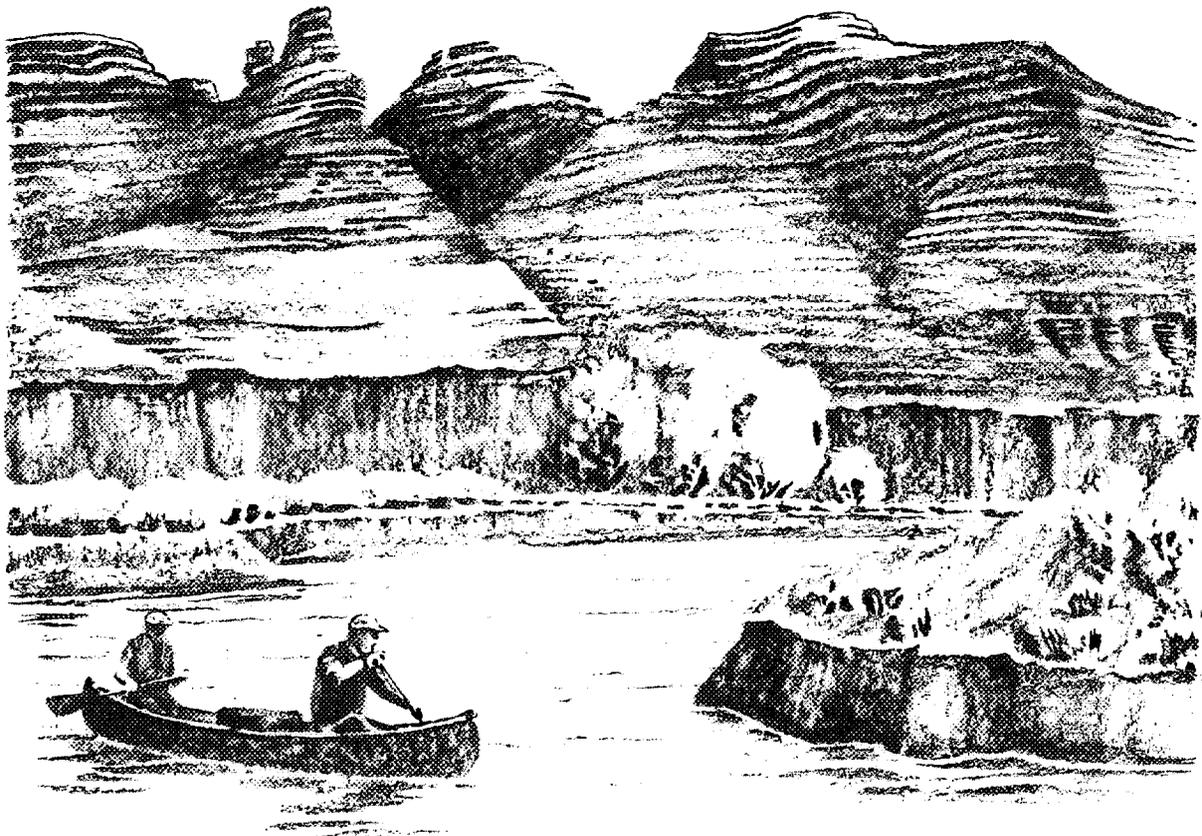


Chapter 1

Purpose and Need



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CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND NEED

INTRODUCTION

This document serves two functions: it proposes a Resource Management Plan (RMP) and determines the effects of implementing the plan through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Book Cliffs RMP is a proposed land use plan for management of all natural resources on 1.1 million acres of public lands. It complies with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (1976), as well as other appropriate planning mandates, (43 CFR 1600) and replaces the outdated Management Framework Plans which were developed during the early 1970s. The RMP provides planning direction for resolving conflicts between competing resource uses such as minerals, recreation, wildlife, etc. Provisions for leasing additional Federal energy minerals such as oil shale and tar sand are identified in the plan. The RMP also coordinates management of the public lands with existing plans of State, and other Federal agencies, and the Ute Indian Tribe.

This EIS assesses the environmental impacts of the proposed plan and identified alternatives. It also complies with the court order (U.S. District Court, District of Columbia, *Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., et al. v. Rogers C.B. Morton et al.*, Case No. 1983-73) to analyze the impacts of livestock grazing on the public lands. Mitigation and monitoring recommended in this EIS will be incorporated into the final RMP.

SCOPE OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

This document discusses both present and possible future options for Federal surface and subsurface resource management in the Book Cliffs Resource Area (BCRA). State, native American, and private properties are only discussed to the extent that their management interacts with that of the Bureau of Land Management.

Lands within the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation, including Federal subsurface minerals, are not analyzed within this document. Inventories of the Tribally-owned surface resources are presently incomplete. Legal questions concerning access for mineral developments and adequate protection of the surface resources have also been raised by the Ute Tribe (Core 1984). After these concerns have been resolved, a planning amendment covering management of the Reservation subsurface lands administered by BLM would be prepared as an addendum to the Book Cliffs RMP.

The decisions identified in the RMP would apply to all public lands within this resource area and any lands subsequently added to it.

INTERRELATED PROJECTS

This document assesses the environmental impacts which could result from actions approved by the BLM in the Book Cliffs Resource Area. Other projects, which have previously been approved by BLM or which could occur on non-Federal lands, have been evaluated in separate environmental documents. In this document, these projects have been identified since they would combine with the proposed BLM projects to create cumulative impacts. These cumulative impacts would only occur if all projects, both BLM and non-BLM, are actually developed concurrently.

TIME FRAME

Based upon current regulations, the proposed plan would remain in effect until it is determined to be outdated by management. If significant changes occur in the proposed land uses of the BCRA, the plan would be amended or revised.

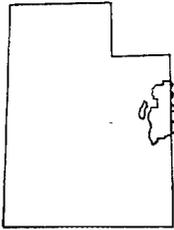
DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

The BCRA is located in northeastern Utah. It is roughly triangular in shape, bounded by the Utah Colorado state line on the east, the Book Cliffs Divide to the south, and the Green River to the north and west (Figure 1-1).

Administratively, the BCRA includes public lands and minerals that are within portions of Uintah and Grand Counties, Utah. The BCRA also includes administration of grazing allotments which overlap into Garfield, Moffat, and Rio Blanco counties in Colorado.

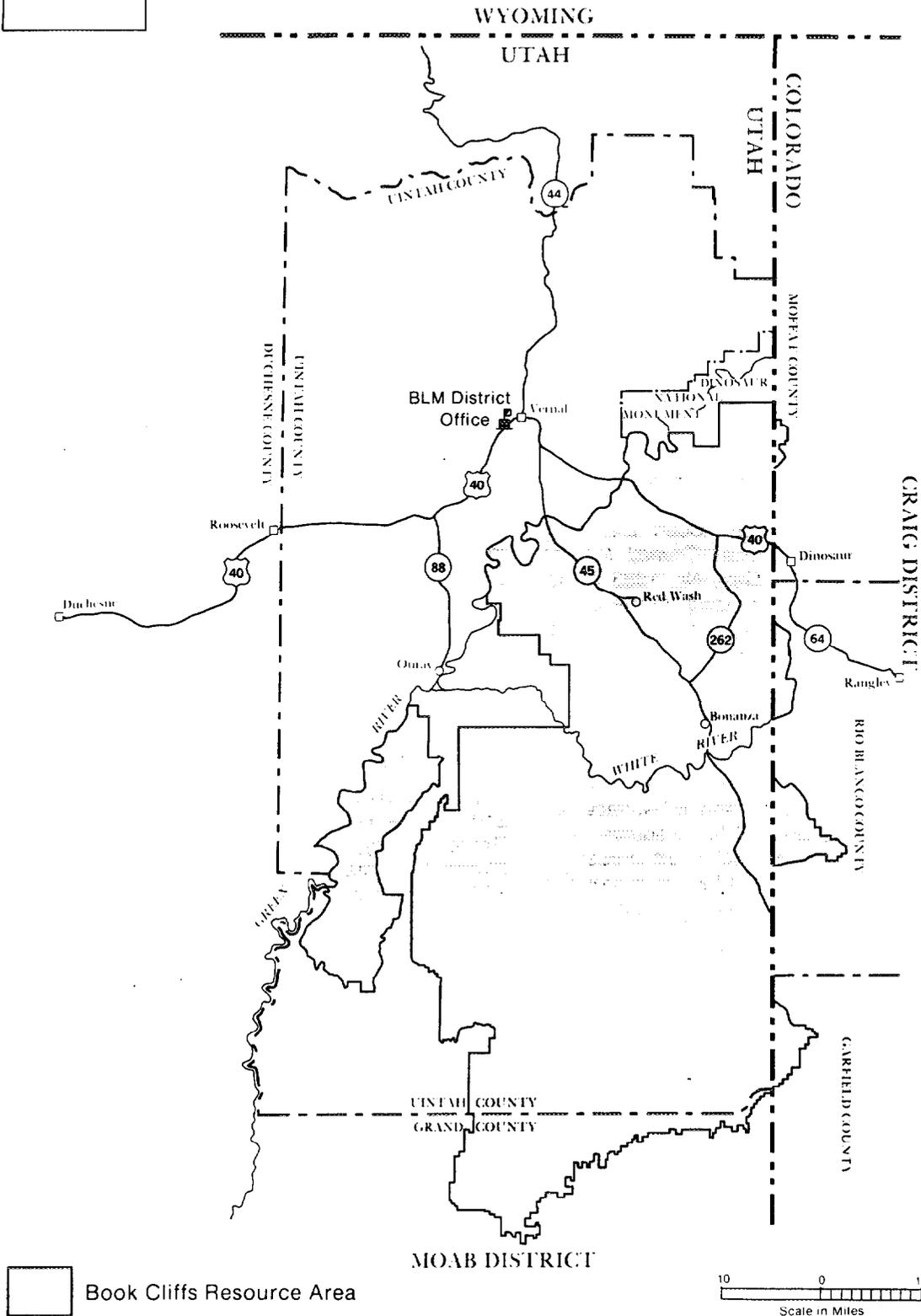
In the BCRA, the Vernal District boundary officially ends at the Uintah County line. The public lands in Grand County, Utah and Garfield, Moffat, and Rio Blanco Counties in Colorado are administered by the BCRA under memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Moab and Craig District Offices, Bureau of Land Management (Figure 1-1). The MOU with Moab includes administration of all resources within the adjusted boundary. The MOU with the Craig District delegates only grazing administrative responsibility.

Land ownership in this Resource Area (Figure 1-2) is as follows:



VICINITY MAP

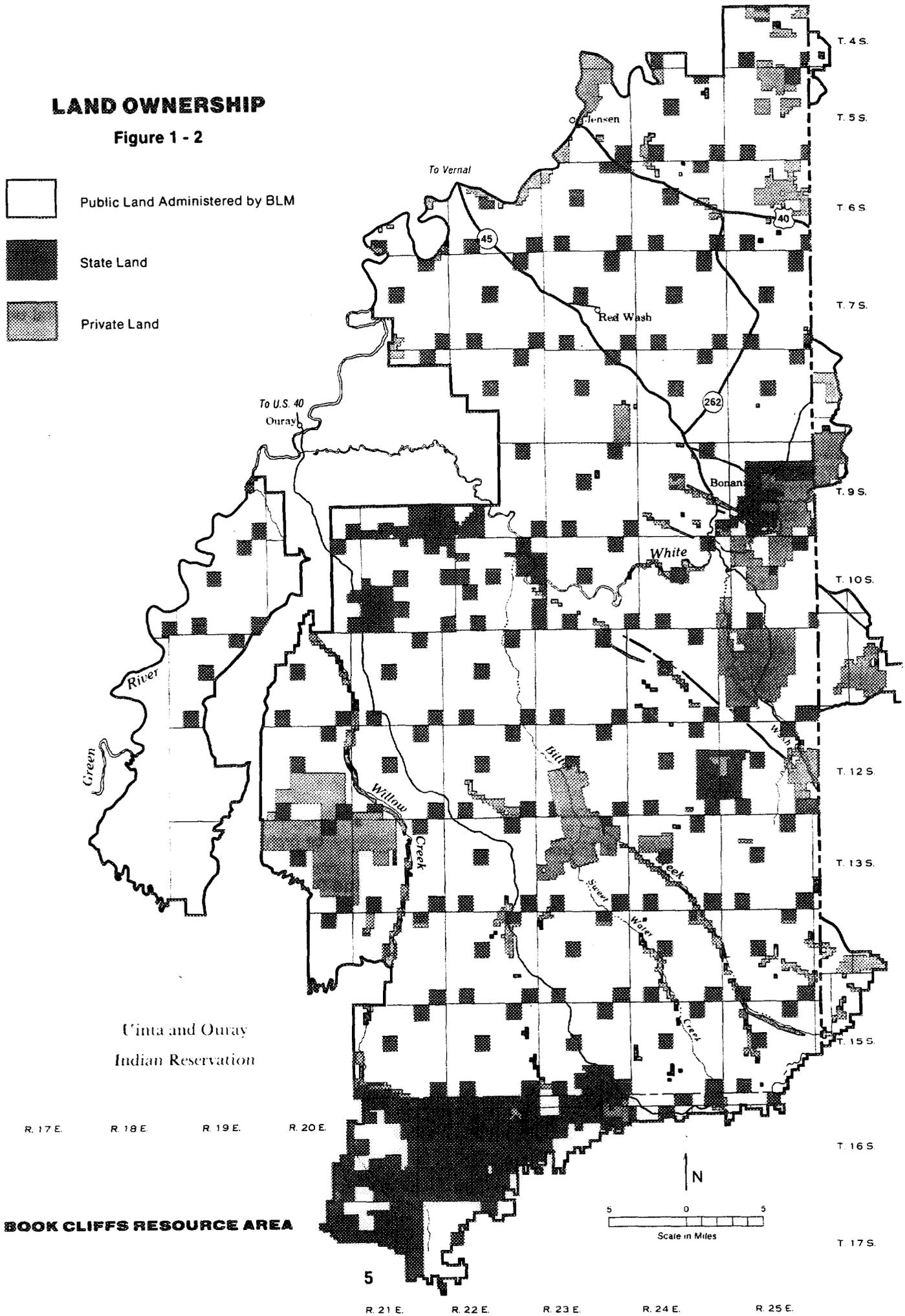
Figure 1-1



LAND OWNERSHIP

Figure 1 - 2

-  Public Land Administered by BLM
-  State Land
-  Private Land



BOOK CLIFFS RESOURCE AREA

R. 17 E. R. 18 E. R. 19 E. R. 20 E. R. 21 E. R. 22 E. R. 23 E. R. 24 E. R. 25 E.

T. 4 S. T. 5 S. T. 6 S. T. 7 S. T. 9 S. T. 10 S. T. 12 S. T. 13 S. T. 15 S. T. 16 S. T. 17 S.

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Bureau of Land Management Vernal District

Public Lands	1,027,167 Acres
Public Lands Within Naval Oil Shale Reserve II	46,152 Acres
Public Lands Under Federal Power Site Reserve	6,633 Acres
Subtotal	1,079,952 Acres
Craig District- Public Lands	32,218 Acres
Moab District- Public Lands	3,284 Acres
State of Utah Lands	216,646 Acres
Private Lands	123,780 Acres
Resource Area Total	1,455,880 Acres

PLANNING PROCESS

The BLM RMP process consists of nine basic steps and requires the use of an interdisciplinary team for the completion of each step. The planning steps described in the regulations and used in preparing this plan are graphically summarized in Figure 1-3.

This final RMP/EIS indicates a proposed resource management plan. Persons who participated in the planning process and have an interest which is, or may be, adversely affected by approval of the RMP may protest the approval. *Protests may only raise issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process.* Protests shall be filed within 30 days after the final RMP/EIS is filed with the Environmental Protection Agency.

ISSUES

Nine issues are addressed in this document. They were identified from the public and county government input, interagency consultations, the judgment of planning team members, and reviews by BLM managers. Planning criteria were developed for each issue to give guidance and identify constraints that could limit possible solutions. Appendix 1 describes the consultation and coordination involved with determining issues to be addressed in this EIS. The public assisted in development of the planning criteria (BLM 1983a). The various criteria that were used are available for review at the Vernal District Office.

Issue 1: Mineral Development

If development of leasable minerals, such as oil and gas, oil shale, tar sand, gilsonite, and salable minerals, such as sand and gravel and building stone occurs at an accelerated pace within the BCRA in order to meet national, regional, and local demand, mineral operations would affect other resource values such as forage, water resources, recreation, air, critical wildlife habitat, and others. Mitigation developed to protect renewable resources could also restrict mineral development. Decisions to be made include:

- Determination of the number and locations of priority use areas for oil shale leasing,
- Establishment of salable mineral areas, and
- Assignment of mineral leasing categories for oil and gas, tar sand and gilsonite on all Federally managed land possessing mineral development potential.

Issue 2: Right-of-Way Corridors

It is anticipated that mineral development, within the BCRA, would increase demand for rights-of-way to accommodate roads, energy and water pipelines, power and communication lines, etc. The opportunity exists to designate preferred areas for utility and transportation rights-of-way, as well as exclusion areas that would be protected from rights-of-way. Location of these corridors could conflict with other resource values. If corridors could be located in areas that are void of other resource conflicts, the time required for issuance of rights-of-way could be significantly reduced. Decisions to be made include:

- Designation of preferred corridors, and
- Designation of areas where rights-of-way would be prohibited.

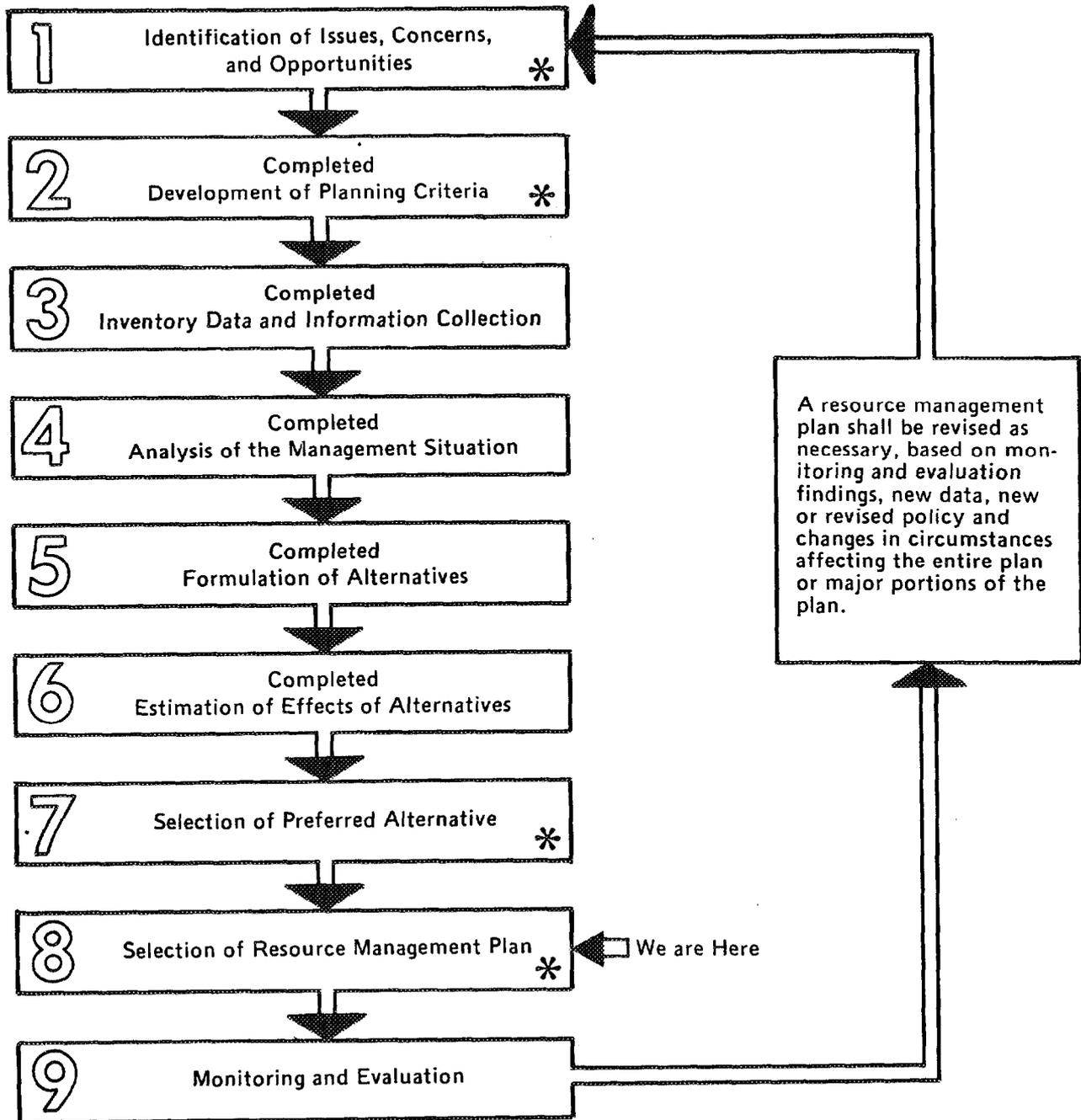
Issue 3: Forage

There is competition for forage and a potential for increased demand on forage from livestock, wild horses, and wildlife, particularly in key areas such as canyon bottoms, riparian habitat, and crucial big game winter ranges (BLM 1983a). This competition is further complicated by the removal of forage by increasing big game populations, oil and gas and other minerals development, and utility and transportation corridors. Wild horses were not considered in the initial forage allocation. Decisions to be made include:

- Determination of desired forage conditions on all grazing lands,
- Establishment of initial stocking rates for livestock, wildlife, and wild horses for each allotment

Figure 1-3

STEPS IN THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS



* Steps Requiring Public Participation

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with emphasis on key livestock use, wildlife habitat, and watershed areas; and

- Monitoring the effects of initial stocking rates and grazing practices on the soil and vegetation resource to determine proper stocking levels.

Issue 4: Wildlife and Wild Horse Habitat

A conflict exists with current and proposed mineral development (oil and gas, oil shale, tar sand, gilsonite) and wildlife and wild horses. Mineral activities often result in the loss of habitat and space required by wildlife and wild horses. Competition for water, space, and cover also exists between livestock and wildlife and wild horses (BLM 1983a). Decisions to be made include:

- Determination of areas to be managed for wildlife priority over other resource values, and
- Selection of areas to be managed for wild horses and areas where wild horses would be given preference over other resources.

Issue 5: Woodland Management

Woodlands are a finite resource and the conversion of woodland areas for other resource uses may conflict with the ability to meet an increasing demand for woodland products. Decisions to be made include:

- Determination of sustained yield management areas for woodlands, and
- Determination of woodland areas where management practices could be used to benefit other resources.

Issue 6: Recreation

Within the BCRA, recreational opportunities are generally undeveloped and semi-primitive motorized in nature. Presently, visitor use is rather low; however, because access to support energy and minerals developments is becoming available, recreational use and needs could increase significantly in the near future. With greater use comes the potential for competition between user groups and other resources, as well as a demand for improved facilities and opportunities. Decisions to be made include:

- Determination of the types and locations of recreation opportunities that would need protection for future use, and
- Classification of the BCRA for off-road vehicle (ORV) use as opened, closed, or limited.

Issue 7: Fire Management

With increasing development in the Book Cliffs, the risk of loss from wildfire will increase. The use of fire as a management tool to benefit wildlife and livestock, conflicts with the public's belief that all fires are bad. The annual occurrence of fires could result in both beneficial and adverse habitat alteration. Decisions to be made include:

- Determination of which fire management techniques should be adopted as part of the fire management program, and
- Determination of where these techniques will be applied and what results are desired.

Issue 8: Watershed Management

Water quality and soil erosion problems including high salinity, sediment, gully headcutting, and flood damage have been identified (BLM 1983a). Restrictions on other resource uses can often maintain existing watershed values, while restorative measures may be necessary in already degraded areas. Springs and seeps are important water sources for livestock, wildlife, and wild horses. These water sources can be degraded or destroyed by other resource uses. Decisions to be made include:

- Selection of mitigating measures that would minimize adverse impacts to watershed values from minerals development, livestock grazing, and woodland management; and
- Determination of areas where degraded watersheds would/could be restored and stabilized;
- Management of major floodplains consistent with Executive Order 11988 to (1) reduce the risk of flood loss or damage to property; (2) minimize the impact from flood loss to human safety, health, and welfare; and (3) restore, maintain and preserve the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains; and
- Selection of locations for reducing soil erosion.

Issue 9: Land Tenure Adjustment

There are Federal lands within the BCRA that are isolated and difficult to reach and to manage. There are also State and private lands within the BCRA that would provide improved public access and enhance various BLM management programs. Land disposals and acquisition could provide improved management of public domain. These potential land actions would result in management changes of resources involved. Decisions to be made include:

- Determination of which lands should be retained, disposed of, studied further, or acquired.

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MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Management concerns are topics which are not considered as issues, but involve management decisions which could be made during the life of the RMP. They involve continuation of certain existing Management Framework Plan (MFP) decisions which are still valid and would not change between alternatives. They also include possible actions which are foreseen as possible in the future, but which have not yet been developed as specific proposals.

In some cases, these concerns involve resource allocation on a conceptual basis only, because a specific action has not been proposed, but is foreseen as a likely possibility. Other management concerns involve administrative changes for parcels of land such as withdrawal revocation.

Leasing Public Lands for Support Facilities

When anticipated mineral developments occur in the BCRA, it is likely that the BLM will receive one or more applications to lease tracts of public land for support service facilities. Examples of applications could include gas stations and possibly town sites to accommodate workers in the oil shale and tar sand industry.

Without a specific application, it is not possible to analyze the potential impacts of support facility leasing upon the resources. The determination of impact would be done during future site-specific analyses.

Naval Oil Shale Reserve II

The BCRA contains approximately 46,000 acres of land designated as the Naval Oil Shale Reserve II (NOSR II). NOSR II was created to protect certain oil shale lands for future use by the Navy (BLM 1983b) (Figure 1-4). NOSR II is presently administered by the Department of Energy (DOE), but managed by the BLM under a cooperative agreement (Evans 1984). Because of the joint administrative responsibilities, this area requires special management.

Oil Shale Withdrawal

Extensive tracts of land within the BCRA were placed under oil shale withdrawal in 1930 (Executive Order 5327). In recent years, legislation and regulations have been enacted which could effectively protect the mineral and other natural resources, while being less restrictive on mineral developments. The oil shale withdrawal may be continued or lifted (Paugh 1984). Continuation of the withdrawals would require different management than would be needed if the withdrawals are lifted.

Reclamation and Power Site Withdrawals

Lands adjacent to the Green River were placed under reclamation and power site withdrawals in the 1960s in anticipation of construction of hydroelectric projects (Figure 1-4). These projects appear highly unlikely today. Although not established for this purpose, these withdrawals afford protection of the river environment by precluding mining. These withdrawals may be lifted in 1984, and the areas opened to mineral entry. Revocation of these withdrawals would require different management than would be needed if they are continued.

Boulevard Ridge Watershed Study Area

This 330-acre area was established in 1971 by BLM to study the effects of chaining on water runoff and sediment movement. The data are currently being analyzed to determine if the study should be continued. Management will need to decide whether the area would subsequently be made available for other resource uses, or be used for continued study purposes.

Geothermal Leasing

The BCRA would remain open to lease consistent with the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970. One area, T. 4 S., R. 24 E., Salt Lake Base and Meridian (SLBM), Sections 33 and 34, has been identified as potentially valuable for geothermal steam development (BLM 1974a). Although the BCRA is considered to have a low potential for geothermal development, leasing could occur through a BLM initiative or in response to an industry proposal.

Book Cliffs Mountain Browse Natural Area

This area was established October 29, 1968, by the BLM, to preserve a vegetation type unique to the Book Cliffs. It is composed of an association of several plant species referred to as mountain browse. The natural area has no real interest value to most recreationists. Because of the abundance of mountain browse within the BCRA, its value as a scientific study plot is questionable. The designation of natural area could be retained and the area managed primarily for its ecological and scientific values or, based on a lack of interest in the area for further scientific studies, the protective natural area designation could be dropped.

AUTHORIZING ACTIONS

BLM's management of public lands in the BCRA is related to projects or management practices of other Federal, State, and local agencies, and, to some extent, private industry. Because BLM manages most of the lands in the BCRA, its practices strongly influence State and private lands that are interspersed with public

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lands. Therefore, BLM needs to closely coordinate its efforts in order to meet goals and avoid resource conflicts. Appendix 2 identifies some of the major authorizing actions that would be involved with implementing the RMP.

In addition, Federal law or policy identifies several activities which, when encountered during development of an environmental assessment or EIS, require a formal consultation process with other Federal or State agencies. Appendix 2 also identifies some of the resources requiring formal consultation and the agency to be consulted.

CONSISTENCY REVIEW

This plan is intended to be consistent with State and local governmental and Tribal policies, plans and programs, as provided for by regulation (43 CFR 1610.3-2). Where inconsistencies result from an alternative presented in Chapter 2, the inconsistency has been identified as a resulting impact in Chapter 4.

Prior to approval of this resource management plan, the Governor of Utah shall have 60 days in which to comment on any inconsistencies which may exist.

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