

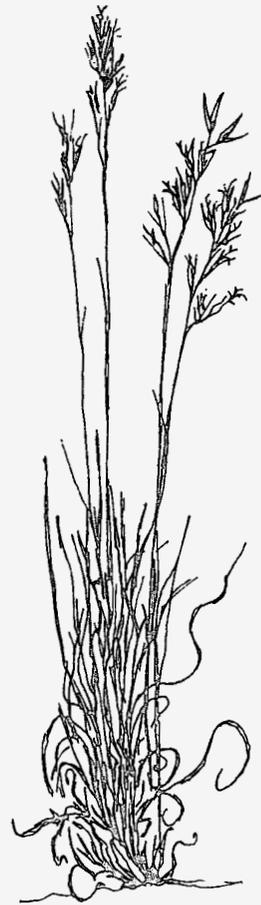
West HiLine

Resource Management Plan
Environmental Impact Statement

FINAL

1988

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Lewistown District, Montana



BLM-MT-ES-88-004-4410

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

FINAL

West HiLine

Resource Management Plan
Environmental Impact Statement

Prepared By

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Marvin LeNove

State Director
Montana State Office

1988

Dear Reader:

This proposed final West HiLine Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement is to be used in conjunction with the draft RMP/EIS issued in May, 1987. The draft analyzed four alternatives, including the preferred alternative, for managing 626,098 acres of public surface and 1,328,014 acres of subsurface minerals administered by the Bureau of Land Management through the Lewistown District Office. A limited number of the draft documents and accompanying maps are available at the Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown District Office, Airport Road, Lewistown, Montana 59457.

The comments and suggestions received during public review of the draft RMP/EIS did not require that the draft be rewritten. However, changes were made in the preferred alternative including: the addition of Middle Butte to the Sweet Grass Hills Area of Critical Environmental Concern; correction of the subsurface acreage figures presented in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4; and clarification of material addressed throughout the draft. The "Using This Document" portion of this final shows the location of this clarified material; describes how various portions of the draft and this document complement each other; and directs the reader to several key areas depending on the level of review desired.

Two additional maps have been included in this proposed final. Figure 3.10 shows the number of claims per township in the entire West HiLine planning area and Figure 3.11 identifies potential areas of locatable minerals and claims in the Sweet Grass Hills.

To better describe the Bureau's oil and gas program, Appendix 1.3 has been added to this final. It describes the general operations involved in oil and gas activities; the history of oil and gas development; an overview of the current leasing program; the program's reasonably foreseeable development scenario; and the cumulative impacts of the development scenario.

The written comments received concerning the draft, along with a summary of oral comments provided during six public meetings, and the Bureau's responses to these comments are given in Chapter 5 of this document.

Any portion of this plan may be protested. Protests should be sent to the Director (760), Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, 18th and C Streets NW, Washington, D.C. 20240, within the 30-day protest period, which ends July 30, 1988. Protest statements should include the following information:

The name, mailing address, telephone number and interest of the person filing the protest.

A statement of the issue or issues being protested.

A statement of the part or parts of the plan being protested.

A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party, or an indication of the date of the issue or issues that were discussed for the record.

A concise statement explaining why the proposed decision is believed to be wrong.

At the end of the 30-day protest period, the BLM may issue a Record of Decision, approving implementation of any portions of the proposed plan not under protest. Approval will be withheld on any portion of the plan under protest until the protest has been resolved. Any significant changes to the proposed plan, resulting from a protest, will be made available for public review and comment prior to final approval and implementation.

Following final approval of the plan a "desk document" consolidating and summarizing the management guidance developed through this planning project will be prepared for each participating resource area. This document will be designed for the everyday use by Bureau of Land Management employees while implementing the Resource Management Plan. A limited number of the desk documents will be available to the public upon request. Persons desiring a desk document may submit a written request to the Lewistown District BLM Office, Airport Road, Lewistown, Montana 59457.

We thank the individuals and organizations who participated in our planning process; helping us to prepare a plan that will lead to more effective and efficient management of public lands and minerals. Your interest is appreciated.

Sincerely,



State Director

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
LEWISTOWN DISTRICT OFFICE
LEWISTOWN, MONTANA**

PROPOSED FINAL

**WEST HILINE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

This proposed final Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement addresses future management options for 626,098 surface acres and 1,328,014 subsurface acres in northcentral Montana. These lands are administered by the Bureau of Land Management through the Havre, Great Falls, Judith, and Phillips Resource Areas of the Lewistown District Office. Only small portions of the Judith and Phillips Resource Areas, related to management of the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River, are addressed in this RMP/EIS.

The plan focuses on management options to resolve five issues: landownership adjustments; off-road vehicle designations; location of major rights-of-way; identification and management of emphasis areas; and recreational management of the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River.

Four alternatives were developed to resolve these issues. The alternatives include Alternative A—continuation of existing management (No Action); Alternative B—emphasizing consumptive uses with minimum restrictions; Alternative C—emphasizing of protection and enhancement of non-consumptive uses and; Alternative D—the preferred alternative reflecting a balance of Alternatives A, B and C. Alternative D, as modified, plus the guidance given in the Management Common to All Alternatives section constitutes the proposed final plan.

The proposed plan identifies 15,689 acres of land for disposal and 34,428 acres for exchange or possibly sale; limits ORV use on 427,951 acres and closes 5 acres to ORV use; identifies 141,560 acres as avoidance areas and 63,357 acres as exclusion areas for major lineal rights-of-way; designates the Kevin Rim, Sweet Grass Hills and the Cow Creek areas as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; and provides for future recreation management of the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River, while mitigating impacts to natural and cultural resources.