



# U. S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management  
Malta Field Office, Montana

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## MALTA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

### SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT





## **SUMMARY**

The Montana Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Malta Field Office (MaFO) has prepared this report to summarize the scoping process of the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for all of the federal surface and mineral estate managed by the BLM within the MaFO boundary in eight counties in northern Montana-Blaine, Choteau, Glacier, Hill, Liberty, Phillips, Toole and Valley. Scoping is a process that is used to encourage public participation, solicit public input, and identify planning issues related to the implementation of the RMP. The public scoping period was held from September 6 to November 15, 2006.

During the scoping period a series of eighteen public open houses were held to encourage public comment on the planning process. Meetings were held in Malta, Whitewater, Glasgow, Opheim, Zortman, Harlem, Hays/Lodge Pole, Turner, Shelby, Browning, Great Falls, Helena, Chester, Big Sandy, Havre, Rocky Boy Agency, Chinook, and Billings. A total of one-hundred eighty-five people attended the open houses.

Coordination with Native American tribal governments and other agencies also occurred during the scoping period. Letters were sent to eight tribal governments on October 26, 2006 inviting their coordination and participation in the RMP revision process. A “kick-off” meeting was held on November 8, 2006 to discuss and initiate a cooperative planning effort with other federal and state agencies containing lands bordering MaFO-administered public lands.

A total of 397 comments and issues were received during the scoping period. Comments were sorted into 14 topical categories: Access and Transportation Management; Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources, and Traditional Values; Fire Management; General Comments; Lands and Realty Management; Livestock Grazing; Minerals and Energy Resources; Recreation and Visitor Services; Social and Economic Values; Soil, Water, and Air Resources (including Water and Air Quality); Special Management Designations (including Wilderness); Vegetation (including Upland and Riparian Management, Noxious Weeds and Forestry); and Wildlife Habitats and Fisheries Management (including Special Status Species).

The majority of comments fell into the Access and Transportation Management, Ecosystem Management, Energy Development and other Commercial Uses, Land Ownership Adjustments, Recreation Visitor Services and Off Highway Vehicles (OHV), and Special Management Designations categories.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS.....	1
1.2	PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN .....	2
1.3	DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA .....	3
1.4	DESCRIPTION OF THE SCOPING PROCESS .....	4
1.4.1	<i>Notice of Intent</i> .....	4
1.4.2	<i>Project Web Site</i> .....	5
1.4.3	<i>Newsletter</i> .....	5
1.4.4	<i>News Release and Newspaper Advertisement</i> .....	6
1.4.5	<i>Scoping Open Houses</i> .....	6
1.4.6	<i>Mailing List</i> .....	7
1.5	AGENCY COORDINATION/COOPERATING AGENCIES .....	7
1.5.1	<i>Cooperation and Collaboration with Agencies and Organizations</i> .....	9
1.5.2	<i>Resource Advisory Council</i> .....	10
1.6	COLLABORATION AND CONSULTATION WITH TRIBES.....	10
<b>SECTION 2</b>	<b>COMMENT SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	METHOD OF COMMENT COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS .....	11
2.1.1	<i>Written Comments by Geographical Area</i> .....	13
2.1.2	<i>Comments by Planning Topical Themes</i> .....	15
<b>SECTION 3</b>	<b>ISSUE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1	CHRONOLOGY OF PLANNING ISSUE DEVELOPMENT .....	18
3.2	PLANNING ISSUE THEMES AND ISSUE STATEMENTS .....	19
3.3	PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY BY ISSUE THEME.....	28
3.3.1	<i>Access and Transportation Management</i> .....	29
3.3.2	<i>Ecosystem Management</i> .....	29
3.3.3	<i>Energy Development and Other Commercial Uses</i> .....	31
3.3.4	<i>Land Ownership Adjustments</i> .....	33
3.3.5	<i>Recreation, Visitor Services and Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV)</i> .....	34
3.3.6	<i>Special Management Area Designation</i> .....	34
3.4	PUBLIC COMMENTS NOT APPLICABLE TO ISSUE THEMES.....	35
3.5	ISSUES RAISED THAT WILL NOT BE ADDRESSED .....	37
3.6	ANTICIPATED DECISIONS .....	37
3.6.1	<i>Future RMP-Level Decisions</i> .....	38
3.6.2	<i>Future Implementation Decisions</i> .....	38
3.7	SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS, INCLUDING NOMINATIONS.....	39
<b>SECTION 4</b>	<b>PLANNING CRITERIA .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>SECTION 5</b>	<b>DATA SUMMARY/DATA GAPS.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>SECTION 6</b>	<b>FUTURE STEPS.....</b>	<b>44</b>
6.1	SUMMARY OF FUTURE STEPS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES .....	44
6.2	CONTACT INFORMATION .....	45
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>A-1</b>
	NOTICE OF INTENT .....	A-1
<b>APPENDIX B</b> .....		<b>B-1</b>
	NEWSLETTER NO. 1 .....	B-1
<b>APPENDIX C</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>C-1</b>

LIST OF COMMENTORS .....	C-1
<b>APPENDIX D .....</b>	<b>D-1</b>
SCOPING COMMENTS BY PLANNING ISSUE THEME .....	D-1

## TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1.1 – MALTA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AREA .....	4
FIGURE 2.1 PROPORTIONS OF WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS PER AFFILIATION.....	13
FIGURE 2.2 PROPORTIONS OF WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS PER GEOGRAPHICAL AREA.....	14
FIGURE 2.3 PROPORTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS PER GEOGRAPHICAL AREA *.....	15
FIGURE 2.4 PROPORTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS PER TOPICAL THEME.....	17
TABLE 1.1 SCOPING OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULE AND ATTENDANCE.....	7
TABLE 2.1 NUMBER OF WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS PER AFFILIATION.....	13
TABLE 2.2 NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS PER GEOGRAPHICAL AREA.....	14
TABLE 2.3 NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS PER TOPICAL THEME.....	16
TABLE 6.1 MALTA RMP/EIS PLANNING MILESTONES.....	45

## **SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION**

The United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is preparing a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for public lands administered by the Malta Field Office (Malta) in Montana. The RMP will replace the 1988 West HiLine and the 1992 Judith-Valley-Phillips (JVP) RMPs.

### **1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS**

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (Public law 91-190) and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA, federal agencies are required to consider the environmental impacts of their proposed actions prior to taking action. Actions that are subject to NEPA include those involving federal funding, requiring federal permits, involving federal facilities and equipment, or affecting federal employees. The actions that would be proposed by the BLM as part of the RMP being developed for the Malta Field Office are subject to the requirements of NEPA. Pursuant to NEPA, the BLM will prepare and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Malta RMP.

Public involvement is a vital component of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and NEPA, vesting the public in the decision making process and allowing for full environmental disclosure. Guidance for implementing public involvement is codified in 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 1506, Part 6 (40 CFR 1506.6), thereby ensuring that federal agencies make a diligent effort to involve the public in preparing NEPA documents.

Public involvement for the Malta RMP is being conducted in four phases:

- Public scoping prior to NEPA analysis to determine the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the RMP/EIS;
- Public outreach via newsletters, news releases, and newspaper advertisements;
- Collaboration with federal, state, local, and tribal governments; and
- Public review and comment on the Draft RMP/EIS, which analyzes likely environmental effects and identifies the BLM's preferred alternatives.

This report documents the results of the first three phases of the public involvement process.

Scoping is a process designed to determine the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in a NEPA document. The process has two components: internal scoping and external scoping. Internal scoping is conducted within an agency or cooperating agencies to determine preliminary and anticipated issues and concerns. Internal scoping meetings were held with an interdisciplinary team of BLM resource

specialists in 2005 to identify the anticipated planning issues, as well as, determine the methods, procedures, and data to be used in the compilation of the Malta RMP/EIS. The anticipated planning issues were compiled into an internal RMP Preparation Plan. All of the issues identified in the internal scoping process were relevant to BLM management in the planning area since implementation of the West HiLine and JVP RMPs in 1988 and 1992; respectively.

External scoping is a public process designed to reach beyond the BLM and attempts to clarify the concerns of high importance to the public. The public process is designed to determine and frame the scope of pertinent issues and alternatives to be addressed in a NEPA document. External scoping helps ensure that real problems are identified early and that they are properly studied; that issues of no concern do not consume time and effort; and that the proposed action and alternatives are balanced, thorough, and able to be implemented.

In accordance with 43 CFR 1610.2(d), the BLM must document the scoping results. The BLM's land use planning guidance (Handbook H-1601-1) requires the preparation of a Scoping Summary Report to capture public input in one document. This report must summarize the discrete comments received during the formal external scoping period. It also must describe 1) the issues and management concerns from public scoping meetings, internal scoping meetings, and the BLM's Preparation Plan; and 2) discuss how these comments will be incorporated into the RMP.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

A RMP is a land use plan that describes broad, multiple-use direction for managing public lands administered by the BLM. FLPMA directs the BLM to develop such land use plans to provide for appropriate uses of public land. Decisions in land use plans guide future land management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions. These decisions establish goals and objectives (desired outcomes) for resource management and the measures needed to achieve them. These measures are expressed as actions and allowable uses (i.e., lands that are open or available for certain uses [including any applicable restrictions] and lands that are closed to certain uses).

The BLM developed and approved two land use plans for this area; the West HiLine in 1988 and the JVP in 1992. Over time the existing plans do not satisfactorily address new and emerging issues. Laws, regulations, policies, and issues regarding management of these public lands have changed during the life of these existing plans. The BLM is developing a new RMP to ensure compliance with current mandates and to address current issues. If decisions in the 1988 West HiLine and the 1992 JVP RMPs are still valid, the BLM may bring them forward into the RMP. When completed, the Malta RMP will replace the existing land use plans.

To support the RMP preparation, the BLM will prepare an EIS that

provides a comprehensive evaluation of all environmental issues and impacts. NEPA requires the BLM to consider a reasonable range of alternatives in its planning process and to analyze and disclose the potential environmental impacts of proposed RMP decisions. The alternative and the impact analysis are documented in the EIS. The EIS process also provides opportunities for participation by the public, other federal agencies, state and local governments, and tribal governments in the RMP development. The RMP and EIS will be combined into one document.

### **1.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA**

Decisions in the RMP/EIS will apply to just over two-and a half million (2,500,000) acres of public land surface estate and three-and a half million (3,500,000) acres of federal subsurface mineral estate (**Figure 1.1**).

This includes:

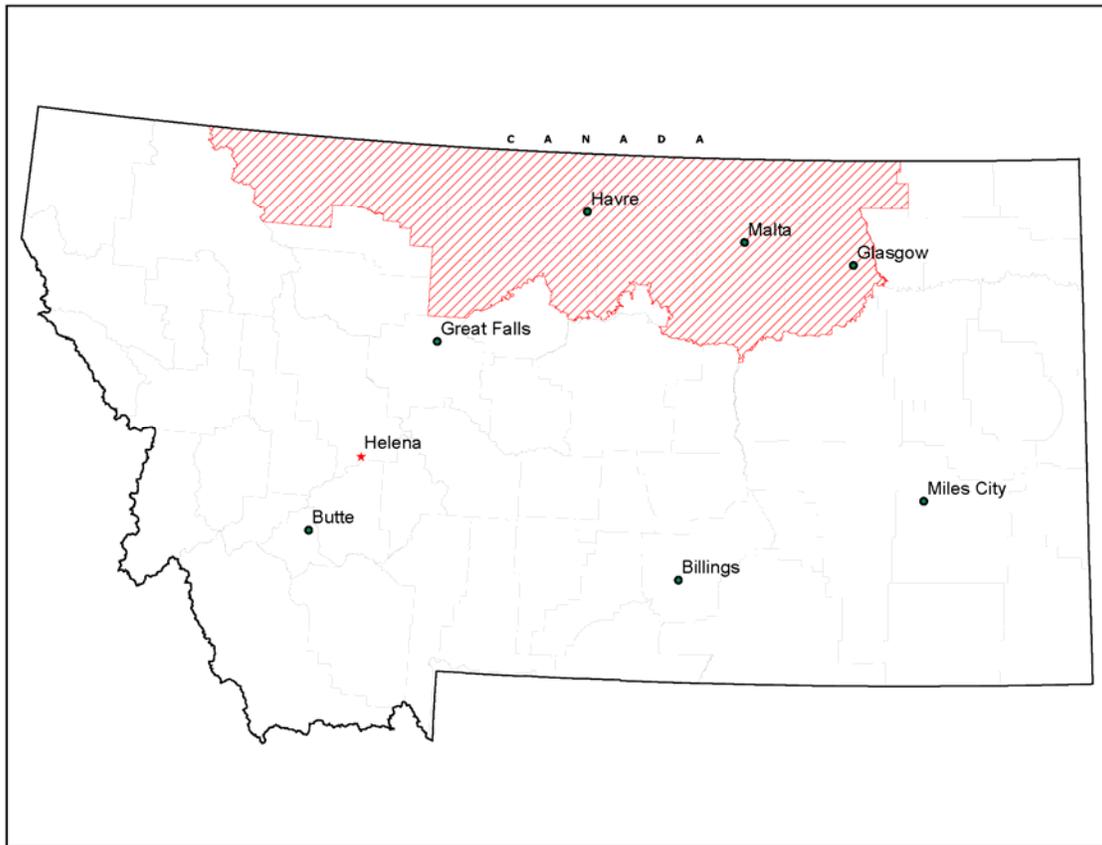
- all surface estate administered by the BLM's Malta Field Office;
- federal mineral resources managed by the BLM beneath private or State surface estate; and
- federal mineral estate lying beneath lands administered by the Bureau of Reclamation.

The RMP/EIS will not make decisions for the surface or mineral estates of land administered by the USDA Forest Service, or for private or State-owned lands and minerals.

The RMP area encompasses more than 15 million acres, and it includes Valley, Phillips, Blaine, Hill, Liberty, Toole, Chouteau and Glacier Counties. Glasgow, Malta and Havre are the largest communities in the RMP area; others include Big Sandy, Browning, Chester, Chinook, Cut Bank, Dodson, Harlem, Landusky, Loring, Opheim, Shelby, Turner, Whitewater, and Zortman.

Most of the BLM-administered lands in the RMP area occur as small tracts interspersed with other federal, state, and private lands. Other federal land managers include the U.S. Forest Service (Lewis and Clark National Forest), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS; Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and the Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge). Other large land owners and managers include the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation for state trust lands; numerous private ranching interests; and the Blackfeet, Fort Belknap, and the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservations.

**Figure 1.1 – Malta Resource Management Plan area**



## **1.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE SCOPING PROCESS**

The BLM follows the public involvement requirements according to the CEQ regulations set forth in 40 CFR 1501.7, which states, “there should be an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed during the planning process.” The BLM also follows public involvement requirements as described in the Resource Management Planning Regulations 43 CFR 1610. The BLM solicits comments, organizes and analyzes all of the comments received, and then distills the comments to identify issues that will be addressed during the planning process. These issues are the scope of analysis for the RMP and are used to develop the project alternatives.

### **1.4.1 Notice of Intent**

The formal public scoping process for the Malta RMP / EIS began on September 9, 2006, with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register*. A copy of the NOI is included in Appendix A. The NOI initiated the public scoping process and served to notify the public of the BLM’s intent to develop an RMP for the Malta Field Office. Under

CEQ regulations, the public comment period must last for at least 30 day; however, the BLM extended this public comment period until November 15, 2006, providing 70 days. Although the formal comment period has ended, the BLM will continue to consider all comments received during the planning process. The NOI was posted on the project web site for public consideration.

#### **1.4.2 Project Web Site**

In August 2006, a Malta RMP / EIS public web site was launched to serve as a clearinghouse for project information during the planning process. The web site, available at [www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp](http://www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp), provides background information about the project, a public involvement timeline and calendar, maps and photos of the planning area, and copies of public information such as the NOI and newsletter. Due to security issues within the online network, the BLM Montana State Office may at its discretion temporarily discontinue this web site. A public web site is not required for NEPA public review periods under CEQ. The BLM, however, understands the inconvenience of the web site being unavailable, possibly during times of public review. For this reason, the public is encouraged to contact the Malta Field Office for any informational requests. The web site is maintained in such a manner as to provide up-to-date information on the status of the Malta RMP / EIS and relevant data.

#### **1.4.3 Newsletter**

The first newsletter for the Malta RMP project was mailed on October 4, 2006, to 993 individuals from the public, agencies, and organizations. The newsletter introduced the BLM and the RMP planning process; provided the preliminary issue themes, planning criteria, and project milestones timeline; and suggested methods for public involvement. The newsletter also provided the dates and venues for the eighteen scoping open houses. A postage-paid comment form was included as an insert to the newsletter to allow the public to easily submit their comments. Additionally, the newsletter gave the public various alternative methods to submit their comments including a dedicated e-mail address ([MT\\_Malta\\_RMP@blm.gov](mailto:MT_Malta_RMP@blm.gov)), via facsimile (406-654-5150), and the BLM Malta Field Office postal address to mail comments on the enclosed form or in any other format.

In addition to mailing, the newsletter was provided at the scoping open houses and posted on the project web site for public review. Future newsletter will be published at major project milestone and mailed to individuals and organizations that have requested to remain on or to be added to the project distribution list. These newsletters also will be posted on the project web site. Participants may request to receive newsletters through electronic mail.

A copy of Newsletter No. 1 is included in Appendix B.

#### **1.4.4 News Release and Newspaper Advertisement**

Advertisements were published in the following newspapers to notify the public of the project, to announce the public open houses, to request public comments, and to provide contact information:

- *Phillips County News* – Malta, MT (September 13, 2006);
- *Blaine County Journal News & Opinion* – Chinook, MT (September 13, 2006);
- *Shelby News Reporter* – Shelby, MT (September 14, 2006);
- *Great Falls Tribune* – Great Falls, MT (September 24, 2006); and
- *Billings Gazette* – Billings, MT (October 30, 2006).

A news release also was issued to various media points during the week of September 19, 2006.

#### **1.4.5 Scoping Open Houses**

The BLM hosted eighteen scoping open houses to further provide the public with opportunities to become involved, learn about the project and planning process, meet some of the RMP team members, and offer comments. As described in the previous section (*News Release and Newspaper Advertisement*), the meetings were advertised in local media. Additionally, the newsletter advertising the meetings was mailed to agency staff and members of the public who have participated in past BLM activities and included in the project distribution list.

During the month of October 2006 (see Table 1-1), open houses were held in fifteen locations within the planning boundary and three meetings were held in regionally accessible locations; Great Falls, Helena and Billings.

At this scoping phase of the planning process, an open house format was chosen over a more formal public meeting format to encourage broader participation, to allow attendees to learn about the project, and to enable people to ask questions of BLM representatives in a more casual setting. Fact sheet handouts about the project, including preliminary planning criteria and project milestones were provided. Site and resource maps and posters were displayed illustrating the current situation and management techniques practiced among different resources and land areas. A presentation highlighted key issues and summarized the planning process. Prominent, local facilities in informal settings were chosen as venues to encourage broad participation. In addition to BLM representatives, a total of 185 people attended the open houses (183 separate individuals; two attendees visited two of the eighteen meetings).

**Table 1.1 Scoping Open House Schedule and Attendance**

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Great Northern Hotel (GN)	Malta	October 2, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	10
Whitewater High School	Whitewater	October 3, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	16
Cottonwood Inn	Glasgow	October 4, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	8
Opheim High School	Opheim	October 5, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	8
Little Rockies Fire Station	Zortman	October 6, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	21
Harlem Elementary School	Harlem	October 10, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	1
Hays High School	Hays/Lodge Pole	October 11, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	0
Turner High School	Turner	October 12, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	21
Marias River Electric	Shelby	October 16, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	6
Blackfeet Community College	Browning	October 17, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	36
BLM/U. S. Forest Service Office	Great Falls	October 18, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	11
Red Lion Colonial Hotel	Helena	October 19, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	2
Chester High School	Chester	October 23, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	9
Big Sandy High School	Big Sandy	October 24, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	5
Best Western Great Northern	Havre	October 25, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	8
Stone Child Community College	Rocky Boy Agency	October 26, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	2
Chinook Motor Inn	Chinook	October 30, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	15
Hampton Inn	Billings	October 31, 2006	6:00- 8:00 p.m.	6
<b>Total</b>				<b>185</b>

#### **1.4.6 Mailing List**

The BLM compiled a list of 993 individuals, agencies, and organizations that have participated in past BLM projects or requested to be on the mailing list. Each of these individual listings was mailed the initial newsletter (discussed in section entitled *Newsletters*). Recipients of the newsletter and visitors to the scoping open houses were asked to specifically request to stay on the official RMP project mailing list to receive future mailings. Several entries were deleted from the official Malta RMP project mailings list due to duplications, changes of address, and return-to-sender mailings. Several new entries were added. Through this process, the mailing list was revised to approximately 1150 entries. Requests to be added to or remain on the official Malta RMP distribution list will continue to be accepted throughout the planning process.

### **1.5 AGENCY COORDINATION/COOPERATING AGENCIES**

A Cooperating Agency is any federal, state, or local government agency or

Native American tribe that enters into a formal agreement with the lead federal agency to assist in the development of an environmental analysis. On October 26, 2006, the BLM mailed letters to the following local, state, federal and tribal representatives inviting them to participate as cooperating agencies for the Malta RMP:

- Blaine County Commissioners
- Chouteau County Commissioners
- Glacier County Commissioners
- Hill County Commissioners
- City of Glasgow
- Montana Board of Oil & Gas Conservation
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Department of Transportation
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Montana State Historic Preservation Officer
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- USDI Bureau Indian Affairs
- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians
- Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation
- Crow Tribal Council
- Fort Peck Tribal Executive Board
- Fort Belknap Community Council
- Liberty County Commissioners
- Phillips County Commissioners
- Toole County Commissioners
- Valley County Commissioners
- Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
- Montana Department of Agriculture
- Montana Department of Livestock
- Montana Environmental Quality Council
- Montana Heritage Preservation & Development Commission
- National Park Service
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- US Forest Service
- USDI Bureau of Reclamation
- Chippewa Cree Business Committee
- Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of MT
- Blackfeet Nation – Tribal Business Council
- Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council

Seven agencies accepted the offer to participate in the BLM Malta RMP planning process as cooperating agencies:

- Blaine County Commissioners
- Phillips County Commissioners
- Valley County Commissioners
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- USDI Bureau Indian Affairs
- USDI Bureau of Reclamation

These agencies will “work with the BLM, sharing knowledge and resources, to achieve desired outcomes for public lands and communities within statutory and regulatory frameworks” (BLM Land Use Planning

Handbook H-1601-1).

The benefits of enhanced collaboration among agencies in the preparation of NEPA analyses include disclosing relevant information early in the analytical process; applying available technical expertise and staff support; avoiding duplication with other federal, state, tribal, and local procedures; and establishing a mechanism for addressing intergovernmental issues.

To initiate the collaborative planning process, during the period of May 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2006, BLM conducted a planning concepts training event for the interdisciplinary and management team and other local invitees consisting of elected officials, economic development planners, and other potentially affected publics. The objectives for the training event was to identify land management issues and owners of those issues; consider preliminary planning issues and write a planning question, the answer to which would resolve the issue; identify those interest and jurisdictions that will need to be involved to successfully resolve the planning question; and be able to distinguish between resource management decisions and implementation decisions.

In continuation of the collaborative planning process, on October 30, 2006, BLM mailed letters inviting the aforementioned federal, state, local, and tribal organizations to a “kick-off” meeting. This cooperating agency kick-off meeting was held on November 8, 2006 in Malta, MT. During this meeting the roles and responsibilities of the lead agency and that of the cooperators was explained in relation to the overall planning process. Additionally, an example of a Memorandum of Understanding was provided to each participant enabling a sound understanding of the formal cooperation agreement.

Additional collaborative planning efforts were achieved in February 2007 when BLM hosted three local economic strategies workshops in the following communities across the HiLine: Shelby, Chinook and Glasgow. The purpose of these workshops was to identify how the local and regional economy has changed and its relationship to public land management. Information discussed during these workshops provided a greater insight into planning issues and allowed greater opportunities for collaborative planning.

Efforts will continue to add other interested federal, state, local governments and tribal governments to cooperating status during the planning formulation phase of this planning effort.

### **1.5.1 Cooperation and Collaboration with Agencies and Organizations**

The BLM believes that face-to-face or one-on-one communication provides the best means of building a trust and good working relationship. The BLM began this practice early in the planning process by giving informal presentations on the Malta RMP planning effort to the following

groups:

- Glacier County Commissioners on October 16, 2006;
- Liberty County Commissioners on October 16, 2006;
- Toole County Commissioners on October 23, 2006;
- Chouteau County Commissioners on October 24, 2006;
- Hill County Commissioners on October 25, 2006; and
- Blaine County Commissioners on October 30, 2006.

The BLM will continue to meet with interested agencies and organizations throughout the planning process.

### **1.5.2 Resource Advisory Council**

A Resource Advisory Council (RAC) is a committee established by the Secretary of Interior to provide advice or recommendations to BLM management (BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1). A RAC is generally composed of 15 members of the public representing different facets. The Central Montana RAC includes a panel of mixed expertise ranging from natural resources and Native American culture to energy development, mining, recreation, elected officials and the public at large.

As provided for by FLPMA, DOI established the RAC program in 1995 as a forum for local citizens to provide advice and recommendations to DOI on management of the public lands. The first meeting with RAC was held on July 13, 2006 at the Cottonwood Inn in Glasgow, MT. A presentation was offered of the RMP process highlighting the components and issues of the planning area, preliminary planning criteria, and project status.

One of the strengths of the RAC is their ability to form subgroups to provide assistance and input on a wide variety of land use issues. Additionally, a RAC subgroup can meet at a frequency appropriate to meet the needs of the RMP. Therefore, close coordination with the RAC, and their subgroups, will be an important component of the RMP planning team.

## **1.6 COLLABORATION AND CONSULTATION WITH TRIBES**

BLM contact with federally recognized tribes is discussed above in the Agency Coordination/Cooperating Agencies section. BLM recognizes the importance of establishing collaboration with a broader range of Native American groups to solicit information on traditional cultural properties and other concerns along the HiLine. Therefore, a renewed effort to establish this important collaboration is currently underway.

## **SECTION 2 COMMENT SUMMARY**

### **2.1 METHOD OF COMMENT COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

Public comments provided during the scoping process are documented and analyzed using a process called comment analysis. This is a systematic process of compiling and categorizing all public viewpoints and concerns submitted on a plan or project. Information from public meetings, letters, emails, faxes and other sources are all included in this analysis. In the comment analysis process, each letter is assigned a unique number. This number allows analysts to link specific comments to original letters. All respondents' names and addresses (email address if the submission was an email) are entered into a project-specific database program, enabling creation of a complete list of all respondents.

Analysts read and categorize comments. Database reports track all input and allow analysts to identify issues and to analyze the relationships among them. A summary of issues received is then created and mapped to the original letters and other input on file in the official project administrative record.

It is important to recognize that the consideration of public comment is not a vote-counting process in which the outcome is determined by the majority opinion. Relative depth of feeling and interest among the public can serve to provide a general context for decision-making; however, it is the relevance to public lands, specificity, and factual accuracy of comment content that serves to provide the basis for input into planning documents and decisions. Further because respondents are self-selected, they do not constitute a random or representative public sample. The National Environmental Policy Act encourages all interested parties to submit comment as often as they wish regardless of age, citizenship, or eligibility to vote. Respondents may include businesses, people from other states, children, and people who submit multiple comment letters. Every comment and suggestion has value, whether expressed by one respondent or many. All input is read and evaluated and the analysis team attempts to capture all relevant public issues in the analysis process.

Although the end of the official Malta RMP scoping period was November 15, 2006, all written scoping comments received through March 1, 2007, were evaluated and documented in this Scoping Report. These and any other comments received during the RMP process will be considered during alternative formulation and project planning.

Individuals were encouraged to submit comments in writing unless a special request was made. No such special requests were made. The BLM will continue to accept comments throughout the planning process. The comments received and evaluated in this Scoping Summary Report will be considered in alternative formulation and initial impact evaluations. A total of 32 submissions were received:

- 58.1% by mail [44.4% were written letters and 55.6% were pre-

preprinted comment forms];

- 6.5% by facsimile;
- 6.5% by hand deliveries to the scoping meetings;
- 6.5% by both regular mail and e-mail; and
- 25.8% by email, only.

A list of commenters and the method and date of receipt is provided in Appendix C. Some individual letters included numerous comments. Furthermore, some discrete comments were relevant to numerous resource issues and thereby classified to more than one issue. For these reasons, the 32 submissions included a total of 217 discrete comments. The pre-printed comment forms provided instructions on requesting confidentiality and on requesting that individual names or addresses be withheld from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. No requests for confidentiality or requests that individual names or addresses be withheld from public review were received.

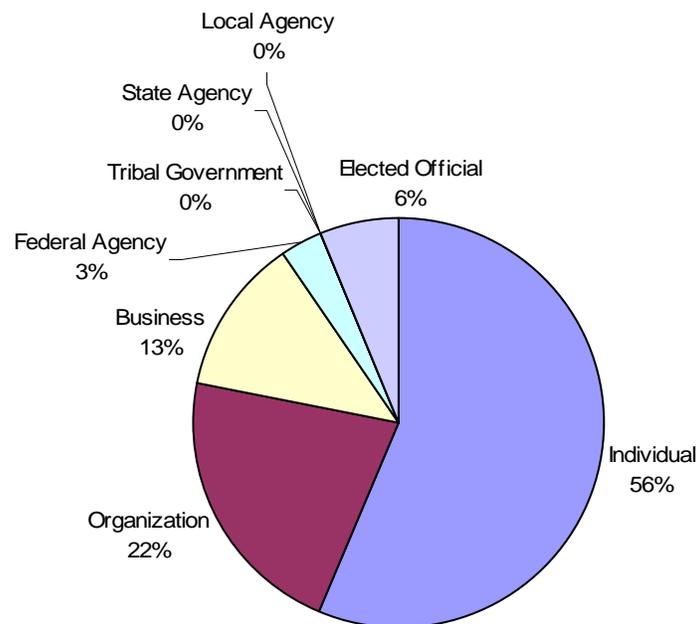
BLM personnel noted public commentary offered during each of the scoping open houses. A total of 180 discrete oral comments were captured during the scoping open houses and are incorporated into the comment analysis.

To ensure that public comments were properly registered and that none were overlooked, a three-phase management and tracking system was used. First, comments were logged and issues and concerns within the submission were sorted into one of the nine Malta RMP Preparation Plan preliminary planning issues (Energy Development; Vegetation Management; Wildlife Management; Special Status Species; Water, Watersheds, & Wetland Areas; Travel Management and Access; Special Management Area Designation; Commercial Uses; and Land Ownership Adjustments). Second, discrete comments were entered into a database to assist with the analytical review. The database is structured to organize comments by preliminary planning issue, geographical location of the commentor, and affiliation of the commentor. Finally, these identifiers were queried and tallied to provide quantitative information on preliminary planning issues and to pinpoint regions or groups providing the most feedback. Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1 show the distribution of comments by affiliation. A list of commentors and submissions are included in Appendix C.

**Table 2.1 Number of Written Submissions per Affiliation**

Affiliation	Number of Written Submissions
Individual	18
Organization	7
Business	4
Federal Agency	1
State Agency	0
Local Agency	0
Tribal Government	0
Elected Official	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

**Figure 2.1 Proportions of Written Submissions per Affiliation**



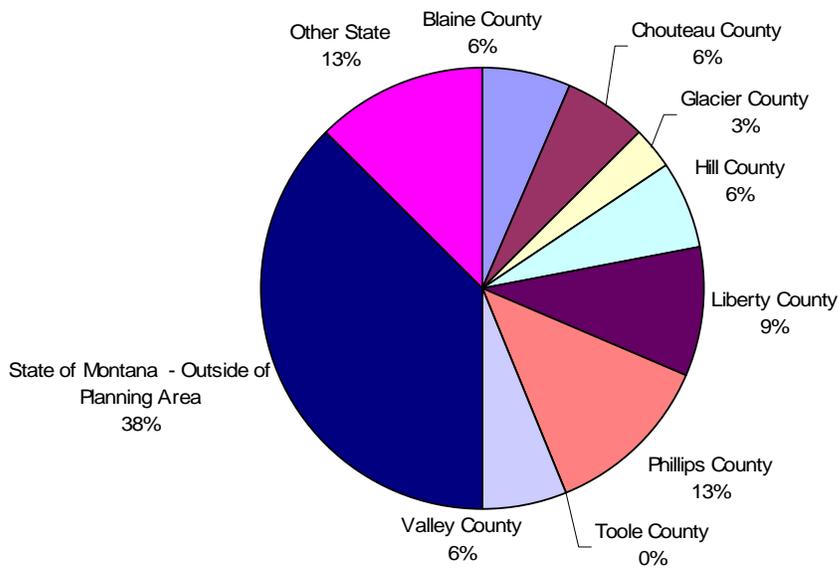
**2.1.1 Written Comments by Geographical Area**

Table 2-2 and Figures 2-2 and 2-3 show the number and proportion of discrete comments received from each geographical area. About 13 percent of comments came from addresses outside of Montana, while 38 percent were from Montana residents living outside of the planning area. The remaining 49 percent were received from people residing within the planning area. Phillips County residents provided the greatest portion of the total submissions (13 percent). However the greatest number of individual comments came from outside of the planning area (67 percent).

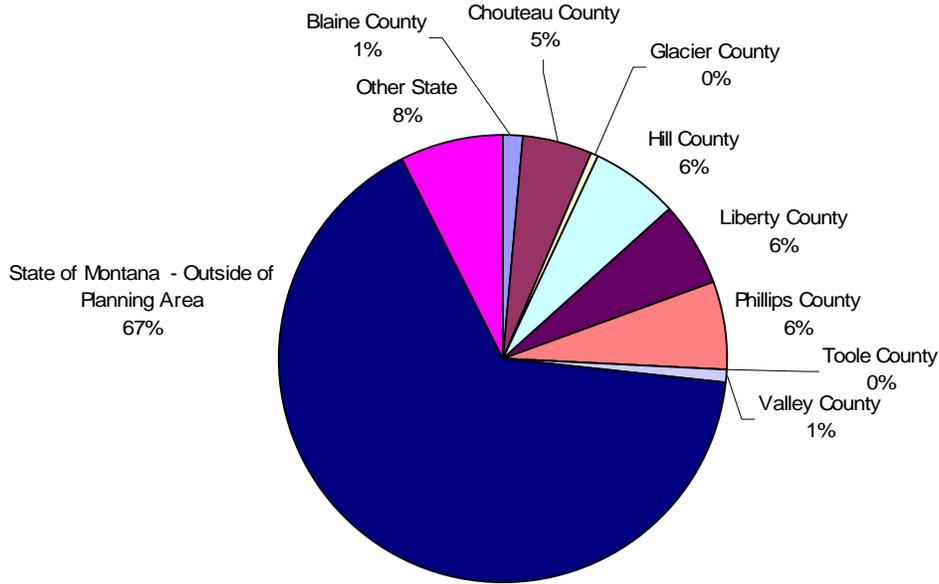
**Table 2.2 Number of Individual Comments per Geographical Area**

Affiliation	Number of Written Submissions	Number of Individual Comments
Blaine County	2	3
Chouteau County	2	11
Glacier County	1	1
Hill County	2	14
Liberty County	3	13
Phillips County	4	14
Toole County	0	0
Valley County	2	2
State of Montana - Outside of Planning Area	12	143
Other State	4	16
Unknown	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>217</b>

**Figure 2.2 Proportions of Written Submissions per Geographical Area**



**Figure 2.3 Proportions of Individual Comments per Geographical Area \***



\* - (graphic depicts both oral and written discrete comments)

### 2.1.2 Comments by Planning Topical Themes

As mentioned in the *Method of Comment Collection and Analysis* section above, BLM personnel noted public commentary offered during each of the scoping open houses. A total of 180 discrete oral comments were captured during the scoping open houses and are incorporated with the written submissions into the comment analysis. A total of 397 discrete comments (written submissions and oral commentary) were logged into the database. Since not all comments were about preliminary planning issues, the comments were evaluated to identify additional issues to address during the planning process. As a result, the nine preliminary planning issues were expanded to fourteen (14) topical themes: Minerals and Energy Resources; Vegetation Management (including, Riparian, Noxious and Invasive Plants, and Forest Health); Fire Management; Livestock Grazing; Wildlife Habitats and Fisheries Management (including, Special Status Species); Soil, Water and Air Resources; Access and Transportation Management; Special Management Area Designations; Lands and Realty Management, Cultural Resources, Paleontology and Traditional Values; Social and Economic Values; Recreation and Visitor Services; and RMP Planning and Process. Table 2-3 and Figure 2-4 show the number and proportion of discrete comments on each topical theme. Section 3 (*Issue Summary*) and Appendix D discuss comments separated by planning issue theme. The majority of the comments focused on themes related to Minerals and Energy Resources; Vegetation Management (including, Riparian, Noxious and Invasive Plants, and Forest Health); Wildlife Habitats and Fisheries Management (including, Special Status Species); Soil, Water and Air Resources; and Access and

Transportation Management (44.8 percent). Other resources or resource uses garnering moderate interest were Special Management Area Designations (6.1 percent), Cultural Resources (5.9 percent), Social and Economic Values (4.3 percent), Lands and Realty Management (4.3 percent) and Recreation and Visitor Services (3.8 percent). Other comments include resource issues that did not receive widespread concern (e.g., visual resources, environmental justice, and outfitting etc.). In combination, these themes represent 8.9 percent of the overall comments.

Each discrete comment entered into the database was further evaluated by assigning a planning classification. The classification indicates which public concerns will be addressed and resolved through this planning effort and which ones will not (Table 2.3). This evaluation is discussed in greater detail in Section 3.

**Table 2.3 Number of Individual Comments per Topical Theme**

<b>Topical Theme</b>	<b>Number of Individual Comments *</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Minerals and Energy Resources	54	2
Vegetation Management (incl. Riparian and Forestry)	33	5
Fire Management	6	14
Livestock Grazing	11	13
Wildlife Habitats and Fisheries Management (including, Special Status Species)	35	4
Soil, Water and Air Resources	31	6
Access and Transportation Management	38	3
Special Management Area Designations	25	8
Lands and Realty Management	15	10
Cultural Resources, Paleontology, and Traditional Values	22	9
Social and Economic Values	15	12
Recreation and Visitor Services	15	11
General Comments	31	7
RMP Planning and Process	66	1
<b>Planning Classification**</b>		
RMP Planning and Process Issues <sup>i</sup>	268	-
Issues Resolved by BLM Policy <sup>ii</sup>	51	-
Issues Addressed outside of the RMP <sup>iii</sup>	30	-
Issues Beyond the Scope of the RMP <sup>iv</sup>	48	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	

-\* represents written submissions and oral commentary captured during scoping meetings

\*\* all discrete comments received during public scoping assigned a planning classification

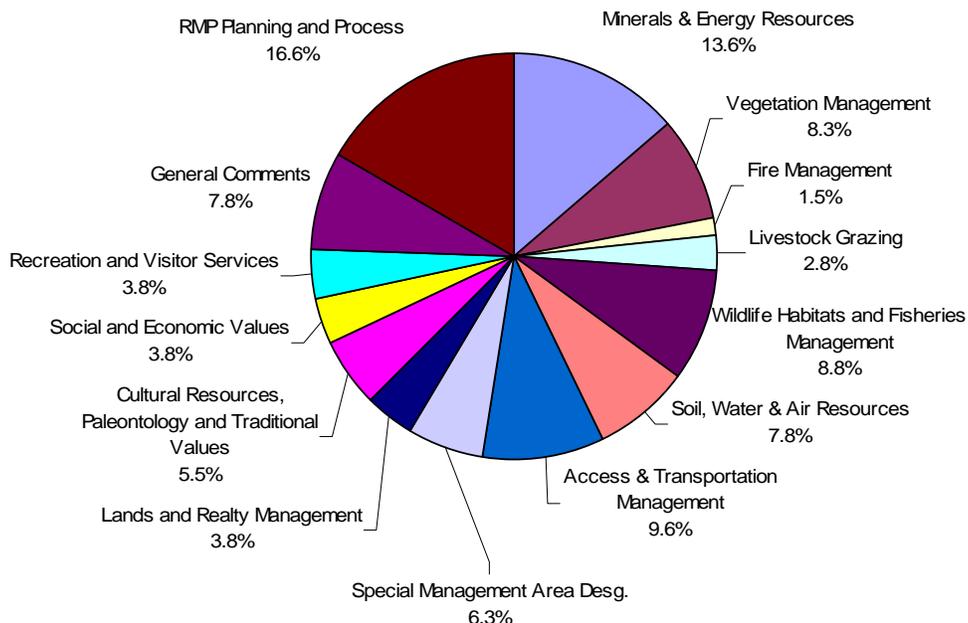
- i represents all discrete comments which will be addressed / considered in the RMP

- ii represents all discrete comments which will be resolved through policy or administrative actions

- iii represents all discrete comments which can be addressed by BLM outside of this planning effort or are concerns that the BLM is already actively addressing.

- iv represents all discrete comments which are beyond the scope of this planning effort.

**Figure 2.4 Proportions of Individual Comments per Topical Theme**



## SECTION 3 ISSUE SUMMARY

Issue identification is the first step of the nine-step BLM planning process. As defined in the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1610-1), planning issues are concerns or controversies about existing and potential land and resource allocations, levels of resource use, production, and related management practices. Issues include concerns; needs; and resource use, development, and protection opportunities to consider in RMP preparation. These issues may stem from new information of changed circumstances and from the need to reassess the appropriate mix of allowable uses.

### 3.1 CHRONOLOGY OF PLANNING ISSUE DEVELOPMENT

The BLM enacted a multi-step issue identification process for the Malta RMP planning effort that began in October 2005.

In May 2006, the BLM completed a Pre-Plan Analysis and Project Management Plan (Preparation Plan) for the Malta RMP / EIS. This plan, used by the interdisciplinary team to commence the planning process, summarized the purpose and need for the RMP. It also highlighted anticipated planning issues, management concerns, and preliminary planning criteria developed by the BLM interdisciplinary team during internal scoping. Based on the lands and resources managed in the planning area, these preliminary issues fell into nine preliminary planning issues in the Preparation Plan: Energy Development; Vegetation Management; Wildlife Management; Special Status Species, Water, Watersheds, and Wetland Areas; Travel Management and Access; Special Management Area Designation; Commercial Uses; and Land Ownership Adjustment.

These preliminary issues were expected to encompass most public issues and concerns and to serve as a starting point to spark public consideration; they were not meant to be all-inclusive.

The BLM then issued the NOI to prepare the RMP, which initiated the scoping period and solicited written comments from the public (further discussed in Section 1.4, *Description of the Scoping Process*). Scoping is a collaborative public involvement process implemented to identify and refine planning issues to address in the planning process. During the scoping period, the BLM also met with interested groups, tribes, and agencies, as discussed in Sections 1.5.1, *Agency Coordination/Cooperating Agencies*, and 1.5.3, *Collaboration and Consultation with Tribes*. The BLM hosted eighteen open houses and solicited written comments from the public during the scoping period. The scoping period provided the BLM additional information on the public's concerns and suggestions regarding the planning area.

Information included in the Preparation Plan was gathered from meetings with interested individuals, organizations, agencies, and tribal representatives. After compiling and evaluating the public scoping,

fourteen (14) topical themes were developed; and are as follows:

1. Access and Transportation Management;
2. Cultural Resources, Paleontological Resources, and Traditional Values;
3. Fire Management;
4. General Comments (i.e., visual resource management, outfitting, and others);
5. Lands and Realty Management;
6. Livestock Grazing;
7. Minerals and Energy Resources;
8. Recreation and Visitor Services;
9. RMP Planning and Process;
10. Social and Economic Values;
11. Soil, Water, and Air Resources;
12. Special Management Area Designation;
13. Vegetation Management (including Riparian, Noxious and Invasive Plants, and Forest Health); and
14. Wildlife Habitats and Fisheries Management (including Special Status Species).

Through further analysis these fourteen topical themes are refined into discrete planning issue statements, which are discussed below in Section 3.2. The purpose of these planning issue statements is to highlight the key issues distilled from these initial planning and scoping processes. These statements are further listed in Section 3.3 according to the various issue themes and associated comments received from the public and interested organizations.

### **3.2 PLANNING ISSUE THEMES AND ISSUE STATEMENTS**

The planning issues statements will be used to develop alternative management strategies that will be analyzed during the planning process. As discussed in Section 2.1, *Method of Comment Collection and Analysis*, comments were reviewed, categorized, and evaluated. Key issues identified during comment evaluation were further distilled from the fourteen topical themes to the following seven issue themes:

1. Access and Transportation Management;
2. Ecosystem Management;
3. Energy Development and Other Commercial Uses;
4. Land Ownership Adjustments;

5. Recreation, Visitor Services and Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV);  
and
6. Special Management Area Designation.

Most public comments received during the scoping process fell under these issue themes and are summarized through these categories in Section 3.3. Furthermore, comments are listed in Appendix D.

The following planning issue statements, along with subsequently identified issues, planning criteria, and other information (e.g., Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenario for Energy Development) will be used by the BLM and cooperators to help formulate a reasonable range of alternatives for the RMP.

1. How will transportation be managed to improve public access, protect natural and cultural resources, and reduce user conflicts? Transportation often relates to other resource issues including recreation, urban expansion, wildlife habitat preservation, and land ownership. Most comments received were regarding vehicular access to public lands for recreation. Several commenters supported the continued use of trails, roads, and OHV access because they are unable to hike to remote areas.

Related Concerns:

- What is the base transportation system for the planning area?
- Identify the desirable management actions for all recreation sites, regardless of ACEC, special management area, or other designation.
- Prescribe management for new and existing SRMAs.
- Develop and designate trails and rely upon collaboration with special interests and others to carry out such a program.
- Access should be provided to connect open space, allowing public access to a variety of areas.
- Improve access to the largest contiguous segments of public lands that are now isolated.
- Improve access to high value recreation areas.
- Consider effects of changing private land ownership that is blocking access to public lands.
- Consider increase in roads network in response to energy development.
- Ensure compatibility with travel management decisions for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM) and the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife

Refuge (CMR).

- What management practices (i.e. timing, method of development, and location) can be applied to activities and uses in order to protect cultural resources?
2. What are the desired conditions for watersheds, soils, vegetation, fish and wildlife, water, air, etc. within the ecosystem and what are the appropriate levels of resource use and resource protection to meet the desired conditions? Soil is a base resource that serves as a medium for the growth of vegetation. Vegetation in-turn is the base for many uses on public lands and plant communities provide habitat for wildlife as well as forage for domestic animals.

Related Concerns:

*Fish and Wildlife Management:*

- How should wildlife corridors and unfragmented and critical wildlife habitat be protected or improved?
- What wildlife species should BLM emphasize habitat manage for?
- How can aquatic species be managed throughout a stream reach?

*Vegetation Management:*

- How should vegetation be allocated to provide forage for grazing animals and wildlife?
- What conditions will trigger forest health and/or fuels reduction treatments?
- How will vegetation resources be monitored for adaptive management?
- How will the data be managed?

*Riparian Resources:*

- How should riparian systems be managed to maintain or improve the quality of habitat for fish, wildlife (especially migratory birds), plants, and invertebrates?
- How should activities and uses be managed to protect riparian areas?
- Where adaptive management could be applied in response to unacceptable resource impacts?
- Where will fire be utilized to eradicate noxious weeds and invasive species?
- Where the natural fire regime should be reestablished?

- What developed areas should be protected from wildland fire?
- What post- fire restoration practices are acceptable?

*Fire Management:*

- How should fire (prescribed and wild) be managed to protect, maintain, or restore desired resource conditions.
- Where should reference condition fire regimes be restored?
- When will burned areas be considered for Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation projects?
- What management practices can be applied to fire management activities and uses in order to protect cultural resources?

*Special Status Species:*

- How should resource uses be managed to maintain the existence of and promote the recovery of special status species?
- How should special status species habitat be protected or improved?
- How should efforts to reintroduce and augment species be managed and what role should BLM play in these efforts?

*Invasive and Noxious Plants:*

- Identify strategies and measures for improving and coordinating the control of noxious weeds.
- Identify desired plant community.
- Through cooperation with state and local governments develop preventive measures for the control of noxious and invasive weeds for the Planning Area.

*Water Resources:*

- What watersheds may require special protection and what water sources are not meeting water quality standards?
- Analyze the effects of management decisions on the Milk and Marias rivers and their associated watersheds.
- Consider the 303(d) listing of impaired streams and manage to improve water quality to meet the designated beneficial use.
- Consider the effects of drainage and run-off from public land onto adjacent private properties.
- Consider watersheds and aquifer recharge when designating lands for disposal.

*Air Resources:*

- What are the potential impacts to air quality from uses on public lands—impacts that would occur from such things as flaring, oil and gas development, and operation of two-stroke engines, fugitive dust from vehicle traffic?

*Soil Resources:*

- How to focus management on maintaining or improving soil health and productivity?
  - How to manage surface disturbing activities on soils that are vulnerable to degradation and susceptible to erosion?
  - How to minimize or mitigate accelerated soil erosion on roads and trails?
3. What areas will be available for energy development and other commercial uses, and what restrictions will be imposed? The public lands produce commodities that are key to the Nation's economy, providing economic stability and growth for local and regional economies. Energy and mineral resources generate the highest economic production values among commercial uses of both BLM-administered public lands (surface) and Federal minerals (subsurface) estate.

*Traditional Energy Development:* Oil and Gas development has a long history within the planning area. As a result, the industry itself has become a key component to local and state economies. With projected trends indicating steady energy growth, future development will need to be analyzed in the context of the need for protection of all other resources.

*Alternative Energy Development:* The Department of the Interior, as the manager of over one fifth of the nation's land, has a significant role to play in this projected increase in domestic renewable energy production. Lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management currently supply almost half of the nation's geothermal generation and over 5 percent of domestically installed wind capacity. Recent assessments of the potential for renewable energy production from public lands indicate that these lands can contribute much more to our renewable energy supply. New authorities and provisions in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 have also given Interior agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) the ability to explore the future development of promising new energy sources

*Livestock Grazing:* Are there areas where grazing should not be available due to resource conflicts? The Secretary of the Interior, through the BLM, manages approximately 264 million acres of public rangelands throughout the western United States. The Taylor Grazing

Act of 1934, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 guide BLM's management of livestock grazing on public lands. The objectives for grazing administration regulations are to "promote healthy sustainable rangeland ecosystems; to accelerate restoration and improvement of public rangelands to properly functioning condition; to efficiently and effectively administer domestic livestock grazing; and to provide for the sustainability of the western livestock industry and communities that are dependent upon productive, healthy public rangelands" (43 CFR 4100.0-2).

*Solid Minerals:* Are there areas where mineral extraction should not be available due to resource conflict?

*Forest Products:* Areas available for forest product removals will be identified in accordance with the planning guidance. Areas identified as Communities at Risk may require modified treatments that remove more forest products in order to meet fuel reduction goals for that area. Forest product removal techniques and appropriate management stipulations would be developed, considered and implemented to protect or enhance other resource values.

*Commercial Recreation Uses:* The Malta Field Office presently authorizes special recreation permits to commercial hunting outfitters. It is expected that the RMP will consider balancing dispersed recreation use with commercial recreation use – primarily related to big game hunting. This could result in areas where commercial use is not allowed or maximum allowable use is established to reduce competition between commercial and non-commercial recreation use.

*Right-of-Way Corridor Planning and Lands Authorizations:* Right-of-way avoidance areas and windows have been previously identified in the planning area; no corridors were identified. The RMP will consider whether right-of-way corridors should be designated to minimize adverse environmental impacts and avoid proliferation of separate ROWs. Avoidance and exclusion areas will also be delineated, if necessary, based on interdisciplinary analysis of resource values and requirements for right-of-way uses and commercial activities. This will include considerations for future communication site uses. Necessary constraints and appropriate area-wide terms and conditions will also be developed for future authorizations.

The President's National Energy Policy will be reflected in the Right-of-Way Corridors and in general areas where Right-of-Way authorizations are needed for the development and transportation of energy. Current environmental standards and good stewardship principles will be maintained.

## Related Concerns:

### *Energy Development:*

- Identify areas where potential development will occur. Apply appropriate levels of mitigation to protect all other resources.
- In sensitive areas, can we utilize other methods, such as best management practices or no surface occupancy leasing, to adequately protect the other resources versus completely closing the lands to leasing?
- How are we going to handle issues that arise from development occurring on split estate lands?
- Although there are no existing wind-energy-generation farms, it appears that the potential certainly exists and should be considered.
- Identify extraction activities in areas with high potential for such use, then protect and reserve these sites for future use.
- Identify opportunities for Biomass Utilization and allow for developing markets.
- How should produced water be managed?
- What management practices (i.e. timing, method of development, and location) can be applied to activities and uses in order to protect cultural resources?

### *Livestock Grazing:*

- How should bison and livestock grazing be managed?
- How should vacant or relinquished allotments be managed?
- How should forage, made available through nonuse, be managed?
- Are there some adaptive management approaches that can be used to manage livestock grazing?

### *Locatable Minerals:*

- Identify unique mineral collection areas and segregate those areas from mining claim locations.
- Address major changes in mineral laws and policies.
- Consider the long-term management of hard rock mining in the Little Rocky Mountains and Sweet Grass Hills, including a potential permanent mineral withdrawal for solid minerals.
- Consider those areas under current, or have the potential for,

withdrawal status.

- What management practices (i.e. timing, method of development, and location) can be applied to activities and uses in order to protect cultural resources?

*Forest Health:*

- Consider management of all forested types.
- Treat acres to improve forest health, utilizing biomass and forest products.
- Consider development of markets that minimize wood product waste material
- What should be the Probable Sale Quantity?

*Commercial Recreational Uses:*

- Consider the need for allocations (geographic or number) of outfitters.

*Right-of-Way Corridor Planning and Lands Authorizations:*

- Identify opportunities for permitting rights-of-way for development of traditional energy (oil and gas) and alternative energy (e.g., wind farming, photovoltaic and concentrated solar power) on public land for siting facilities, and authorizations for power lines, pipelines, pipelines and access roads.

4. What opportunities exist to make adjustments to public land ownership that would result in greater management efficiency, appropriate and agreeable levels of public access, and increased public and natural resource benefits? As mandated by Sec. 106 (a) (1) of FLPMA (43 USC 1701), public lands are retained in federal ownership, the exception being those public lands that have future potential for disposal (i.e., sale and exchange), as described under Sec. 203(a) and Sec. 206 of FLPMA (43 USC 1713; 1716). Public lands have potential for disposal when they are isolated and/or difficult to manage. Lands identified for disposal must meet public objectives, such as community expansion and economic development. The preferred method of disposal is land exchange. Other lands can be considered for disposal on a case-by-case basis. Disposal actions are usually in response to public request or application that results in a title transfer, wherein the lands leave the public domain. Public land cannot be effectively administered without legal and physical access. Methods used to acquire legal rights that meet resource management needs include negotiated purchase, donation, exchange, and condemnation. A withdrawal means withholding an area of public land from settlement, sale, location, or entry for the purpose of limiting activities in order to maintain other public values.

Related Concerns:

- Identify land use authorizations under 43 CFR 2800, 2880, and 2920 to include, but not limited to: transportation and utility needs, designation of communication sites, and airport leases. Specific issues include the Little Rocky Mountains withdrawal and water cleanup.
5. How can increased recreation use, especially motorized vehicle use, be managed while protecting natural resource values? Recreation in northcentral Montana has grown in popularity in recent years. With popularity comes demand for a variety of recreation opportunities which include but are not limited to OHV use, hiking, camping, hunting, and equestrian use. With the number of visitors growing, recreation is expanding further into the backcountry, while resource and user conflicts are becoming more common. OHV use needs to be managed, including identifying areas to be restricted or closed for the protection of other resource values.

Related Concerns:

- Which areas should be designated as open, limited or closed to OHV use, and which routes should be designated within the limited category?
- What types of recreation travel should be available on designated routes and under what limitations?
- Where adaptive management could be applied in response to unacceptable resource impacts?
- How should recreational uses be managed to limit conflicts with other recreational users?
- Where special recreation management areas (SRMAs) should be designated?
- How should conflicts with other resource uses be reduced?
- What management actions should be implemented to mitigate damage caused by recreational uses, including vehicles, on other resources and sensitive areas, especially riparian areas?
- How should recreation in the planning area be managed to ensure public health and safety?
- Where and under what circumstances should permitted recreation uses be available?
- What types of recreational facilities and uses should be available, and what limitations should be required?
- Where can the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) be

applied?

- How will areas be managed for visual resources?
6. What areas should have special designations such as areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs) and wild and scenic rivers (WSRs)? FLPMA and BLM policy require the BLM to give priority to designation and protection of ACECs during the land use planning process. The Wild and Scenic River Act directs federal agencies to consider the potential for including water courses into the National Wild and Scenic River system during the land use planning process.

Related Concerns:

- What management prescriptions will be applied to areas with special designations?
- What resources need the protection of special designations?
- Should existing special designations be modified?

### **3.3 PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY BY ISSUE THEME**

This section provides summaries of the public comments received during the public scoping process. The actual comments are listed in Appendix D. Each discrete comment received during public scoping was entered into a database and assigned a planning classification. The classifications indicate which public concerns will be addressed and resolved through this planning effort and which ones will not. Comments under Category A are those that will be addressed/considered in the RMP. Comments under Category B will be resolved through policy or administrative actions. Comments under Category C can be addressed by the BLM outside of this planning effort and / or are concerns that the BLM is already actively addressing. Comments under Category D are beyond the scope of this planning effort.

It is important to note that while many concerns are included in the seven issue themes, not all concerns and comments are included in the planning issues. These other concerns and comments - which include comments in Category A (as explained in Appendix D) that are not explicitly included in issue statements and management concerns identified during personal meetings with BLM staff or from the Preparation Plan analysis – will still be addressed by the RMP and considered in the effects analysis, but these concerns will not have overriding influence on the development of alternatives. Furthermore, adjustments or additions may be made to the planning issues as the planning process proceeds and BLM continues to review information, meet with the interdisciplinary team, and talk with the public.

Tables D-1 through D-6 presents the anticipated decisions for each resource issue theme. This section is sorted by the seven planning issue themes refined at the end of the scoping period as discussed in Section 3.2.

The number of discrete comments exceeded the written submissions received because both many written submissions included multiple discrete comments and collected oral commentaries from the actual scoping meetings were combined.

### **3.3.1 Access and Transportation Management**

Appendix D, Table D-1 provides comments relevant to Access and Transportation Management. The main theme among comments received pertaining to public access was maintaining access to as many areas as possible. Additionally the public is concerned with the effects of energy development, their access rights and impacts to other resources. Other commenters expressed concern over road development and link to wildlife habitat fragmentation.

#### Representative Comments:

*I would like to see easy unrestricted access to all public lands.*

*If the BLM would create a sign adequate for posting, which outlined the rules regarding any vehicles access, including ATV and motorcycles, I would purchase several.*

*Travel and access should be managed in a manner that allows adequate access without compromising the area to erosion or weed infestations. Travel plans should be coordinated with the appropriate county and must respect the private property rights of the adjacent landowners.*

*We urge BLM to seize the opportunity presented by this RMP process to complete a comprehensive travel management plan in conjunction with the RMP. If the agency does not complete a travel management plan as part of the Malta RMP, then the RMP must identify not only areas for use, but also reasons for permitting travel into an area and appropriate criteria for determining routes that will be made available for different uses, taking into account such factors as undeveloped recreation opportunities available and natural settings.*

*Travel Planning should aggressively ensure that the integrity of the resource be left intact; primitive travel corridors should not be replaced by high-speed roads, motorcycle, or ATV trails. Corridors built to facilitate Oil and Gas and wind power generation should not be included in the travel infrastructure and be reclaimed as soon as feasible. Travel corridors, generator sites, and pad locations contribute to a "disturbed land" condition that encourages noxious weed infestation.*

### **3.3.2 Ecosystem Management**

Appendix D, Table D-2 provides the comments relevant to ecosystem management and mentioned in comments both as part of other issues and as a separate resource management issue. Respondents mentioned wildlife habitat management, including special status species; vegetation management, including noxious weed management, and riparian health; air, water and soil resources as components of range management, energy

and mineral development, transportation management, recreation management, and special management designations. The comments received show that all ecological resources are a concern of many individuals and organizations.

Representative Comments:

*The planning direction for the RMP should reflect the unique significance of this landscape, and support to the maximum extent practicable conservation and biological restoration as a priority throughout the plan.*

*Sage Grouse and Prairie Dog -- Both species are indicators of healthy native prairie ecosystems. Both are generally in trouble. What is BLM doing to identify healthy habitat, monitor sage grouse and prairie dog populations, and help them rebound? What about other key prairie species?*

*Wildlife -Montana's outdoor sporting industry brings an estimated \$593 million to Montana and provides 13,000 jobs. As people that hunt and fish (as well as hike) we like to see land managed with an eye towards protecting wildlife habitat. We are particularly concerned about mining, gas & oil exploration and development, and the harmful effects that have on the wild birds, animals and fish. Access to hunting and fishing sites on BLM property can be a problem. If a land owner will not allow access to the BLM property then it becomes their private hunting and fishing area. This land belongs to all Americans - not just the adjoining land owner! BLM should work with adjoining land owners to acquire right of ways or some kind of access to BLM lands. Sage grouse and prairie dogs are in trouble indicating a lack of healthy native prairie ecosystems. Their habitat needs to be evaluated and plans included helping their population recover. Natural prairie lands are rapidly disappearing so we need to preserve some areas so future generations can see what is was like.*

*Fire Management: The BLM should continue working with local fire suppression resources to ensure that wildfires are handled in a manner that protects the natural resources, including grazing lands.*

*Evaluate and disclose air quality effects of proposed management, including potential air emissions from activities that impact air quality such as coal mining, oil and gas development (wells, compressors and processing plant sources), etc.,.*

*Improve watershed and ecosystem monitoring and assessment programs to identify impacts, detect problems, measure restoration success, and make changes to management based monitoring (adaptive management), and address coordination efforts and budget needs for monitoring. Identify how monitoring will improve from the current plan.*

*Protect high quality waters, riparian area, wetlands and aquatic species, including development of riparian protection guidelines to protect water quality and riparian areas and gain recovery of native fish populations.*

*Reduce impacts to water quality, fisheries and wildlife from activities such as oil and natural gas development, roads, mining, grazing, etc.; and maintenance and restoration of watershed.*

*Water - Develop and promote alternatives that protect the quality of water in the planning area. Where possible, look for creative ways to keep the water cleaner and create nesting habitat for birds and other wildlife near reservoirs. Where possible pump and pipe water out of reservoirs and utilize water tanks.*

*Determine and promote suitable habitat for sensitive species such as sage grouse and protect those resources with Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) protection when those areas fit the criteria for ACEC designation.*

*Identify noxious weeds/exotic plants; discuss the magnitude and occurrence of the weed infestations, and strategies for prevention, early detection, and control procedures for weed management. Promote integrated weed management, with mitigation to avoid herbicide transport to surface or ground waters.*

### **3.3.3 Energy Development and Other Commercial Uses**

Items related to mineral exploration, leasing, and development were frequently mentioned topics in many of the comments received (Appendix D, Table D-3). Commentors identified a full range of issues both in support of and against oil, gas, and mining development. The majority of the energy development comments discussed administrative, economic, access, or ecosystem health issues. Each of these categories was discussed as it relates to oil, gas, and mining. There were also individuals who stated that future technology may make parts of the resource area more desirable for alternative energy development.

The historical importance of public land grazing was noted, and it was mentioned that BLM is required to recognize livestock grazing as a legitimate land use. The interests of local ranchers were expressed through comments that told of their long ties to the land and the benefits of livestock grazing on overall land use in comparison to other land use activities proposed. Some commenters expressed concern over the health of riparian corridors within grazing allotments. The impact of grazing on the landscape, water and wildlife habitat was also of concern.

#### Representative Comments:

*Energy Development -Energy corridors such as the planned Alberta-Montana power transmission corridor and others that may come in the future should have guidelines. What will be considered in the plans in regard to routing and impacts of the corridor? Wind power may become the clean power development of the future. Plans should establish standards (ex. Location, placement and number of windmills, scenery, roads). Are there areas where wind power is not a compatible use?*

*Could windmills be painted to match the surrounding area? What roads need to be established to maintain windmills and is that a good choice for the area?*

*Energy Development - The oil and gas need to be developed so we have lower energy costs and also are creating revenue. Any time we can produce something from our natural resources: for example cattle from the grass or oil and gas from the ground we are creating wealth for the United States. It does this because the money is spent here and we don't have to import the products.*

*Energy Development- Wind-Development of wind energy and proposals to use and/or transmit wind-generated power across BLM lands are likely to increase in the coming decade. The BLM should" 1) develop a wind generation suitability GIS layer that identifies where siting of wind farms is most desirable given a set of constraints that should include: a) distance from existing transmission corridors, b) proximity to ACECs and other sensitive landscapes, c) proximity to sensitive species, d) proximity to major migration routes or flyways. The objective should be to facilitate future permitting and limit development in environmentally sensitive locations. BLM should incorporate adaptive management monitoring of proposed expansion of wind energy. Options might include monitoring impacts to indicator species and developing mitigation based on this.*

*The BLM should encourage energy development in all forms by soliciting proposals that develop the resources (oil, gas, wind) in an environmentally-friendly manner.*

*Energy Corridors - An Alberta-Montana power transmission corridor is currently under consideration. It will impact the Malta RMP area between the Blackfeet Reservation and the Sweet Grass Hills. Are other energy corridors proposed? As with other energy projects, the RMP should provide guidance relative to the routing and impacts of such energy corridors.*

*Solid Minerals - As President of the Sweetgrass Hills Protective Association, I am concerned about future filing of mining claims, exploration and with subsequent mining for minerals using the heap leach system. Presently, the SGH are protected both by a Montana State Statute and a federal ruling established by the Dept. of the Interior when Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt was in office. In 1997, a 20 year mineral withdrawal was placed on BLM subsurface and surface minerals in the Sweetgrass Hills for 20 years. We insist that this ruling be honored in the Malta RMP in its final decision.*

*Livestock Grazing - As a former rancher but still a grassland manager, I well know the value of good pasture management. Over grazing causes many problems within the grass community. Noxious weed invasions, elimination of good palatable species, erosion, less food and habitat for wildlife are all a result of over grazing. Special care should be given to*

*habitat for Sage Grouse to keep these off the Endangered list. Fortunately, many ranchers do follow the rules of good grazing practices and but tend to overgraze in drought years. I highly recommend the BLM follow strictly the standards and guidelines on grazing of our public lands. In short don't give the permittees any breaks when it comes to over grazing; they are getting a good deal and the least they can do is follow the rules.*

*Commercial Uses: New commercial uses of the area must be carefully balanced with the existing uses.*

*Current outfitting SRP regulations within the Malta RMP area are very general and do not specify where the SRPs can be used. Separate out hunting outfitting SRP's to keep those used inside the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM) under the control of the Monument Management team. By design of this RMP, those lands in the UMRBNM which were managed by the Malta office previous to the Monument Proclamation are not directly affected by this RMP. It would be inappropriate for this plan to enforce outfitting regulations that will be determined in the Monument RMP. Although this may develop a redundant permitting process, it is imperative that Monument Plans are not superseded and hence impacted by Regional Field Office decisions.*

### **3.3.4 Land Ownership Adjustments**

Comments regarding lands and realty within the Malta Field Office focused on the private versus public lands as well as land exchange (Appendix D, Table D-4). Comments recommended "to block" up Federal land, in areas of fragmented ownership, through exchanges and sales with adjacent private owners. This would greatly improve manageability for all and reduce trespassing problems for private land." Some commenters wanted the BLM to continue and perhaps expand land exchanges to convert small hard to manage parcels to larger easier to manage parcels.

#### Representative Comments

*Lands and Realty - Identify priority areas for future land acquisition or land trades so that when opportunities from willing sellers present themselves, it is clear about whether to put the time, effort and expense into negotiating a sale or trade. Land sales or trades should be pursued when the property expands wildlife habitat, contains historic or cultural sites, has scenic values or prevents development which is incompatible with the adjoining public lands.*

*Energy Corridors - An Alberta-Montana power transmission corridor is currently under consideration. It will impact the Malta RMP area between the Blackfeet Reservation and the Sweet Grass Hills. Are others proposed? Will the RMP provide guidance relative to the routing and impacts of such energy corridors?*

*Land Tenure Adjustment - Consolidation. Land consolidation could benefit a number of species where uniform management over large areas is required. Fragmented ownership is an impediment to minimizing conflicts, for example, in areas where prairie dog complexes are to be established for black-footed ferret recovery.*

### **3.3.5 Recreation, Visitor Services and Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV)**

Recreation comments ranged from the compatibility of motorized and non-motorized recreation to education programs within recreation areas, and also balancing the experience of recreational opportunities and controlling the types and means of recreational use (Appendix D, Table D-5).

One of the persistent themes in comments regarding recreation in the planning area was the need for OHV access for recreation users. Individuals described vehicles as more than recreational equipment, but as a means of access to other activities. These people requested that the RMP take this into consideration.

#### Representative Comments

*OHV - Recreation -I believe BLM land in the Sweet Grass Hills should be opened to OHV. We have an older population that can no longer walk and enjoy the Hills the way they once did. Trails for OHV's would enhance the use of the Hills and make recreational use possible for many more folks. These are my personal feelings and not the commission as a whole.*

*Off-Road Vehicles - How will off-road vehicle use be affected under the Malta RMP? Will there be a standard policy? Will some areas receive higher protection than others? How will vehicle use be monitored? Will there be resources for enforcement?*

*This area will come under pressures for oil and gas production, alternative energy (wind power), energy transmission corridors in addition to other more typical land uses. Hunting, angling, and general outdoor recreation has a substantial economic and historical legacy on the public lands. For the benefit of these traditional users and uses, the plan must include components that ensure the future of sustainable fish and wildlife populations, non-fragmented habitats (priority), and public hunting and fishing opportunities. Please recognize the cultural values of hunting, fishing and sustainable fish and wildlife and the need for maximum measures to ensure their future and not sacrificed for energy production. Further reviews can determine areas where both interests can be served without sacrificing the whole to save the smaller parts.*

### **3.3.6 Special Management Area Designation**

Several comments were received regarding wilderness and other types of special designations (Appendix D, Table D-6). Most commentators were in favor of the use of special designations. Many individuals indicated

support for existing WSAs and ACECs and requested that the RMP consider formalizing these designations.

#### Representative Comments

*Wilderness - the wilderness character of Bitter Creek and Burnt Lodge wilderness study areas must be evaluated and all illegally created roads or routes must be closed. Other changes which have occurred should be identified and how the wilderness character of the study areas will be protected, improved, and restored ought to be explained.*

*Special Management Area - Wilderness Study Areas - The BLM should make a determination on final designation of the Burnt Lodge WSA.*

*Wilderness - Many conservationists including myself would like to see the Wilderness Study Areas (north of Glasgow) eventually reach full Wilderness designation. It is time the process moved forward as this designation should bring people into this area which would at the minimum, stabilize the population if not increase it. The WSA's in my judgment deserve to be in the Wilderness category.*

### **3.4 PUBLIC COMMENTS NOT APPLICABLE TO ISSUE THEMES**

Appendix D, Table D-7 provides the comments concerning RMP Planning Process. Respondents concentrated on collaboration, urging BLM to work cooperatively with an array of groups and individuals including members of Native American Indian tribes, livestock permittees, and local residents and business owners. A challenge they recognize is the checkerboard configuration of public lands and private ownership, which makes collaboration crucial. The public also encouraged the BLM to use criteria and standards for as many decisions as possible, making it easier to apply management on site-specific activities during implementation-level management phases.

Appendix D, Table 8 provides comments, categorized as Management Concerns, ranging from general administrative issues, cultural resources and traditional values, geological and paleontological resources, visual resource management, social and economic values, and environmental justice concerns.

#### Representative Comments

*Balancing Multiple Use - It is vital to the local stakeholders that issues directly impacting their properties, livelihoods, and communities be handled appropriately. While all uses should be considered, the BLM must ensure that the balance between more recently developed uses, such as recreation, and other uses that have endured through the years and support the local economy, such as grazing, be given special consideration.*

*Cultural Resources and Traditional Values - For archeological and historical values: 1) BLM's goal should be to protect, conserve, and*

*where appropriate restore archeological and historical sites and landscapes; 2) BLM should survey all known or discoverable cultural and historic sites, or those adjacent sites may be adversely affected; 3) BLM should determine the sites or areas that are most vulnerable to current and future impact and adopt management actions necessary to protect, conserve, and restore cultural resources; 4) BLM should complete a Cultural Resource Management Plan that coordinates with the objectives of the RMP and seeks to provide for an appropriate proactive process of inventorying for cultural resources, making determinations of eligibility for the National Register, and seeking to nominate eligible properties to the National Register; 5) BLM should outline specific management actions, such as stabilization, fencing, signing, closures, or interpretative development, to protect, conserve, and where appropriate restore cultural resources; 6) BLM should adopt measures to protect cultural resources from artifact collectors, looters, thieves, and vandals; and 7) BLM should consult with the Native American community to determine whether there are sites or specific areas of particular concern, including sites of traditional religious and cultural significance.*

*Geological and Paleontological Resources - 1) BLM's goal should be to protect and conserve special geologic formations and paleontologic resources; 2) BLM should determine the geologic and paleontologic sites or areas that are most vulnerable to current and future impact and adopt management actions necessary to protect, conserve, and restore these resources; 3) BLM should prohibit the collection of any specimens; 4) BLM should adopt measures to protect paleontologic resources from looters, thieves, and vandals; and 5) BLM should define the level of inventory needed to provide a basis for understanding the distribution, comparative importance, and potential uses of paleontologic resources (i.e., relative sensitivity, relative opportunities for interpretive development, relative scientific importance, relative potential for research and education).*

*Visual/Noise Pollution - Reduce impacts from oil and gas development with natural colors. Reduce noise from facilities with insulation and vegetation screens. No new high voltage right of ways except in existing corridors.*

*Socioeconomic Analysis - The analysis of the socio-economic impacts of the proposed resource management plan must be thorough and accurate in order to responsibly manage the public lands. BLM must also conduct a thorough assessment of the impacts of oil and gas and coalbed methane development on the social and economic wellbeing of the communities included in the Malta planning area. We also request that the RMP require that any proposed oil and gas development includes adequate measures to mitigate negative socioeconomic impacts and protect the local communities, property owners and the landscape from such harms.*

### **3.5 ISSUES RAISED THAT WILL NOT BE ADDRESSED**

To date, comments and concerns raised during the scoping period have been summarized in this scoping report. Based on those comments, the preliminary planning themes have been refined and classified as Category A of Tables D-1 through D-8. Comments and concerns classified as Categories B, C, and D in Tables D-1 through D-8 will not be considered by the BLM during this planning process. These concerns will be resolved through policy or administrative actions (Category B); addressed by the BLM outside of this planning effort or are concerns that the BLM is already actively addressing (Category C); or are beyond the scope of this RMP effort (Category D). Most of the comments that were classified under Category D were considered out of scope because they either addressed project-specific issues or were beyond the Malta RMP planning area.

### **3.6 ANTICIPATED DECISIONS**

FLPMA requires the BLM to manage public lands using principles of multiple use and sustained yield. Management direction resulting from the planning process for the RMP needs to be adaptable to changing conditions and demands over the life of the RMP. RMP's provide management direction and help with decision making regarding appropriate multiple uses and allocation of resources; develop strategies to manage and protect resources; and establish systems to monitor and evaluate the status of resources and effectiveness of the management practices. As part of an analysis of the management situation, the BLM is reviewing the existing condition of the environment and existing management situation to identify which existing management decisions should be continued, which existing management directions should be modified, and which management directions should be developed or added.

This scoping report does not make any decisions, nor does it change current management direction set forth in both the 1988 West HiLine and 1992 JVP RMPs. It only summarizes those issues distilled from comments identified during the scoping period for the Malta RMP planning area. Issues summarized in this scoping report (Section 3.2), along with subsequently identified issues, planning criteria, and other information (e.g. reasonable foreseeable development scenario for fluid minerals), will be used by the BLM and cooperators to help formulate a reasonable range of alternatives during the next phase of the RMP process. Each identified alternative (including continuation of existing management) will represent a complete and reasonable plan for managing the Malta Field Office. Future decisions will occur at two levels: the RMP, or land use planning, and the implementation level. These decision types are described below. In general, only RMP-level decisions will be made as part of the RMP process. The BLM's evaluation of identified alternative will be documented in an EIS prepared as part of the RMP

process (as required by NEPA).

### **3.6.1 Future RMP-Level Decisions**

Future RMP-level decisions will be made on a broad scale. These decisions will identify management direction and guide future actions for the next 10 to 20 years within the planning area. The RMP will provide a comprehensive yet flexible framework for managing numerous demands on resources managed by the BLM.

The vision for the Malta Field Office planning area will be described in the RMP in terms of desired outcomes, which represent one of two categories of RMP-level decisions. (The second category of the RMP-level decisions involves allowable uses and actions to achieve goals.) Desired outcomes will be expressed in terms of specific goals, standards, and objectives. Goals are broad statement of desired outcomes (e.g. ensure sustainable development). Standards are descriptions of conditions or the degree of function required (e.g., land health standards). Objectives are specific, quantifiable, and measurable desired conditions for resources (e.g., manage sagebrush communities to achieve a certain canopy cover by 2017).

The second category of RMP-level decisions, allowable uses and actions to achieve desired outcomes, will be expressed in the RMP as allowable uses, actions needed, and land tenure decisions. Livestock grazing, administrative designations (e.g., ACECs), and land disposal are examples of some RMP-level decisions in this category.

### **3.6.2 Future Implementation Decisions**

The RMP makes broad-scale decisions that guide future land management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions. Implementation decisions are often referred to as project-level or activity-level decisions and represent the BLM's final approval of on-the-ground actions. Implementation decisions require a more-detailed site-specific analysis that will tie back to the EIS prepared for the RMP. Implementation decisions generally constitute final approval of on-the-ground actions to proceed (land Use Planning Handbook H-160101 IV (B)). An example of an implementation decision is development and management of a recreation site. In some circumstances, site-specific implementation decisions may be made through the RMP process.

### **3.7 SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS, INCLUDING NOMINATIONS**

The special designations section of the RMP will include a discussion of designated areas such as ACECs, National Historic Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and WSAs. It also will consider new special management area designations, including Special Recreation Management Areas, ACECs, and river segments eligible and suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. As summarized in Section 3.3.7 and Table D-7 only one comment mentioned studies or designations to wilderness. Per the Utah Wilderness Settlement, the BLM no longer inventories or studies areas for wilderness suitability (including WSA status), so current WSAs will not be expanded from the RMP process.

## **SECTION 4 PLANNING CRITERIA**

The BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-2) require development of planning criteria to guide preparation of the resource management plan. Planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that guide and direct the preparation of the plan. They ensure the plan is tailored to the identified issues and that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided. Planning criteria are based on applicable laws and regulations, agency guidance, the result of consultation and coordination with the public, other Federal, state and local agencies and governmental entities, and American Indian tribes.

Scoping introduced planning criteria to the public for comment. The planning criteria were available for public review and comment during the formal scoping period. Following are the criteria:

- Lands covered in the RMP will be public land and split estates managed by BLM. Decisions will not be made in the RMP relative to the management of lands not managed by BLM.
- The proposed RMP will be in compliance with FLPMA and all other applicable laws, regulations and policies.
- Impacts from the management alternatives considered in the revised RMP will be analyzed in an EIS developed in accordance with regulations at 43 CFR 1610 and 40 CFR 1500.
- Broad-based public participation will be an integral part of the planning and EIS process.
- Decisions in the plan will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, State and Federal agencies as long as the decisions are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law, and regulations applicable to public lands.
- The RMP will recognize the State's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife. BLM will consult with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) as necessary. The RMP will incorporate state or region-wide planning efforts to the fullest extent possible.
- The National Sage-grouse Strategy requires that impacts to sagebrush habitat and sagebrush-dependent wildlife species (including Greater sage-grouse) be analyzed and considered in BLM land use planning efforts for the public lands with sage-grouse/sagebrush habitats located within the planning area.
- The RMP will recognize valid existing rights.
- The RMP/EIS will incorporate management decisions brought forward from existing planning documents.

- Based on the assumptions of adequate funding, this plan will be periodically reviewed and would be amended if necessary. Plans would be evaluated every 5 years per 43 CFR 1610.4-9. Information gathered from the 5 year evaluation would be used to determine planning needs, priority for plan revisions and amendments. For NEPA analysis purposes the short-term will be 5 years and the long-term will be the life of the RMP.
- The planning team will work cooperatively and collaboratively with the State of Montana, Tribal governments, county and municipal governments, other federal agencies, the Central Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC), and all other interested groups, agencies and individuals.
- The planning process will provide strategies for the protection of recognized Native American traditional and cultural uses.
- The BLM and cooperating agencies/governments will jointly develop alternatives for resolution of resource management issues.
- The planning process will incorporate Standards and Guidelines developed in accordance with regulations in 43 CFR Subpart 4180 and approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
- The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) will be consulted and involved throughout the planning/EIS process.
- Areas with special environmental quality will be protected and if necessary designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Wild and Scenic Rivers or other appropriate designations.
- The RMP will emphasize the protection and enhancement of the planning area's biodiversity while, at the same time, providing the public with opportunities for compatible activities on public lands.
- Lifestyles and concerns of the general public in the United States will be recognized in the plan.
- Lands acquired by the BLM, will be managed in the manner the RMP prescribes for adjacent public land, subject to any constraints associated with the acquisition.
- The RMP will provide management direction for lands returned to BLM management through revocation of withdrawals. The plan will also address lands acquired through other means.
- Lands identified for disposal prior to July 25, 2000 will be reviewed to insure disposal is in the best interest of the public. Lands not retained will be available for disposal under the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA or "Baca Bill") where applicable.
- Forest management strategies will be consistent with the Healthy

Forests Restoration Act and the Tribal Forest Protection Act where appropriate.

- Fire Management strategies will be consistent with the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Policy, the National Fire Plan, the Fire/Fuels Management Plan for Montana and Dakotas, the H-9214 Handbook and other policies.
- GIS and metadata information will meet Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) standards, as required by EO 12906, signed April 11, 1994.
- Other applicable BLM data standards will be followed. The planning process will use an easily maintained, spatially based plan with minimal text. Data changes would be automatically reflected in the plan decisions. The goal is to develop an RMP with spatial and temporal data that can be easily accessed for use in subsequent NEPA analyses.
- The RMP will incorporate the Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines as goal statements.
- The planning process will involve American Indian tribal governments and will provide strategies for the protection of recognized traditional uses.
- All proposed management actions will be based upon best available scientific information, research and technology, as well as existing inventory and monitoring information.
- The RMP will include adaptive management criteria and protocol to deal with future issues.

Although no specific criterion differing from those above was suggested by the public during scoping, several encouraged the BLM to use criteria and standards for as many decisions as possible, making it easier to manage site-specific activities during implementation-level management phases. Therefore, the above planning criteria will be used to guide the RMP process. Furthermore, the BLM is currently consulting with and will continue to consult with relevant agencies and tribal governments on issues that will support an effective planning process and offer consistency with similar processes within and adjacent to the Malta RMP planning area.

## **SECTION 5 DATA SUMMARY/DATA GAPS**

Existing resource information available in the Malta Field Office, including GIS theme maps, will be used in formulating resource objectives and management alternatives. As part of the RMP planning, evaluation, and data collection process, the BLM has inventoried available information and identified data needs. Information is being collected, compiled and digitized for use in the planning process to include the development of resource maps for the RMP/EIS. Information already in a digital format must be updated to the same standards required for newly entered data. Because this information is imperative to quantify resources, create updated maps, and manipulate information during alternative formulation; this process must be completed before actual analysis can begin. Any new data generated during the RMP will be used to address planning issues and will meet applicable established standards. This information can be made available upon request.

All GIS data will comply with state and national BLM data standards. Data standards refers to how data should look (i. e. what attributes will be collected/recorded, what is the preferred geographic projection, what is the acceptable level of data accuracy, etc. The procedures and responsibilities for developing data standards and a current listing of completed standards are located at: <http://web.mt.blm.gov/datasteward/index.html>.

Metadata or “data about data” is information about data and/or geospatial services, such as content, source, vintage, spatial scale, accuracy, projection, responsible party, contact phone number, method of collection, and other descriptions. Reliable metadata development, structured in a standardized manner, is essential to ensuring that data are used appropriately, and any resulting analysis is credible. For GIS data to be utilized for NEPA/Planning, it is required that metadata be created and appropriately maintained. All appropriate requirements will be followed to ensure integrity of GIS data.

## SECTION 6 FUTURE STEPS

### 6.1 SUMMARY OF FUTURE STEPS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

The next phase of the BLM's planning process is to develop management alternatives based on the issues presented in Section 3.2. These alternatives will address planning issues identified during scoping and will meet goals and objectives to be developed by the interdisciplinary team. In compliance with NEPA, CEQ regulations, and the BLM planning regulations and guidance; alternatives should be reasonable and capable of implementation. The BLM will also continue to meet with collaborating agencies, interested tribes, community groups, and individuals. A detailed analysis of the alternatives will be documented. Based on the analyses of the alternatives, the BLM's Preferred Alternative will then be selected and analyzed in detail. The Preferred Alternative is often made up of a combination of management option components from the various alternatives to provide the best mix and balance of multiple land and resource uses to resolve the issues.

The analysis of the alternatives will be documented in a Draft RMP/EIS. Although the BLM welcomes public input at any time during the planning process, the next official public comment period will begin when the Draft RMP/EIS is published, which is anticipated for the Summer/Fall of 2008. The draft document will be widely distributed to elected officials, regulatory agencies, members of the public, and will be available on the project web site ([www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp](http://www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp)). The availability of the draft document will be announced via a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register, and a 90-day public comment period will follow. Public meetings are tentatively planned for Chinook, Billings, Browning, Glasgow, Great Falls, Malta, Harlem, Havre, Rocky Boy, Shelby, Turner, and Zortman, Montana during the 90-day period. At the conclusion of the public comment period, all comments received will be evaluated and considered for incorporation into the Final RMP/EIS. A Proposed RMP/Final EIS will then be published. The availability of the proposed document will be announced in the Federal Register, and a public protest period will follow. If necessary, a notice will be published in the Federal Register requesting comments on significant changes made as a result of protest. Concurrently the Governor of Montana will review the Proposed RMP/Final EIS for consistency with approved state or local plans, policies, or programs. At the conclusion of the public protest period and Governor's consistency review, the BLM will resolve all protests and any inconsistencies. With resolution of all protests and inconsistencies the approved RMP and Record of Decision will be published. The availability of these documents will be announced in the Federal Register. Table 6-1 outlines the major milestones of the Malta RMP/EIS planning process and when the public will be asked for its input. All publications, including this report, newsletters, the Draft RMP/EIS, and the Notice of Availability, will be published on the official Malta RMP web site

([www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp](http://www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp)). In addition, pertinent dates regarding solicitation of public comments will be published on the web site.

**Table 6.1 Malta RMP/EIS Planning Milestones**

Notice of Intent Published in Federal Register	September 9, 2006
Public Scoping Period	September 9 through November 15, 2006
Scoping Summary Report Available	June 2007
Formulate Alternatives and Prepare Draft EIS	Summer 2007 through Spring 2008
Draft EIS with Plan Alternatives available for 90-day Public Review and Comment	Fall 2008
Prepare Final EIS and Proposed RMP	Winter 2009
30-Day Public Review and Protest period for Final EIS and Proposed RMP	Summer 2009
Resolve Protest	Fall 2009
Record of Decision and Approved RMP	Spring 2010

**6.2 CONTACT INFORMATION**

The public is invited and encouraged to participate throughout the planning process for the RMP. Some ways to participate include:

- Reviewing the progress of the RMP at the official Malta RMP/EIS web site at [www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp](http://www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp). The web site will be updated with information, documents, and announcements throughout the duration of the RMP preparation; and
- Requesting to be added to or to remain on the official Malta RMP project mailing list in order to receive future mailings and information. Anyone wishing to be added to or deleted from the distribution list or requesting further information may e-mail their request to [MT\\_Malta\\_RMP@blm.gov](mailto:MT_Malta_RMP@blm.gov) or contact G. Claire Trent at (406) 654-5124. Please provide your name, mailing address, and e-mail address, as well as your preferred method to receive information.

## **APPENDIX A**

### ***Notice of Intent***

The attached pages from the Federal Register include the Notice of Intent (NOI) for the Malta Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement. The NOI was published on September 6, 2006, and officially initiated the scoping process for the project.

development operations in existing fields. The purpose of the proposal is to extract and recover natural gas for distribution to consumers. The Operators' proposal consists of development of up to 4,207 wells and associated facilities including but not limited to roads, well pads, pipelines, gas treatment and possible compression resulting in approximately 25,820 acres of short-term disturbance and 9,058 acres of life-of-project disturbance. Wells would be drilled using a combination of vertical and directional drilling techniques. The proposal calls for a 20- to 30-year construction and drilling period with another 30 years for the project operations.

The Hiawatha Regional Energy Development Project is located in an area of existing oil and gas development known as Canyon Creek, Trail, and Kinney Fields (also known as the Vermillion Basin area) in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, and the East and West Hiawatha/Sugarloaf Fields in Moffat County, Colorado. This project would meet the goals and objectives of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and the President's National Energy Policy.

During the preparation of the EIS, development within the project area may be allowed in Wyoming as approved under the Modified Decision Record for the Vermillion Basin Natural Gas Exploration and Production Project. Other interim development will be subject to interim development guidelines on the Wyoming portion of the project.

The EIS will analyze the environmental consequences of implementing the proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action including the No Action alternative. Other alternatives under consideration include a range of drilling surface densities and pace, mitigation measures, best management practices and phased development.

Agency resource issues and concerns will be identified in the public scoping notice mailed to Federal, State and local governments, interested groups, individuals, and businesses under separate cover.

Dated: June 30, 2006.

**Robert A. Bennett,**

*State Director.*

[FR Doc. E6-14670 Filed 9-5-06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-22-P

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[MT-090-1610-DO-048E]

#### Notice of Intent To Prepare a Resource Management Plan for the Malta Field Office and Associated Environmental Impact Statement

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Malta Field Office intends to prepare a Resource Management Plan with an associated Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). The planning area is located in Blaine, Choteau, Glacier, Hill, Liberty, Phillips, Toole, and Valley Counties, Montana. The public scoping process will identify planning issues and develop planning criteria, including evaluation of the existing RMPs in the context of the needs and interests of the public. This notice initiates the public scoping process.

**DATES:** To be most helpful you should submit formal scoping comments within 60 days after publication of this Notice. However, collaboration with the public will continue throughout the process. All public meetings will be announced through the local news media, newsletters, and the BLM Web site (<http://www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp>) at least 15 days prior to the event. The minutes and list of attendees for each meeting will be available to the public and open for 30 days to any participant who wishes to clarify the views they expressed.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments should be sent to Bureau of Land Management, G. Claire Trent, RMP Project Manager, Malta Field Office, 501 S 2nd St. East, Malta, MT 59538; Fax—406-654-5150. Documents pertinent to this proposal may be examined at the Malta Field Office. Respondents' comments, including their names and street addresses, will be available for public review at the Malta Field Office during regular business hours from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the EIS. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning

of your written comments. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further information and/or to have your name added to our mailing list, contact G. Claire Trent at (406) 654-5124 or e-mail at [MT\\_Malta\\_RMP@blm.gov](mailto:MT_Malta_RMP@blm.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The BLM will work collaboratively with interested parties to identify the management decisions that are best suited to local, regional, and national needs and concerns. Public meetings will be held throughout the plan scoping and preparation period. In order to ensure local community participation and input, public scoping meeting locations will be rotated among the towns of Big Sandy, Billings, Browning, Chester, Chinook, Cut Bank, Fort Benton, Glasgow, Great Falls, Harlem, Helena, Havre, Hays, Malta, Opheim, Rocky Boy, Shelby, Turner, and Whitewater. Early participation is encouraged, and will help determine the future management of public lands administered by the Malta Field Office. In addition to the ongoing public participation process, formal opportunities for public participation will be provided upon publication of the Draft RMP/EIS, the final Proposed Plan, and Record of Decision.

The Bureau of Land Management's Malta Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement incorporates a planning area administered by three BLM offices: the Glasgow and Havre Field Stations, and the Malta Field Office. These offices were recently combined under the Malta Field Office [Notice of Montana/Dakotas Administrative Boundaries Resulting from the Havre Field Station Realignment and other Organizational Changes, (IM No. MT-2005-041)]. The land area to be covered under the Malta RMP/EIS is approximately two and a half million surface acres (~2,500,000) and three- and a half million subsurface acres (~3,500,000) of public land in the north-central tier of the State of Montana. Currently, land resources are managed under the following decisions: the 1988 West HiLine RMP as amended in 1992, for portions of the planning area administered by the Havre Field Station; and the 1994 Judith, Valley, Phillips (JVP) RMP for the remainder of the planning areas administered by the Malta Field Office and Glasgow Field

Station. The current JVP RMP does not include oil and gas planning decisions. Oil and gas planning decisions for these lands are under the Management Framework Plans and the supporting National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document—Lewistown District Oil and Gas Environmental Assessment of BLM Leasing Program (September 1981).

Some of the BLM-managed public lands (226,920 acres) analyzed in the West HiLine and JVP RMPs have recently become a part of the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, which will be managed under a separate RMP.

The RMP revision to be prepared for the public lands administered by the Malta Field Office will identify goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines for management of a variety of resources and values. The scope of the RMP will be comprehensive. The plan will specify actions, constraints, and general management practices necessary to achieve desired conditions. The plan will also identify any areas requiring special management such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs). Certain existing standards and guidelines and other BLM plans/plan amendments will be incorporated into the RMP.

In accordance with the National Energy Policy Act of 2005, the BLM is implementing long-term strategies to produce traditional sources of energy on Federal land in an environmentally compatible way, to increase renewable energy production on Federal land, and to involve all interested persons in the public planning process. The significant amount of oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development throughout this part of Montana is a major reason for revising these RMPs. The BLM is involved in managing more than 1500 oil and gas leases across the planning area, and an increasing interest in leasing has created a pressing need for new inventories and revised data. The BLM needs this information to evaluate oil and gas planning decision alternatives. Increased interest in developing alternative energy resources such as wind and solar power have also impacted the planning area, but these activities were not addressed in either current RMP. Also, in recent years, greater sage-grouse, black-tailed prairie dogs and prairie dog associate special status species (SSS) such as burrowing owls and mountain plovers, and migratory birds, in particular SSS associated with grassland habitats, will be addressed in the RMP planning process.

The BLM's decision to begin a new planning effort for the public lands in the Malta resource area is based on public and agency need for revised management guidance to address changing issues. Preliminary issues and management concerns have been identified by BLM, other agencies, and in meetings with individuals and user groups. They represent the BLM's information to date on the existing issues and concerns with current management. The major issue themes that will be addressed in the RMP effort include the following:

1. Energy development—(fluid minerals—oil and gas; alternative—wind);
2. Management of vegetation;
3. Management of wildlife;
4. Conservation and recovery of special status species;
5. Water quality, quantity, and aquatic species;
6. Travel management and access to public lands;
7. Management of areas with special values;
8. Availability and management of public lands for commercial uses; and
9. Land tenure adjustments.

After gathering public comments on what issues the plan should address, the suggested issues will be placed in one of three categories:

1. Issues to be resolved in the plan;
2. Issues resolved through policy or administrative action; or
3. Issues beyond the scope of this plan.

Rationale will be provided for each issue placed in categories two or three. In addition to these major issues, a number of management questions and concerns will be addressed in the plan. The public is encouraged to help identify these questions and concerns during the scoping phase.

An interdisciplinary approach will be used to develop the plan in order to consider the variety of resource issues and concerns identified. Disciplines involved in the planning process will include specialists with expertise in minerals and geology, forestry, range, fire and fuels, outdoor recreation, archaeology, paleontology, wildlife and fisheries, lands and realty, hydrology, soils, sociology, environmental justice and economics.

The following planning criteria have been proposed to guide development of the plan, avoid unnecessary data collection and analyses, and to ensure the plan is tailored to the issues. Other criteria may be identified during the public scoping process. After gathering comments on planning criteria, the BLM will finalize the criteria and provide

feedback to the public on the criteria to be used throughout the planning process.

- The RMP/EIS will comply with FLPMA, NEPA, and all other applicable laws and regulations.
- The plan amendment will recognize the existence of valid existing rights.
- Lands covered in the RMP amendment will be public lands, which include split estate lands, managed by BLM. Decisions in the RMP amendment will be made only on lands managed by the BLM.

The RMP/EIS will utilize existing guidance where appropriate, and establish new guidance for managing the public lands within the Malta Field Office.

- The RMP/EIS will incorporate by reference the *Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota* (August 1997), the *Wind Energy Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* (June 2005), the *Off-Highway Vehicle Environmental Impact Statement and Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas* (June 2003), and the *Montana/Dakotas Statewide Fire Management Plan* (September 2003).

- The RMP/EIS will incorporate by reference all prior Wilderness designations and Wilderness Study Area findings that affect public lands in the planning area.

- The RMP/EIS will recognize the State's responsibility to manage wildlife populations, including uses such as hunting and fishing.

- Planning decisions will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, State, tribal, and Federal agencies as long as the decisions are in conformance with BLM legal mandates.

- The BLM will use a collaborative and multi-jurisdictional approach, where applicable throughout the planning process.

- The scope of analysis will be consistent with the level of analysis in current approved plans and in accordance with Bureau-wide standards and program guidance.

- Resource allocations will be reasonable and achievable within available technological and budgetary constraints.

- The lifestyles and concerns of area residents will be recognized in the plan.

Dated: June 9, 2006.

**Mark Albers,**

*Malta Field Office Manager.*

[FR Doc. E6-14669 Filed 9-5-06; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4311-DN-P

## **APPENDIX B**

### ***Newsletter No. 1***

The attached pages include the first offering of the Malta RMP Newsletter. The first newsletter for the Malta RMP project was mailed on October 4, 2006, to 993 individuals from the public, agencies, and organizations. The newsletter introduced the BLM and the RMP planning process; provided the preliminary issue themes, planning criteria, and project milestones timeline; and suggested methods for public involvement. The newsletter also provided the dates and venues for the eighteen scoping open houses.

# Newsletter of the Malta Field Office



## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, MALTA FIELD OFFICE

Volume 1, Issue 1

September 2006

### Letter from the Field Manager

Dear Public Land User:

This is the first of several newsletters that will provide you with information regarding the Malta Resource Management Plan (RMP). We hope these newsletters and our website will help keep you up-to-date on important aspects of the planning process. You may find our website at <http://www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp>.

The RMP process starts with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register in September 2006. The NOI states that BLM will develop a new RMP for the Malta Field Office planning area which includes the Havre and Glasgow Field Stations. The new plan will replace the existing Judith-Valley-Phillips RMP/EIS (1992) and the West HiLine RMP/EIS (1988), which currently guide management of these lands. The NOI also starts public scoping, a process used to identify issues and concerns relative to the planning process.



Greater sage-grouse, one of several special status species (SSS) to be addressed in the planning process.

Eighteen public meetings are planned to obtain tribal, public and agency input. We invite you to attend and encourage you to participate so that we may better understand your concerns and issues across the planning area. Your issues and concerns will be addressed in the draft RMP and environmental impact statement (EIS) which will include a range of management alternatives.

The Malta RMP planning team, consisting of BLM resource specialists, is compiling existing data, gathering additional data, assessing the existing management situation and discussing opportunities to address issues and concerns brought forth during the upcoming scoping. During the summer of 2007, the planning team will develop alternatives for the Draft RMP.

This newsletter includes a short summary of what needs to be done in the development of the Malta Field Office RMP. We hope that you participate in this planning effort and that you respond with comments and ideas at key points in the process.

Mark Albers  
Field Manager  
Malta Field Office

#### Preliminary Planning Issues



Energy development (oil and gas)



Alternative energy development (wind farming)



Wildlife Management



Recreation Management



Vegetation Management

### BLM Mission:

IT IS THE MISSION OF THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT TO SUSTAIN THE HEALTH, DIVERSITY AND PRODUCTIVITY OF THE PUBLIC LANDS FOR THE USE AND ENJOYMENT OF PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

### Inside this issue:

WHAT IS AN RMP?	2
THE PURPOSE OF SCOPING	2
HOW WE ARE USING YOUR COMMENTS	2
SCOPING MEETINGS SCHEDULE	3
PLANNING TIMELINE	3
WHAT'S NEXT	4
HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE	4

## Newsletter of the Malta Field Office



Pronghorn antelope is a commonly observed wildlife species occurring throughout the planning area.

A PLANNING ISSUE IS IDENTIFIED AS A MATTER OF CONTROVERSY OR DISPUTE OVER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES OR LAND USE THAT IS WELL DEFINED OR TOPICALLY DISCRETE AND ENTAILS ALTERNATIVES BETWEEN WHICH TO CHOOSE.



Public lands provide for scenic recreational opportunities.

### WHAT IS A RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN?

A resource management plan (RMP) provides comprehensive, long-term direction concerning the use and management of resources managed by BLM. Our objective is to establish management goals and objectives to maintain, develop, and protect the resource values of BLM administered land within the

field office's planning area. This new plan will be developed over the next three years and will replace the current West HiLine and Judith-Valley-Phillips Resource Management Plans. The new Malta RMP will guide the Bureau's management of public lands to ensure healthy ecosystems, promote multiple

use, and develop natural resources for present and future generations. The BLM is seeking your comments on its preparation of the plan. Public scoping meetings will be held in October 2006. The public is invited and encouraged to attend.

### WHAT IS "Scoping?"

Public involvement is an important part of developing a new resource management plan. Scoping is the first stage of the planning process and closely involves the public with identifying issues, providing resource and other information, and developing planning criteria to guide

preparation of the resource management plan. It provides an important opportunity for both the public and BLM representatives to discuss concerns, ideas and issues. The BLM is committed to providing stakeholders frequent and equal opportunities to participate in an

open and comprehensive scoping process. In order to provide ample opportunities for public participation across northcentral Montana, the Malta Field Office has scheduled the following public scoping forums (SEE THE MEETING SCHEDULE).

### HOW WE WILL USE YOUR COMMENTS

Upon completion of the scoping period, we will analyze your comments to identify relevant issues to address in the Malta RMP. After analysis of the comments, we compile a scoping report to help us ensure that the RMP and EIS address the issues important to the people who live in the region or who may be affected by BLM's decisions. The scoping report does not make decisions or set forth policies. It does summarize the comments we received through the end of the scoping period, and identifies issues to be addressed by the plan. Comments received after completion of the scoping report will be considered in the next steps of the planning process.

Issues that will be addressed in the RMP, and discussed in the public scoping meetings involve public land uses which can compete or conflict at times. Preliminary issues include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Travel management and access
- Off highway vehicle management
- Vegetation management
- Balancing multiple use
- Cultural resources
- Fire management
- Lands and realty management

- Water resource management
- Visual resource management
- Special status species management
- Commercial uses
- Energy development (fluid minerals—oil and gas; alternative—wind)
- Wildlife management

Volume 1, Issue 1

**RMP SCOPING MEETING SCHEDULE**  
**ALL MEETING TIMES ARE FROM 6 p.m. TO 8 p.m.**

DATE	TOWN	VENUE
October 2, 2006	Malta	Great Northern Hotel (GN)
October 3, 2006	Whitewater	Whitewater High School
October 4, 2006	Glasgow	Cottonwood Inn
October 5, 2006	Opheim	Opheim High School
October 6, 2006	Zortman	Little Rockies Fire Station
October 10, 2006	Harlem	Harlem Elem. School
October 11, 2006	Hays/Lodge Pole	Hays High School
October 12, 2006	Turner	Turner High School
October 16, 2006	Shelby	Marias River Electric
October 17, 2006	Browning	Blackfeet Community College
October 18, 2006	Great Falls	BLM/USFS Office
October 19, 2006	Helena	Red Lion Colonial Hotel
October 23, 2006	Chester	Chester High School
October 24, 2006	Big Sandy	Big Sandy High School
October 25, 2006	Havre	Best Western Great Northern
October 26, 2006	Rocky Boy	Stone Child Community College
October 30, 2006	Chinook	Chinook Motor Inn
October 31, 2006	Billings	Hampton Inn
November 1, 2006	Alternate Date	
November 2, 2006	Alternate Date	

\*Meeting dates and locations dependent upon NOI FR publication date



Management concerns: The Malta RMP will establish goals for management of cultural resources—including preservation and protection of significant cultural resources.

LAND USE PLAN  
 DECISIONS ARE  
 BROAD-SCALE  
 DECISIONS THAT  
 WILL GUIDE  
 FUTURE  
 MANAGEMENT  
 IN THE MALTA  
 RMP PLANNING  
 AREA.

**PLANNING TIMELINE**

SEPTEMBER 2006	NOTICE OF INTENT PUBLISHED IN FEDERAL REGISTER
OCTOBER 2006	PUBLIC SCOPING
OCTOBER 2007	ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT OPEN HOUSES
SEPTEMBER 2008	DRAFT RMP/EIS NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
AUGUST 2009	PROPOSED RMP/FINAL EIS NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
MARCH 2010	RECORD OF DECISION

(Note, the planning timeline is subject to change. Please check our web site to follow our progress in this planning effort.)



Preliminary planning issue/goal: Manage energy development to provide for domestic energy production while protecting the integrity of other resources.

### What's Next?

This winter, the planning team will be working to identify goals, objectives, desired resource conditions, and management strategies for BLM lands. The various objectives and management strategies will be presented as a range of alternatives in the draft plan.

### How You Can Participate

We invite you to participate in our scoping process. If you cannot attend one or more of these meetings, there are several other ways to participate. You can mail your written scoping comments to us at the address below. You can also e-mail comments to [MT\\_Malta\\_RMP@blm.gov](mailto:MT_Malta_RMP@blm.gov).

Address: Malta Field Office, 501 S. 2nd St. E., Malta, MT 59538

Our progress can be followed on-line at the RMP website:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp>

The website will be updated with information and new documents as they are completed.

When we complete the draft RMP/EIS, tentatively scheduled for June 2008, we will contact the public to announce the document availability for review and comment. At that time we will also inform you of upcoming public meetings where you can learn more about the Draft RMP/EIS and provide oral and written comments.

Individuals and groups receiving this newsletter will continue to be on the mailing list. Anyone wishing to be added to or deleted from the list may do so by contacting Claire Trent at the Bureau of Land Management, Malta Field Office, 501 S 2nd St. East, Malta, MT 59538, by phone at (406) 654-5124, or by email at [MT\\_Malta\\_RMP@blm.gov](mailto:MT_Malta_RMP@blm.gov).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
MALTA FIELD OFFICE  
501 SOUTH 2<sup>ND</sup> STREET EAST  
MALTA, MT 59538

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### Contact Us

G. Claire Trent, RMP Project Manager  
(406) 654-5124 or  
[Garrie\\_Trent@blm.gov](mailto:Garrie_Trent@blm.gov)

Mark Albers, Field Manager  
(406) 654-5113 or  
[Mark\\_Albers@blm.gov](mailto:Mark_Albers@blm.gov)

### We're on the Web!

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/mafo/rmp/>

### Commonly Used Acronyms

BLM	BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EIS	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
MAFO	MALTA FIELD OFFICE
NOI	NOTICE OF INTENT
FR	FEDERAL REGISTER
RMP	RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

## APPENDIX C

### *List of Commentors*

A list of commentors and the method and date of receipt is provided.

<b>RMP Scoping Comments</b>	
<b>Commenter</b>	<b>Date of Submission</b>
<b>Comments Received by Mail</b>	
Region 8, Montana Office USEPA	October 4, 2006
William and Lela French	October 10, 2006
George Stevens Land Trust	October 11, 2006
Leonard B. Swenson	October 11, 2006
Russ Tempel	October 12, 2006
Richard Fisher	October 19, 2006
Jerry Peterson	October 30, 2006
Lesley Robinson	November 2, 2006
Mert and Vicki Freyholtz	November 9, 2006
Dyrck Van Hyning	November 13, 2006
Darren Snow	November 13, 2006
Jim Warburton	November 13, 2006
World Wildlife Fund	November 13, 2006
Montana Wilderness Association	November 14, 2006
John Arnold	November 14, 2006
Dennis Tighe	November 16, 2006
The Wilderness Society	November 16, 2006
Missouri River Conservation District Council	November 17, 2006
Helen Horn	November 17, 2006
Joe Etchart	December 8, 2006
Linden P. Martineau	December 15, 2006
<b>Comments Received by E-mail</b>	
Gene Sents	October 31, 2006
Ruthann Knudson	November 10, 2006
James Brenna	November 12, 2006
Montana Petroleum Association	November 14, 2006
Arlo Skari	November 15, 2006
Devon Energy	November 16, 2006
Montana Wildlife Federation	November 16, 2006
Don Marble	December 9, 2006
<b>Comments Received by Facsimile</b>	
American Prairie Foundation	November 15, 2006

<b>Comments Received at the Scoping Meeting</b>	
Stephen Brown	October 6, 2006
Gene Billmeyer	October 12, 2006

## **APPENDIX D**

### ***Scoping Comments by Planning Issue Theme***

Tables D-1 through D-6 list the scoping comments received from the public and interested parties during the public scoping period, September 6 through November 15, 2005. These comment tables are separated by seven planning issue themes:

D-1. Access, and Transportation

D-2. Ecosystem Management

D-3. Energy Development and Other Commercial Uses

D-4. Land Tenure Adjustments

D-5. Recreation, Visitor Services and OHV

D-6. Special Management Area Designation

Comments concerning RMP Planning and Process Issues are listed on Table D-7.

Comments concerning RMP Management Concerns are listed on Table D-8.

Table D-1. Access, Rights-of-Way, and Transportation

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-O-011	Why are there so many gas roads? Can't fewer roads be used to get to the wells?	X			
S-O-012	What major changes are proposed?	X			
S-O-029	Road access- seems more roads are being closed, why?	X			
S-O-036	Commenter wondered what was driving a perceived crackdown on vehicular game retrieval, road closures, etc.	X			
S-O-050	Travel plan issues. What about ORVs, especially 4-wheelers?	X			
S-O-056	Commenter expressed concerns regarding energy development. Will we have to run gas lines into Canada? Or can we construct them laterally? How will development of such lines affect private landowners? Will lessees repair roads? Will they concern themselves with noxious weed proliferation?	X			
S-O-067	Concerning road between Turner and Dodson, is there a bladed road as far as the Joe Nicholson ranch?				X
S-O-072	Commenter expressed concern about electrical transmission lines.	X			
S-O-073	Who controls access to BLM lands across private lands? ("We ought to be able to control who crosses our lands.")	X			
S-O-080	Concern about access across private land to get to public land, what about teepee rings in Kevin Rim area, Are they on public or private land (or both).	X			
S-O-126	Can hunters use BLM-maintained roads on leased land?	X			
S-O-133	Commenter sees public access to public lands as the biggest future problem. Absentee landlords who purchase land for private hunting preserves may shut others out by blocking road access, and it doesn't take that many to block access to a lot of public land. Estimates 100 miles of road shut off to public access in Blaine County alone. Added that he thought the answer was federal land-holding agencies' "buy in" to block management concepts, entailing payment of nominal user fees.	X			
S-O-137	The commenter expressed concern about the Sweet Grass Hills, in that "that the Sweet Grass Hills is our church." And how are we supposed to access our traditional grounds when we constantly see rancher's "No Trespassing" signs that impede native peoples' access. It appears that the BLM can go to their towers, the ranches can go where they please, but we can't get up there to practice our religion, and that constitutes interference with freedom of religion.	X			
S-O-142	Request: For a map of BLM-controlled lands in the Sweet Grass Hills, so they can more easily access sites for religious practices.	X			
S-O-158	Concerning BLM disposal of isolated land parcels, commenter expressed some concern about "locking up land."	X			
S-W-001	I would like to see easy unrestricted access to all public lands. Also I think more emphasis put on habitat restoration. It would be nice to see the grass and sage look healthy so the birds and grouse would come back.	X			
S-W-002	Other- BLM leased land sign posting. If the BLM would create a sign adequate for posting, which outlined the rules regarding any vehicles access, including ATV and motorcycles, I would purchase several.			X	
S-W-003	Travel management and access is important to me to include multiple use and allowing 4-wheeler and vehicle to maintain fencing and cattle moves.	X			
S-W-004	Off-highway vehicles - we would like to continue to use 4-wheelers to check on cows and to move them in our management plan.	X			
S-W-007	Category 3 - Off Highway Vehicles: If it were possible to have enforcement of off road use and they would stay on established two tracks roads, I would have fewer objection. But the fragile grasslands, etc., cannot tolerate off road use. There are always a few bad apples that spoil this for everyone and the area is so vast that enforcement is almost impossible. The scars left by OHV's are visible for years. There is also the danger of them spreading noxious weeds. I would like to see OHV's limited to country roadways.	X			

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-W-010	Travel Management - Off-highway vehicles. Unregulated off-highway vehicle use continues as a serious threat to biodiversity conservation. BLM should ensure that sensitive habitats are protected from this potential problem. Roads. BLM needs to evaluate its road system to determine whether existing road network is impacting maintenance of wildlife habitat, particularly fragmentation of sage grouse habitat, fragmentation of other grassland bird habitat, big game disturbance, and introduction of noxious weeds.	X			
S-W-011	Travel Management and Access: Travel and access should be managed in a manner that allows adequate access without compromising the area to erosion or weed infestations. Travel plans should be coordinated with the appropriate county and must respect the private property rights of the adjacent landowners.	X			
S-W-011	Off Highway Vehicle Management: Off highway vehicle access should be kept to a minimum to prevent weed infestations. Education should be provided to area users regarding weed seed dispersal by vehicles.	X			
S-W-012	Off-Road Vehicles - the enormous potential for damage posed by the use of ORVs, we urge the BLM to require the following in the Malta RMP: 1) Trails designated as open should be clearly marked so that all users will be aware of where ORV use is, and is not, allowed (this will also assist in effective law enforcement); 2) The RMP should prohibit ORV use unless routes are specifically marked and designated as available for that use (i.e., BLM should adopt a "closed unless posted open" policy); 3) Even where a route is recognized, constructed, and maintained, BLM still has a responsibility to determine whether recreational ORV use is appropriate on that route. Similarly, where routes are open for administrative purposes (including authorized uses by permittees), BLM should still ensure the authorization is tailored as narrowly as needed to ensure resource protection while allowing for the valid administrative access. The RMP should make provisions that reflect these requirements; 4) The RMP should implement effective, frequent monitoring of ORV impacts, and set clear benchmarks which, if exceeded, trigger closure of an area to ORVs. If monitoring and enforcement cannot be effectively accomplished due to lack of personnel or resources, the RMP should not allow the use; 5) In accordance with 43 C.F.R. § 8342.2(c), the RMP should prohibit ORV use in wilderness study areas, other areas the BLM has inventoried and found to have wilderness character, and areas within citizen-proposed wilderness areas. These lands comprise a fraction of the lands within the RMP area, and leave plenty of lands open for ORV use elsewhere; 6) The RMP should prohibit ORV use in critical wildlife habitat, winter range, areas critical for nesting, breeding or other reproductive behaviors, and habitat for threatened, endangered or sensitive species; 7) Riparian areas and wetlands are of critical importance to the biological functioning of the RMP area, and are exceedingly rare. ORVs, except on designated trails, are not appropriate in these fragile ecosystems, and the RMP should so provide; 8) Pursuant to 43 C.F.R. § 8342.2(a), ORV use impacts must be evaluated "on all resources and uses in the planning area." Thus, the EIS must evaluate the impacts of ORV use on the full range of resources present in the area, including wilderness quality lands, non-motorized recreation, grazing, water quality, wildlife habitat, scenic quality and other uses; and 9) The RMP must comply with the Tri-State ORV Decision, prohibiting cross-country ORV use on public lands managed by BLM. Public lands users should not be permitted to access public resources and destroy or damage them for recreational (or economic) purposes without being held responsible for mitigation or costs associated with any damage.	X			
S-W-012	Travel management - We urge BLM to seize the opportunity presented by this RMP process to complete a comprehensive travel management plan in conjunction with the RMP. If the agency does not complete a travel management plan as part of the Malta RMP, then the RMP must identify not only areas for use, but also reasons for permitting travel into an area and appropriate criteria for determining routes that will be made available for different uses, taking into account such factors as undeveloped recreation opportunities available and natural settings.	X			

**MALTA FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-W-012	Landscape Level Planning - BLM should address travel management on a landscape-wide basis by addressing the impacts of all roads in the planning area and accounting for the landscape-wide impacts of these roads. BLM should use a legal definition of "road" (as defined above) when designating routes and exclude "user created" routes from the inventory.	X			
S-W-012	Habitat Fragmentation - BLM should use the information provided in the documents including with these comments to measure habitat fragmentation, conduct a thorough fragmentation analysis, and inform decisions regarding road closure and other limitations on use in the Malta RMP.	X			
S-W-012	BLM should follow the eight travel planning principals detailed above to ensure that only routes which truly serve a valid purpose for the public remain open.	X			
S-W-013	Off-Highway Vehicles - Assess how many user created two-tracks and trails have been created. Routes, roads, and trails should be presumed illegal and prohibited from inclusion in all maps unless there is credible and convincing evidence that roads, routes, or trails are in fact legal. Areas and trails shall be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, air, or other resources of public lands, and to prevent impairment of wilderness suitability (43 CFR § 8342). Assess how the technological changes in motorized vehicles and the trends in vehicle use will affect future use and impacts on the land and resources. Provide a plan to enforce and monitor motorized vehicle use. In analyzing the impacts to elk and other big game, it is important to look at total road densities (as opposed to just open or designated road densities) and include all motorized "trails" in the density standard. Calculate current road densities and the road densities for all of the alternatives. Evaluate the impacts of motorized vehicles on threatened and endangered species, candidate species, management indicator species, sensitive species, and species of concern. Evaluate how motorized vehicles will impact vegetation and contribute to the spread of noxious weeds. Assess how access created for motorized vehicles will contribute to vandalism of historic and cultural sites.	X			
S-W-018	Off Highway vehicle management: Something as to be done about the ATVs running off roads. It is getting to be a major problem. The North Dakota/Montana Off Highway EIS requires that all vehicles only use existing roads and trails. However, these ATVs are creating new trails which then becomes an existing trail. The BLM must get a handle on this and prosecute those violating the law. (see scanned documents for attachment references)	X			
S-W-021	Off Highway Vehicle Management - I believe that we should not be closing existing trails and roads. A lot of people have some disability and can't walk as much as others. These are public and should be open to all no matter of physical ability.	X			
S-W-023	Motorized Vehicles - Current road densities and the road densities of the alternatives should be calculated as should the impact of motorized vehicles on wildlife be evaluated. How access created for motorized vehicles will contribute to vandalism of historic and cultural sites must be evaluated. The role of OHV activities in the spread of noxious weeds on BLM-managed lands in the planning areas and the lands of neighboring landowners and farmers needs to be assessed.	X			
S-W-029	Off Highway Vehicles - This farm which I and my family operate has three OHVs. These are very versatile and we use these for spraying, monitoring fields, fixing fence, general run-about etc. We do not use these for outdoor recreation however. I am assuming the BLM will permit OHV use only on a limited number of roads. I realize, from my years on the Central Montana RAC that the definition of a road is problematic. I am well aware that two track trails have been illegally established (user created) during the last 15 years. These trails should be used only by the permittees and Agency personnel in the management of the land. The BLM currently prohibits the use of ATVs traveling cross country and this should continue to be enforced.	X			
S-W-031	Reduce habitat fragmentation by eliminating and reclaiming non-essential and user made roads.	X			

**MALTA FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-W-031	Travel Planning should aggressively ensure that the integrity of the resource be left intact; Primitive travel corridors should not be replaced by high-speed roads, motorcycle, or ATV trails. Corridors built to facilitate Oil and Gas and wind power generation should not be included in the travel infrastructure and be reclaimed as soon as feasible. Travel corridors, generator sites, and pad locations contribute to a "disturbed land" condition that encourages noxious weed infestation (USDA-CSREES report, 1999).	X			
S-W-031	Identify public land that cannot be accessed by the public where outfitting takes place and seek opportunities to secure access to these areas. MWF believes it is inappropriate for our public lands to exist as private hunting preserves.	X			

Table D-2. Ecosystem Management

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-O-008	Would the use of range improvements, such as efforts to control sagebrush and clubmoss using chiseling projects be considered in this plan?	X			
S-O-032	Weed control and management - is BLM looking to use more biological controls, such as bugs on leafy spurge?	X			
S-O-038	Concern about "out-of-area" hunters and outfitters and if a connection between them and the spread of noxious weeds	X			
S-O-039	Concerning BLM's noxious weed control program?	X			
S-O-049	Commenter is very concerned about the spread of noxious weeds.	X			
S-O-052	We need more grassland restoration. Even crested wheatgrass has its good points, largely because it comes up so early.	X			
S-O-061	Do we have a local noxious weed program?	X			
S-O-139	Rancher on south side of West Butte won't let them take their vehicles up the mountain trail. The excuse is that their vehicles might carry seeds of noxious weeds which might thus be spread onto his land. Stated it would seem that the rancher's own cattle, ATV traffic, and even spring water runoff would probably spread more noxious weeds than their vehicles (those of the Chippewa-Cree) ever would.	X			
S-O-154	Non-native weeds continue to be dragged in from Kalispell, etc. The county seems to be trying to do something about noxious weeds, but it doesn't seem like the BLM is doing its share. Why isn't the BLM doing more about this problem?	X			
S-O-155	As he is convinced that hunters from other regions in the state and out-of-state hunters contribute significantly to the noxious weed proliferation problem, perhaps they need to start paying for the solution. What's wrong with hunters' paying \$10 for a high-pressure vehicle wash before being allowed to enter public land?	X			
S-O-157	We're taking care of the beetle infestation problem on the [Ft. Belknap] reservation, but it doesn't seem like the BLM is doing as well on their side in the Zortman area. Timber is being adversely affected, to include increasing fire danger on adjacent public lands.	X			
S-O-160	Can we get some help with bringing substandard grazing lands up to standard, such as additional or renovated small reservoirs?			X	
S-O-161	Does BLM plan to replace non-native grasses with native grasses or to continue with a mixture of native and non-native grasses?	X			
S-O-164	Energy development has certainly changed the Hi-Line's landscape over the last 15 to 20 years. There are pipelines everywhere which the commenter believes has contributed to an increase in noxious weeds.	X			
S-W-003	Vegetation Management - This is a tough one but continue to maintain or improve - club moss - crested wheat - grazing practices	X			
S-W-009	Vegetation Management - The grasses should be grazed by cattle, the same as they have been.	X			
S-W-010	Vegetation- Invasive species- BLM should continue its invasive species monitoring and eradication program	X			
S-W-010	Maintenance of Ecological Processes - The major Great Plains ecological processes are climate, grazing, and fire. BLM should attempt to direct its management to accommodate and replicate these processes where possible.	X			
S-W-011	New Issue - Grazing Management: Grazing in the Malta area is an integral part of the area's economy and should receive special consideration as its own planning issue. With good water development and sound grazing management plans that include a rest rotation, grazing can benefit the area. More emphasis should be placed on range management and grazing.	X			
S-W-012	Native Prairie - The BLM should carry out a comprehensive inventory of the Malta RMP area to identify tracts of native prairie habitat. As such habitat is becoming increasingly scarce, and valuable, the RMP should outline ways such identified habitat will be preserved and protected.	X			
S-W-012	Exotic Vegetation - As native prairie dwindles, exotic vegetation is spreading across the Malta RMP region. Outlining effective exotic vegetation control efforts for the planning area, and steps to ensure such efforts are carried out, must be an RMP priority.	X			

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S-W-013	Vegetation - Assess the role of OHV activities in the spread of noxious weeds on BLM-managed lands in the planning area, and on neighboring landowners and farmers. Inventory BLM lands for sensitive plant species. What areas within the planning area have been inventoried and how does the agency plan to inventory the remaining lands? Include appropriate management actions to limit the spread of noxious weeds. Preventing the introduction and spread of noxious and invasive weeds should be a high priority for the BLM. Noxious weeds degrade wildlife habitat, reduce wildlife-related expenditures, threaten sensitive and rare plant communities, cost farmers money in forage and crop losses, and cause soil erosion. The BLM needs to address noxious weeds in the RMP, and the agency should continue to be proactive in working to halt the introduction and spread of weeds. According to BLM statistics, noxious weeds covered 91,000 acres of public land in Montana in 1985, and 292,000 acres in 1995. This amounts to a 320 percent increase in a mere 10 years! Roads and motorized routes are the most efficient means for the spread of invasive plants into the new areas. Treatment of weeds once they become established is costly and often ends with unsatisfactory results. The best and easiest way to stop weed infestations is to not let them start by restricting the vectors that weeds use to invade new areas. The Resource Management Plan must prepare for the future by continuing to implement policies that protect the land from noxious weed infestations. A minimal road and motorized trail system would make a considerable contribution to prevention efforts.	X			
S-W-018	Riparian Resources: in the Bears Paw to Missouri River Breaks Grazing Allotments, page 12 states "an assessed from 1995-2003, approximately eighty (80) miles of lotic riparian communities were identified at functionally at risk. However, because of the nature of the community, naturally occurring influences, weeds and how the ratings are determined, it is unlikely they would have the potential or capability of rating in proper functioning condition." A solution to this must be found in the Malta RMP or grazing temporarily halted resources is returned to functioning conditions.			X	
S-W-019	Vegetation Management - I feel that we should continue with a grazing of livestock as it is a resource that would be wasted if not grazed.	X			
S-W-019	Vegetation - Weeds - BLM has been a leader in noxious weed control in the North Savoy area. I would hope that BLM would continue to do their part in the control of leafy spurge. BLM secured a couple of grants for weed control on cleared land that was very helpful as it started the first control of leafy spurge in that area.	X			
S-W-024	Promote ecological sustainability of vegetative communities.	X			
S-W-024	Identify noxious weeds/exotic plants; discuss the magnitude and occurrence of the weed infestations, and strategies for prevention, early detection, and control procedures for weed management. Promote integrated weed management, with mitigation to avoid herbicide transport to surface or ground waters.	X			
S-W-031	Maintain up-to-date inventories of flora and fauna; pursue expanding the breadth of the present database.	X			
S-W-031	Encourage re-growth of Wyoming and Great Basin Big-sage habitat types for expansion and repopulation by Sage grouse. Recognize that parameters suggested by the Interagency Sage Grouse Work Group call for seven-inch stubble height to ensure successful Sage grouse brood survival and manage livestock grazing to meet this end in suitable sage grouse habitat.	X			
S-W-031	Minimize use of herbicides in big-sage habitat types to minimize negative impacts to potential Sage grouse expansion within the Malta RMP area.	X			
S-W-031	Disturbed ground is prime substrata for noxious weeds to become established. Plans must emphasize reclamation begin very quickly in those activities that produce this condition: gas wells, drill pads, pipeline system and roads etc. should be reclaimed within 90 days of work completed; avoid overgrazing by domestic livestock to reduce a disturbed ground situation.	X			
S-O-010	There are too many elk in the Landusky area near the Monument boundary, and that FWP Biologists are missing them in their aerial surveys. Are game animal numbers going to be managed?				X

**MALTA FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

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S-O-021	Sage grouse are declining, right? Are coyotes the problem? Commenter expressed concerns regarding loss or reductions of wildlife populations, such as, pronghorns and sage grouse.	X			
S-O-022	Several commenters expressed general concern about wildlife predators, including fear that wolves would be reintroduced to the planning area under pressure from western Montana interests.	X			
S-O-023	Commenter expressed concerns about possible reintroductions of gray wolf and grizzly bear after the success with swift fox north of Whitewater.	X			
S-O-024	Are any federal subsidies available for private wildlife habitat enhancement, such as the construction of wildlife projects on private land?				X
S-W-010	Wildlife Management - The Planning Area has been identified time and time again as one of the most significant landscapes for wildlife and biodiversity conservation in the world. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has identified the Northern Great Plains Ecoregions as one of its "Global 200" ecoregions, the most biologically significant landscapes in the world. In 2004, along with partner organizations in the Northern Plains Conservation Network, WWF produced an ecoregional assessment for the NGP titled: Ocean of Grass: A Conservation Assessment for the Northern Great Plains: <a href="http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildplaces/ngp/pubs/ocean_of_grass.cfm">http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildplaces/ngp/pubs/ocean_of_grass.cfm</a> . The WWF/NPCN assessment found that three exceptional landscapes occur partially or entirely within the Malta Field Office Planning Area. These are the Sage Creek/Southwest Pasture Complex in the vicinity of the Alberta/Saskatchewan border; the Frenchman River/Bitter Creek are of northern Phillips and Valley Counties, Montana and adjacent Grasslands National Park in Canada, and the Montana Glaciated Plains of south Phillips, Valley, and Blaine Counties, Montana. These areas are notable for their high biodiversity ranking, largely as a result of: high numbers of grassland endemic species, intact grasslands and, in places, limited road development. The Nature Conservancy (2000) in its Northern Great Plains Steppe Ecoregional Assessment has similarly identified the above landscapes and others within the planning area as biologically important. The Council on Environmental Cooperation (CEC 2005) has also identified the Montana Glaciated Plains and Bitter Creek areas as among the highest priority grassland landscapes in North America. The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (MFWP 2005) identifies nearly the entire planning area, in three landscapes (Rocky Mountain Front, Montana Glaciated Plains, and Missouri Coteau) as a Tier 1 terrestrial conservation landscape, and the entire length of the Missouri River and adjacent watersheds as Tier 1 aquatic landscapes for wildlife conservation. Twenty-eight (21 terrestrial and 7 aquatic) of the 60 Tier 1 species (those most in need of conservation), or 47% of all species of Conservation Concern in Montana, occur in the Montana Glaciated Plains and Missouri River. Many of these species are globally imperiled as well as of regional concern. Additionally, landscape-level analyses were completed for the Bitter Creek, Southwest Pastures/Sage Creek and 1 other conservation landscape (Whitewater Wetlands) within the Planning Area by the Northern Mixed Grass Transboundary Conservation Initiative partners, which WWF, The Nature Conservancy, Nature Conservancy Canada, Parks Canada, and numerous participants from Provincial, Federal and state agencies including BLM in 2004 (Smith-Fargey et al. 2004, CD available on request). These assessments should assist the BLM in establishing priorities for biodiversity conservation planning in these areas. The planning direction for the RMP should reflect the unique significance of this landscape, and support to the maximum extent practicable conservation and biological restoration as a priority throughout the plan. If the BLM is to maintain the biotic integrity of its lands within the planning area it will also need to address the following issues in this RMP (issues are broken out below; see file code S-W-010).	X			
S-O-035	Commenter expressed appreciation about BLM's role in contributing to increased game populations.		X		
S-O-048	Commenter was concerned about falling greater sage-grouse and other game bird populations.	X			
S-O-054	Why are we still hunting sage grouse if they're endangered?				X

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SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

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S-O-055	There seems to be a heavy overpopulation of coyotes, especially. Canadians don't control predators to the degree that we do. Also, large and medium game species (deer, antelope, elk, etc.) seem to be coming back in numbers, but not birds.				X
S-O-112	How will you address wildlife issues (realizing that you manage habitat and not the animals themselves)?	X			
S-O-172	Noted in other RMPs that rather diverse areas were examined as sage grouse habitat, are there differences in types of sage grouse habitat?	X			
S-W-003	Special Status Species Management - Don't become like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife				X
S-W-003	Wildlife Management and Special Status Species - work with MT St. Dept of FW and Parks.		X		
S-W-007	Wildlife -Montana's outdoor sporting industry brings an estimated \$593 million to Montana and provides 13,000 jobs. As people that hunt and fish (as well as hike) we like to see land managed with an eye towards protecting wildlife habitat. We are particularly concerned about mining, gas & oil exploration and development, and the harmful effects that have on the wild birds, animals and fish. Access to hunting and fishing sites on BLM property can be a problem. If a land owner will not allow access to the BLM property then it becomes their private hunting and fishing area. This land belongs to all Americans - not just the adjoining land owner! BLM should work with adjoining land owners to acquire right of ways or some kind of access to BLM lands. Sage grouse and prairie dogs are in trouble indicating a lack of healthy native prairie ecosystems. Their habitat needs to be evaluated and plans included helping their population recover. Natural prairie lands are rapidly disappearing so we need to preserve some areas so future generations can see what is was like.	X			
S-W-010	Declining Grassland birds - BLM should identify key parameters and strategies to improve habitat for declining endemic grassland bird, including identification of critical breeding habitat on BLM lands within the planning area. BLM should review important bird conservation areas designations through partners in Flight and Joint Ventures programs.	X			
S-W-010	Tier I Species-Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has identified at least 28 vertebrate species as priority species in need of conservation that occur in the planning area. The BLM should determine how it can support the strategies for conservation of the priority species	X			
S-W-010	Habitat Fragmentation- Fencing and fencing type may restrict or act as barriers to animal movement. Fences with cross ungulate migration routes should be modified to allow ready passage by, particularly, pronghorns under adverse weather conditions, with appropriate bottom and top clearance. The BLM should undertake an assessment of fragmentation caused by improper fencing and bring fences into compliance with generally accepted wildlife standards. Similarly, little is known about animal movements throughout the planning area. A large number of migrant birds use temporary habitats through the planning area, and large mammals (pronghorn, elk, and deer) also likely have important seasonal migratory corridors. BLM should identify and make special management prescriptions for these areas.	X			
S-W-010	Conservation and Recovery of Special Status Species - Black-tailed prairie dogs: The Montana Prairie Dog Conservation Plan envisions at least 2 "Category 1" prairie dog complexes (suitable for establishment of a viable population of black-footed ferrets) in the state. The BLM, in consultation with the FWP and other stakeholders, should continue to work to establish a Category 1 complex that occurs at least partially on BLM lands. Until a final agreement is reached pursuant to implementation of the R6 plan, BLM should: 1) maintain the existing Prairie Dog ACEC; 2) in cooperation with FWP, designate those areas where prairie dog shooting will be closed and areas where it will be open to the public; and 3) provide incentives for conservation of prairie dogs by lessees. The BLM should assist Grasslands National Park to the extent practicable in providing additional prairie dog colonies for establishment of a black-footed ferret population in Canada.	X			

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S-W-010	Conservation and Recovery of Special Status Species - Black-footed ferrets - The BLM should continue efforts to reintroduce black-footed ferrets, as BLM lands in the Planning Area constitute one of only 13 places where the ferrets exist in the wild. The BLM should refocus some of its efforts on establishing prairie dog colony complexes of sufficient size and distribution to support greater numbers of black-footed ferrets. All BLM colonies where ferrets occur or management for associated species (such as Mountain Plovers) should be closed to shooting. The BLM should assist Grasslands National Park to the extent practicable in providing additional prairie dog colonies for establishment of a black-footed ferret population in Canada.	X			
S-W-010	Conservation and Recovery of Special Status Species - Sage grouse - To ensure the viability of sage grouse populations, it is important to consider nesting, brood-rearing, and winter habitats (Call and Maser 1985). Connelly et al. (2000) proposed comprehensive guidelines regarding the management of sage grouse, focused around the conservation of breeding/nesting habitat, late summer brood-rearing habitat, and wintering habitat. Braun (2006) refined these recommendations and provided a concrete blueprint for sage grouse recovery. We recommend Braun's guidelines be implemented in the forthcoming RMP, with the modification of a 3-mile NSO and no surface disturbance/vegetation treatment buffer for sage grouse leks in order to protect the leks themselves as well as adjacent nesting habitat.	X			
S-W-010	Conservation and Recovery of Special Status Species - Mountain Plover - In the Planning Area, mountain plover are closely associated with prairie dog colonies. Any prairie dog conservation plan should reflect habitat management conditions that would enhance mountain plover populations. All colonies with a repeated history of plover nesting use should be closed to prairie dog shooting.	X			
S-W-010	Aquatic Species - Fish - The lower Missouri River (from Ft. Peck Reservoir) contains more populations of imperiled aquatic fish species (listed by one or more federal or state agencies within the Northern Great Plains than anywhere else in the entire Northern Great Plains. Species, including pallid sturgeon, sturgeon chub, sicklefin chub, shovelnose sturgeon, pearl dace, finescale dace, finescale x redbelly dace, and western silvery minnow, are imperiled by a number of factors. To the extent possible, BLM should analyze and mitigate for the impacts of upstream development (coal bed methane, mining, and oil and gas development) on biologically rich downstream reaches, as well as direct habitat maintenance and/or improvements.	X			
S-W-011	Special Status Species Management: The BLM should manage special status species with an eye toward practical management policies that can be supported by the neighboring landowners and communities.	X			
S-W-011	Wildlife Management: The BLM should consider management plans that use domestic grazing to enhance wildlife habitat. The Montana FWP has successfully used cattle grazing to enhance elk habitat at the Wall Creek Wildlife Management Area; the BLM should consider a similar program in the Malta area.	X			
S-W-012	Wildlife/Biodiversity - The Malta planning area represents one of the most significant landscapes for wildlife and biodiversity conservation in the world. The RMP should reflect the unique significance of this landscape, and promote conservation and biological restoration as a priority. Regarding habitat fragmentation, key to the wellbeing of wildlife, a significant reduction of roads on public land should be a constant goal. As much as possible, fences should be removed or at least modified to allow ready passage by pronghorn and other species. The Malta RMP should include special conservation plans detailing steps that BLM will be taking relative to the reintroduction, protection, and enhancement of Black-tailed prairie dogs, Black-footed ferrets, Sage grouse, and Mountain plover.	X			

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S-W-013	Wildlife - What threatened and endangered species exist on these lands and how will the plan protect them? Habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation often result from invasive and exotic plant and animal species, human population growth and transportation systems. Sage Grouse and Prairie Dogs are indicators of healthy native prairie ecosystems. Both are generally in trouble. What is the BLM doing to identify healthy habitat, monitor sage grouse and prairie dog populations, and help them rebound? What about other key prairie species? Species which should be included in the analysis include the Northern Leopard Frog, Snapping turtle, Spiny Softshell, Western Hog-nosed Snake, Milksnake, Common Loon, Bald Eagle, Whooping Crane, Piping Plover, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Interior Least Tern, Black Tern, Burrowing Owl, Spotted Bat, Townsend's big-eared Bat, Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Black-footed Ferret, Canada Lynx, American Bison. What opportunities exist to expand and restore habitat for these species.	X			
S-W-014	Wildlife Management - This resource area has tremendous wildlife resources that should remain high in priority.	X			
S-W-014	Lands and Realty management - Consider areas within resource area that can have special designation to prioritize wildlife and related issues. Not "wilderness study areas" but something short of National Park lands but above traditional "recreational" lands. Some that focuses on prairie.	X			
S-W-024	Protect areas with unique resource values, particularly population strongholds and key refugia for listed or proposed species and narrow endemic populations. Maintain and restore degraded wildlife habitats, evaluating road management, habitat characteristics, security, displacement, fragmentation, connectivity, wildlife movement corridors, and promote threatened and endangered and sensitive species recovery.	X			
S-W-025	Sage Grouse and Prairie Dogs -- Both species are indicators of healthy native prairie ecosystems. Both are generally in trouble. What is BLM doing to identify healthy habitat, monitor sage grouse and prairie dog populations, and help them rebound? What about other key prairie species?	X			
S-W-031	Adopt high priority management actions necessary to protect the further conservation and restoration of native wildlife and wildlife habitat with no net-loss of wildlife species.	X			
S-W-031	Pursue and maintain healthy, natural populations, population dynamics and population distribution for wildlife species, both game and non-game species, warm-blooded and cold-blooded wherever possible.	X			
S-W-031	Determine and promote suitable habitat for sensitive species such as sage grouse and protect those resources with Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) protection when those areas fit the criteria for ACEC designation.	X			
S-W-031	Strive to re-establish sage grouse to its historic range within the Malta RMP area as per the BLM's stated commitment to Sage grouse recovery in the Sage Grouse Interagency Recovery Plan.	X			
S-O-026	A question was raised, questioning whether water rights would change or would remain the same.				X
S-O-030	Are water development projects still occurring?	X			
S-O-037	Commenter would like to see more "water dugouts."	X			
S-O-053	Older BLM man-made potholes need to be dug out again. This would be a worthy effort as its good for both grazing and wildlife concerns.	X			
S-O-062	What was BLM's policy in the past regarding water rights? Will anything additional be released under the new RMP?	X			
S-O-087	What about watershed plans? Will these be significantly changed in the new RMP?			X	
S-O-127	Remember that those who drive off-trail, especially in "gumbo," do damage that lasts for years.	X			
S-O-135	Questioner explained that he was very concerned about-and witnessed serious problems with-pollution and negative alterations of water sources. This was particularly true on split estate lands where the BLM leases mineral rights and the lease holders act as if they owned the surface rights as well. County commissioner explained that there are state/county funds for restoration and rectification of such damage, but very few takers.		X		
S-O-138	The badly polluted water resulting from past mining operations doesn't affect just aboriginal peoples, but the farmers and ranchers downstream who must use the polluted water.	X			

**MALTA FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

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S-O-146	What about the proposed pipeline from Lake Elwell/Tiber Dam to the east?				X
S-W-002	Vehicle Caused Erosion - The damage to grass and cause of eventual erosion from any vehicle's track's, including ATV and motorcycles, is alarming.	X			
S-W-003	Water Resources Management- Continue water resource management	X			
S-W-004	Water Resource Management - Continue to manage water to prevent soil erosions and provide water for livestock and wildlife.	X			
S-W-007	Water - both surface and ground water must be protected from pollution. Mining, gas and oil exploration and development, pesticides, herbicides, sewage, livestock yards, etc are all causes of pollution. The 310 stream protection law needs stronger enforcement. Water wells have been ruined by careless oil and gas exploration. This also needs more oversight and enforcement. If the fields are allowed to expand it must be with protection of water, prairie pot holes, upland bird habitat and cultural sites. This is especially true for the Bowdoin area gas project but also for any exploration or development. The water at the Zortman - Landusky mines must be cleaned up.	X			
S-W-010	Water quality - Preservation of water quantity and quality are vital to the long term health of lands in the planning area. Of particular concern are potential degradation of surface waters from coal bed methane development and other potential mining activities, dewatering of ground water aquifers, and erosion caused by unregulated OHV use. BLM should ensure through its planning process that water quality is maintained by its proposed plan.				X
S-W-010	Water Resources - Properly Functioning Condition of Streams - BLM should identify, inventory and map those streams that are not in currently functional condition (due to water quality, quantity, riparian vegetative condition, fish and invertebrate species distribution) and describe a management plan to move those reaches to functional condition (See, e.g. Stagliano 2005).	X			
S-W-010	Special stream designations - BLM should review whether any streams qualify for exceptional status. WWF has identified a number of exceptionally biotically intact streams in the planning area, including portions of the Milk, Frenchman's, Missouri, and W. Fork of the Poplar Rivers. Rock Creek in northwest Valley County has a high potential for improvement with management modifications (Cooper and Hendricks, 2001). Stagliano (2005, Table 8) has also identified a number of other potentially high functioning stream in the Planning Area. Montana DEQ has identified streams considered to be in reference condition in the Northern Great Plains (Suplee 2004) Table 3.2 and Suplee et al. 2005). Subsequent investigation has added three more creeks to the list including Bitter Creek, Willow Creek North and Forchette Creek (Suplee, personal communication). Wall et al (2006) have identified priority watershed for conservation in the Missouri River drainage. Special management designations and appropriate management prescriptions should be considered for these streams and watersheds.	X			
S-W-010	Water development - Stock dams have provided additional access to forage for livestock, but may have significant impacts to prairie streams. Downstream reaches are affected by altered water temperature and flow, changes in sediment transport (Winston et al. 1991). Loss of flow that could have filled numerous downstream pools can prevent recolonization by fish populations (Stagliano 2005, Cook et al. 1996). They may also have unintended impacts on upland wildlife. The potential conflict between livestock grazing and sage grouse is intensifies near water sources due to the importance of these areas to sage grouse. Heavy cattle grazing near springs, seeps, and riparian areas can remove grasses used for cover by grouse (Kleenex 1982). According to Call and Maser (1985), "rapid removal of forbs by livestock on spring or summer ranges may have a substantial adverse impact on young grouse, especially where forbs are already scarce" (p. 17). The BLM should reassess its stock dam development program, particularly in high function watershed with high biodiversity values or sensitive species.	X			
S-W-011	Water Resource Management: The BLM should continue to develop and provide efficient use of water resources within the Malta area.	X			

**MALTA FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-W-011	Vegetation Management: More resources should be directed to combating weed infestations. The BLM should consider practical methods of weed control that also benefit the economy. For example, goats and sheep have been used in other areas to effectively control weed infestations; the BLM should consider this practice in the Malta area. The BLM should also begin planning to combat the expected salt cedar infestation as it continues to encompass the Fort Peck reservoir and expand into other areas.	X			
S-W-012	Coalbed Methane - The RMP should prohibit discharge of water extracted from coalbeds onto the ground or into surface waters. The RMP should address the problem of produced water storage pits/reservoirs leading to concentrated chemical solutions that can harm wildlife and other resources. The RMP should analyze impacts associated with the reinjection of water from CBM development and ensure that these impacts are either prohibited or mitigated.				X
S-W-012	Air Quality - BLM should prepare an air quality baseline for the RMP. It should also set air quality goals and objectives aimed at improving air quality throughout the Malta RMP planning area. This is especially significant with a new coal power plant proposed east of Great Falls, and another north of Billings, both of which will impact the planning area. Oil and gas activity is also on the rise and will likewise influence air quality. This must be taken into account in the RMP.	X			
S-W-012	Water Quality and Quantity - The RMP must ensure all components of Clean Water Act are met as well as the water quality standards for the State of Montana. In addition, The RMP should adhere to and incorporate elements of the Clean Water Action Plan and BLM's Riparian-Wetland Initiative.				X
S-W-012	Buffalo - Historically, bison, more than any other wildlife species, defined the nature of the ecosystem encompassed by the Malta RMP. At present wild populations are extinct from the landscape but there is growing interest in returning buffalo to their native range. The Malta planning area is widely recognized as offering some of the most suitable public prairie habitat to this end. While buffalo restoration is a controversial goal that is unlikely to be fulfilled in the near future, The Wilderness Society urges the BLM acknowledge the significance of the possibility, including its potential environmental, cultural, and socio-economic benefits, and to consider measures in the RMP to protect large tracts of habitat essential for future wild buffalo reintroduction and to minimize potential user conflicts.	X			
S-W-013	Water - Develop and promote alternatives that protect the quality of water in the planning area. Where possible, look for creative ways to keep the water cleaner and create nesting habitat for birds and other wildlife near reservoirs. Where possible pump and pipe water out of reservoirs and utilize water tanks.	X			
S-W-017	Oil/Gas - rehabilitate roads used for exploration and development. Close roads except for administrative use. Maintain liners in discharge water ponds for gas. Provide for non-impairment of other water resources for oil/gas development.	X			
S-W-023	Mining - Considering that 10 years ago the picturesque Sweet Grass Hills were administratively withdrawn from mineral exploration and development for 20 years to protect this landscape - of profound cultural significance to Blackfeet and Chippewa-Cree people - from destructive gold mining, this issue should be addressed in the RMP and your agency should seek a permanent withdrawal. Since reclamation issues have not been fully resolved and there remain water contamination problems, these issues should be addressed in the Little Rocky Mountains, with particular reference to the area just south of the Ft. Belknap Indian Reservation in the Little Rocky Mountains: the Zortman-Landusky Mine - for 20 years one of the most problem-plagued, polluting, and destructive gold mines in our West.		X		
S-W-024	Protect high quality waters, riparian area, wetlands and aquatic species, including development of riparian protection guidelines to protect water quality and riparian areas and gain recovery of native fish populations. Reduce impacts to water quality, fisheries and wildlife from activities such as oil and natural gas development, roads, mining, grazing, etc.; and maintenance and restoration of watershed	X			

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S-W-024	Promote watershed restoration to achieve water quality that fully supports beneficial uses in cooperation with State TMDL development and implementation efforts; link watershed proper functioning condition to water quality that fully supports beneficial uses.	X			
S-W-024	Improve watershed and ecosystem monitoring and assessment programs to identify impacts, detect problems, measure restoration success, and make changes to management based monitoring (adaptive management), and address coordination efforts and budget needs for monitoring. Identify how monitoring will improve from the current plan.	X			
S-W-024	Evaluate and disclose air quality effects of proposed management, including potential air emissions from activities that impact air quality such as coal mining, oil and gas development (wells, compressors and processing plant sources), etc..	X			
S-W-031	Monument Lands within the Malta RMP area - The UMRBNM will be managed from the Lewistown BLM office, however, several specific watershed plans managed from the Malta office will come up for review and revision. MWF insists that these plans respect the Monument Proclamation to protect the wildlife objects of the Monument. This RMP will set parameters for those watershed plans; special attention must be applied to protecting and conserving Monument lands. Special attention should be attributed to the specifics within the Monument Proclamation.				X
S-O-033	What about fire management - will there be more burn projects?	X			
S-O-040	How does the BLM feel about fighting fires in the area?	X			
S-W-003	Fire Management- I don't support a let it burn policy	X			
S-W-009	Fire Management - If the grasses are grazed there is less fuel for fires.	X			
S-W-011	Fire Management: The BLM should continue working with local fire suppression resources to ensure that wildfires are handled in a manner that protects the natural resources, including grazing lands.			X	
S-W-031	Discourage wildfires in potential sage re-growth areas, as wildfires are counterproductive to recovering Sage grouse populations.	X			
S-W-031	Biological controls should be implemented for noxious weed control such as the differing various insects are known to control Leafy Spurge, Knapweed, Canada Thistle and Houndstongue. Leafy spurge flea beetles have proven high success in the Lewistown area as bio-vector of leafy spurge. (Conversation with Craig Roberts, MT DNRC)	X			
S-W-031	Study the suitability of domestic goats as a bio-agent to control Russian and Spotted knapweed and domestic sheep for leafy spurge in areas at a distance from Bighorn sheep determined by biologists. Grazing contracts could concentrate these species, if suitable, in areas of infestation using small enclosures to minimize grazing on desirable species.				X

Table D-3. Energy Development and Other Commercial Uses

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-O-001	Energy development is causing problems, especially with vehicles cutting across roads and pastures. This is especially damaging after rains. The County needs the revenue from gas development, but the road network is a problem. They had the misconception that the current well spacing was 40 acres instead of the 160 acres in most locations.	X			
S-O-002	Will the proposed Valley County wind farm area be open to grazing?			X	
S-O-004	Will there be significant changes in grazing allotments/activities?	X			
S-O-015	Does BLM control subsurface minerals on reservations?		X		
S-O-018	Will there be substantial changes in current grazing decisions?	X			
S-O-020	How will BLM address absentee landlords?				X
S-O-025	What are the different kinds of BLM-administered lands? There was some confusion about the difference between LU and PD land and how BLM manages both.			X	
S-O-031	Are there going to be allocations of outfitters in certain areas?	X			
S-O-034	Commenter wanted an update regarding current status of the Valley County Wind Farm EA.			X	
S-O-041	There was a request for additional meetings just on oil and gas since many in the Zortman area don't know the oil and gas issues very well.				X
S-O-042	Attending County Commissioner reported that another of the Phillips County Commissioner is head of the oil & gas group for all of Montana's County Commissioners.				X
S-O-044	There was a question about "no mineral entry" in the gold mines until 2010 as the commenter had just heard about that. The reason for the withdrawal was given, but it then was asked whether this also applied to private land.		X		
S-O-047	Commenter want to know why he hasn't heard more about decisions made on the Monument RMP. Additionally he offered, that the locals had all commented in favor of Alternative 1 in the Monument RMP, and he was wondering where the decision process was in regards to the Monument RMP. He had not heard anything lately.				X
S-O-058	Various concerns about the bison experiment in southern Phillips County. How are the AUMs being handled, etc.?	X			
S-O-059	With Dillon Field Office finished with its RMP earlier this year, what were some of the areas where there were significant differences from the earlier RMP?				X
S-O-063	Is the bison operation in southern Phillips County a year 'round operation?		X		
S-O-064	What about pasture renovation?	X			
S-O-069	Is Department of the Interior (DOI) land controlled by the BLM?		X		
S-O-070	Concerning alternative energy development on private land-i.e., wind power. Can that in any way be incorporated into the RMP?				X
S-O-071	Will we try to look at future development of alternative energy sources, such as coal bed methane?	X			
S-O-076	Concerning various issues with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, they have no authority on the reservation, etc.				X
S-O-091	Concerning IBLA (?)				X
S-O-093	How can you prepare a "no action alternative" when you have oil and gas leases on hold? You've already predetermined that they will eventually be leased.		X		
S-O-099	We requested for the Monument that the number of outfitters be "capped." Do outfitters who have permits from the Malta Filed Office have privileges in the Monument?		X		
S-O-100	Who will handle guide permits for the monument - the Lewistown Field Office, or the Malta Field Office? Can we develop an outfitting policy specific to the Monument?				X
S-O-101	Concern about wind farm near the [Bitter Creek] WSA, will that be addressed by the Malta RMP?			X	
S-O-102	Why is the EA addressing only this area? Not opposed to wind power, but why just site it at Bitter Creek and nowhere else?			X	
S-O-108	Status of former Glasgow AFB, why not a wind farm there? Does the [federal] government still own it?				X
S-O-109	Have power corridors been identified to transmit 500 megawatts if the wind farm comes to full fruition?	X			
S-O-110	How close might such a corridor come to the West Butte of the Sweet Grass Hills? Is this a proposed powerline corridor?			X	

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S-O-111	The BLM withdrew the Sweet Grass Hills for a reason. It's a very unique area.			X	
S-O-114	Commenter expressed frustration with Monument RMP's refusal to address grazing and watershed plan modifications.				X
S-O-115	How much have we (BLM) heard about the bison propagation project in south Phillips County?				X
S-O-116	You only have one ACEC in the planning area?	X			
S-O-119	What consideration has been given to coal bed methane development?	X			
S-O-124	Commenter asked what will be done with leases that are already in place.	X			
S-O-128	What are the plans for the Sweet Grass Hills? Realizing that we are 10 years into a 20-year withdrawal, can we get a permanent withdrawal of this area?	X			
S-O-132	What about development of coal bed methane?	X			
S-O-134	Who is policing oil and gas drilling procedures by lease holders?	X			
S-O-136	Commenter expressed concern about Sweet Grass Hills, in that mining is extremely destructive and future generations may not have much of the area left undamaged.	X			
S-O-141	"The miners aren't going to forget what's there, and they'll be back."	X			
S-O-149	Fine to have archeologists, but they ought to be accompanied by Native Americans when cultural sites are found; cited example of remains being dug up, kept at Sheriff's Office after being determined to be those of a Native American, and tribe having to pay to reinter the remains. Cited Indian Reorganization Act (a.k.a., Wheeler-Howard Act) as authority for hiring Native Americans based on their experience rather than on their qualifications [no such reference in the act could be found].				X
S-O-150	Commenter expressed much concern of coal-fired electrical generation plant in Great Falls and the possibility of deterioration of air quality over the Rocky Boy Reservation, the increase in cancer rates, and the fact that much if not all of the coal will be extracted from on or near the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.				X
S-O-156	Do oil and gas companies sign any sort of liability agreement concerning weed controls on rights-of-way? Nothing seems to have been done about this problem over a period of many years.		X		
S-O-169	What about extracting bentonite?	X			
S-O-170	What have been the major issues brought up at previous scoping meetings?	X			
S-O-171	It isn't just an issue of the wind farm per se, but also the issue of where to place the power lines to connect the wind farm to the power grid.	X			
S-O-173	There are those who would like to see all oil and gas leases cancelled, including existing ones. You won't spend time on that alternative because it's illegal, correct?		X		
S-W-003	Energy development is a part of multiple uses and is OK.	X			
S-W-003	Lands and Realty - I am not opposed to R.O.W. easements and roads on BLM and to enjoy multiple use and help utilities to provide services to the rural areas.	X			
S-W-004	Livestock Grazing - Continue grazing of cattle. I support the current multiple use plan.	X			
S-W-007	Category 1 - Solid Minerals: The moratorium on mining in the Sweetgrass Hills needs to be extended. There is still about 10 years left on the first 20 year moratorium but time passes quickly. The reasons for the first decisions are still valid (water, Native Am. Religion, cultural, scenic, wildlife, ect.). The Little Rockies, site of the Zortman - Landusky mine still has been completely reclaimed. This mine site is one of the most polluted, destructive mines that can be found anywhere. Hopefully we have learned from the mess at the Zortman - Landusky mine disasters that any type of mining with its acid rock drainage, slag piles, etc. is extremely harmful to the environment and need strict laws with unannounced inspections, and strict enforcement. Even if cyanide heap leach mining is banned, other mining continues and is not immune to pollution.	X			

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S-W-007	Energy Development -Energy corridors such as the planned Alberta-Montana power transmission corridor and others that may come in the future should have guidelines. What will be considered in the plans in regard to routing and impacts of the corridor? Wind power may become the clean power development of the future. Plans should establish standards (ex. Location, placement and number of windmills, scenery, roads). Are there areas where wind power is not a compatible use? Could windmills be painted to match the surrounding area? What roads need to be established to maintain windmills and is that a good choice for the area?	X			
S-W-007	Visual: I think windmills are beautiful and provide clean energy! There are places however where they would spoil a beautiful view and could be placed elsewhere. This should be taken into consideration. Windmills, gas pipelines, pumping stations etc., should be painted to blend in with the environments. There are areas where roads just do not belong because they spoil the visual impact of the area, cause erosion etc. The number of roads should also be considered so they do not make a web of roads in a small area.	X			
S-W-007	Other -In the Marias River, Tiber Dam, Lake Elwell included in this RMP? If so we have questions and concerns about it too. Thanks you for the opportunity to comment. It is difficult to categorize our concerns since many overlap. We are so fortunate to live in an area of such diverse scenery and have the awesome responsibility to preserve and protect this fragile ecosystem.				X
S-W-009	Energy Development - The oil and gas need to be developed so we have lower energy costs and also are creating revenue. Any time we can produce something from our natural resources: for example cattle from the grass or oil and gas from the ground we are creating wealth for the United States. It does this because the money is spent here and we don't have to import the products.	X			
S-W-010	Energy Development- Wind-Development of wind energy and proposals to use and/or transmit wind-generated power across BLM lands are likely to increase in the coming decade. The BLM should" 1) develop a wind generation suitability GIS layer that identifies where siting of wind farms is most desirable given a set of constraints that should include: a) distance from existing transmission corridors, b) proximity to ACECs and other sensitive landscapes, c) proximity to sensitive species, d) proximity to major migration routes or flyways. The objective should be to facilitate future permitting and limit development in environmentally sensitive locations. BLM should incorporate adaptive management monitoring of proposed expansion of wind energy. Options might include monitoring impacts to indicator species and developing mitigation based on this.	X			
S-W-010	Utility and transmission corridors-Utility corridors (including pipelines and high voltage electric transmission lines) should be designated along existing rights-of-way or high-traffic gravel roads or highways. Utility corridors should avoid: 1)Wildlife crucial winter ranges, crucial winter relief area, and birthing areas, 2)Other areas of Critical Environmental Concern as outlined in these comments, 3)Areas within 1 miles of active raptor nests, 4)Areas within 5 miles of active sage grouse or 3 miles of sharp-tailed grouse leks, 5)Lands within 1 mile of large prairie dog colonies and complexes , or those inhabited by BLM Sensitive Species such as black-footed ferret, burrowing owl, mountain plover, or swift fox, and 6)Critical habitats of Endangered and Threatened.	X			

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S-W-010	Oil and Gas-Over the past several years, new studies have shown that roads in open country have a greater impact than previously suspected on elk (Sawyer et al. 2005), oil and gas development can displace mule deer and pronghorn from crucial winter range and lead to major herd declines (Sawyer et al. 2005, Berger et al. 2006, Jones and Grue 2006), CBM development can contribute to major sage grouse declines and result in displacement of birds from important habitats (Naugle 2006a, 2006b), and conventional gas development, even under current BLM mitigation policies, leads to displacement of sage grouse and significant declines (Holleran 2005). The BLM needs to consider this new information in analyzing alternatives and establishing mitigation for oil and gas development. The BLM should incorporate adaptive management monitoring of proposed expansions of oil and gas. Options might include monitoring impacts to indicator species and developing mitigation based on this (e.g. pronghorn; Berger et al. 2006, Jones and Grue 2006).	X			
S-W-010	Livestock grazing- Overall, the BLM should manage allotments to avoid unsustainable grazing and render livestock grazing compatible with other multiple-use values. BLM should consider alternative adaptively managed grazing systems other than rest/rotation and provide a mechanism for lessees to cooperate with BLM in establishing and monitoring these systems.	X			
S-W-011	Energy Development: The BLM should encourage energy development in all forms by soliciting proposals that develop the resources (oil, gas, wind) in an environmentally-friendly manner.	X			
S-W-011	Commercial Uses: New commercial uses of the area must be carefully balanced with the existing uses.	X			
S-W-012	Sweet Grass Hills - the RMP should reinstate the withdrawal of the Sweetgrass Hills from hardrock mining and prohibit oil and gas development within ten miles of the Hills. Protection of the cultural resources should be the priority for management of the Sweetgrass Hills.	X			
S-W-012	Rights-of Way - Rights-of-way are often part-and-parcel of energy development projects, as well as many other activities. All provisions in the Mineral Leasing Act and FLPMA must be adhered to relative to rights-of-way to help ensure environmental protection. We specifically request that the EIS address several issues. The issue of the impact of power lines on birds and bats should be addressed, particularly with regard to raptors. Electrocutions are one negative impact of power lines, and electrocutions could violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Bald Eagle Protection Act, not to mention the ESA. The RMP should have provisions to ensure these laws are not violated if rights-of-way are granted, as well as provisions that specify thorough monitoring and the penalties that will be imposed by BLM for failure to comply. Perhaps just as importantly, power lines change the "structure" of habitat, which may create favorable conditions for some species but be unfavorable for others. For example, there is evidence that ferruginous hawks, which are becoming rare, can be placed at a competitive disadvantage to other raptors when power lines create perches in otherwise open habitat. Likewise, the increasingly imperiled sage grouse can be further threatened if raptors are provided hunting perches in habitat occupied by sage grouse. The EIS must take account of these kinds of effects, and the RMP must ensure they are avoided or at least mitigated. For example, the RMP should require that existing rights-of-way, with similar types of structures, be utilized to the extent possible. Similarly, the impacts rights-of-way have on habitat fragmentation must be analyzed in the EIS, and provision made to avoid or mitigate these impacts in the RMP.	X			

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S-W-012	<p>Energy Development - The RMP should prohibit future oil or gas leasing prior to completion of an EIS that analyzes the site-specific impacts of proposed leasing or the RMP should specify that all leases should be issued with a no surface occupancy stipulation on the entire lease pending completion of a site-specific EIS to determine if surface occupancy can be allowed. BLM should initiate government to government consultation regarding any proposed leasing, APD review or other decisions related to energy or mineral development on or near the reservations. Bowdoin Gas Field planning process should be part of the Malta RMP. Lease stipulations that ensure protection of public lands be developed and included in the RMP for attachment to all leases. The RMP should guide and regulate the configuration and timing of lease offerings when parcels are offered for lease. The RMP should explicitly prohibit oil and gas leasing whenever the RFD has been exceeded. The RMP should adopt specific definitions of what constitutes due care and diligence, undue damage to surface or subsurface resources and what specifically must be achieved to reclaim the disturbed surface. The RMP should include provisions to ensure that lease acreages limits will be monitored and enforced by BLM. BLM should minimize conflicts between surface owners and companies developing subsurface minerals by proactively seeking and addressing their concerns in the design and review of projects, including leasing itself.</p>	X			
S-W-012	<p>Full Field Development and Application for Permit to Drill Issues - 1) The RMP should provide guidance for when the cumulative impacts of approving a number of APDs rises to the level of producing significant impacts on the human environment, requiring preparation of an EIS. It should also provide guidance as to when supplementation of the prior EIS should occur; 2) The RMP should ensure that Notices of Staking (NOS) and APDs are readily available to the public in a timely fashion; 3) The RMP should define when NEPA compliance is required and what opportunities exist for public involvement relative to Sundry Notices; 4) At a minimum, the RMP must identify which stipulations cannot be relaxed and the specific conditions that must be met before a request to exempt or relax any of the others will be granted; 5) When exemptions to stipulation are requested, the RMP must ensure that the public participation requirements of NEPA will be fully complied with; 6) BLM must consult with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to ensure compliance with state laws, regulations and policies before exemptions are granted; and BLM must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the species specific impacts associated with proposed exemptions.</p>	X			
S-W-012	<p>Wind Energy - The Valley County Wind Energy Project should be analyzed as part of the Malta RMP planning process.</p>			X	
S-W-012	<p>Livestock Grazing - The Malta RMP should provide a clear and binding schedule to ensure that the steps established by grazing rules for determining if grazing needs to be modified are accomplished in a timely manner. Monitoring and follow-up monitoring needed to ensure any changes necessary to meet the standards and guidelines must be provided for in the RMP. An analysis of the condition of springs and riparian areas, including biotic and abiotic components, and whether they are in proper functioning condition must be given special attention, should be part of the RMP. In all cases where these important resources and areas are not functioning properly, the BLM must include in the RMP mandatory steps that will be taken to remedy these problems. The RMP should contain specific measures to guarantee that livestock grazing does not adversely impact water quality or impair designated beneficial uses of these waters.</p>	X			
S-W-012	<p>Landscape Vision - The Malta RMP planning area is an American treasure. Not all of the public will see it that way, of course. For some it will be a "wasteland" or a land with "nothing out there." Others will view it as a revenue source, principally from oil and gas, wind power, or grazing. But increasingly, people recognize the prairie of northern Montana as a dramatic, scenic and historic landscape still embracing significant natural tracts and offering tremendous potential for prairie restoration. We hope the BLM will embrace its planning opportunity, approach it with vision, engage the public, and develop an RMP worthy of Montana's magnificent northern prairie landscape.</p>	X			

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S-W-012	Energy Corridors - Alberta-Montana power transmission corridor should be kept as far as possible from the Sweet Grass Hills.	X			
S-W-012	Little Rockies - In light of the Zortman-Landusky history, the RMP should also evaluate the suitability of mining in other parts of the Little Rockies held by BLM. Given the profound impacts mining has already had on the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre people, we urge that all of the range under BLM jurisdiction be permanently withdrawn from mineral entry.	X			
S-W-013	Fluid Minerals - The RMP should explain how the public will be informed about the leasing of BLM land for oil and gas drilling.				X
S-W-013	Fluid Minerals - If it is determined that an area is appropriate to lease for oil and gas drilling, what kind of stipulations will be placed on leases to limit the damage and restore the area to a more natural setting.	X			
S-W-013	Fluid Minerals - How will the expansion of oil and gas drilling in the Bowdoin area be carried out in a manner that protects important pothole and upland bird habitat, as well as cultural sites? What standards and guidelines will be established for this area?			X	
S-W-013	Solid Minerals - A decade ago the very picturesque Sweet Grass Hills of Liberty and Toole Counties were administratively withdrawn from mineral exploration and development to protect this landscape - of profound and cultural significance to Blackfeet and Chippewa-Cree people - from destructive gold mining. The withdrawal action is for twenty years. The issue should be addressed in the RMP and the BLM should seek a permanent withdrawal.	X			
S-W-013	Solid Minerals - Just south of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, the Little Rocky Mountains arise dramatically as the easternmost of Montana's island ranges. The Little Rockies is also the site of the Zortman-Landusky Mine, for two decades one of the most problem plagued, polluting, and destructive gold mines in the West. Reclamation issues have not been fully resolved, and water contamination problems remain. Addressing reclamation issues in the Little Rockies is a matter of both sound stewardship and environmental justice relative to the neighboring reservation and should be addressed in the RMP.	X			
S-W-013	Energy Development - The Valley County Wind Energy proposal has brought to attention the need to plan for future energy projects. As proposed, this gigantic 500 Megawatt project would be located adjacent to the BLM's Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The site is also less than twenty miles south of Prairie Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan. Hundreds of 400 foot tall turbines and a transmission line would overwhelm the scenic and natural attributes of Bitter Creek. Some criterion should be developed as part of the RMP which considers the appropriateness and compatibility of the wind farms and other large industrial projects when situated in or adjacent to special management lands or lands managed for other values.	X			
S-W-013	Energy Corridors - An Alberta-Montana power transmission corridor is currently under consideration. It will impact the Malta RMP area between the Blackfeet Reservation and the Sweet Grass Hills. Are other energy corridors proposed? As with other energy projects, the RMP should provide guidance relative to the routing and impacts of such energy corridors.	X			
S-W-013	Livestock Grazing - Range management should be addressed in the RMP. The guidelines and indicators for healthy range conditions should be described in the RMP. How will range conditions be monitored, and when corrections are needed, how will they be implemented?	X			
S-W-013	Fluid Minerals - How will the expansion of oil and gas drilling in the Bowdoin area be carried out in a manner that protects important pothole and upland bird habitat, as well as cultural sites? What standards and guidelines will be established for this area?	X			
S-W-014	Lands and Realty management - Land management, including flexibility in allotment management plans that can have wildlife as a priority and consider more AU's being allotted to wildlife in areas where wildlife can be considered the priority.	X			

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S-W-015	Lands and Realty Management - It is our understanding that The Carroll Exchange in northern Valley County has been approved to go forward but BLM has not had personnel to do the job because of priority energy development rights of way and the Resource Management Plan. BLM would acquire some key tracts that are adjacent to the Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area and in the Porcupine Creek area. The fact that the exchange would consolidate BLM ownership in larger blocks while also consolidating Mr. Carroll's property offer similar appeal to both parties. It is also worth noting that perpetual recreation access to the BLM lands would be provided. Additional beneficial trade opportunity may well come available to the Bureau as other properties are purchased by people like Mr. Carroll, who may be more flexible than traditional landowners in working with BLM to meet BLM mandates in an exchange. With the Carroll Trade proposal, and others likely to come, the Resource Management Plan should provide a way for these kinds of exchanges to be done without requiring a revision to the land use plan, and resources should be directed to get such exchanges done while the opportunity exists.		X		
S-W-017	Wildlife/cattle grazing - Protection of songbirds, reptiles and amphibians that use riparian habitat particularly around stock ponds. Stock ponds should be renovated to provide for cattle enclosures and separate watering. Protect prairie cottonwood regeneration by fencing cattle out of riparian zones.	X			
S-W-017	Visual/Noise Pollution - reduce impacts from oil and gas development with natural colors. Reduce noise from facilities with insulation and vegetation screens. No new high voltage right of ways except in existing corridors.	X			
S-W-017	Visual/Noise Pollution - reduce impacts from oil and gas development with natural colors. Reduce noise from facilities with insulation and vegetation screens. No new high voltage right of ways except in existing corridors.	X			
S-W-018	Oil and Gas - Withhold leases: Attached is a letter (see actual document for references) from the State BLM office in Billings listing 8 Competitive Oil and Gas leases sold under the West HiLine EIS. The letter states these leases will be with hold until the Malta RMP is completed. This may be a problem to the NEPA process. Under NEPA that was be a no action alternative. With these leases holding over to the new RMP, how can there be a no action alternative? Federal Senior District Donald Molloy in comments made at January 14, 2005 trial of MWA v Fry stated, this should be an interesting agreement how the new BLM RMP no action alternative is treated.	X			
S-W-018	Rights of Way for pipelines: referring to US Code Title 30, 3A 1§185, this statute states the rights of way for pipelines must not be more that 50 feet. There is no reason to have mile wide corridors for pipeline rights-of-ways.	X			
S-W-019	Solid Mineral - Some of the mineral royalties should be directed back to the BLM field offices.				X
S-W-020	Rules - Clear and enforceable standards and rules must be promulgated for any further gas and oil development in a manner that protects the natural qualities of the prairie pothole and upland bird habitat and cultural areas. The BLM must provide clear conservation rules and guidelines for the development of the transmission corridor to minimize the impact to minimize the impact on natural qualities.	X			
S-W-020	Alternative Energy - The Valley County Wind Energy Proposal is a valuable project for sustainable energy and economic development. Means must be found to support the project without diminishing the quality of wilderness study areas and threat to the ambient wildlife. The Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area is an invaluable asset for natural qualities and contributions that must be preserved. Clear rules and guidelines must be developed for this important project.			X	
S-W-021	Energy Development - We need to keep in mind that energy development benefits all. The energy companies need to be held accountable and I believe that they are. I have seen what is after drilling and the impact is very small.	X			

**MALTA FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-W-023	Oil and Gas Drilling - the RMP should explain how the public will be informed about the leasing of your agency's land for oil and gas drilling. It should also explain how your agency will determine whether an area is appropriate for oil and gas drilling, what kind of stipulations will be placed on leases to limit the damage and restore the area to a more natural setting ought to be laid out.	X			
S-W-025	Energy Corridors - An Alberta-Montana power transmission corridor is currently under consideration. It will impact the Malta RMP area between the Blackfeet Reservation and the Sweet Grass Hills. Are others proposed? Will the RMP provide guidance relative to the routing and impacts of such energy corridors?	X			
S-W-025	Bowdoin Gas Development Project - The BLM is expanding the Bowdoin Gas Development Field, an 800,000 acre area generally situated north and northeast of the Fort Belknap Reservation. Standards and guidelines should be established to ensure that this expansion is carried out in a manner that protects important prairie pothole and upland bird habitat, as well as cultural sites.	X			
S-W-025	Wind Power Policy -- Besides the Valley County Proposal, there is increasing interest in wind power development across the RMP region. The plan should establish standards. It should also consider, in advance, areas in which wind power is an appropriate development option, and areas in which wind power is not a compatible use. Regarding the latter, BLM land that has not been turned by a plow, or that is relatively pristine, is rare and worthy of protection from any development.	X			
S-W-025	Valley County Wind Energy Proposal This gigantic 500 MW project would be established on a rare piece of virtually pristine BLM native prairie habitat immediately adjacent to the BLM's Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern in Valley County. The site is also less than twenty miles south of Prairie Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan. Hundreds of 400 foot tall turbines and a transmission line would overwhelm the scenic Bitter Creek area's natural attributes. The proposal should be analyzed with a full Environmental Impact Statement rather than the cursory Environmental Assessment now being prepared.				X
S-W-025	Little Rockies Reclamation Just south of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, the Little Rocky Mountains arise dramatically as the easternmost of Montana's island ranges. The Little Rockies is also the site of the Zortman-Landusky Mine, for two decades one of the most problem plagued, polluting, and destructive gold mines in the West. Reclamation promises have not been fulfilled, and water contamination problems are far from solved. Addressing reclamation issues in the Little Rockies, a matter of both sound stewardship and environmental justice relative to the neighboring reservation, should be a priority of the Malta RMP.			X	
S-W-028	When developing environmental consequences and cumulative effects analyses, recognize mitigation measures that are regularly employed by oil and gas operators. The BLM offices along Montana's Hi Line have years of experience with oil and gas development and are familiar with mitigations that could nearly be called standard practices. By documenting routine, as well as extraordinary, mitigation measures, environmental consequences statements can avoid being worst case scenarios that foes of oil and gas development latch on to and that do not reflect contemporary oil and natural gas development practices.	X			
S-W-028	Incorporate criteria for granting waivers, exceptions and modifications (WEM) of lease stipulations, clearly outlining when and why a WEM could be granted. This will facilitate industry's and the public's understanding of how stipulations might be subject to change depending upon conditions that exist at the time an activity is proposed. The Casper RMP was positively noted by industry for its handling of this issue.	X			
S-W-028	Members of the Montana Petroleum Association have been producing energy resources from the Malta Field Office area for decades. The members look forward to a workable Malta Resource Management Plan that recognizes and keeps accessible the important energy resources from these BLM administered lands.	X			

**MALTA FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

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S-W-029	Solid Minerals - As President of the Sweetgrass Hills Protective Association, I am concerned about future filing of mining claims, exploration and with subsequent mining for minerals using the heap leech system. Presently, the SGH are protected both by a Montana State Statute and a federal ruling established by the Dept. of the Interior when Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt was in office. In 1997, a 20 year mineral withdrawal was placed on BLM subsurface and surface minerals in the Sweetgrass Hills for 20 years. We insist that this ruling be honored in the Malta RMP in its final decision.			X	
S-W-029	Livestock Grazing - As a former rancher but still a grassland manager, I well know the value of good pasture management. Over grazing causes many problems within the grass community. Noxious weed invasions, elimination of good palatable species, erosion, less food and habitat for wildlife are all a result of over grazing. Special care should be given to habitat for Sage Grouse to keep these off the Endangered list. Fortunately, many ranchers do follow the rules of good grazing practices and but tend to overgraze in drought years. I highly recommend the BLM follow strictly the standards and guidelines on grazing of our public lands. In short don't give the permittees any breaks when it comes to over grazing; they are getting a good deal and the least they can do is follow the rules.	X			
S-W-029	The BLM areas other than the Sweetgrass Hills are also equally important and what I am saying here applies to these areas as well. In general, I would recommend the BLM err on the side of caution and protection in the management of these particular public lands. Income producing ventures such as cattle grazing and resource development (oil & gas, solar & wind energy production) should be done leaving a small footprint.	X			
S-W-030	Devon Energy Corporation conducts oil and gas operations in Montana and is very much interested in the development of the Malta RMP. As federal leaseholders we believe it is vitally important to be able to continue to develop our mineral leases. We would like to encourage the BLM to continue to take full advantage of the stakeholder process as decisions are made regarding the management direction of these lands. Devon is supportive of the decision to include various stakeholders in public discussions prior to developing alternatives.		X		
S-W-030	Devon would also encourage to BLM to retain flexibility for the offices handling oil and gas activity. Ensuring flexibility for the years to come will enhance the ability of both the regulatory agency and the stakeholders to adapt to new circumstances and/or technologies and ensure the availability of much needed energy resources for the citizens of Montana and the United States.	X			
S-W-031	Current outfitting SRP regulations within the Malta RMP area are very general and do not specify where the SRPs can be used. Separate out hunting outfitting SRP's to keep those used inside the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM) under the control of the Monument Management team. By design of this RMP, those lands in the UMRBNM which were managed by the Malta office previous to the Monument Proclamation are not directly affected by this RMP. It would be inappropriate for this plan to enforce outfitting regulations that will be determined in the Monument RMP. Although this may develop a redundant permitting process, it is imperative that Monument Plans are not superseded and hence impacted by Regional Field Office decisions.	X			

Table D-4. Land Ownership Adjustment

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-O-057	Commenter wanted to know why land disposals took so long. Will the new plan help to speed the process up?				X
S-O-159	Lots of things can change in 25 years. Can we somehow insert unforeseen land exchanges without doing another RMP?	X			
S-W-007	Lands and Realty: One major concern is probably more political, that is the sale of public lands. Public lands are just that - they belong to all of us and are not for sale!	X			
S-W-009	Lands and Realty - Any or all lands could be sold to the permittee	X			
S-W-010	Land Tenure Adjustment - Consolidation. Land consolidation could benefit a number of species where uniform management over large areas is required. Fragmented ownership is an impediment to minimizing conflicts, for example, in areas where prairie dog complexes are to be established for black-footed ferret recovery.	X			
S-W-013	Lands and Realty - Identify priority areas for future land acquisition or land trades so that when opportunities from willing sellers present themselves, it is clear about whether to put the time, effort and expense into negotiating a sale or trade. Land sales or trades should be pursued when the property expands wildlife habitat, contains historic or cultural sites, has scenic values or prevents development which is incompatible with the adjoining public lands.	X			
S-W-015	Lands and Realty Management - It is our understanding that The Carroll Exchange in northern Valley County has been approved to go forward but BLM has not had personnel to do the job because of priority energy development rights of way and the Resource Management Plan. BLM would acquire some key tracts that are adjacent to the Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area and in the Porcupine Creek area. The fact that the exchange would consolidate BLM ownership in larger blocks while also consolidating Mr. Carroll's property offer similar appeal to both parties. It is also worth noting that perpetual recreation access to the BLM lands would be provided. Additional beneficial trade opportunity may well come available to the Bureau as other properties are purchased by people like Mr. Carroll, who may be more flexible than traditional landowners in working with BLM to meet BLM mandates in an exchange. With the Carroll Trade proposal, and others likely to come, the Resource Management Plan should provide a way for these kinds of exchanges to be done without requiring a revision to the land use plan, and resources should be directed to get such exchanges done while the opportunity exists.	X			

Table D-5. Recreation, Visitor Services and OHV

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-O-066	Audience expressed some concern about off-road game retrieval.	X			
S-O-068	How do you see OHV use? Is it OK in most areas?	X			
S-O-125	What does the BLM envision in the way of change around the Lonesome Lake area? Reason for question: There has been a significant increase in antelope hunting in the area due to some web-based publicity that defined virtually the entire central third of the state as "the Lonesome Lake Area" and pronounced it a haven for antelope.				X
S-W-005	OHV - Recreation -I believe BLM land is the Sweet Grass Hills should be opened to OHV. We have an older population that can no longer walk and enjoy the Hills the way they once did. Trails for OHV's would enhance the use of the Hills and make recreational use possible for many more folks. These are my personal feelings and not the commission as a whole.	X			
S-W-006	OHV - I believe off road travel should be allowed for hunting. There are a large number of people who are not in shape due to age, etc, to walk several miles and drag an animal back to a vehicle. I've talked to several who are quitting hunting for this reason. With no hunting us land owners will be over run with deer and antelope. As for as damage to the land you can find very little that came from off road travel.	X			
S-W-012	Public Participation Opportunities - We encourage BLM to maximize public involvement in preparation of the revised Malta RMP. In addition to the public comment periods required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and BLM's regulations, there are other opportunities throughout the planning process for public involvement, which are used by many BLM offices. Public involvement allows the public to provide useful information and bring concerns to BLM's attention throughout the planning process. We also encourage the BLM to provide for public input into the management situation analysis and identification of planning issues, and on a preliminary range of alternatives prior to preparing the Draft RMP, steps other BLM offices have taken to expand opportunities for public comment. We urge the BLM to ensure sufficient resource data is available to the public.		X		
S-W-013	Recreation - What recreation opportunities will be provided for traditional hunters, hikers, or horseback riders seeking a more remote, primitive, quiet, and non-motorized experience? What measures will be taken to avoid user conflict? Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users are best minimized by creating large blocks of land for motorized use and large blocks for non-motorized use. With the passage of the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act is has long been recognized that some uses are incompatible and that over a larger landscape uses should be separated with some uses managed to a lesser extent than others. Areas and trails shall be located to minimize conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands...(43 CFR § 8342).	X			
S-W-013	Recreational Backcountry Airstrips - The BLM is not obligated to authorize any airstrips just because a plane landed on BLM land sometime in the past. Airstrips are not compatible with all values and need to be located away from more primitive and remote settings. It is highly unlikely that any airstrips identified through the RMP process were created to accommodate recreational use, which is a more recent phenomenon.	X			
S-W-013	Non-motorized Winter Recreation - The RMP should also identify opportunities for winter recreation such as providing public access to the backcountry for snowshoe walking, skiing, or wildlife viewing. Some creative options should be considered such as plowing roads to trailheads and using yurts or cabins for winter camping or as warming huts.	X			
S-W-023	Balancing Multiple Use - Your agency's multiple use doctrine does not mean that all uses must be allowed in all places, but it does mean balancing diverse uses over a large landscape. Where incompatible uses exist, your agency has an obligation to provide a spectrum of recreational opportunities including use by traditional hunters, hikers, and horseback riders seeking a more remote, primitive, and quiet non-motorized experience.	X			

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S-W-025	Off-Road Vehicles How will off-road vehicle use be affected under the Malta RMP? Will there be a standard policy? Will some areas receive higher protection than others? How will vehicle use be monitored? Will there be resources for enforcement?	X			
S-W-031	Economic and cultural benefits derived from hunting and other outdoor recreation activities can be substantial. A report from the Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society documents 1.2 million hunter/days for deer, 900,000 hunter/days for elk translating into \$360 million in economic benefits from deer and elk hunting alone. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) figures quote \$58,533,640 in license fees associated with big-game hunting, bird hunting, and fishing statewide. Montana hunters and to a lesser extent fishermen are the major non-commercial users of BLM lands, and as such constitute a major constituent. The Malta Area Office is charged with managing habitat and opportunities on a large expanse of acreage consisting of varied landscape types of mixed quality. MWF strongly requests that Montana sportsmen are prioritized within your decision making process.	X			
S-W-031	OHV use is to be limited to existing designated open trails and roads; Post signs and distribute brochures outlining available open trails to minimize abuse of this restriction. Recreational vehicles introduce and encourage weed growth (Montana TWS report, 1999.)	X			
S-W-031	Identify sensitive biological and geological formations that could be adversely affected by foot-travel and set restrictions to protect these areas.	X			
S-W-031	This area will come under pressures for oil and gas production, alternative energy (wind power), energy transmission corridors in addition to other more typical land uses. Hunting, angling, and general outdoor recreation has a substantial economic and historical legacy on the public lands. For the benefit of these traditional users and uses, the plan must include components that ensure the future of sustainable fish and wildlife populations, non-fragmented habitats (priority), and public hunting and fishing opportunities. Please recognize the cultural values of hunting, fishing and sustainable fish and wildlife and the need for maximum measures to ensure their future and not sacrificed for energy production. Further reviews can determine areas where both interests can be served without sacrificing the whole to save the smaller parts.	X			

Table D-6 Special Management Area Designation

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-W-012	<p>Wilderness Study Areas - The Malta RMP must address protection of existing wilderness study areas (WSA's) and any designated wildernesses in the RMP area. The provisions at 43 U.S.C. § 1782(c), 43 C.F.R. Part 6300, and BLM Handbook H-8550-1 (Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review), as well as the Wilderness Act itself, must be fully complied with. In addition, BLM's mandate of multiple uses and sustained yield, as well as other relevant law and BLM's current guidance, provides for inventory and protection of wilderness values. BLM is obligated to inventory for and consider a range of alternatives to protect lands with wilderness characteristics. The RMP should establish standards to ensure that the wilderness qualities of existing wildernesses and WSAs are not impaired or degraded. For example, oil and gas development activities in WSAs should be prohibited or regulated to the full extent permitted by law. Exploration leaves long-term marks on the landscape, which should be avoided to the extent possible. Oil and gas drilling activities also impair and degrade wilderness qualities and should be prohibited except under no surface occupancy stipulations. Ensuring nonimpairment is a nondiscretionary duty that BLM must meet.</p> <p><i>Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance v. Norton</i>, 301 F.3d 1217 (10th Cir. 2002). There are currently two WSAs in the Malta RMP planning area, Burnt Creek WSA and Bitter Creek WSA. Wilderness characteristics of these two WSAs include naturalness and opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation. These values must be protected through the life of the RMP or until the areas are either designated as Wilderness or released from their WSA status by Congress. All motorized vehicle use within the WSAs should be prohibited. All roads or "ways", if present, must be permanently closed. No airstrips should be allowed. Likewise oil and gas development must be prohibited. Buffer zones restricting specific types of activities and development should be established around the borders of the WSAs. This is especially critical in open prairie settings where disturbances in the vicinity of, but not within, a WSA would drastically diminish potential wilderness attributes. The enormous Valley County Wind Project, proposed immediately adjacent to the Bitter Creek WSA, is a case in point calling to question what it means to have BLM land designated a WSA (and ACEC as well), as impacts of 400 foot tall turbines and related development would be profound. Buffer zones should also be considered relative to oil and gas development, mining, airstrips, vehicle use, power lines, etc. The entire Malta RMP planning area should be inventoried for additional potential Wilderness status lands. A timetable and process toward WSA designations should be part of the RMP. The BLM can make a variety of land use plan decisions to protect wilderness characteristics, such as establishing Visual Resource Management (VRM) class objectives to guide the placement of roads, trails, and other facilities; establishing conditions of use to be attached to permits, leases, and other authorizations to achieve the desired level of resource protection; and designating lands as open, closed, or limited to Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) to achieve a desired visitor experience. Accordingly, administrative protection can and should be considered for lands not currently protected. The Draft RMP should also consider management alternatives that provide administrative protection for the wilderness characteristics of those lands currently designated as WSAs if they are not ultimately designated as Wilderness by Congress; their wilderness characteristics are already acknowledged by the BLM and are of profound value with or without Congressional recognition. In addition to ensuring proper management of wilderness resources, the RMP should also provide for proper management of components of the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). These areas should be managed to ensure the values that led to their special management status are given first priority, and incompatible uses should not be allowed. Additionally, the RMP should identify and recommend potential additions to the NLCS. Likewise, the RMP should ensure BLM's Grasslands Initiatives, as applicable, are fully implemented by adopting measurable objectives for their implementation. The BLM should ensure that the wilderness qualities of Burnt Creek WSA and Bitter Creek WSA are not impaired or degraded. All motorized vehicle use within the WSAs should be prohibited and any roads or "ways" must be permanently closed. No airstrips should be allowed. Likewise oil and gas development must be prohibited. Buffer zones restricting specific types of activities and development should be established around the borders of the WSAs. In addition, the entire planning area should be inventoried for additional potential Wilderness status lands. A timetable and process toward WSA designations should be part of the RMP.</p>	X			
S-O-005	Would the determinations be finalized for Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in the new RMP?				X
S-O-088	What are some of the areas with "special values"?	X			

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-O-089	Where are the WSAs in the planning area?	X			
S-O-096	What about the EA on the Bitter Creek WSA and the adjacent wind farm?			X	
S-O-103	Should there be some sort of buffer around a WSA?	X			
S-O-104	Bitter Creek has been designated as ACEC and a WSA. Can both designations be applied to an area at once?			X	
S-O-105	Could another Congress reconsider that decision (pertaining to Bitter Creek WSA)?				X
S-O-106	Will ACEC protection continue for Bitter Creek?			X	
S-O-123	Expressed concern about proposed wind farm next to the Bitter Creek WSA, will it impinge on or be inside the WSA?			X	
S-W-010	Special Management Area - Existing ACECs: A number of ACECs have been designated within the planning area. The majority of these ACECs, however, have no special management prescriptions or incentives that accompany designation, and are therefore ACECs in name only. The BLM should develop management goals, criteria, regulations and monitoring plans for these existing ACECs.			X	
S-W-010	Special Management Area - Wilderness Study Areas - The BLM should make a determination on final designation of the Burnt Lodge WSA.				X
S-W-010	Special Management Area - Natural Heritage Designations - The BLM manages a number of exceptional biodiversity landscapes that could benefit from formal recognition. The BLM should review these opportunities and make recommendations accordingly.	X			
S-W-012	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) currently designated within the Malta RMP planning area include Bitter Creek, Mountain Plover, Sweet Grass Hills, Azure Cave, and Big Bend. ACEC protection and management plans must be part of the RMP. As noted above, the attributes that made each of these ACECs worthy of designation must be protected in the RMP. ACEC protection and management plans for Bitter Creek, Mountain Plover, Sweet Grass Hills, Azure Cave, and Big Bend must be part of the RMP.			X	
S-W-013	Wilderness, Special Management Designations - Evaluate the wilderness character of Bitter Creek and Burnt Lodge, the two wilderness study areas within the planning area, and identify any new roads or routes that have been created or other impacts that have occurred since the WSA designation. Identify other changes which have occurred and explain how the wilderness character of the WSAs will be protected, improved, and restored. The BLM is not obligated to authorize primitive routes even if they were included in the original inventory. Please provide the public with the original inventory maps for the Bitter Creek and Burnt Lodge wilderness study areas. The maps should identify the boundaries as well as roads, routes and other man-made developments within the WSAs.	X			
S-W-013	How will the BLM use its Section 201 FLPMA authority to identify and inventory resources and other values, and designate special management areas (such as ACECs) as a component of the land use planning process. We request that you inventory the areas outside of the WSAs that possess natural, remote, and/or primitive characteristics and consider them for special management designation. In particular, we ask that you evaluate BLM land in the Sweet Grass Hills, Little Rockies, Bowdoin area, and BLM lands adjacent to or near to the C.M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge.	X			
S-W-017	Wildlife/cattle grazing - Protection of songbirds, reptiles and amphibians that use riparian habitat particularly around stock ponds. Stock ponds should be renovated to provide for cattle enclosures and separate watering. Protect prairie cottonwood regeneration by fencing cattle out of riparian zones.			X	
S-W-017	Wilderness/WSA - apply non-impairment standard to WSA's to exclude encroachment by off-road vehicles and oil/gas development. Protect archeological and paleontological resources from casual/recreational collection.	X			
S-W-020	Wilderness study areas must be protected from illegal uses including user created tracks and roads. The laws of the land must be enforced.				X

**MALTA FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

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S-W-023	Wilderness - the wilderness character of Bitter Creek and Burnt Lodge wilderness study areas must be evaluated and all illegally created roads or routes must be closed. Other changes which have occurred should be identified and how the wilderness character of the study areas will be protected, improved, and restored ought to be explained.				X
S-W-023	Energy Development - A 500 megawatt wind energy project, to be located on the border of the Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area, will overwhelm the scenic and natural attributes of Bitter Creek. Therefore, some criterion should be developed as part of the RMP which considers the appropriateness and compatibility of the wind farms and other large industrial projects when situated in or adjacent to special management lands or lands managed for other values.	X			
S-W-029	Also, The ACEC in the "Hills" must be continued as is. This category prohibits motorized vehicle use and protects the watershed from pollution. The "Hills" are considered to be a sole source aquifer for the surrounding area. Almost all the residents within sight of the "Hills" are very proud of their pristine defacto wilderness area and fully agree with the BLM in creating this ACEC.	X			
S-W-029	Wilderness - Many conservationists including myself would like to see the Wilderness Study Areas (north of Glasgow) eventually reach full Wilderness designation. It is time the process moved forward as this designation should bring people into this area which would at the minimum, stabilize the population if not increase it. The WSA's in my judgment deserve to be in the Wilderness category.				X
S-W-031	Wilderness Study Areas - Recent proposals to construct a wind turbine "farm" on the border and within eyesight of anywhere within the Bitter Creek WSA has generated some concern among Montana sportsmen. The entire wilderness character would be permanently impaired with this type of development. Wilderness areas in general perform as wildlife "reservoirs" that benefit Montanans on the whole, but offer unique opportunities for hunters seeking a remote hunting experience and should be conserved. MWF believes steps should be implemented to preserve the integrity of these matchless areas. Establish buffer areas around WSAs where wind generation collectives will not be located, to maintain the visual wild character of the landscape. Wind generation can occur anywhere on the Malta Field Office jurisdiction; the necessity for locating these types of visual incursions in sensitive areas is not evident.	X			

Table D-7 RMP Planning and Process

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-O-003	How is BLM going to accomplish consistency in resource planning across such a broad planning area ranging from the Rocky Mountain Front all the way across the HiLine? Resources and local economies appear so different across that broad area; so it appears to be a "one size fits all" approach, despite geographic differences.	X			
S-O-006	Are the public comments weighted in any way; e.g., whether or not they come from Montana residents?		X		
S-O-013	How the planning area is divided up based on areas with different concerns and attitudes between the plains and the mountains.	X			
S-O-016	Do we accept comments from all over the country? "Weighting comments" came up again as "local" people thought that their comments should be weighed heavier than non local comments.		X		
S-O-017	Why are we doing this? Were the old plans that bad or poorly administered?	X			
S-O-019	How might watershed plans be affected?	X			
S-O-027	Commenter offered that BLM, by law, has to revisit its planning documents on a regular basis.		X		
S-O-028	Is this just a revision or rewrite of current RMPs?	X			
S-O-043	Commenter asked about the planning process and the RMP formulation. They generally wanted to understand the process so that they could better participate - i.e., gain a better understanding so that they can ask the right type of questions.		X		
S-O-045	Why can't we just amend the Judith-Valley-Phillips RMP? These things are expensive to produce and not fun. Commenter wanted to know why we are doing this again after the JVP was such a good document. He didn't want to have to read another document in its entirety just to see if anything had changed.	X			
S-O-065	Are other agencies involved in species restoration and animal management?		X		
S-O-082	Will inventories and other primary source documents be available for public release?		X		
S-O-083	Commenter asked what sort of sampling data would be used to support management decisions.		X		
S-O-084	Why is it called the "Malta RMP"? That's an inaccurate and misleading title that confuses the public as to the scope of the planning effort.			X	
S-O-085	When will the completed AMS be available on the web site?		X		
S-O-086	When was the NOI published in the Federal Register?		X		
S-O-090	Could you explain something about the 30-day protest period at the end of the process (after ROD)?		X		
S-O-092	Why don't we engage the RAC more? Shouldn't the RAC be involved on a timelier basis to prevent misunderstandings on significant issues?			X	
S-O-098	How much overlap is there between the UMBNM RMP and the Malta RMP?	X			
S-O-107	Will there be any coordination with Canadian agencies, specifically the Canadian National Park Service?				X
S-O-113	Will sage grouse working groups' agreements be inserted into the RMP?		X		
S-O-117	When will this RMP project be completed?		X		
S-O-118	What office does the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument report to? Which supports it?		X		
S-O-120	When is the scoping meeting in Havre?				X
S-O-121	Asked about last year's request for comments on weed treatments, is this part of the RMP process?	X			
S-O-122	Commenter asked to have the Sweet Grass Hills withdrawal explained.	X			
S-O-129	How can you say that you're writing a plan that takes public input into account when you get a turnout of 4 people in a town the size of Havre?	X			
S-O-130	Commenter expressed disappointment to learn that a letter signed by three county commissioners was counted as only a single comment during the Monument RMP scoping period, just as if it had been the comment of a single citizen. County commissioners represent thousands of citizens.		X		
S-O-131	Won't your plan be outdated and obsolete by the time it gets published in 4 or 5 years?	X			
S-O-144	Why is the current RMP being replaced?	X			

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-O-151	Are written comments treated as "one person equals one vote?" Ranches and other producers who live in the area are small in numbers. There are lots of others out there who would like to turn the planning area into "one big park."		X		
S-O-152	Will there be an interchange with tribal governments?		X		
S-O-153	How much of the older RMPs' practices and guidance will be carried forward?	X			
S-O-162	How much cooperation is there between the BLM and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks?		X		
S-O-163	It doesn't seem like previous RMPs have resulted in major changes, is it just a lot of expensive time and effort for very little return? This one [Malta RMP] probably won't be much different. Why aren't BLM personnel working better with residents/permittees on a day-to-day basis?		X		
S-O-165	How will this [Malta] RMP interface with/affect the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument's RMP?	X			
S-O-166	Will standards established by the RMP apply to reservations within the planning area?				X
S-O-167	Will the Malta RMP take in the areas covered by previous RMPs?	X			
S-O-168	What sort of major changes do you see coming forth in this RMP?	X			
S-O-174	Has noticed in other RMPs (e.g., Casper, WY) that the worst case scenario for a particular problem or issue is sometimes portrayed as the norm. Doing so leads to development of extreme alternatives on either end of the possibility spectrum.		X		
S-O-175	Doesn't like the use of superlative adjectives in RMP narratives (e.g., "magnificent vistas"), and considers such semantics as leading the reader.		X		
S-O-176	Is the BLM supposed to or allowed to talk to the US Fish and Wildlife Service?		X		
S-O-177	There have been problems with wild horse and elk management in southern Montana. These animals range from lands administered by the USFWS, the National Park Service, and the BLM. The agencies seem to have differing management philosophies and standards, but the animals don't know which agency's land they are on.				X
S-O-178	At what point are cooperating agencies involved in the planning process?		X		
S-O-179	What sort of cooperation is occurring with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality?		X		
S-O-180	What if something happens in 2011 that was completely unforeseen in the recently completed Malta RMP? What then? Will we have to start over again with the RMP planning process?		X		
S-W-003	New Issue - I think too large of areas have to be managed differently, like sage grouse etc. And should be managed on a county basis or district. Mountain areas versus plains area - short grass country to tall grass - precip amounts etc.	X			
S-W-010	Monitoring -BLM - in conjunction with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other interested publics - should develop assessment and monitoring programs for all endemic and imperiled species on BLM lands within the planning area, and, where needed, establish goals and a timetable for restoring species such as swift fox and black-footed ferrets, which may be absent from or doing poorly on BLM lands within the planning area at present.		X		
S-W-010	Transboundary Cooperation -BLM should establish agreements with relevant Canadian (Parks Canada, PFRA, Environment Canada, Environment Saskatchewan, Alberta Fish and Wildlife) to ensure that the management of its lands is consistent with mutually agreed on objectives for conservation of wildlife, vegetation, and biodiversity, is consistent with mutually agreed on objectives for conservation of wildlife, vegetation, and biodiversity.		X		
S-W-011	Lands and Realty Management: Emphasis should be placed on respecting and protecting private property rights.				X

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-W-012	Cooperating Agencies - Based on the recent revisions to BLM's regulations governing cooperating agencies (43 C.F.R. Part 1600), cooperating agencies may have an even stronger presence throughout the Malta RMP planning process. In order to permit the public to better understand the roles of these agencies, we request that BLM identify those agencies and tribal and local government entities that have been granted cooperating agency status, and disclose the areas of expertise or other qualifications that form the basis of their cooperating agency status. Recommendation: The BLM should identify the agencies and tribal and local government entities granted cooperating agency status and post this information on the RMP revision website.		X		
S-W-012	The BLM must uphold its responsibility to protect the abundant natural values present in the Malta Resource Area when developing management alternatives in the Malta RMP and evaluating their environmental consequences, as required by both FLPMA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.).		X		
S-W-012	Monitoring and Enforcement - If BLM lacks resources to engage in monitoring and enforcement sufficient to ensure compliance with all requirements applicable to oil and gas drilling on public lands within the RMP area, then it should not allow further development to occur. The EIS should include current costs of reclamation of development activities in the Malta planning area. The RMP should increase bonds as needed to ensure the full costs of reclamation are met	X			
S-W-012	Landscape Vision - The Malta RMP planning area is an American treasure. Not all of the public will see it that way, of course. For some it will be a "wasteland" or a land with "nothing out there." Others will view it as a revenue source, principally from oil and gas, wind power, or grazing. But increasingly, people recognize the prairie of northern Montana as a dramatic, scenic and historic landscape still embracing significant natural tracts and offering tremendous potential for prairie restoration. We hope the BLM will embrace its planning opportunity, approach it with vision, engage the public, and develop an RMP worthy of Montana's magnificent northern prairie landscape.	X			
S-W-013	Balancing Multiple Use -Multiple use should not be construed to mean that all uses must be allowed in all places. Multiple uses is a combination of balanced and diverse resources used over a large landscape that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations, including, but not limited to, recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, wildlife and fish, and natural scenic, scientific and historic values. Multiple use allows for future but as yet unknown or currently undervalued uses that arise from changing needs and conditions. Wilderness is included in the multiple use doctrine. Multiple uses also should not be construed to mean that extractive uses are preferred over other uses. The BLM cannot authorize a particular use based purely on the contribution of that use to the economy. Multiple use does mean the use of some land for less than all of the resources. The BLM can exclude non-beneficial, incompatible, and environmentally adverse uses of resources and bundle together complement		X		
S-W-020	The RMP for the region is covered with numerous sensitive and challenging topics. In considering the alternatives and factors that will be chosen to guide the development and decision for the plan, I request the highest consideration be given to conservation of the natural qualities, especially wilderness areas and other state and federal lands designated for preservation. Secondly, when considering the contribution to the enhancement of the regional and state economy, the highest consideration should be given to the sustainability of the land, water, and air resources. Thirdly, farm, ranch, and tourist qualities should be a high consideration to sustain and expand the well-being of the people in the region. Fourth, hold to the maxim of do no harm to the wildlife, grasslands, grasslands, forested areas, and historical and sacred areas.	X			

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-W-025	Sweet Grass Hills Protection A decade ago the very picturesque Sweet Grass Hills of Liberty and Toole Counties were administratively withdrawn from mineral exploration and development to protect this landscape of profound cultural significance to Blackfeet and Chippewa-Cree people from destructive gold mining. The withdrawal action is for twenty years, after which the Hills will once again be open to gold development unless the Malta RMP dictates otherwise, which I hope it will.			X	
S-W-026	I am particularly concerned about how the BLM will address its management of areas with special values in the Malta Resource Management Plan being developed. I appreciate having had the opportunity to learn more about your plan at the recent public meeting in Great Falls, and would like my comments entered into the official record for the MRMP.		X		
S-W-027	I'm concerned about issues regarding the Little Rockies, the Breaks, the Sweet Grass Hills, the Front, possible wilderness areas, and all the public lands in-between.	X			
S-W-028	A broader range of management options could be available if more than one proposed alternative is a "balanced" management approach as contrasted with presenting four alternatives: (1) no action alternative; (2) unconstrained alternative; (3) maximum preservation alternative, and (4) balanced alternative which usually by default is the preferred alternative.	X			
S-W-029	The comment period should really be extended to give more people time to comment as the vast majority does not know about the Malta RMP. It is a very good idea to provide well written articles to all the newspapers, both daily and weekly, explaining the importance of this RMP and why people should get involved. The poor attendance at the scoping meetings indicates that people did not know about it.		X		
S-W-031	Institute active monitoring and enforcement of grazing allotments to insure that lessees are adhering to management plans and respecting wildlife population priorities. Implement rest-rotation grazing plans that improves wildlife habitat.	X			
S-W-031	Ensure that new and existing livestock fences comply with legal parameters as directed in BLM Manual H-1741-1 that do not inhibit free movement of wildlife. Those standards for domestic fence requirements as quoted, "...3-wire, 38-inch height, with bottom wire 16 inches of the ground..." fences constructed as such comply with the Unlawful In closures (sic) of Public Lands Act of 1885 (43, USC, 1061-1064; 23 Stat. L. 321, ch.149).			X	
S-W-031	Give high priority to noxious weed control by aggressively seeking funds to achieve this goal. Use biological controls whenever possible, chemical control when needed to restore natural environments, techniques that fit the "integrated pest management" guidelines. USDA- CSREES (Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service) defines Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as "a sustainable approach to managing pest species by combining biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools in a way that minimizes economic, health, and environmental risks."		X		
S-W-031	Establish monitoring programs to insure adherence to management plans for wildlife habitat enhancement, grazing, travel, river travel, weed control, and other people use controls; Establish enforcement measures to respond to related problems.	X			
S-W-031	Establish communication protocol with local civilian advisory groups.			X	

Table D-8 Management Concerns

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-O-007	Requested that social/economic concerns be given due consideration in the document because the gas companies are providing much to the local economy.	X			
S-O-009	There was a question about the "attitude" of the Front Range of the Rockies being different from the Eastern Montana Oil & Gas Attitude and how that would affect planning decisions being made on such a large area.	X			
S-O-014	How will planning decisions be made that are not disproportionately affected by counties such as Glacier County decisions.		X		
S-O-020	How will BLM address absentee landlords?				X
S-O-025	What are the different kinds of BLM-administered lands? There was some confusion about the difference between LU and PD land and how BLM manages both.		X		
S-O-042	Attending County Commissioner reported that another of the Phillips County Commissioner is head of the oil & gas group for all of Montana's County Commissioners.				X
S-O-046	Commenter made note that there was no mention of economic impacts in the handouts and offered "Are we really considering economic impact on the planning area, and if so, how"?	X			
S-O-047	Commenter wanted to know why he hasn't heard more about decisions made on the Monument RMP. Additionally he offered, that the locals had all commented in favor of Alternative 1 in the Monument RMP, and he was wondering where the decision process was in regards to the Monument RMP. He had not heard anything lately.				X
S-O-051	Can Turner Fire Dept. get money to improve its firefighting capabilities?				X
S-O-059	With Dillon Field Office finished with its RMP earlier this year, what were some of the areas where there were significant differences from the earlier RMP?				X
S-O-060	Concerning mineral development, where does the money go? Can some of it go back to the county?				X
S-O-069	Is Department of the Interior (DOI) land controlled by the BLM?		X		
S-O-070	Concerning alternative energy development on private land-i.e., wind power. Can that in any way be incorporated into the RMP?				X
S-O-076	Concerning various issues with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, they have no authority on the reservation, etc.				X
S-O-091	Concerning IBLA (?)				X
S-O-094	What about the inevitable increase in the planning area's population? What will their [newcomers] values be? Should we make some sort of attempt to better educate newcomers and visitors to the area about appropriate/feasible uses of both public and private land?	X			
S-O-095	Glad to hear mention of traditional land uses, but let's carefully consider who "traditionally" lives on the land-i.e., long-time established residents-not just newcomers, out-of-area traditional recreationists (hunters, fishermen), tourists with nontraditional interests, etc.	X			
S-O-097	The Sweet Grass Hills were administratively withdrawn for 20 years about 10 years ago. Will the new RMP likely lift that withdrawal?			X	
S-O-099	We requested for the Monument that the number of outfitters be "capped." Do outfitters who have permits from the Malta Filed Office have privileges in the Monument?			X	
S-O-101	Concern about wind farm near the [Bitter Creek] WSA, will that be addressed by the Malta RMP?			X	
S-O-102	Why is the EA addressing only this area? Not opposed to wind power, but why just site it at Bitter Creek and nowhere else?			X	
S-O-108	Status of former Glasgow AFB, why not a wind farm there? Does the [federal] government still own it?				X
S-O-111	The BLM withdrew the Sweet Grass Hills for a reason. It's a very unique area.			X	
S-O-114	Commenter expressed frustration with Monument RMP's refusal to address grazing and watershed plan modifications.				X
S-O-115	How much have we (BLM) heard about the bison propagation project in south Phillips County?				X
S-O-116	You only have one ACEC in the planning area?	X			
S-O-120	When is the scoping meeting in Havre?		X		

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S-O-149	Fine to have archeologists, but they ought to be accompanied by Native Americans when cultural sites are found; cited example of remains being dug up, kept at Sheriff's Office after being determined to be those of a Native American, and tribe having to pay to reinter the remains. Cited Indian Reorganization Act (a.k.a., Wheeler-Howard Act) as authority for hiring Native Americans based on their experience rather than on their qualifications [no such reference in the act could be found].				X
S-O-150	Commenter expressed much concern of coal-fired electrical generation plant in Great Falls and the possibility of deterioration of air quality over the Rocky Boy Reservation, the increase in cancer rates, and the fact that much if not all of the coal will be extracted from on or near the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.				X
S-O-156	Do oil and gas companies sign any sort of liability agreement concerning weed controls on rights-of-way? Nothing seems to have been done about this problem over a period of many years.			X	
S-O-170	What have been the major issues brought up at previous scoping meetings?	X			
S-W-007	Visual: I think windmills are beautiful and provide clean energy! There are places however where they would spoil a beautiful view and could be placed elsewhere. This should be taken into consideration. Windmills, gas pipelines, pumping stations etc., should be painted to blend in with the environments. There are areas where roads just do not belong because they spoil the visual impact of the area, cause erosion etc. The number of roads should also be considered so they do not make a web of roads in a small area.	X			
S-W-007	Other -In the Marias River, Tiber Dam, Lake Elwell included in this RMP? If so we have questions and concerns about it too. Thanks you for the opportunity to comment. It is difficult to categorize our concerns since many overlap. We are so fortunate to live in an area of such diverse scenery and have the awesome responsibility to preserve and protect this fragile ecosystem.				X
S-W-011	Balancing Multiple Use: It is vital to the local stakeholders that issues directly impacting their properties, livelihoods, and communities be handled appropriately. While all uses should be considered, the BLM must ensure that the balance between more recently developed uses, such as recreation, and other uses that have endured through the years and support the local economy, such as grazing, be given special consideration.	X			
S-W-012	Socioeconomic Analysis - The analysis of the socio-economic impacts of the proposed resource management plan must be thorough and accurate in order to responsibly manage the public lands. BLM must also conduct a thorough assessment of the impacts of oil and gas and coalbed methane development on the social and economic wellbeing of the communities included in the Malta planning area. We also request that the RMP require that any proposed oil and gas development includes adequate measures to mitigate negative socioeconomic impacts and protect the local communities, property owners and the landscape from such harms.	X			
S-W-012	Energy Corridors - Alberta-Montana power transmission corridor should be kept as far as possible from the Sweet Grass Hills.	X			
S-W-012	Visual Resource Management - The BLM should ensure that scenic value is a resource that is conserved and must establish clear management direction, including: 1) Lands proposed for wilderness designation or with wilderness characteristics should be managed as Class I to "preserve the existing character of the landscape"; 2) Lands within popular and easily accessible vantage points should be managed for visual resources, such as VRM Class II to "retain the existing character of the landscape," including clear provisions dealing with oil and gas development and other human disturbance; 3) ACECs and other special management designations and prescriptions should be used to protect scenic landscapes and lookout points within the resource area with stipulations specifically addressing and managing human development impacts, including VRM Class I to "preserve the existing character of the landscape" or VRM Class II to "retain the existing character of the landscape" as appropriate; and 4) BLM should inventory for visual resources and designate all lands within the Malta planning area with the appropriate VRM classification, as well as enforce these classifications during implementation.	X			

**MALTA FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

File Code	Comment	A Will be addressed	B Resolved through policy	C Addressed, but independent of the RMP	D Beyond the Scope
S-W-013	Socioeconomics - Protected landscapes attract tourists who contribute to local economies. But the same features which attract tourists also serve as a magnet to attract and keep residents to live, work and conduct business in nearby communities. Their contribution to local economies and to the stability and well being of their communities is generally even greater than tourism. How will the analysis assess the economic benefits of protected landscapes? How will the analysis assess the boom and bust associated with extractive industry on local communities?	X			
S-W-018	Social and Economic Conditions: I am not sure what environmental justices refer to in the October Malta Resource Management Plan Fact Sheet 4. However BLM should not reasonably justify livestock grazing under the planning or management criteria of their principal and management statutes, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and National Forest Management Act (NFMA), both passed in 1976. Instead, grazing is rationalized as a means of sustaining small communities, maintaining open spaces on private lands, and preserving an important western way of life and culture. The governing statutes, however, confer on the BLM and Forest Service no authority, much less a mandate, to promote local economic or lifestyle concerns or to regulate development on private lands.	X			
S-W-022	Socioeconomics - I would just like to remind everyone the economic impact needs to be kept in mind for every decision made.	X			
S-W-025	Valley County Wind Energy Proposal This gigantic 500 MW project would be established on a rare piece of virtually pristine BLM native prairie habitat immediately adjacent to the BLM's Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern in Valley County. The site is also less than twenty miles south of Prairie Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan. Hundreds of 400 foot tall turbines and a transmission line would overwhelm the scenic Bitter Creek area's natural attributes. The proposal should be analyzed with a full Environmental Impact Statement rather than the cursory Environmental Assessment now being prepared.				X
S-O-074	What are our plans to manage sacred sites, especially Sweet Grass Hills?	X			
S-O-075	Concern about Marias River Massacre site, is BLM aware of this? Might there be some possibility of a land tenure adjustment to ease access to the site?	X			
S-O-077	More concern about sacred sites, why aren't there any Indians on the committee?				X
S-O-078	Commenter suggested the BLM (and perhaps the state) should involve tribal members in site identification.	X			
S-O-079	Concern about sites where traditional values can be practiced (e.g., Sweet Grass Hills), could we schedule particular times during the year when such sites would be dedicated primarily to such activities?	X			
S-O-081	Concern about ancestral lands near Choteau, some private land is likely still owned by tribal members. Burial sites perhaps nearby.		X		
S-O-140	Mention that specific tribes use or at least favor specific buttes in the Sweet Grass Hills.	X			
S-O-143	Commenter mentioned the issue of the shell masks that were discovered in the Sweet Grass Hills [in 1992]. Mentioned Salish-Kootenai lawyers being involved [trying to prove connection with Coastal Salish?]. Thought they were likely connected with Ojibway funeral rites.				X
S-O-145	Commenter wanted to know if any decisions would be made about plants used for traditional medicine.	X			
S-O-147	Do you have Native Americans as consultants on site surveys? Can such consultants be paid for such work?				X
S-O-148	When you find a cultural site, do you have contractor archeologists look at the site?		X		

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S-W-007	Cultural: many areas included in this RMP deal with Native American cultural and religious sites. If I understand the Native American beliefs a bit it seems they do not designate one particular spot, "this is our religious site". The entire area is a sacred site. They also need access so they can perform their ceremonies and vision quest. This also requires an area free from noise pollution such as ATV's or heavy equipment. Christian religion also have these area as a reminder as in Ps. 121 I lift my eyes unto the hills, from where does my help come? It comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.	X			
S-W-012	Cultural Resources - For archeological and historical values: 1) BLM's goal should be to protect, conserve, and where appropriate restore archeological and historical sites and landscapes; 2) BLM should survey all known or discoverable cultural and historic sites, or those adjacent sites may be adversely affected; 3) BLM should determine the sites or areas that are most vulnerable to current and future impact and adopt management actions necessary to protect, conserve, and restore cultural resources; 4) BLM should complete a Cultural Resource Management Plan that coordinates with the objectives of the RMP and seeks to provide for an appropriate proactive process of inventorying for cultural resources, making determinations of eligibility for the National Register, and seeking to nominate eligible properties to the National Register; 5) BLM should outline specific management actions, such as stabilization, fencing, signing, closures, or interpretative development, to protect, conserve, and where appropriate restore cultural resources; 6) BLM should adopt measures to protect cultural resources from artifact collectors, looters, thieves, and vandals; and 7) BLM should consult with the Native American community to determine whether there are sites or specific areas of particular concern, including sites of traditional religious and cultural significance.	X			
S-W-012	For geologic and paleontologic resources: 1) BLM's goal should be to protect and conserve special geologic formations and paleontologic resources; 2) BLM should determine the geologic and paleontologic sites or areas that are most vulnerable to current and future impact and adopt management actions necessary to protect, conserve, and restore these resources; 3) LM should prohibit the collection of any specimens; 4) BLM should adopt measures to protect paleontologic resources from looters, thieves, and vandals; and 5) BLM should define the level of inventory needed to provide a basis for understanding the distribution, comparative importance, and potential uses of paleontologic resources (i.e., relative sensitivity, relative opportunities for interpretive development, relative scientific importance, relative potential for research and education).	X			

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S-W-012	Adherence to Montana Laws, Programs and Policies - The BLM must commit to a thorough inventory of the Malta planning area for sites of cultural and religious importance. Moreover, the draft RMP must commit to reducing roads rather than creating additional road access and maintaining current road access. Maintaining current road access and creating additional road access that is likely to damage to these areas of cultural and religious value and undermine protections required by Montana's laws and policies. The RMP should address how known sites, and sites yet to be discovered, will be protected against roads, oil and gas development, etc. The BLM must ensure that it initiates early and adequate consultation with tribes to complete an inventory to identify all sites of religious and cultural importance prior to allowing any disruptive activity. BLM must commit to coordinating with Montana and affected American Indian tribes for every activity, whether road building and maintenance, oil and gas plans of development or user facility development, that may adversely affect historic properties or cultural resources. Prior to every surface-disturbing operation, in oil and gas activity as well as any other activity, BLM must ensure that no cultural and historical resources are in the area to be disturbed. The BLM, through its RMP must commit to effective and complete reclamation, allowing "disturbed surfaces to reclaim naturally" is inadequate. Anything less than active reclamation of disturbed areas greater than 1/10th of an acre does not satisfy the state's constitutional requirement to ensure that all lands disturbed by the extraction of natural resources must be reclaimed to their pre-disturbance condition. The draft RMP should commit BLM to providing a complex of black-tailed prairie dog towns to occur as spelled out in the Montana Conservation Plan. The DEIS/RMP should commit to abiding by the guidelines contained in Montana's ecologically-based integrated weed management plan. The draft RMP must comply with all State noise statutes designed to protect natural quiet and human health.	X			
S-W-013	Cultural, historic, paleontology - The RMP should explain how the agency will work with tribal governments and comply with the National Historic Preservation Act.	X			
S-W-013	Cultural, historic, paleontology - The RMP should include information about what areas have been inventoried and how the BLM plans to expand its inventory of cultural, historic, and prehistoric sites. Importantly, it should address how the BLM will protect these sites once they are identified. What rules will govern the taking of artifacts? If the BLM has not completed an inventory of historic sites, how will the agency determine whether an area is appropriate to lease for oil and gas drilling?	X			
S-W-016	Cultural Resources - I have concerns regarding the special cultural/religious area that the entire Sweet Grass Hills area has for not only my family, but the Blackfeet Nation as a whole. My father, John Yellow Kidney was a great advocate for the Sweet Grass Hills, because like himself, his parents, grandfather(s) and grandmother(s) had special ties to this area. Myself personally, I would like to see the East Butte protected from any future development. There are sacred sites throughout all the hills and many people like me have sought out personal helpers through fasting there. The East Butte is of particular interest to me since this is where I and my ancestors have gone to fast and pray. The entire Sweet Grass Hills has been part of our Blackfeet history and territory long before the dog days. I go there whenever I can and make offerings, etc. to the grandfathers and grandmothers who live there.	X			
S-W-020	Cultural Resources - Last, there are four Native American homelands for seven tribal nations within or close to the RMP region. The Native people and their Nations' representatives must be significantly involved in the development of the guidelines and standards for the plan.	X			
S-W-025	Native American Interests There are four Indian reservations -- home to seven tribes -- within or close to the RMP area. Other tribes have close historical ties to the region. The BLM should reach out to Native interests to insure that sites of cultural and historical importance are respected and protected.		X		

**MALTA FIELD OFFICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
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S-W-026	<p>I am concerned that the plan call for full compliance with the American Indian Religious Freedom Act; Antiquities Act; Archaeological Resources Act as amended; National Historic Preservation Act as amended, including the draft Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Policy Statement Regarding the Treatment of Burial Sites, Human Remains and Funerary Objects (71 FR 13066); National Trails System Act as amended; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act [NAGPRA]; Presidential Memorandum on Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments (59 Fed. Reg. 22951); Religious Freedom Restoration Act; Sacred Sites Executive Order (E.O. 13007); and USDI Environmental Compliance Memorandum No. ECM97-2. I think you should provide clear guidance about how the BLM or its lessees will respond to emergency discovery situations in compliance with NAGPRA, and recommend that you develop memoranda of agreement with federally-recognized tribes who might be involved in such future situations in the Malta field area. I hope you will give strong attention to traditional cultural properties and cultural landscapes in your evaluations and recommendations, and extend (if not expand) the current protections in the Sweetgrass Hills. I understand you have spoken with Tony Bynum and the Resource Advisory Council, but I hope you will have strong and ongoing Native American involvement with the planning team (including a specific team member). I hope you will provide specific information on cultural resource inventory coverage and both known and predicted archeological and historic site occurrence in your planning area, with an honest evaluation of the last 12,000 years worth of resources in your area. I also hope you will give strong consideration to the scientific and/or humanistic use of cultural resources within your area.</p>	X			
S-W-029	<p>Native American Concerns - In the past centuries the Sweetgrass Hills have been a religious site for those Tribes practicing their traditionalist religion. This area should be protected from resource extractions, over grazing, roads etc so these people can continue their practice of worshipping nature and what it means for them. It could well bring them out of their present condition.</p>	X			