

PURPOSE AND NEED

The proposed Garnet Resource Management Plan (RMP) will provide a comprehensive framework for managing the public lands and allocating resources in the Garnet Resource Area (GRA) for the next ten or more years. This document publishes the comments received on the draft RMP/EIS and incorporates by reference the draft RMP/EIS which addressed the future management of 145,660 surface acres and 213,385 subsurface acres of mineral estate. These lands are administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) through its Butte District Office and Garnet Resource Area in Montana (see the Garnet Resource Area Location map).

The proposed RMP is reproduced in Chapter 8 of this document. This plan addresses the resolution of five issue groups (see Chapter 1 of the draft RMP/EIS). In addition, several statutory or court ordered requirements will be met upon final approval of the RMP/EIS.

As required by Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), this document analyzes the suitability of two wilderness study areas in the GRA and makes a preliminary recommendation for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System or for a return to multiple use management. These recommendations will be reported to Congress through the Director of the BLM, Secretary of the Interior, and the President. The final decision on wilderness designation will be made by Congress. The draft RMP/EIS recommended both Wales Creek and Hoodoo Mountain WSAs as unsuitable for wilderness designation.

BLM was granted permission to study two tracts of land for potential wilderness under Section 202 of FLPMA. Recommendation for wilderness designation will be reported to Congress through the Director of the BLM, Secretary of the Interior, and the President. The final decision on wilderness designation will be made by Congress. Recommendations against wilderness designation will be made by the State Director in the Record of Decision for the RMP/EIS. The draft RMP/EIS recommended the Quigg West 202 Study Area as suitable and the Gallagher Creek 202 Study Area as unsuitable for wilderness designation.

The document also analyzes several alternatives for livestock grazing on public land. This fulfills a court ordered agreement based on a 1973 lawsuit against the BLM by the Natural Resources Defense Council.

This planning document incorporates land use planning guidance previously found in five separate Management Framework Plans (MFP): the Blackfoot, Hoodoo, Salmon Lake, Avon, and Philipsburg MFPs. This document also develops and revises resource management guidance as prescribed in Section 202 of FLPMA.

INTRODUCTION



PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

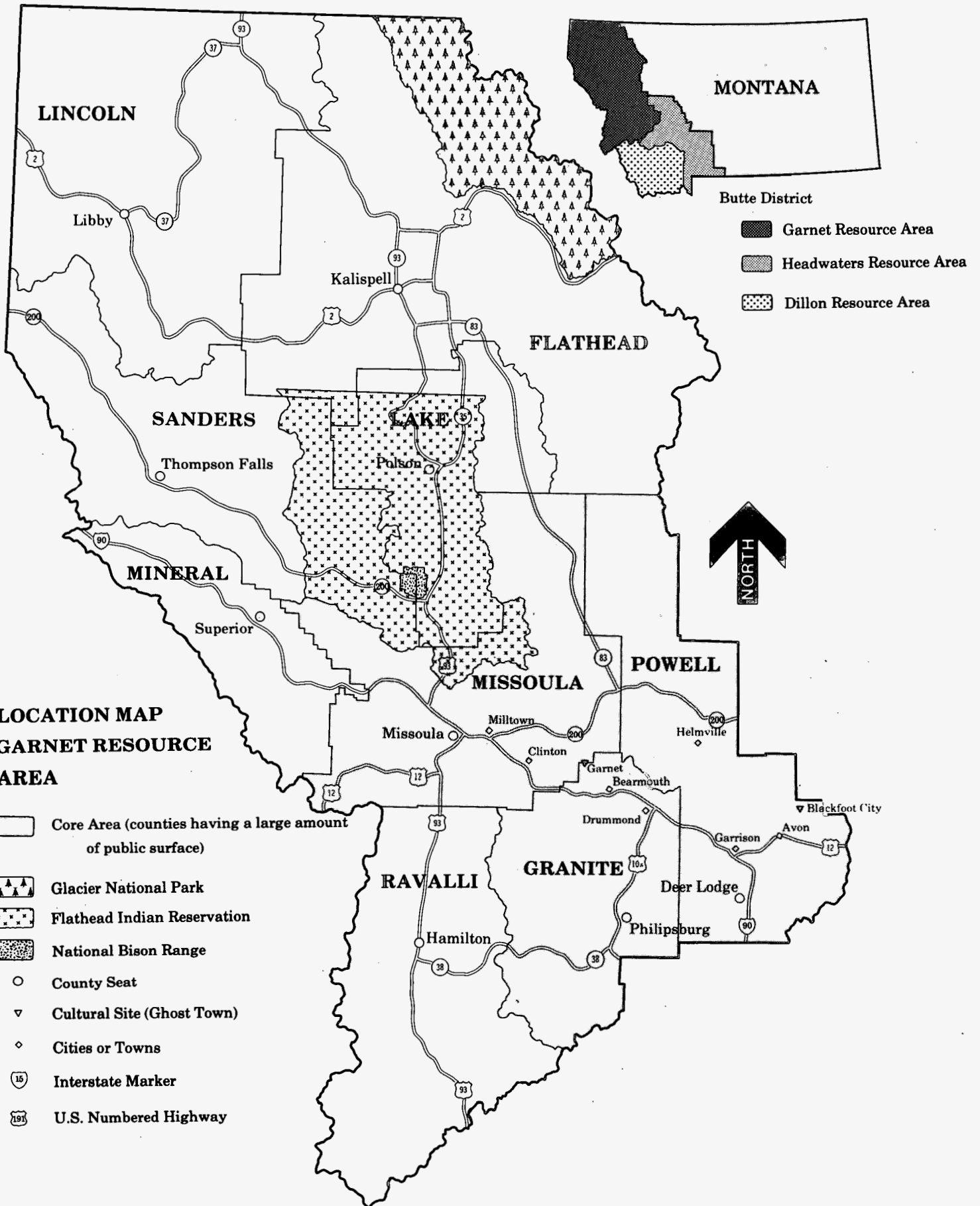
The BLM resource management planning process has nine steps. Figure I-1 lists and highlights the steps where public participation is needed.

Step 1. Identification of Issues

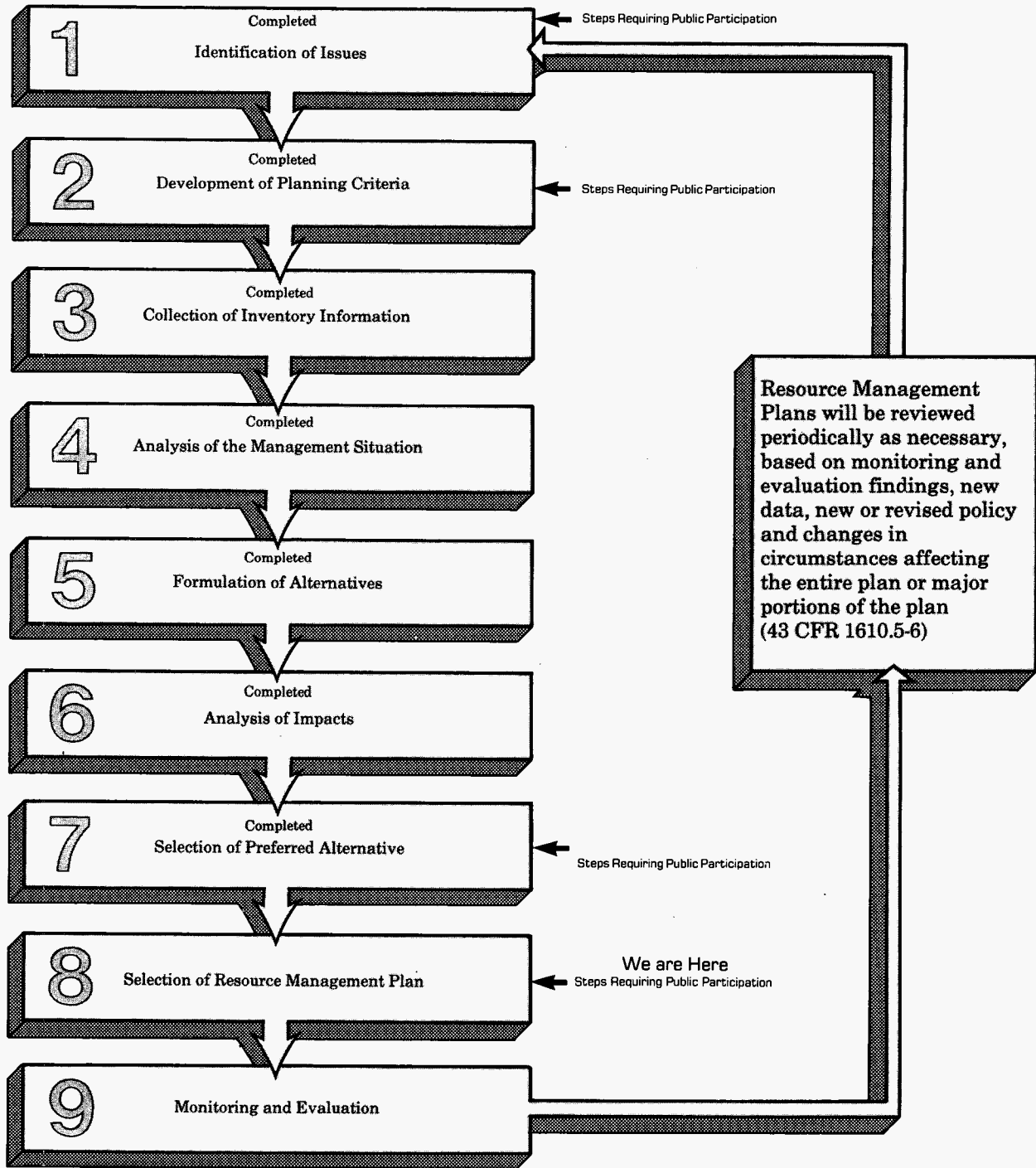
This step identifies resource management concerns, conflicts, and opportunities that can be resolved through the planning process. This process is called scoping and involves public participation.

Step 2. Development of Planning Criteria

This step identifies the information needed to resolve issues, formulate and evaluate alternatives, and select the preferred alternative. The criteria are circulated for public review.



Steps in the Resource Management Planning Process



Step 3. Collection of Inventory Information

This step collects the data needed to resolve resource issues and other environmental, social, and economic concerns.

Step 4. Analysis of the Management Situation

This step assesses the current situation and provides a baseline for development of a resource management plan. A Management Situation Analysis (MSA) document is produced that describes the physical situation, current management guidance, and resource problems and opportunities.

Step 5. Formulation of Alternatives

This step prepares several complete, reasonable resource management alternatives. A no action alternative describes present management while other alternatives place emphasis on environmental protection or resource production.

Step 6. Analysis of Impacts of Alternatives

This step analyzes the physical, biological, economic, and social impacts of implementing each alternative.

Step 7. Selection of the Preferred Alternative

This step compares the impacts of each alternative and selects the preferred alternative. The interdisciplinary process used in Steps 5 through 7 is documented in a draft RMP/EIS and circulated for public review.

Step 8. Selection of the Resource Management Plan

This step analyzes public comments, modifies the alternatives as appropriate, and serves as a basis for the District Manager to select a proposed resource management plan. The proposed RMP and final EIS is distributed to the public in the final RMP/EIS document. A 30-day protest period is allowed before the resource management plan is adopted. A Record of Decision is published after a consideration of any protests.

Step 9. Monitoring and Evaluation

This step monitors and evaluates the resource condition as the plan is implemented. If monitoring shows that resource issues are not being satisfactorily resolved or that the desired results outlined by the RMP are not being met, the plan may be amended or totally revised.

