

CHAPTER 3

SCATTERED TRACTS

BACKGROUND

The lands on which the Bureau of Land Management administers both the surface and mineral estate (sometimes referred to as "surface" lands) make up a tiny portion of North Dakota. These lands were never in private ownership.

When North Dakota was being settled, there was not a master plan to insure that every acre would go into private ownership. The homesteaders filed on what they wanted and needed after the area was settled.

What can be said in general about BLM surface lands in North Dakota, applies to the BLM tracts in the Southwest Planning area (with the exception of the Big Gumbo Area): they are mostly odds and ends, scattered widely, and it is unlikely that the general public is aware of their locations (see Maps 29, 30, and 31).

The BLM has been concerned with the need for land pattern adjustment for many years. Of the 68,000 acres of public land managed by BLM in North Dakota, some 46,000 acres exist in a scattered pattern of relatively small tracts, ranging in size from less than 40 acres to 160 acres. Excluding the Big Gumbo Area, which is discussed in the next chapter, the Southwest Planning Area contains 124 separate BLM parcels with a total area of 11,986 acres.

To accomplish the objective of making the management of both public and adjacent private lands more effective and efficient, it is necessary to adjust the scattered or fragmented pattern of BLM lands. Lands in this planning area have been reviewed and categorized into one of three categories, using criteria found in *State Director Guidance for Resource Management in Montana and the Dakotas*, published in April 1983. These three categories are: disposal (sale, exchange, or transfer); retention; and further study.

Criteria for categorizing scattered tracts are found in Appendix G.

The BLM currently uses a minimal or "custodial" management approach for these lands. The following recommendations would, if they are adopted, result in a different management philosophy for the scattered tracts.

The following land use recommendations for the scattered lands are grouped according to "programs," such as lands (realty) and minerals. The overall objectives for each program precede the recommendations.

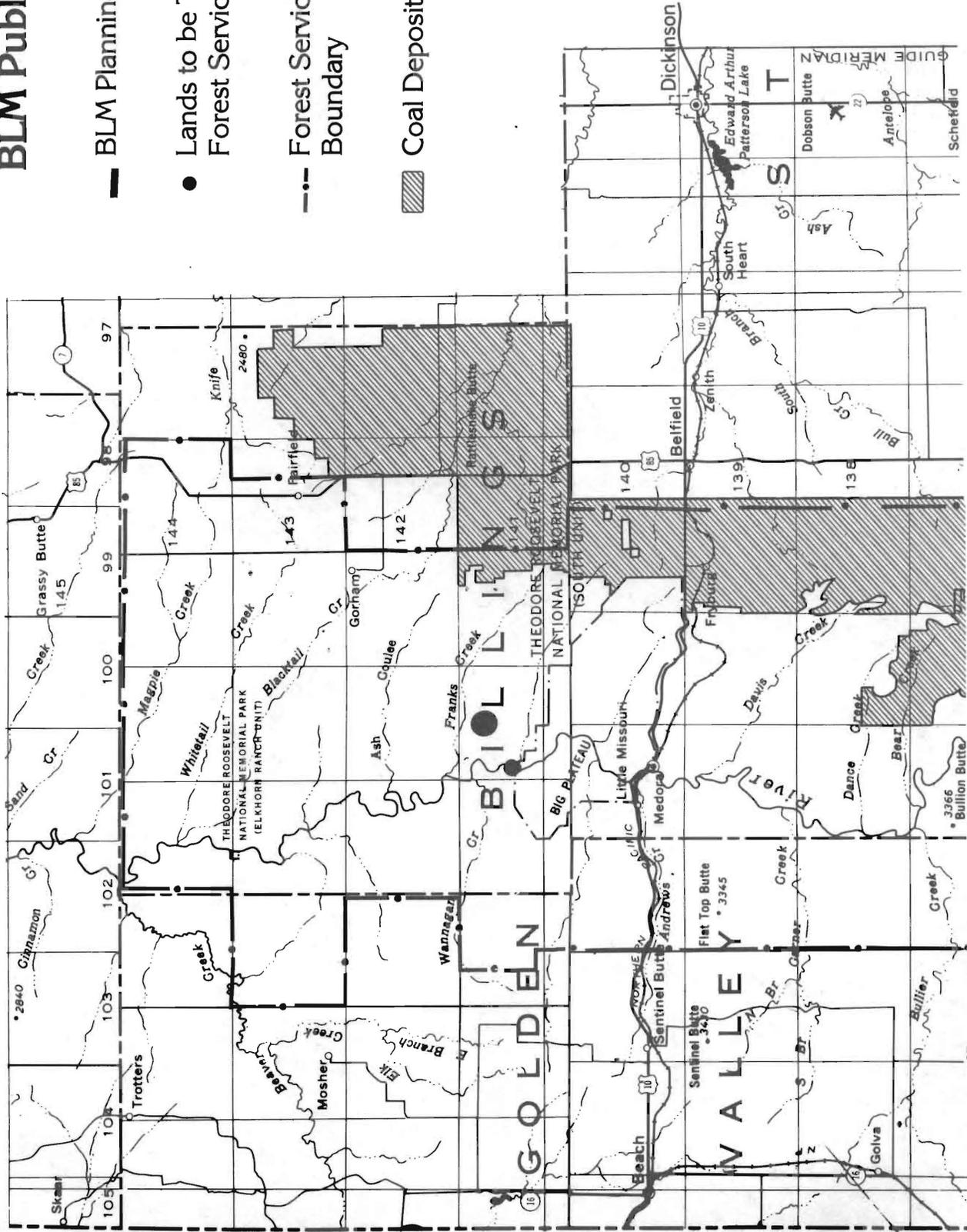
LANDS

Objective: To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public land management through an analysis of resource values and management opportunities on scattered tracts in the Southwest Planning Area. To provide for implementation of a long-term land base adjustment program for the public lands by grouping them in three categories: disposal (sale, transfer, or exchange); retention; and further study. Sell, exchange, or transfer those public lands which could attain a higher and better use in the private sector or through management by another public agency; retain those public lands with identified public values; and adjust BLM land pattern through acquisition where possible to get the most public value and benefit.

Rationale: BLM has been concerned with the need for land base adjustment for many years. The public land pattern in the planning area is fragmented, with most tracts ranging in size from less than 40 to 160 acres. The BLM is authorized to enter into land base adjustments through the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and other public land laws. Lands identified for retention have resource values that war-

BLM Public Lands

-  BLM Planning Area Boundary
-  Lands to be Transferred to Forest Service
-  Forest Service Administrative Boundary
-  Coal Deposits



Scale 1:500,000
1 inch equals approximately 8 miles

rant retention in public ownership and can serve as core areas for acquisition of land through exchange mechanisms, with the goal being to create manageable areas of sufficient size for recreational, scientific and aesthetic purposes, as well as to help maintain ecosystem components. It is in the best interest of the public to dispose of lands which have low resource values, are difficult to manage due to small size and scattered nature, or which could attain a higher and better use in the private sector or through management by another public agency. Disposal of unneeded or unmanageable lands would allow BLM to focus management efforts on areas that will best benefit the public and resource values. By exchanging certain lands for lands which have high resource values and which complement retained lands, the public will be assured the maximum benefits from public lands.

Recommendation A: Dispose of the lands described in Table VIII through sale, exchange, or transfer to another federal agency. Retain all mineral rights in federal ownership. This recommendation does not preclude the option of reclassifying these lands or changing management based on new data or policy changes. Any lands identified for transfer and not transferred to federal agencies before October 1, 1987, will be available for disposal to the general public. Pending disposal, the lands will be managed for multiple use at a low intensity/custodial level.

Rationale: Tracts categorized for disposal by sale or exchange have limited potential for multiple-use management. Management options on these parcels are limited to low intensity/custodial administration. Cost-effective management beyond this level is clearly not feasible. The tract pattern is scattered. The tracts range from less than one acre to 640 acres, and resource values are low. Potential for management by other public agencies is limited. Cost constraints noted here would also affect other agency programs in a similar way. The exceptions are the two tracts located in Billings County that are within the administrative boundary of the U.S. Forest Service and adjoin or are near large blocks of Forest Service land. These tracts are identified for transfer to the Forest Service.

One of the tracts identified for disposal is within a Known Recoverable Coal Resource Area (Mott Coal Deposit); however, it will not be recommended for further consideration for leasing because of surface resource trade-off and unsuitability criteria application. This 40-acre tract contains less than one percent (.03 percent) of the total coal in the deposit.

Lands addressed in this recommendation can serve as a base for exchange to support land acquisition and consolidation discussed in Recommendation B or for other proposals that would benefit the public.

TABLE VIII
LANDS IDENTIFIED FOR DISPOSAL BY SALE, EXCHANGE, OR TRANSFER

Adams County

Township	Range	Section	Subdivision	Acres
129N	91W	5	NESE	40.00
131N*	93W	24	SWSW	40.00

Grant County

Township	Range	Section	Subdivision	Acres
131N	86W	22	E½SW, SE	240.00
134N	86W	4	S½SW	80.00
132N	88W	24	SENE	40.00
134N	88W	30	Lot 1	11.48
130N	86W	30	Lot 2	38.28
132N	87W	32	N½NW	80.00
135N	86W	34	NWNW	40.00
130N	89W	34	NWNE	40.00
130N	85W	10	Lot 1	2.80
130N	85W	10	Lot 2	2.10
130N	86W	26	Lot 1	7.96
129N	87W	8	Lot 1	1.20
129N	87W	9	Lot 2	0.08
134N	88W	18	Lot 1	9.69
130N	90W	27	Lot 4	0.50
130N	90W	28	Lot 3	1.50
131N	84W	30	Lot 14	0.87
131N	84W	2	Lot 10	7.85

Billings County

Township	Range	Section	Subdivision	Acres
141N**	101W	10	All	640.00
141N**	101W	18	SESE	40.00

Bowman County

Township	Range	Section	Subdivision	Acres
129N	106W	3	SE¼NW¼, NE¼SW¼	120.00
129N	106W	3	S½W¼	40.00
129N	106W	11	N½NE¼, SE¼NE¼	120.00
129N	106W	12	NW¼NW¼	40.00
129N	106W	15	NE¼NE¼	40.00
129N	106W	15	E½SE¼	80.00
129N	106W	22	E½NE¼	80.00
129N	106W	18	Lots 2, 3 NE¼SW¼	118.16
129N	107W	13	NE¼SE¼	40.00
129N	106W	19	Lot 4	39.41
129N	106W	30	Lot 1	39.47
129N	107W	24	E½SE¼, SW¼SE¼	
129N	106W	20	S½NW¼	80.00

*This tract lies within a Known Recoverable Coal Resource Area.

**These tracts have been identified for transfer to the U.S. Forest Service.

Bowman County (cont.)

Township	Range	Section	Subdivision	Acres
129N	106W	21	NW¼SW¼	40.00
129N	106W	23	SE¼NE¼	40.00
129N	106W	24	SE¼SW¼	40.00
129N	107W	12	SW¼SW¼	40.00
129N	107W	13	NW¼NE¼, N½NW¼	120.00
129N	107W	34	Lot 4	51.10
129N	104W	32	SW¼SW¼	40.00
129N	105W	35	S½SE¼	80.00
129N	105W	29	NE¼NW¼	40.00
129N	105W	23	SE¼SE¼	40.00
129N	105W	25	N½NW¼	80.00
129N	105W	26	NE¼NE¼	40.00
129N	105W	24	NW¼NW¼	40.00
129N	105W	15	NE¼NE¼	40.00
129N	105W	5	SE¼SE¼	40.00
129N	105W	5	SE¼NW¼	40.00
129N	105W	6	Lot 7	39.54
129N	105W	5	SW¼SW¼	40.00
129N	105W	8	NW¼NE¼, N½NW¼, SE¼, NW¼	160.00
129N	105W	6	Lot 4, 5	78.95
130N	105W	31	Lot 4, SE¼SW¼, S½SE¼	159.41
130N	105W	32	SW¼SW¼	40.00
130N	101W	35	SW¼SE¼	40.00
130N	104W	6	Lot 1	40.10
130N	104W	9	NW¼SW¼	40.00
130N	104W	19	S½SE¼	80.00
130N	104W	21	S½SE¼	80.00
130N	105W	7	NE¼SW¼	40.00
130N	105W	8	S½SW¼	80.00
130N	105W	10	NW¼SW¼	40.00
130N	105W	11	SE¼NW¼, E½SW¼	120.00
130N	105W	19	Lot 4, SE¼SW¼	78.92
130N	105W	22	SW¼SW¼	40.00
130N	105W	30	NW¼NE¼, S½NE¼	120.00
130N	105W	31	SW¼NE¼	40.00
130N	105W	32	NE¼SW¼	40.00
130N	105W	32	SW¼NW¼	40.00
130N	105W	32	SE¼SE¼	40.00
130N	105W	33	E½NE¼	80.00
131N	103W	30	Lot 4	39.18
131N	103W	34	NW¼SW¼	40.00
131N	103W	35	SE¼NE¼	40.00
131N	105W	15	N½SW¼	80.00
131N	105W	17	SE¼NW¼	40.00
131N	105W	17	S½SE¼	80.00
131N	105W	18	SW¼NE¼	40.00
131N	105W	21	W½NW¼	80.00
131N	105W	21	SE¼SW¼, S½SE¼	120.00
131N	105W	22	SW¼NW¼	40.00
131N	105W	26	SW¼NW¼	40.00
131N	105W	27	SE¼SE¼	40.00
131N	105W	34	NE¼, NE¼NW¼, N½SE¼	280.00
131N	105W	30	SE¼NW¼	40.00
131N	106W	6	Lot 4	36.02

Bowman County (cont.)

Township	Range	Section	Subdivision	Acres
131N	106W	13	NE¼SE¼	40.00
131N	106W	23	NE¼NW¼	40.00
131N	106W	24	SW¼NE¼	40.00
131N	107W	2	NW¼	159.90
132N	105W	6	Lots 1, 2, 3, 4	85.71
132N	106W	12	N½N½	160.00
132N	105W	26	W½NW¼	80.00
132N	105W	26	S½SW¼	80.00
132N	105W	28	SE¼NW¼	40.00
132N	105W	34	S½NW¼, SW¼, W½SE¼	320.00
132N	106W	28	NW¼SW¼	40.00
132N	106W	28	NE¼SE¼	40.00
132N	107W	26	NE¼NE¼	40.00
132N	107W	26	SW¼, S½SE¼	240.00

Recommendation B: Retain the lands described in Table IX for multiple-use management. Through further evaluation, determine which tracts or areas would best serve as acquisition core areas for consolidation of lands through exchanges with willing parties. Explore the possibility of exchanging tracts along the Little Missouri River for other lands along the river for the purpose of blocking up federal lands, which would result in improved management and providing better public access. This recommendation does not preclude the option of reclassifying these lands based on new information or policy changes by the Department of the Interior or the BLM.

Rationale: The public lands addressed by this recommendation have high public and resource values

that warrant retention in public ownership. Several tracts are in areas, or associated with other tracts, where consolidation around them would greatly improve manageability, enhance resource values, and better benefit the public. Lands identified for disposal, in Lands Recommendation A, would serve as a base for exchange. Lands along the Little Missouri River warrant retention by themselves, because of high recreation, wildlife, and aesthetic values. These values could be enhanced where further evaluation shows it would be possible to consolidate the lands along the river into larger units. This recommendation provides for the effective and beneficial management of scattered public lands, and if implemented, it would maintain the quality of resource values.

TABLE IX
LANDS IDENTIFIED FOR RETENTION FOR MULTIPLE-USE MANAGEMENT

Bowman County

Township	Range	Section	Subdivision
129N*	106W	4	Lots 5, 6, 7
129N*	106W	15	Lots 1, 2
129N*	106W	21	Lot 7
129N*	106W	27	Lots 3, 4
129N*	106W	28	Lots 13, 15
129N*	106W	33	Lot 3, W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$
129N	104W	31	Lots 1, 3, 4
129N	105W	1	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$
129N	105W	2	Lots 1, 2, 3, 4
129N	105W	2	S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
129N	105W	11	N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$
129N	105W	12	N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$
129N	105W	34	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
129N	105W	35	S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$
129N	105W	35	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
129N	104W	18	Lot 4
130N	105W	13	S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
130N	105W	24	N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$
130N*	105W	6	Lot 8
130N*	106W	1	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
130N	105W	18	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$
130N	106W	19	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Lot 1
130N*	106W	2	Lot 11
130N*	106W	21	Lot 11
130N*	106W	20	Lot 2
130N*	106W	28	Lot 3
130N*	106W	32	Lot 4
131N	105W	4	Lots 1, 2, 3, 4
131N	105W	4	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$
131N	105W	4	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$
131N*	105W	30	Lots 3, 5
131N*	105W	31	Lots 1, 6, 9
131N*	106W	13	Lots 8, 9
131N*	106W	14	Lot 2
131N*	106W	23	Lots 1, 4, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
131N*	106W	24	Lot 5
131N	106W	25	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$
131N	106W	26	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$
131N	106W	26	S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
131N	106W	26	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
131N	106W	27	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
132N	105W	20	All
132N	105W	32	N $\frac{1}{2}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$

*These are tracts located along the Little Missouri River.

Recommendation C: Retain the following lands pending further study. Complete assessments of these tracts and place them in retention or disposal categories.

Township	Range	Section	Subdivision	Acres
129N	105W	24	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40
129N	105W	24	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40
129N	105W	14	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	200
129N	105W	10	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80
131N	103W	34	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40
131N	105W	10	N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	120

Rationale: These tracts have potentially significant cultural resource values that may be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. An assessment of the resource values is necessary before the lands can be categorized for retention or disposal.

Objective: To provide for all applicable rights-of-way across public lands within an environmentally acceptable manner.

Rationale: Local and regional energy developments point to a probable need for additional pipelines, power lines, and roads in this area. Public lands should support these needs to the extent possible without loss of higher public values.

Recommendation D: Keep public lands within this planning area open to rights-of-way applications. Each application should be evaluated on its own merits. Take measures to protect the environmental values.

Rationale: Most future rights-of-way applications in this area would probably be energy related. As energy needs are of exceptionally high priority in our nation today, we must take positive action to develop and transport energy resources. In most cases mitigating measures can be taken to eliminate or limit significant adverse environmental impacts. Where this cannot be achieved, some flexibility to relocate proposed facilities should be allowed.

The planning area contains oil and gas resources and coal deposits of high to moderate potential; however, it is impossible to determine at this time which specific public lands might be needed for roads or rights-of-way in support of coal or oil and gas development in the future.

Recommendation E: Eliminate unauthorized uses on public lands. Determine the ultimate tenure of land where permanent unauthorized uses/activities have occurred (e.g., agricultural activities, powerlines, or occupancy) using the following alternatives:

1. Authorization under permit or lease;
2. Transfer to private ownership through exchange or sale;

3. Termination of the use and restoration of the land.

Rationale: Unauthorized use of public lands denies the public lawful revenues and can damage public land resources or be detrimental to authorized users. Elimination of all unauthorized use of public lands is a goal set forth in State Director Guidance and BLM Policy.

COAL

The overall objectives of the BLM coal program are to: make federal coal resources available to meet present and future market demand; assure that mineral exploration, development, and extraction are carried out in such a way as to minimize environmental damage; receive fair market value for minerals subject to lease; and to provide for orderly and timely development of the resource.

Rationale: The "Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970" declares it to be the policy of the Federal Government to encourage the development of the domestic minerals industry. (See rationale for split-estate coal objective.)

Recommendation: Federal coal reserves in SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 24, T131N, R93W, in Adams County, will not be carried forward for further consideration for leasing. This tract has been categorized for disposal. All minerals underlying this tract will be retained by the federal government.

Rationale: The coal reserves for this tract are not being carried forward for further consideration for leasing, due to application of the coal screens (noted in the Split-Estate Coal Recommendations for the Mott Deposit). Sale of that tract could preclude development of the underlying federal coal.

Recommendation: Leave all the isolated tracts in this planning area open for potential coal exploration. However, applications will be assessed and evaluated on a case-by-case basis. These specific evaluations will determine what mitigation measures should be

required as a condition for issuing the coal exploration license.

Rationale: All of the area has not been adequately explored to determine the exact nature and quality of the coal resources in the planning area. This information is a vital part of overall energy planning in the area, and only through exploration programs can we obtain that information. This exploration can occur without causing significant adverse impacts to the environment.

Recommendation: Issue licenses to mine coal (following the guidelines set in 43 CFR 3400) to qualified applicants within those areas designated acceptable for further consideration for leasing; however, each application must be assessed on its individual merits.

Rationale: These licenses are specifically authorized in Section 8 of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920. They are strictly to provide for local domestic need for coal. Under the provisions of the regulations individual or associations of individuals are allowed to mine federal coal for their own use. A license to mine may be issued to a municipality solely for nonprofit mining and disposal of coal to its own residents. The Bureau may also authorize a recognized and established relief agency of any state to take federally owned coal within the state and provide it to families on its rolls who require the coal for household use but are unable to pay for the coal. These licenses do not require the payment of rentals or royalties. Any mining activities authorized by a license are subject to the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act.

OIL AND GAS

Objective: Make all BLM-administered oil and gas reserves on these tracts available for exploration and development. Assure that exploration and development activities are carried out in such a way as to minimize environmental damage.

Rationale: The "Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970" declares it to be the policy of the federal government to encourage the development of the domestic minerals industry. (See rationale for split-estate coal objective.)

Recommendation: Make available for exploration and leasing all of the lands in the planning area on which the oil and gas is federally owned. Stipulations will be developed for leases and development plans on a case-by-case basis.

Rationale: With the critical need for energy resources, as many areas as possible must be made available, but surface resource values must be protected. Impacts resulting from oil and gas development normally can be mitigated. Lease and development plan stipulations will assure these mitigations.

MISCELLANEOUS MINERALS

Objective: Develop a geology, energy, and minerals (GEM) inventory program, so that the extent, quality, and accessibility can be determined of the limited amounts of minerals that the BLM controls other than oil and gas and coal. Where potentially economic amounts of these minerals occur, make them available for development. Mineral resources in this category include but are not limited to: uranium, geothermal energy, salt, potash, sodium sulfate, sand and gravel, scoria, stone, and clay.

Rationale: The minerals and mineral materials mentioned above are known to exist or possibly exist in the planning area on isolated tracts. Some of these minerals are important at the present time and others will become increasingly important in the future.

Improved processing and mining methods will allow the development of increasingly lower grade deposits. Industrial development will also increase the demand for mineral materials, which may be partially supplied from federally controlled sources.

Recommendation: Prepare a basic data file for minerals other than coal and oil and gas resources for the scattered tracts in this planning area. This file is to be started this fiscal year and updated as needed.

Rationale: Little is known about these resources and little interest is being shown at this time, but interest could grow in the future. This file would supply the basic minerals data needed for a number of possible future actions. These include land sales or exchanges, mineral leases, and material sales.

Recommendation: Federally controlled minerals other than coal and oil and gas must be made available for private industry, local governments, and private individuals if requested. Requests for disposal will be handled on a case-by-case basis, with appropriate analysis to protect other resource values.

Rationale: Minerals are necessary for the continued growth, development and maintenance of the Nation. Their availability must be assured where necessary, but not at the loss of more valuable resources.

RANGE

Objective: Make available for grazing all unleased tracts suitable or desirable for grazing. Enter into short-term nonrenewable leases for unleased tracts categorized for disposal if the tracts are still retained by BLM two years after the adoption of the MFP. Continue leasing lands already leased for grazing unless other circumstances dictate changes. Categorize all tracts for management priority.

Rationale: Many of the isolated parcels are under lease. Unauthorized grazing occurs on some sites.

These areas should be leased. Tracts identified for disposal should not be leased under standard leases because this may encumber disposal actions. Short-term nonrenewable leases would allow authorized grazing without encumbering disposal actions.

Current BLM grazing policy requires that we assign management priorities among allotments or groups of allotments within a planning area. It provides for placing similar allotments into one of three categories based upon our current objectives to: (1) maintain their current satisfactory conditions; (2) improve their current unsatisfactory conditions; or (3) manage the allotments custodially, while protecting current resource values.

Recommendation: Lease the following tracts (which are not currently leased) for grazing and manage at the custodial level. Do not lease those tracts that are classified for disposal in the Final MFP. Those tracts categorized for disposal which are still retained by BLM two years after the adoption of the MFP will be offered for short-term nonrenewable lease and managed at the custodial level.

Bowman County

Township	Range	Section
131N	105W	Sec. 31: Lot 9
130N	104W	Sec. 6: Lot 1
130N	101W	Sec. 35: SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
129N	106W	Sec. 19: Lot 4
129N	106W	Sec. 30: Lot 1

Grant County

Township	Range	Section
130N	86W	Sec. 3: Lot 2
131N	86W	Sec. 22: E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$
134N*	86W	Sec. 4: S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW
135N	86W	Sec. 34: NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$
132N	87W	Sec. 32: N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$
132N	88W	Sec. 24: SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$
130N	89W	Sec. 34: NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$

Adams County

Township	Range	Section
129N	93W	Sec. 24: SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$

Billings County

Township	Range	Section
141N	101W	Sec. 18: SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$

*Leased on a yearly basis pending final MFP.

Rationale: Unauthorized grazing use, small size, and low percentage of federal range make custodial management the most cost-effective and logical option. These tracts are rated in fair to good range condition. If they are retained, short-term leases should be issued and management should continue at the custodial level. Short-term leases will insure that the public will be compensated for use of the land by livestock, pending final disposition of these tracts.

Recommendation: Continue to lease for grazing those tracts already leased and manage at the custodial level. This recommendation does not preclude the option of modifying or cancelling the existing leases consistent with the disposal categorization and as provided for under 43 CFR 4120.2-1(d) and 4130.2(d)(3). Leases subject to these provisions will be renewed on a short-term basis pending disposal.

Rationale: Because the tracts are small in size and widely scattered and make up a small percentage of the operators' grazing lands, custodial management is the most logical. Range conditions on most of the allotments are satisfactory, indicating little need for improvement. Opportunities for positive economic return on public investment do not exist on these allotments. These lands are currently under long-term lease, expiring in 1989.

WATERSHED

Upland Watersheds

Objective: Avoid surface actions which significantly impact existing vegetative cover.

Rationale: Upland watershed areas fall into two hydrologic categories, prairie uplands and badlands. BLM policy and the State 208 program direct the Bureau to protect soil and water resources by ensuring an adequate amount of vegetative cover in each of these hydrologic areas.

Badland areas are fragile and of low productivity, and accelerated soil erosion once underway cannot be readily reversed. Therefore, surface actions which negatively impact existing vegetative cover must be restricted.

Recommendation: Maintain or improve present vegetative cover to minimize soil erosion on tracts to be offered for short-term lease. Grazing lessees should be encouraged to follow 208 best management practices developed by local soil conservation districts.

Rationale: Watershed degradation accelerates soil erosion, which causes a loss in soil productivity and contributes to poor water quality, thus violating Bureau policy and Public Law 92-500, Section 208.

Riverine Floodplains

Objective: Avoid surface actions which impact the river floodplains during the peak runoff period of March through June.

Rationale: Accelerated soil erosion degrades the watershed. The loss of soil productivity and increased nutrient loading contributes to poor water quality. To comply with existing Bureau policy and Public Law 92-500, Section 208, surface actions which negatively impact existing vegetative cover must be restricted during the peak runoff period. This will protect the floodplain and comply with Executive Order 11988.

Recommendation: Within the limits of custodial management, maintain or improve present vegetative cover in riparian areas which will be offered for grazing lease. Grazing lessees should be encouraged to follow best management practices developed by local soil conservation districts. Allow no use for which watershed disturbances are nonmitigable. Surface disturbing activities should be kept to a minimum level. Require that mitigating measures are applied to all surface-disturbing activities, and assess them on a case-by-case basis.

Rationale: Watershed degradation accelerates soil erosion, which causes a loss in soil productivity and contributes to poor water quality in the area, thus violating Bureau policy and Public Law 92-500, Section 208.

WILDLIFE RESOURCES

General

Objective A: Manage for wildlife habitat on isolated tracts that are retained in BLM ownership which have good potential for wildlife enhancement. Develop cost-effective management for BLM retention lands at levels reflecting resource values, priorities, and manageability.

Rationale: Parcels addressed by this objective are not considered crucial to the well-being of the wildlife resources but are of sufficient value to warrant custodial management by BLM and more intensive management by NDGF under cooperative management agreements. Several of the scattered, isolated tracts of BLM land have wildlife values that would respond favorably to more intensive management, resulting in enhanced wildlife populations, productivity, and diversity for relatively large areas. Since proper livestock grazing management systems are often impractical on small tracts, priority should be given to wildlife habitat enhancement on these areas.

Recommendation A-1: The North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF) will be given the opportunity to nominate disposal tracts for cooperative management. Such tracts should be identified by NDGF as

being essential or critical to wildlife programs which are ongoing or being planned for the purpose of establishing water and habitat improvement and enhancement projects. Nominations should be made during the public comment period. Preliminary plans outlining cooperative management objectives and proposed projects must be received by the Dickinson District by September 1, 1983. Nominations not fully supported will be reclassified for disposal, and offered for sale to the general public. Those lands determined to be eligible for cooperative management will be retained.

Rationale: This recommendation provides for the effective management of resource values present on BLM isolated tracts. If implemented, it will result in long-term benefits to the public and help maintain wildlife and other resources for future generations. This would be accomplished by offsetting habitat loss and ensuring that ecological islands are maintained and enhanced through intensive management by NDGF, ensuring diversity and stability in the total ecosystem.

Wildlife

Objective B: Maintain, enhance, and improve wildlife habitat on public land for the greater benefit of the public and the wildlife resources. Offset habitat losses resulting from changing land use in the area. Develop management plans, consolidate lands in key areas, and initiate sound monitoring studies to achieve this goal.

Rationale: Public land provides an important reservoir for wildlife species in the area. Changing land use is steadily decreasing habitat components which are necessary for the continued well-being of the wildlife resource in the region. The present scattered land pattern is not conducive to effective wildlife habitat management. Consolidation around key areas would alleviate this and provide for better, more cost-effective management that is beneficial to the public and the wildlife resources. Enhancement and improvement of wildlife habitat will help offset habitat loss due to changing land use in the area. Greater benefits to the public will be realized by ensuring that sufficient populations of wildlife are maintained throughout the area for hunting, nature study and scientific studies. Several species which have restricted distribution or have limited population in North Dakota such as pronghorn antelope, sage grouse and several species of raptors are found on public land. Management programs that benefit these species will ensure that they remain a part of the native fauna in North Dakota.

Recommendation B-1: Implement management plans to improve wildlife habitat by planting trees, shrubs, and food patches; developing water where needed; and employing other habitat management practices. Acquire and consolidate lands around public lands retained in federal ownership where possible.

Rationale: Lands identified for retention in Lands

Recommendation B, have good potential for wildlife habitat management that will benefit numerous species, including pronghorn antelope, sage grouse, raptors, deer, and furbearers. Their retention is based in part on their high wildlife values and potential. Consolidation and blocking of public lands will provide larger, more manageable units in which to manage for wildlife habitat. Larger blocks of public lands will act as a buffer to land use changes on adjoining private lands and will provide areas of sufficient size to accommodate the habitat requirements of most wildlife species. The present public land pattern is difficult to manage for wildlife habitat and very few wildlife species' habitat requirements are provided in full by the small scattered tracts. Consolidation of public lands around the areas retained would allow cost-effective wildlife habitat management that would benefit wildlife and the public over an area much larger than the present block of lands.

Recommendation B-2: Retain in BLM ownership all lands adjacent to the Little Missouri River and implement management for wildlife habitat. Where the possibility exists, block up BLM land pattern along the river to facilitate better management.

Rationale: Lands adjacent to the Little Missouri River contain riparian and associated upland habitat. These types of areas are critical sources of biological diversity. The majority of wildlife either depend on wetland-riparian areas or use them proportionally more than any other habitat type. Although the parcels administered by BLM are small, their importance to the ecosystem and the public warrants their retention. Additionally, these parcels have excellent potential for intensive management that would create habitat islands with increased values for wildlife and the public. Large portions of the riparian habitat have been destroyed. Maintaining and improving these areas can help offset loss of riparian habitat and will increase the diversity and stability of the total ecosystem. These areas can also be used to set an example of proper management of riparian areas and serve as a nucleus for rehabilitating adjacent riparian habitat along the river.

RECREATION

Objective: Enhance the recreation potential of the public lands in the MFP area within the constraints of their size and scattered ownership pattern.

Rationale: The BLM has limited opportunity to manage an active recreation program in North Dakota, but there are some tracts of public land in the planning area that should be managed for their recreational potential.

Recommendation: Maintain the option to enter into cooperative management agreements with the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department for all BLM surface tracts with high recreation values.

Rationale: The isolated nature of the federal tracts precludes any intensive BLM recreation program in the MFP area; however, some areas may be important to ongoing state recreational programs. These areas could possibly be more effectively managed by a state agency.

Recommendation: Lands around tracts retained in federal ownership should be blocked up where possible to enhance recreational and cultural resource values present in these areas.

Rationale: Blocking up lands around lands retained in federal ownership will provide better access for public use. This will serve to increase the recreational experience for the general public. Hunting, hiking, photography, specimen collecting (rock, artifact, fossil) will probably be the primary recreational uses.

Limited land acquisition in these areas is also consistent with State Director Guidance. Tracts with known paleontologic sites (such as Mud Buttes) are documented in the literature. Other areas have important fossil bearing exposures (Fox Hill, Hell Creek, Ludlow formations) which have significant site potential.

Other tracts and their surrounding areas also contain important cultural resource sites. Some of these areas may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, based on their potential to produce information important to the prehistory of western North Dakota.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Objective: Protect and preserve representative samples of the full array of cultural resources for the benefit of present and future generations. Ensure that cultural resources are given full consideration in all land use planning and management decisions.

Rationale: Cultural resources are recognized as fragile, nonrenewable resources with scientific and sociocultural values, representing an important and integral part of our Nation's heritage. Protection and management of cultural resources under BLM jurisdiction and avoidance of inadvertent loss or destruction of these resources is a primary goal of BLM's cultural resources management program.

Recommendation: Begin a program of testing and evaluation of known cultural resources programs on federal lands in the MFP area, in support of a management plan which will:

1. Manage cultural resources so that scientific and sociocultural values are not diminished but rather maintained and enhanced;
2. Ensure that the Bureau's undertakings avoid inadvertent damage to cultural resources, both federal and non-federal.

Rationale: Current legal and regulatory requirements call for intensive inventory of public lands before actions are taken that change the status or use of the land. Also, surface-disturbing activities on federal lands require an intensive inventory. The survey activity should take place as early as possible to minimize effects on either cultural resources or planned projects.

A management plan based on site potential and importance that protects cultural resource values and promotes scientific and sociocultural values is necessary to ensure that the record left by man is preserved for future generations in understanding the history and prehistory of the area.

A number of cultural resource sites have been located on isolated tracts in the Southwest MFP Area. They do not all appear to be of the same importance in understanding prehistory. Also, not all of the known resources are subject to the same degree of negative impacts. Therefore, they have been prioritized for field work. This information is found in the URA Recreation Appendix, which is available for public review at the Dickinson District Office.

PALEONTOLOGY

Objective: Protect paleontological resource values by reducing deterioration and inadvertent loss of paleontological sites and areas.

Rationale: Paleontological resources are a part of the national heritage, and BLM must manage the wisest use of this resource. The primary purpose of BLM management of paleontological values is protection. Paleontological remains are useful for reconstructing environments of the past, and for correlating geological formations. This type of resource tends to be relatively rare.

The 1906 Antiquities Act does not specifically list fossils, but rather "objects of historic or scientific interest." Because of this provision, scientific research has been conducted under an Antiquity Permit. Recently this interpretation has been questioned; but even if it is dropped, research in paleontology will probably continue under some type of permit system. The permit system provides a measure of quality control and supervision over the extraction of fossils from public lands.

Potential consumers of the resource are scientific and research institutions, educational organizations, and recreational collectors.

Recommendation: A number of paleontological sites are known or suspected to exist on the scattered tracts in this planning area. Before allowing surface-disturbing activities on lands with known sites, the significance of the sites will be assessed by BLM personnel. Additionally, if any paleontological sites are

discovered during surface-disturbing activities, operations will be required to cease and a report will have to be filed with the BLM. The significance of the sites will be assessed. In all cases, suitable mitigation measures will be prescribed for significant sites.

Rationale: Surface disturbance could have a detrimental impact by destroying a rare resource of scientific importance. Proper mitigating measures could lower that impact to acceptable levels.

Recommendation: Maintain an inventory of paleontological sites and areas, which can be used to identify locations that need special protection.

Rationale: BLM is required to protect paleontological values. At present there is very little specific knowledge of this resource in the planning area and, in all probability, important sites are deteriorating or being destroyed because of this lack of knowledge. The management objective of reducing deterioration and protecting the resource from loss cannot be met without an inventory.

Recommendation: Retain federal lands that fit in one or more of the following classes:

1. Land with known valuable paleontologic sites, such as the Mud Buttes area;
2. Land with extensive bedrock exposures, such as buttes and cliff areas;
3. Any land underlain by the Hell Creek or Ludlow formations that contains paleontologic sites or bedrock exposures.

If the acquisition of new properties is proposed, give priority to tracts that fit in the above classes.

Rationale: It has been proposed to consolidate BLM administered land in Bowman County. This proposal will mitigate potential negative impacts. The lands proposed for retention or acquisition are either known or suspected to contain paleontologic sites or overlies formations of great scientific interest.

BIG GUMBO MANAGEMENT AREA

The Big Gumbo Management Area is located in the southwest portion of Bowman County, North Dakota between the Little Missouri River and the Montana state line (see Map 30). It is the only solidly blocked area of public domain in North Dakota consisting of 22,187.15 acres. In general, the topography is gently rolling hills, and the vegetation is primarily grassland with areas of sage-grassland. Soils are generally limiting for high production of vegetation and are unique in North Dakota. The primary uses of the area are livestock grazing, oil and gas development, and limited recreational use by hunters. The following land use recommendations for the Big Gumbo Management Area are grouped according to programs, such as lands (realty) and minerals. The overall objectives for each program precede the recommendations.

LANDS

Objective: To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public land management through an analysis of resource values and management opportunities in the Big Gumbo Management Area. To provide for implementation of a long-term land base adjustment program for this area because of identified public values, including adjustments of the BLM land pattern to get the most public value and benefit.

Rationale: BLM has been concerned with the need for land base adjustment for many years. Authorization to enter into land base adjustment is found in the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 and other public land laws. Lands identified for retention have resource values that warrant retention for public ownership. Limited acquisition of areas adjacent to the Big Gumbo will benefit other resource programs by providing additional land blocking. This in turn will increase overall management efficiencies for field programs.

Recommendation: The Big Gumbo Management Area has been categorized for retention. BLM will pursue acquisition of private lands that will enhance our management objectives in the area. Acquisition will be accomplished through direct exchange or land exchange pooling. Disposal of lands in the planning area will form a base of exchange.

Rationale: There are more opportunities for multiple-use management in large blocks of public lands because BLM has more direct control. The Big Gumbo Management Area consists of over 22,000 contiguous acres. Three grazing allotments have been established and range improvements built. The area has extensive oil and gas development.

Objective: To provide for all applicable rights-of-way across public lands in an environmentally acceptable manner.

Rationale: Local and regional energy developments point to a probable need for additional pipelines, power lines, and roads in this area. Public lands should support these needs to the extent possible without loss of higher public values.

Recommendation A: Keep public lands within the Big Gumbo Management Area open to rights-of-way applications. Each application should be evaluated on its own merits. Take measures to protect the environmental values.

Rationale: Most future rights-of-way applications in this area would probably be energy related. As energy needs are of exceptionally high priority in our nation today, we must take positive action to develop and transport energy resources. In most cases mitigating measures can be taken to eliminate or limit significant adverse environmental impacts. Where this cannot be achieved, some flexibility to relocate proposed facilities should be allowed.

The planning area contains oil and gas resources and coal deposits of high to moderate potential; however, it is impossible to determine at this time which specific public lands might be needed for roads or rights-of-way in support of coal or oil and gas development in the future.

Recommendation B: Eliminate unauthorized uses on public lands within the Big Gumbo Management Area. Determine the ultimate tenure of land where permanent unauthorized uses/activities have occurred (e.g., agricultural activities, powerlines, or occupancy), using the following alternatives:

1. Authorization under permit or lease;
2. Transfer to private ownership through exchange or sale;
3. Termination of the use and restoration of the land.

Rationale: Unauthorized use of public lands denies the public lawful revenues and can damage public land resources or be detrimental to authorized users. Elimination of all unauthorized use of public lands is a goal set forth in State Director Guidance and BLM Policy.

OIL AND GAS

Objective: Make all the BLM-administered oil and gas reserves in this area available for exploration and development. Assure that exploration and development activities are carried out in such a way as to minimize environmental damage.

Rationale: The "Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970" declares it to be the policy of the federal government to encourage the development of the domestic minerals industry. (See rationale for split-estate coal objective).

Recommendation: Make available for exploration and development all lands in the Big Gumbo Management Area. Stipulations will be developed for leases and development plans on a case-by-case basis through the use of the District Programmatic Oil and Gas Environmental Assessment Record and through on-site inspection.

Rationale: With the Nation's critical need for energy resources, as many areas as possible must be available for exploration and development. Established procedures and processes must be used to assure that environmental values are protected. Environmental impacts due to oil and gas development can normally be mitigated through lease and development plan stipulations.

MISCELLANEOUS MINERALS

Objective: Develop a geology, energy and minerals (GEM) inventory program so that the extent, quality, and accessibility can be determined of the limited amounts of minerals that the BLM controls other than oil and gas and coal. Where potentially economic amounts of these minerals occur, make them available for development. Mineral resources in this category include but are not limited to: uranium, geothermal energy, salt, sand and gravel, stone, and clay.

Rationale: Minerals and mineral materials are known to exist in the area. Some of these minerals are important at the present time and others will become increasingly important in the future.

Improved processing and mining methods will allow the development of increasingly lower grade deposits. Industrial development will also increase the demand for mineral materials, which may be partially supplied from federally controlled sources.

Recommendation: Federally controlled minerals other than coal and oil and gas must be made available for exploration and development. Applications will be handled on a case-by-case basis with appropriate analysis to protect other resource values.

Rationale: Minerals are necessary for the continued growth, development, and maintenance of the Nation. Their availability must be assured where necessary but not at the loss of more valuable resources. The types and locations of these actions are unpredictable and can best be handled on a case-by-case basis. An environmental assessment will be prepared for individual cases to ensure that other environmental factors are considered.

Recommendation: Prepare and maintain a basic data file for minerals other than coal and oil and gas resources of this area. This file is to be started in Fiscal Year 1983 and updated as needed.

Rationale: Little is known about these resources and little interest is being shown at this time, but interest could grow in the future. This file would supply the basic minerals data needed for a number of possible future actions. These include land sales or exchanges, mineral leases, and material sales.

PALEONTOLOGY

Objective: Protect paleontological resource values by reducing deterioration and inadvertent loss of paleontological sites and areas.

Rationale: The primary purpose of BLM management of paleontological values is protection. This type of resource is relatively rare. Paleontological remains are useful for reconstructing environments of the past and for correlating geological formations.

Recommendation: Before allowing surface disturbing activities on lands with known sites, the significance of the sites will be assessed by BLM personnel. Additionally, if any paleontological sites are discovered during surface disturbing activities, require that operations cease and a report be filed with the BLM. Assess the significance of the sites. In all cases, suitable mitigation measures will be prescribed for significant sites.

Rationale: Surface disturbance could have a detrimental impact by destroying a rare resource of scientific importance. Proper mitigating measures applied on site-specific basis could lower that impact to acceptable levels.

RANGE

Objective: Maintain the range resource in good to excellent condition and ensure that the trend continues upward on range that is improving and static on range that is at or near potential. Continue current levels of authorized use.

Rationale: The Taylor Grazing Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and Bureau policy require that the rangeland resources be managed on the principles of multiple use while maintaining a sustained yield.

The three allotments that make up most of the public domain lands in the Big Gumbo Management Area went under intensive management in 1968 and 1969. Range condition over much of the area has been maintained in good to excellent condition. Areas that were formerly fair and poor show a significant improvement. The grazing systems are working, as is indicated by the abundance and vigor of desirable plant species.

Recommendation: Continue the authorized use on the three allotments covered by allotment management plans (AMPs) and manage at maintenance level. Monitor to insure compliance and determine if management objectives are being met. Any changes in elements of the AMP will be made in accordance with monitoring results.

AMP Name	Authorized Use
Antelope Butte	913 AUMs
Big Gumbo	1,116 AUMs
Cedar Hills	1,630 AUMs

Rationale: At this point it appears that a balanced use exists between wildlife and livestock use. Therefore, current authorized use on the three allotments covered by AMPs should be continued and managed at the maintenance level. A monitoring plan will be established during the next fiscal year to ensure compliance and determine if management objectives are being met.

Recommendation: Where feasible, incorporate adjacent public domain lands into the existing allotment management plans (AMPs)

Rationale: This would bring additional acres under intensive management and add efficiency to the AMPs.

WATERSHED

Objective: Provide improved watershed condition to enhance the quality of the soil and water resources.

Rationale: The BLM strives to manage the resources on public lands in a manner that will protect the quality of the environment and to meet the needs of the people. It is essential to minimize erosion and maintain or improve soil productivity in order to maximize the benefits that people receive from other resources, as well as provide the highest quality of soil and water possible. Watershed condition is a key factor in controlling erosion and productivity.

Recommendation: Initiate appropriate monitoring studies to assess the effects of current management actions on watershed condition and trend. Implement mitigating measures through activity planning.

Rationale: Based on limited data, the three existing allotment management plans have effected positive changes in the watershed condition in this area. Some limited conflict areas are found in high livestock concentration areas. Long-term mitigation should only be implemented after monitoring and water source location study identify potential mitigation measures.

Recommendation: Initiate appropriate field studies to determine the effectiveness of current oil and gas lease stipulations for maintaining good watershed con-

ditions. Lease stipulations will be modified accordingly, as new permits are issued.

Rationale: Information is not sufficient at the present time to assess the effect of the oil and gas field on the local water quality.

WILDLIFE

Objective: Maintain, enhance, improve and create wildlife-fisheries habitat on public land for the greater benefit of the public and to help offset habitat losses caused by changing land use and man's activities in the area. Develop management plans, consolidate land, and initiate sound monitoring studies to achieve this goal.

Rationale: Public land provides an important reservoir for wildlife species in the area. Changing land use and man's activities are steadily decreasing habitat components which are necessary for the continued well-being of the wildlife resources in the region. Management of public lands to enhance, improve, and create habitat will help offset this loss of habitat. Benefits to the public will be realized by ensuring that sufficient populations of wildlife are maintained in the area for hunting and scientific study. Several species which have restricted distribution or limited populations in North Dakota—such as pronghorn antelope, sage grouse and several species of raptors—are found on public land. Management programs that benefit these species will ensure that they remain a part of the native fauna in North Dakota.

Recommendation: Develop water sources to better facilitate dispersion and productivity of pronghorn antelope, mule deer, sage grouse, and other wildlife species in the area. Maximize waterfowl production, within the constraints of multiple-use management, by developing nesting islands and structures, providing adequate nesting cover, and utilizing other waterfowl habitat management techniques. Provide wildlife access and cover on livestock water developments.

Rationale: Water is generally a limiting factor for wildlife in semi-arid areas such as southwestern North Dakota. Development of water sources of good quality will enhance productivity and dispersion of wildlife by providing better supplies of a limiting resource.

Recommendation: Provide for unimpaired movement of wildlife species such as pronghorn antelope and mule deer by ensuring proper construction of new fences and modification or removal of existing fencing barriers.

Rationale: Net and five-strand barbed wire fencing was installed during implementation of the allotment management plans. Improperly designed and placed fences have contributed to heavy mortality and reduced populations of both pronghorn and mule deer. Within

the Big Gumbo Management Area several miles of net wire and 5-strand barbed wire fencing severely restrict free movement of these species and constitute a hazard to their well-being. BLM manual 1737 provides guidance for the proper construction and modification of fences in antelope and deer ranges. Construction standards for fencing do not include net wire or five-strand barbed wire.

Recommendation: Improve habitat conditions in areas where monitoring indicates undesirable competition exists between livestock and wildlife and where habitat conditions are not being maintained in the desirable condition. Develop a management plan based on resource potential, monitoring results, and long-term objectives for wildlife populations in the area that will enhance, improve, or create wildlife habitat.

Rationale: Overall, wildlife and livestock conflicts are not serious in the management area. However, conflicts do and can exist that can be corrected by utilizing information from monitoring to determine future management actions. Monitoring will be required to assess the effectiveness of management programs and determine the extent that management objectives are being met. Improvement of habitat conditions in identified conflict areas will benefit range and watershed as well as wildlife resources. Development of a management plan will allow for the logical and orderly development and management of resources, with the minimum amount of conflict between resources.

Recommendation: Develop mitigation, corrective measures, and management plans to address adverse impacts that are documented through monitoring studies that assess the impacts of current management actions or resource users on watershed conditions and water quality as they affect fisheries and wildlife.

Rationale: This will provide for effective management of watershed, water quality, and related fishery and wildlife resources, by ensuring that appropriate standards are maintained.

Recommendation: Consolidate scattered tracts of public land and block up with the Big Gumbo Management Area. Expand the allotment management plans (AMPs) to include all contiguous public lands.

Rationale: Consolidation of scattered public lands with the existing block of public lands in the Big Gumbo Management Area will result in a more manageable unit for protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat. Wildlife habitat values in a larger management unit would be less susceptible to unfavorable impacts from land use changes. Consolidation and blocking will also eliminate the problems associated with management of isolated tracts. Additional lands added to the management area will allow for more effective management of habitat for pronghorn, mule deer, sage grouse, and other wildlife species. Placing these lands in an established grazing system will allow better control of live-

stock use on lands presently not under management systems, more flexibility in administering the AMPs, and better management potential for wildlife habitat.

RECREATION

Objective: Enhance the recreational potential in the area. This enhancement should be done to allow a maximum of use while continuing grazing and other activities in the area.

Rationale: The Big Gumbo Area has had some limited use by hunters in the past. That use may be increased by the distribution of maps of the area. It can also be improved by signs in the area that point out the location of the Big Gumbo. Additionally, it may be possible to acquire parcels of land between the Big Gumbo and the Little Missouri River. This would provide access to the river and would enhance the recreational value of the area.

Recommendation: Signing will be used to note the presence of BLM lands where significant public use will be expected. A map of the area will be prepared to show BLM land locations. This map will be made available to the general public.

Rationale: The public is generally not aware of the location of BLM lands. The signs and map will increase public awareness of the lands, and reduce trespass on adjoining private lands.

SUMMARY

A total of 34,172.62 acres of public land is included in the Southwest Management Framework Plan. The Big Gumbo Management Area accounts for 22,187.15 acres of this total. The remaining 11,985.47 acres consist of scattered tracts in Adams (80 acres), Billings (680 acres), Grant (604.31 acres), and Bowman (10,621.16 acres) counties. Lands in the Big Gumbo Management Area will remain in federal ownership and managed for multiple use. The scattered tracts are classified in three categories according to criteria in the State Director Guidance: retain; disposal (sale, transfer, exchange); and further study (see Table X). The option is retained on all tracts to reclassify them or change management based on new data or policy changes.

All mineral rights will be retained in federal ownership on tracts that are disposed of. Exploration and leasing for oil and/or gas on all tracts will continue to be allowed. Coal exploration will be allowed on a case-by-case basis. All other minerals will be made available for private industry, local governments, and private individuals on a case-by-case basis.

All public lands will remain open to rights-of-way applications. Unauthorized use will be eliminated through

the mechanisms identified in the State Director Guidance.

Grazing will continue to be allowed on scattered tracts already under lease and they will be managed at the custodial level. Where tracts under lease have been identified for disposal, the grazing lease may be modified or cancelled, as provided for under 43 CFR 4120.2-1(d) and 4130.2(d)(3). Tracts that are currently unleased for grazing and are categorized for disposal will be offered for short-term nonrenewable grazing leases and managed at the custodial level if they are still under BLM administration two years after the adoption of the MFP. All lands retained will be offered for grazing where applicable.

Lands with high resource values and good management potential and riparian areas will be retained by the BLM. Where further evaluation determines potential, lands will be acquired through exchange mechanisms, using disposal lands as an exchange base, to block up lands around tracts that are retained.

Management plans for wildlife, recreation and cultural resources, and watershed will be developed, where appropriate, to enhance resource values and benefits to the public.

**TABLE X
SURFACE LANDS CATEGORIZATION SUMMARY**

	Acreage
Total Acres of Public Land	34,172.62
Big Gumbo Management Area	22,187.15
Scattered Tracts	11,985.47
Adams County	80.00
Billings County	680.00
Bowman County	10,621.16
Grant County	604.31
Lands Categorized for Retention	26,514.59
Big Gumbo Management Area	22,187.15
Scattered Tracts	4,327.44
Lands Categorized for Further Study	520.00
Lands Categorized for Disposal	7,138.03 *
Acreage Identified for transfer to U.S. Forest Service	680.00
Acreage Identified for Sale/Exchange	6,458.03 **

*Approximately 1,300 acres are proposed for sale. The remainder is proposed for an exchange base or transfer.

**Less than 1 percent of the acreage identified for sale/exchange is located in high-moderate coal areas.

