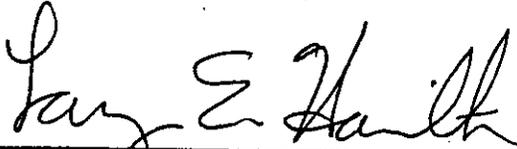


DECISION RECORD
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
APPROVED BILLINGS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
PLAN AMENDMENT
for
POMPEYS PILLAR
AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Prepared by:
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MILES CITY DISTRICT
BILLINGS RESOURCE AREA

DECIDING OFFICIAL:



LARRY E. HAMILTON
State Director
Montana State Office

8/1/96

DATE

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to approve the BLM management decisions for the 473 acres that comprise Pompeys Pillar.

This Decision Record finalizes and documents decisions resulting from the Pompeys Pillar ACEC Environmental Assessment(EA)/Amendment for the Billings Resource Management Plan (Environmental Assessment MT-25-96-09) published in March, 1996.

DECISION

The decision is hereby made to approve the amendment described in the 1996 Pompeys Pillar ACEC EA/Amendment. This plan was prepared under federal regulations including the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. The preferred alternative (Alternative C) has been selected as the approved resource management plan for Pompeys Pillar.

LOCATION OF PLANNING AREA

The Pompeys Pillar ACEC is located on the south bank of the Yellowstone River and on the north side of Interstate Highway 94, 28 miles east of Billings, Montana (see Map 1 for general location). Billings is the nearest major tourist service center and serves as a gateway to the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, Crow Indian Reservation, Little Bighorn National Battlefield, Beartooth Mountains and Yellowstone National Park.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Consultation, coordination and public involvement have occurred throughout the process through scoping meetings, planning meetings, individual contacts, newspaper releases, *Federal Register* notices and comment periods.

In January of 1993, a three day planning workshop was held in Billings. A diverse group of agencies and individuals participated. Appendix 9 of the EA/Amendment contains a complete list of participants. In addition, several open houses were held following the workshop to gather public input. Concepts developed at the workshop and ideas generated at the open houses were used to develop alternatives for the EA/Amendment.

A Federal Register notice was published on April 6, 1995, informing the public of the notice of intent to amend the Billings RMP to consider designating Pompeys Pillar as an ACEC. Several news releases were published in local papers.

Public scoping meetings were held in Huntley and Billings on October 5, 1995. A news release was published in local papers to notify the public of these meetings. Seventeen individuals attended the Huntley meeting, while three attended the meeting in Billings. The meetings were held to gather additional public input prior to initiating the EA/Amendment.

The Pompeys Pillar EA/Amendment was prepared by an interdisciplinary team of specialists from the Billings Resource Area, Miles City District Office and the Montana State Office. Reviews for adequacy were provided by district, state and national office staffs.

During the public review period for the EA/Amendment (April 20 - May 20, 1996), a total of 12 letters were received. The majority of the comments were preferences or opinions for alternatives. One comment suggested a "no shooting" alternative for the entire ACEC. Alternative D was modified to include no shooting and re-analyzed to assess impacts. In addition, several minor corrections were made as the result

of comments. However, none of the comments provided sufficient reason to deviate from the Preferred Alternative.

IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING DECISIONS

Decisions in this plan will be implemented over a period of years and are tied directly to the BLM budgeting process. Funding levels can affect the timing and implementation of management actions and project proposals, but will not affect the decisions made under this resource management plan. An implementation schedule will be developed to provide for the systematic accomplishment of decisions in the approved resource management plan.

All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm have been adopted. Monitoring will be conducted to evaluate the continuing effectiveness of the decisions in this plan. Monitoring will provide the needed information to determine if the plan is meeting the stated goals and objectives including: if the management prescription is fulfilling the purpose for which it was designed; if predictions of impacts were accurate; to reveal unanticipated impacts, including those off-site; if mitigation measures are satisfactory and effective; if threshold levels have been met or exceeded; to provide for continuing evaluation of consistency with federal, state, and local government and Indian tribes; and to determine the rate and degree to which the plan is being implemented.

MAINTAINING AND AMENDING DECISIONS

Decisions in this plan will be maintained to reflect minor changes in information. Maintenance is limited to refining or further clarifying a plan decision and cannot expand the scope of the decision nor change the terms nor conditions of the decision. Maintenance will be documented in supporting records. A plan amendment may become necessary if major changes are needed or to consider a proposal or action that is not in conformance with the plan. Plan amendments are accomplished with public input and environmental analyses.

ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PREFERRED

Alternative A approximates the existing situation. This is considered the No Action alternative. Under this alternative Pompeys Pillar, existing facilities and the current management scheme remain the same. The area is not designated an ACEC.

Alternative B, the most protective of natural and cultural values, emphasizes reconstructing and maintaining the historic character of the landscape over a relatively large area near the NHL. This alternative presents a higher level of recreation development than is currently present, but removes visual obtrusions to some distance from the NHL. Alternative B also eliminates farming.

Alternative C is the approved preferred alternative. This alternative presents a moderate approach to ACEC management, emphasizing both the recreation and historic setting. This alternative presents a higher level of facility development than Alternative B, but much less than Alternative D. This alternative also recognizes the current rural agricultural nature of this portion of the Yellowstone Valley, but provides for future change at the ACEC, when or if needed to satisfy visitor uses.

Alternative D, the least protective of natural and cultural values, presents a maximum recreation development and minimizes the historic setting. This alternative establishes Pompeys Pillar as a major tourist destination with a large visitor center and overnight camping facilities.

PLANNING ZONES

Under Alternatives B, C and D, Pompeys Pillar was divided into three management zones. These zones, described below, emphasized different management objectives.

Historic Zone

The management objectives of this zone would be 1) to provide visitor access to Clark's signature and other historic inscriptions and rock art on the NHL and 2) to enhance the visitors' experience through providing landscapes that appear similar to the natural setting Clark viewed in 1806. Modifications of the landscape would be the minimum necessary for visitor safety and protection of the signature and other rock art from further deterioration.

Historic Zone - Developed

The management objective of this zone would be to provide an area where most facilities would be placed. Facilities would be designed to enhance visitor experiences through interpretation and visitor services. Facilities would include a visitor center, vehicle parking, picnic area, interpretive displays, demonstrations and, under Alternative D, visitor conveniences and overnight camping facilities.

General Management Zone (Alternatives B and D)

The management objectives of this zone would be to: 1) improve and/or maintain wildlife habitat condition and 2) enhance recreation opportunities.

General Management Zone (Alternative C)

The management objectives of this zone would be to: 1) improve and/or maintain wildlife habitat condition, 2) enhance recreation opportunities and 3) utilize agriculture to facilitate general management.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative B is the environmentally preferred alternative, providing the greatest protection from surface-disturbing activities. This is followed closely by the approved alternative, Alternative C, in providing environmental protection. Rather than eliminating uses, special management tools are used to provide environmental protection while allowing use to occur.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATION

Decisions were based on the following rationale and factors.

The management actions in this plan apply to BLM-administered lands and minerals only. No land use decisions require or plan actions on non-BLM property.

Baseline social and economic data were compiled from existing published sources and a staff study of local economic and social characteristics. Management decisions considered demographic and economic trends related to current and future demands for public resources. Public perceptions and attitudes about BLM-administered resources were also considered.

Standard operating procedures were applied, as appropriate, to meet resource management goals. In some cases, more specific stipulations were used to further protect resources.

The BLM followed program guidance including the BLM's Washington Office 1986 Supplemental Program Guidance (BLM Manual 1620-1625). Alternatives and development scenarios were prepared using the Pompeys Pillar Management Development Options (January, 1993).

MANAGEMENT PLAN

The following decisions will guide future management of the Pompeys Pillar ACEC. Decisions found in the Appendices of the Pompeys Pillar ACEC EA/Amendment and the following resource management decisions constitute the Resource Management Plan guidance for Pompeys Pillar ACEC. The rationale for selecting Alternative C, the preferred alternative, was based on public comments from scoping meetings, public comments on the EA/Amendment, current regulations, guidance, laws, current management policy, and the analysis of each alternative.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE

The management objectives will be to emphasize both recreation and the historic setting of 1806 with a moderate level of facility development and visitor services. BLM will provide visitor access while protecting the evidence that the National Historic Landmark (NHL) was visited in 1806 by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (William Clark's signature on the rock).

Rationale

The Pompeys Pillar ACEC provides some unique opportunities as well as access to public land resources in an area where public access is very limited. Maintaining the historic setting will enhance the visitor experience of viewing nearly 200 year old irreplaceable historic resources. The entire ACEC area provides public opportunities for a wide range of nature watching activities in the surrounding riparian environment, as well as hunting in the fall of the year after visitor activities at the Pompeys Pillar NHL are closed.

ACEC DESIGNATION

Pompeys Pillar will be designated an ACEC (see Appendix 1 of the Pompeys Pillar EA/Amendment) excluding the three acres on the south side of the interstate. The ACEC will be divided into three management zones emphasizing different aspects of the setting near the NHL: 90 acres will be managed as a Historic Zone, 110 acres will be managed as Historic Zone - Developed and 270 acres will be managed as a General Management Zone.

Management prescriptions from this amendment and the subsequent activity plan will serve as the ACEC management plan.

Rationale

FLPMA requires that all appropriate areas be considered for designation as ACECs. Bureau policy requires designation of ACECs where resource values meet relevance and importance criteria and the area needs special management attention. Pompeys Pillar, meeting these criteria, requires special management attention because of the present and growing public visitation, in 1995 amounting to 40,000+ visitors.

AIR QUALITY

Management activities will be conducted in a manner that will preserve the Montana Class II air quality designation for Yellowstone County.

Rationale

Under the requirements of the Clean Air Act, as amended (1979), federal agencies must abide by national air quality standards, and support provisions of state regulations.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resource inventories will be conducted before surface disturbing activities are authorized. Effects on significant cultural resources will be avoided or considered in decisionmaking through the regulations at 36 CFR 63 and 36 CFR 800. Actions will also comply with P.L. 101-601, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Cultural resources will be managed under four primary management objectives, in priority order: (1) maintain the existing state of preservation of the rock art and inscription panels on Pompeys Pillar NHL through protection and, where feasible, physical stabilization of these features; (2) identify, record, and evaluate, to the extent possible, such additional cultural properties as may be present; (3) identify appropriate uses for each of the prehistoric and historic cultural properties other than the NHL, and manage each of these sites within their allocated use(s) (Appendix 3); and (4) protect the sites allocated to public, conservation, socio-cultural, scientific, or management use.

The six acre NHL, including the William Clark signature panel, the other rock art and inscription panels on the landform and the surrounding slopes which may harbor intact archaeological deposits, will be allocated to both conservation use and strictly controlled public use for interpretive purposes.

Cultural sites on the property, outside of the Pompeys Pillar NHL, will initially be allocated to scientific use, pending evaluation and consultation with the Montana SHPO and/or the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP). After evaluation and comparison, sites will be assigned to one or more usage categories: scientific use, management use, socio-cultural use, conservation for future use, or public use for interpretive purposes. Sites with only slight remaining scientific potential will be fully documented and then discharged, meaning that their information potential is preserved in archival form and their physical existence will no longer constrain future management decisions.

Rationale

The principal authorities for cultural resources that guided the decisions are the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966; the Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended; the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 800); the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978; and the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. Pompeys Pillar contains many important and unique cultural resource sites.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Visitor access will be provided to Clark's signature.

The Pillar landform will continue to be managed as a National Historic Landmark.

Wading and swimming in the Yellowstone River will be discouraged.

The Pompeys Pillar ACEC will be managed as a day use site. Visitor services consistent with day use, including visitor center and visitor comfort facilities, will be planned and constructed as public support is developed. Visitor services will be offered from May 1 to October 30. Outside the open season dates visitors will be allowed to walk in to the extent BLM can protect resource values.

Firearms use will be managed as shown on Map 6 of the EA/Amendment. The area near and around developed facilities will be closed to discharge of firearms or weapons. Firearm use in the southwest portion of the Pompeys Pillar ACEC will be closed from May through October, coinciding with the season the facilities are open and staffed. Firearm use in the southwest portion from November through April will be restricted to shotguns and archery during legal hunting seasons. The eastern portion of the ACEC will be open to the use of firearms during legal hunting seasons. The use of firearms will be further restricted if needed to protect safety or enjoyment of the site.

The Pompeys Pillar ACEC will be designated as "limited" to off-road vehicles. Under the limited designation, all motorized and nonmotorized vehicle travel will be restricted to designated roads and trails with the following exceptions: medical and other emergencies, BLM operations and maintenance, wildfire suppression, farm equipment within the agricultural areas only and authorized exceptions such as for the physically disabled. For purposes of clarification, cross country travel will not be allowed for over-the-snow vehicles.

The Tschida farmstead will be removed and reclaimed.

The Pompeys Pillar ACEC will be managed under two visual resource management objectives. The NHL will be managed under a Class II management objective. The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the existing landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but not attract the attention of the casual observer.

The remainder of the Pompeys Pillar ACEC will be managed under a Class III management objective. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract the attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer.

A visual corridor will be maintained from the interchange to the NHL. Activities within the corridor will be managed so that the NHL dominates the view of visitors as they approach the site.

Historic Zone

This zone will be managed primarily for providing visitor access to Clark's signature in a historic setting.

The existing visitor contact station and restrooms will remain in place to provide resource protection, to serve visitors and to provide office space.

At a minimum, visitor access will be provided through trails to the base of the NHL and the Yellowstone River.

The existing land base will be maintained using bank stabilization along the Yellowstone River.

Farming will be excluded and the tilled ground restored to a setting characteristic of 1806. Current farming will be allowed to continue until restoration to the historic setting can be accomplished.

The existing access road will be closed and reclaimed.

Historic Zone - Developed

New facilities will include a moderate sized visitor center (projected to be about half the size of the proposed Lewis and Clark Visitor Center in Great Falls, MT), a highly developed picnic area and a trail system.

The visitor center will offer both indoor and outdoor interpretive experiences on site and serve as the headquarters for special events, festivals and outreach activities. An interpretive trail will serve a good portion of the area.

Facilities will be developed to allow fishing access, take-out of non-motorized boats and boat docking.

Farming will be excluded and the tilled ground restored to a setting characteristic of 1806. Current farming will be allowed to continue until facilities are constructed or restoration to the historic setting can be accomplished.

The existing access road along the west boundary will be closed and reclaimed. A new all weather entrance road will be constructed.

General Management Zone

Farming will continue in the near term. Depending on future development trends and visitor demand, farming on more or less acreage may be used to accomplish management goals. Where necessary, management of recreation, historic sites, and the historic setting could take precedence over agriculture and its associated wildlife habitat in this zone if visitor demand and management of resources require such measures.

Farming practices will include leaving standing crops to provide forage and cover for wildlife. Standing crop acreage will be determined by BLM and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Shelterbelt strips of shrubs and trees will be planted or maintained in a manner compatible with maintenance and access to the irrigation system. Shrub and tree plantings will be coordinated with the Huntley Project Irrigation District.

A new hiking trail system will be constructed to expand visitor access to the area and to provide additional fishing access. The General Management Zone will also provide space, if needed, for maintenance facilities.

Rationale

The management actions and facilities will protect the relevant and important values at the Pompeys Pillar ACEC, while allowing the public to enjoy these values. Expanding the facilities will better meet the physiological, safety and recreational needs of visitors. Preserving the local agricultural setting will maintain and enhance local support and partnerships.

FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Riparian/Wetland Habitat:

The management objectives will be to maintain natural riparian areas in Proper Functioning Condition, provide forage and cover with plantings and improve fisheries habitat on the channelized stream.

In both historic zones priority will be given to native wildlife species characteristic of the 1806 setting and still present on site. In the General Management Zone the priority wildlife species will be white-tailed deer, pheasants, Merriams wild turkey, and waterfowl. These game species will be considered a priority species because of their recreational value for hunting.

Actions will be taken to enhance waterfowl, wetland and fisheries habitat. These actions will be consistent with land use planning objectives for the Pompeys Pillar ACEC and will be subject to the existing rights-of-way of the Huntley Project Irrigation District and Bureau of Reclamation.

The channelized stream will be managed to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and improve fisheries or wetland habitat without reducing its functionality as part of the irrigation system. Actions to achieve this objective will include improving cover and overhanging bank vegetation, spawning areas, and pool to riffle ratios. Methods to increase pool to riffle ratio could include installation of instream structures such as bank deflectors, rock or log gabions or large boulder placement.

Waterfowl spring nesting and fall migration resting habitat in the 5-6 acre wetland will be enhanced by flooding the area 2-4 months longer.

Rationale

The BLM's policy is to have 75% of riparian areas in Proper Functioning Condition by 1997 or to manage for PFC. Priority will be given to managing for native wildlife species in the historical zones to support the visitor's historical experience. In the General Management Zone, the priority wildlife species are the game species that support public recreational and hunting opportunities. Other nongame species will also benefit from habitat improvements for the game species. Wetland, stream, and terrestrial wildlife habitat improvements are part of the BLM's mission and policies described in strategy documents from *Fish and Wildlife 2000 -- A Plan for the Future*. Examples are *Fisheries Habitat Management*, *Waterfowl Habitat Management* and *Wetlands Environment Today and Tomorrow*. Opportunities exist to improve these resources while not affecting the irrigation system.

Threatened and Endangered Species:

If bald eagles re-nest on the island, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be initiated. If necessary, actions will be taken to reduce potential human impacts to the nest. Public consultation will be part of the process.

If the peregrine falcon is re-established in the region and nests near the Pompeys Pillar ACEC, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will occur to determine if any actions will be needed to protect the species or its habitat.

Rationale

The bald eagle and peregrine falcon are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Both species have occurred in the area in the past. Bald eagles are a yearlong resident with a historical nest site and wintering concentrations at the Pompeys Pillar ACEC. Peregrine falcons are summer residents that may be released along the Yellowstone River in 1996 or 1997. The Endangered Species Act requires BLM to consider the effects of any actions on these species and their habitat.

Neotropical Migratory Birds:

Because there are about 180 species of these Neotropical (New World Tropics) birds in Montana, they will not be discussed individually. These birds summer in the U.S. and Canada and winter in the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central and South America. The habitat objective for Neotropical birds will be to maintain or improve riparian vegetation condition to represent diverse, healthy plant communities.

Rationale

The Western Working Group of "Partners In Flight" has determined that riparian habitat is the most important habitat for the conservation, protection and restoration of Neotropical migratory birds. The best way to benefit the largest number of Neotropical birds is to maintain or improve riparian areas. The improvement of riparian areas will also improve water quality, reduce erosion, and benefit other wildlife.

It has been BLM's policy since 1987 to maintain, restore, or improve riparian areas to achieve a healthy and productive ecological condition for maximum long term benefits. This policy was reaffirmed by the

Secretary of the Interior through the Rangeland Reform EIS of 1994 (2-9 to 2-12 and 3-47 & 48). Riparian areas are centers of high diversity and abundance for Neotropical migratory birds and are especially vital to the conservation of these birds.

ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL

Animal damage control activities will be carried out when control is necessary to reduce potential threats to human safety or to target problem animals that have been identified on site.

All animal damage control activities will be in accordance with the following: "Environmental Assessment for Predator Management in Montana", MT-930-93-01, April, 1994; Decision Record for the Miles City District, April 22, 1994, and the Animal Damage Control Work Plan for Miles City District.

Rationale

It is anticipated that animal damage control will be done on a very limited basis. One of the greatest concerns for visitor safety is rattlesnakes. These animals will be relocated from the area.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

All wildfires will continue to be suppressed. Initial attack will continue to be managed through agreements with local fire departments.

The Pompeys Pillar ACEC will be divided into two fire suppression areas where initial attack will be managed differently: 1) Intensive and 2) Conditional Intensive.

The Intensive suppression area will include all lands except the six acres of the NHL itself. All fires in the Intensive area will immediately be suppressed using available resources including dozers, motor graders, tractors with plows, air tankers and firefighting crews. Heavy equipment will not be allowed in riparian areas.

The Conditional Intensive suppression area will be the six acres of the NHL. Initial attack will be restricted to the application of water. No hand tools that cause soil or surface disturbance or mechanized equipment will be allowed within this area.

Prescribed fires will be used where it is determined fire is necessary to restore the natural environment and a prescription has been written and approved.

Rationale

The majority of public lands are designated for intensive fire suppression in order to protect areas with (1) large amounts of intermingled or adjacent private or state lands, and (2) high values-at-risk (items of human construction), high-value wildlife habitat, historic sites, or other resources. In areas designated conditional fire suppression, management actions restrict intensive fire suppression techniques, such as committing heavy equipment, in order to minimize cost or damage to resources. Hand tools such as flappers which do not disturb the soil surface will be allowed.

FORESTRY

The management objective will be to maintain the existing canopy cover of the cottonwood bottoms. Wood product sales will not be allowed. Periodic removal of dead or dying branches or trees will occur in areas where management actions encourage visitor use and visitor safety is at risk.

Rationale

Maintaining the existing canopy cover will help preserve the historic setting, provide wildlife habitat and maintain the riparian area condition. Providing visitors with a safe environment is a high priority.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

The management objective will be to minimize the potential for hazardous materials contamination. All activities involving hazardous materials and waste will be conducted in accordance with BLM's current and future policies and procedures. No authorizations will be allowed for solid waste or hazardous materials disposal facilities on site.

Rationale

In order to comply with the appropriate state and federal laws, BLM provides management for hazardous materials and waste. Bureau policy prohibits authorizing disposal of hazardous materials or waste on public lands.

LANDS AND REALTY

All lands acquired in the Pompeys Pillar purchase of 1991 and the adjacent island will be retained in public ownership with the following exception. Disposal of the three acre parcel south of Interstate 94 will be an option subject to an easement for retaining signage to bring attention to the Pompeys Pillar ACEC.

BLM's management goal will be to acquire adjacent private lands where acquisition is consistent with the land use planning objectives for the Pompeys Pillar ACEC. Acquisition could be purchase in fee title, scenic or conservation easement or some other agreement to preserve the rural characteristics of adjacent lands. Any acquisition, easement or agreement will be pursued only with willing land owners.

Future rights-of-way will be excluded from the Historic Zone, except those necessary to service the site facilities. There will be a 500-foot corridor paralleling the southern boundary of the Pompeys Pillar ACEC to serve transmission and utility lines. Any future utility rights-of-way granted in this corridor west of the interstate interchange will require the facility to be buried. When existing above ground utilities west of the interchange are modified, attempts will be made to move them underground.

Rationale

BLM considers current agricultural practices on adjacent private lands as compatible with the setting at the Pompeys Pillar ACEC. Although no known commercial or residential development is planned, this could change with a change in ownership. Allowing acquisition through any of the several means will increase the chances preserving the current setting at the Pompeys Pillar ACEC.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Livestock grazing may be authorized only as a management tool for vegetation control such as weed control or wildlife habitat management.

Rationale

Permitted livestock grazing is excluded as incompatible with the recreation management goals for the ACEC. This decision is intended to provide the option the use livestock grazing as a management tool when BLM determines it is the most cost effective tool and does not interfere with management or visitor enjoyment of the site. Livestock grazing will be limited to the use of sheep or goats for weed control and the use grazing for stimulating stagnant herbaceous vegetation.

MINERALS

For minerals that are privately owned, BLM will work with willing owners to secure title for the United States to the mineral estate through exchange or purchase.

For minerals that are federally owned, the following will apply:

For oil and gas activities, a No Surface Occupancy stipulation will apply to the entire site. The Pompeys Pillar ACEC will be closed to mineral material sales.

Rationale

It has been well documented through the courts that access to private minerals takes precedence over protection of the surface estate. Although it appears that development is unlikely, the potential still exists. Therefore, it is in the public's interest for BLM to pursue ownership of any private minerals. To the extent feasible, BLM will maximize protection of natural and cultural resources within the ACEC from the effects of mineral development.

SOIL AND WATER RESOURCES

The management objectives will be to maintain soil productivity, prevent and/or minimize accelerated soil erosion, prevent and/or minimize flood damage and protect municipal and domestic water supplies.

Rationale

BLM consults and coordinates with other federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Watershed Protection and Flood Control Act, Clean Water Act, and Office of Management and Budget Circular A-81. Areas are managed in order to stabilize and conserve soils, increase vegetation production and maintain or improve water quality.

WEED AND INSECT CONTROL

The long term goal will be to use an integrated system of control that maximizes mechanical and biological weed and insect controls while minimizing the use of chemicals.

Support will continue for testing the effectiveness of biological agents. When biological agents become as or more effective than chemicals, the use of chemicals will be reduced to the minimum amount necessary.

Rationale

Without treatment, weeds could dominate the area, and BLM complies to the greatest extent possible with all Montana laws controlling noxious weeds. Some mosquito control may be necessary to enhance visitor enjoyment of the site. In the long term, the goal is to reduce the amount of chemicals pollutants in the environment.

**Pompeys Pillar ACEC
Environmental Assessment/Amendment
for the
Billings Resource Management Plan**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT MT--25-96-09

On the basis of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment and all other information available to me, it is the determination of the Bureau that none of the four alternatives constitutes a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is unnecessary and will not be prepared. In addition, the amendment to the Billings Resource Management Plan does not affect the entire resource area and does not substantially affect other resource programs to the extent that the resource area would initiate an environmental impact statement.



Burton D. Williams
Burton D. Williams
Billings Resource Area Manager

Date 7-29-96