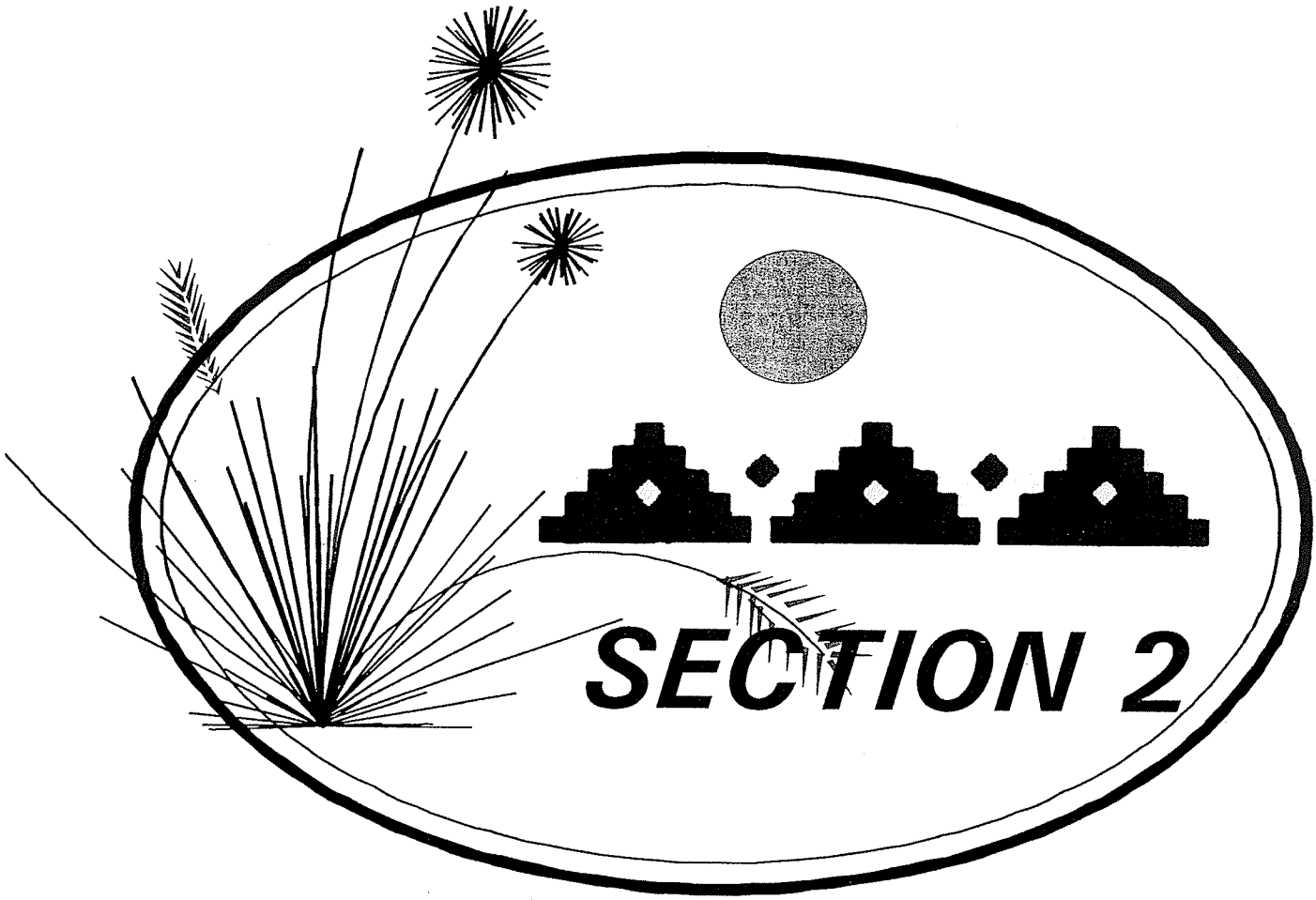

SECTION 2

SECTION 2
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The outcome of the resource management planning process resulted in decisions to resolve the four planning issues and nine management concerns identified during the planning process. These decisions, when combined with the continuing management guidance, provide a comprehensive land management program for public land in the Mimbres Resource Area for the next 20 years. The continuing management guidance was developed primarily from laws, regulations, manuals, and relevant decisions carried forward from previous land use plans.

MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

The overall management strategy for the Mimbres Resource Area is based on achieving and maintaining healthy ecosystems while providing for human values, products, and services. The desired plant community objectives for the public land in the Resource Area will be met by a combination of proper grazing management and land treatments consisting of prescribed natural fire, prescribed fire, and chemical treatments of brush-dominated areas. Land development and improvement projects will be thoroughly analyzed and modified, as appropriate, to limit the amount of new surface disturbance, reduce resource conflicts, and aid in the management of resources. Restoration and maintenance of the limited but highly productive riparian and arroyo habitats will be underscored.

Resolution of the Land Ownership Adjustment and Access issues sets the stage for more efficient management, utilization, and maintenance of the public land resources within the Mimbres Resource Area. Identification of the public land to be retained, acquired, or disposed of effectively displays where Bureau funding, program efforts, and management attention will be focused. Acquiring access to 19 blocks of public land would be accomplished by building new roads, land ownership adjustment, or easement acquisition. Specific access routes or methods of developing access would be identified in the route analysis completed for each area and coordinated with adjacent landowners and permittees.

Management of the designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and Special Management Areas (SMAs) will be highlighted. All resource disciplines will adjust their program activities to meet the administrative intent of each ACEC and SMA. The RMP identifies the dominant public values and uses for each ACEC and SMA. Where feasible, the management prescriptions for the areas are identified and no further planning for these areas is necessary.

The establishment of right-of-way exclusion and avoidance areas is intended to notify all public land users of the restrictions and limitations that exist in these areas. This management approach was established to protect the area's special and sensitive resource values and limit or restrict development.

During implementation of this RMP, emphasis and consideration will be given to the role of non-BLM managed lands in achieving land use objectives, working with adjacent landowners, forming partnerships, and consulting with local and State government officials. When additional activity planning is needed to develop specific management prescriptions and these areas overlap with one another, coordinated resource management plans will be prepared.

On an annual basis, the Bureau will present the previous years accomplishments and upcoming years planned actions to the public for their review. In addition, a record and status of all NEPA documents is maintained in the Resource Area Office.

The decisions reached through the RMP process are listed on the following pages. These decisions will be the focus of future evaluations to measure the level of accomplishment and effectiveness in resolving the planning issues and management concerns.

RESOURCE PROGRAMS

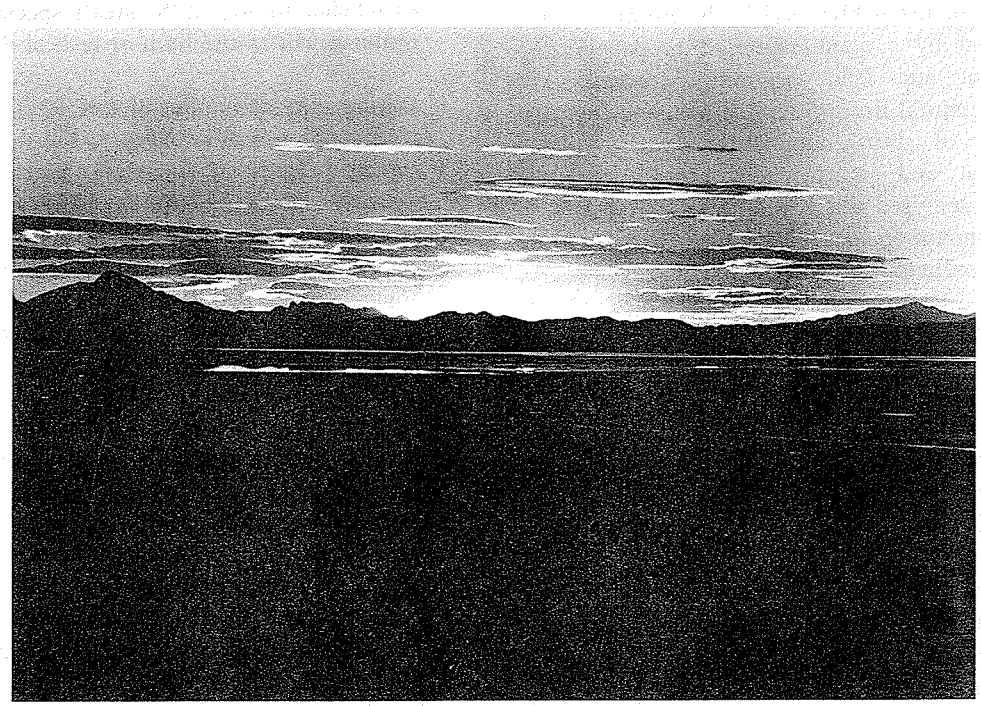
This section is arranged by resource program. Each program contains a discussion on objectives, descriptions, continuing management guidance and actions, and specific resource decisions. The program objective describes the mission and direction for program management. The program description identifies the existing resources and major programs currently operating within the Resource Area.

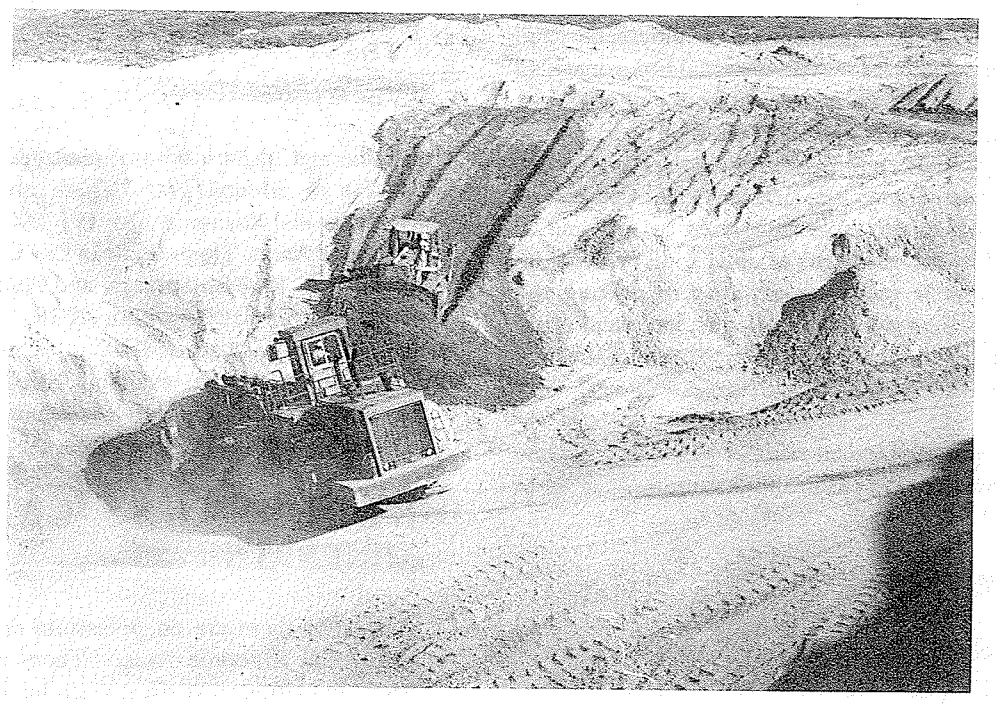
The "Continuing Management Guidance and Actions" is a summary of basic management policy that will continue without change under the Plan. Public land, resources, and programs not affected by the resolution of issues and management concerns will be managed as outlined in this section. It is based on detailed discussions of the "Existing Management Situation" section of Management Situation Analysis (MSA), a companion document to the RMP.

Management guidance for resource programs include laws, Executive Orders, regulations, Department of Interior manuals, BLM Manuals and instruction memoranda. Valid planning decisions found in the Gila and Southern Rio Grande Management Framework Plans (MFPs) and various amendments are available for review in the Mimbres Resource Area Office. Together, these form the basis for the Continuing Management Guidance and Actions that will continue for public land resources and programs in the Mimbres Resource Area.

Specific land allocation decisions are listed for each program requiring land allocations as part of issue or management concern resolution.

The management prescriptions or planned actions, listed for each ACEC or Special Management Area (SMAs) discussed in Section 5, make up the action steps to be taken, to implement resource programs identified under the management goals.





OBJECTIVE

The objective of the minerals program is to provide for the public use of leasable, locatable and saleable minerals consistent with the laws that govern these activities and to minimize environmental damage.

DESCRIPTION

The minerals program in the Mimbres Resource Area involves activities with leasable, locatable and salable mineral resources. Under leasable minerals, oil, gas and geothermal are the principal activities. Locatable minerals include metallic minerals such as gold, silver, lead, zinc and copper and nonmetallic minerals such as barite and fluorspar. Salable minerals include material such as sand, gravel, clay, caliche, stone and volcanic cinders.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

The policy of the BLM is to make mineral resources available in accordance with the objectives of the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970 and the National Materials and Minerals Policy Research and Development Act of 1980. These acts require the Federal Government to facilitate the development of mineral resources to meet National, regional, and local needs for domestic and defensive purposes.

The BLM is also responsible for ensuring that mineral development is carried out in a manner which minimizes environmental damage and provides for the rehabilitation of affected land. The BLM official policy appears in Appendix B-1. Most of the public land in the Mimbres Resource Area is available for mineral entry, except where restricted by withdrawals for military, flood control, conservation, or other specific purposes. Unless otherwise specified, all

acreage figures in this section refer to Federal mineral estate managed by the BLM.

LEASABLE

Most phases of exploration, development, and production operations require National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review before authorization. Exceptions are oil and gas geophysical work. Pre-lease geophysical exploration (including the drilling of geothermal temperature-gradient holes and oil and gas seismic operations) is authorized by a permit or conducted under a Notice of Intent. However, all other operations including exploratory drilling and extraction and production of oil, gas, and geothermal resources requires a lease. See Appendix B-2 for mineral leasing proposals.

Table 2-1 shows the total number of leases and lease acreage by County within the Resource Area as of June 1990.

OIL AND GAS

The Mimbres Resource Area is responsible for permitting, inspecting, and enforcing Notices of Intent (NOIs) for geophysical exploration work. Surface management responsibilities associated with permits to drill are also handled by the Resource Area. The Roswell District is responsible for executing all technical work for monitoring "down hole" activities. In the event of petroleum production, the Resource Area will be responsible for surface management related to production facilities, and the Roswell District will be responsible for the management of more technical operations such as production reporting and abandonment.

GEOTHERMAL

Geothermal resources are managed in a manner similar to oil and gas. There are three Known Geothermal Resource Areas (KGRAs) in the Resource Area. These occur in Las Cruces (Tortugas Mountain), Radium Springs, and Animas (Lightning Dock). All lands within KGRAs are open to competitive geothermal leasing. Other areas in the Resource Area are available for noncompetitive geothermal leasing. All leases are subject to the special fluid leasing stipulations.

NONENERGY LEASABLE MINERALS

Currently, there are no potassium or sodium leases within the Resource Area. There are no existing lease stipulations that affect areas having potential for the occurrence of nonenergy leasable minerals. If prospecting permits are issued, maintaining compliance with current regulations will be the main responsibility of the Mimbres Resource Area.

TABLE 2-1
OIL AND GAS AND GEOTHERMAL LEASES

	OIL AND GAS		GEOTHERMAL	
COUNTY	NO. LEASES	ACRES	NO. LEASES	ACRES
Dona Ana	19	54,451	9	13,126
Grant	11	12,065	0	0
Hidalgo	29	41,980	1	2,501
Luna	13	17,485	0	0
TOTAL	*72	125,981	10	15,627

Source: BLM Files, 1990.
Note: *Actual lease total is 70 because there are two leases that overlap the Hidalgo/Luna County line.

LOCATABLES

The Mining Law of 1872 allows for the location of mining claims on public land for the purpose of exploration, development, and production of minerals. Locatable commodities include metallic minerals such as gold, silver, lead, zinc, and copper and nonmetallic minerals such as barite and fluorspar.

Before commencing any surface-disturbing mining activities, an operator is required to submit either a "notice" that describes the proposed activities or a more comprehensive "plan of operation" to the BLM. A notice is required for disturbing 5 acres or less or for driving off-road in an area designated as limited to existing roads and trails. A plan of operation is required for disturbing more than 5 acres or for operating within Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), ACECs, or areas designated as closed to off-road vehicle use.

The BLM must prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for a plan of operations. An EA is not required for a notice, and the BLM has no authority to approve notices. However, it is standard practice in the Mimbres Resource Area to review all notices for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance and to advise the operator of any special environmental concerns and reclamation practices. Operators are not required to provide reclamation bonds for notices unless they have established a record of noncompliance. Reclamation bonds are mandatory for plans of operation.

SALABLES

Salable minerals include materials such as sand, gravel, clay, caliche, stone, and volcanic cinders. These "mineral materials" must be purchased from the BLM. Most materials are sold by the cubic yard. Stone is usually sold by the ton. Some organizations and government agencies qualify for "free use" and are not charged for extracting mineral materials from public land. However, they are required to perform reclamation and reseeding on disturbed areas.

Most applications for mineral material sales and free use must go through the NEPA review process. The exceptions are sales and free use from community pits and common use areas. These sites have already been evaluated through NEPA review and have been designated suitable for extraction of mineral materials. Permits for community pits and common-use areas are sold "over the counter" and do not require individual EAs. Sales from community pits and common use areas will continue. See Table 2-2.

Stipulations and reclamation and reseeding requirements for mineral material pits will be developed on a case-by-case basis.

TABLE 2-2
COMMUNITY PITS/COMMON-USE AREAS

COMMUNITY PIT/ COMMON USE AREA	COMMODITY	LOCATION
No. 1 (Shalem)	Stone/Sand and Gravel	T. 22 S., R. 1 E. Sec. 19
No. 2 (Hatch)	Sand and Gravel	T. 19 S., R. 3 W. Sec. 17, 18
No. 5 (West Picacho)	Caliche	T. 23 S., R. 1 E. Sec. 19
No. 9 (Mossman)	Crusher fines	T. 25 S., R. 3 E. Sec. 28
No. 11 (Little Black Mtn)	Volcanic cinders and stone	T. 25 S., R. 1 E. Sec. 24
Jornada[a/]	Red Fill Dirt	T. 22 S., R. 2 E. Sec. 10
Rincon[a/]	Building Stone	T. 19 S., R. 3 W. Sec. 4
O'Hara Road North[a/]	Sand and Gravel	T. 26 S., R. 4 E. Sec 19
O'Hara Road Caliche[a/]	Caliche	T. 26 S., R. 4 E. Sec 26
La Union[a/]	Sand and Gravel Red Dirt Caliche	T. 27 S., R. 3 E. Sec 13

Source: BLM Files, 1993.
Notes: a/ Common-use Area.

SPECIFIC DECISIONS

LEASABLE MINERALS

Approximately 266,950 acres are closed to fluid mineral leasing. This includes all ACECs, RNAs, and NNL, in addition to the existing closed areas. (See Map 2-1.)

The current special stipulations for fluid mineral leasing will continue (274,000 acres).

About 65,000 acres are open to leasing with no surface occupancy (see Appendix B-2). The remainder of the Resource Area is open to mineral leasing, subject to standard terms and conditions: oil and gas, 3,532,300 acres; and geothermal and nonenergy leasable, 3,499,500 acres.

LOCATABLE MINERALS

The following areas, totalling 64,000 acres, are petitioned for withdrawal from locatable mineral entry (see Map 2-2):

- Apache Box ACEC
- Guadalupe Canyon ACEC
- Organ/Franklin Mountains ACEC
- Paleozoic Trackways RNA

The remainder of the Resource Area is open to locatable mineral entry, subject to standard mitigating measures.

Existing withdrawals will continue and include:

- Guadalupe Canyon
- Organ Mountains Recreation Area
- Baylor Recreation Area
- Needle's Eye Picnic Site

SALABLE MINERALS

All ACECs, RNAs and NNL and the Butterfield and Continental Divide National Scenic Trails are closed to mineral material disposal (331,950 acres). See Map 2-1.

The remainder of the Resource Area is open to mineral material disposal, subject to standard stipulations.

A competitive sale program will be established; the site(s) will be determined later based on mineral surveys and would probably be within 10 miles of Las Cruces.

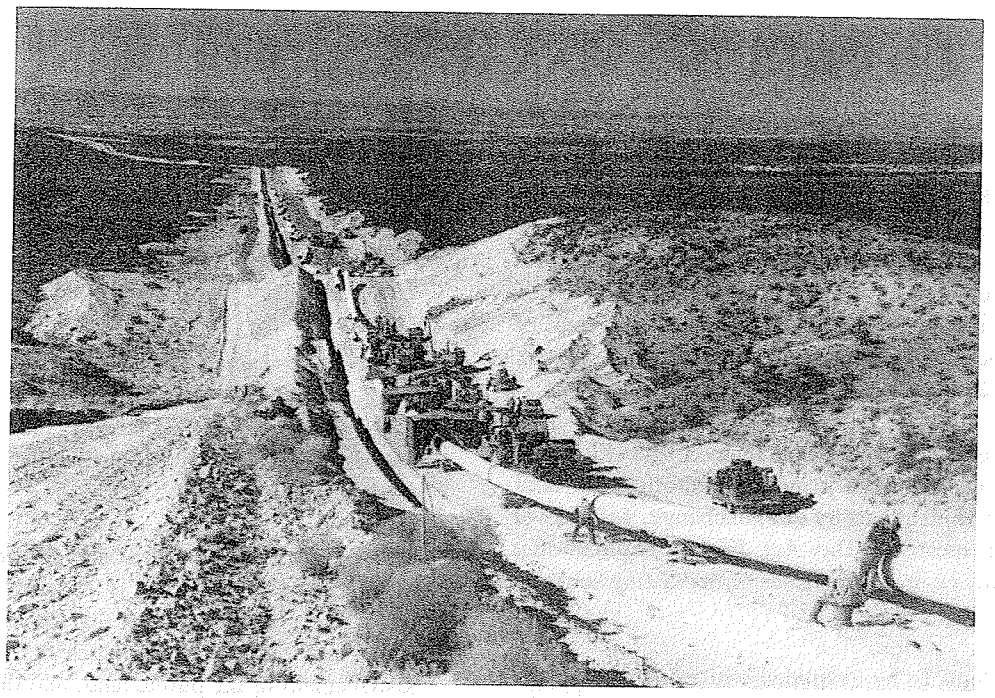
Processing miscellaneous negotiated mineral material sales and Free-Use Permits (FUPs) will continue.

MITIGATING MEASURES

The following mitigating measures apply to lands open to locatable (under Plan of Operations only), salable, or leasable mineral entry:

- Riparian areas will not be disturbed.
- Activities on critical soils on slopes over 20 percent require special mitigation.

NOTES



OBJECTIVE

The objective of the lands program is to facilitate the acquisition, exchange, or disposal of public land in order to provide the most efficient management of public resources. In addition, the program is responsible for granting rights-of-way across public land and acquiring easements.

DESCRIPTION

The BLM administers approximately 3,053,820 acres of public land in Dona Ana, Luna, Hidalgo, and Grant Counties in southwestern New Mexico. Public land comprises about 34 percent of the total surface ownership within the Mimbres Resource Area. In addition to the surface ownership, BLM also administers 4,126,780 acres of Federal mineral estate. See Table 1-1.

The Mimbres Resource Area is characterized by its rural qualities, vast open spaces, and generally sparse population. However, a large and expanding urban populations exists along the Rio Grande and Mesilla Valley from Las Cruces to El Paso. Other populated areas include Deming, Lordsburg, and Silver City.

The urban population, particularly in the Rio Grande and Mesilla Valleys, put a great demand on nearby public land to provide for the needs of these growing communities. Typical actions and authorizations include leases, permits, exchanges, communication site rights-of-way, linear rights-of-way, and recreation and public purposes (R&PP) leases and patents for cemeteries, gun clubs, parks, and school sites.

Many of the linear facilities authorized under various right-of-way grants have led to the establishment of defacto right-of-way corridors. Seven officially designated corridors also exist as a result of previous management framework plans (MFPs). The placement of facilities has in the past been largely due to topographic and land status constraints.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

It is BLM policy to make public land and its resources available for use and development to meet National, regional, and local needs, consistent with National objectives. The Mimbres Resource Area has an active lands and realty program as a result of intense local and regional demands. See Appendix C-1 for Lands and Minerals Disposal Policy.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) (Public Law 94-579) provides authority for land ownership adjustments by sale, exchange, withdrawal and other means. The Act further requires that adjustments be in conformance with existing land-use plans.

Specific items to be examined while considering the merits of any disposal or acquisition action include:

1. Consistency and conformance with current planning.
2. Relative values.
3. Public Interest.
4. Willingness to sell or exchange on part of the landowner.
5. Prime and unique farmlands.
6. Floodplain/flood hazard evaluation.
7. Cultural and paleontological resource values.
8. Native American religious values.
9. Visual resources.
10. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.
11. Wetlands and riparian areas.
12. Existing rights and uses.
13. Controversy.
14. Health and Safety.
15. Adjacent uses and ownership.
16. Air resources.
17. Special status species plants or animals and their habitat.
18. Mineral resources.
19. Recreation and wilderness values.

There are currently 14 Memorandums of Understanding and Cooperative Agreements in the Resource Area that address the lands program. These are listed in Appendix C-3.

PUBLIC LAND EXCHANGES

Laws such as FLPMA and the Federal Land Exchange Facilitation Act provide specific authority for land exchanges.

The emphasis for the exchange program in the Mimbres Resource Area is to acquire private and State trust lands in areas that have high resource values or unique characteristics that would enhance management of the public land, and dispose of public land that is valuable for urban expansion or other physical characteristics that make them difficult or uneconomical for BLM to manage. Every effort will be made to avoid creating split-estate when exchanging land. Existing split-estate land will be exchanged if they meet FLPMA disposal criteria.

Prior to filing a formal written proposal, an informal discussion of the exchange proposal is held with the non-Federal party. At this time, formal exchange proposals that are clearly not in the public interest are discouraged. Written proposals are reviewed to determine if the lands are covered by an approved RMP or MFP.

SALES OF PUBLIC LAND

The objective is to provide for the orderly disposition, at not less than fair market value, of public land identified for sale as part of the land-use planning process.

Under FLPMA, BLM is authorized to sell public land where, as a result of land use planning, it is determined that the sale of such tracts meets the following disposal criteria:

1. Such tract, because of its location or other characteristics is difficult and uneconomic to manage and is not suitable for management by another Federal department or agency; or

2. Such tract was acquired for a specific purpose and the tract is no longer required for that or any other Federal purpose; or

3. Disposal of such tract will serve important public objectives, including but not limited to, expansion of communities and economic development, which cannot be achieved prudently or feasibly on land other than public land and which outweigh other public objectives and values, including, but not limited to, recreation and scenic values, which would be served by maintaining such tract in Federal ownership.

LAND WITHDRAWALS

BLM policy is to keep the public land open for public use and enjoyment. However, there are conditions which may warrant the removal or withdrawal of certain public land from multiple use such as public safety or protection of special uses and resources. Withdrawals designate public land for a particular project, purpose, or use. They may transfer jurisdiction to another Federal agency. Normally, the land is closed to entry under all or some of the public land laws including the mining laws.

All withdrawals in the Mimbres Resource Area have been, or will be reviewed, according to the requirements of laws and existing guidance (see Table 2-3). Withdrawals will be continued, modified, revoked, or terminated consistent with the need as rejustified by the withdrawing agency. As withdrawals are revoked or terminated, the land use decisions in the RMP will apply to those areas. For withdrawals where BLM presently has management responsibility, all RMP decisions covering those areas apply.

Lands suitable for restricted management such as water power and reservoir sites are reviewed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on a case-by-case basis as they are received. Use restrictions and protection of other resources or prohibitions may be negotiated through the FERC as a result of the case-by-case review.

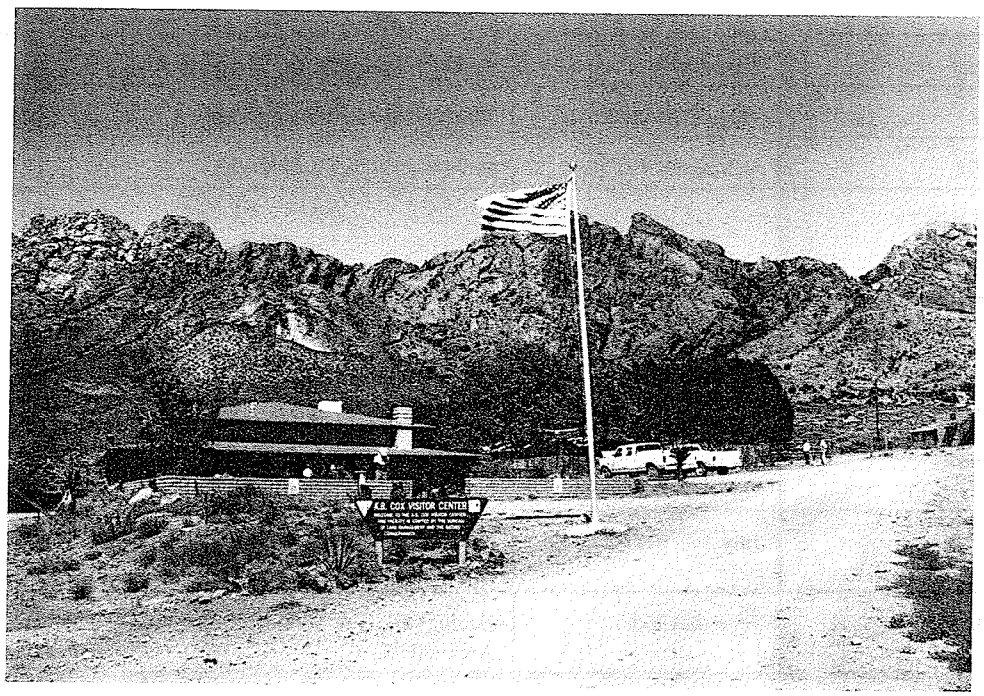


TABLE 2-3
WITHDRAWALS

NUMBER	DATE	PURPOSE AND SURFACE MANAGER	ACRES[a/]
DONA ANA COUNTY			
EO*	October 17, 1903	Rio Grande Reservoir Site (BOR)	50
Proclamation 2137	May 27, 1907	Protection of US/Mexico Border (Unknown)	998
EO 1526 & EO 2368 & EO 4266	May 3, 1912 April 24, 1916 July 20, 1925	Jornada Experimental Station and Range (USDA)	176,899 28,813 7,957
SO*	November 16, 1926	Rio Grande Project (BOR)	98
EO 8646	January 11, 1941	San Andres Wildlife Refuge (USF&W)	57,215
PLO 883 & PLO 1186	May 21, 1952 July 14, 1955	White Sands Missile Range (COE/DOD)	506,540
PLO 663 & EO 8649 & EO 8780 & EO 9115 & PLO 78 & PLO 1866	August 28, 1950 January 23, 1941 June 11, 1941 March 28, 1942 January 15, 1943 June 11, 1941	Rio Grande Canalization Project (IBWC)	0.27
PLO 2051	February 17, 1970	For Research Purposes (NMSU)	827
PLO 3462	November 23, 1964	For Water Supplies and Facilities to Benefit NASA/WSMR and Access Road (COE)	1,382
PLO 3685	June 10, 1965	For Research Facilities to Benefit NMSU (Antenna and Telecom "A" Mountain) (NASA)	2,789
PLO 4038	June 6, 1966	Ecology Plots & Demonstration Area (BLM)	40
PLO 4263	August 11, 1967	Animal Science Ranch (NMSU)	52,000
PL 101-578	November 15, 1990	Prehistoric Trackway Study	736
LUNA COUNTY			
SO*	November 22, 1894	Public Spring Ft. Cummings (USDI)	320
EO 7442 & EO 5255	August 31, 1936 December 31, 1929	Rifle Range (NM National Guard)	2,080
PWR #107 (SO Intp. 250)	February 16, 1939	Public Water Reserves (USDI)	560
PLO 60	November 13, 1942	Landing Field (NM National Guard)	200
SO 238	July 17, 1947	Air Navigation Site (Civil Aeronautics Admin., Dept of Commerce)	40
PLO 4038	June 6, 1966	Ecology Plots & Demonstration Area (BLM)	40

TABLE 2-3
WITHDRAWALS (concluded)

NUMBER	DATE	PURPOSE AND SURFACE MANAGER	ACRES[a/]
HIDALGO COUNTY			
PLO 4146	January 3, 1967	Protection of Mexican Duck (BLM)	190
PWR #107 (SO Intp. 250)	February 16, 1939	Public Water Reserves (USDI)	360
PWR #107 (SO Intp. 253)	August 19, 1940	Public Water Reserves (USDI)	40
PLO 4038 & PLO 4208	June 6, 1966 April 24, 1967	Ecological Plots & Demonstration Area (BLM)	40
GRANT COUNTY			
EO477	July 14, 1906	Fort Bayard (COE/DOD)	860
EO 637	May 23, 1907	Fort Bayard Water Supply (COE/DOD)	13,622
EO 5889 & EO 551 & EO 759 & EO 83 & WPD #1	July 16, 1932 No Date November 24, 1924 July 2, 1910 August 7, 1916	San Carlos Indian Irrigation (San Carlos Indian Reservation) and Powersites on Gila River (FERC)	35,908
PWR #107 (SO Intp. 250)	February 16, 1939	Public Water Reserve (USDI)	40
PWR #107 (SO Intp. 256)	August 22, 1939	Public Water Reserve (USDI)	240
PLO 6613	February 12, 1986	Red Rock Game Farm	712

Source: BLM Files (State Office and District Office), 1990.

Notes:
a/ Acres have been rounded off.
b/ 104,221 acres of the Jornada withdrawal is within the WSMR withdrawal boundary.
PLO = Public Land Order
SO = Secretarial Order
EO = Executive Order
PWR = Public Water Reserves
WPD = Water Power Designation
*Some secretarial and executive orders issued in early 1900's and before were identified only by date, no number was assigned

Classifications were made under the authority of the Classification and Multiple Use Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 986). These classifications delineated land suitable for disposal consistent with the requirements of the Act or for retention for multiple-use management. The retention classifications segregated the land against entry under certain public land laws. Small areas with highly unique resource values were sometimes further segregated against entry under the mining laws or the mineral leasing laws.

All classifications and classification terminations will be reviewed. This document deals with the questions of disposal and the segregations needed to accomplish these objectives. It also recommends the placement of further segregations against the mining laws or mineral leasing laws where they are needed to protect unique and valuable resources.

DESERT LAND ENTRIES

All lands not identified for disposal in the RMP will be retained in public ownership and managed for multiple use. All lands in soil capability Classes II through VII are not suitable for Desert Land Entries application or agricultural leases.

RECREATION AND PUBLIC PURPOSES (R&PPs)

The R&PP Act provides guidelines and procedures for transfer of certain public land to States or their political subdivisions, and to nonprofit corporations and associations to meet their needs for public land required for historical, recreational and public purposes. Under the R&PP Act, BLM has the authority to lease or patent public land to governmental and nonprofit entities for public parks and building sites at less than fair market value. Such applications are processed under the requirements of NEPA and are subject to public review. R&PP applications for lands outside disposal areas that meet the criteria outlined in 43 CFR 2740 and are consistent with management objectives in this plan will be considered.

The BLM leases or sells these public purpose areas to qualified applicants under a Special Pricing Program. These sale prices are determined in accordance with 43 USC 869-1(a) and (c). Leases or conveyances for recreational or historic monument purposes are issued without monetary consideration to Government entities.

New R&PP regulations will now allow BLM to sell landfill sites to local government entities provided Resource Conservation Recovery Act, NEPA, and FLPMA requirements are met. Any public land that may be used for a regional landfill must meet disposal criteria and be considered suitable for use as a landfill. Previously permitted landfills will be retained until the sites have been closed according to New Mexico Environment Division regulations.

RIGHTS-OF-WAY, LEASES, AND PERMITS

The Mimbres Resource Area grants rights-of-way (ROWs), leases and permits to qualified individuals, businesses, and governmental entities for the use of public land. New ROWs are issued within existing ROWs whenever possible to promote joint use. All ROW actions are coordinated, to the fullest extent possible, with Federal, State, and local government agencies, adjacent landowners, and interested individuals and groups.

All ROW applications are analyzed site-specifically on a case-by-case basis. There are no programmatic EAs for the lands program. Each case is reviewed by an interdisciplinary team. All ROW activities are subject to site-specific environmental analysis. Natural and cultural values are protected or avoided. Mitigation measures are incorporated within the authorizations to minimize the adverse effects of any surface disturbing activity. Project construction areas are rehabilitated by various reseeding and soil erosion control methods using the Resource Area's Reclamation and Reseeding Guidelines for guidance.

Applicants are encouraged to use existing corridors whenever possible. These existing corridors do not have a designated width, unless specified in the management prescriptions for the ACECs in Section 5. Prohibiting factors for width would be other resource conflicts, terrain, and land status. Most lands actions in the Resource Area are compatible, and overlapping ROWs are issued whenever possible. Numerous smaller ROWs (such as roads to private residences) are issued annually in addition to the larger ones mentioned above to accommodate public needs within the Resource Area. (See Map 2-3.)

The Resource Area's terrain offers a prime area for development of communication sites. Because of public demand for communication sites in the San Augustine Pass, the US Department of Army is concerned that frequencies, if not monitored

properly, could conflict with their defense testing. In a meeting with the Mimbres Resource Area Manager and White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) personnel, it was agreed BLM will no longer address communication sites in the San Augustine Pass area so long as WSMR is willing to consider communication site applications for that area. Should WSMR cease considering applications from private parties, the BLM will resume management of the area in accordance with provisions of this Plan. All public inquiries will be transferred to WSMR for consideration. The "A" Mountain site is another management concern. NASA and NMSU want the site to remain closed to future applications because they are concerned further development at the site would interfere with NASA's mission and research being conducted at NMSU.

BLM may make Federal land available for use by other entities. If land use planning procedures reveal that the public land has locations or sites highly suitable for habitation, cultivation or the development of trade or manufacturing, these lands can be made available for such use to individuals or non-Federal entities under a 43 CFR 2920 permit. Factors that are considered are whether the site and location values of the land outweigh the protection, management, utilization or extraction of resources under the Bureau's multiple-use management program or if the proposed use would enhance BLM programs. If so, the lands may be made available to State and local governments or the private sector.

SET ASIDES

Certain parcels of public land, within the boundaries of the Elena Gallegos Exchange, were set aside (reserved) by Memoranda of Understanding with the City of Las Cruces and the Las Cruces School District No. 2 for disposal and future development under the R&PP Act. Certain parcels were also set aside within the 10,000-acre State Land Exchange Area for existing and potential R&PP lease and/or patent. The legal descriptions of these areas are contained in Appendix C-2.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The Resource Area continues to study any site where evidence indicates hazardous materials may be present. As unauthorized sites are found they will be assessed by performing a "Removal Evaluation" and cleaned up as necessary. If hazardous materials contamination cannot be removed, a Preliminary Assessment (PA) may be performed. If the results from the PA indicate that hazardous materials are significant or may have migrated off-site, further study might be necessary through a Site Investigation (SI) or a more comprehensive Expanded Site Investigation (ESI). Table 2-4 shows the status of landfill investigations as of June 1993. Once EPA and the State are satisfied with the investigations under Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation Liability Act (CERCLA), the landfill will be closed following State regulations and any recommendations resulting from CERCLA investigations. All surface and mineral use authorizations are suspended pending the outcome of the studies. Additionally, the sites listed on the Federal facilities docket may be severely restricted from any other land use in the future. It is possible that only maintenance of the sites and monitoring will be allowed at the docket sites.

TABLE 2-4
LANDFILL INVESTIGATION STATUS

	STATUS	ON FEDERAL FACILITY DOCKET
Anthony	SI completed	Yes
Butterfield Park	PA scheduled	No
Chaparral	PA completed	Yes
Garfield	RE scheduled	No
Hatch	PA completed	Yes
Hill	PA completed	Yes
La Mesa	PA completed	Yes
La Union	ESI completed	Yes
Las Cruces	SI completed	Yes
Mesquite	PA completed	Yes
Mesilla Dam	ESI completed	Yes
Old Las Cruces	RE scheduled	No
Old La Union*	PA scheduled	No
Rincon	RE completed	No
Salem	RE scheduled	No
Salem-Garfield	RE scheduled	No
Virden North	PA scheduled	No
Virden South	RE scheduled	No

Source: BLM Files, 1993.

Notes: *This site has been formally closed by the BLM.
SI = Site Investigation
PA = Preliminary Assessment
ESI = Expanded Site Investigation
RE = Removal Evaluation

SPECIFIC DECISIONS

LAND OWNERSHIP AND ADJUSTMENT

A total of 156,460 acres of public land are identified for disposal through R&PP, sale or exchange (see Map 2-4). None of the areas identified for disposal are within an area of critical environmental concern (ACEC) or other special management area (SMA).

The existing decisions regarding disposal (as outlined in the Southern Rio Grande MFP Amendment) (BLM 1986) are carried forward with slight modification as follows: seven sections of land adjacent to the proposed Organ Mountains National Conservation Area that were identified for disposal in the Southern Rio Grande MFP Amendment will not be disposed (T. 22 S., R. 3 E., Sections 16, 21, 28, and 33; T. 23 S., R. 3 E., Section 33; T. 25 S., R. 3 E., Section 35; and T. 26 S., R. 5 E., Section 31.). See Appendix C-4 for specific decisions carried forward from the Southern Rio Grande Plan Amendment.

The specific land disposal area described as T. 20 S., R. 3 E., Sections 28 S1/2, 33, and 34; T. 21 S., R. 3 E., Sections 3, 4, 7 SE1/4, 8, 9, 10, 14 N1/2, 15 N1/2, 17, and 18 will be retained. A right-of-way (NMNM66383) has been granted to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and a subsequent Memorandum of Understanding (NM-030-45) was signed in April 1990 reserving the public land for ground water monitoring wells. Based on the ground water studies, these lands may need to be withdrawn from multiple use management to protect public safety.

To facilitate orderly disposal on the East Mesa, two disposal zones are delineated:

- First priority for disposal is public land west of a north-south line 1 mile east of the boundary between R. 2 E. and R. 3 E.

- Second priority for disposal is public land east of the line described above.

A total of 2,896,080 acres of public land not identified for disposal will be managed in accordance with the provisions of Section 102(a) of FLPMA. See Map 2-4.

No public land contiguous to U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land will be disposed of regardless of parcel size. Coordination will take place with the USFS for reservation of easements on parcels adjacent to but not contiguous with Forest land as they are disposed.

No public land within ACECs and other SMAs will be disposed.

Public land may be disposed of through exchange in order to consolidate other public land outside of disposal areas. Only lands within disposal areas will be exchanged for lands outside the Resource Area.

A total of 93,110 acres of State trust land and 56,210 acres of private land are identified for potential acquisition. All State trust land and private land will be acquired within ACECs and other SMAs through exchange or purchase at fair market value, provided that the landowner is in agreement with such acquisition.

Picacho Peak is also identified for potential acquisition. If acquired, Picacho Peak may have ACEC potential, so the area will be managed under temporary special management until a decision is made in an RMP Amendment or Revision. The temporary special management includes the following:

- Exclude ROW authorizations
- Manage as VRM Class II
- Limit vehicles to designated roads and trails
- Close to mineral material sales

The Doña Ana Recreation Area, Massacre Peak, Fort Cummings, and Granite Gap Recreation Area classifications will be terminated upon publication of a Federal Register notice following completion of this Plan. Guadalupe Canyon, Organ Mountains Recreation Area, Baylor Recreation Area, and Needle's Eye Picnic Site will remain in effect until replaced by a protective withdrawal.

No applications will be accepted for disposal under the Desert Land Act.

RIGHTS-OF-WAY (ROW)

ROW exclusion areas are established for 264,870 acres and avoidance areas are established for 783,400 acres. (See Glossary for definitions of ROW exclusion areas and ROW avoidance areas.)

ROW exclusion areas include all:

- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)
- Research Natural Areas (RNAs)
- National Natural Landmarks (NNLs)

ROW avoidance areas include the following:

- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
- Butterfield Trail
- Bighorn sheep areas
- VRM Class II areas

The remainder of the Resource Area is open to the location of ROWs, subject to standard stipulations (1,970,180 acres). Map 2-5 shows the location of the ROW exclusion and avoidance areas.

The BLM will encourage new facilities to be located near existing sites or in existing corridors. Existing ROWs within exclusion areas are recognized as grandfathered and operation, maintenance, and renewal of these facilities will be allowed to continue within the scope of the ROW grant.

New linear ROWs that terminate on private inholdings within an exclusion area may be authorized within an exclusion area if no other reasonable alternative exists. Special stipulations for avoidance areas will also apply to these authorizations.

Existing ROWs within exclusion areas are recognized as grandfathered and operation, maintenance, and renewal of these facilities would be allowed to continue within the scope of the ROW grant.

The following special stipulations apply to new facilities within avoidance areas:

- Facilities will not be located parallel to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail or Butterfield Trail.

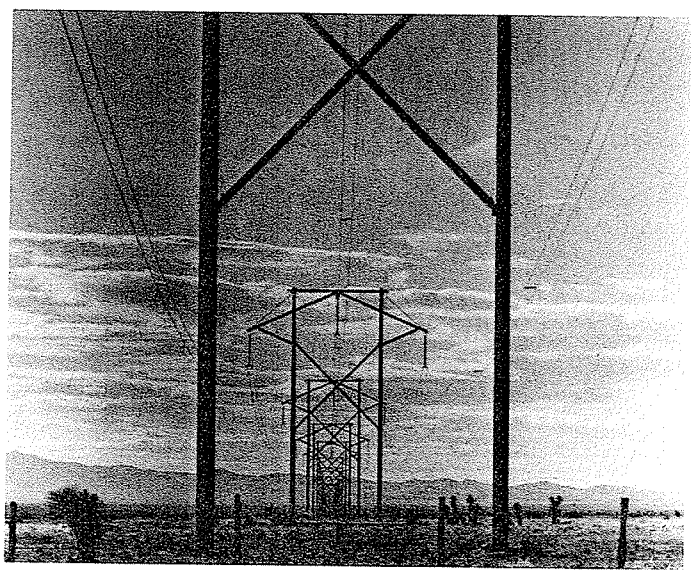
- Facilities will not be located within 1/4 mile of any stage station on the Butterfield Trail.

- Facilities will not be located in riparian areas.

- Access routes will be limited and considered on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, construction and maintenance activities will need to be done aerially.

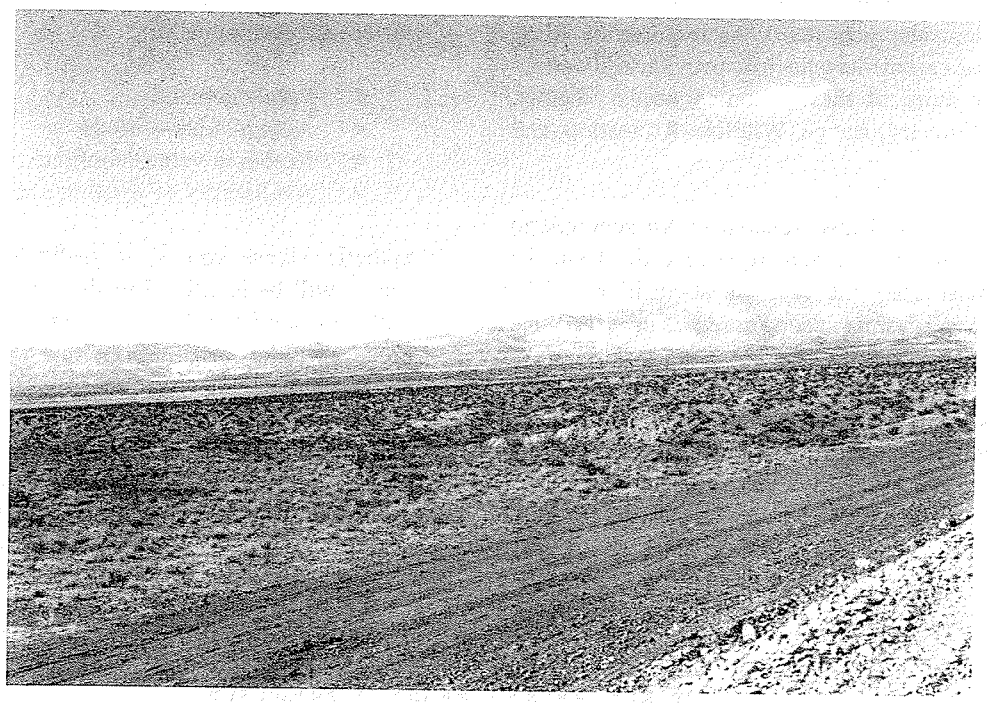
A site management plan will be prepared (with NASA and NMSU input) for "A" Mountain.

Management will continue to authorize routine commercial realty actions under the authority of 43 CFR 2920 throughout the 20-year life of this RMP.



NOTES

ACCESS



OBJECTIVE

The objective of the access program is to enhance access to and across public land in a manner that is compatible with the protection of sensitive resource values. The access program identifies areas where access is lacking or inadequate as well as those where access hinders successful management in other programs, and strives to achieve a balance whereby the public can access public land while having minimal detrimental impacts on natural resources.

DESCRIPTION

Existing transportation routes include Interstates 10 and 25, U.S. Highways 70, 80 and 180, and State Roads 9, 11, 26, 81, 90, 146, 338, and 464. In addition to the major State and Federal highways, numerous county roads traverse many portions of the Mimbres Resource Area.

Traditionally, BLM's transportation network utilizes the Federal, State, and County road systems. The easement acquisition program within the Mimbres Resource Area has been relatively inactive, largely due to a lack of past planning to support an acquisition program and because of minimal funding. In addition to the Federal, State, and County road system, BLM developed and maintains the 5.5-mile long Aguirre Spring Recreation Area access road, the 4.5-mile Pine Tree Trail, and the 6-mile Baylor Pass Trail. BLM also recently acquired and maintains approximately 3 miles of roads and 5 miles of trails in the Dripping Springs Natural Area.

Access concerns have steadily increased over recent years as the demand for access and use of public land has increased.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

The Mimbres Resource Area normally acquires one or two easements each year. As required by BLM policy, these easements generally provide legal access for one or more of these resource needs: Lands, Minerals, Forestry, Range, Wildlife, Recreation, and Watershed.

On a case-by-case basis, easements are acquired to establish legal access where road or trail easements are the most frequent type of acquisition. The method of determining needed access is in accordance with the BLM Planning Process.

All roads will be constructed or maintained in accordance with the BLM New Mexico Road Policy.

The following criteria guide prioritization of the areas for access development:

- Public demand
- Administrative needs
- Resource values/conflicts
- Availability of existing access

Specific access routes or methods of developing access will be identified in the route analysis which will be completed for each individual area. This process will be coordinated with adjacent landowners and permittees.

Prior to the development of access into any of the identified areas, a signing and patrol plan will be developed to address potential problems related to trespass onto private land, littering, and vandalism.

SPECIFIC DECISIONS

Access will be developed to 19 areas by building new roads, land ownership adjustment, or easement acquisition. Emphasis will be on vehicular or pedestrian access depending on the area and resource conflicts. Mimbres Resource Area will work with adjacent landowners and permittees to develop access.

The areas are shown on Map 2-6 and are listed below (the numbers in parentheses are referenced on the map):

Alamo Hueco Mountains (24) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use to the north boundary of the WSA/ACEC.

Animas Mountains (14) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use to the boundary of Cowboy Spring WSA/ACEC and to the Gillespie Peak area. Develop physical access for vehicular use to the north end of the Animas Mountains from State Road 9.

Apache Box (1) - Acquire legal public access to the west boundary (gate) through Bitter Creek.

Bear Creek (2) - Acquire administrative access.

Big Hatchet Mountains (23) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use to the north, east, and west boundaries of the WSA/ACEC (Chaney, Thompson, and Sheridan Canyons).

Burro Mountains (6) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use (north and south of Gila River).

Cedar Mountains (20) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use to the boundary of the WSA/ACEC on the north and west sides.

Community Pit No. 1 (36) - Acquire legal access from Shalem Colony Road to public land (approximately ½ mile).

Cooke's Range (26) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use on the east (Hadley Draw) and west (north of Provinger Canyon) sides.

Florida Mountains (28) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use to the boundary of the WSA/ACEC on the south, east, and west sides (Copper Kettle Canyon, Byer's Spring, and Mahoney Park).

Gila Lower Box (5) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use to the mouth of Nichol's Canyon, Fisherman's Point, and the Caprock Mountain area (north side).

Gila Middle Box (4) - Acquire legal public access to the boundary on either the upstream or downstream side.

Little Hatchet Mountains (19) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use on the east and west sides (to maintain present physical access).

Organ Mountains (38) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use south of Soledad Canyon through private properties.

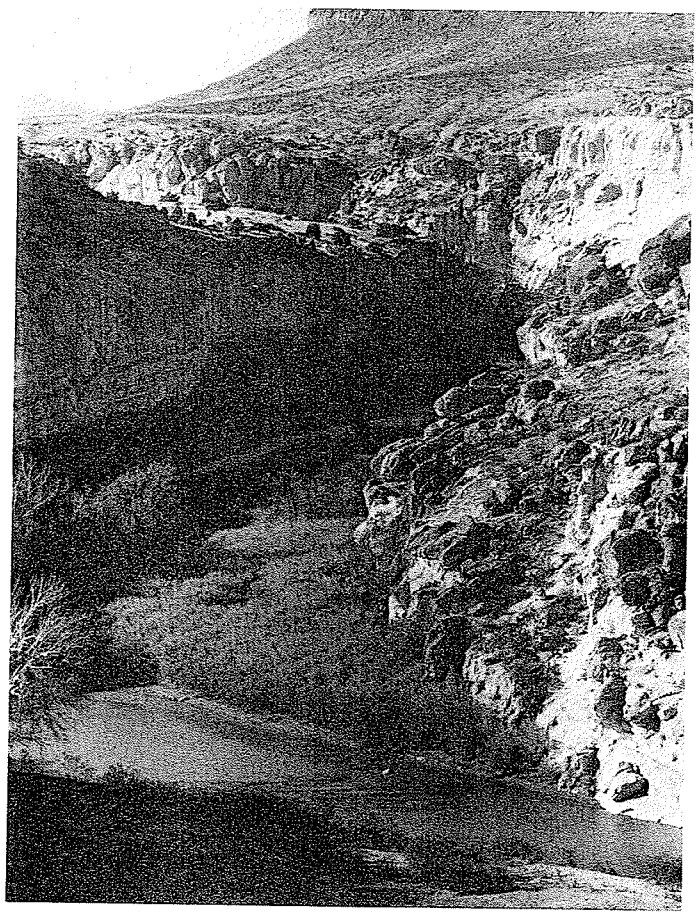
Peloncillo Mountains (13) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use to the mouth of Owl Canyon (west side) and north of I-10.

Pyramid Mountains (8) - Acquire legal public access for vehicular use into Rockhouse Canyon and the southeast part of the Pyramids.

Robledo Mountains (35) - Acquire legal public access across private land for vehicular use on the north end (via Fred Huff Road or Faulkner Canyon).

San Simon Cienega (9) - Acquire legal public access to the north end.

West Potrillo Mountains (40) - Acquire legal public access to the north and west sides.



NOTES

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the livestock grazing program in the Mimbres Resource Area is to manage the rangelands in an efficient manner by providing effective allotment management. This can be accomplished through careful planning, giving attention to proper placement of rangeland improvements, distribution of livestock, the kind and class of livestock, suitable grazing systems, assessing plant and animal requirements and vegetation treatments.

DESCRIPTION

There are 347 grazing allotments within the Doña Ana, Grant, Luna, and Hidalgo County Area. Of these, 206 are within the grazing district boundary and have set grazing capacities for each allotment (Section 3 of the Taylor Grazing Act). Grazing use on these allotments is covered by a term permit. The remaining allotments are outside the grazing district boundary, where grazing use is covered by a term lease (Section 15 of the Taylor Grazing Act). Livestock, owned by 256 livestock operators, utilize the forage on these permits and leases. Approximately 20 allotments located within Hidalgo County are administered by the BLM Safford District Office located in Safford, Arizona. These allotments are administered under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Safford and Las Cruces Districts. The MOU also provides for the administration of a portion of one allotment located in Cochise County, Arizona by the Mimbres Resource Area.

There are 30 allotments in the Resource Area which have implemented Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) or Coordinated Management Plans (CMPs). These allotments are on grazing systems set up in cooperation with the individual permittees. The schedules allow for deferment on one or more pastures for a growing season or complete year's rest. Many ranchers are now practicing some type of grazing management through these or other grazing systems.

There is a total active grazing preference of 385,282 animal unit months (AUMs) in the Mimbres Resource Area. According to the most recent data available (1992-1993 grazing fee year), there was an actual licensed use of 295,754 AUMs. The licensed use will fluctuate from year-to-year, depending on market, forage, or other conditions.

Of the 3 million acres of public land in the Resource Area, approximately 90 percent can be grazed by livestock. The remaining 10 percent is considered unsuitable due to steep slopes (greater than 70 percent) or barren areas (less than 2 percent vegetation).

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

Livestock grazing in the Resource Area is authorized under the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, FLPMA of 1976, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA) of 1978. BLM is directed to authorize and manage livestock grazing on public land under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield and to prevent the degradation of the rangeland resources by providing for their orderly use, improvement, and development.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1971, and NEPA of 1969 can affect livestock grazing activities by requiring additional resource management actions. Through the NEPA process, Federal agencies assess the impacts of their programs and actions on the human environment. Two EIS's on the grazing program cover the Mimbres Resource Area. These are the Southern Rio Grande EIS (BLM 1981) and the Las Cruces/Lordsburg Management Framework Plan Amendment/EIS (BLM 1984). These two EISs and associated MFPs provide program guidance through the proposed actions and management objectives identified. Approximately 20 allotments located in New Mexico are administered by the Safford District (located in Safford, Arizona). These allotments were covered by the Upper Gila-San Simon Grazing EIS (BLM 1978).

GRAZING MANAGEMENT POLICY

BLM's Final Grazing Management Policy established in 1982 and now incorporated in BLM handbooks identified goals and objectives consistent with BLM's responsibility to improve the rangelands and manage the grazing use on public land in compliance with laws and policies affecting the grazing management program. The intent of the policy is to make the grazing management program more efficient and cost effective by use of a selective management approach. This is accomplished by assigning management priorities among allotments or groups of allotments within a planning area based on similar resource characteristics, management needs, and both resource and economic potential for improvement. Selective management categories can be changed as additional resource information becomes available.

The three management categories specified in the Policy are:

- Category M - those allotments with current satisfactory conditions;
- Category I - those allotments where existing conditions are unsatisfactory and can economically be improved; and
- Category C - those allotments where the opportunity for positive economic return on public investment is unlikely.

Additional information on allotment categorization is located in Appendix D-1.

All allotments within the Mimbres Resource Area have been categorized according to the criteria contained in the grazing management policy (See Appendix D-1). The present allotment categories, including a summary of each allotment in the Mimbres Resource Area, is displayed in Appendix D-2.

GRAZING EIS'S

There are 347 allotments within the Mimbres Resource Area. Of this total, 206 are within the grazing district boundary and 141 are outside the boundary. A small portion of Cochise County in Arizona is administered for grazing in the Mimbres Resource Area. All allotments in the Resource Area

were categorized and decisions issued placing these allotments into one of three management categories. Category I allotments were further broken down into a high, medium and low priority rating depending on resource conflicts, utilization patterns, and needed rangeland improvements.

Under the proposed action alternatives in the two grazing EIS's, a number of rangeland improvement projects were identified for implementation. Table 2-5 shows the projects that were identified and the number that have been completed. The annual Rangeland Program Summary Updates identify the projects completed the preceding year.

The completed projects were done with Range Improvement Funds where the BLM and the permittee share the cost of construction. They do not include other rangeland improvement projects that have been built wholly at the permittee's expense or that have been built with other funds such as wildlife habitat improvement funds.

TABLE 2-5
RANGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
GRAZING EIS's

PROJECTS	NO. PLANNED	NO. COMPLETED
Wells	27	5
Storage Tanks	24	21
Drinking Troughs	105	39
Pipeline	192.5 miles	115 miles
Dirt Tanks	32	0
Fence	216 miles	226 miles
Cattleguards	8	0
Erosion Dikes	77	0
Umbrella Catchments	4	0
Creosotebush Control	46,239 acres	10,664 acres
Mesquite Brush Control	30,846 acres	0

ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLANS/ ACTIVITY PLANS

AMPs and other activity plans will continue to be developed for allotments to resolve resource problems or conflicts. Specific management actions will be developed at the activity plan stage. These plans will be prepared in consultation, cooperation, and coordination with the permittees, other landowners, and affected interests. The priorities for completing AMPs and activity plans will be determined by the allotment category; for example, Category I allotments will be first priority, followed by Category "M" and "C" allotments. Category I allotments will have an activity plan developed as the monitoring studies and allotment evaluations are completed.

GRAZING SYSTEMS

AMPs and other activity plans will normally include a grazing system which will provide periodic rest from livestock grazing. The type of system to be implemented will be tailored to meet the needs of the allotment and will be developed through consultation with the livestock operator and other affected interests. Consideration will be given to permittee needs, level of management, vegetation objectives, the degree and type of resource conflicts, initial costs

to implement the system, such as fences and waters, and other factors. A variety of grazing systems are available for consideration. Some of these are rest-rotation, deferred, deferred-rotation, rotation, and high intensity/short duration grazing.

Allotments with Special Management Areas or riparian zones will receive a higher priority for AMP development due to possible resource conflicts.

RANGELAND IMPROVEMENTS

The PRIA outlines the BLM's goal for investing in economically and environmentally sound rangeland improvements to improve public land for multiple use purposes. Copies of the law and resulting regulations are located in the Mimbres Resource Area Office.

A benefit/cost analysis will be used to help set improvement priorities on all new rangeland improvements. Rangeland improvements and vegetation treatments will continue to be implemented to improve or maintain forage production and range condition. Project implementation and the cost of these actions are based on several assumptions:

- Manpower and funding availability.
- Demand for products (i.e., beef) will continue.
- Objectives will be reached within 20 years of plan implementation.
- Actual implementation of the proposed developments may vary from those described at the planning stage.

During the preparation of the AMPs and activity plans, proposed developments will be further refined to reflect changes in allotment management and needs, along with the ever changing legislation, mandates, and policy.

LIVESTOCK USE ADJUSTMENTS

On an allotment, adjustments can be made by changing one or more of the following: the kind and class of livestock, the season of use, the number of livestock, or the pattern of grazing use. Any such adjustment is made only after the appropriate consultation, cooperation, and coordination with lessees, permittees, other landowners, District Grazing Advisory Board, and other affected interests as required by laws, regulations, and policy. Long-term increases in vegetation will be reserved for wildlife, watershed, and livestock on a case-by-case basis.

Permittees may apply for and be granted nonuse for definite periods of time based upon the following criteria: conservation and protection of the public land, annual fluctuations of livestock operations, financial or other reasons beyond the control of the operator, or livestock disease or quarantine. Such nonuse must be in accordance with the goals of the RMP, benefit or protect sensitive resource values (such as within an ACEC), and be approved by the Authorized Officer. Other applications for livestock use will not be considered while the approved nonuse is in effect.

MONITORING STUDIES

The monitoring of rangeland resources involves collection of data on the present grazing management system, the effectiveness of existing rangeland improvements, and present stocking rate, taking into consideration current precipitation data, livestock use levels, watershed and wildlife habitat needs, and current condition and trend. The studies help identify livestock distribution problems, needed rangeland improvements, vegetation treatments, initial adjusted stocking rates, and possible grazing management systems tailored for the particular allotment and its needs. The rangeland monitoring studies are used in the Mimbres Resource Area to monitor long-term rangeland ecological condition and trend and determine desired plant community goals.

Monitoring studies have been or will be established on all I allotments in the Mimbres Resource Area. The intensity and frequency of the studies depends on the allotment category. Category I allotments are monitored at a greater intensity than Category M and C allotments. Any necessary adjustments in stocking levels or other management practices will be based on these studies and consultation with the permittee, other landowners, and affected interests. There will be no changes in active grazing preference until monitoring studies indicate a change is necessary or as agreed upon with the operator or as provided for in the grazing regulations.

In the Afton Allotment (No. 03056), a series of small exclosures (100 acres total) will be constructed to provide ungrazed research sites.

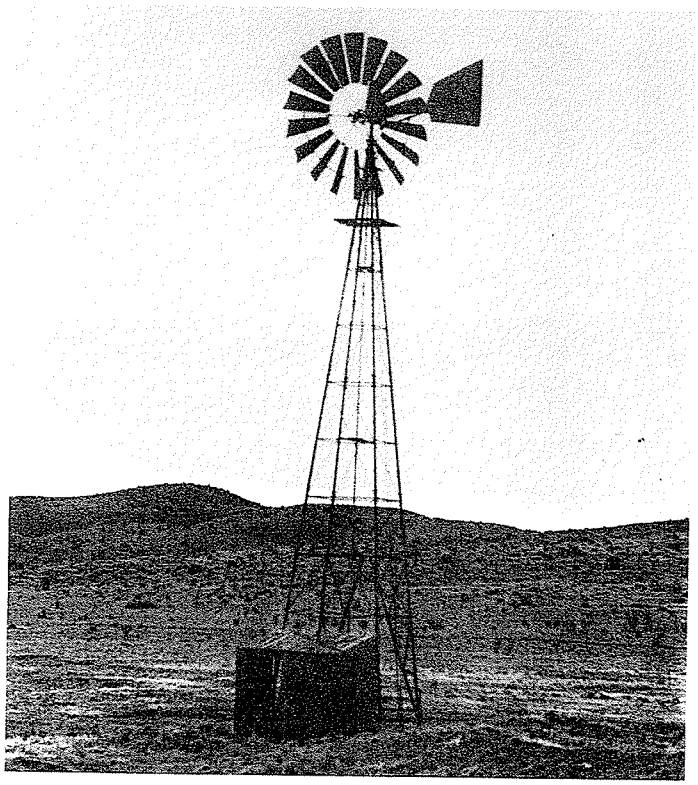
SPECIFIC DECISIONS

Specific decisions for planning issues or management concerns were not identified for the livestock grazing program. Livestock grazing was not an issue in the Mimbres RMP/EIS because specific decisions were made in previous documents, as described in the "Continuing Management Guidance and Actions" section. Some specific decisions relating to livestock grazing are also made under other resource headings.

ACEC prescriptions related to livestock grazing include the following:

- Livestock grazing would be eliminated on a total of 8,026 acres, including the Red Rock Game Farm (1,100 acres), the Central Peloncillo Mountains ACEC (4,446 acres in the Scholes allotment and Owl Canyon), the Bear Creek ACEC (1,480 acres), and portions of the Organ Mountains (1,000 acres). All areas except for Bear Creek are presently excluded from livestock grazing.

The fragile land areas shown on Map 2-7 will receive high priority for AMP or other activity plan revision or development, allotment monitoring, land treatments, allotment recategorization, and possible reduction or exclusion of surface disturbing activities including range improvement development and livestock grazing use. Efforts will be directed towards improving range condition and reaching desired plant community objectives within these areas. Fragile land areas within ACECs will receive the highest priority for improved management.



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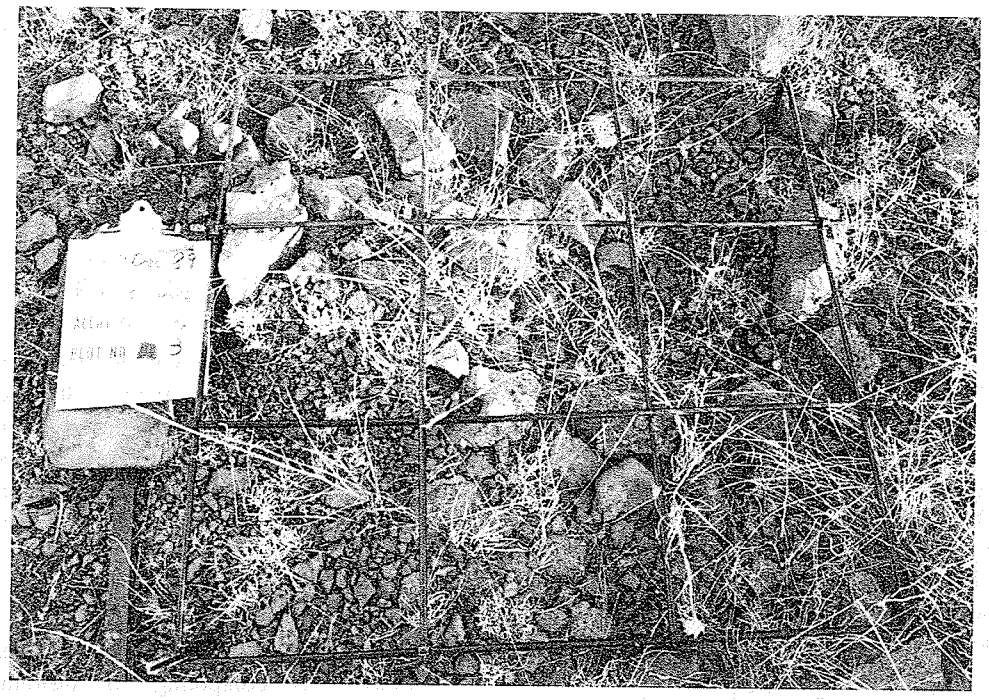
VEGETATION



OBJECTIVE

The objective of vegetation management in the Mimbres Resource Area is to maintain a desired plant community that produces the kind, proportion and amount of vegetation necessary for meeting or exceeding the land use plan goals and activity plan objectives established for each site. This program also establishes and processes vegetation sales, provides direction for land treatments and evaluates activities in fragile land areas.

DESCRIPTION

The vegetation in the Mimbres Resource Area varies greatly in its diversity, production, and potential due to differences in elevation, climate, soils, and topography. The Resource Area exhibits influences from the Chihuahuan Desert, Sonoran Desert, Mexican Highlands, Southern Rocky Mountains, and the Mogollon Plateau. A general description of the vegetation in the Mimbres Resource Area was gathered and compiled from the range surveys and range site mapping done in the late 70's and early 80's.

The Mimbres Resource Area contains portions of two Major Land Resource Areas (MLRAs). The two MLRAs are the Southern Desert-Subresource Area and the Western Plateau-Subresource Area.

The Southern Desert MLRA is characterized by elevations of 3,800 to 5,000 feet with mountain areas up to 8,000 feet. Gently sloping plains are broken by abruptly rising desert mountains. In the Resource Area, 89 percent or approximately 2,670,000 public land acres are in this MLRA.

The Western Plateau MLRA, characterized by elevations of 5,000 to 6,500 feet, is associated with general foothill topography with numerous canyons and dry washes adjacent to mountains. In the 4-County Area, 11 percent or approximately 330,000 public land acres are in this MLRA.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

Timbered or woodland areas are extremely limited in the Mimbres Resource Area. Vegetation sales for fuelwood or fenceposts will continue to be handled on a case-by-case basis. There will be no fuelwood sales except to accomplish other resource management objectives such as mesquite eradication or juniper thinning. Vegetation products for landscaping and decorative purposes are a major demand in the Resource Area.

Prickly pear, sotol, ocotillo, desert willow, little-leaf sumac, range ratany, soaptree yucca, and Spanish dagger are some of the plants sold for noncommercial purposes in the Resource Area. There are no commercial sale areas. Plant collecting is illegal without a permit (with the exception of small quantities for recreational use in accordance with 43 CFR 8365.1-5). Illegal plant collecting is a recurring problem throughout the Resource Area.

Prior to surface disturbing activities, such as sand and gravel operations, plants would be made available to the public and commercial operators. The Adopt-A-Plant program is in its initial stage of development. Under this program, native plants displaced as a result of surface disturbing actions will be "adopted" into private homes.

DESIRED PLANT COMMUNITIES

The desired plant community concept is defined as a plant community that produces the kind, proportion, and amount of vegetation necessary for meeting or exceeding the land use plan goals and activity plan objectives established for the site. The desired plant community becomes the vegetation management objective for the site. The desired plant community must be consistent with the site's capability to produce the identified community through land treatments such as prescribed fire and chemical brush control and prescribed grazing management. Table 2-6 contains the desired plant community objectives for major vegetation types in the resource area. Appendix E contains a more detailed discussion of the desired plant community concept. Maps showing desired plant communities are also available for review in the Mimbres Resource Area office.

LAND TREATMENTS

Grass upland areas will be treated mainly through prescribed grazing management (grazing systems). Grass bottomlands, mixed desert shrub (> 10 percent slope), snakeweed, and mountain brush types will be treated using combinations of prescribed burning, prescribed natural fire, and prescribed grazing management.

Chemical herbicides will be used for control of noxious weeds, during ROW maintenance, and control of competing or unwanted vegetation consistent with the New Mexico Record of Decision (ROD) for Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in the Thirteen Western States (August 1991). Such actions will be identified in site-specific environmental analyses on proposed vegetation control plans, which will be documented using an interdisciplinary approach.

Minimum width buffer strips and other criteria stipulated in the New Mexico ROD (see page 10) will provide an adequate level of protection in almost all situations. For those situations when additional protection is warranted, the buffer may be extended or other criteria developed that is appropriate to the local area.

Within the Mimbres Resource Area, additional protection of perennial streams will be provided by utilizing a 0.5 mile buffer when pelletized Tebuthiuron is used to treat creosotebush, mesquite, and mixed desert shrub, except during ROW maintenance operations. For economic reasons, usually only areas two sections in size or greater (1,240 acres) will be treated. Pelleted Tebuthiuron is also not effective and will not be used on the following range sites: bottomland, draw, clay, salt flats, salty bottomland, igneous hills, limestone hills,

malpais, and breaks. These are usually found in low-lying areas with heavier soils or in areas over 10 percent slope.

The above criteria may change as new chemicals become available. Prescribed fire or prescribed grazing management will be used to maintain these areas to the extent possible. Fire suppression will play a major role in maintaining pinyon-juniper, oak woodland, and conifer types, except where prescribed natural fires may benefit these areas (such as low intensity ground fires where scorch heights are low enough to prevent damage to trees). Table 2-7 summarizes land treatments for specific plant communities. See Maps 2-8 and 2-9.

All areas treated by prescribed burning, prescribed natural fire or chemical herbicides will be rested from grazing for at least two growing seasons in areas where livestock use occurs. Exceptions will be in grass bottomlands where grazing will be allowed after 4 inches of regrowth or as otherwise authorized. Any increase in forage will be reserved for livestock, wildlife, and watershed in accordance with management goals, objectives, and prescriptions for wildlife HMPs, livestock AMPs or other grazing activity plans, and watershed activity plans for specific areas. Prescribed burn plans and EAs will be developed for specific areas prior to the use of prescribed burning or prescribed natural fires. Treatment plans and EAs will be prepared for specific chemical treatment areas prior to herbicide application. Additional information is contained in the Final EIS Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (BLM 1991).

SPECIFIC DECISIONS

VEGETATION SALE AREAS

The existing sale areas will be retained until the supply of plants is exhausted. Sale areas will then be expanded into adjacent lands identified for disposal. A new sale area will be located between Deming and Lordsburg.

LAND TREATMENTS

Grass bottomlands, mixed desert shrub (> 10 percent slope), snakeweed, and mountain brush type will be treated using combinations of prescribed burning, prescribed natural fire, and prescribed grazing management. Creosotebush, mesquite, and desert shrub (< 10 percent slope) will be treated almost entirely by the use of chemical herbicides.

Areas over 10 percent slope and within ½ mile of a perennial stream will not be treated chemically.

All areas treated by prescribed burning, prescribed natural fire, or chemical herbicides would be rested from grazing for at least two growing seasons in areas where livestock use occurs, unless otherwise authorized.

DESIRED PLANT COMMUNITIES

Grazing systems will be developed using forage utilization criteria for important forage species as outlined in Appendix D-3. Flexibility will be provided for permittees and lessees to deviate from these criteria where specified in allotment-specific plans which prescribe different use levels or different means of evaluating allotment objectives.

- Designate the Uvas Valley as an ACEC to protect a unique grassland community. Manage as described in Section 5.

TABLE 2-6
DESIRED PLANT COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES[a/]

PLANT COMMUNITY	% GRASS	% SHRUBS	% FORBS	ACREAGE
Creosotebush	40-60	20-30	20-30	695,240
Creosotebush[b/]	0-10	80-100	0-10	339,210
Mesquite	50-65	15-25	30-50	577,200
Mesquite[b/]	0-10	80-100	0-10	138,680
Snakeweed	60-75	10-15	10-30	438,830
Mixed Desert Shrub (<10% slope)	55-75	15-20	10-20	183,200
Mixed Desert Shrub (>10% slope)	20-30	40-60	20-30	203,940
Mountain Brush	35-55	30-40	20-30	158,630
Pinyon-Juniper/Oak Woodland/Conifer	0-30	40-70	0-30	59,350
Grass Bottomlands	70-80	10-20	10-20	571,880
Grass Uplands	65-80	20-30	15-30	696,190
Riparian	30-80 grass or grasslike	40-60 (woody veg)	30-60	4,600
Arroyo	0-15	40-70	18-20	21,050

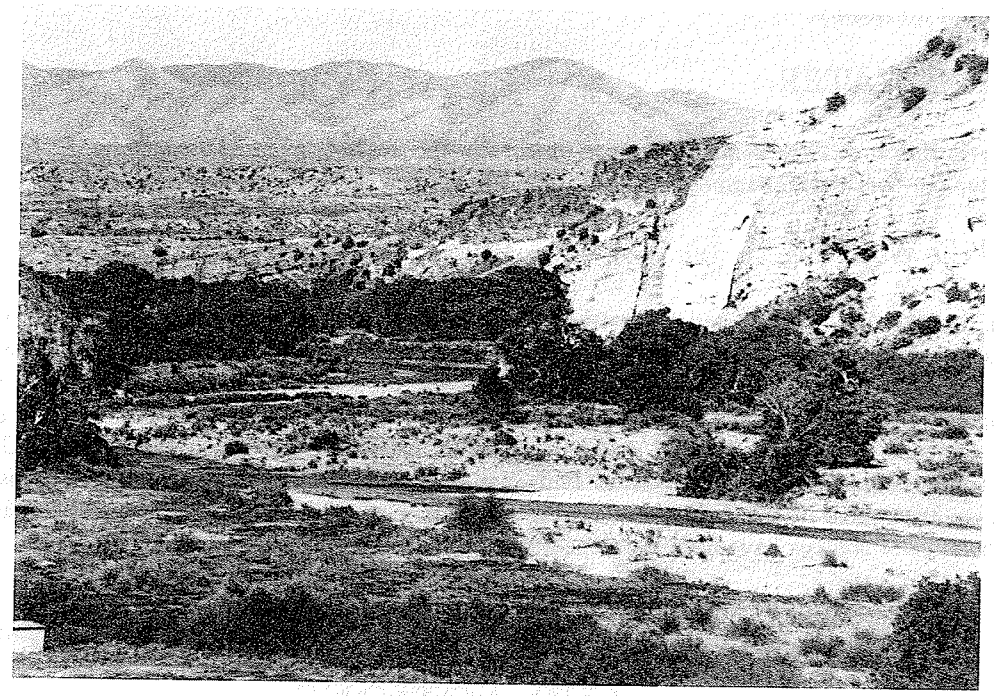
Source: BLM Files, 1990.
Notes: a/ Specific species will be identified for each plant community at the activity planning level.
b/ These brush types would remain unchanged because they fall in the buffered area along perennial streams or are above the 0-10 percent slope contour and would not be treated chemically. These areas would generally not respond positively to changes in grazing management alone.

TABLE 2-7
PLANNED LAND TREATMENTS

PLANT COMMUNITY	AC. BURN	AC. CHEMICAL TREATMENT	PURPOSE
Creosotebush	N/A	533,200	Wildlife, watershed, forage production
Mesquite	N/A	425,700	Wildlife, watershed, forage production
Mixed Desert Shrub (<10% slope)	N/A	121,610	Wildlife, watershed, forage production
Mixed Desert Shrub (>10% slope)	86,830	N/A	Wildlife, watershed, forage production
Mountain Brush	141,510	N/A	Wildlife, watershed, forage production
Snakewood	281,250	N/A	Wildlife, watershed, forage production
Grass Bottomlands	168,550	N/A	Improve plant vigor, reduce shrub invasion, increase forage and palatability
Grass Uplands	Undetermined as needed	N/A	Wildlife, watershed, control shrub invasion
TOTALS	677,690	1,080,530	

Source: BLM Files, 1990.

SOIL, AIR AND WATER RESOURCES



OBJECTIVE

The objective of the soil, air and water program is to protect, maintain and enhance these resources on the public land as well as provide support to other resource programs.

DESCRIPTION

SOIL

SOIL SURVEYS

There are four existing soil surveys which cover the land within the Mimbres Resource Area. These surveys were conducted cooperatively by the USDA Soil Conservation Service, BLM, and the New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station. The four surveys are:

1. Doña Ana County Soil Survey, 1980
2. Grant County Soil Survey, 1983
3. Hidalgo County Soil Survey, 1973
4. Luna County Soil Survey, 1980

The soil surveys depict map units which are made up of one or more soil series. Soils within a given soil series have similar diagnostic features and characteristics, therefore, all areas mapped as a given soil series or map unit will express similar soil characteristics (see Appendix K).

AIR

The air quality in the Mimbres Resource Area is generally very good. The air quality does not exceed the State or Federal air quality standards and is classified as a Class II area. A Class II area allows a moderate amount of degradation of air quality.

SURFACE WATER

The Mimbres Resource Area contains portions of three major river basins as designated by the New Mexico State Engineer for regional water planning. They are the Rio Grande, Lower Colorado, and the Rio Yaqui.

GROUND WATER

The Mimbres Resource Area is within the Basin and Range physiographic region and is characterized by north-trending subparallel mountain ranges separated by basins filled with alluvial material. Most of the ground water occurs in the alluvial deposits on lower mountain slopes and deep alluvial or bolson deposits in the valley. The bolson deposits are a heterogenous mixture of rock from the surrounding uplands and generally the product of more than one sequence of erosion. The fill material ranges in age from Pliocene to Pleistocene. Ground water is obtained from sand and gravel interbedded with clay and beds of silt. The ground water is derived from precipitation, with most of the recharge occurring along permeable streambeds. Generally in the closed basins where groundwater sources have been developed, withdrawals exceed recharge (BLM 1983).

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

SOILS

The BLM has cooperated with the USDA Soil Conservation Service in the National Cooperative Soil Survey Program. Participation in the National Cooperative Soil Survey Program will continue. Updating of the soil surveys and soil interpretive data will be used in planning, support, and implementation of resource activities.

Emphasis is placed on prevention of deterioration or degradation as well as conservation of the soil resource. Some protection is provided by the Conservation Reserve Program. All lands in soil capability classes II through VIII are not suitable for desert land entry petition application or agricultural leases. This program seeks to remove highly erodible lands from marginal agricultural operations.

AIR

Reduction of air quality impacts from activities on public land is accomplished by mitigation measures developed on a case-by-case basis through NEPA or other statutory or regulatory processes. Each impact is evaluated to see if it is allowable and acceptable. Activities such as road construction and sand or gravel extraction will have appropriate measures developed to mitigate impacts to air quality (such as dust abatement). These measures will be made a part of the permit or contract.

The BLM is required to comply with the New Mexico State Implementation Plan on air quality as well as meet responsibilities under the Clean Air Act, as amended, and FLPMA.

WATER RESOURCES

Policy and guidance for the management of water resources associated with land administered by the BLM is summarized in various BLM manual sections. A brief description of the different authorities for the program is also presented. General program emphasis is on water rights and watershed management specifically related to water quality and sediment yields.

WATER RIGHTS

A water use and water rights inventory has been completed in the Mimbres Resource Area to identify the status of the BLM's water rights filings. There are no ongoing adjudications in the Resource Area.

All water rights are acquired in accordance with State substantive and procedural law except where Congress or the Executive Branch has created a Federal reservation of a water right.

Federal reserved water rights are defined in legislation and Executive Orders. BLM's Federal reserved water rights claims are primarily associated with the withdrawal established by the Executive Order of April 17, 1926 which concerns public water reserves.

WATER QUALITY

Water quality regulation in the United States receives its basic authority from three laws. The Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 and the Clean Water Act of 1977 as amended are the basic authorities for instream water quality standards and maximum permissible pollutant discharges. The Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 is the basic authority for domestic water quality standards.

A growing concern is nonpoint source pollution. The New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission recently identified the main stem of the Rio Grande from Doña Ana south as having high amounts of pathogens, while the Mimbres River from Mimbres to San Juan and the Gila River from Davis Creek to the State line are impaired from extensive siltation, nutrients, and temperature. The BLM will continue to participate with the State and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in water quality management to ensure that management practices comply with State water quality standards.

The Colorado River Salinity Control Act passed in 1974 directed the Secretary of the Interior to undertake research and development of salinity control projects and to develop methods to improve water quality. An amendment to the Act passed in 1984 specifically requires the BLM to develop a comprehensive program for minimizing salt contributions to the Colorado River from BLM-administered public land.

WATERSHED ACTIVITY PLANS

There is currently one watershed management plan for the Clark Draw watershed on the east side of the Cooke's Range. Other activity plans such as the Placita Arroyo Coordinated Management Plan (CMP), San Simon CMP, and Gila Lower Box Coordinated Resource Management Plan also address watershed and riparian management concerns.

Control of soil erosion, sediment movement, and salt contamination of surface water remains a high priority management goal. Nonpoint source impaired watersheds and areas with critical to severe erosion (1.0 to greater than 3.0 acre ft/mi^2/yr) sediment yields, which produce runoff having more than 1,000 milligrams per liter (mg/1) dissolved salts, will be of major focus. Salinity control will be a priority on saline soils within the Colorado River drainage.

Continuing efforts to control erosion will include the following: minimizing surface disturbance from construction projects, closure and rehabilitation of unneeded roads, and control of off-road vehicle use in critical areas.

The soil and water programs will continue to emphasize legislative mandates of protection, as they relate to surface and groundwater quality, as well as provide support to other resource activities in the Mimbres Resource Area.

Project level planning will consider the sensitivity of the watershed (soil, water, and vegetation) resource in the affected area on a site-specific basis. All surface disturbing actions will require appropriate reclamation measures using the Resource Area's Reclamation and Reseeding Guidelines as guidance. All rangeland improvements and land treatments will be designed to minimize adverse impacts to the watershed resource. Project construction areas will be reseeded with a mixture of grasses, forbs, and shrubs as necessary. These projects consist of contour furrowing and pitting, mechanical treatments, and the construction of detention dams, diversions, water spreader, wire checks, and exclosures.

Critical soils on 0-10 percent slopes will be the first priority for land treatments and grazing management to reduce erosion and improve water quality. Critical soils on slopes over 10 percent will be a priority for grazing management to reduce erosion and improve water quality.

Watershed management plans will be developed for the following areas:

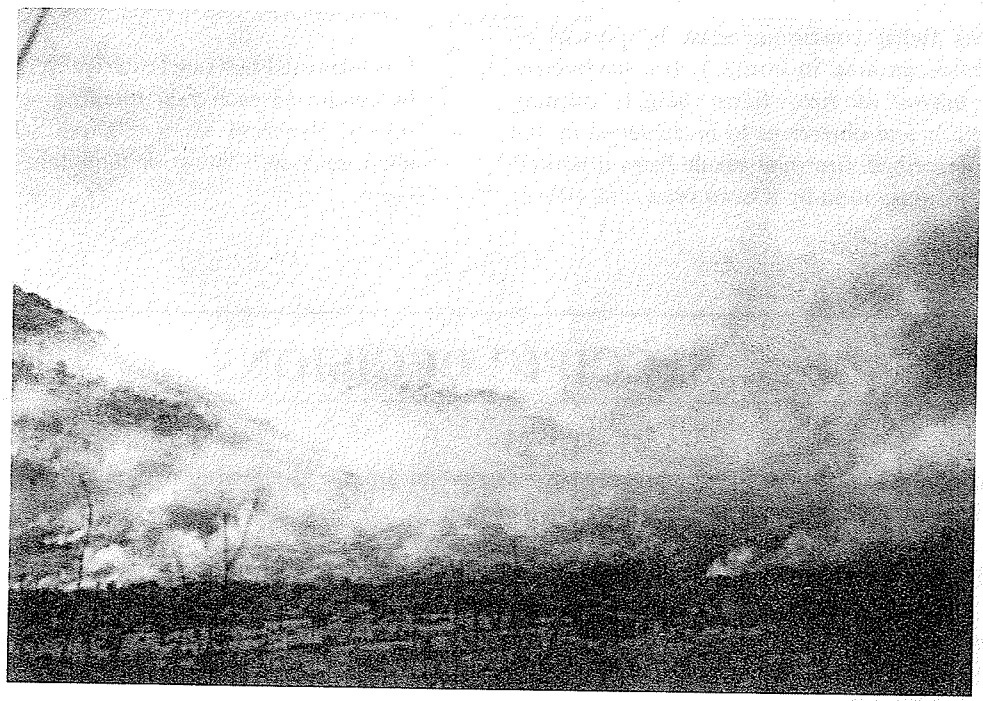
- Starvation/China Draw (southeast side of Cooke's Range)
- North side of Cedar Mountains
- Alamo Hueco/Big Hatchet Mountains (east side)
- Corralitos
- Gila River (Virden to Middle Box, north and south; would include provisions of existing Gila River Coordinated Resource Management Plan)
- Rincon/Hatch (both sides of river)
- Pyramids
- Uvas Valley

The criteria for identification of the areas include nonpoint source impaired watersheds, vegetation, slope, and critical soils. The locations of the areas are shown on Map 2-10.

The focus for management of air quality and efforts to secure guaranteed instream flow will be in ACECs where this is part of the management prescription for the ACEC (see Section 5).

Provisions for erosion control and air quality protection will continue to be incorporated into all surface-disturbing actions.

FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



OBJECTIVE

The objective of the fire management program is to enhance and protect the resources of the public land by preserving their capacity to contribute towards meeting resource needs. Prescribed fire will also be one tool used to achieve desired plant communities.

DESCRIPTION

The number and size of fires varies from year-to-year, depending on the occurrence of lightning storms and the amount of fine fuels build-up. Between 1977 and 1989, there were 63 fires on land administered by the Mimbres Resource Area. During those years, annual ignitions ranged from a low of 0 in 1986 to 10 ignitions in 1989. During this period, 46 of the fires were caused by lightning with sizes ranging from 1 acre to 3,000 acres. There were 17 man caused fires. Fuels consumed were primarily grass, pinyon/juniper, mixed brush, and creosotebush. A prescribed fire program was begun in the Resource Area in 1989. Since that time, five prescribed burns have been completed. These burns have been done to improve wildlife habitat or to improve rangeland for livestock grazing.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

The current Mimbres Resource Area policy is to initial attack all wildfires on or threatening public land. In high sensitivity areas such as the Organ Mountains or where significant property values exist, suppression strategies are geared towards minimizing burned acreage while protecting important resource values.

Prescribed fire is a management tool that the Resource Area has only recently begun to use. Before any area is subjected to prescribed fire, a fire management plan for that area must be prepared. This management plan identifies management prescriptions (what conditions must be present or existing before an area in burned); fire parameters (size and extent of fire, flame height, burning intensity, etc.); and objectives to be achieved by the burn. A prescribed fire may result from a natural ignition or from ignition by a burn crew. In either case, the conditions and parameters described in the burn plan must be met. In some parts of the Resource Area, such as the Bootheel region, prescribed natural fire will play a major role in vegetation and habitat management.

It is estimated that one to two prescribed burns would be conducted each year totalling several hundred to several thousand acres. These will mainly be in alkali sacaton, tobosa, or mountain shrub vegetation types.

SPECIFIC DECISIONS

ACEC prescriptions state no heavy equipment use in several areas and allowing natural fires to burn in several others. These include the following:

- Exclude heavy equipment for fire suppression in the following ACECs.

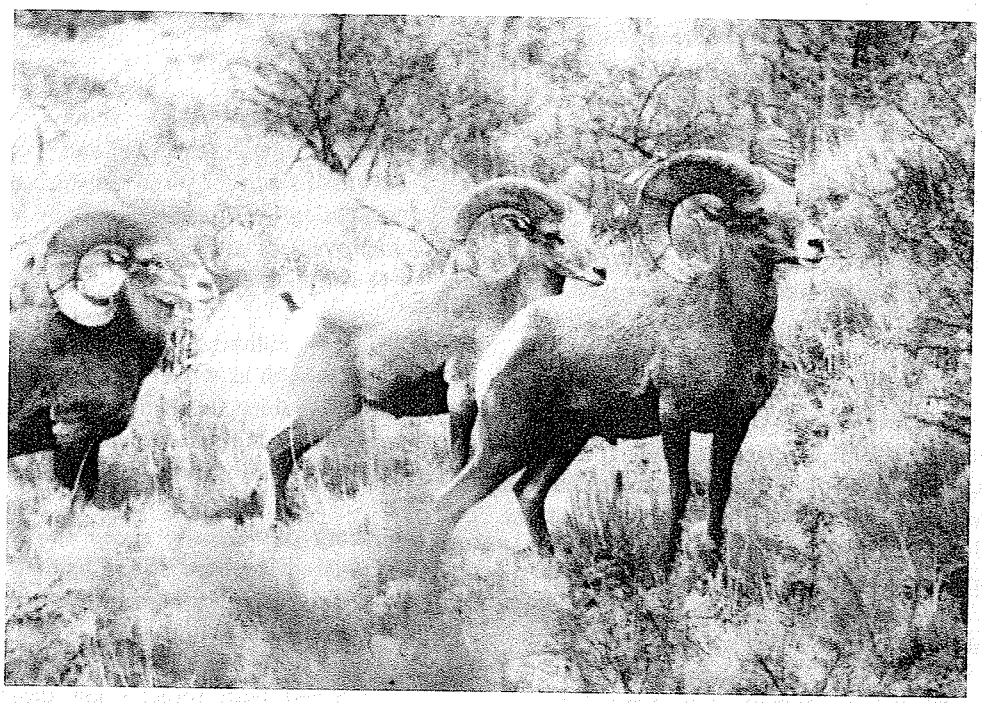
  Cooke's Range
  Central Peloncillo Mountains
  Big Hatchet Mountains
  Apache Box
  Alamo Hueco Mountains
  Cowboy Spring
  Florida Mountains
  Granite Gap
  Guadalupe Canyon
  Northern Peloncillo Mountains

- Develop prescribed natural fire plans for the following ACECs

  Big Hatchet Mountains
  Cooke's Range
  Florida Mountains
  Apache Box
  Central Peloncillo Mountains
  Cowboy Spring
  Organ/Franklin Mountains
  Granite Gap
  Guadalupe Canyon
  Northern Peloncillo Mountains
  Robledo Mountains
  Antelope Pass

Develop prescribed burn plans for other areas in the Resource Area where prescribed fire may be able to help meet the objectives of rangeland and wildlife habitat management.

WILDLIFE



OBJECTIVE

The objective of the wildlife program is to improve, enhance and expand wildlife habitat on public land for both consumptive and non-consumptive uses as well as biological diversity.

DESCRIPTION

There are 489 species of wildlife (excluding invertebrates) found in the Mimbres Resource Area. There are six existing Habitat Management Plans (HMPs) and one Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) which were developed in an effort to improve wildlife habitat. In addition to the development of HMPs, wildlife management actions include habitat developments and participation and review in the development of allotment management plans, mineral actions, and lands activities such as rights-of-way and disposals.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

Legislation such as FLPMA, the Sikes Act, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended in 1982, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act (PRIA), as amended, has directed the BLM to improve management of wildlife habitat to meet wildlife needs. PRIA outlines the BLM's goal for investing in economically and environmentally sound rangeland improvements to improve public land for multiple use purposes. The Wildlife 2000 initiative places added emphasis on expanding and creating a more effective wildlife program Bureauwide. New Mexico Fish and Wildlife 2000 and the New Mexico Operations Plan for wildlife are companion policy guides. This often conflicts with increasing demands for basic energy supplies, building materials, and food products. It is the responsibility of the Mimbres

Resource Area to identify opportunities to maintain, improve, and expand wildlife habitat on the public land for both consumptive and nonconsumptive uses as well as biological diversity. The RMP process also involves identification of wildlife habitats deserving special attention. Furthermore, it is USDI policy that Interior agency fish and wildlife management strategies assist State agencies in implementing fish and wildlife resource plans.

All actions in the Mimbres Resource Area are reviewed in an interdisciplinary site-specific analysis during the environmental assessment (EA) process to determine whether the action will affect wetland or riparian areas. Also considered are impacts to resident species' habitat, habitat improvement projects, and compatibility with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) and BLM Comprehensive Wildlife Plan. All rangeland and watershed improvements will continue to be designed to achieve watershed, range, and wildlife objectives. This includes location and design of waters and vegetation manipulation projects. Fences are designed to minimize resistance to wildlife movement.

ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL

Animal damage control activities on public land in the Mimbres Resource Area are guided by USDI policy and the annual Animal Damage Control Plan for the Las Cruces District, prepared jointly by the USDA and the BLM. The USDA has the responsibility for the program and supervises all control activities. The BLM approves all specific control actions on public land.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Habitat management plans (HMPs) and portions of Coordinated Resource Management Plans (CRMPs) are developed in an effort to improve wildlife habitat. Implementation and maintenance of existing HMPs and CRMPs will continue utilizing appropriated funds as well as funds to be derived from the Sikes Act Stamp Program. Existing HMPs are on file and available for review at the Mimbres Resource Area Office.

Monitoring of wildlife habitat by key species utilization will continue to be conducted as part of HMP and rangeland program monitoring. The information obtained from the vegetation transects will be incorporated into final grazing decisions where appropriate.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Wildlife management actions such as spring developments, exclosures, and game waters involve less than 1 acre of surface disturbance per year. The vegetation/land treatment actions for wildlife habitat improvement are included in the total estimate for vegetation treatments.

Prior to authorizing activities in crucial wildlife habitats such as winter ranges, raptor nest sites, and fawning habitat, considerations are made to avoid or minimize disturbance to wildlife. The area and time stipulations are shown in Table 2-8.

Grazing of domestic sheep and goats will not be allowed in bighorn sheep habitat areas. Existing guidance also addresses buffer areas for grazing of domestic sheep.

Prescribed burn projects are designed to improve wildlife habitat. Rangeland management practices and rangeland improvements are designed or modified to maintain or improve wildlife habitats. Livestock grazing management will incorporate the needs of key plant species important to wildlife.

All new fences are built to allow for wildlife passage in accordance with BLM fence standards. Any existing fences obstructing wildlife movements will be brought into conformance with the adopted standards. Wildlife escape devices are installed on all new and existing water tanks or troughs within the Mimbres Resource Area.

The construction of new roads into crucial wildlife habitats will be avoided. Permanent or seasonal road closures may be instituted where problems exist or are expected.

Raptor habitat will be improved by requiring all new powerlines to be constructed to "electrocution proof" specifications. Any existing lines will be modified to be "electrocution proof."

As HMPs are developed and implemented, particularly where the use of Sikes Act funds are involved, attention will be given to the development

of basic facilities for users such as parking lots and trailheads. Sikes Act projects to maintain, improve, or enhance wildlife habitat will be developed and implemented throughout the Resource Area.

TABLE 2-8
WILDLIFE AREA AND TIME STIPULATIONS

SPECIES	TIME PERIODS	AREA
Big Game		
Pronghorn antelope	Yearlong	Critical Habitat Area
Desert bighorn sheep	Yearlong	Critical Habitat Area
T&E and Candidate Species		
Common black hawk	3/1-8/30	1/2 mi. radius from nest
Ferruginous hawk	2/1-7/30	1/2 mi. radius from nest
Peregrine falcon	2/1-8/30	1/2 mi. radius from nest
Species of Concern		
Golden eagle	2/1-7/15	1/2 mi. radius from nest
Special Habitat		
Riparian, springs, wetlands, ponds, arroyo habitats	Yearlong	Within 500 feet

Source: BLM Files, 1990.

SPECIFIC DECISIONS

Continue to implement, maintain or revise existing HMPs or Coordinated Resource Management Plans for Florida Mountains, Big Hatchet-Alamo Hueco Mountains, Peloncillo Mountains, San Simon Cienega, Gila Lower Box, Franklin Mountains and Organ Mountains.

New HMPs will be developed in the Columbus area, the Cooke's Range/Nutt area, the Robledo Mountains, the Uvas Mountains, the Cedar Mountains, and the West Potrillo Mountains (see Map 2-11). Table 2-9 lists these areas with the priority species, objectives, population goals, and actions.

It is intended that population goals can be reached without reduction of livestock numbers (through grazing management and land treatments). Population goals may be revised as necessary through the HMP monitoring and evaluation process.

All HMPs will incorporate the following:

- Obtain production (population) data to correlate with monitoring (at a minimum, harvest information by area)
- Monitoring emphasis will be on preferred habitats for wildlife
- Monitoring will incorporate browse utilization/condition/trend

Animal damage control (ADC) actions will be conducted in accordance with annual ADC plans. The plan will specify times and conditions for control activities in accordance with management prescriptions, objectives, and goals.

In WSAs and wilderness areas (WAs), animal damage control directed at individual offending animals may be permitted, as long as this will not jeopardize the continued presence of any species in

the area. Use of the minimum control measure necessary to achieve the objective is required.

Designate the Gila Lower Box (6,490 acres) and the Gila Middle Box (840 acres) as ACECs to protect special status species and riparian habitat.

Designate Antelope Pass (8,710 acres) and Lordsburg Playa as Research Natural Areas to protect biological and research values.

Designate Cowboy Spring and Northern Peloncillo Mountains as ACECs to protect biological values and sensitive species habitat.

TABLE 2-9
WILDLIFE HMPs

HMP AREA	PRIORITY SPECIES	OBJECTIVES	POPULATION GOALS (MINIMUM)	ACTIONS
Columbus	Antelope[a/]	Transplant/introduce	50	Fence modification. Reserve 50 AUMs forage.
Cooke's Range/ Nutt	Deer/Antelope[a/]	Deer: Improve habitat Antelope: Transplant/introduce		
Robledo Mountains	Deer/Antelope[a/] Upland Game	Deer: Improve habitat Antelope: Transplant/introduce Upland Game: Improve and enhance habitat	Deer: 400 Antelope: 50	Fence modification. Water development.
Las Uvas Mountains	Deer	Improve habitat	300	Water development.
Cedar Mountains	Deer/Antelope[a/]	Deer: Improve habitat Antelope: Transplant/introduce Upland Game: Improve and enhance habitat	Deer: 300 Antelope: 100	Fence modification. Water development.
West Potrillo Mountains	Deer/Upland Game	Deer: Improve habitat Upland Game: Improve and enhance habitat	Deer: 300	Water development. Exclosure near water.
Organ/Franklin Mountains[b/]	Deer/Bighorn		Deer: 500 Bighorn: 100	Prescribed burning. Water development
Florida Mountains[b/]	Deer Ibex Upland Game	Upland Game: Improve and Enhance Habitat	Deer: 500 Ibex: 400	Prescribed burning. Water development.
Big Hatchet/Alamo Hueco Mountains[b/]	Bighorn/Deer	Upland Game: Improve and enhance Habitat	Bighorn: 250 Deer: 750	Prescribed burning.
Peloncillo Mountains[b/]		Bighorn/Deer	Bighorn: 250 Deer: 750	Fence modification

Sources: BLM Files, 1990, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, 1990.
Notes: a/Antelope objectives and goals contingent on habitat inventory.
b/Existing HMP. Population goals for these HMPs were established at the time the HMPs were developed.

CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Mimbres Cultural Resource Program is to manage cultural resources on public land in a manner that protects and provides for their proper use. Cultural resources include archaeological, historic, and socio-cultural properties. Paleontology and natural history are also managed under the cultural resource program.

DESCRIPTION

Several distinct cultural groups are known to have inhabited the region under consideration during the prehistoric period. The earliest human occupation occurred from about 9,500 BC to approximately 4,000 BC. This culture is known as the Paleoindian period and is divided into three traditions; Clovis, Folsom, and Plano. Isolated projectile points have been found within the study region which have been assigned to these Paleoindian cultures.

The second major prehistoric cultural tradition in the region has been referred to as the "Archaic" or "Desert Archaic." The various Archaic cultures are believed to have occupied the study area from 7,000 BC to about AD 100. The Archaic cultures are believed to have been nonsedentary, pre-pottery hunters and gatherers. Archaic period "lithic scatter" sites are known to occur within the study region, and are primarily identified through various projectile point styles.

The third major southwestern cultural group has been identified as the Mogollon. The Mogollon culture group has been divided into the western Mogollon and eastern or Jornada branch of the Mogollon. The Mogollon period starts at approximately AD 200 and extends to approximately AD 1400. Within this time period, several distinct changes occur and are characterized as the Early Pithouse Period, the Late Pithouse Period, and the Pueblo Period.

Agriculture was a basic element in all of the Mogollon periods, but was probably supplemented by hunting and gathering. Archeological sites from all three of the above stated Mogollon periods are known to occur within the study region.

In addition, the Apache are known to have occupied southern New Mexico from approximately AD 1650 to 1890. Archeological evidence for this occupation is rare, but Apache period sites could occur within the study area, as well as post-contact historic period sites (LeBlanc and Whalen 1980).

A wide variety of historic period sites are known to occur within the Resource Area. Some of these sites are located along two significant historic trails which pass through the Resource Area, the Camino Real and the Butterfield Trail. Historic sites include mining camps, military forts such as Fort Cummings, homesteads, and unique sites such as the historic Dripping Springs Natural Area Resort.

Paleontological resources occur throughout the Mimbres Resource Area. Vertebrate fossils and trace-fossils are found in most of the sedimentary rock formations in the area representing the Paleozoic, Cretaceous, and early Tertiary age, and younger sediments of Pliocene and Quaternary age. Vertebrate fossil faunas represent those of Permian amphibians and early reptiles (280 to 240 million years), Cretaceous dinosaurs (80 to 65 million years), primitive mammals from the Pliocene Santa Fe group (15 to 3 million years), and Pleistocene mammals (3 million to 12 thousand years) much like the animals we know today.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

The degree of management of cultural resources is commensurate with the scientific or socio-cultural values of the resource, the degree of threat, and the resource's vulnerability. Under this concept, the Mimbres Resource Area attempts to protect a representative sample of the full array of cultural resources, both prehistoric and historic, found on BLM-administered public land. Federal laws such as the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) as amended, the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) of 1979 as amended, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) of 1978, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), and FLPMA provide for the protection and management of cultural resources.

These laws are implemented through Federal regulations which provide guidance for the cultural resource program in meeting the requirements of the law. These regulations, as amended, determine how the NHPA shall be implemented by Federal agencies, State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. In New Mexico, a Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement (PMOA) between the above three parties further defines these roles and streamlines the consultation process.

In addition to Federal regulations, special agreements such as the PMOA cited above, instruction manuals, and memoranda are issued at various departmental levels to provide both general and specific guidance for the management of cultural resources. Current instruction memoranda issued at the National, State, and District levels are retained in the Mimbres Resource Area files and are incorporated by reference.

Archaeological and historic resources are evaluated initially under the eligibility criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. Sites listed or eligible for the National Register are managed under BLM procedures which have been developed in conformance with relevant laws and regulations.

Socio-cultural resources are managed in accordance with AIRFA and NAGPRA, and with relevant sections of the regulations, which take into account concerns of Indian tribes in the implementation of ARPA. The consultation process with Indian tribes concerning sites and locations of traditional religious significance is open and on-going and has occurred in the preparation of this document.

INVENTORY

The BLM undertakes inventory and maintains a cultural resource database for all BLM-administered public land. These inventories are categorized into three classes: Class I - Existing inventory and literature search; Class II - Sampling field inventory (all sample units are inventoried to Class III standards); and Class III -Intensive field inventory. Except under certain specific conditions set forth under the BLM Cultural Resource Manuals, Class III inventory is required before any surface disturbance may occur.

The Mimbres Resource Area maintains a cumulative site inventory documenting the locations of all known sites, all areas surveyed, and areas known to be devoid of cultural resources.

Section 110 of the NHPA and ARPA as amended, state that it is the responsibility of each Federal agency to establish a program to locate, inventory, and nominate all properties under the agency's ownership or control that appear to qualify for inclusion in the National Register. The Mimbres Resource Area cultural resource program will meet its responsibilities to Section 110 by establishing a goal for completion of a 10-percent inventory over the 20-year life of the Plan.

An initial focus will be in Hidalgo and Luna Counties and all cultural ACECs. This sample will provide comprehensive data which may be used to determine significance of sites and enable the BLM to make well-balanced decisions. An overall goal of the sample inventory will be to gather sufficient data to build a model of cultural processes which are reflected in site density and distribution for the Mimbres Resource Area.

National Register nominations will be prepared on a regular basis. A goal of one nomination per year has been set. These actions will allow the cultural resources staff to make better informed decisions about the direct and indirect impacts on cultural resources. It will also significantly strengthen the current management approach for protection of cultural resource sites.

EVALUATION

The management goal category system establishes long-term strategies for each of the five classes of cultural resources. These goal categories provide the basis for committing individual cultural resource sites or properties to a specific-use category.

BLM evaluates cultural resources according to the use-category system. This category system is based on the consideration of actual or potential use of individual sites or properties and includes: (1) Current Scientific Use, (2) Potential Scientific Use, (3) Conservation for Future Use, (4) Management Use, (5) Socio-Cultural Use, (6) Public Use, and (7) Discharge Use.

PROTECTION

Protection of cultural resources is accomplished through the application of both administrative (such as off-road vehicle closure) and physical measures (such as fencing) as necessitated by the cultural resource's scientific and socio-cultural value, vulnerability, and degree of threat. Interim protection focuses primarily on the Patrol and Surveillance Plan, until specific cultural resource management objectives are developed. An active program of signing cultural resource properties under threat of active or potential vandalism will continue.

RESOURCE STABILIZATION

Actions to stabilize ruins may involve physical measures to control erosion and arroyo cutting and acquisition of sterile fill from BLM sources for recontouring damaged sites. Erosion control may average 10 acres of protective measures per year and recontouring may require an average of 2,000 cubic yards of fill annually.

Appendix E provides further detail on cultural resources, inventory, goal systems, and use categories.

PALEONTOLOGY

Management of paleontological resources in the Mimbres Resource Area is basically directed by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, interpretation of various other legislative acts, and various instruction memoranda. Through these, the BLM's mandate is to manage and protect fossil resources that occur on the public land it administers. The BLM is presently involved in a process to develop specific legislation and a comprehensive set of Federal regulations for the management of paleontological resources on public land. This effort is being coordinated by BLM with the cooperation of

the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, representatives of various State governments, professional societies, and amateur and commercial collectors. Draft regulations are expected to be completed in 1994. Presently, paleontological resources are managed through the issuance of scientific use permits (for vertebrate fossils) by the BLM New Mexico State Office.

The finalization of these regulations will not alter policy based on other pre-existing forms of legislation and regulation such as the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA); the Wilderness Act of 1964; 40 CFR 1500; 43 CFR 1600, 2740, 2800, 3000, and 8224.

SPECIFIC DECISIONS

- Designate the following cultural and paleontological areas as ACEC or RNAs and manage each area according to management prescriptions listed in Section 5 of this plan.

  Alamo Hueco Mountains ACEC
  Apache Box ACEC
  Cooke's Range ACEC
  Dona Ana Mountains ACEC
  Los Tules ACEC
  Old Town ACEC
  Organ/Franklin Mountains ACEC
  Paleozoic Trackway RNA
  Rincon ACEC
  Robledo Mountains ACEC
  San Diego Mountain ACEC

- Designate the Butterfield Trail as an historic trail.

- Eliminate livestock grazing at Old Town, Fort Cummings, and Dripping Springs Natural Area in accordance with the applicable cultural resource management plan and ACEC management prescriptions.

- Conduct Class III inventories at Fort Cummings, San Diego Mountains, Pony Hills, and Rincon ACECs.

- Research the historic roads and trails in the Resource Area including Camino Real, Santa Rita Copper Trail, spanish exploration routes, and historic wagon roads. Research historic mining towns and features.

- Conduct field schools at Old Town, Bruton Bead, Indian Basin, East Potrillo, South Florida, and Camp Cody sites.

- Restrict public access to the rock shelters at Apache Box; Apache Cave; Stein's Cave; and elsewhere as needed.

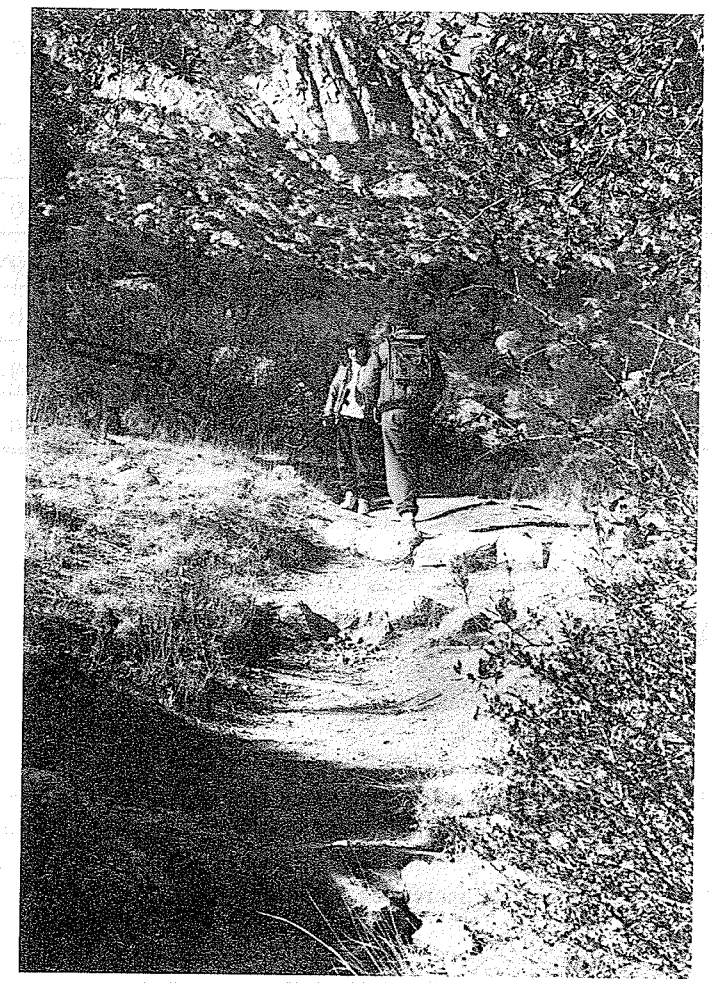
- Acquire (x number) Butterfield Trail Stage Stations on private and State trust lands through exchange or purchase at fair market value, provided that the landowner is in agreement with such acquisition.

- Close road to Bruton Bead site.

- Fence or cover with sterile fill the Los Tules site.

RECREATION

OBJECTIVE



The objective of the recreation program is to enhance opportunities for developed and undeveloped recreation on public land. The recreation program identifies areas with recreational values and enhances the public's knowledge and uses of those areas for recreational purposes.

DESCRIPTION

The Mimbres Resource Area provides many diverse opportunities for recreation, both developed and dispersed. Developed recreation is dependent on developed recreation sites, such as campgrounds or picnic areas, while dispersed recreation occurs over large areas encompassing most of the land in the Resource Area, independent of developed facilities. Public land provides 47, 39, 12, and 34 percent of dispersed recreation opportunities, respectively in Doña Ana, Luna, Grant, and Hidalgo Counties (New Mexico Natural Resource Department 1986).

Developed recreation on public land in the Resource Area is limited to the Organ Mountains, where camping is available at the 57-unit Aguirre Spring Recreation Area. Picnicking is available at the Aguirre Spring Recreation Area, the 14-unit La Cueva Picnic Area, and the 4-unit Dripping Springs Natural Area. Developed hiking trails in the Organs include the 6-mile Baylor Pass Trail, the 4-mile Pine Tree Trail, the 1½-mile Dripping Springs Natural Area Trail, the 1-mile La Cueva Trail, the 1-mile Filmore Canyon Trail, and the 2-mile Crawford Trail.

The Resource Area issues approximately ten Special Recreation Use Permits annually. Approximately half of these permits are for hunting guides while the rest go to annual events including the Baylor Pass Trail Run, the Great Overland Windsail Races, the Renegade Horse Endurance Ride, and the Coyote Classic Mountain Bike Race.

Dispersed recreation in the Resource Area includes hunting, hiking, camping, picnicking, rockhounding, fishing, birdwatching, and vehicle recreation. Table 2-11 summarizes recreation visits by Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and activity. Hunting is the most widespread dispersed recreation use in the Resource Area, with hunting seasons for game birds, small game, or big game species open year-round.

TABLE 2-10
ESTIMATED RECREATION VISITS BY
SPECIAL RECREATION MANAGEMENT AREA (SRMA)
AND ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY	ORGAN MOUNTAINS	GILA LOWER BOX	MIMBRES ESTENSIVE
ORV	1,000	100	10,000
CAMPING	10,000	500	3,000
PICNICKING	80,000	500	3,000
HUNTING	10,000	100	100,000
HIKING	40,000	500	10,000
SIGHT SEEING	20,000	0	20,000
ROCK CLIMBING	1,000	0	500
BICYCLE	5,000	0	5,000
TOTAL	187,000	1,700	151,500

Source: BLM, 1991.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

The objective of the program is to ensure the continued availability of quality outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences that are not readily available from other sources. Recreation use is managed in order to protect the health and safety of visitors; to protect natural, cultural, and other resource values; to stimulate public enjoyment of public land and to resolve user conflicts. The Recreation 2000 initiative places added emphasis on expanding and creating a more effective recreation program Bureauwide.

A range of outdoor recreation opportunities such as backpacking, camping, sightseeing, hunting, climbing, picnicking, mountain biking, and motorcycling will continue to be provided for all segments of the public, commensurate with demand. Trails and other means of public access will continue to be maintained and developed where necessary to enhance recreation opportunities and allow public use.

DEVELOPED RECREATION

A recreation area management plan (RAMP) is developed for all special recreation management areas. This plan implements the decisions of the RMP and describes the management direction for an area and addresses all recreation uses and potential recreation activities within the recreation management

area. This includes addressing the level of development and the construction of major facilities to accommodate recreation users.

DISPERSED RECREATION

Current management direction for dispersed recreation opportunities is provided for in the regulations and subsequent BLM manuals. The major form of dispersed recreation in the Resource Area is hunting.

MOTORIZED RECREATION

It is BLM policy (by Executive Order) that all public land be designated as "open", "limited", or "closed" to motorized and nonmotorized vehicle use (see Appendix F-2).

SCENIC OR BACKCOUNTRY BYWAYS

BLM's program of dedicating certain roads as scenic or backcountry byways will continue. After designation, byway management implementation plans will be developed and the routes will be signed. Proposed roads include the following:

- Aguirre Spring Recreation Area Road
- Red Rock Road
- Highway 81, Hachita to Mexican border
- Antelope Pass (U.S. 80)
- Highway 26, Deming to Hatch
- Dripping Springs Road
- Baylor Canyon Road

Environmental assessments of nominations will be prepared on a case-by-case basis.

CAVE INVENTORY AND MANAGEMENT

An inventory of cave resources will be conducted and caves will be managed in accordance with the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 and related BLM policy. Significant cave locations will not be made public, and any actions which could adversely affect significant caves will be deferred or denied. BLM will take appropriate protection measures as needed.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITY SPECTRUM (ROS)

The BLM utilizes the ROS as a framework for defining outdoor recreation opportunity environments. It is a management tool for inventory, planning, and administration of outdoor recreation resources on public land. A general description of the ROS classes is contained in Appendix F-1. The ROS inventory needed for the remainder of the Mimbres Resource Area should be completed within the next 5 years.

RECREATIONAL FISHING

The BLM is working to enhance opportunities for fishing on public land through the recreational fishing initiative, which is part of the Recreation 2000 initiative. Recreational fishing opportunities in the Resource Area are limited to the Gila River and the Rio Grande.

RIVERS AND TRAILS

The USDI Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service compiled a Natural Rivers Inventory, Natural and Free-flowing Phase in April of 1980. The report described the Gila River in Arizona and New Mexico as being natural and free-flowing, and qualifying for further study for wild, scenic or recreational river potential. In May 1982, the USDI National Park Service completed an inventory of outstandingly remarkable values of the free-flowing rivers and determined that the Gila River in the Mimbres Resource Area contains five of the seven values which can qualify a river for further study. The Gila River between the Burro Mountains and Virden was evaluated for wild, scenic or recreational study potential as part of the RMP.

The National Scenic Trails Act of 1968 required the Secretary of Agriculture to complete a Comprehensive Plan for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and for the Departments of Agriculture and Interior to prepare environmental assessments of the trail. The Comprehensive Plan was completed in 1985 and directed the BLM to analyze potential routes for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail in RMPs.

SPECIFIC DECISIONS

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

The following new Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) are designated (see Map 2-12):

- Dona Ana Mountains
- Fort Cummings

Prepare a Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) for the Dona Ana Mountains SRMA. The Fort Cummings SRMA will be managed in accordance with the existing Cultural Resource Management Plan.

Management of the two existing SRMAs will continue. The Organ Mountains SRMA will continue to be managed in accordance with the Organ Mountains Coordinated Resource Management Plan and the Gila Lower Box SRMA will continue to be managed in accordance with the Gila River Coordinated Resource Management Plan.

The focus of interpretive and educational efforts will be on ACECs or RNAs where this is part of the management prescription for the area (see Section 5).

The remainder of the Resource Area will be managed primarily for dispersed recreation opportunities.

Designate Aden Lava Flow (3,930 acres) as a Research Natural Area and continue designation of Kilbourne Hole as a National Natural Landmark to protect geologic, scenic and research values. Manage as described in Section 5.

The Gila Lower Box (2,480 acres) and the Gila Middle Box (760 acres) are designated as Wild & Scenic River Study Areas.

ORV DESIGNATIONS

Vehicle designations for the entire Resource Area are as follows:

- Open 16,190 acres
- Limited to existing roads and trails: 2,371,630 acres
- Limited to designated roads and trails 532,530 acres
- Closed: 133,470 acres

These areas are shown on Map 2-13.

The areas open to vehicle use are the Aden Hills Open Area (8,700 acres) and the Lordsburg Playa Open Area (7,490 acres). The support needs for these areas include a Class 3 cultural survey. The areas limited to designated roads and trails for vehicle use are all SMAs not designated closed and the Broad Canyon competitive motorcycle race area. The areas closed to vehicle use are the Mexican border area, south of the Anapra - Columbus Road and South of State Road 9 in Dona Ana and Luna Counties (89,180 acres), portions of the Organ/Franklin Mountains, Big Hatchet Mountains, and Florida Mountains ACECs (18,900 acres), and the following seven SMAs (18,280 acres):

- Apache Box ACEC
- Bear Creek ACEC
- Gila Lower Box ACEC
- Gila Middle Box ACEC
- Lordsburg Playa RNA
- Old Town ACEC
- Uvas Valley ACEC

Implementation of the border closure will be contingent upon signing. All other areas are limited to existing roads and trails for vehicle use. Existing roads and trails are defined as those in existence at the time of the designation.

Any road or trail created by the passage of vehicles after this date will not be considered open and will be subject to closure.

Exceptions to the vehicle designations may be permitted in writing. Exceptions will be made for public health and safety such as law enforcement and search and rescue, especially along the international boundary. Exception for mining operations will be addressed in Plans of Operations, notices, permits, and sales. Exceptions will be made for livestock grazing permittees for emergencies such as emergency feeding, rescue of sick livestock, and emergency fence repairs along the international boundary. The user is required to notify BLM within 2 working days after such use. The Border Patrol will be notified immediately for fence repairs along the international boundary. Other exceptions may be

permitted in writing for activities such as fence repairs and dirt tank maintenance.

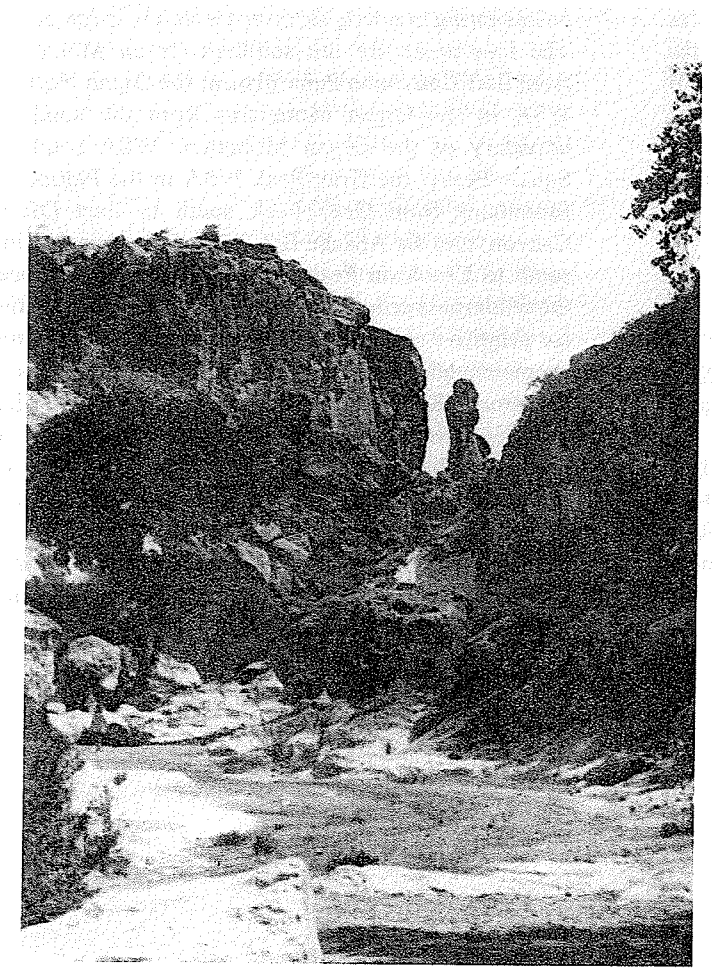
ACEC prescriptions related to Recreation include:

- Impose a no shooting restriction from February 1 to August 15 in Apache Box ACEC.
- Impose a no shooting restriction year-round within the rim of Kilbourne Hole.
- Close Guadalupe Canyon and Cooke's Range ACECs to fuelwood collection.
- Designate the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Corridor. Mark or construct the trail within that corridor. Work with Gila National Forest (lead) to designate the trail route. Develop four trail heads and parking areas for access to the trail.
- Develop a parking area and trail to Aden Crater.
- Develop trails and primitive hunter camps in the Florida Mountains.
- Secure instream flow in the Gila Lower and Middle Box when State law allows.

NOTES

WILDERNESS

OBJECTIVE



The objective of the wilderness program is to identify areas that are suitable for wilderness designation, and to manage those areas in a manner that will preserve the natural values of those ecosystems.

DESCRIPTION

The Mimbres Resource Area contains 14 Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) designated in 1980, totalling 382,909 acres. The BLM completed the New Mexico Statewide Wilderness Study Environmental Impact Statement and Wilderness Analysis Reports in January of 1988. Portions of seven of these WSAs (totalling 239,018 acres) have been recommended as suitable for wilderness designation by the New Mexico State Director, Secretary of the Interior, and the President. These areas are the Aden Lava Flow, the Big Hatchet Mountains, the Cowboy Spring, the Gila Lower Box, the Organ Mountains, and the West Potrillo Mountains and Mount Riley WSAs. The Alamo Hueco Mountains, Blue Creek, Cedar Mountains, Cooke's Range, Florida Mountains, Robledo Mountains, and Uvas Mountains WSAs have been recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Four other areas within the planning area boundary have been studied for wilderness suitability. All four areas are managed either jointly or completely by the San Simon Resource Area of the Safford District in Arizona. The Peloncillo Mountains WSA contains 4,061 acres that were recommended nonsuitable within New Mexico. In 1990, 19,650 acres of the Peloncillo Mountains within Arizona were designated wilderness. The 4,146-acre Guadalupe Canyon Instant Study Area was studied for wilderness suitability in the Coronado National Forest Plan, and was recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation. The 932-acre Apache Box and the 22-acre Hoverrocker WSA were studied for wilderness suitability in the Arizona Mohave Wilderness EIS and recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

All areas studied for wilderness suitability are currently being managed under the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review, and will continue to be managed as WSAs until Congress either designates the areas as wilderness or releases them from the wilderness review process through legislation.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

The 14 WSAs in the Mimbres Resource Area will be managed under the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Land Under Wilderness Review (BLM 1987), until the area is either added to the National Wilderness Preservation System or removed from further wilderness consideration. If designated as wilderness, the area will be managed under the Wilderness Management Policy (BLM 1981). If removed from further wilderness consideration, the area will be managed under the guidance prescribed by this RMP. BLM wilderness recommendations for the 14 WSAs plus four areas in New Mexico that are administered by the Safford District are shown in Table 2-13 and on Map 2-15.

Wilderness suitability recommendations for the 14 existing WSAs were provided in the New Mexico Statewide Wilderness Study Final Environmental Impact Statement (BLM 1988) and will be unaffected by this RMP. The RMP will not address wilderness management of any areas designated by Congress as wilderness. Post-designation management will be detailed in separate Wilderness Management Plans. The RMP will prescribe management for any of the 14 WSAs that are released from wilderness study by Congress.

Public land has been consolidated in four areas through acquisition of State trust or private lands, necessitating wilderness inventories on these areas. The four areas are the southern Organ Mountains from Barr Canyon to Peña Blanca; the Organ Needles WSA in the Organ Mountains from the southern boundary of the Organ Mountains WSA south to Squaw Peak; the Gray Peak WSA in the Peloncillo Mountains from Gray Peak south to Post Office Canyon; and the Apache Box WSA from Apache Box south to Crookson Peak. These four areas all meet the wilderness criteria for size, solitude, opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation, and supplemental values (see Appendix I, for Wilderness Inventory Reports). The Peña Blanca, Organ Needles, and Gray Peak WSAs all appear to be natural. The Apache Box WSA has a number of human impacts to naturalness throughout the area.

As changes in land ownership occur, newly acquired areas will be inventoried and studied as necessary through the RMP process.

TABLE 2-11
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA
WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

WILDERNESS STUDY AREA	TOTAL BLM ACRES	SUITABLE ACREAGE	NON SUITABLE ACREAGE
Aden Lava Flow	25,287	25,287	0
Alamo Hueco Mountains	16,264	0	16,264
Apache Box*	932	0	932
Big Hatchet Mountains	65,872	45,374	20,498
Blue Creek	14,896	0	14,896
Cedar Mountains	14,911	0	14,911
Cooke's Range	19,608	0	19,608
Cowboy Springs	6,699	6,699	0
Florida Mountains	22,336	0	22,336
Gila Lower Box	8,555	5,835	2,720
Guadalupe Canyon*	4,145	0	4,145
Hoverrocker*	22	0	22
Organ Mountains	7,283	7,283	0
Peloncillo Mountains*	4,061	0	4,061
Robledo Mountains	12,946	0	12,946
Las Uvas Mountains	11,067	0	11,067
West Potrillo Mountains and Mount Riley	157,185	148,540	8,645
TOTAL	392,069	239,018	153,051

Source: BLM New Mexico Statewide Wilderness Study, Final Environmental Impact Statement, 1988.
Note: *Areas administered by the BLM Safford District.

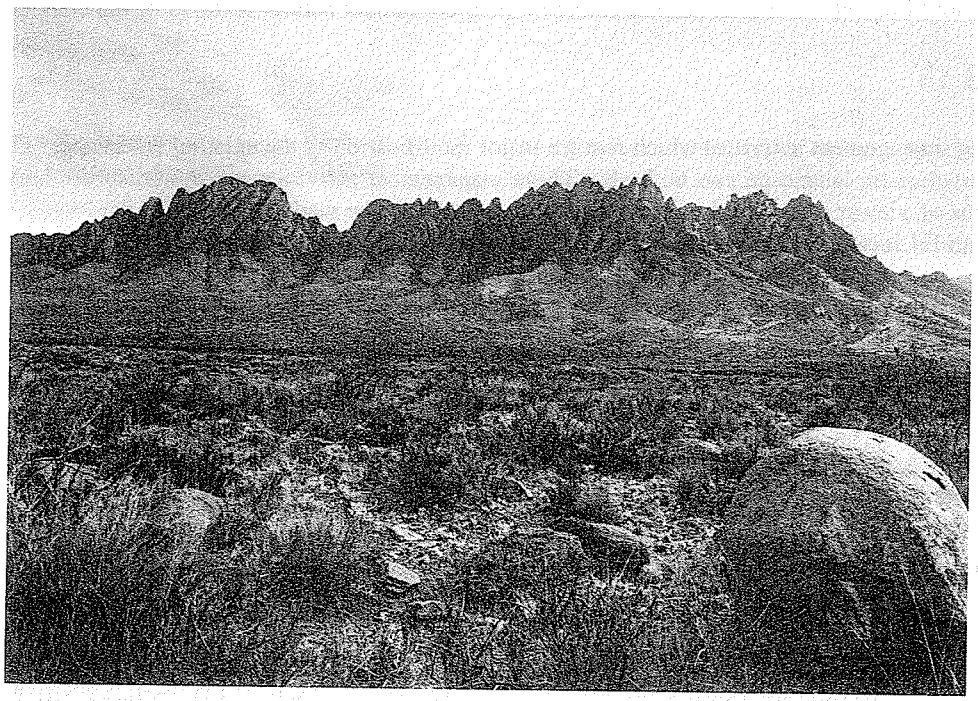
SPECIFIC DECISIONS

Four areas, totalling 33,280 acres, are designated as WSAs (see Map 2-16). These areas will be managed according to the Bureau's Interim Management Guidelines for areas studied under Section 202 of FLPMA until the study is complete, and the areas are either designated as wilderness or released by Congress.

- Organ Needles (7,630 acres)
- Gray Peak (14,678 acres)
- Apache Box (6,300 acres)
- Pena Blanca (4,470 acres)

NOTES

VISUAL RESOURCES



OBJECTIVE

The objective of visual resources management is to identify areas on public land that contain important scenic quality, and to manage those areas to maintain that scenic quality.

DESCRIPTION

The visual resources of the Resource Area have been inventoried and classified into Visual Resource Management (VRM) classes. VRM classes are management zones wherein management actions and controls on proposed actions vary in relation to scenic values. (See Appendix G.) Management objectives for VRM Classes are:

CLASS I.

Preserve the existing character of the landscape. Natural ecological changes and very limited management activities are allowed. Any change to the characteristic landscape must not attract attention.

CLASS II.

Retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the character of the landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

CLASS III.

Partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

CLASS IV.

Provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities can dominate the landscape and be the major focus of viewer attention; however, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

Table 2-12 displays the total acreages by class of inventoried public lands.

TABLE 2-12
VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACREAGES
WITHIN THE MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

CLASS	ACREAGE
VRM CLASS I	159,310
VRM CLASS II	744,621
VRM CLASS III	629,314
VRM CLASS IV	1,546,218
TOTAL	3,079,463

Source: BLM Files, 1990.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

Visual resources will continue to be evaluated as part of resource management activity and project planning. A contrast rating process is used as a project assessment tool during environmental review of affected areas. Appropriate stipulations are established to ensure compatibility of the project with management objectives for visual resources.

The VRM system will continue to be the basic tool for inventory, planning, and management of visual resources on public land. A visual contrast rating will be prepared for all projects proposed within highly sensitive areas and for potentially high impact projects, regardless of location.

Congressionally designated areas and scenic ACECs are subject to Class I VRM guidelines. WSAs are subject to an interim Class II category.

SPECIFIC DECISIONS

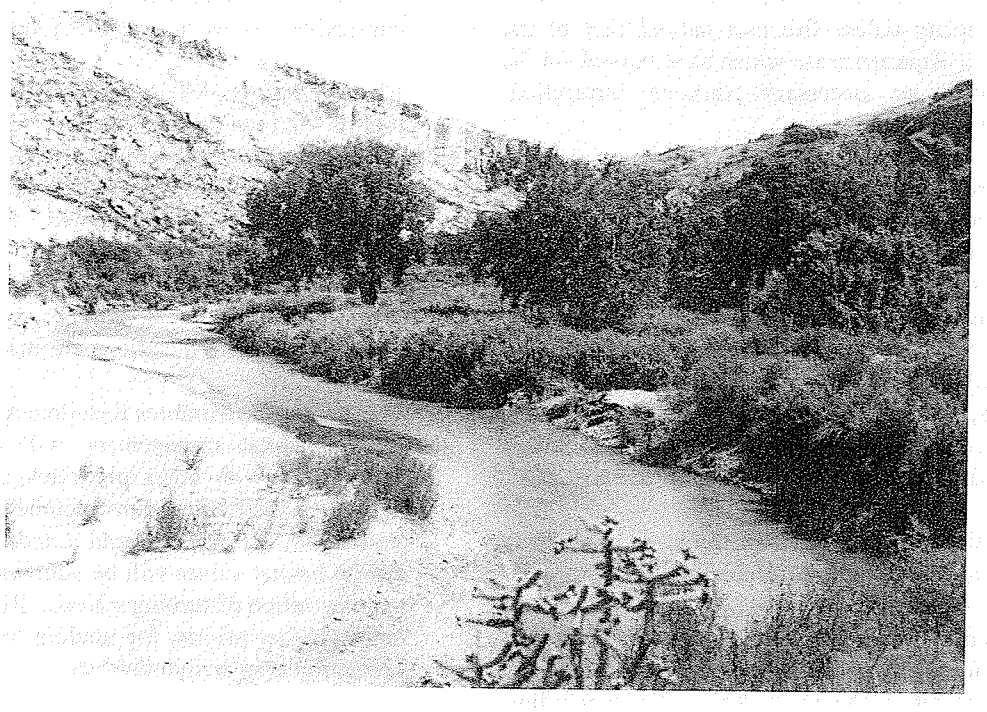
A total of 159,310 acres in 10 areas are designated as Scenic Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and are managed as VRM Class I areas. VRM Class II areas include the wilderness study areas (WSAs), the Organ and Franklin Mountains, and most mountain ranges and hills in the Resource Area, especially along highways. Class III areas are mainly the flatlands, uplands, and basin areas along highways. Class IV areas comprise the nonhilly areas that are not visible from highways. See Map 2-14

The following areas are designated as Scenic ACECs and will be managed as VRM Class I areas. VRM Class ratings will continue for the remainder of the Resource Area.

Alamo Hueco	13,020 acres
Apache Box	2,630 acres
Big Hatchet Mountains	29,180 acres
Central Peloncillo Mountains	12,750 acres
Cooke's Range	17,160 acres
Dona Ana Mountains	1,490 acres
Florida Mountains	15,660 acres
Granite Gap	1,750 acres
Organ/Franklin Mountains	56,480 acres
Robledo Mountains	9,190 acres

NOTES

RIPARIAN AND ARROYO HABITATS



OBJECTIVE

The objective of the riparian program is based on the BLM's formal riparian policy (adopted in 1987) which is directed at achieving a healthy and productive ecological condition for public land riparian areas. Arroyo habitats also contain unique and diverse vegetation and wildlife habitats which may require special management attention.

DESCRIPTION

Riparian areas are defined as an area of land directly influenced by permanent water. They have visible vegetation or physical characteristics reflective of permanent water influence. Spring areas and streambanks are typical riparian areas. Ephemeral streams or washes that do not exhibit the presence of vegetation dependent upon free water in the soil are excluded.

Arroyo habitats associated with the many dry washes throughout the Resource Area are not considered riparian areas by definition. However, because of their unique and diverse vegetation which often occurs in stark contrast to surrounding desert areas, they are considered important areas which may require special management attention.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

In 1987, the BLM adopted a formal riparian policy directed at achieving a healthy and productive ecological condition for public land riparian areas.

Other laws and policies deal with wetlands, floodplains, and related areas which are encompassed by the term riparian.

Riparian areas will not be disposed of through sale or exchange unless disposal would be in the public interest.

Suppression of wildfire in riparian habitats will have a high priority unless fire is a natural part of the ecosystem. Riparian areas which have burned will be rehabilitated as necessary through protection, reseeding or planting.

Grazing management practices will be designed and established to meet riparian and water quality needs in the development of new AMPs and in the revision of existing AMPs. In those instances where management systems alone cannot meet objectives, provisions for fencing or other means of exclusion will be utilized. No livestock-related activities such as salting, feeding, construction of holding facilities, and stock driveways will be allowed to occur within riparian zones unless specifically authorized.

Construction activities which remove or destroy riparian vegetation will be avoided.

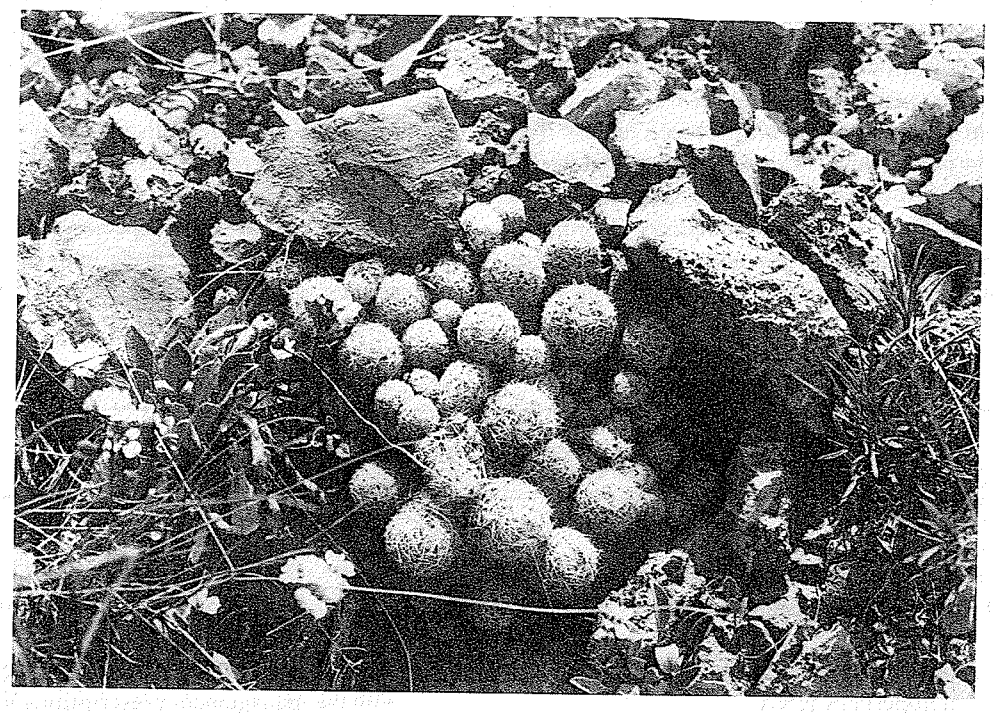
Minerals management actions and special stipulations or conditions will be designed to be compatible with riparian habitat management goals. Riparian buffer zones will be identified and provided for in the exploration and development of mineral resources.

There will be no vegetation treatments in riparian areas using herbicides except for selected treatment of non-native species such as salt cedar.

All new spring developments will be designed to protect riparian areas, while selected existing spring developments will be modified for the same reason. Where possible, and if the need exists for wildlife, parts of reservoirs will be fenced or water for livestock will be provided away from the reservoirs in consultation with the permittee. Wildlife habitat needs will be considered when reservoir site determinations are made.

Throughout the Mimbres Resource Area, riparian and arroyo habitat management will continue to be coordinated with other programs and activities as needed. Specific programs include Range, Wildlife, Watershed, Recreation, and Lands. Riparian and arroyo habitat values will be addressed in all surface and vegetation disturbing actions. Riparian areas will have a higher priority for funding, management, and protection than arroyo habitats.

SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES



OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Special Status Species program (BLM Manual 6840.86) is to give priority to the protection and management of habitat for known populations of Federal or State listed species, to prevent the listing of Federal candidates, and to assist in recovery of listed species.

DESCRIPTION

There are 110 special status plant and animal species which may occur in the Mimbres Resource Area (Appendix L-1, L-2). Present management for Special Status Species consists of protecting and enhancing habitat and all proposed actions are evaluated for their potential impact on known populations of, or potential habitat for, listed or candidate species.

CONTINUING MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ACTIONS

The Endangered Species Act requires that the BLM consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on all actions which may affect a special status species (and to confer for proposed species).

BLM policy, as described in Manual 6840.06, for the endangered species program is to give priority to the protection and management of habitat for known populations of Federal or State listed species, to

prevent the listing of Federal candidates, and to assist in recovery of listed species.

Present management for Federal or State species consists of protecting and enhancing habitat and all proposed actions are evaluated for their potential impact on known populations of, or potential habitat for, listed or candidate species and to develop and implement recovery plans with objectives for listed species on public land. Conservation of habitat can be accomplished through special designations such as ACECs. The Organ Mountains Coordinated Resource Management Plan also provides specific management guidance for special status species within that area. Compliance with the Endangered Species Act (Section 7 Compliance) is required for all Federal actions regardless of land ownership. Other Coordinated Resource Management Plans and HMPs will include objectives and planned actions for the recovery of listed species within those areas, in accordance with recovery plan objectives.

Inventory for Federal listed and candidate species and state endangered or rare species will continue, and monitoring programs will be implemented on known populations of these species. Where monitoring identifies threats to these populations, appropriate actions will be taken to protect the species and its habitat.

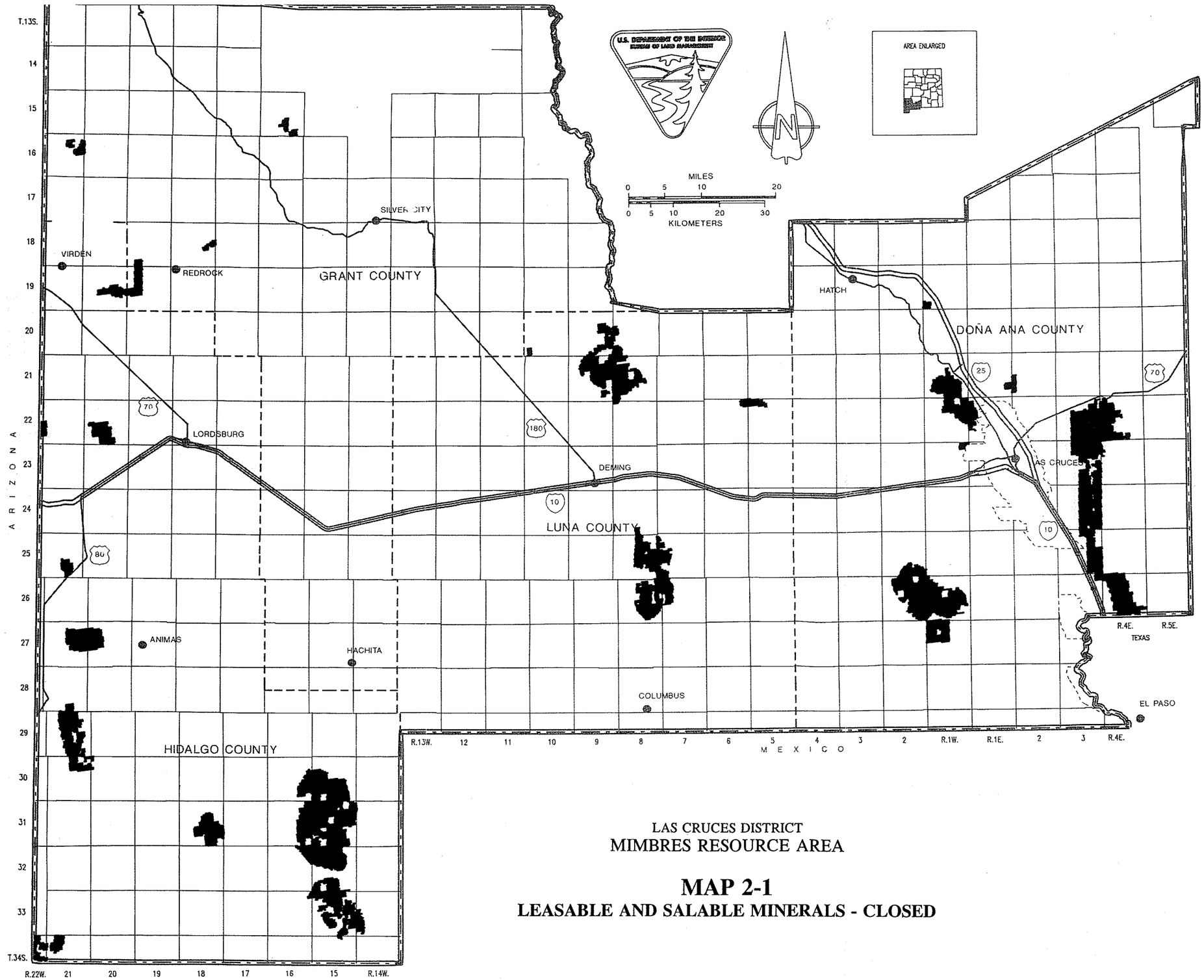
SPECIFIC DECISIONS

Special status species in the following areas are included in the ACEC designations:

- Alamo Hueco Mountains ACEC
- Antelope Pass RNA
- Apache Box ACEC
- Big Hatchet Mountains ACEC
- Central Peloncillo Mountains ACEC
- Gila Lower Box ACEC
- Gila Middle Box ACEC
- Granite Gap ACEC
- Guadalupe Canyon ACEC
- Northern Peloncillo Mountains ACEC

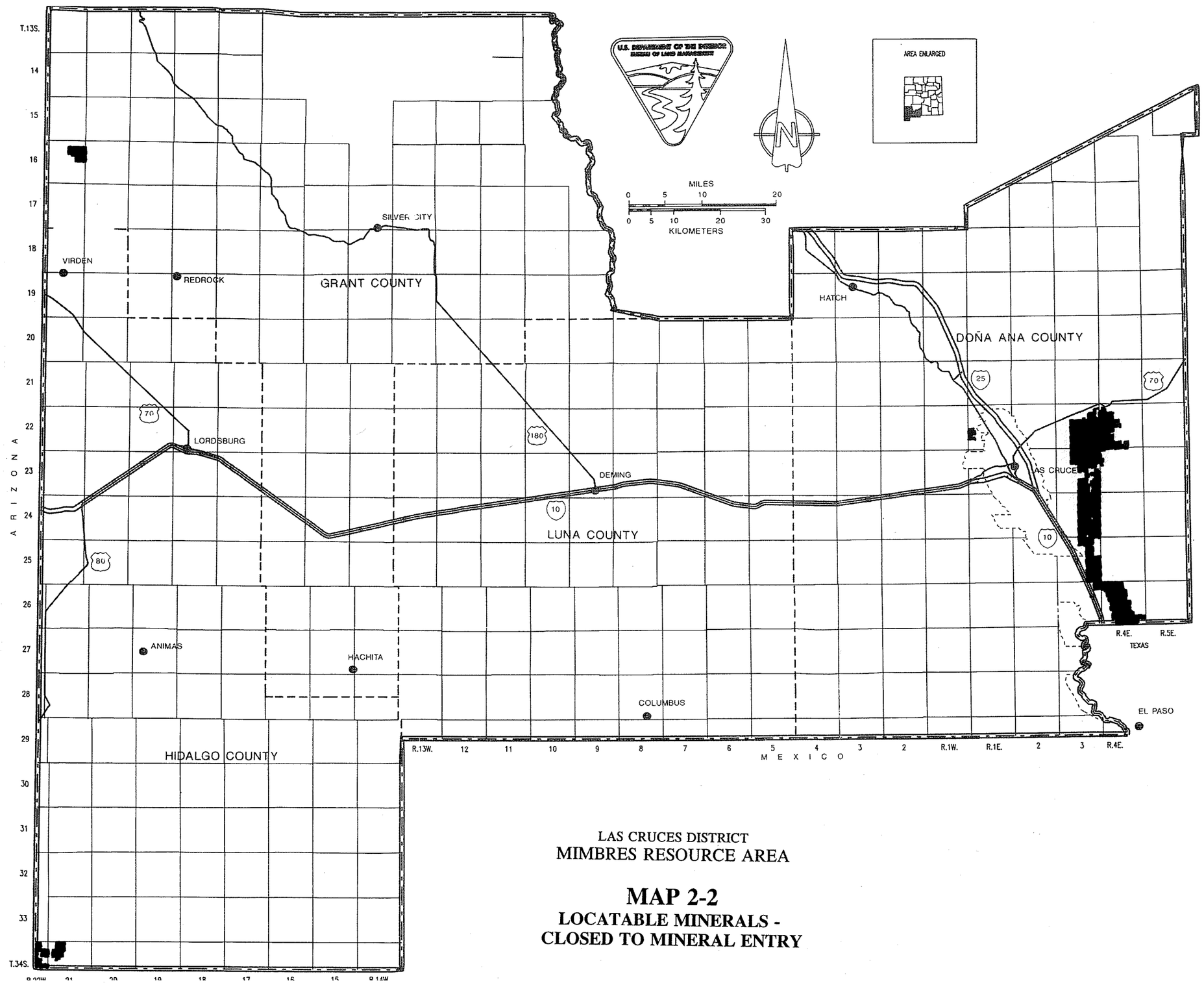
The ACECs and RNA will be managed in accordance with the management prescriptions listed in Section 5.

Management of special status species in the Organ Mountains will continue in accordance with the existing Organ Mountains Coordinated Resource Management Plan.



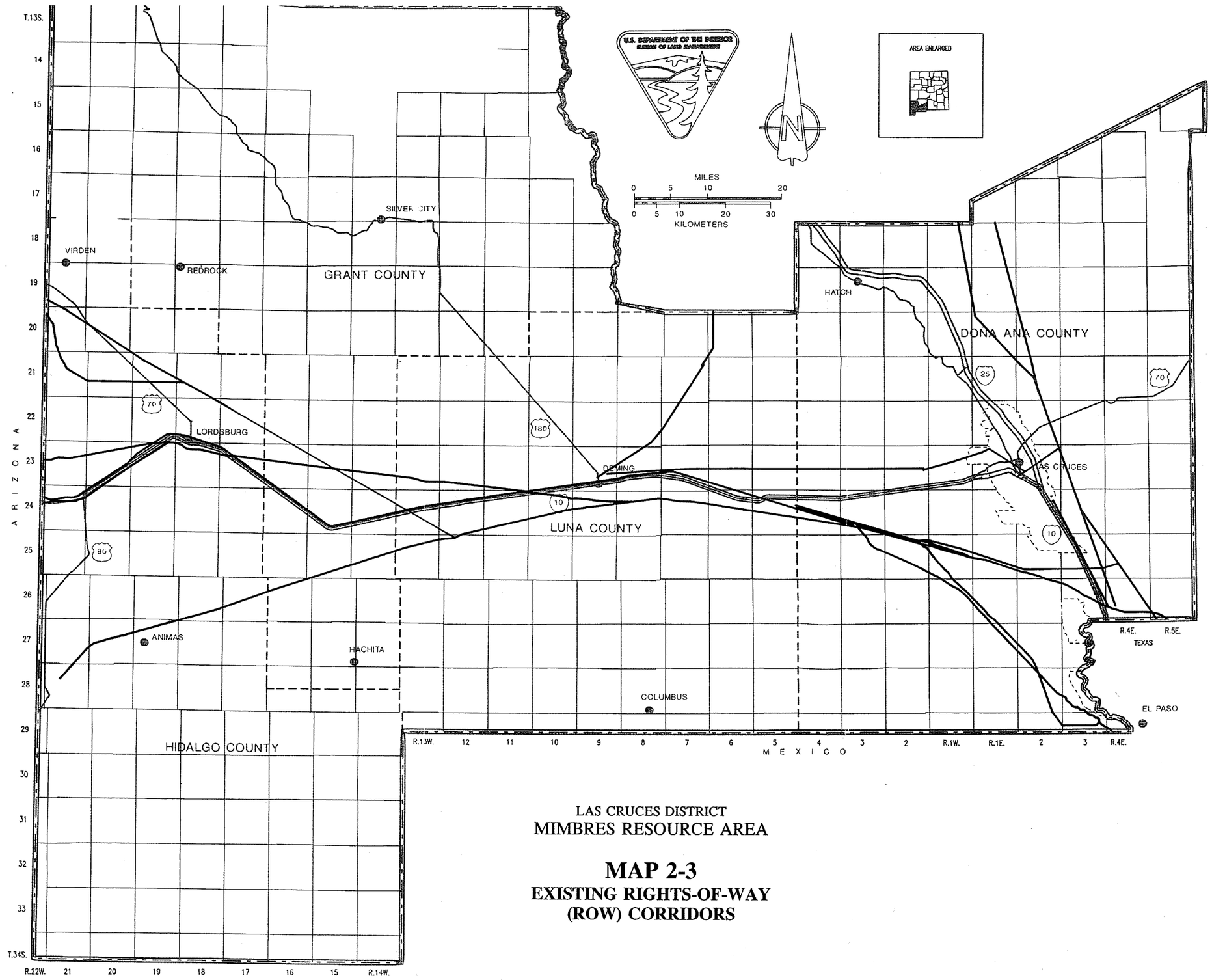
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-1
LEASABLE AND SALABLE MINERALS - CLOSED



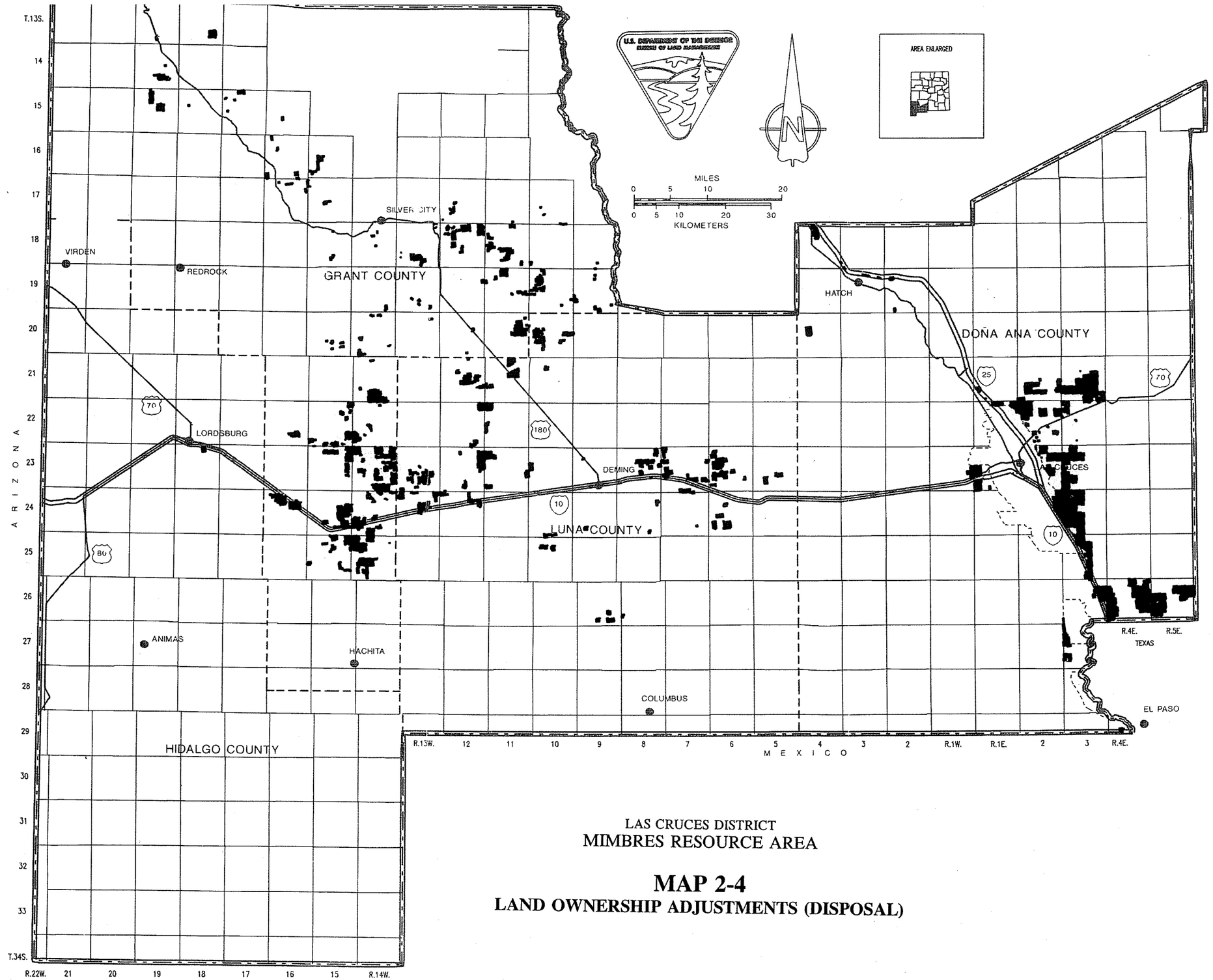
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-2
LOCATABLE MINERALS - CLOSED TO MINERAL ENTRY



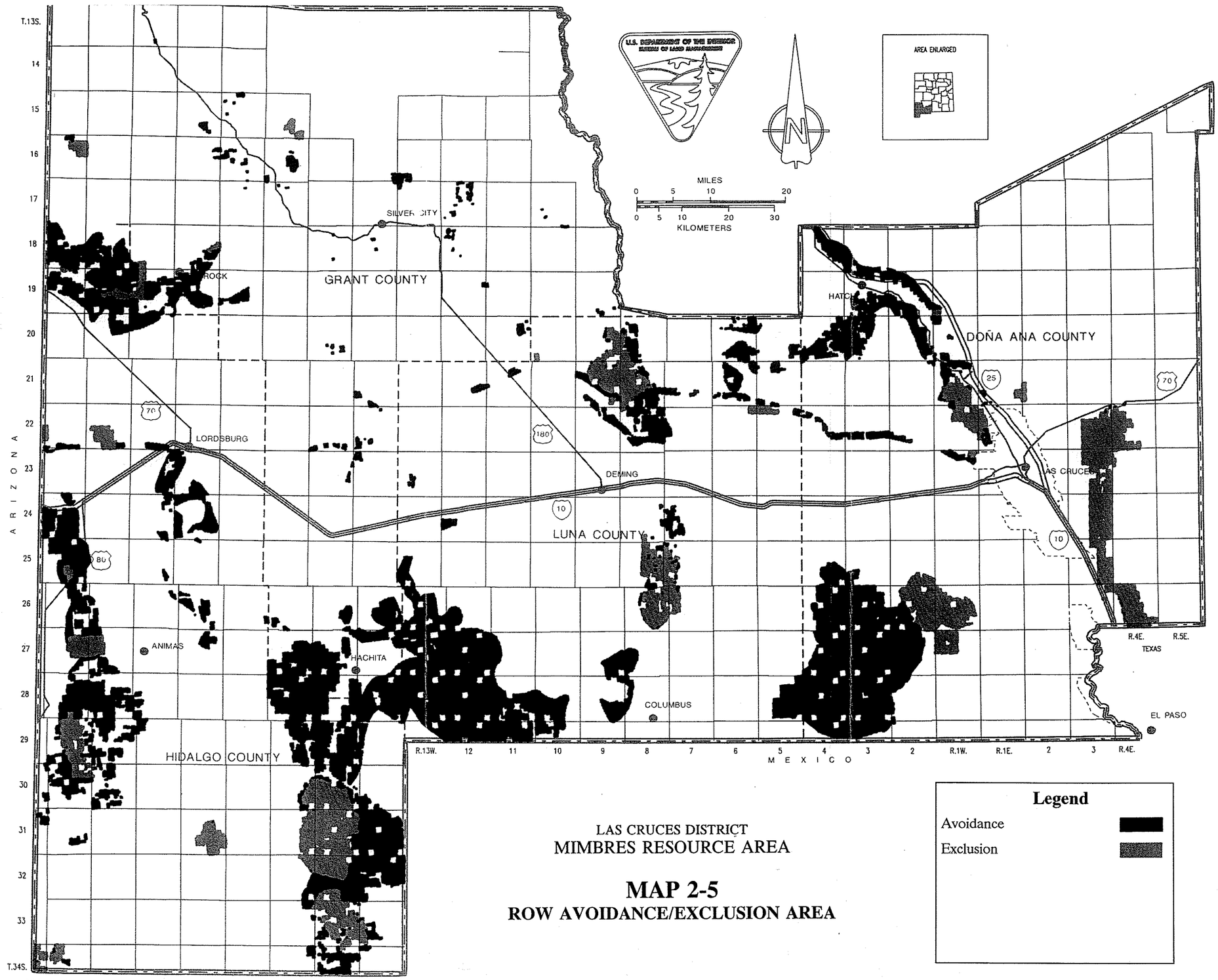
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-3
EXISTING RIGHTS-OF-WAY (ROW) CORRIDORS



LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-4
LAND OWNERSHIP ADJUSTMENTS (DISPOSAL)



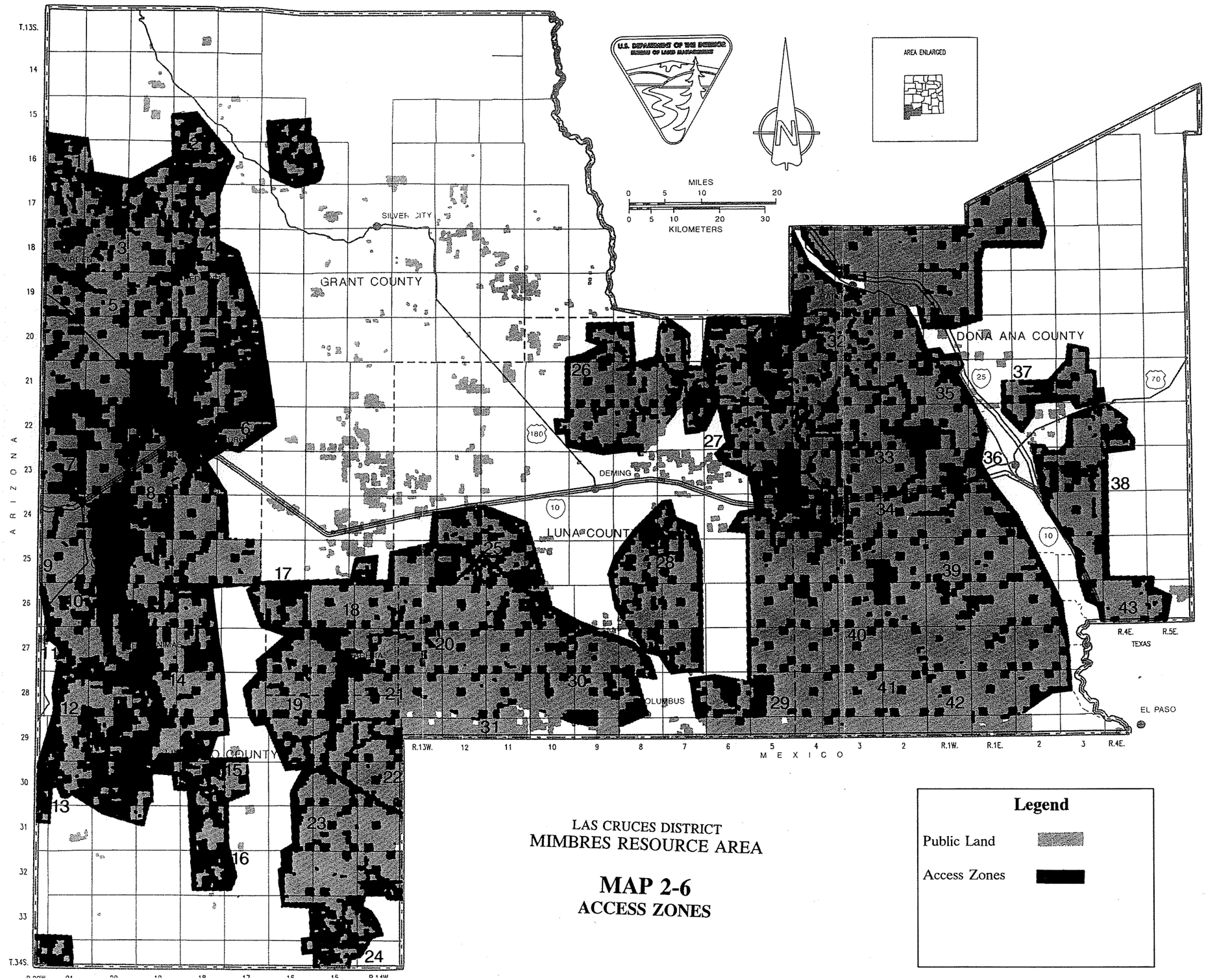
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-5
ROW AVOIDANCE/EXCLUSION AREA

Legend

Avoidance

Exclusion



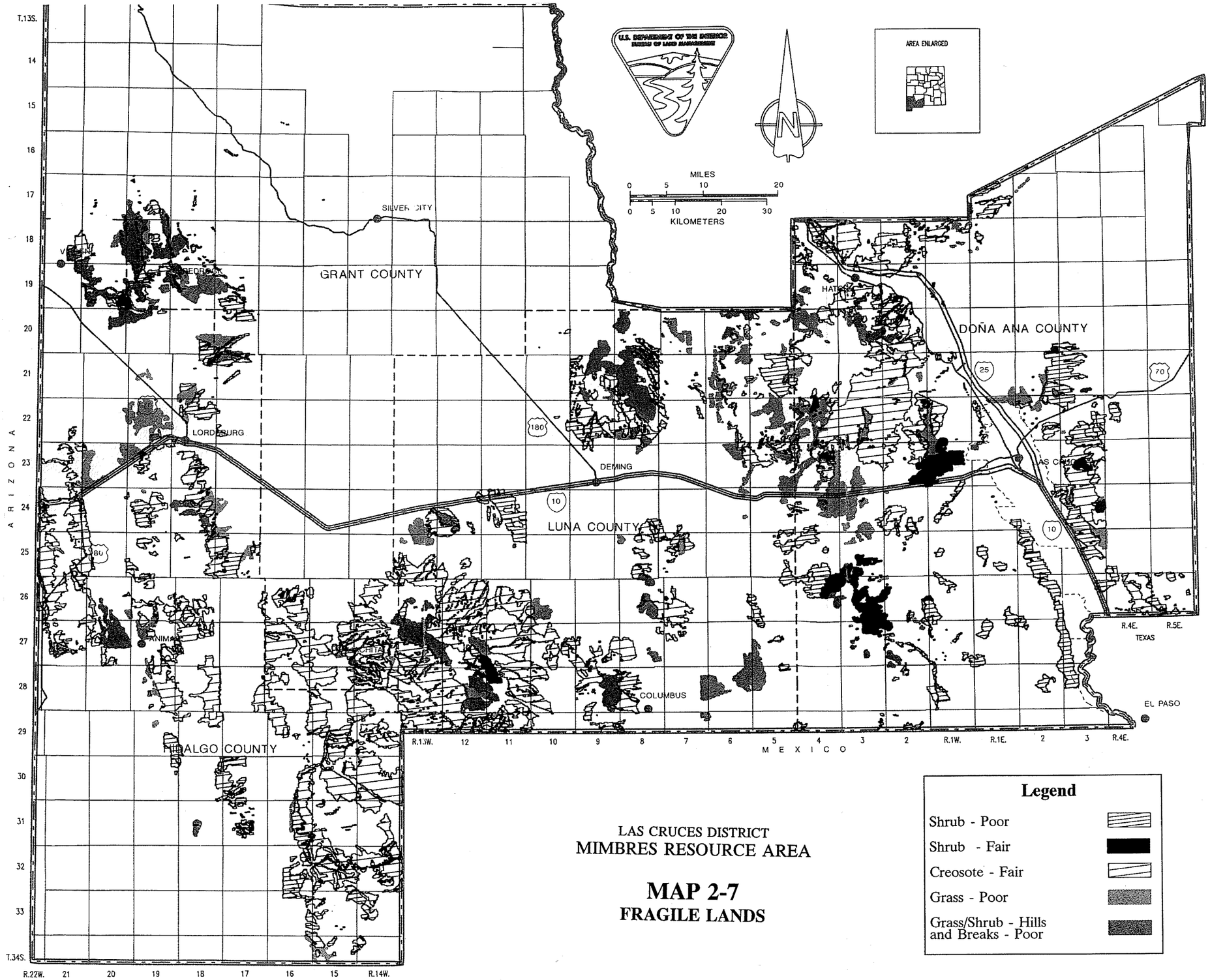
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-6
ACCESS ZONES

Legend

Public Land

Access Zones

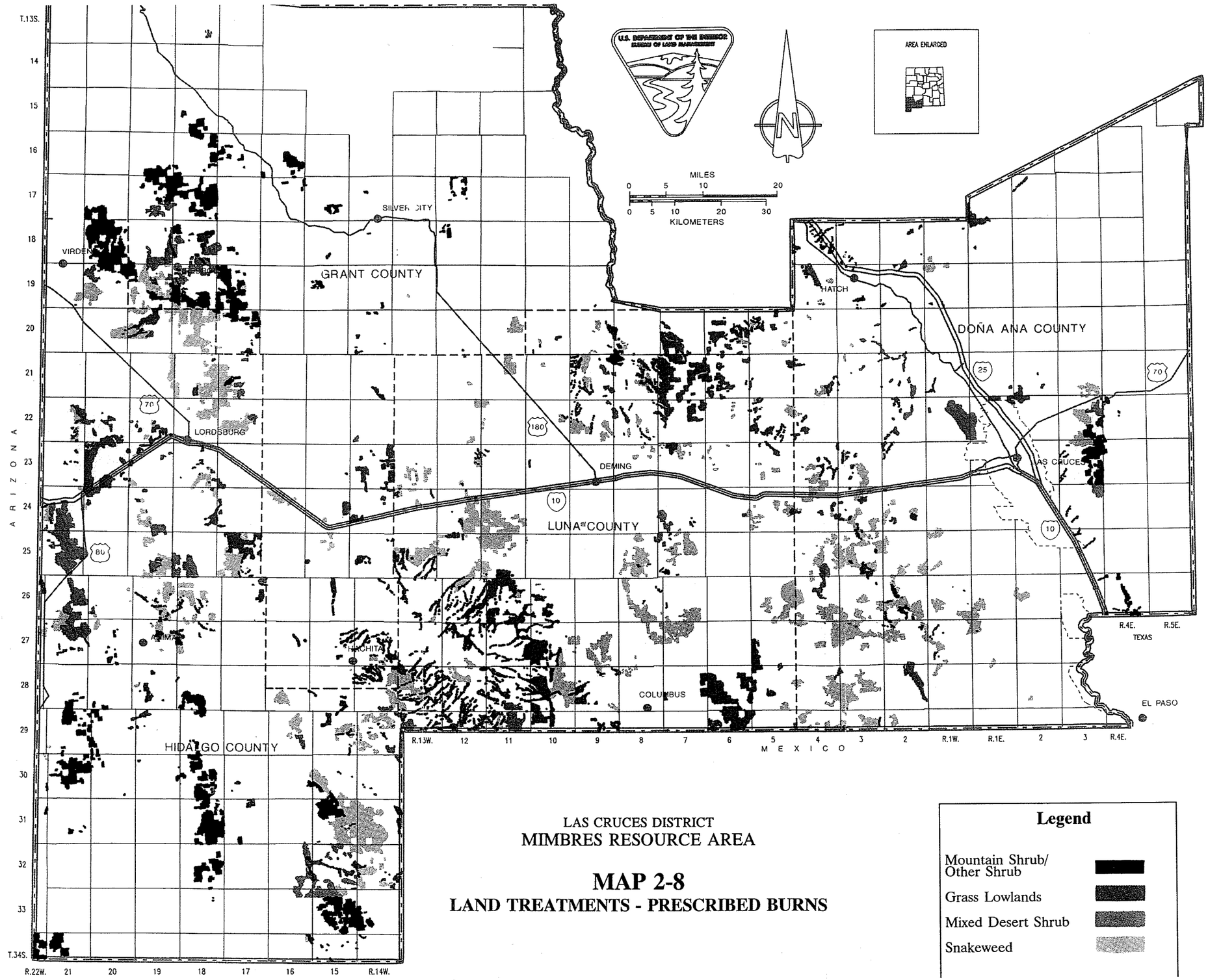


LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-7
FRAGILE LANDS

Legend

- Shrub - Poor
- Shrub - Fair
- Creosote - Fair
- Grass - Poor
- Grass/Shrub - Hills and Breaks - Poor

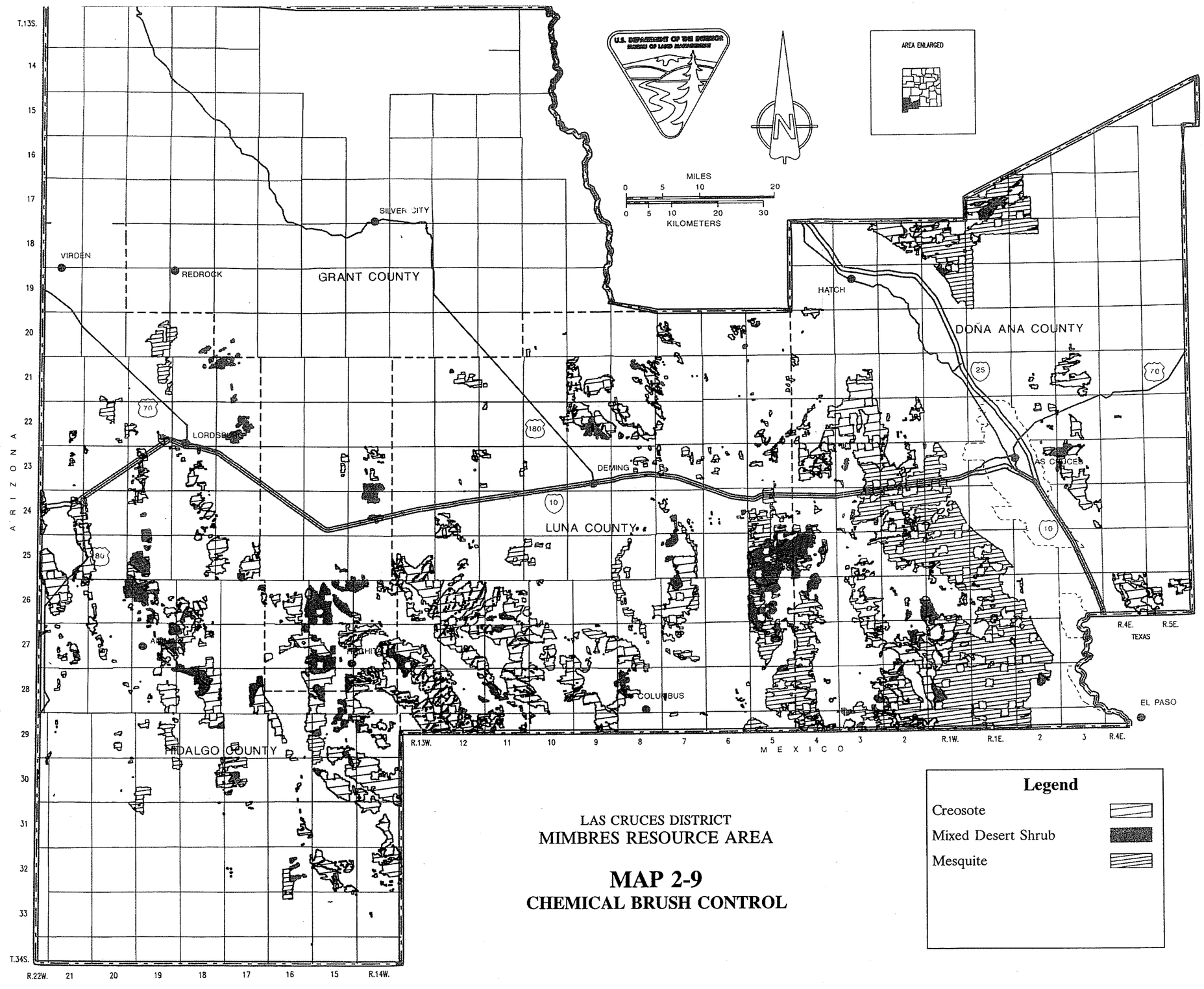


LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-8
LAND TREATMENTS - PRESCRIBED BURNS

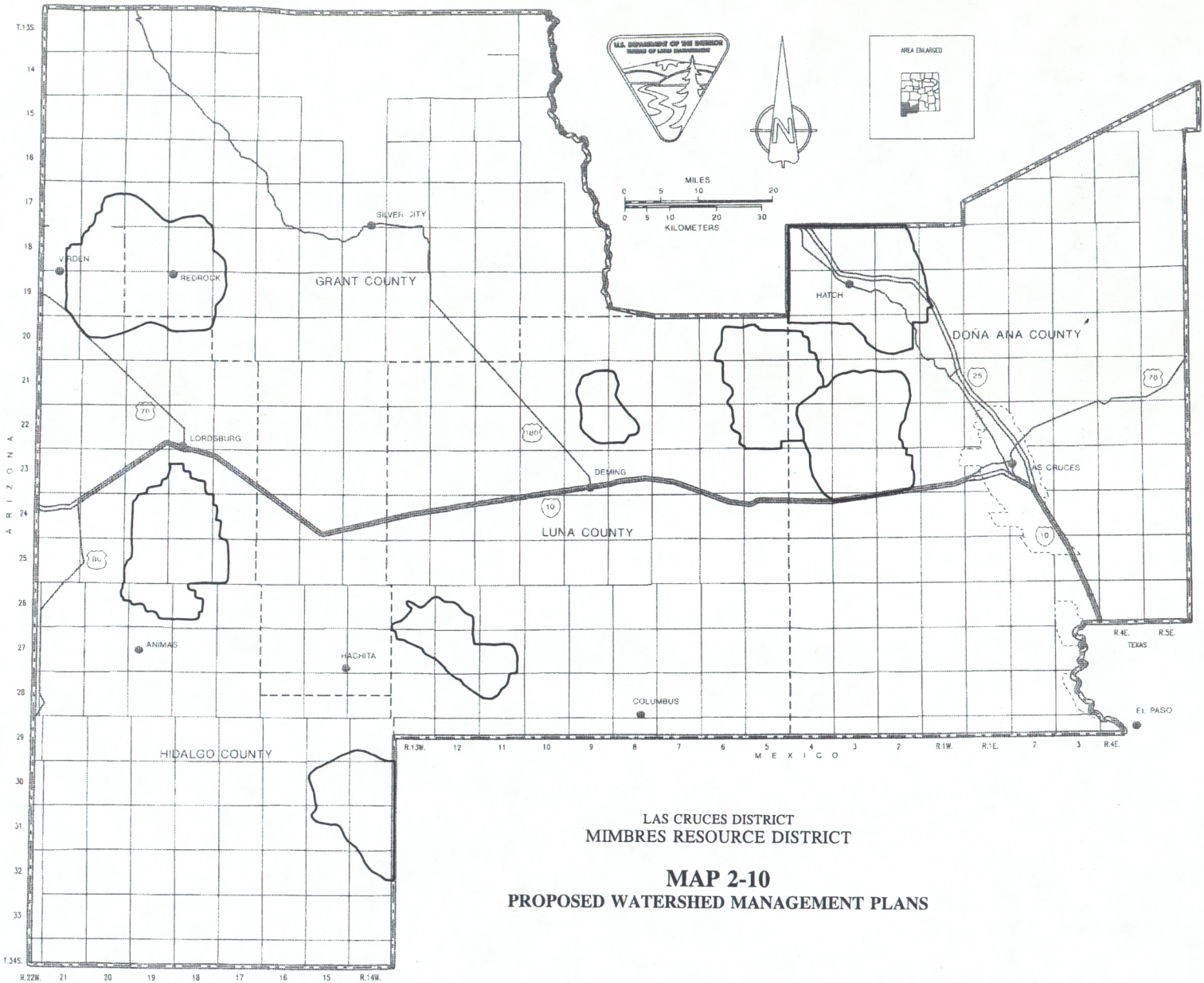
Legend

- Mountain Shrub/ Other Shrub
- Grass Lowlands
- Mixed Desert Shrub
- Snakeweed



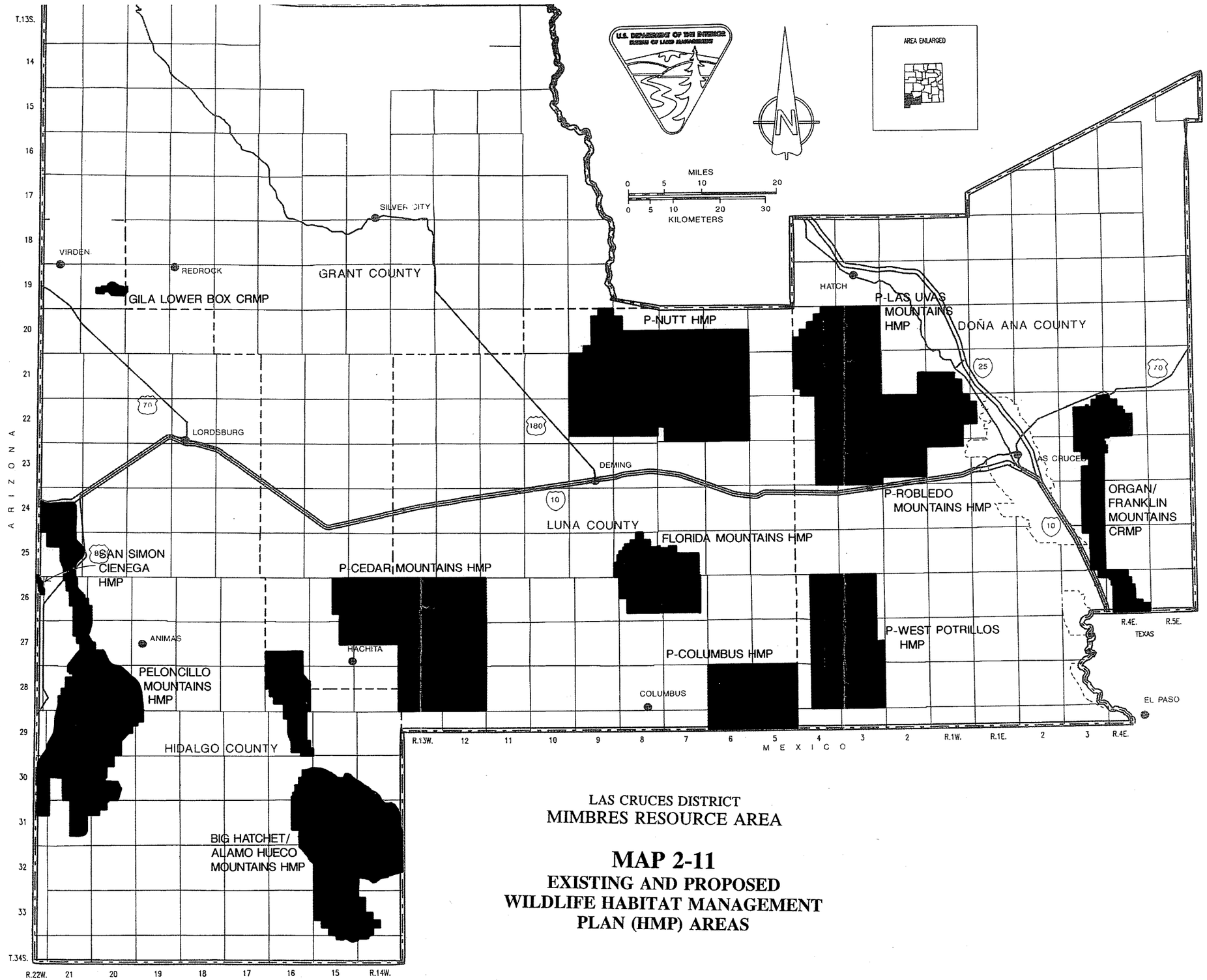
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-9
CHEMICAL BRUSH CONTROL



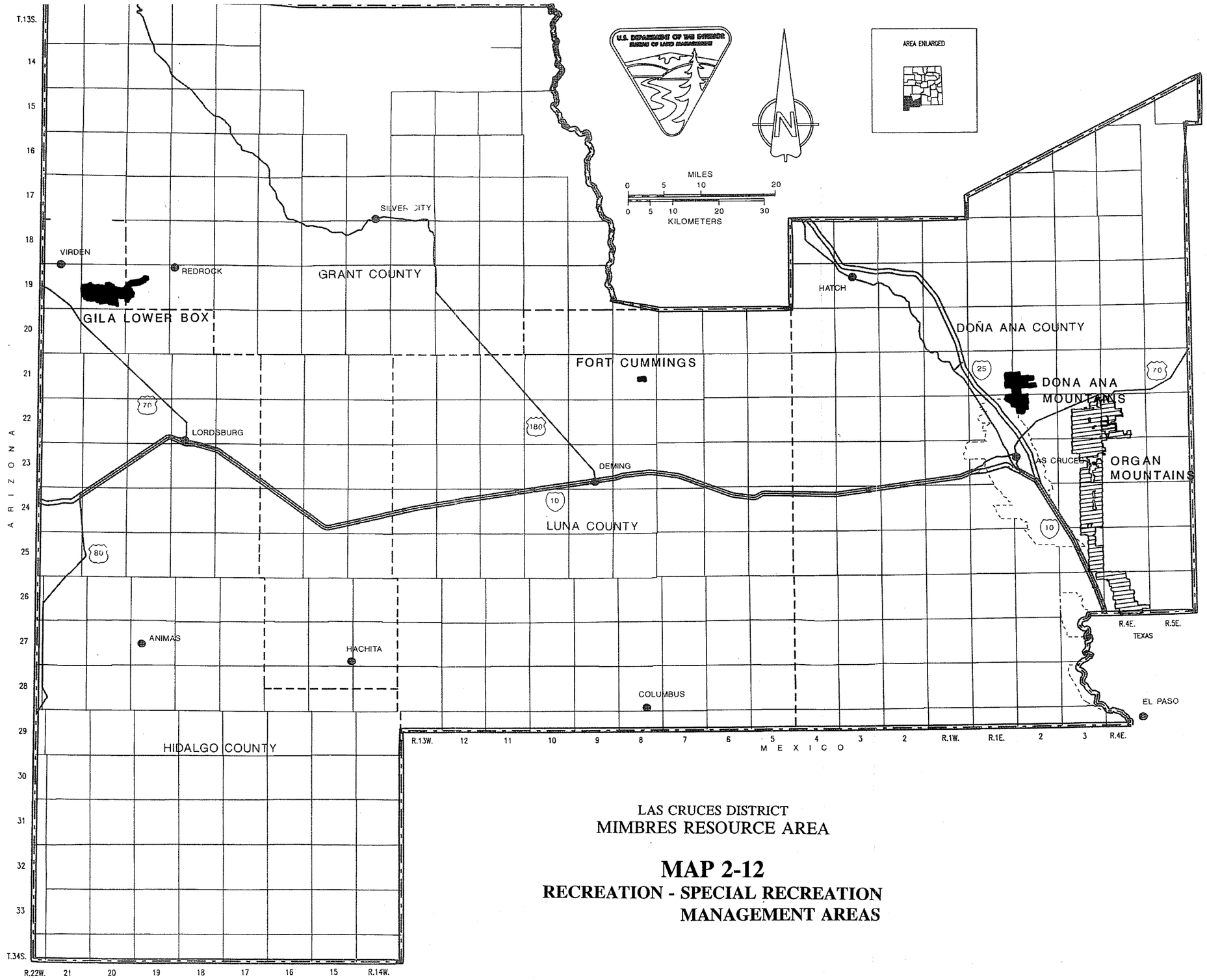
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE DISTRICT

MAP 2-10
PROPOSED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLANS



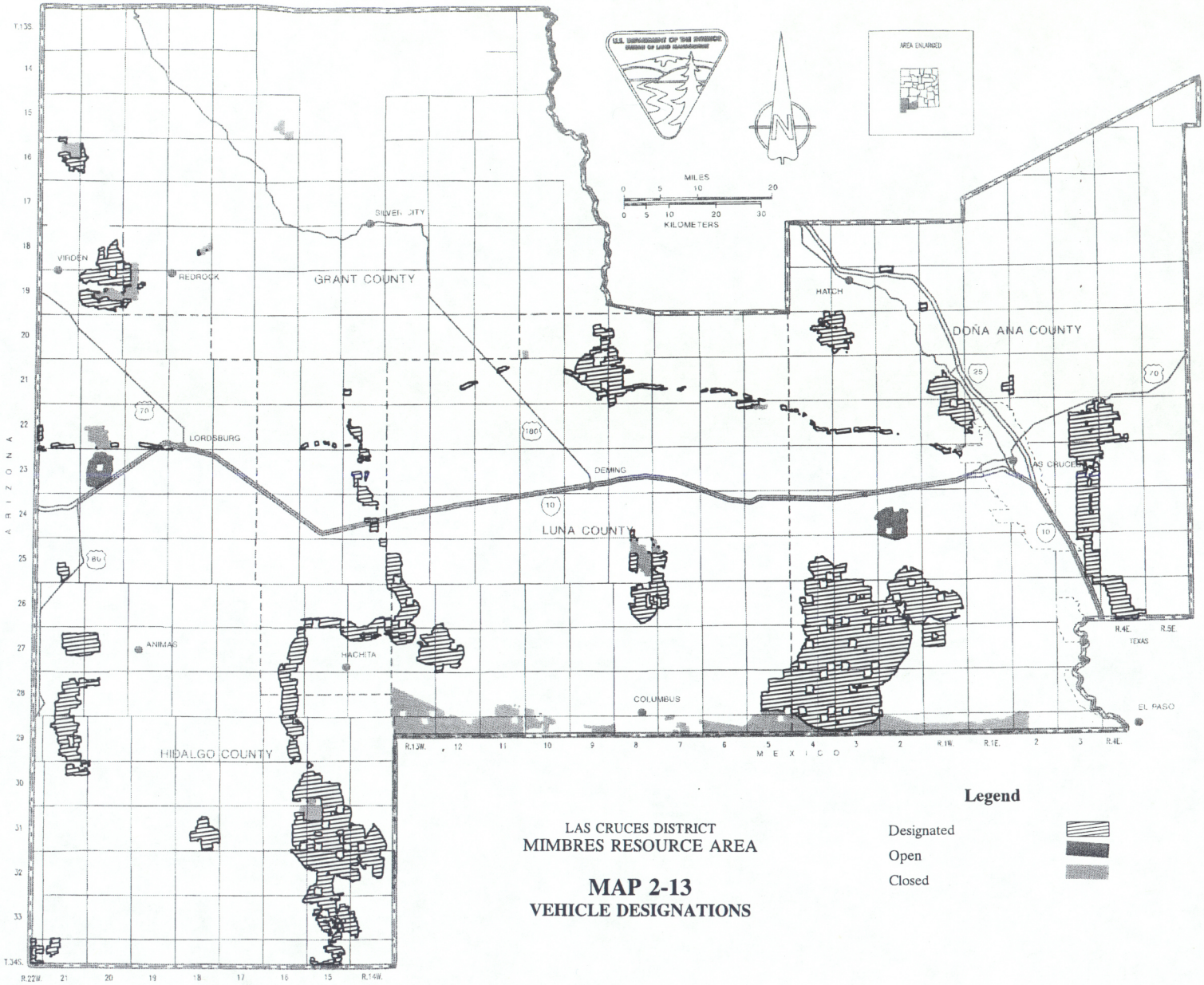
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-11
EXISTING AND PROPOSED WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN (HMP) AREAS



LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-12
RECREATION - SPECIAL RECREATION MANAGEMENT AREAS

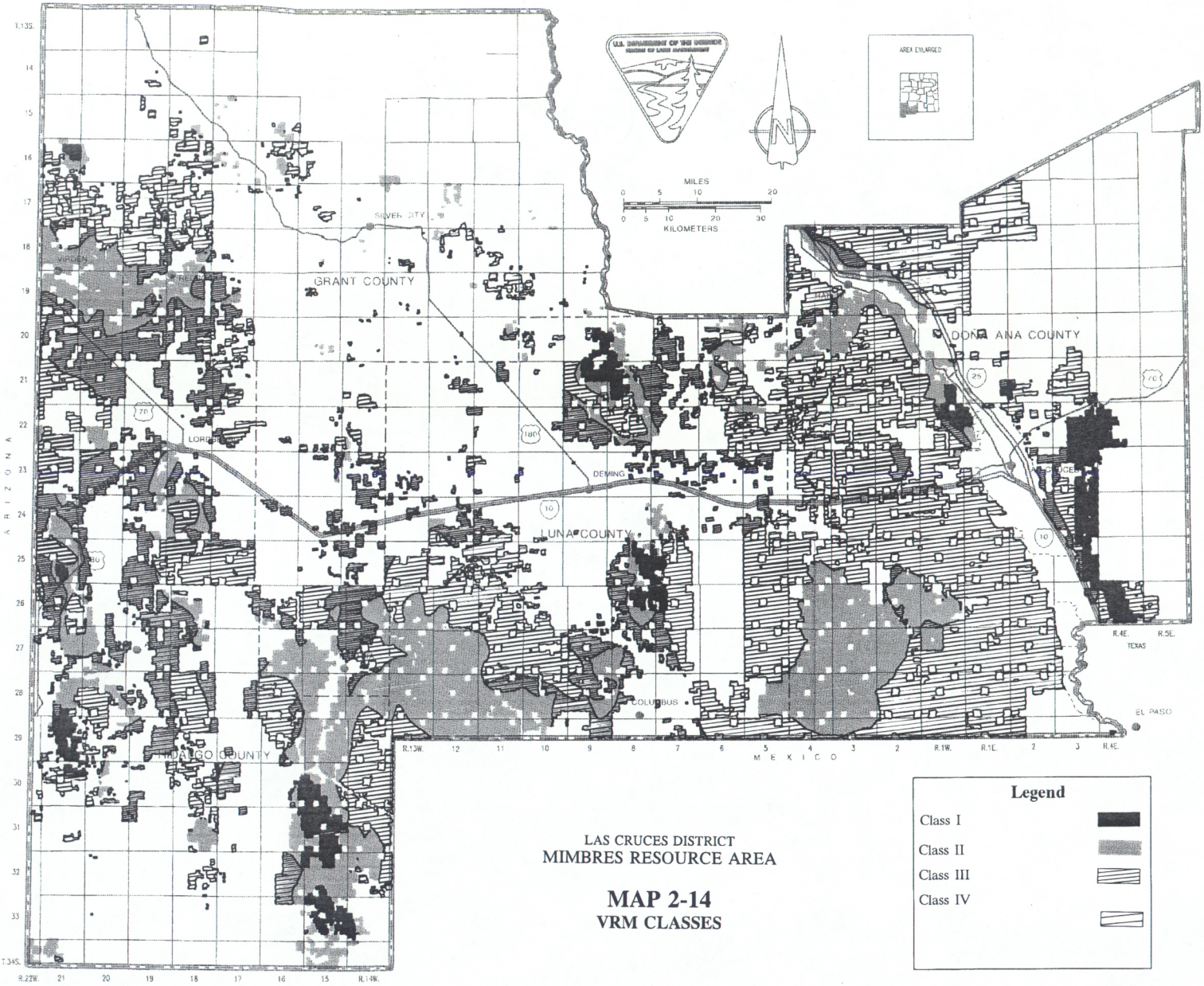


LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-13
VEHICLE DESIGNATIONS

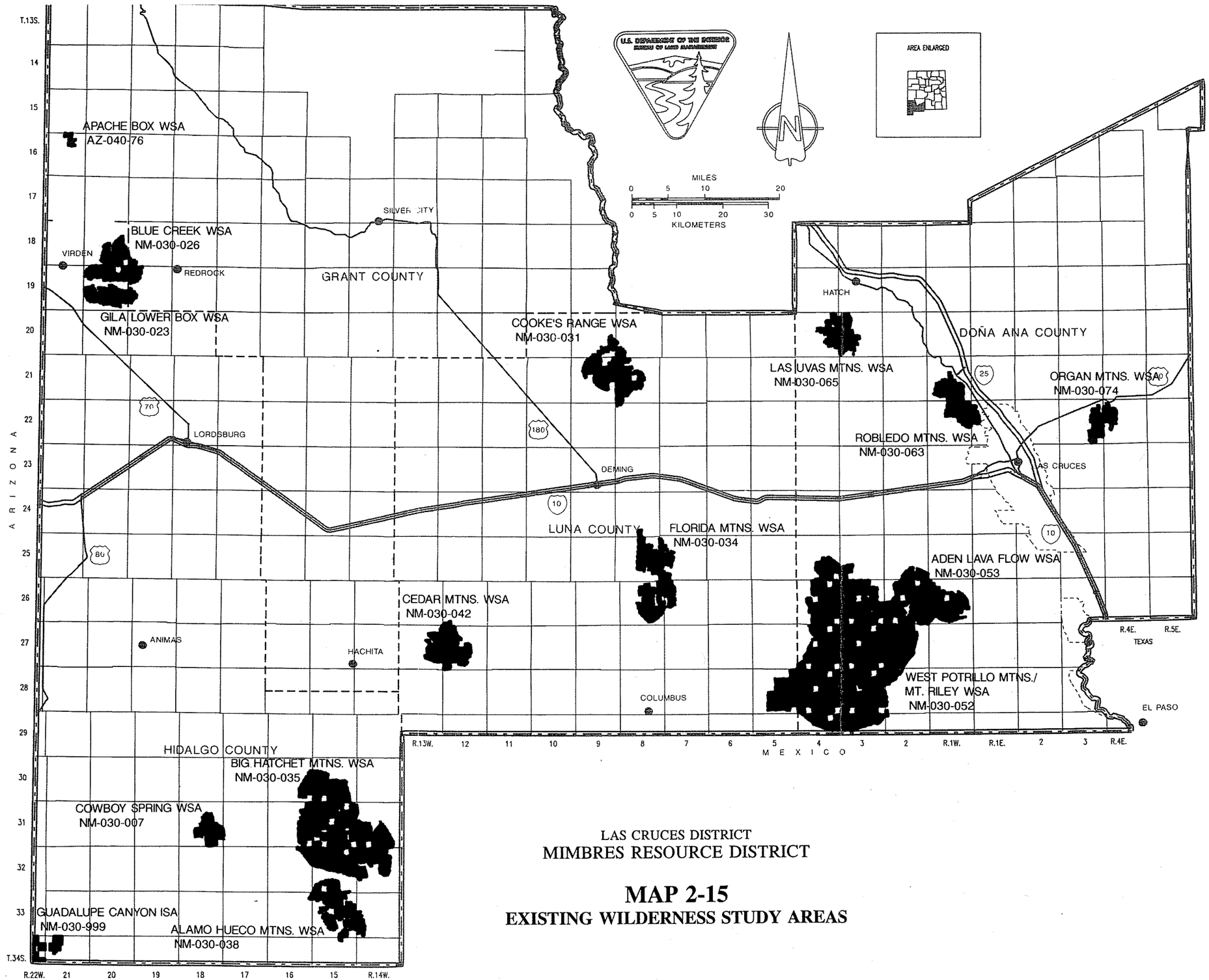
Legend

Designated
Open
Closed



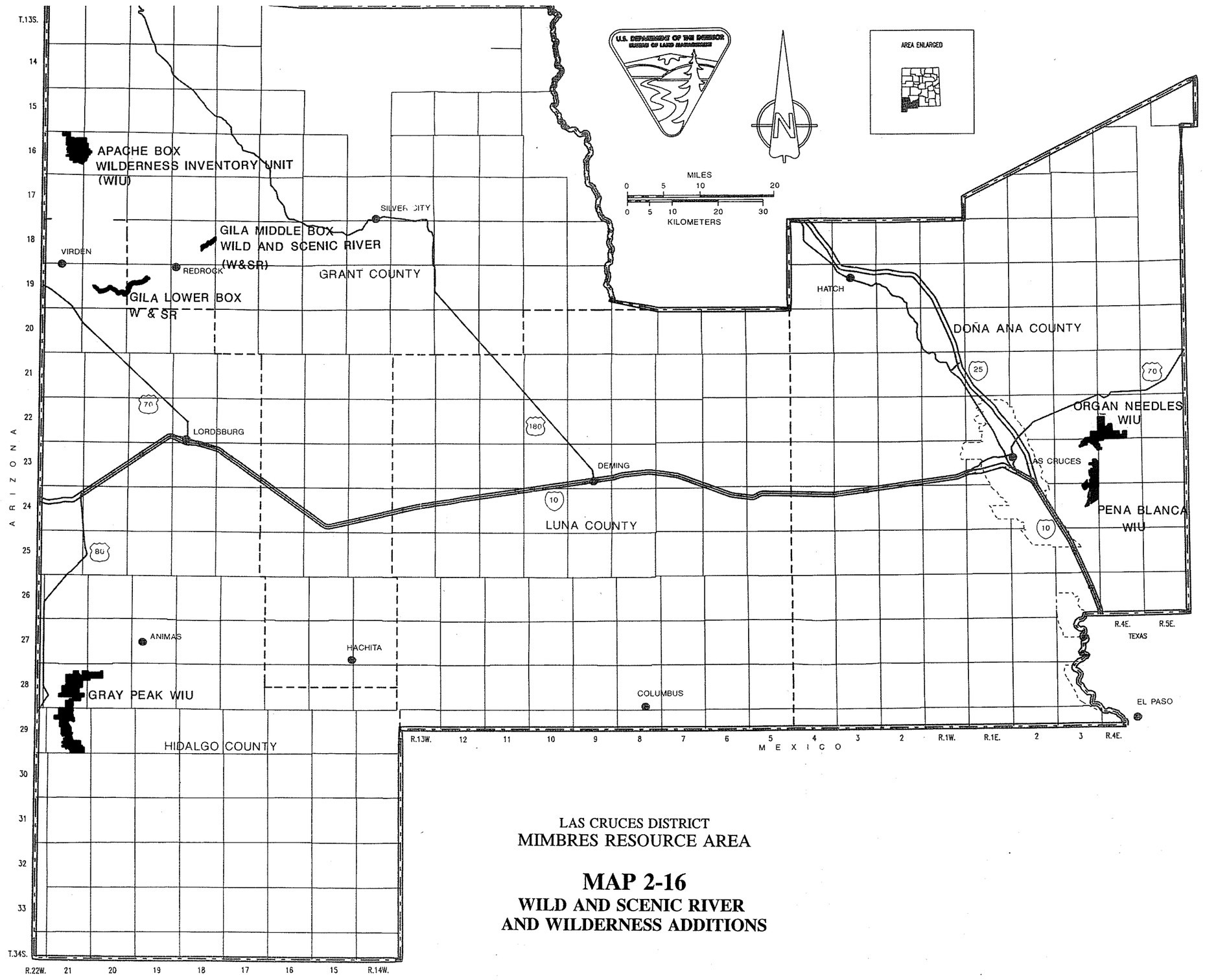
LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-14
VRM CLASSES



LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE DISTRICT

MAP 2-15
EXISTING WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS



LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
MIMBRES RESOURCE AREA

MAP 2-16
WILD AND SCENIC RIVER AND WILDERNESS ADDITIONS