent compatible with reforestation objectives, fire hazard reduction standards, and public safety. (*Goals WF3, WF5, SR2, SE4*)
  30. In grasslands and shrublands undergoing vegetation treatments such as the removal of conifer encroachment through mechanical thinning or prescribed burning, all trees and snags with characteristics of old forest structure will be left standing to the extent practicable. (*Goals WF1, WF3, FW6, SE4*)
  31. Management for wildlife values associated with large amounts of down wood and snags will be emphasized less in WUI areas to allow for fuels reduction projects that would reduce the potential for extreme wildland fire. (*Goal FM5*)

### **Seasonal Restrictions**

32. Disturbance of crucial wildlife breeding areas such as known den sites or big game breeding or winter range will be minimized. Actions that cause disturbance will be minimized to reduce negative effects to special status and priority species during seasonally sensitive periods such as the breeding, nesting, winter, and roosting seasons. (*Goals WF4, WF2, WF5, SE4*)
33. As identified through project-level NEPA analyses, seasonal timing restrictions on projects that cause disturbance to wildlife will be applied where needed to minimize the impacts of human activities on important seasonal wildlife habitat. The major types of seasonal wildlife habitat and the time periods in which restrictions may be needed are: big game winter and spring range (12/1 to 5/30), big game calving range/habitat (5/1 to 6/30), mountain goat nursery areas (5/1 to 7/15), mountain goat breeding areas (11/1 to 12/31), mountain goat winter range (10/15 to 5/15), grizzly bear spring and summer range (4/1 to 9/1), and grizzly bear denning habitat (10/1 to 4/30). These dates may be revised when new data become available. (*Goals WF2, WF4, WF5, WR3, SE4*)
34. Noise disturbance and management activities will be avoided or minimized within 0.5 miles of raptor nests during the nesting and brood rearing period. (*Goals WF2, SE4*)

### **Raptors**

35. BLM will close rock climbing on spires with active raptor nests and educate the public about the importance of avoiding such locations to minimize disturbance to raptors. (*Goals WF5, SE4*)
36. Unoccupied raptor nests (on cliffs, rocky outcrops or in trees) will be protected from removal or destruction for 5 years, or the period a known preferred prey species fluctuates from population highs to lows. Nests will not have to be retained if physically damaged past the point of repair by raptors. In forested habitat types, a 0.25 mile buffer of suitable habitat around unoccupied nests will be maintained for 5 years. (*Goals WF5, SE4*)
37. Bald eagle nesting and roosting habitats will be actively protected from loss due to fire, insect, or disease by reducing vegetation competition and encroachment in these habitats. (*Goals WF5, SE4*)

### **Bats**

38. The BLM will emphasize protecting and restoring special habitat components or features that contribute to the productivity of bat species. These features include, but are not limited to, caves, cliffs, riparian areas and wetlands, and snags and down wood. (*Goals WF3, WF5, SE4*)
39. Caves and abandoned mines will be surveyed and assessed for bat use of features. The BLM will determine the need for closures or seasonal closures for activities affecting caves and abandoned mines. Hibernacula closure dates will be approximately October 15 to May 1 and maternity closure dates will be approximately April 15 to September 30. (*Goals WF5, AM3, SE4*)
40. Bat gates or other suitable measures will be used to protect bat habitat when bat use of caves or abandoned mines is determined. Public health and safety will take precedence over protection of bat habitat if hazardous mine openings cannot be remediated with installation of bat gates. Efforts will be made to safely remove resident bats prior to closure. (*Goals WF5, AM3, SE4*)
41. Clearing of vegetation, except noxious weeds, will not be allowed within 250 feet of the entrance of caves and abandoned mines with bat populations, except when needed for public safety. Vegetation could be removed if necessary when installing bat gates, or when it becomes an obstruction to bat movement. (*Goals WF3, WF5, NW1, AM1, SE4*)

### **Recreation**

42. BLM will develop and implement human food storage regulations and guidelines in grizzly bear distribution zones in coordination with MFWP and other agencies. (*Goals WF4, RM1, SE2, SE4*)
43. As per Executive Order 13443, the BLM will facilitate the expansion of hunting opportunities and management of game species and their habitats. (*Goals RM1, SE2*)
44. To prevent spread of non-native, invasive aquatic species, BLM will post educational signage at all

BLM boat ramps on waterborne invasive species. (Goals WF5, WR1, RMI, SE2, SE4).

### **Fish/Aquatics**

45. The BLM will emphasize maintaining diverse, healthy, productive, well-distributed aquatic habitats and communities to increase populations of native fish and other aquatic species. (Goals WF2, WF5, RV1, RV2, WR1, WR4, SE4)
46. The BLM will 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 for populations of aquatic dependent species. (Goals WF2, RV1, RV2, WR1, WR4, SE4)
47. The BLM will restore and/or maintain riparian structure, composition, and processes, including physical integrity of riparian ecosystems; amount and distribution of woody material 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. (Goals WF2, WF3, RV1, WR1, WR4, SE4)
48. BLM will opportunistically enhance or restore habitat for westslope and Yellowstone cutthroat trout and Arctic grayling. The fisheries program will be coordinated with other programs to improve aquatic habitat. (Goals WF5, WF6, RV2, WR1, SE4)
49. The distribution and abundance of native fishes and other aquatic species will be increased through the maintenance or restoration of habitat. (Goals WF5, WR1, WR4, SE4)
50. In select areas identified for native fish restoration, BLM will collaborate with MFWP to remove non-native fish species that out-compete or hybridize with native fish species through the use of electrofishing or other physical or chemical means. Genetically pure and slightly hybridized (less than 20 percent hybridization) westslope cutthroat trout populations will be managed by maintaining or restoring high-quality habitats and by expanding populations. (Goals WF5, WF6, RV2, WR1, SE4)
51. Transportation system effects on fisheries resources will be reduced. To the extent possible, roads will be located, designed and maintained to reduce sedimentation, identify and remove unnatural barriers, eliminate fish passage barriers (when desired), and restore or maintain riparian vegetation. (Goals WF2, WF5, TF1, RV1, RV2, WR1, WR3, WR4, SE4)

52. Watershed restoration projects will be designed to promote the long-term ecological integrity of ecosystems, conserve the genetic integrity of native species, and contribute to meeting riparian standards. (Goals WF5, RV1, RV2, WR1, WR4, SE4)

### ***Monitoring***

#### **Wildlife**

Vegetation transects, photo points, plot surveys as well as other appropriate sampling methods will be used to monitor wildlife habitat, including habitat used by special status and priority species, by determining plant species diversity, abundance, distribution and structure. Monitoring data will be used to assess changes in distribution, canopy, vegetative quality and composition of sagebrush/grasslands, coniferous forests and riparian/wetland habitats. This monitoring will be supplemented with data collected for riparian and wetland monitoring, rangeland health surveys, utilization surveys and timber stand monitoring to determine if goals and objectives are being met.

Before vegetative treatments or habitat restoration activities, vegetation transects, photo points, and/or plots will be established to show the approximate percent of habitat types, structure, and cover. After vegetation treatments have been implemented, or natural events have occurred, changes in species composition and structure will be monitored and compared to pre-treatment conditions. Monitoring will be used to assess the quality and change of habitat types before and after treatments.

The monitoring of unique habitat features (e.g. caves) will be done in accordance with techniques designed for these features such as bat surveys.

The quality and quantity of key habitats such as riparian zones, sagebrush, aspen, bitterbrush and mountain mahogany stands will be assessed and monitored. Monitoring of important habitats may include horizontal and vertical canopy cover, structure, browse condition, diversity of understory species and fragmentation of habitats.

The Butte Field Office will support and assist MFWP in monitoring wildlife habitat and population goals through the Montana Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

Monitoring for special status wildlife species will be designed to assess the distribution, habitat condition, and trend of species populations known or suspected to be limited in distribution, uncommon within a specific area, or potentially vulnerable to certain activities occurring on public land. Monitoring for special status wildlife species may include visual surveys, transects, remote camera surveys, tracking surveys and radio telemetry tracking. Monitoring will be designed to aid in assessing

the effects of management activities on special status species as well as to provide data that will be used in species status reviews.

Monitoring of known populations of special status species (bald eagle, peregrine falcon, sage grouse, pygmy rabbit, and raptors, etc.), in conjunction with federal, state and private agencies or organizations will continue. Monitoring may include the use of research projects or periodic population/habitat inventories to determine habitat extent or population status. This monitoring may be accomplished through contracts and/or through partnerships.

As stated in “*The Effects of the Butte BLM Land Management Plan on Grizzly Bears Biological Opinion*”, any conflicts between grizzly bear and humans will be tracked and reported to the USFWS by June 1 for the preceding calendar year. “Conflict” is defined by the IGBC (1986) as “a confrontation between man and/or his property and bear(s) in which the safety of man and/or bear(s) is jeopardized and/or property loss occurs.”

Management and monitoring of wildlife populations and distribution is under the jurisdiction of MFWP. The Butte Field Office will continue to coordinate and cooperate with MFWP with monitoring wildlife on public lands.

### **Special Status Plant Species**

Special status plant species monitoring is designed to assess the distribution, resource condition, and trend of species populations known or suspected to be limited in distribution, uncommon within a specific area, or potentially vulnerable to certain activities occurring on public land. Monitoring will be conducted in key areas and will be designed to best reflect the attribute that identified the species for a special status species category.

Monitoring for special status plant species will show the effect of management and activities on populations of special status species plants and their habitats. Monitoring will provide data necessary for making determinations as to whether these plants should be listed as threatened or endangered, require further observation, or should be removed from consideration as a special status species. Monitoring of those species populations that have not been listed as threatened or endangered will be utilized to gain management information for conservation or recovery of those populations occurring in the Planning Area.

Surveys will be conducted to determine the distribution, resource conditions, and trends of special status plant species and representative habitats. Monitoring methods will include establishing photo points and doing periodic ocular surveillance. Trends in special status plants and vegetation will be determined through such methods as demographic studies, density, cover, and frequency

assessments (inside enclosures versus open areas). Methods to accomplish this could include establishing new rare plant enclosures to determine effects of livestock grazing use versus non-use, developing conservation agreements/conservation strategies, and conducting vegetative attribute sampling at appropriate intervals in accordance with BLM Technical Reference 1730-1.

### **Fish**

Methods such as greenline surveys, cover board studies, photo points, aquatic macroinvertebrate sampling, instream and fish habitat assessments, channel cross sections, bank stability and pebble counts will be used on westslope cutthroat trout and other fish bearing streams to track changes in streamside vegetation composition and to track changes to instream habitat structure and quality. This monitoring will be supplemented with data collected for riparian and wetland monitoring and water quality sampling to determine if goals and objectives are being met.

Instream restoration projects will be monitored using habitat assessment surveys, channel cross sections, pebble counts and macroinvertebrate sampling to determine the effectiveness of projects and to track changes in aquatic habitat quality and quantity.

BLM will continue to cooperate with MFWP and the Forest Service to sample and inventory those streams with native fish populations under BLM administration, and to monitor fish populations and distribution.

Streams monitored for native fish species will be tracked, as will the number of habitat restoration or improvement projects initiated and completed.

### **Travel Management and Access**

Travel management and access is addressed at two levels. Management is described at the Field Office level as part of the RMP decisions. In addition, there are five Travel Planning Areas (TPAs) for which site-specific management by individual travel routes are described under the subheading “Implementation Decisions”.

The vision for travel management is to follow the regulations at 43 CFR 8342 to provide a range of high quality, safe, non-conflicting, motorized and non-motorized opportunities; and to provide reasonable access for management while protecting natural resources, now and in the future.

#### **Goal**

**Goal TM1** – Provide a balanced approach to travel management that provides a sustained flow of local economic benefits, minimizes user conflicts, safety concerns, and resource impacts while taking into consideration the unique attributes and values of the various Travel Planning Areas.

**Objective (Goal TM1)**

In the context of route-specific travel planning within individual TPAs, BLM’s objective is to use a systematic process that considers the unique natural resource and resource use issues and social environments of each TPA. Specific attributes analyzed will be based on written criteria developed from public and interdisciplinary team input. Travel planning for areas or sub-areas not analyzed for route-specific management during the course of the RMP revision (due to complexity, controversy, lack of data, or time constraints) will be initiated as soon as possible upon completion of this RMP revision. Pending future completion of travel planning in these areas, the BLM will, to the extent possible, provide preliminary maps and interim travel management guidelines.

**Management Actions**

**Allowable Uses (Goals TM1, RM1, SE2)**

Areas within the Decision Area are categorized as “Open”, “Closed”, and “Limited.” An “Open” area is where all types of vehicle use are permitted at all times, anywhere in the area. A “Closed” designation means all motorized use is prohibited. In accordance with the 2003 Statewide OHV ROD (USDI-BLM 2003a), under the “Limited” designation, all cross-country motorized, wheeled travel (including big game retrieval) is prohibited unless otherwise managed. In the absence of other existing travel plan direction, all motorized wheeled travel is restricted to existing roads and trails. However, the OHV ROD provides several exceptions to this rule (refer to OHV ROD, pages 4-5) which are adopted in this Approved RMP. Examples include:

- Any military, fire, search and rescue, or law enforcement vehicle for emergency operations;
- Official BLM administrative business (prescribed fire, noxious weed control, range management, etc.);
- Other government agency business (surveying, animal damage control, etc.);
- Administration of a federal lease or permit (e.g., livestock permittee maintaining fence, delivering salt, etc.); and,
- For dispersed camping within 300 feet of an existing open road. Site selection must be completed by non-motorized means, and accessed by the most direct route causing the least damage.

A full range of management options will be used for routes with limited designations. Site-specific route management options include: travel limited to designated routes, types or modes of travel such as foot, equestrian, bicycle, motorized; limited to time or season of use; limited to certain types of vehicles (motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, high clearance, full-size street-legal, etc.); limited to permitted vehicles or users; limited to

BLM administrative use only; and other types of limitations as needed. Some pre-existing routes may be closed or decommissioned based on route-by-route travel planning evaluations. Earthen berms, fallen trees, or other techniques will be used to block off closed and decommissioned routes. Some decommissioned routes will be closed and rehabilitated to blend with the natural surroundings. All techniques used to decommission roads will eliminate resource impacts.

Area designations Field Office-wide are shown for wheeled vehicles and snowmobile use in **Table 10**.

Designations	Acres <sup>1</sup>
<b>Wheeled Vehicles</b>	
Open	283
Closed	31,500
Limited	275,526
<b>Snowmobiles</b>	
Open	112,682
Closed	54,706
Limited	139,921
<sup>1</sup> Acres are approximate.	

BLM will maintain current management of TPAs with pre-existing travel plans and area designations, with the following three exceptions, and one qualification. The exceptions are:

1. The small, scattered open areas located within the Elkhorn Mountains are converted from open to limited. Existing routes located within the converted areas remain open to the public;
2. A small (less than one acre) “warm up” area located in the Whitetail-Pipestone Travel Planning Area is converted from open to limited; and,
3. Approximately one half of the 632-acre Radersburg open OHV use area is converted from open to limited.

Regarding the qualification, the motorcycle hill climb located in the Whitetail-Pipestone Travel Planning Area will continue to be managed as open, unless resource problems warrant a change in designation at a later time. In addition, the recently acquired Iron Mask property will be managed under the limited area designation. Site-specific travel management planning for Iron Mask will be conducted subsequent to the limited area designation, and will require an amendment to the Elkhorns Travel Plan.

Travel Planning Areas that have pre-existing travel plans are:

1. Elkhorn Mountains – “limited” area designation – (with the exception of an approximately 632 acre “open” OHV use area near Radersburg);
2. Clancy-Unionville – “limited” area designation;
3. Whitetail-Pipestone – “limited” area designation – (with the exception of an approximately 5 acre “open” motorized motorcycle hill climb area); and,
4. Sleeping Giant – “limited” area designation.

Additional travel planning has previously been completed for several smaller “sub-planning” areas: Confederate Gulch, Sawlog Creek, the Great Divide Ski area, and Nez Perce Ridge Road. No additional site-specific route management changes are being made for the Confederate Gulch, Great Divide Ski Area, and Nez Perce Road areas. Site-specific route management changes are being made with this planning effort for the Sawlog Creek area.

Several “temporary area closures” in effect prior to this RMP revision are being given a permanent “limited” area designation. These areas include the North Hills, Sawmill Gulch, Ward Ranch, the McMasters Hills, Spokane Hills, and Iron Mask. Site-specific route management changes are being made with this planning effort for the North Hills, Ward Ranch, McMasters, and Spokane Hills areas. (See the Implementation Decisions section and associated maps). No site-specific route management changes are being made for the Sawmill Gulch area.

BLM will use a range of route management options, including Open Yearlong, Open with Restrictions, Closed Yearlong, and Decommissioned to manage the road network Field Office-wide as shown in **Table 11** and described below. (Note: Field Office-wide total number of road miles and the breakdown by route management category will shift in the future as additional site-specific travel planning is conducted).

- Open Yearlong - open year-round to public and administrative uses.
- Open with Restrictions - open to public and administrative uses with seasonal and/or vehicle type limitations.
- Routes designated for Game Retrieval will be managed to allow retrieval during big game hunting seasons, between the hours of 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM. Under this management, hunters who have tagged an animal will be allowed to use a motorized vehicle to assist in the retrieval. Motorized use is restricted to the designated Game Retrieval route **only**; no motorized off-road or off-trail use is allowed during the retrieval effort. Animals will

<b>Route Management Category</b>	<b>Route Miles</b>
Administrative Access Only	0.8
Open Yearlong	263.0
Open/Restricted as Follows:	
Closed 2/14 to 4/16	3.3
Closed 9/1 to 12/1	0
Closed 10/2 to 5/15	0.7
Closed 10/15 to 12/1	2.1
Closed 10/15 to 5/15	19.1
Closed 12/2 to 4/15	2.2
Closed 12/2 to 5/15	117.9
Closed 12/2 to 6/15	5.8
Closed 12/2 to 7/15	0.8
Closed 12/2 to 10/5	1.9
Sub-Total Road Miles Open to Public	416.8
Closed Yearlong	317.7
Decommission	52.6
Snowmobile Only	4.3
Trails	14.5
Game Retrieval Only	18.9
Designated Motorcycle-Only Trails	6.1
OHV Only (ATVs and motorcycles)	23.1
OHV Only Closed 10/15 to 12/1	1.8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>856.4</b>

<sup>1</sup>Mileages in table are based on available data “frozen” for the RMP in 2005. Some slight inaccuracies exist related to previous decisions made for pre-existing travel plans. For example, as the implementation of recent travel plans has progressed, an additional 8.8 miles of “OHV Only” trail from that reported in this table have been constructed in the Clancy area as per the travel plan decision there. As a result, a total of 31.9 miles of “OHV Only” trail is available in the decision area, instead of the 23.1 miles reported in the table.

- need to be dragged, or otherwise moved by non-motorized means to the Game Retrieval route.
- Closed Yearlong - closed to motorized public access and subject to administrative or permitted uses based on case-specific exceptions (such as for mining claimants with existing claims accessed by existing routes). Routes identified as closed will have a route bed left intact in case they are needed for valid existing rights only, or in the extended future for administrative purposes. Closed routes will be open to non-motorized use.
- Decommissioned - route is closed and rehabilitated to eliminate resource impacts (for example, to eliminate erosion or to restore a riparian area if route is located within a riparian area) and is no longer useable for public or administrative uses.

## Actions

1. The BLM will continue to apply regulations at 43CFR 8340 through 43CFR 8342.3 to identify route-specific management where activity plan level decisions are made for specific travel routes. (*Goals TMI, WF2, RM1, RM4, SR1, WR1, WR3, SE2, SE4*)
2. In accordance with the 2003 Statewide OHV ROD and plan amendment, nine additional areas, all with "limited" area designations have been identified that need site-specific travel planning. The nine areas are:
  - Helena (focus area – Scratchgravel Hills). High Priority;
  - East Helena (focus area – North Hills). High Priority;
  - Lewis and Clark Country Northwest (focus area – Marysville). High Priority;
  - Boulder/Jefferson City. High Priority;
  - Upper Big Hole River. High Priority;
  - Missouri River Foothills. Moderate Priority;
  - Jefferson County Southeast. Moderate Priority;
  - Broadwater County South. Moderate Priority; and,
  - Park/Gallatin. Moderate Priority. (*Goal TMI*)
3. The five high priority travel planning areas (TPAs) are addressed in the Implementation Decisions section below. Travel planning for the four moderate priority areas will be initiated by the BLM in as timely a manner as possible pending the availability of funding and workforce (*Goal TMI*)
4. For those TPAs for which travel planning has not yet been undertaken, comprehensive travel route inventories will be conducted prior to initiation of the travel planning process. However, user-made routes determined to have been created since the 2003 Statewide OHV ROD and plan amendment will not be brought forward for analysis and therefore will not be considered as part of the road network. (*Goal TMI*)
5. During travel planning, existing routes will be evaluated for adequacy, relevance, and impacts to resources and resource uses. A range of travel management opportunities that provide a balanced approach among motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized use will be developed. (*Goals TMI, WF2, RM1, RM4, SR1, WR1, WR3, SE2, SE4*)
6. All designated routes will be mapped and signed as Open, or Open with Restrictions (seasonal use restriction, vehicle type use restriction, etc.), instead of taking the opposite approach and signing all closed routes as Closed. In other words, unless a route is specifically signed as Open (or Open with Restrictions), it is closed to motorized use, regardless of whether or not a route Closure sign is in place. This "Closed unless signed as Open" approach places a higher level of burden on the user to be cognizant of where, when, and how they are allowed to travel on public lands. It also eliminates a common act of vandalism - removing route closure signs in order to establish de facto "open" routes. Even so, BLM may still elect to use occasional route Closure signs as needed in areas experiencing compliance problems. Designated routes will be identified and signed using a combination of portal signs, bulletin boards (posted travel plan maps), and designated route "arrow" symbols. (*Goals TMI, TF1*)
7. BLM will continue to participate with the Southwest Montana Interagency Travel Management Committee, maintaining map and sign consistency, and seasonal restrictions. (*Goals TMI, RM1*)
8. BLM will continue to partner with the State Trails Program, seeking opportunities to improve existing as well as future trails and facilities. (*Goals TMI, TF1, RM1, SE2*)
9. BLM roads within the travel area will continue to be available for a multitude of motorized vehicle travel (2-wheel, 4-wheel, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, and snowmobiles), provided safety concerns remain minimal. Should traffic volumes or user conflicts become prevalent and warrant restrictions, then priority will be given to vehicles legally registered to travel on public highways. (*Goals TMI, TF1, RM1, SE2*)
10. In accordance with interagency trail width guidelines, all BLM Designated OHV trails, bridges, and cattleguards will be designed to accommodate OHV vehicles 50 inches in width or less. Vehicles wider than 50 inches will be unable to navigate BLM trails; and by default, will be in violation of the off road travel rule. (*Goals TMI, TF1*)
11. Temporary routes could be constructed where needed and where other routes are not available under approved travel management plans. Construction of such routes will be to minimal standards, adhering to **BMPs (Appendix B)**. Temporary routes are not intended to be part of the permanent or designated transportation network system and must be reclaimed when their intended purpose has been fulfilled. Complete reclamation of all temporary routes may not be desired or necessary in all situations. However, unless they are specifically intended for public use, they will not be made available for that use. (*Goals TMI, WF2, SR1, WR1, WR3, SE4*)



12. Short, site-specific sections of road/trail re-alignment or reconstruction will continue to be implemented as needed to minimize resource damage and/or provide minor reroutes around private property. (*Goals TM1, TF1, SRI, WR1, WR3, SE2, SE4*)
13. Opportunities will be sought to disperse or distribute users to help provide a quality recreational experience. (*Goals TM1, TF1, RMI, SE2*)
14. Loop-road connections will be established, where appropriate, to enhance public access and enjoyment. (*Goals TM1, TF1, RMI, SE2*)
15. Variances to travel plan designations may be issued on a case-by-case basis to conduct essential agency administrative actions and site-specific approved uses such as casual use mineral exploration. (Refer to **Appendix D** for details). (*Goals TM1, EMI, EM2, SE1, SE2*)
16. Organized competitive and non-competitive motorized events will be considered and evaluated on a case-by-case basis for the Pipestone area only (existing management). Non-competitive motorized events will not be allowed outside Pipestone. However, competitive motorized events (timed/speed based) proposed on BLM lands outside Pipestone will be considered, but only if held in conjunction with use of adjacent lands (public or private). (*Goals TM1, RMI, RM3, SE2*)
17. BLM will cooperate with the MFWP to adjust seasonal travel restrictions in accordance with big game hunting season extensions. (*Goals TM1, RMI, RM4, SE2*)
18. BLM will provide for interagency travel management consistency and route connectivity with adjoining public lands. (*Goals TM1, RMI, SE2*)
19. Throughout the course of implementing the RMP, site-specific route management decisions may need to be re-evaluated and adjusted by BLM in order to accommodate interagency (Forest Service) connectivity. Proposed changes will be addressed on a case-by-case basis by an interdisciplinary team. (*Goal TM1*)
20. BLM will actively seek agency and public easement agreements in order to maintain current access for popularly traveled routes, and seek additional site-specific opportunities as needed to gain agency and public access to BLM lands. (*Goals TM1, SE2*)
21. Where private landowners have demonstrated willingness to provide public access across their lands, BLM will manage for public access from BLM lands across such private lands in travel plans. Exceptions include routes that BLM has proposed as closed, or are known to be posted or otherwise closed to the public by private property owners. The BLM has no control over private roads traveling through private land onto BLM lands. Access across private land is subject to change. Where public motorized access is contingent upon the governing consent of adjoining landowner(s), BLM will exercise a reciprocal "All or None" road use policy. This means that as long as the public is allowed access to these roads, no changes in travel management will occur. However, should the adjacent landowner refuse public access, then BLM will reciprocate by closing its roads to their use as well. (*Goal TM1*)
22. Roads and trails closed yearlong that are not needed for specific authorized uses (fire prevention/suppression, mining claims, access to private lands, non-motorized travel, etc.) will be rehabilitated to blend into the surrounding area. Roads subject to special uses under authorized exceptions will be stabilized to prevent unnecessary and undue soil erosion and water quality degradation. A priority list for work will be developed after each travel plan is completed. (*Goals TM1, NW1, WF2, SRI, WR1, WR3, SE4*)
23. BLM will replace barbed wire gates (and similar closures) with cattle guards and/or easily operated metal gates wherever problems are known to occur. (*Goals TM1, LG1, TF1*)
24. The BLM will emphasize management of the transportation system to reduce impacts to natural resources from authorized roads and trails. The BLM will 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. (*Goals TM1, NW1, WF1, SRI, WR1, WR3, SE4*)
25. Travel route densities will conform to the management prescriptions in the wildlife section in the RMP. (*Goals TM1, WF2, WF4, WF5, SE4*)
26. BLM will minimize establishing travel routes in areas identified as being at risk for noxious weed infestations. (*Goals TM1, NW1, WF1*)
27. In areas with sensitive soils, BLM will minimize establishing new routes and will consider closure, restriction (season or type of use), mitigation (relocation, reconstruction, etc.), or administrative management of existing travel routes. (*Goals TM1, SRI, SR2*)
28. As roads and trails identified for decommissioning in site-specific travel plans are prioritized, site inventories will be conducted on cultural resources. To provide protection for known cultural resources

and those yet to be discovered, sites will be evaluated to determine eligibility for National Register of Historic Places. Ineligible heritage sites will be preserved in place if possible. If adverse effects threaten a site (on roads proposed for closure or open roads), one or more mitigation measures will be employed to lessen or avoid those effects. These may include:

- Abandon the project.
- Redesign the project to avoid adverse effect with protective measures such as signing, fencing, reroute, or closure of road/trail.
- Data recovery and analysis that could require temporary closure of the area.
- Avoidance by re-routing. (*Goals TMI, CPI, CP2*)

29. Snowmobile use will be subject to restrictions outlined 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. (*Goals TMI, GSI, WFI, RMI, SE2, SE4*)

30. With some exceptions (pending site-specific travel plan NEPA analyses and decisions), cross-country snowmobile use will be allowed, as well as travel on all existing routes during the season of use (December 2 – May 15), snow conditions permitting. (*Goals TMI, RMI, SE2*)

### Implementation Decisions

Nested within the Field Office-wide alternatives for travel planning, there are five Travel Planning Areas (TPAs) for which site-specific travel plan decisions are being made with this document. These areas include: Helena TPA, East Helena TPA, Lewis and Clark County NW TPA, Boulder/Jefferson City TPA, and Upper Big Hole River TPA.

To address route designation criteria outlined under 43 CFR 8342.1, the BLM used the interdisciplinary team process described in **Appendix D** to evaluate roads in each TPA with regards to their relative degrees of human uses and resource impacts. BLM specialist input from this process was used in concert with public input and working group recommendations to reach travel route decisions.

### Working Group Recommendations

In an effort to help BLM develop site-specific travel management alternatives agreeable to the public as well

as the agency, *community based collaborative working groups* were initiated. Two working groups representing a wide, balanced range of public land users were recruited and managed under the direct supervision and guidance of the Lewis and Clark County Board of Commissioners. One of the groups was assigned to assist with travel planning for the Helena (Scratchgravel Hills) and East Helena (North Hills) TPAs, and the other for the Lewis and Clark County NW (Marysville) TPA. Membership criteria included: Montana residency, familiarity with the Travel Planning Area(s), and a willingness to work collaboratively with people of differing viewpoints. Members were selected from three different interest categories (in accordance with the Western Montana Resource Advisory Council criteria) in order to provide for balanced representation. Refer to **Appendix D** for further details on membership selection, and the working group process.

Each group held a series of five or six meetings. The meetings were attended by BLM representatives available to answer questions, provide information and feedback from the BLM's interdisciplinary team, and provide written materials and maps as needed. Group recommendations for route-specific management were based on consensus. In the end, the working groups arrived at complete consensus for the Marysville (subset of Lewis and Clark County NW TPA) and North Hills (subset of East Helena TPA) areas, but only partial consensus for the Scratchgravel Hills (subset of Helena TPA) area. BLM incorporated working group recommendations into decisions for all three TPAs as much as possible, but also considered additional public comments.

The following discussion describes site-specific travel plan decisions by TPA.

### Helena Travel Planning Area

**Map 4** shows travel route decisions for the entire Helena TPA.

Cross-country snowmobile use will be allowed, as well as snowmobile travel on all existing routes during the season of use (December 2 – May 15), snow conditions permitting.

Travel planning for the Helena TPA focused on the Scratchgravel Hills area. BLM received numerous verbal, as well as written comments during two public scoping meetings for the Scratchgravel Hills area. Many of the comments concerned conflicts between motorized and non-motorized use. Due to the high degree of user conflicts and illegal activity taking place, all interior roads in the Scratchgravel Hills will be closed to public wheeled motorized travel yearlong at the five proposed trailheads, with the exception of a few perimeter right-of-way routes and routes to private residences (**Table 12, Map 4**). The BLM believes that this revised management will reduce problems with dumping and illegal activities after dark, and will be more manageable

Area available for wheeled, motorized use (in Acres)		
	Open	0
	Closed	0
	Limited	10,164
Miles of wheeled motorized route:		
	Open Yearlong	9.8
	Seasonally Restricted	0
	Closed Yearlong	36.0
	Decommissioned	6.5
Area availability for snowmobile use (in Acres)		
	Open	10,164
	Closed	0
	Limited	0
Miles of motorized routes available for snowmobile travel		52.2
Miles of motorized routes available for snowmobile travel only		0
Miles of routes available for big game retrieval		0
Miles of routes available for disabled hunter access		0
Miles of non-motorized trails available <sup>1</sup>		38.6
<sup>1</sup> includes all existing trails, as well as closed and decommissioned roads.		

and enforceable than the nighttime closure previously considered for this area.

**East Helena TPA**

**Maps 5a-5d** show travel route decisions for the entire East Helena TPA. Four sub-areas for the East Helena TPA are represented on the maps as follows: **Map 5a** - North Hills Area; **Map 5b** – Ward Ranch Area; **Map 5c** – Spokane Hills Area; and **Map 5d** – Townsend Area.

Decisions for the East Helena TPA represent a combined (merged) effort between the BLM and the community-based collaborative working group for the North Hills sub-area. (**Table 13, Map 5a**). Route 516 will be open yearlong, providing primary access to a non-motorized trailhead at the junction with Route 517. The remaining road network will be seasonally restricted from February 14 to April 16 to prevent soil erosion. An additional non-motorized trailhead will be established at the end of Route 50108. The existing interagency block management hunting area will be brought forward.

With a few minor changes, management of motorized use for the Ward Ranch, McMasters Hills (**Map 5b**), and Spokane Hills (**Map 5c**) areas will continue as it was prior to this planning effort.

Area available for wheeled, motorized use (in acres)		
	Open	0
	Closed	0
	Limited	20,266
Miles of wheeled motorized route:		
	Open Yearlong	13.7
	Seasonally Restricted -	
	Closed 10/15 to 12/1	0
	Closed 9/1 to 12/1	0
	Closed 2/14 to 4/16	3.3
	Closed Yearlong	41.9
	Decommissioned	4.7
Area availability for snowmobile use (in acres)		
	Open	6,362
	Closed	13,904
	Limited	0
Miles of motorized routes available to snowmobile travel (in “Limited” areas during season of use, 12/2 to 5/15)		21.5
Miles of motorized routes available for snowmobile travel only		0
Miles of routes available for big game retrieval		7.0
Miles of routes available for disabled hunter access		7.0
Miles of non-motorized trails available <sup>1</sup>		47.1
<sup>1</sup> includes all existing trails, as well as closed and decommissioned roads		

Minor changes for the Ward Ranch area include: routes 050134 and 050137 will be open yearlong to the public up to the private property boundaries.

The Ward Ranch Trailhead will be brought forward as managed currently: with no motorized use allowed beyond the current trailhead location. For the McMasters Hills area, motorized access will continue to be restricted to three established, non-motorized trailheads, per the existing temporary closure. Motorized access for the area located on the west side of Prickly Pear Creek (south of Black Sandy) will be restricted to several, primary residential access routes and two recreation use access routes (EH025, EH034). Motorized access to the “Big Bend” area (located northwest of Devils Elbow) will be restricted to route EH037. A non-motorized trailhead will be constructed on the ridgetop, near the end of EH037 (**Map 5b**).

With the exception of two changes, management for the Spokane Hills area (**Map 5c**) will continue as it was prior to this planning effort. Motorized access will be

restricted to a non-motorized trailhead at the end of route EH087A. The two changes are as follows:

- The southern portion of Spokane Hills will be available for motorized access during the big game hunting season for persons with disabilities. During a two week period, a limited number of hunters possessing a valid Montana State Disabled Conservation License or Permit to Hunt from a Vehicle may be allowed to access the southern Spokane Hills area using identified routes. This access program will be managed through a permit system. The permit requirements or restrictions will be coordinated with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to ensure hunter safety and a quality hunting experience.
- Outside the special hunt period, the general public will be allowed to use these same identified routes for game retrieval from 11:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M during big game hunting seasons. One route will be available for public access in the Townsend area.

Snowmobile management will be as follows: cross-country travel will be allowed, as well as travel on all existing routes (during the season of use 12/2 – 5/15, snow conditions permitting), for the Townsend area, North Hills, Dana’s Bar, and the area located to the west of Prickly Pear Creek. The remaining areas (e.g., McMaster Hills, Ward Ranch, and Spokane Hills, etc.) will be closed to all cross-country travel, including travel on existing roads and trails. See **Maps 5a-d**.

**Lewis and Clark County NW TPA**

**Maps 6a and 6b** show travel route decisions for the entire Lewis and Clark County NW TPA. Two sub-areas for the Lewis and Clark County NW TPA are represented on the maps as follows: **Map 6a** – Marysville Area; and **Map 6b** – Lincoln/Sieben Ranch Area.

Decisions for the Marysville Area represent a combined effort between the BLM and the community-based collaborative working group. With the exception of a portion of the northwest corner of the Marysville area, all major motorized access routes will remain available for motorized use (**Table 14, Map 6a**). The routes within the upper northwest portion will be closed to help provide big game security and for protection of threatened and endangered species (grizzly bear, Canada lynx).

Cross-country snowmobile travel will be allowed throughout the entire travel planning area, with two exceptions: within the Great Divide Ski area (existing

Area available for wheeled, motorized use (in Acres)	Open	0
	Closed	0
	Limited	16,997
Miles of wheeled motorized route:		
	Open Yearlong	13.8
	Seasonally Restricted (Closed 12/2 to 5/15)	14.3
	Closed Yearlong	26.8
	Decommissioned	10.9
Area availability for snowmobile use (in Acres)	Open	12,649
	Closed	888
	Limited	3,463
Miles of motorized routes available to snowmobile travel		49
Miles of motorized routes available for snowmobile travel only		1.8
Miles of routes available for big game retrieval		0
Miles of routes available for disabled hunter access		0
Miles of non-motorized trails available <sup>1</sup>		37.7
<sup>1</sup> includes all existing trails, as well as closed and decommissioned roads		

management will continue), and the area identified in the northwest portion of the TPA. Snowmobile use in these areas will be restricted to designated routes only during the season of use (12/2 – 5/15), snow conditions permitting.

The majority of routes in the Lincoln/Sieben Ranch area will remain available for public access, while most of the routes located in the Stemple Pass and Lincoln areas (**Map 6b**) will be closed due to lack of public access and resource impact issues.

**Boulder/Jefferson City Travel Planning Area**

**Map 7** shows travel route decisions for the entire Boulder/Jefferson City TPA. Most major motorized access routes will remain available to the public (**Table 15, Map 7**). Area-wide cross-country snowmobile use will continue to be allowed, and snowmobile travel on all existing routes during the season of use (12/2 – 5/15) will still be allowed, snow conditions permitting.

Area available for wheeled, motorized use (in Acres)	
Open	0
Closed	0
Limited	14,487
Miles of wheeled motorized route:	
Open Yearlong	3.7
Seasonally Restricted (Closed 12/2 to 5/15)	25.1
Closed Yearlong	29.0
Decommissioned	2.7
Area availability for snowmobile use (in Acres)	
Open	14,487
Closed	0
Limited	0
Miles of motorized routes available to snowmobile travel	60.5
Miles of motorized routes available for snowmobile travel only	0
Miles of routes available for big game retrieval	0
Miles of routes available for disabled hunter access	0
Miles of non-motorized trails available <sup>1</sup>	33.2
<sup>1</sup> includes all existing trails, as well as closed and decommissioned roads	

**Upper Big Hole River Travel Planning Area**

**Maps 8a-8c** show travel route decisions for the entire Upper Big Hole River TPA. Three sub-areas are represented on the maps as follows: **Map 8a** – Humbug Spires Area; **Map 8b** – Jimmie New Area; **Map 8c** – Fishtrap Area.

Existing management under the Southwest Interagency travel plan will remain in effect in some sub-areas of the Upper Big Hole TPA, but would change in other areas. Several sub-areas of the Southwest Interagency travel plan, originally designated in 1993 as open to wheeled cross country (off road) travel, have been converted to a limited designation in accordance with the 2003 Statewide OHV ROD. Some existing routes within these converted limited areas will be managed as open yearlong to wheeled vehicles while others will be changed from open yearlong, to seasonally restricted (as needed) in order to maintain consistency with the Southwest Interagency travel plan (see **Table 16, Maps 8a-8c**).

Major motorized access routes located between Humbug Spires and Camp Creek will remain available to the public. Some existing seasonal use restrictions will be changed to enhance high elevation hunting opportunities

Area available for wheeled, motorized use (in acres)	
Open	0
Closed	0
Limited	63,249
Miles of wheeled motorized route:	
Open Yearlong	37.1
<u>Seasonally Restricted (Total)</u>	59.4
Closed 10/15 to 12/1	0.2
Closed 10/15 to 5/15	14.5
Closed 12/2 to 4/15	2.2
Closed 12/2 to 5/15	39.0
Closed 12/2 to 6/15	0.9
Closed 12/2 to 7/15	0.8
Closed	47.8
Decommissioned	28.2
OHV Only – Open Yearlong	1.5
OHV Only Closed 10/15 to 12/1	0.3
Area availability for snowmobile use (in acres)	
Open	13,243
Closed	46,932
Limited	3,032
Miles of motorized routes available to snowmobile travel	53
Miles of motorized routes available for snowmobile travel only	2.5
Miles of routes available for big game retrieval	1.1
Miles of routes available for disabled hunter access	0
Miles of non-motorized trails available <sup>1</sup>	83.5
<sup>1</sup> includes all existing trails, as well as closed and decommissioned roads	

(refer to routes BH200, 010113, 0115, and BH150, (**Map 8a**).

Most major motorized access routes located in the Jimmie New Creek area will remain available to the public. Existing management for the Nez Perce Ridge Road and the Sawmill Gulch area will remain in effect. Changes from the current condition include a moderate reduction in road density for the area located north of Highway 43, bounded by the Johnson and Jerry Creek access routes. The reduction in road density will help provide big game security as well as enhanced opportunities for non-motorized recreation (**Map 8b**).

For the Fishtrap Creek area, the most notable change concerns Sawlog Creek, a popular big game hunting area located approximately 2 miles southwest of the Fishtrap fishing access site on the south side of the Big Hole River. Prior to this planning effort, yearlong motorized access has been allowed (fording the river). Under this decision, motorized wheeled vehicle access will be seasonally restricted (closed 12/2 to 7/15). (See Route 189009B, **Map 8c**). This change will help prevent

resource damage by minimizing the number of vehicular crossings of the Big Hole River, improve big game security, and help provide public safety during high water conditions (spring run-off).

In the future, BLM may pursue closing route 189009b and providing alternate access to the Sawlog area via route BH252 or routes 189003 and BH001. Route BH252 is the preferable alternate access route. BH252 provides a safer river crossing and quicker access to the higher elevations that most users (big game hunters) seek. Access via route BH252 will require USFS and State cooperation; the USFS has already indicated interest in pursuing this option. Further coordination with Montana Department of Natural Resources will be needed to pursue this alternate access. Another alternative route to access this area is via Routes BH189003 and BH001. These routes eliminate the need for a river crossing at all; but require several miles of travel in order to reach the Sawlog area. Access across these routes is largely dependent on private landowner cooperation.

Snowmobile management will continue to remain substantially in effect as represented by the 1996 Southwest Interagency Visitor/Travel Map. However, several additional areas will be closed to cross-country travel, and others restricted to existing designated routes and trails during the season of use (December 2 – May 15), snow conditions permitting. Cross-country closures include the area located between the Soap Gulch and Camp Creek roads, the Goat Mountain/Maiden Rock area and the Sawmill Gulch/Nez Perce Ridge area. Snowmobile use in the Dewey area will be restricted to designated routes and trails during the season of use (12/2 – 5/15), snow conditions permitting.

### ***Monitoring***

#### **Monitoring for RMP Decisions**

BLM personnel will implement signing for travel management area designations in the Approved RMP as needed. Signing will be monitored and maintained during periodic field visits by BLM personnel. BLM personnel will monitor and track conditions on the ground and any alterations to area designations or route designations (i.e., newly acquired access easements), to ensure that visitor use travel planning maps are being updated appropriately as needed.

BLM will track planning and implementation efforts for the four site-specific moderate priority travel planning areas identified in the RMP for which travel planning has not yet been completed (Missouri River Foothills, Jefferson County Southeast, Broadwater County South, Park/Gallatin), to ensure they are completed in as timely a manner as possible.

#### **Monitoring for Travel Plan Implementation Decisions**

BLM will conduct periodic monitoring for the five site-specific travel plans addressed with this RMP revision (Helena TPA, East Helena TPA, Boulder/Jefferson City TPA, Lewis and Clark County NW TPA, and Upper Big Hole River TPA) to ensure they are being implemented in as timely a manner as possible. Visitor use travel plan maps, information kiosks (including a large map, brochure maps, visitor information), travel signs (portal signs, route designation signs), approved trailheads, etc. will be monitored through site visits to ensure that these features are in place and functioning appropriately, and that they provide correct information in accordance with final travel plan decisions.

Decommissioned routes will be reviewed through site visits by BLM staff to ensure that any adverse resource impacts have been addressed (eliminated/minimized) and that they have been properly implemented to prevent motorized travel.

During routine patrols BLM staff will monitor designated routes to ensure that they are in a safe, useable condition, and have been maintained in a manner that avoids or minimizes resource impacts such as soil erosion and water quality impacts.

Both implementation and effectiveness monitoring will be largely conducted by “trail rangers” (seasonal travel management staff). Trail rangers will patrol busy travel planning areas (in particular, designated OHV recreation areas), providing public information, educating riders, and ensuring travel plan compliance. Trail rangers can help determine the effectiveness of travel plan implementation through direct observation, photo-documentation, and visitor contacts. Effectiveness monitoring will be documented, and reviewed in the context of the following objectives and indicators.

#### **Physical/Biological Objectives/Indicators**

Public compliance will be assessed through periodic site visits to monitor for unauthorized off trail/road travel and/or vandalism to facilities such as signs and kiosks. Illegal off trail/road travel could be measured as a linear disturbance, or as an area impact, depending on the level and type of use that occurred. Trail rangers will make certain that any new user created trails or roads are closed and mitigated to prevent further use/resource damage.

Visitor use will be measured and monitored by collecting information such as types of vehicles used, numbers of vehicles and people, average length of stay (number of hours, day-use, overnight use), and areas of use. This information will be collected through direct observation and visitor contact by BLM personnel, trail registers, and trail/road counters. These indicators will provide useful information for determining degrees of use and effectiveness of resource management.

Resource impacts such as loss of protective vegetative cover, loss of soil through erosion (hydrological or mechanical), increased trail width and depth, and success of site restoration will be monitored through site visits, photo-documentation, and written documentation.

### **Social Objectives/Indicators**

Reducing conflict between motorized and non-motorized users while providing adequate recreational opportunities is one of the most important and challenging goals of travel planning. As a result, BLM's travel management plans have been developed to provide a balanced approach among motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized users. Visitor feedback (field contacts, written trail register comments, phone calls, etc) will be used to monitor whether this important goal has been realized.

Visitor feedback will also be used to monitor whether travel management areas have been clearly mapped and signed for the public. The level of non-compliance and law enforcement incidences will also help monitor and assess this goal. Implementation activities will include: installing informational kiosks (bulletin boards) at major ingress/egress points and trailheads. The kiosks will be posted with site-specific travel management maps as well as assorted general visitor information (travel management, recreation opportunities, etc.). The kiosks will be stocked (brochure box attached) with small field sized maps (8½" x 11" size) for public use.

Travel signing will be carried out using a minimum of standardized signs, with clear, consistent text and graphics; and utilizing a "signed as Open" management philosophy. In general, portal signs will be installed at all major ingress/egress points and trailheads. Route management and designated route arrow signs will be installed throughout each travel planning area as needed. Route closure signs may be installed at site-specific locations to help reinforce closures, but are not integral to route management or required for law enforcement. Signing will be monitored through field visits (and maintenance) to ensure they are intact and functioning properly.

## **Transportation and Facilities**

### ***Goal***

**Goal TF1** – Maintain facilities, roads, and trails to provide for public and/or administrative use and safety while mitigating impacts to resources.

### ***Management Actions***

1. Comprehensive assessments will be conducted for all maintained roads and facilities and maintenance actions will be implemented as needed. (*Goal TF1*)
2. Roads and trails will be maintained in accordance with Travel Management Plan guidance and BLM policy. After site-specific travel plan decisions are

made, roads included in the transportation system will be assigned maintenance levels, if needed. Roads will be managed in accordance with assigned maintenance levels and in consideration of resource issues. All roads and trails will be maintained in accordance with standards and guidelines in BLM Handbook 9113-2 and Manual Section 9114. Roads and trails will be inspected on an established schedule in accordance with the Bureau's Condition Assessment guidance. (*Goals TF1, TMI*)

3. Recreation sites, administrative sites, buildings, and bridges will be maintained within Bureau standards to reduce deferred maintenance costs; meet public health and safety requirements; provide universal accessibility as appropriate and to enhance visitor experiences. These activities will be coordinated with other federal, state, and local government agencies, private landowners and the general public as needed. (*Goals TF1, RMI, RM2, SE2*)
4. New roads and trails determined to be necessary for permanent or long-term use as part of BLM's transportation system will be constructed subject to project-level NEPA analysis and approved engineering standards. Consideration will be given to use demands, location, safety, and resource constraints when determining the level of road necessary, in accordance with Manual Section 9113. Where a new permanent road will provide better access, existing routes in the vicinity will be identified for closure and decommissioning in order to meet travel plan guidance and resource mitigation concerns (wildlife displacement, habitat fragmentation, VRM, ROS, soil stability, water quality, etc). (*Goals TF1, WF2, TMI, SRI, WR3, VRI*)
5. Roads will be built to the minimum standard necessary that allows reasonable access and has the least impact on resource values. (*Goals TF1, TMI*)
6. If an existing road is substantially contributing to Land Health Standards not being met, the road will be considered for redesign, closure, or decommissioning to minimize the adverse impacts. (*Goals TF1, TMI*)
7. Road designs will include at a minimum:
  - Minimizing road and landing locations in Riparian Management Zones;
  - Minimizing sediment delivery to streams from road surfaces;
  - Outsloping roadway surfaces where possible, except in cases where outsloping would increase sediment delivery to streams or where outsloping is infeasible or unsafe;
  - Routing road drainage away from potentially unstable stream channels, fills and hill slopes;

- Minimizing disruption of natural hydrologic flow paths; and,
  - Minimizing sidestepping of soil or snow. (*Goals TF1, RV1, WF3, WR1, WR3, WR4*)
8. Roads will be designed and maintained in a manner that provides for water quality protection by controlling placement of fill material, keeping drainage facilities open, installing and maintaining appropriately-sized culverts at stream crossings, and by repairing ruts and failures to reduce erosion and sedimentation of aquatic habitats. (*Goals TF1, RV1, WF3, WR1, WR3, WR4*)

**Monitoring**

The condition of BLM facilities will be assessed in accordance with the schedules identified in the latest edition of BLM’s Montana State Asset Business Plan (ABP). In this Asset Business Plan, the Butte Field Office has identified condition assessment schedules for buildings, recreation and administrative sites, dams, bridges and major culverts. The intervals for completing these condition assessments differ by asset type. Condition assessments for all assets will be completed within the intervals established by the Department of Interior. This interval is currently once every five years. BLM is presently finalizing the condition assessment schedules for roads and trails.

The official electronic repository for the inventory of owned, constructed real property assets is the BLM Facility Asset Management System (FAMS). The FAMS program provides standard assessment reports and inventory sheets to assist in completing Comprehensive Condition Assessments (CCAs) and Periodic Inspections (PIs) within the designated schedules. From these inventories, BLM generates work orders to complete any noted deficiencies.

The BLM has developed several major constructed real property asset classes. The current asset classes are:

- Administrative Site Buildings
- Recreation Site Buildings
- Administrative Sites
- Recreation Sites
- Roads
- Trails
- Dams
- Bridges (includes Major Culverts).

Protocols for assessing the condition of roads and trails are currently in the final stages of development. Schedules for assessing these road and trail assets will be included in future Asset Business Plans. With all facilities, informal inspection and “discovery” will be a major part of the condition monitoring program. Information provided by BLM employees and the public on problems or concerns as a result of storms, vandalism, and normal wear and tear will also be used to monitor the condition of BLM facilities.

**Recreation Management**

**Goals**

**Goal RM1** – Provide a diverse array of recreational opportunities while maintaining healthy public land resources.

**Goal RM2** – Establish, manage, and maintain quality recreation sites and facilities to meet a broad range of public needs subject to appropriate resource constraints.

**Goal RM3** – Manage commercial, competitive, or special events with special recreation permits that eliminate or minimize impacts on resources and conflicts with other users.

**Goal RM4** – Manage recreation opportunities to provide a sustained flow of local economic benefits and protect non-market economic values.

**Objectives (Goals RM1, RM2, RM4, SE2)**

1. The BLM will manage Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes for desired recreation opportunities, experience levels, facility developments, and other resource uses. **Appendix E** contains a description of ROS categories. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum settings will be managed in accordance with the classifications in **Table 17** and **Maps 9a-c**.

<b>Table 17 Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classifications</b>	
<b>ROS Class</b>	<b>Acres<sup>1</sup></b>
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	36,800
Semi-Primitive Motorized	71,800
Roaded Natural	171,100
Roaded Modified	16,600
Rural	11,000

<sup>1</sup> Acres are approximate and rounded to nearest 100.

2. Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) will be managed to meet the needs of their primary recreation tourism markets in conjunction with the ROS category into which they fall and the recreation opportunities identified for each SRMA.

**Management Actions**

**General**

1. “Leave No Trace” and “Tread Lightly” practices will be promoted to enhance the sustainability of resource-based activities. (*Goals RM1, RM4, SE2*)
2. BLM will support events that emphasize collaborative outreach and public awareness such as National Public Lands Day, National Fishing Week, Great Outdoors, National Trails Day, and others to promote public stewardship. (*Goals RM1, SE2*)



3. BLM will support and utilize volunteer participation and recruit and train volunteers to provide effective visitor contact assistance. (*Goal RM2*)
  4. BLM will continue to provide a diverse range of quality recreation opportunities and experiences within the BFO commensurate with public demands, resource considerations, and management capabilities. (*Goals RM1, RM4, SE2*)
  5. The BFO will follow BLM program direction for managing recreation on public lands by incorporating “The BLM’s Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services”, applicable sections of Appendix C of the Land Use Planning Handbook (USDI-BLM 2005), and other BLM directives that are related to recreation management. (*Goals RM1, RM2, RM4*)
  6. Comparable, cost effective and value based fee systems will be established for services and facilities provided to public users in accordance with the Butte Field Office Recreation Fee Area (MT-02) Business Plan, BLM directives and the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. BLM will strive to update the business plan every five years to ensure site fees are appropriate over time using fair market values and cost recovery assessments. (*Goals RM2, RM3*)
  7. At present there are no known significant caves or karsts in the Decision Area. Should these resources be discovered, BLM will develop management plans that address management, marketing, monitoring and administrative needs appropriate for the specific resource in accordance with Bureau directives. (*Goals RM1, RM4*)
  8. BLM will conduct periodic visitor satisfaction surveys and distribute annual fee collection and accomplishment reports to the public and encourage continual feedback from visitors. (*Goals RM1, RM4, SE2*)
  9. BLM will strive to enhance voluntary compliance among recreation users through effective public education outreach efforts. (*Goals RM1, RM2, SE2*)
  10. The BLM will continue to establish partnership agreements that are mutually beneficial to BLM and the public and maintain them to enhance comprehensive planning, collaborative management, and collective funding.
    - The highly successful partnership with Pennsylvania Power and Light – Montana (PPLM) will be continued during the life of the project license within the Missouri River corridor and agreements made under the Missouri/Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan will be fulfilled.
    - Challenge Cost Share opportunities and grants to offset funding shortages will be sought and utilized.
    - Working relationships with tourism organizations, recreation interest groups, and local/state/other federal governments will be maintained and expanded to enhance visitor services, management efficiencies, and recreation opportunities.
    - BLM will strive to maintain the existing agreement with MFWP that establishes partnership efforts and responsibilities to collectively manage the Black Sandy and White Sandy sites on Hauser Lake.
    - BLM will strive to establish additional partnerships with MFWP to jointly manage areas along rivers where each agency has common interests.
    - BLM will pursue opportunities to expand day-use parking capacities on Holter Lake in cooperation with the Missouri/Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan. (*Goals RM1, RM4, SE2*)
- Special Recreation Permits**
11. BLM will continue to issue special recreation use permits as appropriate for non-motorized commercial, competitive, and special events subject to 2930 Handbook guidance, resource capabilities, social conflict concerns, professional qualifications, public safety, and public needs. New permits that directly conflict with established special recreation use permits will not be authorized. Existing permittees will be given preference. (*Goal RM3*)
  12. Day-use Special Recreation Permits will be issued for commercial fishing and floating uses at BLM river access sites. Outfitters will be annually billed an advance flat fee (currently \$95.00) established by the Director based on the Implicit Price Deflator Index. In the long-term, the BLM will continue to coordinate with MFWP to enhance river/corridor land management and to possibly develop a multi-agency statewide fee system for the commercial uses of river access sites. (*Goals RM3, SE2*)
  13. In accordance with policy guidance (IM No. 2004-150), a greater priority will be placed on extending appropriate, reoccurring permits from five years to 10 years. (*Goal RM3*)
  14. Commercial camping permits (special recreation use permits) within developed fee sites will not be allowed during the fee season of Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend. (*Goals RM1, RM2, RM3, SE2*)

15. In order to reduce user conflicts and resource impacts, special recreation use permits during the hunting season will be limited to day-use activities with the exception that camping uses will be considered within developed recreation sites with hardened camping units during the non-fee season (October 15 – May 15). (*Goals RM1, RM2, RM3, SE2*)

### **Recreation Sites**

16. BLM will continue to manage all established recreation sites as listed below: Holter Dam, Holter Lake, Log Gulch, Departure Point, Beartooth Landing, Woodsiding Trailhead (TH), Sleeping Giant TH, White Sandy, Devil's Elbow, Two Camps Vista, Clark's Bay Day Use Site, Ward Ranch Historical Site, Spokane Bay, Spokane Bay TH, McMaster Hills East TH, McMaster Hills West TH, French Bar, Spokane Hills TH, Crimson Bluff, Lower Toston, Toston Dam, Lombard, Echo Lane TH, Head Lane TH, Tumbleweed TH, Norris TH, John G. Mine TH, Ohio Gulch OHV TH, Sheep Mountain TH, Duck Creek, Radersburg OHV TH, Crow Creek, Galena Gulch, Sheep Camp, Ringing Rocks, Four Corners OHV TH, Pipestone OHV TH, Whiskey Gulch OHV TH, Maiden Rock East, Divide Bridge CG, Sawmill Gulch TH, Divide Bridge Day Use Site, Jerry Creek Bridge, Dickie Bridge, East Bank, Bryant Creek, Sawlog Gulch, Pintlar Creek, Moose Creek TH, Buffalo Hump and Carbella. (*Goal RM2*)

17. Human food storage regulations will be developed and implemented for all recreation sites with high potential and/or known encounters between people and bears. (*Goals RM1, RM2, WF4, WF5*)

18. Priority funding and management efforts will be given to developed recreation sites that receive the heaviest visitation rates. Sites that cannot be managed to acceptable health and safety standards will be closed until deficiencies are corrected. (*Goals RM2, TF1*)

19. Boat-in camping at dispersed sites (excluding Beartooth Landing) on BLM lands along the east shoreline of Holter Lake will be limited to designated sites only. Site availability will be determined through field evaluations by an interdisciplinary team. Suitable sites where impacts to other important resources (wildlife, cultural resources, riparian, vegetation, etc.) are acceptable will be designated, signed, and available to the public on a first-come, first-served basis. A similar management system will be undertaken for BLM lands on Hauser Lake should resource concerns and conditions warrant. (*Goals RM1, RM2, RM4, SE2, SE4*)

20. BLM will coordinate with MFWP to manage appropriate uses at BLM launch sites as necessary

to ensure that quality recreation opportunities and experiences on state waters and affected BLM lands are collectively managed. (*Goals RM1, RM4, SE2*)

21. Recreation sites and facilities will be maintained and managed to promote resource value protection, public safety and health, quality facilities, visitor experiences, management efficiency, and value based returns. (*Goals RM2, TF1, SE2*)

22. New sites will be developed commensurate with public demand, resource constraints, and management capabilities. Priority will be given to new sites that have partnership funding strategies and are consistent with established ROS and SRMA management guidelines. (*Goals RM1, RM2*)

23. If an existing developed recreation site significantly contributes to Land Health Standards not being met, the impacts from the site will be minimized to the extent possible. (*Goals RM1, RM2, RM4*)

24. Personal property of recreational users cannot be unattended for more than 24 hours at developed recreation sites or for more than 10 days on other BLM lands. (*Goals RM1, RM4*)

25. BLM will continue to conduct periodic accessibility, safety, and condition assessments in accordance with Bureau policy at developed recreation sites. Available funds will be prioritized to resolve deferred and corrective maintenance needs. (*Goals RM2, TF1*)

26. BLM will conduct annual evaluations of all fee sites that address project needs, support equipment, visitor services, public comments, administrative needs, fees, site regulations, and conflict concerns. (*Goals RM2, TF1, SE2*)

27. BLM will establish and maintain information kiosks with site maps, brochures, interpretive and educational information, important contacts, and site regulations at recreation sites. (*Goal RM2*)

28. Until or unless different regulations are promulgated, recreation users will be limited to 14-day camping stays with the following exceptions:

- The 7-day camping limit at Holter Lake Sites (Holter Dam, Holter Lake, Log Gulch, and Departure Point) will continue during the high-use fee season (Memorial Day to Labor Day) weekends.
- The 7-day rule will be implemented, as needed, at other developed sites if camping demands frequently exceed capacities during the high-use fee season (Memorial Day to Labor Day) weekends.
- The BFO will comply with new Bureau directives governing camping stays in undeveloped areas and lower-use developed

- sites throughout the Field Office. (*Goals RM1, RM2, SE2*)
29. Variances for the general public to the existing camping limits during the hunting season will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Field Manager subject to the following considerations: resource impacts, social conflicts, sanitation concerns, livestock use, or whether 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. (*Goals RM1, RM2, SE2*)
30. BLM will maintain and develop a web-site of BLM recreation sites and areas that provides access information and available opportunities. (*Goals RM1, RM2*)
- Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs)**
31. Nine SRMAs are designated for priority management as listed below and depicted on **Map 10**:
- Hauser Lake,
  - Humbug Spires,
  - Lower Holter Lake/Missouri River,
  - Pipestone,
  - Scratchgravel Hills,
  - Sheep Mountain,
  - Sleeping Giant/Missouri River,
  - Upper Big Hole River, and
  - Uppermost Missouri River. (*Goals RM1, RM2, RM4*)
32. **Table 18** indicates the primary recreational management strategy (primary recreation tourism market, needed recreation management zones, ROS, and primary recreation opportunities) for each of the SRMAs. (*Goals RM1, RM2, RM4*)
33. Implementation plans for Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and delineated Recreation Management Zones will be developed where specific management, marketing, monitoring and administrative guidance is needed. Planning guidance will include area-specific travel management plans, recreation site plans, ROS and VRM classifications, and other directives. (*Goals RM1, RM2, RM4, TM1*)
34. The remaining BLM lands not designated as SRMAs will be managed as an Extensive RMA. This area will be managed on a lower priority basis with a few exceptions at some specific sites/locations due to use concentrations, resource concerns, and/or public demand. (*Goals RM1, RM4*)

<b>Table 18 Management of Special Recreation Management Areas</b>				
<b>SRMA</b>	<b>Recreation Tourism Market</b>	<b>Recreation Management Zones</b>	<b>ROS</b>	<b>Primary Recreation Opportunities</b>
Hauser Lake	Community	One	Hauser Lake: primarily Roded Natural	Hauser Lake: Developed camping, lake access for boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking, and group gatherings.
Humbug Spires	Undeveloped	One	Semi-primitive, Non-motorized	Hiking, backpacking, rock climbing, primitive camping, fishing, and hunting.
Lower Holter Lake/Missouri River	Community	One	Rural	Developed camping and day-use activities, lake access for motorized boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking, and group gatherings.
Pipestone	Community	One	Roded Natural	OHV riding, driving for pleasure, semi-developed camping, hunting, horseback riding, hiking and mountain biking.
Scratchgravel Hills	Community	One	Rural	Hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and hunting.
Sheep Mountain	Community	Two sub-units separated by Sheep Mountain Access road	Northern sub-unit; Semi-primitive, Non-motorized Southern sub-unit; Roded Natural	Northern sub-unit; Hiking, rock climbing, hunting and natural viewing. Southern sub-unit; OHV riding, driving for pleasure, semi-developed camping, and hunting.
Sleeping Giant/Missouri River	Undeveloped	Two subunits: Sleeping Giant ACEC/Preliminarily suitable WSR reach of Missouri R. above Holter Lake and non-ACEC portion of Sleeping Giant	ACEC/Eligible W&SR Lands; Semi-Primitive, Non-motorized Non-ACEC; Semi-primitive, Motorized	ACEC; Eligible W&SR Lands; Primitive shoreline camping, fishing, hiking, hunting, horseback riding and natural viewing. Non-ACEC; Limited motorized travel, pleasure driving, hunting, horseback riding and natural viewing.
Upper Big Hole River	Destination	One	Primarily Roded Natural	Semi-developed camping, limited motorized pleasure driving, river access for floating and fishing, fall hunting, hiking and natural viewing.
Uppermost Missouri River	Community	One	Primarily Rural	Semi-Developed camping, lake access for motorized and non-motorized boating, fishing, picnicking and upland hunting.

## ***Monitoring***

### **Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Designations**

ROS settings will be monitored as needed to ensure that appropriate recreation activities, user experiences, facility developments and managerial efforts are provided in a manner that is compatible with the area rating or classification. Priority will be given to Special Designation Areas.

### **Special Recreation Management Areas**

Priority management efforts will be conducted as needed in these areas and recreation management zones to ensure that recreation settings, opportunities, amenities and experiences are consistent with identified recreation-tourism market demands. Monitoring will focus on the social, environmental and administrative indicators and standards to ensure quality opportunities and experiences are provided. Field monitoring patrols will address signing, informational displays, facilities, visitor uses, social conflicts, public safety concerns and resource conditions. Methods to obtain more reliable visitation counts will be considered where appropriate to determine trends and management priorities.

### **Recreation Sites**

The BLM will continue collecting visitor use data at highly developed recreation sites annually using traffic counters, fee envelopes and visitor logs to assist with recreation planning, management and annual reports. Important data needs include party size, length-of-stay, geographic origin of users, daily visitation levels, primary uses and age groups.

Fee compliance monitoring will be conducted at established fee sites on a daily basis subject to management capabilities to ensure BLM is receiving fair value returns for the services and facilities provided to the public.

User compliance monitoring will continue to be conducted daily as needed to ensure that site regulations are being followed in order to minimize social conflicts, provide quality experiences, protect resources and promote public safety. Law enforcement personnel will be requested when needed to assist with this effort.

Visitor surveys will be conducted periodically utilizing approved BLM methods, partnership efforts under the Missouri/Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan, and on-site public suggestion boxes to assess site facility and service needs, user satisfaction levels, desired experiences and public safety concerns.

Recreation site condition assessments will be conducted routinely in accordance with the Bureau's Facility Asset Management System. See the Transportation and Facilities section for more discussion. High use facilities such as docks, toilets, water systems, fish

cleaning stations, pay stations, swim beach areas, information kiosks etc. will be monitored daily during the high use season within fee sites and at least bi-weekly in non-fee sites.

Trailhead registers and traffic counters will be utilized as appropriate to monitor use levels and user satisfaction into back-country areas.

Seasonal weed monitoring and control efforts will continue to be a high priority within developed fee areas.

### **Special Recreation Permits**

Monitoring of Special Recreation Permits will be conducted as needed to ensure compliance with permit terms, conditions, stipulations, operating plans and established fees to ensure resources are protected, social conflicts are mitigated and uses are conducted in a safe and professional manner.

Methods for monitoring permitted users and their activities shall include post-use reports, field observations, patrol logs, photos, client information and permittee performance. The level and types of monitoring should be commensurate with the resource values at risk, type of activity, potential for social conflicts, permittee trust and concerns for public safety.

## **Special Designations - Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)**

### ***Goal***

**Goal AC1**– Designate ACECs and manage them appropriately where special management attention is required to protect relevant and important values.

### ***Management Actions***

#### **Allowable Uses (*Goal AC1*)**

Four ACECs are designated totaling 70,644 acres. These areas are:

- Sleeping Giant (11,679 acres),
- Elkhorns (50,431 acres),
- Humbug Spires (8,374 acres),
- Ringing Rocks (160 acres).

Information on the relevant and important values of these four ACECs is summarized in **Table 19**.

In the event that WSAs designated as ACECs become designated as wilderness, ACEC management will be dropped upon development of wilderness management plans.

For areas of overlap between WSAs and ACECs, WSA management will take precedence. Management direction below for ACECs will be in effect if it is consistent with WSA management. Where ACEC management described below is not consistent with

<b>ACEC</b>	<b>Relevant and Important Values</b>
Elkhorn Mountains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important cultural/historic sites.</li> <li>• Diverse upland and aquatic habitat for wildlife and fish.</li> <li>• Unique National management area.</li> </ul>
Humbug Spires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding scenic qualities.</li> <li>• Diverse upland and aquatic habitat for plants, animals, and fish.</li> </ul>
Ringing Rocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rare and unique geological rock feature.</li> </ul>
Sleeping Giant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding scenic qualities.</li> <li>• Diverse upland and aquatic habitat for wildlife and fish.</li> </ul>

WSA management for these overlap areas, ACEC management will be considered “fall back” management if these areas are eliminated from wilderness consideration by Congress.

### **Actions**

In discussions of each individual ACEC below, general management direction is characterized by major management activity category. Special management prescriptions are designated in *italic* font.

#### **Elkhorn Mountains ACEC (Map 11)**

The Elkhorn Mountains ACEC (50,431 acres) will be managed under the following management guidance. Management direction is characterized by critical resource and resource use categories below.

#### ***Recreation Opportunity Spectrum***

1. Majority of the area will be managed as Roaded Natural. (*Goals AC1, RM1, SE2*)
2. Elkhorns Tack-on WSA will be managed as Semi-Primitive Non-motorized. (*Goals AC1, RM1, SE2*)
3. Wood-Horse Gulch area north of BPA road will be managed as Semi-Primitive Motorized. (*Goals AC1, RM1, SE2*)
4. Nursery-Golconda Creek area northwest of WSA will be managed as Semi-Primitive Motorized. (*Goals AC1, RM1, SE2*)
5. Parcels between Dutchman and Prickly Pear Creek will be managed as Semi-Primitive Motorized. (*Goals AC1, RM1, SE2*)
6. Johnny-Keating area will be managed as Roaded Modified. (*Goals AC1, RM1, SE2*)

#### ***Motorized Travel Management***

7. Motorized travel will be “limited” to designated routes in order to protect wildlife and non-motorized recreation values. (*Goals AC1, TM1, RM1, SE2, SE4*)

8. No new permanent roads or motorized trails will be authorized for public use (road relocation will be allowed to protect resources, maintain access and/or protect human safety). (*Goals AC1, WF2, TM1, RM1, SE2, SE4*)
9. Existing road closures will be maintained and enforced per the 1995 Elkhorns travel plan. BLM will re-evaluate and/or monitor routes to determine if changes to existing plan are required. (*Goals AC1, TM1, SE2, SE4*)
10. *Non-motorized recreation will be promoted and emphasized.* (*Goals AC1, RM1, SE2, SE4*)

#### ***Visual Resource Management***

11. The majority of the area will be managed as VRM Class III and IV. (*Goals AC1, VR1, SE4*)
12. The Elkhorns Tack-on WSA will be managed as VRM Class II (if Congress releases it from wilderness consideration). (*Goals AC1, VR1, SE4*)
13. High visibility lands along Missouri River, canyon cliffs along Indian Creek and scattered parcels adjacent to USFS north and west boundaries will be managed as VRM Class II. (*Goals AC1, VR1, SE4*)

#### ***Land Ownership/Adjustment***

14. *All BLM lands within the ACEC will be retained in BLM public ownership.* (*Goals AC1, WF5, LR2, CP2, SE4*)
15. *The area will be classified as not suitable for Recreation and Public Purposes patent actions.* (*Goals AC1, WF5, LR2, CP2, SE4*)
16. *Priority will be given to acquire lands (fee title/easements) to “block up” BLM lands within and adjacent to the ACEC to enhance relevant and important values, manageability and public access to or within the area.* (*Goals AC1, WF5, LR1, CP2, SE4*)

**Land Use Authorizations**

17. The ACEC will be open to new rights-of-way (with some exceptions – see Allowable Uses-Land Use Authorizations section of this document) and 2920 Permits and Leases with restrictions to protect area values. (Goals AC1, WF5, LR2, CP2, SE4)
18. The area will be classified as not suitable for Recreation and Public Purposes lease actions. (Goals AC1, WF5, LR2, CP2, SE4)

**Leasable Minerals (including Oil and Gas)**

19. No Surface Occupancy will be allowed in Muskrat Creek Watershed. (Goals AC1, RV2, WF3, WF5, WR1, WR3, WR4, SE4)
20. No Surface Occupancy will be allowed in Crow Creek Campground. (Goals AC1, RM2, SE2, SE4)
21. No Surface Occupancy will be allowed in sensitive plant population locations. (Goals AC1, WF5)
22. Remaining area will be subject to all other stipulations for oil and gas exploration in this Approved RMP. (Goals AC1, EM1, EM2, SE1)

**Locatable Minerals**

23. ACEC lands will be open to operations under the Mining Laws. An approved Plan of Operations will be required for surface disturbing activity greater than casual use. (Goals AC1, EM1, EM2, SE1)

**Salable Minerals**

24. Salable minerals sales will be allowed in ways that minimize impacts to wildlife and recreation. (Goals AC1, EM1, EM2, SE1)

**Vegetation Management**

25. The Elkhorns will be managed as an ecological unit across political boundaries for the purpose of sustaining ecological systems, including the full range of potential biological diversity and ecosystem processes. (Goals AC1, GS1, FW1, FW2, FW3, FW4, FW5, FW6, WF1, SE4)
26. No timber salvage will be allowed unless beneficial to ACEC values or needed for human safety. (Goals AC1, WF3, WF5, SE4)

**Wildlife**

27. Current direction outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by MFWP, USFS, and BLM will be followed within a modified boundary from the one described in the MOU (Map 11). (Goals AC1, WF1, WF2, WF5, WF6, SE4)
28. Wildlife and wildlife habitats will be managed to support populations of species associated with endemic vegetative communities, with emphasis on providing the necessary habitat components for those species with special needs. (Goals AC1, GS1,

FW1, WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, WF6, WF7, SE4)

29. Management activities will have long-term benefits to wildlife and will minimize short-term impacts (with the exception of mining). (Goals AC1, WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, WF6, WF7, SE4)
30. The BLM will seek opportunities to convert sheep allotments to cattle allotments at the time an allotment is vacated, sold, or transferred. Existing sheep allotments will remain in effect unless permittees are interested in working with the BLM to convert to cattle. (Goals AC1, WF5, SE4)
31. BLM will continue to actively participate in partnerships. (Goals AC1, WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, WF6, WF7, SE4)
32. BLM will continue to work with MFWP and the USFS to resolve issues in the Elkhorn Mountain Range. (Goals AC1, WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, WF6, WF7, SE4)
33. Activity timing restrictions for burning, noise and ground disturbance will be enforced. (Goals AC1, WF4, WF5, SE4)

**Fire/Fuels Management**

34. BLM will seek opportunities with surrounding landowners (private/FS) to allow natural fires to burn when within established prescriptions. (Goals AC1, GS1, FW1, FM1, FM2, FM4)
35. BLM will continue following the existing Elkhorns Fire Management Plan but evaluate all opportunities for natural fire use. (Goals AC1, FM1, FM2, FM3, FM4, FM5)

**Livestock Grazing**

36. BLM will place a priority on management to ensure against unauthorized livestock grazing (maintain/build boundary fences, cattle guards and closely monitor livestock trailing). (Goals AC1, LG1, LG2, LG3)
37. Management activities will be allowed only to maintain or enhance ecosystems, natural qualities, and scenic values. (Goals AC1, LG1, LG2, LG3, VR1, SE4)

**Cultural Resources**

38. BLM will refrain from developing any additional permanent roads to prevent further degradation to historic ditches, dams, and reservoirs. (Goals AC1, CP2)

**Humbug Spires ACEC (Map 12)**

The Humbug Spires ACEC (8,374 acres) will be managed under the following management guidance. Management direction is characterized by critical resource and resource use categories below.

### **Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

1. ACEC will be managed for Semi-Primitive Non-motorized experiences. (Goals AC1, RMI, SE2)

### **Motorized Travel Management**

2. Area will be closed yearlong to all motorized travel in order to protect natural and scenic values. (Goals AC1, WF2, VRI, SE4)
3. No new roads or motorized trails will be authorized. (Goals AC1, TMI, WF2, SE4)
4. Motorized route closures will be managed within the area in accordance with the Upper Big Hole River Travel Plan. (Goals AC1, TMI)

### **Visual Resource Management**

5. ACEC will be managed for VRM Class II objectives (if Congress releases it from wilderness consideration). (Goals AC1, VRI, SE4)

### **Land Ownership/Adjustment**

6. All BLM lands will be retained in the ACEC. (Goals AC1, WF5, LR2, VRI, SE4)
7. High priority will be given to acquiring inholding lands or interests and adjacent lands along Moose Creek on east boundary from willing landowners to enhance management and ACEC values. (Goals AC1, WF5, LR1, VRI, SE4)
8. Area will be classified as not suitable for Recreation and Public Purposes patent actions. (Goals AC1, WF5, LR2, VRI, SE4)

### **Land Use Authorizations**

9. Area will be closed to all new rights-of-way and 2920 Permits and Leases. (Goals AC1, WF5, LR2, VRI, SE4)
10. Area will be classified as not suitable for Recreation and Public Purposes lease actions. (Goals AC1, WF5, LR2, VRI, SE4)

### **Leasable Minerals (Oil and Gas)**

11. Oil and Gas activities will be subject to No Surface Occupancy (would apply if the Humbug Spires WSA were released from wilderness consideration). (Goals AC1, WF5, VRI, SE2)
12. The area will be unavailable to all other mineral leases. (Goals AC1, WF5, VRI, SE2)

### **Locatable Minerals**

13. ACEC values will be protected from unnecessary and undue degradation. (Goals AC1, EM1, EM2, SE1)
14. A Plan of Operations will be required for any surface disturbing activity greater than casual use in the ACEC. (Goals AC1, EM1, EM2, SE1)

### **Salable Minerals**

15. The area will be unavailable to salable minerals. (Goals AC1, WF5, VRI, SE4)

### **Vegetation Management**

16. Management activities will be allowed to restore ecosystems provided natural, primitive recreation, native wildlife and scenic values are protected. (Goals AC1, GS1, FW1, WF1, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, SE4)

### **Fire/Fuels Management**

17. BLM will seek opportunities with surrounding landowners (private/USFS) to allow natural fires to burn when they are within established prescriptions and beneficial to ACEC values. (Goals AC1, GS1, FW1, FM1, FM2, FM4)
18. Prescribed fires will only be used in situations that would benefit ACEC values. (Goals AC1, GS1, FW1, WF5, VRI, EM2, SE4)

### **Livestock Grazing**

19. Management will ensure against unauthorized livestock grazing (maintain/build boundary fences, cattle guards and closely monitor livestock trailing). (Goals AC1, LG1, LG2, LG3)
20. Management activities will only be allowed to protect or enhance ecosystems and ACEC values. (Goals AC1, LG1, LG2, SE4)

### **Additional Special Management**

21. BLM will assess alternatives and implement measures to minimize visitor encounters and enhance solitude experiences along the established hiking trail. (Goals AC1, RMI, SE2)
22. The existing trail will be rerouted/maintained to address erosion and water quality concerns. (Goals AC1, RV2, SRI, WRI, WR3, SE4)
23. Outfitter camping use within 200 feet of existing trail will be eliminated. (Goals AC1, RM3, SE2)
24. Special permit uses will be eliminated during summer holiday weekends if conflicts arise with other public visitors. (Goals AC1, RM3, SE2)
25. BLM will close rock climbing on spires with active raptor nests to outfitter uses and educate the public about the importance of avoiding such locations. (Goals AC1, WF3, WF5, SE4)
26. The interpretative information displayed at the Moose Creek Trailhead will be improved to:
  - Describe the area and its important/relevant characteristics.
  - Educate visitors about resource protection and Leave No Trace principles.



- *Display a quality map of the area. (Goals AC1, WF5, VR1, SE4)*

### **Ringing Rocks ACEC (Map 13)**

The Ringing Rocks ACEC (160 acres) was withdrawn from mineral entry in 1965. The Montana Bureau of Mining and Geology evaluation concluded that while the greater surrounding area has high mineral potential, the Ringing Rocks withdrawal area has low to no mineral potential.

The Ringing Rocks is a geologic feature resulting from a combination of chemical composition and jointing patterns which chime when struck. Rocks removed from the formation do not ring. The only other ringing rocks formation known in the United States is located in Pennsylvania.

If the Ringing Rocks feature was changed in any way, including mining, it could not be reclaimed to the extent that the rocks would once again ring.

The Ringing Rocks ACEC will be managed as an ACEC under the following management guidance. Management direction is characterized by critical resource and resource use categories below.

#### ***Salable Minerals***

1. *The area will be unavailable to salable minerals. (Goals AC1, EM3)*

#### ***Vegetation Management***

2. *Vegetation treatments will be planned to ensure that the visual qualities of the 160-acre area are not adversely impacted. (Goals AC1, EM3, VR1)*

#### ***Additional Special Management***

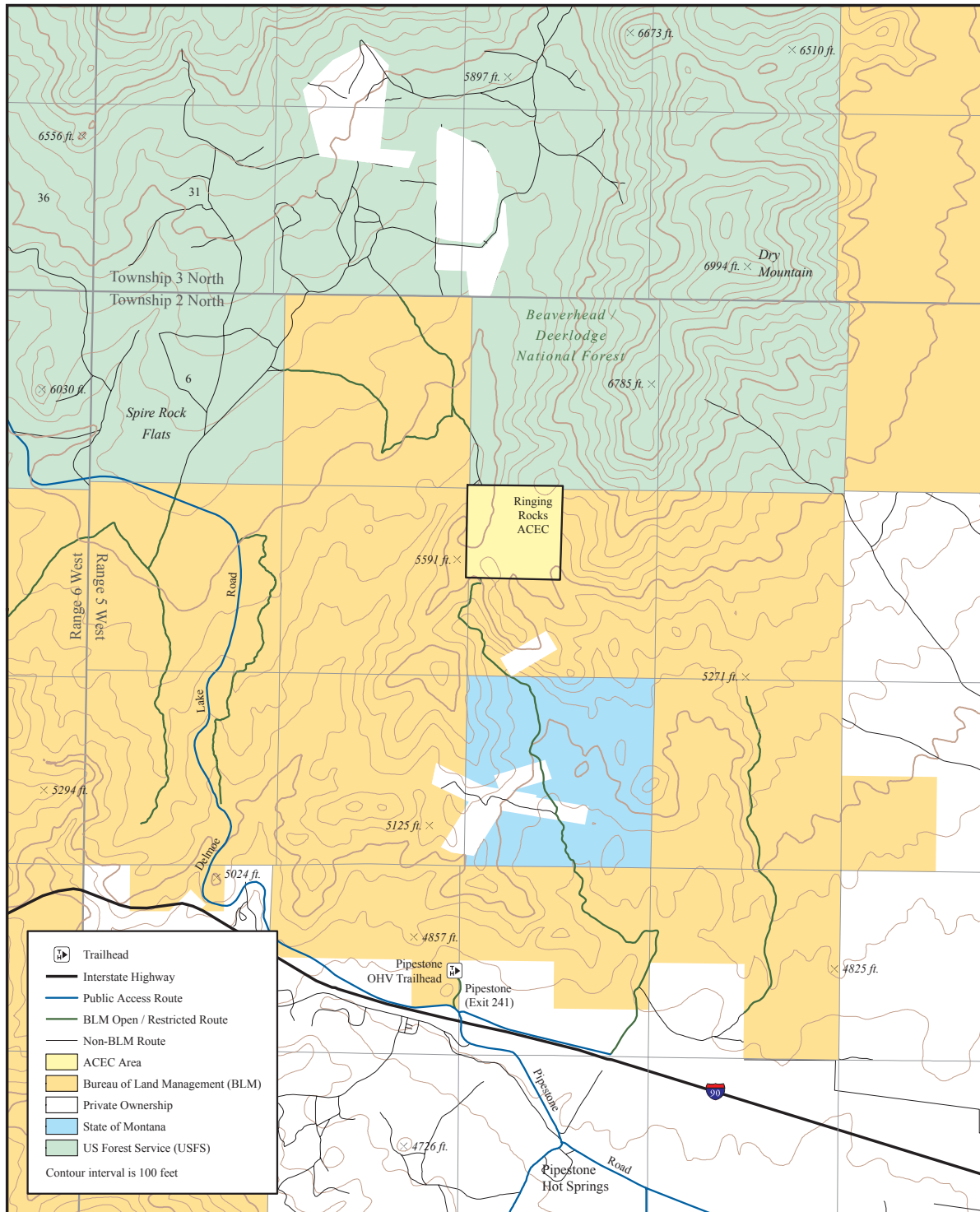
3. *Interpretative information displayed at the site will be improved to:*
  - *Discuss the uniqueness of the rock formation.*
  - *Educate visitors about the importance of protecting the rock features*
  - *Describe the cultural/mining history of the area. (Goals AC1, CP2, EM3, SE2)*
4. *Collection/removal of rocks within the formation will not be allowed. (Goals AC1, EM3)*
5. *The nearby abandoned mine shaft will be reclaimed. (Goals AC1, AM2)*
6. *Cultural features at risk will be protected. (Goals AC1, CP2)*

### **Sleeping Giant ACEC (Map 14)**

While the Sleeping Giant ACEC was identified as being 11,609 acres when it was originally designated, more accurate GIS calculations based on its original boundaries indicate a size of 11,679 acres.

Sleeping Giant ACEC will be managed under its original management plan (USDI-BLM 1988) with the following modifications.

1. *Area will be closed to all new rights-of-way. Maintenance of the existing Towhead/Falls Gulch Power line will be allowed. Future upgrades will be authorized provided that ACEC resources are not degraded. (Goals AC1, LR2)*
2. *Discretionary management actions will only be allowed to protect or enhance ecosystems, and long-term ACEC values (naturalness, primitive and unconfined forms of recreation, solitude experiences, visual resources, native wildlife, and cultural resources). (Goals AC1, GS1, FW1, WF1, WF2, WF5, RM1, VR1, CP2, SE4)*
3. *For the entire river/lake shoreline, the existing livestock grazing restrictions outlined in the current grazing lease and Oxbow Allotment Management Plan will continue to be implemented. BLM will cooperatively work with the lessee to restrict and/or manage livestock grazing along the river/lake shoreline from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend to enhance primitive recreation experiences, soil/water quality conditions, visual resources, and natural values. (Goals AC1, LG1, RM1, SE4)*
4. *BLM will seek opportunities to allow for prescribed natural fires and develop a coordinated management plan if appropriate. (Goals AC1, FM1, FM2, FM4)*
5. *In addition to controlling noxious weeds through chemical and biological means, mechanical (hand pulling) efforts will also be utilized where practical. (Goals AC1, NW1, WF1)*
6. *ROS management for the ACEC will be semi-primitive non-motorized. (Goals AC1, RM1, SE2, SE4)*
7. *With the exception of the Beartooth Landing Site, docks will not be authorized at the primitive shoreline sites. (Goals AC1, RM1, SE2, SE4)*
8. *Cutting of dead and down material for firewood will not be allowed unless specifically authorized. (Goals AC1, WF3)*
9. *Aerial spraying within 300 feet of streams or the river will be prohibited. (Goals AC1, RV1, RV2, WF3, WR1)*



0 1 Miles  
1 inch equals 0.76 miles

Map generated by the Butte Field Office in January 2009

UTM Zone 12 North (NAD 1983) Projection

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.



**Map 13: Ringing Rocks Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)**

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



Butte Field Office  
Approved Resource Management Plan

## ***Monitoring***

ACEC monitoring will be routinely conducted to assess status of relevant and important values in accordance with Section 103(a) of FLPMA. Objectives for monitoring will be to protect and prevent irreparable damage to relevant and important values for each ACEC, and to provide for visitor health and safety. Visual observations and trend conditions based on indicators will be used where needed to document impacts, potential causes and develop necessary management changes.

Where outstanding scenic quality is a relevant and important value (Humbug Spires and Sleeping Giant ACECs), monitoring will be conducted to protect against unauthorized trespass actions and to ensure that identified proposed projects conform with VRM Class II objectives (for non-WSA areas and WSA areas released from wilderness consideration by Congress) and Scenic Quality A ratings. Visual contrast ratings, described in BLM Manual 8400 will be conducted for proposed actions as appropriate to minimize visual resource impacts and to assess the effectiveness of implemented design features and mitigation measures. VRM compliance monitoring will be conducted and findings recorded annually. Documentation methods available include photographs, simulations, videos, and written reports.

Where upland and aquatic habitats constitute relevant and important values (Elkhorn Mountains, Humbug Spires, and Sleeping Giant ACECs), monitoring will be conducted as indicated for these resources in the Wildlife, Fish, Wildlife Habitat, Special Status and Priority Plant and Animal Species section above.

To monitor wildlife habitats in these ACECs with upland habitats as a relevant and important value, vegetation transects, photo points, plot surveys as well as other appropriate sampling methods will be used to monitor vegetation to determine plant species diversity, abundance, distribution and structure. Monitoring data will be used to assess changes in distribution, canopy, vegetative quality and composition of sagebrush/grasslands, coniferous forests and riparian/wetland habitats.

In light of the important cultural/historic sites as a relevant and important value in the Elkhorn Mountains ACEC, the Butte Field Office will dedicate a portion of its annual cultural resource monitoring commitment to the Elkhorn Mountains ACEC. The number of sites monitored will be different from year to year in order to respond to various issues affecting cultural resources such as tribal concerns, vandalism, and changes in the number and type of public interpretation venues.

While the relevant and important values in the Elkhorn Mountains ACEC are centered on upland and aquatic habitat as well as cultural resources, the Elkhorn Mountains are an area with high mineral potential for

locatable mineral resources and additional monitoring by resource specialists associated with any mineral activity will be routinely incorporated into field work in the Elkhorns. Compliance monitoring will be conducted and findings recorded as field work is completed. Documentation methods will include photographs and written reports.

In the Ringing Rocks ACEC, monitoring will be conducted to protect against unauthorized mineral trespass actions and to ensure that any nearby identified proposed projects conform with protecting the unique geologic feature here. Compliance monitoring will be conducted and documented. Documentation methods available include photographs and written reports.

## **Special Designations - National Trails**

### ***Goal***

**Goal NT1** – Manage National Trails to promote public enjoyment and protect their designated values.

### ***Management Actions***

1. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail will be managed cooperatively with the USFS in accordance with national policy guidelines. The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail will be managed cooperatively with the National Park Service (NPS) in accordance with national policy guidelines. (*Goals NT1, RM1, RM2, SE2, SE4*)
2. BLM will seek opportunities to cooperatively manage National Trails through partnerships. (*Goals NT1, RM1, RM2, SE2, SE4*)
3. BLM will continue cooperative efforts with Pennsylvania Power and Light of Montana (PPLM) and other partners to collectively manage the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail under the Missouri/Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan. All recreation sites within the trail corridor will continue to be managed in a manner that promotes public accessibility, resource protection, visitor safety, and interpretive education. (*Goals NT1, RM1, RM2, SE2, SE4*)
4. The two National Trails (Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail) will be managed to protect natural resource values, minimize recreation conflicts, and enhance recreation opportunities and experiences. Lands within these extensive corridors will be retained in public ownership. Additional management guidance will be established in accordance with the ROS classes, VRM classes, travel plan direction, and oil and gas stipulations established elsewhere in this Approved RMP. (*Goals NT1, RM1, RM2, SE2, SE4*)
5. BLM will evaluate opportunities to re-route the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail segment

(occupied by a road) in coordination with the USFS to enhance non-motorized opportunities; reduce current needs for use easements/acquisitions through private lands; and remove motorized conflicts associated with the motorized road. (Goals NT1, RM1, RM2, SE2, SE4)

**Monitoring**

The BLM will periodically monitor BLM lands along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail to ensure that management actions are in conformance with VRM, ROS, SRMA, ACEC and OHV travel designations and guidelines so that opportunities and user experiences are protected. Data will be collected and documented using patrol logs, surveillance reports and photographs. Efforts to prevent unauthorized uses will include law enforcement patrols, area surveillance by BLM staff and volunteers, boundary signing, educational materials, news releases and project compliance visits. Unauthorized actions will be mitigated so that natural settings are retained to the extent possible.

The BLM segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail above Marysville will be monitored annually to protect the visual and natural qualities of the BLM corridor lands as seen from the trail. In addition the existing trail will be annually monitored so that unacceptable safety hazards are corrected, resource damages are mitigated and appropriate uses are occurring.

Periodic monitoring will be done along segments of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail managed by the Butte Field Office to ensure that management actions are not adversely impacting the historical values. The Butte Field Office will continue to promote applicable management guidelines as an active partner of the Missouri/Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan.

**Special Designations - Wild and Scenic Rivers**

**Goal**

**Goal WSR1** – Identify river segments suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System and manage appropriately for Outstandingly Remarkable Values.

**Objectives (Goal WSR1)**

Protective management objectives for river segments being recommended as suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation include:

- Free-flow characteristics will not be modified by stream impoundments, diversions, channelization, or riprap.

- Each segment will be managed to protect identified outstandingly remarkable values, and to the extent practicable such values will be enhanced.
- Development of the eligible river and its corridor will not be modified to the extent that the eligibility or tentative classification would be affected.

These objectives for protective management under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will be applied to recommended suitable segments until they are either designated by Congress or released to multiple use. Protective management will be subject to valid existing rights and to actions within BLM’s authority. Any proposed activities will be reviewed to ensure that Wild and Scenic River eligibility and tentative classification will not be affected.

**Management Actions**

1. In cooperation with other agencies, local governments, and special interest groups, management will be conducted in a manner to protect and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values for each river being recommended as suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation. **Table 20** depicts the outstandingly remarkable values and tentative classifications of the two river segments being recommended as suitable for designation. (Goal WSR1)

<b>Table 20 Recommended Suitable Wild and Scenic River Segments</b>		
<b>WSR Segment Name</b>	<b>Outstandingly Remarkable Values</b>	<b>Tentative Classification</b>
Missouri River	Recreational Wildlife Scenic	Scenic
Muskrat Creek	Fish	Scenic

2. Muskrat Creek (2.6 miles located in T7N, R3W, sections 31-33) is recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS). (Goals WSR1, RV1, RV2, WF3, WR1, SE4)
3. Missouri River (3.1 miles located in T12N, R3W, section 13; and T12N, R2W, sections 18, 19, 29, 30) is recommended as preliminarily suitable, but will only be recommended for inclusion in the NWSRS pending USFS (Helena National Forest) concurrence and coordination. This river segment is bordered by BLM lands on one side and Helena National Forest lands on the other. A joint recommendation by BLM and the USFS will be necessary to forward the Missouri River segment as suitable for inclusion in the NWSRS. (Goals WSR1, RV1, RV2, WF3, WR1, RM1, SE2, SE4)

## ***Monitoring***

Monitoring efforts will be conducted for suitable and preliminarily suitable WSRs (Muskrat Creek and Missouri River) in order to ensure protection of the river's free flowing character, tentative classification and identified outstandingly remarkable values until such time as Congress makes a final decision on whether or not to designate these river segments. On-the-ground surveillance will be conducted at least annually. Monitoring log books will be established for recording visits, documenting use compliance and violations, and recording resource specific data that is responsive to identified outstandingly remarkable values. Efforts to prevent unauthorized uses include law enforcement patrols and area surveillance by BLM staff and volunteers. Unauthorized impacts will be mitigated so that identified values are protected.

## **Special Designations - Wilderness Study Areas**

### ***Goal***

**Goal WSA1** – Manage Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) to maintain their suitability for potential wilderness designation.

All BLM lands were evaluated to determine whether additional lands other than existing WSAs have wilderness characteristics (blocks of land at least 5,000 acres in size with naturalness and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation). Lands obtained through acquisitions since previous wilderness reviews were considered in concert with pre-existing BLM lands. No additional BLM lands were identified as having wilderness characteristics because no areas with naturalness and opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation met the size criteria. (*Goal WSA1*)

### ***Management Actions***

1. All six WSAs (Black Sage – 5,917 acres, Elkhorns Tack-on – 3,575 acres, Humbug Spires – 11,320 acres, Sleeping Giant – 6,666 acres, Sheep Creek – 3,801 acres, and Yellowstone River Island – 69 acres) will continue to be managed under the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands under Wilderness Review (BLM Handbook H-8550-1 dated 1995) until such time as Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them from further consideration as wilderness. The wilderness characteristics (naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude, and outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation) of each of the six WSAs will continue to be protected under the IMP directives. (*Goals WSA1, WF2, RMI, SE2, SE4*)

2. Any areas designated wilderness by Congress will be managed per the Wilderness Act of 1964, as amended, Public Law 88-577 (16 United States Code 1131-1136). In addition, an area-specific wilderness management plan will be developed. (*Goals WSA1, WF2, RMI, SE2, SE4*)
3. WSAs will continue to be managed in accordance with the established monitoring and sign plans for each WSA. (*Goal WSA1*)
4. In addition to the Interim Management Protection mandates, both the Sleeping Giant and the Sheep Creek WSAs will continue to be managed as part of the Sleeping Giant ACEC under its management plan written in 1988 as well as the management direction indicated in the ACEC section in this Approved RMP for the Sleeping Giant ACEC. (*Goals WSA1, AC1, WF2, RMI, SE2, SE4*)
5. WSAs released from further consideration as wilderness will be managed consistent with surrounding lands and prescriptions identified in this land use plan. (*Goal WSA1*)
6. If released, the Sleeping Giant, Sheep Creek, Humbug Spires, and Elkhorns Tack-on WSAs will be managed as ACECs. These administrative designations will promote continued protection of many of the existing wilderness characteristics for these four areas. In the event that these WSAs designated as ACECs become designated as wilderness, ACEC management will be dropped upon development of wilderness management plans. See the ACEC section of this Approved RMP for detailed descriptions of ACEC management of these areas. (*Goals WSA1, AC1*)
7. Should the USFS lands adjacent to the Elkhorns Tack-on WSA be removed from wilderness review, this Section 202 (FLPMA) WSA will be dropped from further wilderness consideration. This small WSA is not capable of providing outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation on its own and does not meet minimum size criteria for wilderness characteristics in and of itself. (*Goal WSA1*)
8. If the Black Sage WSA were to be released from wilderness consideration, it would continue to be managed to provide semi-primitive, motorized recreation opportunities. Motorized travel within the area would be designated as "limited" and the availability of established routes would be determined through an area-specific travel management plan. New permanent roads would not be authorized although re-routes may be considered to minimize resource impacts, public safety issues, or access concerns. The visual resource classification of the area would be modified from VRM Class I to VRM Class II management. (*Goals TMI, RMI, VRI*)

Land ownership would be managed for retention and exchanges would be considered to improve its configuration and manageability. The area would be open to rights-of-way subject to mitigations. Management would emphasize restoration and maintenance of natural processes and conditions when considering the appropriateness of other resource uses. Locatable minerals would be open and subject to requirements to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation. All salable and leasable minerals with the exception of oil and gas would remain unavailable. Oil and gas development would be subject to Field Office-wide stipulations approved in this RMP. All other resources and uses would be managed in accordance with management direction in this RMP. (*Goals LR1, LR2, GS1, FW1, WF1, EM1, EM2, SE1*)

9. If released from wilderness consideration, the Yellowstone Island would continue to be managed to provide semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities. The island would remain closed to motorized travel. The visual resource classification of the area would be modified from VRM Class I to VRM Class II management. Land ownership would be managed for retention and the island would be closed to rights-of-way. (*Goals RM1, TM1, VR1, LR2, SE2*)

The island would be open to locatable mineral entry subject to requirements to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation. Oil and gas development activities would be subject to stipulations approved in this RMP. This area would be closed to all other leasable and salable mineral actions. Livestock grazing and forest management practices would not be allowed. All other resources and uses would be managed in accordance with management direction described in this RMP. (*Goals EM1, EM2*)

### **Monitoring**

WSA monitoring will be conducted to protect wilderness characteristics and prevent impairment of an area's suitability for wilderness designation. WSAs are currently protected and managed under BLM Handbook H-8550-1 (Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review). Monitoring includes on-the-ground and aerial surveillance, conducted at a minimum of once per month during the season the area is accessible to the public. Areas not accessible by vehicular means will be monitored at least once per year. Data will be collected and documented using patrol logs, surveillance reports and photographs. Efforts to prevent unauthorized uses include law enforcement patrols, area surveillance by BLM staff and volunteers, boundary signing, WSA maps, educational materials, news releases and project compliance visits. Unauthorized actions will be mitigated promptly subject to funding constraints.

## **Air Quality**

### **Goal**

**Goal AQ1** – 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.

### **Management Actions**

1. BLM will continue to participate in local, state, and federal ambient air quality monitoring programs, as required. Management of non-attainment areas within the Planning Area will be guided by the state. (*Goal AQ1*)
2. BLM will comply with local, state, and federal regulatory requirements (*Goal AQ1*).
3. Management will minimize or prevent air quality degradation throughout the Planning Area by applying mitigation measures to projects. (*Goals AQ1, SE1*)
4. Air resources will continue to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis as part of project level planning to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal regulatory requirements. Evaluations will consider the significance of the proposed project and the sensitivity of air resources in the affected area. Mitigation measures will be developed as appropriate to ensure compatibility of projects with air resource management. (*Goal AQ1*)
5. Before approval of an application for permit to drill (APD) for oil and gas or a Sundry Notice application that would involve surface disturbance, the appropriate level of NEPA analysis (in most cases an EA) will be completed. This document will analyze effects on all appropriate resources and resource uses including air quality as identified. (*Goals AQ1, EM2, SE1*)

### **Monitoring**

Air quality is monitored by the State of Montana to identify and quantify the effects of all uses and activities within the state. Except for wildland fire activities and events, BFO management activities do not affect air quality to an extent that requires monitoring or mitigation.

An air quality monitoring process for wildland fire activities has been developed for Montana (the Smoke Monitoring Unit of the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group, in coordination with the Montana DEQ) that will help quantify air quality standards. Annual review of this process to ensure procedures are being followed at the implementation stage (i.e. fire prescriptions and mitigation measures shall be reviewed and records of acreages/tonnages burned shall be maintained and

reported) will ensure the air quality goal in the RMP is being met.

## Soil Resources

### Goals

**Goal SR1** – Manage uses to minimize accelerated soil erosion and compaction and maintain surface soil water infiltration based on site-specific conditions.

**Goal SR2** – Maintain or improve soil health and fertility, prevent or minimize erosion and compaction while supporting multiple use management.

### Objectives (Goals SR1, SR2, RV1, WR1, WR3)

Soil management objectives include:

- Reduce soil erosion associated with steeper slopes, granitic soils, and high recreational use areas.
- Reduce sediment delivery to creeks and streams.
- Reduce soil mass movement (primarily from accelerated water erosion) resulting from burned areas, aboveground disturbances (primarily roads), and accelerated streambank erosion.

### Management Actions

1. BLM will continue to implement soil conservation measures and BMPs to meet these management objectives. Examples of measures and BMPs that will be applied throughout the BFO include:
  - Seasonal or yearlong closures of specific road and trail sections to reduce soil erosion
  - Design, enhancement, and maintenance of vegetated filter strips along critical waterways
  - Integration of soil, groundwater, and surface water management to minimize stream channel degradation and improve groundwater and surface water quality. (Goals SR1, SR2, RV1, RV2, WR1, WR3, WR4)
2. Soil conservation practices and soil BMPs will provide the basis for maintaining soil productivity, fertility, and stability, and maximizing infiltration of natural precipitation and minimizing runoff, soil erosion, and sedimentation. (Goals SR1, SR2, FW1, FS1, RV1, WR4)
3. Consideration of soil conditions and types and their influence on management actions will occur on a case-by-case basis. Best Management Practices and mitigation measures will be implemented at the site-specific project level to maintain or improve the soil resource. Soils susceptible to compaction and erosion will receive greater consideration when assessing proposed activities. (Goals SR1, SR2, WR4)

4. Soil compaction and erosion problems will be diagnosed using Land Health Standards. (Goals SR1, SR2)
5. Appropriate mitigation or seasonal restrictions will be applied to activities in areas with significant soil compaction or accelerated erosion. (Goals SR1, SR2)
6. The BLM will re-seed disturbed areas where needed based on site-specific assessments. (Goals SR1, SR2, GSI, FW1, WF1)

### Monitoring

Monitoring will be conducted to ensure that management actions conform to laws, regulations and applicable standards pertaining to soil quality including soil compaction, erosion and productivity. Information on soil/site stability, derived from assessments of Land Health Standards, is typically inferred from other monitoring information, such as vegetative cover and density, litter cover, and stream sediment loading and turbidity. It can be assumed, in the absence of measurable and observable soil erosion, and in the presence of healthy vegetative communities, that soil processes are functioning correctly.

## Water Resources

### Goals

**Goal WR1** – Restore and/or maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of water resources to protect designated beneficial uses and achieve water quality standards.

**Goal WR2** – Maintain existing or acquire new water rights on lands in the Decision Area to ensure water availability for multiple-use management.

**Goal WR3** – Minimize erosion and subsequent sedimentation for improved stream and watershed health.

**Goal WR4** – Maintain or improve morphological conditions to a stable state that can fully support beneficial uses.

**Goal WR5** – Protect water quality for municipal, industrial, agricultural, recreation, and residential purposes by adopting protective measures to meet tribal, state, and local water quality requirements.

### Objectives (Goals WR1, WR3, WR4, WR5)

Management will seek to prevent water quality degradation, and improve watershed function throughout the Planning Area.

The objective on Decision Area lands is for water bodies to have measurable attributes within site-specifically appropriate ranges (including meeting state, tribal, and local water quality standards). From a morphological standpoint these ranges may be based on

reference conditions or other scientifically accepted methods. For proper functioning condition in streams, entrenchment, width/depth ratio, sinuosity, channel substrate, and slope should be within the ranges identified for channel types.

### **Management Actions**

1. BMPs will be used to prevent non-point source water pollution and mitigation measures will be applied to activities on a case-by-case basis. (*Goals WR1, WR3, WR4, WR5, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)
2. Permits pertaining to projects affecting water quality, wetlands, or streams will be obtained, and outside applicants will be required to provide copies of pertinent permits prior to BLM authorization. (*Goals WR1, WR3, WR4, WR5, FW1, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)
3. BLM will use the State of Montana BMPs to address non-point source water pollution (**Appendix B**). (*Goals WR1, WR3, WR4, WR5, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)
4. BLM will comply with the non-degradation provisions of the Montana Water Quality Act. (*Goals WR1, WR3, WR5*)
5. Water rights and instream flow reservations will be maintained subject to Montana water law. BLM will participate in the Montana Statewide water adjudication process and comply with Montana law for water rights. (*Goals WR1, WR2, WR5, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)
6. Existing water rights will be maintained to ensure water availability for multiple-use management and proper functioning riparian and upland areas. (*Goals WR1, WR2, WR5, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)
7. BLM will consider acquiring water rights from willing sellers. (*Goals WR1, WR2, WR5, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)
8. Projects will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to minimize impacts to water quality. BLM will use “reasonable land, soil, and water conservation practices” (MDEQ 2009) to prevent harm to public health, recreation, safety, welfare, livestock, wild animals, birds, fish, or other wildlife. (*Goals WR1, WR3, WR4, WR5, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)
9. BLM will continue to coordinate and cooperate with Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and communities in the development of Water Quality Restoration Plans (WQRPs) and Source Water Protection Plans. (*Goals WR1, WR2, WR3, WR4, WR5, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)
10. BLM will participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of water quality restoration plans and TMDL plans in watershed

planning areas in which BLM is a significant land manager or water user. (*Goals WR1, WR2, WR3, WR4, WR5, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)

11. BLM will examine Water Quality Restoration Plans (WQRPs) to determine if reduction targets of pollutants (TMDLs) are reasonable and attainable. WQRPs will be implemented as funding becomes available. (*Goals WR1, WR2, WR3, WR4, WR5, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)
12. Burned areas will be monitored for weed infestations and accelerated soil erosion. Where sedimentation from burned areas impacts adjacent streams, erosion will be remediated. (*Goals WR1, WR3, WR4, WR5, RV1, RV2, WF3, SE4*)

### **Monitoring**

Water quality will be monitored to establish baseline conditions, identify areas of concern, and document progress from mitigation measures.

Water resources monitoring is primarily designed to measure water quality attributes as an indicator of reach or watershed scale condition relative to identified beneficial uses (e.g. salmonid habitat) and standards prescribed under the Clean Water Act. Water quality monitoring is primarily in the context of effectiveness monitoring, relying on monitoring of other resources, such as vegetation, that generally indicate an earlier response to land management activities and function as surrogate measures of water quality. The prioritization, intensity, and scale (watershed, subwatershed or reach/site) of implementation and effectiveness monitoring will be determined through watershed or reach/site assessments, activity plans, or WQRPs.

Identification of specific riparian attributes of vegetation, hydrology/geomorphology and erosion/deposition to be monitored will be identified through PFC assessments and activity level planning. The relevance of vegetation management to the maintenance, restoration, or improvement of water quality and quantity will be reflected in monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of BMPs, and may include a variety of techniques to assess condition and trend.

### **Visual Resources**

#### **Goal**

**Goal VR1** – Manage visual resources in accordance with VRM classifications described below.

#### **Objectives (Goals VR1, SE4)**

Management classifications are established for all BLM lands based on visual resource characteristics (scenic quality, sensitivity level and distance zones) and management considerations. Generally, areas that have lower Visual Resource Management (VRM)



classifications have higher visual resource values and protection measures.

Objectives for visual resources are to manage BFO lands in accordance with the following acreages by VRM classes:

- Approximately 31,500 acres will be managed as VRM Class I. These lands include all six WSAs. The objective of this class is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.
- Approximately 48,900 acres will be managed as VRM Class II. The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
- Approximately 125,200 acres will be managed as VRM Class III. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
- Approximately 101,700 acres will be managed as VRM Class IV. The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modifications of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

**Maps 15a-15c** depict the location of these classes throughout the Butte Field Office.

### ***Management Actions***

1. Visual resource design techniques and best management practices will be used to minimize short and long-term visual impacts. (*Goals VR1, SE4*)
2. Contrast ratings will be completed for proposed projects in Class I and II areas, and for proposed

projects in Class III and IV areas that are high impact projects or located in highly sensitive areas. (*Goals VR1, SE4*)

3. VRM Class I objectives for all WSAs will be maintained. (*Goals VR1, SE4*)

### ***Monitoring***

Monitoring will be conducted to ensure that identified project design features and/or mitigation measures are performed in a manner that conforms to established VRM class objectives. Visual contrast ratings, described in BLM Manual 8400 will be conducted as appropriate to minimize visual resource impacts and to assess the effectiveness of implemented design features and mitigation measures. VRM implementation monitoring will be tracked and recorded. Documentation methods available include photographs, simulations, videos, and written reports.

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

### ***Goals***

**Goal CP 1** – Identify cultural resource sites, traditional cultural properties, and paleontological localities and mitigate impacts from natural or human-caused deterioration.

**Goal CP2** – Preserve and protect eligible cultural resource sites, traditional cultural properties, and paleontological localities to ensure that they are available for appropriate uses by present and future generations.

### ***Objective (Goals CP1, CP2)***

As an inventory objective, BLM will identify areas with a high potential for various archeological/historical site types, and conduct 200 acres of proactive inventory in those areas each year. One hundred acres of low potential areas will be inventoried each year for comparison.

### ***Management Actions***

#### **Cultural Resources and Traditional Cultural Properties**

1. At the project level, the BLM will conduct inventories for the purpose of gathering resource information, as per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, in order to avoid disturbance to cultural resources in the Area of Potential Effects (APE). The BLM will continue Section 106 compliance by working through the State Protocol Agreement with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office. BLM will continue to make determinations of eligibility or non-eligibility for historic properties on land it manages and

document all inventories and decisions affecting cultural resources in an annual report. If the project cannot be redesigned to avoid disturbance, the sites will be evaluated for their eligibility for listing on the National Register for Historic Places. If eligible sites cannot be avoided, the BLM will, in consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, facilitate mitigation to recover data that would otherwise be lost. The BLM will also conduct inventories to gather information about cultural resources, as per Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. (*Goals CP1, CP2*)

2. BLM's consultation process for historic mining sites will continue in accordance with the Historic Placer and Lode Mining Properties Programmatic Agreement that, among other things, specifies creation of a historic preservation plan to organize and compile what is known about various historic mining districts. (*Goals CP1, CP2*)
3. BLM will continue to work with Native American tribal governments and their representatives, as well as those members who are recognized cultural leaders, elders, and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers. In addition to cultural resource specialists, the BLM will include other tribal resource specialists who may have an interest in project planning and management issues. Tribal consultation will be most frequent with those entities who historically occupied the Planning Area. Meetings with tribal representatives will be conducted at least once a year to coordinate consultation requirements and to maintain a good working relationship. (*Goals CP1, CP2, TTI*)
4. All recorded sites will be assigned a use category to facilitate management of those cultural resources. See Definitions of Use Categories in **Appendix F**, section .42, A-F. (*Goals CP1, CP2*)
5. During the oil and gas leasing process, the following stipulation (from IM 2005-003) will be attached to lease parcel review documents: This lease may be found to contain historic properties and/or resources protected under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, E.O. 13007, or other statutes and executive orders. The BLM will not approve any ground disturbing activities that may affect any such properties or resources until it completes its obligations under applicable requirements of the NHPA and other authorities. The BLM may require modification to exploration or development proposals to protect such properties, or disapprove any activity that is likely to result in adverse effects that cannot be successfully avoided, minimized, or mitigated. (*Goals CP1, CP2, EM2, SE1*)

6. Educational and public outreach programs on cultural resources will be provided as requested. (*Goals CP1, CP2*)
7. Eligible historic buildings will be maintained consistent with National Park Service standards as funding permits. Deteriorating cultural resources falling under the Experimental or Scientific Use Categories eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places will be mitigated by intensive recordation or data recovery. (*Goal CP2*)

#### **Paleontological Resources**

8. At the project level, BLM will continue to map fossil localities so as to avoid those localities during project implementation. If the locality cannot be avoided, permitted institutions or individuals will be contacted to properly map, record, and/or recover, if necessary, paleontological resources. Public education and outreach will be conducted as time and funding permit. (*Goals CP1, CP2*)
9. Fossil localities will be afforded the same consideration as historic sites in project planning. The BLM will identify and assess potential impacts from federal actions on significant paleontological resources, so as to implement proper mitigation measures when necessary to protect those resources. If projects cannot be redesigned to avoid fossil localities, then specimens will be excavated by permitted paleontologists. Assistance will be permitted institutions and/or individuals will be routinely sought in order to properly map and record fossil localities. (*Goals CP1, CP2*)
10. Opportunities for public outreach and education will be pursued as staffing and funding resources permit. (*Goals CP1, CP2*)

#### **Monitoring**

Natural and human-caused damage to cultural and paleontological resources will be documented as a first step towards mitigating that damage. Sites recorded in the Butte Field Office will be assigned a "Use Category" to segregate those properties which do not require active management from those that do. Monitoring of recorded sites will keep those assignments up to date and provide data to make the proper management decision if/when the "Use Category" needs to be changed: such as an incident of vandalism in a historic building. NHPA-eligible historic buildings will be monitored to ensure maintenance needed to retain eligibility (as funding permits).

Priorities for the Butte Field Office for site and locality selection for monitoring will be based on a combination of public use, and the status of the property in question. An eligible site located in an area with very little public use does not face the same pressure as an eligible property in a location with heavy use, erosive soils, or

active river floodplains that may erode quickly and destroy the primary context. In the Butte Field Office, sites and localities located in Boulder batholith soils are generally the most at-risk due to the combination of their highly erosive nature and motorized vehicle recreational developments. Since some Boulder batholith sites face a combination of all three of the pressures listed above, they could be monitored every five years, or more often, as the need arises. Cultural resources and paleontological localities elsewhere could be monitored every 10 years, or as the need arises.

## Lands and Realty

### Goals

**Goal LR1** – Seek opportunities to acquire non-federal land or interest in non-federal land with important resources and resource uses.

**Goal LR2** – Provide land-use opportunities contributing to a sustained flow of economic benefits and meet local infrastructure needs while protecting or minimizing adverse impacts to resources and resource uses.

### Management Actions

#### Allowable Uses – Land Use Authorizations

No new rights-of-way will be authorized in identified exclusion areas (approximately 33,323 acres). With the exception of corridors identified in this RMP, new rights-of-way in identified avoidance areas will not be allowed unless there are no other routing options (approximately 75,727 acres). Valid existing rights-of-way in avoidance and exclusion areas will be recognized, and holders of such authorizations will be allowed to maintain their facilities (**Maps 16a-16c**). (*Goals LR2, AC1, SE4*)

Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/Record of Decision (ROD) for Designation of Energy Corridors on Bureau of Land Management-Administered Lands in the 11 Western States (USDI-BLM 2009), hereafter called WWEC ROD (for West-Wide Energy Corridor Record of Decision), was published in January 2009. This document amended the Headwaters RMP. Decisions from that Record of Decision will be carried forward in this Approved RMP.

Corridors on BFO lands (**Maps 16a-c**) identified in the WWEC ROD include:

- Segment #229-254 with a width of 1,000 feet, restricted to electric only;
- Segment #51-204 with a width of 3,500 feet and is multimodal;
- Segment #51-205 with a width of 3,500 feet and is multimodal;

- Segment #50-51 with a width of 3,500 feet and is multimodal.

Multimodal corridors identified in the WWEC ROD represent preferred locations on BLM lands for future electric transmission lines and oil, gas, and hydrogen pipelines. (*Goals LR2, SE1*)

#### Actions – Land Use Authorizations

1. Land uses will be authorized by various means such as right-of-way grants, road use agreements and associated temporary use permits under several different authorities: leases, permits, and easements under section 302 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA); airport leases under the Act of May 24, 1928, as amended (49 U.S.C. Appendix, 211-213); and Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) leases. (*Goals LR2, SE1, SE2*)
2. Requests for land use authorizations will be analyzed and mitigation measures applied on a case-by-case basis in compliance with the NEPA process. Interim management policy and guidelines for land use authorizations in WSAs will be followed as appropriate. In accordance with current policy, land use authorizations will not be issued for uses which would involve the disposal or storage of materials which could contaminate the land (hazardous waste disposal sites, landfills, rifle ranges, etc.). Rights-of-way, leases, permits, or easements will not be required for those activities that are considered casual use of public lands. (*Goals LR2, WSA1, SE2*)
3. New right-of-way facilities will be located within or adjacent to existing rights-of-way, to the extent practicable, in order to minimize adverse environmental impacts and the proliferation of separate rights-of-way. Right-of-way applications across roads that have been closed or have seasonal restrictions will be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. (*Goals LR2, SE2*)
4. New communication site users will be grouped into existing facilities at established communication sites to reduce impacts and expedite application processing. Site plans will be completed prior to authorizing communication site uses in new areas. The use of alternative power sources will be considered where electric power is not available. (*Goals LR2, SE1, SE2*)
5. BLM will provide recreation and public purposes leases or patents on BLM land that meets classification criteria. (*Goals LR2, SE2*)
6. Proposals for renewable energy development will be considered on a case-by-case basis. No proposals for alternative energy development, other than wind power are anticipated to occur in the foreseeable future. Two areas, one near Whitehall

and one near Livingston, are anticipated to have wind energy development in the future (**Maps 16a-16c**). Current BLM guidance and Guidelines and Best Management Practices (BMPs) from the Wind Energy Development Programmatic EIS (ROD signed December 2005) will be used when considering wind energy projects on BLM land. The latest version of *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines* (APLIC 2006) will be implemented in the construction and operation of right-of-way facilities. (*Goals LR2, SE1*)

7. Owners of non-federal land surrounded by public land managed under FLPMA will be allowed an appropriate degree of access across public land which would provide for the reasonable use and enjoyment of the non-federal land. (*Goals LR2, SE1, SE2*)
8. The use of certain rights-of-way constructed on public lands prior to FLPMA will be recognized as a valid use even though the laws under which they were authorized were repealed by FLPMA. The BLM will not renew grants issued prior to the passage of FLPMA. Holders of such authorizations must apply for a new FLPMA grant. (*Goals LR2, SE2*)
9. The existing Communication Sites at Boulder, Bull Mountain, Limestone Hills, Montana City, Mt. Belmont, Spokane Butte, Toston, and Wickes are formally designated as communication sites for the BFO. BLM will consider applications for new communications facilities and limit those uses to the designated sites. **Maps 16a-16c** show the existing sites. Any new facilities to be located within the designated sites will be required to conform to the existing site plans and the designated uses of sites identified in **Table 21**. Once the designated communications sites are filled to near capacity, new site location(s) may be authorized after site management plans and appropriate site-specific NEPA analyses are completed. (*Goals LR2, SE1, SE2*)
10. Access to and along right-of-way corridors and use areas necessary to maintain existing facilities and construct new facilities will be provided across public lands. Other uses of right-of-way corridors and use areas will be permitted to the extent that they do not interfere with or preclude the use of these locations for their intended purposes and are consistent with this Approved RMP. (*Goals LR2, SE1, SE2*)
11. New leases, permits, rights-of-way, and easements will be authorized in a manner consistent with meeting Land Health Standards and applicable Best Management Practices. Renewals of existing authorizations will be analyzed, and if required,

<b>Table 21</b>	
<b>Communication Sites and Locations in the BFO</b>	
<b>Communication Site</b>	<b>Legal Description (Principle Meridian, Montana)</b>
Boulder	T.6N., R.4W., Sec. 19, SE¼ NW¼
Bull Mountain	T.2N., R.3W., Sec. 18, SW¼ SE¼
Limestone Hills	T.6N., R.1E., Sec. 20, NE¼ NW¼
Montana City	T.9N., R.3W., Sec. 25, W½ NW¼
Mount Belmont	T.12N., R.6W., Sec. 34, Lot 9
Spokane Butte	T.9N., R.1W., Sec. 15, NW¼ NE¼
Toston	T.4N., R.3E., Sec. 8, SE¼ NW¼
Wickes	T.7N., R.4E., Sec. 28, Lot 10

special stipulations will be added to meet or move toward meeting Land Health Standards. The BLM will attempt to negotiate changes in existing authorizations where improvements could be made to meet or move toward meeting Land Health Standards. (*Goals LR2, SE1, SE2, SE4*)

**Allowable Uses – Withdrawals and Classifications (*Goals RMI, RM2, WR5, EM3*)**

A total of approximately 6,300 acres of land are currently withdrawn from locatable mineral entry primarily for Public Water Reserves in the vicinity of the Chain of Lakes on the Missouri River (with some exceptions). These withdrawals do also include the Devil’s Elbow (142 acres), Holter Lake (80 acres) and Ringing Rocks (160 acres) recreation areas, totaling 382 acres that will remain in effect in order to safeguard infrastructural investments; protect resource values; and ensure quality visitor use experiences.

**Actions – Withdrawals and Classifications**

1. In compliance with Section 204(1) of FLPMA, existing withdrawals will be reviewed prior to the end of the withdrawal period or as otherwise required by law to determine if they should be extended, revoked, or modified. Withdrawals no longer needed, in whole or in part, for the purpose for which they were withdrawn will be recommended for revocation or modification. Other agency requests for withdrawal relinquishments, extensions, or modifications will be considered. (*Goal LR2*)
2. Department of Interior and BLM policy will be followed in the consideration of any new withdrawals. New withdrawal proposals will be considered where land would transfer from one federal agency to another or where resource values or agency investments are best protected by withdrawal. Lands proposed to be withdrawn should be the minimum area required for the intended use and where applicable alternative prescriptions such as the use of rights-of-way,

leases, permits, or cooperative agreements are inadequate to protect the resource values. (*Goal LR2*)

3. Priority for new withdrawals will be all developed recreation sites, followed by new acquisitions through exchange, purchase or donation, and in ACECs to protect resources and values as needed, in accordance with current withdrawal and mineral policy. (*Goals LR2, RM2, AC1*)
4. A Legislative Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared by the Department of Army, in cooperation with the BFO, for the withdrawal of approximately 20,000 acres of BLM land in the Limestone Hills west of Townsend. These lands were segregated from the public land laws by the Federal Register Notice of August 13, 2007, and are not currently open to surface entry or mining for a period of two years from the date of publication of the notice. Congressional action resulting from this proposal/Legislative Environmental Impact Statement will subsequently amend this Approved RMP. (*Goal LR2*)
5. Land classifications, as “de facto” withdrawals, will be reviewed to determine if they should be continued or terminated. Any remaining Classification and Multiple Use Act retention classifications will be terminated. (*Goal LR2*)
6. All new classifications will comply with the requirements of 43 CFR 1600 and criteria in 43 CFR 2400. There is a “Recreation and Public Purpose” classification on 200 acres at the old Deep Creek Ski Area in T2N, R12W, Section 20: E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ . This area is no longer being used for recreation purposes; therefore this classification will be terminated and opened by publication of a Notice of Realty Action. (*Goal LR2*)
7. The Last Chance Handgunners at Boulder have expressed interest in a patent, under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, to their shooting range in T6N, R5W, Section 24: Lot 2 and Section 25: NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ . This parcel has already been classified as suitable for R&PP lease. This R&PP classification will be revised to allow for R&PP patent. (*Goals LR2, SE2*)

**Allowable Uses – Land Ownership Adjustment**  
(*Goals LRI, LR2, WF4, WF5, RM2, WSAI, WSRI, NTI*)

Lands identified for retention and disposal are displayed on **Maps 17a-17c**. Approximately 299,104 acres are in the retention category. These are lands that are generally not subject to land ownership adjustments. High priority lands for retention and potential future acquisition by the BLM include those in and immediately adjacent to special designation areas

(ACECs, WSRs, WSAs, National Trail Corridors, SRMAs, and recreation sites) as well as habitat for priority and special status species. The goal of potential acquisitions in these areas will be to enhance the following attributes: resource values identified for the area, public access to and within the area, recreation opportunities that are compatible with the specific area, manageability of the area or sites, and wildlife habitat. Land acquisitions in these areas are considered to be consistent with this RMP and therefore plan amendments will not be required.

Approximately 8,741 acres of land are identified as available for disposal. These lands are available for exchange or sale, subject to the criteria described in **Appendix G** and project level NEPA analysis. Legal descriptions of these parcels are located in **Appendix G**. No Butte Field Office lands are suitable for disposal under the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA) of 2000. Lands leased or conveyed under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, will be classified for such disposal under Sec 7 of the Taylor Grazing Act (42 USC 315f) and 43 CFR 2400.

All right-of-way (ROW) holders shall be informed of the options pertaining to their ROW grant when the land encumbered by the grant is considered for disposal, which may be constrained by the legal authority of the proposed disposal. The ROW holder will have the following options:

- a) Maintain the ROW under its current terms and conditions, including expiration date (status quo). The patent would be issued “Subject To” the ROW, and the patentee would succeed to the interest of the United States, including administration of the ROW and the ability to collect future rent.
- b) Negotiate an easement with the prospective patentee that would become effective at the time of patent issuance.
- c) Submit an application to the BLM to amend the ROW, or portion thereof, to a perpetual easement (30-year term easement for Mineral Leasing Act [MLA] grants).

The BLM will administer the ROW grant according to option “a” above unless requested differently by the grant holder.

**Actions – Land Ownership Adjustment**

1. Land ownership adjustment refers to those actions that result in the disposal of BLM-administered land and/or the acquisition of non-federal land or interests. In this context, BLM land is categorized as either “retention” or “disposal”. Generally, lands in the retention category will be retained and managed by BLM and lands in the disposal category will be available for land ownership adjustment. Methods of adjustment include

exchanges, sales, transfers, fee acquisition, and donation. Land ownership adjustments will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Specific land ownership adjustment criteria developed for retention, disposal, and acquisition will be followed. (See **Appendix G**) (*Goals LR1, LR2, SE2, SE4*)

2. Public lands with high resource values will generally be retained in federal ownership. All proposed land ownership adjustment actions will be analyzed in project-specific environmental reviews. (*Goals LR1, LR2, SE4*)
3. Public access will be maintained or improved through all land ownership adjustment transactions. Land transfers to other public agencies will be considered where improved management efficiency would result. BLM lands could be made available for community expansion if there are no other lands available. (*Goals LR1, LR2, SE2*)
4. Direct purchase will be limited to cases where no practical alternatives exist and high public values will be acquired. Lands and interests in lands obtained with Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) appropriations will not be available for disposal by any means, nor will such lands be open to locatable or salable mineral entry. (*Goals LR1, LR2, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, SE4*)
5. The need to protect newly acquired lands will be considered as part of the analysis prior to acquisition. If withdrawn, acquired lands will be managed under the terms and conditions of the withdrawal. (*Goals LR1, SE4*)
6. Disposal parcels will be made available for all means of disposal (sale, exchange, R&PP, etc.). Some lands identified for disposal could be retained in public ownership based on site-specific application of the land ownership adjustment criteria. (See **Appendix G**) (*Goals LR1, LR2, SE1, SE2*)
7. In addition to meeting the disposal criteria, lands to be sold will meet the following disposal criteria from FLPMA:
  - Such land is difficult and uneconomic to manage as part of the public land base, and must not be suitable for management by another federal department or agency.
  - Such land was acquired for a specific purpose and must no longer be required for that or any other federal purpose.
  - Disposal of such tract will serve important public objectives, including but not limited to, expansion of communities and economic development, which cannot be achieved prudently or feasibly on land other than public

land and which outweigh other public objectives and values, including, but not limited to, recreation and scenic values, which would be served by maintaining such tract in federal ownership. (*Goals LR2, SE1, SE2*)

8. If, over the life of the plan, land status updates identify additional parcels administered by BLM, those lands will be managed in the same manner as adjacent parcels or those in the same vicinity in regard to retention or disposal. (*Goals LR2, SE1, SE2*)
9. Federal minerals underlying non-federal surface will generally be retained in federal ownership. However, an exchange of this type of mineral estate may be considered on a case-by-case basis if found to be in the public interest. The sale of this type of mineral interest under section 209(b) of FLPMA could be considered only if the requirements of the same were met. (*Goals LR2, SE1, SE2*)
10. No BLM lands in the BFO are suitable for Desert Land Entry. (*Goal LR2*)

#### **Actions - Access**

1. Access refers to the physical ability and legal right of the public, agency personnel, and authorized users to reach public land. BLM will acquire legal public access and administrative access to BLM land from willing landowners. Easement acquisition will be the predominant method of obtaining legal access. However, other methods of accomplishing this could include fee purchase, exchange, donation, reciprocal rights-of-way, and/or long-term land use agreements. If necessary, when BLM parcels are patented in land ownership adjustments, existing access could be retained using appropriate patent reservations. (*Goals LR2, RMI, SE2*)
2. BLM will follow specific access criteria outlined in **Appendix G** for obtaining new access and managing existing access to BLM administered lands. Acquisition efforts will be focused on those routes designated as “open” in travel plans that lack legal public access. (*Goals LR2, RMI, SE2*)

#### **Actions – Unauthorized Land Use**

1. BLM will abate realty-related unauthorized use through prevention, detection, and resolution. Unauthorized use of BLM administered land will be resolved through termination, short or long-term authorization, sale, or exchange as appropriate. (*Goal LR2*)
2. Resolution of trespasses will require settlement of trespass liabilities and reclamation of any resource damage. Resolution of trespasses will be conducted in accordance with 43 CFR 9230. (*Goal LR2*)

## ***Monitoring***

Monitoring of realty related land uses, including those for renewable energy development and military activities, shall be undertaken to assess compliance with requirements for mitigation, restoration of the lands, and other terms and conditions of the authorizing document. Monitoring of these types of activities typically involves inspection and photo documentation of the site. If deficiencies are noted during the inspection, the proponent is notified and corrective measures taken until compliance is achieved. Long-term land uses are frequently inspected during the initial construction phase. Once in operation, these land uses are inspected less frequently, concentrating monitoring efforts during periods of reconstruction, major maintenance, or land restoration activity. Development in sensitive areas, or activities with a high potential for greater than usual effects, would be inspected more frequently than those in less sensitive areas or those having less effect potential.

## **Energy and Minerals**

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.

### ***Goals***

**Goal EM1** – Ensure that federal minerals are available for energy and mineral exploration and development.

**Goal EM2** – Manage exploration and development of mineral resources and ensure they are conducted in an environmentally sound manner.

**Goal EM3** – Where possible, conserve significant or unique geological features.

### ***Management Actions***

#### **General**

1. All Energy and Minerals exploration, development, and production activities will be managed to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)
2. For all exploration and mining proposals BLM will ensure operations take all practical measures to maintain, protect, or minimize disturbances to resources. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)
3. Future changes to Endangered Species Act listings of species or occupied habitats may require changes or modifications of proposed activities to comply with the requirements of the act. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)

4. Where no alternative to road construction exists, roads (including roads in riparian areas) will be kept to the minimum necessary for the approved mineral activity. When no longer required for mineral or land management activities, roads and facilities will be closed and the landscape rehabilitated. (*Goal EM2*)

#### **Leasable Solid Minerals**

5. BLM will consider proposals for developing leasable minerals (coal, phosphate, sodium, potash, sulphur, oil shale, native asphalt, and solid and semi-solid bituminous rock) under the administration of the federal government on a case-by-case basis. Site-specific environmental analysis will be required to lease these minerals. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)

#### **Allowable Uses - Leasable Fluid Minerals (Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5)**

Approximately 632,045 acres are available for oil and gas leasing (**Maps 18a-18d**), subject to the stipulations in **Table 22** or Standard Lease Terms.

Approximately 28,774 acres in the six Wilderness Study Areas (Black Sage, Elkhorns Tack-on, Humbug Spires, Sheep Creek, Sleeping Giant, and Yellowstone Island) are unavailable for oil and gas leasing. None of the lands within the Sheep Creek, Black Sage, Sleeping Giant, Elkhorns Tack-on, Humbug Spires, or Yellowstone Island Wilderness Study Areas will be available for oil and gas leasing unless they are released from their existing status, at which point they will be managed under the conditions described in the Wilderness Study Area section of this Approved RMP. (*Goals EM2, WSA1, SE4*)

Lands available for oil and gas leasing will be subject to the stipulations listed in **Table 23**. Stipulations are a part of the lease only when environmental and planning records show the need for them. Three types of stipulations describe how lease rights are modified: no surface occupancy, timing limitation (seasonal restriction), and controlled surface use. (For descriptions, see **Appendix H**). Stipulations may be changed by application of waivers, exceptions, or modifications. The decision whether to grant waivers, exceptions, or modifications generally occurs during the Application for Permit to Drill approval process. Waivers are a permanent exemption from a lease stipulation. This occurs when the resource does not require the protection of stipulation. Exceptions are granted on a case-by-case basis. Each time the lessee applies for an exception, the resource objective of the stipulation must be met. Modifications are fundamental changes to the provisions of a lease stipulation either temporarily or for the term of the lease.

<b>Table 22</b> <b>Acres of Federal Mineral Estate Available or Not for Fluid Mineral Leasing</b>	
<b>Acres Available for Oil and Gas Leasing<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>632,045</b>
No Surface Occupancy	280,831
Timing Limitations	294,906
Controlled Surface Use	38,365
Standard Lease Terms	17,943
<b>Acres Unavailable for Oil and Gas Leasing</b>	<b>28,774</b>
Non-discretionary	28,774
Discretionary	0
1- Acreages by subcategory were calculated such that the sum of the subcategories adds up to the total available acres for leasing based on the following general concepts where multiple stipulations overlapped: No Surface Occupancy stipulations override and are more restrictive than Timing Limitations, Controlled Surface Use, and Standard Lease Terms. Timing Limitation stipulations override and are more restrictive than Controlled Surface Use and Standard Lease Terms. Controlled Surface Use stipulations override and are more restrictive than Standard Lease Terms.	

The BLM will authorize oil and gas leasing on available federal mineral estate lands. An oil and gas lease grants the lessee the right to explore for, extract, remove, and dispose of oil and gas deposits that may be found on the leased lands.

The lessee may exercise the rights conveyed by the lease, subject to lease terms and any lease stipulations (listed in **Table 23**), and permit approval requirements. On Bureau of Reclamation lands, in addition to the resource specific stipulations listed in **Table 23**, stipulations that are recommended by the Bureau of Reclamation will be used (see **Appendix H**).

**Actions - Leasable Fluid Minerals**

1. The terms of existing oil and gas leases will not be changed by the decisions in this document. When existing leases expire, subject areas will be managed for oil and gas according to the decisions reached in this document. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)
2. For federal oil and gas where the surface is managed by another federal agency, the BLM will consult with that agency before issuing leases. In areas where oil and gas development may conflict with other resources, the areas may be closed to leasing in accordance with decisions made from this document. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)

3. The BLM will allow for the lease of lands that are otherwise unavailable for leasing if oil and gas is being drained from such lands. If the unavailable lands were under the jurisdiction of another agency, leasing of such lands would only occur following consultation, and consent if necessary, from the surface managing agency. (*Goals EM1, SE1*)
4. Lands unavailable for leasing will be leased only if a state or fee well is proposed or completed within the same spacing unit, or if the lands are within a producing unit. These lands will be leased with a no surface occupancy and no subsurface occupancy stipulation without any waiver, modification or exception provisions. There will only be a paper transaction with no physical impacts on the unavailable lands. There will be no exploration or development (drilling or production) within the unavailable lands. After issuance of a lease, the lease will be committed to a communitization agreement and the United States will then receive revenue in proportion to its acreage interest as it bears to the entire acreage interest committed to the agreement. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)
5. Additional information can be provided to the lessee in the form of a lease notice. This notice does not place restrictions on lease operation, but does provide information about applicable laws and regulations, and the requirements for additional information to be supplied by the lessee. (*Goals EM1, EM2*)
6. New information may lead to changes in existing resource inventories. New use areas and resource locations may be identified, or use areas and resource locations that are no longer valid may be identified. These resources usually cover small areas requiring the same protection or mitigation as identified in this plan. Identification of new areas or removal of old areas that no longer have those resource values may affect geographic specificity of where stipulations apply, but the content of the stipulations proper will not be affected. Changes to the existing data inventory will be made without a plan amendment. In cases where the changes constitute a change in resource allocation outside the scope of this plan, a plan amendment will be required. (*Goals EM2, SE1, SE5*)
7. After lease issuance, the lessee may conduct lease operations with an approved permit. Proposed drilling and associated activities must be approved before beginning operations. The operator must file an Application for Permit to Drill or Sundry Notice that must be approved according to (1) lease stipulations, (2) Onshore Oil and Gas Orders, and (3) regulations and laws. (See **Appendix H**) (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)



**Table 23**  
**Lease Terms and Stipulations**

<b>Key</b>	
TL = Timing Limitation Stipulation	NSO = No Surface Occupancy Stipulation
CSU = Controlled Surface Use Stipulation	
Distances are enumerated and those equal to or greater than 100 are feet and those 3 or less are miles. Time periods are month/day.	
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Stipulation</b>
<b>Wildlife</b>	
Grizzly Bear – Recovery Zone	NSO
Grizzly Bear – Denning Habitat (Distribution Zone)	TL 4/1-6/30, 9/15-10/15
Gray Wolf Dens – NW MT Recovery Area	TL 4/15-6/30 1
Prairie Dog Towns	NSO
Sage Grouse Winter/Spring Range	TL 12/1-5/15
Sage Grouse Strutting Grounds (leks)	NSO ¼
Sage Grouse Breeding Habitat	TL 3/1-6/30 3
Wildlife Management Areas	NSO
Big Game Winter/Spring Range	TL 12/1-5/15
Elk Calving/Big Game Birthing Areas	TL 4/1-6/30
Bighorn Sheep Yearlong Range	TL 11/1-6/30
Bighorn Sheep Core Areas	NSO
Bald Eagle Nest Sites/Breeding Habitat	NSO ½ +
	TL 2/1-8/31 1
Raptor Breeding Territories (Golden eagle, Prairie falcon, Swainson’s Hawk)	TL 3/1-7/31 ½
Peregrine Falcon Nest Sites/Breeding Habitat	NSO 1
Ferruginous Hawk Breeding Territories	NSO ½
Threatened and Endangered Species	CSU
<b>Fisheries</b>	
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitat (90-99% pure)	NSO ½
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitat (99-100% pure)	NSO ½
Fluvial/Adfluvial Arctic Grayling Habitat	NSO ½
Bull Trout Habitat	NSO ½
Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Habitat (90-100% pure)	NSO ½
Streams with High Restoration Potential – Native Fish	NSO ½
Class 1 Fisheries (Blue Ribbon)	NSO ½

**Table 23  
Lease Terms and Stipulations**

**Key**

TL = Timing Limitation Stipulation  
CSU = Controlled Surface Use Stipulation

NSO = No Surface Occupancy Stipulation

Distances are enumerated and those equal to or greater than 100 are feet and those 3 or less are miles. Time periods are month/day.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Stipulation</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	
Developed Sites	NSO ¼
Special Recreation Management Areas	CSU
<b>Cultural and Paleontological Resources</b>	
Cultural and Paleontological Resources Inventory Requirement	CSU
National Register of Historic Places Eligible Properties/Districts and Paleontological Localities	NSO 300
Traditional Cultural Properties	NSO ½
<b>Visual Resources</b>	
VRM Class II, III & IV Areas	CSU
<b>Vegetation, Wetlands, Riparian and Water Quality</b>	
Wetlands, Floodplains and Riparian Areas	NSO
Special Status Plant Habitats	CSU
Known or Discovered Special Status Plants or Populations	NSO ¼
Municipal Watersheds	NSO
<b>Soils</b>	
Areas of mass wasting, unstable land areas, slopes >20 percent on Boulder Batholith Soils or >30 percent on non-Boulder Batholith Soils	CSU
<b>Trails, Rivers and Special Designations</b>	
Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (Marysville)	NSO ½
Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail	NSO ½
Rivers Suitable for WSR Designation	NSO ½
<b>Lands and Realty</b>	
R&PPs and 2920 Authorizations	NSO
Lands Acquired with Land and Water Conservation Funds	NSO

**Geothermal Energy**

8. Lands in the Decision Area will be available for geothermal leasing, unless located within wilderness or WSAs or in instances where it is determined that issuing the lease will cause unnecessary or undue degradation to public lands or resources. A site-specific environmental analysis will be prepared should interest be expressed in exploring for or developing geothermal resources in the Decision Area. This analysis will address the application of stipulations and develop any additional mitigating measures over and above the lease stipulations required. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)
9. Stipulations developed in this document for oil and gas leases will be applied to any geothermal lease issued if appropriate. Geothermal exploration and production activity is sufficiently different from oil and gas that the stipulations developed for oil and gas may not be appropriate and could be modified. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)
10. Direction in the December 2008 Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan Amendments for Geothermal Leasing in the Western United States (USDI –BLM 2008) will be followed. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)

**Geophysical Exploration**

11. The BLM will manage oil and gas geophysical activity as per regulations found at 43 CFR Subparts 3150, 3151, and 3154. Additional guidance is found in BLM Manual Section 3150 and Handbook 3150. Geophysical operations will be managed in accordance with the “Geophysical Operations” portion of the oil and gas section of **Appendix H**. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)
12. The BLM will review Notices of Intent to Conduct Geophysical Exploration in the Decision Area and develop appropriate mitigation measures so as not to create unnecessary or undue degradation. A site-specific environmental analysis will be prepared for each NOI filed. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE5*)

**Allowable Uses - Locatable Minerals**

A total of approximately 6,300 acres of land are withdrawn from locatable mineral entry (with some exceptions primarily for Public Water Reserves). These lands will remain withdrawn. (*Goal WR5*)

The Devil’s Elbow and Holter Lake recreation areas totaling 171 acres located on Hauser Lake will continue to be withdrawn due to their high level of visitation, development, and exclusive use for concentrated recreation activities. These recreation areas include four developed sites (Devil’s Elbow, Clark’s Bay, Two Camps Vista, and Holter Lake). (*Goals RM2, SE5*)

The Ringing Rocks area totaling 160 acres will continue to be withdrawn from mineral entry in order to protect this unique geological feature. (*Goal EM3*)

Approximately 11,200 acres of land acquired with Land and Water Conservation Funds since development of the Headwaters RMP and Dillon Management Framework Plan will not be opened to locatable or salable mineral entry. (*Goals WF2, WF4, WF5, WR1, SE4*)

**Actions – Locatable Minerals**

1. BLM will provide opportunities for mineral exploration and development. (*Goals EM1, SE1*)
2. BLM will ensure accessibility to mineralized areas for exploration and development. (*Goals EM1, TM1*)
3. No casual use areas of concern or suction dredge use areas are identified or designated. (*Goal EM2*)
4. BLM will strive to provide for timely permit evaluation and processing of federal energy and solid mineral exploration and development proposals. (*Goal EM1*)
5. A Plan of Operations will always be required (instead of a Notice) when there are lands or waters known to contain federally proposed or listed threatened or endangered species or their proposed or designated critical habitat, unless BLM allows for other action under a formal land-use plan or threatened or endangered species recovery plan. Land tracts where resource values (i.e., sensitive status or priority species, visual corridors, adjacent land restrictions, substantial cultural resource sites and fossil localities, etc.) may require special measures to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation during mineral exploration (and geophysical exploration) and development will be identified. (*Goals EM1, EM2, WF4*)
6. BLM will develop and implement measures to prevent unnecessary and undue degradation from exploration, mining, and reclamation activities. BLM will also develop conditions of approval and implementation guidelines (BMPs) to minimize impacts to natural resources including significant cultural resource sites and fossil localities caused by locatable mineral development. (*Goals EM1, EM2, WF2, WF3, WF4, WF5, CPI, SE1*)
7. Reclamation and restoration activities will be monitored to determine effectiveness of the practices. (*Goals EM2, SE1*)
8. For locatable minerals, especially placer mining operations, reclamation activities will be required to restore stream channels and riparian habitats to functioning condition as close to pre-mining

conditions as possible. (*Goals EM2, RV1, RV2, WF3, WR1, WR3, WR4*)

9. As information becomes available, known areas of geological hazards (for example landslide prone areas, avalanche areas, rock fall areas and unstable ground) will be mapped. (*Goal HM1*)
10. In addition to the approximately 6,300 acres of existing withdrawals from mineral entry previously described, approximately 198 acres are proposed for withdrawal from mineral entry upon completion of withdrawal actions. These acres are in highly visited and developed recreation sites that are exclusively used and contain substantial financial investments by the BLM (**Table 24, Map 10**). (*Goal RM2*)

Site Name	Approximate Acres
Departure Point	5
Divide Bridge	8
Divide Campground	17
French Bar	44
Holter Dam	13
Log Gulch	39
Spokane Bay	8
White Sandy	64
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>198</b>

**Actions - Salable Minerals**

1. BLM will dispose of salable minerals on unpatented mining claims only for a public purpose when no reasonable alternative exists. Salable mineral sites will have an approved mining and reclamation plan and an environmental analysis prior to being opened. Mineral material will be sold at a fair market value to the public, but will be free to state, county, or other local governments when used for public projects. Mineral material sales will be processed on a case-by-case basis. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE1, SE2*)
2. The BLM will continue to authorize the purchase of salable minerals (common varieties of sand, stone, gravel, pumice, cinders, clay, and petrified wood) from the federal government through a contract of sale (by the ton or cubic yard) or a free-use permit unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise. Extraction of materials from previously disturbed sites will be encouraged. All development and

operating impacts to natural resources and local residences will be minimized. (*Goals EM1, EM2, SE2*)

**Monitoring**

Monitoring for locatable, leasable, and salable energy and minerals exploration and development will be designed case-specifically to provide compliance with applicable laws, regulations, policy, and site specific plans. In addition, monitoring helps to provide compatibility with other resource management objectives, and other resource uses, and helps to provide for protection of public lands. Inspections of minerals operations or activities may also be conducted in response to issues that may be identified by other resource specialists conducting field work.

**Leasable Fluid Minerals**

Periodic field inspections of leasable mineral activities will be done to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, conditions of leases, and the requirements of approved exploration and development plans, applications for permit to drill, and sundry notices.

The extent of oil and gas drilling/production activities in the planning area (including non-federal) will be monitored based on surface area of ground disturbance. Total gross surface disturbance and net surface disturbance from all drilling (regardless of mineral ownership) will be tracked, based on the following formulas:

- Gross surface disturbance = current (existing) disturbance + new disturbance
- Net surface disturbance = current (existing) disturbance + new disturbance – reclaimed acreage.

These acreage figures will be compared to the total acres of disturbance anticipated in the RMP as a result of projected well drilling and field development.

In addition, the total number of wells drilled will be tracked for comparison with the number forecast in the RMP.

Additional analysis and/or amendment of the plan will be considered if the net surface disturbance acreage or number of wells exceeds the total forecast in the RMP.

An accurate accounting of production will also be tracked on producing leases. Total acres of new disturbance, total acres reclaimed, and production numbers from producing federal leases will be tracked.

**Locatable Minerals**

For locatable minerals, monitoring of activities on mining claims shall be conducted primarily to provide compliance with the 43 CFR 3802/3809/3715 regulations and site-specific plans. These regulations allow locatable minerals activities on public lands while preventing unnecessary or undue degradation; require

reclamation of disturbed areas; and provide for coordination with other agencies. The 43 CFR 3809 regulations state that the BLM may inspect minerals exploration and mining operations at any time. Those regulations further establish minimum inspection frequencies for mining operations as follows: at least four times each year, the BLM shall inspect all operations that are using cyanide or other leachate, or where there is significant potential for acid rock drainage. There is no stated frequency for inspections for all other activities. According to BLM policy, activities in sensitive areas or activities with a high potential for greater than usual effects shall be inspected more often than annually.

For leasable minerals, inspections shall be conducted to ensure compliance with 43 CFR 3100/3200/3500 regulations and site specific plans. If mineral production occurs, inspections will show: (1) an accurate accounting of material removed; (2) proper compensation to the federal government; and (3) protection of the environment, public health, and safety. Activities in sensitive areas or activities with a high potential for greater than usual effects shall be inspected more frequently, according to BLM policy.

### **Salable Minerals**

Inspections of saleable minerals operations shall be conducted primarily to determine compliance with 43 CFR 3600 regulations and site-specific plans. Where mineral production occurs, inspection will show: (1) an accurate accounting of materials removed; (2) proper compensation to the federal government; (3) protection of the environment, public health, and safety; and (4) identification and resolution of salable mineral trespass. Activities in sensitive areas or with a high potential for greater than usual effects shall be inspected more frequently, according to BLM policy.

## **Abandoned Mine Lands (AML)**

### ***Goals***

**Goal AM1** – Reclaim AML sites on public land to improve water quality, plant communities, and diverse fish and wildlife habitat.

**Goal AM2** – Reduce and/or eliminate risks to human health from hazardous mine openings.

**Goal AM3** – Protect historic resources and wildlife habitat commonly associated with AML sites.

### ***Management Actions***

1. To the extent possible on BLM lands, the BLM will strive to meet state and federal water quality standards in watersheds impacted by historic mining. (*Goals AM1, AM2, AM3, RV1, RV2, WF3, WR1*)

2. To the extent possible on BLM lands, the BLM will strive to meet state and federal air quality standards in the interest of protecting human health potentially impacted by fugitive dust emissions. (*Goals AM1, AM2, AM3, AQ1*)
3. Closures of dangerous inactive and abandoned mine sites will be designed to reduce the risks to human health and safety, restore the environment, and protect geological and cultural resources. (*Goals AM1, AM2, AM3, CP1, CP2, SE4*)
4. BLM will assess levels of risk at AML sites and prioritize them for reclamation based on standardized risk assessment. Reclamation will be implemented at the highest risk sites first. (*Goals AM1, AM2, AM3*)
5. Where deemed appropriate by BLM personnel, the BLM will restore severely impacted soils and watersheds as closely as possible to pre-disturbed conditions that support productive plant communities and ensure properly functioning watersheds. (*Goals AM1, AM3, SR2, WR1, WR3, WR4*)
6. Operation, maintenance, and evaluation activities will be conducted in a manner to ensure the effectiveness of the selected remediation. (*Goals AM1, AM2, AM3*)
7. All resource activities will be required to reclaim and restore AML or hazard reduction sites to the extent necessary to protect work performed on the site. (*Goals AM1, AM2, AM3*)

### ***Monitoring***

Abandoned Mine Lands reclamation and remediation sites will be monitored to protect and safeguard human health, prevent/restore environmental damage and to limit BLM's liability. This monitoring includes: conducting periodic well, soil and water sampling; monitoring for revegetation of reclaimed areas; monitoring of dust control, soil erosion and other signs of potential impacts to human health and the environment.

Reclamation and mitigation work done on abandoned mine sites will be monitored by the AML program to insure compliance with laws and regulations. An inventory of known abandoned mine hazards, reclamation efforts and monitoring results will be maintained in the BLM's site cleanup database.

Monitoring at AML sites may be conducted:

- 1) prior to reclamation as required;
- 2) in watersheds to assess impacts as required;
- 3) at reclaimed mine sites and repositories;
- 4) as part of operations and maintenance;
- 5) in collaboration with other agencies and partners.

## Hazardous Materials Management

### Goal

**Goal HM1** – Minimize threats and reduce risks to the public and environment from hazardous materials or sites.

### Management Actions

1. BLM will comply with all appropriate laws and regulations regarding hazardous materials. Disposal of hazardous materials on public lands will not be permitted. When the use or storage of hazardous materials is authorized (i.e. in mining operations or other types of commercial activities), special stipulations will be applied to comply with appropriate laws, regulations, and policies. In the event of hazardous materials incidents on public land, standard operating procedures will be used to respond. Cleanups and reclamation will be conducted in accordance with the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan and site-specific NEPA decisions. (*Goals HM1, RV1, RV2, WF3, WR1, SE4*)
2. BLM will promote and support the appropriate use and recycling of hazardous materials in public facilities and on public land to prevent or minimize the generation and disposal of hazardous wastes. (*Goals HM1, SE4*)
3. BLM will minimize and remediate hazardous materials spills or incidents. (*Goal HM1*)
4. Environmental Site Assessments will be conducted for land acquisitions, land disposals, and for rights-of-way if applicable. Land uses will be authorized and managed to reduce the occurrence and severity of hazardous materials incidences on public land. (*Goals HM1, LR1, LR2*)
5. BLM will assess level of risk at hazard sites and conduct remediation at highest priority sites that are the greatest risks to the public and environment. (*Goal HM1*)
6. Pollutants, such as flammable liquids and lubricants, will be prevented from entering streams by storing outside of riparian areas, having a spill prevention and control plan, and not allowing refueling within riparian areas (with the exception of permitted mining activities, fire suppression activities, reclamation work and chainsaw re-fueling). (*Goals HM1, RV1, RV2, WF3, WR1, SE4*)

### Monitoring

Clean-up sites will be monitored to protect and safeguard human health, prevent environmental damage, restore

environmental functions and limit the BLM's liability. Monitoring will include such activities as conducting periodic water and soil sampling, monitoring for revegetation of reclaimed areas, dust and erosion, and other signs of potential impacts to human health and environmental harm. Monitoring of specific sites or project areas will continue until there is no threat to human health or the environment.

An inventory of hazardous materials sites, clean-up efforts and monitoring results will be maintained in the BLM's site cleanup database.

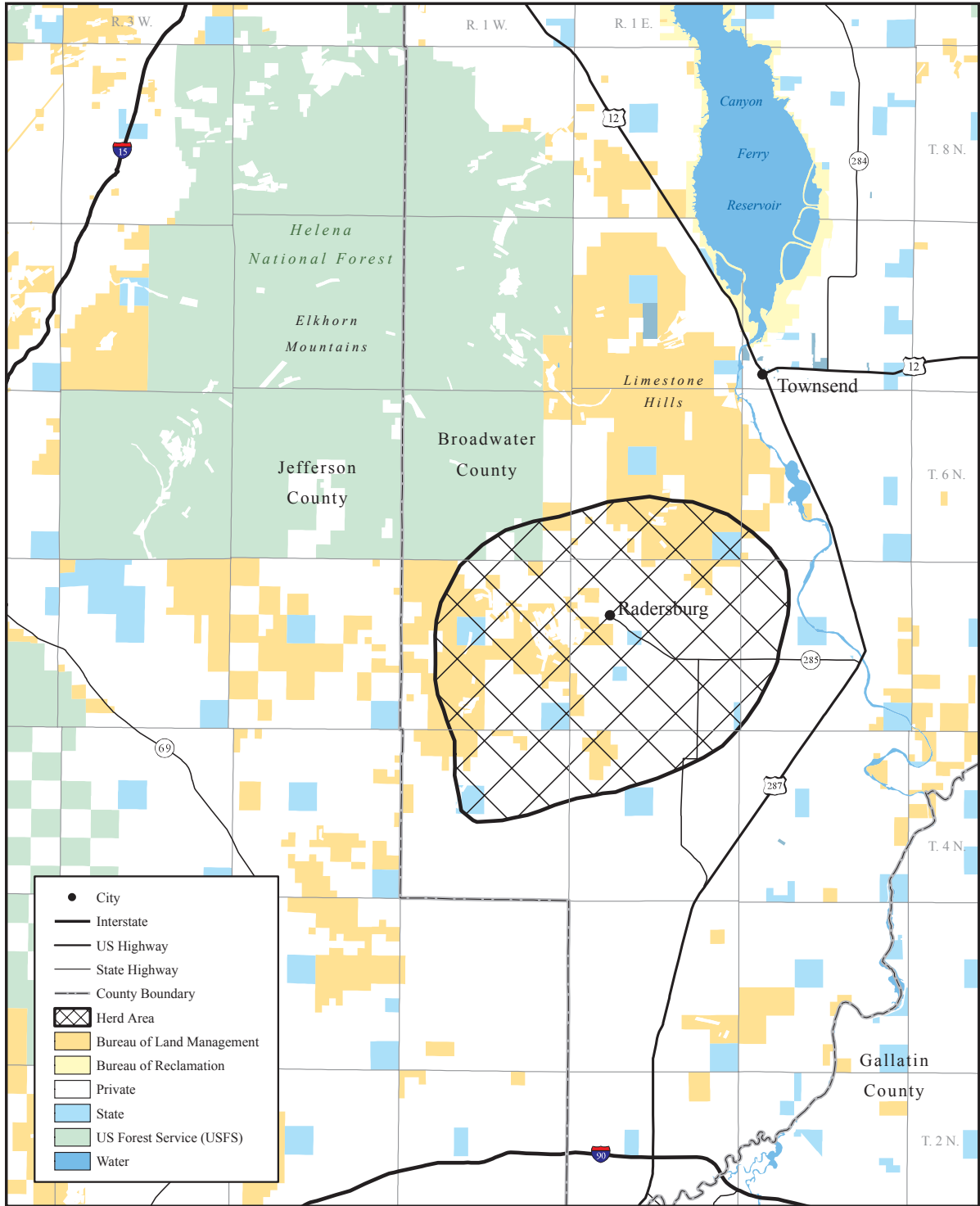
The number of sites (if any) will be tracked and reported as necessary.

## Wild Horses and Burros

Herd areas are public lands identified as being habitat used by wild horses and burros at the time of passage of the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act (Act). At the time of the passage of the Act, a Wild Horse Herd Area called the Devils Fence Herd Area was designated within the Planning Area. This herd area is between Townsend and Radersburg (**Map 19**).

The herd area is predominantly private and state lands intermingled with BLM and USFS lands dispersed in a fragmented manner throughout the area. Of the approximately 69,725 acres in the Devils Fence Herd Area, there are 49,592 acres of private lands (71 percent); 16,231 acres of BLM (23 percent); 2,868 acres of state land (4 percent); 1,032 acres of USFS land (2 percent), and 2 acres of local government land. Additionally, several fences partition this area among the many landowners which further inhibits the free roaming nature of said horses. This area has not been used by, or managed to support wild horses since 1977 due to habitat limitations and land ownership patterns. In 1977 the area was closed to wild horse use and twelve wild horses were gathered and removed from the Devils Fence area in compliance with the Act. Conditions have changed little since 1977 when this herd was eliminated.

Under the current situation as well as the foreseeable future, the Devils Fence Herd Area is not conducive to long-term maintenance and management of wild horses that would result in healthy self-sustaining wild horses in a thriving natural ecological balance. In order to manage for wild horses in this area, private land owners would have to request that large portions of their private property be made available to the BLM, and private fences would have to be removed to allow animals to freely roam between land owners. As a result, the Devils Fence Herd Area will not be managed for wild horse use, and will not be designated herd management area (HMA) status.



0 10 Miles  
1 inch equals 5 miles

Map generated by the Butte Field Office in January 2009

UTM Zone 12 North (NAD 1983) Projection

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.



**Map 19: Devils Fence Herd Area**

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



Butte Field Office  
Approved Resource Management Plan

## Social and Economic Environment

### Goals

**Goal SE1** – Provide opportunities for economic benefits while minimizing adverse impacts on resources and resource uses.

**Goal SE2** – 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.

**Goal SE3** – 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.

**Goal SE4** – Protect visual quality, wildlife habitats, and recreation opportunities to sustain non-market values.

**Goal SE5** – Make resource commodities available to provide a sustainable flow of economic benefits within the capability of the ecosystem.

### Management Actions

1. Identified Special Recreation Management Areas and the remaining Extensive Recreation Management Area will be managed for identified user markets, activities, and experience levels. (*Goals SE1, SE2, RM1, RM4*)
2. Collaborative and/or stewardship processes will be used in the analysis and treatment of all resources and uses, as possible. (*Goals SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE5*)
3. BLM will provide opportunities for traditional and nontraditional uses of forest and forest products by incorporating sound ecological principles while contributing to the economic stability of the community. (*Goals TT1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE5, FW2*)
4. Use of new and developing technologies and industries will be encouraged in achieving healthy forest, stewardship, biomass utilization, and fuel management goals. (*Goals SE1, SE2, SE3, SE5*)

### Monitoring

#### Economic Conditions

Increasing human population and changing development and land use will influence the demand for nearby public land and mineral uses as well. Public land use decisions and policies in the RMP that are appropriate today may need to be revisited in the future.

Evaluations and monitoring are appropriate to determine whether resource management issues, land use plan decisions, and NEPA analyses are still valid and whether the plan is being implemented. Monitoring may help determine if decisions remain relevant to current issues, decisions are effective in achieving desired outcomes, and

decisions need to be revised. Monitoring demographic, economic, and land use trends is appropriate for the Butte RMP. The following indicators will be monitored whenever RMP evaluations occur (approximately every five years).

- **Demographic Trends:** Substantial changes in local population may result in corresponding changes in resource management issues, BLM land uses, and related economic conditions. Local population levels and trends may be monitored by checking the Economic Profile System, IMPLAN, or other credible sources.
- **BLM Land Uses:** Substantial changes in annual levels of BLM land uses (e.g. recreation use, livestock grazing, timber harvest, fuels treatments, fire suppression efforts, rights-of-way), may result in substantial local economic impacts on attributes such as employment, income, and public revenues. These BLM land use changes may be monitored by checking use levels shown in BLM annual reports, authorizations, annual revenues to the state and counties, and other sources. If information on these annual BLM land use levels is available, IMPLAN/FEAST modeling can be used to identify the current role of BLM-related contributions to the area economy for employment and income, i.e. BLM as a percent of total for each major industrial sector.
- **Private Land Developments:** Five major trends in rural development that may influence BLM land/mineral uses and management policies under the Butte RMP are:
  - Rural homes tend to be concentrated near water and on highly productive soils.
  - Development of remote home sites encourages conversion of nearby natural areas.
  - Natural amenities, such as rivers, vistas, and protected public lands attract growth.
  - High amenity towns are more likely to attract nearby rural development.
  - The strongest driver of growth is the location of transportation infrastructure and services.

A related planning concern is that sprawling development, especially “leap frog” subdivisions constructed away from existing development, encourages further development of nearby natural areas. This occurs because the infrastructure and services that accompany “leap frog” subdivisions facilitate further development of nearby land. If natural areas on private lands in the region are converted to development, or if public access to undeveloped private lands decreases substantially in the future, more demands may be placed on public lands.



Private land developments may be monitored by checking the Montana Department of Revenue Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal System (CAMA) database (to identify density of rural housing developments) and help determine whether conditions in the planning area have changed to a degree that warrants modification of the RMP.

### **Social Conditions**

The social goal for the RMP is to “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.” Social monitoring needs to evaluate how successfully this social goal has been met.

Implementation monitoring applies directly to resource protection and resource use programs and activities. However, monitoring for social changes could occur during effectiveness monitoring to see if the implemented activities have had the desired consequences. This type of social monitoring is cited under the individual resource or resource use. For instance, under Travel Management and Access, Implementation Monitoring, Social Objectives and Indicators are included. The major example where social monitoring will be useful is in assessing whether the travel plans have successfully reduced or minimized conflict between motorized and non-motorized users.

Information from social monitoring could also be helpful for the five year RMP evaluations. The BLM may evaluate how successfully the social vision has been met by holding focus groups or meetings with the different groups/interested parties that were addressed in the social effects analysis and assessing the satisfaction of these groups/parties with the plan implementation. These groups/interested parties include: timber and logging interests; ranching/livestock permittee interests; recreation interests; commercial outfitter and guide interests; groups/individuals who give a high priority to resource protection; and groups/individuals who give a high priority to resource use.

Social monitoring of data that is routinely collected could also be helpful in the five year RMP evaluations. Relevant information would include demographic data (such as population and migration) and economic data (such as changes in the work force), as discussed under the economic monitoring section. These data, along with the information from groups/interested individuals, could indicate whether there were changes in the planning area that indicate the need for BLM to revisit planning decisions.

## **Environmental Justice (EJ)**

### ***Goal***

**Goal EJ1**– Identify and remediate to the extent possible disproportionate negative effects to minority or low income populations per Executive Order 12898 – “Federal Action to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations”.

### ***Management Action***

1. BLM will evaluate and disclose whether actions would place a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences on any particular populations covered by the Executive Order, and where practical, avoid such consequences. (*Goal EJI*)

### ***Monitoring***

Potential changes in Environmental Justice populations within the RMP planning area will be tracked with information available from the State of Montana’s Census and Economic Information Center. These data, along with other information from groups/interested individuals as described above, could indicate whether there were changes in the Planning Area that indicate the need for BLM to revisit planning decisions.

## **Tribal Treaty Rights**

### ***Goal***

**Goal TT1** – Accommodate treaty and legal rights of Native American groups in management of public lands. (Tribal treaties affecting the Decision Area are contained in **Appendix F**)

### ***Management Action***

1. BLM will notify and consult with tribes on BLM actions. Consultation and coordination will be conducted on a government to government basis with federally recognized tribes. (*Goal TT1*)

### ***Monitoring***

A minimum of one "face-to-face" project coordination meeting with historically affiliated tribal representatives will be conducted annually. Additional project-specific coordination will be conducted as necessary, particularly for projects involving activities such as vegetation treatments, land exchanges, and oil and gas development, with notification by mail and telephone conversation to determine additional consultation needs. Consultation and "government-to-government" meetings will also be conducted as requested by BLM or appropriate tribal representatives. Contact information for the appropriate tribal representatives will also be maintained on the Field Office project notification mailing lists.

## MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Plan implementation is a continuous process occurring over the life of the resource management plan that will consider changing circumstances and new information through monitoring. The goal is to maintain a dynamic resource management plan that is evaluated and amended if necessary on an issue-by-issue basis.

The implementation and monitoring process for the Butte Field Office involves five major steps: planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and adjustments, as necessary. Planning involves a great amount of time and resources to identify issues and management opportunities to address those issues. During the planning process, the scope of land use planning issues is identified and management goals, objectives and actions are defined to address the issues. Once the planning process is completed, decisions are implemented, monitored, and evaluated over a period of time to determine if goals are being met and if management actions are achieving the desired objective or standard. Results of monitoring are documented and communicated to appropriate parties, and management objectives and actions are modified based on results, if necessary.

### PLANNING

The Resource Management Plan was approved once the Record of Decision was signed in April 2009.

The BLM expects that new information gathered from field inventories and assessments, research, other agency studies, and other sources will update baseline data or support new management techniques, best management practices, and scientific principles. To the extent that such new information or actions address issues covered in the plan, the BLM will integrate the data through plan maintenance.

The BLM regulation in 43 CFR 1610.5-4 provides that land use plan decisions and supporting components can be maintained to reflect minor changes in data. Maintenance is limited to further refining, documenting, or clarifying a previously approved decision incorporated in the plan. Maintenance must not expand the scope of resource uses or restrictions or change the terms, conditions, and decisions of the Approved RMP. Some examples of maintenance actions include:

- Correcting minor data, typographical, mapping, or tabular data errors;
- Refining baseline information as a result of new inventory data (e.g., refining the known distribution or habitat of special status species or adjusting the boundary of a fire management unit based on updated fire regime condition class inventory);

- Applying an existing oil and gas lease stipulation to a new area prior to a lease sale based on new inventory data (e.g., applying an existing protective stipulation for sage grouse to a newly discovered sage grouse lek not previously known or in existence at the time of finalization of the Approved RMP).

Plan maintenance updates will be documented and reported as needed. Plan maintenance does not require formal public involvement, interagency coordination, or the NEPA analysis required for making new land use plan decisions.

Land use plan decisions are changed through either a plan amendment or a plan revision. The process for conducting plan amendments is basically the same as the land use planning process used in developing RMPs. The primary difference is that circumstances may allow for completing a plan amendment through the environmental assessment (EA) process, rather than through an EIS. Plan amendments (43 CFR 1610.5-5) change one or more of the terms, conditions, or decisions of an approved land use plan. Plan amendments are most often prompted by the need to consider a proposal or action that does not conform to the plan; implement new or revised policy that changes land use plan decisions; respond to new, intensified, or changed uses on BLM land; and consider significant new information from resource assessments, monitoring, or scientific studies that change land use plan decisions.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the resource management plan (RMP) begins once the Record of Decision and Approved RMP for the Proposed RMP/Final EIS is signed.

Decisions made through the RMP planning process are implemented over a period of time. Some of the decisions are immediate and go into effect with the Record of Decision. These include decisions such as resource-specific management prescriptions and lands available for oil and gas leasing. Some decisions will be implemented after a site-specific environmental review or NEPA process is completed. Examples include range improvements, development of recreation sites, vegetation management treatments, or approval of an application for permit to drill a natural gas well.

Any future proposals or management actions will be reviewed against the Approved RMP to determine if the proposal would be in conformance with the RMP. While the Final EIS for the Butte RMP provides the compliance with NEPA for the broad-scale decisions to be made in the Record of Decision, it does not replace the requirement to comply with NEPA for implementation actions. Proposed actions fall into one of five categories: (1) actions that are exempt from

NEPA; (2) actions that are categorically excluded; (3) actions that are covered by an existing NEPA environmental document; (4) actions that require preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) to determine if an environmental impact statement (EIS) is needed; or (5) actions that require preparation of an EIS. The NEPA procedural, documentation, and public involvement requirements are different for each category.

Activity level planning will address any proposed new activities and long-term permitted activities that need to be brought into compliance with plan decisions, subject to valid existing rights. Monitoring of these activities will then determine the effectiveness of applying the land use plan direction. Where land use plan actions or best management practices are not effective, modifications could occur without amendment or revision of the plan as long as assumptions and impacts disclosed in the analysis remain valid and broad-scale goals and objectives are not changed. This approach uses on-the-ground monitoring, review of scientific information, and consideration of practical experience and common sense to adjust management and modify implementation of the plan to reach the desired outcome.

As part of this process, the BLM will review management actions and the plan periodically to determine whether the objectives set forth in this document are being met. Where they are not being met, the BLM will consider adjustments of appropriate scope. Where the BLM considers taking or approving actions which will alter or not conform to overall direction of the plan, the BLM will prepare a plan amendment and environmental analysis of appropriate scope.

In addition, during the life of the Approved RMP, the BLM expects that new information gathered from field inventories and assessments, research, other agency studies, and other sources will update baseline data or support new management techniques, best management practices, and scientific principles. To the extent that such new information or actions address issues covered in the plan, the BLM will integrate the data through plan maintenance.

## **Public Involvement in Plan Implementation**

The BLM will continue to actively seek the views of the public, using techniques such as news releases and mass mailings to ask for participation and to inform the public of new and ongoing project proposals, site-specific planning, and opportunities and timeframes for comment. The public is encouraged to contact the BLM (Butte Field Office, 106 North Parkmont, Butte, Montana 59701) and discuss projects or issues they are interested in with appropriate BLM personnel. The

public may also contact the Butte Field Office by calling (406) 533-7600.

The BLM will also continue to coordinate, both formally and informally, with the numerous federal and state agencies, Native American tribal governments, local agencies, and officials interested and involved in the management of BLM lands in the Decision Area.

## **MONITORING**

Monitoring is the repeated measurement of activities and conditions over time. Monitoring data gathered over time is examined and used to draw conclusions on whether management actions are meeting stated objectives, and if not, why. Conclusions are then used to make recommendations on whether to continue current management or what changes need to be made in management practices to meet objectives.

Implementation monitoring determines whether planned activities have been implemented in the manner prescribed by the plan. This monitoring documents BLM's progress toward full implementation of the land use plan decision. There are no specific thresholds or indicators required for this type of monitoring.

Effectiveness monitoring also is used to determine if the implementation of activities has achieved the desired goals and objectives. This requires knowledge of the objectives established in the RMP as well as indicators that can be measured. Indicators are established by technical specialists in order to address specific questions, and thus avoid collection of unnecessary data. Success is measured against the benchmark of achieving desired future conditions established by the plan.

Validation monitoring may be used to ascertain whether a cause-and-effect relationship exists among management activities or resources being managed. It confirms whether the predicted results occurred and if assumptions and models used to develop the plan are correct. This type of monitoring is often done by contract with another agency, academic institution, or other entity, and is usually expensive and time consuming since results are not known for many years.

Regulations at 43 CFR 1610.4-9 require that the proposed plan establish intervals and standards, as appropriate, for monitoring and evaluation of the plan, based on the sensitivity of the resource decisions involved. Progress in meeting the plan objectives and adherence to the management framework established by the plan is reviewed periodically. CEQ regulations implementing NEPA state that agencies may provide for monitoring to assure that their decisions are carried out and should do so in important cases (40 CFR 1505.2(c)). To meet these requirements, the BLM will

prepare periodic reports on the implementation of the RMP.

## **PLAN EVALUATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**

Evaluation is a process in which the plan and monitoring data are reviewed to see if management goals and objectives are being met and if management direction is sound.

As part of this process, the BLM will review management actions and the plan periodically to determine whether the objectives set forth in this document are being met. Where they are not being met, the BLM will consider adjustments of appropriate scope. Where the BLM considers taking or approving actions which will alter or not conform to overall direction of the plan, the BLM will make adjustments by preparing a plan amendment and environmental analysis of appropriate scope.

Land use plan evaluations will be used by the BLM to determine if the decisions in the RMP, supported by the accompanying NEPA analysis, are still valid. Evaluation of the RMP will generally be conducted every five years, unless unexpected actions, new information, or significant changes in other plans, legislation, or litigation triggers an evaluation. Land use plan evaluations determine if decisions are being implemented, whether mitigation measures are satisfactory, whether there are significant changes in the related plans of other entities, whether there is new data of significance to the plan, and if decisions should be changed through amendment or revision.

Based on the Record of Decision and Approved RMP being released in the spring of 2009, the following evaluation schedule will be followed for the Butte RMP:

- April 2014
- April 2019
- April 2024
- April 2029

Evaluations will follow the protocols established by the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 in effect at the time the evaluation is initiated.

Adaptive management involves exploring alternative ways to meet management objectives, predicting the outcomes of alternatives based on the current state of knowledge, implementing one or more of these alternatives, monitoring to learn about the impacts of management actions, and then using the results to update knowledge and adjust management actions. Adaptive management strategies may be used to modify management when monitoring data is available, and as long as the goals and objectives of the plan are met with alternative approaches being applied. Where monitoring shows land use plan actions or best management practices are not effective, modifications or adjustments may occur without amendment or revision of the plan as long as assumptions and impacts disclosed in the analysis remain valid and broad scale goals and objectives are not changed.

## **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

An implementation strategy will be developed for the Approved RMP. The intent of the strategy will be to prioritize the planning and sequencing of projects and activities to best meet the intent of the RMP. The strategy will document a prioritized list of actions that: 1) will help achieve RMP goals and desired outcomes; and 2) will be implementable given existing and anticipated budgets and workforce.