

Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Consistency Review for the Targhee National Forest Recreation Residence Tracts

Introduction

The Targhee National Forest has nine recreation residence tracts on two districts: Palisades Ranger District and the Ashton/Island Park Ranger District. The Palisades Ranger District has 5 tracts: Alpine (4 lots), Palisades (18 lots), Calamity (25 lots), Sheep Creek (13 lots), and Hoffman (32 lots). The Ashton/Island Park Ranger District has 4 tracts: Big Springs North and South (7 lots each), Buffalo (55 lots) and Moose Creek (12 lots). Lot numbers are the numbers of lots with existing special use authorizations. Special use authorizations expire for all of the tracts in 2008 except for the Big Springs tracts, which expire in 2012. The Big Springs tracts have been included in this analysis. Their expiration dates will remain 2012 because this date resulted from a legal settlement.

According to Forest Service direction, the Caribou-Targhee National Forest must conduct a Forest Plan Consistency Review to determine whether the recreation residence tracts on the Forest are consistent with the 1997 Revised Targhee Forest Plan. Policy outlined in Forest Service Manual 2721.23e (FSM2721.23e) specifies the procedures and analysis to be completed. “Decisions to issue new recreation residence term permits following expiration of the current term permit require a determination of consistency with the current forest plan. Make this determination by evaluating the extent to which continued recreation residence use adheres to the standards and guidelines, which apply to the appropriate management area. Address continuation of recreation residence use on a tract or group of tracts basis, not on individual lots. (FSM2721.23e)” “When recreation residence use is consistent with the Forest plan, it shall continue. (FSM2721.23e(1)).”

Method

The 1997 Revised Targhee Forest Plan (RFP) was analyzed to identify specific forest wide standards and guidelines, subsection direction, and management prescriptions that applied to each recreation residence tract. Those areas of the RFP that applied to the recreation residence tracts were drafted into a table to create an efficient means of reference. Forest specialists, in concert with special use permit administrators, analyzed current special use permit administration and overall management of the tracts against direction in the RFP and provided documentation addressing whether or not the tracts are in compliance with the RFP. Appendix 1 is the result of those findings. Individual specialist reports are available in the project file.

Background

The Revised Targhee Forest Plan forest wide standards and guidelines are common to the entire forest, however, not all standards and guidelines apply specifically to the recreation residence tracts. For example, several standards and guidelines apply to activity areas, which do not include the recreation residence tracts. Those that do apply have been identified in Appendix 1. Those that do not apply were identified during the process and are listed in the project file.

Each recreation residence tract is located within a Forest Plan subsection or larger ecological unit. Each tract was evaluated for its consistency with RFP subsection direction. Three subsections applied: Island Park, Big Hole Mountains and Caribou Range Mountains.

All areas of the forest are allocated to a prescription area within the RFP. Prescription 4.2, Special Use Permit Recreation Sites, addresses recreation residences. This prescription applies to ski areas, resorts, recreation residence tracts and organization camps that are allowed under a special use authorization. The emphasis is on providing privately operated types of recreation on National Forest land for large concentrated groups of people. Overall, there are many signs of people with little or no evidence of resource development except for recreation. There will be a variety of vegetation conditions from sagebrush to forested land with a variety of visual conditions, depending on past insect, disease, and fire activity and management's response to those disturbances.

Discussion

Forest and district specialists evaluated recreation residence tract management against RFP direction during the summer and fall 2004. In addition to the Revised Targhee Forest Plan, other information sources included existing permit administration files, tract management guidelines, Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Caribou-Targhee National Forest Forest Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report 1997 – 1999 were considered. District permit administrators completed inspections on each lot. In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, a contractor performed surveys and evaluations for each recreation residence. Documentation of existing cabins within the recreation residence tracts was completed and reports were forwarded to the State Historic Preservation Office for final determinations.

All recreation residence tracts on the Targhee National Forest: Alpine, Palisades, Calamity, Sheep Creek, Hoffman, Big Springs North and South, Buffalo, and Moose Creek are consistent or will be made consistent, due to upcoming projects, with the Revised Targhee National Forest Plan. The tracts were found to be consistent in the following areas: soils, wildlife, recreation, lands, minerals, plants, access, and range. Several tracts are not fully consistent with RFP direction for insects and disease, timber and fire; however, consistency will be achieved by 2008 as projects are accomplished. The Hoffman tract is consistent with mitigation measures added when new permits are issued.

