

SECTION 1



SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Mimbres Resource Management Plan (RMP) has been prepared to provide a comprehensive framework for managing public land and for allocating resources during the next 20 years using the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. These two principles are defined in the Glossary. The RMP establishes areas for limited, restricted, or exclusive uses, levels of production, allowable resource uses, resource condition objectives, program uses, program constraints, and general management direction.

This RMP sets forth the land use decisions, terms and conditions for guiding and controlling future management actions on public land in the Mimbres Resource Area. All uses and activities in the Resource Area must conform with the decisions, terms and conditions as described herein. The Plan was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for comprehensive land-use planning for public land. The requirement (by Executive Order 11644) that public land be designated as "open", "limited", or "closed" to off-road vehicle use will also be met. Plan amendments, if necessary, will keep the RMP current with resource management needs and policies.

Between 1976 and 1982, the Mimbres Resource Area prepared land-use plans, known as Management Framework Plans (MFPs), for the majority of the public surface and minerals within its area of jurisdiction. The MFPs include the Gila and Southern Rio Grande MFPs and various amendments (Red Rock Withdrawal, Elena Gallegos Land Exchange, Navajo-Hopi Land Exchange, Southern Rio Grande Plan Amendment/EIS, Las Cruces/Lordsburg MFP Amendment and Southwell Ranch Headquarters Amendment).

LOCATION AND SIZE

The Mimbres Resource Area (formerly known as the Las Cruces/Lordsburg Resource Area) is located in the southwest portion of New Mexico and contains approximately 3,053,820 acres of public land and 4,126,780 acres of Federal minerals (see Map 1-1 and Table 1-1). The public land is located in Doña Ana, Grant, Luna, and Hidalgo Counties. Generally, the public land is well-blocked in Doña Ana County, southern Luna County and portions of Hidalgo County. Private and State trust lands are concentrated in much of Grant County, southern Hidalgo County and northern Luna County.

PLANNING PROCESS

The BLM RMP process consists of nine basic steps (see Figure 1-1). This process requires the use of an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists for the completion of each step. The steps described in the planning regulations and followed in preparing this RMP are summarized below.

Step 1. Identification of Issues

The first step in the planning process is intended to identify resource management problems or conflicts that can be resolved through the planning process. These problems or conflicts (issues) were identified by the BLM and other agency personnel as well as members of the public. Four issues and nine management concerns were identified and considered in this document. Each are discussed in detail in Appendix A.

Step 2. Development of Planning Criteria

During this step, preliminary decisions are made regarding the kinds of information needed to clarify the issues, the kinds of alternatives to be developed,

TABLE 1-1
LAND STATUS (In Acres)

LANDHOLDER/MANAGER	DONA ANA	LUNA	HIDALGO	GRANT	TOTAL
SURFACE ESTATE					
BLM	1,126,270	759,220	850,210	318,120	3,053,820
Forest Service	0	0	0	0	0
National Park Service	52,600	0	0	0	52,600
Military Withdrawal	503,560	2,070	0	1,670	507,300
Other Withdrawn land	155,840	630	12,210	24,440	193,120
State Trust	287,500	549,560	373,880	352,190	1,563,130
Private	315,420	586,340	893,330	977,910	2,773,000
TOTAL	2,441,190	1,897,820	2,205,170	2,540,990	9,085,170
MINERAL ESTATE					
BLM Administered					
All Minerals	1,416,850	884,090	1,134,470	691,370	4,126,780
Coal Only	0	0	0	0	0
Oil, Gas and Coal Only	0	0	0	0	0
Oil and Gas Only	3,940	12,790	10,840	5,170	32,740
Other	6,610	1,710	80	830	9,230
National Park Service	52,600	0	0	0	52,600
USFS Administered	0	0	75,540	857,940	933,480
WSMR Administered	503,550	0	0	0	503,550
No Federal Minerals	457,640	999,230	984,240	985,680	3,426,790
TOTAL	2,441,190	1,897,820	2,205,170	2,540,990	9,085,170

Source: Mimbres Resource Area Geographic Information System Data, 1990.

and the factors to be considered in evaluating alternatives and selecting a preferred RMP/EIS. As each issue was identified, a list of planning criteria was developed to help guide the resolution of that issue. The planning criteria are listed in Appendix A.

Step 3. Inventory Data and Information Collection

This step involves the collection of various kinds of environmental, social, economic resource, and institutional data needed for completion of the process. This step can include detailed field studies, literature studies, or consultation with appropriate professionals. In most cases, this process is limited to inventories needed to address the issues.

Step 4. Management Situation Analysis (MSA)

The step calls for deliberate assessment of the current situation. It includes a description of current BLM management guidance, a discussion of existing problems and opportunities for solving them, and a consolidation of existing data needed to analyze and resolve the identified issues. The end result of this step is the development of an unpublished companion document known as the MSA. That document is used to develop the Continuing Management Guidance and Actions section of the RMP. The MSA is used as a basis for compiling the Affected Environment chapter. A copy of the MSA is available for review in the Mimbres Resource Area Office.

Step 5. Formulation of Alternatives

During this step several complete, reasonable resource management alternatives are prepared, including one for no action and others that strive to resolve the issues while placing emphasis either on environmental protection or resource production.

Step 6. Estimation of Effects of Alternatives

The physical, biological, economic, and social effects of implementing each alternative are estimated in order to allow for a comparative evaluation of impacts. This step, is also known as the Environmental Consequences section.

Step 7. Selection of the Preferred Alternative

Based on the information generated during Step 6, the District Manager identifies and recommends a preferred alternative to the State Director. The Draft RMP/EIS document is then prepared and distributed for public review.

Step 8. Selection of the Resource Management Plan

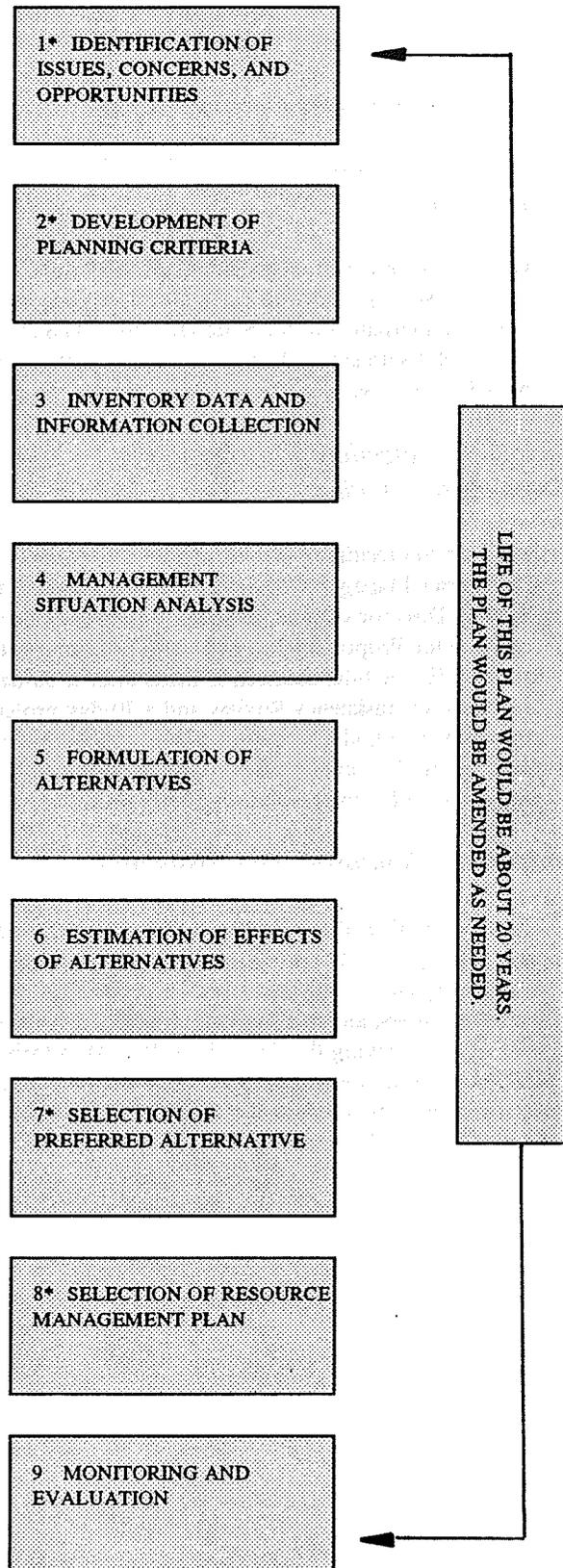
Based on the results of public review and comment, the District Manager will select and recommend to the State Director various proposals or alternatives to comprise the Proposed RMP and publish it along with a Final EIS. A final decision is made after a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review and a 30-day protest period on the Final EIS are completed. A Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved RMP will then be published, following resolution of any protests.

Step 9. Monitoring and Evaluation

This step involves the collection and analysis of long-term resource condition and trend data to determine the effectiveness of the plan in resolving the identified issues, and to ensure that implementation of the plan is achieving the desired results. Monitoring continues from the time the RMP is adopted until changing conditions require a revision of the whole plan or any portion of it.

FIGURE 1-1
STEPS IN THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
PLANNING PROCESS

* Public Participation Opportunities



PLANNING ISSUES, CRITERIA, AND MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

The BLM planning regulations equate land-use planning with problem solving and issue resolution. An issue is defined as an opportunity, conflict, or problem, regarding the use or management of public land and resources.

Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and measures used for data collection and alternative formulation, which will guide final plan selection. Planning criteria are taken from appropriate laws and regulations, BLM manuals and directives, and concerns expressed in meetings, and consultations, both with the public and other agencies.

Management concerns are those nonissue related procedures or land-use allocations which have proven, during the preparation of this RMP/EIS, to need modification. Management concerns focus on use conflicts, requirements, or conditions that cannot be resolved administratively and did not, during initial public scoping appear to meet the criteria to qualify as a planning issue but were identified for resolution in the Mimbres RMP.

The Planning Issues and Management Concerns covered in the Mimbres RMP are as follows and are further described in Appendix A.

ISSUES

- Issue 1: Land Ownership Adjustments
- Issue 2: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and Other Special Management Areas (SMAs)
- Issue 3: Vehicle Management
- Issue 4: Access

MANAGEMENT CONCERNS:

- Management Concern 1: Rights-of-Way
- Management Concern 2: Minerals
- Management Concern 3: Recreation
- Management Concern 4: Cultural and Paleontological Resources

- Management Concern 5: Wildlife Habitat
- Management Concern 6: Soil, Air and Water
- Management Concern 7: Vegetation
- Management Concern 8: Riparian and Arroyo Habitats
- Management Concern 9: Special Status Species

CHANGING THE PLAN

The Plan may be changed, if necessary, through amendment. Monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, and new or revised policies will be evaluated to determine if there is a need for an amendment. Any change in circumstances or conditions which affect the scope, terms, or conditions of the RMP may warrant an amendment. In all cases, a proposed action that does not conform to the RMP and warrants further consideration before an RMP revision is scheduled would require an amendment. Generally, an amendment is site-specific or involves only one or two planning issues.

A plan revision, if necessary, would involve the preparation of a new RMP for the entire Resource area.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public participation in the Mimbres RMP is a dynamic process occurring throughout the development of the Plan and beyond. In addition to formal public participation steps, informal contacts occur frequently with public land users and interested persons through meetings, field trips, telephone calls or letters. All applicable public participation is documented and analyzed in the planning process and kept on file in the Mimbres Resource Area.

A notice was published in the Federal Register on September 22, 1988, announcing the formal start of the planning process.

Prior to publishing the Notice of Intent, informal public meetings were held as early as March 1988 and have continued throughout development of the RMP. Meetings were held with BLM's District Advisory Council, Dona Ana County Associated

Sportsmen, Sierra Club, Southern New Mexico Coalition of Conservation Organizations, Native Plant Society, Desert Trophy Hunters, Picacho Gun Club, Fort Bliss Rod and Gun Club, Rio Grande Corridor Committee, BLM Safford District, Range Improvement Task Force, and Hidden Valley Ranch.

A comprehensive public participation plan was prepared, with the intent of involving interested or affected parties early and continuously throughout the planning process. The plan emphasizes localized one-to-one contacts, media coverage, direct mailings and continued coordination with local, State and other Federal agencies.

Meetings to determine the scope of the RMP and to obtain input on issues and planning criteria were held in Las Cruces (July 26, 1989), Deming (July 18, 1989), Lordsburg (July 19, 1989), and Silver City (July 20, 1989), New Mexico and El Paso, Texas (July 25, 1989). A scoping report which outlined issues and management concerns was issued prior to the meetings in June 1989. The report also gave the times and locations for the public meetings. A Follow-up Scoping Report was distributed in November 1989. The Report contained revisions to the preliminary issues, management concerns, and planning criteria based upon public review and comment. On June 25, 1990, a letter was sent to over 1,500 individuals on the RMP mailing list to update them on the progress of the RMP.

Section 202 of FLPMA of 1976 requires the BLM to coordinate land use planning activities with other Federal agencies, State and local governments and Indian tribes. FLPMA also requires BLM to ensure that consideration is given to non-Bureau plans that are pertinent to the development of the RMP, assist in resolving inconsistencies between Federal and non-Federal government plans and to provide for meaningful public involvement of other Federal agencies, State and local government officials and Indian tribes in the development of the RMP. In line with these requirements, BLM held initial interagency meetings throughout the month of June 1989 with over 40 entities of Federal, State and local governments, and Indian tribes. (See Table 1-2.) BLM officials have continued these contacts throughout the process by providing RMP updates at regularly scheduled meetings of the various governmental entities. Specifically, the Luna and Grant County Commissioners were briefed on the RMP status prior to release of the Draft RMP/EIS in 1990.

FORMAL CONSULTATION

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is required prior to initiation of any project by BLM that may affect any Federally listed special status species or its habitat.

Consultation is required by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. This RMP is considered a major planning effort, and formal consultation has been completed. Letters of formal consultation are on file in the Mimbres Resource Area Office. Coordination and consultation will continue throughout the planning process and implementation of the plan.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) and the New Mexico Natural Resources Department have been contacted in regard to State listed threatened and endangered animal and plant species. This plan is consistent with legislation protecting State listed species. NMDGF also provided information on existing wildlife population levels and proposed wildlife population goals. Coordination and consultation with the State will continue throughout the planning process and during implementation of the plan.

The BLM cultural resource management program operates in accordance with 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 800, which provides specific procedures for consultation between the BLM and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) NMSO-168 between the SHPO, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the BLM New Mexico State Office became effective October 19, 1982. This MOU incorporates procedures for exchanging information with the SHPO concerning cultural resources on public and private lands. It defines activities requiring consultation and establishes reporting standards. The SHPO has been consulted during the development of the RMP.

PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE RMP

Table 1-3 is a partial listing of various Federal, State and local agencies, organizations, Indian Tribes, and individuals to which the RMP was sent for review and comment.

Informal coordination with the public has taken place throughout the planning process through personal

contacts, telephone calls, and letters, and will continue throughout the Plan implementation process.

Draft RMP/EIS

The Draft RMP/EIS was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on August 16, 1991. The 90-day comment period began on August 23, 1991, and ended November 25, 1991. A notice of availability was published in the Federal Register on August 20, 1991. During the comment period, five public workshops were held: September 17 in Deming, September 18 in Lordsburg, September 19 in Silver City, September 24 in El Paso, Texas, and September 25 in Las Cruces. BLM staff who were familiar with the Draft RMP/EIS were available at these workshops to answer questions and concerns. Public hearings were held in Las Cruces, New Mexico (on October 22) and Lordsburg, New Mexico (on October 23, 1991) to provide an opportunity for the public to present oral comments. The public was notified about the hearings in the Federal Register, local newspapers, and personal letters and contacts. Complete transcripts are available for public inspection at the Mimbres Resource Area Office.

A total of 226 written and 6 oral comments were submitted during the formal comment period. Responses were made to all substantive comments presented in letters. Substantive comments were those which addressed either the adequacy and accuracy of the Draft RMP/EIS or the merits of the alternatives or both. The responses are presented adjacent to the comments in each letter. Additional letters received were given full consideration in the final decision.

Proposed Plan/Final EIS

The notice of availability for the Proposed Plan/Final EIS was published in the Federal Register on October 15, 1992. The document was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on October 8, 1992. The Federal Register notice specified a 30-day protest period ending on November 16, 1992.

A total of 16 letters of protest were received by the BLM Director. Three letters were determined to be invalid for failure to follow the requirements for protests in the planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.5-2). One letter was withdrawn by the protestor following agreement with the Mimbres Resource Area on text changes on the Continental Divide Trail.

TABLE 1-3
PARTIAL LISTING OF DOCUMENT RECIPIENTS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Stabilization
and Conservation Service
Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service
Farmers' Home Administration
Soil Conservation Service
U.S. Forest Service
Southwest Regional Office
Gila National Forest
Coronado National Forest
Department of the Army
Corps of Engineers
Fort Bliss
White Sands Missile Range
Department of Commerce
Department of the Interior
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bureau of Mines
Bureau of Reclamation
National Park Service
Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Geological Society
Department of Energy
Office of Environmental Compliance
U.S. Border Patrol
NASA
Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Congressional Staff
International Boundary and Water Commission

STATE GOVERNMENT

Arizona

Game and Fish Department

New Mexico

Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources
Department of Finance and Administration
Range Improvement Task Force
Historic Preservation Division
State Historic Preservation Officer
Energy and Minerals Department
Governor of New Mexico
Health and Environmental Department
Environmental Improvement Division
State Land Office
Natural Resources Department
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Division of State Forestry
State Highway Department
Congressional Delegation
Museum of New Mexico
Soil and Water Conservation Division
New Mexico State University
New Mexico State Police
New Mexico Army National Guard
New Mexico Department of Agriculture
New Mexico Department of Commerce and Industry
State Engineer
Interstate Stream Commission
New Mexico State Livestock Board
State Oil Conservation
New Mexico Mining Association

Texas

Governor of Texas

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Mayors

Towns of:
Mesilla Hatch
Cities of:
Anthony Hurley
Bayard Las Cruces
Central Lordsburg
Deming Mesilla
El Paso Silver City

County Commissioners:

Grant Dona Ana
Luna Hidalgo

El Paso Public Service Board
Southwest New Mexico Council of
Governments - Silver City
Arizona/New Mexico Coalition of Counties
Elephant Butte Irrigation District
Las Cruces Extra-Territorial Zone Commission
New Mexico Border Commission
New Mexico Association of Counties
West Texas Council of Governments

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Continental Divide Trail Society
New Mexico Cattle Growers Association
Albuquerque Archaeological Society
Museum of Natural History
Earth First!
Natural Resources Defense Council
Central New Mexico Audubon Society
National Audubon Society
New Mexico Oil and Gas Association
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
Sierra Club
The Nature Conservancy
Society for Range Management
Native Plant Society
Independent Petroleum Association of
New Mexico
Farm and Livestock Bureau
Public Land Council
The Wilderness Society
New Mexico Bureau of Land Management
Wilderness Coalition
Grazing Permittees
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
New Mexico Natural History Institute
American Rivers
Minerals Exploration Coalition
Land Use Planning Committee

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

Ysleta del Sur
Mescalero
Pueblo of Acoma
Pueblo of Isleta
San Carlos Apache Tribe
White Mountain Apache Tribe
Zuni Tribe

The Director then addressed issues in the 12 remaining letters, dismissing the protests with only minor text changes for the Approved Plan. Several protestors raised valid concerns which were addressed by the New Mexico State Director in written responses. On February 4, 1993, members of the Las Cruces District Advisory Council met with the District Manager, Area Manager and Team Leader to review protest issues and BLM responses on the Mimbres RMP. Additional meetings were held with County Commissions to update them on the status of the RMP.

Record of Decision

The Record of Decision (ROD) was signed by Acting State Director, Monte G. Jordan, on April 30, 1993. It was mailed to the public on June 10, 1993, and a notice of the Record of Decision's availability was published in the Federal Register on June 21, 1993. The ROD approved the proposed decisions as described in the Proposed Plan/Final EIS with only minor text changes as described in the ROD pages 4 and 5 at the beginning of this document.

CONTINUING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Mimbres Resource Area plans to prepare an RMP summary update every year following the published final RMP. The purpose of this update will be to inform the public of the progress made in implementing the RMP. The summary will also

describe the activity plans to be prepared the following year so that interested members of the public may request copies and comment on them. The BLM hopes that this will enable the public to become further involved in the specific land management actions resulting from the implementation of this RMP. The first annual update was published in March 1993.

CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER PLANS

The BLM planning regulations require that RMPs be "consistent with officially approved or adopted resource-related plans, and the policies and procedures contained therein, of other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and Indian Tribes, so long as the guidance and RMPs are also consistent with the purposes, policies and programs of Federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands..." (43 CFR 1610.3-2). In order to ensure such consistency finalized plans were solicited from Federal, State, and local agencies as well as Tribal governments listed in Table 1-3.

At this time there are no known inconsistencies between any of the alternatives and officially approved and adopted resource-related plans of other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and Indian tribes. Coordination and consultation will continue throughout the planning process and implementation of the plan.