TWO Alternatives

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is presented in two major portions (Management Common To All Alternatives and the Alternative Descriptions) for the reader's convenience.

The guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section has been carried forward from existing laws, regulations, policy, supplemental program guidance and previous planning efforts. This guidance, combined with the Preferred Alternative will form the RMP for BLM land within the planning area.

The second portion of the chapter describes the five alternatives designed to resolve the issues discussed in Chapter 1.

All five alternatives comply with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requirement that BLM land be managed on a multiple-use and sustained yield basis. All alternatives are subject to compliance with all valid statutes on BLM land. Impacts to all resources are considered through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for specific actions. Actions which are determined to be inconsistent with the RMP will not be approved without a plan amendment and associated public involvement.

ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

Alternatives proposing exclusive production or protection of one resource at the expense of other resources were not considered because this would violate the BLM's legal mandate to manage public land on a multiple-use and sustained yield basis. This eliminated alternatives such as no oil and gas leasing, closing all BLM land to off-road vehicles (ORV)s, or not identifying areas for riparian and wetland management, etc.

MANAGEMENT COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES

The following guidance will continue regardless of which alternative is selected. The resources and resource uses discussed in this section are common to all five alternatives. Valid decisions from the Belt Management Framework Plan (MFP) (1977), Fergus MFP (1977), Petroleum MFP (1977), Little Rockies MFP (1977), Phillips MFP (1977), UL Bend-Zortman MFP (1977), Valley and Willow Creek MFP (1977), Carpenter Creek-Craig Coulee MFP Amendment (1986), Bitter Creek Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (1989), Missouri Breaks Wilderness EIS (1987), Prairie Potholes Vegetation Allocation EIS (1981), Missouri Breaks Grazing EIS (1979), Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program EIS (1987), Containment/Eradication of Selected Noxious Plants Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA) (1986), Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands EIS (1991), Willow Creek Interdisciplinary Watershed Activity Plan EA (1987), Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project Programmatic EA (1978), Animal Damage Control Plan (1987), and Small Sales of Forest Products Programmatic EA (1978) have been brought forward into this section. The decisions listed in this section are part of each alternative analyzed and combined with the Preferred Alternative, will form the RMP.

ENERGY MINERAL RESOURCES

Oil and Gas

The Montana State BLM Office issues all federal oil and gas leases, including those involving split estate ownership. Stipulations will be applied by the appropriate resource area office, as prescribed in this document, to protect other resources. Stipulations used for split estate ownership apply only to federal oil and gas approvals, not to any other land use. The oil and gas stipulations are listed by alternative in Appendix B. Each resource area office has map overlays showing specifically where each stipulation would be used and which lands would be closed to leasing.

For leases on lands managed by the Bureau of Reclamation (BR) and the U.S. Forest Service (FS), the surface management agency provides stipulations and conditions for leases in accordance with that agency's planning guidance. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with these agencies contain more detail on the leasing process. Leases for Indian lands (Tribal and allotted) are issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Implementation

All leases are subject to BLM operation regulations (43 CFR 3160), Onshore Orders, Notices to Lessees, and the standard terms in the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987.

Geophysical exploration is authorized by each representative agency. BLM uses a Notice of Intent process to regulate exploration on BLM lands in the planning area.

Notices of Staking (NOSs), Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) Deepen or Plugback, and Sundry Notices are reviewed and approved by the appropriate resource area office. For activities on other surface management agency lands, the approval process is conducted under regulations and agreements specific to that agency. At the time of activity approval on BLM and split estate lands, the authorized officer may waive, except or modify stipulations as specified in Appendix B. This could be the case where the resource requiring protection is not present, or when operations can be conducted with acceptable impacts. Additional conditions may be added as site specific conditions of approval to provide for conditions found during field visits to proposed well locations.

Geothermal

BLM will provide opportunities for geothermal exploration and development in areas open to oil and gas leasing.

Implementation

There are no Known Geothermal Resource Areas (KGRA) in the planning area. Should interest be expressed in exploring for or developing geothermal resources, a site specific environmental analysis will be prepared to develop appropriate mitigating measures.

Oil Shale

BLM will provide opportunities for exploration and possible development of the Metalliferous Heath oil shale deposit in southcentral Fergus County. Areas prospectively valuable for oil shale will remain open for issuing prospecting permits and leasing.

Implementation

Prospecting permits will be issued after appropriate environmental review of the exploration proposal. There are currently no regulations for leasing oil shale deposits. A plan amendment will be required prior to issuing surface mining leases.

Coal

BLM will provide opportunities for coal exploration and production while maintaining nonmineral resource values. The planning area will be available for coal exploration licenses. Coal licenses to mine for domestic use will be available and use per family may not exceed 20 tons annually. Coal leasing by application will remain available for underground and surface mining consideration through the plan amendment process.

Implementation

Prior to approving exploration licenses and licenses to mine, a project specific environmental review document will be prepared to assess impacts and develop mitigation measures.

Prior to issuing coal leases, unsuitability criteria will be applied and a plan amendment prepared.

NONENERGY MINERAL RESOURCES

Hardrock Mining

All federal minerals are available for exploration and development unless withdrawn (see the hardrock mining section of the Preferred Alternative). The surface management program for hardrock mineral exploration and development is administered under federal regulations (43 CFR 3809) and an MOU between the Montana Department of State Lands (DSL) and BLM. Hardrock mineral activities in wilderness study areas (WSA) are administered under the 43 CFR 3802 regulations.

Implementation

Most of the land in the planning area with hardrock mineral activity falls under the public domain (PD), non-WSA category and is subject to the following procedures.

Activities exceeding casual use, but disturbing 5 acres or less and occurring outside special management areas, may proceed 15 days after a Notice is filed with the appropriate office. A Notice is screened for impacts that constitute unnecessary or undue degradation. Processing a Notice is not a federal action and there is no formal environmental analysis.

Projects disturbing more than 5 acres require an approved Plan of Operations before work can begin. Once a Plan of Operations is filed with the BLM, the proposed action is analyzed and those mitigating measures needed to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation are required for approval. For operations covered by the BLM-DSL MOU, the agencies work together to review the mine plan, prepare the environmental analysis and develop appropriate mitigating measures. DSL currently holds the reclamation bond on hardrock mineral activities, with BLM advice and concurrence.

A Plan of Operations must always be filed, regardless of disturbance acreage, for activities which exceed casual use and occur in special management areas such as areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC), wild and scenic rivers and areas closed to ORV use.

A Plan of Operations is required in WSAs for other than casual use level activities. The nonimpairment criteria will determine the required mitigating measures in the Plan of Operations.

Inspection frequency is dependent on a variety of considerations. BLM policy requires, at a minimum, biannual inspections for all operations. Additional inspections are performed as necessary to investigate undesirable events, verify abandonments and follow-up on Notices of Noncompliance. Most inspections are conducted in cooperation with DSL. Appendix C provides additional information on hardrock mineral exploration and development.

Bentonite

BLM will allow exploration and development of bentonite resources while preventing unnecessary or undue degradation of nonmineral resources. Past bentonite production areas will remain open to location under the mining laws or leasing under the leasing laws.

Implementation

Bentonite exploration and development proposals received on public domain land not withdrawn will be processed similar to hardrock mining. Mine plans will be reviewed and appropriate measures taken to protect nonmineral resource values.

Mineral Materials

BLM will issue sales contracts for mineral materials where disposal is deemed to be in the public interest, while providing for reclamation of mined lands and preventing unnecessary or undue impact to nonmineral resources.

All lands not withdrawn, are available for mineral material disposal. Mineral material permits are considered on a case-by-case basis and issued at the discretion of the Area Manager. BLM will continue meeting the demand of local governments for sand and gravel needed for road surfacing and maintenance.

Implementation

Free Use Permits (FUP) are issued to government agencies or subdivisions and to nonprofit organizations. Materials obtained by FUP may not be bartered or sold.

Material sale contracts are valued according to the BLM statewide general appraisal schedule. Sales valued at more than $5,000 require an individual appraisal prior to contract issuance.

Common use areas or community pits will be designated if the level of localized activity warrants.

Material sales or permits in amounts less than 50,000 cubic yards and disturbing less than five acres may be processed with a Categorical Exclusion Review (CER). Sales or permits exceeding these levels require an environmental assessment. A reclamation plan and operating stipulations to protect nonmineral resource values are included in the permit. The reclamation bond is held by the DSLs, Open Cut Bureau. Government agencies are not bonded for reclamation, but a reclamation plan is incorporated into the permit. Material sales and permits are monitored for production verification and compliance with operating and reclamation requirements.

Solid Minerals (Other Than Coal and Oil Shale)

BLM will allow exploration and development of solid mineral resources (other than coal and oil shale) as authorized under the 1920 and 1947 Mineral Leasing Acts. Resources include, but are not limited to, gypsum, sodium, potassium and phosphate.

Prospecting permits will be available for all land not closed to mineral leasing in conformance with 43 CFR 3500.

Implementation

Prospecting permits will be issued after appropriate environmental review to assess impacts and develop mitigating measures. Discovery of a valuable mineral deposit, within the terms of the prospecting permit, entitles the permittee to a preference right lease.

On land where prospecting or exploration work is unnecessary to determine the existence or workability of a valuable mineral deposit, the minerals may be leased only through competitive sale to the highest qualified bidder. On land where the surface estate is not managed by BLM, consultation and concurrence with the surface managing agency will take place prior to issuing prospecting permits or leases.

GEOLOGIC FEATURES

BLM will provide for access and study of unique geological features. This includes examples of unique structure, stratigraphy, mineral assemblages, historical geology, geomorphology or other geologic exposures that may be educationally valuable or scientifically significant.

Implementation

BLM may develop interpretative sites for geologic features. Areas tentatively identified include Back Country Byways, the Square Butte Outstanding Natural Area (ONA), Red Hill Road/Alaska Bench Road, Maiden Canyon, Judith Peak, Missouri River Breaks and one or more exposures of glacial geology/geomorphology in north Phillips or Valley Counties.

CAVE RESOURCES

BLM will manage significant cave resources containing biota; cultural, historic, and paleontological values; geologic and mineralogic features; hydrology; recreational value; and educational or scientific value. Two caves have been determined to possess significant values, Azure Cave in the Little Rocky Mountains and the Tate-Poetter Cave in the Judith Mountains.

Implementation

Significant cave resources discovered would have a cave management plan prepared. A management plan for significant cave resources will promote cave resources through interpretation, education programs and techniques; protect significant cave biota, cultural resources, paleontology, geologic and mineral features and hydrology; enhance user experience and opportunities; and ensure visitor protection and safety.

PALEONTOLOGY

BLM will protect major paleontological resources of scientific interest. BLM will issue permits only to qualified paleontologists to work on BLM land. Casual invertebrate fossil specimen collectors are not required to obtain a permit.

Implementation

Permits will be issued by the BLM's Montana State Office to qualified paleontologists to work on BLM land. These permits can be issued for excavating and studying significant vertebrate, invertebrate or plant remain fossils.

Potential impacts to paleontological resources will be considered on an individual basis. If paleontological resources are encountered during construction activities, the operator must suspend operations and report the finding to BLM for evaluation and a determination concerning the disposition of such resources.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

BLM will prevent the contamination of BLM land with hazardous substances and ensure public health and safety. No authorizations will be made for developing hazardous waste disposal or landfill facilities on BLM land.

Implementation

Land requested for hazardous waste disposal sites, treatment facilities or landfills would be transferred to private ownership, through sale or exchange, after appropriate environmental review. Such action would be coordinated with the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Solid and Hazardous Waste Bureau.

All land acquired by BLM, through purchase or exchange, shall be inventoried for hazardous substances and past history of possible contamination in accordance with Secretarial Order 3127. BLM will not take title to any land known to be contaminated with hazardous substances.

Processing land and mineral authorizations shall include review for the proper use, control, storage and disposal of hazardous materials. A contingency plan will be prepared to direct and coordinate a BLM response to any reported incident involving the spill, or release, of potentially hazardous substances on BLM land.

SOILS MANAGEMENT

BLM will maintain and/or improve soil productivity by increasing vegetation cover and reducing erosion.

Implementation

Prior to authorizing any surface disturbing activity (including but not limited to range improvements, mineral development or right-of-way (ROW) location), BLM will evaluate the activity and if necessary apply mitigating measures, deny the authorization, or relocate the activity to a more suitable soil type. Site-specific measures will be developed for soils with high erosion susceptibility, steep slopes, sparse vegetation and shallow soil depth. Activity plans will include mitigation to protect ground cover and streambank stability and to reduce sediment yields from surface disturbing activities. All surface disturbing activities are subject to an on-site evaluation to develop mitigation to reduce erosion and soil compaction and improve soil stability and salinity control. These mitigation measures will also prescribe revegetation programs.

The following mitigating measures will be applied, if necessary, to surface disturbing activities:

1. All proposed range improvements will be designed to limit erosion, saline seeps, salt accumulations (i.e., selenium) and rapid sedimentation.

2. Roads and trails, when part of an approved transportation plan, will be built or upgraded with due regard for environmental considerations. Cut-and-fill slopes should be no steeper than 3:1 where feasible. This will promote quick revegetation and soil stabilization and discourage invasion by weeds. The type of terrain (flat to steep) will be a major factor in applying the 3:1 guideline. The intent is to provide a stable seedbed where practical. After access roads are no longer needed, they will be contoured to a natural appearance and seeded.

3. Topsoil and suitable subsoil will be identified and stockpiled during all soil excavation activities and will be used to rehabilitate the area when the project is completed. Exceptions to this may be granted, based on a site specific evaluation. Disturbed areas will be monitored for noxious plant infestation and control measures will be implemented as needed.

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Surface and groundwater quality will be maintained to meet or exceed state and federal water quality standards. BLM will continue obtaining water rights for all projects on BLM land and complying with Montana water laws.

BLM will improve or maintain vegetative cover on upland and riparian-wetlands to reduce runoff and sedimentation, especially on highly erodible soils. It is anticipated erosion will remain high on the most erosive soils (soil subgroups 3 and 4, see Figure 2.1 and Appendix D) which include very low productivity soils with limited improvement potential and large areas of barren shale outcrop which are only vegetated during ideal climatic conditions.

Implementation

All proposed reservoirs are subject to a soil survey and a hydrologic site evaluation. Engineering staff experience, concerning the soils and hydrology, will be utilized and may substitute for detailed evaluations on routine projects. Reservoirs will be designed with a minimum 15-year life expectancy. All proposed reservoirs will be evaluated to determine the need for off-site water facilities.

All surface disturbing activities are subject to an on-site evaluation to mitigate impacts to water quality and quantity. No activities should alter stream courses. Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented to protect watershed values and maintain or improve water quality (see Appendix E). Other measures to protect stream courses will be evaluated for environmental impacts prior to project approval.

Small amounts of oil field produced water, which do not meet water quality standards, will be disposed of in accordance with On-shore Order #7 and/or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines.

AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

BLM will comply with national and state air quality standards. Existing air quality will be protected by the use of BMPs (Appendix E) and best available control technology (BACT).

Implementation

Federal and state regulations require air quality monitoring for activities which could degrade existing air quality. Detailed monitoring and mitigation plans are written when an activity plan is prepared. These measures generally require actions during specific wind conditions to either disperse smoke or prevent chemical spray drift.

Prescribed fires require approval from the Montana Department of Heath and Environmental Science, Air

Figure 2.1 Physiographic Provinces and Soil Subgroups.

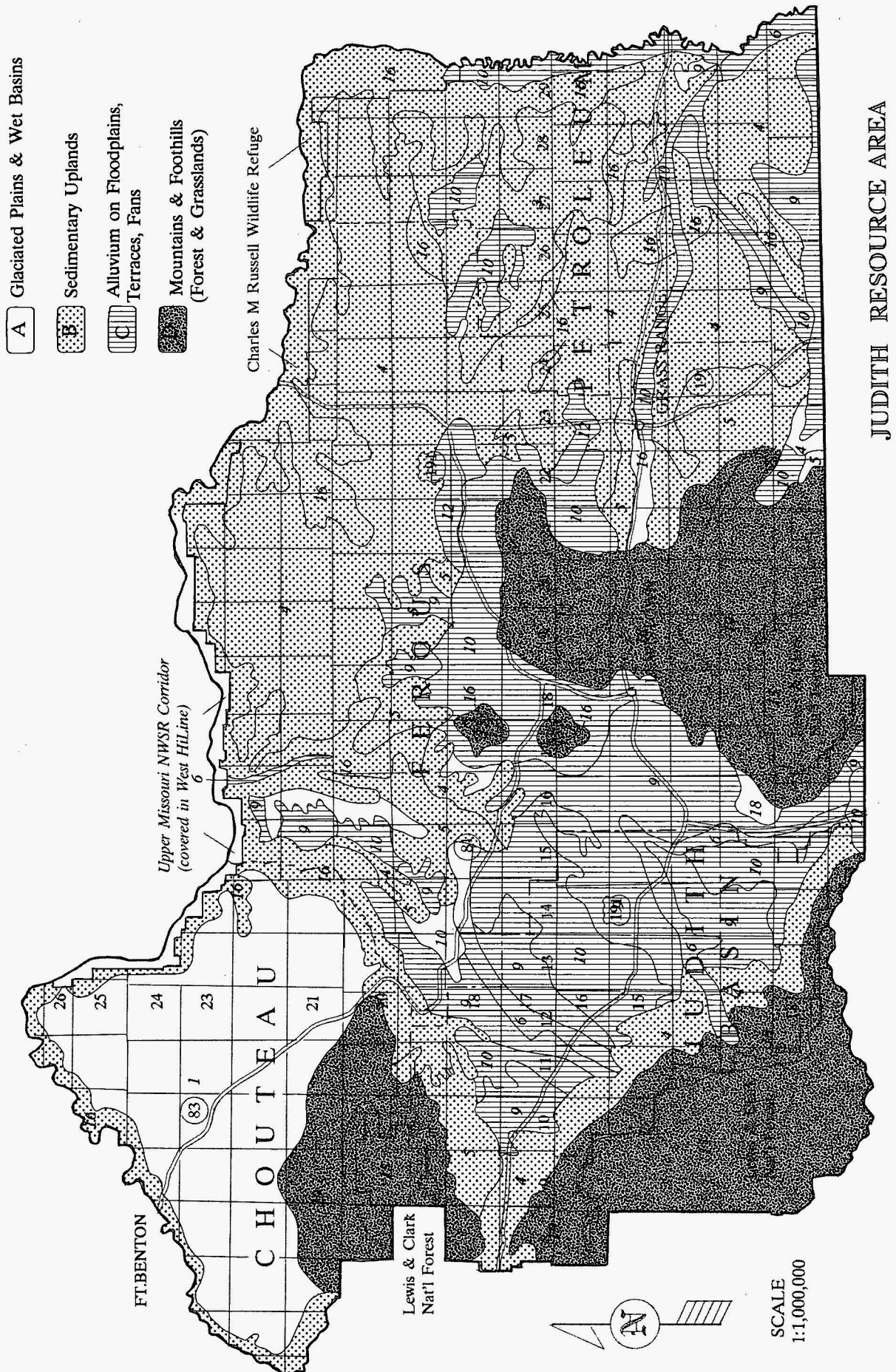
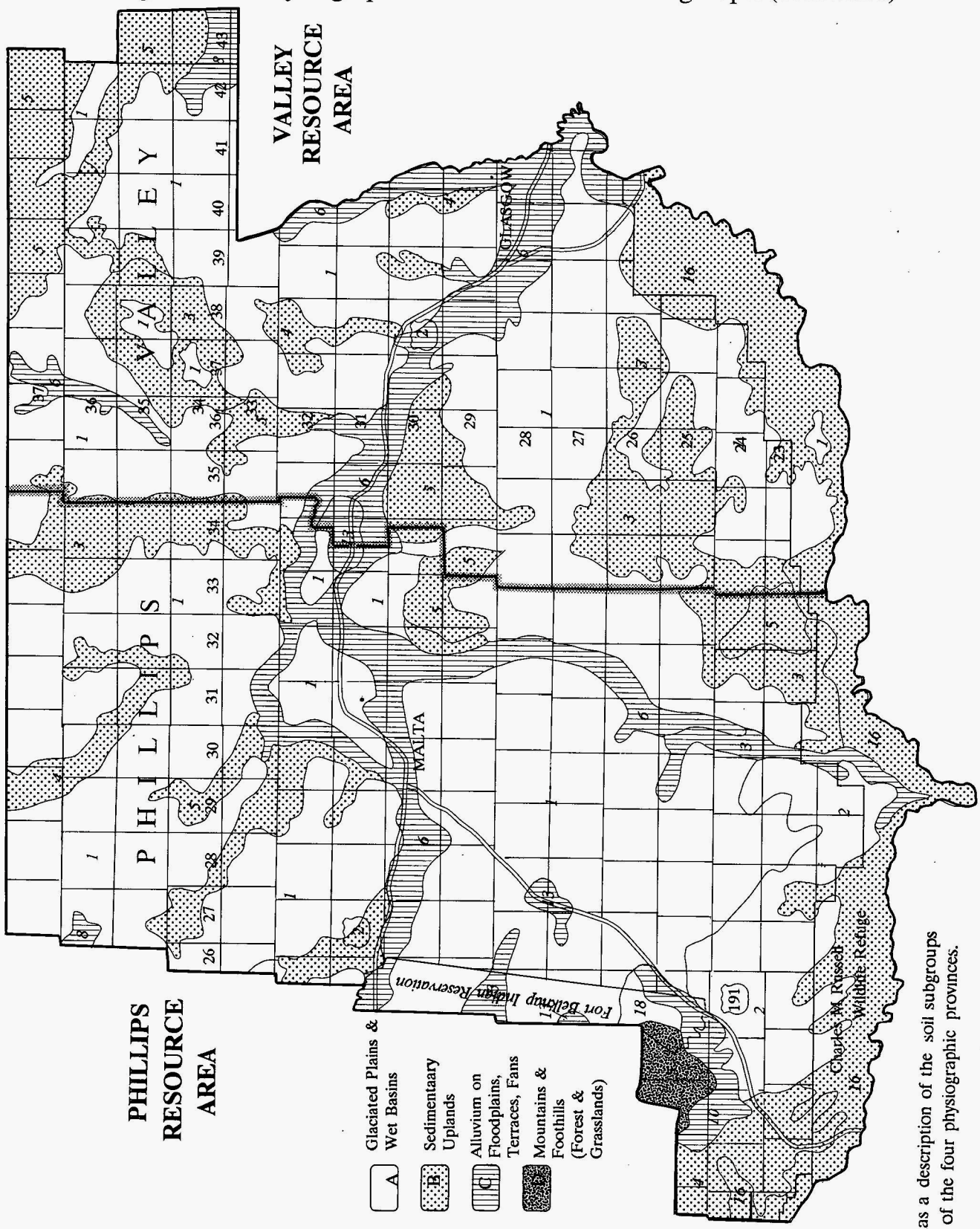


Figure 2.1 Physiographic Provinces and Soil Subgroups. (continued)



Note: Appendix K has a description of the soil subgroups found in each of the four physiographic provinces.

Quality Bureau. All such plans are forwarded to the appropriate airshed zone coordinator.

Venting or flaring hydrocarbon gas associated with hydrogen sulfide (sour gas) requires approval under the provisions of the Notice to Lessee (NTL) 4-A and State Air Quality regulations. The BLM along with the Montana State Air Quality Bureau monitors this activity for compliance.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

BLM'S overall vegetation management objective is to improve or maintain the ecological status of the BLM land to achieve a plant community of good or excellent ecological condition on 80% of the BLM land within 15 years of implementation of activity plans. Good to excellent ecological status is defined by the Soil Conservation Service's (SCS) Montana Grazing Guides for each ecological site, and equates to late seral and potential natural community (PNC) terms currently used by the BLM. Management of riparian-wetland areas is discussed under the Alternative Descriptions for the Riparian and Wetland Management of Watersheds issue.

BLM rangelands are managed according to multiple-use objectives, based on ecological site potential for specific uses. These objectives must be economically and biologically feasible. In some cases, the desired plant community needed to maintain certain wildlife habitat for specific species (prairie dogs for example) will be an ecological condition class less than good (late seral) or excellent. Good to excellent ecological condition satisfies the habitat requirements for most wildlife species.

The Missouri Breaks Grazing and Prairie Potholes Vegetation EISs identified objectives to increase vegetation production for watershed protection, wildlife habitat, livestock forage and wildlife forage as a product of improving of the rangeland ecosystem. The Missouri Breaks Grazing EIS projected an 8% increase and the Prairie Potholes Vegetation EIS a 15% increase in vegetation production as primary objectives. These objectives will remain in effect.

Grass seed or hay may be sold from BLM land if an interdisciplinary environmental analysis finds it to be in the best interests of the public. Hay or seed cutting may be used as a land treatment to improve production of crested wheatgrass.

Watershed Management Implementation

About 60% of the vegetation will continue being allocated to watershed protection and wildlife forage and cover (this equates to 712,570 animal unit months (AUMs)). The BLM will continue to cooperate with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MDFWP) to determine wildlife habitat needs.

As allotment management plans (AMP) are developed, site specific ground cover objectives will be incorporated to supplement and support range condition objectives. Ground cover objectives will be consistent with the site potential by soil series or ecological site. Grazing management methods, water developments, land treatments and other practices will be designed to meet ground cover objectives. Monitoring and evaluation methods will be applied and management practices modified as needed to ensure these objectives are met.

Allotments in predominately fair ecological condition or with fair condition areas due to poor livestock distribution will have grazing methods applied to periodically defer grazing during critical growth periods. Grazing methods and land treatments (keyed to specific soil subgroups) in selected areas will be implemented, as necessary, to improve vegetation production, cover and to reduce soil compaction.

Surface disturbing activities greater than 1/4-acre will require the initiating party to rehabilitate the disturbance. Native species in the site's natural plant community will normally be seeded to revegetate all surface disturbance. Some reclamation may involve introduced species if these species are necessary to stabilize the site. Revegetation species will be determined during the site specific environmental analysis phase.

A minimum rest period from livestock grazing of two growing seasons will be required after any major vegetative disturbance. More rest may be required, depending on the situation. Major disturbances are defined as mechanical manipulation of the range such as chiseling and seeding. Requirements for rest following fire (wild or prescribed) will depend on a variety of factors including the type of fuel, time of burn, accessibility of the burned area to livestock and climatic factors post-burn. Specific timing and the type of rest will be determined at the site specific environmental assessment phase.

Some of the Willow Creek Basin watershed control structures in the Valley RA will be maintained for wildlife, riparian and access values. Other structures will be abandoned. Contour furrowing and grazing methods to improve ground cover and control erosion, runoff and sedimentation will be applied in the Willow Creek Basin and in other locations with similar soils.

Alternate water developments, springs, wells, pipelines, etc. will be considered before constructing reservoirs greater than 5 acre-feet in volume in soil subgroups 3 and 4 due to erosive soils and high siltation rates which shorten reservoir life. An interdisciplinary team will review the placement of water sources on soil subgroups 3 and 4 in areas that historically have not been grazed. Changes in grazing season or animal unit month (AUM) reductions will be considered as alternatives to implementing grazing methods that would require water developments on these soils.

Wildlife and Fisheries Implementation

Specific objectives will be incorporated into resource activity plans, if needed, to meet wildlife habitat goals. Grazing methods, land treatments and other improvements will be designed and monitored to accomplish objectives.

BLM will improve the quality and quantity of summer forage by improving the reproduction and availability of palatable forbs for deer and antelope; maintaining and/or improving deer and antelope winter range (especially woody species) and fawning cover; and maintaining existing sagebrush stands at a canopy cover of 15 to 50% with an effective height over 12 inches.

BLM will improve the quality and quantity of nesting, brood rearing and winter habitat for upland game birds. BLM will provide residual grass and forb cover for upland bird and waterfowl nesting. Objectives for residual cover will be developed in AMPs and measured in terms of percent of residual (utilization levels) or visual observation ratings. BLM will manage for succulent vegetation, including a variety of forbs and maintain big and silver sage on sage grouse wintering and nesting areas with a canopy coverage (line intercept) of 15 to 50% and an effective height of 12 inches. BLM will improve or maintain woody vegetation for sharp-tailed grouse cover.

Livestock use levels will be monitored to ensure adequate wildlife cover remains to meet winter and early spring wildlife cover needs.

Prior to constructing any rangeland improvements, a wildlife biologist will provide site-specific recommendations and develop needed mitigating measures. Construction of new water developments within 1/2-mile of a sharp-tailed grouse lek will only be allowed after careful consideration of potential impacts on woody vegetation due to possible increased livestock grazing. Land treatments will be designed to maintain sagebrush levels within the desired canopy cover range (15-50%) and to increase the amounts of succulent forbs. Controlled burning in conifer and sagebrush types will be done on an individual basis to improve wildlife habitat.

As reservoirs are planned during the development of AMPs or habitat management plans (HMP), fisheries potential will be a key consideration in location and design. New fisheries reservoirs will normally be fenced and a livestock watering tank provided below the reservoir. Existing fisheries reservoirs will be fenced to exclude livestock, if necessary, to improve emergent vegetation, shade and/or improve the recreational experience.

Grazing Management Implementation

BLM manages grazing on the public rangelands by statutory authority, i.e. the Taylor Grazing Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act. Under the statutes, BLM is required to develop regulations to manage public land resources on a multiple-use and sustained yield basis. Management of grazing on BLM land within the planning area will be in accordance with the grazing administration regulations found in 43 CFR, Parts 4100. The purpose of the grazing regulations is to manage the livestock grazing program as an integral part of the overall multiple-use of the public lands.

About 40% of the vegetation (452,380 AUMs) will continue being allocated to livestock; 139,236 AUMs in the Valley RA, 179,911 AUMs in the Phillips RA and 133,233 AUMs in the Judith RA. Short-term livestock grazing reductions will be implemented as necessary during drought or other emergencies.

All vegetation increases resulting from livestock grazing management and/or land treatments within an allotment will be allocated to watershed, until the soil and vegetation resource is stabilized at a satisfactory condition as determined by an interdisciplinary team. In the Willow Creek watershed of the Valley Resource Area (RA) all increased vegetation will be allocated to watershed protection because of highly erodible soils (primarily soil subgroups 3 and 4).

Developed recreation sites will be excluded from livestock grazing, except where grazing is needed to maintain the desired plant community. For example, sheep or goat grazing may be needed to control leafy spurge. Grazing by horses and other livestock used by recreationists in developed recreation sites will be managed through specific activity plans.

Forage allocation decisions will be monitored on a continuing basis. Adjustments to livestock forage allocations will be based on ongoing monitoring. Monitoring intensity will be based on allotment category. Allotments with potential overstocking will be most intensively monitored. Utilization data from key areas which receive substantial use will be used to adjust stocking on these allotments. In addition to utilization data, actual use, climate and trend data will be used to support changes in livestock forage allocations. The monitoring guidelines can be found in the Valley, Judith and Phillips Monitoring Plans available at the respective offices.

Most unallocated parcels will remain available for livestock grazing. These are mainly isolated small tracts. An environmental assessment will be prepared for areas not previously grazed by livestock. Four larger areas (Square Butte, part of the Judith Mountains, the Little Rocky Mountains and Whitewater Lake area) will remain closed to livestock grazing. The Cree Crossing allotment, adjacent to the Milk River, will be closed to livestock grazing for recreation values. The Montana Gulch and Dry Gulch allotments will be authorized under a grazing permit following the procedure in 43 CFR 4130.1-2.

Grazing allocations on newly acquired land will be based on management needs and objectives for the acquisition. The allocation may range from zero to full capacity and will be monitored after completion of the activity plan to adjust grazing as needed, to meet objectives.

BLM will supervise grazing use to assure compliance with the terms and conditions of grazing permits and leases. Any violations of permits will be pursued vigorously in accordance with the grazing trespass regulations.

Livestock grazing will continue to be managed through development and monitoring of AMPs or similar grazing plans and supervision of grazing use. AMPs will be developed and maintained to achieve multiple-use objectives in accordance with the Missouri Breaks Grazing and Prairie Potholes Vegetation Allocation EISs as modified by this EIS. Methods and guidelines from these EISs will be followed to maintain or improve ecological condition, enhance vegetation production, maintain and enhance wildlife habitat, protect watersheds, reduce bare ground to the target soil vegetation cover by soil subgroups and to minimize livestock/recreation conflicts. AMPs will implement some form of grazing method (i.e., rest rotation, deferred rotation, seasonal or other methods). Livestock grazing management methods will be implemented prior to land treatments.

All allotments have been assigned to a management category depending on the resources and problems contained in the allotment. The three categories Improve (I), Maintain (M) and Custodial (C) reflect resource conditions and economic considerations for each allotment. The terms maintain, improve, and custodial relate to resource objectives for the allotment, i.e. whether conditions need to be improved, maintained or if custodial management is appropriate because of relatively limited resources and resource problems. BLM's allotment categorization system will continue to determine priorities for implementing AMPs, spending range improvement funds and monitoring. Allotments will be subject to recategorization based on changes in resource conditions as determined through monitoring and priority changes made through this EIS.

Monitoring data and analysis will be used to determine if grazing management is achieving land use or activity plan objectives. Existing AMPs will be updated as dictated by monitoring results or changes in the livestock operation.

Grazing permittees have an opportunity to apply each year for changes in grazing use within their preference level. These changes may include adjustments in season of use, livestock numbers or class of livestock. Where major changes in livestock use are proposed, these applications will be considered through an interdisciplinary environmental analysis.

Temporary decreases in livestock forage allocations will be used in the event of a temporary loss of forage such as in severe drought, fire or insect or weed infestations. Temporary increases in livestock forage allocations will be made on a nonrenewable basis, where such increases are within the available carrying capacity and are consistent with multiple use objectives as determined by an interdisciplinary review.

Range improvements (primarily reservoirs, fences and land treatments) will be built to support AMPs. Fences will be designed to allow easy passage of wildlife. In the Prairie Potholes area, one water source per section is the guideline for water development.

Reductions in livestock grazing previously made in the Missouri Breaks due to steep slopes and other suitability criteria will remain in effect.

LAND TREATMENTS

BLM will use land treatments to meet watershed, grazing management and wildlife objectives. Land treatments will only be applied where grazing management alone will not accomplish the desired result. Clubmoss-bluegrama vegetation, dense clay and claypan ecological sites, dense big sagebrush stands, and dense pine-juniper stands are the soil/vegetation types considered for treatments. These will increase infiltration of water into the soil, improve ecological condition, improve wildlife habitat and increase vegetation production.

Land treatments (chisel plowing, planting of lure crops, scalping, discing, contour furrowing, seeding and burning) may be considered in all AMPs. Chisel plowing will continue as the primary clubmoss/claypan treatment method. Burning will be done on a limited basis to improve wildlife and livestock forage in dense pine-juniper stands throughout the Missouri Breaks and to improve vegetation productivity on other upland sites including sagebrush. Chemical control of sagebrush will not be considered because of the potential loss of valuable winter forage, damage to valuable forbs and concerns about the effects of herbicides on wildlife.

Implementation

The criteria and guidelines in the Chisel Plowing Policy for the State of Montana (IM MT-88-125, 1988) will be followed when implementing land treatments.

Land treatments will be planned, developed and implemented to ensure that potential negative impacts are identified and mitigated. The MDFWP will be consulted in accordance with the MOU between BLM and MDFWP. Watershed topography, soil types, infiltration and soil loss potential will also be considered and mitigated in vegetation manipulation projects.

Increased production resulting from land treatments will be allocated toward accomplishing multiple-use objectives. When all objectives of the AMP are accomplished, additional forage resulting from land treatments will normally be allocated 50% to watershed, 25% to livestock and 25% to wildlife. If Ducks Unlimited or other private wildlife funding is used to do the treatment, the additional allocation will be to wildlife. Conversely, where there is substantial contribution by the livestock permittee and there are no conflicts with wildlife objectives, up to 50% of the additional vegetation may be allocated to livestock.

Existing crested wheatgrass seedings will be managed where feasible as spring pastures to defer native rangeland grazing, except where sagebrush invasion has resulted in important wildlife habitat. Crested wheatgrass seedings may be maintained for maximum livestock forage production with up to 70% of the production allocated to livestock when soils are stabilized to a satisfactory condition. Mechanical treatments and fertilization are management practices which renovate old crested wheatgrass stands to benefit associated native rangeland.

Crested wheatgrass seedings may be used to consolidate existing scattered stands of crested wheatgrass into a manageable unit. New seedings of crested wheatgrass or other species may be used where no other option is available to meet the resource objectives. Reseeding old crested wheatgrass stands to native species is not normally feasible due to the difficulty of eliminating the crested wheatgrass and the cost of native seeds.

NOXIOUS PLANTS

BLM will control, eradicate or contain noxious plants to maintain native rangelands. The primary tool will be the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM uses chemical, biological, mechanical and other strategies to most effectively combat noxious plants while minimizing impacts to the environment.

Control efforts will be focused primarily on leafy spurge and knapweeds. The containment/eradication of noxious plants will proceed as analyzed in the Programmatic Environmental Assessment on Containment/Eradication of Selected Noxious Plants in the BLM Lewistown District (1986), the Northwest Area Noxious Weed Control Program EIS (1987), and the Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands EIS (1991).

Implementation

BLM will encourage and pursue educational efforts in cooperation with the Montana Cooperative Extension Service to increase awareness of the noxious plant problem.

BLM will cooperate with state and county governments to detect and prevent the spread of noxious plants. BLM will control, eradicate and/or contain noxious weed infestations on BLM land by cooperative agreements with county weed boards. If weed problems occur in an intermingled ownership pattern, BLM will initiate control measures in conjunction with the other landowners.

Biological control and sheep or goat grazing will continue to be emphasized, especially where using of chemicals would be environmentally or economically impractical. Herbicides will be used on small infestations and on the perimeter of large infestations. BLM will continue cooperating with the Agricultural Research Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), in biological weed control efforts.

ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL

BLM may allow animal damage control on BLM land in the planning area. The methods used include trapping, denning, snaring, M-44s, ground shooting, and aerial gunning. Animal damage control will be conducted on BLM land by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, APHIS. Prairie dog control is discussed under the Prairie Dog and Black-footed Ferret Management issue.

Implementation

Control activity procedures, responsibilities, stipulations and restrictions are described in the Lewistown District Office, Animal Damage Control Plan, 1987, as updated.

WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

BLM will maintain and enhance suitable habitat for all wildlife species. The emphasis for habitat maintenance and development will be on present and potential habitat for sensitive, threatened and/or endangered species, nesting waterfowl, crucial wildlife winter ranges, non-game habitat and fisheries. This guidance is consistent with BLM's Montana Fish and Wildlife 2000: A Plan for the Future.

General forage allocations and habitat decisions for wildlife can be found in the Vegetation Management section of this chapter. Population management is the responsibility of MDFWP; BLM has made general habitat management decisions to support the populations identified by the MDFWP and these decisions are identified below. All existing MOUs between BLM and other agencies that pertain to wildlife management will be carried forward in this document.

Sensitive, Threatened and/or Endangered Species Habitat Implementation

BLM will consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) when any action "may affect" a threatened or endangered (T&E) species or its habitat.

No action will be initiated on BLM land which will jeopardize any candidate or federally listed threatened and endangered plant or animal. Impacts to state designated species of special interest will be evaluated and applicable mitigation developed prior to any action on BLM land.

BLM will cooperate with the FWS to fully recover threatened and endangered species. The federally listed T&E species within the planning area are the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, black-footed ferret and piping plover (see Appendix F). Federal candidate species are the ferruginous hawk, mountain plover, and long-billed curlew. BLM will cooperate with MDFWP to manage the State Species of Special Concern (see Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1
MONTANA SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

Mammals	Birds
Northern Bog Lemming	Northern Goshawk
Dwarf Shrew	Ferruginous Hawk
Preble's Shrew	Merlin
Merriam Shrew	Cooper's Hawk
Big-eared Bat	Prairie Falcon
Hoary Marmot	Golden Eagle
White-tailed Prairie Dog	Mountain Plover
Canada Lynx	Upland Sandpiper
Wolverine	Long-billed Curlew
Least Weasel	Northern Pygmy Owl
Long-legged Bat	Northern Saw-whet Owl
Meadow Jumping Mouse	Long-eared Owl
Masked Shrew	Burrowing Owl
	Three-toed Woodpecker
Amphibians	Northern Saw-whet Owl
	Vesper Sparrow
Wood Frog	Burrowing Owl
Dakota Toad	Pileated Woodpecker
Tailed Frog	Olive-sided Flycatcher
	Western Bluebird
Fish	Clay-colored Sparrow
	Brewer's Sparrow
Westslope Cutthroat Trout	Bobolink
Blue Sucker	Dickcissel
Finescale Dace	Eastern Bluebird
Shortnose Gar	Field Sparrow
Cheek Chub	
Reptiles	
Plains Hognose Snake	
Western Spiny Softshell	
Milk Snake	
Common Snapping Turtle	

Source: BLM, 1990

The Montana Bald Eagle Working Group did not identify any high potential nesting habitat within the planning area; however, historical nesting sites do occur. Areas that contain potential nesting habitat need to be evaluated to determine if high potential habitat could be developed with habitat modifications. Food sources for nesting eagles would also be evaluated. If habitat modification provides high potential nesting habitat, BLM will manage the area for bald eagles.

Potential peregrine nesting cliffs are scattered throughout the Missouri River Breaks and mountain ranges in the planning area. These areas should be considered future reintroduction sites.

Many of the wetlands on BLM land may contain habitat for piping plover and/or least tern. Piping plovers have been found on Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge and Nelson and Fort Peck Reservoirs in the planning area. However, smaller alkali wetlands elsewhere (North Dakota and southern Saskatchewan) provide habitat for the plover. No piping plovers have been found on BLM land in the planning area. Least terns have been found on islands at Fort Peck Reservoir and on islands down stream from the reservoir. The wetlands within the planning area need to be inventoried for both species. If piping plovers are found on BLM land, their habitat should be protected. Disturbing activities would not be allowed within 1/4-mile of any nesting piping plover from May 15 to July 30.

An inventory is needed to determine ferruginous and Swainson's hawks populations in the planning area. Various techniques are needed to plant new trees and/or nesting structures to secure adequate nesting areas for the Swainson's hawk. These nesting structures need to be protected from livestock by fencing or placing large rocks around the nesting structure.

Mountain plover habitat is enhanced by black-tailed prairie dogs. Most of the mountain plover observations in the planning area are associated with prairie dog towns. Classic mountain plover habitat elsewhere is associated with short grass prairies. These areas need to be identified and surveyed to determine the extent of mountain plover habitat.

The long-billed curlew is very common throughout the planning area. The curlew is found mainly in the grassland habitats. An inventory is needed to assess the curlew habitat and its habitat needs.

Wildlife Habitat Implementation

Areas that can support woody vegetation establishment and respond to rest, need to be identified, maintained and managed. Browse is important in maintaining big game and upland bird populations.

BLM will minimize or prevent road and trail development on crucial big game and upland bird habitat areas.

Woody vegetation is important to sharp-tail grouse, particularly in the fall and winter. Woody vegetation will be improved or maintained and careful consideration given to the location of all water improvements within 1-1/2 miles of sharp-tailed grouse leks.

Powerline construction will follow the recommendations related to Prevention of Raptor Electrocution on Power Lines (A. Oldendorft, A. Miller and R. Lehman, 1981).

BLM may provide artificial nesting platforms for osprey, golden eagles and other raptors. BLM may develop nesting areas in high cliff faces for peregrine falcons.

Great blue heron and cormorant rookeries will be protected from roads, campsite developments, timber cutting and other intrusions. Surface disturbing activities will not be allowed within 1,000 feet of rookeries from the start of nesting to the fledgling of young birds.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan was developed in 1988, because of declining waterfowl production in the United States and Canada. It showed that certain species of ducks, especially the mallard, northern pintail, redhead and canvasback are in serious trouble. North America has been divided into various regions. Two of these regions, the Prairie Potholes and Northern Great Plains, are within the planning area. It also suggested joint ventures, which are coordinated efforts with federal and state agencies and private landowners to produce waterfowl. Within the Prairie Potholes Joint Venture, the Montana Waterfowl Working Group has identified Beaver Creek Project. This project is in the Phillips RA.

To implement the North American Waterfowl Management Plan BLM will emphasize the mallard, northern pintail, redhead and canvasback during habitat development. Priority would be given to the Beaver Creek project in the Prairie Potholes Joint Venture; then the remainder of the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture and finally to the Northern Great Plains region. Wildlife habitat management of BLM land within the regions would fall into these categories; reservoir construction, reservoir reconstruction, island construction, reservoir enhancement, grazing system implementation, enhancement and/or modification and wetland acquisition.

Potholes in association with the existing stockwater reservoirs, provide additional waterfowl production. The potholes would be developed into complexes with a large (larger than 10 surface acres) permanent waterbody, brood ponds (permanent or ephemeral, about 3-surface acres in size) and pairing ponds (mostly ephemeral, about 1-surface acre in size).

Managing riparian and wetland areas is discussed further under the Riparian and Wetland Management of Watersheds issue.

Fish Habitat Implementation

Consistent with the 10-year Cooperative Fish Management Plan between the BLM and MDFWP, the MDFWP will be requested to stock the reservoirs shown in Table 2.2.

TABLE 2.2
RESERVOIRS IDENTIFIED FOR FISHERIES ON BLM LAND

Judith RA	Valley RA	Phillips RA
Buffalo Wallow	Atlas	Bell Ridge
Hopalong	Shoot	Lark
Holland	Snow	Dogtown
Upper Dry Fork	Hose	Sentinel
Lower Dry Fork	Gay	Pale Face
Jakes	Langen	White Face
Crooked Creek	Knudson (Helen)	Sagebrush
Dry Blood	Lunch	Taint
South Fork Dry Blood	Big	Current
Yellow Water	Valley	Wrangler
Drag		PR-110
Payola		Wapiti
Cotton Dam		PR-20
Fritzner		King
Mauland		PR-18
Box Elder		PR-16
		PR-109A
		Douchette
		PR-114
		PR-22
		PR-54
		Compton
		Flake

Source: BLM, 1990

Other reservoirs may be identified as fisheries reservoirs with priority consideration given to reservoirs near population centers and major access routes. BLM will attempt to develop self-sustaining game fish populations while recognizing that some reservoirs would be maintained as put-and-take fisheries. BLM will also improve existing habitat by modifying existing high potential reservoirs, considering fisheries potential during the design phase of new reservoirs, and attempting to locate reservoirs in a cluster with a variety of self-sustaining game fish.

RECREATION

BLM will maintain and/or enhance the recreational quality of BLM land and resources to ensure enjoyable recreational experiences. BLM's Recreation 2000 guidance and the Tri-State Recreation plan incorporate the following provisions:

1. Managing visitor services including a permit system, interpretive programs, visitor contact, and efforts to improve BLM's image with public land users;

2. Maintaining all facilities where the public comes in contact with BLM roads, trails, signs, recreation sites and buildings;

3. Partnerships among other agencies, organizations, and private citizens; and

4. Budget/marketing techniques which showcase BLM's land management.

Recreation emphasis will be to develop and maintain opportunities for dispersed recreational activities such as hunting, scenic and wildlife viewing and driving for pleasure. Methods to achieve these opportunities include emphasizing public access and the Watchable Wildlife and Back Country Byways programs. BLM will support dispersed recreation for the public to support local, regional and national needs. BLM will not construct undeveloped or developed recreation sites based strictly on local use, unless these sites can be realized through partnerships with other government entities, local service organizations, etc.

The operation and development of recreation facilities supported solely by BLM will be in nationally and regionally recognized areas and in areas where BLM has previously made substantial investments. BLM will encourage and support reasonable recreational initiatives from local and regional groups through partnerships, agreements, challenge cost sharing and volunteer efforts.

BLM will increase coordination with the Montana tourism industry to market BLM recreational opportunities, particularly with the Charlie Russell and Missouri River Tourism Regions for the State of Montana.

BLM will use signs, maps and brochures to identify recreation resources for the public.

Recreation sites for fishing will be developed by BLM when there is an opportunity to share funding with other agencies such as MDFWP.

BLM will not allocate permits or specific use areas for outfitters and guides. All BLM land is available at the discretion of the area manager as long as permittees maintain a special use permit and meet BLM regulation requirements. Outfitters and other recreation users are required to use weed-free feed on BLM land for their livestock as a part of the district's integrated weed management program.

A pack in/pack out garbage policy will be implemented throughout the planning area, except for developed recreation sites where an entrance fee is assessed. BLM will provide sanitation and maintenance services for all developed recreation sites. Partnerships will be sought to help maintain recreation sites.

Judith RA Implementation

The Judith RA contains six recreation management areas (RMA), the Judith with 643,634 acres, Judith Mountains with 22,000 acres, Square Butte with 1,947 acres (discussed in the alternative descriptions of this chapter), Snowy Mountains with 20,000 acres, Judith River with 9,000 acres, and the Nez Perce National Historic Trail with 5,000 acres.

Judith RMA

This is an extensive recreation management area which provides dispersed and unstructured recreational activities.

The Judith RMA contains 16 undeveloped recreation sites associated with these fishing reservoirs; Buffalo Wallow, Hopalong, Holland, Upper Dry Fork, Lower Dry Fork, Jakes, Crooked Creek, Dry Blood, South Fork Dry Blood, Yellow Water, Drag, Payola, Fritzner, Mauland, Box Elder and Cotton Dam. These sites will receive minimal maintenance. Any additional facilities such as tables, fire pits and toilets will be coordinated through partnerships and volunteers.

Recreation access maps, brochures and signs at key public access points and at undeveloped sites will be available for the public.

BLM land in this RMA has high rockhounding potential and BLM will allow and encourage rockhounding opportunities.

One route (Missouri Breaks) has been designated for the Back Country Byways program.

BLM will work with the Fort Peck Interagency Council, the MDFWP, the Corp of Engineers and Petroleum County Commissioners on maintaining the Crooked Creek Road. The degree of involvement will be determined by budget and staff availability.

Judith Mountains RMA

This special RMA provides picnicking, scenic viewing, hiking, driving for pleasure and caving opportunities.

Additional cave inventories will be needed. Interim protective measures will be needed for the Tate-Poetter Cave as well as other significant caves in the planning area.

An activity plan may be prepared to develop partnerships and volunteer agreements for managing the existing sites in the Judith Mountain RMA. The majority of the public use is on a local or regional level. A lack of funding will result in closing or not implementing most of these sites, unless some type of volunteer assistance is obtained. This includes six undeveloped recreation sites Collar Gulch, Red Mountain, Big Grassy Peak, Judith Peak Scenic Overlook, Limekiln Canyon and Upper Armells Creek.

Developing trail systems and undeveloped recreation sites in the Collar Gulch area should be coordinated with Fergus County's Camp Maiden site.

The scenic overlook project on Judith Peak will be undertaken, if a partnership can be established with local groups. This site could be made available through a recreation and public purposes (R&PP) lease to a qualified group.

A mountain bike trail could be constructed from the Red Mountain recreation site to the Collar Peak trailhead, a distance of 5 miles, provided a partnership with another entity can be obtained.

A rock collecting area for double terminated, smokey quartz crystals (locally known as Judith Peak Diamonds) may be identified along the Judith Peak Road.

The Judith Peak/Maiden Canyon Road may be nominated for the Back Country Byways system.

Snowy Mountains RMA

This special RMA provides fishing, hunting, sightseeing, hiking and picnicking opportunities.

BLM will work with the Lewis and Clark National Forest to provide an access route across BLM land from the Red Hill Road to Half Moon Pass Trail (FS #493).

Lack of funding will close the South Fork Flatwillow recreation site unless partnership is attained.

BLM will cooperate with the state, FS and private landowners for the continued development and use of the 4-mile cross-country ski trail in the Green/Dry Pole Canyon area along the Crystal Lake Road. There is a need to formulate a partnership with the State of Montana, FS and private landowners.

Judith River RMA

This special RMA provides float boating, hunting, fishing, scenic and wildlife viewing and camping opportunities.

The Judith River was evaluated for Wild and Scenic River status and a 27.1-mile segment in this RMA has been studied and found eligible but not suitable for wild and scenic river status. Additional information on the evaluation process is discussed in the Wild and Scenic River Section of Management Common To All Alternatives.

Visual resource values (VRM Class II) will be protected along the Judith River. Public access will be pursued for put-in and take-out points from the Denton highway bridge to the Anderson Bridge.

Nez Perce National Historic Trail RMA

A portion of this statewide special recreation management area is located within the planning area and BLM will manage the recreation activities and opportunities associated with this portion of this historical feature.

This National Historic Trail System crosses the Judith RMA and provides several opportunities for interpretation. This key segment begins near Winifred and enters the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River (UMNWSR) Corridor near Cow Island. It also parallels portions of the proposed Missouri Breaks Back Country Byway.

Scenic and cultural values will be protected on BLM land along this historic trail. An activity plan will be developed to detail management activities along the trail.

Valley RA Implementation

The Valley RA contains two recreation management areas, Valley with 366,486 acres and South Valley with 653,400 acres.

Valley RMA

This unit is an extensive recreation management area where a limited commitment of resources will provide dispersed and unstructured recreational activities.

The Valley RMA contains six undeveloped recreation sites; five fishing reservoirs plus a day use area along the Milk

River west of Glasgow (Faraasen Park). The fishing reservoirs are Atlas, Big, Gay, Hose and Langen.

Potential management actions for this RMA include providing recreation access maps, brochures and signs at access points and the undeveloped sites. Partnerships between BLM and volunteer groups may provide additional facilities such as picnic tables, fire pits and toilets for the undeveloped recreation sites.

Faraasen Park development plans include a parking lot, an interpretive nature trail and improved wildlife habitat and riparian areas. Continued development and maintenance will be realized through partnerships with other government entities and local service organizations, etc.
The Bitter Creek area has been selected for a wildlife viewing zone under the Watchable Wildlife program. The North Valley access route from Opheim to Hinsdale will be considered for Back Country Byway status.

South Valley RMA

This unit is a special recreation management area which provides opportunities for hunting, scenic and wildlife viewing and driving for pleasure.

The South Valley RMA includes five undeveloped recreation sites associated with fishing; Helen, Lunch, Shoot, Valley and Snow. The Lunch, Shoot and Valley sites have development potential as new fishing reservoirs through a partnership agreement. The facilities at these five sites could include picnic tables, fire pits, shelter roofs and pit toilets.

The TC Access Road and Willow Creek/Dry Fork routes will be considered for Back Country Byway status.

Phillips RA Implementation

The Phillips RA contains three RMAs; Phillips with 740,690 acres, South Phillips with 318,200 acres and Little Rockies with 25,800 acres.

Phillips RMA

This RMA is an extensive recreation management area which provides dispersed and unstructured recreational activities.

This RMA contains nine undeveloped recreation sites, of which seven are associated with fishing reservoirs. These sites plus the remaining two sites, Guston Coulee and Cottonwood Coulee, will receive minimal maintenance. Recreational activities associated with the latter two would be camping, hunting, fishing and picnicking. Additional facilities such as picnic tables, fire pits, toilets or sun shelters could be pursued through the use of partnerships and volunteers.

The seven fishing reservoirs are Douchette, Compton, Flake, PR-22, PR-110, PR-54 and PR-114.

Walk in hunting areas may be developed to alleviate resource damage or in response to public demand for that type of access.

Fishing access and boat ramps will be developed on BLM land along the Milk River where partnership agreements can be made.

These routes will be considered for Back Country Byway status; Frenchman Creek, Cottonwood Creek/Black Coulee, and a North Phillips tour route through potholes and wetlands complexes (specific location to be determined).

South Phillips RMA

This special RMA provides hunting, fishing, scenic and wildlife viewing and pleasure driving opportunities.

There are 17 undeveloped recreation sites within this RMA of which 16 will be available for fishing and watchable wildlife activities. These 16 recreation sites are Bell Ridge, Lark, Dogtown, Current, Sentinel, Pale Face, White Face, Sagebrush, Taint, Wrangler, PR-20, Wapiti, King, PR-18, PR-16 and PR-109A.

The other undeveloped recreation site, White Rocks Coulee, will be used for camping and picnicking.

These 20 sites will receive minimal maintenance. Additional facilities may include a picnic table, fire pit, toilet and sun shelter through cooperative partnerships and volunteers.

The Dry Fork/Willow Creek and Bull Creek/Power Plant Ferry routes will be nominated to the Back Country Byways program.

Scenic overlooks will be considered from which the Burnt Lodge, Antelope Creek and Cow Creek WSAs can be seen. Any development would be arranged through partnerships and volunteers.

Efforts will be made to acquire the Coe Homestead and Kid Curry Hideout for interpretive programs.

Wildlife viewing areas will be considered for waterfowl, mountain plover, burrowing owls, sage grouse and sharptails and may consist of photo blinds, hiking trails and the Watchable Wildlife program.

Little Rockies RMA

This special RMA provides camping, picnicking, hiking and wildlife viewing opportunities.

BLM will maintain the Camp Creek Campground, Montana Gulch Campground and Buffington recreation sites.

Additional cave inventories in the Little Rocky Mountains will determine which caves meet significance criteria. Interim management prescriptions will be needed to protect resources in any significant caves. Azure Cave is located within this RMA and is discussed as one of the potential ACECs in the alternative descriptions in this chapter.

WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT

A final suitability study/EIS has been completed that recommended wilderness designation for Burnt Lodge, Antelope Creek and a portion of the Cow Creek WSAs. The WSAs that were studied, but not determined suitable for wilderness designation were Bitter Creek, Woodhawk, Dog Creek South, and Square Butte. More information on these WSAs can be found in the Square Butte Wilderness Study Report (1980), Final Bitter Creek Wilderness EIS (1989) and the Final Missouri Breaks Wilderness Suitability Study/EIS (1987).

BLM will maintain the wilderness values in seven WSAs (Burnt Lodge, Antelope Creek, Cow Creek, Bitter Creek, Woodhawk, Dog Creek South and Square Butte). The Secretary of Interior made recommendations to the President in October 1991. Table 2.3 shows the Secretary of Interior's wilderness recommendations for these seven WSAs (1991). The President will send a recommendation by October 1993, to Congress who in turn can designate any of the WSAs or portions thereof as wilderness, deny designation or continue study of the areas.

TABLE 2.3
WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilderness Study Area	Acres Recommended for Wilderness	Acres Recommended for Non-Wilderness
Burnt Lodge	13,730	
Antelope Creek	9,600	2,750
Cow Creek	21,590	12,460
Bitter Creek		59,660
Woodhawk		8,100
Dog Creek South		5,150
Square Butte		1,947

Source: BLM, 1991

Implementation

WSAs will continue to be managed under BLM Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review until they are acted upon by Congress.

Acquired areas studied for wilderness will be managed to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the land, and when it does not conflict with valid and existing rights, they will be managed to meet the non-impairment standard as well.

BLM will prepare a Wilderness Management Plan for any areas designated as wilderness by Congress. WSAs not designated as wilderness by Congress will subsequently be managed in accordance with guidance for adjacent BLM land unless otherwise specified.

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

BLM will manage activities to comply with the Visual Resource Management (VRM) policy. BLM land within the planning area has been assigned a VRM class based on a process that considers scenic quality, sensitivity to changes in the landscape and distance zone (see Map 1, in the back of this document). The planning area has four classes, numbered I to IV. The lower the class number the more sensitive and scenic the area. Each class has a management objective which prescribes the level of acceptable change in the landscape. The visual classes are defined as follows:

Class I Objective - 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.

Class II Objective - 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.

Class III Objective - 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.

Class IV Objective - The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modification 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.

Class I areas include the Square Butte ONA and scattered BLM lands associated with the UMNWSR. Management of the UMNWSR is discussed in the West HiLine RMP/EIS and management of the visual resources for Square Butte is discussed in the alternative descriptions of this chapter.

Class II areas are landscapes that provide contrast to the uniformity of the surrounding plains. In the planning area, this includes several isolated mountain ranges, major stream valleys and Breaks area along some deeply incised valleys. With increased interest in tourism, sightseeing activities, back country byways, scenic corridors and scenic overlooks, BLM places management emphasis on maintaining scenic quality within the overall multiple-use management direction.

One area, the Judith Mountains Scenic Area, has been nominated as an ACEC because of its relatively visually undisturbed character and the large block of BLM land it contains. The ACEC is discussed in detail in the description of alternatives in this chapter and in Chapter 3. This particular area highlights the tourism backdrop for the largest central Montana community, Lewistown, and provides for sightseeing within the scenic corridor of several major highways leading into the Lewistown community. Other planning area mountain ranges and river valleys possessing Class II visual resource ratings do not have the undisturbed vistas or do not have sufficient blocks of BLM land ownership to warrant special management attention. Several of the Breaks areas are in wilderness study status and a portion of those Class II areas have been recommended for wilderness designation. Such designation would contain management prescriptions for maintaining the visual character of those areas.

Class III and IV areas primarily include the open prairie, grasslands and some foothills in the planning area. Management of these areas allows alteration of the visual landscape, but works to minimize visual disruption of the form and lines created by the plains and foothills landscape.

Implementation

Surface developments will be designed or mitigated to compliment and harmonize with the natural features and the VRM class objectives. The visual contrast rating will be used as a guide for all major projects proposed on BLM lands that fall within VRM Classes I, II and III areas. The VRM class objectives may not always be met due to non-discretionary actions or exceptions which may occur after evaluation and at the discretion of the authorized officer.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The cultural resource management program has two components; compliance with existing laws/regulations and the management of cultural properties on BLM land.

Two cultural resource management plans will be prepared, one for Valley and Phillips RA and one for the Judith RA. The purpose is to assign cultural resources to particular uses and to assess and to establish thresholds for determining cultural property significance. The cultural resource management plans will establish the management prescriptions best suited for fulfilling management goals and objectives.

BLM decisions, including implementing a cultural resource management plan, are subject to historic preservation laws and regulations (primarily the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and 36 CFR Part 800). BLM will ensure that all proposed actions, initiated or authorized by BLM, avoid damage to federal and non-federal cultural resources. BLM will determine, based on inventory and evaluation data, whether the proposed action will impact important cultural resources and if necessary take steps to avoid or mitigate possible impacts, consistent with the uses attributable to the cultural resource.

BLM will consult with Native American tribes when its actions have the potential to affect areas of concern to the practitioners of traditional religions. In the planning area, that consultation will require contact with the Fort Belknap, Fort Peck and Rocky Boy Reservations and possibly other tribes. The activities of concern are those which might cause degradation to the visual or aesthetic nature of an area, or cause the loss of plant species or other resources important to Native Americans. BLM is required to consult with traditional religious practitioners of policies and procedures to determine if changes are needed to ensure that such rights and freedoms are not abridged by agency practices.

The Big Bend of the Milk River, in the Phillips RA, has archaeological resources of particularly high site density and unusual significance. A more detailed discussion is given under the Big Bend of Milk River ACEC nomination.

Implementation

The primary management objectives are to properly manage the cultural resources under BLM jurisdiction through a

systematic program of identification and evaluation, and to reduce the level of conflict between cultural resources and other land and resource uses. All cultural resources within the planning area are segregated into management objectives. These objectives include managing for information potential, managing for public values and managing for conservation.

Cultural resources which contain significant information on the prehistory and history of the planning area will be managed for their information potential. These are cultural properties that consist of artifacts and features on the surface and/or are buried that have the potential to yield important information.

Cultural resources that possess sociocultural, educational and recreational attributes will be managed for their public values. These include cultural resources associated with traditional Native American cultural values and prehistoric or historic cultural properties which exhibit interpretive and/or recreational potential. Managing cultural properties used by Native Americans will focus on avoiding uses incompatible with traditional values.

Special or unique cultural resources will be managed for their public values and conservation. These include cultural properties that contain sensitive prehistoric religious features such as medicine wheels or burials; cultural properties that are of a nature that would not permit current archaeological technology to adequately investigate the property; and cultural properties which are rare in the planning area.

Allocation of cultural resources to specific uses will be completed during Cultural Resource Management Planning. There are six use categories for cultural resources: Scientific Use, Conservation for Future Use, Management Use, Sociocultural Use, Public Use and Discharged Use.

The Scientific Use category applies to any cultural property determined to be suitable for consideration as the subject of scientific or historical study, including study that would result in its physical alteration. Inclusion in this category signifies that the property need not be conserved in the face of an appropriate research or data recovery (mitigation) proposal.

The Conservation for Future Use category is reserved for any unusual cultural resource which, because of scarcity or special significance, has research potential that surpasses the current state of the art; is of singular historical importance, cultural importance, or architectural interest, or comparable reasons; and is not currently appropriate for conservation as the subject of scientific or historical study that would result in its physical alteration. A cultural property or location included in this category is considered worthy of segregation from all other land or resource uses, including cultural property uses, that would threaten the maintenance of its present condition or setting, as pertinent, and it will remain in this use category until specified provisions developed in the cultural resource management plan are met in the future.

The Management Use category may be applied to any cultural property considered most useful for controlled experimental study that would result in its physical alteration by the BLM or other entities concerned with the management of cultural properties. Expenditure of cultural properties or data may be justified for purposes of obtaining specific information that would ultimately aid in that management of other cultural properties. Experimental studies may be aimed toward a better understanding of the kinds and rates of natural or human caused deterioration, effectiveness of protection measures and similar lines of inquiry.

The Sociocultural Use category is to be applied to any cultural property that is perceived by a specified social and/or cultural group as having attributes that contribute to maintaining the heritage or existence of that group. This use category signifies that the cultural property is to be managed in a way that takes those attributes into account, as applicable.

The Public Use category may be applied to any cultural property found to be appropriate for consideration as an interpretive exhibit in place, a subject of supervised participation in scientific or historical study, or related education and recreation uses by members of the general public.

The Discharged Use category means either that a cultural property that was previously qualified for assignment to any of the categories defined above no longer possesses that qualifying characteristic for that assignment to an alternative use; or that a cultural property's scientific use potential was so slight that it was exhausted at the same time the property was recorded, and no alternative use is deemed appropriate. Where a cultural property is involved, allocation to Discharged Use also means that records pertaining to the property represent its only remaining importance and that its location no longer presents a management constraint for competing land uses.

Those traditional cultural properties that are at least 50 years require consideration under the NHPA. BLM will analyze each proposed action by determining the likelihood of the presence of not only significant cultural properties, but also the potential for or the presence of traditional cultural properties. Potential impacts to traditional cultural properties subject to the NHPA and, therefore, determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, will be avoided, or if possible, mitigated.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Fire management includes both wildfire actions and prescribed fire operations. Fire will be managed in the manner most cost-efficient and responsive to resource management objectives. The resource objectives identified in the RMP will provide the guidelines, direction and degree of suppression to be used.

Prescribed fire will be allowed to burn only under specific conditions. Planned fires will be used in accordance with approved activity plans. Prescribed burning will be administered on an individual basis in grassland, sagebrush and/or conifer types to improve wildlife habitat and vegetation production. Prescribed burns will be held in abeyance in WSAs. Prescribed burning will be addressed in the individual recreation activity plans for each designated wilderness area.

BLM will utilize two levels of suppression actions for wildfire situations. These are intensive and conditional suppression areas.

Intensive suppression will be applied to areas with high resource values, structures, improvements, oil and gas developments, commercial forest values, sagebrush and juniper areas, fire sensitive woody riparian areas (soil subgroups 6 and 17) and cultural values that require aggressive suppression action. Intensive suppression may also be used to prevent fire from spreading to adjoining private property and structures.

BLM will protect these flammable, above ground public developments through intensive suppression efforts:

1. Recreation sites; Camp Creek, Montana Gulch, Buffs Picnic Area and Faraasen Park.

2. Administrative Sites; Zortman Station and Communication Sites (Radio, Remote Automated Weather Stations).

3. Range Improvement Structures; hypalon aprons and storage bags.

Conditional suppression will be applied to areas with resources low in value or not warranting intensive suppression actions and high suppression cost. Responses will depend on the fire's potential and the cost effectiveness of suppression. Suppression strategies may range from immediate initial attack to indirect response such as confining or containing fires within a particular area. Initial attack may be used on one sector of a fire while indirect responses such as burning out, backfiring or allowing the fire to burn to a natural break, may be used on another sector of the fire.

BLM will use conditional suppression actions in these areas:

1. Grass/shrub fuel types (Fire Management Zone 1 - Soil subgroups 1, 2, 5, 10 and 13). The allowable burn acreage in this fuel type is 500 acres.

2. Missouri Breaks (Fire Management Zone 2 - Soil subgroups 3, 14, 16 and 17). The allowable burn acreage in this fuel type is 100 acres.

3. Mountain timber fuel type (Fire Management Zone 3 - Soil subgroups 15, 17, 18 and 19). The allowable burn acreage in this fuel type is 20 acres.

Implementation

Allowable burn acreage allows acceptable resource losses while using a safe, more cost effective suppression action. That is, waiting for fire to burn out of a steep coulee or draw with a thick juniper canopy rather than taking an intensive, costly and dangerous suppression action. However, this does not mean all fires will be allowed to burn to a predetermined acreage before suppression action is initiated.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

BLM will allow the harvest of forest products within the average allowable cut of 650 thousand board feet (MBF) per year and will meet the demand for minor forest products as feasible. Forest products will be sold at fair market value and cutting plans will be coordinated with adjacent landowners when possible. Timber sales will be with wildlife habitat objectives in mind.

Even though there are approximately 78,200 acres of productive forest land in the planning area, only 29,000 of these acres support the timber base. The 49,200 acres in the Breaks are not in the timber base due to fragile soils, steep slopes, dry sites, crucial wildlife habitat and poor timber quality. However, forest products may be harvested from these areas on a selected sustained yield basis.

The annual allowable cut will be offered through sawtimber sales and the demand for minor forest products will be met within the constraints of the Small Sales of Forest Products Programmatic EA.

Implementation

Commercial thinnings will be used as a silviculture practice on intensively managed forest lands to increase production of stands between 30 and 90 years of age.

Christmas trees for personal use may be cut throughout the planning area, except in the Square Butte ONA, WSAs and recreation sites. Areas for commercial Christmas tree cutting will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Permits will be issued for fuelwood (dead and/or down) materials for personal use on a demand basis outside of the Square Butte ONA and WSAs. Dead and down trees may be cut from cottonwood riparian areas on a case-by-case basis. The permits will contain a stipulation to identify and protect trees with significant wildlife value.

No control of endemic forest insect infestations are proposed. Epidemic infestations will be subject to control only where biological evaluations clearly demonstrate the need and feasibility of the action, or where the infestation is causing other damage, such as creating conditions for catastrophic wildfires.

The following timber harvesting techniques are presently being used by BLM when preparing timber sales.

1. Tractor logging will be limited to slopes with average gradients of less than 40%.

2. Roads will be constructed to the minimum standard necessary to remove the timber and protect the environment. Road locations will be based on topography, drainage, soils and other natural features to minimize erosion.

3. Skid trails will be water barred as needed, to retard soil erosion.

4. Streamside green strips will be left along perennial streams. Skidding through streams will not be allowed.

5. Logging units will be laid out to minimize the risk of wind throw of leave trees. Selection of leave trees will be made to improve the genetic composition of the regenerated stand. Clear-cut blocks will be less than 10 acres and shaped to resemble natural openings.

6. All slash burning will be done in conformance with state air pollution regulations.

7. If available, a minimum of three snags per acre plus replacement snags will be left for wildlife on all sales.

A list of Best Management Practices is found in Appendix E.

LANDS

BLM will protect or enhance the various resource values when considering applications or requests for the use of BLM land. Uses in this category include rights-of-way (ROW), leases and permits.

BLM land will be retained unless this plan determines that selling a particular parcel(s) meets FLPMA disposal criteria, or exchanging BLM land is in the public interest. (See the Land Acquisition and Disposal issue and Appendix A.)

Unauthorized uses of BLM land will be resolved in an expeditious manner and new cases of unauthorized use will be resolved immediately.
Existing withdrawals and classifications, subject to review under the authority of section 204 (L) of FLPMA, are analyzed as part of this document. Recommendations for continuation or revocation are provided. New withdrawals are considered on an individual basis.

Rights-of-Way and Corridor Planning

There is one designated ROW corridor through the Phillips and Valley RAs. This designation was established for the Northern Border Pipeline by the Federal Register Publication dated August 28, 1979.

This RMP will not identify corridors because of the small amounts of BLM land along occupied corridors.

Avoidance areas and windows are identified in the planning area. ROWs may be granted in avoidance areas only when no feasible alternative routes and/or sites are available. In avoidance areas, ROW stipulations from BLM Manual Handbook H-2801-1 will be used to protect resource values, including visual qualities. Windows will be used to channel linear ROWs around specific avoidance areas. WSAs are not subject to ROW application.

Judith RA

Avoidance areas include the Acid Shale-Pine Forest ACEC and BLM land in, Judith River Canyon, the South Moccasin Mountains and the Judith Mountains. Windows in the Judith Mountains are identified through Ross Pass and along the county road west of Black Butte.

The Woodhawk and Dog Creek South WSAs are temporary exclusion areas, pending wilderness area determinations.

Communications site ROWs in the Judith RA will be confined to the Judith Peak and the South Moccasin Mountains communication sites. Judith Peak and the South Moccasin Mountains will be used for existing and future communications facilities. All future facilities in the South Moccasin Mountains will be placed in one building. A communications site plan for Judith Peak was implemented in 1986, and will be carried forward in this document.

Valley RA

The existing communications site located in the SE1/4SE1/4, Section 22, T. 32N., R. 37E. must first be considered for use prior to new sites being established.

The Bitter Creek and Burnt Lodge WSAs are temporary exclusion areas, pending wilderness area determinations.

Phillips RA

Communications site ROWs in the Little Rocky Mountains will be confined to Antoine Butte. Other sites in the Phillips RA will be considered on an individual basis.

The Antelope Creek, Burnt Lodge and Cow Creek WSAs are temporary exclusion areas, pending wilderness area determinations.

Implementation

ROWs outside of avoidance areas and WSAs will be considered on a case-by-case basis with appropriate stipulations from BLM Manual Handbook H-2801-1 incorporated into the ROW grant. The primary authorities for issuing of ROWs are FLPMA and the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 (MLA).

Leases and Permits

The planning area will be closed to cabin site leasing. Other Section 302 (b) leases, Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) leases and Section 302 (b) permits will be considered on an individual basis. The following lands in the Phillips RA have been identified for R&PP lease and/or conveyance.

1. T. 25N., R. 25E. (Zortman Townsite)
   Section 17, Block 8 Lots 3 & 4

2. T. 25N., R. 24E. (Landusky Townsite)
   Section 27, Block 3 Lots 10, 13 & 18

Implementation

The primary authorities for granting leases are Section 302 (b) of FLPMA and the Recreation and Public Purpose Act of 1926.

Public Sale

The following BLM lands are identified for public sale and meet certain sale criteria of Section 203 of FLPMA. The tract in the Valley RA meets disposal criteria 1 of Section 203. The tracts in the Phillips RA meet disposal criteria 1 and 3 of Section 203 and are subject to the floodplain restrictions of Executive Order 11988.

1. Valley RA

   T. 30N., R. 37E.,
   Section 15, SW1/4SW1/4

2. Phillips RA

   T. 25N., R. 25E., (Zortman Townsite)
   Section 17, Block 6 Lot 9
   Block 7
   Block 8 Lots 3 and 4
   Block 14 Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4
   Block 15 Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4
   Block 16 Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4

   T. 25N., R. 24E., (Landusky Townsite)
   Section 27, Block 3 Lots 10, 13 & 18

Implementation

The authority for sale of BLM land is Section 203 of FLPMA.

Unauthorized Use

Unauthorized uses include agricultural and occupancy trespass, unlawful enclosure and unlawful linear facilities such as powerlines and pipelines.

Implementation

Unauthorized uses of BLM land will be resolved. Unauthorized users are responsible for fair market rental for current and past years of unauthorized use and full reimbursement for administrative costs, rehabilitation and stabilization.

Withdrawal Review

This section discusses withdrawals or land classifications undergoing the withdrawal review and revocation process or reviewable withdrawals that have not been reviewed. The legal descriptions and maps for the following withdrawals and classifications are available in the appropriate resource area office.

Judith RA

1. Coal withdrawal 1

Coal withdrawal 1 (120.34 acres) is located in Chouteau County and was withdrawn by Executive Order in July 1910 to allow time to determine and classify BLM land as valuable for coal. The withdrawal segregates this area from the public land laws, including the mining laws. BLM's recommendation is to revoke the withdrawal and open the area to mineral entry because the coal classification is complete.

2. Blacktail Creek Paleontological Withdrawal

The Blacktail Creek Paleontological site (320 acres) was withdrawn to protect rare fossil fish, mainly the Doryopterid Fish. The site is located in Fergus County and was withdrawn by Public Land Order 6674 on April 27, 1988. The lands are segregated from settlement, sale, location or entry under the general land laws, including the United States mining laws, but not from leasing under the mineral leasing laws. BLM is the surface management agency and decided to withdraw the Blacktail Creek Paleontological site and will continue the withdrawal until the expiration date of April 27, 2008. A review will take place 2-years before the expiration date.

3. Square Butte

The Classification and Multiple-Use Act of September 1964, classified Square Butte for retention and multiple use management. Square Butte is located in southeast Chouteau County. The classification is for 1,946.53 acres and segregates against appropriation under the agricultural land laws and from sales under section 2455 of the Revised Statutes. The lands were also segregated from the mining and mineral leasing laws. The ACEC section of this RMP will provide recommendations concerning the continuation or termination of the classification.

4. Powersite Reserves 33, 37 and 56

Powersite Reserves (PSR) 33 and 37 were created by an Executive Order dated July 2, 1910, and PSR 56 was created by Secretarial Order dated November 9, 1909. The reserves are located along the Judith River from Willow Creek to Brown Coulee and total 1,698.23 acres. The reserves segregate against settlement, sale or location under the public land laws but not from the mining or mineral leasing laws. Completion of withdrawal review will require a water power potential evaluation. If the reserves do not have any water power potential, the withdrawals should be revoked. BLM is the surface management agency.

5. Powersite Classification 232

Powersite Classification (PSC) 232 is a linear withdrawal 20-feet wide created by Secretarial Order dated June 25, 1929. The classification is located in the Butte and Lewistown Districts and the total acreage is unknown. PSC 232 does not segregate against settlement, sale or location under the public land laws and is open to mining. PSC 232 was withdrawn to protect existing electrical transmission lines and not for potential powersite values. PSC 232 should be revoked because the existing transmission lines are authorized and some of the affected lands are in private ownership. The BLM is the surface management agency.

6. Powersite Classification 301

Powersite Classification 301 was created by Secretarial Order dated August 31, 1937. PSC 301 is located along the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River (UMNWSR) and is about 30,200 acres in size. PSC 301 segregates against settlement, sale or location under the public land laws, but not from the mining or mineral leasing laws. PSC 301 is recommended for revocation. Most of PSC 301 is located within the UMNWSR which is part of the West HiLine RMP, which also recommended revocation. Even though a small part of PSC 301 is within the JVP RMP, the final processing of the withdrawal review of PSC 301 will take place under the guidance of the West HiLine RMP. The BLM is the surface management agency.

7. Powersite Classification 369

Powersite Classification 369 was created by Secretarial Order dated October 24, 1944. PSC 369 is located along the Missouri River between Great Falls and Fort Benton and is about 2,000 acres. PSC 369 segregates against settlement, sale or location under the public land laws, but not from the mining or mineral leasing laws. Completion of withdrawal review will require a water power potential evaluation. If PSC 369 does not have water power potential, the withdrawal should be revoked. The BLM is the surface management agency.

8. Powersite Classification 428

Powersite Classification 428 was created by Secretarial Order dated July 14, 1953 and consists of two islands along the Missouri River. One island (14.7 acres) is located downstream from Wolf Creek in the Great Falls RA. The other island (48.86 acres) is located upstream from the Marias River in the Judith RA. PSC 428 segregates against settlement, sale or location under the public land laws, but not from the mining or mineral leasing laws. The island in the Judith RA was recommended for revocation. Completion of withdrawal review will require a water power potential

evaluation. If PSC 428 does not have water power potential, the withdrawal should be revoked. The BLM is the surface management agency.

9. Judith Peak, Red Mountain and Grass Range Missile Silo

The Judith Peak Radar site (60.36 acres) and the Red Mountain Radar site (6.54 acres) are located in the Judith Mountains. The Missile Silo (25.00 acres) lies adjacent to State Highway 19 between Grass Range and Bohemian Corner.

A. Judith Peak & Red Mountain

The Judith Peak radar site was withdrawn by PLO 1758 dated November 21, 1958 and the Red Mountain radar site was withdrawn by PLO 2186 dated August 19, 1960. Both of these withdrawals segregate, subject to valid existing rights, the areas from all forms of appropriation under the public lands laws, including the mining and mineral leasing laws but not disposal of materials under the Act of July 31, 1947. A revocation application was filed in 1971, by the Corps of Engineers (COE) on behalf of the Air Force and ever since the BLM has had surface management responsibilities. All improvements have been removed and the land reclaimed and are ready for revocation. There are suspended mining claims that may be validated when the revocation is finalized and will be treated as prior existing rights. The Judith Peak and Red Mountain sites are discussed as part of the hardrock mining issue in this RMP.

B. Grass Range Missile Silo

The Grass Range Missile Silo was withdrawn by PLO 2336 dated May 9, 1961, which segregates the area from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, including the mining and mineral leasing laws and disposal of materials under the Act of July 31, 1947. The withdrawal was reviewed in 1983, with a recommendation to continue a buffer zone in relation to the Minuteman Missile Site located on adjacent private land. The Air Force is the surface management agency.

Valley RA

1. Public Water Reserve 62

Public Water Reserve 62 was withdrawn by Executive Order dated April 8, 1919, and totals 433.55 acres in Valley County. Public Water Reserve 62 is located under Fort Peck Lake. It was withdrawn from settlement, sale, location and entry. The managing agencies are the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Corps of Engineers. The withdrawal is recommended for revocation.

2. Fort Peck Project

The Fort Peck Lake Project was created by five Executive Orders (EO) numbered 6491, 6707, 6841, 7331 and 9132 and one Secretarial Order (SO) dated July 24, 1935 which withdrew 549,163.40 acres of public domain. The withdrawals segregate against settlement, location, sale and entry and all forms of appropriations. The majority of the withdrawn lands are inundated by Fort Peck Lake and the rest are located along the lake. Some of the withdrawn lands are located along the Missouri River above and below the lake. Most of the Fort Peck Lake Project is located within the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) which bisects the Lewistown and Miles City District boundaries. The Fort Peck Project is managed by the Corps of Engineers concurrently with the CMR which is managed by the FWS.

The Fort Peck Lake Project is reviewable under Section 204 (L) of FLPMA. On September 7, 1989, the Corps of Engineers submitted a draft report entitled "A Review of Public Domain Withdrawals and Executive Order 12512 Project Survey." The report recommends the revocation of 366,317.21 acres. Most of this acreage either duplicates previous Fort Peck Lake Project withdrawals or is in private ownership within CMR. Table 2.4 shows the amount of withdrawn land recommended for revocation within the Valley RA and outside the CMR.

TABLE 2.4
LAND IDENTIFIED FOR REVOCATION

Federal Land	Acres
EO 6707	156.94
EO 7331	198.79
Total	355.73
Private Land with reservations (EO 6707)	**Acres**
Ditches and Canals	813.52
Oil and Gas	240.00
Total	1,053.52

Source: BLM, 1990

The 355.73 acres of federal land is located between the confluence of the Milk River and the Missouri River. BLM concurs with the Corps of Engineers recommendation for relinquishment and will accept management responsibility for the acreage (343.12 acres) that remains north of the Missouri River and west of the Milk River, since both rivers

have changed their course. The rest of the acreage (12.61 acres) lies north of the Missouri River but further west of the Milk River. BLM concurs with the relinquishment of this tract and will accept management responsibility. The private land with reservations (EO 6707) will have the notation removed from the record.

Phillips RA

1. Powersite Reserve 499

Powersite Reserve 499 (approximately 20 acres) is a linear withdrawal 50-feet wide created by Secretarial Order dated July 19, 1915. The classification is located in Townships 24 and 25 North and Range 24 East. PSR 499 does not segregate against settlement, sale or location under the public land laws. PSR 499 is open to mining. PSR 499 was withdrawn to protect an existing electrical transmission line (MTMHVR-045157 and/or MTMGF-059068) and not for potential powersite values. PSR 499 should be revoked because a transmission line does not exist and some of the affected lands are in private ownership. A water power potential report is not necessary because the classification was not made to protect potential powersite values. BLM is the surface management agency.

2. Powersite Reserve 500

Powersite Reserve 500 (approximately 90 acres) is a linear withdrawal 50-feet wide created by Secretarial Order dated July 19, 1915. The classification is located in Townships 23 North and Range 22 East, Townships 24 and 23 North and Range 23 East and Township 24 North and Range 24 East. PSR 500 does not segregate against settlement, sale or location under the public land laws. PSR 500 is open to mining. PSR 500 was withdrawn to protect an existing electrical transmission line (MTMHVR-045157 and/or MTMGF-059067) and not for potential powersite values. PSR 500 should be revoked because a transmission line does not exist and some of the affected lands are in private ownership. A water power potential report is not necessary because the classification was not made to protect potential powersite values. BLM is the surface management agency.

3. Landusky and Zortman town sites, Camp Creek and Montana Gulch campgrounds, Azure Cave and Recreation Site

On February 23, 1966, the FS transferred the Little Rockies Division of the Lewis and Clark National Forest to the BLM under PLO 3938. The transfer created a withdrawal in the Little Rockies for the Landusky (82.50 acres) and Zortman (107.50 acres) town sites, the Camp Creek (40.00 acres) and Montana Gulch (60.00 acres) campgrounds, Azure Cave (139.41 acres), and a designated recreation site (15.00 acres) near Landusky. The lands were withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, including the mining laws. BLM is the surface management agency. Lots in both town sites were disposed through pre-emption rights and at public auction. Lots or blocks of lots within a floodplain or located on very steep slopes were not sold. Lots or blocks of lots with dedicated BLM facilities were withheld from sale. In Landusky a teacherage and community hall site were not sold. In Zortman a church and BLM administrative site were not sold.

The designated recreational site near Landusky was not developed. Instead, Phillips County was authorized to operate a sanitary landfill on a portion of the site on behalf of Landusky. On February 7, 1989, a revocation removed the withdrawal on the 5-acre sanitary landfill site. Later, the 5 acres were exchanged to Phillips County. The rest of the site remains withdrawn.

A withdrawal review was completed on August 24, 1980, and recommended that the withdrawal for the campgrounds and Azure Cave be continued for a 20 year period. Azure Cave will be addressed in the ACEC section of this RMP. The withdrawal for the designated recreation site near Landusky was recommended for revocation because there are no plans for developing a recreational facility. The withdrawal for the townsites were recommended for revocation in order to allow possible disposal. The decision for continuation, modification or revocation will be addressed in the Hardrock Mining issue of this RMP.

Bureau of Reclamation Withdrawn Lands

Various Executive or Secretarial Orders dated between 1902 and 1910 withdrew BLM land for the Milk River Project, either as first form or second form withdrawals. First form withdrawals include lands that may be needed in the construction and maintenance of irrigation projects. Second form withdrawals include lands not needed in the actual construction and maintenance of irrigation projects, but which may be irrigated from such projects. First form withdrawals are segregated from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, including the mining laws, but not the mineral leasing laws. The Act of April 23, 1932 provides reclamation with discretionary authority to allow entry under the mining laws. Second form withdrawals are currently segregated from surface entry, but not from the mining laws or mineral leasing laws.

The Milk River Project, in Valley County, includes a diversion structure near Vandalia, Montana. The project in Phillips County includes Dodson Dam, a diversion structure and Nelson Reservoir a storage reservoir. The project contains many miles of main line, feeder canals and return ditches or drains in both counties.

About 96% of the withdrawn lands in Valley County and 74% in Phillips County were transferred into private ownership. Any United States interest that remains withdrawn is subject to withdrawal review under FLPMA

204 (l). Approximately 2,100 surface acres remain in federal ownership in Valley County and 32,300 surface acres in Phillips County. The remaining lands in Valley County are located along the Milk River Valley with some lands developed with ditches or canals and seepage areas. The remaining lands in Phillips County are located in three areas. The first area (16,500 acres) includes Nelson Reservoir, Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge and the Beaver Creek flood plain approximately 4 to 6 miles south of Nelson Reservoir. The second area (10,000 acres) is situated in the Beaver Creek drainage approximately 18 miles south of Nelson Reservoir. This acreage is undeveloped. The third area (6,200 acres) is scattered along the Milk River Valley with some lands developed with ditches or canals and seepage areas.

Some of the withdrawn lands are managed by the Bureau of Reclamation (BR) subject to third party agreements. BR has entered into agreements with the Malta and Glasgow Irrigation Districts on June 27, 1975 and December 11, 1981. The irrigation districts subsequently lease the withdrawn lands for grazing and agricultural purposes. On some lands, BR has entered into agreements with the MDFWP for managing areas either as a park or a wildlife management area. There is a local agreement between the BLM and BR for the management of the Beaver Creek area (9,926 acres). This agreement was signed March 5, 1974, and was a subordinate agreement to the 1972 interagency agreement. The current national agreement is dated March 25, 1983, and provides direction for the management of BR withdrawn lands.

Bureau of Reclamation withdrawn lands have been justified for continuation or revocation by using the terms of a letter of agreement between the Lewistown District Office and BR Montana Projects Office. The agreement and implementing procedures are listed in Appendix G. Draft justification reports submitted by BR show 12,218.52 acres recommended for revocation (see Table 2.5), of which 698.99 acres are also withdrawn by the FWS and/or Corps of Engineers and will remain withdrawn. Therefore, a total of 11,519.53 acres may return to BLM land status, of which 11,275.87 acres are located in the Phillips RA and 243.66 acres in the Valley RA.

TABLE 2.5
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION LAND
IDENTIFIED FOR CONTINUATION OR REVOCATION

		Criterion				
Serial No.	Revoke	A	E	G	H	Total
M-40722	0.00	0.00	0.00	114.90	0.00	114.90
M-40723	0.00	40.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	40.00
M-40728	0.00	78.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	78.10
M-40735	1,361.88	1,346.98	0.00	850.00	511.33	4,070.19
M-40740	1,540.52	240.00	0.00	2,008.06	120.00	3,908.58
M-40742	64.53	0.00	0.00	161.97	160.00	386.50
M-40837	2,880.00	20.00	0.00	490.00	809.29	4,199.29
M-40838	0.00	0.00	0.00	160.00	0.00	160.00
M-40869	359.54	7,570.56	0.00	60.00	390.00	8,380.10
M-40871	0.00	0.00	0.00	120.00	0.00	120.00
M-40872	440.54	280.52	0.00	0.00	0.00	721.06
M-40876	4,482.56	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,285.62	8,768.18
M-40877	389.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	389.96
M-40884	0.00	686.47	0.00	0.00	0.00	686.47
M-40885	0.00	292.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	292.89
M-40886	0.00	33.56	80.00	135.30	0.00	248.86
M-40903	0.00	165.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	165.50
M-40908	0.00	548.43	0.00	0.00	0.00	548.43
M-40918	40.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	40.00
M-40919	58.64	0.00	0.00	80.00	0.00	138.64
M-40933	80.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	80.00
M-40946	520.35	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	520.35
M-44079	0.00	0.00	0.00	160.00	0.00	160.00
M-49756	0.00	121.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	121.09
M-79789	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.74	20.74
Total	12,218.52	11,424.10	80.00	4,340.23	6,296.98	34,359.83

Criterion A: Lands Within a Reservoir Boundary
Criterion E: Land Needed for Flood Control Structures and Impoundment Areas
Criterion G: Lands Needed for Named Main Delivery Canals
Criterion H: Activity Planning Areas

Source: BLM and BR, 1990

In the Phillips RA, 6,441.18 acres, is suitable for disposal and will be used to achieve our acquisition goals (see Appendix A). The remaining 4,834.69 acres with riparian, grazing and recreational values will be managed by this RMP. In the Valley RA, 185.02 acres is suitable for disposal and will be used to achieve our acquisition goals (see Appendix A). The remaining 58.64 acres are suitable for retention because of wildlife and recreational values and will be managed by this RMP. On July 14, 1992 the Bureau of Reclamation submitted their final justification statements for their withdrawn land within the planning area. The submission of the justification statements at this point in the planning process does not allow BLM to complete the process for withdrawals proposed for revocation. BLM will complete the withdrawal review process and update the acreages shown in Table 2.5 through plan maintenance, or if necessary a plan amendment, for the lands proposed for revocation.

WATERPOWER AND WATER STORAGE MANAGEMENT

All BLM withdrawals for waterpower and water storage are recommended for revocation pending site evaluation for water power potential.

Implementation

The evaluation of waterpower and water storage sites will consider the historical and current demand for water power at the site, the original and current size of the withdrawal, the size of the withdrawal in relation to the need for a reservoir, the water rights that may need to be established, and a site feasibility study.

SIGNING

BLM will ensure that appropriate signs and posters are used to promote safety and convenience for visitors and users, define boundaries, identify management practices, provide information about geographic and historic features and protect vulnerable land areas and resources from misuse.

A sign plan will be developed which includes an inventory of existing signs, proposed new signs and a schedule for maintenance.

Implementation

Bureau Manual 9130 provides guidance for the procurement, installation and maintenance of signs on BLM land.

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACEC)

BLM must identify, evaluate and designate ACECs through an RMP or an amendment to an RMP. Areas are nominated by the public, BLM or other federal and state agencies. All nominations are evaluated to determine if they meet both relevance and importance criteria. A nomination must meet one or more relevance and importance criteria to be considered a potential ACEC. A potential ACEC is designated if the area requires special management.

BLM received 31 nominations within the planning area. In the draft RMP/EIS eight of these nominations met both the relevance and importance criteria and were addressed by alternatives developed for the ACEC and Prairie Dog and Black-footed Ferret Management issues. Appendix H explains the evaluation process and provides more information for the 31 nominations.

During the public comment period on the draft RMP/EIS new information was received for the Woody Island Coulee, Joiner Coulee and Mountain Plover ACEC nominations. These three nominations were re-evaluated to determine if they met the relevance and importance criteria. Joiner Coulee and Woody Island Coulee do not meet the relevance and importance criteria. The Mountain Plover ACEC nomination met the criteria and will be addressed through an amendment to the Judith Valley Phillips RMP/EIS. Nominations which meet the criteria as potential ACECs must be reviewed through the Bureau's planning and NEPA processes.

BLM received additional ACEC nominations in November, 1990, and during the public comment period on the draft RMP/EIS. These nominations are the Mixed Grass Prairie in the Valley RA and the Little Rocky Mountains, Old Scraggy Peak and Saddle Butte in the Phillips RA. To maintain the planning schedule and commitment to the public, BLM did not include additional nominations in this RMP/EIS. If these nominations qualify for further consideration, per the ACEC criteria, alternatives for special management will be considered through an amendment to the Judith Valley Phillips RMP/EIS.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

BLM has identified and evaluated various river segments to determine their potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System per Section 5(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA).

The river study process is a three-step assessment; eligibility, tentative classification of rivers found to be eligible, and a determination of suitability.

BLM reviewed 187 rivers and streams within the planning area which may have free-flowing and outstandingly remarkable values. Of these, 182 were free-flowing but did not possess outstanding remarkable values, and 4 were neither free-flowing or possessing outstandingly remarkable values. One segment of the Judith River was determined to be both free-flowing and possessing outstandingly remarkable values. This is a 27.1-mile long segment from Ming Coulee to Anderson Bridge. This segment is free-flowing and possesses outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational and geologic values. Other segments of the Judith River have little or no public ownership and BLM lands along those segments do not possess outstandingly remarkable values. Appendix I provides additional information on the evaluation process.

Through the evaluation process for the Judith River, this segment was determined to be not suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System because of severe manageability problems. These include lack of access to the area, the small scattered BLM land pattern and the overwhelming constraints of private land ownership and management in the area. Lack of support by any other federal, state or local interest combined with the small percentage of BLM land in the area appear to make joint consideration of the area infeasible as well. This recommendation will be carried forward through all alternatives in this RMP/EIS. There will be no wild and scenic river discussion in the issues section of this chapter, since the above recommendation applies to all alternatives. Under interim management, this segment of the Judith River will be managed as part of the Judith River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA #MT060852). There are no known threats to the pristine condition of the Judith River or its valley between Ming Coulee and Anderson Bridge.

ALTERNATIVE A
(No Action - Current Management)

This alternative represents a continuation of present management direction and would continue to implement policies, regulations and decisions from previous planning documents. This is the No Action alternative required by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations. If selected, this alternative plus the guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section would form the RMP.

Land Acquisition and Disposal

BLM would pursue (through exchange or purchase with willing proponents and/or sellers) private, state, or other land that would meet the objectives of the State Director's Guidance on Land Pattern Review and Land Adjustment (1984) (see Appendix A). BLM would pursue acquisitions as opportunities arise. The main objective would be to attain a BLM land pattern which balances multiple resource values and brings about better manageability.

A total of 166,021 BLM acres would be available for disposal through exchange to meet the acquisition objectives (see Table 2.6 and Appendix A). BLM land identified for exchange would be subject to evaluation and the possible retention of cultural, mineral, wildlife and riparian or wetland resources. An environmental analysis and Notice of Realty Action would be completed for each disposal action.

TABLE 2.6
ALTERNATIVE A

BLM LAND AVAILABLE FOR EXCHANGE

Resource Area	Acres
Judith	
Chouteau County	6,024
Fergus County	42,491
Judith Basin County	2,406
Petroleum County	17,410
Valley	34,089
Phillips	63,601
Total	166,021

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

BLM land may be sold to help facilitate a purchase or exchange action or maintain the respective county tax base. However, since no BLM lands are currently identified for sale, a plan amendment would be prepared under this alternative.

As opportunities arise, BLM would evaluate land exchanges involving private and state inholdings within the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) on a case-by-case basis.

Acquisitions could occur by exchange or purchase through negotiation with willing landowners. Exchange would be the primary method of acquisition and may include BLM land within or outside the planning area.

Access to BLM Land

BLM would pursue access in the public interest while properly managing access within the Bureau's multiple-use mandate. Access would be sought for administrative purposes, for authorized users and for the general public.

Efforts to acquire new and or additional access would be concentrated in the high, medium and low priority areas as identified in the State Directors Guidance (1989).

Access would be pursued to provide access to BLM land that contains public benefits, maintains the present road and trail system, and to construct and maintain roads and trails identified for administrative and public access.

Implementation

Access would be accomplished primarily by easements or land exchanges. Other methods include, but are not limited to cooperative agreements, Land and Water Conservation Fund acquisitions or patent reservations.

Current management direction includes public land signing, mapping and user outreach. Public access routes and boundaries would be signed and restricted ORV travel areas would be identified and mapped.

Off-Road Vehicle Designations

BLM would restrict ORV use yearlong to existing roads and trails or close specific areas to protect resource values, wilderness values in the WSAs, vegetative cover and fragile soils. Other BLM land would remain open to ORV use to provide cross-country travel and recreation use for ORV activities.

BLM would designate 2,375,440 BLM acres open, 428,770 BLM acres limited and 1,947 BLM acres closed to ORVs (see Table 2.7 and Figure 2.2).

TABLE 2.7
ALTERNATIVE A

BLM LAND DESIGNATED AS OPEN, LIMITED, OR CLOSED TO ORVs

Resource Area	Open	Limited Seasonal	Limited Yearlong	Closed
Judith	476,074	0	223,560	1,947
Valley	953,996	0	65,890	0
Phillips	945,370	0	139,320	0
Total	2,375,440	0	428,770	1,947

Source: BLM, 1990

Areas Closed

The Square Butte ONA would remain closed to all types of motorized travel (1,947 acres).

Areas Limited Yearlong

ORV use in the six WSAs (Bitter Creek, Burnt Lodge, Antelope Creek, Woodhawk, Dog Creek South and Cow Creek) would be restricted yearlong to the existing roads and trails.

In those WSAs Congress determines suitable for wilderness designation, ORV use would be restricted yearlong to cherry-stemmed and boundary roads. All internal trails and ways would be closed to ORV use.

In those WSAs Congress determines unsuitable for wilderness designation, the ORV designations would be identical to the adjacent BLM lands. For example, if found unsuitable for wilderness designation the Bitter Creek, Burnt Lodge, Antelope Creek and Cow Creek WSAs would be designated open to ORV use; and in the Woodhawk and Dog Creek South WSAs, ORV use would be limited yearlong to existing roads and trails.

ORV use on BLM land in Frenchman Creek, Cottonwood Creek and Little Rocky Mountains would be restricted yearlong to existing roads and trails to reduce user conflicts and protect fragile soils.

ORV use on slopes of 30% or greater in the Missouri Breaks, Musselshell Breaks, Judith River Breaks, Arrow Creek Breaks, Highwood Mountains, Little Belt Mountains, Snowy Mountains, North and South Moccasin Mountains, Judith Mountains and the Yellow Water area would be restricted yearlong to existing roads and trails to protect vegetative cover, maintain watersheds and water quality and to minimize erosion on fragile soils.

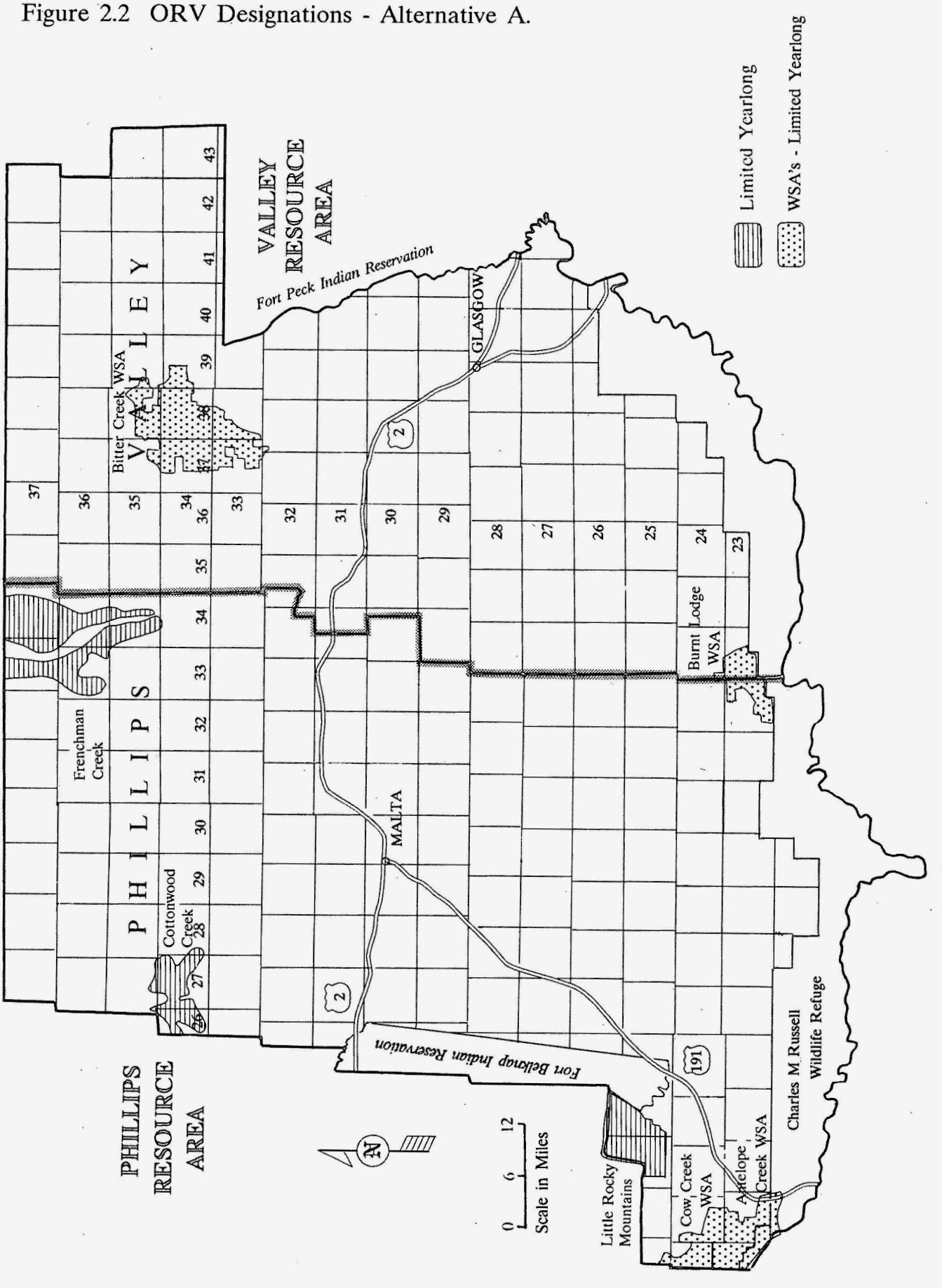
Implementation

The guide for rating soil impacts from off-road travel would be used as an indicator to revise restrictions (MSO supplement to 7162 BLM Manual-Soil Interpretations).

BLM would publish an ORV map that delineates the boundaries and travel restrictions. Restricted areas would be signed with an explanation of allowed uses.

ORV regulations would provide permission for administrative access for lessees (grazing, oil and gas, mineral or other).

Figure 2.2 ORV Designations - Alternative A.



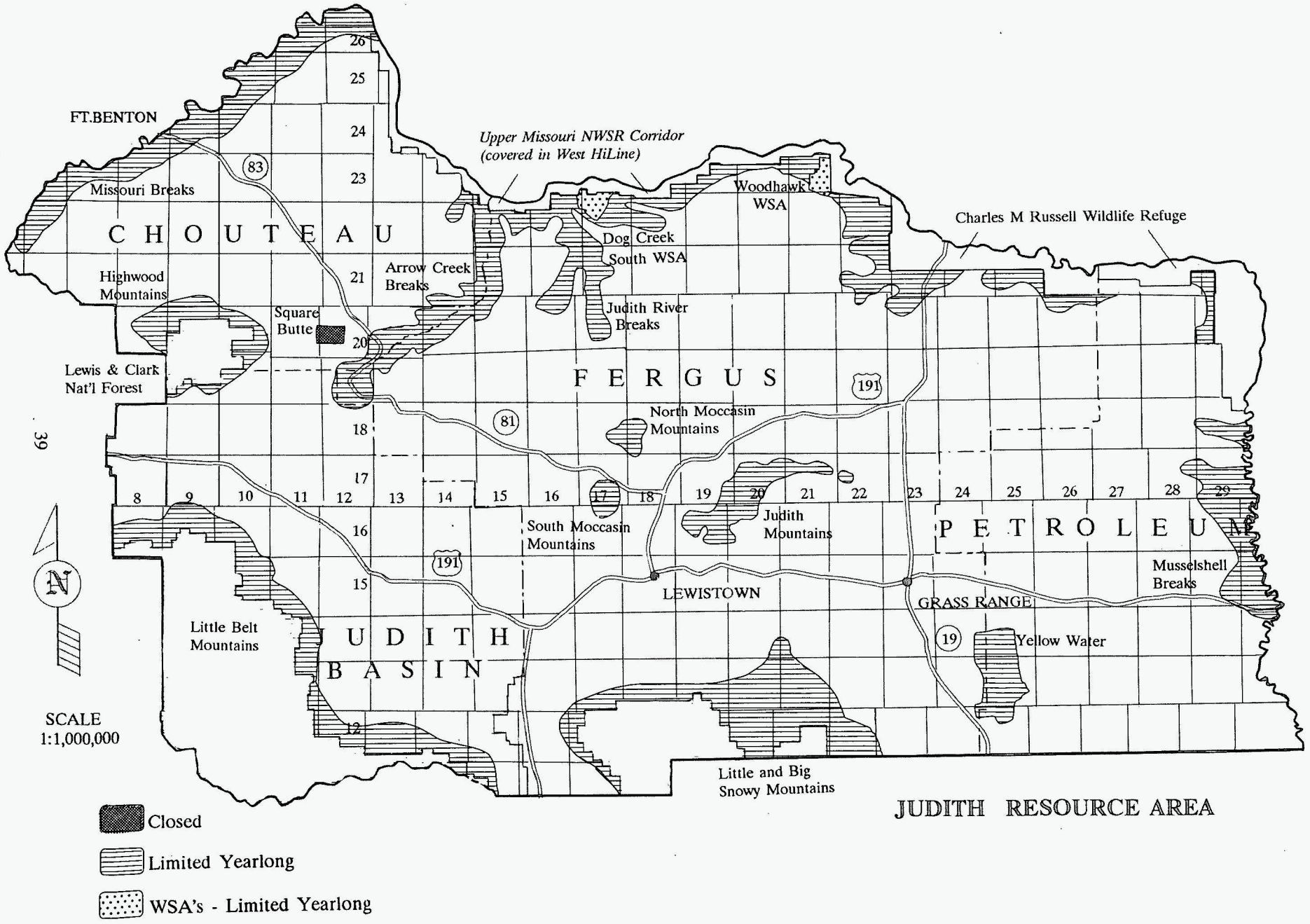


Figure 2.2 ORV Designations - Alternative A. (Continued)

Oil and Gas Leasing and Development

BLM would protect surface resource values on lands open to oil and gas leasing. Land available for oil and gas leasing would be subject to three levels of protective measures; timing restrictions up to 60 days and/or relocating the activity up to 200 meters; standard stipulations for a variety of resources should they be present on the lease during the permitting process (see Appendix B - Form MT 3109-1) and special stipulations for resources known to be present on the lease (see Appendix B - Form MT 3109-2, 3, 4). The leasing process would be consistent with that presently used in all other Montana BLM jurisdictional lands outside the planning area.

WSAs would remain closed to oil and gas leasing. Oil and gas leasing in the Little Rocky Mountains would not be allowed unless reserves have been proven in similar formations adjacent to the area. All remaining BLM land would be open to oil and gas leasing.

No Surface Occupancy restrictions would be used to protect critical paleontology sites, archaeological sites, some reservoirs and one crucial elk winter range located in south Valley County.

Seasonal and distance restrictions would be included in oil and gas leases to mitigate impacts to wildlife habitat.

These stipulations would include legal descriptions or maps which show the lease area and the purpose for the protective measure. Special stipulations would be applied on a certain portion of the lease to protect a specific resource. The standard stipulations (Form MT 3109-1) apply to all portions of the lease. If the specific resource is not found, the stipulation would not apply to the proposed activity.

All lands leased for oil and gas would be subject to standard stipulations and lease terms. Table 2.8 shows the BLM acreage subject to the respective restrictions or closed to leasing in high and moderate mineral development potential areas. There are no areas of low development potential within the planning area, except FS land in the Little Belt Mountains.

TABLE 2.8
ALTERNATIVE A

FEDERAL MINERAL ESTATE SUBJECT TO STANDARD STIPULATIONS, SPECIAL STIPULATIONS, NO SURFACE OCCUPANCY OR CLOSED TO OIL AND GAS LEASING (Acres)

Resource Area & Potential	Standard Stipulations	Special Stipulations	No Surface Occupancy	Closed
Judith				
High	18,490	0	0	5,150
Moderate	832,710	874	320	10,047
Valley				
High	67,840	0	0	0
Moderate	986,279	0	14,000	66,525
Phillips				
High	328,350	0	2,530	0
Moderate	997,532	0	960	56,080
TOTAL				
High	414,680	0	2,530	5,150
Moderate	2,816,521	874	15,280	132,652

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

Areas currently leased with only standard stipulations would continue to be leased with the same stipulations, unless new resource data indicates the need for additional protective stipulations. All areas with specific resources would continue to have appropriate special stipulations attached to the leases. The oil and gas management guidance given in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of this chapter and Appendix B describes the oil and gas leasing and permitting process.

Hardrock Mining

BLM would allow hardrock mineral resource development while mitigating impacts to other resources. Management emphasis would be on preventing unnecessary or undue degradation of nonmineral resources by applying mitigating measures on a project specific basis during Notice review or Plan approval.

BLM would revoke the withdrawals for the Judith Peak and Red Mountain Radar Sites and the Montana Gulch Campground, but would continue the other withdrawals in the planning area. There are suspended mining claims within the Judith Peak and Red Mountain Radar Sites that may be validated when the revocation is finalized and will be treated as prior existing rights. Table 2.9 identifies, by BLM withdrawal, the acreage that would be segregated from mineral entry by high, moderate, low and very low mineral development potential.

TABLE 2.9
ALTERNATIVE A

FEDERAL MINERAL ESTATE THAT WOULD BE SEGREGATED FROM MINERAL ENTRY (Acres)

	Total Acres	Hardrock Mineral Development Potential			
		High	Mod	Low	Very Low
Judith RA					
Square Butte ONA*	1,947	0	0	0	1,947
Blacktail Fossil Site	320	0	0	0	320
Phillips RA					
Azure Cave	140	80	60	0	0
Camp Creek Campground	40	0	0	40	0
Landusky Town Site	83	0	83	0	0
Landusky Recreation Site	15	0	15	0	0
Zortman Town Site	108	0	70	38	0
Total	2,653	80	228	78	2,267

*The Square Butte ONA is not a withdrawal, but is a classification which segregates the area from the mining and leasing laws under the authority of the Classification and Multiple-Use Act of 1964.

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

The hardrock management guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of this chapter and Appendix C describes the program for surface management of hardrock mineral exploration and development.

Riparian and Wetland Management of Watersheds

BLM would maintain and/or improve the riparian-wetland areas in existing and proposed AMPs based on proper functioning condition and desired plant community (see Appendix J). Ranking would be based on site potential as determined by intensive inventories in the Prairie Potholes and Northern Great Plains Regions. It may be necessary to recategorize Category M and C allotments for more intensive management if significant riparian or wetland values are present and need improvement.

The objective would be to protect existing riparian-wetland areas, improve potential riparian-wetland areas for waterfowl and wildlife habitat, and to comply with the nonpoint source water pollution section of the Clean Water Act. Riparian-wetland areas would be monitored and allocations and uses may be adjusted to accomplish management objectives.

Riparian-wetland condition objectives would be included in all new AMPs. When existing AMPs are reviewed, those lacking riparian-wetland objectives would be revised to include appropriate management objectives.

BLM would allocate 50% of any forage increases in riparian-wetland areas to watershed and wildlife and 50% to livestock.

Table 2.10 shows the number of allotments, miles of stream, and number of water sources on BLM land. The number of water sources is based on the reservoirs, potholes and springs with water rights. Intensive riparian-wetland inventories would update this information through plan maintenance.

TABLE 2.10
ALTERNATIVE A

NUMBER OF ALLOTMENTS, MILES OF STREAM AND NUMBER OF WATER SOURCES WITHIN ALLOTMENTS MANAGED FOR RIPARIAN AND WETLAND VALUES

Resource Area	Number of Allotments*	BLM Land	
		Miles of Stream	Water Sources
Judith	97	125	390
Valley	73	235	1,225
Phillips	100	138	2,503
Total	270	498	4,118

*Portions of several allotments in the Judith and Phillips RAs are within the UMNWSR corridor.

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

BLM would improve or maintain stream floodplains to proper functioning condition through livestock grazing methods including, but not limited to:

1. Hot season grazing deferment,
2. Creation of separate riparian pastures,
3. Changes in kind and class of livestock,
4. Time control grazing, and

5. Other range management practices such as development of off-site water, salting, development of shade sources, herding, insect control, early pastures of crested wheatgrass, etc.

The same methods would be applied to those riparian areas identified as important for wildlife habitat. AMP revisions would be made to protect these areas from grazing as discussed in the Missouri Breaks Grazing EIS.

BLM would rehabilitate degraded riparian areas by seeding, planting and installing structures such as rock gabions, check dams, etc.

BLM would construct water impoundments on suitable sites as opportunities arise. An evaluation for soils and hydrologic characteristics would determine which proposed sites are suitable. Islands would be constructed on new and existing impoundments where feasible.

BLM would include mitigation measures for surface disturbing activities to protect wetland habitat.

BLM may fence specific existing and new fishing reservoirs to establish or protect shoreline vegetation for a perimeter 100-feet around the high water line.

Some newly constructed water impoundments would be limited to 2-acre feet in volume or would be built with water pass-through facilities, as required by the Milk River MOU with the BR.

Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat Management

BLM would maintain elk habitat to support the existing elk population on BLM land in the Missouri Breaks, Highwood Mountains and Little Belt Mountains.

BLM would provide habitat for elk expansion on BLM land, where forage is available, in the Missouri Breaks, Square Butte, Judith Mountains, North Moccasin Mountains and Little and Big Snowy Mountains (all in the Judith RA).

BLM would maintain bighorn sheep habitat on BLM land in the Little Rocky Mountains and Missouri Breaks and provide habitat for bighorn sheep expansion, where forage is available, in the Chimney Bend area.

BLM would provide 593,980 acres of elk habitat and 84,711 acres of bighorn sheep habitat on BLM land within the planning area (see Table 2.11 and Figure 2.3).

TABLE 2.11
ALTERNATIVE A

ACRES OF ELK AND BIGHORN SHEEP HABITAT ON BLM LAND

Resource Area	Elk Habitat	Bighorn Sheep Habitat
Judith	410,796	66,187
Valley	50,806	0
Phillips	132,378	18,524
Total	593,980	84,711

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

Current forage allocations would be maintained for each allotment containing elk and bighorn sheep habitat. That portion of the Judith Mountains currently closed to livestock grazing would remain closed. In the Valley RA, forage is allocated to support 250 head of elk for 6 months. Timber would be undisturbed to provide cover for elk on traditional summer and winter range.

Seasonal or No Surface Occupancy stipulations, or a no lease designation would restrict oil and gas activities to protect crucial elk and bighorn sheep habitat.

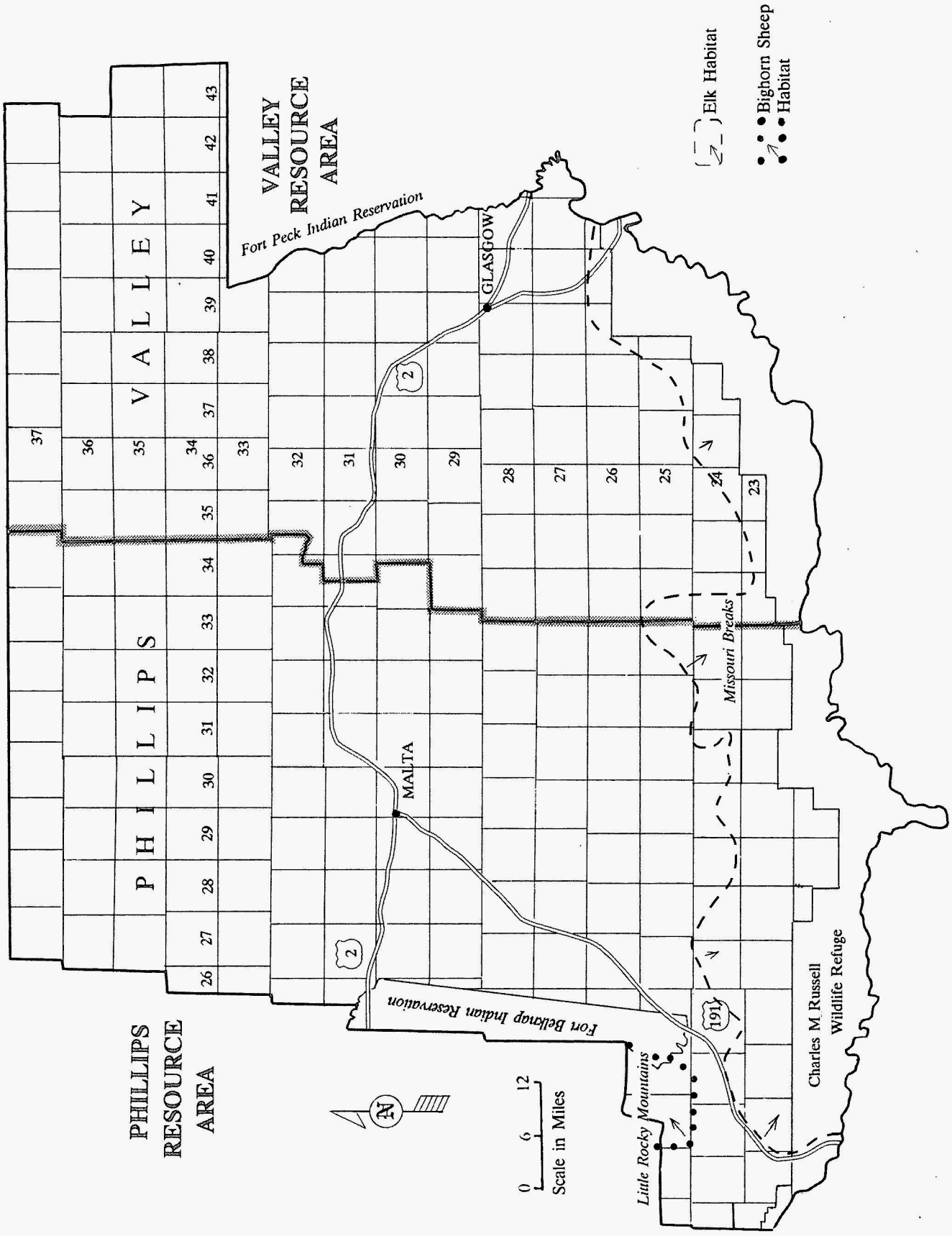
Prairie Dog and Black-Footed Ferret Management

BLM would eliminate (by poisoning) prairie dog towns on 10,013 BLM acres to stabilize the watershed and improve range condition. Appendix K identifies these prairie dog towns by resource area.

BLM would provide 3,308 acres of scattered prairie dog towns in the Phillips RA for the potential reintroduction of the black-footed ferret, associate species (mountain plover, burrowing owl, and ferruginous hawk), recreational viewing and temporary prairie dog shooting. Prairie dog towns on BLM land identified for reintroduction of the black-footed ferret would not be designated an ACEC.

BLM would also provide 770 acres of prairie dog towns for associate species and recreational viewing in the Valley RA. Table 2.12 summarizes the prairie dog and black-footed ferret management activities and acreages in this alternative. Prairie dog towns would be maintained within an acreage range as shown in Appendix K.

Figure 2.3 Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat - Alternatives A & C.



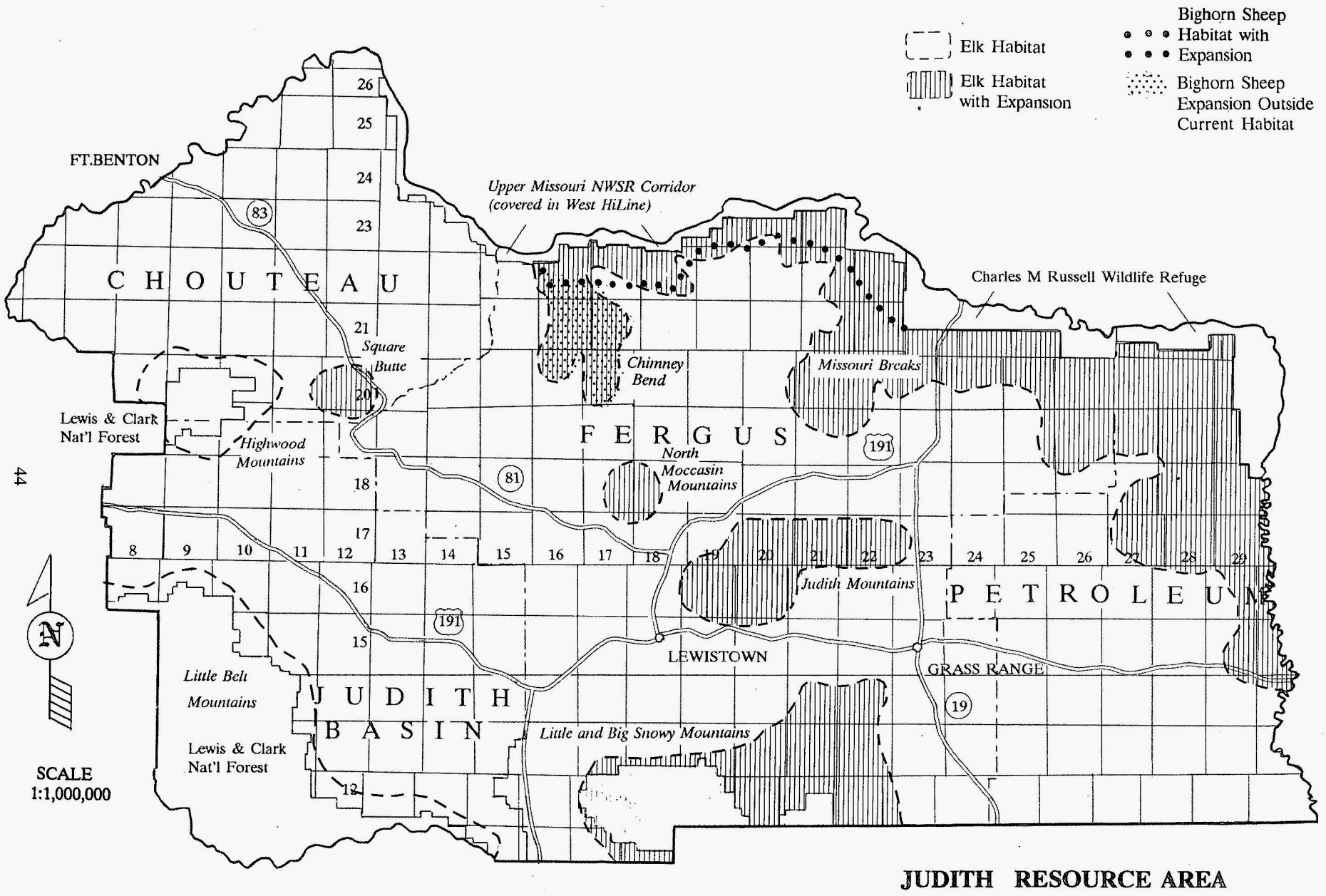


Figure 2.3 Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat - Alternatives A & C. (continued)

TABLE 2.12
ALTERNATIVE A

SUMMARY OF PRAIRIE DOG AND BLACK-FOOTED FERRET MANAGEMENT

Resource Area & Management	Number of Towns	BLM Acres	State Acres	Private Acres	Total Acres
Prairie Dog Mgmt.					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	6	770	0	0	770
Phillips	19	3,308	583	377	4,268
Total	25	4,078	583	377	5,038
Ferret Management*					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	19	3,308	583	377	4,268
Total	19	3,308	583	377	4,268
Shooting					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0
Elimination					
Judith	7	71	0	112	183
Valley	5	30	40	120	190
Phillips	216	9,912	1,487	5,979	17,378
Total	228	10,013	1,527	6,211	17,751
Planning Area Total	253	14,091	2,110	6,588	22,789

*Criteria for selection of a town.

1. No more than 1% of the BLM land in an allotment may be occupied by prairie dog towns.
2. Towns should be as close to the CMR as possible.
3. Towns greater than 50 acres would be managed for associate species.
4. Towns less than 50 acres were eliminated.

Implementation - Elimination

Before poisoning prairie dog towns, BLM would:

1. Complete a damage assessment to determine the nature and extent of resource damage attributable to prairie dogs by identifying changes in condition class, forage availability and soil loss;

2. Prepare or revise AMPs to include prairie dog management objectives and identify management actions to provide for resource recovery;

3. Consult with the grazing permittee and other interested parties (Defenders of Wildlife, Audubon Society and MDFWP) while developing or revising AMPs; and

4. Inventory each prairie dog town for federally listed threatened and endangered species.

BLM would pursue poisoning the entire 10,013 acres of prairie dog towns in one year. Poisoning would continue the following year to completely eliminate the prairie dog towns.

Implementation - Prairie Dog Management

Prairie dog towns identified for management would be maintained within the acreage range shown in Appendix K. The high range is the acreage from a 1988 survey plus 10% and the low range would be the acreage from a 1984 survey.

If these towns are above the maximum acreage, poisoning may be an initial one time application. Monitoring would indicate if and when poisoning would be necessary. Poisoning would be done on a rotational basis to no more than 20% of the prairie dog towns per year.

When a prairie dog town exceeds the maximum acreage, the town would be poisoned to reduce the acreage to within the management prescription. If the acreage drops below the minimum acreage, measures would be taken to increase the prairie dog town back to within the management prescription.

When poisoning is scheduled on a prairie dog town which includes state and private land, a cooperative effort would be made to control the entire town. The cost of applying poison on private or state land would be the responsibility of the private landowner or the state land permittee.

BLM would consider using non-toxic methods for prairie dog control (ie. perch poles, barriers, water, vegetation enhancement, prairie dog sterilization, biological control, etc.).

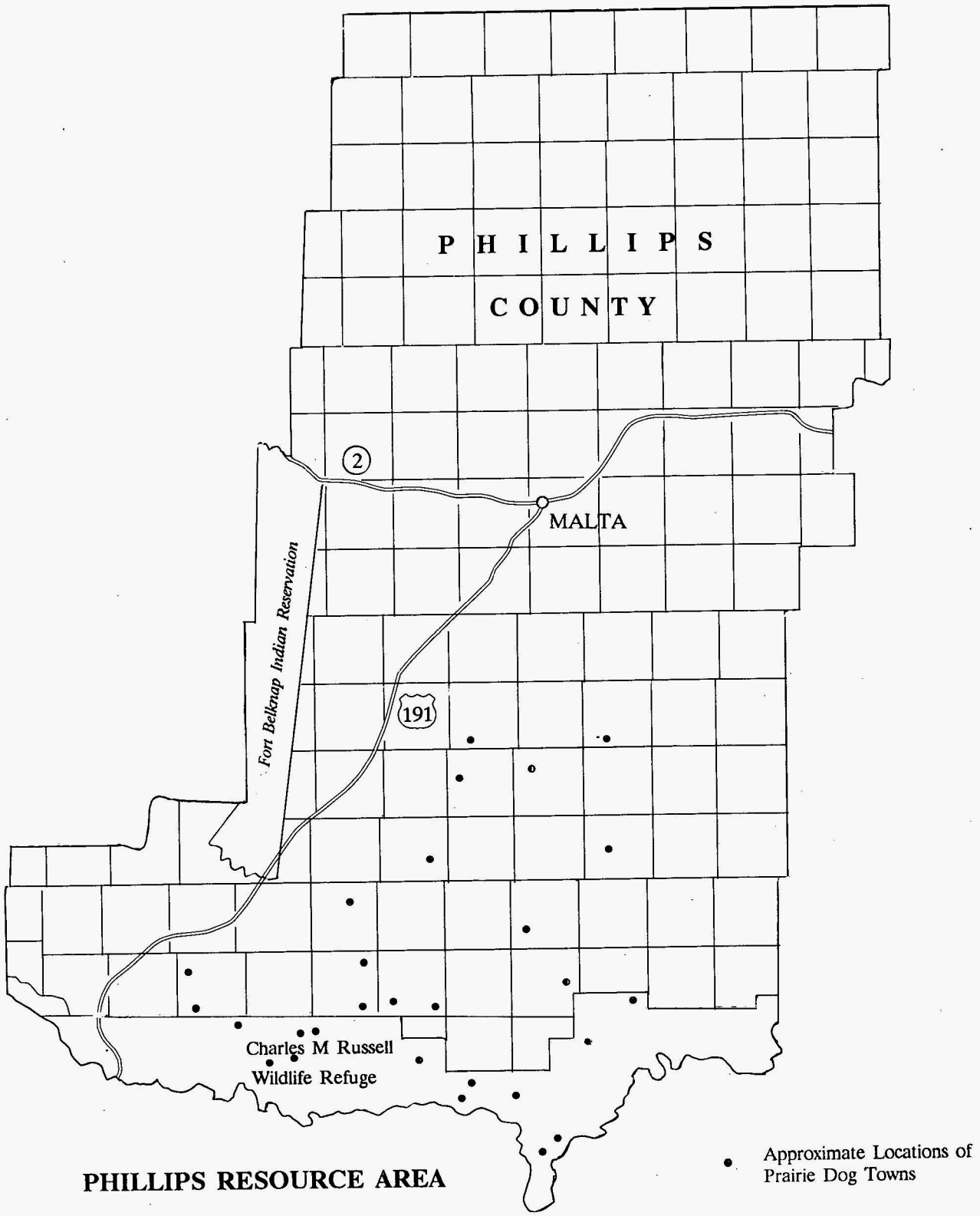
When feasible, BLM would use mechanical treatments elsewhere in an allotment to compensate for the vegetation loss associated with prairie dog towns.

New prairie dog towns would be evaluated for management objectives. If new towns are smaller than 50 acres they would be eliminated. Towns larger than 50 acres would be maintained within an acreage range. Prairie dog towns would not occupy more than 1% of the BLM portion of any allotment.

Implementation - Black-footed Ferret Management

BLM would provide habitat on 3,308 BLM acres for black-footed ferret reintroduction in the Phillips RA (see Figure 2.4). The towns on BLM land would be used to reintroduce isolated ferret families. The towns identified for reintroduction would be based on implementation of the Phillips RA Prairie Dog Control/Management Plan (1982).

Figure 2.4 Prairie Dog Towns/Black-footed Ferret Management - Alternative A.



A core area on CMR and BLM land would be the initial ferret reintroduction site. Before reintroduction occurs, all activities on BLM land in south Phillips County (south of Highway 2) would be evaluated to ensure impacts to a future reintroduction are assessed and mitigated. After reintroduction occurs, all activities which could impact the ferret or its habitat would require formal consultation with the FWS.

Some activities near prairie dog towns identified for black-footed ferret reintroduction would be restricted. These towns would be avoidance areas for above ground ROWs; would have NSO restrictions for oil and gas development; would have no further development or implementation of livestock improvements; and would not be grazed by livestock. When feasible, BLM would use mechanical treatments elsewhere in an allotment to compensate for the vegetation loss associated with these livestock restrictions. These restrictions would apply to these prairie dog towns and a 1/4-mile area around each town. The 3,308 acres of prairie dog towns would include an additional 7,372 acres for a total of 10,680 acres.

Implementation - Prairie Dog Shooting

BLM would not manage shooting prairie dogs on BLM land in the Phillips RA. Prairie dogs would be eliminated on 10,013 BLM acres and shooting would be available on the remaining 3,308 acres until the black-footed ferret is reintroduced. Shooting would be allowed, but not managed in the Valley RA.

Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC

BLM would not designate the area an ACEC and current management practices would continue.

Implementation

Special stipulations for protecting the scenic resource would not be implemented.

Acid Shale-Pine Forest ACEC

BLM would not designate the area an ACEC and current management practices would continue.

Implementation

Special stipulations for protecting the endemic plant community would not be implemented.

Square Butte Outstanding Natural Area ACEC

BLM would designate 1,947 BLM acres an ACEC to protect natural endemic systems, cultural resource sites, scenic qualities, rare geologic features unique to Montana and to identify key wildlife viewing sites under the Watchable Wildlife Program (see Supplemental Color Map A at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public land administered by BLM.

Implementation

Current management practices and allocations would continue within the Square Butte ONA. The area would remain closed to ORVs and segregated from the mining and leasing laws under the authority of the Classification and Multiple-Use Act of 1964. The area would be managed with no additional stipulations, unless needed on a site specific basis to mitigate impacts to resources.

Collar Gulch ACEC

This area would not be designated an ACEC and current management practices would continue.

Implementation

The Montana Water Quality Act imposes a nondegradation policy for Collar Gulch Creek. Special stipulations for protecting the westslope cutthroat trout population would not be implemented.

Azure Cave ACEC

This area would not be designated an ACEC and current management practices would continue.

Implementation

There would be no admittance to the cave other than for administrative reasons. The gate would remain in place and locked at all times. BLM would continue the withdrawal for Azure Cave to protect public recreation values and the bat hibernaculum. Other stipulations to protect cave resources would not be implemented.

Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC

This area would not be designated an ACEC and current management practices would continue.

Implementation

Special stipulations to protect the area's cultural resources would not be implemented.

ALTERNATIVE B

This alternative would generally provide the maximum opportunity for exploration, development and production of BLM land and resources with minimum restrictions. If selected, this alternative plus the guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section would form the RMP.

Land Acquisition and Disposal

BLM would pursue acquisitions as opportunities arise through exchange or purchase with willing proponents and/or sellers. BLM recognizes and respects private property rights and would not use condemnation to implement land tenure adjustment under this land use plan. Acquisitions could include private, state or other land that would meet the objectives of the State Director's Guidance on Land Pattern Review and Land Adjustment (1984) (see Appendix A). Private, state and other lands meeting the criteria in Appendix A would be in conformance with this land use plan. The main objective would be to attain a BLM land pattern which balances multiple resource values and brings about better manageability. Lands acquired would have multiple resource values such as access, riparian-wetland areas, ACECs, recreation and wildlife habitat.

A total of 166,021 acres of BLM land would be available for disposal (see Table 2.6 and Appendix A). The lands identified for disposal would be available for exchange. These lands may also be available for sale to facilitate an individual land exchange. For purposes of sale, these lands meet FLPMA disposal criteria Sec. 203(a)(1). BLM land identified for disposal would be subject to further site specific evaluation and if significant values are found they may be retained under BLM management. An environmental analysis and Notice of Realty Action would be completed for each disposal action. Areas not identified for disposal would be managed for long-term public ownership.

Implementation

During any purchase or exchange action, BLM would attempt to maintain the respective county tax base and allow no overall net gain in BLM land over the life of this plan.

As opportunities arise, BLM would evaluate land exchanges involving private and state inholdings within the CMR on a case-by-case basis.

Acquisitions could occur by exchange or purchase through negotiation with willing landowners. Exchange would be the primary method of acquisition and may include BLM land within or outside the planning area.

Access to BLM Land

BLM would not pursue new or additional access to BLM land, but would maintain existing access. BLM would support the public road network, primarily county roads, leading to BLM land by establishing limited cooperative agreements for maintenance with the respective counties.

BLM would concentrate on maintaining roads with legal public access as identified on the Lewistown District Transportation Map, which is available for review at the Lewistown District Office.

Implementation

BLM would enter into limited cooperative maintenance agreements with the appropriate counties to exchange maintenance work for the existing road network and to ensure public safety.

Off-Road Vehicle Designations

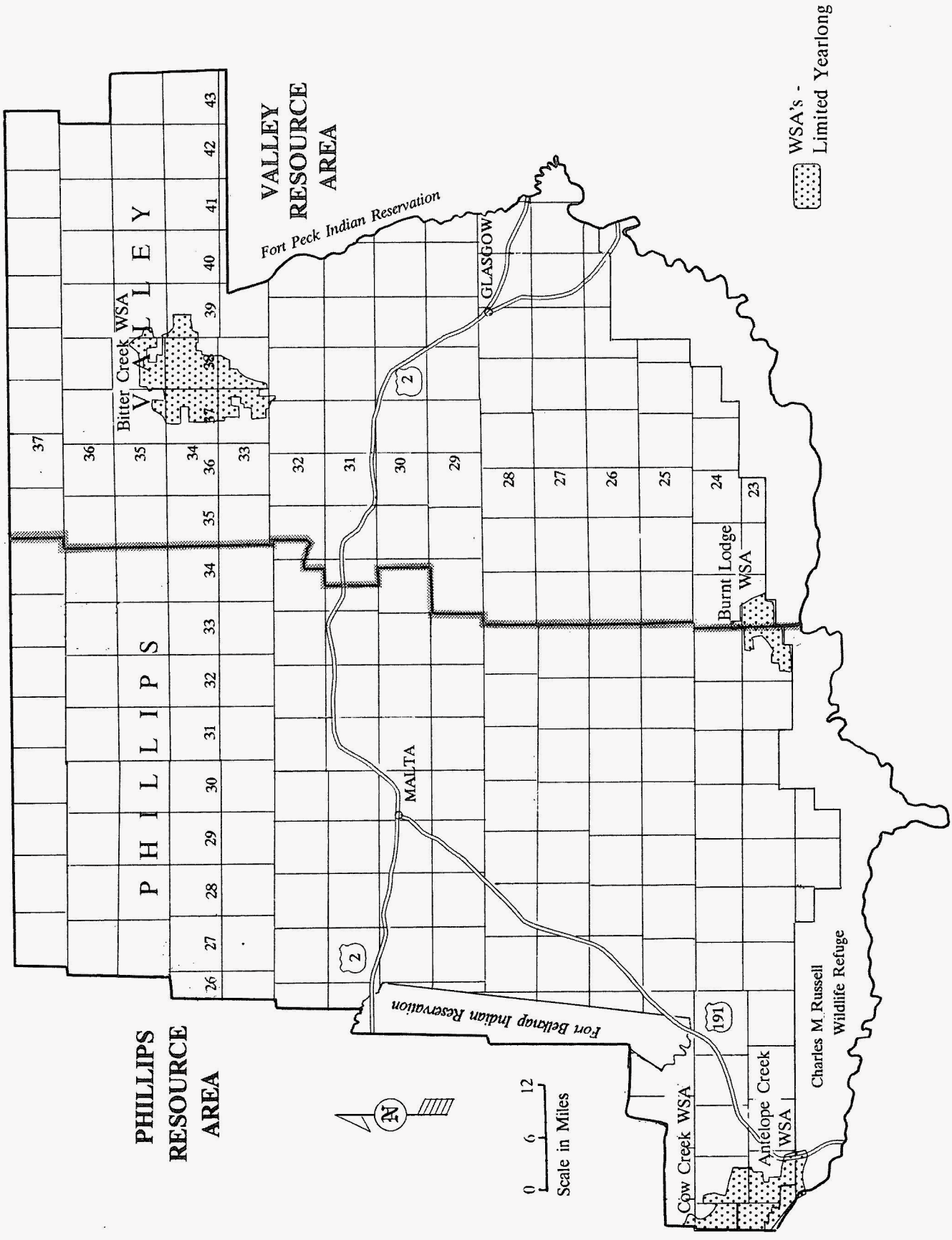
BLM would maximize opportunities for ORV use to provide unrestricted cross-country travel and ORV recreation.

ORV use in the six WSAs (Bitter Creek, Burnt Lodge, Antelope Creek, Woodhawk, Dog Creek South and Cow Creek) would be restricted yearlong to the existing roads and trails. In those WSAs Congress determines suitable for wilderness designation, ORV use would be restricted yearlong to cherry-stemmed and boundary roads. All internal trails and ways would be closed to ORV use. Those WSAs Congress determines unsuitable for wilderness designation would be open to ORV use.

The Square Butte ONA ACEC would be closed to all motorized vehicle travel (1,947 acres).

BLM would designate 2,687,570 BLM acres open, 116,640 BLM acres limited and 1,947 BLM acres closed to ORVs (see Table 2.13 and Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5 ORV Designations - Alternative B.



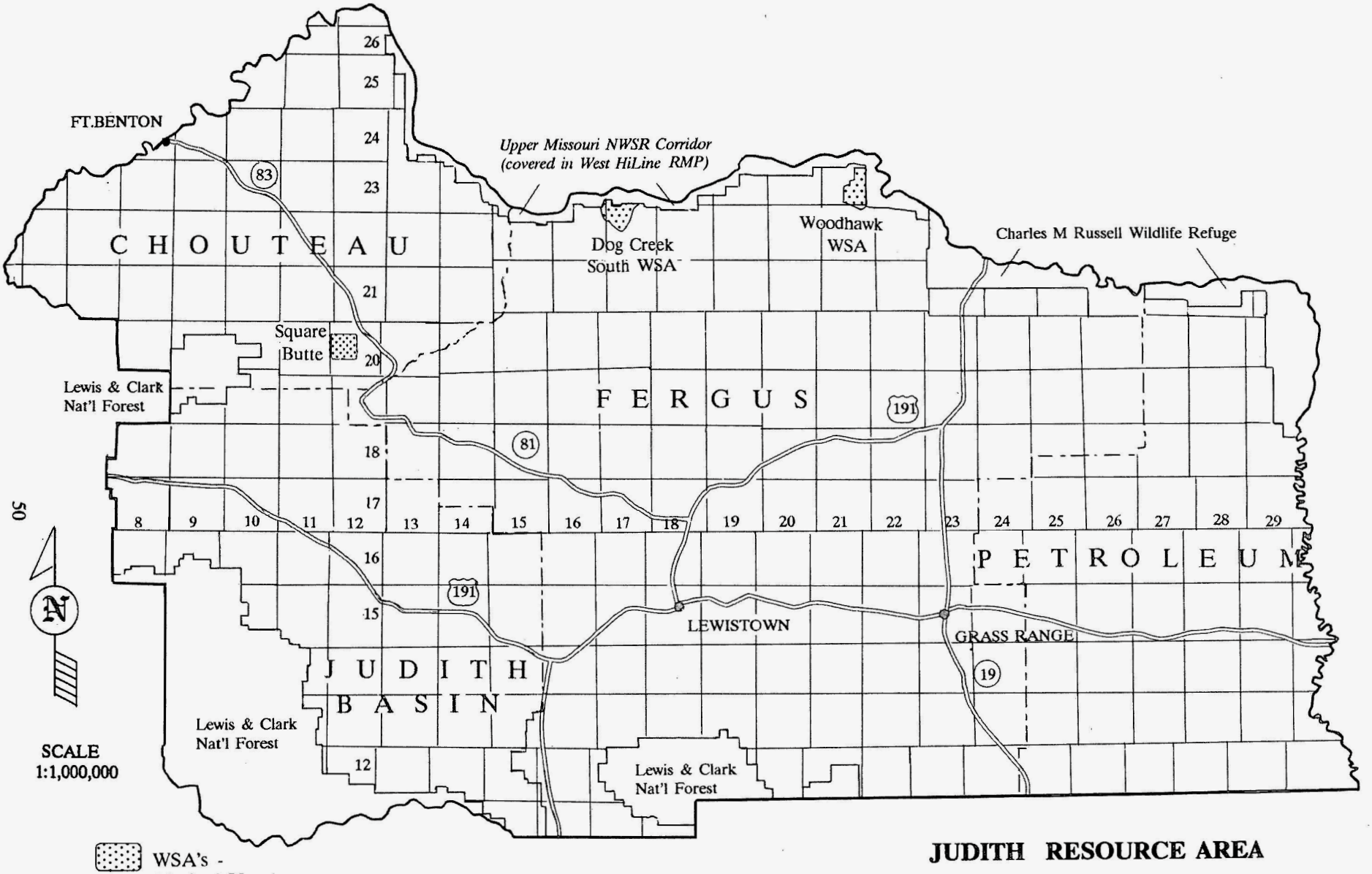


Figure 2.5 ORV Designations - Alternative B. (Continued)

TABLE 2.13
ALTERNATIVE B

BLM LAND DESIGNATED AS OPEN, LIMITED, OR CLOSED TO ORVS

Resource Area	Open	Limited Seasonal	Limited Yearlong	Closed
Judith	686,384	0	13,250	1,947
Valley	953,996	0	65,890	0
Phillips	1,047,190	0	37,500	0
Total	2,687,570	0	116,640	1,947

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

The designated access routes in WSAs (roads and trails) would be signed.

BLM would pursue cooperative agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies and use a BLM law enforcement ranger to monitor and implement restrictions.

BLM would provide barriers and signs where necessary to protect the resource values in the Square Butte ONA ACEC.

ORV use on newly acquired land would be consistent with adjacent BLM lands.

The three implementation actions discussed in Alternative A would also apply to this alternative.

Oil and Gas Leasing and Development

BLM would provide for maximum oil and gas exploration and development opportunities by leasing lands with minimum lease stipulations. All BLM-administered land would be open to oil and gas leasing without restrictions beyond those in the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987, BLM regulations, existing Notice to Lessees and Onshore Orders. This would not include land closed by legislation or administered by other federal agencies which preclude oil and gas leasing.

BLM land which is currently leased with standard terms and stipulations, ranging from seasonal wildlife restrictions to No Surface Occupancy, would be leased with standard terms and conditions, as provided by regulation.

WSAs would remain closed to oil and gas leasing.

Table 2.14 shows the BLM acreage that would be subject to standard lease terms, stipulations, No Surface Occupancy restrictions or closed to leasing in high and moderate mineral development potential areas. There are no areas of low development potential within the planning area, except FS land in the Little Belt Mountains.

TABLE 2.14
ALTERNATIVE B

FEDERAL MINERAL ESTATE SUBJECT TO STANDARD LEASE TERMS, STIPULATIONS, NO SURFACE OCCUPANCY OR CLOSED TO OIL AND GAS LEASING (Acres)

Resource Area & Potential	Standard Terms Only	Stipulations	No Surface Occupancy	Closed
Judith				
High	18,490	0	0	5,150
Moderate	833,904	0	0	10,047
Valley				
High	67,840	0	0	0
Moderate	1,000,279	0	0	66,525
Phillips				
High	330,880	0	0	0
Moderate	1,018,332	0	0	36,240
TOTAL				
High	417,210	0	0	5,150
Moderate	2,852,515	0	0	112,812

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

Current oil and gas leases would continue according to the respective stipulations until they expire. As existing leases expire they would be reissued with standard terms and conditions. The oil and gas management guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of this chapter and Appendix B describes the oil and gas leasing and permitting process.

Hardrock Mining

BLM would allow hardrock exploration and development by using minimum constraints on mineral activity while still maintaining compliance with mandatory federal, state and local laws, regulations and requirements. The majority of the planning area would remain open to mineral entry.

BLM would continue the withdrawal for the Blacktail Fossil Site, 320 acres in the Judith RA. BLM would

recommend revoking the Judith Peak and Red Mountain Radar Sites, Azure Cave, Montana Gulch Campground, Camp Creek Campground, Landusky Town Site, Landusky Recreation Site, and the Zortman Town Site withdrawals. There are suspended mining claims within the Judith Peak and Red Mountain Radar Sites that may be validated when the revocation is finalized and will be treated as prior existing rights.

The Square Butte ONA is currently segregated from the mining and leasing laws by a classification under the authority of the Classification and Multiple-Use Act of 1964. BLM would terminate the classification and open the area to mineral entry.

Implementation

The hardrock management guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of this chapter and Appendix C describes the program for surface management of hardrock mineral exploration and development.

Riparian and Wetland Management of Watersheds

BLM would maintain and/or improve the riparian-wetland areas in existing AMPs based on proper functioning condition and desired plant community (see Appendix J). Ranking would be based on potential as determined by intensive inventories in the Prairie Potholes and Northern Great Plains Regions. It may be necessary to recategorize Category M and C allotments if significant riparian or wetland values are present and need improvement.

The objective would be to improve or maintain riparian-wetland areas to proper functioning condition, to provide wildlife habitat and to comply with the nonpoint source water pollution section of the Clean Water Act.

Riparian-wetland condition objectives would be included in all new AMPs. When existing AMPs are reviewed, those lacking riparian-wetland objectives would be revised to include appropriate management objectives.

BLM would allocate 50% of any forage increases in riparian-wetland areas to watershed and wildlife and 50% to livestock.

Table 2.15 shows the number of allotments, miles of stream and number of water sources on BLM land. The number of water sources is based on the reservoirs, potholes and springs with water rights. Intensive riparian-wetland inventories would update this information through plan maintenance.

TABLE 2.15
ALTERNATIVE B

NUMBER OF ALLOTMENTS, MILES OF STREAM AND NUMBER OF WATER SOURCES WITHIN ALLOTMENTS MANAGED FOR RIPARIAN AND WETLAND VALUES

Resource Area	Number of Allotments	BLM Land	
		Miles of Stream	Water Sources
Judith	49	49	227
Valley	61	220	1,143
Phillips	82	99	2,110
Total	192	368	3,480

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

BLM would use livestock grazing methods to meet riparian objectives and manage the floodplain associated with streams to achieve the desired plant community. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Hot season grazing deferment,
2. Creation of separate riparian pastures,
3. Changes in kind and class of livestock,
4. Time control grazing, and
5. Other range management practices such as development of off-site water, salting, development of shade sources, herding, insect control, early pastures of crested wheatgrass, etc.

BLM would rehabilitate degraded riparian areas by seeding, planting and installing structures such as rock gabions, check dams, etc.

BLM would construct water impoundments on suitable sites as opportunities arise. Islands would be constructed on new and existing impoundments where feasible. An evaluation for soils and hydrologic characteristics would determine which proposed sites are suitable.

All proposed vegetation manipulation projects would be evaluated to determine their impacts on wildlife.

BLM would include mitigation measures for surface disturbing activities to protect wetland habitat.

BLM would implement grazing methods on degraded wetlands to improve vegetation, while maintaining current AUM allocations. These methods could include hot season deferment, fencing, creating riparian pastures, early use pastures of crested wheatgrass, etc.

Some newly constructed water impoundments would be limited to 2-acre feet in volume or would be built with water pass-through facilities as required by the Milk River MOU with the BR.

Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat Management

BLM would provide 593,980 acres of habitat to support elk populations on BLM land within the Missouri Breaks, Highwood Mountains, Square Butte, Little Belt Mountains, Judith Mountains, North Moccasin Mountains, and Little and Big Snowy Mountains (see Table 2.16 and Figure 2.6).

BLM would also provide 66,788 acres of habitat for bighorn sheep in the Little Rocky Mountains and Missouri Breaks (see Table 2.16 and Figure 2.6).

TABLE 2.16
ALTERNATIVE B

ACRES OF ELK AND BIGHORN SHEEP HABITAT ON BLM LAND

Resource Area	Elk Habitat	Bighorn Sheep Habitat
Judith	410,796	48,264
Valley	50,806	0
Phillips	132,378	18,524
Total	593,980	66,788

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

Adjustments in wildlife forage allocations would be made if monitoring indicates changes are needed to meet management objectives. These allocations would include other uses such as riparian, watershed or livestock grazing.

Standard terms would be placed on oil and gas activities to protect crucial elk and bighorn sheep habitat.

Prairie Dog and Black-Footed Ferret Management

BLM would provide 6,462 acres of prairie dog towns on BLM land in the Phillips RA (Complex 1) for the potential reintroduction of the black-footed ferret, associate species (mountain plover, burrowing owl and ferruginous hawk), recreational viewing and prairie dog shooting. This acreage would be designated an ACEC.

BLM would provide 770 acres of prairie dog towns in the Valley RA for associate species and recreational viewing. Prairie dog towns would not occupy more than 1% of the BLM portion of any allotment in the Valley RA.

BLM would poison prairie dog towns on 6,859 BLM acres to stabilize the watershed and improve range condition. All prairie dog towns in the Judith RA would be eliminated. Appendix K discusses the prairie dog towns identified for elimination by allotment and resource area.

Table 2.17 summarizes the prairie dog and black-footed ferret management activities and acreages in this alternative. Prairie dog towns would be maintained within an acreage range as shown in Appendix K.

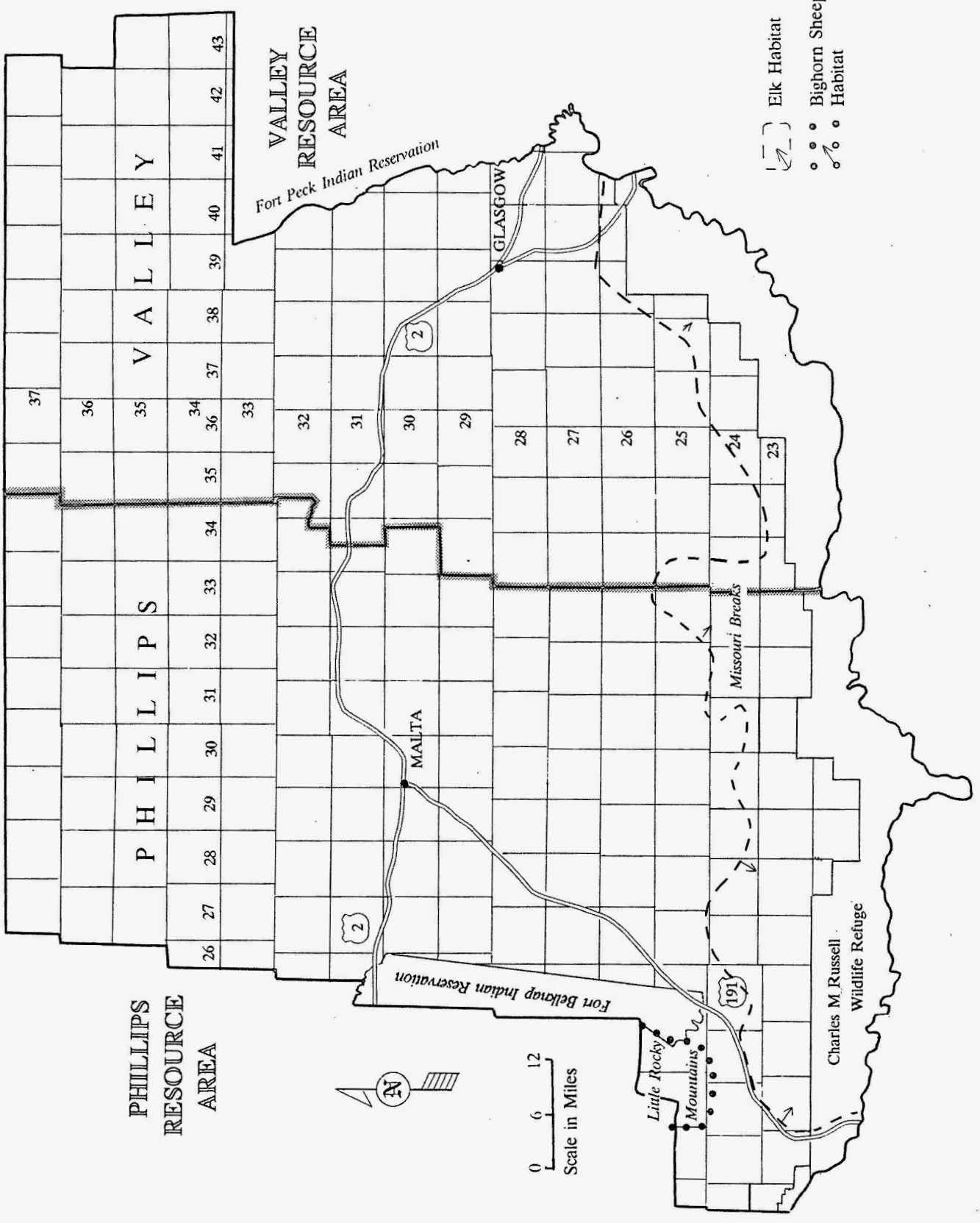
TABLE 2.17
ALTERNATIVE B

SUMMARY OF PRAIRIE DOG AND BLACK-FOOTED FERRET MANAGEMENT

Resource Area & Management	Number of Towns	BLM Acres	State Acres	Private Acres	Total Acres
Prairie Dog Mgmt.					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	6	770	0	0	770
Phillips	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	770	0	0	770
Ferret Management					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	40	6,462	477	818	7,757
Total	40	6,462	477	818	7,757
Shooting					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0
Elimination					
Judith	7	71	0	112	183
Valley	5	30	40	120	190
Phillips	195	6,758	1,593	5,538	13,889
Total	207	6,859	1,633	5,770	14,262
Planning Area Total	253	14,091	2,110	6,588	22,789

Source: BLM, 1990

Figure 2.6 Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat - Alternative B.



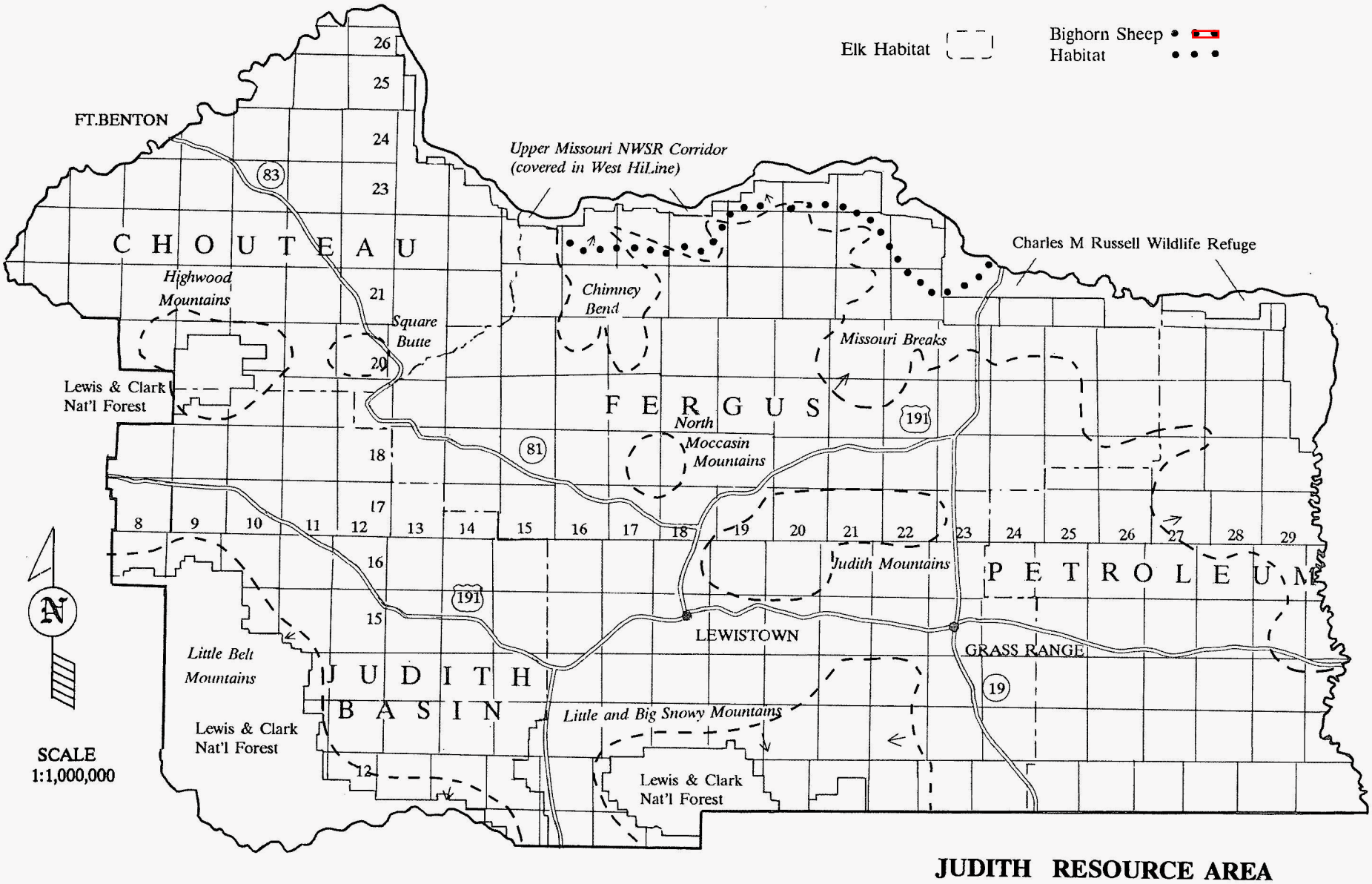


Figure 2.6 Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat - Alternative B. (continued)

Implementation - Elimination

Before poisoning prairie dog towns, BLM would inventory each town for federally listed threatened and endangered species.

BLM would pursue poisoning the entire 6,859 acres of prairie dog towns in one year. Poisoning would continue the following year to completely eliminate the prairie dog towns.

Implementation - Prairie Dog Management

These implementation actions would be the same as those discussed in Alternative A.

In addition, new prairie dog towns in the Phillips RA would be eliminated. New prairie dog towns smaller than 50 acres would be eliminated in the Judith and Valley RA. Towns larger than 50 acres would be maintained within an acreage range. Prairie dog towns would not occupy more than 1% of the BLM portion of any allotment in the Valley RA.

Implementation - Black-footed Ferret

BLM would provide habitat on 6,462 BLM acres in the Phillips RA for black-footed ferret reintroduction (see Figure 2.7). The towns identified for reintroduction, Complex 1, are based on a paper by Clark and Minta (1988) using the Habitat Suitability Index for Black-footed Ferrets for prairie dog complexes in Montana (Houston et al, 1986). Reintroduction could include portions of the CMR and may also include prairie dog towns on 477 acres of state and 818 acres of private land.

A core area(s) on BLM and CMR land would be the initial ferret reintroduction site(s). Prairie dog towns on BLM and CMR land outside the core area(s) would be used to expand the reintroduction within Complex 1.

Before reintroduction occurs, all activities on BLM land in south Phillips County (south of Highway 2) would be evaluated to ensure impacts to a future reintroduction are assessed and mitigated. After reintroduction occurs, all activities which may impact the ferret or its habitat, may require informal consultation with the FWS.

All activities would be allowed, except the willful taking of the ferret or destroying its habitat in south Phillips County.

Implementation - Prairie Dog Shooting

BLM would manage prairie dog shooting on BLM land in Complex 1 before and after ferret reintroduction. BLM would respond to requests for information, prepare maps and sign prairie dog towns. Prairie dog shooting may be restricted to a certain number of people each year to allow for a quality experience. Shooting would be allowed in the Valley RA, but would not be managed.

Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC

The designation and implementation actions would be the same as those discussed in Alternative A.

Acid Shale-Pine Forest ACEC

The designation and implementation actions would be the same as those discussed in Alternative A.

Square Butte Outstanding Natural Area ACEC

The designation and implementation actions would be the same as those discussed in Alternative A, except that the classification which segregates the area from the mining and leasing laws would be terminated and the area would be open to mineral entry.

Collar Gulch ACEC

The designation and implementation actions would be the same as those discussed in Alternative A.

Azure Cave ACEC

The area would not be designated an ACEC.

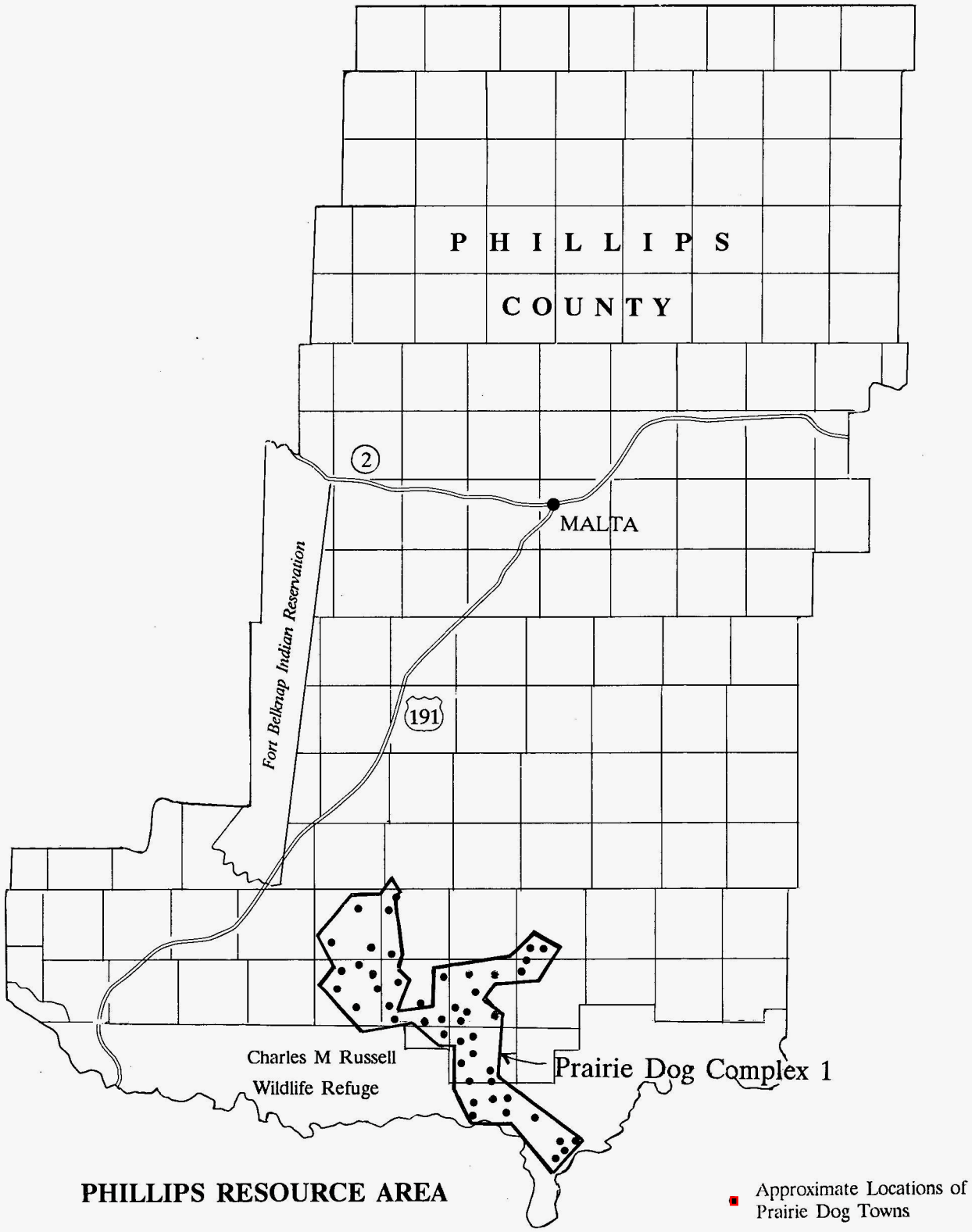
Implementation

The gate would be removed and there would be no time restrictions on using the cave. BLM would recommend revoking the Azure Cave withdrawal. Other stipulations to protect cave resources would not be implemented.

Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC

The designation and implementation actions would be the same as those discussed in Alternative A.

Figure 2.7 Prairie Dog Towns/Black-footed Ferret Management - Alternative B.



ALTERNATIVE C

This alternative represents an intermediate course between natural resource production and protection. It provides for balanced consumptive and nonconsumptive uses of public land resources in the planning area.

Land Acquisition and Disposal

BLM would pursue acquisitions as opportunities arise through exchange or purchase with willing proponents and/or sellers. BLM recognizes and respects private property rights and would not use condemnation to implement land tenure adjustment under this land use plan. Acquisitions could include private, state or other land that would meet the objectives of the State Director's Guidance on Land Pattern Review and Land Adjustment (1984) (see Appendix A). Private, state and other lands meeting the criteria in Appendix A would be in conformance with this land use plan. The main objective would be to attain a BLM land pattern which balances multiple resource values and brings about better manageability. Lands acquired would have multiple resource values such as access, riparian-wetland areas, ACECs, recreation and wildlife habitat.

A total of 166,021 acres of BLM land would be available for disposal to meet the acquisition objectives (see Table 2.6 and Appendix A). The lands identified for disposal would be available for exchange. These lands may also be available for sale to facilitate an individual land exchange. For purposes of sale, these lands meet FLPMA disposal criteria Sec. 203(a)(1). BLM land identified for disposal would be subject to further site specific evaluation and if significant values are found they may be retained under BLM management. An environmental analysis and Notice of Realty Action would be completed for each disposal action. Areas not identified for disposal would be managed for long-term public ownership.

Implementation

During any purchase or exchange action, BLM would attempt to maintain the respective county tax base and allow no overall net gain in BLM land over the life of this plan.

As opportunities arise, BLM would evaluate land exchanges involving private and state inholdings within the CMR on a case-by-case basis.

Acquisitions could occur by exchange or purchase through negotiation with willing landowners. Exchange would be the primary method of acquisition and may include BLM land within or outside the planning area.

Access to BLM Land

Access would be pursued to BLM land where no legal public access exists. This includes preserving and improving access to BLM land. Access would provide improved land management and use by the public.

BLM has identified 71,793 BLM acres as needing new legal public access (see Table 2.18 and Appendix L).

TABLE 2.18
ALTERNATIVE C

ACRES OF BLM LAND NEEDING NEW LEGAL PUBLIC ACCESS

Resource Area	Acres
Judith	67,740
Valley	13
Phillips	4,040
Total	71,793

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

These actions would be the same as those described in Alternative A.

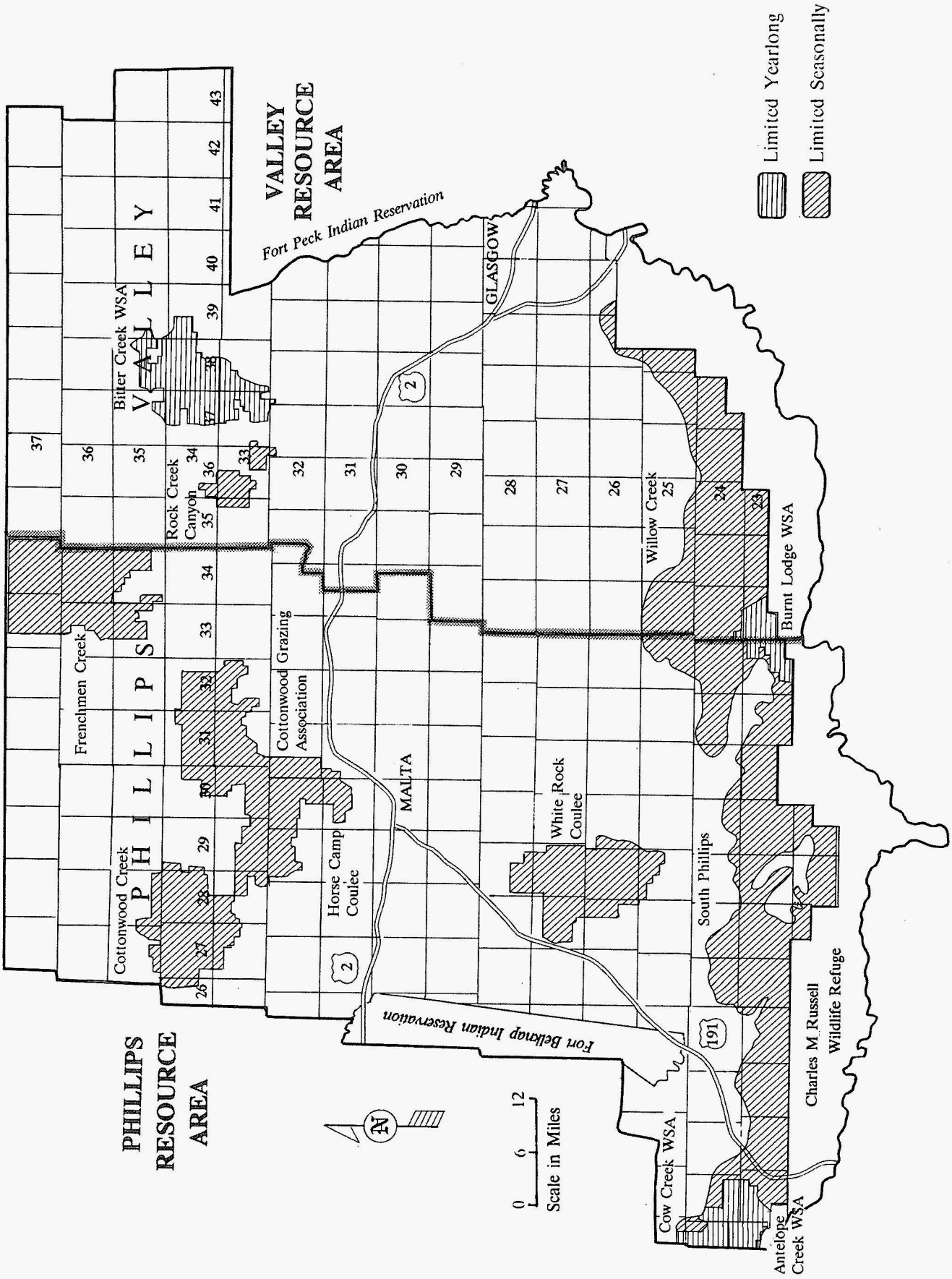
Off-Road Vehicle Designations

BLM would restrict ORV use on BLM land yearlong or seasonally to designated roads and trails or close specific areas to ORV use. This would reduce user conflicts, provide watershed and vegetative cover by limiting travel on ridges, reduce harassment of wildlife and provide habitat security, protect the resource values in ACECs, protect habitat on core prairie dog towns for potential black-footed ferret reintroduction and preserve and protect the wilderness values in the WSAs.

Other BLM land would remain open to ORV use to provide for cross-country travel including a designated intensive ORV use area for competitive events such as races and rallies.

BLM would designate 1,818,437 BLM acres open, 983,915 BLM acres limited and 3,805 BLM acres closed to ORVs (see Table 2.19 and Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8 ORV Designations - Alternative C.



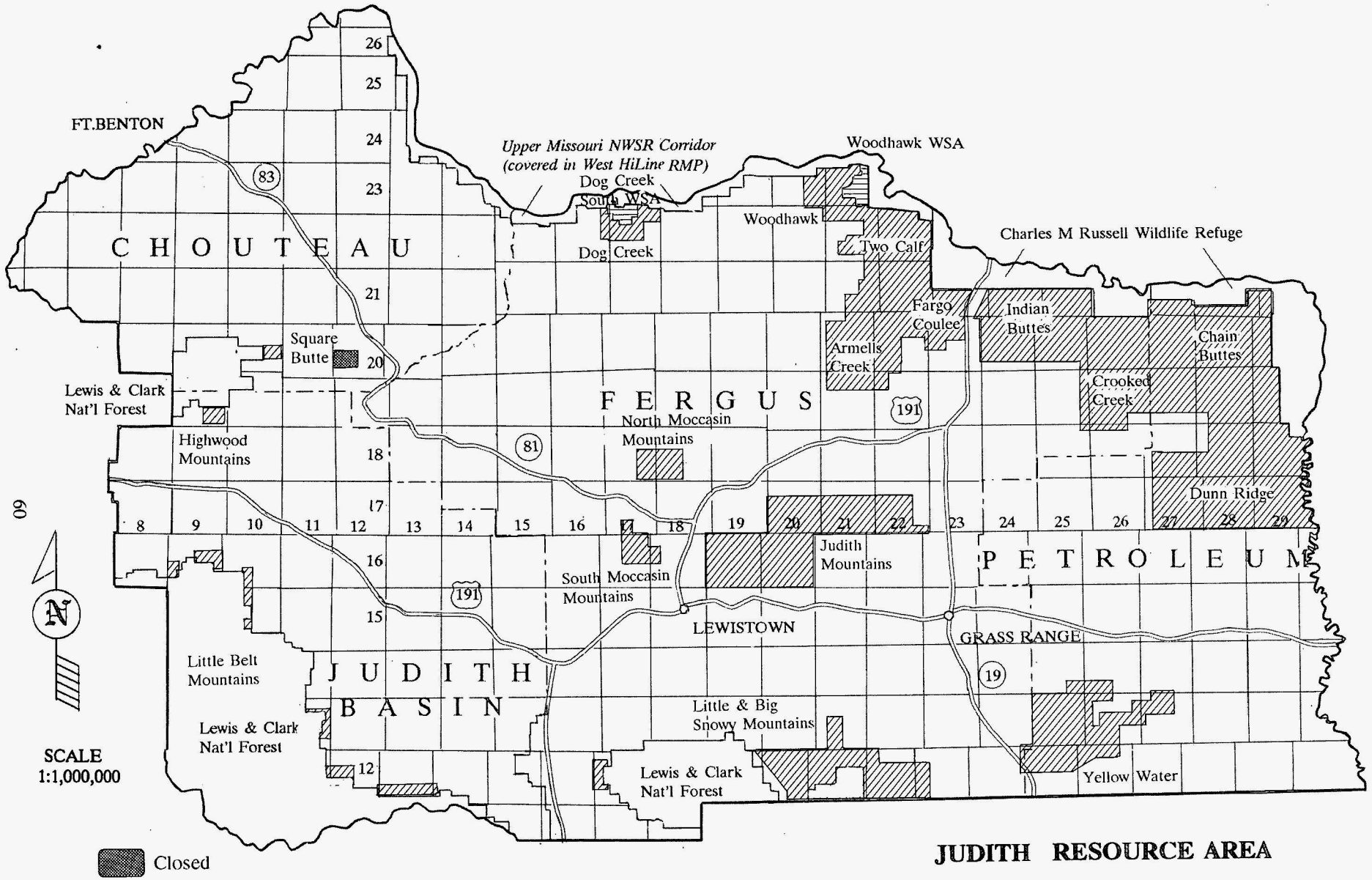


Figure 2.8 ORV Designations - Alternative C. (Continued)

TABLE 2.19
ALTERNATIVE C

BLM LAND DESIGNATED AS OPEN, LIMITED, OR CLOSED TO ORVS

Resource Area	Open	Limited Seasonal	Limited Yearlong	Closed
Judith	344,374	337,444	17,816	1,947
Valley	777,896	176,100	65,890	0
Phillips	696,167	349,165	37,500	1,858
Total	1,818,437	862,709	121,206	3,805

Source: BLM, 1990

Areas Closed

The Square Butte ONA ACEC and four prairie dog towns in the Phillips RA would be closed to all motorized vehicle use (3,805 acres).

Areas Limited Yearlong

ORV use in the Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails to protect the visual resources (4,566 acres).

ORV use in the six WSAs (Bitter Creek, Burnt Lodge, Antelope Creek, Woodhawk, Dog Creek South and Cow Creek) would be restricted yearlong to the existing roads and trails. In those WSAs Congress determines suitable for wilderness designation, ORV use would be restricted yearlong to cherry-stemmed and boundary roads. All internal trails and ways would be closed to ORV use. In those WSAs Congress determines unsuitable, ORV designations would remain limited yearlong, except for the Bitter Creek WSA which would be limited seasonally to designated roads and trails.

Areas Limited Seasonally

The seasonal restriction, September 1 through December 1, is based on the big game hunting season. If the hunting season would change, the seasonal restriction would be modified accordingly.

ORV use in the Collar Gulch ACEC would be restricted seasonally to designated roads and trails to protect resource values (1,160 acres).

The Rock Creek Canyon area would be restricted seasonally to designated roads and trails to provide nonmotorized recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat security and to protect the watershed's vegetative cover (14,100 acres).

BLM land in Cottonwood Grazing Association, Horse Camp Coulee, White Rock Coulee, Cottonwood Creek and Black Coulee, Frenchman Creek, Judith Mountains, Chain Buttes, Indian Buttes, Dunn Ridge, Two Calf, Armells Creek, Fargo Coulee, Crooked Creek, Blacktail, Woodhawk, Dog Creek, Yellow Water, Highwood Mountains, Little Belt Mountains, Snowy Mountains, North and South Moccasin Mountains, and Willow Creek would be restricted seasonally to protect fragile soils, reduce user conflicts, and maintain and improve water quality (687,127 acres).
ORV use in the south Phillips area would be restricted seasonally to designated roads and trails to protect fragile soils (160,322 acres).

Implementation

The guide for rating soil impacts from off-road travel would be used as an indicator to revise restrictions (MSO supplement to 7162 BLM Manual-Soil Interpretations).

BLM would implement a signing and public outreach program and publish an ORV map that delineates the boundaries and travel restrictions. Limited areas would be signed with an explanation of allowed uses. The designated access routes (roads and trails) would be signed in the WSAs.

BLM would pursue cooperative agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies and use a BLM law enforcement ranger to monitor and implement restrictions.

ORV regulations would provide permission for administrative access for lessees (grazing, oil and gas, mineral or other).

ORV use on newly acquired land would be consistent with adjacent areas.

Intensive ORV Use Area

BLM would designate and manage a 40 acre intensive ORV use area north of Glasgow for motorcycles and ATVs (T. 29 N., R. 39 E., Section 34, NE1/4SE1/4).

The actions needed for implementation would include a map and brochure of the intensive use area, signing, fencing, monitoring and enforcement. Competitive events would require a commercial permit.

Other areas for intensive ORV use would be designated if the need arises based on public demand.

Oil and Gas Leasing and Development

BLM would protect surface resource values on BLM lands open to oil and gas leasing. The leases on BLM land available for oil and gas exploration and development would contain protective surface use stipulations. Lands would be open to leasing with stipulations consistent with those used in other Montana BLM jurisdictional land outside the planning area. The stipulations along with the waivers, modifications and exceptions are described in Appendix B.

WSAs would remain closed to oil and gas leasing. All the remaining BLM land would be open to oil and gas leasing.

No Surface Occupancy restrictions would be used to protect critical paleontological sites, archaeological sites and various wildlife species.

Seasonal or distance restrictions would also be applied to oil and gas activities to protect raptor and grouse nests and critical winter habitat for various wildlife species.

Table 2.20 shows the acreage that would be subject to standard lease terms, stipulations, No Surface Occupancy restrictions or closed to leasing in high and moderate mineral development potential areas. There are no areas of low development potential within the planning area, except FS land in the Little Belt Mountains.

TABLE 2.20
ALTERNATIVE C

FEDERAL MINERAL ESTATE SUBJECT TO STANDARD LEASE TERMS, STIPULATIONS, NO SURFACE OCCUPANCY OR CLOSED TO OIL AND GAS LEASING (Acres)

Resource Area & Potential	Standard Terms Only	Stipulations*	No Surface Occupancy*	Closed
Judith				
High	8,795	9,600	95	5,150
Moderate	138,573	689,081	6,250	10,047
Valley				
High	28,324	38,996	520	0
Moderate	75,277	904,922	20,080	66,525
Phillips				
High	65,747	257,096	8,037	0
Moderate	124,779	782,653	91,060	56,080
Total				
High	102,866	305,692	8,652	5,150
Moderate	338,629	2,376,656	117,390	132,652

*Standard lease terms would also apply to the acreage identified for stipulations and No Surface Occupancy.

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

Current leases would continue according to the respective stipulations until they expire. As these leases expire, the land open to oil and gas leasing would be re-leased with stipulations, No Surface Occupancy restrictions or standard terms and conditions. The oil and gas management guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of this chapter and Appendix B describes the oil and gas leasing and permitting process.

Hardrock Mining

BLM would provide for hardrock mineral resource development while protecting other resources of exceptional value with special management prescriptions.

BLM would recommend revoking the withdrawals for the Judith Peak and Red Mountain Radar Sites, Landusky Town Site, Landusky Recreation Site, Montana Gulch Campground, and the Zortman Town Site. There are suspended mining claims within the Judith Peak and Red Mountain Radar Sites that may be validated when the revocation is finalized and will be treated as prior existing rights. BLM would continue the other withdrawals in the planning area.

The Square Butte ONA is currently segregated from the mining and leasing laws by a classification under the authority of the Classification and Multiple-Use Act of 1964. BLM would pursue a protective withdrawal for Square Butte to segregate the area from locatable mineral entry to protect natural endemic systems, cultural sites, scenic qualities and rare geologic features unique to Montana. The classification would be terminated when the area is withdrawn from mining claim location.

Table 2.21 identifies, by BLM withdrawal, the acreage that would be segregated from mineral entry by high, moderate, low and very low mineral development potential.

TABLE 2.21
ALTERNATIVE C

FEDERAL MINERAL ESTATE THAT WOULD BE SEGREGATED FROM MINERAL ENTRY (Acres)

	Total Acres	Hardrock Mineral Development Potential High	Mod	Low	Very Low
Judith RA					
Square Butte ONA ACEC	1,947	0	0	0	1,947
Blacktail Fossil Site	320	0	0	0	320
Phillips RA					
Azure Cave	140	80	60	0	0
Camp Creek Campground	40	0	0	40	0
Total	2,447	80	60	40	2,267

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

The hardrock management guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of this chapter and Appendix C describes the program for surface management of hardrock mineral exploration and development.

To ensure orderly development of mineral resources while protecting other resource values, the mitigating measures explained in the following section would be applied to Plans of Operation in the Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC, Collar Gulch ACEC, elk habitat in the Judith and North Moccasin Mountains, and bighorn sheep habitat in the Little Rocky Mountains. Mitigating measures would be applied together with the undue or unnecessary degradation standards of the 43 CFR 3809 regulations and the Mining Law of 1872.

Management Prescriptions for the Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC

1. Surface disturbing activities must meet visual contrast rating requirements for VRM Class II areas, using Lewistown as the key observation point. Mitigation requirements must be met and the area reclaimed to natural conditions.

2. Access route design for exploration and development would use the natural terrain to screen disturbances from view.

3. Facilities and equipment placement would use the natural terrain to screen them from view.

4. Camouflaging facilities or equipment would be required where they cannot be placed out of view.

5. Concurrent reclamation of a project would keep simultaneous disturbance to a minimum, thereby reducing visual intrusion.

Management Prescriptions for the Collar Gulch ACEC

1. Surface uses with the potential for hazardous or toxic discharge to Collar Gulch Creek would not be allowed in the drainage.

2. Mining activity that could physically impact the Tate-Poetter Cave would not be allowed.

3. Routine water quality monitoring would be initiated in the drainage to establish baseline conditions and set limits on future degradation to water quality.

4. No withdrawal of surface or ground water would be allowed when the flow in Collar Gulch Creek drops below 3 cubic feet per second, at the lower reach of the trout population.

5. No mining related fluids would be discharged into Collar Gulch Creek unless nondegradation standards are met.

6. Surface disturbing activities would not be allowed within 100 feet on either side of Collar Gulch Creek, except for approved stream crossings.

7. Sediment traps would be installed below any surface disturbance to minimize sediment increases in Collar Gulch Creek.

8. Access route design for exploration and development would minimize sedimentation into streams.

9. Surface disturbing activities would be designed to avoid disturbing the Collar Peak Trail.

10. Concurrent reclamation of a project would keep simultaneous disturbance to a minimum, thereby reducing erosion and sedimentation potential.

11. The following reclamation guidance would be applied to Plans of Operation. Project reclamation plans would isolate mine waste material. This includes spent ore heaps, waste rock dumps, process pond sludge, mill tailing, etc. Specific measures employed may include, but are not limited to:

    A. Chemical neutralization of material.
    B. Physical encapsulation of material.
    C. Off-site disposal of material.
    D. Reshaping of material to enhance vegetation and prevent exposure of waste material with subsequent generation and release of leachate.
    E. Revegetation of material to provide long-term stability.
    F. Extended post-operation monitoring (5-plus years) before final bond release.

Management Prescriptions for Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat

1. Seasonal restrictions would be placed on exploration during crucial wildlife periods. Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis to prevent undue or unnecessary degradation.

2. Concurrent reclamation of a project would be required to keep simultaneous disturbance to a minimum, thereby reducing wildlife habitat loss.

3. Reclamation would utilize plant species suitable for wildlife forage.

4. Wildlife proof fences would be required around solution ponds to prevent wildlife mortality.

5. Off-site mitigation or compensation would be provided for habitat loss. This may include habitat improvement or replacement with comparable sites.

6. Off-site water would be provided to draw wildlife from the active mining sites.

Riparian and Wetland Management of Watersheds

BLM would maintain and/or improve the riparian-wetland areas in existing, proposed and potential AMPs based on proper functioning condition and desired plant community (see Appendix J). Ranking would be based on site potential as determined by intensive inventories in the Prairie Potholes and Northern Great Plains Regions. It may be necessary to recategorize Category M and C allotments if significant riparian or wetland values are present and need improvement.

The first objective would be to improve or maintain riparian-wetland areas to proper functioning condition and late seral or potential natural community vegetation status to provide wildlife habitat, increase waterfowl habitat, improve watershed conditions and to comply with the nonpoint source water pollution section of the Clean Water Act. Existing AMPs would be rewritten and new AMPs written to include riparian-wetland condition objectives. These objectives would be met by grazing methods.

When trend is improving, the prescribed grazing methods should be continued even if the condition objective is not achieved in the stated time frame. If grazing methods are not successful in meeting management objectives, BLM would take the necessary action to achieve those objectives. This could include, but is not limited to, fencing riparian-wetland areas, reducing livestock numbers and use and rehabilitating degraded riparian areas.

A second objective is to accomplish the above riparian-wetland objectives while considering the economic viability of the affected ranches. This objective recognizes the importance of the intermingled BLM and base property private lands, including valuable riparian-wetland areas, which could be adversely impacted as a result of management changes on BLM land.

BLM would allocate 75% of any forage increases in riparian-wetland areas to watershed and wildlife and 25% to livestock.

Table 2.22 shows the number of allotments, miles of stream and number of water sources on BLM land. The number of water sources is based on the reservoirs, potholes and springs with water rights. Intensive riparian-wetland inventories would update this information through plan maintenance.

TABLE 2.22
ALTERNATIVE C

NUMBER OF ALLOTMENTS, MILES OR STREAM AND NUMBER OF WATER SOURCES WITHIN ALLOTMENTS MANAGED FOR RIPARIAN AND WETLAND VALUES

Resource Area	Number of Allotments*	BLM Land	
		Miles of Stream	Water Sources
Judith	97	125	390
Valley	141	251	1,377
Phillips	183	180	4,143
Total	421	556	5,910

*Portions of several allotments in the Judith and Phillips RAs are within the UMNWSR Corridor.

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

The condition objectives would be met through livestock grazing management. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Hot season grazing deferment,

2. Creation of separate riparian pastures,

3. Changes in kind and class of livestock,

4. Time control grazing, and

5. Other range management practices such as development of off-site water, salting, development of shade sources, herding, insect control, early pastures of crested wheatgrass, etc.

The same techniques would be applied to those riparian areas identified for wildlife habitat.

BLM would rehabilitate degraded riparian areas by seeding, planting and installing structures such as rock gabions, check dams, etc.

BLM would construct water impoundments on suitable sites as opportunities arise. Islands would be constructed on new and existing impoundments where possible and feasible. An evaluation for soils and hydrologic characteristics would determine which proposed sites are suitable.

All proposed vegetation manipulation projects would be evaluated for their potential impacts on wildlife.

BLM would include mitigation measures for surface disturbing activities to protect wetland habitat.

BLM may fence specific existing and new waterfowl and fishing reservoirs to establish or protect shoreline vegetation for a 100-foot perimeter around the high water line. Periodic, short-term grazing of fenced enclosures may be allowed, if necessary, to maintain or improve wetland habitat.

Some newly constructed water impoundments would be limited to 2-acre feet in volume or would be built with water pass-through facilities as required by the Milk River MOU with the BR.

Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat Management

BLM would maintain elk habitat to support the existing population on BLM land in the Missouri Breaks, Highwood Mountains and Little Belt Mountains.

BLM would also provide habitat for elk expansion on BLM land, where forage is available, in the Missouri Breaks, Square Butte, Judith Mountains, North Moccasin Mountains, and Little and Big Snowy Mountains (all in the Judith RA).

BLM would maintain bighorn sheep habitat on BLM land in the Little Rocky Mountains and Missouri Breaks and provide habitat to allow for increased bighorn sheep populations, where forage is available, in the Chimney Bend area.

The BLM would provide 593,980 acres of elk habitat and 84,711 acres of bighorn sheep habitat on BLM land within the planning area (see Table 2.23 and Figure 2.3).

TABLE 2.23
ALTERNATIVE C

ACRES OF ELK AND BIGHORN SHEEP HABITAT ON BLM LAND

Resource Area	Elk Habitat	Bighorn Sheep Habitat
Judith	410,796	66,187
Valley	50,806	0
Phillips	132,378	18,524
Total	593,980	84,711

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

BLM would maintain the current forage allocations for each allotment containing elk and bighorn sheep habitat. That portion of the Judith Mountains closed to livestock would remain closed. In the Valley RA, forage is allocated to support 250 head of elk for 6 months. Timber would be undisturbed to provide cover for elk on traditional summer and winter range.

Seasonal restrictions would be placed on oil and gas activities to protect crucial elk and bighorn sheep habitat.

Domestic sheep grazing would not be allowed to overlap bighorn sheep habitat to ensure no contact between domestic and bighorn sheep this would prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

The following mitigating measures would be applied to Plans of Operation for hardrock mining within elk habitat in the Judith and North Moccasin Mountains and bighorn sheep habitat in the Little Rocky Mountains.

1. Seasonal restrictions would be placed on exploration during crucial wildlife periods. Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis to prevent undue or unnecessary degradation.
2. Concurrent reclamation of a project would be required to keep simultaneous disturbance to a minimum, thereby reducing wildlife habitat loss.
3. Reclamation would utilize plant species suitable for wildlife forage.
4. Wildlife proof fences would be required around solution ponds to prevent wildlife mortality.
5. Off-site mitigation or compensation would be provided for habitat loss. This may include habitat improvement or replacement with comparable sites.
6. Off-site water would be provided to draw wildlife from the active mining sites.

Prairie Dog and Black-Footed Ferret Management

BLM would provide 7,367 acres of prairie dog towns on BLM land in the Phillips RA, defined as Complex 1+2, for the potential reintroduction of the black-footed ferret, associate species (mountain plover, burrowing owl and ferruginous hawk) and recreational viewing. This acreage (7,367 acres) would be designated an ACEC. BLM would also provide 4,624 acres of prairie dog towns outside the Complex 1+2 for prairie dog shooting in the Phillips RA.

BLM would provide 770 acres of prairie dog towns in the Valley RA as discussed in Alternative A. Prairie dog towns would not occupy more than 1% of the BLM portion of any allotment in the Valley RA.

BLM would eliminate prairie dogs (by poisoning) on 1,330 BLM acres to stabilize the watershed and improve range condition.

Table 2.24 summarizes the prairie dog and black-footed ferret management activities and acreages in this alternative. Prairie dog towns would be maintained within an acreage range as shown in Appendix K.

TABLE 2.24
ALTERNATIVE C

SUMMARY OF PRAIRIE DOG AND BLACK-FOOTED FERRET MANAGEMENT

Resource Area & Management	Number of Towns	BLM Acres	State Acres	Private Acres	Total Acres
Prairie Dog Mgmt.					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	6	770	0	0	770
Phillips	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	770	0	0	770
Ferret Management					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	50	7,367	545	849	8,761
Total	50	7,367	545	849	8,761
Shooting					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	71	4,624	1,384	4,688	10,696
Total	71	4,624	1,384	4,688	10,696
Elimination					
Judith	7	71	0	112	183
Valley	5	30	40	120	190
Phillips	114	1,229	141	819	2,189
Total	126	1,330	181	1,051	2,562
Planning Area Total	253	14,091	2,110	6,588	22,789

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation - Elimination

Before poisoning prairie dog towns, the BLM would inventory each town for federally listed threatened and endangered species.

BLM would pursue poisoning of the entire 1,330 acres of prairie dog towns in one year. Poisoning would continue the following year to completely eliminate the prairie dog towns.

Implementation - Prairie Dog Management

These actions would be the same as those described in Alternative A.

In the Phillips RA, all new towns outside Complex 1+2 would be eliminated. New towns would be allowed in Complex 1+2, as long as the total acreage does not exceed 7,367 acres. If new towns are smaller than 50 acres, they would be eliminated in the Judith and Valley RAs, otherwise they would be maintained within an acreage range.

Implementation - Black-footed Ferret Management

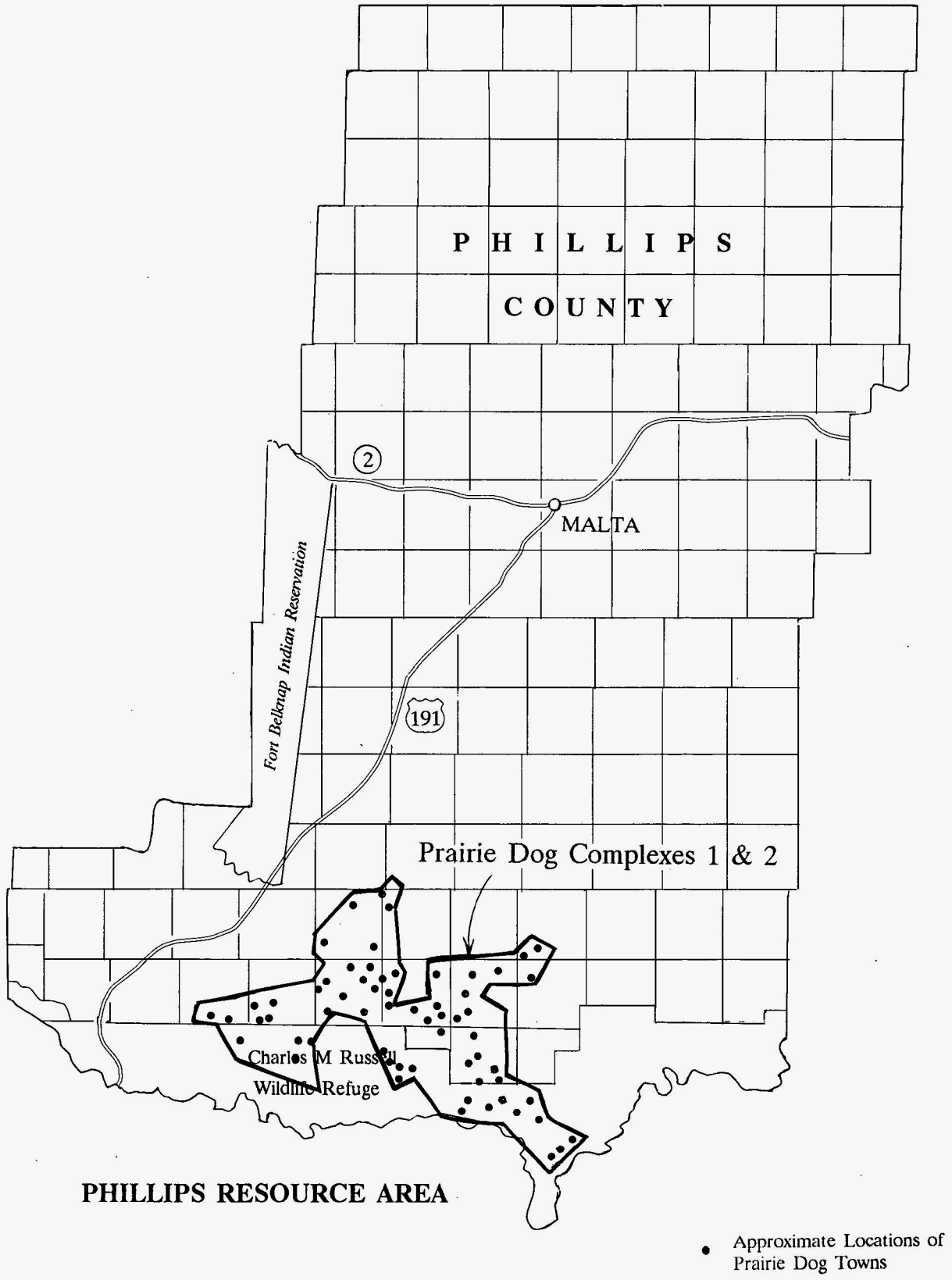
BLM would provide habitat on 7,367 BLM acres for black-footed ferret reintroduction in the Phillips RA (see Figure 2.9). The towns identified for reintroduction, Complex 1+2, are based on a paper by Clark and Minta (1988) using the Habitat Suitability Index for Black-footed Ferrets for prairie dog complexes in Montana (Houston et al, 1986). Reintroduction could include portions of the CMR and may also include 545 acres of state and 849 acres of private land.

A core area(s) on CMR and BLM land would be the initial reintroduction site for the black-footed ferret. Prairie dog towns on CMR and BLM land outside the core area(s) would be used to expand the reintroduction within Complex 1+2.

Before reintroduction occurs, all activities on BLM land in south Phillips County (south of Highway 2) would be evaluated to ensure impacts to a future reintroduction are assessed and mitigated. After reintroduction occurs, all activities within Complex 1+2 which may impact the ferret or its habitat would require informal consultation with the FWS.

Some activities near prairie dog towns identified for black-footed ferret reintroduction would be restricted. These towns would be avoidance areas for above ground ROWs; would have no further development or implementation of livestock improvements; and would not be grazed by livestock. When feasible, BLM would use mechanical treatments elsewhere in an allotment to compensate for the vegetation loss associated with these livestock restrictions. These restrictions would apply to the core prairie dog towns and a 1/4-mile area around each town. The 2,084 acres of core prairie dog towns would include an additional 2,896 acres for a total of 4,480 acres.

Figure 2.9 Prairie Dog Towns/Black-footed Ferret Management - Alternative C.



Oil and gas leasing within Complex 1+2 would be restricted. Surface occupancy and use would be prohibited to protect the black-footed ferret reintroduction area (see Appendix B).

Implementation - Prairie Dog Shooting

BLM would manage prairie dog shooting on BLM land outside Complex 1+2 in the Phillips RA (4,624 acres). BLM would respond to requests for information, prepare maps, sign prairie dog towns and manage the towns to provide shooting. Prairie dog shooting may be restricted to a certain number of shooters each year to allow for a quality experience. Prairie dog shooting would continue within Complex 1+2 until ferret reintroduction occurs. Shooting would be allowed, but not managed, in the Valley RA.

Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC

BLM would designate 4,566 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect the scenic, wildlife and recreation values in the Judith (3,702 acres) and South Moccasin (864 acres) Mountains (see Supplemental Color Map B at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by the BLM. This area would be managed to mitigate impacts to resources from surface disturbing activities.

Implementation

The following mitigating measures would be applied to protect the scenic, wildlife and recreation values:

1. Surface disturbing activities must meet visual contrast rating requirements for VRM Class II areas, using Lewistown as the key observation point. Mitigation requirements must be met and the area reclaimed to natural conditions.

2. Access route design would use the natural terrain to screen disturbances from view.

3. Facilities and equipment placement would use the natural terrain to screen them from view.

4. Camouflaging facilities or equipment would be required where they cannot be placed out of view.

5. Concurrent reclamation of a project would keep simultaneous disturbance to a minimum, thereby reducing visual intrusion.

6. Off-road travel would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails.

7. The ACEC would be an avoidance area for ROWs.

8. Oil and gas leases would contain a controlled surface use stipulation for visual resources.

The area would remain open to mineral entry and these mitigating measures would be applied to Plans of Operations together with the undue and unnecessary degradation standards of the 43 CFR 3809 regulations and the Mining Law of 1872.

Acid Shale-Pine Forest ACEC

BLM would designate 817 BLM acres within the Acid Shale-Pine Forest ecosystem an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect an endemic plant community unique to the area and a fragile watershed (see Supplemental Color Map C at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM.

Implementation

The area would be managed as a Research Natural Area with ongoing studies to determine effects of grazing, fire, etc. on this type of plant community. Disposal of forest products from the site would be prohibited, unless necessary for stand preservation. Grazing, recreation and wildlife use of the area would continue. The area would remain open to oil and gas leasing with a No Surface Occupancy restriction and to mineral entry.

Square Butte Outstanding Natural Area ACEC

BLM would designate 1,947 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect natural endemic systems, cultural sites, scenic qualities and rare geologic features unique to Montana (see Supplemental Color Map A at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM. These lands would be managed primarily for wildlife and recreational purposes.

Implementation

BLM would pursue public access to the area. The area would be closed to oil and gas leasing, except to protect from drainage, and closed to ORVs.

The Square Butte ONA is currently segregated from the mining and leasing laws by a classification under the authority of the Classification and Multiple-Use Act of 1964. BLM would pursue a protective withdrawal for Square Butte to segregate the area from locatable mineral entry to protect natural endemic systems, cultural sites, scenic qualities and rare geologic features unique to Montana. The classification would be terminated when the area is withdrawn from mining claim location.

Recreation and habitat management plans for the area would include a recreational trail system, camping areas, a recreation use policy, habitat management direction for wildlife populations including prescribed fire, security areas, etc. The sale of forest products would be prohibited, unless necessary for stand preservation.

Collar Gulch ACEC

BLM would designate 1,160 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect a pure strain of westslope cutthroat trout, which is a Montana State Species of Special Concern (see Supplemental Color Map D at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM. The area's primary emphasis would be on protecting wildlife (westslope cutthroat trout) habitat and nonmotorized recreational use.

Implementation

Public access would be pursued for vehicles to the ACEC's eastern boundary.

ORV use would be restricted to designated roads from September 1 to December 1, with road closures during highly erosive periods. The area would be open to oil and gas leasing with a No Surface Occupancy restriction.

Stream protection and enhancement structures would be initiated to improve trout habitat. BLM would initiate a study to identify the source of water quality degradation in the drainage and develop appropriate measures to eliminate or mitigate the degradation source. Recreational developments in the area would be designed to protect fish habitat.

The following mitigating measures would be applied to Plans of Operation for hardrock mining within the Collar Gulch ACEC:

1. Surface uses with the potential for hazardous or toxic discharge to Collar Gulch Creek would not be allowed in the drainage.

2. Mining activity that could physically impact the Tate-Poetter Cave would not be allowed.

3. Routine water quality monitoring would be initiated in the drainage to establish baseline conditions and set limits on future degradation to water quality.

4. No withdrawal of surface or ground water would be allowed when the flow in Collar Gulch Creek drops below 3 cubic feet per second, at the lower reach of the trout population.

5. No mining related fluids would be discharged into Collar Gulch Creek unless nondegradation standards are met.

6. Surface disturbing activities would not be allowed within 100 feet on either side of Collar Gulch Creek, except for approved stream crossings.

7. Sediment traps would be installed below any surface disturbance to minimize sediment increases in Collar Gulch Creek.

8. Access route design for exploration and development would minimize sedimentation into streams.

9. Surface disturbing activities would be designed to avoid disturbing the Collar Peak Trail.

10. Concurrent reclamation of a project would keep simultaneous disturbance to a minimum, thereby reducing erosion and sedimentation potential.

11. The following reclamation guidance would be applied to Plans of Operation. Project reclamation plans would isolate mine waste material (spent ore heaps, waste rock dumps, process pond sludge, mill tailing, etc). Specific measures employed may include, but are not limited to:

    A. Chemical neutralization of material.
    B. Physical encapsulation of material.
    C. Off-site disposal of material.
    D. Reshaping of material to enhance vegetation and prevent exposure of waste material with subsequent generation and release of leachate.
    E. Revegetation of material to provide long-term stability.
    F. Extended post-operation monitoring (5-plus years) before final bond release.

Azure Cave ACEC

BLM would designate 479 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect cave resources and potentially the northernmost bat hibernaculum in the United States (see Supplemental Color Map E at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM.

Implementation

BLM would allow cave access from May 15 through September 15. A caged ladder at the entry and at the chimney would provide cave access. Permits for using the cave would be issued to individuals or to a concessionaire. Developments would include lights, sanitation facilities, signing and an external shelter. BLM would pursue access from the Seven Mile road and develop an all weather road to a parking lot and an asphalt trail to the cave opening. The area would be open to oil and gas leasing with a No Surface Occupancy restriction.

Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC

BLM would designate 2,120 acres of BLM land within the Henry Smith and Beaucoup Sites an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect unusual and unique archaeological resources representing bison hunting and prehistoric ceremonial use of the Northwestern Plains (see Supplemental Color Map F at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM.

Implementation

The area would remain open to ORVs, mineral entry and oil and gas leasing with a No Surface Occupancy restriction.

The Henry Smith Site (1,000 acres) would be developed for public and scientific use including interpretation and public education. BLM would also pursue public access to the site. Lands within the ACEC would be inventoried to record any additional sites and mapping and/or collecting of data would be completed as necessary. Developments at this site would include roads and walking paths with interpretative signs for visitor information.

The Beaucoup Site (1,120 acres) would be managed for scientific use. Lands within the site would be inventoried for cultural resources. All resources would be mapped, collected and excavated as necessary for relevant archaeological data.

ALTERNATIVE D

This alternative emphasizes resource protection. Some land uses would be restricted by withdrawals, stipulations and/or mitigation to protect and enhance non-consumptive resources (recreation, soil, visual and cultural resources, riparian and wetland values). If selected this alternative plus the guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section would form the RMP.

Land Acquisition and Disposal

BLM would pursue acquisitions as opportunities arise through exchange or purchase with willing proponents and/or sellers. BLM recognizes and respects private property rights and would not use condemnation to implement land tenure adjustment under this land use plan. Acquisitions could include private, state or other land that would meet the objectives of the State Director's Guidance on Land Pattern Review and Land Adjustment (1984) (see Appendix A). Private, state or other lands meeting the criteria in Appendix A would be in conformance with this land use plan. The main objective would be to attain a BLM land pattern which balances multiple resource values and brings about better manageability. Lands acquired would have multiple resource values such as access, riparian-wetland areas, ACECs, recreation and wildlife habitat.

A total of 166,021 acres of BLM land would be available for disposal to meet the acquisition objectives (see Table 2.6 and Appendix A). The lands identified for disposal would be available for exchange. These lands may also be available for sale to facilitate an individual land exchange. For purposes of sale these lands meet FLPMA disposal criteria Sec. 203(a)(1). BLM land identified for disposal would be subject to further site specific evaluation and if significant values are found they may be retained under BLM management. An environmental analysis and Notice of Realty Action would be completed for each disposal action. Areas not identified for disposal would be managed for long-term public ownership.

Implementation

During any purchase or exchange action, BLM would attempt to maintain the respective county tax base and allow no overall net gain in BLM land over the life of this plan.

As opportunities arise, BLM would evaluate land exchanges involving private and state inholdings within the CMR on a case-by-case basis.

Acquisitions could occur by exchange or purchase through negotiation with willing landowners. Exchange would be the primary method of acquisition and may include BLM land within or outside the planning area.

Access to BLM Land

Access would be pursued to BLM land where no legal public access exists and/or where additional access to major blocks of BLM land is needed. This includes preserving and improving access to BLM land. Access would provide for improved land management and use by the public for

hunting, camping, picnicking, and other recreational activities.

BLM has identified 71,793 BLM acres needing new legal public access and 1,126,858 BLM acres needing additional access (see Table 2.25). The New Year Peak, Pyramid Peak, Armells Headwaters, Chicago Gulch, Fox Peak, Lewis Peak, Lookout Peak, Black Butte, Square Butte, North and South Moccasin Mountains, and the Missouri Breaks areas would be priority areas for increasing legal public access.

TABLE 2.25
ALTERNATIVE D

ACRES OF BLM LAND NEEDING NEW AND ADDITIONAL LEGAL PUBLIC ACCESS

Resource Area	New Access	Additional Access
Judith	67,740	231,260
Valley	13	72,860
Phillips	4,040	822,738
Total	71,793	1,126,858

Source: BLM, 1990

BLM would support the public road network, primarily county roads, leading to BLM land by establishing limited cooperative agreements for maintenance with the respective counties. BLM roads or trails would be extended and/or upgraded to reflect public access needs. Table 2.26 shows the BLM roads identified that would be extended or upgraded.

TABLE 2.26
ALTERNATIVE D

BLM ROADS THAT WOULD BE EXTENDED OR UPGRADED

Road Name	Current Type	Proposed Type
East Dry Fork	Two-track	Gravel
Frenchman Rd.	Two-track	Bladed
White Rock Rd.	Trail	Bladed
Indian Lake Rd.	Two-track	Bladed
Pea Ridge Rd.	Two-track	Bladed

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

Transportation planning would identify additional areas for access and road extension or upgrading.

Access would be accomplished primarily by easements or land exchanges. Other methods include, but are not limited to cooperative agreements, Land and Water Conservation Fund acquisitions, or patent reservations.

Public access routes and boundaries would be signed and restricted travel areas would be identified and mapped. BLM would develop public information programs, monitor use and enforce regulations.

Off-Road Vehicle Designations

BLM would restrict ORV use on BLM land yearlong or seasonally to designated roads and trails or close specific areas to protect the resource values in ACECs, preserve and protect wilderness values in the WSAs, protect vegetative cover to maintain watersheds and water quality, reduce user conflicts, reduce harassment of wildlife and provide habitat security, and protect habitat on primary and secondary prairie dog towns for potential black-footed ferret reintroduction.

BLM would provide a 40-acre intensive ORV use area north of Glasgow for competitive events such as races and rallies.

BLM would designate 40 BLM acres open, 2,785,147 BLM acres limited and 20,970 BLM acres closed to ORVs (see Table 2.27 and Figure 2.10).

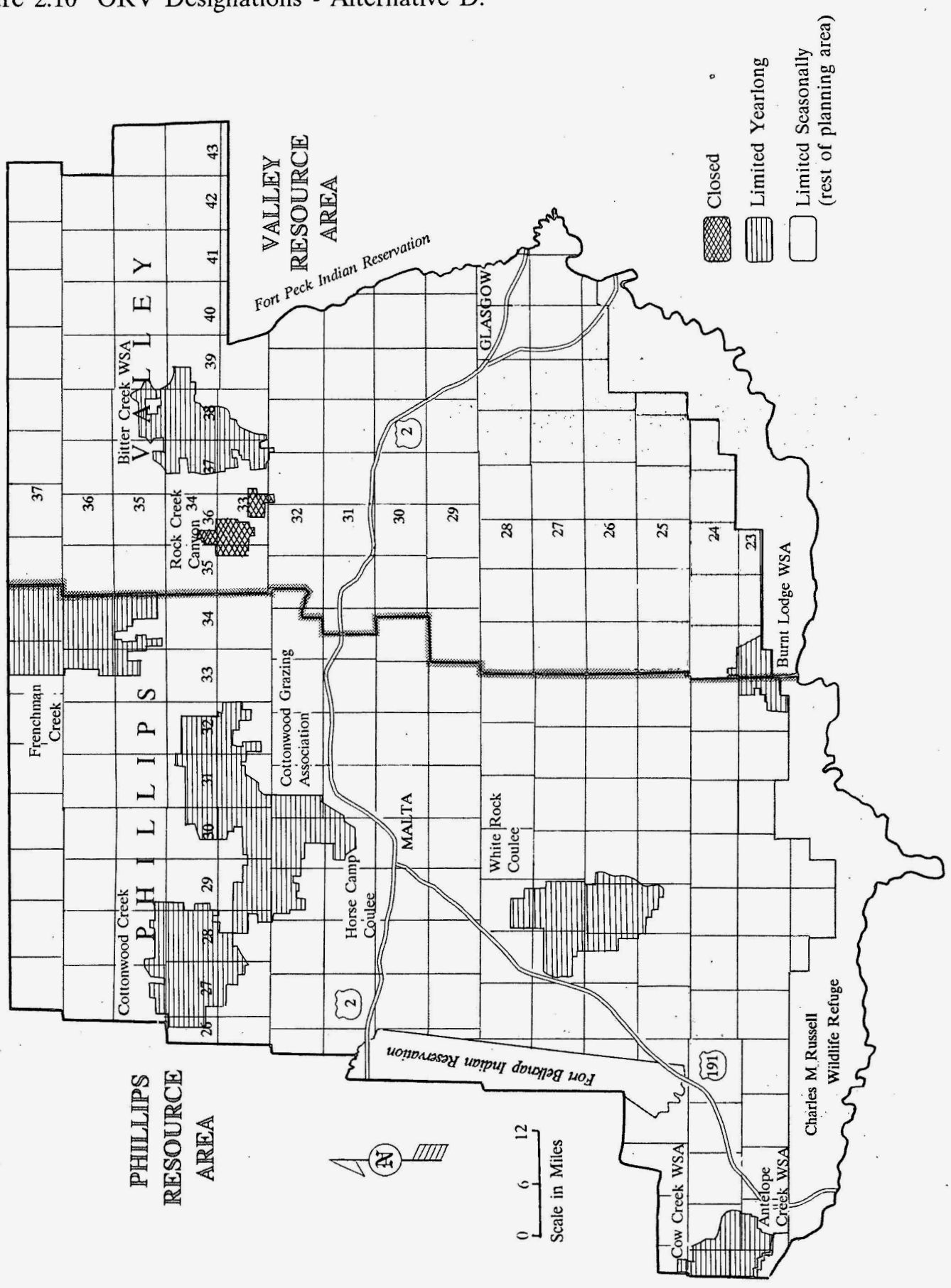
TABLE 2.27
ALTERNATIVE D

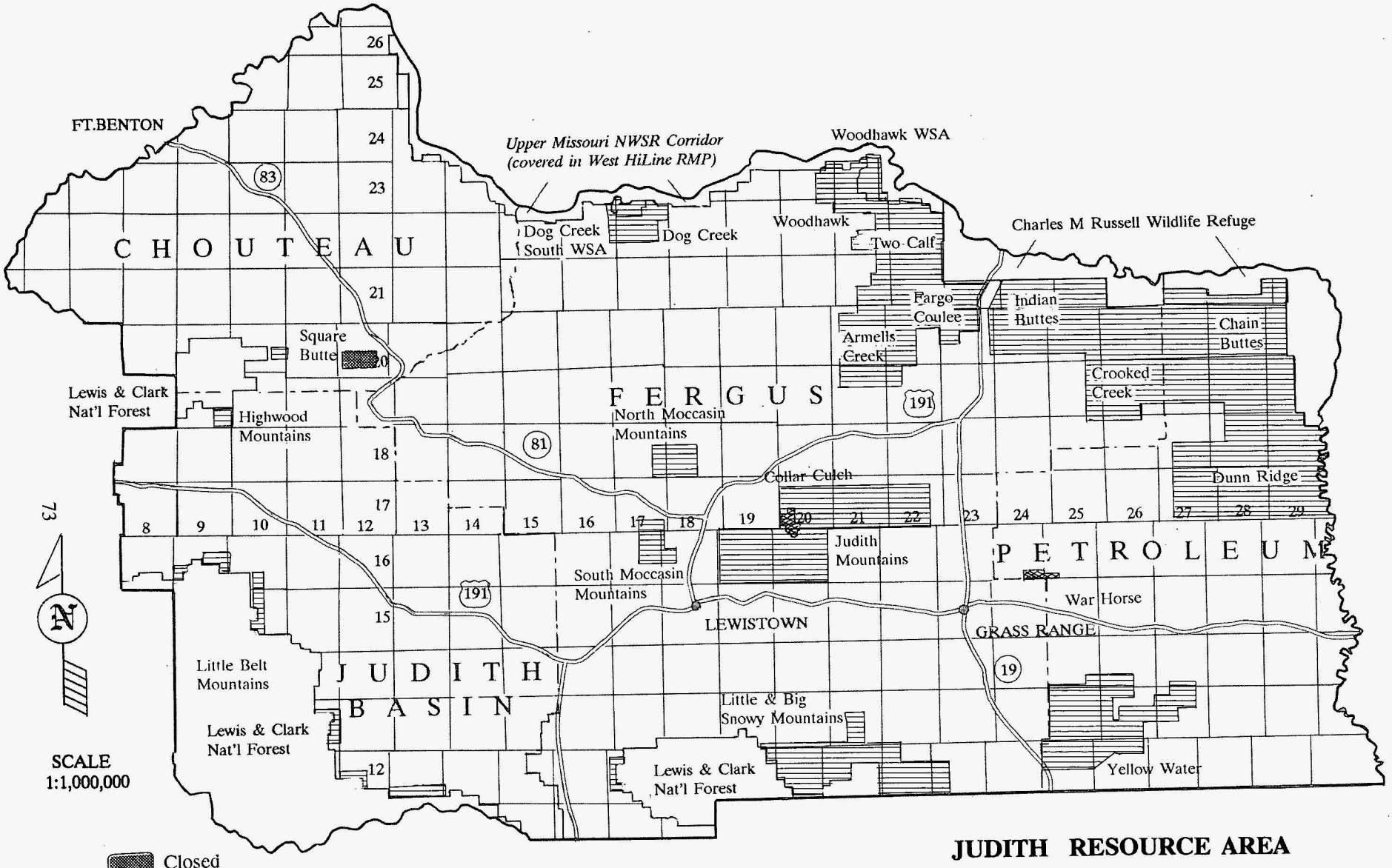
BLM LAND DESIGNATED AS OPEN, LIMITED, OR CLOSED TO ORVS

Resource Area	Open	Limited Seasonal	Limited Yearlong	Closed
Judith	0	343,099	354,100	4,382
Valley	40	939,856	65,890	14,100
Phillips	0	844,525	237,677	2,488
Total	40	2,127,480	657,667	20,970

Source: BLM, 1990

Figure 2.10 ORV Designations - Alternative D.





JUDITH RESOURCE AREA

Figure 2.10 ORV Designations - Alternative D. (Continued)

Areas Closed

The Square Butte ONA ACEC, Collar Gulch ACEC, Acid Shale-Pine Forest (War Horse) ACEC, Rock Creek Canyon and eight prairie dog towns in the Phillips RA would be closed to all motorized vehicle use (20,970 acres).

Areas Limited Yearlong

ORV use in the six WSAs (Bitter Creek, Burnt Lodge, Antelope Creek, Woodhawk, Dog Creek South and Cow Creek) would be restricted yearlong to the existing roads and trails. In those WSAs Congress determines suitable for wilderness designation, ORV use would be restricted yearlong to cherry-stemmed and boundary roads. All internal trails and ways would be closed to ORV use. For those WSAs Congress determines unsuitable, ORV designations would be limited seasonally in the Bitter Creek, Burnt Lodge, Antelope Creek and Cow Creek WSAs and designation would be limited yearlong in the Woodhawk and Dog Creek South WSAs.

BLM land in the Cottonwood Grazing Association, Horse Camp Coulee, White Rock Coulee, Cottonwood Creek and Black Coulee, Frenchman Creek, Judith Mountains, Chain Buttes, Indian Buttes, Dunn Ridge, Two Calf, Armells Creek, Fargo Coulee, Crooked Creek, Blacktail, Woodhawk, Dog Creek, Yellow Water, Highwood Mountains, Little Belt Mountains, Snowy Mountains, and North and South Moccasin Mountains would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails to protect fragile soils, reduce user conflicts, and maintain and improve water quality (537,410 acres).

Sixteen prairie dog towns in the Phillips RA would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails to protect habitat for potential black-footed ferret reintroduction (3,617 acres).

Areas Limited Seasonally

All remaining BLM land would be restricted seasonally to existing roads and trails from September 1 to December 1. The September 1 to December 1 seasonal restriction is based on the big game hunting season in the area. If the hunting season would change, the restriction would be modified accordingly.

Implementation

The following exceptions would apply to the limited designations except in the WSAs and ACECs:

1. Vehicle access for camping would be permissible within 100 yards of existing or designated roads and trails,
2. Vehicle access for the retrieval of downed big game would be permissible,
3. The non-ambulatory handicapped, as defined by Montana Law, would be allowed motorized access off existing or designated roads and trails, and
4. Snowmobiles would be allowed to travel on BLM land in the Little Belt and Snowy Mountains.

Resource damage, changes in landscape and user conflicts would be considered in opening or closing roads and trails. The guide for rating soil impacts from off-road travel would be used as an indicator to revise restrictions (MSO supplement to 7162 BLM Manual-Soil Interpretations). As additional mapping and signing occurs, the roads and trails designated as open or restricted may change depending on future management needs.

BLM would implement a signing and public outreach program and publish a map that delineates boundaries and travel restrictions. Areas limited with a yearlong restriction would be signed, identifying those roads and trails not open to motorized travel and an explanation of allowed uses. The designated access routes (roads and trails) would be signed in the WSAs.

BLM would pursue cooperative agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies and use BLM law enforcement ranger(s) to monitor and implement restrictions.

ORV regulations would provide permission for administrative access for lessees (grazing, mineral, oil and gas or other).

ORV use on newly acquired land would be consistent with adjacent areas.

Intensive ORV Use Area

This area and the actions needed for implementation would be the same as those described in Alternative C, except there would be no other intensive use areas.

Oil and Gas Leasing and Development

BLM would provide stipulations to protect the resource values identified as conflicting with oil and gas exploration and development on BLM land. The stipulations along with the waivers, modifications and exceptions are described in Appendix B.

WSAs would be closed to oil and gas leasing. A No Surface Occupancy restriction would be placed on oil and gas activities 1/4-mile around WSAs and FWS refuges.

A No Surface Occupancy restriction would be placed on oil and gas activities to protect critical paleontology sites, R&PP and facilities, developed recreation sites, occupied raptor nests, bald eagle nests, piping plover nesting habitat, crucial winter range, grouse leks and nesting habitat, reservoirs greater than 10 surface acres, designated fisheries reservoirs and prairie dog towns identified for potential black-footed ferret reintroduction.

Controlled surface use stipulations would be used to protect visual resources, sensitive soils, cultural sites and prairie dog towns.

A lease notice would be used to inform lessees and operators of the requirements for cultural resource historic preservation compliance.

Table 2.28 shows the acreage that would be subject to standard lease terms, stipulations, No Surface Occupancy or closed to leasing in high and moderate development potential areas. There are no areas of low development potential within the planning area, except FS land in the Little Rocky Mountains.

TABLE 2.28
ALTERNATIVE D

FEDERAL MINERAL ESTATE SUBJECT TO STANDARD LEASE TERMS, STIPULATIONS, NO SURFACE OCCUPANCY OR CLOSED TO OIL AND GAS LEASING (Acres)

Resource Area & Potential	Standard Terms Only*	Stipulations	No Surface Occupancy**	Closed
Judith				
High	8,795	7,135	2,560	5,150
Moderate	138,573	110,730	584,601	10,047
Valley				
High	28,324	34,296	5,220	0
Moderate	75,277	408,702	516,300	66,525
Phillips				
High	65,747	167,023	98,110	0
Moderate	124,779	39,925	828,028	61,840
Total				
High	102,866	208,454	105,890	5,150
Moderate	338,629	559,357	1,928,929	138,412

*Standard terms would include a lease stipulation on visual resources which applies to all leases.

**Standard lease terms would also apply to the acreage identified for stipulations and No Surface Occupancy.

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

Current oil and gas leases would continue according to the respective stipulations until they expire. As current leases expire, the areas would come under the management guidelines of this document. The oil and gas management guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of this chapter and Appendix B describes the oil and gas leasing and permitting process.

Hardrock Mining

BLM would protect certain sensitive areas on BLM land by withdrawing them from location and entry under the mining laws. Sensitive areas would include some areas with scenic values, crucial elk and bighorn sheep habitat and certain potential ACECs.

BLM would recommend revoking the withdrawal for Judith Peak and Red Mountain Radar Sites and continue the other withdrawals in the planning area. BLM would pursue seven protective withdrawals in those areas with sensitive resource values where hardrock exploration and development may potentially create significant impacts. The following withdrawals would be proposed to segregate the areas from locatable mineral entry:

1. A withdrawal of approximately 25,160 acres in the Judith Mountains would protect the Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC, U.S. 191 Scenic Area, U.S. 87 Scenic Area, Collar Gulch ACEC, crucial elk habitat, Judith Peak scenic road corridor and the Judith Peak scenic overlook including the Judith Peak and Red Mountain Radar Sites.

2. A withdrawal of approximately 1,073 acres in the North Moccasin Mountains would protect crucial elk habitat.

3. A withdrawal of approximately 2,194 acres in the South Moccasin Mountains would protect the scenic qualities for the visual resources.

4. A withdrawal of approximately 5,504 acres in the Little Rocky Mountains would protect crucial bighorn sheep habitat.

5. A withdrawal of approximately 3,169 acres in the Acid Shale-Pine Forest ACEC would protect an endemic plant community from possible bentonite mining.

6. A withdrawal of approximately 10,720 acres in the Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC would protect archaeological resources.

7. The Square Butte ONA is currently segregated from the mining and leasing laws by a classification under the authority of the Classification and Multiple-Use Act of 1964. BLM would pursue a protective withdrawal for Square Butte (1,947 acres) and terminate the classification when the area is withdrawn.

Table 2.29 identifies, by BLM withdrawal the acreage that would be segregated from mineral entry by high, moderate, low and very low mineral development potential.

Implementation

The hardrock management guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of this chapter and Appendix C describes the program for surface management of hardrock mineral exploration and development.

Before BLM approves a Plan of Operations on existing mining claims in areas withdrawn, validity examinations would be conducted on those mining claims involved in the proposed operation. If the claims did not contain a discovery, within the meaning of the Mining Laws, the claims would be declared null and void and the Plan of Operations would be denied. BLM would consider purchasing valid claims where activities threaten the resource values protected by the withdrawal.

Riparian and Wetland Management of Watersheds

BLM would maintain and/or improve the riparian-wetland areas in existing, proposed, potential AMPs and non-AMP areas based on proper functioning condition and desired plant community (see Appendix J). Ranking would be based on potential as determined by intensive inventories in the Prairie Potholes and Northern Great Plains Regions. It may be necessary to recategorize Category M and C allotments if significant riparian or wetland values are present and need improvement.

TABLE 2.29
ALTERNATIVE D

FEDERAL MINERAL ESTATE THAT WOULD BE SEGREGATED FROM MINERAL ENTRY (Acres)

	Total Acres	Hardrock Mineral Development Potential			
		High	Mod	Low	Very Low
Judith RA					
Blacktail Fossil Site	320	0	0	0	320
Square Butte ONA ACEC	1,947	0	0	0	1,947
Judith Mountains	25,160	1,761	16,748	6,651	0
North Moccasins	1,073	0	993	80	0
South Moccasin	2,194	0	1,754	440	0
Acid Shale-Pine Forest ACEC	3,169	0	0	0	3,169
Phillips RA					
Azure Cave	140	80	60	0	0
Montana Gulch Campground	60	20	40	0	0
Camp Creek Campground	40	0	0	40	0
Landusky Town Site	83	0	83	0	0
Landusky Recreation Site	15	0	15	0	0
Zortman Town Site	108	0	70	38	0
Proposed					
Little Rocky Mountains	5,504	0	4,494	1,010	0
Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC	10,720	0	0	0	10,720
Total	50,533	1,861	24,257	8,259	16,156

Source: BLM, 1990

The first objective would be to improve or maintain riparian-wetland areas to proper functioning condition and late seral or potential natural community vegetation status to provide wildlife habitat, increase waterfowl habitat by 30%, improve watershed conditions and to comply with the nonpoint source water pollution section of the Clean Water Act. Existing AMPs would be rewritten and new AMPs written to include riparian-wetland condition objectives. These objectives would be met by grazing methods.

When trend is improving the prescribed grazing methods should be continued even if the condition objective is not achieved in the stated time frame. If grazing methods are not successful in meeting management objectives, BLM would take the necessary action to achieve those objectives. This could include, but is not limited to, fencing riparian-wetland areas, reductions in livestock numbers and use and rehabilitation of degraded riparian areas.

A second objective is to accomplish the above riparian-wetland objectives while considering the economic viability of the affected ranches. This objective recognizes the importance of the intermingled BLM and base property private lands, including valuable riparian-wetland areas, which could be adversely impacted as a result of management changes on BLM land.

BLM would allocate all increases in vegetation within riparian-wetland areas to watershed and wildlife.

Table 2.30 shows the number of allotments, miles of stream and number of water sources on BLM land. The number of water sources is based on the reservoirs, potholes and springs with water rights. Intensive riparian-wetland inventories would update this information through plan maintenance.

TABLE 2.30
ALTERNATIVE D

NUMBER OF ALLOTMENTS, MILES OF STREAM AND NUMBER OF WATER SOURCES WITHIN ALLOTMENTS MANAGED FOR RIPARIAN AND WETLAND VALUES

Resource Area	Number of Allotments*	BLM Land	
		Miles of Stream	Water Sources
Judith	205	151	555
Valley	178	252	1,433
Phillips	264	196	4,399
Total	647	599	6,387

*Portions of several allotments in the Judith and Phillips RAs are within the UMNWSR Corridor.

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

These objectives would be met through livestock grazing management. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Hot season grazing deferment,
2. Creation of separate riparian pastures,
3. Changes in kind and class of livestock,
4. Time control grazing, and
5. Other range management practices such as development of off-site water, salting, development of shade sources, herding, insect control, early pastures of crested wheatgrass, etc.

Seeding, planting and installing rock gabions and check dams may be used to meet riparian objectives in addition to grazing management.

BLM would implement livestock grazing formulas to provide waterfowl nesting cover on allotments with existing or potential waterfowl production areas.

To improve waterfowl production, BLM would construct six to eight satellite water bodies of 2 to 3 surface acres within 1.5 miles of existing perennial water bodies greater than 10 surface acres. BLM would also construct perennial water bodies (40% of which must be at least 3-feet deep) within 1.5 miles of a cluster, four to five, of satellite water bodies.

BLM may fence specific existing and new waterfowl and fishing reservoirs to establish or protect shoreline vegetation for a 100-foot perimeter around the high water line. Periodic, short-term grazing of fenced enclosures may be allowed, if necessary, to maintain or improve wetland habitat.

BLM would continue to exclude all insecticide, herbicide, prescribed fire and mechanical disturbances within the wetlands complex (aquatic and terrestrial habitat) except as required for wildlife habitat management objectives. Mechanical land treatments may be implemented on soil subgroups 1, 2, 10, and 11, containing predominately blue grama and club moss vegetation, to improve waterfowl nesting cover.

BLM would negotiate with the BR to modify the current Milk River MOU to make water availability for waterfowl as flexible as possible, e.g. drilling artesian wells for water replacement when ephemeral water would not reach the main Milk River drainage.

Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat Management

BLM would provide 660,140 acres of habitat to maintain and/or expand elk on BLM land in the Missouri Breaks, Highwood Mountains, Square Butte, Little Belt Mountains, Judith Mountains, North and South Moccasin Mountains, and Little and Big Snowy Mountains (see Table 2.31 and Figure 2.11). This would also allow for new elk populations in unoccupied habitat where suitable forage is available in the Little Rocky Mountains, the South Moccasin Mountains and in the Missouri Breaks Bull Creek area.

BLM would provide 156,930 acres of habitat to maintain and expand bighorn sheep in the planning area (see Table 2.31 and Figure 2.11). This would also allow for new bighorn sheep populations in unoccupied habitat, where suitable forage is available, in the Larb Hills area and the Missouri Breaks Bull Creek area.

TABLE 2.31
ALTERNATIVE D

ACRES OF ELK AND BIGHORN SHEEP HABITAT ON BLM LAND

Resource Area	Elk Habitat	Bighorn Sheep Habitat
Judith	412,113	66,187
Valley	50,806	25,902
Phillips	197,221	64,841
Total	660,140	156,930

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

BLM would manage and limit access in elk and bighorn sheep habitat to increase habitat security. This would be done by restricting ORV use to designated or existing roads and trails. All other roads in elk and bighorn sheep habitat would be closed for the general and early elk and bighorn sheep hunting seasons.

BLM would plant lure crops on BLM land, where feasible, to draw elk from private crop land where depredation conflicts are occurring. Planting lure crops would be considered for small areas and management could include fencing, grazing methods or a change in season of use for livestock. Planting and maintaining lure crops would be most feasible under a cooperative arrangement with the MDFWP or other organizations.

These areas would be leased for oil and gas with No Surface Occupancy restrictions within the crucial winter range to protect elk and bighorn sheep habitat.

BLM would withdraw elk calving areas, sheep lambing areas and the respective winter range from mining claim location where conflicts may occur. This includes land in the Judith Mountains, North Moccasin Mountains, Little Rocky Mountains and Square Butte ONA.

Domestic sheep grazing would not be allowed to overlap bighorn sheep habitat to ensure no contact occurs between domestic and bighorn sheep. This would prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Prairie Dog and Black-Footed Ferret Management

BLM would provide 12,105 acres of prairie dog towns on BLM land, in the Phillips RA (7km Complex) for the potential reintroduction of black-footed ferrets, associate species (mountain plover, burrowing owl, and ferruginous hawk) and recreational viewing. Prairie dog towns on BLM land identified for reintroduction of the black-footed ferret would be designated an ACEC (12,105 acres). BLM would initially provide 1,115 acres of prairie dog towns for prairie dog shooting in the Phillips RA and allow prairie dog expansion on another 8,885 acres. Appendix K lists the allotments within the reintroduction area and the prairie dog shooting area.

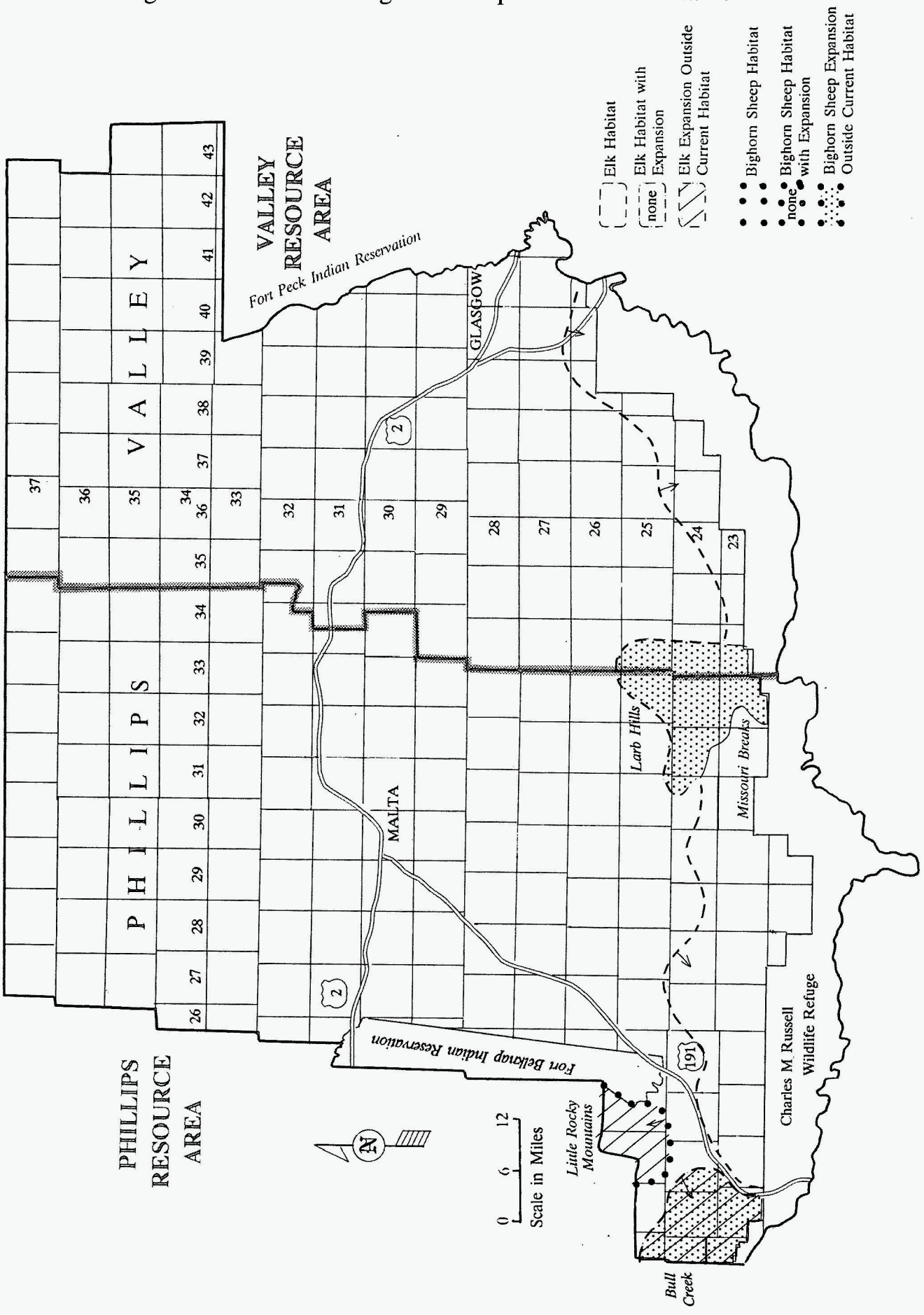
BLM would also provide prairie dog towns for associate species, recreational viewing and prairie dog shooting in the Valley and Judith RAs. Prairie dog towns would be allowed to expand to 5,000 acres in both Valley and Judith RAs. BLM would initially provide 800 acres of prairie dog towns in the Valley RA and 71 acres in Judith RA and allow for the expansion on another 4,200 acres in Valley and 4,929 acres in Judith. Prairie dogs would not occupy more than 10% of the BLM portion of any allotment in the Judith and Valley RAs.

Table 2.32 summarizes the prairie dog and black-footed ferret management activities and acreages in this alternative. Prairie dog towns would be maintained within an acreage range as shown in Appendix K.

Implementation - Elimination

Before poisoning prairie dog towns, the BLM would inventory each town for federally listed threatened and endangered species.

Figure 2.11 Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat - Alternative D



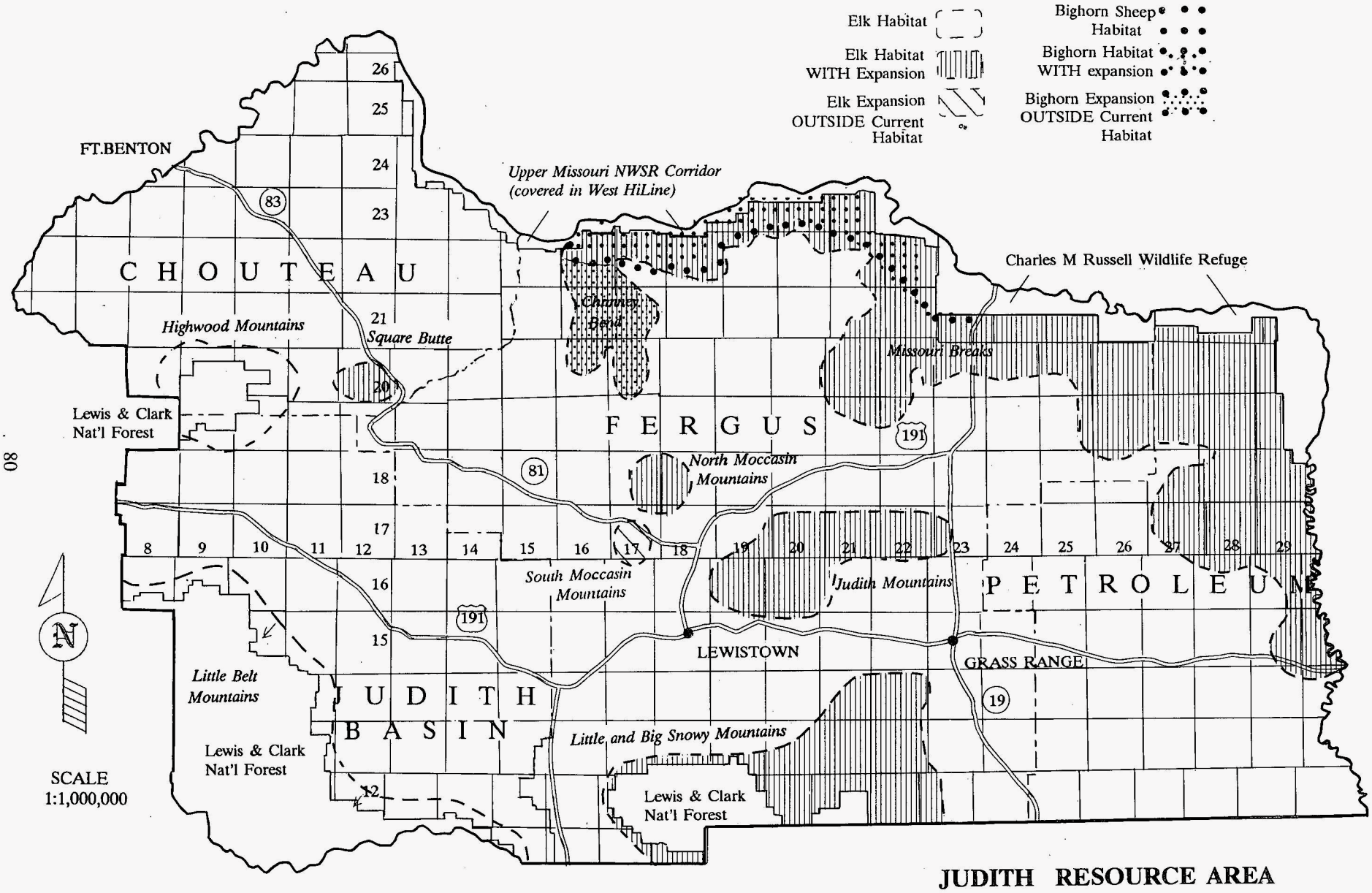


Figure 2.11 Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat - Alternative D. (continued)

TABLE 2.32
ALTERNATIVE D

SUMMARY OF PRAIRIE DOG AND BLACK-FOOTED FERRET MANAGEMENT

Resource Area & Management	Number of Towns	BLM Acres	State Acres	Private Acres	Total Acres
Prairie Dog Mgmt.					
Judith	*	5,000	0	0	5,000
Valley	**	5,000	0	0	5,000
Phillips	0	0	0	0	0
Total		10,000	0	0	10,000
Ferret Management					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	157	12,105	2,005	5,660	19,770
Total	157	12,105	2,005	5,660	19,770
Shooting					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	**	10,000	0	0	10,000
Total	0	10,000	0	0	10,000
Elimination					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0

*Prairie dogs would be allowed to expand in the allotments where the towns exist and in adjacent allotments.

**Prairie dogs would be allowed to expand in the allotments where the towns exist.

Source: BLM, 1990

Poisoning within the 7km Complex may initially be a one-time application for prairie dog towns above the high management level as indicated in Appendix I. Monitoring would then indicate the need for future poisoning and would be applied on a rotational basis to no more than 20% of the total acreage (12,105 acres) per year.

BLM would eradicate all prairie dog towns outside the 7km Complex when the prairie dog shooting area exceeds 10,000 acres on BLM land in the Phillips RA, 5,000 acres in the Valley RA and 5,000 in the Judith RA.

Prairie dog towns larger than 50 acres would be managed. No more than 10% of the BLM acres in any one allotment would contain prairie dog towns. Once an allotment reaches the 10% figure, poisoning would take place on prairie dog towns within the allotment, even if management objectives have not been reached.

Implementation - Prairie Dog Management

These management actions would be the same as those discussed in Alternative A.

In addition, new towns would be allowed in the 7km Complex as long as the total acres of prairie dog towns on BLM land does not exceed 12,105 acres. New prairie dog towns outside the 7km Complex in the Phillips RA and all new towns in the Valley and Judith RA would be allowed to expand until they meet management objectives.

Implementation - Black-footed Ferret Management

BLM would provide habitat on 12,105 acres of BLM land for black-footed ferret reintroduction in the Phillips RA (see Figure 2.12). Reintroduction could include portions of the CMR and may also include 2,005 acres of state and 5,660 acres of private land. The towns identified for reintroduction, the 7km Complex, based on FWS habitat assumptions for ferret management (i.e. the area encompasses a group of prairie dog towns that are no more than 7 km apart and at least 5 hectares in size).

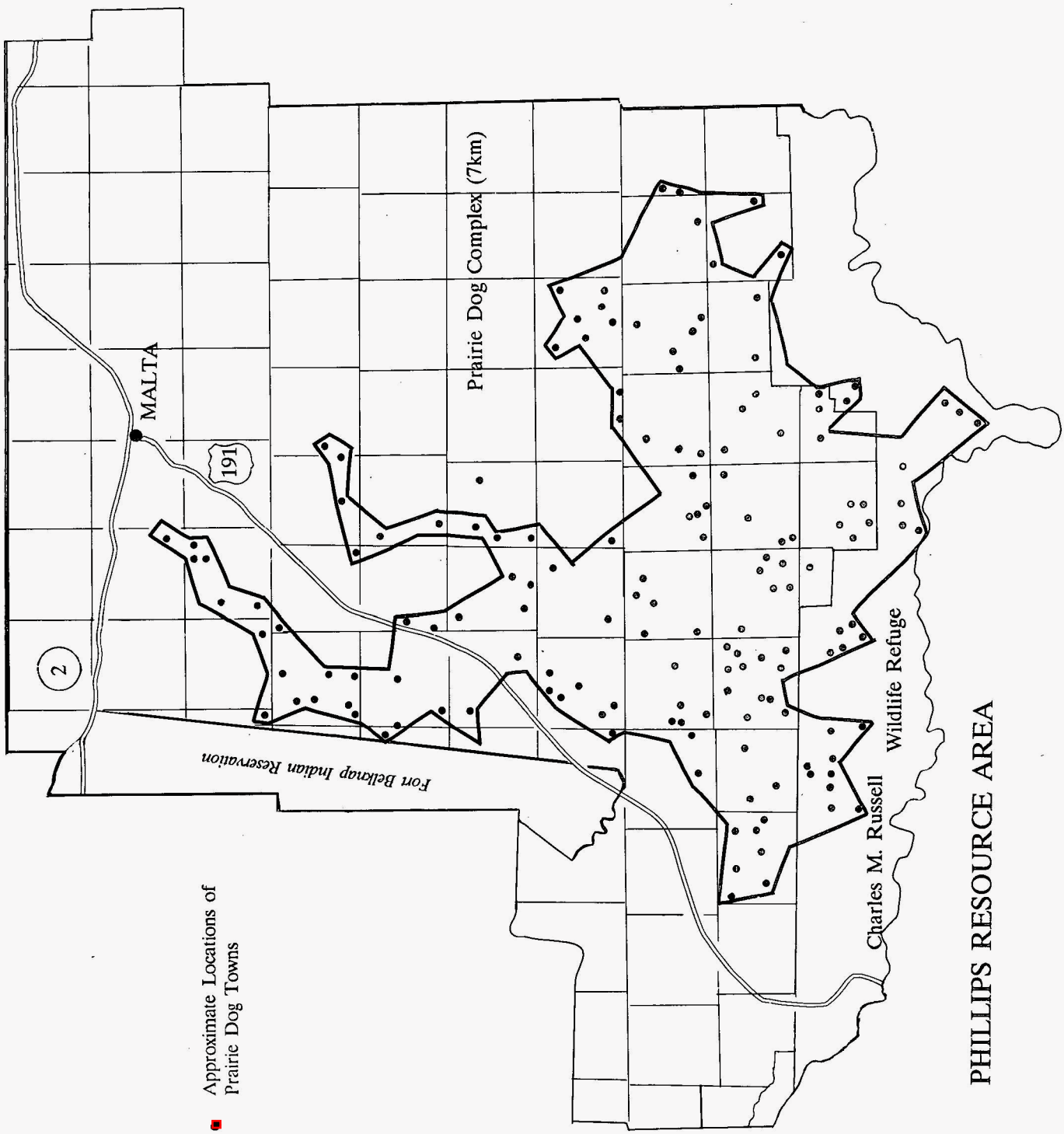
A core area(s) on CMR and BLM land would be the initial reintroduction site for the black-footed ferret. Prairie dog towns on CMR and BLM land outside the core area(s) would be used to expand the reintroduction within the 7km Complex.

Before reintroduction occurs, all activities on BLM land in south Phillips County (south of Highway 2) would be evaluated to ensure impacts to a future reintroduction are assessed and mitigated. After reintroduction occurs, all activities which may impact the ferret or its habitat would require informal consultation with the FWS.

Some activities near prairie dog towns identified for black-footed ferret reintroduction would be restricted. These towns would be avoidance areas for above ground ROWs; would have no further development or implementation of livestock improvements; would not be grazed by livestock and would be closed to ORV use. When feasible, BLM would use mechanical treatments elsewhere in an allotment to compensate for the vegetation loss associated with these livestock restrictions. These restrictions would apply to the core prairie dog towns and a 1/4-mile area around each town. The 3,306 acres of prairie dog towns involved include an additional 2,774 acres for a total of 6,080 acres.

Some activities associated with the important towns (secondary core towns) outside the core area(s) but inside the 7km Complex would also be restricted. This would exclude above ground rights-of-way within 1/4-mile of these towns, implement seasonal restrictions on livestock grazing, restrict the development and implementation of livestock improvements, and restrict ORV use yearlong.

Figure 2.12 Prairie Dog Towns/Black-footed Ferret Management - Alternative D.



Oil and gas leasing within the 7km Complex would be restricted. Surface occupancy and use would be prohibited to protect the black-footed ferret reintroduction area (see Appendix B).

Implementation - Prairie Dog Shooting

BLM would manage prairie dog shooting on BLM land in the Phillips RA. BLM would respond to requests for information, prepare maps, sign prairie dog towns and manage the towns to provide for shooting. Prairie dog shooting may be restricted to a certain number of shooters each year to allow for a quality experience. Shooting would be allowed, but not managed, in the Valley and Judith RAs.

Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC

BLM would designate 4,566 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect the scenic, wildlife and recreation values in the Judith (3,702 acres) and South Moccasin (864 acres) Mountains (see Supplemental Color Map B at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM. This area would be managed to mitigate impacts to resources from surface disturbing activities.

Implementation

Activities would not be allowed which could not meet visual contrast rating requirements for VRM Class II areas.

BLM would pursue a protective withdrawal which segregates this area from mining claim location to protect the scenic values. Validity exams would be conducted on claims when a Plan of Operations is filed. BLM would pursue purchasing valid mining claims. Plans of Operations would be subject to the mitigating measures in Alternative C.

ORV use would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails. The area would be open to oil and gas leasing with a No Surface Occupancy restriction and would be an avoidance area for ROWs. The area would be available for restricted management of forest products.

Acid Shale-Pine Forest ACEC

BLM would designate 3,619 BLM acres within the Acid Shale-Pine Forest range an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect an endemic plant community unique to the area (see Supplemental Color Map C at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM. This area contains four tracts of BLM land; War Horse, Briggs Coulee, Chippewa Creek, and Ford's Creek. The four tracts would be designated an ACEC to prevent elimination of the entire unit in case of a catastrophic event such as fire.

Implementation

The area would be open to oil and gas leasing with No Surface Occupancy restrictions. All areas would be withdrawn from mining claim location to protect the sites from possible bentonite mining. Livestock grazing would be eliminated from the War Horse tract and continued at present levels in the others. The War Horse tract would be closed to ORVs. The use or sale of forest products would be prohibited, unless necessary for stand preservation.

Square Butte Outstanding Natural Area ACEC

BLM would designate 1,947 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect natural endemic systems, cultural sites, scenic qualities and rare geologic features unique to Montana (see Supplemental Color Map A at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM. This area would be managed primarily for wildlife and recreational purposes.

Implementation

Legal access would be acquired to the area for a trailhead as well as a trail network to the Butte. Access should be developed from north or east of the Butte for easy access from the highway. The area would be closed to ORVs.

Square Butte is currently segregated from the mining and leasing laws by a classification under the authority of the Classification and Multiple-Use Act of 1964. BLM would pursue a protective withdrawal for Square Butte to segregate the area from mining claim location to protect natural endemic systems, cultural sites, scenic qualities and rare geologic features unique to Montana. The classification would be terminated when the area is withdrawn. The area would be closed to oil and gas leasing.

Surface disturbing activities (transmission lines, roads, communication sites, pipelines, etc.) would be prohibited. Recreation and wildlife habitat management plans would be developed to include hiking, wildlife observation, rock-climbing, hunting, prescribed fire, wildlife reintroduction or supplemental populations, camping, security areas, etc. The sale of forest products from the area would be prohibited, unless necessary for stand preservation.

Collar Gulch ACEC

BLM would designate 1,618 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect a pure strain of westslope cutthroat trout which is a Montana State Species of Special Concern (see Supplemental Color Map D at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM. The primary emphasis would be on wildlife habitat protection and improvement for the westslope cutthroat trout population, with some associated non-motorized recreational use.

Implementation

The area would be closed to motorized vehicles, except for the main Judith Peak road and interconnected Big Grassy Peak and Crystal Peak/Collar Ridge access roads. Additional public access to the area would not be pursued to protect natural resource values.

The area would be open to oil and gas leasing with No Surface Occupancy restrictions. BLM would pursue a protective withdrawal to segregate the area from mining claim location to protect a pure strain of westslope cutthroat trout. Plans of Operations would be subject to the mitigating measures in Alternative C. Validity exams would be conducted on claims when a Plan of Operations is filed. BLM would pursue purchase of valid mining claims.

Developments in the area would be designed to protect trout habitat. BLM would initiate a study to identify the source of water quality degradation in the drainage and develop appropriate measures to eliminate or mitigate the degrading source.

Azure Cave ACEC

BLM would designate 479 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect cave resources and potentially the northernmost bat hibernaculum in the United States (see Supplemental Color Map E at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM.

Implementation

BLM would allow cave access from June 15 through August 15. Climbing ropes or a rope ladder would be provided for cave access. A Special Recreation Use Permit would be issued to qualified cavers. BLM would pursue access from Seven Mile road but would limit the quality of the route to an unimproved road. BLM would continue the withdrawal for Azure Cave to protect public recreation values and the bat hibernaculum.

Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC

BLM would designate 10,720 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect archaeological resources representing bison hunting and prehistoric ceremonial use of the Northwestern Plains (see Supplemental Color Map F at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM.

Implementation

BLM would consult with appropriate Native Americans to ensure that the activity plan is developed with sensitivity to Native American cultural values.

Land within the ACEC would be inventoried for cultural resources and cooperative agreements would be pursued to develop the scientific use of selected cultural resources. Development of the Henry Smith Site would include roads, walking paths and interpretative signs for visitor information.

ORVs would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails. The area would be open to oil and gas leasing with No Surface Occupancy restrictions. BLM would pursue a protective withdrawal to segregate this area from mining claim location and withhold the area from solid mineral leaseables to protect the area from any possible bentonite mining.

ALTERNATIVE E (The Preferred Alternative)

This alternative reflects changes based on public comments received on the Preferred Alternative identified in the draft RMP/EIS. If selected, this alternative plus the guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section would form the RMP.

Land Acquisition and Disposal

BLM would pursue acquisitions as opportunities arise through exchange or purchase with willing proponents and/or sellers. BLM recognizes and respects private property rights and would not use condemnation to implement land tenure adjustment under this land use plan. Acquisitions could include private, state or other land that would meet the objectives of the State Director's Guidance on Land

Pattern Review and Land Adjustment (1984) and the criteria in Appendix A. Private, state and other lands meeting the criteria in Appendix A would be in conformance with this land use plan. The main objective would be to attain a BLM land pattern which balances multiple resource values and brings about better manageability. Lands acquired would have multiple resource values such as access, riparian-wetland areas, ACECs, recreation and wildlife habitat.

A total of 161,968 acres of BLM land would be available for disposal (see Table 2.33, Appendix A and Map 2 in the back of this document). The lands identified for disposal would be available for exchange. These lands may also be available for sale to facilitate an individual land exchange or meet other plan objectives. For purposes of sale, these lands meet FLPMA disposal criteria Sec. 203(a)(1). BLM land identified for disposal would be subject to further site specific evaluation and if significant values are found they may be retained under BLM management. An environmental analysis and Notice of Realty Action would be completed for each disposal action. Areas not identified for disposal would be managed for long-term public ownership.

TABLE 2.33
ALTERNATIVE E
(PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

BLM LAND AVAILABLE FOR DISPOSAL

Resource Area	Acres
Judith	
Chouteau County	6,386
Fergus County	37,836
Judith Basin County	2,366
Petroleum County	17,370
Valley	34,089
Phillips	63,921
Total	161,968

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

During any purchase or exchange action, BLM would attempt to maintain the respective county tax base and allow no overall net gain in BLM land over the life of this plan. BLM would monitor land tenure adjustments to identify potential problems in achieving this objective. BLM land may be sold to facilitate a purchase or exchange action or maintain the respective county tax base.

As opportunities arise, BLM would evaluate land exchanges involving private and state inholdings within the CMR on a case-by-case basis.

Acquisitions could occur by exchange or purchase through negotiation with willing landowners. Exchange would be the primary method of acquisition and may include BLM land within or outside the planning area.

Access to BLM Land

Access would be pursued to BLM land where no legal public access exists and/or where additional access to major blocks of BLM land is needed utilizing existing laws, regulations and guidelines while recognizing private property rights. This includes preserving and improving access to BLM land. During activity planning and/or route analysis, access may be defined as foot, horse or vehicular. Access would be confined to as narrow a corridor as is necessary to serve such purpose. Access would provide for improved land management and use by the public for hunting, camping, picnicking and other activities.

BLM has identified 71,793 BLM acres as needing new legal public access and 1,126,858 BLM acres needing additional access (see Table 2.34 and Appendix L). Map 3, in the back of this document, shows the areas for new and additional public access. The New Year Peak, Pyramid Peak, Armells Headwaters, Chicago Gulch, Fox Peak, Lewis Peak, Lookout Peak, Black Butte, Square Butte, North and South Moccasin Mountains, and the Judith and Missouri Breaks areas would be priority areas for increasing legal public access.

TABLE 2.34
ALTERNATIVE E
(PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

ACRES OF BLM LAND NEEDING NEW AND ADDITIONAL LEGAL PUBLIC ACCESS

Resource Area	New Access	Additional Access
Judith	67,740	231,260
Valley	13	72,860
Phillips	4,040	822,738
Total	71,793	1,126,858

Source: BLM, 1990

BLM would support the public road network, primarily county roads, leading to BLM land by establishing limited cooperative agreements for maintenance with the respective counties. BLM roads or trails would be extended and/or upgraded to reflect public access needs.

Implementation

Transportation planning would identify additional areas for access and road extension or upgrading.

Access goals would be accomplished in accordance with existing laws, BLM regulations and guidelines. The primary method of access would be negotiation of easements or land exchanges. Other methods include, but are not limited to cooperative agreements, Land and Water Conservation Fund acquisitions, patent reservations or as a last resort, condemnation.

Signs would be installed and maintained for public access routes and boundaries.

Off-Road Vehicle Designations

BLM would restrict ORV use on BLM land yearlong or seasonally to designated roads and trails or close specific areas to protect the resource values in ACECs, preserve and protect the wilderness values in the WSAs, protect vegetation and soils to maintain watersheds and water quality, reduce user conflicts, and reduce harassment of wildlife and provide habitat security.

Other BLM land would remain open to ORV use to provide for cross-country travel, including a designated intensive ORV use area for competitive events such as races and rallies.

BLM would designate 1,990,441 BLM acres open, 813,769 BLM acres limited and 1,947 BLM acres closed to ORVs (see Table 2.35).

TABLE 2.35
ALTERNATIVE E
(PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

BLM LAND DESIGNATED AS OPEN, LIMITED, OR CLOSED TO ORVS

Resource Area	Open	Limited Seasonal	Limited Yearlong	Closed
Judith	324,791	327,576	47,267	1,947
Valley	787,400	162,000	70,486	0
Phillips	878,250	166,720	39,720	0
Total	1,990,441	656,296	157,473	1,947

Source: BLM, 1990

Areas Closed

The Square Butte ONA ACEC would be closed to all motorized vehicle use (1,947 acres).

Areas Limited Yearlong

ORV use in the following areas would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails (see Maps 4 and 5 in the back of this document and Supplemental Color Maps G, H and I at the conclusion of Chapter 2).

ORV use in the six WSAs (Bitter Creek, Burnt Lodge, Antelope Creek, Woodhawk, Dog Creek South and Cow Creek) would be restricted yearlong to the existing roads and trails. In those WSAs Congress designates as wilderness, ORV use would be restricted yearlong to cherry-stemmed and boundary roads. All internal trails and ways would be closed to ORV use. In those WSAs Congress determines unsuitable for wilderness ORV travel would be restricted seasonally to designated roads and trails.

ORV use in the Rock Creek Canyon area would be restricted yearlong to provide habitat security and protect vegetation for the watershed (4,586 acres).

The Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC would be restricted yearlong to protect the scenic qualities of the visual resources (3,702 acres).

The Acid Shale-Pine Forest ACEC would be restricted yearlong to protect an endemic plant community and reduce water and wind erosion (2,463 acres).

ORV use in the Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC would be restricted yearlong to protect cultural resource values (2,120 acres). Designated roads and trails would be established in an activity plan.

ORV use in the Camp Creek Campground, Montana Gulch Campground and Faraasen Park would be restricted yearlong to protect recreation values (110 acres).

BLM land in the North and South Moccasins and Judith Mountains would be restricted yearlong to reduce user conflicts, reduce wildlife harassment and provide habitat security (27,452 acres).

Areas Limited Seasonally

ORV use in the following areas would be restricted seasonally with vehicle travel restricted to designated roads and trails (see Maps 4 and 5 in the back of this document and Supplemental Color Maps G, H and I at the conclusion of Chapter 2). The seasonal restriction, September 1 through December 1, is based on the big game hunting season. If the hunting season would change, the seasonal restriction would be modified accordingly.

The Missouri Breaks area would be restricted seasonally to protect fragile soils, reduce user conflicts, and maintain and improve water quality. This area includes the southern portion of the Phillips (166,720 acres) and Valley (162,000 acres) RAs and the following areas in the Judith RA: Missouri Breaks, Chain Buttes, Two Calf, Armells Creek, Fargo Coulee, Indian Buttes, Crooked Creek, Dunn Ridge, Dog Creek and Woodhawk (300,871 acres).

ORV use in the Blacktail Coulee and Yellow Water areas would be restricted seasonally to reduce user conflicts and improve water quality (25,225 acres).

Other Areas

BLM land in the Highwoods, Belts and Snowy Mountains would be consistent with the adjacent FS ORV designations: Highwoods, 360 acres limited seasonally and 600 acres open; Belts, 1,120 acres limited seasonally and 1,760 acres open; and Snowies, 400 acres limited yearlong and 9,387 acres open.

Implementation

The following exceptions would apply to the limited designations, except in the WSAs and ACECs:

1. Vehicle access for camping would be permissible within 100 yards of designated roads and trails. Exceptions could be granted on a case-by-case basis through the use of a special use permit.
2. The non-ambulatory handicapped, as defined by Montana Law, would be allowed motorized access off designated roads and trails.
3. Snowmobiles would be allowed off-road travel on BLM land in the Little Belt and Snowy Mountains.
4. Off-road vehicle use would be allowed for game retrieval. In some areas, retrieval may be restricted.

Those roads not designated open within areas limited yearlong would be closed. Roads not designated open within areas limited seasonally would be closed from September 1 through December 1. See Maps 4 and 5 in the back of this document and Supplemental Color Maps G, H and I at the conclusion of Chapter 2 for the ORV travel plan indicating those designations.

Resource damage, changes in landscape and user conflicts would be considered in opening or closing roads and trails in the future. The guide for rating soil impacts from off-road travel would be used as an indicator to revise restrictions (MSO supplement to 7162 BLM Manual - Soil Interpretations). As additional mapping and signing occurs, the roads and trails designated as open or restricted may change depending on future management needs.

BLM would implement a signing and public outreach program and publish maps that delineate boundaries and travel restrictions. Areas designated as limited would be signed, identifying those roads and trails not open to motorized travel and an explanation of allowed uses.

BLM would pursue cooperative agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies and use BLM law enforcement ranger(s) to monitor and implement restrictions.

Off-road travel for administration of a federal lease or permit would be granted, unless specifically prohibited.

ORV use on newly acquired land would normally be consistent with adjacent areas. Special circumstances may require a change from adjacent conditions. These areas would be mapped and identified for the public.

Intensive ORV Use Area

BLM would designate and manage a 40-acre intensive ORV use area north of Glasgow for motorcycles and ATVs (T. 29 N., R. 39 E., Section 34, NE1/4SE1/4).

Implementation actions would include maps and brochures of the intensive use area, signing, fencing, monitoring and enforcement. Competitive events would require a special recreation use permit.

Other areas for intensive ORV use would be designated if the need arises based on public demand.

Oil and Gas Leasing and Development

BLM would provide for oil and gas exploration and development on BLM land, while protecting other resource values through standard lease terms, stipulations, No Surface Occupancy restrictions or closing areas where resource values are not compatible with exploration and development. The stipulations along with waivers, modifications and exceptions are described in Appendix B.

WSAs would remain closed to oil and gas leasing. In those WSAs Congress determines unsuitable, the appropriate oil and gas lease stipulations would be applied.

A No Surface Occupancy restriction would be placed on oil and gas activities to protect designated critical paleontology sites, R&PP facilities, developed recreation sites, bald eagle nests, piping plover nesting habitat, grouse leks, waterfowl production areas (reservoirs larger than 10 surface acres), riparian-wetland areas, designated fisheries reservoirs and those ACECs designed to protect cultural or wildlife resources.

Seasonal or distance restrictions would be placed on oil and gas activities to protect raptor nests, crucial winter habitat and grouse nesting areas. Controlled surface use stipulations would be applied to protect soils, visual resources and prairie dog towns within black-footed ferret reintroduction areas. A lease notice would be used to inform lessees and operators of the requirements for cultural resource historic preservation compliance.

Table 2.36 shows the acreage that would be subject to standard lease terms, stipulations, No Surface Occupancy restrictions or closed to leasing in high and moderate mineral development potential areas. There are no areas of low development potential within the planning area, except FS land in the Little Belt Mountains. Map 6 in the back of this document identifies the areas subject to standard lease terms, stipulations, No Surface Occupancy restrictions or closed to oil and gas leasing.

TABLE 2.36
ALTERNATIVE E
(PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

FEDERAL MINERAL ESTATE SUBJECT TO STANDARD LEASE TERMS, STIPULATIONS, NO SURFACE OCCUPANCY OR CLOSED TO OIL AND GAS LEASING (Acres)

Resource Area & Oil & Gas Potential	Standard Terms Only	Stipulations*	No Surface Occupancy*	Closed
Judith				
High	16,570	1,920	0	5,150
Moderate	236,190	594,161	3,553	10,047
Valley				
High	62,620	5,220	0	0
Moderate	423,979	574,700	1,600	66,525
Phillips				
High	232,930	92,800	5,150	0
Moderate	502,192	491,625	24,515	36,240
Total				
High	312,120	99,940	5,150	5,150
Moderate	1,162,361	1,660,486	29,668	112,812

*Standard lease terms would also apply to the acreage identified for stipulations and No Surface Occupancy.

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

Current leases would continue according to the respective stipulations until they expire. As current leases expire, the areas would come under the management guidelines of this document. The oil and gas management guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of this chapter and Appendix B describes the oil and gas leasing and permitting process.

Hardrock Mining

BLM would provide for hardrock mineral development, while protecting other resources of exceptional value through withdrawal from mineral entry or with special management prescriptions.

BLM would recommend revoking the withdrawals for the Judith Peak and Red Mountain Radar Sites, the Landusky Town Site, Landusky Recreation Site and the Zortman Town Site. There are suspended mining claims within the Judith Peak and Red Mountain Radar Sites that may be validated when the revocation is finalized and will be treated as prior existing rights. BLM would continue the Blacktail Fossil Site, Azure Cave, Camp Creek Campground and Montana Gulch Campground withdrawals. BLM would pursue protective withdrawals for the Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC to protect the area from any possible bentonite mining; and the Zortman Cemetery.

The Square Butte ONA is currently segregated from the mining and leasing laws by a classification under the authority of the Classification and Multiple-Use Act of 1964. BLM would pursue a protective withdrawal for Square Butte to segregate the area from locatable mineral entry to protect natural endemic systems, cultural sites, scenic qualities and rare geologic features unique to Montana. The classification would be terminated when the area is withdrawn from mining claim location.

Table 2.37 identifies, by BLM withdrawal, the acreage that would be segregated from mineral entry by high, moderate, low and very low mineral development potential.

TABLE 2.37
ALTERNATIVE E
(PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

FEDERAL MINERAL ESTATE THAT WOULD BE SEGREGATED FROM MINERAL ENTRY (Acres)

	Total Acres	Hardrock Mineral Development Potential			
		High	Mod	Low	Very Low
Judith RA					
Square Butte ONA ACEC	1,947	0	0	0	1,947
Blacktail Fossil Site	320	0	0	0	320
Phillips RA					
Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC	2,120	0	0	0	2,120
Azure Cave ACEC	140	80	60	0	0
Camp Creek Campground	40	0	0	40	0
Montana Gulch Campground	60	20	40	0	0
Zortman Cemetery	20	0	0	20	0
Total	4,647	100	100	60	4,387

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

The hardrock management guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of this chapter and Appendix C describes the program for surface management of hardrock mineral exploration and development.
Before BLM approves a Plan of Operations on existing mining claims in areas withdrawn, validity examinations would be conducted. If the claims did not contain a discovery, within the meaning of the mining laws, the claims would be declared null and void and the Plan of Operations would be denied. BLM would consider purchasing valid claims where activities threaten the resource values protected by the withdrawal.

To ensure orderly development of mineral resources while protecting other resource values, mitigating measures explained in the following section would be applied to Plans of Operation in the Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC, elk habitat in the Judith and North Moccasin Mountains and bighorn sheep habitat in the Little Rocky Mountains. Mitigating measures would be applied to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation.

Management Prescriptions for the Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC

Recognizing that conformance to VRM II standards will be consistent with rights granted to the public and the mining claimant under the mining law, the RMP provides an operator with examples of mitigation that may be applied to exploration and mining activity within the ACEC. Upon review of a specific 3809 Plan of Operations, the standard of "unnecessary or undue degradation" (43 CFR 3809.0-5(k)), which includes consideration of visual resources, will be examined. If the operator can meet the standard, the plan will be approved. Special prescriptions would be considered during the Plan of Operations approval process and could include:

1. Alternate methods of exploration access, rather than the traditional construction of drill roads by dozer, for reconnaissance level exploration if conventional methods could not be reclaimed to meet VRM standards.

2. Alternate location of mine facilities. Not all lands within the scenic area are visible from Lewistown. Foreground ridges could totally or partially screen operations from view at some locations.

3. Limiting the individual size/amount of a particular disturbance. Several smaller sized waste rock dumps, heaps or other facilities may be preferable to a large single unit in an effort to meet VRM II goals.

4. Examining feasibility of pit backfilling (to some degree) or pit reconfiguration in an effort to conform to the scenic values visible from the City of Lewistown.

5. Exceeding VRM II standards under an approved exploration/mining Plan of Operations, with emphasis on conformance upon final reclamation.

6. Reclamation concurrent with exploration and mining to minimize visual impacts.

Operators are encouraged to submit conceptual plans and initiate discussions with BLM early in the project design phase for assistance in preparing a Plan of Operations that conforms with management objectives in the scenic area.

Management Prescriptions for Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat

1. Seasonal restrictions would be placed on exploration during crucial wildlife periods (December 1 through March 31) on a case-by-case basis to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation.

2. Concurrent reclamation would be emphasized to keep simultaneous disturbance to a minimum, thereby reducing wildlife habitat loss.

3. Reclamation would utilize plant species suitable for wildlife forage if slope stability and revegetation concerns can be satisfied.

4. Wildlife proof fences would be required around solution ponds to prevent wildlife mortality.

5. Off-site compensation would be considered to mitigate crucial habitat loss. This may include habitat improvement or replacement with comparable sites.

6. Off-site water would be developed if needed to draw wildlife from active mining sites.

Riparian and Wetland Management of Watersheds

BLM would maintain and/or improve the riparian-wetland areas in existing, proposed, and potential AMPs along with wetlands in non-AMP areas based on proper functioning condition and desired plant community (see Appendix J). Ranking would be based on site potential as determined by intensive inventories in the Prairie Potholes and Northern Great Plains Regions. It may be necessary to recategorize Category M and C allotments if significant riparian or wetland values are present and need improvement.

The first objective would be to improve or maintain riparian-wetland areas to proper functioning condition. The second objective would be to achieve or maintain the desired plant community to provide wildlife habitat, increase waterfowl habitat by 30%, improve watershed conditions, and to comply with the nonpoint source water pollution section of the Clean Water Act. As new AMPs are written, existing AMPs revised, or through monitoring specific riparian-wetland objectives would be included.

BLM would initially accomplish riparian-wetland objectives through livestock grazing methods at current stocking levels. If grazing methods are not successful in meeting management objectives, BLM would take the necessary action to achieve those objectives. This could include, but is not limited to, fencing riparian-wetland areas, reducing livestock numbers and use, and rehabilitating degraded riparian-wetland areas. When trend is improving, the prescribed grazing method should be continued even if the riparian-wetland objectives are not achieved in the stated time frame.

To accomplish the above riparian-wetland objectives BLM would consider the importance of the intermingled private lands, including valuable riparian-wetland areas, which could be adversely impacted as a result of management changes on BLM land.

After riparian-wetland objectives are met, BLM would allocate any forage increases within riparian-wetland areas to watershed, wildlife and livestock.

Table 2.38 shows the number of allotments, miles of stream and number of water sources on BLM land under the Preferred Alternative. The number of water sources is based on the reservoirs, potholes and springs with water rights. Intensive riparian-wetland inventories would update this information through plan maintenance.

TABLE 2.38
ALTERNATIVE E (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

NUMBER OF ALLOTMENTS, MILES OF STREAM AND NUMBER OF WATER SOURCES WITHIN ALLOTMENTS MANAGED FOR RIPARIAN AND WETLAND VALUES

Resource Area	Number of Allotments*	BLM Land	
		Miles of Stream	Water Sources
Judith	76	150	328
Valley	89	250	1,285
Phillips	183	195	4,237
Total	348	595	5,850

*Portions of several allotments in the Judith and Phillips RAs are within the UMNWSR Corridor.

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

As new AMPs are written, existing AMPs revised or through monitoring specific objectives consistent with the plant community types described by the Montana Riparian Association would be developed. The objectives would include two aspects; proper functioning condition; desired plant community. Descriptions of the desired riparian-wetland plant communities would include the amount of seedling, sapling, pole, mature, dead and decadent woody species on sites with the potential. Regeneration of herbaceous riparian-wetland vegetation would also be included in management objectives based on site potential and the desired plant communities. The desired condition or health of the areas would be described, as well as the desired ecological status.

The proper functioning condition objective would include the following statement: "Sufficient plant residue would be left in the primary flood plain to protect stream banks during run-off events and provide for adequate sediment filtering, and dissipation of flood water energy." Grazing methods would be designed to protect stream banks from unacceptable shearing and trampling.

To achieve the proper functioning condition objective more specific utilization standards may be incorporated into AMPs. Utilization standards would be based on key species to ensure grazing use is consistent with other resource values and objectives including water quality, recreation and wildlife.

Grazing methods to be implemented include but are not limited to:

1. Hot season grazing deferment,
2. Creation of separate riparian pastures,
3. Changes in kind and class of livestock,
4. Time control grazing, and
5. Other range management practices such as development of off-site water, salting, developing shade sources, herding, insect control or early use pastures.
   a. All spring developments would be fenced if needed to protect associated riparian vegetation.
   b. Salt and mineral blocks and supplemental feeding would only be allowed at least 1/4-mile or further from riparian-wetland areas where possible.
   c. Water developments would be built away from stream riparian-wetland areas where possible.
6. Study exclosures would be put in place on key areas and areas representative of common riparian-wetland types and types about which there are questions, to compare management progress, demonstrate the values of proper management, and confirm potential and

recovery rates. This would be a cooperative effort with permittees or lessees.

The above grazing management practices are consistent with those described in the Montana Riparian Association publication "Riparian Dominance Types of Montana" Hansen, Chadde and Pfister, 1988. As new information or techniques become available the suitability for application to BLM land would be considered and adopted if appropriate.

Seeding, planting and installing rock gabions and/or check dams may be used to meet riparian objectives in addition to grazing methods.

BLM would implement livestock grazing formulas to maintain or improve waterfowl nesting cover on allotments with existing or potential waterfowl production areas.

To improve waterfowl production, BLM would construct six to eight satellite water bodies of 2 to 3 surface acres within 1.5 miles of existing perennial water bodies greater than 10 surface acres. BLM would also construct perennial water bodies (40% of which must be at least 3-feet deep) within 1.5 miles of an existing cluster (four to five) of satellite water bodies.

BLM may fence specific existing and new waterfowl and fishing reservoirs to establish or protect shoreline vegetation for a perimeter of a minimum of 100-feet around the high water line. Periodic, short-term grazing of fenced enclosures may be allowed, if necessary, to maintain or improve wetland habitat.

BLM would comply with all requirements for any insecticide or herbicide use within the wetlands complex (aquatic and terrestrial habitat). Land treatments and prescribed fire would not be allowed except as required for wildlife habitat management objectives. Mechanical land treatments may be implemented on soil subgroups 1, 2, 10 and 11 containing predominately blue grama and club moss vegetation, to improve waterfowl nesting cover.

BLM would negotiate with the BR to modify the current Milk River MOU to make water availability for waterfowl as flexible as possible, e.g. drill artesian wells to augment flows to the Milk River which would offset water which is stored in reservoirs built on ephemeral streams. Water developments, including drilling artesian wells, would require a site-specific environmental assessment.

Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat Management

BLM would provide 593,980 acres of habitat on BLM land for elk in the Missouri Breaks, Highwood Mountains, Square Butte, Little Belt Mountains, Judith Mountains, and Little and Big Snowy Mountains (see Table 2.39 and Figure 2.13). This would be consistent with the 1992 MDFWP Elk Management Plan.

BLM would provide 156,930 acres of habitat on BLM land to maintain and expand bighorn sheep in the planning area (see Table 2.39 and Figure 2.13). This would also allow for new bighorn sheep populations in unoccupied habitat, where suitable forage is available, in the Larb Hills area and the Missouri Breaks Bull Creek area.

TABLE 2.39
ALTERNATIVE E
(PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

ACRES OF ELK AND BIGHORN SHEEP HABITAT ON BLM LAND

Resource Area	Elk Habitat	Bighorn Sheep Habitat
Judith	410,796	66,187
Valley	50,806	25,902
Phillips	132,378	64,841
Total	593,980	156,930

Source: BLM, 1990

Implementation

Vegetation management, including allocations for watershed, wildlife, and grazing, is discussed in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of Chapter 2.

Except in the Little Rocky Mountains, ORV use within elk and bighorn sheep habitat would be restricted seasonally to designated roads and trails to reduce wildlife harassment and provide habitat security (see the ORV section of this alternative).

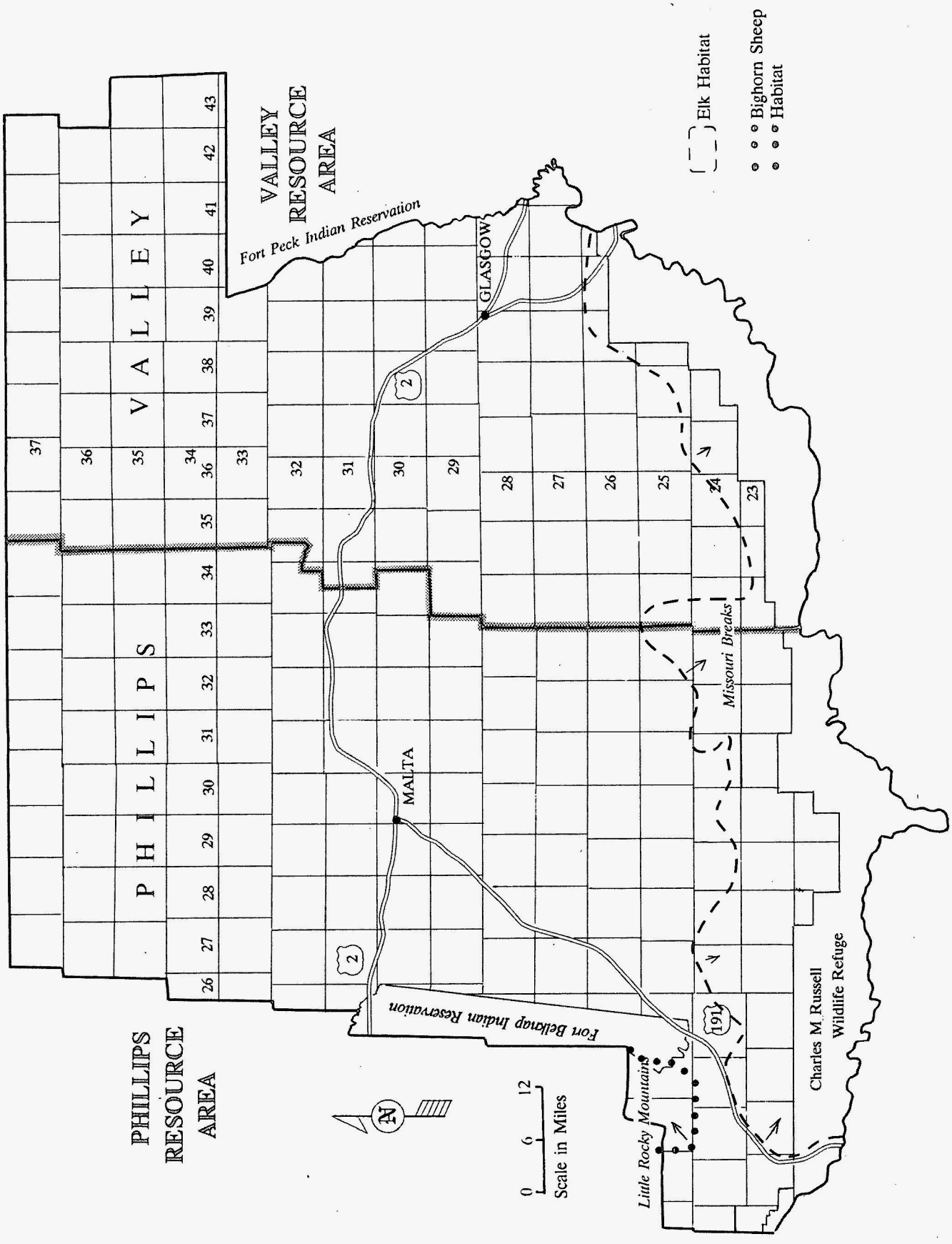
BLM would plant lure crops on BLM land where determined to be necessary and feasible to draw elk from private crop land where depredation conflicts are occurring. Planting lure crops would be considered for small areas and management to protect lure crops could include fencing, grazing methods, or a change in season of use for livestock. Planting and maintenance of lure crops would be most feasible under a cooperative arrangement with MDFWP, other organizations or individuals.

These areas would be leased for oil and gas with a seasonal stipulation to protect crucial winter range.

Domestic sheep grazing would not be allowed to overlap bighorn sheep habitat to ensure no contact between domestic and bighorn sheep. This would prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

The following mitigating measures would be applied to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation on Plans of Operation within elk habitat in the Judith and North Moccasin

Figure 2.13 Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat - Alternative E.



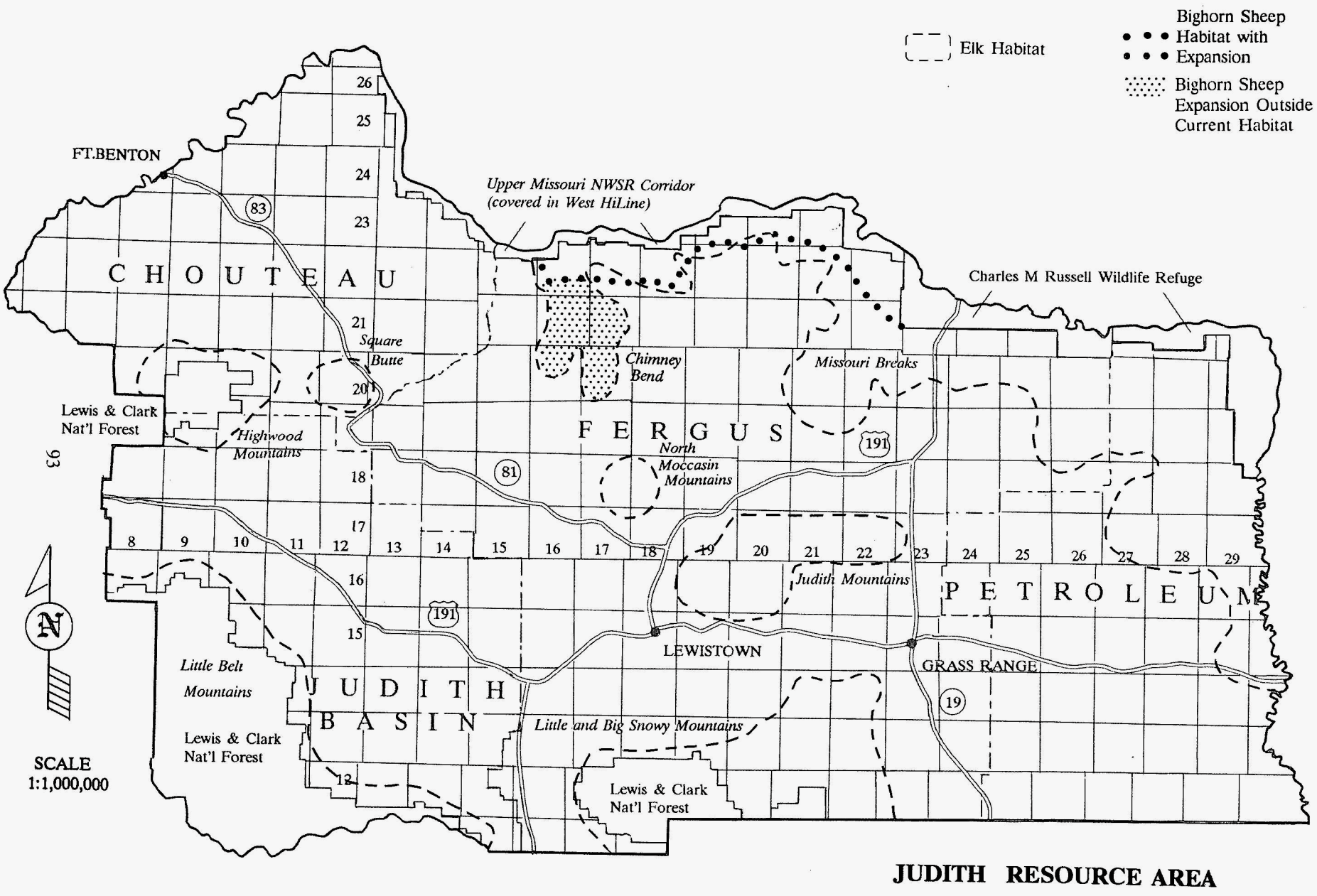


Figure 2.13 Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat - Alternative E. (continued)

Mountains and bighorn sheep habitat in the Little Rocky Mountains:

1. Seasonal restrictions would be placed on exploration during crucial wildlife periods (December 1 through March 31) on a case-by-case basis to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation.

2. Concurrent reclamation would be emphasized to keep simultaneous disturbance to a minimum, thereby reducing wildlife habitat loss.

3. Reclamation would utilize plant species suitable for wildlife forage if slope stability and revegetation concerns can be satisfied.

4. Wildlife proof fences would be required around solution ponds to prevent wildlife.mortality.

5. Off-site compensation would be considered to mitigate crucial habitat loss. This may include habitat improvement or replacement with comparable sites.

6. Off-site water would be developed if needed to draw wildlife from active mining sites.

Prairie Dog and Black-Footed Ferret Management

BLM would provide prairie dog habitat for black-footed ferret reintroduction and long-term ferret recovery, associate species (mountain plover, burrowing owl, and ferruginous hawk), recreational viewing, and prairie dog shooting. Prairie dog towns on BLM land identified for reintroduction of the black-footed ferret would be designated an ACEC (12,346 acres). This habitat may also help prevent the need for listing of the mountain plover, burrowing owl and ferruginous hawk as threatened or endangered. If one of these species would become listed, BLM would consult with the FWS to assure this RMP meets the habitat needs. If this plan would not meet those needs, BLM would amend this RMP.

BLM, in cooperation with the FWS and MDFWP, would maintain the existing prairie dog habitat and distribution on BLM land within the 7km Complex based on a 1988 survey. BLM would also support cooperative agreements for prairie dog towns on CMR, DSL, and private land within the 7km Complex. The 7km Complex contains approximately 26,000 acres of prairie dog towns (12,346 BLM acres, 5,800 CMR acres, 2,012 DSL acres and 5,821 private acres) as shown on Map 7 in the back of this document. Management actions would be directed to cooperatively maintain this amount of prairie dog habitat. Table 2.40 summarizes the prairie dog and black-footed ferret management activities and acreages in this alternative. Appendix K lists the allotments that would be affected.

TABLE 2.40
ALTERNATIVE E
(PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

SUMMARY OF PRAIRIE DOG AND BLACK-FOOTED FERRET MANAGEMENT

Prairie Dog Mgmt.					
Judith	7	71	0	112	183
Valley	11	800	40	120	960
Phillips	235	13,220	2,070	6,356	21,646
Total	253	14,091	2,110	6,588	22,789
Ferret Management					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	211	12,346	2,012	5,821	20,179
Total	211	12,346	2,012	5,821	20,179
Shooting					
Judith	7	71	0	112	183
Valley	11	800	40	120	960
Phillips	235	13,220	2,070	6,356	21,646
Total	253	14,091	2,110	6,588	22,789
Elimination					
Judith	0	0	0	0	0
Valley	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0
Planning Area Total	253	14,091	2,110	6,588	22,789

Source: BLM, 1990

A Cooperative Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction and Management Plan would be developed with the affected landowners, BLM, CMR, MDFWP, DSL and FWS. The 12,346 acres of prairie dog towns on BLM land may fluctuate according to the guidelines in the plan.

Prairie dogs on BLM land outside the 7km Complex are non-essential to black-footed ferret recovery and would be maintained at the existing level (1988 survey) or controlled based on values other than the ferret.

Implementation - Prairie Dog Management

BLM would monitor prairie dog towns for expansion and all allotments within the 7km Complex with prairie dog towns would be categorized as I. BLM would control prairie dog expansion within the 7km Complex by allotment when the acreage exceeds the existing level (1988 survey). A decision to control would be based on the prairie dog town distribution and density within the area of expansion.

In the Phillips RA, BLM would maintain the prairie dog towns on BLM lands outside the 7km Complex at the existing level for recreational viewing, associate species, and prairie dog shooting. BLM may reduce or eradicate some small isolated prairie dog towns.

BLM would maintain or manage prairie dog towns on BLM lands in the Valley (800 acres) and Judith (71 acres) RAs, based on the values or problems encountered.

Management actions would follow guidance in the Cooperative Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction and Management Plan to avoid taking ferrets and may include using EPA registered toxicants or non-toxic methods for prairie dog control (i.e. barriers, water, vegetation enhancement, prairie dog sterilization, biological control, etc.).

When poisoning is scheduled on a prairie dog town which includes state and private land, a cooperative effort would be made to control the entire town. The cost of poisoning for state and private land would be the responsibility of the private landowner or the state land permittee.

The loss of prairie dog habitat on private land may be compensated for by developing additional habitat on BLM land in the vicinity of the habitat loss. Prairie dog expansion within the 7km Complex above the existing level (1988 survey) would not be allowed on BLM land without AUM mitigation. Any loss of livestock forage due to prairie dog habitat increases on BLM land above the existing level (1988 survey) would be mitigated through land treatments (mechanical, fire, etc.).

Implementation - Black-footed Ferret Management

The following guidelines would be addressed when developing the Cooperative Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction and Management Plan:

1. Funding would be identified to support the black-footed ferret reintroduction effort and to cooperatively manage prairie dog towns at the existing level (1988 survey) on BLM land.

2. The RMP may be amended to address prairie dog management on BLM land within the 7km Complex if there is a change of status for any associated species or a modification of the Cooperative Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction and Management Plan.

3. BLM prefers the option of initial releases of black-footed ferrets on habitat within the CMR with subsequent releases on BLM land when prairie dogs have been reduced to the 1988 level.

4. All prairie dog towns in joint ownership would be subject to cooperative agreements for management and/or control consistent with guidelines provided in this RMP.

5. If the loss of prairie dogs on private land voids a portion of the 7km Complex, prairie dog towns on BLM land within the voided area would be subject to cooperative agreements for management and/or control, consistent with guidelines provided in this RMP.

The following restrictions would apply to activities associated within the 7km Complex:

1. Powerline ROWs would be located to avoid prairie dog towns and discourage raptor perching.

2. Oil and gas leasing would be allowed with Controlled Surface Use Stipulations on prairie dog towns within the 7km Complex. When an oil and gas activity is proposed, the authorized officer of the BLM is responsible for applying conditions of approval to prevent adverse effects on the reintroduction and recovery of black-footed ferrets. The "Draft Guidelines for Oil and Gas Activities in Prairie Dog Ecosystems Managed for Black-Footed Ferret Recovery," FWS, 1990, would guide the development of appropriate conditions of approval for the proposed activity.

   Waivers, exceptions and modifications to these stipulations would be allowed for activities that are determined to have no adverse effect on the integrity of ferret habitat for purposes of reintroduction and recovering black-footed ferrets. The BLM authorized officer would coordinate with the Montana Black-Footed Ferret Coordination Committee (MBFCC) before making a final decision on waiving, exception, or modifying the stipulation.

3. Animal damage control on prairie dog towns within the 7km Complex would be allowed. Restrictions on the placement of M44s, traps and snares would be necessary to avoid accidently taking black-footed ferrets.

4. Recreational activities (camping, sight seeing, etc.) would be allowed and managed to prevent adverse impacts to the ferret.

5. Controlling ferret predators and monitoring for ferret diseases in specific locations within the 7km Complex may be necessary.

6. BLM would maintain the existing livestock AUMs within the 7km Complex.

7. A public education program would be jointly developed by FWS, CMR, MDFWP and BLM to explain the ferret management effort and to minimize any potential problems (i.e. distemper, etc.).

Implementation - Prairie Dog Shooting

BLM would manage prairie dog shooting on BLM land in the Phillips RA before and after ferret reintroduction. BLM would respond to requests for information, prepare maps, sign prairie dog towns and manage the towns to provide shooting. Shooting may be regulated to a certain number of people each year to allow for a quality experience.

Prairie dog shooting may temporarily be prohibited on prairie dog towns where black-footed ferret reintroduction is occurring. However, shooting would be managed on these towns and towns subsequently occupied by the ferret, unless impacts from shooting are shown to be detrimental.

Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC

BLM would designate 3,702 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect the scenic, wildlife and recreation values in the Judith Mountains (see Supplemental Color Map B at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM. This area would be managed to mitigate impacts to resources from surface disturbing activities.

Implementation

Off-road travel would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails. The ACEC would be an avoidance area for ROWs. Oil and gas leases would contain a controlled surface use stipulation for visual resources. The area would be available for restricted management of forest products.

The area would remain open to mineral entry. Mitigating measures specific to hardrock mining activities are discussed under the hardrock mining section of this alternative.

Acid Shale-Pine Forest ACEC

BLM would designate two representative BLM tracts, War Horse (817 acres) and Briggs Coulee (1,646 acres), within an Acid Shale-Pine Forest ecosystem a Research Natural Area ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect an endemic plant community unique to the area and a fragile watershed (see Supplemental Color Map C at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM. The ACEC would be a Research Natural Area where research would be allowed to determine the effects of grazing, fire, etc. on this type of plant community. BLM would allow research at War Horse and maintain Briggs Coulee as a control site.

Implementation

Disposal of forest products from the area would be prohibited, unless necessary for stand preservation. The area would receive intensive wildfire suppression. ORV use would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails. The two ACEC units would be leased for oil and gas with standard lease terms and would remain open to mineral entry.

Square Butte Outstanding Natural Area ACEC

BLM would designate 1,947 BLM acres an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect natural endemic systems, cultural sites, scenic qualities, rare geologic features unique to Montana and identify key wildlife viewing sites under the Watchable Wildlife Program (see Supplemental Color Map A at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM. This area would be managed primarily for wildlife, cultural resources and recreation.

Implementation

Square Butte is currently segregated from the mining and leasing laws by a classification under the authority of the Classification and Multiple-Use Act of 1964 (CMU). BLM would pursue a protective withdrawal for Square Butte to segregate this area from mining claim location to protect natural endemic systems, cultural sites, scenic qualities and rare geologic features unique to Montana. The classification would be terminated when the area is withdrawn.

If Congress determines the Square Butte WSA is unsuitable as wilderness and the CMU classification is terminated, the area would then be available for oil and gas leasing. The area would be divided between No Lease and No Surface Occupancy restrictions. The core area would be withheld from leasing. A 1/4-mile perimeter at the outer edge would be leased with No Surface Occupancy restrictions to protect from drainage.

Legal access would be pursued to the ACEC for a trailhead as well as a trail network to the Butte. Access should be developed from the highway east of the Butte or across private land from the northeast. The area would be closed to ORVs.

Surface disturbing activities would be prohibited including transmission lines, roads, communication sites, pipelines, etc.

Recreation and habitat direction for the area would include a trail system, camping areas, a recreation use policy and

habitat management direction for wildlife populations including prescribed fire, security areas, etc. The sale of forest products would be prohibited, unless necessary for stand preservation.

Collar Gulch ACEC

This area would not be designated an ACEC, the area would remain open to mineral entry and current management practices would continue.

Implementation

Current management would include the evaluation of alternate mine operating practices and mitigating measures during technical review and environmental analysis of individual Plans of Operations. The Montana Water Quality Act imposes a nondegradation policy for Collar Gulch Creek.

Azure Cave ACEC

BLM would designate 140 BLM acres an ACEC to protect cave resources and potentially the northernmost bat hibernaculum in the United States (see Supplemental Color Map E at the conclusion of Chapter 2). Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM. The cave would be managed to protect bats during crucial hibernation periods and allow specific and general recreation use on a limited basis.

Implementation

BLM would prepare an activity plan to determine time periods for cave access and initiate appropriate management activities to protect the bats. Cave access would not be allowed until an activity plan is completed and safe access into the cave is developed.

BLM would continue the withdrawal from mining claim location to protect public recreation values and the bat hibernaculum. The area would be closed to oil and gas leasing, except to protect from drainage if cave resources can be protected.

Additional legal access would be pursued from the Seven Mile road and the quality of the route would be limited to an unimproved road. ORVs would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails. An activity plan would identify the roads and trails open in the area.

Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC

BLM would designate 2,120 BLM acres within the Big Bend of the Milk River area, which includes the Henry Smith and Beaucoup Sites, an ACEC and prepare an activity plan to identify specific management actions to protect archaeological resources representing bison hunting and prehistoric ceremonial use of the Northwestern Plains (see Supplemental Color Map F at the conclusion of Chapter 2). The Henry Smith Site would be managed for interpretation and the Beaucoup Site for research. Designation of an ACEC only applies to public lands administered by BLM.

Implementation

BLM would consult with appropriate Native Americans to ensure that the activity plan is developed with sensitivity to Native American cultural values.

ORVs would be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails. Big Bend would be withdrawn from mineral location and withheld from solid mineral leaseables to protect the cultural resources.

The Henry Smith Site (1,000 acres) would be developed for public and scientific use including interpretation and public education. Land within the site would be inventoried for cultural resources and mapping and/or collecting data would be completed as necessary. Developments would include roads and walking paths with interpretative signs for visitor information. BLM would also pursue public access to the site. The area would be open to oil and gas leasing with No Surface Occupancy restrictions.

The Beaucoup Site (1,120 acres) would be managed for scientific use. Land within the site would be inventoried for cultural resources. All resources would be mapped, collected and excavated as necessary for relevant archaeological data. The area would be open to oil and gas leasing with standard lease terms.

SELECTION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Four preliminary alternatives (Alternatives A, B, C and D) and a draft preferred alternative (Alternative E) were reviewed for effectiveness in resolving the planning issues, conformance with the guidance established by the planning criteria, avoidance of unnecessary impacts to the human environment, and responsiveness to public concern. Alternative E was developed from the initial analysis of Alternatives A, B, C and D and revised based on the public comments received on the draft RMP/EIS. If selected, this

alternative plus the guidance in the Management Common To All Alternatives section would form the resource management plan. The rationale for selecting Alternative E is presented below by issue.

Land Acquisition and Disposal

Alternative E establishes management direction to accomplish BLM land adjustment. A total of 161,968 acres meet disposal criteria. BLM would concentrate acquisition in areas important for access, riparian-wetland areas, ACECs, recreation and wildlife habitat. The main objective would be to attain a BLM land pattern which balances multiple resource values and brings about better management. This alternative increases BLM's flexibility in accomplishing land adjustment while considering landowner preference to exchange or sell and the effects on the local tax base.

Access to BLM Land

BLM used a citizen's group called a Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) committee approach on three issues; this being one of them. A CRMP committee composed of interested citizens jointly consider an issue and try to come to a consensus regarding recommendations to resolve the issue. The Preferred Alternative for this issue reflects the recommendations of the CRMP committee.

Alternative E identifies areas of BLM land needing new or additional legal public access. A total of 71,793 BLM acres have been identified needing new legal public access and 1,126,858 BLM acres need additional public access.

This alternative would address the problem of providing legal access to BLM land and the expected increase in recreation use on BLM land. It does not provide access to all BLM land, but only those areas large enough to provide an adequate recreational experience, and that are expected to remain in public ownership. Thus, BLM could utilize resources most effectively and concentrate on the highest priority parcels when acquiring new legal access.

Off-Road Vehicle Designations

Alternative E amends the ORV designations developed under direction of Executive Order 11644. BLM would designate 1,990,501 BLM acres open, 813,709 BLM acres limited and 1,947 BLM acres closed to ORVs. Restrictions would protect the resource values in ACECs and WSAs, protect vegetation and soils to maintain watersheds and water quality, reduce user conflicts, and provide wildlife habitat security. Most restrictions are seasonal in nature and designed to reduce the majority of adverse impacts on resources from off-road vehicle use while recognizing the advantage of off-road travel for certain activities. This alternative provides exceptions in some limited areas for camping, game retrieval, access by the non-ambulatory, and snowmobile travel in the Little Belt and Snowy Mountains. These designations address resource conflicts and public concerns while recognizing the possible future demands for ORV use on BLM land.

A CRMP committee was also used to help resolve this issue. The CRMP committee focused, for the most part, on Valley County and the problems found there regarding off-road vehicles. The CRMP committee recommended the entire county have an ORV designation limiting motorized vehicles to existing roads and trails, but allow exceptions for game retrieval, camping and handicapped access. This recommendation conflicted with needs in the other resource areas where certain areas had no known conflicts and could be left open. In balancing the CRMP recommendations with the other area needs, BLM expanded limited designations in some areas and reduced the acreage involved in Valley County.

Oil and Gas Leasing and Development

Alternative E would provide for oil and gas exploration and development on BLM land, while protecting other resource values through standard lease terms on 1,474,481 acres, stipulations on 1,760,426 acres, No Surface Occupancy restrictions on 34,818 acres and closing 117,962 acres where resource values are not compatible with exploration and development.

This alternative considers the oil and gas development potential in the planning area along with foreseeable activity when selecting areas open and closed for oil and gas leasing. The BLM choose this alternative to keep as much land as possible open to oil and gas leasing while protecting other resources in the planning area.

Hardrock Mining

Alternative E would provide for hardrock mineral development, while protecting other resources of exceptional value through withdrawal from mineral entry or with special management prescriptions. This alternative considers protective withdrawals for Square Butte ONA ACEC to protect resource values and the Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC to protect cultural resources from possible bentonite mining. Special resource prescriptions would be applied to the Judith Mountains Scenic ACEC.

The alternative considers the hardrock mineral development potential in the planning area along with foreseeable activity when selecting areas open and closed to mining claim location. BLM choose this alternative to leave most of the hardrock development potential lands open to mining claim location. In areas where BLM determined hardrock mining

and other critical resource use was incompatible, other options were infeasible and the best long-term productivity of the land lay with other resources, the land was withdrawn.

Riparian and Wetland Management of Watersheds

Alternative E would provide management for 99% of the stream riparian areas and 92% of the natural and manmade water sources in the planning area. Alternative E would improve or maintain riparian-wetland areas based on proper functioning condition and the desired plant community. This alternative would consider the trend toward meeting this objective, while considering the importance of intermingled private land which could be adversely impacted as a result of management changes on BLM land.

Elk and Bighorn Sheep Habitat Management

Alternative E would provide 593,980 BLM acres of elk habitat and 156,930 BLM acres of bighorn sheep habitat. This alternative would consider methods to address conflicts where crop depredation occurs.

BLM chose this alternative to alleviate wildlife/landowner conflicts and to maintain viable elk and bighorn sheep habitat within the potential of the land to sustain them.

Prairie Dog and Black-Footed Ferret Management

This was the last of the three issues which used a CRMP committee. Members of this CRMP committee included all the ranchers in the recovery area, sportsman's groups, state and federal agencies and interested parties and individuals. The Preferred Alternative reflects the overall direction received from this group.

Alternative E would provide prairie dog habitat for black-footed ferret reintroduction and long-term ferret recovery, as well as provide habitat for associate species (mountain plover, burrowing owl, and ferruginous hawk). Activities such as recreational viewing and prairie dog shooting would also be allowed and managed in a compatible manner with the reintroduction of the ferret. Prairie dog towns on BLM land identified for reintroduction of the black-footed ferret would be designated as an ACEC.

This alternative would address the public's concern about prairie dog expansion by controlling prairie dog towns at the 1988 level. This would also provide habitat for the potential reintroduction of the black-footed ferret and prairie dog shooting without restrictions to other activities.

BLM chose this alternative as it would allow for reintroduction of the black-footed ferret in keeping with the Endangered Species Act, provide for continued existence of prairie dogs and associated species and minimize impacts on local and affected landowners and permittees.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Alternative E designates and provides management guidance for six ACECs in the planning area. BLM surface in the Judith Mountains Scenic Area, Acid Shale-Pine Forest, Square Butte ONA, Azure Cave, Big Bend of the Milk River and prairie dog towns on BLM land identified for reintroduction of the black-footed ferret would be designated as ACECs.

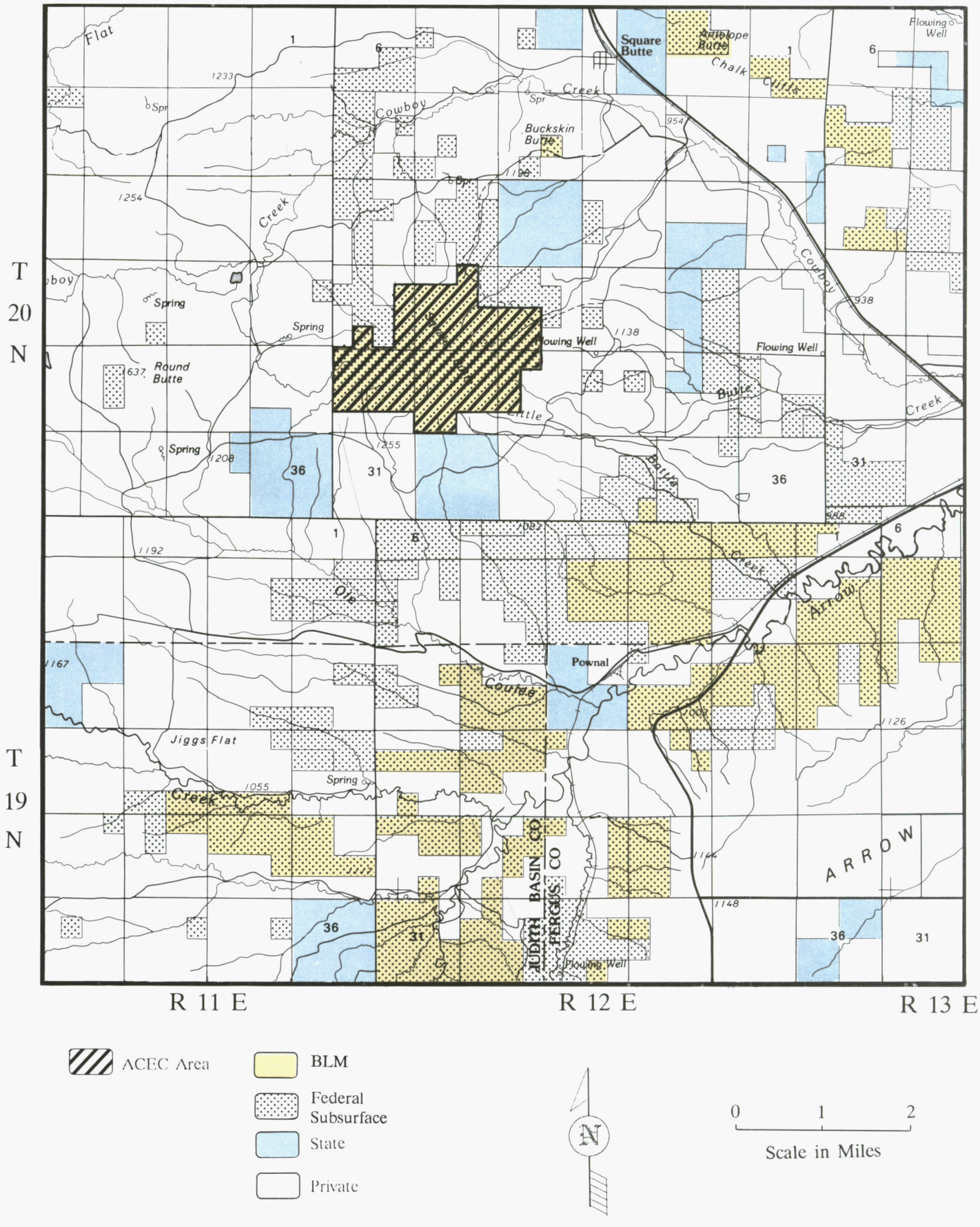
All six areas would be managed to allow multiple use activities while preserving and enhancing the resources for which the areas are designated. Special management in the Judith Mountains Scenic Area would protect the scenic qualities and the visual resources in the Judith Mountains. Special management in the Acid Shale-Pine Forest would protect an endemic plant community unique to the area and a fragile watershed. Special management in the Square Butte ONA would protect natural endemic systems, cultural sites, scenic qualities, and rare geologic features unique to Montana. Special management in Azure Cave would protect the cave resources and potentially the northern most bat hibernaculum in the United States. Special management in the Big Bend of the Milk River would protect archaeological resources representing bison hunting and prehistoric ceremonial use of the Northwestern Plains. Special management for prairie dog towns on BLM land identified for reintroduction of the black-footed would maintain prairie dogs at the 1988 level.

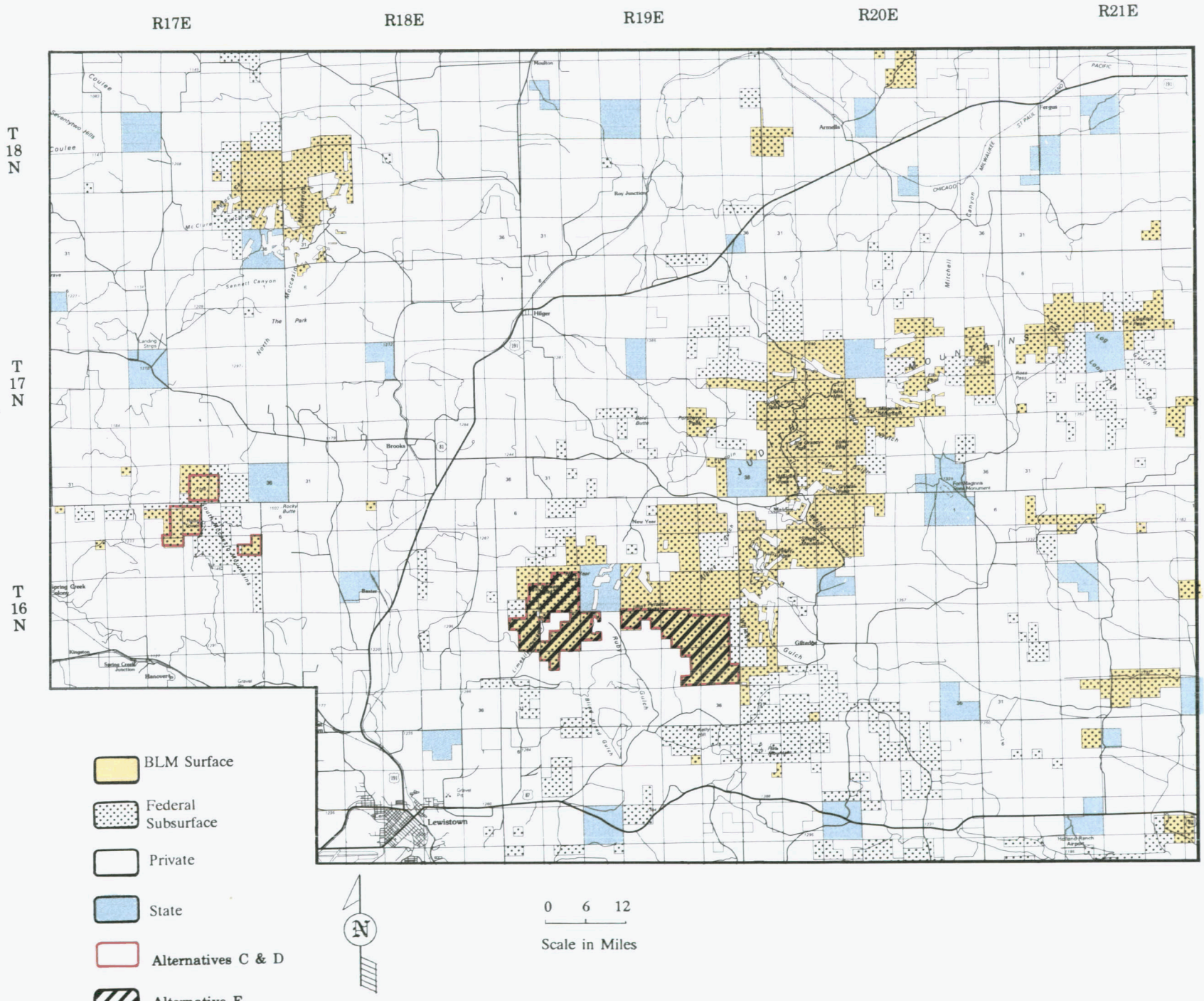
Under the preferred alternative, Collar Gulch would not be designated an ACEC. The area has a high and moderate development potential for hardrock minerals with existing mining claims and a history of mining activity. A withdrawal for Collar Gulch would not eliminate the risk to the westslope cutthroat trout due to existing claims and potential valid mining claims and related mining activity. Management for the area would include the evaluation of alternate mine operating practices and mitigating measures during technical review and environmental analysis of individual Plans of Operations based on the resources present.

COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

Table S.1 presents a summary of the alternatives to resolve the issues. Table S.2 summarizes the environmental consequences by issue for each alternative. Tables S.1 and S.2 are located in the Summary at the beginning of this document.

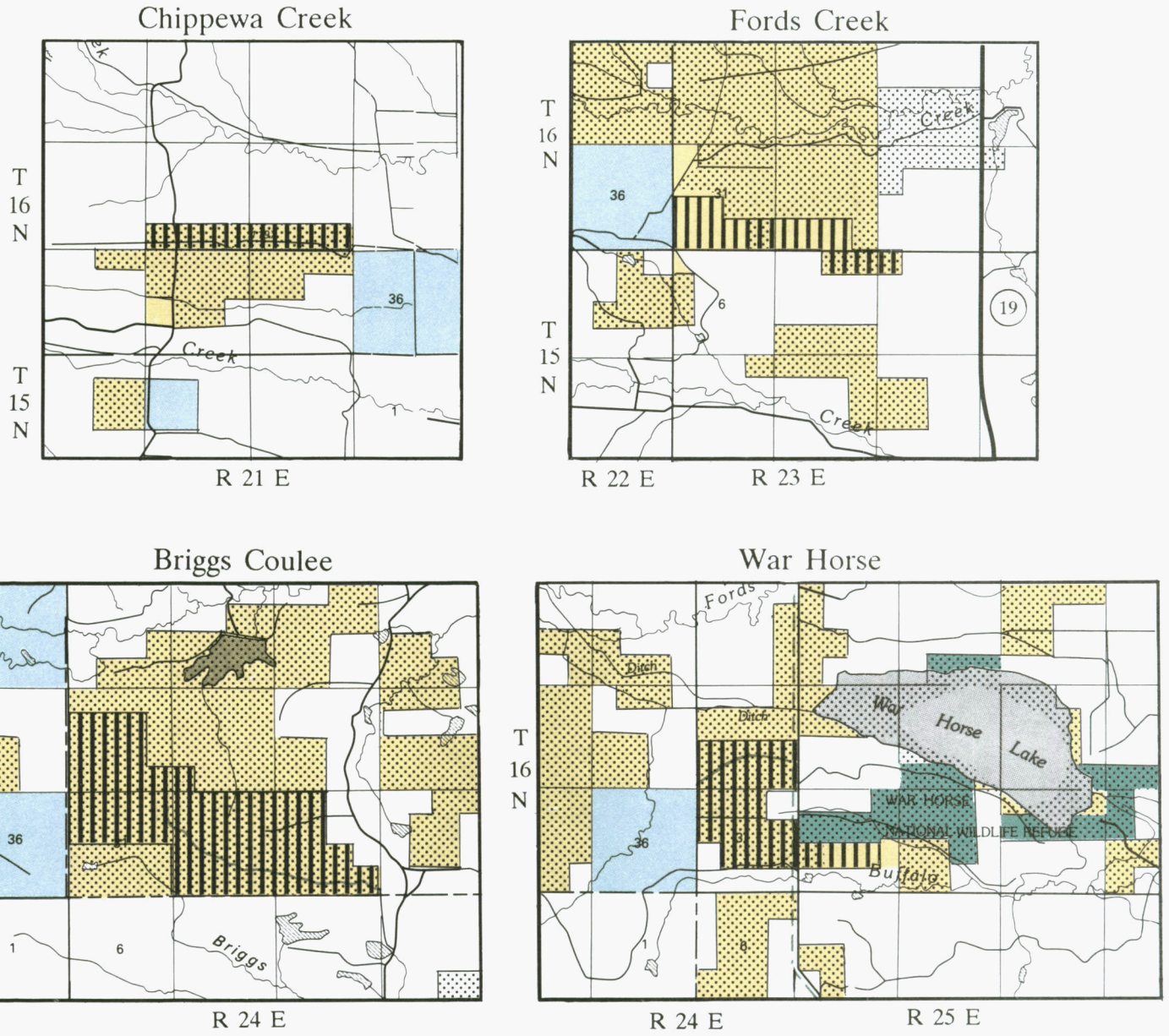
Map A Square Butte ONA ACEC.



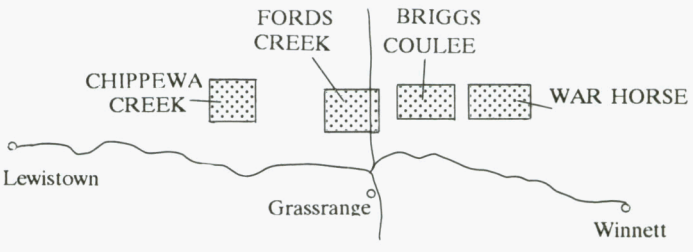


Map B Judith Mountains Scenic Area ACEC.

Map C Acid Shale-Pine Forest ACEC.



Location Map



Alternative C - War Horse Only

Alternative D - All four Areas

Alternative E - Briggs and War Horse only

BLM Roads - Open

County Access Roads

ACEC Area

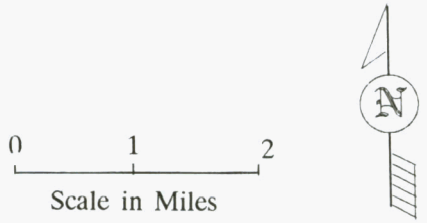
BLM

Federal Subsurface

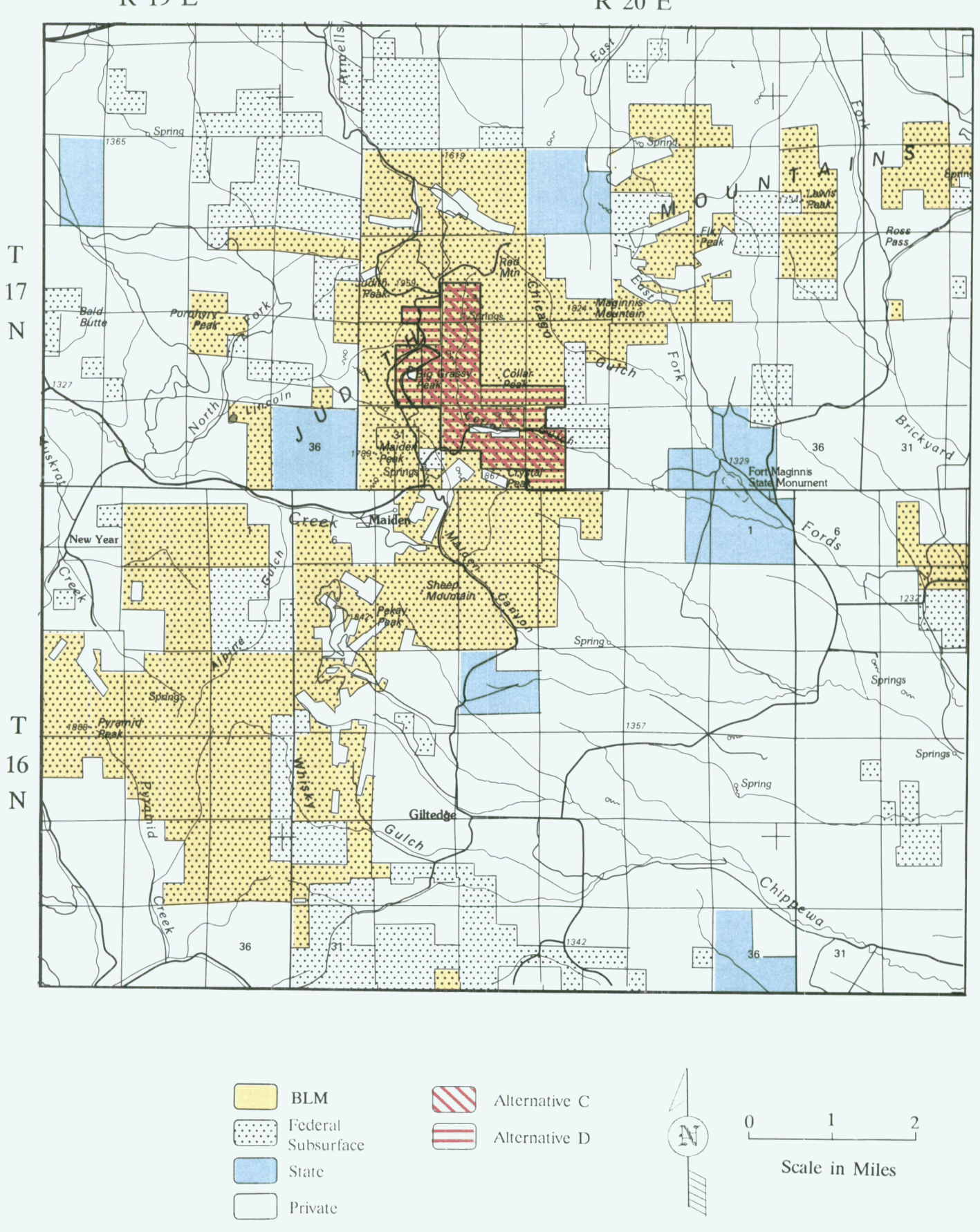
State

Private

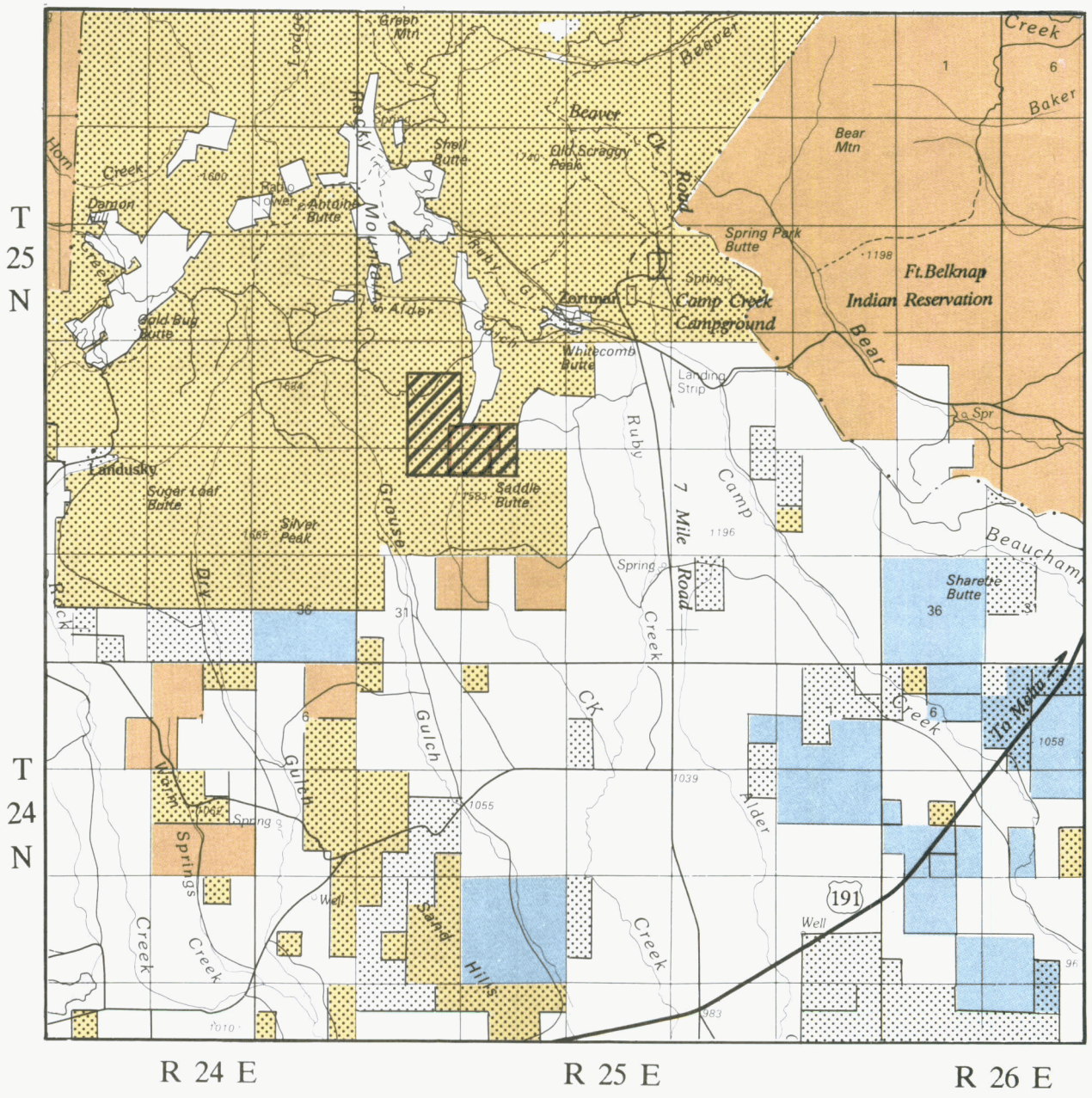
Wildlife Refuge



Map D Collar Gulch ACEC.



Map E Azure Cave ACEC.



BLM

Federal Sub-surface

State

Private

Indian Lands or Reservation

Alternatives C & D

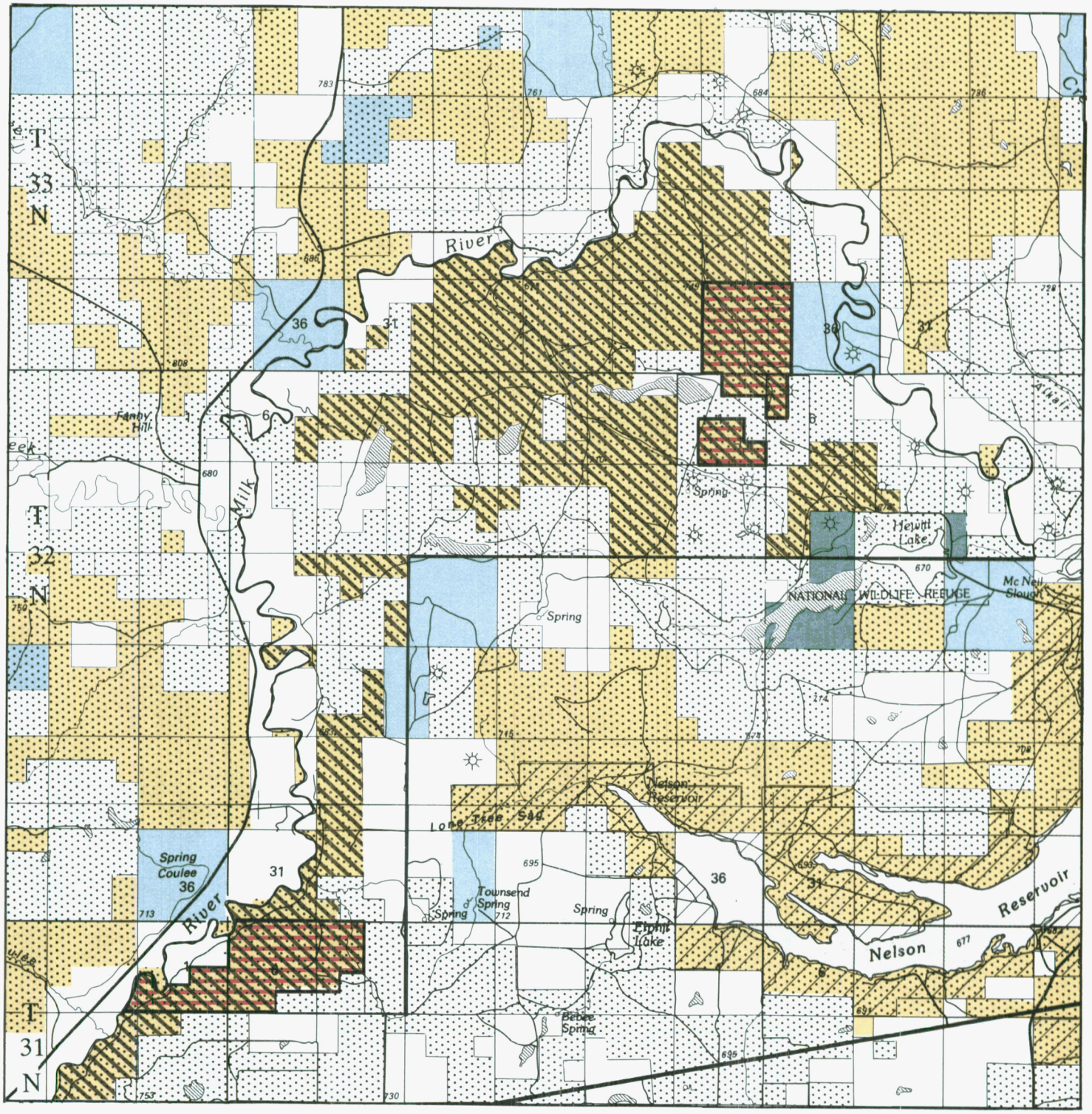
Alternative E

Currently Withdrawn from Mineral Entry

0 1 2

Scale in Miles

Map F Big Bend of the Milk River ACEC.



R 30 E R 31 E R 32 E

BLM Surface

Federal Subsurface

State

Private

Bureau of Reclamation

Wildlife Refuges

Producing Gas Wells

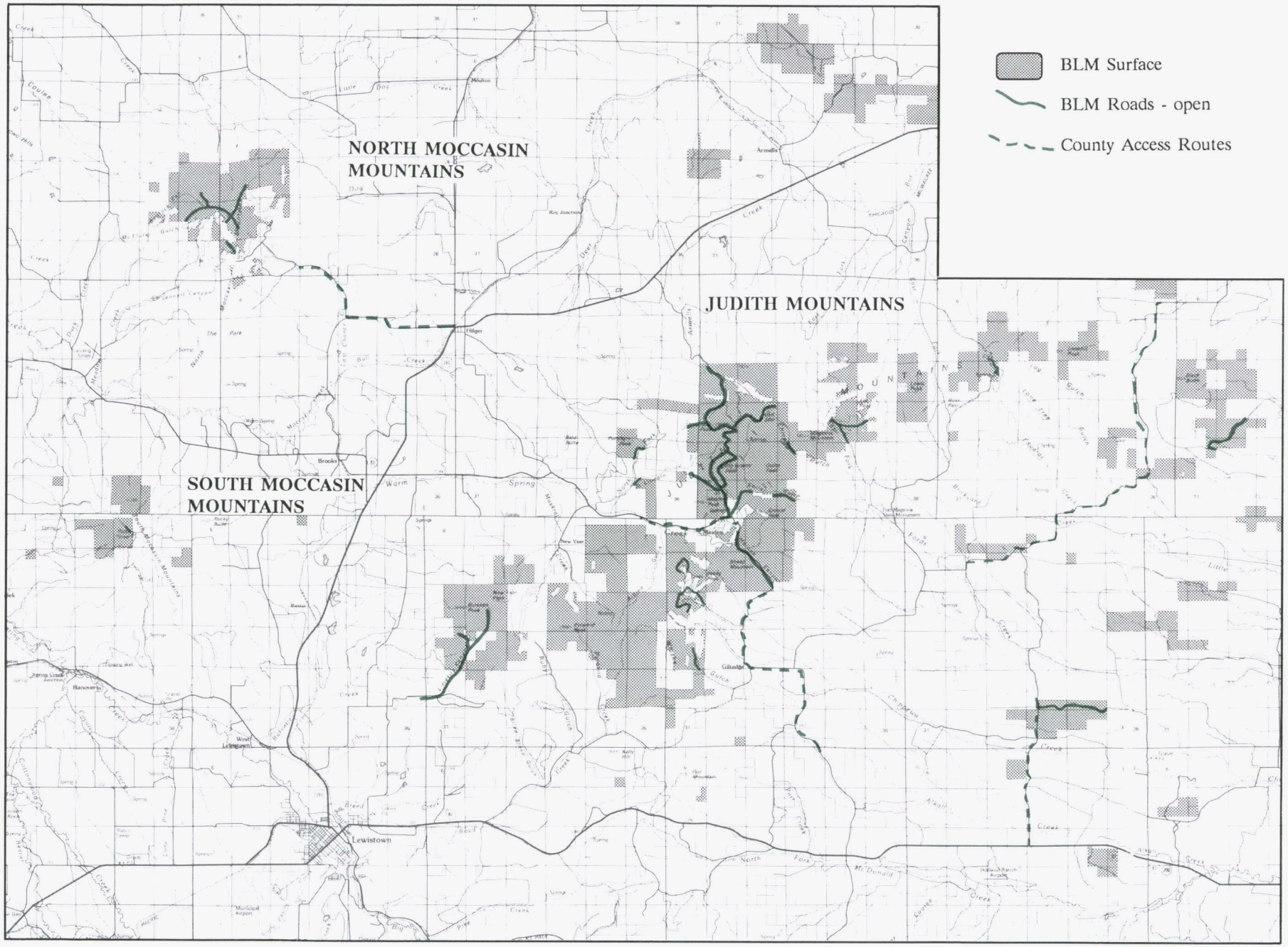
Alternative D

Alternatives C & E

N

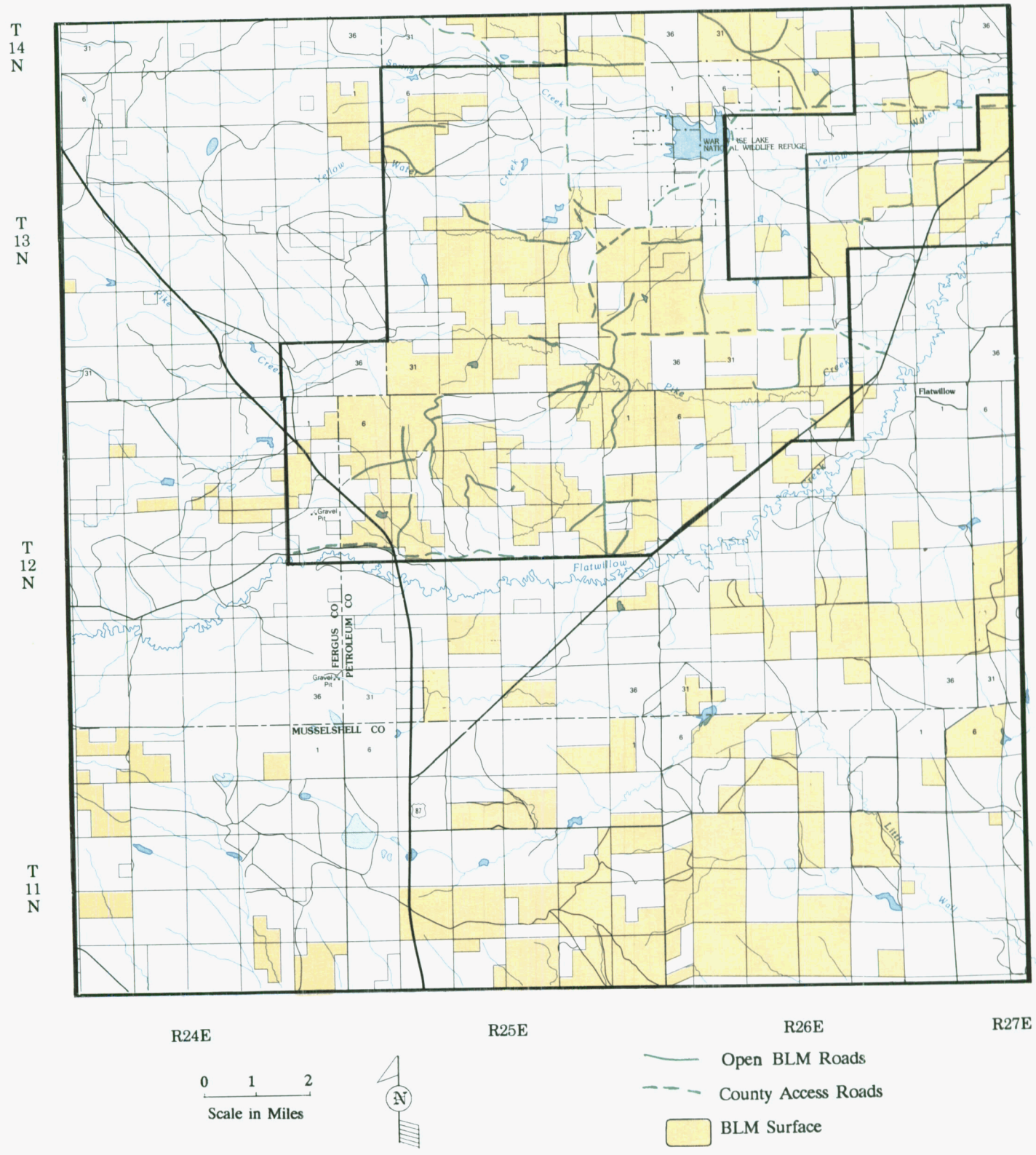
0 1 2

Scale in Miles



Map G Judith and Moccasin Mountains ORV Travel Plan.

Map H Yellowwater ORV Travel Plan.



Map I. Bitter Creek WSA and Rock Creek Canyon ORV Travel Plan.