

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND NEED

This *Phoenix Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (RMP/EIS) is being prepared to guide the BLM in its management of approximately 911,000 acres of public land in Arizona within the Phoenix Resource Area. It is prepared under the authority of Sections 102 and 202 of the *Federal Land Policy and Management Act* (FLPMA) and in conformance with the BLM planning regulations, 43 CFR 1600.

The *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) requires all federal agencies to prepare EISs on major federal actions. An RMP is considered a major federal action, therefore, it is accompanied by an EIS. The final EIS (FEIS) in this document analyzes the impacts of implementing the BLM's proposed action alternative (the Proposed RMP) for the Phoenix Resource Area and, together with the alternative analysis in the draft RMP/EIS, conforms to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA.

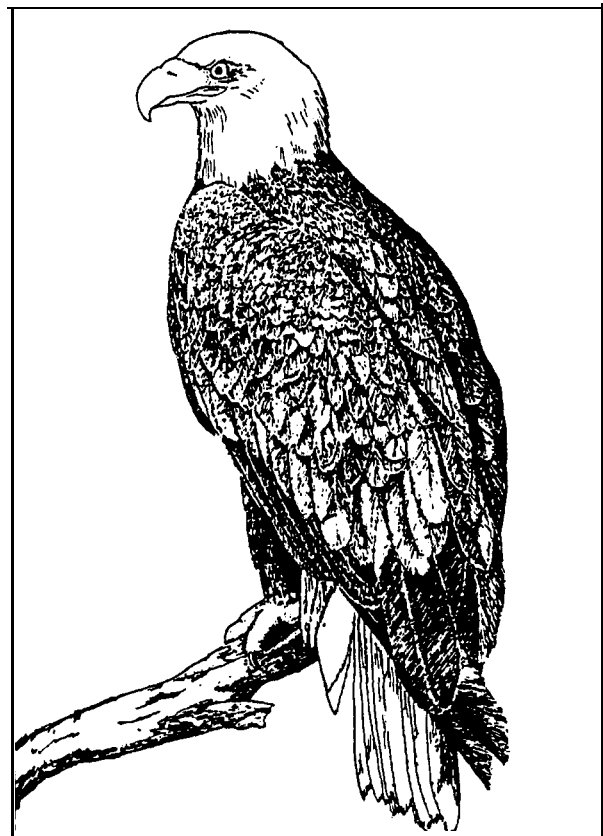
This RMP/EIS focuses on resolving six key planning issues associated with the management of the RMP area's public land. These six planning issues were identified during BLM's scoping process. The scoping process was designed to identify the issues and was begun on January 17, 1986 when the BLM published in the *Federal Register* a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an RMP/EIS. Following the issuance of the NOI, the BLM held several public meetings and sent mailouts asking the public to identify issues that should be addressed in the RMP/EIS. See Chapter 5 for a description of the public input opportunities available for this RMP/EIS. This RMP/EIS does not address two key issues identified during the scoping process. These two issues—rangeland management and wilderness—have been covered by the BLM in separate EISs: rangeland management in the *Eastern Arizona Grazing* EIS (1986) and wilderness management in the *Phoenix Wilderness* EIS (1987). The Record of Decision on the *Eastern Arizona Grazing* EIS and the Proposed Action Alternative in the *Phoenix Wilderness* EIS have been carried forward in this RMP/EIS.

This RMP/EIS would replace land use planning decisions in three existing Management Framework Plans (MFPs)—Silver Bell, Middle Gila and Black Canyon— as amended; and a Phoenix District Planning Analysis which have guided the BLM's management of public land in the RMP area for the past 12 years. The current planning decisions that still have merit are incorporated into this RMP. Until decisions resulting from this RMP are documented in the Arizona State Director's Record of Decision, however, the existing planning decisions remain valid.

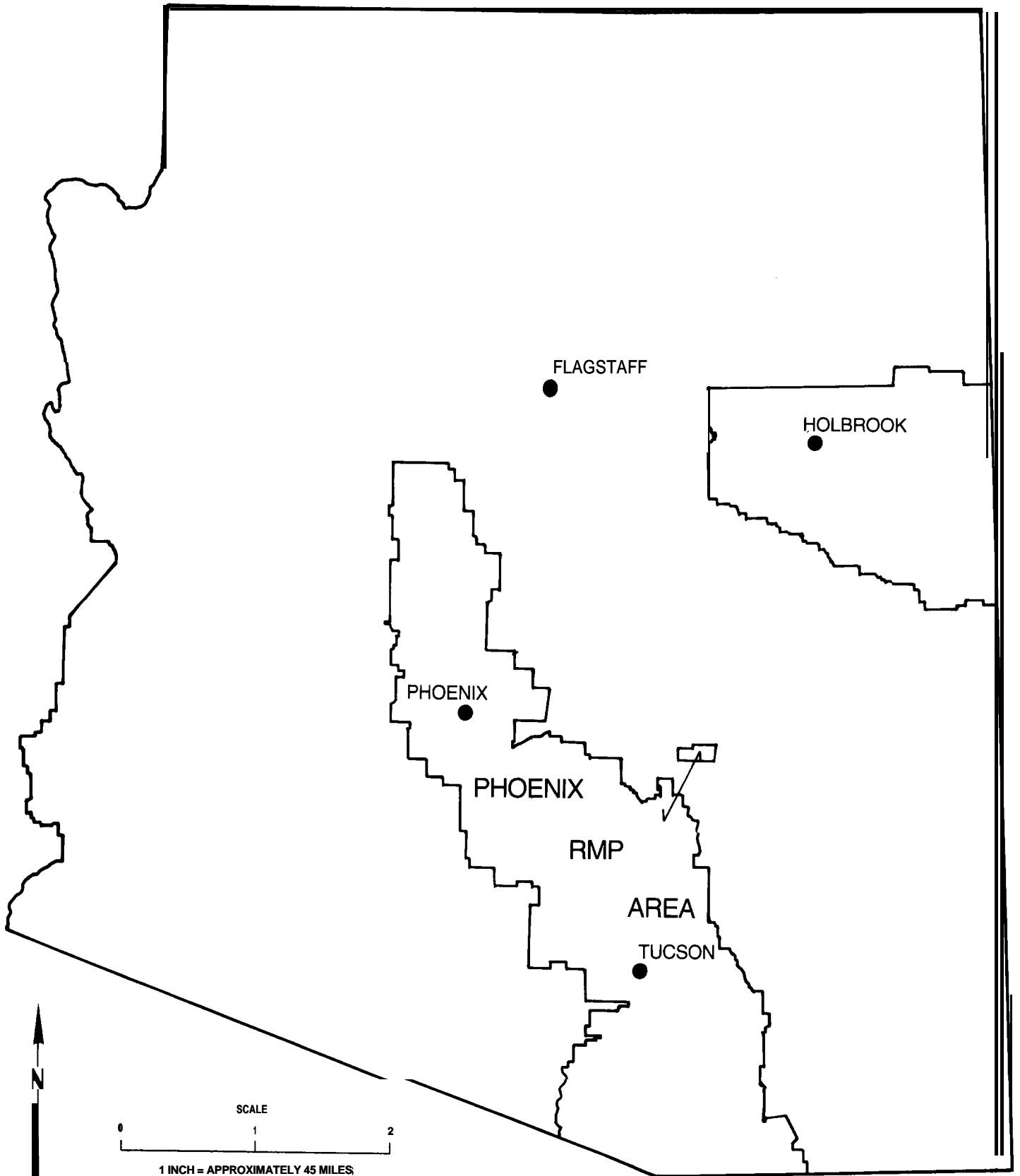
Description of the Planning Area

The Phoenix RMP area is divided into two distinct geographic regions (see Map 1-1). The northern region, Apache and Navajo counties, encompasses about 228,700 acres of scattered public land lying north of the Sitgreaves National Forest and south of the Navajo Indian Reservation.

The southern portion of the RMP area includes 682,640 acres of scattered public land in central and south central Arizona. The land is among private and state holdings and Indian reservations. The southern portion of the planning area has about 75 percent of the state's 2.7 million people and includes the major metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson.



MAP 1 -1
PHOENIX RMP/EIS AREA



The planning area covers all or parts of eight Arizona counties. Table I-1 shows a county-by-county breakdown of the surface and minerals acres administered by the BLM in the Phoenix Resource Area.

The public land pattern in the RMP area includes 20 percent blocked land, 40 percent checkerboard and 40 percent scattered. Population pressures exerted by the major metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson have greatly increased the demands on public land in the RMP area. From an economic standpoint, much of the planning area's public land is high value, approaching one dollar per square foot in some areas.

The RMP area's public land provides valuable public recreation opportunities and exhibits important wildlife, archaeological, wilderness, scenic and recreational values. Often the protection of these important resource values conflicts with development pressures, requiring that difficult choices be made. It is the BLM's goal to provide through this RMP/EIS, a long-term approach to resolving these conflicts.

addressed in the RMP/EIS. The planning team then analyzed the public's comments and identified six major planning issues to be resolved.

The six issues are:

Issue 1: Land Tenure Adjustment

Land Tenure Adjustment is the major RMP issue. The BLM in Arizona is currently involved in a large-scale state and private exchange program designed to block up land ownerships for more efficient management. To resolve this issue, the BLM would need to design a long-term land tenure adjustment program for the RMP area.

Issue 2: Utility Corridors and Communication Sites

The resolution of this issue would require the identification of routings and sites for major utility and communication site rights-of-way.

**TABLE I-1
Public Land Acres by County (Surface and Mineral Ownership)
Bureau of Land Management, Phoenix District, Arizona**

COUNTY	Fed.Surface Fed.Minerals	Fed.Surface State Minerals	Fed.Surface Priv.Minerals	State Surface Fed.Minerals	Priv.Surface Fed.Minerals
Apache	129,670	0	4,227	32,326	59,245
Gila	6,115	0	0	120	3,040
Maricopa	76,088	1,237	0	55,967	113,439
Navajo	93,050	1,760	0	16,699	45,081
Pima	160,975	240	240	55,923	345,389
Pinal	263,725	720	0	188,213	142,916
Santa Cruz	2,841	0	0	1,800	29,895
Yavapai	170,294	111	50	78,644	70,601
TOTAL	902,758	4,068	4,517	429,692	809,606

Source: Phoenix District files.

Planning Process Overview

The BLM resource management planning process consists of nine steps, graphically illustrated in Figure I-1.

Planning Issues

Planning issues are those major concerns, problems or opportunities associated with the management of the public land in the RMP area. The issues drive the RMP in that the Proposed RMP and the other alternatives studied are primarily designed to resolve the identified planning issues.

The BLM interdisciplinary planning team used the scoping process to identify issues. Through communication media such as public meetings, newsletters and directed mailings, the public was given the opportunity to identify issues that needed to be

Issue 3: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Other Areas Requiring Special Management

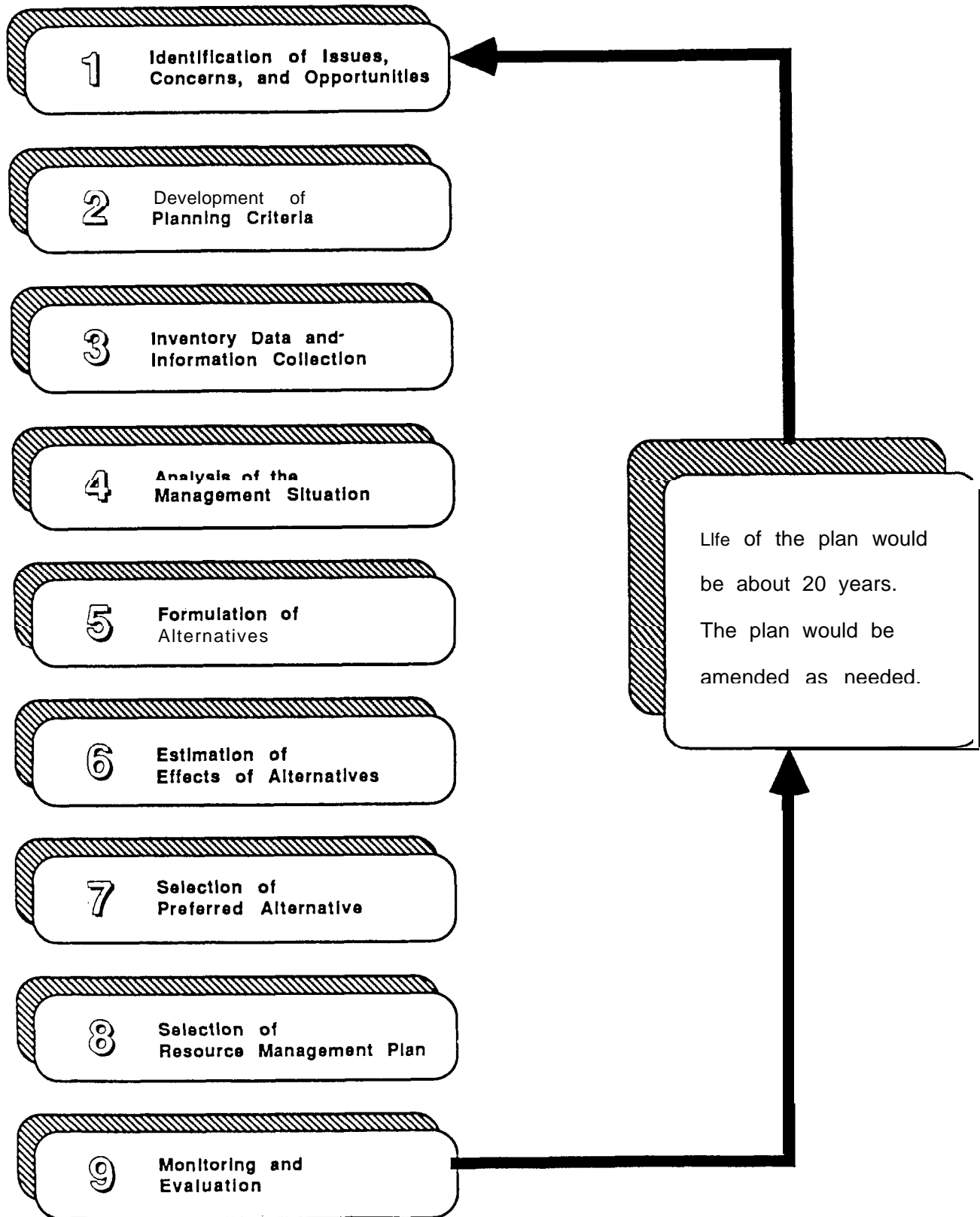
Scoping identified areas and resources which might benefit from or require special management. Consequently, a resolution of this issue would require consideration for designating areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) or other special management areas (SMAs).

Issue 4: Off-Road Vehicle Restrictions

ORV restrictions are an issue because of public concern about vehicle use on public land and because current BLM policy requires all public land to be designated as open, closed or limited for ORV use.

STEPS IN THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

Figure I-I



Issue 5: Recreation Management

This issue was identified by the public and local governments during scoping. The concern focused on the need for the BLM to provide open space recreation opportunities near Phoenix and Tucson and also for the BLM to provide public land for local park development. A resolution of this issue would require a identification of land in the RMP Area suited for these purposes.

Issue 6: Land Classifications

The *Federal Land Policy and Management Act* (FLPMA) calls for a review of all existing classifications in the land use planning process. Consistent with FLPMA, classifications no longer useful for their intended purpose would, through this RMP/EIS, be recommended for termination.

Environmental Issues

Information received from the public during the issue identification phase of this planning effort was also utilized by the BLM planning team to identify significant “environmental issues” that would be addressed. An environmental issue is a value that is expected to be significantly impacted by one or more of the alternatives chosen for study. Consistent with CEQ regulations, this FEIS discusses effects on only those environmental issues that would be significantly impacted by the Proposed RMP. The environmental issue identification process eliminates from detailed study the environmental issues which would not be affected by the Proposed RMP. The environmental issues impacted by the Proposed RMP are the same as those identified in the draft RMP/EIS as being significantly affected by one or more of the other alternatives chosen for study.

The environmental issues in this Proposed RMP/FEIS are:

1. Effects on Land Uses -
 - Land ownership
 - Land available for recreation and other public purposes
 - Right-of-way development
 - Payments in lieu of taxes (PILT)
2. Effects on locatable mineral development
3. Effects on watershed condition
4. Effects on rangeland management
 - Ranch operations
 - Ranch values
5. Effects on areas of cultural significance
6. Effects on vegetation
7. Effects on riparian habitat
8. Effects on special status plants -
 - 3 federally listed species
 - 3 federal candidate species
9. Effects on wildlife
 - 3 federally listed species (also state listed)
 - 1 federal candidate species (also state listed)
 - 1 state listed species
 - 3 game species
10. Effects on wild, free-roaming burros
11. Effects on recreation use

