

CHAPTER 1

ISSUES AND CRITERIA

ISSUE-DRIVEN PLANNING

The BLM planning regulations equate land use planning with problem solving or issue resolution. An issue is an opportunity, conflict, or problem regarding the use or management of public lands and resources. Not all issues can be resolved through land use planning but may instead require changes in policy, budgets, or legislation.

Issue-driven planning addresses conflicting resource uses, new management opportunities, or other problems of major concern to land managers and the public. Alternatives are formulated and evaluated to determine the best way to resolve the issues. Aspects of current management that are not at issue are not evaluated in detail.

ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE GARNET RMP

Five issues are addressed in the Garnet RMP. The process of determining issues involved the interdisciplinary planning team, public input, interagency consultation, and BLM management review.

Renewable Resources

Most of the public land in the Garnet Resource Area (78 percent) is commercial forest land. The forage on 79 percent of the public land is leased for domestic livestock grazing. These resources (timber and forage) can be managed on a sustained yield basis while allowing for multiple resource use. However, the amount and type of use allocated to each resource is a major concern of the public. This has contributed to the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, and the need for planning efforts such as this RMP. Needed decisions include:

How much of the commercial forest land should be harvested?

Where and to what degree of intensity can timber management be applied to provide a desired level of production? Is there any public land where fire should not be used as a method to manage the timber and forage resources? Is there any public land where pesticides (herbicides and insecticides) should not be used?

Where should livestock grazing not be authorized?

Which allotments can be prioritized for more intensive grazing management?

What options should be considered for grazing and timber management to meet the needs of wildlife habitat, livestock, watershed, and forest products?



Special Attention Resources

There are resource values on public land in the Garnet Resource Area that are not specifically renewable or commodity oriented, such as wilderness values or riparian habitat. These require careful and professional management as directed by public and professional opinion and federal law. These values often compete among themselves and with other resource uses. The management and allocation of these resources are a major concern of the public. Needed decisions are:

Which wilderness study areas (Wales Creek, Hoodoo Mountain, Gallagher Creek, or Quigg West) or portions thereof, if any, are suitable for designation as wilderness?

How should the WSAs be managed if they are not recommended for wilderness?

Are there any Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) on public land that require special management?

Are there good management reasons for closing additional roads either seasonally or permanently? Where?

What emphasis should be placed on the management of riparian habitat and other special habitats?

Is there public land where the management of wildlife habitat should be the primary objective?

Nonrenewable Resources

The Garnet Resource Area also has a role in managing the public land in a manner that recognizes the national and local need for mineral resources. Most of the public land has been leased for oil and gas, and there are occasional requests for saleable minerals (sand, gravel, and rock). Also, portions of the resource area have been continuously explored or mined for locatable minerals, such as gold, silver, barite, tungsten, and copper. Exploration and development can conflict with other resource uses in certain areas. The public, federal law, and BLM (as stewards of all resources) recognize that other resource concerns should be considered along with the need for the minerals. Needed decisions are:

Which public land, if any, should not be leased for oil and gas to protect other resource values?

Which public land should have special stipulations applied to oil and gas leases?

Is there public land that should be withdrawn or remain withdrawn from mineral entry to protect other resource values?

Land Ownership and Administration

The public, through past planning efforts, general response, and legislation, has indicated that public land should be kept in public ownership unless analysis shows transfer or disposal would result in better management of resource values. The public land in portions of the Garnet Resource Area is intermingled with private lands. The administration of this intermingled public land is often more difficult and costly because property lines are more expensive to establish, transportation and energy costs are higher, management activities must consider actions on adjacent private land, etc. This ownership pattern has also resulted in tracts of public land with no access. The type of needed access is yet to be determined. Also, there are several major utility (transmission line and pipeline) corridors presently crossing public land and additional lines are likely. The RMP will assess the impacts associated with such corridors and identify areas that should not be crossed. Furthermore, the BLM is directed to review existing and proposed withdrawals (primarily from mineral entry and sale) to determine their impact and continued desirability. The needed decisions are:

Which land should be retained in public ownership?

Which public land should be excluded from future routing of major utility rights-of-way? Which public land should be avoided if possible, and which public land should remain available for future corridor development?

Where and what type of access is needed to get to public land?

Is there public land that should remain withdrawn from sale, location, and entry under the public land laws to protect certain resources?

Recreation, Cultural, and Aesthetic Resources

The public land in the Garnet Resource Area provides numerous outdoor recreation opportunities, aesthetic quality, archaeological values, motorized vehicle use opportunities, and historic values. The need to manage these values is founded in public opinion and legal mandates. Management can take any number of differing avenues and in doing so can create conflicts of varying degrees between resource uses. The needed decisions are:

How should motorized vehicle use be managed?

How many areas, if any, should be provided for roadless, nonwilderness recreation; and where should they be located?

What areas should be identified primarily for the protection of developed and undeveloped recreation sites?

What recreational opportunities should be provided? Where?

Is there any public land that should be managed primarily for its scenic values? How should this land be managed for other resources?

To what degree should BLM be involved with management of Garnet Ghost Town?

What management emphasis should be placed on cultural or historic sites?

PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria set out the legal parameters and management goals that guide and direct the development of the RMP. These criteria were developed and revised with public participation to assure that the planning process stayed focused on the issues. The criteria were used at four stages of the planning process: resource inventory, management situation analysis, formulation of alternatives, and selection of the preferred alternative.

Renewable Resources

Forestry

The RMP should follow the guidance outlined in the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) for forest management and the *Montana Cooperative Elk Logging Study* (USDA, FS 1982a) recommendations, where applicable. The plan should consider:

- the availability of land for inclusion into the Sustained Yield Unit (SYU) base dependent upon the Timber Production Capability Classification (TPCC);

- the access requirements;

- the demand for forest products other than saw-timber;

- the impacts of timber harvesting (including firewood) on wildlife habitat, watershed, soils, range management, wilderness, recreation, and scenic values;

- the impacts of timber management decisions on social and economic conditions;

- adjacent land ownership and public attitudes toward timber management and the use of fire and pesticides; and

- the impacts of meeting wildlife habitat, watershed, livestock, and recreation objectives on timber management.

Livestock Grazing

The RMP should follow the guidance outlined in the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) for grazing management. Initial grazing levels were established by a 1965 occular range survey supplemented in part by the use of the *Soil Conservation Service National Range Handbook* (USDA, SCS 1976).

Range potential will be determined by comparison with similar ungrazed sites in addition to intensive monitoring techniques. This will determine the proper stocking rates. Rangeland improvements and grazing allotments will be prioritized; those showing the greatest opportunity for positive economic return and/or meeting resource management objectives will receive the highest priorities. The plan should consider:

- suitability for grazing considering distance from water, sparsity and type of vegetation, steepness of slope, and manageability (cost and control);

- the impacts of livestock grazing and Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) on wildlife habitat, riparian areas, watershed, and forest regeneration; and

- the impacts of meeting wildlife habitat, watershed, recreation, and forest product needs on grazing management.

Special Attention Resources

Wilderness and Special Designations

The RMP should follow the guidance outlined in the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and the BLM wilderness study guidelines (USDI, BLM 1978, 1981b, 1983a) for wilderness study areas. The plan should consider:

- the impacts of nondesignation on wilderness or special values;

- the manageability of the area;

- the potential and availability of public lands for energy and mineral development;

- the availability of public lands for development and use of timber, grazing, and recreation resources;

- the impacts of wilderness designation on social and economic conditions;

- public attitudes and the availability of wilderness;

- consistency with Forest Service plans; and

- the availability of other means to protect and manage the resources.

Road Management

The plan should consider:

- the availability and demand by the public for road use;

- the cost and manageability of closing roads;

- the impacts of not closing roads on maintenance costs, wildlife habitat, watershed, recreationists, vegetation (grass and trees); and

- compatibility with adjoining land uses.

Wildlife and Riparian Habitat

The RMP should follow the guidance outlined in the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) for wildlife and the *Montana Cooperative Elk Logging Study* (USDA, FS 1982a) recommendations, where applicable. The plan should consider:

- the impacts of livestock grazing, timber management, and other uses on riparian, special habitat, and important wildlife habitat conditions;

- the impacts of riparian, special habitat, and important wildlife habitat management decisions on livestock operations, timber management, mineral exploration, and recreation pursuits;

- the cost and public attitude toward the availability of areas for management; and

- the compatibility with adjacent landowners.

Nonrenewable Resources

Oil and Gas Leasing

The RMP should follow the guidance outlined in the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) for major program thrusts, the *Butte District Oil and Gas Programmatic Environmental Analysis* (USDI, BLM 1981a), and the existing map of the resource area showing areas where special stipulations are needed. In general, mitigation of adverse impacts can be accomplished via standard stipulations and special stipulations, where warranted. The no lease recommendation should be used infrequently and thoroughly justified. The plan should consider:

- the current availability of public land for oil and gas leasing, realizing that most of the public lands in the resource area are already leased;

- the impacts of oil and gas activities on social and economic values;

- the probability of oil and gas resources being found and the probability of leased land being explored;

- the impacts of oil and gas activities on adjoining land uses; big game and aquatic habitat; wilderness study areas; scenery, historic and archaeological resources; fragile soil types; surface and ground water; and the rehabilitation requirements of such impacts; and

- the impacts of protective stipulations on the lessee's access and use of the lease area.

Mineral Withdrawals

The RMP should follow the guidelines outlined in the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) for minerals and energy. The probability of occurrence and availability of minerals must be given equal consideration with other resource values when considering withdrawals. The plan should consider:

- management efficiency and effectiveness,

- public use of public resources,

- social and economic conditions, and

- the availability of other actions to protect non-mineral resource values.

Land Ownership and Administration

Land Ownership Adjustment

The RMP should follow the guidance outlined in the *Land Pattern Review and Land Adjustment Supplement to the State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1984). Exchange will generally be the preferred means of land adjustment. The plan should consider:

- the surrounding ownership, adjacent land uses, the need for public access, and the public attitude; and

- the costs that have already been expended towards management (easements, line running, forest management, etc.) weighed against future management costs.

Withdrawals from the General Land Laws

The plan should consider:

- management efficiency and effectiveness,

- public use of public resources,

- social and economic conditions, and

- the use of other means to accomplish the needed protection.

Utility Corridors

The RMP should identify possible exclusion areas, avoidance areas, and windows for utility corridors based on the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) for corridor planning. The location of future utility lines adjacent to existing utilities, where compatible, is generally preferred over undeveloped areas. The plan should consider:

- compatibility with other utility rights-of-way and adjoining land uses;

- availability of public lands for corridor development and the existence of corridors or utility rights-of-way;

- social and economic impacts;

- impacts on important big game and threatened and endangered species habitat;

- impacts on visual, recreation, archaeological, and historical resources;

- impacts on wilderness values and environmentally sensitive areas; and

- impacts on active mining areas (placer).

Access

The RMP should follow the guidance outlined in the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) for access to public lands. In general, larger tracts of public land with high multiple use values will receive higher priority over smaller isolated tracts, unless a critical resource need is identified and documented or the tract has high public values as expressed by public nomination. All access needs shall be prioritized by each resource activity. The plan should consider:

- impacts of the type of physical access (vehicular vs nonvehicular) on big game habitat, wilderness values, ACEC, recreation values, and geologically sensitive areas that require a high degree of management to prevent loss of resource value or to prevent degradation;

- the size of the tract, resource values, costs, compatibility with adjoining land uses, and the need for public access; and

- availability of existing access to the public lands.

Cultural, Aesthetic, and Recreation Resources

Motorized Vehicle Use

Planning for motorized vehicle use should follow the guidance outlined in Executive Orders 11644 and 11989 and the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) for off-road vehicle designations. The plan should consider:

- the availability of public land for existing motorized use (including FS where applicable);

- the impacts of motorized use on wildlife habitat, watershed, nonmotorized recreation uses, forestry, livestock management, and range improvements;

- the compatibility with adjoining land uses;

- the manageability and costs;

- the public attitude;

- the amount of existing motorized use; and

- motorized use necessary for program management and maintenance.

Recreational Facilities

The RMP should follow the guidance outlined in the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) for recreation. The plan should consider:

- the costs and demands of providing facilities and opportunities;

- the compatibility with adjacent land uses; and

- the impacts of recreation activities on wildlife habitat, forestry, range use, and watershed.

Scenic Values

The plan should consider:

- the compatibility and consistency with adjacent land uses;

- the impacts of scenic management decisions on forestry and range management, and oil and gas leasing;

- public attitudes; and

- existing visual resource ratings.

Cultural and Historic Sites

The RMP should follow the guidance outlined in the *State Director Guidance* (USDI, BLM 1983b) on recreation and cultural resources, the requirements of the National Register of Historic Places (36 CFR 60, 63), and the requirements for the protection of historic and cultural properties (36 CFR 800). The plan should consider:

- public attitudes and amount of visitor use;

- the cost of management;

- the impacts on other resource values;

- the compatibility with adjacent land uses;

- the impacts of nonmanagement on recreation, cultural, and historic values;

- the impacts on sites from other uses such as timber, motorized travel, other recreation, mining, etc.; and

- the relationship to national, state, and regional significance and user attraction.