ELKO
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Draft Alternatives

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management

Elko District
Elko, Nevada

IN REPLY REFER TO

United States Department of the Interior

1601 (NV-010)

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ELKO DISTRICT OFFICE
P.O. Box 831
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OCT 1 9 1984

Dear Interested Reader:

The Elko District is currently preparing a Resource Management Plan for the Elko Resource Area. This area contains 3.2 million acres of public land within Elko, Eureka and Lander counties. The planning area is shown on the attached map.

We are presently evaluating options for managing the public lands in the Elko Resource Area. Each of these options, or alternatives, prescribes resource management direction for the public lands for the next fifteen to twenty years. Each alternative relates to issues that many of you helped to identify. These alternatives will be analyzed in an upcoming Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as part of the planning process.

We have developed five resource alternatives, each with a different overall management emphasis. In Alternative A the level of land and resource use would remain essentially unchanged from the present. Alternative B emphasizes consumptive uses such as livestock production and mineral development. Natural value protection and enhancement is the emphasis in Alternative C. Alternative D emphasizes both consumptive use and protection and enhancement of natural values. Alternative E, presented for analysis only, represents the exclusion of livestock grazing on public lands.

The issues and alternatives discussed here were developed from public comment on the preliminary issues and planning criteria brochure, contacts with local governments and known user or interest groups, and staff analysis. If, after reviewing this packet you have any comments, we would like to receive them by November 23, 1984. Development of a preferred alternative will be based on your public comments, as well as interagency and staff recommendations. Consider the following points when reviewing these alternative proposals:

1. Your comments or suggestions on the alternatives presented,
2. Your preference for the preferred alternative,
3. Criteria you feel should be used in the development of the preferred alternative,
4. Significant impacts you feel would occur from implementing any of these alternatives.

After considering all comments, we will prepare final resource management alternatives. Then, we will estimate the effects of implementing each of these alternatives, develop a preferred alternative and release a draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement in the summer of 1985.

We encourage you to participate in the management of your public lands. If you have any questions or wish to discuss your comments with our staff, contact this office during regular office hours, 7:30 to 4:30, Monday through Friday.

Thank you for your past participation with this planning effort. We look forward to your continued interest.

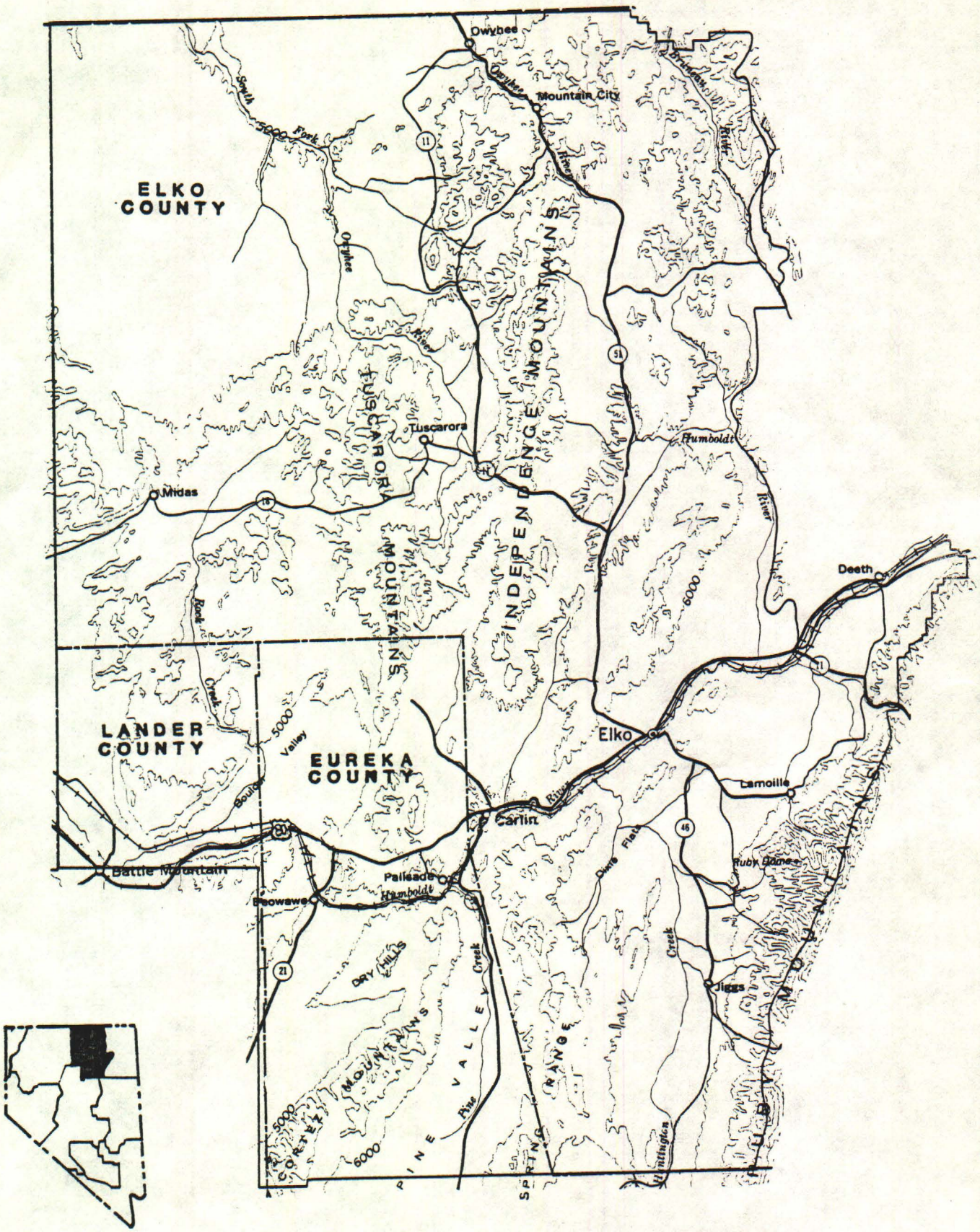
Sincerely yours,

Tim Hartzell

TIM HARTZELL, Manager
Elko Resource Area

Merle Good

for RODNEY HARRIS
District Manager



ELKO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AREA

ELKO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
DRAFT ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION

The Elko Planning Area encompasses 3.2 million acres of public lands. The majority of this area is located in Elko County (80 percent). Smaller portions are located in Eureka (16 percent) and Lander (4 percent) counties. Major communities within the planning area are Elko and Carlin.

The area consists of a variety of land forms ranging from cold desert to mountains. Major mountain ranges are the Cortez, Tuscarora and Independence mountains and the Sheep Creek and Adobe ranges. Elevations vary from 4500 to 9150 feet.

This area is arid to semiarid with low annual precripitation (down to eight inches) on valley floors and higher precipition (up to 20 inches) in the mountain areas. Temperatures vary widely, both seasonally and daily, with summer highs of 90 to 100 degrees F and winter lows near 0 degrees F.

The Elko Planning Area supports vegetation typical of the Great Basin Region. The present native plant communities are dominated by big sagebrush and grassland.

The Resource Management Plan (RMP) is a land use plan as described by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The RMP establishes in a written document:

- allowable resource uses and related levels of production or use to be maintained;
- land areas for exclusive, limited or restrictive resource uses;
- resource condition goals or objectives to be reached;
- program constraints and general management practices;
- identification of where specific planning is required;
- general implementation schedule; and
- intervals and standards for monitoring the plan to determine its effectiveness.

The underlying goal of the RMP is to provide efficient on-the-ground management of public lands and associated resources.

PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

The procedure for preparing an RMP involves nine interrelated actions as described below. Some actions may occur simultaneously and it may be necessary to repeat an action if sufficient additional information becomes available. The plan which results from this process is a general decision document designed primarily to guide managers in their decision making. Where more detailed managment direction is required, specific activity plans will be prepared after the RMP process is complete.

The Elko RMP was initiated in November of 1983 when the Bureau asked the public for assistance in identifying issues to be addressed in the plan. This resulted in the development of eleven preliminary issues. Since the original identification of issues, watershed has been deleted from our issue list. It was felt that watershed concerns could be adequately analyzed under other issues, specifically livestock and wildlife habitat. Step two in the process again involved asking for public input to develop planning criteria for each of the issues. These criteria are used to refine the issues and guide the development of the plan. Step three required assembly of all data pertinent to the planning process. Step four involved preparation of a document which describes current resource management and a discussion of existing problems, demands and opportunities needed to analyze the issues.

Formulation of alternatives is the next step and the stage of the process which the Elko RMP is currently developing. This process involves the preparation of a range of resource management alternatives; including one for continuing the existing situation (legally mandated) and alternatives designed to help resolve the issues, while providing for a variety of multiple use management combinations. Step six involves identification and analysis of the anticipated physical, biological, social and economic effects of implementing each of the alternatives. This information is used in step seven to select a preferred alternative and also complete the information required to prepare the draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for public review. Step eight, where the final resource management plan is selected, incorporates comments and concerns expressed during the review of the draft document. Step nine is the monitoring and evaluation of the plan to ensure it is a workable, current document.

The draft alternatives are described below. The primary management actions are presented by issue.

ELKO RESOURCE AREA ALTERNATIVES - MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

PLANNING ISSUE	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D	ALTERNATIVE E
1. Lands and Realty	Continue to process land disposal requests individually.	Retain 2,867,741 acres (87.9% of Resource Area) of public land. Make available 394,040 acres (12.1% of RA) of public land for disposal.	Retain 3,256,101 acres (99.8% of RA) of public land. Make available 5,680 acres (0.2% of RA) of public land for disposal.	Retain 3,144,141 acres (96.4% of RA) of public land. Make available 117,640 acres (3.6% of RA) of public land for disposal. This includes 14,100 acres for disposal primarily through sale and 103,540 acres available for disposal through exchange.	Same as Alternative C
2. Utility Corridors	Continue to handle all major rights-of-way requests individually.	Designate 354 miles of rights-of-way corridors which contain existing facilities. Designate 94 miles of planning corridors for future facilities.	Designate 354 miles of rights-of-way corridors which contain existing facilities. Future facilities along Interstate 80 (125 miles will be accommodated if the facility is not evident in the characteristic landscape. Designate no additional miles of planning corridors for future facilities.	Designate 354 miles of rights-of-way corridors which contain existing facilities. Future facilities along Interstate 80, an existing corridor, (125 miles) will be accommodated if the facility is not evident in the characteristic landscape. Designate 94 miles of planning corridors for future facilities.	Same as Alternative C
3. Legal Access	Continue acquisition of legal access on a case-by-case basis.	Acquire legal access for 38 roads (167 miles) considered high priority for management of livestock grazing, woodland products and mineral exploration/development.	Acquire legal access for 24 roads (80 miles) considered high priority for management of wilderness areas, wild horses, wildlife and riparian habitats.	Acquire legal access for 55 roads (230 miles) considered as high priority for multiple use management.	Same as Alternative C

PLANNING ISSUE	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D	ALTERNATIVE E
4. Recreation	Maintain four existing Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs); the South Fork of the Owyhee River (4,480 acres, the rim to rim portion), Wilson, (5,440 acres), Zunino (800 acres) and North Wildhorse (210 acres) Reservoirs. Total acres existing 10,930.	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A
		Designate the West Wildhorse Reservoir (160 acres) and Adobe Hills (21,120 acres) as SRMAs. Total acres to be designated: 21,280).	Designate the West Wildhorse Reservoir (160 acres), the South Fork (3,760 acres) and Rock Creek (4,640 acres) Reservoirs as SRMAs. Total acres: 8,560.	Same as Alternative C	Same as Alternative C
			Designate the Wildhorse Extensive Recreation Management Area (5,350 acres).	Same as Alternative C	Same as Alternative C
	Maintain entire resource area (3.2 million acres) open to off-road vehicles.	Designate the planning area for ORVs as follows: 3,137,015 acres (96.2%), open; 21,685 acres (0.6%) acres closed; 103,081 acres (3.2%), limited to designated roads and trails.	Designate the planning area for ORVs as follows: 3,084,796 acres (94.6%), open; 66,754 acres (2.0%), closed; 110,231 acres (3.4%) limited to designated roads and trails.	Designate the planning area for ORVs as follows: 3,111,925 acres (95.4%), open; 41,685 acres (1.3%) closed; 108,171 acres (3.3%) limited to designated roads and trails.	Same as Alternative C
5. Wilderness	Recommend no WSAs as suitable for wilderness designation.	Recommend the Rough Hills WSA (6,685 acres) and a portion of the Little Humboldt River WSA (15,000 acres) as preliminarily suitable for wilderness designation. Total acres recommended suitable = 21,685 (0.6% of RA). Recommend Cedar Ridge (10,009 acres), Red Spring (7,847 acres) and a portion of the Little Humboldt River WSAs (27,213 acres) as nonsuitable for wilderness designation.	Recommend the Rough Hills (6,685 acres) Cedar Ridge (10,009 acres), Red Spring (7,847 acres) and Little Humboldt River WSAs (42,213 acres) as preliminarily suitable for wilderness designation. Total acres recommended suitable = 66,754 (2.0% of RA).	Recommend the Rough Hills WSA (6,685 acres) and a portion of the Little Humboldt River WSA (35,000 acres) as preliminarily suitable for wilderness designation. Total acres recommended suitable = 41,685 (1.3% of RA). Recommend Cedar Ridge (10,009 acres), Red Spring (7,847) and a portion of the Little Humboldt River WSA (7,213 acres) as nonsuitable for wilderness designation.	Same as Alternative C

PLANNING ISSUE	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D	ALTERNATIVE E
6. Livestock	The present level of livestock grazing would be continued without change, permittees could license up to the active preference level of 386,499 animal unit months (AUMs). This is 19 percent below total preference (active preference plus suspended non-use which equals 477,078 AUMs) and 27 percent above the current 3-5 year average licensed use of 304,947 AUMs. Twelve existing allotments management plans (AMPs) would continue to be followed. No new AMPs would be implemented. No livestock grazing developments would take place.	Livestock grazing would increase to 496,200 AUMs. This would be 28 percent over active preference, 4 percent over total preference and 63 percent over the current 3-5 year average licensed use. Existing AMPs would continue to be implemented and new AMPs would be developed. As specified in Table 1 (attached), the total cost for range improvements would be $14,925,320.	Livestock grazing would decrease to 193,250 AUMs. This would be 50 percent below active preference, 60 percent below total preference and 37 percent below current 3-5 year average licensed use. Existing AMPs would continue to be implemented and new AMPs would be developed. As specified in Table 1, the total cost for range improvements would be $2,303,400.	Livestock grazing would increase to 419,420 AUMs. This would be 9 percent over active preference 12 percent below total preference and 37 percent over the current 3-5 year average licensed use. Existing improvements and land treatments totalling $4,720,685 would be developed as specified in Table 1. Range monitoring studies would be implemented to determine future adjustments in grazing management and stocking levels.	Livestock grazing would be excluded on all public lands within the Elko RA. No livestock improvements would be implemented.
7. Wildlife Habitat	Continue to manage terrestrial and riparian wildlife habitat at present levels. Provide habitat for present numbers of mule deer and antelope (20,100 mule deer and 250 antelope[a]).	Provide habitat for existing numbers of mule deer and antelope (20,100 mule deer and 250 antelope[a]).	Provide habitat for reasonable numbers of mule deer and antelope (34,000 mule deer and 640 antelope[a]). All land treatments are excluded from critical wildlife habitat.	Provide habitat for reasonable numbers of mule deer and antelope (34,000 mule deer and 640 antelope[a]). Any land treatment considered will not be in conflict with critical wildlife habitat.	Same as Alternative C
	Manage streams which provide threatened and endangered species habitat (52 miles/-1,530 acres).	Manage streams which provide threatened and endangered species habitat (52 miles/1,530 acres).	Manage riparian and stream habitat which will provide good ecologic conditions for wildlife and fish (212 miles/6,360 acres).	Manage riparian and stream habitat which will provide good ecologic conditions for wildlife and fish on priority streams (77 miles/2,300 acres).	
8. Wild Horses	Continue management of current population levels on four existing wild horse herd use areas (target population level: 330 horses).	Continue management of four wild horse herd use areas, with a target population level of 220 horses (33 percent decrease).	Continue management of four wild horse herd use areas, with a target population level of 660 horses (100 percent increase).	Continue management of four wild horse herd use areas, maintaining the target population level at 330 horses. Monitoring studies would be implemented to determine future adjustments in management and stocking levels.	Same as Alternative C

[a] Based on Nevada Department of Wildlife population estimates and projections

PLANNING ISSUE	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D	ALTERNATIVE E
9. Woodland	Maintain the issuance of permits for woodland products at current harvest levels of 970 cords and 500 Christmas trees[b]. Acres available for harvest 48,000.	Manage woodlands for harvest of fuelwood up to a level of 2000 cords and 500 Christmas trees (these figures represent maximum annual harvest levels). Acres available for harvest: 74,000.	Manage woodlands for harvest of fuelwood up to a level of 500 cords and 500 Christmas trees. Acres available for harvest: 48,000.	Manage woodlands for harvest of fuelwood up to a level of 2000 cords and 500 Christmas trees. Acres available for harvest: 65,000.	Same as Alternative C
10. Minerals	Acres subject to energy leasing and development: Open 3,042,831 (93.3%) Seasonal Restriction 207,150 (6.4%) No Surface Occupancy 11,800[c] (0.3%)	Acres subject to energy leasing and development: Open 3,261,781 (100.0%) Seasonal Restriction 0 (0.0%) No Surface Occupancy 0 (0.0%)	Acres subject to energy leasing and development: Open 1,590,181 (48.7%) Seasonal Restriction 1,645,890 (50.5%) No Surface Occupancy 25,710[c,d] (0.8%)	Acres subject to energy leasing and development: Open 2,455,561 (75.3%) Seasonal Restriction 785,860 (24.1%) No Surface Occupancy 20,360[c] (0.6%)	Same as Alternative C
	Acres closed to both energy mineral exploration and development: 11[e] (±0%)	Acres closed to both energy and mineral exploration and development: 21,696[e,f] (0.7%)	Acres closed to both energy and mineral exploration and development: 66,765[e,g] (2.0%)	Acres closed to both energy and mineral exploration and development: 41,696[e,h] (1.3%)	Same as Alternative C
	Acres open to mineral exploration and development: 3,261,770 (±100.0%)	Acres open to mineral exploration and development: 3,240,085 (99.3%)	Acres open to mineral exploration and development: 3,195,016 (98.0%)	Acres open to mineral exploration and development: 3,220,085 (98.7%)	Same as Alternative C

[b] Based on permits sold in Fiscal Year 83.
[c] Includes Special Recreation Management Areas and 870 acres closed to non-metaliferous location (Public Water Reserves).
[d] Includes Wildhorse Extensive Recreation Management Area.
[e] Includes administrative site.
[f] Includes 21,685 under the wilderness study area category
[g] Includes 66,754 under the wilderness study area category
[h] Includes 41,685 under the wilderness study area category

TABLE 1
RANGELAND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS BY ALTERNATIVE[1/]

Livestock	Alternative B		Alternative C		Alternative D		Alternative E[3/]	
Wells (Each)	47	$ 282,000	---	---	31	$ 186,000	---	---
Pipelines (Miles)	180	720,000	93	$ 372,000	124	496,000	---	---
Water Storage Tanks (Each)	28	56,000	13	32,500	28	56,000	---	---
Spring Developments (Each)	139	417,000	80	240,000	72	216,000	---	---
Fences (Miles)	402	964,800	251	602,400	220	528,000	---	---
Cattleguards (Each)	59	147,500	29	72,500	59	147,500	---	---
Land Treatment (Acres)	638,527	10,010,020	---	---	103,386	2,115,185	---	---
Reservoir (Each)	291	2,328,000	123	984,000	122	976,000	---	---
TOTAL COST		$14,925,320		$2,303,400		$4,720,685		
WILD HORSES/BURROS								
Water Developments	2/		3	$ 30,000	2	$ 20,000	2/	---
WILDLIFE								
Guzzlers (Each)	5	$ 10,000	20	$ 40,000	20	$ 40,000	5	$ 10,000
Spring Protection (Each)	7	3,500	10	20,000	40	20,000		---
Vegetation Treatments (Acres)		---		---	500	30,000	200	12,000
Water Developments (Each)	40	80,000	12	24,000	40	80,000	40	80,000
Fence Modification (Miles)	5	5,000	10	10,000	20	20,000		---
Fences (Miles)	86	208,000	353	848,000	128	308,000	---	---
TOTAL COSTS		$ 306,500		$ 942,000		$498,000		$102,000

1/ These improvements will be designed to benefit all uses. The categories used here are only to indicate the primary benefiting use.
2/ No specific improvements currently planned.
3/ There are no proposed range improvements for Alternative E (No Livestock Grazing).