

CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND NEED

CHAPTER 1 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1987, a major deposit of Paleozoic Era fossilized footprint megatrackways was discovered in the Robledo Mountains in southern New Mexico. The trackways contain footprints of numerous amphibians, reptiles, and insects (including previously unknown species), plants, and petrified wood dating back approximately 280 million years, which collectively provide new opportunities to understand animal behaviors and environments from a time predating the dinosaurs. The area is located in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) New Mexico Las Cruces District Office and covered by management outlined in the Mimbres Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM 1993). In 1990, Senator Jeff Bingaman and Congressman Joe Skeen introduced the Prehistoric Trackways Study Legislation (S. 2684 and H.R. 4945). In 1993, the legislation passed which allowed the BLM to contract with the Smithsonian Institution and the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science to conduct a study and prepare a report on the significance of the trackways discovery. The report states:

...evaluation indicates the Robledo Mountains tracksites are the most scientifically significant Early Permian tracksites known. The diversity, abundance and quality of the tracks in the Robledo Mountains is far greater than at any other known tracksites or aggregation of tracksites. Because of this, the Robledo tracks allow a wide range of scientific problems regarding late Paleozoic tracks to be solved that could not be solved before. (Lucas, Hunt, and Hotton III 1994)

In 2008, Senator Bingaman introduced legislation to designate the trackways area as a National Monument . . . “in order to conserve, protect, and enhance the unique and nationally important paleontological, scientific, educational, scenic, and recreational resources and values of the public land....” The legislation was passed as part of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (the Act or Legislation) and designated 5,280 acres as the Prehistoric Trackways National Monument (PTNM or Monument) administered by the BLM. This Legislation instructs the development of a comprehensive management plan specifically for the Monument.

Although the PTNM is relatively small, 5,280 acres, there is considerable public interest in managing the area, and the potentially conflicting uses between off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and protection and interpretation of paleontological resources in the Monument. In order to address these issues and the long-term management of the area, the BLM developed this Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact statement (RMP/EIS).

This Draft RMP/EIS describes the alternative management strategies, identify the potential impacts of implementation of the alternatives, and determine the appropriate measures to mitigate those impacts. The EIS analyzes and documents the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the reasonably foreseeable future actions resulting from BLM’s management decisions. By law, these impacts must be analyzed before BLM makes an irreversible commitment of public land resources. This RMP/EIS is intended to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and other associated regulations.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT AND ANALYSIS AREA

The Monument is located in the southern third of the Robledo Mountains and is approximately 10 miles northwest of the City of Las Cruces in Doña Ana County, New Mexico (see Map 1-1). The Robledo Mountains are a north-south trending fault-block located northwest of Las Cruces. Elevation varies from 5,876 feet on Robledo Mountain to about 4,100 feet at the south end. The climate is characterized by an arid, continental climate with mild winters and warm-to-hot summers. Summer daytime temperatures often exceed 100° F. Average annual precipitation is slightly less than 9 inches; however, a wide variation is characteristic of the climate. Most rainfall occurs during late summer months in the form of thunderstorms, which are usually short duration, but can be very intense resulting in flash flooding.

Vegetation in the Monument is sparse, dominated by grasses and Chihuahuan Desert shrub species. A few juniper trees are sparsely scattered, primarily along the north slopes and arroyos. Shrubs include mesquite, whitethorn acacia, creosote, and mimosa, with scattered agaves and various cacti.

Faunal components of the Monument are typical of the Chihuahuan Desert, but also include species that may be found along the Rio Grande and the nearby farming areas in the Mesilla Valley. Species that may be found within the Monument include such amphibians as New Mexico spadefoot toads, Great Plains toads, green toads, and red-spotted toads. Reptiles may include common side-blotched lizards, marbled whiptail lizards, collared lizards, gopher snakes, striped whipsnakes, and Western diamondback rattlesnakes. Mammals that may be found in the Monument include mule deer, javelina, grey fox, coyote, black-tailed jackrabbits, desert cottontails, spotted ground squirrels, Merriam's and banner-tailed kangaroo rats, desert pocket mice, white throated woodrats, and cactus mice. Common birds include mourning doves, Northern Harriers, Swainson's hawks, red-tailed hawks, Chihuahuan ravens, greater roadrunners, mockingbirds, scaled quail, Gambel's quail, golden eagles, meadowlarks, black-throated sparrows, and Scott's orioles.

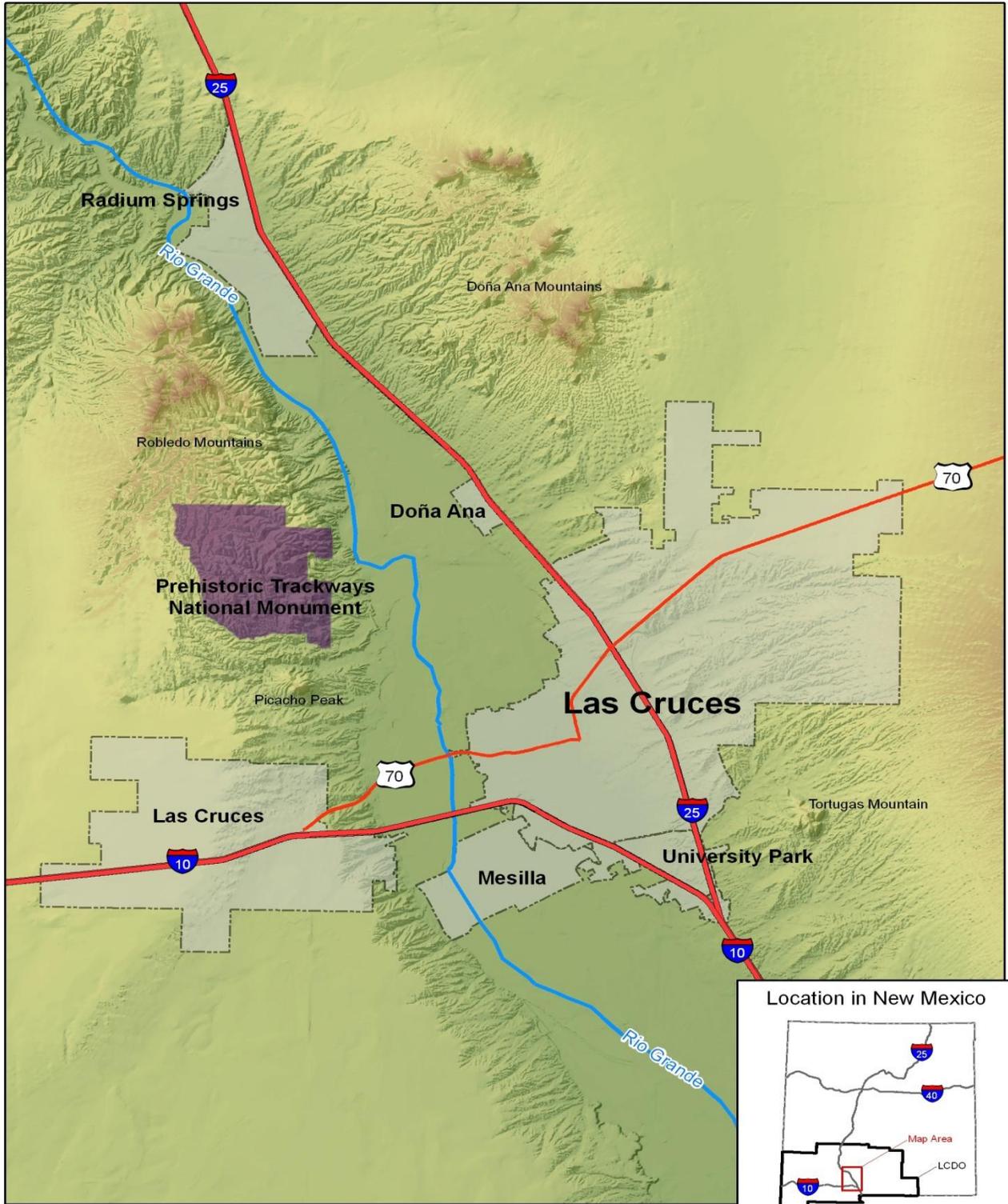
The main access point into the Monument is across private land. The BLM does not have legal access for the public or administrative purposes. Negotiations for acquiring a public access easement are ongoing. Until BLM secures a public easement across the private land to access the Monument, BLM would not authorize capital improvement projects, with the exception of nominal improvements such as visitor and trail signage.

Prior to designation, a portion of the Monument was managed by the BLM as the Paleozoic Trackways Research Natural Area (RNA), as designated by the Mimbres RMP (BLM 1993). The management goals of the Paleozoic Trackways RNA were to protect, research, and interpret paleontological resources.

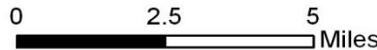
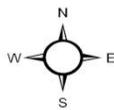
In the Mimbres RMP, it designated another portion of the Monument as the Robledo Mountains Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The ACEC met the relevance criteria of having significant paleontological, cultural, scenic, and biological values. BLM manages this area to protect biological and scenic values and to protect, research, and interpret paleontological values.

The Robledo Mountains Wilderness Study Area (WSA) consists of 12,876 acres. A portion of the WSA and ACEC (approximately 789 acres) is within the Monument. These two designations overlap each other within the northern portion of the Monument. The WSA was recommended in 1980 as a result of the initial inventories mandated by Section 603 of FLPMA. Since then, BLM has managed the area to preserve its wilderness character. However, in the mid-90s, BLM discovered that unauthorized OHV use

Map 1-1 - Regional Map



No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data, or for purposes not intended by the BLM. Spatial information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This information is subject to change without notification.



Projection: UTM, Zone 13
Datum: NAD 1983

was occurring which was degrading these values. This use was curtailed and directed south outside of the WSA. As a result, the scars created by the use are slowly healing.

The local community uses the Robledo Mountains for all types of recreation. This includes hiking, mountain biking, fossil and rock collecting, hunting, horseback riding, camping, and OHV use. The BLM has permitted an annual 4-day OHV event since 1998, which draws people from the local community and nearby states and nations. Recreationists are allowed to use the trails year-round.

The BLM analysis in the Draft RMP/EIS is specifically to include decisions for only the Planning Area. In the Act, the acreage of the Monument is stated as 5,280. However, the acreages calculated using the BLM's Geographic Information System (GIS, which allows production of maps and analysis based on computerized satellite data) shows a smaller acreage (5,255 acres). Because the acreage difference is small and the time and cost to adjust them is uncertain, the BLM Planning Team has elected to use the GIS figures throughout the analysis. These differences are not large enough to change the outcome of the analysis.

The designating Legislation states: *“If additional paleontological resources are discovered on public land adjacent to the Monument after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary may make minor boundary adjustments to the Monument to include the resources in the Monument.”* If public land is added to the Monument, it will follow the same management decisions resulting from this document.

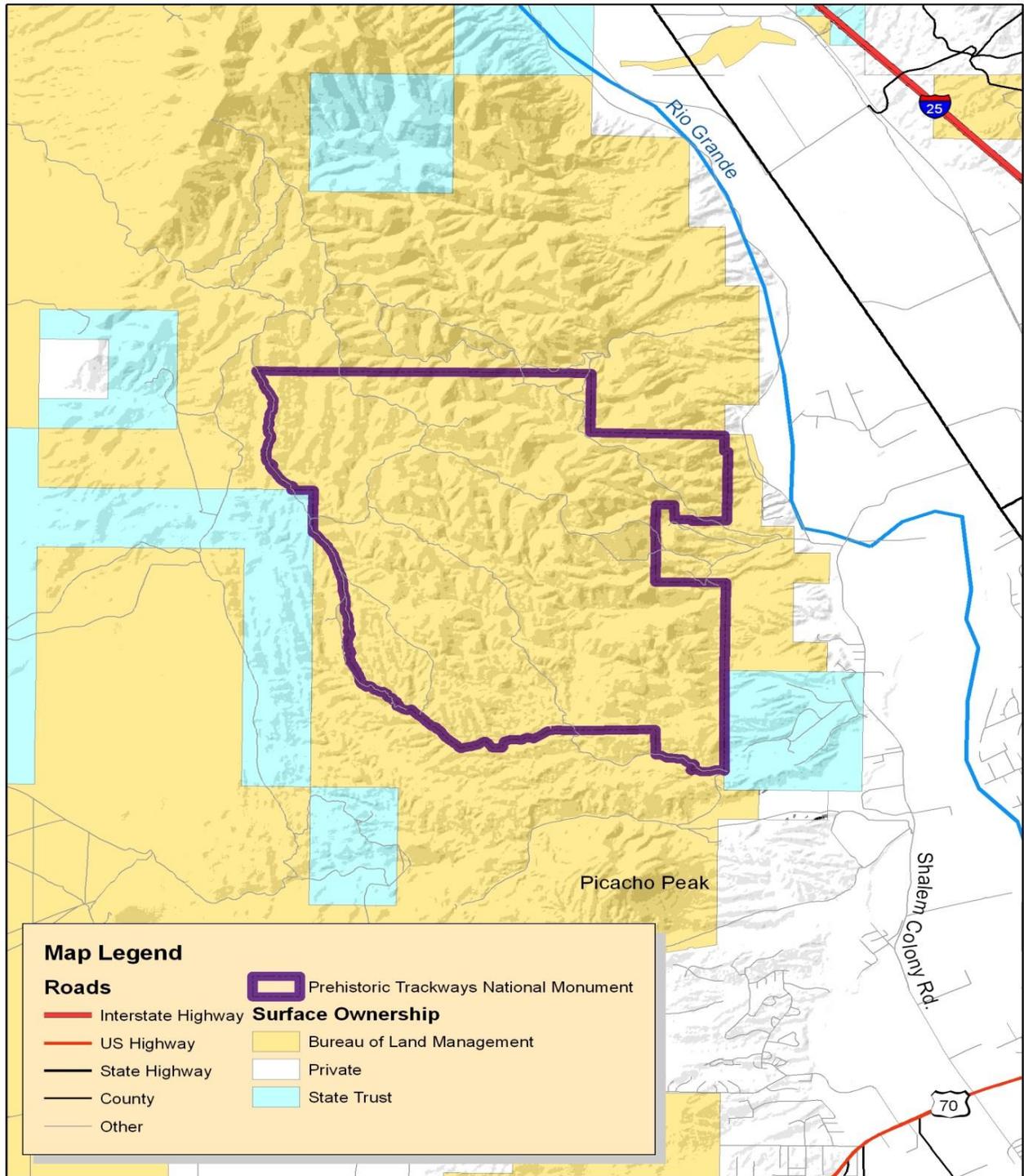
The **Planning Area** is the area for which decisions made in this RMP will apply. The Planning Area consists of 5,280 acres of Federal surface estate and 4,886 acres of Federal subsurface estate, designated as the PTNM (see Map 1-2).

The term **Analysis Area** is used for some resources and resource use discussions that must consider areas outside the Planning Area when determining the effects of BLM actions. The Analysis Area is Doña Ana County, which includes the PTNM, 8 WSAs, 11 ACECs, and several towns. The Analysis Area includes public, private, and other government lands, and consists of about 2,436,595 acres.

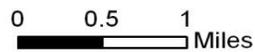
1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION

The enabling Legislation established the need for the PTNM RMP/EIS, which requires that *“Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall develop a comprehensive management plan for the long-term protection and management of the Monument... The management plan shall describe the appropriate uses and management of the Monument, consistent with the provisions of the legislation.”* The existing Mimbres RMP (BLM 1993) covering the Monument is inadequate to address the mandates of the enabling Legislation. The purpose of the Monument RMP is to address resource management and public uses within the Monument as prescribed by the Legislation. The EIS will disclose to the public and BLM managers any impacts to the environment that would likely result from implementing the agency's Proposed Action or possible alternatives.

Map 1-2 - Prehistoric Trackways National Monument



No Warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data, or for purposes not intended by the BLM. Spatial information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This information is subject to change without notification.



Projection: UTM Zone 13
Datum: NAD 1983

The PTNM Draft RMP/EIS addresses the following Legislative mandates:

- Manage the Monument in a manner that conserves, protects, and enhances the paleontological, scientific, educational, scenic, and recreational resources and values of the Monument.
- The Secretary shall provide for public interpretation of, and education and scientific research on, the paleontological resources of the Monument, with priority given to exhibiting and curating the resources in Doña Ana County, New Mexico.
- The use of motorized vehicles in the Monument shall be allowed only on roads and trails designated for use by motorized vehicles under the RMP.
- The Secretary may issue permits for special recreation events involving motorized vehicles within the boundaries of the Monument to the extent the events do not harm paleontological resources, and subject to any terms and conditions that the Secretary determines to be necessary.

The Mimbres RMP, approved in April 1993, currently provides general guidance on a landscape level for management of Doña Ana County and four other counties within the Las Cruces District Office's jurisdiction. The Monument RMP, once completed, will replace the Mimbres RMP for the Monument area. The Monument RMP will provide the framework and the prescriptions to implement the measures described in the Legislation. As such, the RMP will be comprehensive in nature and will address all issues within the Monument boundary. In the document, BLM staff identifies the current management situation, desired future conditions to maintain or achieve, and management actions needed to achieve these objectives. Following completion of the Monument RMP, the BLM Las Cruces District Office staff will develop an implementation plan.

1.4 PLANNING ISSUES

The process for developing an RMP begins with identification of planning issues (40 CFR 1502.7 and 43 CFR 1610.4-1). Issues are areas of conflict or controversy between uses and management activities for a given area of public land that must be resolved in the RMP. The agency also addresses other basic environmental and management concerns to provide comprehensive management guidance for all resources within the Monument and to satisfy legal requirements.

The following are issues or areas of concern for the Monument. BLM resource specialists and the public identified planning issues during internal and public scoping. As a result, the BLM refined the preliminary planning issues and determined the issues that are carried forward and the issues that are not addressed in the RMP process.

Issues Addressed

Paleontological Research and Protection

How will management actions address the legislative mandate of providing for resource protection and research of paleontological resources?

How will the management prescriptions address site protection, resource mitigation, interpretive development, and public education?

The Monument provides insight into the Permian Era with its paleontological resources and also provides a variety of activities and uses for the public. Research of the paleontological resources has increased the knowledge of the Permian Era environment and animals. This research has also provided the BLM with information for public interpretive materials.

Interpretation and Education

How will the management actions address the legislative mandate of providing for public interpretation of, and education and scientific research on, the paleontological resources of the Monument, with priority given to exhibiting and curating the resources in Doña Ana County?

What types of interpretation and education are best suited to protection of the paleontological resources? Onsite? Off-site?

Except for several high-clearance vehicle routes, the Monument and the trail leading to the “Discovery Site” which offers minimal interpretation, there are no visitor facilities or interpretation sites within the Monument. The BLM has entered into a partnership with the City of Las Cruces Museums and is actively working with them in developing exhibits for their new Museum of Nature and Science, which will open in November 2012. The theme of the new museum is “Trackways to Space” and will feature a large continuous trackways specimen displaying various extinct species as the centerpiece exhibit. Several other exhibits will also interpret the trackways and the Monument. This museum will serve as a primary gateway to educating the public on the resources of the Monument and plans may include Museum-led talks and tours. Currently, much of the interpretation and education is off-site from the Monument at local schools, local organizations’ meetings, and fairs. BLM Park Ranger-led tours of the Monument are also offered to the public either as scheduled tours or as requested by individuals or groups. In order to facilitate more on-site visitors, facilities may be needed in order to provide information and education.

Travel and Access

How can the BLM manage access to the Monument while protecting the resources of the Monument?

Within the Monument are 37.6 miles of routes within arroyos and along the ridge tops. Although these routes provide access to the majority of the Monument, only high clearance vehicles or modified vehicles can use most of these routes. There are multiple entry points for the Monument, of which BLM does not have legal access across the private property or the State of New Mexico property. The current route system may not be adequate in order to protect the resources and/or provide adequate access.

Recreation

How will the RMP address the conflict between motorized use and protection of the Monument objects?

How will the BLM manage requests for special recreation permits?

How will the management actions address other various recreation opportunities such as camping, shooting, and fossil hunting while providing for protection of Monument resources? What opportunities will be available for visitor services and facilities?

The Monument is used for a variety of recreational uses such as motorized and non-motorized touring, hiking, fossil/rock/wildlife hunting, and solitary walking experiences. The Monument is used for livestock grazing and motorized special recreation permitted events. Motorized and non-motorized vehicle use is allowed on existing, designated routes, of which some are near paleontological resources. OHV use is a popular recreational use of the area. Annually, the BLM has allowed motorized special recreation permitted events within the Monument. Additional mitigation or modifications may be needed in order to avoid damage to paleontological resources near or within existing routes. As mentioned earlier, there are not any visitor facilities within the Monument. Additional facilities may be needed to accommodate increased recreational use.

Management Concerns

Habitat and Its Users

What management actions will protect wildlife and wildlife habitat?

How will livestock grazing be addressed within the Monument?

How will management of vegetative communities be addressed in the Monument?

The Monument is home to the typical Chihuahuan desert animals and plants along with permitted cattle. This provides economic activities to the local community. Management must consider the potential impacts to wildlife, vegetation, and grazing permittees that are dependent on the land within the Monument.

Visual Resources

How will the BLM manage threats to scenic quality within the boundaries of the Monument?

The visual resources within the Monument are an important resource that must be considered while making management decisions.

Socio-economics

How will the management actions in the RMP impact economic and social opportunities in the community?

The Monument designation and management can impact economic and social opportunities for the local community through tourism, recreational opportunities, and livestock grazing. These impacts must be considered when considering the management alternatives.

Issues Considered but Not Further Analyzed

Some scoping comments received referred to implementation decisions made through administrative or resource program guidance and do not require land use planning decisions in order to be resolved. The following issues are beyond the scope of this planning effort or outside of the BLM's decision-making authority (authority is with another agency or entity).

Comments urging the BLM to organize or support a volunteer or advisory group for the Monument are documented in the Scoping Report, but will not be addressed in the RMP/EIS. Such actions can be resolved through administration or policy action. The BLM is committed to coordinating and

collaborating with local groups, clubs, educational institutions, and agencies to promote the resources of the Monument.

A management concern for the BLM is the possibility of Legislation that would change the Monument boundary. The Legislation allows the Secretary of the Interior to make minor boundary adjustments to the Monument if additional paleontological resources are discovered on public land adjacent to the Monument. The Secretary of the Interior has the authority to make these adjustments outside the RMP/EIS process. This concern was mentioned during scoping to bring this possibility to light to the public. There were several comments regarding this issue stating that the BLM should not consider upcoming legislation in the RMP. This issue will be documented in the RMP as an Issue Considered, but Not Further Analyzed due to this action being beyond the scope of the RMP/EIS. If additional lands are added to the Monument at a later date, these lands will be managed in accordance with the management decisions made in this RMP/EIS.

Actions regarding the adjacent Community Pit #1 are beyond the scope of the RMP because the Community Pit #1 is outside the RMP Planning Area. However, cumulative impacts from the actions taken in Community Pit #1 will be addressed in the RMP/EIS.

1.5 PLANNING CRITERIA/LEGISLATIVE CONSTRAINTS

The BLM's land use planning guidance (Handbook H-1601-1) states that planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that guide and direct the development of the RMP. The planning criteria ensure that RMPs are tailored to the identified issues and ensure that unnecessary data collection and analyses are avoided. Planning criteria for the PTNM RMP/EIS are as follows:

- The RMP will be in compliance with the *FLPMA*, *NEPA*, *New Mexico Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management* (2001), *The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009-Paleontological Resources Preservation* (16 USC 470aaa et seq.), and all other applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
- The RMP will be in compliance with the *Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009*. While the multiple-use mandates of *FLPMA*, *NEPA*, and all other applicable laws, regulations, and policies will be followed to the extent appropriate, the provisions of the Legislation will prevail in managing the Monument. Specific mandates from the Legislation are stated later in this Chapter in Section 1.9.
- The RMP will be in compliance with the *8270 Management of Paleontological Resources Manual and Handbook* and *Potential Fossil Yield Classification (PFYC) System*.
- Land use decisions in the RMP will apply to the surface and subsurface estate managed by the BLM.
- For program-specific guidance for decisions at the land use planning level, the process will follow the BLM's policies in the *Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601*.
- BLM staff will strive to make decisions in the RMP compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, and Federal agencies and local American Indian tribes, as long as the decisions are consistent with the Legislation.

- BLM staff will work cooperatively and collaboratively with cooperating agencies and all other interested groups, agencies, tribal entities, and individuals.
- The planning process will provide for ongoing consultation with American Indian tribal governments and the public regarding strategies for protecting recognized traditional uses and heritage resources.
- Broad-based public participation and collaboration will be an integral part of the planning process.
- In the RMP, the BLM will recognize the State's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife. The BLM will coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.
- The RMP will recognize valid existing rights.
- The RMP will incorporate, where applicable, management decisions brought forward from existing planning documents.
- The BLM will consider public welfare and safety when addressing hazardous materials and fire management.
- WSAs will continue to be managed under the BLM's *Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review* (IMP) until Congress either designates all or portions of the WSAs as wilderness or releases the lands from further wilderness consideration.
- Where practicable and timely for the planning effort, the best available scientific information, research, and new technologies will be used.
- Geographic Information System and metadata information will meet Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) standards, as required by Executive Order 12906. All other applicable BLM data standards will also be followed.
- Local Fire Management Plan(s) will provide specific implementation strategies, evaluation criteria and accomplishment reporting details as referenced in the fire management portion of the RMP.
- Planning and management direction will focus on the relative values of resources and not the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or economic output.
- Actions must comply with all applicable laws and regulations and must be reasonable, achievable, and allow for flexibility while supporting adaptive management principles.
- The RMP will identify specific goals, objectives, and actions for the use, conservation, protection, and possible restoration of the Monument's resources.
- The RMP will identify Best Management Practices (BMPs) or mitigation measures to be applied to existing uses and planned uses to ensure protection of the Monument's objects, such as the paleontological, scientific, educational, scenic, and recreational resources and values of the Monument.

As stated in the BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2009-215:

... “according to Section 302(a) of FLPMA, the National System of Public Lands is to be managed under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield “except that where a tract of such public land has been dedicated to specific uses according to any other provisions of law it shall be managed in accordance with such law.”

This section of FLPMA directs that when an area of public land is set aside by a presidential proclamation issued under the Antiquities Act of 1906 or an Act of Congress, the designating language is the controlling law. Therefore, as a general rule, if the management direction of the designating Legislation conflicts with FLPMA’s multiple-use mandate, the designating Legislation supersedes that portion of FLPMA.

1.6 PLANNING PROCESS

The RMP will unfold in the following ten steps according to the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601 (see Figure 1-1). These steps of the planning process allow the BLM to act in accordance with NEPA and FLPMA, as amended.

NEPA requires those actions whose effects are expected to be significant and are not fully covered by an existing EIS must be analyzed in a new EIS. Approval of an RMP is considered a Federal action that normally requires the preparation of an EIS. The public is encouraged to participate throughout the planning process, and the BLM is mandated to support and allow for public participation and review. This process also requires the expertise of an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists to complete each step.

FLPMA mandates the BLM to prepare and maintain a current inventory of public land and its resources and values. It also mandates the BLM to develop, maintain, and where appropriate revise land use plans for the public land. Section 202 of FLPMA states that land use plans must observe and use the principles of multiple-use and sustained yield, use a systematic interdisciplinary approach, give priority to ACECs, rely on the available inventory of public land, consider present and potential uses, consider the scarcity of the values involved, weigh the long- and short-term benefits, comply with applicable laws and regulations, and coordinate with State and local governments.

The designating Legislation also states that a comprehensive management plan for the long-term protection and management of the Monument shall be developed.

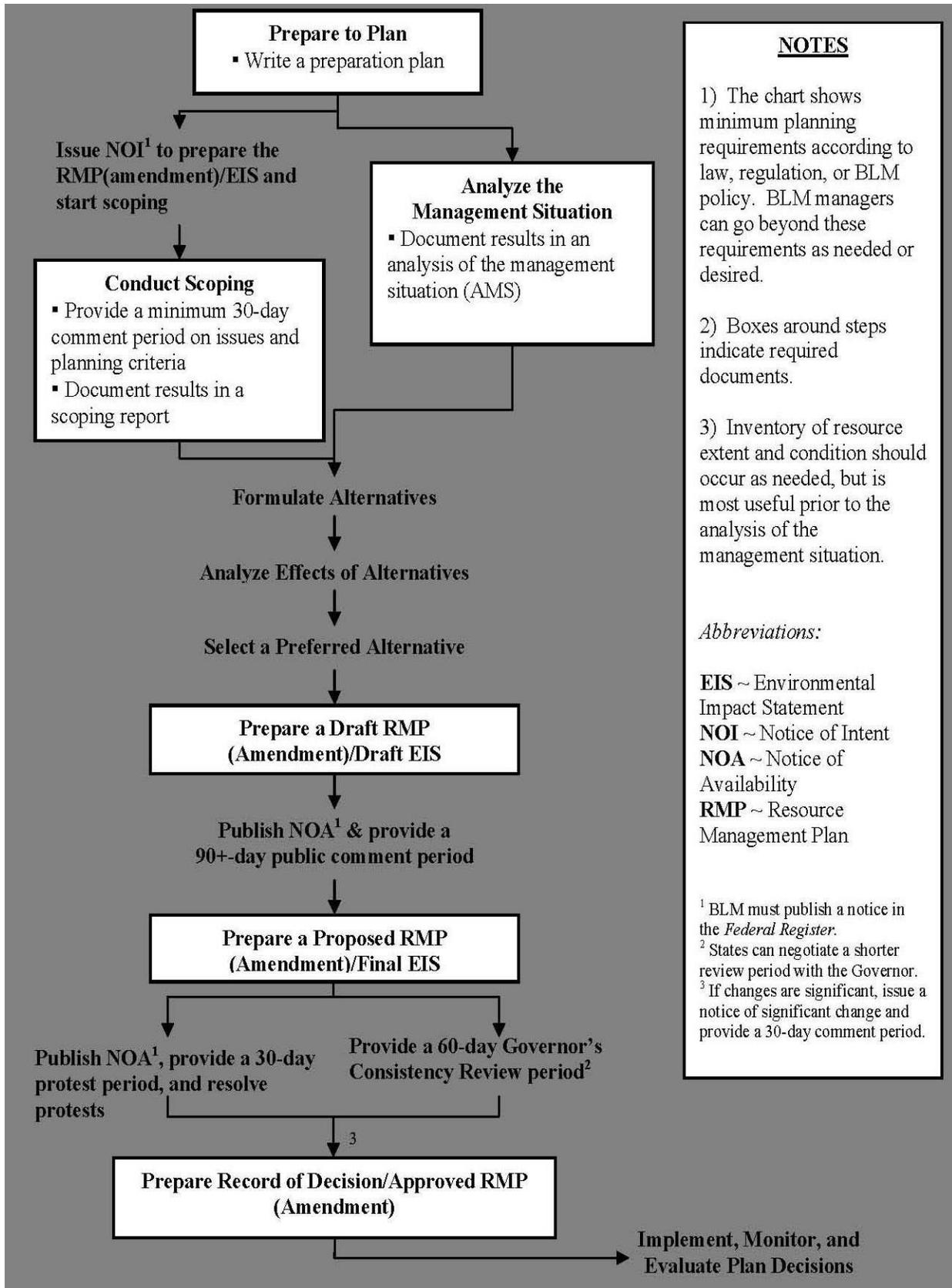
Step 1: Prepare to Plan

In January 2010, the BLM finalized the PTNM Preparation Plan. This Preparation Plan was developed to flush out the preliminary planning issues and management concerns, data needs, to identify potential cooperating agencies and public scoping opportunities, and create a schedule and budget.

Step 2: Issue Notice of Intent

On January 5, 2010 a Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register* (Volume 75, Number 2, Pages 431-432), which notified the public of BLM’s intent to prepare the RMP/EIS and to begin public scoping.

Figure 1-1 Planning Process



NOTES

1) The chart shows minimum planning requirements according to law, regulation, or BLM policy. BLM managers can go beyond these requirements as needed or desired.

2) Boxes around steps indicate required documents.

3) Inventory of resource extent and condition should occur as needed, but is most useful prior to the analysis of the management situation.

Abbreviations:

EIS ~ Environmental Impact Statement
NOI ~ Notice of Intent
NOA ~ Notice of Availability
RMP ~ Resource Management Plan

¹ BLM must publish a notice in the *Federal Register*.
² States can negotiate a shorter review period with the Governor.
³ If changes are significant, issue a notice of significant change and provide a 30-day comment period.

Step 3: Scoping

The BLM held one formal scoping meeting in Las Cruces on January 26, 2010 to share information about the Monument, preliminary issues, and the planning process. The BLM asked the public for comments and suggestions regarding the management and interpretation of the natural, cultural, recreational, and scientific resources within the Monument. The initial “*formal scoping*” period closed on February 10, 2010. The results of the public scoping are found in the Scoping Report, Appendix F.

Step 4: Analysis of Management Situation

The BLM analyzed available inventory data, portrayed the existing management situation, and identified management opportunities to respond to identified issues, which is all collected in a report named the Analysis of Management Situation (AMS). As stated in 43 CFR 1610.4-4, this is the basis for formulating reasonable alternatives, including the types of resources for development or protection. This analysis also results in identification of the “*No Action Alternative*” - the baseline (current) management condition, which includes management designated through the Legislation and is located in Chapter 3.

Step 5: Formulate Alternatives

The BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.4-2) require development of planning criteria to guide preparation of an RMP. “*Planning criteria*” are the standards, rules, and other guidelines developed by managers and interdisciplinary teams, with public input, for use in forming judgments about plan-level decision making, analysis and data collection. These criteria are used to establish the parameters or “*ground rules*” for making planning decisions and simplifying RMP actions. The criteria may be adjusted during RMP development based on management concerns and the results of the public scoping process.

Four alternatives are explored in this Draft RMP/EIS. These alternatives address planning issues identified during both internal and external scoping and the Legislation. They also meet the goals and objectives developed by the interdisciplinary team. In compliance with NEPA, CEQ regulations, and the BLM planning regulations and guidance, the alternatives are reasonable and capable of implementation. These alternatives are described in detail in Chapter 2.

Step 6: Analyze Effects of Alternatives and Select a Preferred Alternative

The resulting physical, biological, economic, and social impacts from implementation of each of the alternatives have been predicted and assessed in Chapter 4. The District Manager evaluated the alternatives, the estimated impacts, and has identified the preferred alternative and recommended Alternative C to the State Director as the preferred alternative.

Step 7: Preparation of the Draft RMP/EIS

The resulting Draft RMP/EIS has been distributed for a 90-day public review and comment period. In addition to the public comment period, a public meeting will be held by the Las Cruces District Office in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Step 8: Preparation of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS

After the public comment period, the BLM shall evaluate comments and update the RMP/EIS if necessary. The District Manager will recommend a proposal to the State Director, who will select an alternative or a mixture of alternatives, which will then be published in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS.

Publication of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS will commence a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review and a 30-day protest period.

Step 9: Approval of the Record of Decision and Approved RMP

Following resolution of any protests on the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, the BLM New Mexico State Director will make a final decision regarding the selection of an alternative. The Approved RMP and Record of Decision (ROD) will be published.

Step 10: Implementation and Monitoring of Planning Decisions

The BLM will formulate an implementation and monitoring plan after the RMP is finalized. This will provide for periodic evaluations (minimum every 5 years) to determine if management and mitigation measures are satisfactory for the resources. This will allow the BLM to detect any issues early on or to ensure that management goals are being met.

1.7 COLLABORATION

Intergovernmental, Interagency, and Tribal Relationships

American Indian tribes have a long history of collaboration with BLM in planning and managing cultural resources. A letter inviting participation in the planning process was sent in February 2010 to the Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Comanche Indian Tribe, White Mountain Apache, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Pueblo of Isleta, Mescalero Apache Tribe, and Navajo Nation. The list of invited tribes expanded in September 2011 to include inviting Acoma Pueblo, Laguna Pueblo, and Tesuque Pueblo. No tribe has accepted the invitation to be a cooperating agency, but consultation will continue throughout the planning process.

Cooperating Agencies

By definition, a cooperating agency is any Federal, state, or local government agency or Indian tribe that has either jurisdiction by law or special expertise regarding environmental impacts of a proposal. As a cooperating agency, it provides the formal framework for governmental units to engage in active collaboration with the lead Federal agency during the NEPA process. In January and February 2010 and September 2011, letters were sent to the following agencies inviting recipients to become a cooperating agency for this project:

City of Las Cruces
Doña Ana County
New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
New Mexico State Parks
Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
Comanche Indian Tribe
White Mountain Apache
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
Pueblo of Isleta

Mescalero Apache Tribe
Navajo Nation
Acoma Pueblo
Laguna Pueblo
Tesuque Pueblo

Formal status for cooperating agency has not been requested by any invited party. The State Historic Preservation Office was notified of the planning process.

Other Stakeholder Relationships

Although the following various groups are not defined as cooperating agencies, the BLM has been working with these groups in addition to the public to encourage input for this RMP. These groups all have an interest in the Monument for a variety of reasons. Those groups that have helped by providing valuable information are:

Las Cruces Museum of Nature and Science
Las Cruces Four-Wheel Drive Club
New Mexico State University
Paleozoic Trackways Foundation
Smithsonian Institution
New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science

1.8 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

Land use plans created for and by the Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments were reviewed as required to determine whether those plans were relevant to the development of the Monument RMP. BLM must ensure that land use plans are consistent as possible with existing officially adopted and approved resource related plans, policies or programs of other Federal and State agencies, Indian tribes, and local governments that may be affected (43 CFR 1610.3-1(d)(1)). A summary of those plans that impact the same land as the Monument are as follows.

Federal

The *Mimbres RMP* (BLM 1993), as amended, currently provides guidance for the PTNM and approximately 3,053,820 acres of public land. The local Fire Management Plan(s) will provide specific implementation strategies, evaluation criteria and accomplishment reporting details as referenced in the fire management portion of the RMP. *Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management to be applied to BLM Lands in New Mexico* (BLM 2001) provide guidance for livestock grazing management within the Monument and throughout New Mexico. The decisions carried forward from these plans are specifically addressed in the existing management guidance and alternatives.

State and Local Government Plans

This RMP is consistent with the following resource related plans of State and local governments:

- *Doña Ana County, New Mexico Natural Events Action Plan Reevaluation 2005*
- *The New Mexico Forest and Watershed Health Plan (2005)*
- *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*
- *New Mexico Historic Preservation Plan*

- *The 2006 Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*
- *2000 City of Las Cruces Extraterritorial Zoning Comprehensive Plan 2000-2020*
- *2005 Las Cruces Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Plan*
- *2004 Rio Grande Riparian Ecological Corridor Project Report*
- *Vision 2040 Regional Planning Project (in preparation) - City of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County*

A summary description of the relevancy and consistency of these plans is found in Chapter 5.

1.9 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE OBJECTS AND REQUIREMENTS

TO CONSERVE, PROTECT, AND ENHANCE THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES AND VALUES:	
PALEONTOLOGICAL	A major deposit of Paleozoic era fossilized trackways, plants, and petrified wood are located within the Monument.
SCIENTIFIC	The Monument is scientifically important on behalf of past research and continued scientific research.
EDUCATIONAL	Public education of the fossil and natural resources.
SCENIC	The Robledo Mountains are a prime example of the Chihuahuan Desert.
RECREATIONAL	The Robledo Mountains are continually used by a multitude of recreationists ranging from hikers, mountain bikers, OHV enthusiasts, motorcyclists, hunters, and outdoor enthusiasts.

As specifically stated in the Legislation, the Monument was designated for the resources and values stated directly above, which are referenced to as “*objects of the Monument*”. In addition to the objects of the Monument, the Legislation states:

- The Secretary shall only allow uses of the Monument that the Secretary determines would further the purposes for which the Monument has been established.
- Provide for public interpretation of, and education and scientific research on, the paleontological resources of the Monument, with priority given to exhibiting and curating the resources in Doña Ana County, New Mexico.
- Enter into cooperative management agreements or other instruments with interested parties or agencies, as appropriate, to coordinate and collaborate management of the Monument.
- Continue to manage that portion of the Robledo Mountains WSA within the Monument according to the *Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review*.
- Continue to manage that portion of the Robledo Mountains ACEC within the Monument according to the prescribed management in the Mimbres RMP.
- Except as needed for administrative purposes or to respond to an emergency, the use of motorized vehicles in the Monument shall be allowed only on roads and trails designated for use by motorized vehicles.
- Subject to valid existing rights, close the Monument to entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws. This only refers to the title transfer of land/property. Land use authorizations

may be permitted to facilitate the management of the Monument and to meet the intent of the enabling legislation.

- Subject to valid existing rights, close the Monument to location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and the operation of the mineral leasing laws, geothermal leasing laws, and minerals materials laws. Therefore, free-use of petrified wood without a permit is no longer allowed.
- Manage any land or interest in land that is acquired by the United States for inclusion in the Monument after the date of enactment of this Act in the same manner and degree as herein described for the rest of the Monument.

1.10 MISSION STATEMENT AND OVERALL VISION

The mission of the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) is to conserve, protect, and restore these Nationally-significant landscapes that are recognized for their outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values. Specifically the PTNM, which is a unit of the NLCS, was designated in order to conserve, protect, and enhance the unique and Nationally-important paleontological, scientific, educational, scenic, and recreational resources and values of the public land.

A storybook of paleontological resources is preserved within the PTNM. Our Vision is for educational, scientific, and appropriate recreational opportunities in this rugged and scenic setting to be enhanced all the while ensuring the sustained use and enjoyment of these lands for future generations. We will collaboratively work to achieve a balance of utilization and conservation, as we strive to ensure that the compelling stories of this Monument are told.