

To: Tompkins, Jaime[jtompkins@blm.gov]
From: Fisher, Timothy
Sent: 2017-06-02T08:55:58-04:00
Importance: Normal
Subject: Re: link to Monument reports
Received: 2017-06-02T08:56:11-04:00
Monument Manager Report FINAL JJC DC.docx

Here is 2016

I thought about UMRBNM last night and in the summary and the documents you should state some of the hunting --- even though you do not have the data from the State as of yet - it be good to continue to see if you can get 2016 or 2015 hunting information and put in a spreadsheet. Like Bears Ears - I expect questions will come back to us and if your already on the rabbit trail tracking down information it will help later on ... also if you get it by Monday or Tuesday - upload it to the docs! Lets be as prepared as we can.

Again thanks Jaime for your hard work.

Timothy J Fisher, Program Lead

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On Thu, Jun 1, 2017 at 8:29 PM, Tompkins, Jaime <jtompkins@blm.gov> wrote:

Hi Tim,

Do you have the link to the old monument reports that you could email to me by chance? I was able to locate a handful of past reports..but not 2016 as the link I have doesn't work...

Thx,

Jaime

~~~~~

Jaime Tompkins  
National Conservation Lands/VRM/Youth Program Lead

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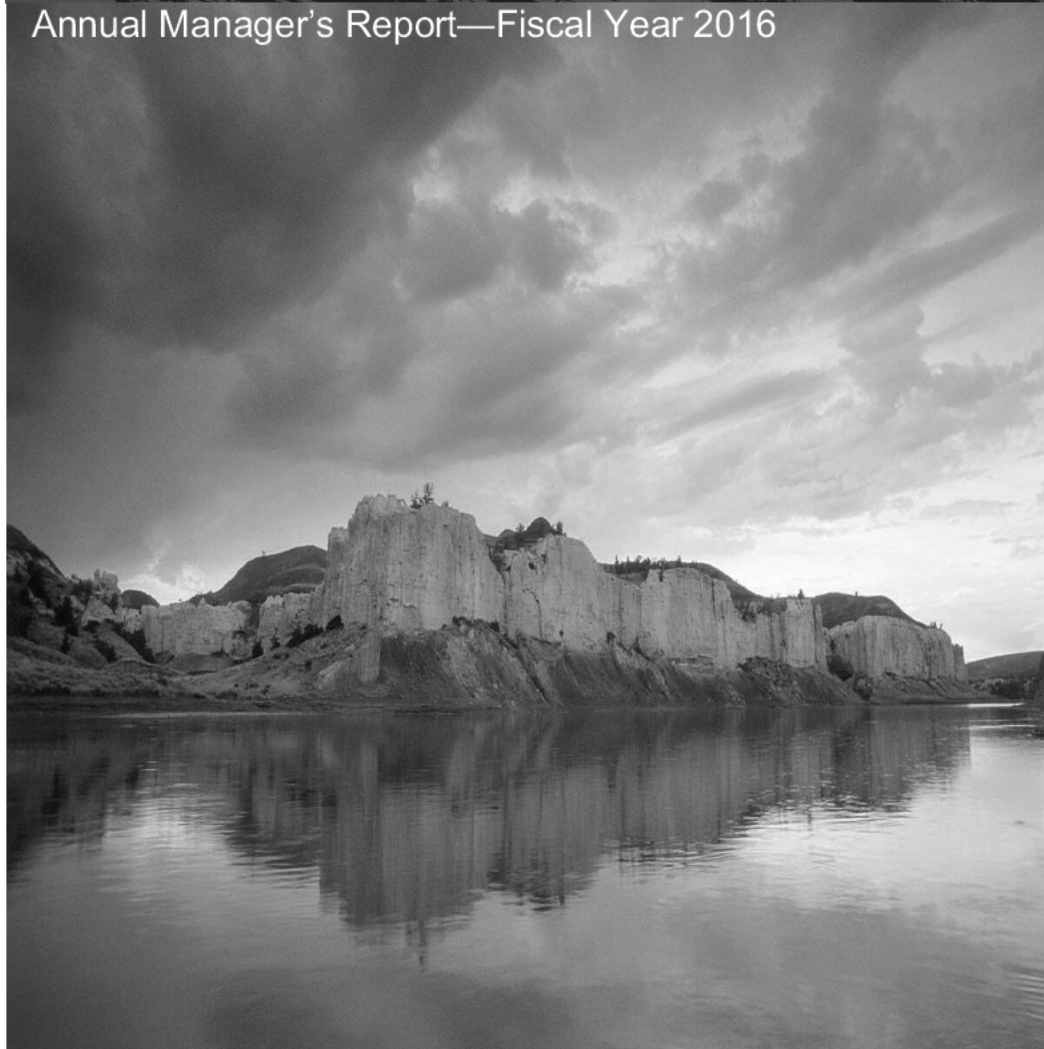
NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS

Montana

# Upper Missouri River Breaks

National Monument (UMRBNM)

Annual Manager's Report—Fiscal Year 2016



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## UMRBNM Profile

### Designating Authority

Designating Authority: Presidential Proclamation #7398

Date of Designation: January 17<sup>th</sup> 2001

### Acreage

|                     |         |
|---------------------|---------|
| Total Acres in Unit | 496,346 |
| BLM Acres           | 377,346 |
| Other Federal Acres | N/A     |
| State Acres*        | 39,000  |
| Private Acres*      | 80,000  |

\*State and Private acres while within the exterior boundaries of the UMRBNM are not included in the monument and are not part of the total unit acres where BLM has management authority or responsibilities

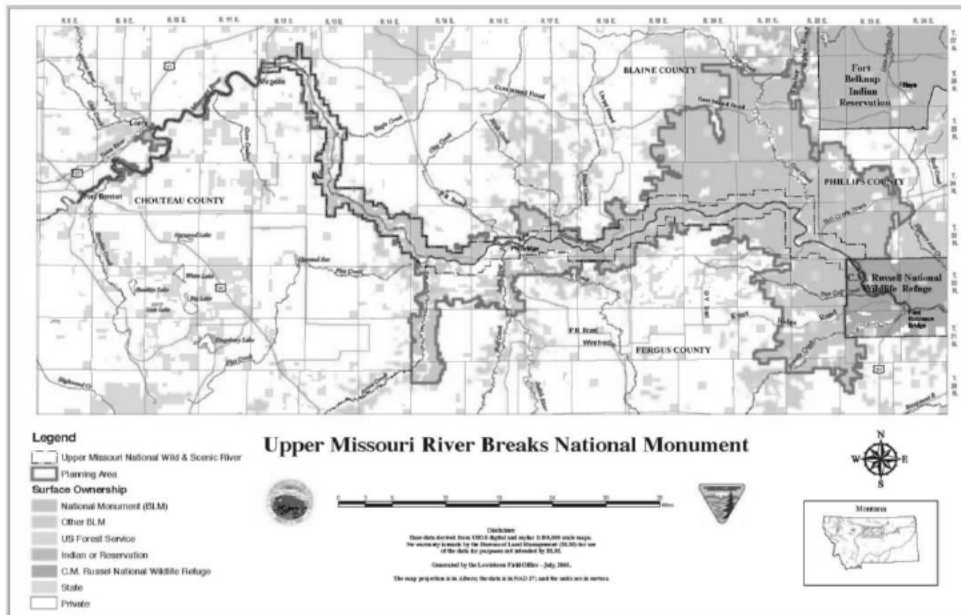
### Contact Information

|                      |                                                    |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Unit Manager         | Josh Chase (Acting)                                |
| Phone                | 406 262 2840                                       |
| E mail               | jchase@blm.gov                                     |
| Mailing Address      | 3990 HWY 2 West, Havre, MT 59501                   |
| Field Office Name    | Havre & Lewistown FO, UMRBNM Interpretative Center |
| District Office Name | North Central Montana District                     |
| State Office Name    | Montana Dakotas State Office                       |

### Budget

|                                       |           |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Total Fiscal Year 2016 Budget__       | \$913,000 |
| Subactivity 1711 (Labor & Ops)        | \$663,000 |
| Other Subactivities and partnerships_ | \$250,000 |

Map of UMRBNM



**Managing Partners:** BLM is the sole management agency of the UMRBNM

### Staffing

- 1 Monument Manager
- 1 Law Enforcement Officer
- 1 Hydrologist
- 1 Natural Resource Specialist
- 1 Wildlife Biologist
- 2 Rangeland Management Specialists
- 1 Range Technician
- 1 Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner
- 1 Park Manager (Interpretative Center Director)
- 1 Park Ranger
- 1 Information Receptionist
- 1 Maintenance Worker
- 1 Administrative Assistant
- Multiple Seasonal Employees and Volunteers

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\* Resource specialists stationed in the Lewistown, Fort Benton, and Havre field offices have collateral duties within the UMBNM. These include: cultural, paleontological, lands/realty, etc.

#### Key Resources and Values

Upper Missouri National Wild & Scenic River (149 miles)

Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail

Nez Perce National Historic Trail

6 Wilderness Study Areas

1 Area of Critical Environmental Concern

Judith Landing Historic District

2 National Register of Historic Places Listed Homesteads

1 Sike's Act Management Area

The Richard E. Wood Watchable Wildlife Area

Diverse Wildlife Species

Diverse Recreational Opportunities

Visitor and Interpretive Center

#### How is the unit's work accomplished?

The workload for the UMRBNM is established and prioritized by the Monument, Havre and Lewistown Field Managers in close concert with the North Central Montana District Manager. An annual work plan is established and disseminated to staff with ongoing contact and interaction by the District Leadership Team throughout the fiscal year. Priorities may be shifted in order to be responsive to public needs and/or concerns.

Emergency Actions (Road Closures, Fire, etc.) are directed through the Monument Manager and addressed on a case by case basis to determine appropriate action and response at the time of the event.

Engineering and construction needs are coordinated through the Monument Manager and the District Administrative Officer in Lewistown.

Given the complexity of the UMRBNM, many tasks and projects are accomplished through various partnerships and volunteer efforts. These efforts enable more items to be accomplished on the ground. Partnerships include collaborations with Montana Conservation Corp, Friends of the Missouri River Breaks and continued collaboration with other federal and state agencies

#### Does it have its own dedicated manager and staff?

The UMRBNM has a dedicated Manager with fully delegated decision making responsibilities for all programs within the Monument. For the upcoming year staff assigned and reporting to that position which is stationed in Fort Benton, Montana will include a Interpretative Center Director (GS 11), Maintenance Worker (WG 5), Information Receptionist (GS 03), Outdoor Recreation Planner (GS 11), Park Ranger (GS 09) and Law Enforcement Ranger (GS 11).

The unique position of the UMRBNM within the North Central Montana District provides a management span of control over three offices to include the Havre and Lewistown Field Offices primarily due to topographic constraints, i.e. the Missouri River.

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Staff located in Havre and supervised by the Havre Field Manager but who have responsibilities within the UMRBNM include a Rangeland Management Specialist (GS 11) and a Natural Resource Specialist (Weeds (GS 11)).

Staff located in Lewistown and supervised by the Lewistown Field Manager but who have responsibilities within the UMRBNM include a Rangeland Management Specialist (GS 11), Hydrologist (GS 11), Range Tech (GS 7), Archaeologist (GS 11), Geologist (GS 11) and Realty Specialist (GS 11).

Does it share staff with another unit, BLM office, or other Federal agency?

Yes, as was previously stated, the UMRBNM shares staff with two other field offices within the district. Estimates of the percentage of each staff member's time spent working on the NM can range widely with associated workloads and priorities but on average are at least 60 70% of their total time. The UMRBNM is a highly visible and unique public land unit in the BLM and more specifically in Montana and requires a unique, diverse and diligent staff to be successful.

## Planning and NEPA

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### Status of the Resource Management Plan

The Resource Management Plan for the UMRBNM was approved in December of 2008. Implementation of the Management Plan is ongoing and after 8 years is reaching the end of the originally forecasted work load associated with implementation with the exception of the long term goals established in the RMP. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Management Plan was completed in 2014, as well as the development of a strategy to assist successful implementation.

The Transportation plan was approved previously and the sign plan for the Monument area is being implemented. Road route markers have been installed in all areas in which BLM has legal access or land owner permission to access these roads.

An environmental assessment was completed that established methods and schedules for closing and/or decommissioning approximately 201 miles of roads that were identified to be closed in the RMP. That EA was litigated and found to be deficient in its compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). In compliance with the corresponding court order BLM has completed additional Class III inventories and consulted with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (MT SHPO) to ensure compliance.

Below are the established goals as identified in the approved RMP:

*Air Quality* **Maintain the Monument as a Class II airshed**

*Cultural Resources* **Preserve historic and cultural values and sites by enhancing public awareness or protection of the resources**

*Fish and Wildlife* **Manage, enhance and protect the fish and wildlife habitat and habitat for special status species.**

*Geology and Paleontology* **Protect the surface features in the landscape that are identified in the proclamation**

*Soils* **Maintain or improve soil health and productivity to provide an ecosystem supporting plant and animal species**

*Vegetation* **Native Plants** *manage for healthy vegetation communities that provide for a wide variety of long term benefits such as aesthetics, wildlife, recreation, livestock grazing, etc.*

*Vegetation* **Riparian** *achieve, or make significant progress toward, proper functioning condition in riparian and wetland areas and to sustain a diverse age class and composition of riparian wetland vegetation for maintenance and recovery of riparian wetland areas.*



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**Vegetation** **Noxious and Invasive Plants** to control, contain and, if possible, eradicate invasive plants

**Visual Resources** to protect the cultural landscape (viewshed) and the visual features in the landscape that are identified in the Proclamation.

**Livestock Grazing** to permit livestock grazing consistent with maintaining healthy vegetation communities

**Water Quality** to maintain and/or improve the existing hydrologic systems in the Monument

**Water Developments and Water Rights** to maintain and/or improve the existing hydrologic systems in the Monument

**Reserved Water Rights** to maintain and/or improve the existing hydrologic systems in the Monument.

**Forest Products** to provide a healthy ecosystem that achieves a sustainable natural variation of vegetation communities.

**Lands and Realty** to provide reasonable access for the public and for private landowners, as well as for the administrative needs and authorized uses of industry and government agencies.

**Fire Management** to manage wildland fire safely, efficiently and with minimal impact to resource values while minimizing the risk of catastrophic fire within the Monument and communities adjacent to the Monument. This includes maintaining or reestablishing the natural influence of fire on vegetation communities and associations.

**Recreation** to manage for a variety of sustainable visitor opportunities in mostly primitive and natural landscapes.

**Upper Missouri River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)** to manage these lands for a variety of sustainable visitor experiences in mostly primitive and natural landscapes. This goal would allow BLM to provide dispersed and developed recreation opportunities and ensure that visual quality characteristics reflect a predominantly primitive or natural landscape while providing a diversity of visitor experiences.

**Uplands Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)** to manage these lands for a variety of sustainable visitor experiences in mostly primitive and natural landscapes. This goal would allow BLM to provide dispersed and developed recreation opportunities and ensure that visual quality characteristics reflect a predominantly primitive or natural landscape while providing a diversity of visitor experiences.

**Minerals** **Oil and Gas** to provide reasonable oil and gas exploration and development on existing leased land without diminishing the objects of the Monument.

*Access and Transportation* to provide access to state and federal land and reasonable access for private landowners while protecting the features of the Monument and to manage legal and physical public access to and within the Monument to provide opportunities for diverse recreation activities (motorized and non motorized) while considering the surrounding regional recreation opportunities in northcentral Montana.

*Wilderness Study Areas* to preserve or enhance the primitive characteristics of the wilderness study areas.

*Cow Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern* to preserve or enhance the resources of the Cow Creek ACEC.

#### Key National Environmental Policy Act Actions and/or Project Authorizations

##### FY-15 UMRBNM NEPA Activity Report

| FY INITIATED | NUMBER  | TITLE                                                               | DECISION DATE |
|--------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 2013         | 0009-EA | UMRBNM Transportation System Implementation                         | 04/20/15      |
| 2014         | 0011-EA | Old PN Road Relocation                                              | 11/13/14      |
| 2014         | 0013-CX | JBO Productions Permit                                              | 10/02/14      |
| 2015         | 0001-EA | Hunters Montana SRP                                                 | 10/21/14      |
| 2015         | 0002-EA | 2015 Missouri Breaks Riparian Group Projects                        | 03/17/15      |
| 2015         | 0003-EA | Cow Creek Airstrip Mechanized Grazing                               | 06/23/15      |
| 2015         | 0004-EA | Armells Creek Outfitters SRP Renewal                                | 02/13/15      |
| 2015         | 0005-EA | M & E Outfitters SRP Renewal                                        | 03/03/15      |
| 2015         | 0006-EA | UMNWSR Recreation Site Enhancement and Fence Enclosures             | 07/09/15      |
| 2015         | 0007-CX | Evans Bend Study Enclosures for Russian Knapweed Biological Control | 04/27/15      |
| 2015         | 0008-CX | WSR Temporary Designation of Level Three Primitive Boat Camps       | 06/18/15      |
| 2015         | 0010-CX | Lion Television Film Permit                                         | 09/15/15      |

##### FY-16 UMRBNM NEPA Activity Report

| FY INITIATED | NUMBER   | TITLE                               | DECISION DATE |
|--------------|----------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| 2014         | 0012-DNA | Schwenke Pipeline Reroute/RIP       | 11/24/15      |
| 2016         | 0001-CX  | Ritland Grazing Preference Transfer | 08/11/2016    |
| 2016         | 0002-CX  | Sherry Coulee                       | 08/11/2016    |
| 2016         | 0003-DNA | Nez Perce Trail Ride                | 07/15/2016    |
| 2016         | 0005-CX  | Metafilm Permit                     | 08/24/16      |
| 2016         | 0007-CX  | Atlantis Film Permit                | 09/15/2016    |

Please describe any NEPA actions or authorizations that affected the unit during the past fiscal year.

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## Year's Projects and Accomplishments

### General Accomplishments

ANNUAL VISITATION AND RECREATION MANAGMENT: Visitor use on the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River received 3,208 registered boaters. Of this number, 1,912 were Montana residents, and 1,296 were from out of state. Outfitted use totaled approximately 17% of people boating the Missouri River in the Monument. The overwhelming number of boaters used canoes and other non motorized boats. Use in the uplands is not counted due to remoteness of the area; however, the majority of the use is during hunting season, September through November. Some hiking occurs during the summer, but use is unknown. The largest fee site campground within the NM, Kipp Recreation Area, had 3,156 paying visitors. Two additional fee areas located on the River were added to the system this past fall.



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**RANGE MANAGEMENT:** In accordance with the Presidential proclamation establishing the UMRBNM, the BLM continues to advocate and administer livestock grazing within the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. A primary focus of the Monument Range Staff is to ensure and maintain healthy rangeland conditions within the Monument. This process is based on evaluating the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management, which are statements of physical and biological condition or degree of function required for healthy sustainable rangelands.

In 2016, UMRBNM staff conducted grazing allotment assessments on 24 individual grazing allotments in the Monument. These 24 grazing allotments equated to 76,000 acres of rangelands being monitored using the 17 Indicators or Rangeland Health Methodology to ensure the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management are being met. This ensures the health and sustainability of rangelands for future generations.





**WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT:** Key upland habitats were inventoried for Standards of Rangeland Health, for riparian health, greater sage grouse habitat, BLM Designated Sensitive Species, and big game. Monitoring efforts continued for sage grouse habitat and big game winter range. Several miles of old fences, which were a danger to wildlife and obstacles to wildlife movement, were removed. Spring improvements and wildlife escape ramps for livestock watering tanks were maintained.

Most known wildlife populations continue to be stable or expanding, with a few exceptions noted below. Many less glamorous and lesser known species have not been inventoried, but presence continues to be based on regular or occasional observations, and presence of available habitat within established range of the species within the state.

Some declines in the size of prairie dog towns have been noted following outbreaks of sylvatic plague. Overall acreage of prairie dog towns has stabilized within the monument due to good precipitation years, areas decimated by plague are re established, or new towns get discovered.

Bald eagle populations nesting along the Upper Missouri River continues to increase annually. Only three nests were active in 2004, while 21 nests in 14 territories have now been documented, with all but one of those territories successfully fledging young birds in 2016.

Sage grouse trends have been static over the long term with slight declines in the last 3



5 years in areas north of the Missouri River. Inventories for unknown lek sites continued, with additional areas to be surveyed in coming spring.

Impacts to critical wildlife habitat along the Upper Missouri River are still increasing with recreational development and use. Efforts are being made to reduce these impacts through mitigation and relocation of recreational sites.

With management and monitoring of upland and riparian health standards, big game winter habitat conditions are good to excellent and still improving, except in areas of overuse by resident and growing elk population. Elk numbers continue to exceed Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MT FWP) population goals and are starting to have an impact on mule deer winter habitat, limiting available forage for wintering mule deer. These numbers continue to climb due to limited public access for hunting. Uncontrolled elk numbers have resulted in declining mule deer numbers across several western states, as a result of the reduction in quality habitat.

Bighorn sheep and elk populations continue to increase and expand into unoccupied habitat. This could provide additional opportunities for wildlife viewing and hunting, with the exception where public access is limited.

Current bighorn sheep are above the population goals set by MT Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks. These numbers continue to climb due to limited public access for hunting. Bighorn sheep populations are at risk for disease outbreaks due to high numbers and densities, which could cause a collapse of these herds for many years to come.



**INTEGRATED PEST AND WEED MANAGEMENT:** Through help from the Friends of the Missouri Breaks, MT Biological Weed Control Coordination Project, MT War on Weeds, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the BLM was able to make significant progress in working on 3 major projects with help from MT Conservation Corp Crews (MCC).

In summer of 2016, BLM used MCC Crews to conduct herbicide treatments in and near 4 recreation areas and significant portions of the Stafford and Dog Creek Wilderness Study Areas.

MCC crews cleared approximately 88 acres of Russian olive from riparian forest on islands in the Missouri River.

Through cooperation with the MT Biological Control Coordination Project, MT War on Weeds, BLM and the MCC provided by the Friends of the Missouri Breaks Volunteers were able to collect biological control insects for distribution amongst the BLM and local County Weed Districts including:

- 200,000 leafy spurge flea beetles and 400 stem borers,
- 6700 spotted knapweed root weevils
- 3 releases of the Russian knapweed gall midge
- 4 releases of the Russian knapweed gall wasp
- 57,000 Dalmatian toadflax stem weevils,

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**CULTURAL RESOURCES:** BLM performed Class III Inventory of all federal and state parcels within the designated corridor of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail north of Cow Island Trail within the UMRBNM and Havre Field Office. This completed one of the RMPs long term objectives.

As previously mentioned, in 2008 the BLM signed the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument's Resource Management Plan. This decision was litigated, eventually being appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. On July 31, 2013, The 9th Circuit's decision was published on July 31, 2013.

In regards to cultural resources, the Court ruled the BLM had satisfied its requirements to consult with the SHPO, but had not sufficiently looked at the effects of travel management on cultural resources. Therefore, the BLM was required to inventory a large percentage of existing roads and trails within the UMRBNM. To accomplish this task, a contract was awarded to perform the necessary work.

Total surveyed area for the contract was 3,343 acres associated with 244 miles of roads and ways and six airstrips. This is in addition to the 2,670 acres and 196 miles of roads that were inventoried in 2014. In addition, 72 sites in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM) project area were investigated, compared to eighty sites in 2014. Satisfaction of the court order needed to occur by January 2017.

BLM also funded a contract for an additional 1,800 acres of inventory in the extreme north end of the UMRBNM. This area has a landmark called Chimney Butte, this inventory has yet to be completed but will be in FY17



Chimney Butte, Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument



An ongoing study consists of archaeological testing on a BLM lot in Fort Benton, the site of the Upper Missouri Wild & Scenic River's contact station prior to the establishment of the Monument. There is a historic subsurface component based on an illegal excavation at the site several years ago. This property is located along Front Street, immediately across the street from a historic levee where the steamboats docked in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is the possibility that there are more archaeological remains associated with that time period in the area.

In September 2015, Montana Preservation Alliance presented the National Register nomination for the Ervin Homestead/Gist Ranch Historic District to the Montana Historical Preservation Review Board for their consideration. The Board supported the nomination and BLM forwarded it to the Keeper in 2016. That property, as of June 23, 2016, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



Ervin Homestead/Gist Ranch Historic District

#### PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES:

Macalester College (St. Paul, MN). Dr. Ray Rogers and colleagues from Macalester and the Smithsonian continue to conduct paleontological field schools in the UMRBNM with financial support from the BLM's challenge cost share and cultural resource program. Rogers accompanied our staff to the Rocky Mountain Front (which is outside of the monument but within the North Central Montana District (NCMD)) this season to monitor paleontological localities recorded 25 years ago. Preserved tracks and a tyrannosaurid jaw were two of the fossils relocated in this effort.

During this period Ray and Curry Rogers continued to work with their students at Macalester College on the recovery, identification, and analysis of vertebrate fossils from the UMRBNM. Two senior honors theses that focus on resources of the UMRBNM were completed. The first project, completed by Mr. Patrick Sullivan, focused on the evidence for predation in fossil localities in the UMRBNM. The second student project, completed by Mr. Evan Kartheiser, focused on the mineralogy of sandstones in the Judith River Formation in the UMRBNM.



Tyrannosaurid jaw, Rocky Mountain Front



Macalester College students, UMRBNM Field School 2015

A manuscript detailing the stratigraphy of the Judith River Formation in the UMRBNM was published in the Journal of Geology. In this manuscript three new members of the Judith River Formation are proposed: the McClelland Ferry Member, the Coal Ridge Member, and the Woodhawk Member. The first radiometric dates from the UMRBNM are also reported in this manuscript. The reference for the manuscript is below.

Rogers, R.R., S.M. Kidwell, A. Deino, J.P. Mitchell, K. Nelson, and J.T. Thole. In Press. Age, Correlation, and Lithostratigraphic Revision of the Upper Cretaceous (Campanian) Judith River Formation in its Type Area (north central Montana), with a Comparison of Low and High Accommodation Alluvial Records. *Journal of Geology* 124:99-135.

A second major manuscript detailing the taphonomy of the fossils in the UMRBNM was completed and submitted to the journal *Paleobiology*. In this manuscript, the concept of "isotaphonomy" is explored using fossils that were collected as part of this project. Two undergraduate students previously supported with funding from the BLM are co authors on this report. The reference for the manuscript is below.

Rogers, R.R., M.T. Carrano, K.A. Curry Rogers, M. Perez, and A. Regan. In Review. Age, Isotaphonomy in Concept and Practice: An Exploration of Vertebrate Microfossil Bonebeds in the Upper Cretaceous (Campanian) Judith River Formation, North Central Montana. *Paleobiology*.

Dr. Matt Carrano (Smithsonian Institution, Curator of Dinosaurs) returned to the UMRBNM to excavate a hadrosaur fossil that had been located two years ago by a "collector" who inadvertently crossed onto public land. The extent of the find has yet to be determined since they are still in the field at the time of this report.

#### HYDROLOGY:

**Cottonwood Planting:** This year, over 80 trees were planted along a mile of the Missouri River at two locations: Slaughter River (6 acres) and Lower Eagle Creek (8 acres). This project is part of an ongoing partnership with local ranchers and the Friends of the Missouri Breaks National Monument. Additional funding was also provided to the Friends to assist with hiring a Montana Conservation Corps crew to water cottonwood plantings at 5 restoration sites.

**Cottonwood Inventory:** Partnering with the Friends of the Missouri Breaks National Monument and the University of Montana's Avian Science Center, an inventory of the critical age class cottonwoods was completed in 2015; and additional funding was provided in 2016 to analyze the data. The results should be available in 2017.

**Riparian Monitoring:** Completion of over 20 miles of riparian assessments as part of Judith to Judith Project. Riparian areas within the Monument are generally functioning at or near their capability, which in most cases is proper functioning condition or making progress towards proper functioning condition although ecological status varies depending on site location. Riparian areas support numerous Monument objects including cottonwood forest and valuable wildlife habitat for nearly every species of wildlife that inhabit the Monument.

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**Exclosure Construction:** Closures were constructed at two locations as part of a partnership with North Western Energy. The Hideaway exclosure included 43 acres of riparian habitat along 1 miles of the Missouri River. And the Woodhawk fencing project included 3 miles of river and 80 acres of riparian habitat.

**Road Treatments:** Road signage was installed on 29 roads for over 5 miles of closure.

**USGS Missouri River Monitoring:** In 2015, the BLM provided funds for a multi year monitoring effort in partnership with the USGS. Gregor Auble, USGS Riparian Ecologist, is leading the effort. No funding was provided in 2016, but data was collected. Two main "products" will be provided to the BLM. The first is a full analysis paper of the transect cottonwood recruitment monitoring data (the beginning in 1997). The second is the Geodatabase of long term bottomland cover type changes.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT:** Currently the Law Enforcement position located in Fort Benton is vacant with a new hire arriving in January 2017. In the meantime, the Lewistown Field Office Ranger covered law enforcement operations for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument for the year resulting in:

- 61 Patrol Checks
- 7 Warnings
- 3 Citations
- 2 Jet boat Patrols
- Documented 3 Search and Rescue incidents
- 1 Fire Investigation

**INTERPERATIVE CENTER:** Visitation at the Missouri River Breaks Interpretive Center surpassed 8,250 in FY16. This is an increase of more than 1,000 visitors over the previous year, and more than 2,500 visitors during the last two years. Almost 1,000 students, ages K 12 including some colleges, attended educational programming at the center, or off site. Washington DC and New Hampshire were the only states without representation in our visitor statistics this year. Many foreign countries were represented in our visitation. Our foreign visitors included Canadians, Germans, Japanese, Swedish, French, Australians, British, Norwegians, Danish, South Africans and Scottish among others.

**REALTY:** The realty workload continues for the Monument, and includes actions such as rights of ways, easements, and acquisition opportunities. The BLM continues to seek LWCF funding as acquisition opportunities are brought to our attention. Each year, the Monument receives requests for commercial filming of the hunts. In FY2016, film permit requests were higher than usual; however, some requests were withdrawn due to time constraints or required fee amounts. Right of way applications vary widely and include: roads, fiber optic lines, and gas pipeline renewals (for existing leases within the Monument)

**VOLUNTEERS:** The volunteers at the UMRBNM provide exemplary support to the river operations and overall program serving in various capacities such as: campground hosts, visitor contact representatives, administrative assistants and field staff. Volunteers are a critical component to the overall success of this program. The Monument hosted 9 long term volunteers to staff developed campgrounds and provide administrative support throughout the boating season. Specific volunteer projects of note include a very successful cottonwood planting effort at Eagle Creek and Slaughter River campgrounds. The Monument's hydrologist spearheaded the effort, coordinating all three phases of the labor intensive project without incident. This project ranged from cutting saplings to digging holes, hauling supplies and equipment to the remote sites and transporting the

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volunteer force for the planting. This project resulted in 150 cottonwood saplings being planted through a joint effort of BLM Staff and Friends of The Missouri River Breaks.

Educational programming at the Missouri Breaks Interpretive Center is accomplished entirely by volunteer staff, supported by one BLM seasonal park ranger. Eleven volunteers and one MCC intern contributed over 500 hours toward the educational programming at the interpretive center. Without their support and dedication the educational programming that reaches almost a thousand students each year would not be possible.

Longstanding partnerships through the Interpretive Center include The River and Plains Society, the City of Fort Benton, the Fort Benton Chamber of Commerce and the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC). A new program within MCC is the Big Sky Watershed Corps; the Interpretive Center Manager is looking forward to working with an intern from that program in FY17. These interns, from around the country, work toward on the ground management as well as through public and student education program like those offered at the center.

**FRIENDS GROUPS:** BLM has actively engaged the Friends of the Missouri River Breaks in 2016 developing work plans, facilitating interactions to gain assistance, attending board meetings and incorporating them into multiple facets of the UMRBNM. Specific projects for 2016 and 2017 where the Friends will be involved include cottonwood planting on the Missouri River, construction of the Woodhawk fence and a myriad of other projects focusing on short term success with long term goals being identified throughout 2017.

#### Current Areas of Focus

Current focus areas for the UMRBNM consist of infrastructure maintenance and repair, upland and WSR recreation management, Cultural Resource Inventory and interpretation, riparian restoration and increased efforts to establish a visible presence for the UMRBNM and the NCMD throughout Montana and the Western United States.

#### Education, Outreach, and Interpretation

General visitation for the UMRBNM Interpretive Center FY 16 was approximately 8,250 people, the highest numbers at the center since opening. Included in that total were almost 1,000 students who participated in over 65 educational programs at the center or off site. These students or groups came from around the region and represent school children, clubs, and after school programs.

Malmstrom Air Force Base out of Great Falls, Montana, brought 120 children over two days for programs presented at the center and at our partner locations in Fort Benton.

Several schools enrolled their students in the Hands on the Land (HOL) river trip program, which is now in its 12th year. This year, the program reached over 125 students from communities in North Central Montana. Prior to this program few, if any, of these students had ever been camping overnight or on a multi day outdoor learning adventure on their public lands.

A new interpretive sign for a trail near the Stafford Ferry has been developed. The Old Army Trail which was constructed to reach the steamship "Peter Balen" to recover that which could be salvaged after the boat caught fire and sank at Dauphine Rapids in 1869. This trail begins on the north side of the river at the Stafford/McClelland Ferry. It follows the historic Army road and affords sweeping views of the river, the heart of the Breaks and the uplands seen north of the river.



Image of the Old Army Trail interpretive sign developed in FY2016.

**Partnerships:** The Monument entered into its eighth year of an Educational Partnership with Salish Kootenai College (SKC), Pablo, Montana. This tribal college recruits American Indian/Native American students from all over the Nation for summer internships designed to expose them to the types of natural resource careers available within the BLM and to provide them an opportunity to gain valuable job experience during their break from college. American Indians/Native Americans are currently greatly under represented in natural resource professions and our goal is to create and maintain an open network of communication by working to develop an outreach program for natural resource students and provide meaningful hands on experience along with educational instruction opportunities. Students assist BLM by accomplishing field projects and gain knowledge about resource management career opportunities within the organization. In FY 16 active recruitment of students began in early spring with funding secured for four students, two of which worked exclusively on the Monument. Both students hailed from the Navajo Nation and began work in May and June respectively as Park Rangers. Opportunities to engage in other resource management related occupations included Law Enforcement, Range Management, and Invasive weeds eradication programs.

The Monument staff continued to engage youth through a recruitment incentive and entered into two separate partnerships with the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC).

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The first one continued the youth work crew program resulting in the commitment of 4 MCC crews over the course of the summer performing various resource management projects to include our on going invasive weeds eradication program, recreation site exclosure construction and road obliteration, habitat restoration. In addition, the Monument recruited four interns this year for a period of twelve weeks each, exposing them to various, resource management related occupations to include Park Ranger (River and Interpretation), range management, and invasive weed eradication.

Land (or Interests in Land) Acquisitions

N/A



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## Science

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### Science

As part of a statewide survey of prairie streams, a graduate student from Montana State University, in cooperation with BLM, Northwestern Energy, and MT FWP, is conducting inventories for 3 native and increasingly rare native prairie fish species (dace). The project will identify important remaining habitat, additional species accounts, and impacts of non native fish. The inventory will provide baseline information for future management decisions.

The MT FWP and USFWS continue to survey endangered Pallid Sturgeon numbers, to document success of stocking efforts and recruitment of young fish into the population.

The BLM has partnered with the University of Montana on a research project regarding late seral woody riparian species such as green ash, box elder, red osier dogwood, to name a few. The purpose of the project is to determine whether the relative absence of such species is influenced by site conditions (soil texture, soil moisture, depth to water table) or by historic herbivory. The project is ongoing, and a citable publication is forthcoming.

Macalester College (St. Paul, MN) and the Smithsonian continue to conduct paleontological field schools in the UMRBNM focusing on the recovery, identification, and analysis of vertebrate fossils from the UMRBNM.



## Resources, Objects, Values, and Stressors

The resources within the UMRBNM are as diverse and widespread as the landscape they encompass, for a comprehensive list of resources identified within the UMRBNM and its corresponding RMP see CHP 2 Established Goals.

Discussed below are resources and values which currently have identified and foreseeable stressors which warrant further conversation outside of what has been discussed in previous chapters.

**RIPARIAN:** Riparian areas within the Monument are generally functioning at or near their capability, which in most cases is proper functioning condition (PFC) or making progress towards PFC, although ecological status varies depending on site location. Riparian areas support numerous Monument objects including cottonwood forest and valuable wildlife habitat for nearly every species of wildlife that inhabit the Monument.

While riparian functionality is being maintained or is improving, riparian values such as woodland forest do have stressors. These include flow regulation and water use, invasive plant species, urban floodplain development upstream of the Monument (which affects the river ecosystem downstream), and livestock grazing. However, on BLM administered land, livestock grazing as a stressor is limited in scope and scale to relatively small areas.

Emerging stressors include drought/climate change, recreational use, and development. The plant evaluation for the RMP identified these emerging stressors as inadequately addressed within that document.

In summary, while riparian areas are generally being maintained or improving and have overall good health, there are stressors affecting the objects and values that these riparian areas support. Many of those stressors are outside of the BLM's ability to directly control.

**WATER QUALITY:** Throughout the UMRBNM, the Missouri River is listed as a water quality impaired stream by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. Although most pollutants are from upstream sources, non point source pollution from altered streamside zones is identified as a contributor of pollutants.

On BLM managed lands, those allotments meeting upland and riparian health standards are at least partially mitigating non point source pollution.

Since most upland and riparian areas within the UMRBNM are meeting standards or improving, mitigation of non point source pollution is also improving.

**INVASIVES:** Invasive plant species have continued to persist in the UMRBNM particularly along the river corridor. Some species will always be a significant vegetative component of the river bottoms they now infest. New invaders such as tamarisk, purple loosestrife, common tansy, and perennial pepperweed are being inventoried/monitored annually to keep very small populations from becoming established.

Deleted:

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Recreation sites are being treated to reduce the risk of spread from these areas to other areas of the Monument and to address introductions due to recreational activities.

The establishment and spread of cheatgrass, regardless of ecological conditions, is becoming more widely distributed on river bottoms along the Missouri River. Results of monitoring and upland assessments indicate, at least in some localized areas, that it is outcompeting and replacing native grass species. If this trend continues, at some point ecological processes and conditions will worsen impacting grazing and wildlife.

**AQUATIC INVASIVES:** There is an emphasis in Montana to inventory for aquatic invasive plants with the discovery of Eurasian Watermilfoil in the Missouri River both up and downstream from the Monument.

**WILDLIFE:** Some declines in the size of prairie dog towns have been noted following outbreaks of sylvatic plague. Overall acreage of prairie dog towns has stabilized within the monument due to good precipitation years, areas decimated by plague are re established, or new towns get discovered.

Bald eagle populations nesting along the Upper Missouri River continues to increase annually. Only three nests were active in 2004, while 21 nests in 14 territories have now been documented, with all but one of those territories successfully fledging young birds in 2016.

Sage grouse trends have been static over the long term with slight declines in the last 3 5 years in areas north of the Missouri River. Inventories for unknown lek sites continued, with additional areas to be surveyed in coming spring.

Impacts to critical wildlife habitat along the Upper Missouri River are still increasing with recreational projects being planned. Efforts are being made to reduce these impacts through mitigation and relocation of recreational sites.

With management and monitoring of upland and riparian health standards, big game winter habitat conditions are good to excellent and still improving, except in areas of overuse by resident and growing elk population.

Big horn sheep and elk populations continue to increase and expand into unoccupied habitat. This could provide additional opportunities for wildlife viewing and hunting, except for limited public access. Current bighorn sheep are above the population goals set by MT Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks. These numbers continue to climb due to limited public access for hunting. Bighorn sheep populations are at risk for disease outbreaks due to high numbers and densities, which could cause a collapse of these herds for many years to come.

Elk numbers continue to exceed MT FWP population goals and are starting to have an impact on mule deer winter habitat, limiting available forage for wintering mule deer. These numbers continue to climb due to limited public access for hunting. Uncontrolled elk numbers have been shown to reduce mule deer numbers across several western states, by reducing the quality of the habitat.



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## **Summary of Performance Measures**

Provided below is a brief qualitative summary of the status of Resource, Objects and Values (ROVs) listed in the previous section.

| Resources, Objects, and Values Status Summary Table |                                                                                |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Resource, Object, or Value                          | Status                                                                         | Trend     |
| Riparian                                            | Generally functioning at or near PFC                                           | Upward    |
| Water Quality                                       | Listed as a water quality impaired, MTDEQ                                      | Improving |
| Invasives                                           | Significant vegetative component of the river bottoms where currently infested | Improving |
| Aquatic Invasives                                   | New aquatic invasives located in tributary water bodies to Missouri River      | Expanding |
| Wildlife                                            | Numbers of animals and habitat generally expanding and improving               | Improving |

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## Manager's Letter

Instead of focusing on the challenges this organization and unit faces in the upcoming years I would instead like to offer some insight and optimism. I have observed during my time as the Acting Monument Manager (over the course of the last few months) exceptional employees with a passion and drive for their respective resources striving to keep BLM multiple use mandates at the front of their work.

I have been part of the resource staff in what was the Hilina and Central Montana district for over six years as a resource specialist (Archaeologist) and have interacted with everyone who has responsibilities within the UMRBNM. I have seen on a daily basis employees working with permittees, the public and tribes to ensure that the public lands contained within our unit are managed to what I believe are the highest caliber the BLM has to offer.

Serving in the capacity as the manager when one has worked side by side with other resource folks offers insight and complications others may not have been privy to before, but I am encouraged and humbled to have seen my colleagues come together for the benefit of the Monument and the Bureau. During my tenure here we have managed to solve several long term issues and difficulties which will allow for a better and safer public experience.

Specialists in the UMRBNM overcome challenges associated with a unit spread out over three field offices and hundreds of miles but still get the job done. This document is called a managers report but is really a list of employee accomplishments highlighted by a manager, in this case a temporary one at that.



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

## **Upper Missouri River Breaks**

### **National Monument**

North Central Montana District  
Bureau of Land Management  
Havre Field Office  
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Havre, Montana 59501  
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