

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This approved resource management plan (RMP) sets forth the land use decisions, terms and conditions for guiding future management of lands and minerals administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within the Valley Resource Area (RA). All uses and activities within this resource area must conform with the decisions, terms, and conditions described in this plan. This approved RMP has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The Valley RA of the Lewistown District includes BLM land in Valley County. The Valley planning area encompasses 2,698,017 acres, of which 1,019,886 surface acres (38%) and 1,134,644 acres of mineral estate (42%) are administered by the BLM.

### RELATIONSHIP TO THE BUREAU PLANNING SYSTEM

Development of an approved RMP occurs within the framework of the BLM planning system. The planning system is divided into three distinct tiers; policy planning, land use planning, and activity planning. The completion of this approved RMP along with the previously completed steps in the land use planning process, the draft Judith-Valley-Phillips RMP and environmental impact statement (JVP RMP/EIS, July 1991), proposed JVP RMP/final EIS (October 1992), and JVP Record of Decision (ROD, August 1994)) satisfies the requirements for the land use tier of the Bureau planning system.

### DISTRIBUTION OF THE APPROVED RMP

This approved RMP is available upon request to all individuals, groups, entities, companies, and agencies.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COORDINATION

Throughout the planning process, concerns and interests of all publics were solicited and then addressed in a variety of formal and informal public participation activities. These involved various public meetings, one-on-one meetings with individuals or specific entities, the establishment and use of three coordinated resource management planning committees, public mailings, media news releases, and coordination briefings with governmental agencies. If more in-depth information is desired, please refer to Chapter 5, Consultation and Coordination, of the draft JVP RMP/EIS (1991) and proposed JVP RMP/final EIS (1992).

### IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING DECISIONS

Decisions in this plan will be implemented over a period of years depending on budget and staff availability. Funding levels would affect the timing and implementation of management actions and project proposals, but would not affect the decisions made under this RMP. An implementation schedule will be developed to provide for the systematic accomplishment of decisions in the approved RMP.

Decisions will be monitored to evaluate the continuing effectiveness of the decisions in the plan. This provides the information needed to chart the progress being made toward reaching the plan's stated goal and objectives. Monitoring the land use plan will provide the following:

1. Determine if a multiple-use prescription is fulfilling the purpose for which it was designed.
2. Determine if predictions of effects and impacts from management actions were accurate as a basis for appropriate management action.
3. Reveal unanticipated and/or unpredictable effects including off-site impacts.
4. Determine if mitigation measures are satisfactory and are as effective as predicted.

5. Determine if any established threshold levels have been met or exceeded.
6. Provide for continuing evaluation of consistency with plans or programs of federal, state, and local government or Indian Tribes.
7. Provide for continuing comparison of plan benefits versus costs (social, economic, and environmental).
8. Determine if new data and/or information have affected the plan, its conclusions, or estimation of effects.
9. Determine the rate and degree to which the plan is being implemented in terms of both the decisions that can be implemented without activity planning and those that require activity planning.

Monitoring guidelines can be found in the Valley RA Monitoring and Implementation Plan available at the resource area office. These guidelines will be used to monitor the implementation of specific management guidance and actions and updated as necessary.

Land tenure adjustments will be monitored to identify changes in the respective county tax base and the net change in BLM land.

The following inventory and monitoring requirements for riparian-wetland areas will begin with implementation of the plan for the six groups of allotments identified under the Preferred Alternative in Appendix J of the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS (1992). The allotments were ranked into these six groups based on resource conditions and whether riparian objectives are being met. The list of allotments will be updated through plan maintenance based on inventories and monitoring.

Implementation will be by watershed and management will consider the streams, water sources, and uplands within that watershed. Prioritization for implementation will begin with the watershed containing the greatest number of group one allotments. All allotments within a watershed will be considered when managing for riparian-wetland values. The resource area will determine the size of the watershed applicable to management actions. The actual boundaries of the selected watershed will correspond to those major, submajor, minor, or hydrologic units as defined by the State of Montana, Department of Natural Resources, Water Resources Division. Implementation for an individual allotment will consider the implications (standards and guidelines) and effects to the entire watershed and to other

allotments within the watershed. Exceptions will be considered for C allotments, if it is determined that the amount of public land involved is so insignificant that overall improvement in the watershed cannot take place.

Inventories of riparian-wetland areas already have or will determine functioning condition (proper functioning condition, functioning at risk, or non-functioning) and the potential to produce a certain type of plant community.

Allotments with riparian-wetland areas that are in proper functioning condition (and apparent trend is static or upward) or are functioning at risk (and apparent trend is upward) will remain at the existing allotment category (Improve (I), Maintain (M), or Custodial (C)). The riparian-wetland objectives will be to maintain or meet proper functioning condition and achieve the desired plant community. To meet these objectives, grazing and other methods will continue as specified in the permit/lease, grazing agreement, or allotment management plans (AMP). The plant communities in these riparian-wetland areas will be monitored to determine if the trend is maintained or improving. If the trend is down or static/functioning at risk, the allotment will be recategorized as an I allotment and grazing and other methods will be specified to meet the objectives as discussed in the following paragraph.

Allotments with riparian-wetland areas that are in proper functioning condition (and apparent trend is down), functioning at risk (and apparent trend is static or down) or non-functioning will be recategorized as Category I allotments. The riparian-wetland objectives will be to maintain or meet proper functioning condition and achieve the desired plant community. Grazing and other methods to meet these objectives will be implemented during the next grazing season. Grazing methods will be specified in the permit/lease, grazing agreement, or AMP. The plant communities in these riparian-wetland areas will be monitored for two years immediately following implementation of the grazing methods to determine if the trend is improving to meet proper functioning condition. If the trend is not improving, the necessary action will be taken the next grazing season to achieve an upward trend toward proper functioning condition and the desired plant community.

Figure 1 shows the general implementation schedule for riparian-wetland management. A specific implementation schedule will be prepared for the allotments with riparian-wetland areas. This specific implementation schedule will maintain the time frame shown in Figure 1 and will be updated each year based on additional inventory and monitoring.

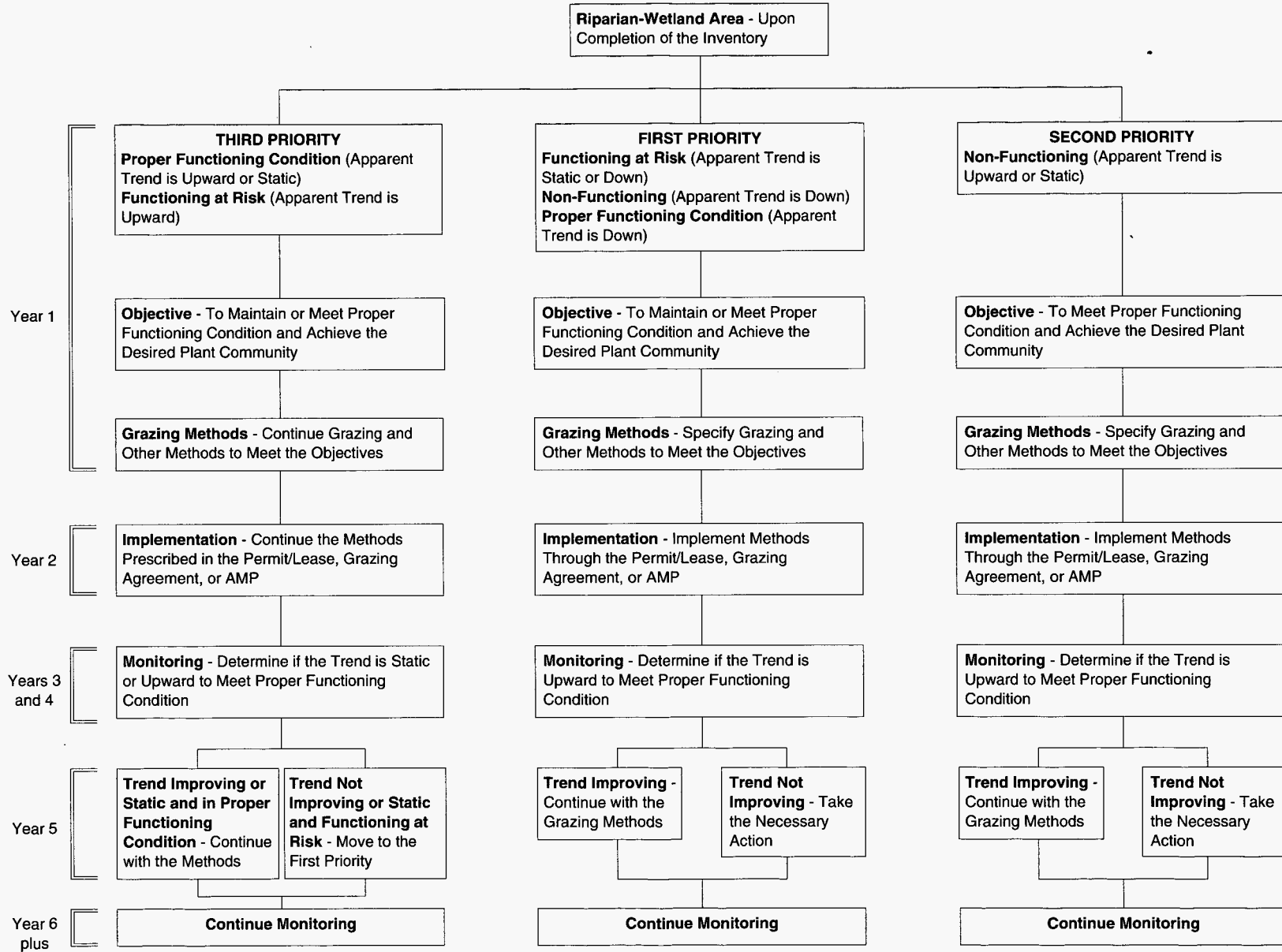


Figure 1  
General Implementation Schedule for Riparian-Wetland Management

Hardrock mineral activities in wilderness study areas (WSA) are administered under the 43 CFR 3802 regulations.

### **Implementation**

Most of the land in the resource 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. The DSL currently holds the reclamation bond on hardrock mineral activities, with the 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 off-road vehicle (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. The 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 Non-compliance. Most inspections are conducted in cooperation with the DSL.

### **Bentonite**

The 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**

The 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. The 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 DSL's, 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)**

The 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 the BLM, consultation and concurrence with the surface managing agency will take place prior to issuing prospecting permits or leases.

## **GEOLOGIC FEATURES**

The 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**

The BLM may develop interpretative sites for geologic features. Areas tentatively identified include Back Country Byways and one or more exposures of glacial geology/geomorphology in north Valley County.

## **CAVE RESOURCES**

The 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.

### **Implementation**

Significant cave resources discovered will have a cave management plan prepared. A management plan for significant cave resources would 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**

The BLM will protect major paleontological resources of scientific interest. The 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 the BLM for evaluation and a determination concerning the disposition of such resources.

## **HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

The 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 will 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 the BLM, through purchase or exchange, shall be inventoried for hazardous substances and past history of possible contamination in accordance with

Secretarial Order 3127. The 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

The 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), the 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. The BLM will continue obtaining water rights for all projects on BLM land and complying with Montana water laws.

The 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) 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 (Appendix A). 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

The BLM will comply with national and state air quality standards. Existing air quality will be protected by the use of BMPs (Appendix A) 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 Health and Environmental Science, Air Quality Bureau. All such plans are forwarded to the appropriate watershed 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**

The BLM's overall vegetation management objective is to improve or maintain the ecological status of BLM land to achieve a plant community of good or excellent ecological condition on 80% of 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.

The 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 (1979) and Prairie Potholes Vegetation (1981) 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 interest of the public. Hay or seed cutting may be used as a land treatment to improve production of crested wheat-grass.

## **Watershed Management Implementation**

About 60% of the vegetation will continue being allocated to watershed protection and wildlife forage and cover (this equates to 208,854 animal unit months (AUMs)).

As AMPs 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 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 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. The BLM will continue to cooperate with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MDFWP) to determine wildlife habitat needs.

The 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.

The BLM will improve the quality and quantity of nesting, brood rearing and winter habitat for upland game birds. The 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. The 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. The 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\_ miles 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**

The 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, the 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 resource area will be in accordance with the grazing administration regulations found in 43 CFR Part 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 (139,236 AUMs) will continue being allocated to livestock. 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 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 devel-



oped 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 RA Monitoring and Implementation Plan available at the resource area office.

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.

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.

The 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 the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS (1992). 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 objec-

tives 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. The 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 the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS (1992).

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.

## **RIPARIAN AND WETLAND MANAGEMENT OF WATERSHEDS**

The BLM will 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 (Appendix B). Ranking will 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 will be to improve or maintain riparian-wetland areas to proper functioning condition. The second

objective will 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 will be included.

The BLM will initially accomplish riparian-wetland objectives through livestock grazing methods at current stocking levels. If grazing methods are not successful in meeting management objectives, the BLM will 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, the BLM will 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, the BLM will allocate any forage increases within riparian-wetland areas to watershed, wildlife and livestock.

Table 2.1 shows the number of allotments, miles of stream and number of water sources on BLM land that will be managed. The number of water sources is based on the reservoirs, potholes and springs with water rights. Intensive riparian-wetland inventories will update this information through plan maintenance.

**TABLE 2.1  
NUMBER OF ALLOTMENTS, MILES OF  
STREAM AND NUMBER OF WATER SOURCES  
WITHIN ALLOTMENTS MANAGED FOR  
RIPARIAN AND WETLAND VALUES**

Number of Allotments	89
BLM Land - Miles of Stream	250
BLM Land - Water Sources	1,285

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 will be developed. The objectives will include two aspects; proper functioning condition and desired plant community. Descriptions of the desired riparian-wetland plant communities will include the amount of seedling, sapling, pole, mature, dead and decadent woody species on sites with the potential. Regeneration of herbaceous riparian-wetland vegetation will also be included in management objectives based on site potential and the desired plant communities. The desired condition or health of the areas will be described, as well as the desired ecological status.

The proper functioning condition objective will 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 will 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 will 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 will be fenced if needed to protect associated riparian vegetation.
  - b. Salt and mineral blocks and supplemental feeding will only be allowed at least 1/4-mile or further from riparian-wetland areas where possible.
  - c. Water developments will be built away from stream riparian-wetland areas where possible.
6. Study exclosures will 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 will 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 will 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.

The BLM will implement livestock grazing formulas to maintain or improve waterfowl nesting cover on allotments with existing or potential waterfowl production areas.

To improve waterfowl production, the BLM will 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. The BLM will 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.

The 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.

The BLM will comply with all requirements for any insecticide or herbicide use within the wetlands complex (aquatic and terrestrial habitat). Land treatments and prescribed fire will 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.

The BLM will negotiate with the Bureau of Reclamation (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, will require a site-specific environmental assessment.

## LAND TREATMENTS

The 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 the 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 use 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**

The 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**

The BLM will encourage and pursue educational efforts in cooperation with the Montana Cooperative Extension Service to increase awareness of the noxious plant problem. The BLM will cooperate with state and county governments to detect and prevent the spread of noxious plants. The 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, the 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 will be environmentally or economically impractical. Herbicides will be used on small infestations and on the perimeter of large infestations. The BLM will continue cooperating with the Agricultural Research Service, Animal and Plant

Health Inspection Service (APHIS), in biological weed control efforts.

## **ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL**

The BLM may allow animal damage control on BLM land in the resource area. The methods used include, but are not limited to, 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.

### **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**

The 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 the 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 the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MDFWP); the 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 the BLM and other agencies that pertain to wildlife management will be carried forward in this document.

### **Sensitive, Threatened and/or Endangered Species Habitat Implementation**

The 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.

The BLM will cooperate with the FWS to fully recover threatened and endangered species. The federally listed T&E species within the resource area are the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, black-footed ferret, and piping plover. Federal candidate species are the ferruginous hawk, mountain plover, and long-billed curlew. The BLM will cooperate with MDFWP to manage the State Species of Special Concern (Table 2.2).

The Montana Bald Eagle Working Group did not identify any high potential nesting habitat within the resource 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, the BLM will manage the area for bald eagles.

**TABLE 2.2**  
**MONTANA SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN**

<b>Mammals</b>	<b>Birds</b>
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	Field Sparrow
	Three-toed Woodpecker
<b>Amphibians</b>	Eastern Bluebird
Wood Frog	Vesper Sparrow
Dakota Toad	Burrowing Owl
Tailed Frog	Pileated Woodpecker
	Olive-sided Flycatcher
<b>Fish</b>	Western Bluebird
Westslope Cutthroat Trout	Clay-colored Sparrow
Blue Sucker	Brewer's Sparrow
Finescale Dace	Bobolink
Shortnose Gar	Dickcissel
Cheek Chub	
<b>Reptiles</b>	
Plains Hognose Snake	
Western Spiny Softshell	
Milk Snake	
Common Snapping Turtle	

Source: BLM, 1990

Potential peregrine nesting cliffs are scattered throughout the Missouri River Breaks. 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 resource area. Least terns have been found on islands at Fort Peck Reservoir and on islands down stream from the reservoir. The wetlands within the resource 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 resource 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.

Most of the mountain plover observations in the resource area are associated with hard pan areas in the Willow Creek drainage. 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 resource 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.

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

Woody vegetation is important to sharp-tailed 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).

The BLM may provide artificial nesting platforms for osprey, golden eagles and other raptors. The 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.

To implement the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the 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 these 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).

### **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 2.3.

**TABLE 2.3  
RESERVOIRS IDENTIFIED FOR FISHERIES  
ON BLM LAND**

Atlas	Shoot	Snow
Hose	Gay	Langen
Knudson (Helen) Valley	Lunch	Big

Source: BLM, 1990

Other reservoirs may be identified as fisheries reservoirs with priority consideration given to reservoirs near population centers and major access routes. The BLM will attempt to develop self-sustaining game fish populations while recognizing that some reservoirs would be maintained as put-and-take fisheries. The 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.

### **PRAIRIE DOG MANAGEMENT**

The BLM will maintain or manage prairie dog towns on BLM lands in the Valley RA (800 acres), based on the values or problems encountered.

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

### **ELK AND BIGHORN SHEEP HABITAT MANAGEMENT**

The BLM will provide 50,806 acres of habitat on BLM land for elk in the Missouri Breaks (Figure 2.13 in the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS, 1992). This would be consistent with the MDFWP Elk Management Plan.

The BLM will provide 25,902 acres of habitat on BLM land to maintain and expand bighorn sheep in the resource area (Figure 2.13 in the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS, 1992). This would also allow for new bighorn sheep populations in unoccupied habitat, where suitable forage is available, in the Larb Hills area.

## **Implementation**

ORV use within elk and bighorn sheep habitat will be restricted seasonally to designated roads and trails to reduce wildlife harassment and provide habitat security.

The BLM will 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.

Domestic sheep grazing will 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.

## **RECREATION**

The BLM will maintain and/or enhance the recreational quality of BLM land and resources to ensure enjoyable recreational experiences. The 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 the BLM's image with public land users;
2. Maintaining all facilities where the public comes in contact with the BLM roads, trails, signs, recreation sites and buildings;
3. Developing partnerships among other agencies, organizations, and private citizens; and
4. Enhancing budget/marketing techniques which showcase the 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. The BLM will support dispersed recreation for the public to support local, regional and national needs. The 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 the BLM will be in nationally and regionally recognized areas and in areas where the BLM has previously made substantial investments. The BLM will encourage and support reasonable recreational initiatives from local and regional groups through partnerships, agreements, challenge cost sharing and volunteer efforts.

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

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

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

The 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 the 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 resource area, except for developed recreation sites where an entrance fee is assessed. The BLM will provide sanitation and maintenance services for all developed recreation sites. Partnerships will be sought to help maintain recreation sites.

## **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 the 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.

## **OFF-ROAD VEHICLE DESIGNATIONS**

The BLM will restrict ORV use on BLM land yearlong or seasonally to designated roads and trails to 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 will 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.

The BLM will designate 787,400 BLM acres open, 162,000 BLM acres limited seasonally, and 70,486 BLM acres limited yearlong to ORVs.

## **Areas Limited Yearlong**

ORV use in the following areas will be restricted yearlong to designated roads and trails (Map 5 and Supplemental Map I in the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS, 1992).

ORV use in the two WSAs (Bitter Creek and Burnt Lodge) will be restricted yearlong to the existing roads and trails (65,890 acres). 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 will be restricted yearlong to provide habitat security and protect vegetation for the watershed (4,586 acres).

ORV use in Faraasen Park will be restricted yearlong to protect recreation values (10 acres).

## **Areas Limited Seasonally**

ORV use in the following areas will be restricted seasonally with vehicle travel restricted to designated roads and trails (Map 5 in the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS, 1992). The seasonal restriction, September 1 through December 1, is based on the big game hunting season. If the hunting season will change, the seasonal restriction would be modified accordingly.

The Missouri Breaks area will be restricted seasonally to protect fragile soils, reduce user conflicts, and maintain and improve water quality. This area includes the southern portion of the Valley (162,000 acres) RA.

## **Implementation**

The following exceptions will apply to the limited designations, except in the WSAs:

1. Vehicle access for camping will 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, will be allowed motorized access off designated roads and trails.
3. Off-road vehicle use will be allowed for game retrieval. In some areas, retrieval may be restricted.

Those roads not designated open within areas limited yearlong will be closed. Roads not designated open within areas limited seasonally will be closed from September 1 through December 1. See Map 5 and Supplemental Map I in the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS (1992) for the ORV travel plan indicating those designations.

Resource damage, changes in landscape and user conflicts will be considered in opening or closing roads and trails in the future. The guide for rating soil impacts from off-road travel will 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.

The BLM will implement a signing and public outreach program and publish maps that delineate boundaries and travel restrictions. Areas designated as limited will be signed, identifying those roads and trails not open to motorized travel and an explanation of allowed uses.

The BLM will 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 will be granted, unless specifically prohibited.

ORV use on newly acquired land will normally be consistent with adjacent areas. Special circumstances may require a change from adjacent conditions. These areas will be mapped and identified for the public.

### **Intensive ORV Use Area**

The BLM will 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 will include maps and brochures of the intensive use area, signing, fencing, monitoring and enforcement. Competitive events will require a special recreation use permit.

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

## **WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT**

A final suitability study/EIS has been completed that recommended wilderness designation for the Burnt Lodge

WSA. The Bitter Creek WSA was determined not suitable for wilderness designation. More information on these WSAs can be found in the Final Bitter Creek Wilderness EIS (1989) and the Final Missouri Breaks Wilderness Suitability Study/EIS (1987).

The BLM will maintain the wilderness values in two WSAs (Burnt Lodge and Bitter Creek). The Secretary of Interior made recommendations to the President in October 1991. Table 2.4 shows the Secretary of Interior's wilderness recommendations for these two WSAs (1991). In January 1993, the President sent a recommendation 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 2.4  
WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>Wilderness Study Area</b>	<b>Acres Recommended for Wilderness</b>	<b>Acres Recommended for Non-Wilderness</b>
Burnt Lodge	13,730	
Bitter Creek		59,660

Source: BLM, 1991

### **Implementation**

WSAs will continue to be managed under the 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.

The 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**

The BLM will manage activities to comply with the Visual Resource Management (VRM) policy. The BLM land

within the resource area has been assigned a VRM class based on a process that considers scenic quality, sensitivity to changes in the landscape and distance zone (Map 1 in the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS, 1992). The resource 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.

The VRA does not include any Class I areas.

Class II areas are landscapes that provide contrast to the uniformity of the surrounding plains. In the resource area, this includes 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, the BLM places management emphasis on maintaining scenic quality within the overall multiple-use management direction.

Class III and IV areas primarily include the open prairie and grasslands in the resource area. Management of these areas allows alteration of the visual landscape, but works to minimize the visual disruption.

### **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 the 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.

A cultural resource management plan will be prepared for the Valley and Phillips RAs. The purpose is to assign cultural resources to particular uses and assess and establish thresholds for determining cultural property significance. The cultural resource management plan 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). The BLM will ensure that all proposed actions, initiated or authorized by the BLM, avoid damage to federal and non-federal cultural resources. The 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.

The 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 resource 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. The 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.

## **Implementation**

The primary management objectives are to properly manage the cultural resources under the 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 resource 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 resource 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 resource 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. The 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.

The 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, 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.

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

1. Recreation sites; Faraasen Park.
2. Administrative Sites; 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.

The 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.

### **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**

The BLM 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.

The demand for minor forest products will be met within the constraints of the Small Sales of Forest Products Programmatic EA.

### **Implementation**

Christmas trees for personal use may be cut throughout the resource area, except in 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 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.

## **LANDS**

The 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.

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 modification or termination are provided below. New withdrawals are considered on an individual basis.

### **Land Acquisition and Disposal**

The BLM will pursue acquisitions as opportunities arise through exchange or purchase with willing proponents and/or sellers. The BLM recognizes and respects private property rights and will 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 C. Private, state and other lands meeting the criteria in Appendix C will be in conformance with this land use plan. The main objective will be to attain a BLM land pattern which balances multiple resource values and brings about better manageability. Lands acquired will have multiple resource values such as access, riparian-wetland areas, ACECs, recreation and wildlife habitat.

A total of 34,651 acres of BLM land will be available within the Valley RA for disposal (Appendix C and Map 2 in the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS, 1992). Lands identified for disposal will 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). The BLM land identified for disposal will be subject to further site specific evaluation and if significant values are found they may be retained under the BLM management. An environmental analysis

and Notice of Realty Action will be completed for each disposal action. Areas not identified for disposal will be managed for long-term public ownership.

### **Implementation**

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

As opportunities arise, the BLM will 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 will be the primary method of acquisition and may include BLM land within or outside the resource area.

### **Rights-of-Way and Corridor Planning**

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

The RMP did not identify corridors because of the small amounts of BLM land along occupied corridors.

Avoidance areas and windows were not identified in the resource area.

The existing communications site located in the SE1/4 SE1/4, 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. WSAs are not subject to ROW application.

### **Implementation**

ROWS outside of WSAs will be considered on a case-by-case basis with appropriate stipulations from the 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 resource 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.

## 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 land is identified for public sale and meets disposal criteria 1 of Section 203 of FLPMA.

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

## 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 resource area office.

### 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 FWS and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). 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 COE 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 2.5 shows the amount of withdrawn land recommended for revocation within the Valley RA and outside the CMR.

**TABLE 2.5  
LAND IDENTIFIED FOR REVOCATION**

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

Source: BLM, 1990



The 355.73 acres of federal land is located between the confluence of the Milk River and the Missouri River. The BLM concurs with the COE 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. The 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.

## Bureau of Reclamation Withdrawn Lands

Various Executive or Secretarial Orders dated between 1902 and 1910 withdrew the 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 contains many miles of main line, feeder canals and return ditches or drains.

Some of the withdrawn lands are managed by the BR subject to third party agreements. The BR has entered into agreements with the Glasgow Irrigation District on June 27, 1975 and December 11, 1981. The irrigation districts subsequently lease the withdrawn lands for grazing and agricultural purposes. On some lands, the BR has entered into agreements with the MDFWP for managing areas either as a park or a wildlife management area. 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 modification or termination 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 of the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS (1992). The BLM has been and will continue with the withdrawal review process and

update the acres identified for modification or termination in the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS (1992).

The BLM has recommended 15,185.49 acres for termination (June, 1994) of which 826.51 acres are located in the Valley RA (see Table 2.6). In the Valley RA, 746.51 acres are suitable for disposal and will be used to achieve acquisition goals (see Appendix C). The remaining 80.00 acres are suitable for retention because of wildlife and recreational values and will be managed by this approved plan.

The submission of BLM's recommendation, at this point in the planning process, does not allow the BLM to complete the process for withdrawals proposed for revocation. The BLM will complete the withdrawal review process and update the acreages through plan maintenance, or if necessary a plan amendment, for the lands proposed for revocation.

**TABLE 2.6  
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION LAND  
IDENTIFIED FOR TERMINATION  
IN THE VALLEY RESOURCE AREA**

Serial Number	Acres
MTM-40735	45.16
MTM-40933	80.00
MTM-40919	111.88
MTM-40946	589.47
Total	826.51

## ACCESS TO BLM LAND

Access will 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 will 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.

The BLM has identified 13 BLM acres as needing new legal public access and 72,860 BLM acres needing additional access (Appendix D). Map 3, in the proposed JVP RMP/final EIS (1992), shows the areas for new and additional public access.



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

### **Implementation**

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

Access goals will be accomplished in accordance with existing laws, the BLM regulations and guidelines. The primary method of access will 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 will be installed and maintained for public access routes and boundaries.

## **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**

The 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)**

The BLM must identify, evaluate and designate ACECs through an RMP or an amendment to an RMP. Areas are nominated by the public, the 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.

During the public comment period on the draft RMP/EIS, new information was received for the Mountain Plover ACEC nomination. This nomination was re-evaluated to determine if it met 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.

The BLM received additional ACEC nominations in November, 1990, and during the public comment period on the draft RMP/EIS. This included the Mixed Grass Prairie nomination in the Valley RA. If this nomination qualifies for further consideration, per the ACEC criteria, alternatives for special management will be considered through an amendment to the Judith-Valley-Phillips RMP/EIS.

The BLM has determined that the most efficient way to consider these nominations is to begin the inventory and ACEC evaluation process in 1994, complete the evaluation and begin an amendment to the JVP RMP in 1995, and complete the amendment in 1996.

## **WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS**

The 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.

The BLM reviewed 12 rivers and streams within the Valley RA which may have free-flowing and outstandingly remarkable values. Of these, 11 were free-flowing but did not possess outstanding remarkable values, and one was neither free-flowing or possessing outstandingly remarkable values.