

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This document is *the proposed final Resource Management Plan and final Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS)*. It incorporates comments and suggestions made on the draft RMP/EIS during the 90-day public review period which began in May, 1987. It also includes minor corrections and additions identified after the draft was published. The RMP portion of this proposed final consists of the proposed alternative (Alternative D) plus the guidance given in the Management Common to All Alternatives section. The EIS portion consists of the information discussing the four alternatives throughout this final.

This document has been prepared in accordance with the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) planning regulations in the Code of Federal Regulations and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 1969.

The information contained in this document reflects current policy and regulatory information as of February 1, 1988. Policy or regulatory changes after the RMP is finalized would be incorporated through plan maintenance, unless they reflect a change in management direction. A change in management direction would require the RMP be amended or a new RMP written.

## LOCATION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The West HiLine planning area is located in the northcentral portion of Montana (see Figure 1.1). It is bounded on the north by Canada, on the east by Phillips County, on the south by Pondera, Teton and Cascade Counties and the Missouri River and to the west by Glacier National Park.

The planning area includes the entire Havre Resource Area (Hill and Blaine Counties and that portion of Chouteau County north of the Missouri River), and that portion of the Great Falls Resource Area located in Glacier, Toole and Liberty Counties. It also includes the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Corridor, and adjacent public lands in the Judith Resource Area (Choteau and Fergus Counties) and the Phillips Resource Area (Phillips County).

The planning area encompasses 11,285,025 acres, most of which is privately owned. The BLM administers 626,098 surface acres (5.5%) and 1,328,014 subsurface acres (11.7%). Other significant landownerships include the Blackfeet, Rocky Boys and Fort Belknap Indian Reservations, small portions of Glacier National Park, the Lewis and Clark National Forest, and some state lands. Table 1.1 portrays the ownership by resource area, within the planning area.

This plan only covers the management of public lands administered by the BLM. It does not affect private lands or lands administered by other federal agencies, within the planning area.

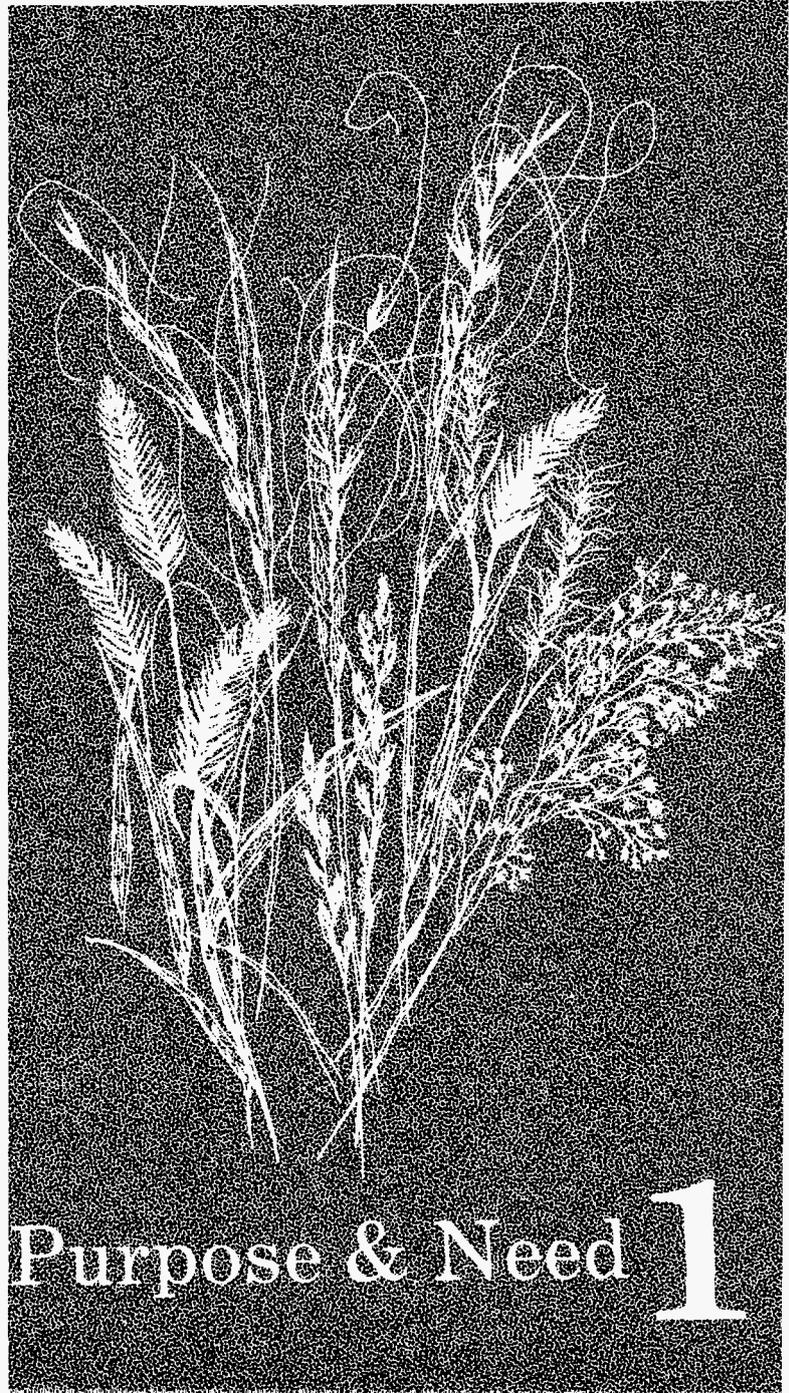


Figure 1.1 Location Map of the West Hilline Resource Management Area.

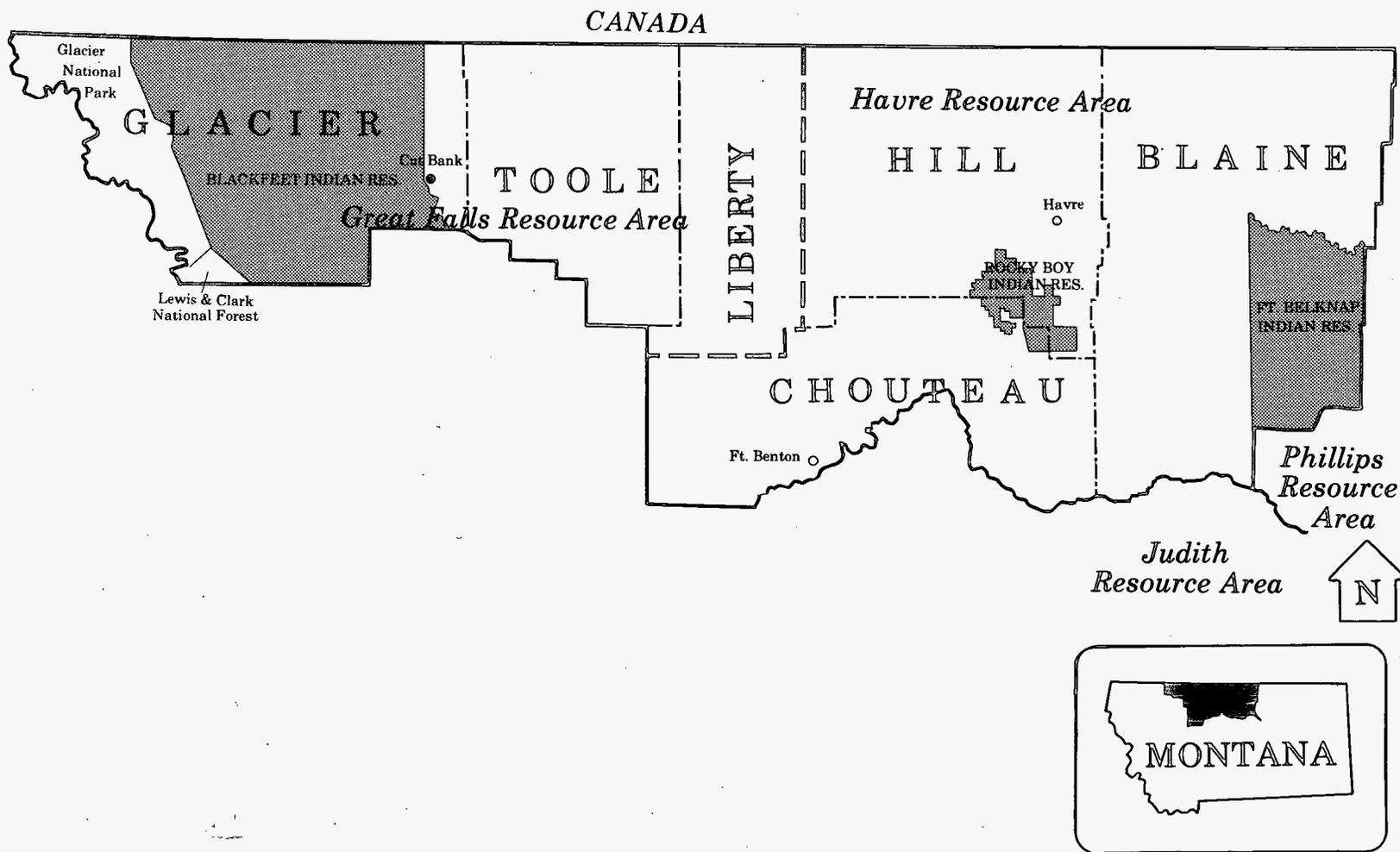


TABLE 1.1 LAND OWNERSHIP BY RESOURCE AREA IN THE PLANNING AREA<sup>1</sup>

RESOURCE AREAS	SURFACE						SUBSURFACE	
	BLM	Private	State	Native American Lands	Other Federal	Total Surface	BLM	Other
Great Falls	37,334	2,057,332	294,772	1,313,563	439,452	4,142,453	178,658	3,963,795
Havre	541,573	5,217,867	597,000	632,000	85,000	7,073,440	1,111,952	5,961,488
Judith <sup>2</sup>	42,588	15,155	6,475	0	0	64,218	32,770	31,448
Phillips <sup>2</sup>	4,603	224	87	0	0	4,914	4,634	280
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>626,098</b>	<b>7,290,578</b>	<b>898,334</b>	<b>1,945,563</b>	<b>524,452</b>	<b>11,285,025</b>	<b>1,328,014</b>	<b>9,957,011</b>

<sup>1</sup> Montana Department of State Lands, 1984  
BLM Public Lands Digest Montana, 1984

<sup>2</sup> These acreage figures are for lands important to river management only.

## PURPOSE AND NEED

The West HiLine RMP will provide a master plan for managing and allocating public land resources within the planning area over the next 10 to 15 years, and precedes the activity planning level. The activity plan is a site-specific, detailed plan that may precede actual site development.

This RMP also resolves several resource issues. It identifies lands for retention, acquisition and disposal; amends the existing designations for open, limited or closed to off-road vehicle (ORV) use areas; identifies areas not suitable for transmission and communication site right-of-way (ROW) location; identifies areas where management emphasis may be required; and determines recreation management direction for the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Corridor.

Management guidance for other resources in the planning area is found in the Management Common to All Alternatives section of Chapter 2. This guidance was carried forward from five management framework plans and five major environmental documents prepared in the 1970s and 1980s. The guidance given in that section will be followed no matter which alternative is selected and is a substantial portion of this RMP.

When the Record of Decision is published, this RMP will supersede all previous planning efforts. It will also consolidate all major land use decisions for BLM-administered lands in the planning area into one document.

## ISSUES

At the beginning of the planning process, the BLM, general public, other federal agencies and state and local governments identified the following issues and management concerns for the planning area.

### Land Tenure Adjustment

The BLM manages a variety of public lands in the West HiLine area, including public domain (lands which have never left federal ownership), land utilization lands (lands which left federal ownership and were later acquired under the Bankhead-Jones Act), and mineral estate (subsurface) lands. Many of these lands are widely scattered and often pose multiple resource management problems. This document will identify which lands should be retained, which lands may leave federal ownership and areas where BLM would like to acquire lands.

### Off-Road Vehicle Management

Off-road vehicle use is increasing throughout the planning area and unauthorized roads and trails are extending into previously unroaded areas. Executive Order (EO) 11644, as amended by EO 11989, directs that all public lands be designated as open, limited or closed to off-road vehicle use. This RMP will amend those designations. Existing ORV designations will be reviewed and adjusted to minimize conflicts with other ORV user groups, other public land users and other resource programs.

## Right-of-Way Location

*This RMP will deal with ROW corridor planning by identifying avoidance areas, exclusion areas and timing windows. It will not identify corridors. The rationale for not designating corridors within the planning area is based on the small amount of public land along occupied corridors. Map 4 in the back of this document, shows the occupied corridors as portrayed by the Western Regional Corridor Study of 1986.*

*This planning effort will also identify areas which are not suitable for communication site location.*

## Emphasis Areas

*Two areas in the Great Falls Resource Area and one in the Havre Resource Areas have been identified as emphasis areas that may need management emphasis to protect or preserve particular resources. Figure 1.2 shows the location of these areas.*

The Kevin Rim has high potential as a peregrine falcon reintroduction area; is currently a high use area for a variety of raptors; and contains *significant cultural resources*.

The Sweet Grass Hills are significant because of their importance as a religious and cultural use area for Native Americans; *because they are an integral part of the peregrine falcon reintroduction area*; because they contain high value recreational lands; and because they support diverse wildlife populations.

*The Cow Creek area contains a segment of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail, the Cow Island Trail and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. It also includes portions of the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River (UMNWSR) and the Cow Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA).*

## Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Management

*The Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River was designated in 1976, and since that time there have been significant increases in recreational use of the river. This RMP affords BLM the opportunity to analyze the issue of increasing recreational expectations.*

*The proposed alternative plus the guidance given in the Management Common to All Alternatives section will provide direction for revising the Coordinated Resource Activity Plan, which will prescribe specific management actions along the UMNWSR.*

## ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED

Numerous concerns were identified during the scoping process that were *beyond the scope* of this RMP. The disposal of produced water from oil and gas production; the development of water resources in the Milk River Valley; the Milk River water diversion proposal by the Bureau of Reclamation; the management of range resources on Bureau of Reclamation lands; and the cleanup of the Kevin Sunburst oil field are examples of issues that can't be resolved in an RMP.

The guidance for the majority of these issues is contained in various Memorandums of Understanding among the BLM, the Bureau of Reclamation and the State of Montana.

Coal development is not addressed in this RMP because the planning area is not in a coal production area and no federal coal leasing will result from this plan. In addition, major coal and mineral operators and organizations were contacted to determine *their* interest in the coal *resources* in the planning area, and there was no apparent interest in these *resources*. Any potential federal coal leasing would be guided by the federal coal management regulations (43 CFR 3425). Any future application for a coal lease would be studied for acceptability utilizing these four planning screens: verification of coal development potential; application of the 20 unsuitability criteria; surface owner consultation (for split-estate lands); and multiple use trade-offs involving other resource values compared to coal. For underground coal mine development, the surface owner consent screen is not applicable. Unsuitability criteria *would* be applied to surface facilities that are associated with underground mining.

Application of these screens would constitute an amendment to this RMP and would be subject to *state government* and public review. If some areas would be found acceptable for *leasing* consideration; the applicant maintains interest; and evidence of surface owner consent is provided; these lands could be offered for competitive lease by the Secretary of the Interior.

Access needs have been addressed in general terms *with existing information* and for geographic areas rather than for specific needs and routes. The Lewistown District is committed to completing an access inventory that will, with public involvement, allow BLM to address the specific access needs for the West HiLine planning area. *The inventory* information on specific routes and acquisition needs will be presented in an Access Activity Plan *within* several years.

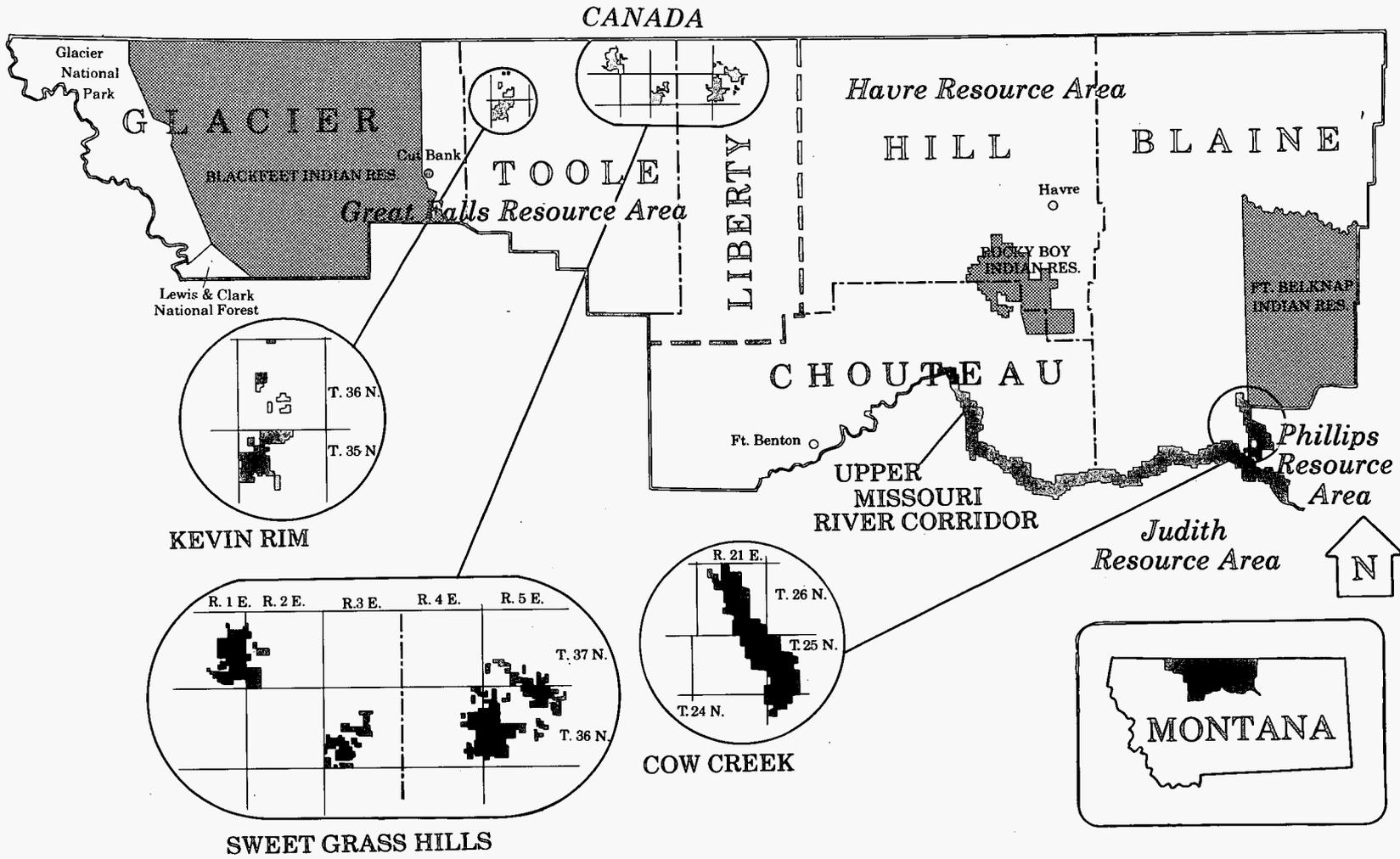
## ISSUES PREVIOUSLY ADDRESSED

Concerns about grazing management, riparian management, wilderness management and oil and gas management were all identified during the scoping process. However, these resource issues have been addressed in previous planning efforts and are *discussed* in the Management Common to All Alternatives section of Chapter 2. *Additional detailed information concerning oil and gas leasing is available in Appendix 1.3.*

## PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria may be legal, policy, or regulatory constraints that direct or limit BLM's ability to resolve issues, or they may respond to public *opinion and* coordination efforts with state or local governments and other federal agencies. General criteria were developed to guide the RMP/EIS. Specific criteria for each issue were then developed to guide the formulation of alternatives and selection of the *proposed* alternative.

Figure 1.2 Location Map of the Emphasis Areas and the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Corridor.



## General Criteria

This plan will provide BLM with broad resource management guidelines to implement a variety of activity plans. Specific guidance will be used *only where resolution of major management conflicts is needed*.

The BLM will adhere to the *program* guidance provided by BLM's Washington Office Supplemental Guidance for RMPs (1986) and the State Director's Guidance for RMPs (1983/1984).

Valid *management guidance* from existing documents will be carried forward in the Management Common To All Alternatives section of Chapter 2.

The RMP alternatives will be developed on a planning area wide basis *and* will only analyze those issues requiring management resolution. The RMP/EIS and supporting documents will incorporate all available valid decisions, analysis and information.

The RMP will apply mitigating measures or stipulations only to resolve existing or projected management conflicts. Most of these will be standard operating procedures and will be identified in the Management Common to All Alternatives section of Chapter 2.

Any decision or mitigative measure required by the RMP will be enforceable and *capable of being monitored*.

The plan will dovetail with local, county, state and other federal agency plans *to the greatest extent possible*. The Bureau has coordinated with other agencies for assistance in determining consistency with their plans. This *coordination has been* accomplished through the review process.

The RMP will be used as the basic planning document to guide BLM management and budget requests for the planning area over the next 10-15 years. Revisions will be made as necessary.

The final RMP will be divided to address two planning units. One planning unit is the entire Havre Resource Area (which will include the management guidance for the UMNWSR). The decisions affecting the UMNWSR will later be incorporated into the Judith, Phillips and Valley RMP when *that document is* prepared. The other planning unit is the northern portion of the Great Falls Resource Area. *The Great Falls section will incorporate pertinent decisions* from the Headwaters RMP, thus providing the Great Falls Resource Area with one RMP.

## Issue Specific Criteria

### Issue No. 1: Land Tenure Adjustment

*The public land sale criteria from the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the acquisition, disposal and retention criteria from the Supplement to the State Director's Guidance, June 1984: will be applied to public lands in the planning area. The criteria in the State Director's Guidance was refined for each resource area. The criteria to be used in identifying lands for acquisition, retention and disposal is presented in Appendices 1.1 and 1.2.*

### Issue No. 2: Off-Road Vehicle Management

*Public interest for proper resource utilization, safety, and environmental protection will be used to determine the need for ORV use restrictions under the limited or closed designations. These restrictions will be needed to minimize: damage to vegetation and cultural resources; soil erosion; water degradation; harassment of wildlife and the loss of their habitat; and nonimpairment of wilderness study areas. Limited restrictions will apply to certain types of vehicles, times of the year, areas or trails, or to kinds of conditions. Closed restrictions will apply all year to all types of ORVs by areas or by designated roads or trails.*

*The open designation will apply to lands not otherwise limited or closed.*

### Issue No. 3: Right-of-Way Location

*An area will remain open to lineal and communication site right-of-way location unless restrictions are needed to: minimize adverse impacts to high value wildlife habitat; minimize visual intrusions to the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Corridor; avoid impacts to WSAs; and to avoid destruction of historic and archaeological sites listed (or with potential for listing) on the National Register of Historic Places.*

All future transmission line sitings will consider the Montana Interagency Agreement for right-of-way siting and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation siting rules. Future sitings will also consider existing corridors. *The Glossary portion of this document gives the comparative definitions between BLM and the Montana Major Facilities Siting Act for avoidance areas, exclusion areas and timing windows.*

### Issue No. 4: Emphasis Areas

All high resource values *in these areas*, including, but not limited to, wildlife, cultural, minerals and recreation will be identified.

Resource conflicts will be identified *and* public needs and demands for the resources present will be considered; including but not limited to, existing mining claims and mineral leases.

The RMP will strive to balance resource use, while ensuring the protection and preservation of significant resources.

### Issue No. 5: Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Management

Management actions will *remain consistent* with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (PL 90-542 1968) and its amendment for the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River (PL 94-486, 1976).

*This RMP* will provide for utilization of recreation resources.

Resource conflicts will be identified and resolved in the alternatives.

*This RMP* will provide for visitor services through a blend of private and public initiatives within the constraints of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act *as amended*, and the Memorandum of Understanding with the National Park Service.

Management will continue the segregation of locatable minerals within the wild segments of the UMNWSR Corridor. In addition, BLM will not lease minerals within the remainder of the corridor until rules are developed by the Secretary of the Interior.