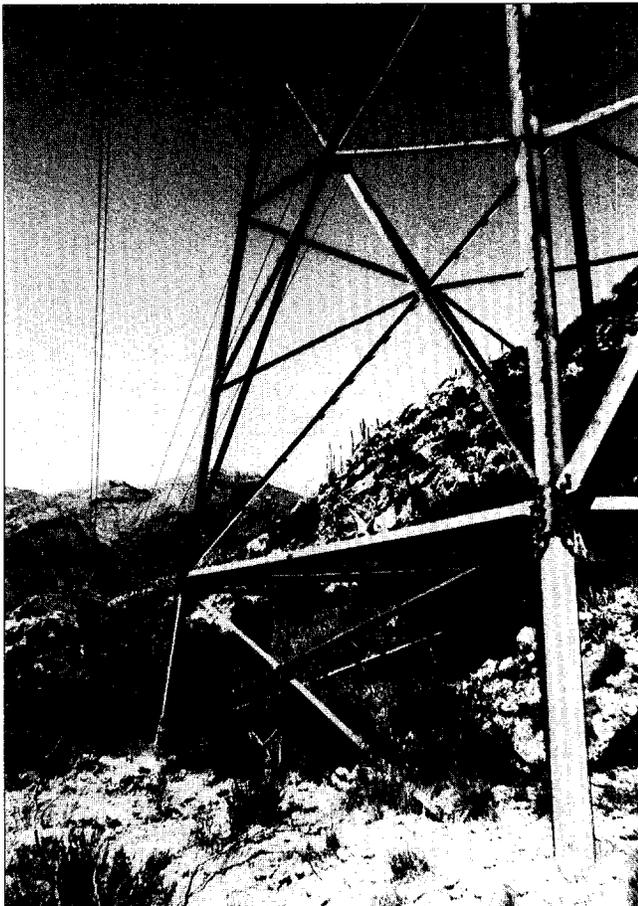


Introduction

The purpose of this Resource Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement is to guide BLM Safford District's management of public lands and resources for the next 15 years. The decisions resulting from the approved Resource Management Plan/ Record of Decision will determine which use or combination of uses will be emphasized by the District. Decisions will also indicate which uses are not appropriate. In certain cases, the decisions will be specific and immediately implementable. In other instances, more specific activity plans and environmental analyses will be prepared before decisions can be implemented. Mitigating measures will be developed prior to implementation of the Resource Management Plan.

Section 202 of the *Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976* requires the Secretary of the Interior to develop, maintain and revise land use plans for management of the public lands. To comply with that act, this Resource Management Plan was prepared by the Safford District. The approved plan will be reviewed, in accordance with monitoring plans, to determine its effectiveness and need for revision.



High voltage power lines carrying electricity across public lands.

Monitoring is a critical and never-ending step in the planning process. Resource Management Plans are generally designed to have a planning horizon of about 15 years.

The Resource Management Plan will replace four existing Management Framework Plans. Much of the information collected for use in preparing the Management Framework Plans was used in preparation of the Resource Management Plan. Similarly, many of the Management Framework Plan's decisions are still valid and are carried forward and incorporated into the Resource Management Plan. Two of the District's Planning Units have never had a land use plan developed. One, the Cochise Planning Unit, is located in Cochise County west of the Dos Cabezas and Chiricahua Mountains and is part of the San Simon Resource Area. The other, the San Pedro Planning Unit, is located in northern Cochise and southwestern Graham counties and is part of the Gila Resource Area. These two units are contiguous to one another and comprise scattered tracts of public lands among large blocks of State or private lands.

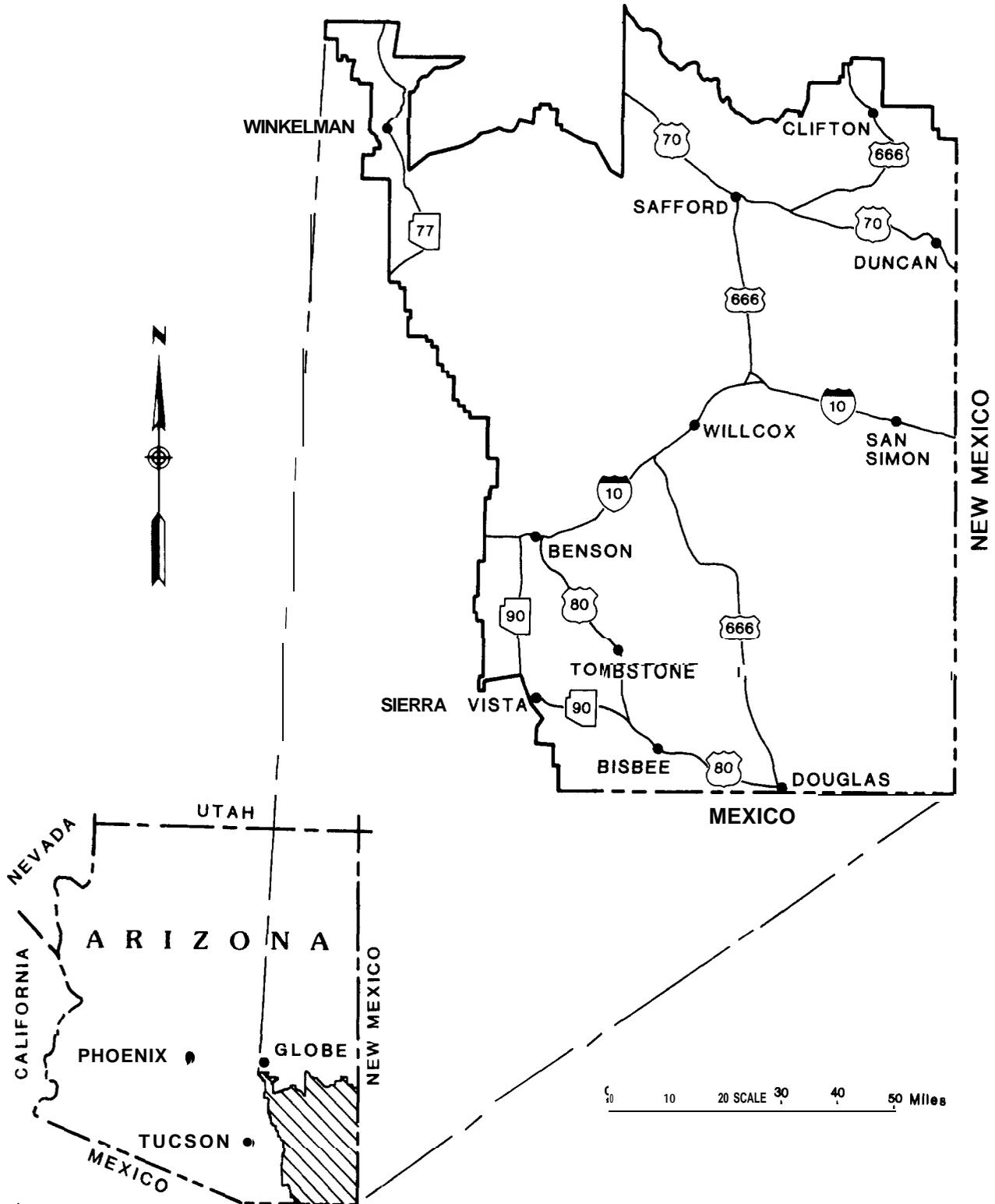
In 1989 BLM completed a land management plan for 47,668 acres of public land along the upper San Pedro River. The *San Pedro River Riparian Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (BLM 1989) provides direction for management of the natural and cultural resources of the property. During the preparation of the San Pedro plan, Congress designated these lands and adjacent public lands (54,189 acres) as the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. Management direction for the adjacent lands was not determined in the San Pedro plan, but will be made in the approved Resource Management Plan, consistent with legislation and the San Pedro plan. The management decisions and mitigations of the *San Pedro River Riparian Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* are incorporated into this Resource Management Plan.

Description of the Planning Area

The Safford District manages for over 1,400,000 acres of public land in southeastern Arizona. It encompasses all of Graham, Greenlee and Cochise counties and portions of Pinal, Pima and Gila counties.

The District is in a sparsely populated part of the state. Larger communities include Sierra Vista, Safford/Thatcher, Clifton/Morenci, Duncan, Willcox, Douglas, Bisbee, Benson and Winkelman.

SAFFORD DISTRICT RMP/EIS AREA



The public lands managed by the District lie within the Basin and Range Physiographic Province south of the Colorado Plateau. The area's northwesterly trending mountain ranges reach elevations of almost 11,000 feet. Separating these mountain ranges are broad, flat or gently sloping basins. Public lands range in elevation from about 1,900 feet to 7,500 feet.

The Safford District administers a variety of programs on public lands in the planning area. Historically, management emphasis has been on livestock grazing, mining, wildlife habitat, recreation, watershed and land and realty actions. Increasing demands for management of cultural resources, wilderness, and other multiple-use programs necessitates BLM maintain up-to-date land use plans.

Planning Process Overview

Resource Management Plans are prepared to resolve significant issues and management concerns about specific land management opportunities and problems. Issues and concerns are identified by BLM specialists and managers and the public at the onset of the planning process. Various alternatives to resolve the issues and concerns are developed and analyzed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The approved Resource Management Plan that results from this process will provide the District Manager with solutions to the issues and concerns and specific guidance for management of all resources on public lands throughout the District.

Under the planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4) the preparation and implementation of an Resource Management Plan is completed in nine steps as described below (see Figure 1).

Step 1- Identification of Issues

This step is intended to identify resource management problems or conflicts that can be resolved through the planning process. Issues are identified by the public and BLM specialists.

Step 2- Development of Planning Criteria

During this step, preliminary decisions are made regarding the kinds of information needed to resolve the issues, the kinds of alternatives to be developed and the factors to be considered in evaluating alternatives and selecting a preferred resource management plan.

Step 3 - Collection of Inventory Data and Information

This step involves the collection of resource, environmental, social, economic or institutional data needed for completion of the process.

Step 4 - Analysis of the Management Situation

This step calls for an assessment of the current situation. It includes a description of current Bureau management guidance, discussion of existing problems and opportunities to resolve them and consolidation of existing data that is needed to analyze and resolve the identified issues.

Step 5 - Formulation of Alternatives

During this step, several resource management alternatives are prepared, including one for no action and others that strive to resolve the issues while emphasizing either environmental protection or resource production or a balance between the two extremes.

Step 6 - Estimation of the 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.



Coatis are racoon-like mammals found in rocky wooded canyons such as Guadalupe Canyon.

Step 7 - Selection of the Preferred Alternative

Based on the information generated during Step 6, the District Manager identifies a preferred alternative. The draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement document is then prepared and distributed for public review.

Step 8 - Selection of the Resource Management Plan

Based in part on the results of public review and comment, the District Manager will select a proposed resource management plan and publish it along with a final Environmental Impact Statement. A final decision can then be made after a 30-day protest period on the final Environmental Impact Statement. The final decision is documented in a Record of Decision prepared by the District Manager. Unresolved protests are not included in the Record of Decision and a decision will be deferred until the protested portions are resolved. The Record of Decision is a separate environmental document and is not considered as a part of the Final Resource Management Plan /Environmental Impact Statement document.

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. Monitoring will also assure that implementation of the plan is achieving the desired results. Monitoring continues from the time the Resource Management Plan is adopted until changing conditions require a revision of the plan.

Planning Issues and Management Concerns

The BLM planning process relates resource management planning to solving land use problems. Significant or controversial land use problems are referred to as issues. An issue may be general, such as a particular program, or more specific, such as how that particular program affects a specific area. Some issues cannot be resolved through the planning process, but require policy changes or even legislation for a solution. In addition to the major issues, other less controversial land use problems are also evaluated. These are referred to as management concerns and are resolved in the same manner as planning issues to improve management of the public lands. Issues and management concerns are identified by BLM specialists and the public.

Issue-driven planning means that only those parts of current management direction that are believed to be at issue are analyzed through the formulation and evaluation of alternatives. Alternatives are not developed for those parts of current management believed to be satisfactory.

Issues Addressed

Four issues and 10 management concerns are addressed in this document. These issues and management concerns were identified based on the judgment of Bureau planning team members, interagency consultation, public input and review by BLM managers.

Issue I -Access

Land ownership in southeastern Arizona varies from large blocks of public, national forest and Indian reservation lands to small scattered tracts of public, state and private lands. Public use of state, national forest and public lands is often limited by the lack of physical or legal access. In some cases, no roads or trails exist to provide access. More often, however, roads exist, but the public has no legal right to use them because they cross private property or other lands where use is not permitted without the appropriate authorization. Access problems also prevent BLM from administering the public lands. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

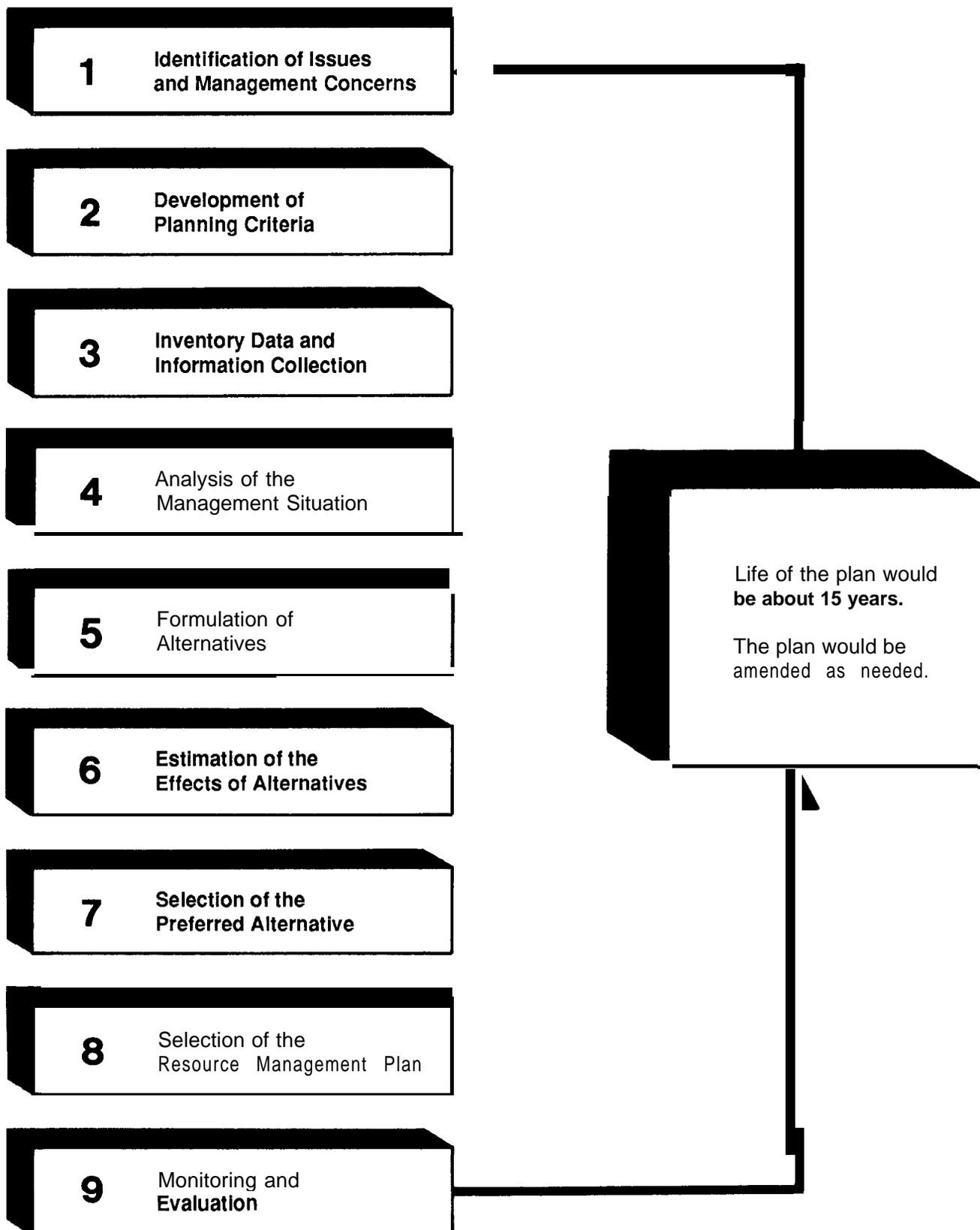
- Where should BLM provide access to or across public lands and what type of access is needed?
- What actions should BLM take to provide access to or across public lands?



Fences are used to divide pastures to facilitate livestock management and to exclude grazing from sensitive areas.

STEPS IN THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

Figure 1



- How should BLM coordinate with other land and resource management agencies and private land-owners to ensure access to state, national forest and public lands?

Issue 2 - Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Other Types of Special Management

The public lands in the Safford District have a variety of important historic, cultural, scenic and natural values. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern designations may be used to protect these values. They may also be used to identify and manage areas that are hazardous to human life and property. Members of the public and BLM resource specialists have made 30 nominations for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. (See Appendix 2)

Other types of special management may also be used to protect important resource values. These include wild and scenic rivers, and resource conservation areas. As required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the subsequent Guidelines for Fulfilling Requirements of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, BLM must study those rivers which qualify for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Two rivers in this area (the Gila and San Francisco) were identified by the National Park Service in 1982 as needing further study, and will be addressed in this document as well (see Appendix 3).

The Wild and Scenic River study process involves making an eligibility, classification and suitability determination. This Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement addresses only eligibility and classification as required by the Guidelines and will defer the suitability determination of all eligible rivers until a later date due to the need for further public involvement. It will only be through the detailed suitability assessment and further public involvement that BLM will make a recommendation through the Secretary of the Interior to Congress on suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers. Only Congress has the authority to designate a Wild and Scenic River through this process.

Resource conservation areas can be designated to give management emphasis to protect special resource values. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- Which public lands, if any, should be designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern? How should they be managed?

- Which rivers and streams, if any, are eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System and how should they be managed?
- Which public lands, if any, should be designated as Resource Conservation Areas? How should they be managed?

Issue 3 - Off-highway Vehicles

The use of off-highway recreational vehicles (three and four-wheeled all terrain vehicles, four-wheel drive pickups, dirt bikes, etc.) has increased over the years and continues to grow. BLM manages the public lands for use by off-highway vehicles, but their use must be carefully controlled to prevent unacceptable changes to the land and its resources. Through this planning process, public lands will be designated as open, limited or closed to off-highway vehicle use. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- Which public lands should be open to off-highway use by vehicles? Which should be closed?
- On which public lands should Off-Highway Vehicles be limited to existing or designated roads and trails (including washes), by type of vehicle or by season of use?

An open area is an area where all types of vehicle use is permitted, at all times and anywhere in the designated area. Conversely, a closed area is an area where vehicle use is prohibited even if roads or trails exist within the designated area.

Issue 4 - Riparian Areas

Riparian areas are valuable because of their importance to watershed protection, water quality, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, recreation opportunities and livestock management. Special management attention is needed to ensure these fragile areas are protected and improved while providing for their use. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- What management objectives should BLM establish for riparian areas to provide for the various public demands for use, yet still protect and enhance these areas?
- What actions should BLM take to achieve these objectives?



Management Concern 1 Wildlife Habitat

Public lands in the Safford District provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Other uses of the public lands can be damaging to wildlife habitat if not properly managed. Special attention is needed to restore, maintain or enhance priority species and habitats (see Appendix 4). Integration of habitat management with other resource programs requires careful planning to minimize impacts to these species and habitats while still providing for other uses of the public lands. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- . What species and habitats should receive management priority? What maintenance, improvement and expansion objectives should BLM establish for those species and habitats?
- . For which priority areas should Habitat Management Plans be prepared?
- . What actions should BLM take to achieve the objectives for priority species and habitats?
- . What monitoring objectives should BLM establish for priority habitat?

- . What management objectives should BLM establish for state and federally listed threatened and endangered species? What actions should BLM take to improve habitat conditions and resolve resource conflicts for listed, proposed and candidate species?
- . Where, by what methods, and at what times of the year should animal damage (predator) control activities be authorized?

Management Concern 2 - Lands and Realty

Over the past three years, BLM has been very active in a land ownership adjustment, or exchange program. The purpose of the program was to consolidate land ownership to improve resource management and service to the public and to bring into public ownership lands with significant multiple resource values. Over 250,000 acres of state land and large areas of private land have come into public ownership through exchanges or adjustments.

The public lands are used by the private sector for a variety of purposes, including powerlines, oil pipelines and telecommunication sites. Authorization of these activities takes careful planning to ensure that significant adverse impacts to other resource values and uses do not occur. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- . Which public lands should be sold or exchanged to improve BLM land and resource management efficiency and to provide for the future needs of the public and local communities?
- . What types of lands should BLM acquire through purchase or exchange to support its resource management programs (see Appendix 5)?
- . Which lands should be retained in public ownership to be managed for their various values in a combination that will best serve the needs of the public?
- . Which public lands should be designated right-of-way corridors, communication sites, avoidance areas and exclusion areas?
- . What terms and conditions should be applied to right-of-way grants for corridors and communication sites and for uses outside corridors and communication sites?
- . Which existing public land transportation and utility corridors should not be designated as right-of-way corridors upon plan approval?

Management Concern 3 - Outdoor Recreation and Visual Resource Management

Recreation on public lands continues to increase. Demand for developed recreation sites and open space for more dispersed activities can, at least in part, be satisfied through management of outdoor recreation use of the public lands. Recreation opportunities also contribute to tourism in Arizona, benefitting the economies of communities, counties and the state. BLM also manages visual resources to maintain the scenic quality of the public lands. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

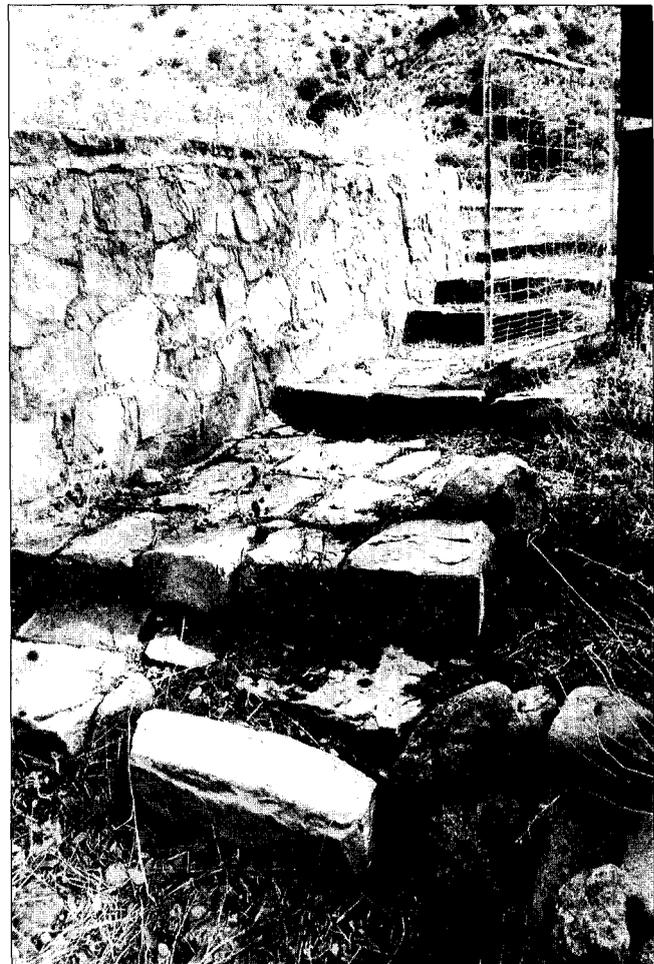
- . Which public lands should be managed with emphasis on outdoor recreation opportunities?
- . What recreation settings should be maintained and what recreation activities, services or facilities should BLM provide?
- . What recreation management strategies should be developed, and what actions should BLM take to maintain or improve established recreation settings?
- . What recreation activity planning priorities should BLM establish for the District?
- . Which public lands should be identified and managed for interpretation of natural and cultural resources and for public education?
- . Which roads, sites, signs and facilities should be signed to provide for public information, interpretation and safety?
- . What visual resource management objectives should BLM establish for recently acquired lands? Existing public lands?

Management Concern 4 - Energy and Minerals

Bureau policy and Department regulations to foster and encourage the development of energy and mineral resources while protecting public lands from undue or unnecessary degradation of the environment. Careful consideration is given to mitigate, where possible, potential impacts of mining operations on other resource values. BLM also has the authority to include stipulations with energy and mineral leases to avoid adverse impacts to other resource values. Utilization of energy and mineral resources, while providing for environmental protection, requires careful analysis.

The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- . Which public lands should be open to oil and gas and geothermal energy development subject to the terms and conditions of the standard lease form, minor constraints such as seasonal restrictions or major constraints such as no surface occupancy? Which public lands should be closed to oil and gas and geothermal energy leasing (see Appendix 8)?
- . What management direction should Safford District establish for existing leases, lease stipulations, stipulation waivers and geophysical exploration?
- Which public lands should be closed to the operation of the mining laws (see Appendix 7)?
- . Which public lands should be open to mineral material (sand, gravel, etc.) disposal? Which should be closed?



Remains of historical buildings can be seen along Guadalupe Canyon in extreme southeastern Arizona.

- What terms, conditions or special stipulations should be applied to open areas that may constrain mineral material disposal activities?

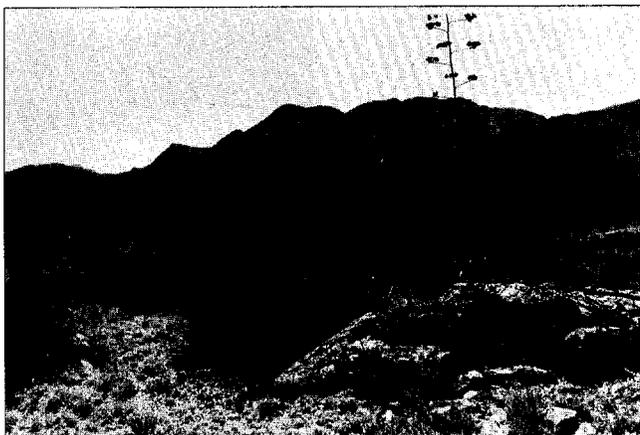
Management Concern 5- Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are an important link to our past. Understanding this link will help BLM as well as public, state and local historians or archaeologists in planning for the future. BLM manages cultural resources for their scientific, historic and management information; sociocultural, educational, recreational or other public values; or to maintain them in their present condition. The resource management plan presents an opportunity to set direction for management of cultural resources on the public lands. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- What management objectives should BLM establish for cultural resources on public lands in the District?
- What actions should BLM take to achieve these objectives?

Management Concern 6- Soil Erosion

Measures to control soil erosion in the San Simon Watershed and to reclaim eroded land have been underway since the 1930s. Since the 1950s BLM has built structures on the main and side channels of the San Simon River and reseeded over 12,000 acres of the watershed for that same purpose. While channel structures have produced the desired results, seedings have met with minimal success. Special attention is needed to determine if further structural work will be required to complete rehabilitation of the watershed.



Rolling hills around Ft. Bowle National Historic Site provide hiking opportunities, and contain parts of the historic Butterfield State Route.

The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- What objectives should BLM establish for management of soils in the San Simon Watershed, and what actions should be taken to achieve those objectives?
- What objectives should the District establish to reduce the salinity of water and what actions should be taken to achieve those objectives?

Management Concern 7 - Vegetation

Vegetation is an integral part of an ecosystem and how BLM manages that resource on public land will affect the health of the environment. Careful consideration needs to be given about how BLM should manage firewood cutting, threatened and endangered plant species, re-establishment of vegetation and land treatments for enhancement of vegetation. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- Which public lands should be available for firewood cutting and what terms and conditions should be applied to a permit to cut firewood?
- What management objectives should BLM develop to re-establish upland vegetative species, and what actions should be taken to achieve those objectives?
- What management objectives should BLM establish to protect and enhance threatened and endangered species, and what actions should be taken to achieve those objectives?
- On which public lands should land treatments (vegetation manipulation) be used to protect, restore, establish or enhance vegetation species? What types of treatments should BLM use (root plow, herbicides, prescribed fire, etc.)?

Management Concern 8 - Water Resources

In the dry environment of the Southwest, water is often the limiting factor to biological resources and use of the public lands. Maintenance of water quality and quantity is critical to the well-being of the environment, the public and many of BLM's programs (see Appendix 9). The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- What groundwater management objectives should BLM establish for the public lands managed by the District and what actions should be taken to achieve those objectives?
- For which public lands should water management plans be prepared?
- What water quality objectives should BLM establish for the public lands within the District and what actions should be taken to achieve those objectives?
- Where should Unique Waters nominations be made? How should BLM manage these areas if designated?
- Where should BLM focus its efforts to secure instream flows for riparian, wildlife and recreation purposes?

Management Concern 9 - Air Quality

Under the Clean Air Act, public lands in the Safford District were given Class II air quality status. This classification allows for moderate deterioration of air quality associated with moderate, well-controlled industrial and population growth. Some activities that take place on public lands may have created impacts on air quality, but the activities must comply with the Clean Air Act standards. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

- What management objectives should BLM establish for maintenance of air quality on public lands within the District?
- What actions should BLM take to achieve these objectives?

Management Concern 10 - Paleontological Resources

Southeastern Arizona contains many paleontological resources. This Resource Management Plan gives the Bureau an opportunity to set direction for how these resources should be managed on the public lands for the public benefit. The following questions were analyzed in the planning process.

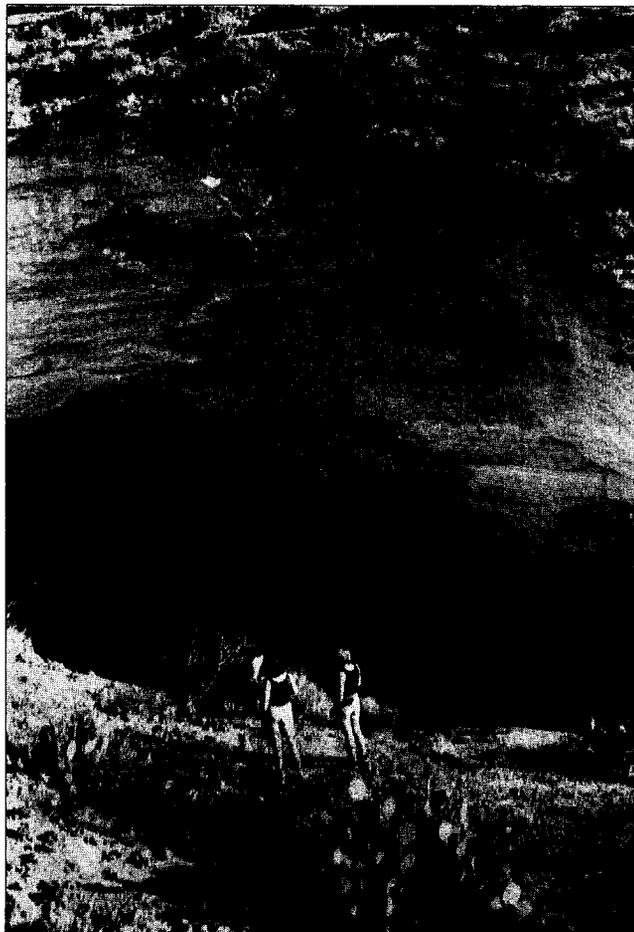
- What management objectives should BLM establish for paleontological resources?
- What actions should BLM take to achieve these objectives?

Issues Considered But Not Analyzed

The following issues were identified early in the process, but were not analyzed in detail:

Livestock Grazing The Upper Gila-San Simon Grazing Environmental Impact Statement was completed in 1978 and its decisions have been implemented since then. Monitoring studies are in place and analysis indicates that the rangeland condition is improving under the present management. Present management has the flexibility to modify grazing levels and seasons, where necessary. In addition, the *Eastern Arizona Grazing Environmental Impact Statement* was completed in 1987 and the decisions made in that document are beginning to be implemented. The grazing decisions are incorporated by reference.

Wilderness Districtwide wilderness studies were completed in 1989. On November 28, 1990, President George Bush signed into law the Arizona Desert



Hikers above Oak Grove Canyon view the Goat Corral amphitheater in the canyon below.

Wilderness Act which created six new wilderness areas in the District, an expanded Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness and the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area. No further analysis of this issue is necessary at this time. Baker Canyon WSA will continue to be managed as a study area until New Mexico addresses Wilderness designation.

Herbicides and Pesticides An environmental impact statement *Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands* is being prepared to provide Bureauwide guidance on the use of pesticides and herbicides. If chemicals are approved for use, site specific environmental analyses will be prepared for each project proposing the use of herbicides or pesticides.

Planning Criteria

Planning criteria were developed and revised at several points during the planning process to assure that the planning steps focused on the issues and concerns. Planning criteria are factors BLM will evaluate when developing resolutions to the issues and management concerns. They help establish the limits of the analysis needed to resolve the issues and concerns. The analyzed criteria can be reviewed at the Safford District Office, 425 East Fourth Street, Safford, Arizona 85546.

