

**BILLINGS RESOURCE AREA  
MILES CITY DISTRICT**

# **Chapter 1**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

# **Introduction**





This document contains the decisions on all land use proposals presented in the November, 1983 final environmental impact statement. It describes resource objectives and recommendations, rationale, implementation priorities, support and monitoring techniques.

This document does not present information on the existing environment or environmental consequences. This information was previously discussed in the draft and final Billings RMP/EIS, which may be obtained by contacting the Billings Resource Area Office.

In addition to this document, a rangeland program summary and four wilderness study reports are being prepared. The wilderness study reports will identify the preliminary recommendations for each wilderness study area. This report along with a final environmental impact statement for the wilderness portion of the plan, will be submitted to Congress for approval. The rangeland program summary will summarize the livestock grazing management program and grazing decisions reached through this plan together with consultation with the affected parties. This summary will describe which selective management category each allotment falls into and provide a proposed schedule for issuance of grazing decisions where stocking rates are known. It will also detail the studies and actions to be taken to determine proposed stocking rates for those allotments where stocking rates are known.

## **PURPOSE AND NEED**

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, the BLM conducted several planning efforts on small sub-units of what is now the Billings Resource Area. These planning efforts resulted in several management framework plans (MFPs) that provided management direction for various resources and resource problems.

Because of new legislation, changing policies and new land use problems, there was a need to consolidate, revise and update the decisions made in the old MFPs. This new planning effort replaced earlier MFPs, and included portions of the resource area not covered in previous planning efforts and is called a resource management plan (RMP).

The Bureau's principal authority to manage public lands is found in the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978. Through these authorities, BLM is responsible for managing resources on public lands in a manner that maintains or improves them.

This resource management plan is written in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations and in specific response to litigation in the Natural Resources Defense Council et al. versus Roger C.B. Morton et al. 1973 (U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, ref. Case No. 1983-73).

In addition to meeting the previously mentioned requirements, this plan satisfies the BLM's policy to (1) identify lands suitable for wilderness designation (the study phase of BLM's wilderness review process); (2) identify lands with potential for coal leasing (43 CFR, Part 3400); (3) respond to the court mandate (Natural Resources Defense Council et al. versus Watt (Civil Action 1983-75)) requiring the BLM to complete a livestock grazing environmental impact statement; (4) identify public land as open, closed, or limited for off-road vehicle use (Executive Order 11989); and (5) manage and control wild horses and burros to "maintain a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship" on the public lands (Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burros Act of 1971).

The intent of this resource management plan is to anticipate and plan for the public needs from BLM lands in the Billings Resource Area to the year 2008.

Unless otherwise specified, the recommendations made in this land use plan apply only to public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

## **SETTING**

The Billings Resource Area in southcentral Montana is comprised of Wheatland, Golden Valley, Musselshell, Yellowstone, Carbon, Stillwater, Sweetgrass, and portions of Big Horn Counties. This area totals approximately 10 million acres of land of all ownerships (see Figure 1.1). The resource area administers approximately 425,336 public surface acres on a multiple use basis. There are 906,084 subsurface (mineral) acres within the resource area. The resource area is also responsible for the administration of 6,340 acres of public lands in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range in Big Horn County, Wyoming.

Except for several contiguous blocks of land in Carbon County, most of the BLM managed lands in the Billings Resource Area are scattered tracts, intermingled with private and state-owned lands. Private lands are usually located along drainage bottoms and on the more productive uplands. In addition to livestock grazing, these public lands provide wildlife habitat, recreation, valuable minerals and other multiple resource values. This land pattern strongly affects management options.

The population of the area is primarily concentrated in the Yellowstone Valley in and around Billings, Montana.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Decisions in this plan will be implemented over a period of years and must be tied to the BLM budgeting process. This period of time is referred to as the short term (8 years). Results of implementation are assumed to take place in the long term (25 years) or 17 years after the implementation period. Therefore, priorities have been established for each resource to guide the order of implementation. The priorities for each program will be reviewed annually to help develop the annual work plan commitments for the coming year. The priorities may be revised based upon new administrative policy, new Departmental directions, or new Bureau goals. The priorities of implementation are presented by resource issue in Chapter 2.

## **MITIGATION AND MONITORING**

The selected Resource Management Plan incorporates measures for mitigating undesirable environmental effects. These measures are identified in the final RMP/EIS and will be applied during implementation of the RMP. In some cases, additional mitigation will be applied during activity planning.

The effects of implementing the Billings RMP will be monitored and evaluated on a periodic basis to assure that the desired results are being achieved. Individual resources will be monitored as explained in Chapter 2 of this document. Monitoring will determine whether actions are consistent with current policy, whether original assumptions were correctly applied and impacts correctly predicted, whether mitigation measures are satisfactory, whether significant changes have been made in related plans of other federal agencies or state and local governments, or whether new data is of significance to the plan. Monitoring will also help to establish long-term use and resource condition trends and provide valuable information for future planning.

## **MAINTENANCE**

This plan will be maintained as necessary to reflect minor changes in data. Maintenance will be limited to refining or documenting a previously approved decision. It shall not expand the scope of resource uses or restrictions or change the terms, conditions, and decisions of the plan. Maintenance will be documented in supporting records. Formal public involvement will not be necessary to maintain the plan.