CURRENT MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE

Leaseable Minerals

Oil and Gas.

Land for oil and gas development would continue to be leased under the existing oil and gas category system (Appendix 4: Specialized Mineral Terminology. The Resource Area is divided into four categories. Category 1 areas are leased under standard oil and gas stipulations, Category 2 areas have special mitigation developed to protect critical resource values which cannot be adequately protected through the standard stipulations. Surface occupancy is not allowed on Category 3 areas, and Category 4 areas are not leased.

Resource values totalling 186,000 acres and requiring special mitigation for protection (Category 2) would include: Critical antelope, deer, elk, and wild horse range, sage grouse leks, and severe winter condition areas. Also included are perennial streams, floodplains and wetlands, springs and seeps, and the scenic corridor along U.S. Highway 40.

Surface occupancy would not be allowed on 32,000 acres (Category 3) in order to protect: Public water reserves, Boulevard Ridge Watershed Study Area, the White River, portions of the Green River, lands adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument, inventoried recreation sites, the Book Cliffs Natural Area, and significant archaeological sites.

The 16,000 acres of no lease land (Category 4) include: A few miles along the Green River, key recreation areas, scenic lands adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument, and oil shale tracts U-a and U-b, (Figure 2-1). The Naval Oil Shale Reserve and power site withdrawals (53,000 acres) are not available for lease under any alternative (Figure 1-4). All other lands are open for leasing under standard lease stipulations (Category 1).

Standard mitigating measures are contained in 43 CFR 3570. This information is commonly reported by the lessee in the 13 point surface use plan as part of every oil and gas lease. An 'on site' inspection is conducted in relation to the surface use plan to determine the most feasible and environmentally acceptable area for well sites, access roads, and other proposed surface use areas.

Special mitigating measures, such as seasonal restrictions, are listed in the wildlife, watershed, and recreation sections.

Oil Shale.

Two Federal oil shale tracts, U-a and U-b, are currently being developed by the White River Shale Corporation (Figure 1-4). No additional Federal leasing of oil shale would be anticipated under this alternative. Companies such as Paraho, Syntanna, Tosco, Magic Circle, and Geokinetics, have oil shale ventures in the area on land leased through the State of Utah (BLM 1982).

Tar Sand.

No development of tar sand deposits would be allowed. Leasing of combined hydrocarbons (tar sand), by either conversion application or competitive bidding, would not be approved even though conversion applications have been submitted (Figure 2-2).

Salable Minerals

Sand and Gravel.

New sites could be established along the southeast side of the Green River and south of Blue Mountain or in other locations on a case-by-case basis as the need arises (Figure 2-3). The community sand and gravel pit adjacent to the Green River would be retained in its current location. Disposals would continue in free use permit areas next to the Green River until supplies are depleted or permits expire.

Building Stone.

Building stone would continue to be sold from the Buck Canyon, Johnson Draw, and Nutters Hole collecting areas (Figure 2-4).

Right-of-Way Corridors

The proposed corridors for this alternative have been identified in Management Framework Plans (MFP) and MFP amendments and are shown in Figure 2-5.

A "right-of-way corridor" (or corridor) is a linear strip of land identified as having certain land use, environmental, engineering, and economic advantages for the present or future location of one or more transportation or utility rights-of-way. This designation could minimize or restrict to given areas the environmental impacts that result from unplanned rights-of-way. A corridor is considered to be a "preferred" area for future rights-of-way; it does not preclude the area from other types of activities.

Forage

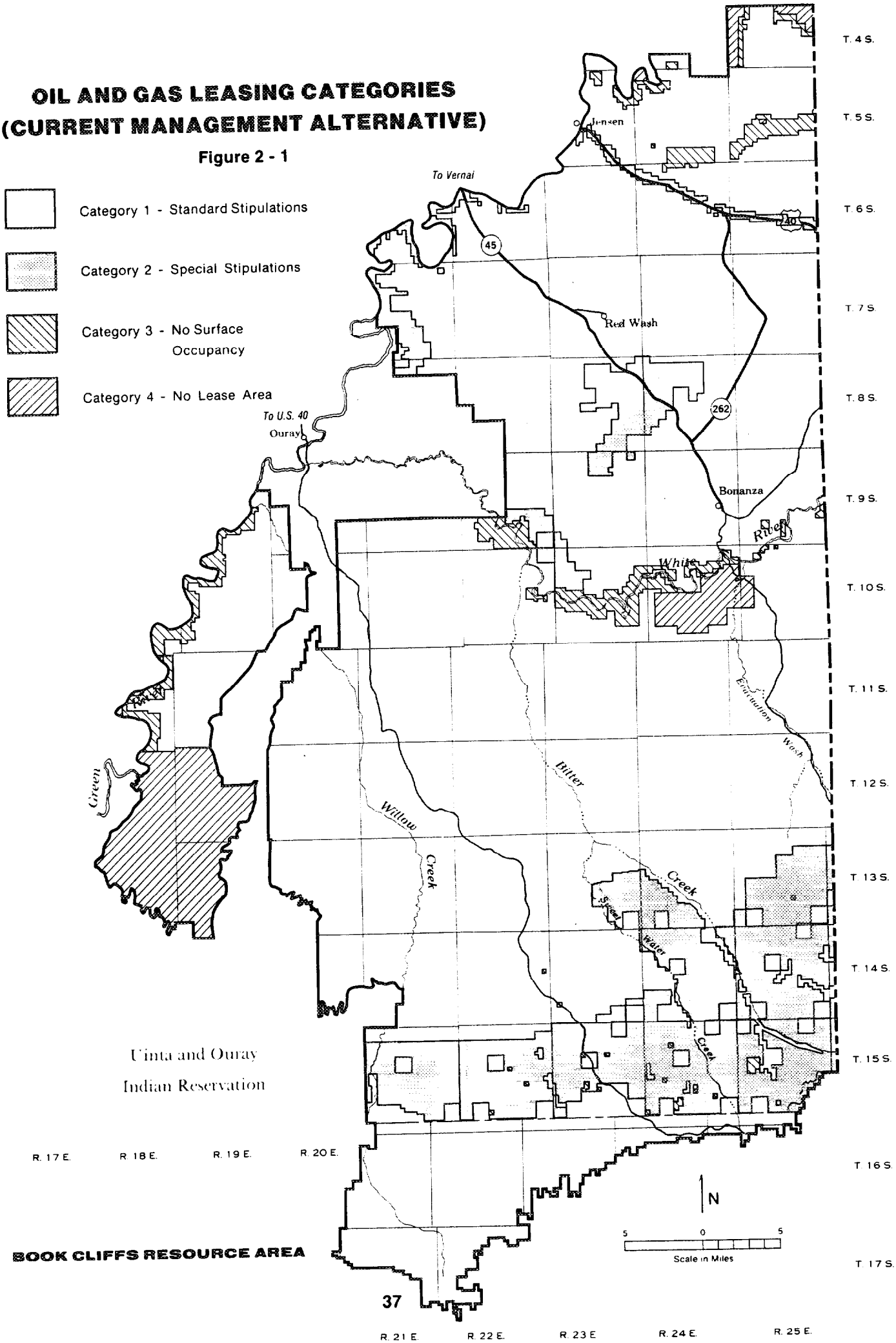
Forage related actions for this alternative are outlined by allotment Appendix 5 (Forage Actions by Alternative) and are discussed as follows.

Grazing Practices.

Stocking levels, seasons of use, the kind and class of livestock and grazing pattern (including 13 existing

OIL AND GAS LEASING CATEGORIES (CURRENT MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE)

Figure 2 - 1

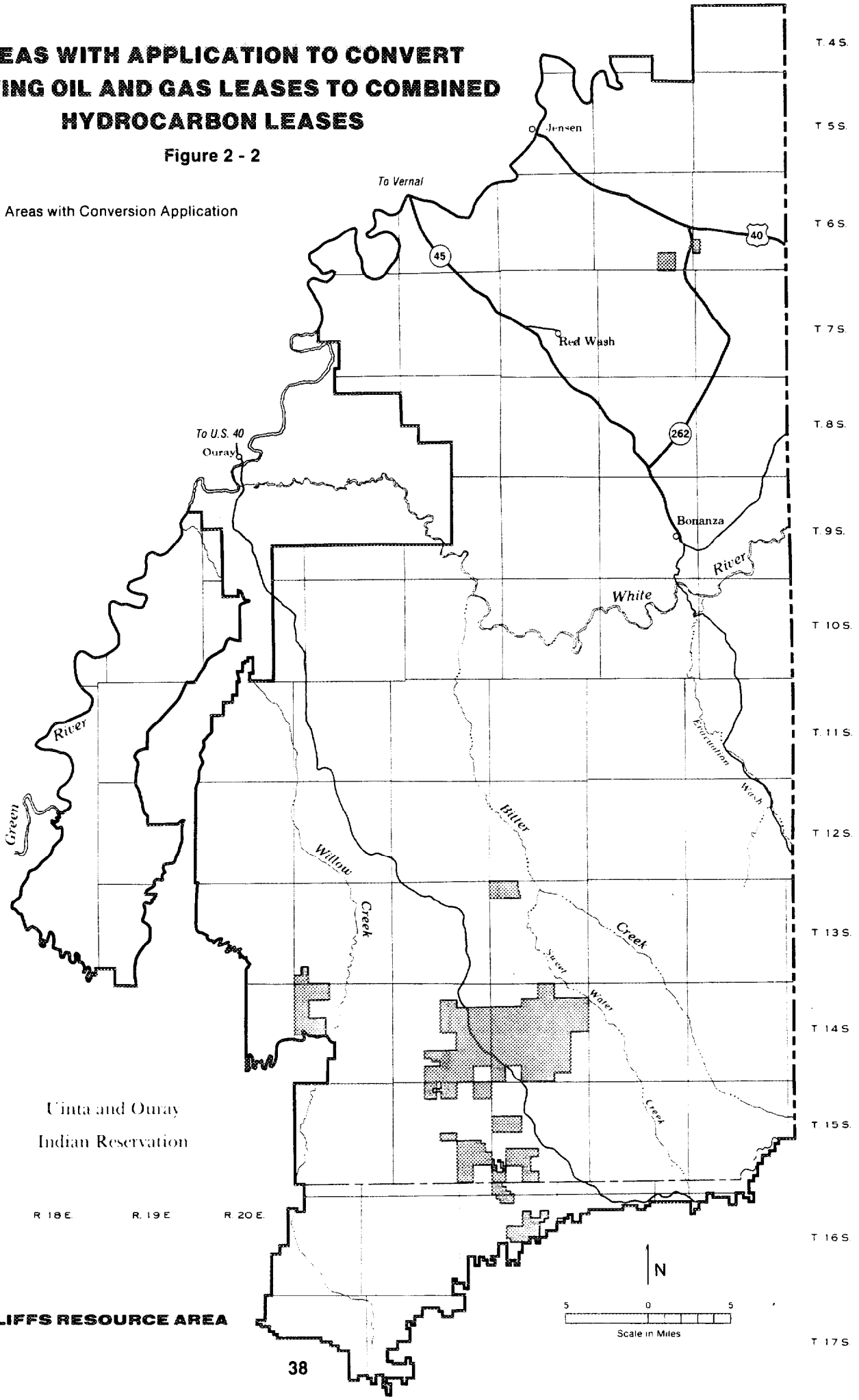


BOOK CLIFFS RESOURCE AREA

AREAS WITH APPLICATION TO CONVERT EXISTING OIL AND GAS LEASES TO COMBINED HYDROCARBON LEASES

Figure 2 - 2

Areas with Conversion Application

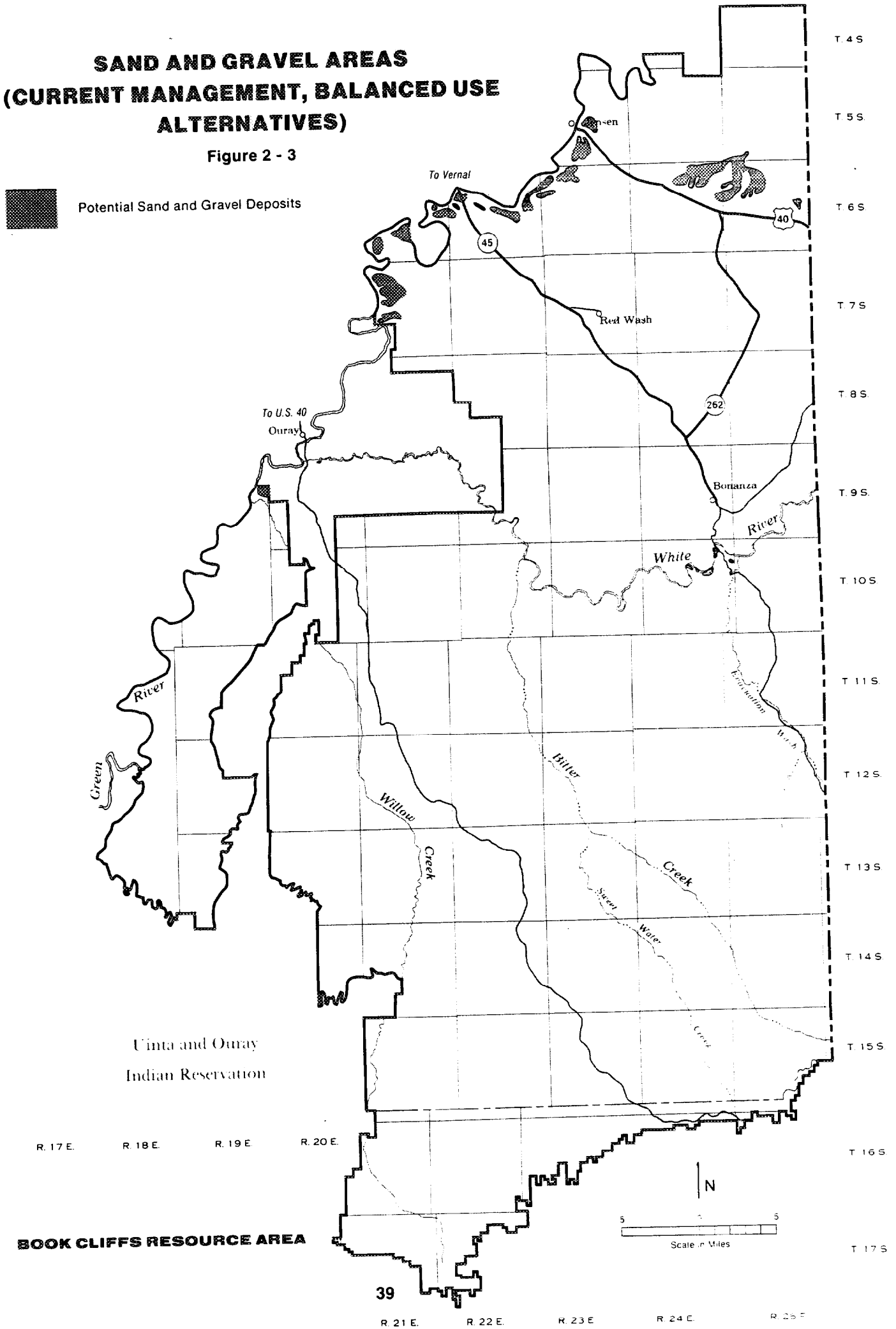


BOOK CLIFFS RESOURCE AREA

SAND AND GRAVEL AREAS (CURRENT MANAGEMENT, BALANCED USE ALTERNATIVES)

Figure 2 - 3

Potential Sand and Gravel Deposits



BOOK CLIFFS RESOURCE AREA

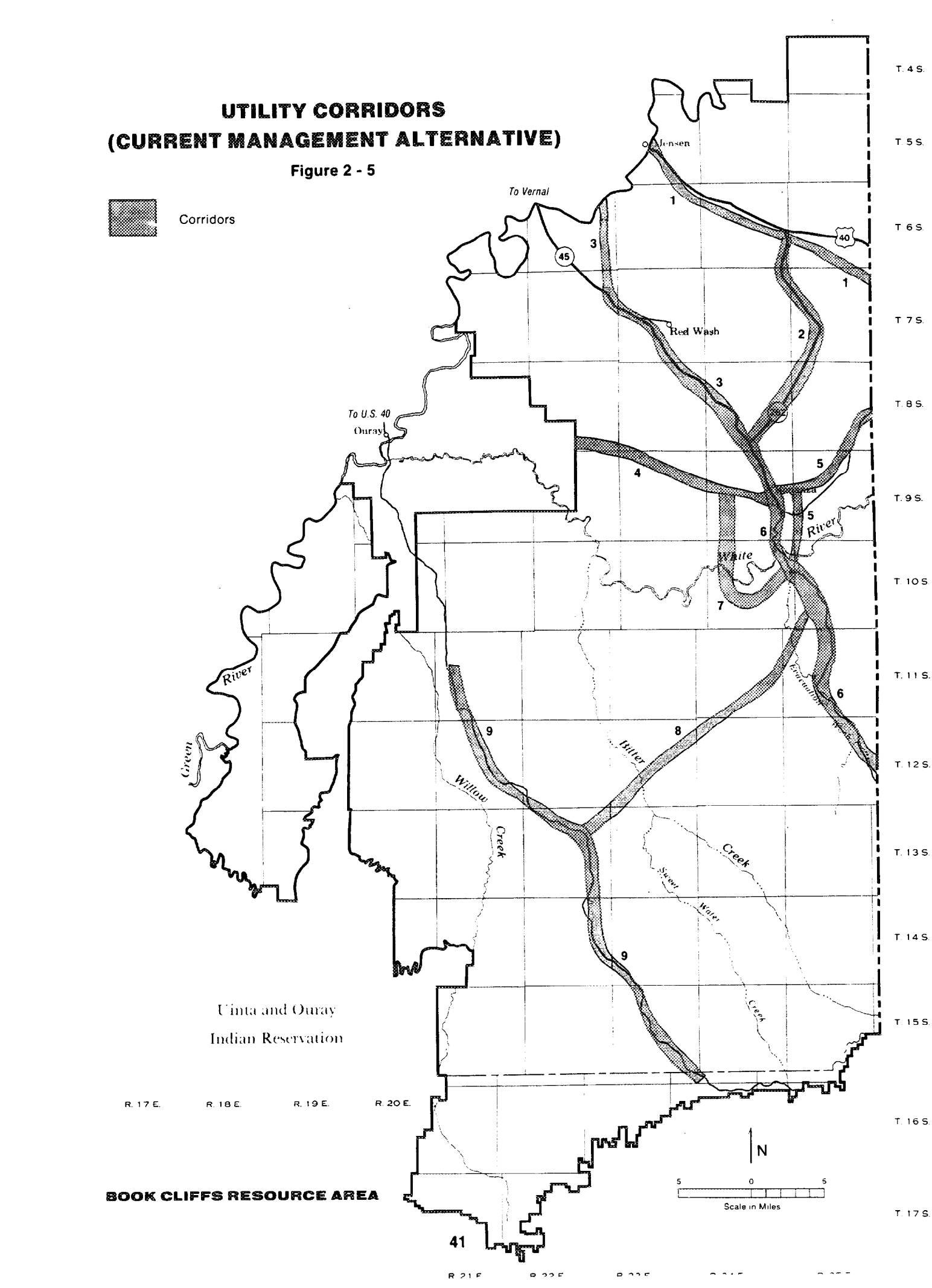
BUILDING STONE COLLECTING AREAS (CURRENT MANAGEMENT, BALANCED USE, COMMODITY PRODUCTION ALTERNATIVES)

Figure 2 - 4

Balanced Use and Current Management

Commodity Production

BOOK CLIFFS RESOURCE AREA


UTILITY CORRIDORS
(CURRENT MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE)
Figure 2 - 5
Corridors
To Vernal
Jensen
Red Wash
To U.S. 40
Ouray
Uinta and Ouray
Indian Reservation
White River
Green River
Willow Creek
Bitter Creek
Sweet Water Creek
Evacuation Creek
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
41
45
40
T. 4 S.
T. 5 S.
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
T. 8 S.
T. 9 S.
T. 10 S.
T. 11 S.
T. 12 S.
T. 13 S.
T. 14 S.
T. 15 S.
T. 16 S.
T. 17 S.
R. 17 E.
R. 18 E.
R. 19 E.
R. 20 E.
R. 21 E.
R. 22 E.
R. 23 E.
N
5 0 5
Scale in Miles
BOOK CLIFFS RESOURCE AREA

AMPs) would remain as are currently authorized. Requests for changes in any of the above items would be considered on a case-by-case basis and would be allowed or disapproved based on the individual circumstances. There would be no active program to develop new allotment management plans or grazing systems. No special practices or actions would be proposed for wild horses.

Livestock Adjustments.

The current stocking level (average licensed use) would remain unchanged at approximately 66,980 AUMs. The active livestock preference is 102,915 AUMs. Under this alternative, the active preference would be used as the technical base for authorizing stocking levels. No reductions from active preference would be proposed. If active preference would be fully activated, it would result in an increase of 35,935 AUMs over the current stocking level. Individual operations would have the option of increasing or decreasing their level of active or nonuse. However, it is assumed that the overall level of nonuse would remain relatively constant.

Under current use, there would be no special provision to provide forage for wild horses. Wild horse forage would continue to be provided from livestock nonuse based on the assumption of a relatively constant nonuse level.

Range Improvements.

No specific livestock projects are proposed under this alternative. Improvement work would be limited primarily to reconstruction, development of cooperative improvements, and improvements to remedy special need situations.

Implementation Schedule.

The Current Management Alternative would be implemented as follows:

1. Begin the "5-year monitoring program" to determine any needed adjustments (livestock numbers, seasons of use, vegetative treatments).
2. Retain the current allotment management plans.
3. Maintain existing water facilities, fences, and land treatments.
4. Develop improvements to satisfy special needs.

Riparian Habitat, Floodplains, and Crucial Wildlife Habitat.

Floodplains and riparian habitat would be protected as required by Executive Order 11988 by avoiding development in these areas or requiring minimization of damage through restoration and preservation measures.

Crucial wildlife habitat on Lower McCook Ridge would be protected through a rotation grazing system that would provide a balance of forage for both livestock and wildlife.

Costs.

Under this alternative, BLM would not fund new livestock improvements. This would not exclude use of BLM funds for operation and maintenance (reconstruction and maintenance) or development of new improvements resulting from cooperative funding.

Wildlife and Wild Horses

The 5,000 to 10,000 acres of prescribed burns would concentrate on mature sagebrush canyon bottoms located primarily in crucial wildlife summer habitats.

Surface-disturbing activities associated with mineral exploration and development, woodland harvest, etc., would require rehabilitation. Disturbed wildlife habitat would be required to be returned to a state comparable to that which existed prior to development.

Recreation

Within the Green River Corridor from Ouray to Tabyago Canyon, the placement of structures or other types of visible development would comply with management consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Along the remaining portions of the river, 5,250 acres from Ouray to Dinosaur National Monument, no river corridor would be designated, but the river environment would be partially protected. All development or surface disturbances would conform to the existing Visual Resource Management standard.

Watershed

Boulevard Ridge Watershed Study Area.

In 1972, the Boulevard Ridge Watershed Study Area was established to examine the effects of removing mature pinyon and juniper trees on water runoff and sediment yield. Data have been collected from a chained (removal of pinyon and juniper) drainage area and an undisturbed (control) drainage area. The two drainage areas, totalling 330 acres have been fenced to exclude livestock; all other surface disturbing activities are prohibited within the exclosure.

Treatment Measures.

Watershed treatment measures such as detention and retention dams would be installed on 10,000 acres.

Based on past treatments, an average of 50 structures would be constructed per 1,000 acres. Each structure would have a sediment capacity of 0.25 acre-feet and function for approximately 20 years without maintenance. The exact number of structures and their location are not currently known. The location of critical and severe erosion condition areas are shown in Figure 2-6.

The seeding of detention-retention dams and the utilizing of runoff diversion structures, would minimize adverse soil impacts, which might result from gas and oil activities.

Land Tenure Adjustment

The approximately 1,360 acres of land made available for disposal (Figure 2-7) would be small, isolated tracts, surrounded by state and private lands. ***These lands meet the basic FLPMA requirements for disposal. They have been identified in this document so they may be considered in future land exchanges or sales. Exchanges would be the preferred method of disposal. Site specific analysis would be required prior to any disposal effort.*** Potential lands for disposal or exchange are shown in Figure 2-7.

RESOURCE PROTECTION ALTERNATIVE

Oil and Gas.

Implementation of this alternative would place land into restricted use areas, emphasizing renewable resource values. ***Approximately 470,000 acres would be placed into Category 2 (see Appendix 4). Specific wildlife resource values requiring special mitigation include: Crucial winter elk habitat such as chainings and burns, crucial elk summer range, the Monument Ridge Deer Migration Corridor, and crucial antelope range. Perennial streams, severe and critical erosion areas, VRM Class II areas, and three scenic travel corridors would receive special mitigation to protect important watershed and recreation resources. The Green River Corridor from Ouray to Jensen and the White River Corridor upstream from the proposed damsite would receive special mitigation to protect wildlife, watershed, and recreation values.***

Surface occupancy would not be allowed on 49,000 acres in order to protect sagegrouse leks, deer and elk calving and fawning areas, floodplains, wetlands, public water reserves, and a watershed study area.

In addition, thirteen campsites, six scenic overlooks, the Book Cliffs Natural Area, and two ecologic features would be precluded from surface occupancy. The Green River adjacent to Dinosaur National Monument and from Ouray to Tabyago Canyon, along with the White River downstream from the proposed damsite, would also receive this special protection to enhance wildlife, watershed, and recreation values.

Leasing would not be allowed on approximately 36,000 acres due to current limitations of offsite or slant drilling. Additionally, the Naval Oil Shale Reserve would remain closed to oil and gas leasing.

Oil Shale.

Approximately 18,000 acres would be available for lease and would be designated a priority management area, (Figure 2-9). Two future oil shale tracts, totalling approximately 10,500 acres, could be leased within this area after implementation of the RMP. The actual size of the tracts could vary due to offsite disposal considerations or other legislation that may be forthcoming. Detailed environmental documentation would be required for any lease proposal and would require specific mitigation measures. A schedule for oil shale leasing would then be developed. Exploration drilling of the resource would be allowed to verify the projected estimates before a competitive leasing program would be started.

Tar Sand.

Areas in Category one and two (Figure 2-10), would be administered according to standard laws and regulations (refer to Appendix 4 for more discussion).

Additional special mitigation (Category 2) would be required for crucial deer and elk habitat, high productive woodlands, and critical and severe erosion areas. The mitigation would be developed during an environmental analysis of a specific proposed mining project. Mitigation could include such things as substitute habitat development prior to project initiation. Areas affected would total approximately 106,000 acres.

Certain areas would be delineated no surface occupancy. This designation would preclude development of tar sand deposits although conventional oil and gas resources could still be developed. Crucial wildlife habitat which would negate surface occupancy includes: Deer fawning and elk calving areas, McCook Ridge crucial winter habitat, the Monument Ridge Deer Migration Corridor, and sage grouse leks. Other limiting resource values would include: Public water reserves, VRM Class II areas, ten campsites, a portion of the Book Cliffs Divide Scenic Corridor, and a watershed study area. The area affected would total approximately 67,000 acres.