

**Helena National Forest  
Forest Plan Amendments 1-23  
Compiled 7/2004**

Helena National Forest  
2880 Skyway Drive  
Helena MT, 59601

## AMENDMENT NO. 1

The text of Amendment 1 to the Helena Forest Plan is not available electronically. A hard copy can be obtained by contacting the Helena National Forest, 2880 Skyway Drive, Helena, MT 59601.

The amendment was a joint effort to better coordinate recreation management within the greater Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (including the Scapegoat Wilderness) between the Flathead, Lewis and Clark, Helena, and Lolo National Forests. The decision to amend the plan was made by Helena Forest Supervisor Robert Gibson on April 6, 1987.

The amendment replaced Appendix S of the Helena Forest Plan with the direction found in the document Bob Marshall, Great Bear, Scapegoat Wildernesses - Recreation Management Direction. (April 1987) The following excerpt from the summary of that document describes the direction:

"The amendment is directed at managing recreation in the wilderness complex. Other portions of the Forest Plans currently address management of fire, and management of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River which flows through the wilderness. This amendment identifies management action to reduce, prevent, or rehabilitate unacceptable resource and social conditions in the BMWWC. The amendment also establishes specific standards of acceptable conditions in different parts of the wilderness and identifies how managers will go about determining what management actions are most suitable to address specific problem areas. Finally, the amendment establishes a monitoring process to identify the effectiveness of management actions and to keep track of changes in wilderness conditions."

HELENA NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
AMENDMENT NO. 2

APRIL, 1989

**Forest Plan, Chapter pg. II/2**

A. Goals

19. Protect stream segments determined to be eligible for classification under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act until suitability studies are completed.

**Forest Plan, Chapter II, pg. II/6**

**B.Objectives**

1.Resource Activity/Summaries

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Segments of four streams on the Helena National Forest have been determined to be eligible for protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The four stream segments include portions of Copper Creek, Little Blackfoot River, Beaver Creek, and the Missouri river (from Hauser Dam to Cochran Gulch). These stream segments will be studied sometime in the future to determine their suitability for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Eligible stream segments will be protected to maintain their outstandingly remarkable resource values and potential classification until suitability studies can be completed.

**Forest Plan, Chapter III, pg. II/36**

**C.Forest-wide Standards**

**WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS**

Streams determined to be eligible for protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will be protected to maintain their potential classification pending suitability studies.

The following Wild/Scenic/Recreational Management Standards were adopted from Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 - Chapter 8 and further developed for the eligible rivers on the Helena National Forest. These standards do not affect other public or private lands and will not abrogate any existing rights, privileges, or contracts affecting Helena National Forest lands held by any private party.

1.Hydroelectric Power

Wild/Scenic/Recreational: No development of hydroelectric power facilities will be permitted. Where the licensing authority is the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Forest will recommend that no license be issued for hydroelectric power facilities.

## 2. Water Supply

Wild/Scenic: All water supply dams and major diversions are prohibited. If necessary, water monitoring stations are permitted but must be unobtrusive.

Recreational: Existing low dams, diversion works, rip rap and other minor structures are allowed provided the waterway remains generally natural in appearance. New structures are prohibited. If necessary, water monitoring stations are permitted but must be unobtrusive.

## 3. Flood Control

Wild: No flood control dams, levees, or other works are allowed in the channel or river corridor. The natural appearance and essentially primitive character of the river area must be maintained.

Scenic: Flood control dams and levees will be prohibited.

Recreational: Existing flood control works may be maintained. New structures are prohibited.

## 4. Range

Wild: Agricultural use is restricted to the amount of domestic livestock grazing currently practiced.

Scenic: A wider range of agricultural uses is permitted to the extent currently practiced. Row crops are not considered as an intrusion of the "largely primitive" nature of scenic corridors as long as there is not a substantial adverse effect on the natural-like appearance of the river area.

Recreational: Lands may be managed for a full range of agricultural uses, to the extent currently practiced.

## 5. Timber Production

Wild: Cutting of trees will not be permitted except when needed in association with a primitive recreation experience (such as clearing for trails and protection of users) or to protect the environment (such as control of fire). Timber outside the boundary but within the visual corridors, will be managed and harvested with special emphasis on visual quality.

Scenic: A wide range of silvicultural practices may be allowed provided that such practices are carried on in such a way that there is no substantial adverse effect on the river and its immediate environment. The river area will be maintained in its near natural environment. Timber outside the boundary but within the visual scene area will be managed and harvested with special emphasis on visual quality.

Recreational: Timber harvesting will be allowed under standard restrictions to protect the immediate river environment, water quality, scenic, fish and wildlife, and other values.

## 6. Mining

Wild: Surface occupancy related to oil and gas leasing is prohibited within .25 mile of the river. Valid claims and leases will not be abrogated. Subject to regulations (36 CFR 228) that the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior may prescribe to protect the rivers included in the National System, other existing mining activity will be allowed to continue. Existing mineral activity must be conducted in a

manner that minimizes surface disturbance, and sedimentation. Reasonable access will be permitted. Mining activities outside the boundary but within the visual corridors, will be managed with special emphasis on visual quality through mitigating measures and reclamation.

Scenic: Subject to regulations (36 CFR 228) that the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior may prescribe to protect the values of rivers included in the National System, new mining claims and mineral leases will be allowed and existing operations allowed to continue. However, mineral activity must be conducted in a manner that minimizes surface disturbance, sedimentation and pollution. Mining activities outside the boundary but within the visual corridors, will be managed with special emphasis on visual quality through mitigating measures and reclamation.

Recreational: Subject to regulations (36 CFR 228) that the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior may prescribe to protect values of rivers included in the National System, new mining claims and mineral leases are allowed and existing operations are allowed to continue. Mineral activity must be conducted in a manner that minimizes surface disturbance, sedimentation and pollution. Mining activities outside the boundary but within the visual corridors, will be managed with special emphasis on visual quality through mitigating measures and reclamation.

## 7.Road Construction

Wild: Subject to valid existing rights, no roads or other provisions for overland motorized travel will be permitted within a narrow incised river valley or, if the river valley is broad, within .25 mile of the river bank. Also, unobtrusive trail bridges may be allowed.

Scenic: Roads may occasionally bridge the river area and short stretches of conspicuous or longer stretches of inconspicuous and well-screened roads or screened railroads could be allowed. Consideration will be given to the type of use for which roads are constructed and the type of use that will occur in the river area.

Recreational: Paralleling roads or railroads may be constructed on one or both river banks. There can be several bridge crossings and numerous river access points.

## 8.Motorized Travel

Wild: Motorized travel on land or water may be permitted, but is generally not compatible with this classification.

Scenic: Motorized travel on land or water may be permitted, prohibited or restricted to protect the river values.

Recreational: Motorized travel on land or water may be permitted, prohibited or restricted. Controls will usually be similar to surrounding lands and waters.

## 9.Utilities

Wild/Scenic/Recreational: New transmission lines, gas lines, water lines, etc. are discouraged. Where no reasonable alternative exists, additional or new facilities should be restricted to existing rights-of-way. Where new rights-of-way are indicated, the scenic, recreational, and fish and wildlife values must be evaluated in the selection of the site. Each proposal will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

## 10. Recreation Development

**Wild:** Major public-use areas, such as large campgrounds, interpretive centers, or administrative headquarters, are located outside the wild river area. Simple comfort and convenience facilities, such as fireplaces or shelters, may be provided as necessary within the river area. These should harmonize with the surroundings.

**Scenic:** Larger scale public use facilities, such as moderate size campgrounds, public information centers, and administrative headquarters are allowed if such structures are screened from the river. Modest and unobtrusive marinas also can be allowed.

**Recreational:** Campgrounds and picnic areas may be established in close proximity to the river. However, recreational classification does not require extensive recreation development.

## 11. Structures

**Wild:** A few minor existing structures may be allowed assuming such structures are not incompatible with the essentially primitive and natural values of the viewshed. New structures will not be allowed except in rare instances to achieve management objectives (i.e. structures and activities associated with fisheries enhancement programs may be allowed).

**Scenic:** Any concentrations of habitations are limited to relatively short reaches of the river corridor. New structures that will have a direct and adverse effect on river values will not be allowed.

**Recreational:** Small Communities as well as dispersed or cluster residential developments are allowed. New structures are allowed for both habitation and for intensive recreation use.

## 12. Fisheries

**Wild/Scenic/Recreational:** To protect "outstandingly remarkable" fishery values in the four eligible rivers, cumulative sediment analyses will be conducted for all projects/activities requiring road construction or significant land disturbance within the specific drainage. If significant effects are predicted, mitigating measures will be employed to maintain the outstandingly remarkable fishery value.

### **Forest Plan, Chapter IV, Implementation/Monitoring, pg. IV/6**

#### TABLE IV-1

#### Forest Plan Monitoring Requirements

RESOURCE ELEMENT: Wild and Scenic Rivers - J1

ACTION, EFFECTS OF RESOURCE

TO BE MONITORED: Project level effects on the eligible rivers and adjacent lands.

INTENT: Insure protection of the "free flowing" water, the "outstandingly remarkable" resource values and the assigned potential classification of "wild, scenic or recreational."

DATA SOURCES: Project EA's, Plans of Operation, Field Reviews, Lease Applications, Forest

Monitoring Report.

RESPONSIBILITY: Recreation Staff Officer.

MEASUREMENT FREQUENCY: Annual, 100% sample.

PRECISION: High.

RELIABILITY: High.

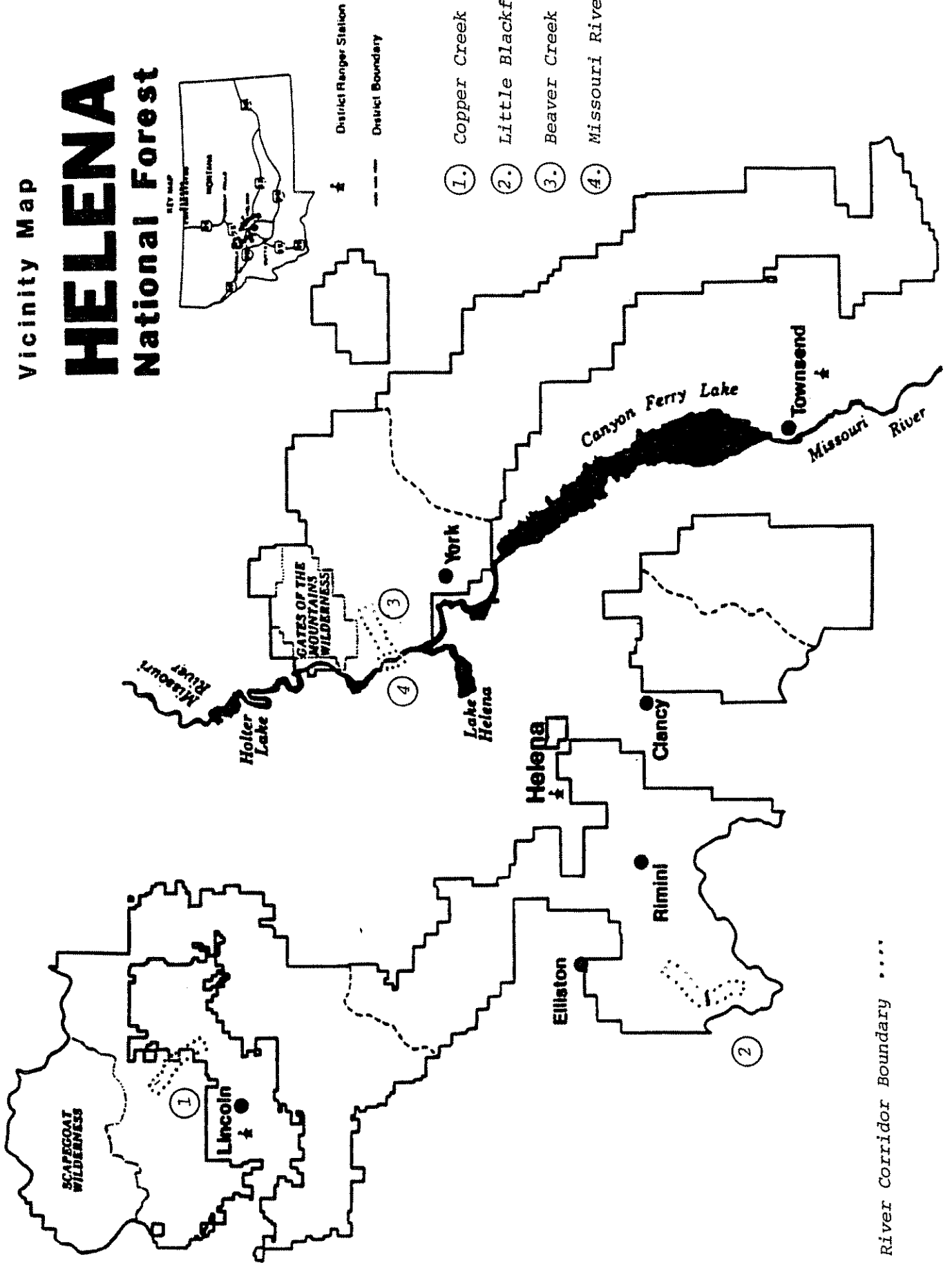
REPORT TIME: Annual.

VARIABILITY WHICH WOULD INITIATE ACTION: Any action that would adversely impact eligible rivers qualifications or potential classification.

# WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

## Vicinity Map

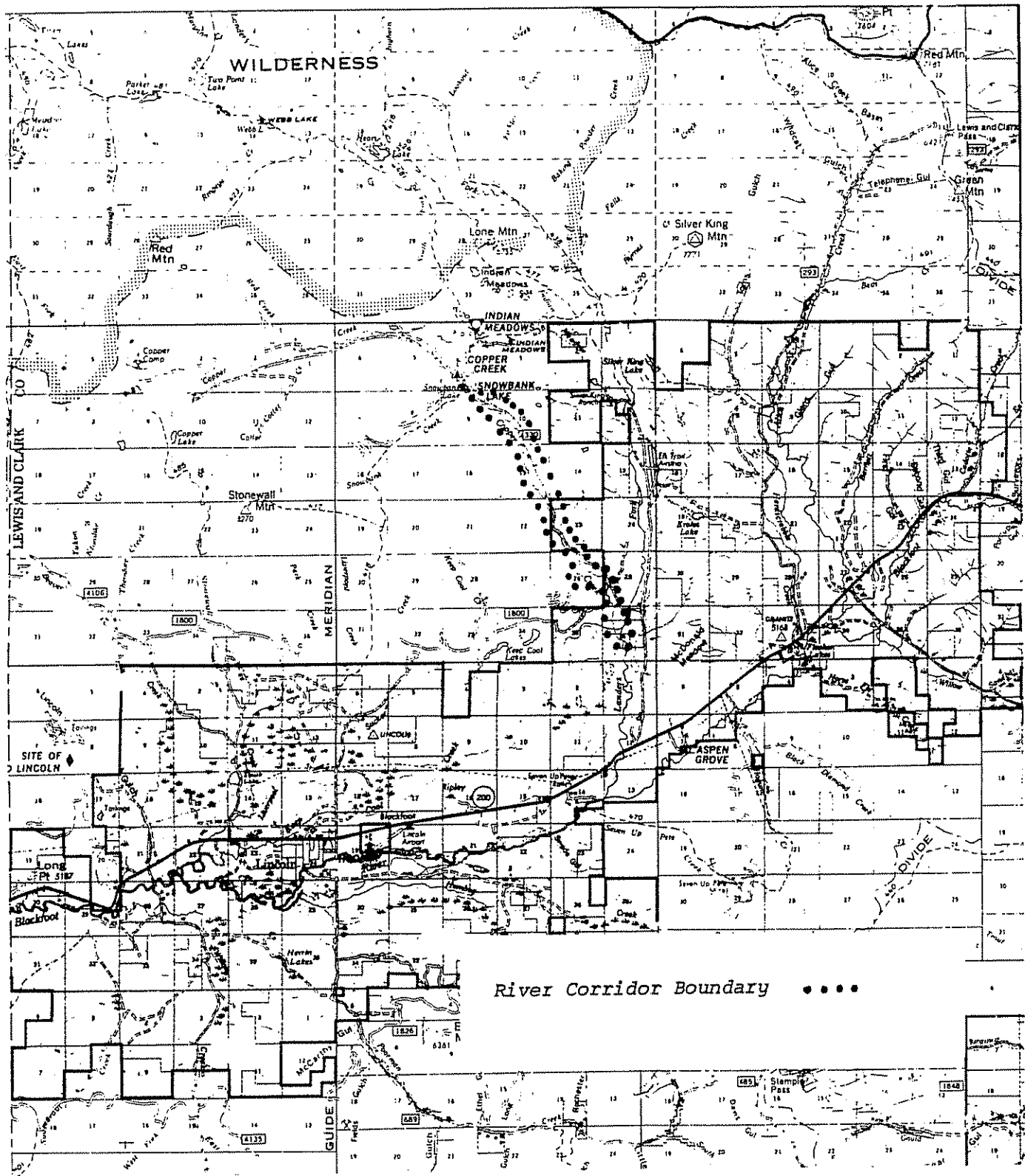
# HELENA National Forest



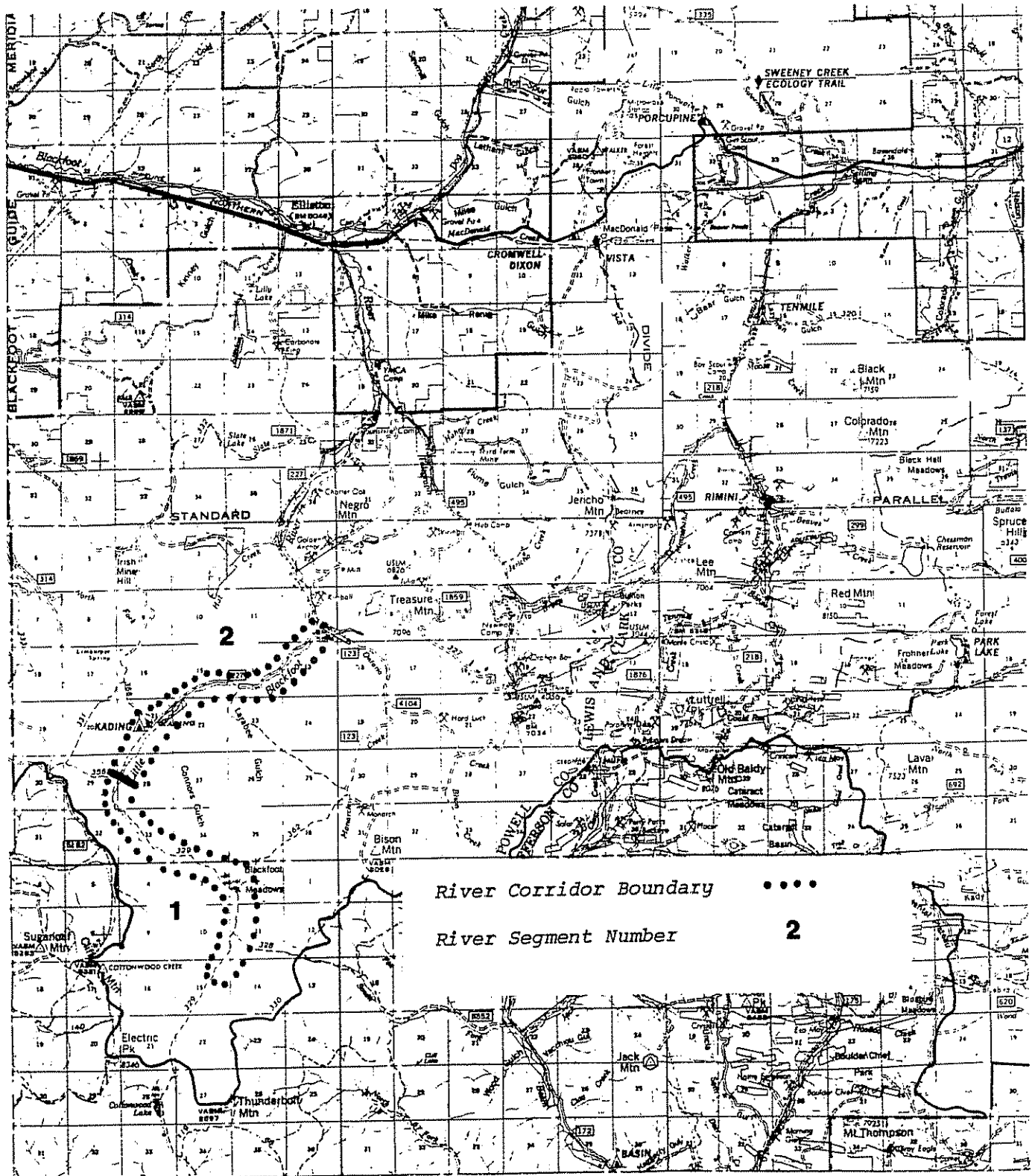
River Corridor Boundary . . . . .



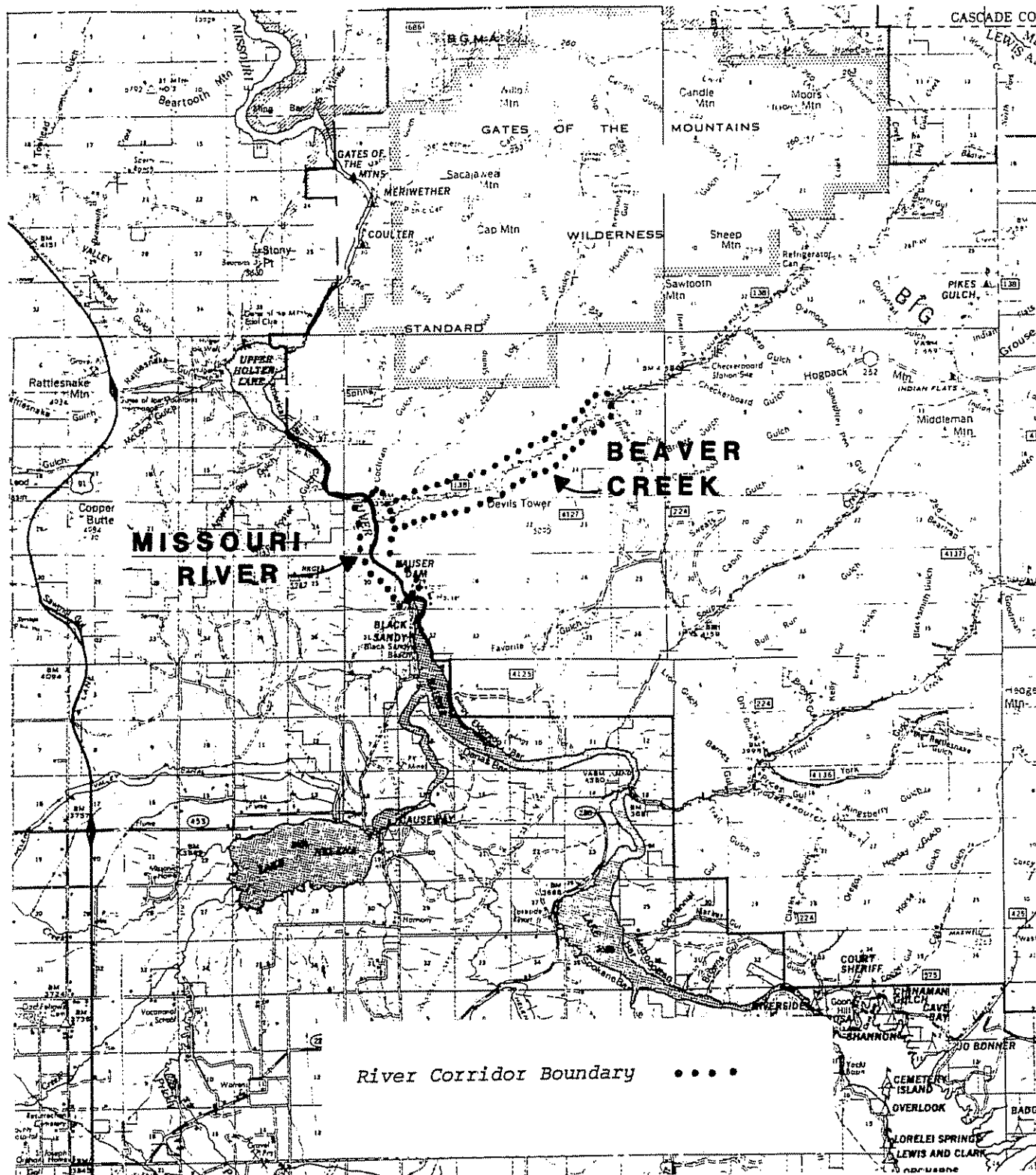
# HELENA NATIONAL FOREST WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS COPPER CREEK



# HELENA NATIONAL FOREST WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS LITTLE BLACKFOOT RIVER



# HELENA NATIONAL FOREST WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS BEAVER CREEK AND MISSOURI RIVER





United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Helena National Forest  
301 S. Park, Drawer 10014  
Helena, MT 59626

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Reply to: 1920  
FP Amendment #2

Date: May 16, 1989

Dear Forest Plan Participant:

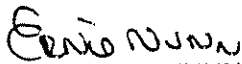
The Helena National Forest has completed the assessment of the eligibility and potential classification of all rivers within the Forest for possible inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

As a result of the evaluation, I have decided to amend the Helena Forest Plan by adding to the standards listed in Chapter II (Forestwide Management Direction) of the Plan.

The specific standards added are related to Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers and are designed to protect the eligible rivers and the adjacent lands. These changes will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives identified in the Forest Plan.

The Decision Notice and the Forest Plan Amendment are enclosed. A copy of the Environmental Assessment is available upon request from the Forest Supervisor, Helena National Forest, 301 S. Park, Federal Building, Drawer 10014, Helena, MT 59626. Please attach the amendment to your copy of the Helena National Forest Plan.

Sincerely,

  
ERNEST R. NUNN  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure



**DECISION NOTICE**  
**AND**  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ELIGIBILITY STUDY**

**USDA Forest Service**  
**Helena National Forest**

## WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ELIGIBILITY STUDY

### **INTRODUCTION**

Section 5(d) of the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA), as amended, requires that all federal agencies consider potential national wild, scenic, and recreational river areas in "all planning for the use and development of water and related land resources". Therefore, as part of the continuing development and implementation of the 1986 Helena National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), the decision needed incorporates three sequential steps:

- (1) identify eligible rivers on the Helena National Forest;
- (2) assign each eligible river a potential classification of wild, scenic, recreational or combination thereof, based on its existing condition; and,
- (3) develop Wild/Scenic/Recreational River Management Standards protecting eligible river segments until the river suitability study is completed and/or a future decision is made on their designation into the National Rivers System.

The river suitability study will be conducted in the future as a separate study report or incorporated into the 1996 Forest Plan/Environmental Impact Statement revision.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared which analyzes the effects of the decision needed. The EA tiers to the 1986 Helena National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement as it analyzes the effects between the Plan's existing management area prescriptions and the Wild/Scenic/Recreational River Forest-Wide Management Standards developed to manage and protect each eligible river and its assigned potential classification. The EA does not provide project level site-specific documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Projects proposed within and/or immediately adjacent to eligible river corridors will be further analyzed under NEPA.

### **ISSUES**

Public involvement occurred during the eligibility assessment. The only issue identified relates to whether the development of Wild/Scenic/Recreational River Management Standards protecting eligible river segments and their potential classification:

**WHETHER THE EXISTING STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES IN THE 1986 HELENA NATIONAL FOREST PLAN PROVIDE ADEQUATE PROTECTION FOR THE ELIGIBLE RIVERS AND THEIR POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION.**

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Alternatives were formulated following three sequential steps: (1) evaluate, verify, and document the finding of eligibility as specified in Sections 1(b) and 2(b) of the WSRA; (2) assign each eligible river a potential classification as defined by Section 2(b) of the WSRA which best fits the river; and, (3) develop Wild/Scenic/Recreational River Forest-Wide Management Standards that will protect eligible rivers until the river suitability study is completed and/or a final decision is made on their designation into the National Rivers System.

These three sequential steps (eligibility, potential classification, Wild/Scenic/Recreational River Management Standards) were conducted and analyzed by a Forest Interdisciplinary Team (IDT).

### Step 1: Eligibility

Based on Section 1(b) and 2(b) of the WSRA, a river is eligible if it is free-flowing and, with its immediate land area, possess at least one "outstandingly remarkable" resource value. A free-flowing river or section of a river is defined by the WSRA in Section 16(a) and (b). "Outstandingly remarkable" resource values emphasized in Section 1(a) of the WSRA are scenic, recreation, geologic, fisheries, wildlife, cultural, and natural. The IDT developed criteria to be utilized in defining each of the above resource values. This criteria is displayed in the EA. Applying the two eligibility qualifications, the IDT evaluated every river within the proclaimed Helena National Forest boundary.

### Step 2: Potential Classification

Once eligible rivers were identified, they were assigned a potential classification of wild, scenic, recreational, as defined by Section 2(b) of the WSRA, based on the condition of the river and adjacent corridor as they existed during the eligibility assessment:

**Wild river areas** – Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.

**Scenic river areas** – Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or, watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.

**Recreational river areas** – Those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

Potential classification covers, as a minimum, an area extending the length of the eligible river segment and extending in width .25 mile from each bank of the river (USDA-USDI Interagency Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification, and Management of River Areas, September 7, 1982). The river corridor can extend beyond this .25 mile width if it facilitates management of the river's resources.

Potential classification only applies to river segment lengths and widths on Helena National Forest land. State and private land inside and outside the Helena National Forest boundary contain river segments that are free-flowing and potentially contain "outstandingly remarkable" resource values. The Forest will continue to seek cooperative involvement as the State or Bureau of Land Management identifies eligible river segments adjacent to National Forest land.

### Step 3: Wild/Scenic/Recreational Management Standards

Section 10(a) of the WSRA requires that eligible rivers be administered to protect and enhance their "outstandingly remarkable" resource values while providing for public recreation and resource uses which do not adversely impact or degrade those values. Section 10(a) further states that primary emphasis shall be given to protecting the river's esthetic, scenic, cultural, and scientific features. Section 12(b) of the Act states that this management and protection shall not abrogate any existing rights, privileges, or contracts affecting Federal lands held by any private party. The applicability of United States mining and mineral leasing laws is further clarified in Section 9 of the WSRA. The IDT with guidance from the USDA-USDI Interagency Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification, and Management of Rivers Area (September 7, 1982) and the Forest Service Land and Resource Management Planning Handbook (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 8) developed Wild/Scenic/Recreational River Forest-Wide Management Standards. These standards provide a description of developments and activities that are permitted, restricted, or prohibited within the designated river corridor for each of the three potential classifications. The EA lists the standards needed to protect these values.

Based on this three step process, the IDT developed two alternatives for analysis:

**Alternative A (NO ACTION):** This alternative would defer the verification of eligible rivers, potential classification, and interim management direction to the 1996 Forest Plan revision.

**Alternative B:** This alternative would amend the 1986 Forest Plan verifying those rivers meeting the two eligibility qualifications (free-flowing and containing at least one "outstandingly remarkable" resource value) under the Section 1(b) and 2(b) of the WSRA; assign a potential classification to each eligible river as directed under Section 2(b) of the WSRA; and, apply the appropriate Wild/Scenic/Recreation River Management Standards to manage and protect each river.

## **DECISION**

It is my decision to adopt and implement Alternative B for the Helena National Forest. Alternative B identified four rivers on the Forest that were eligible for further study: Copper Creek, Little Blackfoot River, Beaver Creek, and the Missouri River (Section 10A). Alternative B assigned a potential classification of wild, scenic or recreational, as defined by Section 2(b) of the WSRA based on each river's existing condition. Wild river areas would include Segment 1 of the Little Blackfoot River. Scenic river area includes the Missouri River and Recreational rivers would include Copper Creek, Segment 2 of the Little Blackfoot River, and Beaver Creek. Alternative B prescribed Wild/Scenic/Recreational Management Standards to manage and protect the four rivers based on their assigned potential classification. Under Alternative B, the Helena Forest Plan will be amended to reflect the four eligible rivers, their classification and the Management Standards.

During the eligibility assessment, the IDT documented the rivers determined ineligible (Ineligible Rivers, 1988). This document focuses on the resource values of rivers rated "1" or "2" in the Montana Rivers Study (Pacific Northwest Rivers Study) and/or identified during the public scoping process.

As new resource information (i.e. natural, wildlife, fisheries, cultural, geological, recreational, and scenic) collected, it will be reviewed within the scope of the WSRA, potentially resulting in additional eligible rivers that will be addressed in future Forest Plan revisions and amendments.

Table 1 summarizes steps 1 and 2 by listing the four eligible rivers, their potential classification, river length, and their "outstandingly remarkable" resource values.



TABLE I  
WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS REVIEW  
SUMMARY

RIVER	UPPER BOUNDARY	LOWER BOUNDARY	LENGTH MILES	POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION	OUTSTANDING VALUES
Copper Cr.	SW1/4, S4 T15N, R8W	NW1/4, S36,T15N R8W	5.0	Recreational	Fisheries
Little Blackfoot River	Center of S15,T7N, R7W	NW1/4 S28,T8N R7W	6.0	Wild	Fisheries
Little Blackfoot	NW1/4 S28 T8N, R7W	S12,T8N, R7W	5.0	Recreational	Fisheries
Beaver Cr.	NW1/4 S12 T12N, R2W	S19,T12N R2W	4.5	Recreational	Fisheries
Missouri River (Section 10A)	SW1/4 S29 T12N, R2W	S18,T12N R2W	2.5	Scenic Geologic	Fisheries  Natural Wildlife Recreation

Potential classification includes a minimum of one-quarter mile wide corridor extending outward from each river bank. This could vary depending upon the resource to be protected.

**RATIONALE FOR DECISION**

My decision is based on the requirements of 1(b) and 2(b) of the WSRA that state a river is eligible if it is free-flowing and, with its immediate land area, possess at least one "outstanding remarkable" resource value. The four selected rivers met these eligibility requirements and were then assigned a potential classification according to Section 2(b) of the WSRA. Alternative B responds to the concern about the Forest Plan having adequate standards to protect the eligible rivers. Alternative B provides management and protection of eligible rivers through the Wild/Scenic/Recreational Rivers Management Standards until the river suitability study is completed and/or a future decision is made on their designation into the National Rivers System.

Every river on or crossing the proclaimed Helena National Forest boundary was evaluated to determine if it meets the WSRA eligibility requirements. This evaluation included a review of the 1986 Pacific Northwest Rivers Study which incorporated the Montana Rivers Study. The Montana Rivers Study provided baseline data on the characteristics and qualities of rivers on the Forest. Upon review of this study, the IDT developed "outstandingly remarkable" resource value criteria. This criteria assured that a uniform and consistent approach was used to evaluate rivers on the Forest. Based on the Montana Rivers Study review and the application of the "outstandingly remarkable" resource value criteria, the IDT developed a list of eligible rivers.

The potential classification of wild, scenic, recreational was assigned to each eligible river based on its condition during the eligibility assessment. Wild, scenic, and recreational rivers are defined in Section 2(L) of the WSR. The development of Wild/Scenic/Recreational River Management Standards were based on the USDA-USDI Interagency Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification, and Management of River Areas (September 7, 1982) and the Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 8.

### **FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT**

My decision will amend the 1986 Helena National Forest Plan. Forest Plan Amendment-1 identifies which rivers meet the WSR eligibility qualifications; assigns each eligible river a potential classification; and identifies the Wild/Scenic/Recreational River Management Standards that will manage and protect each eligible river for further study under the WSR.

Wild/Scenic/Recreational River Management Standards provide a description of developments and activities that are permitted, restricted, or prohibited within the river corridor for each of the three potential classifications. In some cases, a river will be managed stricter than the standards applied to its assigned potential classification based on existing Forest-Wide goals, objectives, standards, management area prescriptions, and other resource-related legislation (i.e. Wilderness Act of 1964, National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 etc). These standards do not affect other public or private lands and remain in effect until a river suitability study is completed under Section 4 of the WSR and/or a future decision is made on their designation into the National Rivers System.

This amendment does not result in a significant change in the Helena National Forest Plan. Actions under this amendment do not significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management nor change the planned annual resource outputs from the Forest. The determination that this is a nonsignificant amendment is made in accordance with the requirements of 16 U.S.C. 1604(f) 36 CFR 219.10(e) and (f), 36 CFR 219.12(k), and sections 1922.33(a) and (b) of Interim Directive No. 15 of the Forest Service Handbook 1920-Land and Resource Management Planning.

### **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

I have determined that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors found in 40 CFR 1508.27:

1. Adverse and beneficial effects are not significant (EA, pgs. 24-27).
2. There are no effects on public health and safety (EA, pgs. 25-27).
3. The eligibility determination, potential classification, and Wild/ Scenic/Recreation River Management Standards does not significantly effect the characteristics of adjacent geographic areas (EA, pgs. 4-11, 13-22).
4. There are no known effects that are highly controversial (EA, pgs. 2-4, 22-28).
5. There are no effects which are highly uncertain, or involve unique or unknown risks (EA, pgs. 22-28)
6. There are no irreversible resource commitments in the eligibility determination and protection of the rivers identified (EA, pgs. 22-28).

7. There are no significant cumulative effects (EA, pgs. 27-28).
8. There are no effects to cultural resources (EA, pgs. 22-28).
9. There are no significant effects to threatened or endangered wildlife species and sensitive plant species (EA, pgs. 13-22, 22-28).
10. This action will amend the management direction and standards prescribed by the Forest Plan for the Helena National Forest (May, 1986). This action complies with all Federal, State, and local laws and requirements for the protection of the environment (EA, pg. 1).

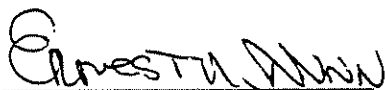
**RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW**


This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, Content of Notice of Appeal, including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with:

John W. Mumma, Regional Forester  
USDA Forest Service  
P.O. Box 7669  
Missoula, Montana, 59807

within 45 days of the date of this decision. For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact:

Ernest R. Nunn, Forest Supervisor  
Helena National Forest  
301 S. Park, Drawer 10014  
Federal Office Building, Room 334  
Helena, Montana, 59626.

  
Ernest R. Nunn  
Forest Supervisor

  
Date

DECISION NOTICE

AND

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

AND

NONSIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT TO THE  
FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST PLAN  
LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST PLAN  
HELENA NATIONAL FOREST PLAN  
LOLO NATIONAL FOREST PLAN

Amending:

Recreation Management Direction

for the

Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wildernesses

April 1987

## INTRODUCTION

### What is being decided?

This decision notice documents our decision to amend the Flathead, Helena, Lewis and Clark, and Lolo National Forest Plans to incorporate recreation management direction for the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wildernesses, known as the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC). This recreation management direction will replace the following appendices:

Appendix R of the Flathead National Forest  
Appendix S of the Helena National Forest  
Appendix U of the Lewis and Clark National Forest  
Appendix O-2 of the Lolo National Forest

These Forest Plans are amended by the document titled Bob Marshall, Great Bear, Scapegoat Wildernesses - Recreation Management Direction, dated April 1987. This decision notice also documents our rationale for selecting Alternative D as the strategy for modifying current recreation management direction in these wildernesses. The analysis of alternatives and public comments we considered in making this decision can be found in the Environmental Assessment.

### What is the goal of this Amendment?

Our goals in preparing this amendment are to secure preservation of the integrity of the wilderness resource and minimize human induced impacts while still permitting appropriate levels of recreational use.

### What will happen to the existing recreation management direction for these Wildernesses?

This amendment complements and supplements existing Management Area direction for managing recreational use as displayed in the Forest Plans.

### What is the duration of the Amendment, and can it be changed?

The management direction contained in this Amendment is subject to the same revision period as the Forest Plans themselves. The Forest Plan will normally be revised every 10 years, but must be revised every 15 years. In the case of this Amendment, more frequent revision may be necessary to incorporate additional direction with respect to wildlife management issues.

### What is not being decided?

While this Amendment contains specific management actions that will be used to rehabilitate and/or prevent unacceptable resource and social conditions, no site specific actions are identified, with the exception of the Schafer Meadows Airstrip area and those areas identified in Table 9. The Amendment lists the management actions that may be undertaken and the process managers will use to employ them on specific sites within the Wildernesses. The Amendment directs that additional consideration be given to wildlife issues, in cooperation with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, but does not identify specific wildlife management direction. Decisions about outfitter service levels will be made in the future.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, ISSUES, AND MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Public involvement on issues, management direction, and development of alternatives was an essential part of the process of identifying this recreation management direction. A task force composed of about 45 citizens, managers, and researchers was formed in February 1982 to jointly compose this Amendment. The full Task Force met a total of nine times between February 1982 and June 1986. In addition, numerous meetings were held with subgroups of the task force during this period to help resolve issues and identify alternatives. A formal public comment period on the draft recreation management direction began in July 1985 and ended in December 1985. Approximately 1600 wilderness visitors participated in a study of visitor preferences and attitudes toward management policy in 1982. The results of this study were also used in developing the Amendment.

In dealing with the array of 15 issues listed in the environmental assessment, six of them surfaced as major concerns warranting indepth discussion and attention. These major issues were identified from the informal and formal public involvement and from the interdisciplinary team's identification of issues following publication of the draft Amendment:

1. Management of Schafer Meadows Airstrip and nearby recreation facilities: How should aircraft use be managed and what level of recreation facilities is appropriate?
2. Outfitter base camps in the Argosy Creek and Silver Tip Creek drainages: Can these base camps continue to operate and meet the resource standards proposed for these areas?
3. Communication and administrative facilities: What administrative facilities are appropriate in the Wildernesses and where should communication facilities be located?
4. Trail construction and maintenance: What is the appropriate standard for trail construction and maintenance in different areas of the Wildernesses?
5. Wildlife: What is the effect of the Amendment on threatened and endangered species, and how should wildlife be managed in the Wildernesses?
6. Opportunity Class Allocations: Should changes in the proposed opportunity class designations be made?

A number of relatively minor issues were also identified, but those concerns were either resolved during the planning phase, or are addressed in Appendix I of the Environmental Assessment (Response to Public Comments).

## ALTERNATIVES

During the planning process, task force members considered and evaluated a wide variety of alternative ways of managing recreational use in these Wildernesses. The Limits of Acceptable Change wilderness planning system provided the overall framework for examining and discussing issues and concerns, proposing alternatives and evaluating them. Alternatives were considered for the following:

1. Descriptions of the wilderness recreation opportunity classes
2. Indicators of wilderness resource and social conditions
3. Standards for the above indicators
4. Wilderness recreation opportunity class allocations
5. Management actions to respond to wilderness resource and social impact problems.

Because the overriding driving concern in this regime of wilderness management is the designation of opportunity classes, the Environmental Assessment addresses various alternative designations, which include:

1. Alternative A -- No Action

Do not amend the recreation management direction for wilderness at this time. Continue using the direction provided in the Forest Plans.

2. Alternative B -- Emphasize Opportunities for Wilderness Dependent Recreation

This alternative would maximize the capability of the Wildernesses to provide opportunities for appropriate recreation. It would increase from the present situation the amount of allowable use and impact.

3. Alternative C -- Emphasize Preservation of the Wildernesses's Pristine Conditions

This alternative would maximize the area in the Wildernesses where no human impact would be permitted. Consequently, it would allow substantially less impact and use than is currently permitted.

4. Alternative D -- The Proposed Action

This alternative allows somewhat more impact than alternative C around the currently heavily used travel corridors. It would permit considerably less impact over the entire wilderness than Alternatives A and C.

## THE DECISION

It is our decision to amend the Forest Plans with implementation of Alternative D as the recreation management direction for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. This Amendment will guide management of recreation use of the Complex until the Forest Plans are revised.

This Amendment establishes a basis to resolve several concerns and issues within these Wildernesses, and directs the following:

1. Specific Wilderness Recreation Opportunity Classes are designated in the wilderness. These are areas of land managed to provide opportunity for similar wilderness dependent recreation experiences. Each of the four Opportunity Classes provides for a specific type of recreation experience, and establishes an overall management regime to restore, enhance or maintain those experiences.
2. Indicators (and standards) of wilderness resource and social conditions are established. These indicators will be periodically monitored to detect changes in wilderness conditions. Negative changes in conditions will be followed by management actions to prevent conditions from violating standards (or becoming unacceptable).
3. A regime of management actions. For each major type of resource or social condition impact problem, a list of management actions to be employed, by Opportunity Class is identified. Generally, these actions are listed, and will be used, in order of increasing restrictiveness. Non-regulatory actions will be used first. If these actions fail to adequately correct the problem, more restrictive and regulatory actions may then be implemented.

## RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

The factors we used to determine which alternative best protects the integrity of the wilderness resource include response to issues, concerns and opportunities, response to laws and national policy; environmental quality; and other agency goals.

In making this decision, we recognize the limitations of the physical and biological systems of the wilderness, and that the Complex cannot provide everything each individual or group would like. Our reasoning for the decision is as follows:

### Response to Issues and Concerns

1. Issue: **Management of Schafer Meadows Airstrip and Nearby Recreation Facilities**

The Schafer Meadows area is placed in Opportunity Class IV because of the extensive amount of recreation and administrative activity found there. Placing this area in any other Opportunity Class would have made the management job unrealistically difficult. Congressional direction mandates that the airstrip remain open for public use, but that aircraft use of the



airstrip be managed to protect wilderness values. Standards for such use are adopted in the Amendment, and the number of aircraft flights into the area will be monitored. Educational efforts to reduce unnecessary training flights will be implemented to reduce the noise generated by such. Pilots will also be informed that the principal purpose of the airstrip is as a wilderness access. The campground mid-way along the airstrip will be removed as facilities deteriorate. The campground receives little use and the one located at the end of the airstrip will suffice. We selected Alternative D because it provides specific direction on management of the Schafer area.

**2. Issue: Outfitter base camps in Argosy Creek and Silver Tip Creek drainages**

Nearly all those who commented on this issue, both in the formal comment period and in Task Force deliberations felt that these drainages should be designated as Opportunity Class I. These are truly pristine areas and should remain so. We believe that outfitter base camps can be managed to meet the standards in the Amendment. Alternative D was selected because it minimizes the potential economic effects to outfitters, while maintaining much of the BMWC in the most pristine opportunity classes. Managers will work with outfitters in these areas, as well as others, to cooperatively develop a plan of action, outlined in the camp operation plan, to ensure that standards will be met. If after a trial period, standards cannot be met, managers will work with outfitters and affected publics to develop suitable alternatives. These alternatives may include moving the camp to a different location, changing the standards, or changing the Opportunity Class designation for these areas. Our intent in maintaining these areas in Class I was to first implement actions that would allow these camps to remain, prior to the consideration of any possible changes in Opportunity Class designations, or moving the camps to a different location.

**3. Issue: Appropriateness and Location of Communication and Administrative Facilities in the Wildernesses**

The intent of the Amendment is to provide overall management direction for recreation within the Complex. Management of administrative and communication facilities was not intended to be a component of this Amendment. However, such facilities do have an impact on wilderness recreation experiences, either serving as an attraction to some recreationists, or as an intrusion into other's experiences. The Amendment directs that an analysis of communication facilities be completed to determine communication needs and location of communication facilities, basically repeater stations. Such facilities are normally very small, and not intrusive to wilderness experiences. Never-the-less, every attempt will be made to minimize the number of repeater stations and to locate them outside of the Complex or outside of Class I areas.

Because of the size of the Complex, some administrative facilities are needed to house wilderness rangers and trail crews. These facilities also represent a former way of wilderness management that has important historical value. Many facilities themselves are eligible for nomination on the National Register of Historical Places. However, some of these facilities are in poor condition, of little value for administrative purposes, serve to concentrate wilderness visitors, or act as an

unnecessary intrusion into wilderness experiences. The Amendment directs that no new facilities be constructed in the Wildernesses and that no expansion of existing ones be permitted. We are further directing that an analysis of the need for administrative sites be conducted to determine if some can be eliminated, reduced in size or moved to less obtrusive locations. Any decision to relocate or remove existing structures will be made in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office.

4. Issue: **Appropriate Standards for Trail Construction and Maintenance in Different Areas of the Wildernesses**

Some individuals and groups expressed the opinion that trails be constructed and maintained to a high standard. Others felt that how trails are built and the frequency and type of maintenance they receive should be influenced by the Opportunity Class in which they are located. We have decided that trails exist primarily to provide opportunities for wilderness dependent recreation experiences. By adopting a specific allocation of Opportunity Classes to different areas of the Complex, we are providing opportunities for a range of those experiences. Thus, we feel that there should be different standards for construction and maintenance in the different Opportunity Classes. To the extent that budgets will allow, all trails in the Complex will be maintained according to the guidelines established in the Amendment. The Amendment provides overall guidelines for these standards.

5. Issue: **Relationships between Wildlife and Recreation Management Direction**

We believe that native wildlife is both an important component of wilderness and an essential component of many wilderness recreation experiences. The Complex contains four listed threatened and endangered species. A biological evaluation was conducted to determine if the proposed recreation management direction would adversely affect these species. The biological evaluation contained several recommendations concerning implementation of management actions at specific sites within the complex. We will ensure that these recommendations are followed if it is necessary to implement those actions.

There are innumerable relationships between recreationists and wildlife: some seek wildlife as game, others as appreciation, still others view wildlife as a way to learn more about natural processes. These considerations were identified in the public involvement process, and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks was requested to take the leadership in developing a program of wildlife management in the Complex. A draft of the work plan to develop the proposed program was written and presented to a number of public groups and individuals. While that program has not been implemented at this time, we felt it was necessary to implement the recreation management direction now in order to prevent any further degradation of the wilderness and to begin restoration of deteriorated areas. We will work with the Department in providing appropriate input into their program. When that program is developed, the salient components will be incorporated into the recreation management direction for the BMWC as wildlife goals and objectives. Specific indicators and standards may be developed if applicable, and implementable, for wildlife protection and management.

## 6. Issue: Changes in Opportunity Class Allocations

Following release of the draft Amendment, several Ranger Districts proposed changes in some Opportunity Class allocations. These were presented to the LAC Task Force in February 1986. We concur with these recommended changes. Some of the changes were recommended because of mistakes in the original mapping, others because the draft did not accurately reflect actual resource conditions, still others were made to provide greater flexibility in management or to enhance opportunities to distribute recreational use. We feel, however, that the allocation identified in the Amendment is now relatively permanent, that is, it should be changed only with very good reason, such as suggested in the discussion under Issue 2.

### Response to Laws and National Policy

All three Wildernesses in the Complex are managed under the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. Section 4(a) of the Wilderness Act requires that the Forest Service manage these Wildernesses to preserve the wilderness character for which they were established. We believe designation of Opportunity Classes and the allocation in the Amendment does the best job of meeting this mandate of all the alternatives considered. The Amendment will prevent any further deterioration in the wilderness resource as a result of recreation use.

The Amendment also responds to regulations promulgated under the provisions of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 which state:

"...Provide for limiting and distributing visitor use of specific portions in accord with periodic estimates of the maximum levels of use that allow natural processes to operate fully and that do not impair the values for which wildernesses were created."

The Amendment responds to this direction by establishing specific standards of acceptability of resource impact and through implementation of a non-degradation policy. In addition, limits on visitor use are provided for should they become necessary.

### Environmental Quality

Environmental quality was an important consideration in selecting Alternative D. Indicators and standards established for important resource parameters will help to control, reduce and minimize impacts from recreation. The non-degradation policy limits the total amount of impact. Alternative D places about 80% of the Complex in the two most pristine Opportunity Classes, while Class IV is limited to approximately 6% of the area. Important habitat components are substantially avoided in Class IV. The Biological Evaluation determines that threatened and endangered wildlife species are not adversely impacted. Alternative D will result in an improvement of resource conditions over time, compared to Alternative A, because the standards do not permit much of the impact now found. Fish habitat impacts do not vary by any alternative.

## Compatibility With Other Public Agency Goals

The planning effort included representatives of other agencies, primarily the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Fish and Wildlife management in the Wildernesses is guided by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Forest Service and the Department. During the writing of the Biological Evaluation, the Fish and Wildlife Service was informally consulted. They determined the evaluation was consistent with Threatened and Endangered Species recovery goals.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Implementation of this Amendment will begin immediately after signing of this decision. Implementation requires moving from the current wilderness recreation management direction as found in the respective Forest Plans to the management regime found in the Amendment.

Monitoring and evaluation are explicit components of the Amendment. The monitoring program provides us with information on the progress of implementation. Such information will provide feedback into the Forest Planning process for future change if necessary.

## RECORDS

The supporting records for the Amendment are contained in a project file located at the Supervisor's Office, Flathead National Forest. They contain detailed records and information concerning the process and data used in developing the Amendment.

All documentation chronicling the amendment process is available for inspection during regular business hours at:

Supervisor's Office  
Flathead National Forest  
1935 Third Avenue East  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
(406) 755-5401

## DOCUMENTATION OF NONSIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

This Amendment to the management direction for Wildernesses in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex of the respective Forest Plans constitutes a nonsignificant change to these plans according to 36 CFR 219.10(f), and the Forest Service Manual 1922.33a, item 4, (minor changes in standards and guidelines). The factors used to determine if the proposed change was significant or nonsignificant were timing; location; goals, objectives, and outputs; and management prescriptions.

### Timing

The possibility of implementing management actions that may have significant impacts, such as use rationing, would likely not occur within the near future.

### Location

Only lands designated Wilderness will be affected by the Amendment. Further, a relatively small part of the wilderness, campsites and trails will be immediately affected.

### Goals, Objectives, and Outputs

The Amendment is consistent with goals and objectives established in the respective Forest Plans, and in a sense, is an implementation of those goals and objectives. The Amendment does not alter long-term relationships among the levels of goods and services projected by the respective Forest Plans. Recreation opportunities provided in the Complex are not foregone, nor are other wilderness dependent resources.

### Management Prescriptions

The changes in management prescribed by the Amendment are neither irreversible or irretrievable.

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

We have determined through the Environmental Assessment that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. There are no irreversible resource commitments.
2. There are no significant cumulative effects.
3. The impacts resulting from this Amendment should not adversely affect the well being of threatened and endangered species.
4. The Amendment is within the scope of the Environmental Impact Statements prepared for the Flathead, Helena, Lewis and Clark, and Lolo Forest Land and Resource Management Plans.

APPEAL RIGHTS

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 211.18. Notice of Appeal must be in writing and submitted to anyone of the following officials:

Edgar B. Brannon, Jr., Forest Supervisor  
Flathead National Forest  
PO Box 147  
Kalispell, MT 59901

Robert S. Gibson, Forest Supervisor  
Helena National Forest  
Federal Office Bldg., Room 334  
Helena, MT 59626

Orville L. Daniels, Forest Supervisor  
Lolo National Forest  
Bldg. 24, Fort Missoula  
Missoula, MT 59801

John D. Gorman, Forest Supervisor  
Lewis and Clark National Forest  
PO Box 871  
Great Falls, MT 59403

Notice of appeal must be submitted to one of the above officials within 45 days from the date of this decision. The latest date given below will be used to determine the beginning of the appeal period. A statement of reasons to support the appeal and any request for oral presentation must be filed within the 45-day appeal period for filing notice of appeal.

Edgar B. Brannon, Jr.  
Edgar B. Brannon, Jr.  
Forest Supervisor

March 31, 1987  
Date

Robert S. Gibson  
Robert S. Gibson  
Forest Supervisor

April 6, 1987  
Date

John D. Gorman  
John D. Gorman  
Forest Supervisor

4-2-87  
Date

Orville L. Daniels  
Orville L. Daniels  
Forest Supervisor

April 1, 1987  
Date



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

summary



Forest Service  
Flathead, Lolo, Helena, Lewis & Clark  
National Forests

# Bob Marshall Great Bear Scapegoat



## Wildernesses

### Recreation Management Direction





THE BOB MARSHALL, GREAT BEAR AND SCAPEGOAT WILDERNESS

A SUMMARY OF DIRECTION FOR MANAGING RECREATION

This document is a summary of the amended recreation management direction for the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wildernesses. This recreation management direction will replace the following Forest Plan appendices:

- Appendix R - Flathead National Forest Plan - Management Area 21
- Appendix S - Helena National Forest Plan - Management Area P-1
- Appendix U - Lewis & Clark National Plan - Management Area P
- Appendix O-2 - Lolo National Forest Plan - Management Area 12

This summary is intended to answer the general public's questions about this amendment. More detailed information is available in the amendment itself which may be obtained by request from the Forest Service addresses shown at the end of this summary.

TO HELP YOU FIND ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS, CHECK THESE PAGES:

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## 1. WHAT IS THE BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS COMPLEX?

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex is comprised of the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Great Bear Wildernesses. The Bob Marshall Wilderness was Congressionally classified in 1964 when the Wilderness Act was passed. Separate legislation classified the Scapegoat (1972) and Great Bear (1978) Wildernesses. Because these areas are adjacent to one another, they are managed as one unit, called the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex or BMWC. This area totals approximately 1.5 million acres, making it one of the largest contiguous roadless areas in the lower 48 states. It contains a wide variety of topography, vegetation and wildlife, including several threatened and endangered species. It provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and lengthy backpacking, horseback and rafting wilderness trips.

The complex is managed by four National Forests; the Flathead, Helena, Lewis & Clark and Lolo as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. As part of the overall Forest planning process, these National Forests have developed coordinated wilderness recreation management direction.

## 2. WHAT IS THE AMENDMENT FOR MANAGING RECREATION ALL ABOUT?

There are a number of reasons why the Forest Service engaged in this planning process. First, increasing visitor use is resulting in more pressure on the wilderness resource, both in physical impacts on the land and in reduced opportunities for solitude for people. Second, managers and citizens have become increasingly concerned about these impacts and changes in wilderness conditions and experience. Third, regulations developed pursuant to provisions of the National Forest Management Act passed by Congress in 1976 require the Forest Service to develop specific management actions to protect wilderness values.

The amendment is directed at managing recreation in the wilderness complex. Other portions of the Forest Plans currently address management of fire, and management of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River which flows through the wilderness. This amendment identifies management action to reduce, prevent, or rehabilitate unacceptable resource and social conditions in the BMWC. The amendment also establishes specific standards of acceptable conditions in different parts of the wilderness and identifies how managers will go about determining what management actions are most suitable to address specific problem areas. Finally, the amendment establishes a monitoring process to identify the effectiveness of management actions and to keep track of changes in wilderness conditions.

### 3. WHAT PROCESS WAS USED TO DEVELOP THE AMENDMENT?

The amendment was developed by a Task Force of citizens, managers, and researchers using the concept of Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC), a wilderness planning system recently developed by Forest Service scientists. The LAC process, as applied in the BMWC, contains nine steps:

1. Identify management concerns, public issues, and overall wilderness management direction. In this step, overall goals and objectives for the area are established. Specific issues which the planning effort must identify are also defined.
2. Define and describe wilderness recreation opportunity classes designed to preserve a range of wilderness conditions. Wilderness recreation opportunity classes represent a range of desirable conditions found in the BMWC; while all areas must meet the minimum standards of the Wilderness Act, some areas within the complex are managed for more pristine conditions than others.
3. Identify resource and recreation characteristics which serve to indicate wilderness conditions (such as campsite impacts or amount of solitude). These "indicators" are selected because they are easily measured and broadly representative of wilderness conditions.
4. Inventory the wilderness using the characteristics and indicators identified in Step 3. In this step, maps of the indicators are produced to display the status of wilderness conditions. These maps provide information about the range of conditions, priority problem areas, and suggest what areas will require intensive monitoring.
5. Develop specific standards for each indicator and each wilderness recreation opportunity class. The standards set the limit of acceptable change for wilderness conditions; they are not necessarily goals to be achieved. Through monitoring, the trend of each indicator is established; appropriate management is triggered when trends appear to be threatening wilderness standards.
6. Identify alternative ways of managing the wilderness in terms of opportunity classes. In this step, alternatives for managing the complex were developed by managers and a variety of citizens group representatives.
7. Select a preferred alternative which describes the desirable range of wilderness conditions and appropriate management actions. The amendment represents the alternative selected by the Task Force.
8. Implement management actions to ensure that objectives established in Step 7 are achieved and that unacceptable conditions are restored to standard.
9. Monitor and evaluate wilderness conditions and the effectiveness of management actions.

The LAC planning system as implemented in the amendment is a continuous process, with monitoring information being used, where necessary, to change management actions, to prevent unacceptable degradation of the wilderness resource, and to identify overall changes in wilderness conditions.

The LAC Task Force, comprised of about 40 representatives of a variety of concerned citizens and user groups, Forest Service managers, and scientists have met over the last 4-1/2 years to develop the amendment. Nine meetings of the full Task Force were held in that period, but many other meetings with subgroups, field trips, and workshops were also held. Table 1 displays the representation of the Task Force.

#### 4. WHAT DOES THE AMENDMENT DO?

Briefly, the amendment allocates the BMWC into four different wilderness recreation opportunity classes, as shown in the enclosed map. Each opportunity class has somewhat different management objectives in terms of resource, recreation, and administrative conditions. The objectives are "quantified" through the use of indicators, and standards of acceptable conditions. For each of the opportunity classes and type of management problem encountered, an array of management actions are identified. Managers will choose from this array when they find that wilderness conditions are unacceptable or are taking a negative trend. Because wilderness is designated partly to provide for "primitive and unconfined" experiences, managers will try to select management actions which are the least intrusive to the wilderness visitor. For example, management actions such as education and information will be used as a first choice. Mandatory visitor permits will be used only if all other techniques fail.

#### 5. WHY IS THE WILDERNESS DIVIDED INTO RECREATION OPPORTUNITY CLASSES?

Resource conditions vary substantially from one part of the wilderness to another. For example, in the South Fork drainage of the Flathead River, impacts from recreational use are apparent, trails are heavily used, and the visitor relatively frequently encounters other wilderness travelers. In other areas of the wilderness, such impacts and use levels are low, resulting in pristine conditions. Most people would agree that management of these different conditions must also be different. Each recreation opportunity class has slightly different management objectives, meaning that recreation use and impacts will be managed somewhat differently. All opportunity classes must meet the minimum standards established by the Wilderness Act.

Using recreation opportunity classes in the management process assures that some areas in the wilderness will remain truly pristine, and not show the same types of impacts that other more heavily used areas do. Recreation opportunity classes also retain a wider diversity of wilderness experiences than would be available if all parts of the BMWC were managed similarly. This means that there will always be places where the adventurous visitor can go to get away from other people. On the other hand, the main travel corridors will be retained as places where inexperienced visitors can travel if they do not wish to go into the more remote areas.



In the BMWC, the Task Force has determined that four different opportunity classes fully describe the range of conditions desired. Opportunity Class I is the most pristine, and Opportunity Class IV is the least pristine. However, the conditions in Opportunity Class IV still meet the minimum required by the Wilderness Act.

#### 6. HOW IS THE WILDERNESS MAPPED INTO RECREATION OPPORTUNITY CLASSES?

The relative characteristics of the four recreation opportunity classes are summarized in Tables 2 and 3. A total of eight alternative opportunity class maps were generated for the BMWC, using manager, researcher, and citizen expertise. From these alternatives, managers generated another composite map which was presented to the Task Force. The Task Force then agreed, through consensus and modifications, on a preferred alternative. After public review, managers made a decision on a final opportunity class allocation, displayed in the enclosed map.

The map displays how the Task Force recommends the wilderness to be managed in terms of diversity of wilderness opportunities. While many of the major trails are located in the least pristine opportunity class (IV), overall, the alternative emphasizes maintenance of pristine conditions.

#### 7. WHAT ARE INDICATORS AND STANDARDS?

Two terms are used to help determine when management actions should be implemented. One is "indicator"; the other is "standard". An indicator is like a gas gauge on a car, it is one indication of the usability of the auto. An oil stick is another. In the wilderness, an indicator might be the impact at a campsite, or the amount of solitude or privacy a visitor might have. An indicator is a measurable factor which suggests to the manager the condition of the wilderness resource.

A standard is the level of the indicator beyond which you will not accept. For example, you may decide to get gas every time your gas gauge reads half full and add oil when the dip stick indicates low oil level. In wilderness, a standard may be the number of campsites in a certain area, or the number of people encountered along the trail in a day. Through monitoring of indicators, managers know if wilderness conditions are getting better or worse. The standard is the limit of what managers and the public agree is acceptable in wilderness conditions, not necessarily what is desirable. The indicators and standards are displayed in tables 4 and 5.

#### 8. WHAT MANAGEMENT ACTIONS ARE SUGGESTED?

Through extensive involvement of the LAC Task Force, a number of management actions were identified for potential use in the complex. These are shown in Tables 6-9. The actions are listed in decreasing order of acceptability to the public for each of the opportunity classes and by each type of problem that may occur. The problems are keyed to the indicators identified in Tables 4 and 5.

TABLE 2  
SUMMARY OF RESOURCE AND SOCIAL SETTING COMPONENTS FOR EACH OPPORTUNITY CLASS

	OPPORTUNITY CLASS I	OPPORTUNITY CLASS II	OPPORTUNITY CLASS III	OPPORTUNITY CLASS IV
RESOURCE SETTING: (General Description)	Unmodified natural environment	Unmodified natural environment	Unmodified natural environment	Predominantly unmodified natural environment
1) Ecological Conditions	Not measurably affected by the action of users	Minimally affected by the action of users	Moderately affected by the action of users	Many sites substantially affected by the action of users
2) Prevalence and Duration of Impact	Temporary loss of vegetation where camping occurs and along some travel routes. Typically recovers on an annual basis.	Minor loss of vegetation where camping occurs and along most travel routes. Most impacts recover on an annual basis.	Moderate loss of vegetation where camping occurs and along most travel routes. Impacts in some areas persist from year to year.	Moderate loss of vegetation and soil on major travel routes. human impacted sites, & popular lake shores. Impacts persist from year to year.
3) Visibility of Impacts	Not apparent to most visitors	Apparent to only a low number of visitors	Apparent to a moderate number of visitors	Impacts are readily apparent to most visitors
SOCIAL SETTING: (General Description)	Outstanding opportunity for isolation and solitude	High opportunity for isolation and solitude	Moderate opportunity for isolation and solitude	Moderate to low opportunities for isolation and solitude
1) General Level of Encounters	Very infrequent	Low	Moderate	Moderate - High
2) Degree of Challenge and Risk	Very High	High	Moderate	Moderate - Low
3) Inter-party Contacts while Traveling	Very Few	Low	Moderately Frequent	Relatively High
4) Inter-party Contacts at the Campsite	Non-existent	Fairly Low	Moderately Frequent	Common

TABLE 3  
SUMMARY OF MANAGERIAL SETTING COMPONENTS FOR EACH OPPORTUNITY CLASS

MANAGERIAL SETTING (General Description)	OPPORTUNITY CLASS I	OPPORTUNITY CLASS II	OPPORTUNITY CLASS III	OPPORTUNITY CLASS IV
1) Contact with Management Personnel during Normal Use Season	Strongly emphasize sustaining and enhancing the natural ecosystem	Emphasize sustaining and enhancing the natural ecosystem	Emphasize sustaining and enhancing the natural ecosystem	Emphasize sustaining and enhancing the natural ecosystem
2) Rules and Regulations and Visitor Behavior	Infrequent	Minimum	Routine	Frequent
3) Formal and Informal User Education Programs	Will be communicated to visitors primarily outside of the wilderness in areas such as at trail heads and boundary portals	Where necessary, on-site enforcement and communication of rules and regulations will be conducted		
4) Formal Rules and Regulations	Will be initiated to inform users about what to expect and how to use the area for optimum benefit to all.	May be necessary to have management objectives and permits may be considered only when light-handed, less restricted measures have consistently failed to achieve desired goals and objectives		
5) Presence and Extent of Signing	Signs may be present for resource protection only.	Trail signs permitted. Other signs will provide only minimum information necessary to protect the resource.	Signs will be permitted. Will include minimum number necessary to protect the resources and for administration.	Signs will be placed to aid in distributing and dispersing use, and for resource protection.
6) General Level of Trail Construction and Maintenance	New trails will not be constructed. Management level will retain primitive condition.	Managed to accommodate light and infrequent travel.	Managed to accommodate moderate use.	Managed to accommodate heavy traffic.
7) Presence of administrative structures	No new structures permitted, excepting radio repeater stations if necessary	Allowed as described in Area Wide Guidelines	Allowed as described in Area Wide Guidelines	Allowed as described in Area Wide Guidelines
8) Presence of other permanent structures (corrals, hitch racks, etc.)	None allowed	Very few permitted. For resource protection. Native materials only.	A few permitted. For resource protection. Native materials only	A few permitted. For resource protection. Native materials only



TABLE 4

Standards for Resource and Social Indicators for each Opportunity Class in the BMWC

INDICATORS	OPPORTUNITY CLASS I	OPPORTUNITY CLASS II	OPPORTUNITY CLASS III	OPPORTUNITY CLASS IV
Social:				
1) Number of trail encounters with other parties	80% probability of 0 encounters per day	80% probability of 1 or fewer encounters per day	80% probability of 3 or fewer encounters per day	80% probability of 5 or fewer encounters per day
2) Number of other parties camped within sight or continuous sound	80% probability of 0 parties per day	80% probability of 0 parties per day	80% probability of 1 or 0 parties per day	80% probability of 3 or fewer parties per day
Human Impacted Sites:				
3) Area of barren core (ft <sup>2</sup> )	100	500	1000	2000
4) Number of human impacted sites per 640 acre area	1 permitted	2 permitted	3 permitted	6 permitted
5) Number of human impacted sites above a particular conditioned class index per 640 acres	No moderately or highly impacted sites per 640 acre area	No more than (1) moderately impacted site and (0) highly impacted sites per 640 acre area	No more than (2) moderately impacted sites and (0) highly impacted sites per 640 acre area	No more than (3) moderately impacted sites and (1) highly impacted sites per 640 acre area

1/ Excludes authorized horse handling facilities. A variance will be given to outfitter base camps not currently in compliance and a timetable for compliance will be developed and administered through the outfitter operation plans.

2/ Human impacted sites defined as any site with evidence of human impact, normally centered around a fire ring, regardless of its prior use for camping.

TABLE 5

Standards for Range Indicators for Each Opportunity Class in the BWC

INDICATORS	OPPORTUNITY CLASS I	OPPORTUNITY CLASS II	OPPORTUNITY CLASS III	OPPORTUNITY CLASS IV
Range:				
1) Degree of forage utilization <sup>1/</sup>	No more than 20% forage utilized	No more than 20% forage utilized	No more than 40% <sup>2/</sup> forage utilized	No more than 40% <sup>3/</sup> forage utilized
2) General range trend <sup>1/</sup>	Static or improving	Static or improving	Static or improving	Improving
3) Overall range condition <sup>1/</sup>	Excellent	Excellent	Generally good or better	Generally good
4) Visual Appearance <sup>2/</sup> (Maximum Impact)	Lightly grazed	Lightly grazed	Moderately grazed	Moderately grazed
5) Forest Succession, Vegetation changes	Maintain natural ecological processes and conditions as they existed prior to fire suppression			

<sup>1/</sup> Standards for determining range condition, trend, and utilization are found in the Range Analysis Handbook (FSH 2209.21 -1)

<sup>2/</sup> Standards for defining the visual appearance of grazing impact are found in the Appendices of the Forest Plans of the Flathead, Lewis and Clark, Helena and Kolo National Forests.

<sup>3/</sup> On big game winter range, critical grizzly habitat, or other important wildlife ranges, forage utilization standards may be below these levels.

TABLE 6

POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT ACTIONS DIRECTED TOWARD  
REDUCING HUMAN IMPACTED SITE DENSITY  
(LISTED IN ORDER OF DECREASING ACCEPTABILITY)

Opportunity Class I

Campsite Obliteration  
Contact Repeat Users  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Closure of Large Area to Camping

Opportunity Class II

Campsite Obliteration  
Contact Repeat Users  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Closure of Large Area to Camping

Opportunity Class III

Contact Repeat Users  
Campsite Obliteration  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Closure of Large Area to Camping

Opportunity Class IV

Contact Repeat Users  
Campsite Obliteration  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Closure of Large Area to Camping

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TABLE 7

POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT ACTIONS DIRECTED TOWARD  
REDUCING UNACCEPTABLE SITE CONDITIONS OR IMPACTS  
(LISTED IN DECREASING ORDER OF ACCEPTABILITY)

Opportunity Class I

Information and Education  
Contact Repeat Users  
Limit Group Size  
Limit Number of Stock per Group  
Campsite Closure  
Enforcement  
Prohibit Stock in Campsite  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Remove Existing Facilities  
Campsite Restoration  
Equipment Requirements  
Close Campsite to Certain Users Only  
Ranger Contact  
Temporary Corrals  
Campsite Permit

Opportunity Class II

Information and Education  
Contact Repeat Users  
Limit Group Size  
Enforcement  
Limit Number of Stock per Group  
Campsite Closure  
Campsite Restoration  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Prohibit Stock in Campsite  
Equipment Requirements  
Remove Existing Facilities  
Ranger Contact  
Close Campsite to Certain Users Only  
Temporary Corrals  
Campsite Permit

Opportunity Class III

Information and Education  
Contact Repeat Users  
Enforcement  
Campsite Restoration  
Ranger Contact  
Limit Group Size  
Temporary Corrals  
Limit Number of Stock per Group  
Seasonal Campsite Closure  
Campsite Closure  
Prohibit Stock in Campsite  
Permanent Hitch Racks  
Equipment Requirements  
Campsite Permit  
Close Campsite to Certain Users Only

Opportunity Class IV

Information and Education  
Ranger Contact  
Campsite Restoration  
Enforcement  
Contact Repeat Users  
Temporary Corrals  
Limit Group Size  
Limit number of Stock per Group  
Permanent Hitch Racks  
Seasonal Campsite Closure  
Campsite Closure  
Prohibit Stock in Campsite  
Equipment Requirements  
Campsite Permits  
Pit Toilets  
Close Campsite to Certain Users Only

=====

TABLE 8

POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT ACTIONS DIRECTED TOWARD  
REDUCING CAMPSITE AND TRAIL ENCOUNTERS  
(LISTED IN ORDER OF DECREASING ACCEPTABILITY)

Opportunity Classes I and II

Limit Group Size  
Length of Stay Limits  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Self-issued Entry Permits  
Close Campsite to Certain Users  
Office-issued Permits  
Campsite Permits

Opportunity Class III

Limit Group Size  
Length of Stay Limits  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Self-issued Entry Permits  
Campsite Permits  
Screen Trails from Each Other  
Office-issued Permits  
Close Campsites to Certain Users  
Signing with Direction & Distance  
Change Access Conditions  
Build More Bridges  
Allow 1-Way Travel Only on Some Trails

Opportunity Class IV

Limit Group Size  
Length of Stay Limits  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Self-issued Entry Permits  
Screen Trails from Each Other  
Signing with Direction & Distance  
Campsite Permits  
Change Access Conditions  
Building More Bridges  
Allow 1-Way Travel Only on Some Trails  
Office-issued Permits  
Close Campsite to Certain Users Only  
Trail Head Entry Quotas

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TABLE 9

POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT ACTIONS DIRECTED TOWARD  
IMPROVING RANGE CONDITIONS  
(LISTED IN ORDER OF DECREASING ACCEPTABILITY)

Opportunity Classes I and II

Information and Education  
Limit Total Number of Stock per Party  
Require Users to Provide  
    Supplement Feed  
Length of Stay Limits  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Prohibit Stock in Campsite  
Closure of Large Areas  
Limit Stock/People Ratio  
Close Drainages on Rotating Basis  
Prohibit Stock Overnight in Campsite  
Temporary Corrals

Opportunity Class III

Information and Education  
Temporary Corrals  
Length of Stay Limits  
Limit Total Number of Stock per Party  
Require Users to Provide  
    Supplement Feed  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Prohibit Stock in Campsite  
Closure of Large Areas  
Permanent Corrals  
Limit Stock/People Ratio  
Close Drainages on Rotating Basis  
Drift Fences

Opportunity Class IV

Information and Education  
Temporary Corrals  
Length of Stay Limits  
Limit Total Number of Stock per Party  
Require Users to Provide  
    Supplemental Feed  
Seasonal Campsite Closures  
Permanent Corrals  
Prohibit Stock in Campsite  
Closure of Large Areas  
Drift Fences  
Limit Stock/People Ratio  
Close Drainages on Rotating Basis

Additional Direction from Forest Plans

Grazing by Permit  
Limit on Grazing Time

Generally, managers will try the most acceptable techniques first before moving down to techniques of lesser acceptability. Monitoring will indicate if the technique has been effective in reducing the problem. In some cases, where problems may be particularly difficult, managers may begin further down the list of techniques if it is necessary to do so.

9. WHAT PROCESS WILL BE USE TO DETERMINE WHEN MANAGEMENT ACTIONS ARE NECESSARY?

Following implementation of the amendment, for areas where monitoring data show that standards are being violated or where negative trends are occurring, managers will first field check the data to make sure it is accurate. If it is, managers will then determine if the situation is consistent with the intent of the objectives of the opportunity class. If not, then managers will determine the priority of the problem and its cause. Finally, managers will go to the appropriate table (Tables 6-9) and implement the appropriate technique(s) to resolve the problem.

10. WHAT DOES MONITORING CONSIST OF?

Monitoring in the BMWC serves three functions: (1) measurement of the effectiveness of management actions implemented to restore or maintain acceptable wilderness conditions; (2) identification of adverse changes in wilderness conditions; and (3) completion of the inventory process for the entire area. These three objectives will be met through two complementary monitoring processes. One is a long term monitoring process. The second is directed at indicators to be monitored annually, and areas of special concern such as locations where standards are already being violated.

Using this monitoring system, managers will then continue to examine the situation over time to determine if conditions are improving. Managers will continue to work closely with citizen task force members in selecting appropriate management actions in particularly difficult or controversial situations.

11. WHERE CAN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONCERNING THE AMENDMENT BE FOUND?

If you want to receive a complete copy of the recreation management direction for the BMWC or more information on the LAC process, please write the Forest Supervisor's Office address below. The available information on the inventory can be examined at the Supervisor's Office for each of the four National Forests involved.

Flathead National Forest  
P. O. Box 147  
Kalispell, MT 59901

Lewis & Clark National Forest  
P.O. Box 871  
Great Falls, MT 59403

Helena National Forest  
Federal Office Bldg., Room 334  
Helena, MT 59626

Lolo National Forest  
Bldg. 24, Fort Missoula  
Missoula, MT 59801



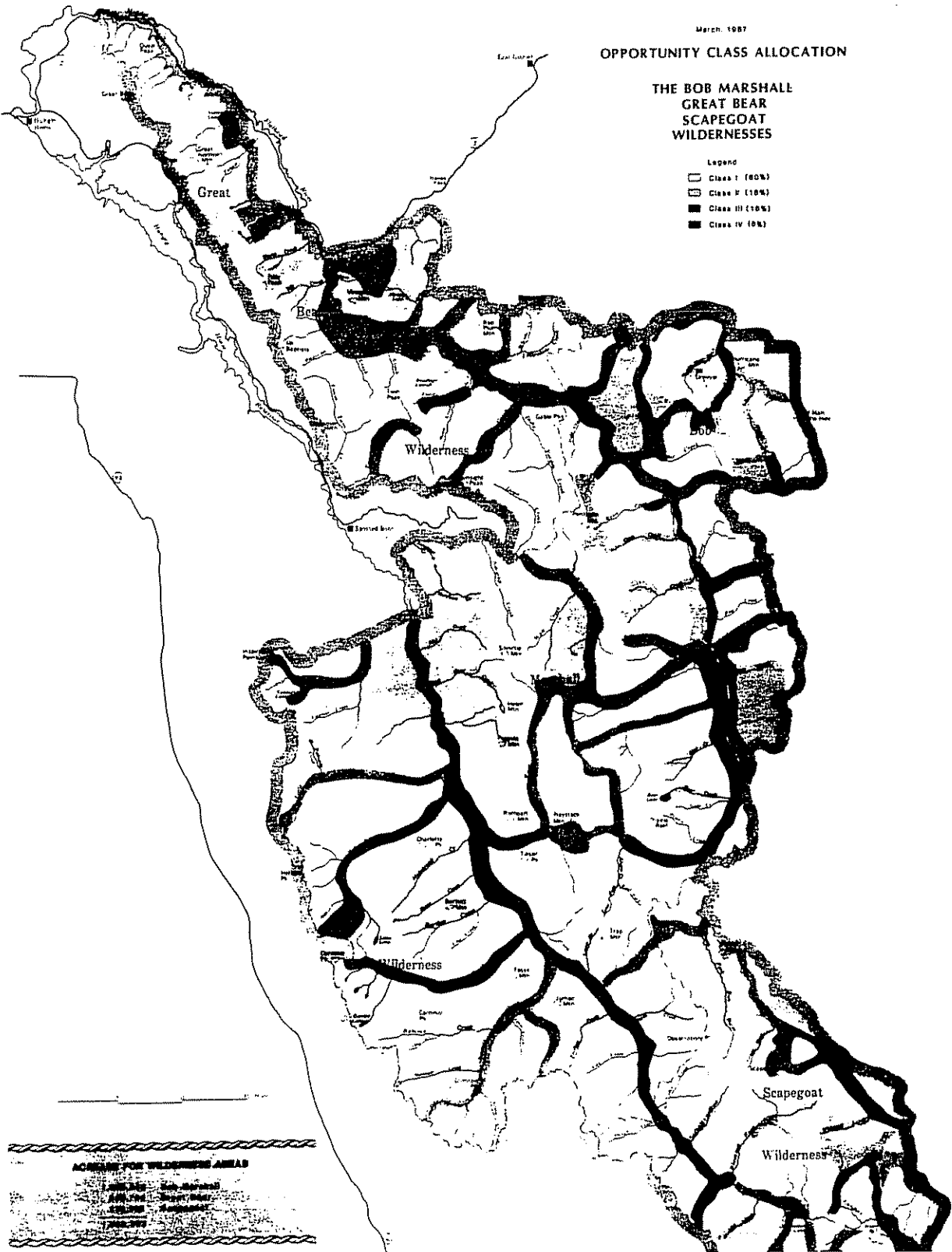


March, 1987

### OPPORTUNITY CLASS ALLOCATION

#### THE BOB MARSHALL GREAT BEAR SCAPEGOAT WILDERNESSES

- Legend
- Class I (60%)
  - ▨ Class II (10%)
  - Class III (10%)
  - Class IV (10%)



#### AGREEMENT FOR WILDERNESS AREAS

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Washington, D.C. 20250



**Helena National Forest  
Land and Resource Management Plan**

**Amendment No. 3  
August, 1990**

**Forest Plan, Page II/28**

The first paragraph under leasable minerals should read as follows:

**Leasable Minerals**

**1. The Forest Plan does not make leasing recommendations. The Plan identifies where oil and gas leasing could potentially occur, where it would be compatible or incompatible with surface resource management direction and what stipulations may be applied to the leasing activity should it occur.** Before any action is recommended on lease applications, site-specific analysis of environmental effects will be done in accordance with the NEPA process. Stipulations displayed in Appendix N which are based upon the Environmental Analysis for Oil and Gas Leasing on the Helena National Forest, 1981, will be recommended in accord with management area direction in Chapter III.

**\*\*\*End of Amendment\*\*\***

Chambers



Department of  
Agriculture

Service

301 S. Park, Drawer 10014  
Helena, MT 59626

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REPLY TO: 1920

Date: August 14, 1990

SUBJECT: Forest Plan Amendment Number 3

TO: Management Team

Enclosed is a Decision Memo amending the Forest Plan. This is amendment number 3 to the Plan. The purpose of this amendment is to clarify wording in Chapter II (Forestwide Management Direction), page II/28.

This item surfaced during the appeal period when a concern was raised over whether the Forest Plan made oil and gas leasing recommendations. It was discovered that the language on page II/28 of the Forest Plan could be interpreted to mean that the Plan had made leasing recommendations. The intent of the Forest Plan was not to recommend oil and gas leasing, but to identify areas where leasing has the potential to occur. The attached Decision Memo and Forest Plan Amendment addresses this concern and clarifies the wording in the Plan.

The Decision Memo and Forest Plan Amendment covering the above change is enclosed. Please insert this amendment in your "Official Copy" of the Helena Forest Plan.

You should make others in your area aware of these amendments to the Plan so they can update their own copies.

  
DWIGHT CHAMBERS  
Planning Staff Officer

Enclosures





United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Helena National Forest  
301 S. Park, Drawer 10014  
Helena, MT 59626

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Reply to: 1920  
FP Amendment #3

Date: August 8, 1990

Dear Forest Planning Participant:

This is to keep you updated on the amendments to the Helena National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

The current amendments to the Forest Plan have been renumbered so they are in proper sequence and to avoid confusion in the future. The amended recreation management direction for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, dated April, 1987 will be amendment number 1. The Wild and Scenic River standards, dated April, 1989 will be amendment No. 2 .

The document titled \*Bob Marshall, Great Bear, Scapegoat Wilderness Recreation Management Direction, dated April 1987, was prepared and released through the Flathead National Forest Supervisors Office. This was a multi-forest document which amended four Forest Plans, including the Helena Forest Plan. This is the first amendment to the Helena Forest Plan and incorporates recreation management direction for the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wildernesses, known as the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC). This recreation management direction replaced Appendix S of the Helena Forest Plan. You should have received a copy of this document in April of 1987.

The second document you should have received, dated April 1989, amended the Forest Plan to include rivers that meet the Wild and Scenic River Act eligibility qualifications, assigns a potential classification to each river and identifies management standards designed to protect the eligible rivers and adjacent lands. This is the second amendment to the Helena Forest Plan.

The third amendment is enclosed and addresses an area of the Forest Plan that needs clarification. This item surfaced during the appeal period when a concern was raised over whether the Forest Plan made oil and gas leasing recommendations. The attached Decision Memo and Forest Plan Amendment address this concern and clarifies the wording in the Forest Plan.

During the appeal period, it was discovered that the language on page II/28 of the Forest Plan could be interpreted to mean that the Plan had made leasing recommendations. The intent of the Forest Plan was not to recommend oil and gas leasing, but to identify areas where leasing has the potential to occur. I am amending the Forest Plan to clarify this wording.

The Decision Memo and Forest Plan Amendment covering the above change is enclosed. Please attach the amendment to your copy of the Helena Forest Plan.

  
ERNEST R. NUNN  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure



**Decision Memo**  
**Forest Plan Amendment No. 3**  
**Helena National Forest**  
**Helena, Montana**

I have decided to amend the Helena National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). The purpose of Forest Plan Amendment No. 3 is to clarify wording in Forest Plan Chapter II (Forestwide Management Direction), Page II/28.

During the appeal period of the Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, a concern was raised that the Plan had made oil and gas leasing recommendations without any site-specific analysis. It was discovered that the first sentence on page II/28 of the Forest Plan could be interpreted to read that recommendation decisions for oil and gas leasing had already been made. The intent of the Forest Plan was to identify areas where oil and gas leasing could potentially occur, where it would be compatible or incompatible with surface resource management and what stipulations would be applied should leasing occur.

The corrections made in this Forest Plan amendment provide clarification that will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives as identified in the Forest Plan.

I have determined the proposed change is not significant since it is a minor clarification in standards and will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.

Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forestwide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an EIS or EA (FSM 1950 Interim Directive No. 16 and FSH 1909.15 Interim Directive No. 2).

Additional information can be obtained from:

Dwight Chambers, Staff Officer  
Land Management Planning  
Helena National Forest  
301 S. Park, Drawer 10014  
Helena, Montana 59626

(406) 449-5201

Implementation of this decision will begin immediately. This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217.(1). Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted within 45 days of this decision to:

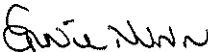
John W. Mumma, Regional Forester  
USDA Forest Service  
P.O. Box 7669  
Missoula, Montana 59807

Simultaneously a copy of the notice of appeal must be sent to the Deciding Officer:

Ernest R. Nunn, Forest Supervisor  
Helena National Forest  
301 S. Park, Drawer 10014  
Helena, Montana 59626

The notice of appeal must be filed in compliance with the procedures identified in 36 CFR (FR 3357), including 36 CFR 217.8 and 217.9.

As a minimum, a written notice of appeal filed with the reviewing officer must: 1) List the name, address and phone number of the appellant; 2) Identify the decision about which the requestor objects; 3) Identify the document in which the decision is contained by the title and subject, date of the decision, and name and title of the Deciding Officer; 4) Identify specifically that portion of the decision or decision document to which the requestor objects; 5) State the reasons for objecting, including issues of fact, law, regulation, or policy and if applicable specifically how the decision violates law, regulation, or policy, and; 6) Identify the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks CFR 217.9(b)).

  
ERNEST R. NUNN  
Forest Supervisor

8/9/90  
Date

**FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 4**

**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST**

**MARCH 12, 1991**

**AMENDMENT DECISION WAS VACATED IN  
APPEAL DECISION ON OCTOBER 4, 1991**

**United States Forest Region 1 Federal Building  
Department of Service P.O. Box 7669  
Agriculture Missoula, MT 59807**

**Reply to:** 1990

**Date:** March 12, 1991

Dear Forest User:

I have decided to amend eleven of the thirteen Forest Land and Resource Management Plans in Region One. These amendments will show the ASQ as two non-interchangeable components: (1) the component that is to come from inventoried roadless areas, and (2) the component that is to come from existing roaded areas. My decision, and my rationale for it are contained in the enclosed Decision Memo. These amendments will not change the total ASQ for each Forest.

I have also decided to require Forest Supervisors to monitor the amount of timber sold from inventoried roadless areas separate from roaded areas and notify the public of the results in an annual monitoring report.

I originally announced this proposal in December of 1990. I want to thank those respondents (184) for their thoughtful responses. Many felt that the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) was too high. Many also stated that the roadless area timber harvest should be deferred until Congress decided their future management. Still others requested no change from the present.

The 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA) directed the Forest Service to enter a new era in management. Forest Plans were developed to integrate resource management direction for all National Forests. As we learn more from the implementation of those Plans through monitoring and evaluation, it's clear that they must be kept current to reflect the changing needs and demands of society.

Management of the National Forests in the Northern Region is of interest to all of us and affects the lives of many people. We fully intend to continue implementing our Forest Plans and this decision does not change our commitment to that direction.

/s/ John W. Mumma

**JOHN W. MUMMA**  
Regional Forester

Enclosure: Decision Memo



## *DECISION MEMO*

Amendment to eleven Forest Plans

Northern Region  
States of Idaho and Montana

### *PROPOSED ACTION (DECISION):*

I have decided to amend the Forest Plans (Forest Land and Resource Management Plans) for the Beaverhead, Bitterroot, Deerlodge, Flathead, Gallatin, Helena, Idaho Panhandle, Kootenai, Lewis & Clark, Lolo and Nezperce National Forests to partition Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) into two non-interchangeable components. One component is from the inventoried roadless areas and the other component comes from existing roaded areas.

Forest Plans determined the ASQ which is defined as a maximum amount of timber that can be harvested over a ten year time period. Forest Planning determined ASQ from roaded areas and roadless areas. However, only one forest, the Clearwater actually partitioned the volume into two non-interchangeable components. The Custer National Forest does not have a roadless component of their ASQ.

The purposes of these amendments are to clarify: 1) how much of the ASQ is to come from the roaded or roadless areas (and establish upper limits for both) and 2) that these components are not interchangeable. By non-interchangeable, I mean that the amount of timber to be sold in a decade is restricted to the amount estimated in the Forest Plans for each component; roaded and inventoried roadless. These amendments preclude removal of timber from existing roaded lands in excess of Forest Plan estimates (Exhibit 1), and preclude attempts to increase harvest on roaded areas in order to make up for any decadal shortfall in roadless area harvest.

In addition, I am amending the Forest Plans (except the Custer Forest Plan) to require the Forest Supervisors to monitor the amount of timber sold from inventoried roadless areas separate from roaded areas, and to notify the public of the results in an annual monitoring report.

### *SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:*

The Region took a two-phase approach to public involvement to address this issue: 1) On December 14, 1990 I held a press conference to discuss the proposal and the reasons for consideration. 2) On December 21 I sent a letter to interested individuals, organizations, agencies and Indian tribes outlining my proposal and the reasons behind it. That letter requested their written comments by January 15, 1991.

The December 21 letter identified two other options for public comment: 1) take no action at this time; 2) defer timber harvest in roadless areas until Congress passes wilderness legislation. I have received, reviewed, and considered approximately 184 letters from individuals, groups, and other agencies. The letters ranged from support and opposition of the original three options to suggestions for other options. Common themes throughout the comments included the need for Congressional action on the wilderness issue and that we remain committed to good land stewardship.

In addition to the proposal, other options I considered to address the issue were:

Option 2 - Take no action at this time.

Option 3 - Defer timber harvest in roadless areas until Congress passes wilderness legislation.

Option 4 - Amend the Forest Plans to require that monitoring identify the portion of harvest coming from the roadless and roaded lands without partitioning the ASQ at this time.

Option 5 - Use the Chief's policy and guidelines for below-cost timber sale programs to determine where they are below cost and amend the Plans accordingly.

Option 6 - Using monitoring results, determine which Forest's ASQ need to be adjusted based on changed conditions and better data. Amend or revise the Forest Plans accordingly.

Option 7 - Defer timber harvest in roadless areas for two years to allow Congress to pass Wilderness legislation. Consider cutting beyond Forest Plan estimates in roaded areas where Standards and Guidelines can still be met.

#### *RATIONALE FOR DECISION:*

I am concerned about the growing opposition to our proposed timber sales as indicated by the number of appeals, especially within roadless areas and the resulting delays and increased costs. Without resolution of the wilderness issue in Montana and Idaho the issue is further clouded. We are also concerned with the personal hardships and adverse affects on timber-dependent communities which may be aggravated by the failure to achieve the goals stated in the Forest Plans.

Public debate and controversy on roadless area harvest has increased the difficulty to meet Congressionally financed timber targets. We have relied on the roaded land base to meet these targets which raises environmental concerns especially where accelerated harvest on adjacent private lands has occurred.

This action will clearly identify the ASQ and monitor accomplishments within and outside of the roadless areas and identify the tradeoffs. This decision reduces the potential to increase harvest on roaded lands to compensate for reduced volumes on roadless areas by establishing a ceiling for each component. The total ASQ for each Forest remains the same. My intent is to work toward a sustainable level of harvest.

We are committed to meeting all Forest Plan Goals and Objectives within the Standards and Guidelines and want to avoid abrupt timber harvest level changes in later years. With disproportionately high volumes coming from less than the total suitable land base, options to maintain a balanced timber program in the future could be significantly reduced. Ultimately, our ability to provide an even flow of timber from the roaded areas in the future may be reduced or even impossible, particularly without resolution of the wilderness issue.

Many publics were concerned that this amendment does not accomplish enough and that more drastic changes are needed. This may be true if a solution to the timber harvest controversy is not resolved.

I will continue to monitor this situation. Five year monitoring and evaluation reviews of our Forest Plans will be completed in 1992 and 1993 (Exhibit 2). If Congressional action does not resolve this issue, if the costs and delays of entering roadless areas continue to escalate, and if pressure to meet total timber targets from the roaded areas continue, I will seriously pursue other options.

#### *REASONS FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION:*

The environmental effects of the programmatic decisions made in the Forest Plans were disclosed in the Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) prepared for the individual Forest Plans. While this proposed action amends portions of those Plans, it does not change decisions made in those Plans that may cause environmental impacts. There is no change in the assignment of lands to Forest Plan management areas. There are no effects on the quality of the human environment that have not already been disclosed in the EISs for the Forest Plans.

Forest Plans established allowable sale quantity (ASQ) as an upper limit to the amount of timber that may be offered for sale during the decade from the forest. The analysis which was used to establish the ASQ in the Forest Plans is now being used to establish two separate upper limits on the amount of timber sold; one for inventoried roadless areas, and the other for remaining lands.

With its incorporation into Forest Plans, this decision may be a factor in the selection of particular timber sale projects to implement during the remainder of the Plan period. The site-specific environmental effects of such projects will be evaluated through the NEPA process, including public participation and a decision document.

This decision will also affect Forest Plan monitoring activities. These activities are entirely administrative in nature and have no effects on the environment.

This proposed action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment (EA) in accordance with direction in FSM 1952.2 (which refers to examples of actions that do not ordinarily require an EIS). It will have no significant effect on the human environment individually or cumulatively. Therefore it has no more environmental impact than those actions within the typical classes and no extraordinary circumstances exist that might cause the action to have significant effects.

This amendment will be implemented seven days after the notice is published in the principal newspapers for Montana and Idaho identified for Regional Forester decisions in the Federal Register, Vol.55 No.220, Wednesday, Nov 14, 1990, p.p.47500 thru 47502.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Written notice of appeal must be received within 45 days of the date of publication in the principal newspapers. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of Notice of Appeal", including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with: Chief, USDA Forest Service; 14th & Independence, S.W.; 201 14th Street, S.W.; Washington, DC 20250.

For further information, contact Jim Hagemeyer; Director of Land and Financial Planning and Management; USDA Forest Service, Northern Region; P.O. Box 7669; Missoula, Montana 59807; telephone (406)329-3453.

/s/John W. Mumma

John W. Mumma  
Regional Forester

Date: 3/12/91

Enclosures

EXHIBIT 1

December 1990

ASQ NON-INTERCHANGEABLE COMPONENTS

<u>Forest</u>	Total <u>ASQ</u>	ASQ from <u>Roaded</u>	ASQ from <u>Roadless</u>
Beaverhead	173	75	98
Bitterroot	334	294	40
Custer <sup>1</sup>	35	35	00
Deerlodge	230	164	66
Flathead	1000	933	67
Gallatin	210	70	140
Helena	150	123	27
Kootenai	2270	2187	83
Lewis & Clark	121	81	40
Lolo	<u>1070</u>	<u>705</u>	<u>365</u>
MT Total	5593	4667	926
Clearwater <sup>1</sup>	1730	1000	730
IPNF	2800	2260	540
Nezperce	<u>1080</u>	<u>540</u>	<u>540</u>
ID Total	5610	3800	1810
REGION TOTAL	11203	8467	2736

<sup>1</sup> The Forest Plans for these two National Forests will not be amended. Their ASQ is displayed in order to show the State and Regional totals.

ASQ figures are expressed as decade totals in mmbf.

## HELENA

Add the following objective for timber (page II/4). Insert as the first paragraph under Timber.

Program up to the allowable sale quantity of 150 million board feet of timber sales from suitable lands during the first decade. Approximately 123 million board feet of this total can be sold from the currently roaded areas of the Forest. The remaining 27 million board feet will have to be harvested from currently roadless land designated suitable for timber harvest by this Plan. In the event these roadless lands are made unavailable for timber harvest due to appeals, litigation, or lack of funds, the timber sale program will be reduced accordingly.

Delete the second sentence of the existing paragraph so that it reads:

Management activities will increase the timber productivity on the approximately 251,000 acres of suitable timberland. The sale program depends on managing suitable acres with stocking control techniques, such as precommercial and commercial thinning, and successfully managing any insect or disease outbreaks. Timber management activities and projects will be coordinated with other resources through an interdisciplinary process. Appendices H thru M and V summarize the timber volumes and schedule activities. Opportunities to gather firewood will be increased by temporarily expanding access, by not burning slash piles in potential woodcutting areas for at least one season, and by developing a public awareness program. Soil and water conservation practices will be applied during Plan implementation to ensure that Forest water quality goals will be met.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

October 4, 1991

MEMORANDUM FOR F. DALE ROBERTSON, CHIEF  
FOREST SERVICE

FROM: JOHN H. BEUTER, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

SUBJECT: USDA Decision on Review of the Administrative Decision by the Chief of the Forest Service on the Four Consolidated Appeals of the Decision Memo Amending 11 Forest Plans in the Northern Region.

Dale, enclosed is my review and decision regarding your August 9, 1991 decision on the Northern Region consolidated administrative appeal by Friends of Wild Swan (appeal #91-13-00-0119), Associated Logging Contractors (Appeal #91-13-00-0132), Intermountain Forest Industries Association (Appeal 91-13-00-0136), and Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Inc. (Appeal #91-13-00-0137), with regard to the Decision Memo amending 11 forest plans in the Northern Region.

Please promptly notify Appellants of my decision.

Enclosed also is the record pertaining to this appeal.

Enclosure

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

October 4, 1991

SUBJECT: USDA Decision on Review of the Administrative Decision by the Chief of the Forest Service on the Four Consolidated Appeals of the Decision Memo Amending 11 Forest Plans in the Northern Region.

TO: F. Dale Robertson  
Chief  
Forest Service

Pursuant to 36 CFR 217.17 (e-f) and authority delegated to me by 7 CFR 2.19 (c) (1990), I elected to review your August 9, 1991 decision on the consolidated administrative appeals by Friends of Wild Swan (Appeal #91-13-00-0119), Associated Logging Contractors (Appeal #91-13-00-0132), Intermountain Forest Industries Association (Appeal #91-13-00-0136), and Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Inc. (Appeal #91-13-00-0137), with regard to the Decision Memo amending 11 forest plans in the Northern Region.

#### **BACKGROUND**

On March 12, 1991, Regional Forester John W. Mumma issued a Decision Memo (DM) amending 11 Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) in the Northern Region. The amendments, which became effective March 23, 1991, were issued "to clarify: (1) how much of the [allowable sale quantity] ASQ is to come from the roaded or roadless areas (and establish upper limits for both[,]) and (2) that these components are not interchangeable."(DM,p.1):

Appellants' major issues were portrayed as follows in the Chief's August 9, 1991 Appeal Decision (AD,p.3-7):

1. Whether the use of a "categorical exclusion" violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Appeal #s 91-13-00-0119,0136,0137).

The 11 national forests with amended plans include the Beaverhead, Bitterroot, Deerlodge, Flathead, Gallatin, Helena, Idaho Panhandle, Kootenai, Lewis and Clark, Lolo, and Nezperce. Plans were not amended on the two remaining forests in the region: the Clearwater NF had already partitioned the ASQ into roadless and roaded components in its original plan, and the Custer NF has no roadless component associated with its ASQ.

2. Whether the action violates provisions of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) regarding significant amendments, scoping and monitoring (Appeals #s91-13-00-0119,0132),
3. Whether the action violates the Endangered Species Act by failing to ensure the recovery of the grizzly bear and gray wolf (Appeal #91-13-00-0119).
4. Whether the amendment reduce the flexibility of the Forest Service to achieve the ASQ (Appeal #s91-13-00-0132,0136).
5. Whether the estimated amount of timber in each noninterchangeable component (NIC) was supported by flawed data (Appeal #91-13-00-0136).

The Chief's AD affirmed the Regional Forester's decision with regard to all five issues.

#### DISCUSSION

The appeals are generally premised on the belief that the amendments will have significant consequences that require additional analysis and public disclosure. The DM and AD, however, are consistent in asserting that the amendments are merely a partitioning of the ASQ into two components of the forest, roadless and roaded, and that thereby sets an upper limit to the volume that can be offered for sale in each of the components over the planning period.

The DM and AD emphasize that the amendments do not change the total ASQ, nor the suitable timberland base. The Regional Forester certified that the amendments are not significant because they do not change the planning goals and objectives, nor available management practices (Admin. Record, Tab 10). The amendments are specifically intended to notify the public of the Regional Forester's intent to minimize the chances for undesirable consequences that might result if overharvesting were to occur in roaded areas to offset harvesting in roadless areas that may be forestalled by appeals, litigation and the unresolved consideration of these lands for wilderness designation.

Apparently, the Regional Forester anticipated that there would be interest in making up the forestalled roadless area timber sale volume by offering more volume from suitable timberland acres in the roaded areas. This could have the potential to exceed standards and guidelines set forth in the forest plans, and could compromise the long-term sustainability anticipated in the LRMP. However, it has been established by the Secretary that "...[t]he selected ASQ is a ceiling of timber which could be sold over a 10-year period taking into account other multiple-use values and compliance with Forest plan management direction." (*Statement of Action on GAO Report, Forest Service: The Flathead National Forest Cannot Meet Its Timber Goal*, May 24, 1991, p.1). The Secretary also noted the Chief's commitment that every project be in full compliance with standards and guidelines set forth in Forest plans. (*Id.*)



There is no question that the Region is facing a dilemma. The ASQs in the plans are apparently valid but the Region is unable to achieve timber output projections because of externally generated disruptions. Does this mean that the plans should be amended? It all depends on whether the disruptions are significant enough to warrant structural changes in the LRMPs. The Record does not disclose that structural changes were evaluated at the time the amendments were approved. The Regional Forester may exercise professional judgment under his administrative authority to control harvesting in specific areas in order to achieve standards and guidelines established in the LRMP. The question is whether LRMP amendments are needed to do so.

In this case, the Record shows no evidence that there is anything wrong with the management direction contained in these LRMPs. The Regional Forester has broad discretion in determining whether and how to conduct timber sales. It should not take an amendment for the Regional Forester to notify the public that management standards and guidelines will not be exceeded in roaded areas because of other limitations on harvesting in roadless areas. It was inappropriate to use plan amendments as the means for public notice.

#### *DECISION*

Using LRMP amendments to partition the ASQ for 11 National Forests in the Northern Region into two noninterchangeable components for the purpose of advising the public of future timber sale offerings is found to be unnecessary, and the amendments are vacated. The Regional Forester has sufficient discretion to assure that LRMP direction is implemented in accordance with the standards and guidelines without resorting to the amendment process. If there is a need to amend the ASQ for any of the national forests, NEPA and NFMA planning procedures must be followed.

It was proper for the Regional Forester to give public notice regarding possible limits on timber offerings if conflicts over the management of the roadless areas are not resolved. The Regional Forester retains full discretion to exercise professional judgment to prepare timber sales during the planning period that conform to the LRMP standards and guidelines, and to project the volume estimated to be forthcoming from the roadless and roaded components of the suitable timberland base.

This decision is the final administrative determination with respect to the above referenced appeals.

*/S/ JOHN H. BEUTER*  
JOHN H. BEUTER  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Natural Resources and Environment

HELENA NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

AMENDMENT NO. 5

JULY 7, 1992

This amendment changes Management Area boundaries mapped during the Forest Plan process. The change is needed to apply appropriate management and Forest Plan standards to the Sheriff Gulch area.

The following information describes the location and acres of the amended Management Area boundary. Detailed maps and descriptions are on file in the Land Management Planning Office, Helena National Forest Supervisor's Office in Helena, and the Townsend Ranger District Office.

DISTRICT	PROJECT NAME	FROM		TO	
		MA	ACRES	MA	ACRES
Townsend	Sheriff Gulch	M-1	130	T-1	130

\*\*\*END OF AMENDMENT\*\*\*

**Decision Notice  
and  
Finding of No Significant Impact**

For

**Sheriff Gulch Regeneration Harvest Sale  
and  
Amendment No. 5  
to the  
Helena National Forest Plan**

USDA Forest Service  
Helena National Forest  
Townsend Ranger District

Meagher and Broadwater Counties, Montana

**NOTICE:** This Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) withdraws and supercedes the DN/FONSI I signed on July 7, 1992 addressing the Sheriff Gulch Regeneration Harvest Sale and Helena Forest Plan Amendment #5. The July 7 document had an error in the legal description of the project area and omitted certain rationale I wanted to include in the discussion concerning my decision. This new DN/FONSI corrects those deficiencies and presents my decision on this project and Forest Plan amendment.

### **I. Introduction**

The Forest Service proposes commercial harvesting of 30 acres of overstocked, stagnated lodgepole pine in Sheriff Gulch on the Townsend Ranger District. The regeneration harvest will utilize a clearcut harvest method and produce approximately 300 thousand board feet (300 MBF) of timber. Harvest activity will be accomplished in Sections 2, and 3 of Township 11 North, and Range 1 East, approximately 40 miles northeast of Townsend in the Sheriff Gulch drainage.

In a connected action, the Forest Service also proposes to amend the Helena Forest Plan to make a Management Area boundary adjustment in Sheriff Gulch which would change 130 acres from Management Area M-1 to Management Area T-1. The Planning regulations and Forest Service policy permits Forest Plan amendments resulting from analysis conducted during Forest Plan implementation (36 CFR 219.10(f) and FSM 1922.5). The need for change in Management Area boundaries and a Forest Plan amendment was determined through site specific project analysis and associated ground inspection by Interdisciplinary Team members. This area review reflects a more intensive survey of the area than was possible during the Forest Plan development. The amendment will add 130 acres to the suitable timber base.

The selected Forest Service action is to approve harvesting of 30 acres of lodgepole pine in Sheriff Gulch and to amend the Helena Forest Plan to reallocate 130 acres of Management Area M-1 in Sheriff Gulch to Management Area T-1. This action is described and analyzed in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the 1992 Townsend District Small Sale Program that was prepared by Townsend Ranger District personnel. The EA and analysis are filed and available for public review at the Townsend Ranger District.

The Forest Plan amendment would adjust the Management Area boundary to include the proposed Sheriff Gulch sale within a T-1 Management Area. The proposed harvest activity is consistent with the Forest Plan management standards for T-1 Management Areas. The proposed harvest activity complies with the Forest-wide standards and management direction contained in pages II/14 to II/16 and III/30 to III/33 of the Helena Forest Plan.

## **II. Issues, Concerns and Public Involvement**

Public comments for the proposal were solicited through media releases in the Helena newspaper, and letters to interested public groups. In addition, comments were solicited from biologists from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. Comments received from the public are on file and can be viewed at the Townsend Ranger District.

An interdisciplinary team composed of Forest Service specialists reviewed the public and agency comments. Four issues were identified that led to the development of four alternatives. The issues identified were timber supply to area mills, loss of production on sites allocated for timber management, loss of big game security and the effectiveness of the proposed silvicultural practices. Other comments and concerns were evaluated but did not lead to the development of an alternative.

## **III. Alternatives**

Four alternatives were given detailed consideration in the analysis. The four alternatives and their relative consideration of Sheriff Gulch and a Forest Plan Amendment are: Alternative A (no action: Sheriff Gulch harvest = 0 acres; Forest Plan amendment = 0 acres), Alternative B (the proposed action: Sheriff Gulch harvest = 30 acres; Forest Plan amendment = 130 acres), Alternative C (reduce the number of acres clearcut: Sheriff Gulch harvest = 10 acres; Forest Plan amendment = 130 acres), and Alternative D (reduce the number of acres thinned: Sheriff Gulch harvest = 30 acres; Forest Plan amendment = 130 acres).

## **IV. Decision**

I am withdrawing my original DN/FONSI signed on July 7, 1992 and issuing this new DN/Fonsi documenting my decision for this project and Forest Plan amendment.

This Decision Notice addresses only the Sheriff Gulch related portions of the 1992 Townsend District Small Sales Program EA. Based on the analysis documented in the EA, it is my decision to select the Sheriff Gulch project identified in Alternative B involving regeneration harvesting of 30 acres utilizing a clearcut harvest method. In addition, I amend the Helena Forest Plan to reallocate 130 acres from Management Area M-1 to Management Area T-1.

## **V. Rational for Decision**

I have selected the Sheriff Gulch project identified in Alternative B of the 1992 Townsend District Small Sales Program EA because it best fits the purpose and need of the proposal. In addition, I have determined that the Forest Plan amendment providing for this Management Area allocation adjustment is not significant since it is a minor change in allocation and will not alter the multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest-wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement.

One aspect of the 30 acre Sheriff Gulch regeneration harvest I wish to address in particular is the use of clearcutting as the selected harvest method. I have reviewed the EA and project files to understand and

evaluate the clearcutting recommendation. The Biological Environment writeup in Chapter III of the EA notes that the existing stand in Sheriff Gulch "is dominated by 2000+ stagnated Lodgepole Pine poles per acre which are 80 to 100 years old. ... The excessive stocking of the site has resulted in a stand which is stagnated and has no potential for release should thinning occur." The silviculturists' stand diagnosis matrix (Project File records) shows that several harvest methods were considered for application on the Sheriff Gulch stands including: clearcutting; seedtree harvest; shelterwood harvest; and unevenaged management. The seedtree, shelterwood, and unevenaged management treatments were not viable options for these stands due to the potential for windthrow of unharvested trees and the lack of shade tolerant species to accomplish regeneration of an understory stand. I concur with the conclusion that clearcutting is the optimal harvest method for meeting Forest Plan objectives through the Sheriff Gulch project. This conclusion is based on existing stand conditions and species composition.

In reaching my decision on this project, I have also taken into consideration the recent Policy Statement of the Chief of the Forest Service concerning reduction of clearcutting on National Forest System lands. Under the Policy the use of the clearcut harvest method is to be limited, however clearcutting is allowed under certain circumstances including:

4. To preclude or minimize the occurrence of potentially adverse impacts of insect or disease infestations, *windthrow*, logging damage, or other factors affecting forest health. (emphasis added)
5. To provide for the establishment and growth of desired tree or other vegetative species that are *shade intolerant*. (emphasis added)

The silviculturists' input on this project has identified both potential windthrow and the lack of shade tolerant trees for regeneration as conditions that exist on the proposed Sheriff Gulch harvest unit. I believe that the use of the clearcutting method is entirely appropriate for this project and is in conformance with the Chief's Policy Statement.

A more detailed description of Alternative B along with the environmental effects of this action are disclosed in the EA.

#### **VI. Finding of No Significant Impact**

In reaching my determination that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not needed, I considered the following factors and information developed during the analysis of the proposal disclosed in the EA:

##### **(a). Context**

The setting of the proposed activities are in a localized areas with implications only for the immediate harvest areas. I have determined that the effects would be limited to these areas due to the small acreages involved.

The cumulative effects of the past management, combined with the current proposals and reasonably foreseeable future actions are displayed in Chapter 4 of the EA. The selected alternative is consistent with the management direction, standards and guidelines outlined in the Helena National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Helena Forest Plan).

**(b). Intensity**

**1). Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.**

Impacts associated with the alternatives are discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Four of the EA. These impacts are within the range of those identified in the Helena LRMP Environmental Impact Statement. The actions would not have significant impacts on other resources identified and described in Chapter Three of the EA. Impacts from the selected alternative are not unique to this project. Previous projects have had similar activities and non-significant effects.

I conclude that the beneficial and adverse effects of the selected alternative are not significant in the context of the proposed and cumulative effects.

**2). The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.**

Public safety and health was not identified as an issue during the scoping process. Commercial operations will be conducted in accordance with current requirements to minimize hazards to workers conducting logging operations. A degree of risk is involved for the individual members of the public that harvest their own post and pole material, but the small size of the material involved lessens that risk.

Based upon this information, I have concluded that the selected alternative does not constitute a threat to public health or safety. The project does not involve National Defense or Security.

**3). Unique characteristics of the geographic area.**

Analysis identified no impacts to any unique geographic areas. Identification of unique areas was an outcome of analysis and decisions made during the adoption of the Helena LRMP. None of the alternatives enter any roadless areas nor do they impact any wetlands or farmlands.

A cultural resource inventory has been completed for the project areas and no sites will be affected by the selected alternative. Additionally, the potential for impacting yet undiscovered sites is mitigated following LRMP standards and guidelines and the Decision Notice.

Based upon the identification of unique areas in the Helena Forest LRMP, and the cultural resource inventory, I conclude there will be no significant effects on unique resource characteristics.

**4). The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.**

The EA is tiered to the Helena LRMP Environmental Impact Statement. Forestwide effects of the Helena LRMP Plans standards were disclosed in that EIS. All alternatives meet the LRMP standards. Extensive scoping was completed during the analysis in order to identify areas of potential controversy. The scoping activities are identified in Chapter II of the EA. Areas of potential controversy were identified as issues. Issues were used to focus development of alternatives, mitigation measures, and the environmental analysis itself.

There has been no information presented to indicate that there are areas of potential controversy. I conclude that it is very unlikely that the environmental effects associated with this action will be highly controversial.

**5). The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.**

This action is similar to many past actions in these analysis areas and adjacent areas. Effects of this action will be similar to the effects of past similar actions. Responsible logging activities have occurred on the Helena Forest in the past. The selected alternative involves, common, well accepted logging practices and mitigation measures. The Interdisciplinary Team that conducted the analysis used the results of past actions as a frame of reference, and combined that insight with scientifically accepted analytical techniques and best available information to estimate effects of the proposal.

I conclude that there are no unique or unusual characteristics about the area which have not been previously encountered that would constitute an unknown risk upon the human environment.

**6). The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.**

Similar actions have occurred in these drainages. Effects of this project are minor and short-term in nature. Major follow-up actions will not be necessary.

I conclude that this action does not establish precedence for future actions with unknown risks to the environment.

**7). Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant impacts.**

Chapter IV of the EA discusses the combined effects of the projects with other past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future action. Based on the discussion in the EA, I've concluded that there are no cumulatively significant impacts.

**8). The degree to which the action may affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.**

A cultural resource inventory was done on the project areas and no sites were identified within the proposed disturbance area. Any cultural resources discovered during operations will be avoided.

Based upon this information I conclude this action will not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historic resources.

**9). The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.**

No impacts to any endangered or threatened species (Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf and Grizzly Bear) or their habitat are foreseen. A biological evaluation documenting a "no effect" finding was completed and is found in the project file at the Townsend Ranger District office.

Based upon the conclusions documented in the Biological Evaluation, I conclude that there will be no adverse effect to species or their habitat determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act.

**10). Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.**

Chapter I of the EA refers to the laws that impose requirements for environmental protection. These activities are in compliance with these laws. Upon adoption of the Forest Plan amendment adjusting the Management Area boundary no Forest Plan standards are violated by these activities.

Based on these discussions, I have concluded that these projects are in compliance with statutes imposed for the protection of the environment.

### **Finding**

I find based upon the analysis disclosed in the 1992 Townsend District Small Sale Program EA and my evaluation of the factors described in 40 CFR 1508.27, that this is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed.

### **VII. Mitigation**

Practices that apply to the selected alternative to protect resources include limited operating season due to the current road closure, protection of archeological resources, and BMPs.

### **VIII. Monitoring and Evaluation**

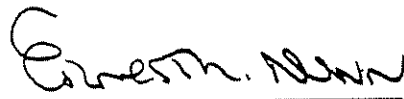
Weekly inspections will be performed by the harvest inspector while harvest activities are ongoing. Monthly inspections of regeneration success and weed infestation will be done and evaluated.

### **IX. Consultation with others**

The results of this analysis have been discussed with the local Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks wildlife biologist.

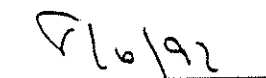
### **X. Appeal Rights**

For additional information regarding this decision or the Forest Service appeals process, contact George A. Weldon, Townsend Ranger District, Box 29, Townsend, MT 59644 or telephone (406) 266-3425. This decision may be implemented 7 days after public notification and is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217 within 45 days of initial publication of the legal notice announcing this decision in the Helena Independent Record. Any appeal must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, Content of a Notice of Appeal, including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with David F. Jolly, Regional Forester, Federal Building, 200 East Broadway, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, Montana, 59807.

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ERNEST R. NUNN  
Forest Supervisor

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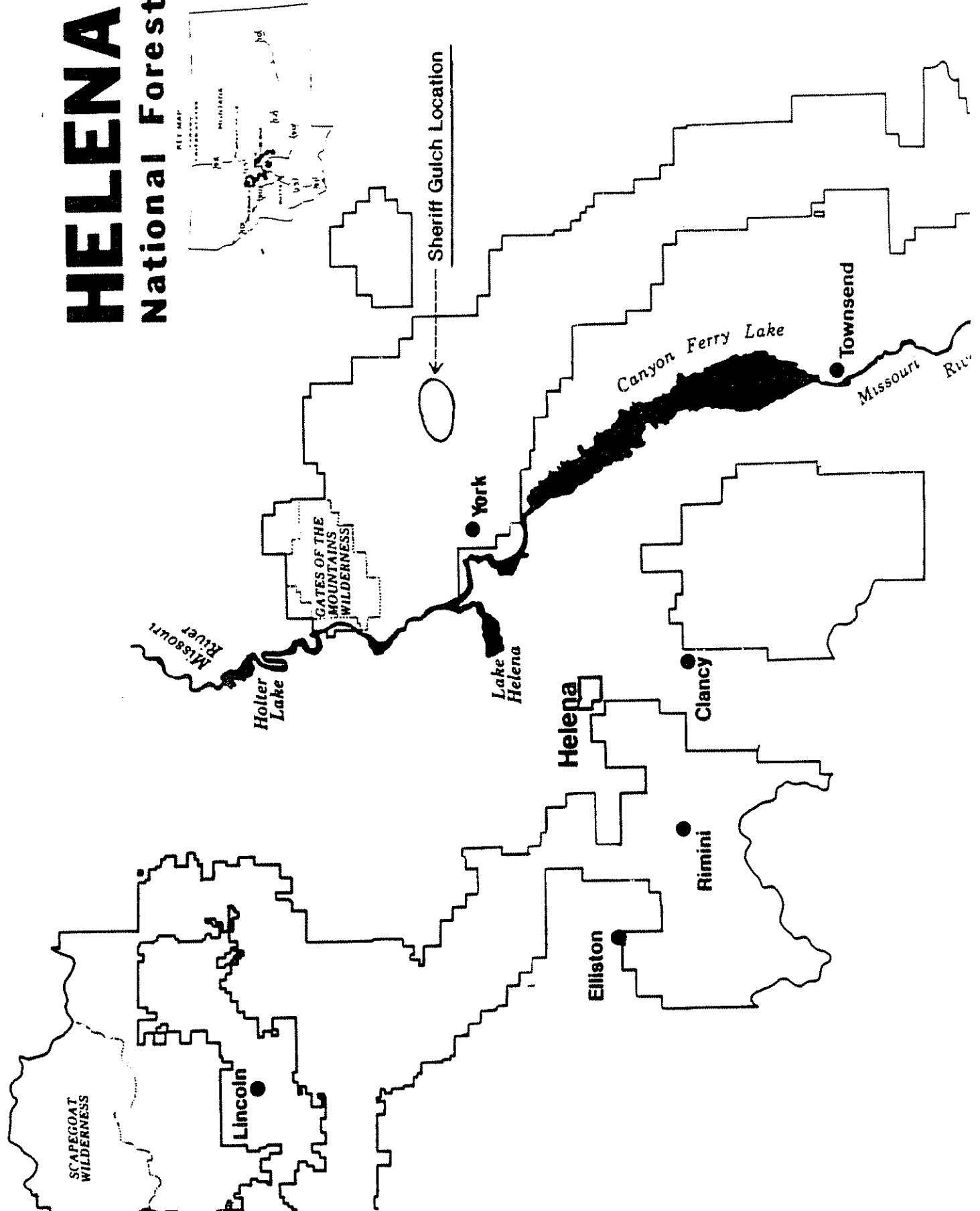
Date



VICINITY MAP

# HELENA

National Forest





**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**AMENDMENT NO. 6**

**April, 1993**

This amendment deletes the second paragraph on page III/62 for Management Area P-1 under the Grazing standards section, and *replaces it with the following:*

Managers shall inform wilderness users of the noxious weed problem and will use an Integrated Pest Management approach to prevent, control, or eradicate noxious weeds in the wilderness.

**\*\*\* End of Amendment \*\*\***

**LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**AMENDMENT NO. 11**

**April, 1993**

This amendment deletes MANAGEMENT AREA P Grazing paragraph 11, on page III-45 and *replaces it with the following:*

Managers shall inform wilderness users of the noxious weed problem and will use an Integrated Pest Management approach to prevent, control, or eradicate noxious weeds in the wilderness.

**\*\*\* End of Amendment \*\*\***

ORDER  
USE OF WEED FREE FORAGE, HAY, AND STRAW  
HELENA NATIONAL FOREST

Pursuant to 36 CFR Sections 261.50 (a) and 261.58 (t), to prevent the spread of weeds within the Helena National Forest:

**ALL HAY AND STRAW BROUGHT ONTO THE HELENA NATIONAL FOREST IN THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED AREA SHALL BE CERTIFIED BY AN AUTHORIZED FEDERAL, STATE, OR COUNTY OFFICER AS BEING NOXIOUS WEED SEED FREE. THIS CERTIFICATION SHALL BE ATTACHED TO EACH BALE FOR BALED FEED. OTHER PELLETIZED FEED OR GRAIN MUST MEET CURRENT CERTIFICATION STANDARDS IN MONTANA FOR WEED SEED FREE FEED.**

THE AREA TO BE RESTRICTED IS DESCRIBED AS:

***Scapegoat Wilderness:*** The Scapegoat Wilderness on the Helena National Forest in Townships 15N, 16N, and 17N; Ranges 8W, 9W, and 10W, PMM. Maps of this area are available on request from the Lincoln Ranger District or the Helena National Forest Supervisors Office.

This order is effective July 1, 1994.

Done at Helena, Montana this \_\_\_\_th day of June, 1993.

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ERNEST R. NUNN  
Forest Supervisor  
Helena National Forest

Violations of this prohibition are punishable by a fine of not more than \$5,000.00 or imprisonment for not more than 6 months or both.

16USC551  
18USC3571

ORDER  
USE OF WEED FREE FORAGE, HAY, AND STRAW  
LOLO NATIONAL FOREST

Pursuant to 36 CFR Sections 261.50 (a) and 261.58 (t), to prevent the spread of weeds within the Lolo National Forest:

**ALL HAY AND STRAW BROUGHT ONTO THE LOLO NATIONAL FOREST IN THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED AREA SHALL BE CERTIFIED BY AN AUTHORIZED FEDERAL, STATE, OR COUNTY OFFICER AS BEING NOXIOUS WEED SEED FREE. THIS CERTIFICATION SHALL BE ATTACHED TO EACH BALE FOR BALED FEED. OTHER PELLETIZED FEED OR GRAIN MUST MEET CURRENT CERTIFICATION STANDARDS IN MONTANA FOR WEED SEED FREE FEED.**

THE AREA TO BE RESTRICTED IS DESCRIBED AS:

***Scapegoat Wilderness:*** The portion of the Scapegoat Wilderness on the Lolo National Forest in Townships 16N, 17N, and 18N; Ranges 9W, 10W, 11W, and 12W, PMM. Maps of this area are available on request from the Seeley Lake Ranger District or from the Lolo National Forest Supervisors Office.

This order is effective July 1, 1994.

Done at Missoula, Montana this \_\_\_\_th day of June, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_  
ORVILLE L. DANIELS  
Forest Supervisor  
Lolo National Forest

Violations of this prohibition are punishable by a fine of not more than \$5,000.00 or imprisonment for not more than 6 months or both.

16USC551  
18USC3571



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Helena National Forest  
2880 Skyway Drive  
Helena, MT 59601

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Reply to: 1920/2030

Date: May 24, 1993

Dear Forest Plan Participant:

Thank you for your continuing interest in the management of the Helena National Forest and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC). As you probably know, the BMWC is managed by the Helena, Flathead, Lewis and Clark, and Lolo National Forests.

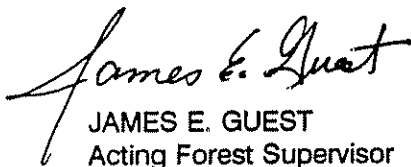
Since 1986, the Forests have requested comments on weed management from over 1,200 individuals and groups. Each Forest has also done at least one Environmental Impact Statement on their weed management programs. Three recurrent issues have come up. They are:

1. What are the potential impacts of weeds on forest resources?
2. What are the potential impacts of weed control methods on forest resources?
3. How will weed management methods affect human health?

We recently reviewed how the Forest Plans addressed wilderness weed management. Based on that review, each Forest Supervisor signed a decision to update their Forest Plan standard. The new standard will better enable wilderness managers to comply with the Wilderness Act by using an integrated pest management approach to weed management. The present standard limits managers by emphasizing the control of weeds after they establish. The amended standard will enable us to more effectively prevent the establishment and spread of weeds through the use of weed free feeds. I believe that preventing weeds is more ecologically sound than treating them after they establish. To ensure consistency, the wording of this standard will be identical for each Forest.

I've attached a copy of the decision for your review. Please feel free to contact Charlie Hester, Lincoln Ranger District, at 362-4265 if you have any questions. Thanks again for your interest.

Sincerely,

  
JAMES E. GUEST  
Acting Forest Supervisor

Enclosure



## DECISION MEMO

Nonsignificant Forest Plan Amendment  
for  
Implementation of an Integrated Pest Management Approach to Weed Management  
in  
The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 17  
HELENA NATIONAL FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 6  
LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 11  
LOLO NATIONAL FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 17

April, 1993

### *I. Summary*

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC) includes the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wildernesses. The complex lies within the Flathead, Helena, Lewis and Clark, and Lolo National Forests. Each of these four respective Forest Plans include identical language regarding noxious weeds and livestock feed in the wilderness.

This Forest Plan amendment responds to rising public concern about the establishment and spread of noxious weeds in the wilderness by replacing the existing Standard common to all four Forests Plans with a Standard that reads:

"Managers shall inform wilderness users of the noxious weed problem and will use an Integrated Pest Management approach to prevent, control, or eradicate noxious weeds in the wilderness."

The present standard reads:

"Managers will inform persons using stock in the wilderness of the noxious weed problem. When supplemental feed is required, encourage the use of weed-free hay and pellets. Wilderness manager-public contacts should emphasize the relationship between overused, disturbed sites and noxious weed establishment. Stock users will be encouraged to use weed-free hay, but certification will not be mandatory."

The present standard limits each Forest to the control of weeds after they have become established. The new Integrated Pest Management (IPM) standard will allow each Forest to more effectively prevent the establishment of weeds in the BMWC. Initial implementation of this management strategy will begin with each Forest issuing an Order requiring weed seed free feed (WSFF) in the BMWC. This Order is categorically excluded from further documentation under FSM 1909.15 Chapter 31.1b item #1. This requirement will be phased in to give the public time to adjust and to ensure that an adequate supply of WSFF is available. Both the public and scientific community will be asked for recommendations on other integrated pest management methods to prevent the establishment and spread of weeds.

### *II. Reasons for this Decision*

The Wilderness Act (P.L. 88-577) defines wilderness in part as an area "where the earth and community of life are untrammelled by man." Although wilderness may be viewed as those areas that are "left alone", human impacts have challenged the ability of the Forest Service to comply with the Wilderness Act. The



the Lewis and Clark Forest mailed out 94 letters asking for comment on their weed management program. The Forest received 18 responses. In November, 1987, the Lolo Forest sent out over 1000 letters asking for comment on weed management on the Forest. Sixty-two responses were received. On January 5, 1990, the Lolo Forest sent out another 950 letters asking for comment. Thirty-six responses were received. Since that time the Lolo Forest has mailed out another 250 letters asking for comment on specific weed control projects. On February 1, 1991, the Flathead Forest sent out requests to 186 individuals and groups asking for public comment on weeds in the wilderness. The Forest received 30 responses. On February 28, 1992, the Flathead Forest sent out another 60 letters to interested groups and individuals asking for additional public comments on weeds in the wilderness. The Forest received 3 responses. On January 29, 1993, the Flathead asked for public comment on their second Weed Management EIS. They received 13 responses.

Public comments revealed widespread concern about the noxious weed problem and supported an emphasis on prevention in order to minimize the need for direct control measures. Particular concern was expressed over the establishment and spread of weeds in the wilderness. Additional concern was expressed about preventing the transport of weed seed in livestock feeds. Biological controls were also generally viewed as an acceptable long term weed management approach.

#### IV. Contact Person

The contact person for additional information on this amendment is Robert Meuchel, Program Officer for Planning, Lolo National Forest, Building 24, Fort Missoula, Missoula, MT 59801.

#### V. Appeal Rights

This decision may be implemented 7 days after publication in the *Missoulian*, the *Great Falls Tribune*, the *Helena Independent Record*, and the *Daily Interlake*. Forest Plan amendments are subject to appeal under 36 CFR 217.3(b)(1). The 45-day appeal period will begin immediately after publication of this notice in these newspapers. Appellants must file two copies of a Notice of Appeal with the Regional Forester, 200 East Broadway, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, MT 59807, Notices of Appeal must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 217.9.

  
JOEL D. HOLTROP  
Flathead National Forest Supervisor

5/11/93  
Date

  
ERNEST R. NUNN  
Helena National Forest Supervisor

5/11/93  
Date

  
JOHN GORMAN  
Lewis and Clark National Forest Supervisor

5/11/93  
Date

  
ORVILLE L. DANIELS  
Lolo National Forest Supervisor

5/11/93  
Date

Acting

HELENA NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

AMENDMENT #7

JUNE 17, 1993

This site specific amendment excepts the Miller Mountain hard rock mineral exploration project area from Forest Plan standards for open road density and hiding cover (Big game standards 3 and 4, Helena Forest Plan, p. II/17). This amendment also excepts the project area from the Visual Quality Management Standard of partial retention for lands in the project area that are within a W-2 management area allocation (Helena Forest Plan, p. III/53). The change is needed because the current phase of this exploration project is for continued drilling and road construction to outline the mineral resources. Mineral exploration activity is consistent with Forest-wide direction for locatable minerals (Helena Forest Plan, p.II/27) and is a recognized use and activity within the management area direction for National Forest lands in the project area (Helena Forest Plan, p. III/54. From the exploration information developed through this activity, a future decision may be made whether or not to develop a mine. During these phases of project activity, the Forest Plan standards for open road density and hiding cover, and visual quality cannot be met.

The following information describes the location and acres of the area to be excepted from meeting the identified Forest Plan standards. Location maps are attached. Detailed maps and descriptions are on file in the Land Management Planning Office, Helena National Forest Supervisors' Office in Helena and the Townsend Ranger District Office.

DISTRICT	PROJECT NAME	ACRES EXCLUDED FROM MEETING FOREST PLAN STANDARD FOR OPEN ROAD DENSITY AND HIDING COVER	ACRES EXCLUDED FROM MEETING FOREST PLAN STANDARD FOR VISUAL QUALITY
Townsend	Miller Mountain Exploration Plan of Operations	Approximately 590 acres; T10N, R3E, Sec. 12, 13; T10N, R4E, Sec. 18,19	Approximately 225 acres (within same area)

\*\*\*\*\*END OF AMENDMENT\*\*\*\*\*



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Helena National Forest  
2880 Skyway Drive  
Helena, MT 59601

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Reply to: 1920

Date: June 23, 1993

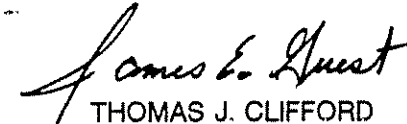
Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for Pegasus Gold Corporations' 1993 Miller Mountain Plan of Operations and the associated site specific Helena Forest Plan Amendment #7. A copy of Forest Plan Amendment #7 is also enclosed. This amendment has been determined to be a nonsignificant amendment. Under National Forest Management Act regulations, Forest Supervisors must determine if Forest Plan amendments are significant or nonsignificant.

The Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact was signed on June 17 and a notice announcing the decision was published in the legal notice section of the Helena Independent Record on June 20, 1993.

If you have any questions about these decisions or would like additional information, please contact Dennis Heffner at (406) 449-5201 or George Weldon at (406) 266-3425. Thank you for your continued interest in the Helena National Forest.

Sincerely,

  
THOMAS J. CLIFFORD  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures (2)

cc: George Weldon, Townsend Ranger District



**DECISION NOTICE  
and  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**FOR**

**PEGASUS GOLD CORPORATION'S  
PLAN OF OPERATION AND RECLAMATION  
FOR THE MILLER MOUNTAIN PROJECT**

USDA Forest Service  
Helena National Forest  
Townsend Ranger District

Broadwater and Meagher Counties, Montana

## I. INTRODUCTION

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the Miller Mountain exploration Plan of Operations submitted by Pegasus Gold Corporation on January 12, 1993 with changes on April 23 and May 6, 1993. The proposed activities include drilling 79 holes and constructing approximately 12,500 feet of new access road. Approximately 8600 feet of road and 66 drill pads from prior exploration activity will be reclaimed in 1993. Some additional drilling and road construction would occur on adjacent private land, however the predominant amount of activity, including the reclamation, is on National Forest lands. Pegasus' proposed activities are located in T10N, R2E, Sections 12, 13, 23 and 24; and in T10N, R3E, Sections 18 and 19, approximately 25 miles northeast of Townsend, Montana in the Confederate Gulch area.

In a connected action, I propose to make a site specific amendment to the Helena Forest Plan to except the project area from meeting Helena Forest Plan standards for open road density and hiding cover (Helena Forest Plan standards for big game, #3 and 4, p. II/17-18), and the visual quality standard of partial retention in the W-2 management area portion of the project area (Helena Forest Plan visual standard for management area W-2, p. III/53). The Planning regulations and Forest Service policy permits Forest Plan amendments resulting from analyses conducted during Forest Plan implementation (36 CFR 219.10(f) and FSM 1922.5). The need for excepting the project area from these standards through a Forest Plan amendment was determined through site specific project analysis and associated ground inspection by analysis team members.

The open road density standard for the elk herd unit in this area is 0.1 miles per square mile where available hiding cover is 30% or less (Helena Forest Plan p. II/18). The existing road density in the specific project area is approximately 14 miles of road per square mile due to recent and past mineral exploration activities. Approximately 8 miles of these roads are open during general rifle season. The hiding cover in the herd unit averages about 19%, primarily due to inherent topography and vegetation.

Approximately 225 acres of the project area has a management allocation of W-2. Visual quality standards for this management area is partial retention. The "partial retention" objective for visual quality provides for management activities that remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. Exploration road construction in the area precludes meeting the visual quality standards.

The area considered for the amendment is outlined in Figure 2 of the EA and includes approximately 590 acres.

## II. Issues, Concerns and Public Involvement

Public comments for the proposed project were solicited through a media release in weekly and daily newspapers, in newsletters and through letters to interested public groups. The letters to public groups were sent and articles published in newspapers the weeks of January 28th and February 1st, 1993. In addition, copies of the Plan of Operation were circulated among resources personnel of the Helena National Forest and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MDFWP). Comments received from the public are on file and available for review at the Townsend Ranger District.

From the public, a total of 2 written comments were received. An interdisciplinary team composed of Forest Service resources specialists reviewed the public and agency comments. Two issues were identified that led to the development of three alternatives. The issues identified were:

*Issue-Open road density<sup>1</sup> and hiding cover<sup>2</sup> in the Confederate elk herd unit are outside of Forest Plan standards for these parameters and the exploration proposal leads to additional new roads. Although most of the new road would be closed, about 3,000 feet would be open.*

<sup>1</sup>Open road density is the number of miles of road open during hunting season per square mile of area.

<sup>2</sup>Hiding cover is that type of vegetation which conceals 90% or more of a standing elk at 200 feet (Helena Forest Plan, p II-18).

*Issue-Visual quality standards for the W-2 management area portion of the project are for partial retention<sup>3</sup>. The amount of roads constructed in the W-2 area precludes the project from meeting the visual standards.*

<sup>3</sup>Partial retention for visual management is described where management activities remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

Other comments and concerns were evaluated but did not lead to the development of an alternative.

### **III. Alternatives**

Three alternatives were given detailed consideration in the analysis. These alternatives and their relative consideration of the exploration project and Forest Plan amendment are:

#### **Alternative 1: No Action**

No new road construction or drilling would occur on National Forest lands. Potential mineral deposits would not be identified and quantified. Elk security acres would remain unchanged. Open road density would remain unchanged. The landscape would continue to appear altered by management activities. The project area would not be excluded from meeting Forest Plan standards for open road density, hiding cover, and visual quality and a Forest Plan amendment would not be made.

#### **Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

Pegasus would conduct exploration activities in the project area after the spring calving period. They would conduct the reclamation for 1993 as outlined in the 1992 Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for Miller Mountain Exploration Activities (Helena National Forest, June 3, 1992). The project area would be outside of Forest Plan standards for open road density and hiding cover, and visual quality in management area W-2. A Forest Plan amendment excepting the area from meeting these standards would not be done.

#### **Alternative 3: Modified Proposal and Forest Plan Amendment**

This alternative addresses the issues of elk security as measured by hiding cover and open road density, and meeting visual quality standards. Pegasus would conduct their activities with mitigation identified to address elk security and visual quality issues. A Forest Plan amendment would also be written to exclude the area from hiding cover and open road density standards and visual quality standards.

### **IV. Decision**

Based on the analysis documented in the EA, it is my decision to select Alternative 3 - Modified proposed action and Forest Plan amendment. The decision is to approve the construction of 12,500 feet of new road and 79 drill sites with mitigation as outlined in Appendix A of the EA, and to approve a site specific Forest Plan amendment to except 590 acres of the project area from meeting Helena Forest Plan standards for road density and hiding cover, and approximately 225 acres of W-2 Management Area allocation within the project area from meeting the Management Area standard for visual quality. This action is described and analyzed in the EA that was prepared for this proposal. The EA and analysis are filed and available for public review at the Townsend Ranger District. With selection of this alternative it also continues the actions identified in the Decision Notice for Miller Mountain dated June 3, 1992.

## V. Rationale for Decision

I have selected Alternative 3 based on the following:

Alternative 3 allows for exploration activities in the project area while also implementing measures to reduce current open road density in the Confederate elk herd unit. These measures include:

- a. road closures in areas of new road construction
- b. implementing new closure methods in Jimmys Gulch area closure adjacent to the Miller Mountain
- c. incorporating the reclamation schedule established in the 1992 Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for Miller Mountain Exploration

In addition, I have determined that the Forest Plan amendment providing for exclusion of the project area from meeting Forest Plan standards for road density, hiding cover and visual quality is not significant since it involves a relatively small area and will not alter the multiple use goals and objectives for long term land and resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement. It should be noted that this Forest Plan amendment is for this specific project only and is being made to provide for implementing the Forest Plan Management area direction for minerals. One of my primary considerations for deciding to amend the Forest Plan was that for the hunting district that contains the Confederate elk herd unit, the harvest levels for bulls for the first week of the season were meeting the objective stated in the Forest plan. For visual quality, timely and effective reclamation will move this project area closer to the Visual quality objectives as stated in the Helena Forest Plan in the long run.

## VI. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I considered the following factors and information developed during the analysis before reaching my determination that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not needed:

### (a) Context.

The setting of the proposal and associated disturbance is the Miller Mountain area of the Confederate elk herd unit. The Confederate elk herd unit was defined as the area that the proposal would influence with respect to the big game resource. The action proposed is a continuation of mineral exploration activities conducted since 1984 and is an activity which is a recognized use within the Forest Plan Management Areas involved. The cumulative effects of past management, combined with the current proposal, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are displayed in Chapter 4 of the EA. The existing conditions described in Chapter 3 are the conditions resulting from historical mining activity and the past 8 years of management activities. The selected alternative is consistent with the management direction, standards and guidelines outlined in the Helena Forest Plan (USDA, 1986) with the exception of not meeting hiding cover and open road density standards within the Confederate elk herd unit, and exceeding visual quality objectives as identified in Management Area W-2. However, adoption of an amendment for this project to implement Forest Plan direction for minerals exploration and development will not significantly change the Forest wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement, and it will not alter the multiple use goals and objectives for long term land and resource management.

**(b) Intensity.**

**1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.**

Impacts associated with the alternatives are discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 of the EA. These impacts are within the range of those identified in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (USDA Forest Service, 1986). The actions would not have significant impacts on other resources identified and described in Chapter 3 of the EA. Impacts from the selected alternative are not unique to this project, previous projects have had similar activities and non-significant effects.

I conclude that the beneficial and adverse effects of the selected alternative are not significant in the context of proposed and cumulative effects.

**2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.**

Public health and safety was not identified as an issue during the scoping process. However, during implementation of Alternative 3, Pegasus is required to abide by public health and safety requirements of the State of Montana. Also, upon request by a Forest Officer, Pegasus would be required to implement any appropriate public safety practices deemed necessary.

Based upon this information, and mitigation measures, I have concluded that the selected alternative does not constitute a threat to public health or safety. The project does not involve National Defense or Security.

**3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area.**

Field reviews conducted for this analysis identified no impacts to any unique geographic areas. None of the alternatives enter any roadless areas and do not impact any wetlands, farmlands or floodplains. A cultural resource inventory has been completed for the project area and no sites will be affected by the selected alternative. I conclude that there will be no significant effects on unique resource characteristics.

**4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.**

This EA is tiered to the Helena Forest Plan EIS. Forestwide effects of the Forest Plan's standards were disclosed in that EIS. All action alternatives considered in the EA meet Forest Plan standards with the exception of the standards for open road density and hiding cover in the Confederate elk herd unit and the visual quality standards in Management Area W-2 in the project area. Within the herd unit, the open road density and hiding cover standards would only be attainable if there were almost no roads in the area due to the inherent openness of the terrain. Alternative 3 provides for the most reasonable reduction in open road density and increase in elk security acres of the three alternatives analyzed. Alternative 3 will not affect existing elk security areas because the new roads that travers near identified security areas will be unavailable for public use. Visual quality in the project area is altered by the exploration activities that have occurred. Reclamation bonding and standards provide for restoration of much of the disturbance. Visual quality effects are considered relatively short term as reclamation proceeds and vegetation becomes reestablished.

There has been no information presented as a result of scoping efforts and interagency communications to indicate controversial results from the analyses conducted. Therefore, I conclude that that the environmental effects associated with this action will not be highly controversial.

**5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.**



Responsible mineral exploration has occurred on the Helena National Forest and other forest lands for more than 10 years. Pegasus' proposal involves accepted mineral exploration practices and mitigation requirements. Thus, I conclude that the effects of the proposed action are not uncertain nor involve unique or unknown risks.

**6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.**

Actions similar to the proposed project have occurred within the same area since 1984. Effects of these activities are localized and relatively short-term in nature. The new roads identified for this proposal are temporary and are bonded for reclamation. They will not become Forest system roads. In the event that mine development and mining is planned, a new, extensive environmental analysis would be initiated by the Forest Service and the State of Montana.

**7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant impacts.**

Chapter 4 of the EA discusses the combined effects of the project with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Based on the discussion in the EA, I've concluded that there are no cumulatively significant impacts.

**8. The degree to which the action may affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.**

A cultural resource inventory was done on the project area and no sites were identified within the proposed disturbance area. Numerous cultural resources field reviews have been conducted in the area for previous proposals. All cultural resources identified have been avoided during operations.

Based upon this information, and concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Officer, I conclude this action will not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historic resources.

**9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.**

A biological evaluation was conducted and it was concluded that the proposed action would have no effect on threatened, endangered or sensitive animals and no effect on sensitive species of plants (Ondov, 1992; Ondov and Lavell, 1992; Lavell, 1993).

**10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.**

As stated in the Introduction, above, this project is consistent with Forest Plan management standards with the exception of the standards for hiding cover, open road density and visual quality. The selected alternative excepting the Forest Plan standards for road density, hiding cover and visual quality is not a significant Forest Plan amendment. The site specific Forest Plan amendment involves a relatively small area and will not alter the multiple use goals and objectives for long term land and resource management. Scoping activities and the environmental analysis completed for this proposal did not identify any actions or effects that would threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements. Thus, I conclude that this project is in compliance with statutes imposed for the protection of the environment.

## Finding

Based upon the analysis disclosed in the Miller Mountain Project EA, and my evaluation of the factors described in 40 CFR 1508.27, I find that this is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed.

## VII. MITIGATION

Practices that apply to the selected alternative to protect resources or mitigate effects of road construction on elk security are listed in Chapter 2 and Appendix A of the EA. These include road and drill pad reclamation, seasonal and year around road closures, best management practices, noxious weed control, timing of activities and protection of archaeological resources.

## VIII. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

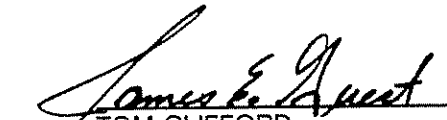
Inspections will be conducted by the minerals administrator while drilling and construction are ongoing. Regular inspections of revegetation success, weed infestations, project area fences, traffic activity and the overall mineral exploration operation will be conducted and evaluated.

## IX. CONSULTATION WITH OTHERS

The results of this analysis have been discussed with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and with the Hard Rock Bureau of the Montana Department of State lands.

## X. APPEAL RIGHTS

If you have concerns about this decision, please contact me so that I may hear and discuss those concerns with you. For additional information regarding this decision or the Forest Service appeals process, contact George A. Weldon, Townsend Ranger District, Box 29, Townsend, MT 59644 or telephone (406) 266-3425. This decision may be implemented 7 days after public notification and is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217 or 36 CFR 251 within 45 days from the date of initial publication of this decision in the newspaper. Any appeal must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 or 36 CFR 251.90, Content of Notice of Appeal, including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with Dave Jolly, Regional Forester, Federal Building, 200 East Broadway, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, Mt. 59807.

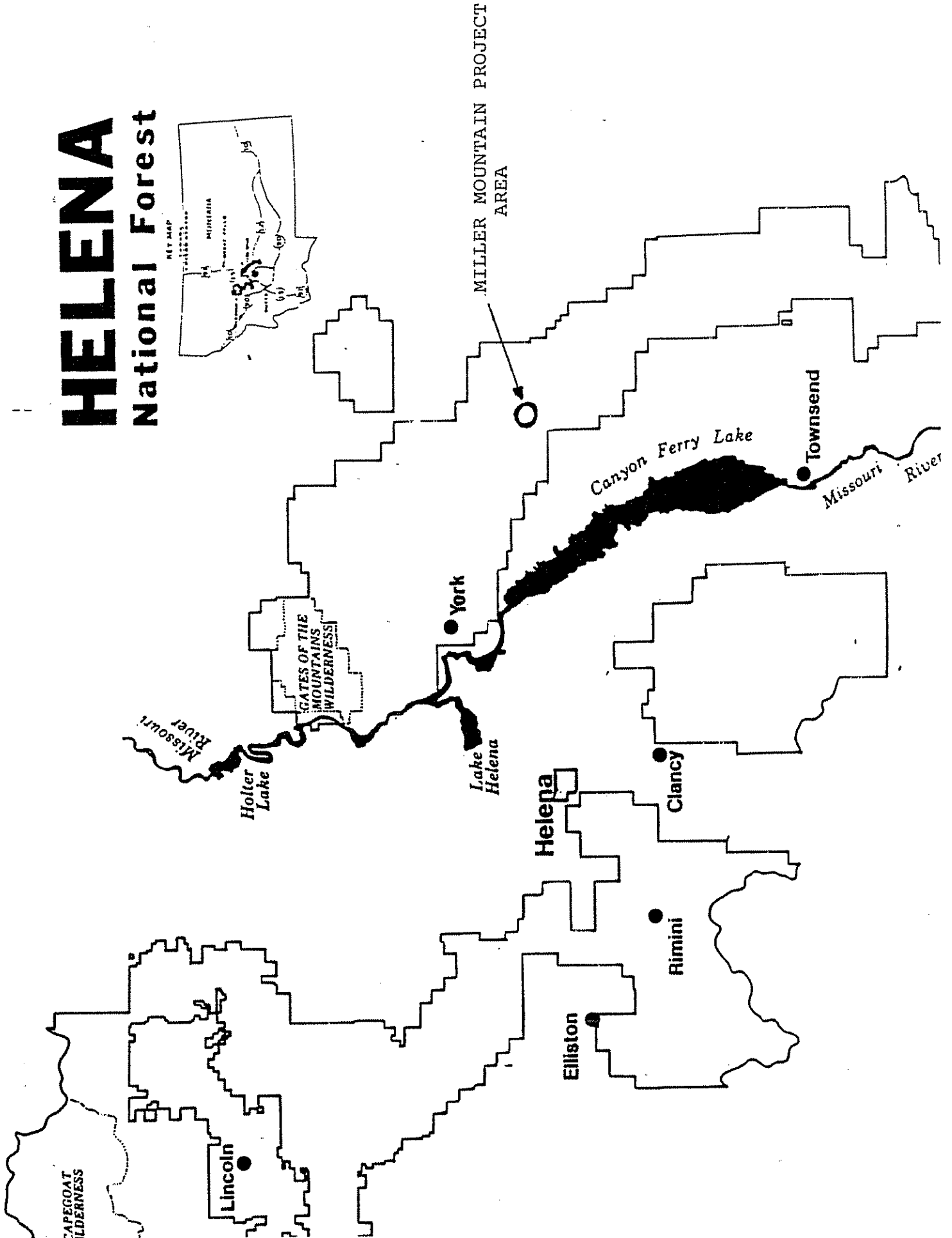
  
TOM CLIFFORD  
Forest Supervisor

  
DATE

VICINITY MAP

# HELENA

National Forest





HELENA NATIONAL FOREST  
 LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN  
 AMENDMENT NO. 8  
 AUGUST 13, 1993

This amendment changes the Management Area (MA) designation for approximately 120 acres of National Forest system land in the Gipsy Creek drainage ( E 1/2 Sec 32 and W 1/2 Sec 33, T8N, R4E ).

The following information describes the location and acres of the changed Management Area allocation. A location map is attached.

Detailed maps and descriptions are on file in the Land Management Planning Office, Helena National Forest Supervisor's Office in Helena, and the Townsend Ranger District Office.

DISTRICT	PROJECT NAME	FROM		TO	
		MA	ACRES	MA	ACRES
Townsend	Gipsy Creek	L-1	20	W-2	20
		T-1	100	W-2	100

\*\*\*END OF AMENDMENT\*\*\*

**Decision Notice  
and  
Finding of No Significant Impact**

For

**Amendment No. 8  
to the  
Helena National Forest Plan**

USDA Forest Service  
Helena National Forest  
Townsend Ranger District

Meagher and Broadwater Counties, Montana

**Proposed Action**

The Helena National Forest proposes to amend the Forest Plan to change the Management Area (MA) designation on approximately 120 acres of land which is currently designated as MA T-1 and L-1 (approximately 100 acres and 20 acres respectively). This proposed change is in response to newly identified site specific information generated through environmental analysis completed for the Kissing Gypsy Timber Sale Environmental Assessment, which was not available during the Forest Planning process.

The amendment would reassign the area of approximately 120 acres to a W-2 management allocation.

**I. Background**

When reviewing Management Area suitability in the Kissing Gypsy project area (Kissing Gypsy EA, 1992), the interdisciplinary team found that in one instance, on-the-ground conditions did not fit with the management area goals as identified in the 1986 Helena National Forest Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan, Pages III/30-33).

The need for change was found through site specific project analysis and associated ground inspection by Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) members and visual inspection of the Forest Plan map by Helena Forest personnel. As a result of environmental analysis for the Kissing Gypsy project it was found that an area of approximately 120 acres within the project boundary did not match the physical conditions described in the Forest Plan data base. Through site specific analysis it was found that the 120 acre area contains an aggregation of riparian areas which form a mosaic of extremely wet and moist sites as well as several well defined stream channels. Due to the combination of riparian conditions, steeper slopes, and broken topography we have determined that the area is not suitable for intensive timber or livestock management. The area does have the physical characteristics and biological components that fit well with the W-2 Management Area goals and objectives.

**II Helena National Forest Plan**

e National Forest land within the Helena National Forest has been divided into 23 Management Areas, each with different management goals, resource potential, and limitations (Forest Plan, pages III/1 and III/2). The three management areas that would be affected by this change are Management Areas T-1, L-1, and W-2:

-The goal for Management Area T-1 is to emphasize cost effective timber production, provide healthy timber stands and optimize timber growing potential, maintain water quality and stream bank stability, and protect soil stability (Forest Plan, page III/30).

-The goal for Management Area L-1 is to optimize livestock production through intensive grazing systems, while maintaining other resource uses (Forest Plan, page III/11).

-The goal for Management Area W-2 is to maintain or enhance spring, summer, and fall habitat characteristics for big game species; provide habitat diversity for non-game wildlife species; and provide forage for both big game and livestock. Generally W-2 areas consist of "riparian and other lands that have forage, resting, and security characteristics and provide important spring, summer, and fall requirements for all big game species. Range allotments are in parts of the area" (Forest Plan, page III/53).

## **. Alternatives**

1. No action - make no changes in Management Area allocation.
2. Change Management Area allocation as proposed.
3. Delay any change in Management Area allocation until Forest Plan revision.
4. Leave Management Area allocation as it is and implement timber harvest activity on the site.

## **Environmental Consequences**

There are no environmental consequences as a result of implementing Alternatives 1-3 as no activities are being proposed in the 120 acre area under consideration.

Alternative 4 was examined in the Kissing Gypsy EA and was found to be an infeasible alternative as the interdisciplinary team specialist determined that the area could not be harvested in compliance with existing state and federal laws.

## **. Decision - Forest Plan Amendment**

As my decision to amend the Helena Forest Plan at this time to reallocate 120 acres from Management Areas T-1 (10 acres) and L-1 (20 acres) to Management Area W-2.

The 120 acres will be changed to Management Area W-2 so that identified resource values can be better managed. (see attached map)

## **II. MA Non-significant Amendment**

I have determined that this amendment does not result in a significant change to the Helena National Forest Plan. The determination that this is a non-significant amendment is made in accordance with the requirements of 16 U.S.C. 1640(f), 36 CFR 219.10(e) and (f), 36 CFR 219.12(k), and Forest Service Manual 1920. Actions under this amendment will not significantly change the multiple-use goals or objectives for long-term land and resource management nor significantly change the planned annual outputs for the Forest.

## **III. Finding of No Significant Impact**

I have determined that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. There are no physical or biological effects.
2. There are no effects on public health and safety.
3. There are no effects on any unique characteristics of the area.
4. There are no effects that are highly controversial.
5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain, or involve unique or unknown risks.
6. There are no actions which establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.
7. There are no significant cumulative effects.
8. There are no effects on inventoried cultural resource sites.
9. There are no effects on threatened or endangered species or their habitats.
10. The proposed action complies with all Federal, State, and local laws and requirements for the protection of the environment.

## **X. Appeal Rights**

This decision may be implemented 7 days after the Legal Notice announcing this decision is published in the Helena Independent Record. Forest Plan amendments are subject to appeal under 36 CFR 217. The 45 day appeal period will begin upon initial publication of the Legal Notice in the Independent Record. Appellants must file two copies of a Notice of Appeal with the Regional Forester, 200 East Broadway, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, Mt. 59807. It is the responsibility of those who appeal a decision to provide the reviewing officer sufficient narrative evidence and



ument to show why the decision should be changed or reversed. Any appeal must meet the requirements of 36  
R 217.9.

**Contact Person**

ditional information may be obtained from:

ry Adelblue, Team LeaderGeorge Weldon  
nd Management PlanningDistrict Ranger  
lena National ForestTownsend Ranger District  
30 Skyway Drive415 S.Front, Box 29  
lena, Mt. 59601Townsend, Mt. 59644

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omas J. CLIFFORDDate  
rest Supervisor

HELENA NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

AMENDMENT NO. 9

AUGUST 13, 1993

This amendment modifies a Management Area boundary mapped during the Forest Plan process. The change is needed to assign appropriate management direction and Forest Plan standards for approximately 40 acres of National Forest system land in McQuithy Gulch ( NW 1/4 Sec 15, T12N, R7W).

The following information describes the location and acres of the changed Management Area allocation. A location map is attached.

Detailed maps and descriptions are on file in the Land Management Planning Office, Helena National Forest Supervisor's Office in Helena, and the Helena Ranger District Office.

DISTRICT	PROJECT NAME	FROM		TO	
		MA	ACRES	MA	ACRES
Helena	McQuithy	M-1	40	T-1	40

\*\*\*END OF AMENDMENT\*\*\*

## Forest Plan Amendment No. 9

### Nonsignificant Amendment to the Helena National Forest Plan

USDA Forest Service  
Helena National Forest

**Decision:** It is my decision to amend the Helena National Forest Plan to make a Management Area boundary adjustment involving 40 acres in McQuithy Gulch ( NW 1/4 Sec 15, T12n, R7W). This amendment is based on site specific information developed during project planning. The amendment changes the Management Area allocation for the 40 acres from an M-1 to a T-1 designation.

**Rationale for the Decision:** Forest Service policy permits Forest Plan amendments resulting from analysis conducted during Forest Plan implementation (36 CFR 219.10(f) and FSM 1922.5). The need for change was found through site specific field inspections and evaluations by IDT specialists. The existing Management Area boundary splits an 80 acre stand of 28 year old timber into two different Forest Plan allocations. The upper and lower portions of the stand are within the suitable timber base with a T-1 Management Area allocation, while the central portion (40 acres) of the stand is outside of the suitable timber base with an M-1 Management Area allocation. The 40 acres of M-1 allocation are identical to the remaining portion of the stand and are suitable for timber management. The information gathered from on-the-ground reconnaissance of the area indicates that adjusting the management area boundary to incorporate the entire stand within the T-1 Management Area allocation will allow for stocking reduction treatments to reduce competition both within tree canopies and in the root zones. I believe the Management Area boundary adjustment will provide for more appropriate and efficient management of the entire stand, based on more detailed site condition information than was available during the original Forest Planning process.

**Nonsignificant NFMA Amendment:** I have determined the proposed change is not a significant Forest Plan amendment since the decision will not alter the Forest multiple use goals and objectives for long term land and resource management. Through this decision the acreage change in Management Area allocations is minor and adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest-wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

**Implementation:** This decision may be implemented 7 days after the Legal Notice announcing this decision is published in the Helena Independent Record.

**Administrative Appeal:** Forest Plan amendments are subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. The 45 day appeal period will begin upon initial publication of the Legal Notice in the Helena Independent Record. Appellants must

≥ two copies of a Notice of Appeal with the Regional Forester, 200 East Broadway, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, Mt. 807. It is the responsibility of those who appeal a decision to provide the reviewing officer sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why the decision should be changed or reversed. Any appeal must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 217.9.

**ontact Person:**

ditional information may be obtained from:

ry Adelblue, Team Leader  
Dennis Hart  
nd Management Planning  
District Ranger  
Helena National Forest  
Helena Ranger District  
30 Skyway Drive  
2001 Poplar Street  
Helena, Mt. 59601  
Helena, MT. 59601

---

Thomas J. Clifford  
Date  
est Supervisor

**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST**  
**LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
**AMENDMENT NO. 10**

July, 1995

This amendment identifies several language changes in management area direction within the Elkhorn Mountains based on information developed during site specific analysis efforts.

The specific changes are listed below.

On page III/81, delete the paragraph under the Recreation standards section for Management Area Elkhorn-1 and replace it with the following:

- Motorized dispersed recreation activities are limited to designated routes and/or areas.

On page III/83, delete the first paragraph under the Facilities standards section for Management Area Elkhorn-1 and replace it with the following:

- The public lands in the Elkhorn Mountains are administered under an area closure. Motorized vehicle use is limited to designated routes and/or designated areas. Timing limitations identifying the permitted season of use or daily time of use may also be specified for individual designated routes or areas.

On page III/86, delete the statement "(See Elkhorn Travel Management Direction, Figure III-1.)" from the first paragraph under the Facilities standards section for Management Area Elkhorn-2.

On page III/87, delete the second paragraph under the Recreation standards section for Management Area Elkhorn-3 and replace it with the following:

- Motorized dispersed recreation activities are limited to designated routes and/or areas.

On page III/89, delete the first paragraph under the Facilities standards section for Management Area Elkhorn-3 and replace it with the following:

- The public lands in the Elkhorn Mountains are administered under an area closure. Motorized vehicle use is limited to designated routes and/or designated areas. Timing limitations identifying the permitted season of use or daily time of use may also be specified for individual designated routes or areas.

On page III/92, under the Facilities standards section for Management Area Elkhorn-4 add the following:

- The public lands in the Elkhorn Mountains are administered under an area closure. Motorized vehicle use is limited to designated routes and/or designated areas. Timing limitations identifying the permitted season of use or daily time of use may also be specified

for individual designated routes or areas.

Page III/93, Figure III-1, delete the entire page. The Forest Visitor Map will be used to display the travel management program for the Elkhorn Mountains, as it is for the remainder of the Forest. (see Forest Plan page II/17, item 4 paragraph 2)

**\*\*\* End of Amendment \*\*\***

**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST**  
**LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
**AMENDMENT NO. 11**

July, 1995

This amendment identifies an exception to the Forest Plan open road density standards for the Sheep Creek and Kimber Gulch elk herds based on information developed during site specific analysis efforts.

The specific Forest Plan amendment language follows and is to be added at the end of section 4.a. on Forest Plan Page 11/18.

Based on more detailed site specific analysis, exceptions to the open road density limits listed above have been identified.

Within the Elkhorn Mountain Sheep Creek elk herd unit, roads will be managed during the general big game hunting season to maintain an open road density of no more than 0.23 mi/mi<sup>2</sup>.

Within the Elkhorn Mountain Kimber Gulch elk herd unit, roads will be managed during the general big game hunting season to maintain an open road density of no more than 0.22 mi/mi<sup>2</sup>.

**\*\*\* End of Amendment \*\*\***

**Forest Plan Amendment No. 12**

Nonsignificant Amendment to the Helena National Forest Plan

USDA Forest Service

Helena National Forest

**January 1996**

Decision: It is my decision to amend the Helena National Forest Plan to delete Kingsberry Gulch as a proposed Research Natural Area (Forest Plan, pg. 11/9) and to add Indian Meadows and Cabin Gulch as new proposed RNA's. This amendment is based on site specific information developed during ground truthing of all three of these areas. It is also based on the Helena National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing analysis (Chapters 3 and 4) and Record of Decision. The amendment changes the Kingsberry Gulch allocation from an N-1 to a M-1 designation. It also changes the Cabin Gulch area of M-1 and L-2 Management Areas to N-1 Management Area. The Indian Meadows area is changed from R-1 MA to an N-1 MA. (An additional 230 acres of this proposed Research Natural Area extends into the Scapegoat Wilderness. The management area designation for this portion of the proposed Indian Meadows Research Natural Area does not change from the existing P-1 designation.)

**Rationale for the Decision:** Forest Service policy permits Forest Plan amendments resulting from analysis conducted during Forest Plan implementation (36 CFR 219.10(f) and FSM 1922.5). The need for change was determined through site specific field inspections and evaluations by IDT specialists as well as analysis that took place during the Helena National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing EIS (Chapters 3 and 4). The need for this amendment as a part of the oil and gas leasing decision became apparent between the draft EIS and the final EIS. The proposed Kingsbury Gulch Research Natural Area was reviewed on the ground to determine how well it met criteria for establishing RNA's. In part, the criteria for selection includes areas that represent the ecological conditions needed to complete the natural areas system and where human disturbance is not evident for the past 50 years. Kingsberry Gulch did not meet either of these criteria. The desired habitat types identified in the Forest Plan were not well represented and the area had previous mining evidence as well as active claims.

Cabin Gulch and Indian Meadows, on the other hand, met the selection criteria for RNA's and contain the habitat types listed in the Forest Plan (pg. 11/9). Ground truthing has occurred in both of these areas and there has been a draft Establishment Report prepared which recommends both for Research Natural Areas.

**Significance:** I have determined the proposed change is not a significant Forest Plan amendment since the decision will not alter the Forest multiple use goals and objectives for long term land and resource management. Through this decision the acreage change in Management Area allocations is minor and adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest-wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

**Implementation:** The decision will be implemented prior to implementation of the Helena



National Forest and Elkhorn Mountains Portion of the Deerlodge National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing Decision. A copy of the Amendment will be sent to all those who have requested notice of Forest Plan amendments and other public that have participated in the Oil and Gas Leasing analysis efforts.

This Forest Plan Amendment consists of two parts:

Management Area Designations

Management Area Maps

Management Area Designations

The Kingsberry Area (300 acres) is changed from an N-1 management area to an M-1 management area.

The Cabin Gulch Area (2,200 acres) is changed from an L-2 area (2,100 acres) and an M-1 area (100 acres) to an N-1 area. The main habitat types associated with the Cabin Gulch Area are: PSME/AGSP (Douglas-fir/bluebunch), PSME/FESC (Douglas-fir/rough fescue) and PSME/ARUV (Douglas-fir/kinnikinnick).

The Indian Meadows Area (830 acres) is changed from an R-1 area to an N-1 area. An additional 230 acres of proposed Research Natural Area lies within the P-1 area (Scapegoat Wilderness). The P-1 management area designation area does not change. The main habitat types associated with the Indian Meadows area are: PSME/CAGE (Douglas-fir/elk sedge), ABLA/XETE (Subalpine fir/beargrass), ABLA/CACA (Subalpine fir/bluejoint), ABLA/MEFE (Subalpine fir/menziesia), and wet meadows.

Maps

USGS Quadrangle Maps display the changes and are the official maps maintained as planning records at the Forest Supervisor's Office.

THOMAS J. CLIFFORD

Forest Supervisor

Helena National Forest

## Forest Plan Amendment No. 13

### Nonsignificant Amendment to the Helena National Forest Plan

USDA Forest Service  
Helena National Forest

May 1998

**Decision:** It is my decision to amend the Helena National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) to incorporate leasing availability decisions. All references to leasable minerals in each of the Management Areas no longer apply to oil and gas leasing (Forest Plan pages III-3 to III-92). Appendix N is deleted and replaced with a new Appendix N which contains lease notices and new stipulations for leases issued for available lands.

**Rationale for Amendment:** Forest Service policy permits Forest Plan amendments resulting from analysis conducted during Forest Plan implementation (36 CFR 219.10 (f) and FSM 1922.5). The ROD for the Helena National Forest Plan allows oil and gas leasing on most lands under the Forest's administration. Leasing was allowed with applicable stipulations attached to leases. In March of 1989, Region One adopted the uniform format for oil and gas lease stipulations developed by the Rocky Mountain Regional Coordinating Committee. Agency regulations implementing the 1987 Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act identified new requirements for leasing analyses. There is a need to change the Forest Plan to incorporate the uniform format for the lease stipulations and the decisions resulting from the leasing analysis on the Helena National Forest. The leasing analysis has been completed and the resulting decisions will be incorporated into the Forest Plan along with the new stipulation format.

The "Helena National Forest and Elkhorn Mountains portion of the Deerlodge National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing ROD" describes how the leasing stipulations in this Forest Plan Amendment will be applied once a lease application is received. Chapters 2 and 3 of the FEIS, the SEIS and ROD contain the maps that are necessary for understanding where the stipulations that constitute a portion of this Forest Plan amendment will be applied.

**Significance:** I have determined the proposed change is not a significant Forest Plan amendment since the decision will not alter the Forest multiple use goals and objectives for long term land and resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest-wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

**Implementation:** The decision for this amendment will be implemented prior to implementation of the Helena National Forest and Elkhorn Mountains portion of the Deerlodge National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing Decision. A copy of the Amendment will be sent to all those who have requested notice of Forest Plan amendments and other people that have participated in the oil and gas leasing analysis efforts.

This Forest Plan Amendment consists of five parts:

Forest-wide Management Direction  
Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit Direction  
Management Area Direction

## Appendix - N Standard Lease Terms and Supplemental Stipulations Stipulation Map

### Forest-wide Management Direction

Forest-wide management direction under "Leasable Minerals 1." on page II/28 in the Forest Plan will be changed to incorporate the Leasing Availability decisions in the Helena National Forest and Elkhorn Mountains portion of the Deerlodge National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing ROD. These changes incorporate the supplemental stipulations applied in the ROD.

### Replacement Language

Helena Forest lands that are Unavailable for oil and gas leasing are Wilderness Areas (P-1 and P-2 management areas), Forest Plan recommended Wilderness (P-3 management areas), the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit and the Helena City Municipal Watershed (Ten Mile drainage above the city water treatment plant). All other Forest lands with Federal mineral ownership are available for lease and will be recommended to the BLM for issuance. The recommendation will include appropriate stipulations as determined in the ROD for the "Helena National Forest and Deerlodge National Forest portion of the Elkhorns Oil and Gas Leasing EIS" and displayed as the new Appendix N of the Forest Plan.

### Standards Elkhorn-Wide

Elkhorn-Wide Standards 6 and 7 are not applicable to oil and gas leases because the area is Unavailable for oil and gas leasing.

The words, "except operations and maintenance of oil and gas production facilities" are removed from Elkhorn-Wide Standard 6) on page 3 of the Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit Amendment. (September 1996)

The words, "except operations and maintenance of oil and gas production facilities" are removed from Elkhorn-Wide Standard 7 on page 3 of the Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit Amendment. (September 1996)

### Management Area Direction

References to leasable minerals in Management Standards for management areas on pages III/3 through III/77 no longer apply to oil and gas leases. The new standards are displayed in the new Appendix N.

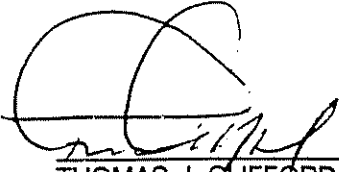
### Appendix N - Standard Lease Terms and Supplemental Stipulations

All of Appendix N of the Forest Plan is deleted and replaced by the new Appendix N, which is included as Attachment 1 to this amendment. The new Appendix N contains the lease notices and stipulations for leases issued on the Helena National Forest.

### Stipulation Maps

The stipulation maps are included in the Helena National Forest and Deerlodge National Forest portion of the Elkhorn Mountains Oil and Gas Leasing EIS project file. Copies of the maps are found

in the Final EIS, Supplemental EIS, or ROD. The maps will be maintained at the Forest Supervisor's Office.



THOMAS J. CLIFFORD  
Forest Supervisor  
Helena National Forest

May 25 1998  
Date

ATTACHMENT 1

APPENDIX N

Oil and Gas Leasing - Standard Lease Terms and Supplemental Stipulations

**INTRODUCTION**

Lease forms and guidelines for lease stipulations and lease notices are found in the booklet, "Uniform Format For Oil And Gas Lease Stipulation", prepared by the Rocky Mountain Regional Coordinating Committee in March, 1989. These guidelines were developed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Forest Service. These guidelines will be used for leases issued on the Helena National Forest.

**LEASE NOTICES**

The following lease notices will be attached to all leases issued for the Helena National Forest.

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Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_

FS Parcel No. \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTICE FOR LANDS OF THE NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM  
UNDER JURISDICTION OF  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

The permittee/lessee must comply with all the rules and regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture set forth at Title 36, Chapter II, of the Code of Federal Regulations governing the use and management of the National Forest System (NFS) when not inconsistent with the rights granted by the Secretary of Interior in the permit. The Secretary of Agriculture's rules and regulations must be complied with for (1) all use and occupancy of the NFS prior to approval of an exploration plan by the Secretary of the Interior, (2) uses of all existing improvements, such as forest development roads, within and outside the area permitted by the Secretary of the Interior, and (3) use and occupancy of the NFS not authorized by an exploration plan approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

All matters related to this stipulation are to be addressed to:

who is the authorized representative of the Secretary of Agriculture.

**CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES** - The FS is responsible for assuring that the leased lands are examined to determine if cultural resources are present and to specify mitigation measures. Prior to undertaking any surface-disturbing activities on the lands covered by this lease, the lessee or operator, unless notified to the contrary by the FS, shall:

1. Contact the FS to determine if a site specific cultural resource inventory is required. If a survey is required, then:
2. Engage the services of a cultural resource specialist acceptable to the FS to conduct a cultural resource inventory of the area of proposed surface disturbance. The operator may elect to inventory an area larger than the area of proposed

disturbance to cover possible site relocation which may result from environmental or other considerations. An acceptable inventory report is to be submitted to the FS for review and approval at the time a surface disturbing plan of operation is submitted.

3. Implement mitigation measures required by the FS and BLM to preserve or avoid destruction of cultural resource values. Mitigation may include relocation of proposed facilities, testing, salvage, and recordation or other protective measures. All costs of the inventory and mitigation will be borne by the lessee or operator, and all data and materials salvaged will remain under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Government as appropriate.

The lessee or operator shall immediately bring to the attention of the FS and BLM any cultural or paleontological resources or any other objects of scientific interest discovered as a result of surface operations under this lease, and shall leave such discoveries intact until directed to proceed by FS and BLM.

**FLOODPLAIN AND WETLANDS** - The lessee is hereby notified that this lease may contain land within a riparian ecosystem. All activities within this area may be precluded or highly restricted in order to comply with Executive Order 11988 - *Floodplain Management* and Executive Order 11990 - *Protection of Wetlands*, in order to preserve and restore or enhance the natural and beneficial values served by floodplains and wetlands.

The riparian ecosystem, will be managed by the Forest Service to protect from conflicting uses in order to provide healthy, self-perpetuating plant and water communities that will have optimum diversity and density of understory and overstory vegetation. Occupancy and use of lands within riparian ecosystems proposed in a Surface Use Plan of Operations will be considered in an environmental analysis done to identify the mitigation measures necessary to protect the riparian area. Special measures such as road design, well pad size and location or directional drilling, may be made part of the permit authorizing the activity.

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Parcel No.

Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_

## USDA - FOREST SERVICE

### THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE PLANT OR ANIMAL SPECIES LEASE NOTICE

The lease area may contain threatened and endangered species or habitat necessary for the continued existence of threatened, proposed and endangered species which are protected by the 1973 Endangered Species Act, as amended (50 CFR 402). The lease area may also contain habitat or species, listed as sensitive, which may require protective measures to prevent them from being listed as threatened or endangered or result in a loss of viability or biological diversity (36 CFR 219.19 or 219.26). A biological evaluation of the leased lands may be required prior to surface disturbance to determine if threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant or animal species or their habitat are present and to identify needed mitigation measures. Prior to undertaking any surface-disturbing activities on the lands covered by this lease, the lessee or operator shall:

1. Contact the Forest Service to determine if a biological evaluation is required (FSM 2670.31-32). The Forest Service is responsible for ensuring that the leased land is examined through a biological evaluation, prior to undertaking any surface-disturbing activities, to determine effects upon any plant or animal species listed or proposed for listing as threatened, endangered, or sensitive.

2. The lessee or operator may choose to conduct the evaluation on the leased lands at their discretion and cost. This biological evaluation must be done by or under the supervision of a qualified biologist/botanist approved by the Forest Service. An acceptable report must be provided to the Forest Service identifying the anticipated effects of a proposed action on threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. An acceptable biological evaluation is to be submitted to the Forest Service for review and approval no later than that time when an otherwise complete application for approval of drilling or subsequent surface-disturbing operation is submitted.

3. Implement mitigation measures required by the Forest Service. Mitigation may include the relocation of proposed lease-related activities or other protective measures. The findings of the biological evaluation may result in some restrictions to the operator's plans or even disallow use and occupancy to comply with the 1973 Endangered Species Act (as amended), threatened and endangered regulations and Forest Service regulations.

If threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant or animal species are discovered in the area after any required biological evaluation has concluded, an evaluation will be conducted to assess the effect of ongoing and proposed activities. Based on the conclusion drawn in the evaluation, additional restrictions or prohibitions may be imposed to protect the species or their habitats.

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## STIPULATIONS

This section describes the stipulations that will be attached to leases. Conditions are also described for waivers, exceptions, and modifications.

All modifications or waivers of lease terms for NSO or Timing Limitation stipulations will be subject to public review for at least a 30 day period as described in 43 CFR 3101.1-4.

The conditions of 36 CFR 228.104 must be met before a waiver, exception or modification can be granted. The authorized officer reviews the request and ensures compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and other applicable laws, and the preparation of any environmental documents.

The authorized officer may authorize the Bureau of Land Management to modify, waive, or grant an exception to a stipulation if:

1. The action would be consistent with applicable Federal Laws;
2. The action would be consistent with the current forest land and resource management plan;
3. The management objectives which led the Forest Service to require the inclusion of the stipulation in the lease can be met without restricting operations in the manner provided by the the stipulation given the change in the present condition of the surface resource involved, or given the change in the present condition of the surface

resource involved, or given the nature, location, timing, or design of the proposed operations; and

4. The action is acceptable to the authorized Forest officer based upon a review of the environmental consequences.

The stipulations which will be attached to leases are as follows.

<b>RESOURCE:</b>	<b>Big Game Winter Range</b>
Stipulation:	Timing Limitation
Objective:	To preclude surface disturbing activities, including interrupting drilling operations, within the big game winter range which could cause increased stress and/or displacement of animals during the critical time period (December 1 to May 15).
Waiver:	A waiver may be granted if habitat studies in coordination with the Montana FW&P conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is no longer used as a winter range.
Exception:	An exception may be granted if seasonal conditions are such that the animals have moved out of and are not using the general area during the particular year.
Modification:	A modification of the stipulation may be granted if habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not important winter range.
<b>RESOURCE:</b>	<b>Big Game Winter Range</b>
Stipulation:	Controlled Surface Use
Objective:	To require coordination of production activities and or other limitations to spread surface disturbance activities over time and space within Big Game Winter Range areas to avoid or minimize the potential for adverse effects to Big Game species.
Waiver:	A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies in coordination with the Montana FW&P conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not in an important big game winter range area.
Exception:	An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.
Modification:	A modification of the stipulation may be granted if new habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not in an important big game winter range area.
<b>RESOURCE:</b>	<b>Big Game Birthing Areas</b>
Stipulation:	Timing Limitation
Objective:	To preclude surface disturbing activities, including interrupting drilling operations, within the big game birthing areas which could cause increased stress and/or displacement during the critical time period (April 15 to June 30).
Waiver:	A waiver may be granted if habitat studies in coordination with the Montana FW&P conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is no longer used as a birthing area.
Exception:	An exception may be granted if seasonal conditions are such (ie. an early spring and snowmelt) that the animals are not using the general area during the particular year.



**Modification:** A modification of the stipulation may be granted if habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not used as a birthing area.

**RESOURCE: Big Game Summer Range**

**Stipulation:** Timing Limitation

**Objective:** To preclude surface disturbing activities, including interrupting drilling operations, within big game summer range which could cause increased stress and/or displacement of animals during the critical time period (June 1 to September 30) to insure big game animals have areas of security that provide habitat components needed to keep animals healthy as they go into breeding period and hunting season.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if habitat studies in coordination with the Montana FW&Parks conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not important summer range.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if seasonal conditions are such that the animals have moved out of and are not using the general area during the particular year.

**Modification:** A modification of the stipulation may be granted if habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not used as summer range.

**RESOURCE: Big Game Travel Routes**

**Stipulation:** Controlled Surface Use

**Objective:** To require coordination of timing and timing adjustments in activities within big game migration routes to avoid or minimize the potential for adverse effects to big game because of cumulative impacts from other activities along the migration route.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if habitat studies in coordination with the Montana FW&P conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not in an important migration route.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if there are no other activities along the migration route that cumulatively have adverse effects on big game.

**Modification:** A modification of the stipulation may be granted if habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not used as a migration route.

**RESOURCE: Core Mountain Goat Range**

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To protect the yearlong mountain goat habitat during all seasons thereby precluding disturbance during important periods, displacement to habitats of lower quality or physiological responses brought on by stress.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies in coordination with the Montana FW&P conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not important core mountain goat habitat.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator can demonstrate in a Plan of Operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** A modification may be granted if new habitat studies in coordination with the Montana FW&P conclude that a portion of the area affected by this stipulation is not important core mountain goat habitat.

**Justification:** Surface activities within these areas could adversely affect mountain goats. A No Surface Occupancy stipulation is deemed necessary ensure the protection of the core mountain goat habitat. If operations within these areas were to be under either a Controlled Surface Use or Timing Limitations stipulation, or under Standard Lease Terms, the management of these areas for goats could be affected and goat populations could decline. The No Lease option is not considered appropriate since impacts can be mitigated using a No Surface Occupancy stipulation and no leasing could subject the Federal mineral estate to drainage from adjacent leased lands.

**RESOURCE: Gates of the Mountains Game Preserve**

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To preclude surface disturbance within the area and to maintain its values as a game preserve.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if the area is no longer designated as a game preserve.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** A modification may be granted if the game preserve boundaries change.

**RESOURCE: Rocky Mountain Front Ecosystem**

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To protect the significant combination of resources and ecological values associated with the Rocky Mountain Front ecosystem from potential cumulative effects from activities both within and on nearby private lands.

**Waiver:** This stipulation will not be waived while the area is important to for the protection of the Rocky Mountain Front ecosystem.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator can demonstrate in a Plan of Operations that there are no adverse cumulative effects.

**Modification:** This stipulation may be modified if a portion of the area is no longer considered important for the protection of the Rocky Mountain Front ecosystem.

**RESOURCE: Continental Divide Biological Corridor**

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To require that surface disturbing activities do not take place within 1/2 mile of the Continental Divide in order to protect features important to the suitability of the Continental Divide as a biological corridor.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not important as a biological corridor.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** A modification may be granted if new habitat studies conclude that portions of the area affected by this stipulation is not important as a biological corridor.

**RESOURCE:** Continental Divide Biological Corridor

**Stipulation:** Controlled Surface Use

**Objective:** To require that activities be located or designed to protect features important to the suitability of the Continental Divide as a biological corridor between 1/2 mile from the divide to 1 mile from the divide.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not important as a biological corridor.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** A modification may be granted if new habitat studies conclude that portions of the area affected by this stipulation is not important as a biological corridor.

**RESOURCE:** Research Natural Areas

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To preclude surface disturbance within the area and to maintain its near natural conditions for future research use.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if it is determined that the entire leasehold no longer contains portions of Research Natural Areas.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** A modification may be granted if the Research Natural Area boundaries have changed.

**RESOURCE:** Threatened and Endangered Species occupied area

**Stipulation:** Controlled Surface Use

**Objectives:** 1) To ensure that proposed activities do not adversely affect the viability of T&E species, operations will be designed, including limiting noise levels, and/or located so as to not adversely affect the viability of T&E species. 2) To restrict the timing or type of activities on roads, if needed to control human-animal conflicts or disturbances. 3) To require coordination of timing and timing adjustments of activities within T&E occupied areas to avoid or minimize the potential for adverse effects to T&E species because of cumulative impacts from oil and gas activities, plus other activities within the area. This stipulation may limit the extent of field development.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not in T&E occupied area.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** A modification of the stipulation may be granted if new habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not in occupied T&E areas.

**RESOURCE:** **Situation 1 Grizzly Bear Habitat**

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To preclude surface disturbing activities in Management Situation 1 Grizzly Bear habitat while the area is important for the recovery and maintenance of the bear.

**Waiver:** This stipulation will not be waived while the area is important to grizzly bear recovery or to its conservation following a change in legal status under the Endangered Species Act. Conditions for Waiver require that the area is no longer classified as Management Situation 1 habitat pursuant to the Interagency Grizzly Bear Management Guidelines (Federal Register, Vol 51, No.228, November 26, 1986) and not considered important to its conservation, as outlined in an approved grizzly bear conservation strategy, following a change in its legal status under the Endangered Species Act.

**Exception:** An exception will not be granted while the area is important to grizzly bear recovery or to its conservation following a change in legal status under the Endangered Species Act. Conditions for Exception require that the area is no longer classified as Management Situation 1 habitat pursuant to the Interagency Grizzly Bear Management Guidelines (Federal Register, Vol 51, No.228, November 26, 1986) and not considered important to its conservation, as outlined in an approved grizzly bear conservation strategy, following a change in its legal status under the Endangered Species Act.

**Modification:** This stipulation may be modified if a portion of the area is no longer important to grizzly bear recovery or to its conservation following a change in legal status under the Endangered Species Act. Conditions for Modification require that a portion of the area is no longer classified as Management Situation 1 habitat pursuant to the Interagency Grizzly Bear Management Guidelines (Federal Register, Vol 51, No.228, November 26, 1986) and not considered important to its conservation, as outlined in an approved grizzly bear conservation strategy, following a change in its legal status under the Endangered Species Act.

**RESOURCE:** **Grizzly Bear Denning Area (MS 2)**

**Stipulation:** Timing Limitation

**Objective:** To preclude surface disturbing activities, including interrupting drilling operations, within the Grizzly Bear denning areas which could cause increased stress and/or displacement of animals during the critical time period (October 15 to April 15).

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not critical for Grizzly Bear denning.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if it is determined that the animals have moved out of and are not using the general area during the particular year.

**Modification:** A modification of the stipulation may be granted if new habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not used by Grizzly Bears for denning.

**RESOURCE:** **Grizzly Bear Spring Habitat (MS 2)**

**Stipulation:** Timing Limitation

**Objective:** To preclude surface disturbing activities, including interrupting drilling operations, within the critical Spring Grizzly Bear habitat which could cause increased stress and/or displacement of animals during the critical time period (April 1 to June 30).

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not critical for Grizzly Bear spring habitat.

Exception: An exception may be granted if seasonal conditions are such that the animals have moved out of and are not using the general area during the particular year.

Modification: A modification of the stipulation may be granted if new habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not used by Grizzly Bears.

**RESOURCE: Grizzly Bear Summer Area (MS 2)**

Stipulation: Timing Limitation

Objective: To preclude surface disturbing activities, including interrupting drilling operations, in critical Grizzly Bear summer areas which could cause increased stress and/or displacement of animals during the critical time period (July 1 to September 15).

Waiver: A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not critical Grizzly Bear summer range.

Exception: An exception may be granted if seasonal conditions are such that the animals have moved out of and are not using the general area during the particular year.

Modification: A modification of the stipulation may be granted if new habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not used by Grizzly Bears.

**RESOURCE: Grizzly Bear Denning and Summer Occupied Habitat (MS 2)**

Stipulation: No Surface Occupancy

Objective: To preclude new surface disturbing activities within the occupied overlapping denning and summer habitat of Grizzly Bear to protect habitat and to facilitate recovery.

Waiver: A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is no longer needed as denning or summer habitat.

Exception: An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

Modification: A modification of the stipulation may be granted if new habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not important denning or summer habitat.

**RESOURCE: Wolf Winter Prey Habitat**

Stipulation: Timing Limitation

Objective: To preclude surface disturbing activities, including interrupting drilling operations, within the big game winter range which could cause displacement of prey animals for wolf during the critical time period (December 1 to May 15).

Waiver: A waiver may be granted if habitat studies conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is no longer used as a winter prey area.

Exception: An exception may be granted if seasonal conditions are such that the prey animals have moved out of and are not using the general area during the particular year.

Modification: A modification of the stipulation may be granted if habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not important winter prey area.

**RESOURCE: Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon Habitat**

**Stipulation:** Timing Limitation

**Objective:** To preclude surface disturbing activities, including interrupting drilling operations, within occupied areas (critical habitat) which could cause increased stress and/or displacement of animals during the critical time period (February 1 to July 31).

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service conclude that the area affected by this stipulation is not critical for Eagles or Peregrine Falcon.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** A modification of the stipulation may be granted if new habitat studies show that a portion of the area is not used by Eagles or Peregrine Falcon.

**RESOURCE: Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon Nests**

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To preclude surface disturbing activities within the one mile of Bald Eagle or Peregrine Falcon nests to protect habitat and to facilitate recovery.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if new habitat studies in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service conclude that the area affected by this stipulation no longer contains an Eagle nest.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** Same as Waiver.

**RESOURCE: Native Trout Species Streams**

**Stipulation:** Controlled Surface Use

**Objective:** To require that activities within bull trout and westslope cutthroat drainages may be relocated, require special design criteria, and additional on and off-site mitigation measures to prevent the regional viability of native trout populations from being decreased from oil and gas activities.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if the stream is no longer considered important to the viability of the species.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator can demonstrate in a surface use plan of operations that adverse effects can be minimized and activities would not affect native trout populations.

**Modification:** A modification may be granted if an on site inspection and analysis demonstrates that native trout would not be affected by operations in portions of the area.

**RESOURCE: Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Bull Trout Streams (Upper Missouri Westslope Cutthroat Trout drainages and Alice Creek, Copper Creek, Arrastra Creek, Poorman Creek, and upper Little Blackfoot.**

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To preclude construction of well sites and related facilities such as tank batteries in drainages important to the viability of Upper Missouri Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Bull Trout.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if the stream is no longer considered important to the viability of the species.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator can demonstrate in a surface use plan of operations that adverse effects can be minimized and activities would not affect native trout populations.

**Modification:** A modification may be granted if an on site inspection and analysis demonstrates that native trout would not be affected by operations on a portion of the area.

**RESOURCE: Wild and Scenic River Candidates**

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy – 0.25 mile buffer

**Objective:** To protect wild and scenic river values along the river corridor and within 0.25 miles.

**Waiver:** This stipulation may be waived if it is determined that the entire lease no longer involves a wild or scenic river candidate.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator can demonstrate in a surface use plan of operations that the wild and scenic river values of the area can be maintained at a level acceptable to the authorized forest officer.

**Modification:** This stipulation may be modified if it is determined that portions of the lease no longer involves a wild and scenic river candidate.

**RESOURCE: Non-Motorized Recreation Management Areas (R1)**

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To maintain the roadless values in the Forest Plan R1 Management Areas.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if the area is no longer managed for roadless values.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator can demonstrate in a surface use plan of operations that the roadless values of the area can be maintained at a level acceptable to the authorized forest officer.

**Modification:** This stipulation may be modified if it is determined that portions of the lease are no longer managed for roadless values.

**RESOURCE: Developed Recreation Sites**

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To preclude surface occupancy and surface disturbing activities within developed recreation sites and within 1/2 mile of the perimeter.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if the site is moved or eliminated.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

Modification: Same as waiver.

**RESOURCE: Scenery Resources**

Stipulation: No Surface Occupancy

Objective: To protect the visual quality of the Retention Foreground viewing areas.

Waiver: A waiver may be granted if the area is no longer managed as retention foreground.

Exception: An exception may be granted if the operator can demonstrate in a surface use plan of operations that the visual quality of the area can be maintained at a level acceptable to the authorized forest officer.

Modification: A modification may be granted if a portion of the area is no longer managed as retention foreground.

**RESOURCE: Scenery Resources**

Stipulation: Controlled Surface Use

Objective: To ensure that the visual quality of the area is maintained proposed activities would be required to be located or designed to meet the visual quality objectives of retention mid ground, retention background, or partial retention within one year of completing operations.

Waiver: A waiver may be granted if the area is no longer managed as retention mid/background or partial retention.

Exception: An exception may be granted if for unforeseen circumstances, such as drilling problems, or other resource concerns, such as not being able to reclaim an area due to wet soil conditions, the visual quality objective can not be met within one year.

Modification: A modification may be granted if a portion of the area is no longer managed as retention mid/background or partial retention.

**RESOURCE: Slopes greater than 40 percent and Sensitive Soils**

Stipulation: No Surface Occupancy

Objective: To preclude construction of well sites, but allow related facilities such as roads and pipelines on slopes between 40% and 60%. Well sites would involve relatively large cut and fill slopes and would be difficult to rehabilitate, and to preclude surface disturbing activities on areas that have a high erosion/stability hazard and would be difficult to reclaim.

Waiver: A waiver may be granted if an on-the-ground review shows that the entire lease is on slopes less than 40% and sensitive soils do not exist on the lease.

Exception: An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

Modification: A modification may be granted if an on-the-ground review of a proposed well site or facility shows that an area of less than 40% slope exists where sensitive soils are not present.



**RESOURCE:** 30 - 40% percent slopes

**Stipulation:** Controlled Surface Use

**Objective:** To require that activities on 30 - 40% slopes be located and/or designed to avoid or minimize the potential for adverse effects to soil and water.

**Waiver:** A waiver may be granted if an on-the-ground review shows that the lease is on slopes less than 30%.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** A modification may be granted if an on site inspection demonstrates slopes over 30% do not exist on the specific site.

**RESOURCE:** Water Quality

**Stipulation:** No Surface Occupancy

**Objective:** To preclude surface disturbing activities on areas within 100 feet of water courses, water bodies, flood plains, and riparian areas to protect water quality.

**Waiver:** No portion of the lease is within 100 feet of water courses, water bodies, flood plains, or riparian areas.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** A modification may be granted if an on site inspection demonstrates that surface water does not exist intermittently or perennially on the specific site.

**RESOURCE:** Water Quality

**Stipulation:** Controlled Surface Use

**Objective:** To require that activities within 500 feet of water courses, water bodies, flood plains, and riparian areas be located and/or designed to avoid or minimize the potential for adverse effects to surface water.

**Waiver:** No portion of the lease is within 500 feet of water courses, water bodies, flood plains, or riparian areas.

**Exception:** An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

**Modification:** A modification may be granted if an on site inspection demonstrates that surface water does not exist intermittently or perennially on the specific site.

**RESOURCE:**

**Riparian Areas**

Stipulation:

No Surface Occupancy

Objective:

To preclude surface disturbing activities for the protect riparian areas.

Waiver:

A waiver may be granted if an on-the-ground inspection shows the lease does not contain riparian areas.

Exception:

An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

Modification:

A modification may be granted if an on-the-ground inspection shows that the area of the proposed activity is not a riparian area.

**RESOURCE:**

**Wetland Areas**

Stipulation:

No Surface Occupancy

Objective:

To preclude surface disturbing activities and protect jurisdictional wetlands relative to Executive Order 11990.

Waiver:

A waiver may be granted if an on-the-ground inspection shows that the lease does not contain wetlands.

Exception:

An exception may be granted if the operator can demonstrate in a surface use plan of operations that adverse effects can be minimized, there are no practicable alternatives, and a 404 permit can be obtained.

Modification:

The area affected by this stipulation may be modified if an on-the ground survey concludes that wetlands do not cover the entire area.

**RESOURCE:**

**Administrative Sites**

Stipulation:

No Surface Occupancy

Objective:

To preclude surface occupancy and new surface-disturbing activities within administrative sites.

Waiver:

A waiver may be granted if it is determined that the entire leasehold no longer contains portions of administrative sites.

Exception:

An exception may be granted if the operator demonstrates in a plan of operations that impacts from the proposed action are acceptable or can be adequately mitigated.

Modification:

A modification may be granted if the administrative boundaries have changed.



**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**AMENDMENT NO. 14**

**February, 1996**

This amendment provides INTERIM DIRECTION to protect habitat and populations of resident native fish outside of anadromous fish habitat in Eastern Oregon, Eastern Washington, Idaho, and Western Montana.

This interim direction is in the form of riparian management objectives, standards and guidelines and monitoring requirements. The action amends the management direction established in the Regional Guides and all existing land and resource management plans for the area covered by the assessment. For the Helena Forest, this direction applies ONLY to the National Forest system lands west of the Continental Divide.

Attachment A describes the Inland Native Fish Strategy that will apply to the National Forest system lands west of the Continental Divide that are administered by the Helena National Forest.

**\*\*\* End of Amendment \*\*\***

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Helena National Forest  
2880 Skyway Drive  
Helena, MT 59601  
406 449-5201

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File Code: 1920  
Route To: Leadership Team

Date: May 14, 1996

Subject: Forest Plan Amendment No. 14

To: Leadership Team

Enclosed is Amendment No. 14 to the Helena Forest Plan. This amendment provides INTERIM DIRECTION to protect habitat and populations of resident native fish outside of anadromous fish habitat in Eastern Oregon, Eastern Washington, Idaho, and Western Montana.

This interim direction is in the form of riparian management objectives, standards and guidelines and monitoring requirements. The action amends the management direction established in the Regional Guides and all existing land and resource management plans for the area covered by the assessment. For the Helena Forest, this direction applies ONLY to the National Forest system lands west of the Continental Divide.

Attachment A describes the Inland Native Fish Strategy that will apply to the National Forest system lands west of the Continental Divide that are administered by the Helena National Forest.

Please add this amendment to your "Official Copy" of the Forest Plan. You should make others in your area aware of this amendment so they can update their copies of the Plan.



Dwight Chambers  
Planning Team Leader

Enclosure

**DECISION NOTICE  
AND  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
FOR THE  
INLAND NATIVE FISH STRATEGY**

**INTERIM STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING FISH-PRODUCING WATERSHEDS  
IN EASTERN OREGON AND WASHINGTON, IDAHO,  
WESTERN MONTANA AND PORTIONS OF NEVADA**

**USDA FOREST SERVICE**

**Lead Agency:** USDA Forest Service

**Deciding Officials:** Hal Salwasser  
Regional Forester, Northern Region

Dale N. Bosworth  
Regional Forester, Intermountain Region

John E. Lowe  
Regional Forester, Pacific Northwest Region

**For Further Information, Contact:** David J. Wright, Team Leader  
Inland Native Fish Strategy  
3815 Schreiber Way  
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814

**ABSTRACT**

This strategy is intended to provide interim direction to protect habitat and populations of resident native fish outside of anadromous fish habitat in eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, Idaho, western Montana, and portions of Nevada. Inland native fish species within the scope of this decision have been identified by state, private and federal agencies as being at risk due primarily to habitat degradation, introduction of exotic species, over-fishing, and loss of migratory forms. This interim direction does not apply to areas addressed by the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Land Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (Northern Spotted Owl ROD) or Decision Notice/Decision Record for Interim Strategies for Managing Anadromous Fish-Producing Watersheds on Federal Lands in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho and Portions of California (PACFISH). Long-term management direction is being developed through two ecosystem-based environmental impact statements that are being prepared for National Forest System lands and lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the Interior and Upper Columbia River Basins.

This interim direction is in the form of riparian management objectives, standards and guidelines, and monitoring requirements. The action amends the management direction established in the Regional Guides and all existing land and resource management plans for the area covered by the assessment.

The programmatic environmental assessment examined 5 alternatives (including No-Action) which addressed issues identified through the scoping and public involvement phases of the process. Alternative D reflected the proposed action, and is the alternative selected by the USDA Forest Service and supported by USDI Fish and Wildlife Service.

Alternatives C and E provided concepts and philosophy attractive for longer-term reduction of risk to habitat. The Regional Foresters have directed the Inland Native Fish Strategy Team Leader to develop a strategy to apply Alternatives C and E on a limited test basis.



# ATTACHMENT A

## INLAND NATIVE FISH STRATEGY SELECTED INTERIM DIRECTION

### Management Direction

Under the selected Alternative D, the Inland Native Fish Strategy will apply the following management direction to all 22 Forests except where PACFISH or the President's Plan apply. This is approximately 24.9 million acres.

The adoption of Alternative D as the Inland Native Fish Strategy could lead to deferring or suspending some resource management projects and activities within priority watersheds within the Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs, described below) or that degrade RHCAs during the interim period. Adoption of these requirements during the interim period is *not* to be considered a "lockout" of any project or activity from the RHCAs. However, proper analysis is required prior to initiation of projects. See the discussion below on priority watersheds and watershed analysis.

In addition, we will be testing the concepts and philosophies of alternatives C and E as described in the Decision Notice for this project. The direction for alternatives C and E are included with this package but are only to be used within the watersheds assigned for the testing. More detail will be sent out as to how and where the testing will be accomplished.

### Riparian Goals

The goals establish an expectation of the characteristics of healthy, functioning watersheds, riparian areas, and associated fish habitats. Since the quality of water and fish habitat in aquatic systems is inseparably related to the integrity of upland and riparian areas within the watersheds, The strategy identifies several goals for watershed, riparian, and stream channel conditions. The goals are to maintain or restore:

- (1) water quality, to a degree that provides for stable and productive riparian and aquatic ecosystems;
- (2) stream channel integrity, channel processes, and the sediment regime (including the elements of timing, volume, and character of sediment input and transport) under which the riparian and aquatic ecosystems developed;
- (3) instream flows to support healthy riparian and aquatic habitats, the stability and effective function of stream channels, and the ability to route flood discharges;
- (4) natural timing and variability of the water table elevation in meadows and wetlands;
- (5) diversity and productivity of native and desired non-native plant communities in riparian zones;



- (6) riparian vegetation, to:
  - (a) provide an amount and distribution of large woody debris characteristic of natural aquatic and riparian ecosystems;
  - (b) provide adequate summer and winter thermal regulation within the riparian and aquatic zones; and
  - (c) help achieve rates of surface erosion, bank erosion, and channel migration characteristic of those under which the communities developed.
- (7) riparian and aquatic habitats necessary to foster the unique genetic fish stocks that evolved within the specific geo-climatic region; and
- (8) habitat to support populations of well-distributed native and desired non-native plant, vertebrate, and invertebrate populations that contribute to the viability of riparian-dependent communities.

### **Riparian Management Objectives**

In the development of PACFISH, landscape-scale interim Riparian Management Objectives (RMOs) describing good habitat for anadromous fish were developed, using stream inventory data for pool frequency, large woody debris, bank stability and lower bank angle, and width to depth ratio. Applicable published and non-published scientific literature was used to define favorable water temperatures. All of the described features may not occur in a specific segment of stream within a watershed, but all generally should occur at the watershed scale for stream systems of moderate to large size (3rd to 6th order streams).

This material was reviewed in regard to its applicability to inland native fish. It has been determined that the Riparian Management Objectives described in PACFISH are good indicators of ecosystem health. The analysis that led to development of the RMO's involved watersheds in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho that include inland native fish as well as anadromous fish. With the exception of the temperature objective, which has been modified, the RMO's represented a good starting point to describe the desired condition for fish habitat.

Under the Inland Native Fish Strategy, these interim RMO's would apply where watershed analysis has not been completed. The components of good habitat can vary across specific geographic areas. Interim RMO's are considered to be the best watershed scale information available; National Forest managers would be encouraged to establish site-specific RMO's through watershed analysis or site specific analysis.

RMOs should be refined to better reflect conditions that are attainable in a specific watershed or stream reach based on local geology, topography, climate, and potential vegetation. Establishment of RMO's would require completion of watershed analysis to provide the ecological basis for the change. However, interim RMO's may be modified by amendment in the absence of watershed analysis where watershed or stream reach specific data support the change. In all cases, the rationale supporting RMO's and their effects would be documented.

The interim RMOs for stream channel conditions provide the criteria against which attainment or progress toward attainment of the riparian goals is measured. Interim RMOs provide the target toward which managers aim as they conduct resource management activities across the landscape. It is not expected

that the objectives would be met instantaneously, but rather would be achieved over time. However, the intent of interim RMOs is not to establish a ceiling for what constitutes good habitat conditions. Actions that reduce habitat quality, whether existing conditions are better or worse than objective values, would be inconsistent with the purpose of this interim direction. Without the benchmark provided by measurable RMOs, habitat suffers a continual erosion.

As indicated below, some of the objectives would apply to only forested ecosystems, some to non-forested ecosystems, and some to all ecosystems regardless of whether or not they are forested. Objectives for six environmental features have been identified, including one key feature and five supporting features. These features are good indicators of ecosystem health, are quantifiable, and are subject to accurate, repeatable measurements. They generally apply to 3rd to 6th order watersheds.

Under the strategy, interim RMO's would apply to watersheds occupied by inland native fish. Application of the interim RMOs would require thorough analysis. That is, if the objective for an important feature such as pool frequency is met or exceeded, there may be some latitude in assessing the importance of the objectives for other features that contribute to good habitat conditions. For example, in headwater streams with an abundance of pools created by large boulders, fewer pieces of large wood might still constitute good habitat. The goal is to achieve a high level of habitat diversity and complexity through a combination of habitat features, to meet the life-history requirements of the fish community inhabiting a watershed.

Many people commented on the draft what it meant to not retard the attainment of the RMOs. For the purposes of analysis, to "retard" would mean to slow the rate of recovery below the near natural rate of recovery if no additional human caused disturbance was placed on the system. This obviously will require professional judgement and should be based on watershed analysis of local conditions.

Table A-1. Interim Riparian Management Objectives.

Habitat Feature	Interim Objectives
Pool Frequency (kf <sup>1</sup> ) (all systems)	Varies by channel width (see Table A-2).
Water Temperature (sf <sup>2</sup> )	No measurable increase in maximum water temperature (7-day moving average of daily maximum temperature measured as the average of the maximum daily temperature of the warmest consecutive 7-day period). Maximum water temperatures below 59F within adult holding habitat and below 48F within spawning and rearing habitats.
Large Woody Debris (sf) (forested systems)	East of Cascade Crest in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada and western Montana: >20 pieces per mile; >12 inch diameter; >35 foot length.
Bank Stability (sf) (non-forested systems)	>80 percent stable.
Lower Bank Angle (sf) (non-forested systems)	>75 percent of banks with <90 degree angle (i.e., undercut).
Width/Depth Ratio (sf) (all systems)	<10, mean wetted width divided by mean depth

<sup>1</sup> Key feature.

<sup>2</sup> Supporting feature.

Table A-2. Interim objectives for pool frequency.

Wetted width (feet)	10	20	25	50	75	100	125	150	200
Pools per mile	96	56	47	26	23	18	14	12	9

### Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas

Interim Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCA) would be delineated in every watershed on National Forest System lands within the geographic range of the strategy.

Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas are portions of watersheds where riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis, and management activities are subject to specific standards and guidelines. Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas include traditional riparian corridors, wetlands, intermittent streams, and other areas that help maintain the integrity of aquatic ecosystems by (1) influencing the delivery of coarse sediment, organic matter, and woody debris to streams, (2) providing root strength for channel stability, (3) shading the stream, and (4) protecting water quality (Naiman et al. 1992).

The Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas under the strategy would be nearly identical to those under the Idaho Conservation Strategy (Idaho Department of Fish & Game Commission's Bull Trout Conservation Strategy, 1995). The main difference is that, under the Idaho Conservation Strategy, Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas would apply only in key watersheds. Since their key watersheds are large and cover much of the National Forest System lands in Idaho, there would be little difference between the two Strategies in regard to Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas within occupied bull trout habitat.

Widths of interim Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas that are adequate to protect streams from non-channelized sediment inputs should be sufficient to provide other riparian functions, including delivery of organic matter and woody debris, stream shading, and bank stability (Brazier and Brown 1973, Gregory et al. 1984, Steinblums et. al 1984, Beschta et al. 1987, McDade et al. 1990, Sedell and Beschta 1991, Belt et al. 1992). The effectiveness of riparian conservation areas in influencing sediment delivery from non-channelized flow is highly variable. A review by Belt et al. (1992) of studies in Idaho (Haupt 1959a and 1959b, Ketcheson and Megehan 1990, Burroughs and King (1985 and 1989) and elsewhere (Trimble and Sartz 1957, Packer 1967, Swift 1986) concluded that non-channelized sediment flow rarely travels more than 300 feet and that 200-300 foot riparian "filter strips" are generally effective at protecting streams from sediment from non-channelized flow.

Interim RHCA widths would apply where watershed analysis has not been completed. Site-specific widths may be increased where necessary to achieve riparian management goals and objectives, or decreased where interim widths are not needed to attain RMOs or avoid adverse effects. Establishment of RHCA's would require completion of watershed analysis to provide the ecological basis for the change. However, interim RHCAs may be modified by amendment in the absence of watershed analysis where stream reach or site-specific data support the change. In all cases, the rationale supporting RHCA widths and their effects would be documented.

### **Standard Widths Defining Interim RHCAs**

The four categories of stream or water body and the standard widths for each are:

**Category 1 - Fish-bearing streams:** Interim RHCAs consist of the stream and the area on either side of the stream extending from the edges of the active stream channel to the top of the inner gorge, or to the outer edges of the 100-year floodplain, or to the outer edges of riparian vegetation, or to a distance equal to the height of two site-potential trees, or 300 feet slope distance (600 feet, including both sides of the stream channel), whichever is greatest.

**Category 2 - Permanently flowing non-fish-bearing streams:** Interim RHCAs consist of the stream and the area on either side of the stream extending from the edges of the active stream channel to the top of the inner gorge, or to the outer edges of the 100-year flood plain, or to the outer edges of riparian vegetation, or to a distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or 150 feet slope distance (300 feet, including both sides of the stream channel), whichever is greatest.

**Category 3 - Ponds, lakes, reservoirs, and wetlands greater than 1 acre:** Interim RHCAs consist of the body of water or wetland and the area to the outer edges of the riparian vegetation, or to the extent of the seasonally saturated soil, or to the extent of moderately and highly unstable areas, or to a distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or 150 feet slope distance from the edge of the maximum pool elevation of constructed ponds and reservoirs or from the edge of the wetland, pond or lake, whichever is greatest.

**Category 4 - Seasonally flowing or Intermittent streams, wetlands less than 1 acre, landslides, and landslide-prone areas:** This category includes features with high variability in size and site-specific characteristics. At a minimum the interim RHCA's must include:

- a. the extent of landslides and landslide-prone areas
- b. the intermittent stream channel and the area to the top of the inner gorge
- c. the intermittent stream channel or wetland and the area to the outer edges of the riparian vegetation
- d. for Priority Watersheds, the area from the edges of the stream channel, wetland, landslide, or landslide-prone area to a distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or 100 feet slope distance, whichever is greatest
- e. for watersheds not identified as Priority Watersheds, the area from the edges of the stream channel, wetland, landslide, or landslide-prone area to a distance equal to the height of one-half site potential tree, or 50 feet slope distance, whichever is greatest

In non-forested rangeland ecosystems, the interim RHCA width for permanently flowing streams in categories 1 and 2 is the extent of the 100-year flood plain.

### **Standards and Guidelines**

Project and site-specific standards and guidelines listed below would apply to all RHCA's and to projects and activities in areas outside RHCA's that are identified through NEPA analysis as potentially degrading RHCA's. The combination of the standards and guidelines for RHCA's specified below with the standards and guidelines of existing forest plans and Land Use Plans would provide a benchmark for management actions that reflects increased sensitivities and a commitment to ecosystem management.

Under the strategy, the standards and guidelines listed below would be applied to the entire geographic area for the project. Due to the short-term duration of this interim direction, provisions for development and implementation of road/transportation management plans and the relocation, elimination, or reconstruction of existing roads, facilities, and other improvements (i.e., RF-2 c, RF-3 a and c, RF-4, RF-5, GM-2, RM-1, and MM-2) would be initiated but would be unlikely to be completed during the interim period. Where existing roads, facilities, and other improvements found to be causing an unacceptable risk cannot be relocated, eliminated, or reconstructed, those improvements would be closed. Also, due to the short-term duration of this direction, adjustments to management not within the sole discretion of the Agencies (i.e., RF-1, LH-3, RA-1, WR-2, FW-3, and FW-4) would be initiated but would be unlikely to be completed during the interim period.

The standards and guidelines under the Inland Native Fish Strategy have the same intent as the 38 standards and guidelines under the Idaho Conservation Strategy. The Inland Native Fish Strategy has one additional standard and guideline (RA-4), related to storage of fuels and refueling in RHCA's.

Many people commented on the draft what it meant to not retard the attainment of the RMOs. For the purposes of analysis, to "retard" would mean to slow the rate of recovery below the near natural rate of recovery if no additional human caused disturbance was placed on the system. This obviously will require professional judgement and should be based on watershed analysis of local conditions.

## Timber Management

- TM-1** Prohibit timber harvest, including fuelwood cutting, in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, except as described below.
- a. Where catastrophic events such as fire, flooding, volcanic, wind, or insect damage result in degraded riparian conditions, allow salvage and fuelwood cutting in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas only where present and future woody debris needs are met, where cutting would not retard or prevent attainment of other Riparian Management Objectives, and where adverse effects can be avoided to inland native fish. For priority watersheds, complete watershed analysis prior to salvage cutting in RHCAs.
  - b. Apply silvicultural practices for Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas to acquire desired vegetation characteristics where needed to attain Riparian Management Objectives. Apply silvicultural practices in a manner that does not retard attainment of Riparian Management Objectives and that avoids adverse effects on inland native fish.

## Roads Management

- RF-1** Cooperate with Federal, Tribal, State, and county agencies, and cost-share partners to achieve consistency in road design, operation, and maintenance necessary to attain Riparian Management Objectives.
- RF-2** For each existing or planned road, meet the Riparian Management Objectives and avoid adverse effects to inland native fish by:
- a. completing watershed analyses prior to construction of new roads or landings in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas within priority watersheds.
  - b. minimizing road and landing locations in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas.
  - c. initiating development and implementation of a Road Management Plan or a Transportation Management Plan. At a minimum, address the following items in the plan:
    1. Road design criteria, elements, and standards that govern construction and reconstruction.
    2. Road management objectives for each road.
    3. Criteria that govern road operation, maintenance, and management.
    4. Requirements for pre-, during-, and post-storm inspections and maintenance.
    5. Regulation of traffic during wet periods to minimize erosion and sediment delivery and accomplish other objectives.
    6. Implementation and effectiveness monitoring plans for road stability, drainage, and erosion control.

- 7. Mitigation plans for road failures.
- d. avoiding sediment delivery to streams from the road surface.
  - 1. Outsloping of the roadway surface is preferred, except in cases where outsloping would increase sediment delivery to streams or where outsloping is infeasible or unsafe.
  - 2. Route road drainage away from potentially unstable stream channels, fills, and hillslopes.
- e. avoiding disruption of natural hydrologic flow paths.
- f. avoiding sidecasting of soils or snow. Sidecasting of road material is prohibited on road segments within or abutting RHCAs in priority watersheds.

**RF-3** Determine the influence of each road on the Riparian Management Objectives. Meet Riparian Management Objectives and avoid adverse effects on inland native fish by:

- a. reconstructing road and drainage features that do not meet design criteria or operation and maintenance standards, or that have been shown to be less effective than designed for controlling sediment delivery, or that retard attainment of Riparian Management Objectives, or do not protect priority watersheds from increased sedimentation.
- b. prioritizing reconstruction based on the current and potential damage to inland native fish and their priority watersheds, the ecological value of the riparian resources affected, and the feasibility of options such as helicopter logging and road relocation out of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas.
- c. closing and stabilizing or obliterating, and stabilizing roads not needed for future management activities. Prioritize these actions based on the current and potential damage to inland native fish in priority watersheds, and the ecological value of the riparian resources affected.

**RF-4** Construct new, and improve existing, culverts, bridges, and other stream crossings to accommodate a 100-year flood, including associated bedload and debris, where those improvements would/do pose a substantial risk to riparian conditions. Substantial risk improvements include those that do not meet design and operation maintenance criteria, or that have been shown to be less effective than designed for controlling erosion, or that retard attainment of Riparian Management Objectives, or that do not protect priority watersheds from increased sedimentation. Base priority for upgrading on risks in priority watersheds and the ecological value of the riparian resources affected. Construct and maintain crossings to prevent diversion of streamflow out of the channel and down the road in the event of crossing failure.

**RF-5** Provide and maintain fish passage at all road crossings of existing and potential fish-bearing streams.

### Grazing Management

- GM-1 Modify grazing practices (e.g., accessibility of riparian areas to livestock, length of grazing season, stocking levels, timing of grazing, etc.) that retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives or are likely to adversely affect inland native fish. Suspend grazing if adjusting practices is not effective in meeting Riparian Management Objectives.
- GM-2 Locate new livestock handling and/or management facilities outside of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. For existing livestock handling facilities inside the Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, assure that facilities do not prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives. Relocate or close facilities where these objectives cannot be met.
- GM-3 Limit livestock trailing, bedding, watering, salting, loading, and other handling efforts to those areas and times that would not retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish.
- GM-4 Adjust wild horse and burro management to avoid impacts that prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish.

### Recreation Management

- RM-1 Design, construct, and operate recreation facilities, including trails and dispersed sites, in a manner that does not retard or prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives and avoids adverse effects on inland native fish. Complete watershed analysis prior to construction of new recreation facilities in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas within priority watersheds. For existing recreation facilities inside Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, assure that the facilities or use of the facilities would not prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish. Relocate or close recreation facilities where Riparian Management Objectives cannot be met or adverse effects on inland native fish can not be avoided.
- RM-2 Adjust dispersed and developed recreation practices that retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish. Where adjustment measures such as education, use limitations, traffic control devices, increased maintenance, relocation of facilities, and/or specific site closures are not effective in meeting Riparian Management Objectives and avoiding adverse effects on inland native fish, eliminate the practice or occupancy.
- RM-3 Address attainment of Riparian Management Objectives and potential effect on inland native fish in Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, and other Recreation Management plans.

### Minerals Management

- MM-1 Minimize adverse effects to inland native fish species from mineral operations. If a Notice of Intent indicates that a mineral operation would be located in a Riparian Habitat Conservation Area, consider the effects of the activity on inland native fish in the determination of significant surface disturbance pursuant to 36 CFR 228.4. For operations in a Riparian Habitat Conservation Area ensure operators take all practicable measures to maintain, protect, and rehabilitate fish and wildlife habitat which may be affected by the operations. When bonding



is required, consider (in the estimation of bond amount) the cost of stabilizing, rehabilitating, and reclaiming the area of operations.

- MM-2** Locate structures, support facilities, and roads outside Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. Where no alternative to siting facilities in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas exists, locate and construct the facilities in ways that avoid impacts to Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas and streams and adverse effects on inland native fish. Where no alternative to road construction exists, keep roads to the minimum necessary for the approved mineral activity. Close, obliterate and revegetate roads no longer required for mineral or land management activities.
- MM-3** Prohibit solid and sanitary waste facilities in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. If no alternative to locating mine waste (waste rock, spent ore, tailings) facilities in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas exists, and releases can be prevented and stability can be ensured, then:
- a. analyze the waste material using the best conventional sampling methods and analytic techniques to determine its chemical and physical stability characteristics.
  - b. locate and design the waste facilities using the best conventional techniques to ensure mass stability and prevent the release of acid or toxic materials. If the best conventional technology is not sufficient to prevent such releases and ensure stability over the long term, prohibit such facilities in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas.
  - c. monitor waste and waste facilities to confirm predictions of chemical and physical stability, and make adjustments to operations as needed to avoid adverse effects to inland native fish and to attain Riparian Management Objectives.
  - d. reclaim and monitor waste facilities to assure chemical and physical stability and revegetation to avoid adverse effects to inland native fish, and to attain the Riparian Management Objectives.
  - e. require reclamation bonds adequate to ensure long-term chemical and physical stability and successful revegetation of mine waste facilities.
- MM-4** For leasable minerals, prohibit surface occupancy within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas for oil, gas, and geothermal exploration and development activities where contracts and leases do not already exist, unless there are no other options for location and Riparian Management Objectives can be attained and adverse effects to inland native fish can be avoided. Adjust the operating plans of existing contracts to (1) eliminate impacts that prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives and (2) avoid adverse effects to inland native fish.
- MM-5** Permit sand and gravel mining and extraction within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas only if no alternatives exist, if the action(s) would not retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives, and adverse effects to inland native fish can be avoided.
- MM-6** Develop inspection, monitoring, and reporting requirements for mineral activities. Evaluate and apply the results of inspection and monitoring to modify mineral plans, leases, or permits as needed to eliminate impacts that prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives and avoid adverse effects on inland native fish.

## Fire/Fuels Management

- FM-1** Design fuel treatment and fire suppression strategies, practices, and actions so as not to prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives, and to minimize disturbance of riparian ground cover and vegetation. Strategies should recognize the role of fire in ecosystem function and identify those instances where fire suppression or fuel management actions could perpetuate or be damaging to long-term ecosystem function or inland native fish.
- FM-2** Locate incident bases, camps, helibases, staging areas, helispots, and other centers for incident activities outside of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. If the only suitable location for such activities is within the Riparian Habitat Conservation Area, an exemption may be granted following a review and recommendation by a resource advisor. The advisor would prescribe the location, use conditions, and rehabilitation requirements, with avoidance of adverse effects to inland native fish a primary goal. Use an interdisciplinary team, including a fishery biologist, to predetermine incident base and helibase locations during presuppression planning.
- FM-3** Avoid delivery of chemical retardant, foam, or additives to surface waters. An exception may be warranted in situations where overriding immediate safety imperatives exist, or, following a review and recommendation by a resource advisor and a fishery biologist, when the action agency determines an escape fire would cause more long-term damage to fish habitats than chemical delivery to surface waters.
- FM-4** Design prescribed burn projects and prescriptions to contribute to the attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives.
- FM-5** Immediately establish an emergency team to develop a rehabilitation treatment plan to attain Riparian Management Objectives and avoid adverse effects on inland native fish whenever Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas are significantly damaged by a wildfire or a prescribed fire burning out of prescription.

## Lands

- LH-1** Require instream flows and habitat conditions for hydroelectric and other surface water development proposals that maintain or restore riparian resources, favorable channel conditions, and fish passage, reproduction, and growth. Coordinate this process with the appropriate State agencies. During relicensing of hydroelectric projects, provide written and timely license conditions to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that require fish passage and flows and habitat conditions that maintain/restore riparian resources and channel integrity. Coordinate relicensing projects with the appropriate State agencies.
- LH-2** Locate new hydroelectric ancillary facilities outside Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. For existing ancillary facilities inside the RHCA that are essential to proper management, provide recommendations to FERC to assure that the facilities would not prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives and that adverse effects on inland native fish are avoided. Where these objectives cannot be met, provide recommendations to FERC that such ancillary facilities should be relocated. Locate, operate, and maintain hydroelectric facilities that must be located in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas to avoid effects that would retard or prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives and avoid adverse effects on inland native fish.

- LH-3 Issue leases, permits, rights-of-way, and easements to avoid effects that would retard or prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives and avoid adverse effects on inland native fish. Where the authority to do so was retained, adjust existing leases, permits, rights-of-way, and easements to eliminate effects that would retard or prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish. If adjustments are not effective, eliminate the activity. Where the authority to adjust was not retained, negotiate to make changes in existing leases, permits, rights-of-way, and easements to eliminate effects that would prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish. Priority for modifying existing leases, permits, rights-of-way, and easements would be based on the current and potential adverse effects on inland native fish and the ecological value of the riparian resources affected.
- LH-4 Use land acquisition, exchange, and conservation easements to meet Riparian Management Objectives and facilitate restoration of fish stocks and other species at risk of extinction.

**General Riparian Area Management**

- RA-1 Identify and cooperate with Federal, Tribal, State and local governments to secure instream flows needed to maintain riparian resources, channel conditions, and aquatic habitat.
- RA-2 Trees may be felled in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas when they pose a safety risk. Keep felled trees on site when needed to meet woody debris objectives.
- RA-3 Apply herbicides, pesticides, and other toxicants, and other chemicals in a manner that does not retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives and avoids adverse effects on inland native fish.
- RA-4 Prohibit storage of fuels and other toxicants within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. Prohibit refueling within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas unless there are no other alternatives. Refueling sites within a Riparian Habitat Conservation Area must be approved by the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management and have an approved spill containment plan.
- RA-5 Locate water drafting sites to avoid adverse effects to inland native fish and instream flows, and in a manner that does not retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives.

**Watershed and Habitat Restoration**

- WR-1 Design and implement watershed restoration projects in a manner that promotes the long-term ecological integrity of ecosystems, conserves the genetic integrity of native species, and contributes to attainment of Riparian Management Objectives.
- WR-2 Cooperate with Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies, and private landowners to develop watershed-based Coordinated Resource Management Plans (CRMPs) or other cooperative agreements to meet Riparian Management Objectives.

## Fisheries and Wildlife Restoration

- FW-1** Design and implement fish and wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement actions in a manner that contributes to attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives.
- FW-2** Design, construct, and operate fish and wildlife interpretive and other user-enhancement facilities in a manner that does not retard or prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish. For existing fish and wildlife interpretive and other user-enhancement facilities inside Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, assure that Riparian Management Objectives are met and adverse effects on inland native fish are avoided. Where Riparian Management Objectives cannot be met or adverse effects on inland native fish avoided, relocate or close such facilities.
- FW-3** Cooperate with Federal, Tribal, and State wildlife management agencies to identify and eliminate wild ungulate impacts that prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish.
- FW-4** Cooperate with Federal, Tribal, and State fish management agencies to identify and eliminate adverse effects on native fish associated with habitat manipulation, fish stocking, fish harvest, and poaching.

## **Priority Watersheds**

Priority watersheds have been designated in Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Washington. Criteria considered to designate priority watersheds in the 22 National Forests were:

1. *Watersheds with excellent habitat or strong assemblages of inland native fish, with a priority on bull trout populations.*
2. *Watersheds that provide for meta-population objectives.*
3. *Degraded watersheds with a high restoration potential.*

The intent of designating priority watersheds is to provide a pattern of protection across the landscape where habitat for inland native fish would receive special attention and treatment. Areas in good condition would serve as anchors for the potential recovery of depressed stocks, and also would provide colonists for adjacent areas where habitat had been degraded by land management or natural events. Those areas of lower quality habitat with high potential for restoration would become future sources of good habitat with the implementation of a comprehensive restoration program. Priority watersheds would have the highest priority for restoration, monitoring and watershed analysis.

Within priority watersheds, ongoing activities have been screened. This screening effort is a way to monitor ongoing activities to categorize the extent of risk they represent to bull trout habitat or populations. Projects determined to be a high or medium risk must be reviewed by Forest Supervisors and, subject to valid existing rights, they have three options to pursue:

1. *Modify the action to reduce the risk.*
2. *Postpone the action until the final direction is issued.*
3. *Cancel the action.*

Forest Supervisors will submit to their respective Regional Foresters an action plan for how high and moderate risk projects will be modified to avoid an unacceptable risk. This action plan will be submitted

within one month. Modifications for moderate and high risk projects should be initiated within two months with high risk projects having the highest priority. If there are compelling reasons why a project can not be modified, delayed, or cancelled, the Forest Supervisor will include in the action plan written documentation of the rationale for such action and what other mitigating measures will be implemented to assure there is not an unacceptable risk. For low risk projects, Forest Supervisors must provide an action plan by March 1, 1996 for means to assure there is not an unacceptable risk.

## **Watershed Analysis**

Watershed analysis is a systematic procedure for determining how a watershed functions in relation to its physical and biological components. This is accomplished through consideration of history, processes, landform, and condition. Generally, watershed analysis would be initiated where the interim RMOs and the interim RHCA widths do not adequately reflect specific watershed capabilities, or as required in the standards and guidelines before specific projects are initiated. The guidelines and procedural manuals being developed by the Interagency Watershed Analysis Coordination Team and other potentially relevant procedures (e.g., the Cumulative Watershed Effects Process for Idaho, etc.) would be considered and used, where appropriate, in development of a watershed analysis protocol. Eventually, any watershed analysis would follow the final *Ecosystem Analysis at a Watershed Scale*. Additional information will be sent out when it is available.

Watershed analysis is a prerequisite for determining which processes and parts of the landscape affect fish and riparian habitat, and is essential for defining watershed- specific boundaries for Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas and for Riparian Management Objectives. Watershed analysis can form the basis for evaluating cumulative watershed effects; defining watershed restoration needs, goals and objectives; implementing restoration strategies; and monitoring the effectiveness of watershed protection measures, depending upon the issues to be addressed in the watershed analysis. Watershed analysis employs the perspectives and tools of multiple disciplines, especially geomorphology, hydrology, geology, aquatic and terrestrial ecology, and soil science. It is the framework for understanding and carrying out land use activities within a geomorphic context, and is a major component of the evolving science of ecosystem analysis. Forests should utilize local fish and game department, tribal staff, or other local groups whenever possible to increase the knowledge base and expertise for watershed analysis.

Watershed analysis consists of a sequence of activities designed to identify and interpret the processes operating in a specific landscape. Since the concept of watershed analysis was first introduced, there has been much discussion as to the procedures and detail that a watershed analysis should complete. It is recognized that the components and intensity of the analysis would vary depending on level of activity and significance of issues involved. Following are the general process steps for watershed analysis currently being considered:

### **1. Characterization of the Watershed.**

- a. *Place the watershed in a broader geographic context.*
- b. *Highlight dominant features and processes with the watershed.*

- 2. Identification of Issues and Key Questions.**
  - a. *Key questions and resource components.*
  - b. *Determine which issues are appropriate to analyze at this scale.*
- 3. Description of Current Condition.**
- 4. Description of Reference Conditions.**
  - a. *Establish ecologically and geomorphically appropriate reference conditions for the watershed.*
- 5. Interpretation of Information.**
  - a. *Provide a comparison and interpretation of the current, historic, and reference conditions.*
- 6. Recommendations.**
  - a. *Provide conclusions and recommendations to management.*

The process described above is significantly streamlined to allow managers to focus watershed analysis to address specific issues and management needs. This can include modification of RMO's, RHCA's, or identification of restoration and monitoring needs. The state-of-the art for watershed analysis is still developing and the processes would need to be flexible.

### **Watershed Restoration**

Watershed restoration comprises actions taken to improve the current conditions of watersheds to restore degraded habitat, and to provide long-term protection to natural resources, including riparian and aquatic resources. The strategy does not attempt to develop a restoration strategy given the short time period for implementation of this interim direction. It is expected that Forests would utilize the information from watershed analysis and project development to initiate restoration projects where appropriate and funds are available. Priority watersheds would have the highest priority for restoration efforts.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring is an important component of the proposed interim direction. The primary focus is to verify that the standards and guidelines were applied during the project implementation. Monitoring to assess whether those protective measures are effective to attain Riparian Goals and Management Objectives would be a lower priority given the short time frame for this interim direction. Complex ecological processes and long time frames are inherent in the RMOs, and it is unrealistic to expect that the planned monitoring would generate conclusive results within 18 months. Nevertheless, it is critical to begin monitoring. Forests are urged to utilize current Forest Plan monitoring efforts, and Section 7 Monitoring results from PACFISH areas where on the same Forest to establish a baseline for determining the effectiveness of these standards and guidelines. Priority watersheds would have the highest priority for monitoring efforts.

A third type of monitoring (validation monitoring) is intended to ascertain the validity of the assumptions used in developing the interim direction. Because of the short-term nature of the management direction, no specific requirements are included for validation monitoring.

## ALTERNATIVE C

The following information on Alternative C is supplied for the testing efforts. It is not for general application.

Alternative C is based on the "National Forest Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Strategy (FISH 2000)" developed by the Northwest Forest Resource Council in January, 1995. FISH 2000 was submitted by many commentators as an alternative that should be evaluated in detail. Following are the key elements of the strategy. FISH 2000 is included in the planning record.

This alternative does not establish generalized Riparian Management Objectives or Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. Rather these are established through assessment of key processes related to the forest canopy and shade, large woody debris recruitment, sediment from surface erosion, sediment from mass failures, and gravel recruitment. As described in FISH 2000 (page iv), the process is implemented in three steps:

1. *Watershed scale riparian function assessment would establish current riparian conditions, riparian input processes, areas not functioning within ecological potential, and appropriate riparian goals.*
2. *Project and site-specific assessment determines the extent to which riparian functions are currently provided and identify management actions that would maintain them.*
3. *Where riparian function relationships and management needs remain unclear, FISH 2000 requires a more comprehensive watershed analysis be conducted to adjust RHCA's, RMO's, and Standards and Guidelines.*

This alternative articulated several goals for watershed, riparian, and stream channel conditions. These goals are the same as those described for the strategy and are listed above.

FISH 2000 provides standards and guidelines only for the management of resources within the RHCA's. For the purposes of this alternative, the current Forest Plan management direction for other resources and any existing State Best Management Practices would be considered the management direction to be applied.

Refer to Table A-3, below, for the Standards and Guidelines guiding project development under Alternative C.

## ALTERNATIVE E

The following information on Alternative E is supplied for the testing efforts. It is not for general application.

Alternative E would be similar to the strategy, in that it would apply the same riparian goals, interim Riparian Management Objectives, Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, and standards and guidelines for the entire area of the project. Based on the results of scoping, it was determined that another alternative was needed to provide stronger direction in the following areas:

1. *A Riparian Management Objective for sediment substrate would be established to be less than 20 percent fine sediment in spawning habitat.*

2. *A Riparian Management Objective for streambank stability would be established ensuring that at least 90 percent of all streambanks would be stable.*
3. *Watershed analysis, although conducted as described for the strategy, must be completed in Priority Watersheds prior to initiation of any new projects and activities therein.*
4. *Subject to valid existing rights, prohibit all road construction and timber sales in unroaded areas 1,000 acres or larger or unroaded areas smaller than 1,000 acres that are biologically significant.*
5. *All watershed analysis findings that would change Resource Management Objectives, Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, or standards and guidelines would undergo peer review.*



Table A-3. Interim standards and guidelines design considerations.

Function	RHCA Requirements	Activity	Timber Management Considerations
Water/bank stability; constrained channels	Up to 20 feet	Harvesting, Grazing <sup>1</sup>	20-ft. no-cut zone around all fish-bearing streams; selectively harvest 20 ft. up to 100 ft. Small streams, leave trees <8 inches dbh <sup>2</sup>
Water/bank stability; unconstrained channels	Up to 1 effective tree height around all active channel migration zones.	Harvesting, Grazing	20-ft. no-cut zone around all fish-bearing streams; selectively harvest 20 ft. up to 100 ft. Small streams, leave trees <8 inches dbh
Canopy	Up to 75 feet	Harvesting, Grazing	Selectively harvest trees not required for shade and temperature control according to locally applicable models (e.g., WA canopy-elev-temp model for E. WA).
Large Woody Debris (LWD)	Up to 1 effective tree height. Around all active channel migration zones.	Harvesting	Selectively harvest trees not required for LWD recruitment. For example, see Oregon Forest Practices Rules for standing leave-tree needs.
Litter	100 feet for medium to large streams, 50 feet for small streams. Around all active channel migration zones.	Harvesting	Selectively harvest trees in accordance with requirements for shade and LWD.
Nutrients	100 feet for medium to large streams, 50 feet for small streams. Around all active channel migration zones.	Harvesting, Grazing, Roads, Slash Disposal	No piling and burning of slash. Minimize broadcast burning consistent with ecosystem management fire ecology. Minimize soil disturbance.
Sediment from Surface Erosion	Roads: 150 feet. Ground-based skidding: 50 feet.	Harvesting, Grazing, Roads	Selectively harvest within 75 ft. of large streams, 20 ft. of small streams. No ground-skidding equipment within 50 ft. Minimize subsoil disturbance. Minimize location of roads within 150 ft. and mitigate erosion.
Sediment from Mass Failures	High risk sites.	Harvesting, Grazing, Roads	Stabilize fills, carefully maintain culverts and drainage systems. Locate and construct roads only when failures will not occur. Remove trees when slope instability will not result.
Fuel Loads/Wildfires Vegetative Community	Riparian and stream-adjacent sites	Harvesting, Thinning, Prescribed Burning	Prevent catastrophic wildfires. Return RHCA's to a more healthy species mix, density and lower fuel load.
Gravel	Bank erosion and mass failure sites.	Harvesting, Grazing, Roads	Conduct management activities so as not to prevent natural process from providing necessary gravels.

<sup>1</sup> Grazing is a key riparian management consideration, but grazing standards and guidelines are not included within this table.  
<sup>2</sup> Diameter at breast height.

**FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 15**

**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST**

**AMENDMENT DECISION WAS  
VACATED ON APRIL 14, 1991**

## APPENDIX B- FOREST PLAN TEXT

NOTE: This is Alternative A modified and represents the "Decision" on this project. Changes in wording from the original Alternative A, which were not stated as modifications in the Decision Notice are indicated here in italics.

### ELKHORN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT

#### HELENA AND BEAVERHEAD-DEERLODGE NATIONAL FORESTS

### ELKHORN-WIDE DIRECTION

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) was established as a result of the Final Elkhorn Wilderness Study EIS and decision (1982). The Final Report and decision recommended a set of criteria that would be used to establish a WMU in the Deerlodge and Helena Forest Plans. The Forest Plans were completed in 1987 and 1986, respectively, and both provided direction for management of the Elkhorns as a WMU. Monitoring, completed through a landscape analysis in 1993, indicated a need for an amendment to update and improve the Forest Plan direction which would continue to meet the original criteria.

The following direction for the Elkhorn WMU applies to all National Forest System Lands in the Elkhorn Mountains which includes portions of the Helena and Deerlodge National Forests. This direction is a compilation of the original Wilderness Study criteria, the original language in the Forest Plans (1986, 1987), the results of the Elkhorn Landscape Analysis (completed in January 1993), and the interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Elkhorn Cooperative Management Area (signed July 1992 by the Deerlodge National Forest, Helena National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, Butte District, and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks). **This direction incorporates the principles of Ecosystem Management while maintaining the integrity of the WMU concept.** The objectives contained in this direction are intended to be accomplished within a ten year time frame with the exception of LTA vegetation objectives, which are intended to be accomplished in 50 years.

NOTE: **Forest-wide standards in the Forest Plans for the Helena and Deerlodge National Forests have been incorporated as they apply to the Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit and included in this section.**

#### II. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION

The desired future condition is based on the goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines. The following paragraph is a description of the desired future condition of the Forest System lands in the Elkhorn Mountains:

The Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit is integrated into the overall Elkhorn Cooperative Management Area as a unique, cooperatively administered geographic area, where management of all lands under federal administration emphasizes ecosystem health and sustainability. On National Forest System lands, wildlife and recreation values are

considered above other resource uses or outputs.

On public lands in the Elkhorns, a sense of "naturalness" is the pervasive quality of the landscape. Mining, timber, grazing, and other land use occur, but are mitigated such that they do not appear dominant. Grasslands consist of mostly native species that provide abundant forage. Shrublands exist in varying patch sizes, densities, and seral stages across the landscape. The forests represent a variety of age classes. Many of the lower elevation forested stands exist in an open savannah-like structure. Streams run clear and riparian areas are productive, diverse, and function to store water and trap sediment. Riparian areas are vigorous and healthy with a diversity of flora and fauna.

Recreation in the Elkhorns emphasizes its unique resources including an abundant and diverse flora and fauna for fishing, hunting, viewing, and interpretation; an abundance of unique cultural resources both historic and prehistoric for viewing and interpretation, and a well-defined and managed transportation system which offers opportunities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational activities. Signing is consistent throughout the area regardless of administrative boundaries.

### III. DEFINITIONS

A **Goal** is a concise statements that describe a desired end result. Goals are normally expressed in broad general terms rather than quantitatively and there is no time period specified for achievement.

**Objectives** describe measurable resource conditions, ranges of conditions, or a time period intended to achieve forest plan goals.

**Standards** are limitations on management activities; adherence to standards is mandatory. Standards must be defined in such a manner that they are clearly within the authority or ability of the agency to enforce; that is, compliance must be within the agency's control.

**Guidelines** are used to describe a preferred or advisable course of action. Guidelines would play two key roles: First, guidelines can be used to describe a preferred or advisable method for conducting resource activities. Second, guidelines can be used to describe a preferred or advisable sequence or priority for implementing various types of projects when such guidance is useful in facilitating achievement of a forest plan goal. When deviation from a guideline is necessary, it will be documented during the project-level analysis.

### IV. STANDARDS - ELKHORN-WIDE

- 1) No trans-mountain road will be considered.
- 2) Prior to making site-specific decisions about livestock grazing, the process outlined in FSH 2209.24 will be followed.
- 3) Allotment Management Plans will include numerical limitations on one or more of the following parameters: key species forage utilization (%); stubble height (inches); woody utilization (%); bank disturbance (% of reach); and/or soil disturbance (% of reach).
- 4) All forest land in the WMU is classified as unsuitable for timber production which

precludes timber harvest on a "programmed" basis.

5) Outfitter numbers will not increase for hunting and fishing. The number of service days are considered during the permitting process.

6) Mining activities will not be allowed on big game winter ranges/calving areas from 12/2 to 5/15. Winter ranges, as mapped, are based on MDFWP telemetry data (See Figure A). This standard applies to all mining activities except operations and maintenance of oil and gas production facilities.

7) Leased minerals activities will not be allowed on core big game summer range from 6/1-9/30. Core summer ranges are based on MDFWP telemetry data (see Figure B). This standard applies to all leaseable mining activities except operations and maintenance of oil and gas production facilities.

8) No mineral activity will occur at the Elkhorn townsite cemetery (withdrawn from mineral entry).

## **V. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **TERRESTRIAL ENVIRONMENT**

#### **VEGETATION**

**GOAL 1.** The structure, amounts, and patterns of vegetation are managed to be consistent within the range of conditions that were maintained under natural disturbance regimes.

The distribution and relative occurrence of vegetation is managed at the level of the Landtype Association (LTA). The structure of the vegetation is also addressed within the overall lifeform (eg. grassland). LTA's are groupings of landtypes having repeatable patterns of bedrock geology, geomorphic influence, broad climatic breaks, landforms, soils, and potential vegetation. The following objectives reflect the total changes needed **to manage the grasslands at the lowest end of best estimate of natural** range and conversely, to manage at the upper ends of the natural ranges for both shrubs and conifers. These objectives are intended to be accomplished over the next 50 years.

#### **Objectives:**

(NOTE: a "decrease" in shrubs or conifers is not equivalent to a "type conversion"; these are areas where conifers (generally 0-90 years old) and shrubs are colonizing into previously "open" areas (these will generally be on grassland habitat types). "Canopy cover reductions" are targeted only for the areas within the stated acreages where canopy cover is greater than 50% and historically the stands were 10-50%).

A. **LTA 1:** Increase grasslands by about 765 acres or to 19% of the LTA; decrease shrublands by 700 acres (to 5% of the LTA); decrease conifers by about 70 acres and reduce canopy cover from >50% to 10-50% on portions of 8,800 acres.

B. **LTA 2:** Increase grasslands by about 2300 acres (to 68% of the LTA); decrease shrublands by 1300 acres (to 10% of the LTA); decrease conifers by about 1500 acres (to

10% of the LTA); increase riparian vegetation and aspen on about 500 acres; and reduce canopy cover from >50% to 10-30% on portions of 1200 acres of conifers.

C. **LTA 3:** Maintain grasslands on about 3100 acres (20% of the LTA); increase shrublands, aspen, and riparian on 300 acres (5% of the LTA); decrease conifers on about 300 acres; and reduce canopy cover from >50% to 10-50% on portions of 11,000 acres of conifers (70% of LTA).

D. **LTA 4:** Increase grasslands by about 4600 acres (to 68% of the LTA); decrease shrublands by 1800 acres (to 10% of the LTA); decrease conifers on about 4,000 acres; increase aspen and riparian vegetation on about 1200 acres; and reduce canopy cover from >50% to 10-30% on portions of 1300 acres of conifers.

E. **LTA 5:** Increase grasslands by about 2400 acres (to 15% of the LTA); maintain about 700 acres of shrublands (3% of the LTA); decrease conifers on about 2400 acres; and reduce canopy cover from >50% to 10-50% on portions of 18,500 acres of conifers.

F. **LTA 6:** Decrease canopy cover where it currently is greater than 50% to range from 30-50% on portions of 11,000 acres of conifers (70% of the LTA).

G. **LTA 7:** Decrease canopy cover where it currently is greater than 50% to range from 30-50% on portions of 5,700 acres of conifers (70% of the LTA).

H. **LTA 8:** Consider unplanned fire ignitions; Management is limited.

I. **LTA 9:** Decrease canopy cover where it currently is greater than 50% to range from 30-50% on portions of 7,000 acres of conifers (70% of the LTA).

J. **LTA 10:** Consider unplanned fire ignitions; Management is limited.

K. **LTA 11:** Increase grasslands by about 400 acres (to 85% of the LTA); decrease about 250 acres of shrublands (10% of the LTA); and reduce conifers on about 100 acres (5% of the LTA).

L. **LTA 12:** Increase grasslands by about 270 acres (to 10% of the LTA); increase shrublands by 100 acres (to 13% of the LTA); decrease conifers by about 370 acres (77% of the LTA). In portions of the remaining conifer stands (2,500 acres), reduce canopy cover where it is currently >50% to occur within the range from 10-50%.

M. Plant communities of limited distribution in the Elkhorn Mountains are given special consideration in the implementation of other vegetation treatments as shown below:

1. Improve the health and vigor of existing stands of bitterbrush in LTA's 2, 5, 6, and 11.
2. Improve the health and vigor of existing stands of mountain mahogany in LTA 11.
3. Increase young age-classes of narrowleaf cottonwood where the species is currently distributed.
4. Conduct surveys for the Regionally-listed sensitive plant species with potential habitat in

the Elkhorns; any known populations are maintained or enhanced.

**GOAL 2.** Soils and vegetation function to promote overall ecosystem health and sustainability.

**Objectives:**

A. Restore and maintain long-term soil productivity consistent with vegetation objectives through techniques that increase organic material incorporation and decrease the percentage of exposed surface soils.

**Guidelines:**

1. The soil resource is considered when managing livestock, mining, recreation, and other potential land disturbing activities.

B. Control epidemic (threatens the well-being of many wildlife species) levels of insects and disease (endemic levels are considered normal).

**Guidelines:**

1. The control methods minimize impacts on wildlife values.

**GOAL 3.** Vegetation composition (kind of species and communities) is within the range of conditions that were maintained under natural disturbance regimes.

**Objectives:**

A. Promote old growth structure on a portion of the forested vegetation and provide habitat for species associated with old growth forest within the range of conditions that were maintained under natural disturbance regimes as follows: **LTA 1, 3, 9:** 25-60%; **LTA 2, 4, 11:** 0-15%; **LTA 5, 6:** 35-60%; **LTA 7, 8, 10:** 20-65%.

**Guidelines:**

1. Base old growth delineations and management on definitions found in FSH 2609.24

B. Control noxious weed levels to protect and enhance native vegetation.

**Guidelines:**

1. Utilize biological, mechanical and chemical controls in an integrated manner focusing on areas of heaviest weed infestations.

2. Utilize, to the extent possible, native plant species for reclamation and revegetation of disturbances associated with management activities.

3. Treat new weed infestations as a priority over existing infestations.

4. Provide funding for weed control on disturbed sites by the "resource" that causes the

disturbance.

## **WILDLIFE**

GOAL 1. At the landscape level, a diverse array of habitats, at levels and arrangements within the range of conditions that were maintained under natural disturbance regimes, function to contribute to viable populations of native wildlife species, and mountain goats.

### **Objectives:**

A. Increase the variety of wildlife habitats by accomplishing the objectives for soil, water, and vegetation.

B. Provide high quality and adequate quantity of forage on "core" elk winter ranges (see map) to increase the number of animals wintering on public lands from about 70% to 90% of the 1992 State Elk Plan population objective (2,000). Forage quality includes a balance of biomass and palatability (ie. not all plants are old with lots of dead material).

C. Accomplish 150-500 acres of prescribed burning on potential bighorn sheep winter range.

### **Guidelines:**

1. Restore and/or maintain grasslands in conjunction with rocky cliffs to support populations of bighorn sheep to minimize or eliminate any impacts on existing land uses and private landowners.

2. Transplanted bighorn sheep are considered "established" when monitoring shows continual use of a winter area for 3 consecutive years.

D. Improve riparian habitats to reestablish or maintain beaver populations in Slim Sam, Crow, South Crow, Indian, Wilson, Big Tizer, Maupin, Mill, Willard, and Turnley Creeks.

### **Guidelines:**

1. Restore and/or maintain shrubs and other woody vegetation in areas where historic beaver activity occurred and which have the potential to support beaver; Vore, 1993 states that the best beaver habitat is associated with glacial till, granite or shist bedrock geology with a stream gradient of less than or equal to 6%, a valley width of 150 feet or more, willow or aspen for winter food, and materials suitable for dam and lodge construction.

E. Improve riparian habitats to support 25-75 moose especially in Tizer Basin and lower Crow Creek, and in the Muskrat, McClellan, and Maupin drainage basins.

### **Guidelines:**

1. Restore and/or maintain a diversity of healthy browse species (aspen, willow, dogwood, alder) (with a variety of age-classes from young sprouts to older mature shrubs), and avoid impacts to willow bottoms during other management activities.

**GOAL 2.** The special needs of Regionally-sensitive (and threatened and endangered)



species occurring or with the potential to occur in the Elkhorns are provided.

**Objectives:**

A. Restore and/or maintain habitats for these species by accomplishing vegetation objectives, and/or through project level evaluation, mitigation, and/or investments (eg. snag retention and/or creation).

**Guideline:**

1. The special needs of sensitive species with potential habitat in the Forest System lands in the Elkhorn Mountains are addressed through project level evaluations, mitigation, or by proposing specific habitat enhancement projects, where appropriate using information provided in Reichel et al. (1992) (Project File). Threatened and endangered species, if located in the Elkhorn WMU, are managed consistently with applicable laws and recovery plans.

**GOAL 3. Motorized vehicle access and other human activities are restricted whenever necessary to protect wildlife habitats and other natural resources, and to provide seclusion for selected wildlife species.**

**Objectives:**

A. Restrict motorized vehicle access on summer range in moist meadows and drainage heads to maintain habitat effectiveness (guidelines found in FSH 2609.24).

B. Coordinate with MDFWP to ensure that trapping regulations and quotas are consistent with the maintenance of beaver complexes (except where beaver are in conflict with other riparian objectives).

C. Control human disturbance on big game winter range between 12/2-5/15. This includes restrictions primarily on motorized vehicles, but may also include, where necessary, restrictions on other users.

**GOAL 4. Elk are maintained on public lands during the big game hunting season and habitat is provided to support the desired sex and age classes of elk, as stated in the current State Elk Plan (1992).**

**Objectives:**

A. Restrict access to provide big game security areas (blocks of cover at least 1/2 mile from roads open to motorized vehicles) to contribute to 30% (where inherent cover conditions allow) of the herd unit.

B. Retain hiding cover on core elk winter range where it exists within 1/8 mile of a road open to motorized vehicles. Hiding cover is defined as timber with at least 40% canopy cover in patches at least 10 acres in size.

**Guidelines:**

1. Use state of the art methodology to assess and manage security habitat for elk during the big game season. These process guidelines are found in Forest Service Handbook (FSH 2609.24).

## **AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT**

### **WATERSHED**

GOAL 1. The extent and function of riparian areas are maintained and/or restored to their full potential. Riparian and stream conditions reflect low to moderately low grazing disturbance regimes. Streams provide quality fish habitat. Vegetation consists of a diversity of plant species and structural stages. Non-native plants and noxious weeds are greatly reduced.

#### **Objectives:**

A. Improve low similarity riparian reaches to moderate similarity, and maintain moderate and high similarity riparian reaches to achieve the following percentages on streams within Forest System lands in the Elkhorns:

High: 74% Moderate: 25% Low: 1%

Similarity relates to desired conditions as described in "Riparian Guidelines for Grazing" (FSH 2209.24).

Specific Objectives for the major drainages in the Elkhorns are as follows:

BT

Drainage Improve Similarity Maintain Moderate

from Low to Moderate and High Similarity

Crow Creek 22 miles 93 miles

Indian Creek 5 miles 3 miles

Prickly Pear NA 13 miles

Warm Springs 0.5 miles 18 miles

McClellan NA 24.5 miles

Beaver Creek 2 miles 23 miles

Muskrat Creek 0.5 miles 5 miles

Dry Creek 2 miles 3 miles

Elkhorn Creek 1.5 miles 5 miles

BT

**Guidelines:**

1. Reduce high and extreme disturbance (based on riparian inventories) by specifying in Allotment Management Plans the annual allowable limits to use of riparian areas for livestock grazing. Process direction and recommended limits based on current conditions and stream resiliency is contained in FSH 2209.24.

2. The numerical guidelines for riparian disturbance and utilization apply only to domestic livestock and will not include use by wildlife prior to the grazing season. At the site-specific level, during the development of annual operating plans, situations where "dual use" by livestock and wildlife would impede recovery of specific riparian areas, livestock turn-on dates, modified pasture scheduling, temporary fencing, herding, or other measures, would be implemented to enable the achievement of riparian and allotment management plan objectives.

B. Maintain habitat conditions in drainages currently occupied by westslope cutthroat trout in high similarity conditions. This includes the Hall, Prickly Pear, Crystal, Staubach, McClellan, Dutchman, and Muskrat drainages (the streams physically occupied by the fish as well as unoccupied connected tributaries).

C. Coordinate with MDFWP to facilitate the reintroduction of westslope cutthroat in all suitable barren stream reaches; to date these include upper Muskrat, upper Eureka, upper Beaver and South Beaver, Little Tizer, and East Fork McClellan Creeks.

**Guidelines:**

1. Suitable habitat will generally consist of 4 km of habitat that provides for spawning, overwintering, and rearing needs. Consideration should also be given to whether there is a barrier to isolate cutthroat from competing non-native fish, the accessibility of the stream (probability of someone introducing non-native fish), and public recreational use and acceptance.

D. Coordinate with MDFWP to evaluate removing non-native fish and introduction of cutthroat trout in lower Muskrat, South Fork Crow, lower McClellan, Queen's Gulch, and East Fork Dry Creeks.

**Guidelines:**

1. Use the following criteria in prioritizing proposals: a) juxtaposition to existing or potential cutthroat population (+), b) road access and accessibility (-), c) recreational fishing (-), d) complexity of removing brook trout (eg. beaver ponds)(-), and e) public recreational use and acceptance.

E. Restore or maintain potential wetland habitats associated with non-linear areas influenced by high water tables and/or springs in the Elkhorns. Such areas include: Hog Hollow, Spring Creek, Swamp Creek spring complex, South Fork Crow Lakes, Jenkins Gulch, Wilson Creek, Tizer Basin, Black Canyon, Bear Gulch, South Fork Crow Creek, Maupin Creek,

Willard Creek, Crystal Creek (and the head of Jackson Creek), Turnley Meadows, Muddy Spring, and Leslie Lake. Identify additional smaller seeps and wet areas.

**GOAL 2.** The water currently meeting state water quality standards is maintained. The quality of water and sediment coming from degraded watershed situations (backlog) on Forest lands is improved through restoration projects.

**Objectives:**

A. Implement road maintenance/improvements in the McClellan Creek municipal watershed and in other areas where excessive erosion on road beds is occurring.

**Guidelines:**

1. Apply soil and water conservation practices that have been developed cooperatively by the State Water Quality agency and the Forest Service and displayed in the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (FSH 2509.22). To help identify the minimum requirements for projects that could degrade water quality, the effectiveness of state and local Best Management Practises (BMPS) will be identified.

2. Emphasize riparian restoration through controls on other activities (livestock, minerals, timber harvest, road or trail construction) versus habitat structures. In limited cases, habitat structures may offer a short-term measure to raise the water table until natural vegetation returns to the site.

B. Rehabilitate areas which have been severely disturbed and are not capable of recovering through management controls (guidelines or best management practices), using structural/mechanical means. These will be scheduled through the Capital Investments Projects program".

**Guidelines:**

1. Evaluate the following factors in prioritizing stream rehabilitation projects: a) root causes of the degradation (eg. mining, roads); b) rehabilitation potential; c) the need for comprehensive watershed management; d) the need to resolve land management conflicts; e) the ability to work with natural recovery processes; f) whether the channel is still undergoing major adjustments; g) the effect of channel changes on channel dynamics; h) cost benefit ratio; i) whether the achieved conditions will be self-sustaining".

**GOAL 3.** Water needed for National Forest purposes will be filed for and protected through state water rights procedures.

**USER ENVIRONMENT**

**RECREATION**

**GOAL 1.** Recreation opportunities on all the National Forest System Lands in the Elkhorn Mountains include a balance of dispersed motorized and non-motorized opportunities based on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS).

**Objectives:**

- A. Manage motorized vehicle use to occur only on designated routes (no-off road travel) with the exception of snowmobile use in areas designated by the travel plan.
- B. Coordinate motorized access with user needs (eg. motorized trails for non-street legal recreational vehicles).
- C. Reclaim roads not open to motorized vehicles under the travel plan and which are not needed for management of the area.

**Guidelines:**

1. Use the Forest travel management planning process to review, evaluate, and implement the goals, objectives, and standards (Elkhorn -wide and Management Area); review every year and update every 5-10 years as needed. Intermediate emergency orders may be implemented between updates.
2. Coordinate transportation planning and road management with State, other federal, and local agencies and with owners of intermingled lands.
3. Use the following criteria for evaluating road, trail, or area restrictions:
  - safety** (restrictions may be necessary to provide for safety of Forest users).
  - resource protection** (unacceptable damage to soils, watershed, fish, wildlife, or historical/archeological sites will be mitigated by road restrictions or other road management actions as necessary).
  - economics** (restrictions will be considered if maintenance costs exceed benefits)
  - conflicting use** (conflicts between user groups may require restrictions)
  - facility protection** (restrictions may be necessary to prevent damage to administrative sites, special use facilities, or other improvements)
4. Relocate users displaced by management decisions within the same area or within the mountain range whenever possible.
5. Implement the method of road reclamation to achieve the desired conditions for the specific site. Methods could include: a) road obliteration with return to natural contours and restoration of natural drainage patterns; b) physical closure and restoration of natural drainage patterns; and c) conversion to a non-motorized trail.

**GOAL 2.** Recreation experiences meet the expectations, in terms of quality, of both the motorized and non-motorized users. Experiences include options for those who prefer driving for pleasure and enjoy self-guided drives, those who prefer a motorized experience with some challenge and risk, those who prefer nonmotorized activities that have low - moderate challenge and risk, and those who prefer nonmotorized activities that are self-guided and

entail additional challenge and risk.

**Objectives:**

A. Upgrade transportation systems to accommodate passenger vehicles on approximately 40 miles of main access routes including Warm Springs, Crystal Creek, and McClellan Creek on the north end of the mountain range; Indian Creek and Crow Creek on the east side; and Elkhorn Creek on the south end of the range.

B. Manage a portion of the transportation system, consisting of primitive roads and trails primarily in the Crow Creek and Prickly Pear drainages (Eagle Basin, Tizer Basin), to accommodate off-highway type vehicles.

C. Provide specific opportunities to enhance the safety and enjoyment of non-motorized recreational users, including 10-20 miles of marked cross-country ski and mountain bike trails, and permitted wildlife viewing guided trips.

D. Update all signs to meet current standards for clarity and quality and to be consistent across district and agency boundaries.

**Guidelines:**

1. Provide information and services when needed to promote understanding of the cultural, biological, and/or physical resources in the Elkhorns based on the existing "Interpretive Strategy for the Elkhorns" (Teegarden 1993).

2. Use current Recreation Opportunity Guides (ROGs) to provide updated public information about recreation in the Elkhorns at each District (Townsend, Jefferson, Boulder, Helena).

E. Remove structures and other signs of human activities which are not needed and are not of historical significance. Protect cultural resources (eg. mining cabins, tailings, etc.) that are an important part of the expected scenery around the town of Elkhorn, and in and around other historic mine sites.

**Guidelines:**

1. New structures should be constructed from native materials where possible as per Regional Guidelines for matching structures to ROS class. Metal structures are painted with a non-reflective paint of a color which complements the landscape.

F. Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs), from sensitive viewing areas, are met over the long-term as much of the landscape is restored to desired vegetative conditions -- conditions where fires historically played a role.

**Guidelines:**

1. Assess VQO's from sensitive viewing areas for each project and consider the timeframes of visual impacts from vegetation treatments relative to unit design and placement (Burned grass would come back green in one growing season, but charred stems of some shrubs and conifers would remain for 2 to over 20 years).

2. Manage the scenery for the sensitive viewing areas (travel routes, use areas, water bodies) identified below by distance zones according to the Visual Management System (Ag. Handbook #701; Landscape Aesthetics, Handbook for Scenery Management). Cultural resources are viewed in the foreground from many of these routes.

3. Manage the following travel routes and destinations as sensitive areas:

**Sensitivity Level 1:**

ROADS: Warm Springs 226, Indian Creek 360 & 4031, McClellan Cr 294, Crystal Creek 4017, S. Fork Crow Cr 277, Crow Cr 424, Weasel Cr 405, Elkhorn 258, Dry Creek 517, Muskrat 441, Prickly Pear 424.

CABINS: Eagle Guard Station, Tizer Cabin

TRAILS: All system trails

WATER BODIES: Glenwood Lake, Tizer Lakes, Hidden Lake, Leslie Lake.

**Sensitivity Level 2:** All other roads

**GOAL 3.** Adequate public access is provided to and within the Elkhorn Mountains.

**Objectives:**

A. Acquire trail and road rights-of-way (pages II-29/30, Elkhorn Travel Plan EA {1995}) to have trails and designated routes to and within Forest system lands under Forest Service jurisdiction.

**HERITAGE RESOURCES**

**GOAL 1.** The heritage resources in the Elkhorn Mountains are preserved and protected.

**Objectives:**

A. Nominate to the Register historic and prehistoric sites that are significant.

B. Stabilize and protect heritage sites which have been or have the potential to be lost or degraded.

**GOAL 2.** Heritage resources are interpreted in a variety of ways for public enjoyment.

**Objectives:**

A. Provide interpretive measures to help understanding and enjoyment of heritage resources.

B. In coordination with the adjacent private landowners, interpretive plans for the Elkhorn townsite and cemetery are implemented. The historic values of these sites are protected.

## LIVESTOCK

GOAL 1. Domestic livestock grazing is managed as a tool to promote the desired conditions of other resources including maintenance of adequate plant and litter ground cover, nutrient cycling, forage for wildlife species, and the restoration and maintenance of riparian communities.

### Objectives:

A. Allow for at least 40% of above-ground plant biomass to remain following the grazing season.

B. Decrease livestock use in riparian areas and drainage courses.

C. Decrease the size and proportion of areas of historical cattle concentrations and modify livestock distribution to provide more uniform utilization of upland rangelands.

### Guidelines:

1. Upland stages and stocking rates are determined through the process described in FSH 2209.21; allowable utilization levels are also prescribed to improve or maintain high seral conditions (stage 1/2).

D. Provide residual forage to support 90% of the total elk population (State Elk Plan 1992) from December to April on primary and secondary range within the "core" elk winter range (see map).

### Guidelines:

1. Planning for elk winter forage occurs in the capacity calculations done for Allotment Management Plans (see FSH 2209.21); the number of elk to account for will be a function of the herd home range boundaries relative to the allotment boundaries.

2. Forage left for elk must be at least 3 inches in height and/or in areas where snow accumulation is minimal. An average of 11.5 pounds of forage per elk per day is needed.

E. Maintain at least 30% of the existing grassland habitats in useable condition (adequate stubble heights of at least 6") for ground-nesting wildlife during the spring nesting season (April-June).

GOAL 2. Livestock grazing in the Elkhorns is maintained to help preserve the integrity of open spaces and viable ranching opportunities in and around the Elkhorn Mountain ecosystem.

### Objectives:

A. Authorize livestock numbers at the highest levels that are compatible with soil, water, vegetation, and wildlife objectives (short-term reductions may be necessary).



**Guidelines:**

1. Determine 10-year stocking rates based on the upland use guidelines found in FSH 2209.21, considering a 15-20 year recovery period for most "stage" (see glossary) 4 and 3 areas to improve to stage 1 or 2 (only those areas attributable to overuse versus colonization of woody species). The decision on stocking rates will be incorporated into the livestock grazing permit.

2. See GUIDELINE #2, GOAL #1, OBJECTIVE A, WATERSHED

**SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

GOAL 1. The management of Forest System lands in the Elkhorns is complementary to management of private lands, and lands under the jurisdiction of local, state, and federal agencies and governments in and around the Elkhorn Mountains.

**Objectives:**

A. Develop the annual Elkhorn Program of Work in collaboration with other agencies and local governments.

B. Consider County and city plans in the implementation, update and revision of Forest Plans and in project level alternative development.

B. Develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with Broadwater, Jefferson and Lewis and Clark Counties to facilitate collaborative planning.

**Guidelines:**

1. Document the effects of management actions on local communities and private landowners relative to management decisions in the Elkhorn Mountains.

**MINERALS MANAGEMENT**

GOAL 1. Mining activities are managed to minimize new surface disturbance, the protection of fish and wildlife habitats, and the promotion of timely reclamation.

**Objectives:**

A. Restrict timing and access necessary to maintain fish and wildlife habitat potential and to prevent displacement.

**Guidelines:**

1. All mining activities on core elk summer range are mitigated to protect important features such as wet meadows, drainage heads, and wallows, and to minimize the displacement of animals.

2. Leased minerals production on big game winter range will be mitigated to reduce

disturbance to wintering animals. Examples include the use of electronic monitoring, restricted visitation, and restricted access.

B. Reclaim mined areas to ensure future beneficial uses. Reclaimed areas will be stabilized with well-distributed native vegetation, and noxious weeds will be controlled, within 2 years following the cessation of mining activities.

**Guidelines:**

1. Reclamation will include at the minimum: control of erosion and water runoff; isolation, removal, or control of toxic materials; reshaping and revegetation (using native seed mixes and shrubs) of disturbed areas; noxious weed control; and rehabilitation of wildlife and fisheries habitats.

B. Withdraw important administrative, cultural, or recreation sites from mineral entry when resource objectives can not be met through mitigation.

**GOAL 2.** The health and safety risk to human and animals from hazardous mining materials in the Elkhorn Mountains is decreased.

**Objectives:**

A. Reclaim and stabilize, based on State priorities, old mining sites on public lands that present health risks from contamination. Reclamation is conducted in a timely manner to prevent further degradation but with regard also for maintaining the integrity of cultural resources.

**FIRE MANAGEMENT**

**GOAL 1.** Prescribed fire with scheduled and unscheduled ignitions is used to promote healthy, sustainable vegetation on Forest System lands in the Elkhorn Mountains.

**Objectives:**

A. Develop and have authorized, a fire management plan for the Elkhorns that identifies where prescribed fires with unscheduled ignitions and management-ignited prescribed fires can be used to achieve the desired conditions for vegetation.

**Guidelines:**

1. Use prescribed burning as a tool to achieve objectives for other resources. Projects needing prescribed fires should be developed to allow for prescribed fire with unplanned ignitions and well as management-ignited prescribed fire.

2. Burning prescriptions consider and mitigate effects on scenery, smoke, soils, and special fish or wildlife needs (eg. sage-dependent species).

**GOAL 2.** Fire suppression is effective, efficient, provides for firefighter and public safety, and supports overall resource management objectives. Fire suppression is engaged anytime the effects of fire are not desirable.

**Objective:**

A. Develop suppression strategies in conjunction with the fire management plan throughout the Elkhorns.

**Guideline:**

1. Work with local fire protection organizations to develop suppression strategies for the areas in the wildland interface.

**LANDS AND SPECIAL USES**

**GOAL 1.** Land ownership patterns are consolidated to increase the effectiveness of management of Forest System lands as a Wildlife Management Unit.

**Objectives:**

A. Exchange privately-owned land within the Forest Boundary for lands on the periphery.

**Guidelines:**

1. Exchange parcels are identified based on 1) WMU boundary managability, 2) wildlife values

**GOAL 2:** Special uses and right-of-ways are consistent with maintenance and/or enhancement of wildlife values.

**V. MANAGEMENT AREAS**

Management Areas are those areas where specific management direction is needed above and beyond that provided at the mountain range level. There are 2 MA's in the Elkhorns -- Motorized Use Area and Non-Motorized Use Area. The Motorized MA, includes Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) settings Rural, Roaded Natural and Semi-Primitive Motorized. The Non-Motorized MA, includes the ROS settings Semi-Primitive Non-motorized and Primitive (See Figure I-3, Environmental Assessment).

**MOTORIZED MANAGEMENT AREA** approx. 103,000 Acres

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This Management Area consists mostly of the perimeter lands around the Elkhorn Mountains. Elevations range from 5000 to 8800 feet and varies from rolling grassy foothills to steep, heavily timbered slopes. The area provides winter and yearlong range to a variety of wildlife species. It is estimated that about 70% of the total elk in the Elkhorn Mountains winter within this MA. Most of the area is roaded and provides a variety of dispersed recreation opportunities.

The old townsite of Elkhorn is within this management area. It includes houses, cabins, old mines, a cemetery, and a Forest Service picnic ground. Periodic mining continues to occur.

Land ownership is intermingled and difficult to determine with many patented mining claims concentrated around the townsite. Many of the buildings are abandoned but one, owned by the State of Montana, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Most of the buildings are on private land and residence occupancy varies from year round to seasonal. The cemetery is entirely on National Forest land.

A small portion of the McClellan Creek Municipal Watershed is included in this area. In the Crow Creek drainage, the gentle slopes, predominantly southern aspect, and low elevations, combined with low snow accumulation, make elk winter range the primary wildlife use.

### **STANDARDS:**

1. Commercial timber harvest can only be used as a tool to manage or manipulate vegetation for the purpose of achieving Forest Plan resource objectives other than timber management. In the area around the Elkhorn townsite, timber harvest may be used as a method of fuel treatment for protection of private structures and to blend visual impacts from adjacent private land harvest.

2. Personal use forest products such as post and poles, Christmas trees, and firewood can be harvested from existing open (to motorized use as per travel plan) roads; other areas may be "opened" on a temporary basis for personal use product removal that achieves other resource objectives.

3. New "temporary" roads can be constructed only for surface activities that maintain or improve soil, water, vegetation, or wildlife values, and for mineral activities. In the area around the Elkhorn townsite, new roads may be constructed to improve comprehensive transportation systems for both the private landowners and the Forest Service. Roads no longer needed for their intended purpose are reclaimed to near the natural contour and revegetated with native species.

4. Motorized vehicles are allowed on transportation system roads, trails, and areas designated for such use in the Travel Plan that is in effect for the Elkhorn Mountains. Seasonal restrictions on motorized uses will generally comply with the dates of 12/2-5/15 for winter/calving and 10/15-12/1 for hunting season. Special Use roads provide private land access but are not open for public use.

### **GOALS:**

I\$ There is a wide range of quality outdoor recreation opportunities for visitor use and satisfaction within the context of a healthy, sustainable ecosystem.

### **Objectives:**

A. Manage the transportation system such that visitors can expect moderate to high "encounters" on roads and low to moderate encounters on trails.

B. Manage road access levels through the travel plans such that retrieval distances are generally less than 2 miles during the big game hunting season. Retrieval distances may be less than 1 mile in some portions of this management area.

C. Provide a mix of road-oriented and walk-in type hunting experiences; challenge and risk are low to moderate.

D. Provide facilities needed to protect site values (eg. outhouses); user "comfort" facilities are limited (eg. visitor centers), but may include public rental of cabin facilities.

E. Provide for "retention" in the foreground, and "partial retention" in the mid-ground and background areas from sensitivity level 1 routes and destinations; provide for partial retention in the foreground and modification in the mid-ground and background areas from sensitivity level 2 routes and destinations.

### **Guidelines:**

1. Construct facilities with native materials as per Regional Guidelines for matching recreation improvements to ROS settings.

2. Mitigate some resource impacts in localized areas with subtle "site-hardening" (eg. gravel parking spot).

3. Provide a simple information system (eg. signs) to direct users.

4. Complete "Future Use Determination" analyses for Eagle Guard Station, Tizer Station, Strawberry Lookout, and other cabins that may become available.

### **Management Practices**

Management opportunities have been developed for the area that focus on reducing the differences between existing condition and desired condition as expressed by the goals and objectives.

### **Monitoring Requirements**

Monitoring will focus on measuring progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the Management Area.

### **NON-MOTORIZED MANAGEMENT AREA (approx. 56,800 Acres)**

This Management Area lies in the central portion along the high divide of the Elkhorns. The area is predominantly unroaded and includes mostly higher elevations ranging from approximately 5,600 to 9,400 feet. It includes portions of McClellan, Beaver, and Crow Creeks on the Helena Forest and Rawhide, Muskrat, Sloan and Turnley Creeks on the Deerlodge Forest. Also included in this Management Area are the high mountain peaks of Casey, High, Crow and Elkhorn and several high mountain lakes (South Crow, Tizer, Hidden, Leslie, and Glenwood lakes). Vegetation varies from heavily timbered north and east slopes to scattered open timber on the periphery with high mountain meadows interspersed. This Management Area provides summer habitat for a variety of wildlife species and is considered prime summer range for elk, deer and moose. Part of the McClellan Creek Municipal watershed is in this Management Area.

**STANDARDS:**

1. No timber harvest will occur in this MA.
2. No permanent roads will be constructed for surface resource management.
3. Roads constructed for mineral activities will be reclaimed to near the natural contour and revegetated with native species when they are no longer needed for mineral purposes.
4. No motorized vehicles are allowed except for administrative actions which benefit the soil, water, vegetation, recreation or scenery.
5. This is an "avoidance" area for transmission corridors.
6. No surface occupancy (NSO) stipulations will be applied to all mineral leases in this Management Area.

**GOALS:**

There are a variety of semi-primitive and primitive nonmotorized recreation opportunities within the context of a healthy, diverse ecosystem.

**Objectives:**

- A. Manage for less than 6 encounters/day visitor encounters.
- B. Provide walk-in type hunter opportunities in an undeveloped environment; challenge and risk are moderate.

The existing roadless and visual resource values are maintained and the impacts of human activity are hardly visible to the casual observer.

**Objectives:**

- A. Provide for "retention" in the foreground, mid-ground, and background from sensitive viewing areas (all system trails and Glenwood Lake).

**Guidelines:**

1. Provide only primitive facilities and only where needed to protect site values.
2. Manage for low impact resource uses that require little site hardening.
3. Provide very minimum signing direction for users of this Management Area.

**Management Practices**

Management opportunities have been developed for the area that focus on reducing the differences between existing condition and desired condition as expressed by the goals and

objectives.

### **Monitoring Requirements**

Monitoring will focus on measuring progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the Management Area.

**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST**  
**LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Forest Plan Amendment No. 16

Research Natural Areas and Botanical Special Interest Areas

July 1997

Introduction

The Helena National Forest Record of Decision for the Forest Plan was approved in May, 1986. Changes affecting the Forest Plan since that time have required periodic amendments to keep it current. To date there have been fifteen amendments approved. This amendment pertains to the establishment of three Research Natural Areas. Part of this amendment will delete Kingsberry Gulch as a proposed Research Natural Area (Forest Plan, pg. II/9) and to add Indian Meadows and Cabin Gulch as new research natural areas.

This Forest Plan Amendment consists of two parts:

Management Area Designations

Changes in Forest Plan wording (Chapter II and III)

**Management Area Designations**

RNA	CHANGE FROM	CHANGE TO
Kingsberry Gulch	300 acres N-1	300 acres M-1
Cabin Gulch	584 acres M-1 1824 acres L-2	584 acres N-1 1824 acres N-1
Indian Meadows*	855 acres R-1	855 acres N-1
Red Mountain**	1800 acres N-1	1901 acres N-1

\* A portion (94 acres) of Indian Meadows RNA is within the Scapegoat Wilderness (Management Area P-1)

\*\*The difference in acreage is due to a recalculation of the original Forest Plan estimate.

Changes in Forest Plan Wording

1. Chapter II, Section 3, Research Natural Area Objectives (page II/8 of Forest Plan). The following changes are made:



a. Replace the first two sentences in the first paragraph with the following:

**There are three designated Research Natural Areas on the Helena Forest. One area, Granite Butte, will be proposed for designation.**

b. Replace the last sentence of the first paragraph with the following:

**Establishment reports have been prepared for each designated area.**

c. Change the first sentence of the second paragraph to read as follows:

Table II-2 also lists target habitat types that are not represented in a **designated or proposed** RNAs.

d. Change the first sentence of the third paragraph to read as follows:

To meet the targets not yet represented by a **designated or proposed** RNA, the Forest will do field examinations in areas where habitat types are tentatively identified.

2. Chapter II, Table II-2, page II/9. Replace Table II-2 with the following table:

TABLE II-2

Research Natural Area (RNA) Objectives

Habitat Type Code	Vegetative Habitat Type*	Occurrence**	Designated	Proposed
<b>Forested Types</b>				
010	SCREE	M	Red Mountain	
210	PSME/AGSP	m	Cabin Gulch	
230	PSME/FESC	m	Cabin Gulch	
280	PSME/VAGL	m	Indian Meadows	
320	PSME/CARU	m	Cabin Gulch & Indian Meadows	
650	ABLA/CACA	M	Red Mountain	
670	ABLA/MEFE	m	Red Mountain	
690	ABLA/XETE	m	Red Mountain	Granite Butte
720	ABLA/VAGL	M		
730	ABLA/VASC	M		
820	ABLA-	M	Red Mountain	Granite Butte
830	PIAL/VASC	m	Red Mountain	
850	ABLA/LUHI	M	Red Mountain	
870	PIAL/ABLA	m		
	PIAL			Granite

Butte

**Nonforest  
Types**

Alpine Types	M	Red Mountain	
STCO/BOGR	M		
FESC/AGSP	M		Granite
FESC/FEID	M		Butte
ARTR/FESC	m	Cabin Gulch	Granite
RHTR/AGSP	m		Butte
RHTR/FEID	m		

**Aquatic  
Type  
and  
Subtypes**

Type I Stream		Red Mountain	
Type II Stream		Red Mountain	
Beaver Ponds		Indian Meadows	
Wet Meadows			Granite
Thermal Springs			Butte

\* These vegetative descriptions are abbreviations of species names.

\*\* M = Major representative in a zone.

m = Minor representative in a zone.

3. Table III-1, page III/2, Management Areas and Net Acres, change the net acres for Management Area N-1 to the following.

Management Area N-1	Net Acres 5758	Percent of Forest <1%
------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

4. Chapter III, page III/8.

a. Change the acres at the top of page to **5,758**

b. Replace the first two paragraphs with the following:

Description

**This management area consists of three designated Research Natural Areas (RNA) and one proposed identified on the Helena National Forest to meet Regional targets.**

Table II-2 on page II/8 lists the Forest RNA targets. The three designated areas fill 16 of the 26 targets and the proposed RNA fills 6 targets. Target ecosystems not yet represented are: ABLA/VAGL (subalpine fir/blue huckleberry), STCO/BOGR (needle and thread/blue grama), RHTR/AGSP (skunkbrush/bluebunch wheatgrass), RHTR/FEID (skunkbrush/Idaho fescue), and thermal springs. As more target ecosystems are identified on the ground, more RNAs could be proposed and added to this management area.

The three designated areas on the Helena (Red Mountain, Indian Meadows, and Cabin Gulch) and the proposed Granite Butte typify important ecosystems in southwestern Montana. The ecosystems are listed below by proposed RNA.

c. Change the acres on Red Mountain to **1901**

d. Delete **Kingsberry Gulch** information

e. Add: **Indian Meadows (949 acres)**

PSME/VAGL (Douglas-fir/blue huckleberry)

PSME/CARU (Douglas-fir/pine grass)

Beaver Ponds

f. Add: **Cabin Gulch (2,408 acres)**

PSME/AGSP (Douglas-fir/bluebunch)

PSME/CARU (Douglas-fir/pine grass)

PSME/FESC (Douglas-fir/rough fescue)

ARTR/FESC (sagebrush/rough fescue)

g. Add the following paragraph under Management Goal

Management Goal

Manage the three established RNA's (Red Mountain, Indian Meadows and Cabin Gulch) according to the Establishment Record (Management Prescriptions) and the management standards listed below. The proposed RNA (Granite Butte) will be managed according to the standards listed below to protect the unique vegetation types found within.

5. Chapter III, Page III/9

a. Add the following sentence to the first paragraph under Management standards.

Management Standards

**Management practices, such as grazing, cutting of vegetation and fire management are generally not permitted except where needed to meet RNA goals and objectives and are plans approved by the Intermountain Research Station Director.**

b. Add the following standard under Recreation

Recreation

**Dispersed motorized recreation such as ATV's, OHV's and snowmobiles will not be allowed. Area closures are recommended.**

c. Replace the standard under Timber with the following standard.

Timber

**Timber harvest or personal use wood cutting such as firewood, posts, poles, and Christmas trees will not be permitted.**

6. Chapter III, page III/10

a. Add the words **and approved** after feasible to the third standard under Protection.

b. Add the words **and prior approval by the Intermountain Research Station Director** to the end of the first sentence of the fourth standard under Protection.

## Helena National Forest Plan Amendment #17

## Willow Creek Allotment Management Plan

Decision: It is my decision to amend the Forest Plan for the Willow Creek Allotment Management Plan. The amendment allows W-1 management area lands to be included in the Willow Creek Allotment. The W-1 management areas and proposed allotment boundary are shown on the amendment map on the following page.

Rationale for the Decision: Forest Service policy permits Forest Plan Amendments resulting from analysis conducted during Forest Plan implementation (36 CFR 219.10 (f) and FSM 1922.5). The existing allotment boundaries are not on logical barriers to cattle or logical locations to fence. Evaluation of the change was made through site specific field inspections and evaluations of Forest specialists as well as analysis for the Willow Creek Allotment Plan Environmental Assessment. Analysis showed that W-1 management area goals can be met if these specific W-1 management area lands in the Willow Creek project area are included in the allotment. Use by cattle is expected to be incidental, the areas do not have big game winter range and summer forage availability will be maintained at acceptable levels. A management goal of the W-1 management area is, "Provide for other resource uses, if they are compatible with wildlife management goals." (Helena Forest Plan, page III/50)

Significance: I have determined that the change is not a significant Forest Plan amendment since the decision will not alter Forest multiple use goals and objectives for long term land and resource management. This amendment does not affect sustainability of forest or range health. Adoption of this amendment will not change the Forest-wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Implementation: This decision will be implemented prior to implementation of the Willow Creek Allotment Management Decision. A copy of the amendment will be sent to all those who have requested notice of Forest Plan amendments and other people that have submitted comments to the Willow Creek Allotment Management Plan Environmental Assessment.

THOMAS J. CLIFFORD  
Forest Supervisor  
Helena National Forest

## HELENA NATIONAL FOREST

## LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Forest Plan Amendment No. 18

## Site Specific Amendment for the Poorman Project

Decision: It is my decision to amend the Forest Plan for the Poorman Project. This amendment changes 68 acres of M-1 lands to "T" management area allocations. Thirty-nine acres are changed to T-1, 20 acres are changed to T-2 and 9 acres are changed to T-3. The changes in management areas are shown on the amendment map on the following page.

Rationale for the Decision: Forest Service policy permits Forest Plan Amendments resulting from analysis conducted during Forest Plan implementation (36 CFR 219.10 (f) and FSM 1922.5). This amendment will help to meet the Forest Plan goals and desired condition for the Poorman area. M-1 management area lands being changed are forested lands that were considered uneconomical for timber management in the Plan. The Poorman analysis shows that treating these lands at this time is economical.

Significance: I have determined that the change is not a significant Forest Plan amendment since the decision will not alter Forest multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management. The amendment changes the M-1 area and the "T" areas by less than 1% for each area forest-wide. Adoption of this amendment will not change the forest-wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Implementation: This decision will be implemented prior to implementation of the Poorman Project Decision. A copy of the amendment will be sent to all those who have requested notice of Forest Plan amendments and other people that have submitted comments to the Poorman Project Draft EIS.

THOMAS J. CLIFFORD  
Forest Supervisor  
Helena National Forest

**FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 19**

**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST**

**OCTOBER 2000**

## BACKGROUND

The Helena National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was approved by the Regional Forester in April 1986. The Forest Plan guides all natural resource management activities and established management standards for the Helena National Forest.

Under the general mining laws, all National Forest System lands in the withdrawal area on the Lincoln Ranger District were available for the staking of mining claims for locatable minerals except those already specifically withdrawn from entry. National Forest System Lands can only be withdrawn to mineral entry by a specific act of Congress or through the withdrawal process under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Alternative B of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Rocky Mountain Front Mineral Withdrawal specifically reflects the Secretary of the Interior's withdrawal of all the acres open to the staking of claims under the general mining laws in the withdrawal area on the Lincoln Ranger District. These areas would be closed to the staking of mining claims for locatable minerals for the next 20 years. This withdrawal would be subject to review and extension after the 20 year period. The withdrawal could be extended for another 20 years for a total withdrawal period of 40 years.

### FOREST PLAN MANAGEMENT DIRECTION (Changes shown in bold)

Forest Plan direction for mineral resources is found in variety of locations in the Forest Plan. Direction for locatable minerals management is provided under Forest-wide management standards and under specific direction for management areas. Appendix Q lists those areas specifically withdrawn or proposed for withdrawal from mineral entry.

#### Forest-wide Management Standards

Forest-wide management standards clarify policy and direction for forest operations, maintenance and protection. The following change to the locatable minerals Forest-wide Management Standard (Forest Plan page II-27) is made as a result of decisions made from the Final Rocky Mountain Front Mineral Withdrawal EIS.

Under paragraph (1) the following statement shall be modified: Consistent with the Mining and Mineral Policy Act of 1970, continue to encourage the responsible development of mineral resources on National Forest lands. Concurrently, require mitigation measures to protect surface resources. **Lands withdrawn from mineral entry are found under Appendix Q.**

#### Appendix Q

This Forest Plan Amendment would add the acres withdrawn on the Lincoln Ranger District, Helena National Forest to Appendix Q of the Forest Plan. The addition would be as follows:

<u>Serial No.</u>	<u>Name of Site</u>	<u>Township</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Acres</u>
	Alice Creek/ Indian Meadows	T15N	R7W	763
		T16N	R6W	1,200
		T16N	R7W	19,395
		T16N	R8W	5,099
		T17N	R7W	132

### NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

The Record Of Decision for the Rocky Mountain Front Mineral Withdrawal discusses the rationale for the decision to amend the Helena Forest Plan and evaluates whether this amendment is significant for the purposes of the planning process in accordance with the requirements of 16 USC 1604(f), 36 CFR



219.12(k), FSM 1920 and factors identified in FSH 1909.12 section 5.32 and the direction found in 36 CFR 219.10(f).

**CONTACT PERSON**

For additional information concerning this decision, please contact David Whittekiend, ID Team Leader, Lewis and Clark National Forest, P.O. Box 869, Great Falls, MT 59403, (406) 791-7700.

**FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 20**

**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST**

**JANUARY 2001**



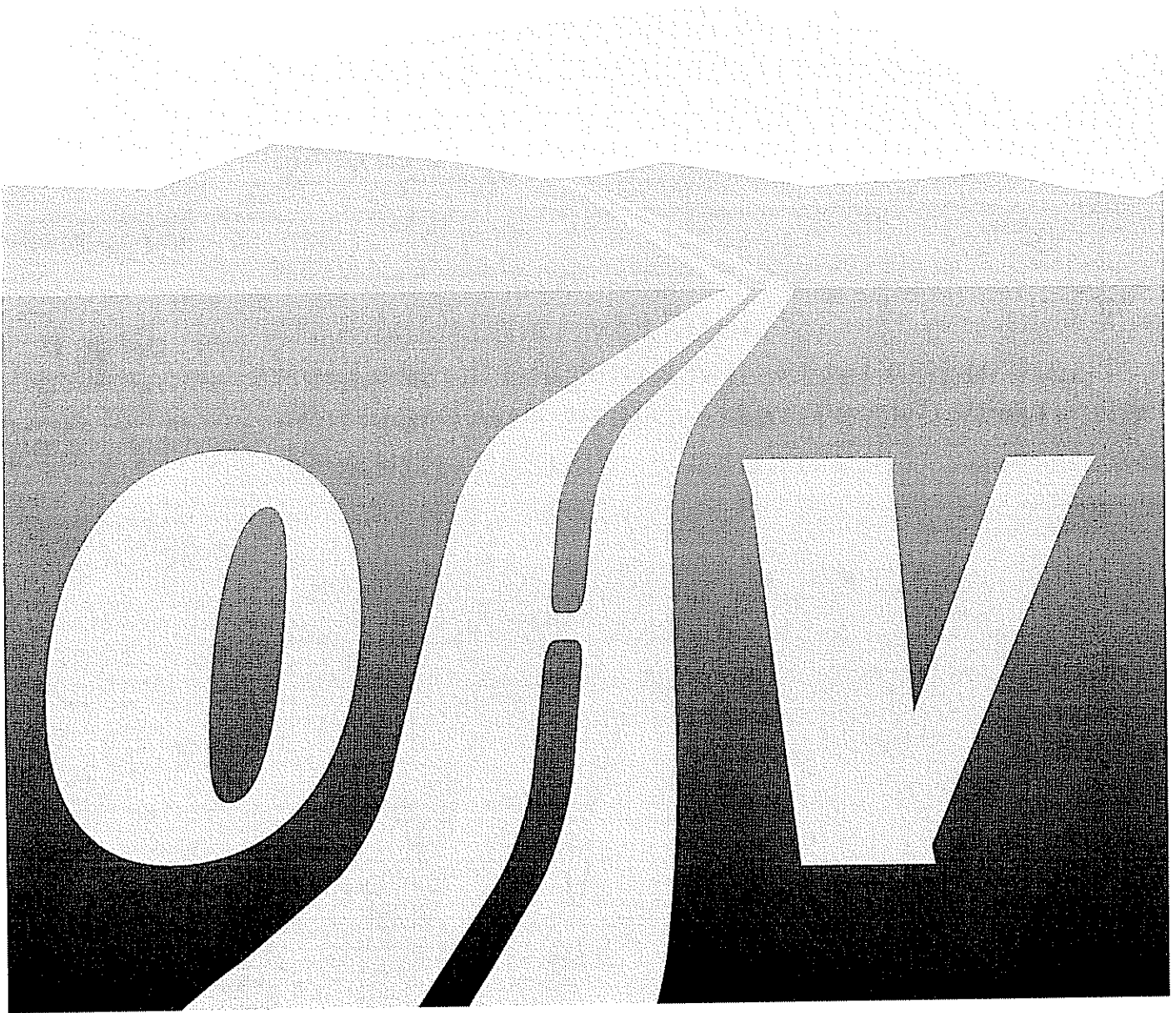
United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Northern Region

January 2001



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**OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE  
RECORD OF DECISION AND PLAN AMENDMENT  
FOR MONTANA, NORTH DAKOTA AND PORTIONS  
OF SOUTH DAKOTA**



# RECORD OF DECISION

Amendment to Nine National Forest  
Land and Resource Management Plans  
In Montana, North and South Dakota

Management Direction Related to  
Off-Highway Vehicles

## INTRODUCTION

The Forest Service (FS) has made a decision to amend forest plans listed in Table 1.1. The amendment eliminates wheeled motorized cross-country travel with a few specific exceptions. The decision is based on the analysis in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which was prepared jointly with the Bureau of Land Management. This decision document applies to National Forest System Lands only.

Each national forest and grassland manages OHV use based on its land and resource management plan (referred to as forest plans). The Dakota Prairie Grasslands are currently covered by the Custer National Forest plan and included in that plan.

**Table 1.1 FS Forest Plans**

Beaverhead National Forest Plan (1986) Bitterroot National Forest Plan (1987) Custer National Forest Plan (1987) (Includes Dakota Prairie Grasslands) Deerlodge National Forest Plan (1987) Flathead National Forest Plan (1986) Gallatin National Forest Plan (1987) Helena National Forest Plan (1986) Kootenai National Forest Plan (1987) Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan (1986)
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### Location of the Analysis Area

FS Northern Region in Montana, North Dakota, and portions of South Dakota administers 18.2 million acres of National Forest System (NFS) land located within nine national forests and the Dakota Prairie Grasslands. About 10 million of the 18.2 million acres of NFS lands are currently designated as available to motorized wheeled cross-country travel, either seasonally or yearlong, and would be affected by this Record of Decision (ROD). Table 1.1 displays the plans affected by this analysis. The national forests and grasslands acreage affected are listed in Table 1.2.

The scope of this analysis does not include the northern Idaho portion of the Northern Region. The north Idaho forests complicated the cooperative effort with the BLM because the whole state of Idaho falls within a different BLM administrative unit. In addition the dense forests and steeper terrain in north Idaho result in relatively fewer problems from cross-country travel by wheeled motorized OHV's.

**Table 1.2**

National Forests and Grasslands	Affected Acres	Total Acres
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest	1,921,000	3,352,000
Bitterroot National Forest	796,000	1,117,000
Custer National Forest	758,000	1,187,000
Dakota Prairie Grasslands*	1,260,000	1,260,000
Flathead National Forest	1,211,000	2,353,000
Gallatin National Forest	780,000	1,801,000
Helena National Forest	571,000	975,000
Kootenai National Forest	1,551,000	2,220,000
Lewis and Clark National Forest	1,347,000	1,862,000
Lolo National Forest	0	2,082,000

\*Dakota Prairie Grasslands are currently managed in accordance with the Custer National Forest

### Background

The increased popularity and widespread use of OHV's on public lands in the 1960's and early 1970's prompted the development of a unified federal policy for such use. Executive Order (EO) 11644 was issued in 1972 and EO 11989 was issued in 1977 (Appendix A of the FEIS). They provide direction for federal agencies to establish policies and provide for procedures to control and direct the use of OHV's on public lands so as to (1) protect the resources of those lands; (2) promote the safety of all users of those lands; and (3) minimize conflicts among the various users on those lands. The FS developed regulations in response to the EO's (36 CFR 216, 219, and 295). Under those regulations, OHV use can be restricted or prohibited to minimize (1) damage to the soil, watershed, vegetation, or other resources of the public lands; (2) harm to wildlife or wildlife habitats; and (3) conflict between the use of OHV's and other types of recreation.

External and internal reviews have identified concerns with the FS implementation of the EO's (1995, General Accounting Office, Information on the Use and Impact of Off-Highway Vehicles; 1986, Forest Service review of its OHV program; and the 1979 Council on Environmental Quality review of Off-Road Vehicles on Public Land). These reviews have identified numerous resource concerns that would be addressed by this proposal.

The FS recognizes in their respective forest plans, policy, and manual direction, that OHV use is a valid recreational activity when properly managed. Managing this use along with other recreation uses and the need to protect natural and cultural resources has become increasingly more difficult with increased public demands.

**Figure 1.1 Decision Levels for Travel Planning**

<u>Decision Level One</u> Forest Plans	<u>Decision Level Two</u> Site-Specific Planning At the Local Level
Provides direction for acceptable uses and protection measures. Identifies goals, objectives, standards and guidelines for future decision-making through site-specific planning.	Provides analysis of site-specific road and trail management designed to achieve goals and objectives of the forest plan.
Designates areas as closed, open, or limited/restricted to motorized wheeled cross-country travel.	Includes identification of when and where individual roads and trails would be open or closed to various types of use.

Planning for units of the National Forest System involves two levels of decision (Figure 1.1). The first level, often referred to as programmatic planning, is the development or amendment of forest plans that provide management direction for resource programs, uses, and protection measures. Forest plans and associated amendments are intended to set out management area prescriptions or direction with goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines for future decision-making through site-specific planning. This includes the designation of areas as closed, open or restricted to motorized wheeled cross-country travel. The environmental analysis accomplished at the plan amendment level guides resource management decisions on National Forest System (NFS) lands and aids, through the tiering process, environmental analyses for more site-specific planning. This FEIS is a programmatic, forest plan level, document.

The second level of planning involves the analysis and implementation of management practices designed to achieve goals and objectives of the forest plan. This is commonly referred to as site-specific planning. It requires relatively detailed information that includes the location, condition, and current uses of individual roads and trails, and the identification of when and where individual roads and trails will be open or closed to various types of use. This step is accomplished through the site-specific planning process at the local level.

It is important for the reader to note that anytime a specific road, trail or area has considerable adverse environmental effects occurring from OHV use, the local manager has the responsibility and authority (36 CFR 295.5) to immediately close the road, trail or area to use until the problem has been resolved.

### **Purpose and Need**

In general the need for a decision and the purpose of the decision is based on an evaluation of the existing condition compared to the desired condition. The following describes this process.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this decision is to avoid future impacts from the increasing use of OHV's on areas that are currently available to motorized wheeled cross-country travel. It amends forest plan direction to prohibit motorized wheeled cross-country travel to protect natural resource values. This would provide timely direction that would minimize further resource damage, user conflicts, and related problems associated with motorized wheeled cross-country travel, including new user-created roads, until subsequent site-specific planning is completed.

Site-specific planning would address OHV use on individual roads and trails to provide for a range of safe motorized recreation opportunities while continuing to protect resource values.

This decision does not change the current restricted year-long or closed designations for areas. This decision does not change current road or trail designations.

### **Existing Condition**

About 10 million of the 18.2 million acres of NFS lands are currently designated as available to motorized wheeled cross-country travel, either seasonally or yearlong (Table 1.3).

<b>Table 1.3 Affected Environment (Acres)</b>		
<b>Open Seasonally</b>	<b>Open Yearlong</b>	<b>Total</b>
3,848,000	6,244,000	10,092,000

During the past 10 years, OHV use and associated cross-country travel have increased in some areas. The estimated number of vehicles used off-highway across the three-state

area increased dramatically in the 1990's (Table 1.4). The increased use has resulted in environmental effects on public resources in numerous areas, including roads and trails that have developed as the result of repeated use, often referred to as user-created.

Trucks	13%
ATV's and Motorcycles	92%

\*For additional information see Chapter 3, Economics Section in the FEIS.

Problems do not occur equally throughout the analysis area. Some OHV use has occurred in riparian areas and on highly erodible slopes. In other areas use is very light and little or no effects from motorized wheeled cross-country travel are evident. It is estimated that only about 1% of the wheeled motorized OHV users go cross-country when the whole analysis area is considered (chapter 3 of the FEIS). However the 1% is not evenly distributed and the cross-country use that occurs in more sensitive areas can result in damage from very low levels of use.

Increased use of OHV's has the potential to:

- spread noxious weeds,
- cause erosion,
- damage cultural sites,
- create user conflicts, and
- disrupt wildlife and damage wildlife habitat.

Monitoring of OHV travel at some National Forest and district offices indicates that problems exist where unrestricted motorized wheeled cross-country travel is allowed. Some forests or districts are presently reevaluating their existing travel management plans or developing new plans. These plans are designed to determine the appropriate use of roads and trails to provide a reasonable mix of motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities while protecting other resource values. Many offices have begun or completed site-specific planning.

Members of the public and other state and federal agencies have shared their concerns about unrestricted OHV travel on public lands (OHV project file).

#### **Desired Condition**

The goal of managing OHV's is to provide a range of safe motorized recreation opportunities, recognizing their legitimate use while minimizing the current or anticipated

effects on wildlife and their habitat, soil, native vegetation, water, fish, cultural resources and other users (Appendix A of the FEIS). The long-term goal is that OHV use would occur on designated routes and intensive use areas to provide a variety of motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities. However, designation of specific routes requires local site-specific planning consistent with the forest plan. In the interim period before designation of travel routes can be accomplished, it is desirable to take the first step and restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel. The designation of areas to the restricted yearlong category in the forest plans in the three-state area is a valuable step toward the long-term goal.

#### **Need**

In comparing the existing condition to the desired condition, it is evident that OHV use and associated effects have increased in many areas since forest plans were completed. The FS is concerned that continuing unrestricted use could potentially further increase the spread of noxious weeds, cause erosion, damage cultural sites, create user conflicts, disrupt wildlife and damage wildlife habitat. The trend of increased use is expected to continue. In order to minimize further resource damage in areas already experiencing increased activity and to avoid future impacts in areas not yet affected, management of OHV use needs to be reviewed.

Areas that are open seasonally or yearlong to motorized wheeled cross-country travel in current forest plans require a plan amendment to address these issues. The decision to manage the cross-country aspect of motorized wheeled vehicle use is part of the responsibility of public land managers to balance human use with the need to protect natural resources.

The FS Natural Resource Agenda has established a number of goals for maintaining and restoring the health, diversity, and productivity of the land, which include: protect and restore the settings of outdoor recreation; determine the best way to access the national forest or grassland; reduce impacts of the existing road system; restore watersheds; and provide an avenue to collaborate with communities, the private sector and other agencies. This decision will help address several of these goals.

## **DECISION**

After careful consideration of the potential environmental impacts, the effectiveness in resolving the planning issues, responsiveness to public concern, and compliance with FS statutory authority and Executive Orders 11644 and 11989 it is my decision to adopt Alternative 5.

My decision amends the nine forest plans listed in Table 1.1 and establishes a new standard that restricts yearlong, wheeled motorized cross-country travel, where it is not already restricted. There are several specific exceptions to this restriction:

- Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be allowed for any military, fire, search and rescue, or law enforcement vehicle used for emergency purposes.
- Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for the FS would be limited to official administrative business as outlined by internal memo (see Appendix D of the FEIS).
- Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for other government entities on official administrative business would require authorization from the local field manager or district ranger in their respective areas. This authorization would be through normal permitting processes and/or memoranda of understanding.
- Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for lessees and permittees would be limited to the administration of a federal lease or permit.
- Motorized wheeled cross-country travel to a campsite would be permissible within 300 feet of roads and trails.

This decision directs the forests/grasslands to prioritize areas across each unit as to whether they are high, medium or low priority for site-specific planning, based on the factors identified in Appendix B of the FEIS. The prioritization will be completed within six months of the release of this decision. High priority areas will have site-specific planning initiated no later than two years after this decision. Medium will be initiated within 5 years. No time limit is specified for the low priorities. Site-specific planning is the process that will result in the designation of roads and trails for their appropriate uses.

Approximately 3600 acres of drawdown area around Lake Koocanusa on the Rexford District of the Kootenai National Forest is excluded from this decision. The drawdown area is currently being addressed in the Rexford District Recreation Management Plan.

## REASONS FOR DECISION

Alternative 5 was selected because it minimizes further resource damage, user conflicts and related problems, including new user-created roads, associated with motorized wheeled cross-country travel. The protection provided by

alternative 5 is slightly less than alternative 1 (Chapter 3 of FEIS) because it allows more administrative and other permitted uses of OHV's cross-country. However, this use would be conducted in a controlled manner, according to permit requirements, to mitigate potential adverse effects. Examples of permit requirements include the cleaning of equipment to avoid spreading invasive weeds, avoidance of threatened or endangered species habitat, timing restrictions, etc. This slight tradeoff is made in order to maintain efficient and effective management of the public's resources by allowing limited motorized wheeled cross-country travel for conducting needed work, such as prescribed fires, treating invasive weeds, conducting monitoring or research, maintaining or constructing fences, utility structures and other types of improvements.

Alternative 5 does not allow motorized wheeled cross-country travel for big game retrieval, as in alternative 2, the preferred alternative in the draft EIS. This game retrieval restriction would: reduce the conflicts between motorized and nonmotorized users during the hunting season; reduce the potential for introducing invasive weeds; reduce the potential for soil erosion; reduce the potential for impacts to wildlife; be more responsive to numerous public concerns that were expressed about the inappropriateness of allowing an exception for game retrieval; and be consistent with the long-term goal of using vehicles on designated routes. For these reasons alternative 5 was selected instead of alternative 2.

Alternative 5 allows for dispersed camping within 300 feet of a road or trail provided recreationists use the most direct route and select their site by nonmotorized means. This greater distance than in alternative 1 (50') was important particularly in areas without any developed campgrounds. This allows people to move away from the dust and noise generated on the road or trail. Agency recreation specialists expect relatively little use of this exception, as most popular dispersed campsites already have a road accessing them.

There are parts of this three-state area with relatively little damage from wheeled motorized cross-country travel as described in the FEIS. Alternative 3 excluded the Bitterroot, Kootenai and Flathead National Forests because they are relatively steep and densely vegetated which precludes the use of OHV's in many areas. I did not choose that alternative, to prevent future problems of invasive weed introductions, the development of unclassified roads and trails, potential effects on historic and cultural resources and effects on wildlife and their habitat from developing and to provide consistency of use within the analysis area and between the BLM and Forest Service.

Alternative 5 was selected instead of alternative 4 because I felt the seasonal restrictions did not provide sufficient



protection from the spread of invasive weeds, the potential for development of more unclassified (user-created) roads and trails, damage to historic and cultural resources or adequately protect wildlife and their habitat. Particularly the protection of threatened and endangered species that may be unknowingly affected by cross-country users. This same rationale was applied for not selecting the no action alternative.

This important step towards the goal of designated roads and trails will allow the maintenance of a legitimate form of recreation while the natural and cultural resources of the national forests are maintained and user-conflicts are minimized. The designation of roads and trails allows for knowledgeable monitoring and evaluation of use and the effects of use that cannot be accounted for when large expanses of land are open for cross-country use.

Alternative 5 provides specific mitigation measures consistent with the Endangered Species Act for the threatened western prairie fringed orchid in known habitat on the Shesenne National Grassland. It provides for positive benefits for several other listed species (Appendix C of the FEIS) as well as many other species of wildlife (Chapter 4 of the FEIS), whereas the no action alternative completely lacks these protections.

This decision is consistent with the BLM's preferred alternative in the FEIS, which provides for better service to the public, since the rules are the same and will not create confusion for the users of federal public lands.

This decision and the local site-specific planning approach it prescribes is consistent with the proposed roads rule the FS recently published (36 CFR 212). It provides a process for resolving the disposition of unclassified roads, including user-created roads and trails. It moves the agency towards designated routes, which many people, organizations and other agencies have advocated.

This decision in conjunction with the existing authority for local line officers, to immediately close any areas roads or trails that are or will cause considerable adverse effects (36 CFR 295), will substantially improve our ability to maintain the use of OHV's as a recreational activity and meet our responsibility to protect the cultural and environmental values of the national forests.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

This decision will take effect 7 days after publication of legal notice in each of the newspapers of record listed at the end of this document.

The actual application of the decision will be through activities on each of the forests and grasslands affected. This will include a CFR order signed by each forest/grassland supervisor eliminating cross-country travel. This will be added to the travel management maps for each forest/grassland. Signs will be posted on the major portal roads to NFS lands prohibiting cross-country travel. These orders and signs will be in place by July 1, 2001.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

This section describes the No Action Alternative and five other alternatives for management of OHV's on public lands. All alternatives comply with the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976, and are subject to compliance with all valid statutes on NFS lands. Impacts of all resources are considered through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

### **Attributes Common to All Alternatives**

The FS will consult in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure any site-specific plan is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any species listed or proposed to be listed under the provisions of the ESA, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated or proposed critical habitat.

Through subsequent site-specific planning, the FS will designate roads and trails for motorized use. With public involvement the agencies would continue with ongoing travel management plans and develop new travel management plans (i.e., landscape analysis, watershed plans, or activity plans) for geographical areas. Through site-specific planning, roads and trails would be inventoried, mapped, and analyzed to the degree necessary to evaluate and designate the roads and trails as open, seasonally open, or closed and determine the type of vehicle. The inventory would be commensurate with the analysis needs, issues, and desired resource conditions based on forest plan objectives for the analysis area. When addressing roads, the proposed FS roads policy will be utilized (36 CFR 212).

Site-specific planning could include identifying opportunities for trail construction and/or improvement, eliminating roads/trails that are causing resource problems or adding specific areas where intensive OHV use may be appropriate. A change in area designations from restricted to open would require a plan amendment. Implementation and monitoring are described in Appendix B of the FEIS. Implementation includes prioritizing areas for site-specific planning within six months of the respective agencies' Record of Decision based on the resources in the area.

Disabled access will be allowed per the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

### **No Action Alternative (Current Management)**

This alternative would continue current direction and was used as the baseline condition for comparing the other alternatives. The FS would continue to manage OHV's using existing direction and regulations. It addressed a number of issues and concerns raised during scoping, such as the proposal is too restrictive and effects on the ground do not warrant any change. It also addressed the concern that it is unrealistic to provide consistent management of OHV's across a three-state area due to wide variations of issues and problems that would necessitate decisions be made at the local level.

Areas currently open seasonally or yearlong to motorized wheeled cross-country travel would remain open (Table 1.3 and Map 1 in the FEIS). The table and map reflect designations identified in existing forest plans.

Site-specific planning and enforcement of OHV regulations would occur at current levels.

### **Alternative 1**

This is the most restrictive alternative for management of OHV's. Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be prohibited with only a few exceptions for emergency and limited administrative purposes. This alternative was developed to address concerns that OHV use needed to be restricted quickly and was overdue because of resource impacts and user conflicts. Concerns addressed were to stop the expansion of problems associated with the spread of noxious weeds, user conflicts, wildlife harassment and habitat alteration, effects on vegetation, soils and aquatic resources, and further deterioration of FS Inventoried Roadless, Recommended Wilderness and Montana Wilderness Study Areas.

The FS would restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel yearlong (Map 1, FEIS). These lands, approximately 10 million acres, would be designated restricted yearlong under FS regulations (36 CFR 295).

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be allowed for any military, fire, search and rescue, or law enforcement vehicle used for emergency purposes.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for FS official administrative business would not be allowed without prior approval by the authorized officer (district ranger).

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for lessees and permittees to administer federal leases or permits would not be allowed unless specifically authorized under the lease or permit.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would not be allowed for the retrieval of a big game animal.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would not be allowed for personal use permits such as firewood and Christmas tree cutting.

The following exception would apply unless currently restricted:

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for camping would be permissible within 50 feet of roads and trails by the most direct route after site selection by nonmotorized means. This exception does not apply where existing seasonal restrictions prohibit traveling off designated routes to a campsite.

### **Alternative 2**

This alternative was based on the initial proposal and public comments received during scoping. It restricts motorized wheeled cross-country travel throughout the analysis area but allows some additional exceptions compared to alternative 1, for relatively infrequent activities. Similar to Alternative 1, concerns addressed were to stop the expansion of problems associated with the spread of noxious weeds, user conflicts, wildlife harassment and habitat alteration, effects on vegetation, soils and aquatic resources, and further deterioration of FS Inventoried Roadless, Recommended Wilderness and Montana Wilderness Study Areas. It meets the concern that the FS needs to allow for some exceptions for motorized wheeled cross-country travel, such as game retrieval and camping. It provides almost the same ease of enforcement and consistency between the BLM and FS as Alternative 1.

The FS would restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel yearlong (Map 1, FEIS). These lands, approximately 10 million acres, would be designated restricted yearlong under FS regulations (36 CFR 295).

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be allowed for any military, fire, search and rescue, or law enforcement vehicle used for emergency purposes.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for FS official administrative business would be allowed.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for lessees and permittees to administer federal leases or permits would be

allowed, unless specifically prohibited in the lease or permit. This would not change any existing terms or conditions in current leases or permits. However, this would not preclude modifying leases or permits to limit motorized wheeled cross-country travel based on further site-specific analysis.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for personal use permits, such as firewood and Christmas tree cutting, could be permitted at the local level (FS ranger district) at the discretion of the authorizing officer.

The following exceptions would apply unless currently restricted:

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for camping would be permissible within 300 feet of roads and trails by the most direct route after site selection by nonmotorized means. This exception would not apply where existing seasonal restrictions prevent traveling off designated routes to a campsite.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel by the most direct route to retrieve a big game animal in possession would be allowed only in the following field units in Montana: Custer National Forest (NF) with the exception of the Beartooth Ranger District. Motorized wheeled cross-country travel in all other areas to retrieve a big game animal would not be allowed. Through subsequent site-specific planning big game retrieval could be restricted.

The following mitigation measures for the western prairie fringed orchid would apply:

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for FS official administrative business would not be allowed in known western prairie fringed orchid habitat on the Sheyenne National Grassland in eastern North Dakota without prior approval.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for lessees and permittees to administer federal leases or permits would not be allowed in known western prairie fringed orchid habitat on the Sheyenne National Grassland in eastern North Dakota without prior approval.

### **Alternative 3**

This alternative is based on the premise that the agencies should not restrict OHV use where problems are limited by steep terrain and dense vegetation or where existing regulations are adequate. Lands in the Flathead, Kootenai and Bitterroot National Forests in western Montana would not be affected by this alternative. Preliminary analysis indi-

cated that even though significant amounts of federal land were open to motorized wheeled cross-country travel in western Montana, current technology of OHV's generally has limited the expansion of user-created routes because of relative steepness and dense vegetation. Concerns for the need to restrict OHV's in the remainder of the analysis area are similar to Alternative 2. Concerns addressed were to stop the expansion of problems associated with the spread of noxious weeds, user conflicts, wildlife harassment and habitat alteration, effects on vegetation, soils and aquatic resources, and further deterioration of FS Inventoried Roadless, Recommended Wilderness and Montana Wilderness Study Areas. It meets the concern that the agencies need to allow some exceptions for motorized wheeled cross-country travel, such as game retrieval and camping.

The FS would prohibit motorized wheeled cross-country travel yearlong in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF, Custer NF, Dakota Prairie Grasslands, Gallatin NF, Helena NF, and the Lewis and Clark NF (Map 2 in the FEIS). Approximately 6.6 million acres would be designated restricted yearlong under the FS regulations (36 CFR 295).

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be allowed for any military, fire, search and rescue, or law enforcement vehicle used for emergency purposes.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for FS official administrative business would be allowed.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for lessees and permittees to administer federal leases or permits would be allowed, unless specifically prohibited in the lease or permit. This would not change any existing terms or conditions in current leases or permits. However, this would not preclude modifying leases or permits to limit motorized wheeled cross-country travel based on further site-specific analysis.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for personal use permits, such as firewood and Christmas tree cutting, could be permitted at the local level (FS ranger district) at the discretion of the authorizing officer.

The following exceptions would apply unless currently restricted:

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for camping would be permissible within 300 feet of roads and trails by the most direct route after site selection by nonmotorized means. This exception does not apply where existing seasonal restrictions prohibit traveling off designated routes to a campsite.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel by the most direct route would be allowed from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. to retrieve a big game animal that is in possession. Through subsequent site-specific planning big game retrieval could be restricted.

#### **Alternative 4**

This alternative restricts motorized wheeled cross-country travel seasonally to lessen impacts on resource values and to minimize user conflicts. Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be restricted to times of the year when the ground is generally frozen (December 2 to February 15) or during dryer periods (June 15 to August 31) to reduce soil and vegetation impacts, aquatic resource damage, and to minimize user conflicts. No motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be allowed during big game hunting seasons in all three states, with the exception of game retrieval, to minimize user conflicts and wildlife harassment. Game retrieval would be allowed in all open areas of the analysis area. It meets the concern that the agencies need to allow some exceptions for motorized wheeled cross-country travel, such as game retrieval and camping. It provides almost the same ease of enforcement and consistency between the two agencies as Alternative 1 because the timing and exceptions are the same throughout the three-state area.

The FS would restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel seasonally (Map 1, FEIS). These areas would be open to motorized wheeled cross-country travel from June 15 to August 31 and from December 2 to February 15. These lands, approximately 10 million acres, would be designated limited or restricted seasonally under FS regulations (36 CFR 295).

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be allowed for any military, fire, search and rescue, or law enforcement vehicle used for emergency purposes.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for FS official administrative business would be allowed.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for lessees and permittees to administer federal leases or permits would be allowed, unless specifically prohibited in the lease or permit. This would not change any existing terms or conditions in current leases or permits. However, this would not preclude modifying leases or permits to limit motorized wheeled cross-country travel based on further site-specific analysis.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for personal use permits, such as firewood and Christmas tree cutting, could be permitted at the local level (FS ranger district) at the discretion of the authorizing officer.

The following exceptions would apply unless currently restricted:

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for camping would be permissible within 300 feet of roads and trails by the most direct route after site selection by nonmotorized means. This exception does not apply where existing seasonal restrictions prohibit traveling off designated routes to a campsite.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel by the most direct route would be allowed to retrieve a big game animal that is in possession. Through subsequent site-specific planning big game retrieval could be restricted.

#### **Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative)**

This alternative was developed in response to comments on the DEIS from the public and other agencies. It restricts motorized wheeled cross-country travel throughout the analysis area to protect riparian areas, wetlands, crucial wildlife habitat, threatened or endangered species, soils and vegetation, aquatic resources, and to reduce user conflicts. The alternative addresses the concern that the agencies need to allow an exception for camping, but includes specific limitations on that exception. This alternative would limit travel for administrative use by the FS, other government entities, and lessees and permittees, but would allow motorized wheeled cross-country travel when necessary.

The FS would restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel yearlong (Map 1, FEIS). These lands, approximately 10 million acres, would be designated restricted yearlong for motorized wheeled cross-country travel under FS regulations (36 CFR 295).

The FS recognize there are some valid needs for motorized wheeled cross-country travel. The following outlines the needs for motorized wheeled cross-country travel allowed in this alternative.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be allowed for any military, fire, search and rescue, or law enforcement vehicle used for emergency purposes.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for the FS would be limited to official administrative business as outlined by internal memo (see Appendix D of the FEIS). Examples of administrative use would be prescribed fire, noxious weed control, revegetation, and surveying. Where possible, agency personnel performing administrative functions would locate a sign or notice in the area they are working to identify for the public the function they are authorized to perform.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for other government entities on official administrative business would require authorization from the local field manager or district ranger in their respective areas. This authorization would be through normal permitting processes and/or memoranda of understanding. Some examples of other agency administrative use would be noxious weed control, surveying, and animal damage control efforts. Where possible, the authorized party performing administrative functions would locate a sign or notice in the area they are working to identify for the public the function they are authorized to perform

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for lessees and permittees would be limited to the administration of a federal lease or permit. Persons or corporations having such a permit or lease could perform administrative functions on public lands within the scope of the permit or lease. However, this would not preclude modifying permits or leases to limit motorized wheeled cross-country travel during further site-specific analysis to meet resource management objectives or standards and guidelines. Some examples of administrative functions include, but are not limited to:

- Gas or electric utilities monitoring a utility corridor for safety conditions or normal maintenance,
- Accessing a remote communication site for normal maintenance or repair,
- Livestock permittees checking vegetative conditions, building or maintaining fences, delivering salt and supplements, moving livestock, checking wells or pipelines as part of the implementation of a grazing permit or lease, and
- Scientific groups under contract for resource assessments or research.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for personal use permits, such as firewood and Christmas tree cutting, could be allowed at the local level (FS ranger district) in specific areas identified for such use. In all other areas, motorized wheeled cross-country travel associated with personal use permits would not be allowed.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for big game retrieval would not be allowed.

The following exception would apply unless currently restricted:

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel to a campsite would be permissible within 300 feet of roads and trails. Site selection must be completed by nonmotorized means and accessed by the most direct route causing the least damage. This exception does not apply where existing seasonal restrictions prohibit traveling off designated routes to a campsite. Existing local rules take precedence over this exception. This distance could be modified through subsequent site-specific planning.

The following mitigation measures for the western prairie fringed orchid would apply:

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for FS official administrative business would not be allowed in known western prairie fringed orchid habitat on the Sheyenne National Grassland in eastern North Dakota without prior approval so as to eliminate impacts to occupied habitat.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for lessees and permittees to administer federal leases or permits would not be allowed in known western prairie fringed orchid habitat on the Sheyenne National Grassland in eastern North Dakota without prior approval so as to eliminate impacts to occupied habitat.

Table S.1 Summary of Alternatives

<i>Management</i>	<i>No Action (Current Management)</i>	<i>Alternative 1</i>	<i>Alternative 2</i>	<i>Alternative 3</i>	<i>Alternative 4</i>	<i>Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative)</i>
Areas open yearlong or seasonally	Areas currently open	None	None	Flathead NF, Kootenai NF and Bitterroot NF	Open 6/15 to 8/31 and 12/2 to 2/15 in all areas currently open	None
Prohibits motorized wheeled cross-country travel	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, except in Flathead NF, Kootenai NF and Bitterroot NF	Restricted seasonally	Yes
Emergency use	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed
Administrative use	Allowed	Authorization required	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed as outlined by internal memo
Lease and permit holders	Allowed	Not allowed unless specifically authorized	Allowed unless specifically prohibited	Allowed unless specifically prohibited	Allowed unless specifically prohibited	Allowed unless specifically prohibited
Exceptions for Motorized Wheeled Cross-Country Travel						
- Camping	Allowed	Within 50 feet of roads and trails by the most direct route	Within 300 feet of roads and trails by the most direct route	Within 300 feet of roads and trails by the most direct route	Within 300 feet of roads and trails by the most direct route	Within 300 feet of roads and trails by the most direct route
- Game retrieval	Allowed	Not allowed	Allowed by the most direct route in portions of eastern Montana.* Not allowed in other areas. Could be modified in site-specific planning	Allowed from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. by the most direct route	Allowed by the most direct route	Not allowed. Retrieval would be allowed on roads and trails unless currently restricted.
- Disabled access	Allowed per Rehabilitation Act	Allowed per Rehabilitation Act	Allowed per Rehabilitation Act	Allowed per Rehabilitation Act	Allowed per Rehabilitation Act	Allowed per Rehabilitation Act
- Firewood and Christmas tree cutting	Specified by permit	Not allowed	Specified by permit at the local level	Specified by permit at the local level	Specified by permit at the local level	Specified by permit at the local level

\* Game retrieval is allowed in Montana only in the following field units: Miles City FO, Billings FO, Malta FO, Lewistown FO with the exception of the Great Falls Field Station, and Custer NF with the exception of the Beartooth RD.

Table S.2 Summary of Environmental Consequences

Identified Environmental Issues	No Action (Current Management)	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative)
<b>Recreation</b>						
User Conflicts	User conflicts would continue to increase.	User conflicts associated with cross-country travel would be substantially reduced.	User conflicts associated with cross-country travel would be substantially reduced.	Effects under Alt. 2 would apply where motorized wheeled cross-country travel is prohibited. Effects under No Action would apply elsewhere.	Effects under No Action Alt. 1 would apply from 6/15-8/31 and 12/2-2-15. Effects under Alt. 2 would apply during other time periods.	User conflicts associated with cross-country travel would be substantially reduced.
Motorized Recreation	Existing opportunities would remain.	Motorized users would have access to roads and trails. Cross-country travel eliminated.	Motorized users would have access to roads and trails. Cross-country travel eliminated.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Motorized users would have access to roads and trails. Cross-country travel eliminated.
Nonmotorized Recreation	Recreation experience would be reduced.	Recreation experience would improve.	Recreation experience would improve.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Recreation experience would improve.
Visuals	Objectives for scenic values may not be met.	Additional disturbances to visuals would be substantially reduced.	Additional disturbances to visuals would be substantially reduced.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Additional disturbances to visuals would be substantially reduced.
Roadless/Wilderness Study Areas	Motorized wheeled cross-country travel may have an effect on the naturalness of these areas.	This alt. would enhance the protection of the naturalness of these areas.	This alt. would enhance the protection of the naturalness of these areas.	Same as above.	Seasonal motorized wheeled cross-country travel may have an effect on the naturalness of these areas.	This alt. would enhance the protection of the naturalness of these areas.
<b>Social</b>						
Older Recreationists	Opportunity would be available to substitute motorized wheeled cross-country travel for activities that require more mobility. There is no clear evidence this is what people will choose to do as they age.	No opportunity would be available to substitute motorized wheeled cross-country travel for activities that require more mobility. There is no clear evidence this is what people will choose to do as they age.	No opportunity would be available to substitute motorized wheeled cross-country travel for activities that require more mobility. There is no clear evidence this is what people will choose to do as they age.	Opportunity would be available in some areas to substitute motorized wheeled cross-country travel for activities that require more mobility. There is no clear evidence that this is what people will choose to do as they age.	Opportunity would be available from 6/15-8/31 and 12/2-2/15 to substitute motorized wheeled cross-country travel for activities that require more mobility. There is no clear evidence this is what people will choose to do as they age.	No opportunity would be available to substitute motorized wheeled cross-country travel for activities that require more mobility. There is no clear evidence this is what people will choose to do as they age.

<i>Identified Environmental Issues</i>	<i>No Action (Current Management)</i>	<i>Alternative 1</i>	<i>Alternative 2</i>	<i>Alternative 3</i>	<i>Alternative 4</i>	<i>Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative)</i>
Environmental Advocacy	This group feels that current management does not sufficiently protect resources on public lands.	This alt. may meet the desires of this group.	This alt. may meet the desires of this group.	This alt. may meet the desires of this group in most areas. In open areas, this group feels that current management does not protect resources on public lands.	This alt. would not meet the desires of this group because it may not go far enough to protect the resources on public lands.	This alt. may meet the desires of this group.
Lessees and Permittees	Motorized wheeled cross-country travel opportunities would be available to administer a lease or permit.	Motorized wheeled cross-country travel to administer a lease or permit would only be allowed under specific terms of the lease or permit.	Motorized wheeled cross-country travel opportunities would be available to administer a lease or permit.	Motorized wheeled cross-country travel opportunities would be available to administer a lease or permit.	Motorized wheeled cross-country travel opportunities would be available to administer a lease or permit.	Motorized wheeled cross-country travel opportunities would be available to administer a lease or permit.
Rural Communities/ Personal Freedom	This alt. would best respond to rural communities who prefer that current activities on public lands not be limited.	This alt. would not be consistent with rural communities' preference for leaving activities on public lands at current levels.	This alt. would not be consistent with rural communities' preference for leaving activities on public lands at current levels.	Effects under Alt. 2 would apply where motorized wheeled cross-country travel is prohibited. Effects under No Action Alt. would apply elsewhere.	This alt. would not be consistent with rural communities' preference for leaving activities on public lands at current levels.	This alt. would not be consistent with rural communities' preference for leaving activities on public lands at current levels.
Economics of OHV Industry	Minor increase in jobs is expected to increase due to projected increases in OHV's and trucks.	Minor reductions in jobs and employee compensations may occur.	Minor reductions in jobs and employee compensations may occur.	Minor reductions in jobs and employee compensations may occur.	Minor reductions in jobs and employee compensations may occur.	Minor reductions in jobs and employee compensations may occur.
Cultural Resources	This alt. would cause the greatest direct and indirect impacts to cultural sites in the analysis area.	This alt. would offer the most protection for cultural sites in the analysis area.	This alt. would offer protection similar to Alt. 1, with minor differences due to the exceptions.	Effects under Alt. 2 would apply where motorized wheeled cross-country travel is prohibited. Effects under No Action Alt. would apply elsewhere.	This alt. would cause direct and indirect impacts to cultural sites in the analysis area.	This alt. would offer protection similar to Alt. 1, with a minor difference due to the camping and permitted use exceptions.
Vegetation and Weeds	This alt. would have the greatest risk for expanding and introducing existing and new weeds to BLM and NFS lands.	This alt. would have the lowest risk for expanding and introducing existing and new weeds to BLM and NFS lands.	This alt. would have the third lowest risk for expanding and introducing existing and new weeds to BLM and NFS lands.	This alt. would have substantially less risk than the No Action Alt. because only 6.5 million acres would be open and of those lands, many acres would not be available because of dense forest cover. But it has more risk than alt. 1, 5 and 2.	Effects under this alt. would be similar to the No Action Alt.	This alt. would be similar to Alt. 1, with a minor difference due to the camping and permitted use exceptions.



<i>Identified Environmental Issues</i>	<i>No Action (Current Management)</i>	<i>Alternative 1</i>	<i>Alternative 2</i>	<i>Alternative 3</i>	<i>Alternative 4</i>	<i>Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative)</i>
Wildlife	The current level of impact to wildlife and wildlife habitat would continue with this alt.	Direct and indirect effects would be reduced (habitat fragmentation, habitat abandonment, physiological effects, and indirect impacts of weeds).	Direct and indirect effects would be reduced (habitat fragmentation, habitat abandonment, physiological effects, and indirect impacts of weeds).	Effects under Alt. 2 would apply where motorized wheeled cross-country travel is prohibited. Effects under No Action Alt. would apply elsewhere.	Effects under No Action Alt. would apply from 6/15-8/31 and 12/2-2/15. Effects under Alt. 2 would apply during the other time periods. Overall, impacts to wildlife may be considerably less since closed period is when most travel occurs (fall hunting).	Direct and indirect effects would be reduced (habitat fragmentation, habitat abandonment, physiological effects, and indirect impacts of weeds).
Aquatic Resources	This alt. would provide no risk reduction for further impacts to aquatic resources.	This alt. would provide greatest risk reduction for further impacts to aquatic resources.	This alt. is similar to Alt. 5, with minor differences due to the additional exceptions.	Effects under Alt. 2 would apply where motorized wheeled cross-country travel is prohibited. Effects under No Action Alt. would apply elsewhere.	Overall, effects under this alt. would be less than those under No Action Alt. because there would be fewer days during which motorized wheeled cross-country travel could occur.	This alt. is similar to Alt. 1, with a minor difference due to the camping and permitted use exceptions.
Soils	This alt. would have the greatest potential to impact soil resources.	Impacts to soil resources would be kept to a minimum and widely dispersed.	Impacts to soil resources would be kept to a minimum and widely dispersed.	Overall accelerated soil erosion from motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be reduced, except if such travel were to occur in a concentrated manner.	This alt. would reduce soil erosion by reducing motorized wheeled cross-country travel to periods when soils are likely dry or frozen.	Impacts to soil resources would be kept to a minimum and widely dispersed.
Air	This alt. would have the greatest potential to influence short-term air quality in the immediate area.	This alt. would have reduced localized air effects from fewer user-created trails.	This alt. would have reduced localized air effects from fewer user-created trails.	Effects under Alt. 2 would apply where motorized wheeled cross-country travel is prohibited. Effects under No Action Alt. would apply elsewhere.	This alt. would offer no real difference from the No Action Alt.	This alt. would have reduced localized air effects from fewer user-created trails.
Minerals	This alt. would have no impact.	This alt. would cause increased administrative review before some routine activities could occur.	This alt. would have no impact to existing holders of mineral leases or permits. Some increase in administrative review of casual use for pre-permit surveying and staking.	Effects under Alt. 2 would apply where motorized wheeled cross-country travel is prohibited. Effects under No Action Alt. would apply elsewhere.	Effects under No Action Alt. would apply from 6/15-8/31 and 12/2-2/15. Effects under Alt. 2 would apply during the other time periods.	This alt. would have no impact to existing holders of mineral leases or permits. Some increase would occur in administrative review of casual surveying and staking.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The Forest Service and BLM conducted public involvement for the proposed amendments consistent with procedures required by the National Environmental Policy Act. A Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register on January 22, 1999. Nearly 14,000 scoping letters were mailed out. The comment period was extended to May 31, 1999. During that time 35 open houses were conducted, which approximately 1400 people attended. During the scoping period nearly 3,400 letters were received and reviewed and used to identify issues and develop alternatives.

The draft EIS had a 90 day comment period that ended February 24, 2000. During this period 35 open houses were hosted with over 1,500 people attending. Over 2,300 letters were received and analyzed.

A thorough description of the public involvement process and responses to comments is located in Chapter 4 of the FEIS.

## **LEGALLY REQUIRED FINDINGS**

### **National Forest Management Act: Finding of Nonsignificant Amendment**

The NFMA significance determination is based on a review of the degree to which management direction for the area covered by a forest plan is being changed. The purpose of this amendment is to restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel to avoid future impacts to soil, water, vegetation, wildlife and its habitat, the spread of invasive weed species, damage to cultural resources and minimize user conflicts. These problems are occurring in some areas. A major reason for this decision is preventative in nature. Given the increases in OHV use in the past ten years and the expectation of that trend to continue the decision to amend forest plans to restrict cross-country travel has been made.

NFMA provides that forest plans may be amended in any manner, but if the amendment results in a significant change in the plan, additional procedures must be followed. The Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.12) identifies four factors to consider in determining whether an amendment is significant. These are addressed below for this amendment.

It is important to put these decisions into context with national direction for OHV management. The Executive Orders 11644 and 11989 direct federal agencies to establish procedures to control and direct the use of OHV's on public lands so as to (1) protect the resources of those lands, (2) promote the safety of all users, and (3) minimize conflicts among the various users of those lands. The E.O.'s require the designation of areas and trails for use by OHV's. These amendments only deal with the area designation. Existing land management plans allocated lands to one of three categories: closed – no motorized travel permitted; restricted – seasonally or year-long restrictions on the use of OHV's; open – areas open to use anytime. These amendments shift lands from open and seasonally restricted to yearlong restrictions. These amendments result in minor changes in the use of the forests for motorized recreationists as discussed in chapter 3, recreation section of the FEIS. It explains that motorized recreation is just one segment of the overall suite of possible activities provided on the national forests/grasslands. And that OHV motorized wheeled cross-country travel recreation is just a small portion of the motorized forms of recreation (approximately 1%, see chapter 3, recreation section of FEIS).

The following four factors and their discussion were used in determining significance:

**Timing:** Identify when the change is to take place. Determine whether the change is necessary during or after the plan period or whether the change is to take place after the next scheduled revision of the forest plan.

NFMA requires that Forest and Grassland Plans be revised at least every 15 years. These plans have been in place since 1986-1987. The plan revisions are scheduled in the next couple of years. Thus it is late in the current planning period.

These OHV area designation amendments are taking place during the current planning period prior to completion of the revisions. As stated in FSH 1909.12, chapter 5.32, "the later the change, the less likely it is to be significant for the current forest plan."

**Location and Size:** Determine the location and size of the area involved in the change. Define the relationship of the affected area to the overall planning area.

The following table displays the acres and percentage of each forest plan that is and is not affected by these amendments.

National Forest/ Grassland	Acres Open Yearlong	Acres Closed/ Restricted Yearlong	Total Acres	Percent of Unit Open
Beaverhead-Deerlodge*	1,921,000	1,431,000	3,352,000	57%
Bitterroot**	796,000	321,000	1,117,000	71%
Custer	758,000	429,000	1,187,000	64%
Dakota Prairie***	1,260,000	0	0	100%
Flathead	1,211,000	1,142,000	2,353,000	51%
Gallatin	780,000	1,021,000	1,801,000	43%
Helena	571,000	404,000	975,000	59%
Kootenai**	1,447,000	670,000	2,220,000	70%
Lewis & Clark	1,347,000	516,000	1,862,000	72%

\*These two forests are administered as one forest but have two separate plans

\*\*Acreages only include lands in Montana

\*\*\*Part of the Custer NF plan. A separate plan is currently being developed.

The area involved with the change in designation ranges from 43 to 100 % of the affected forests/grasslands, which is fairly large. However the forest/grassland recreation experts have estimated the number of cross-country wheeled OHV users to be about 1% of all OHV users across the forests/grasslands and the range is from less than 1% to 10% (chapter 3 FEIS). Most wheeled motorized OHV use occurs on roads and trails. Roads and trails remain open within existing restrictions. As described in the environmental setting in chapter 3 much of the National Forest System lands are steep and trees and other vegetation is dense enough to preclude cross-country use by OHV's cross-country. Therefore the change in designation has a much smaller effect on OHV users than depicted by these figures since roads and trails remain open. More than three quarters of the Northern Region is forested. Because of the small magnitude of effects and the fact that much of the land is not now accessible this is not a significant amendment.

**Goals, Objectives and Outputs:** Determine whether the change alters long-term relationships between the levels of goods and services projected by the forest plan. Consider whether an increase in one type of output would trigger an increase or decrease in another. Determine whether there is a demand for goods or services not discussed in the forest plan.

This amendment is fully consistent with the goals in all nine of the forest plans affected. None of the goals will be altered by this decision. There are no new forest plan goals established.

This amendment is fully consistent with and does not alter the objectives of each forest plan. No new objectives are established.

There are no significant changes, in outputs projected by the forest/grassland plans, expected as a result of this decision. The greatest effect is upon motorized OHV users. This effect is relatively minor since the majority of use (estimated to be 99% in the EIS) is on roads and trails and thus is minimally altered by this decision. It is expected that most of the OHV users that have recreated cross-country will shift their activity to roads and trails rather than stop recreating altogether. There will be some benefits for wildlife habitat, slightly reduce the spread of noxious weeds, slightly improve habitat for some Threatened and Endangered species. None of these changes alter the long-term projections of goods and services projected in the forest/grassland plans.

This decision does not deal with a demand for goods or services that were not discussed in the previous planning efforts.

**Management Prescription:** determine whether the change in a management prescription is only for a specific situation or it would apply to future decisions throughout the planning area. Determine whether or not the change alters the desired future condition of the land and resources or the anticipated goods and services to be produced.

This amendment does not change any Management Area (MA) designations. It does change where the motorized activity within the MA's can be conducted. It eliminates the motorized wheeled cross-country travel, with a few specifically managed exceptions, but does not change the current use of roads and trails in place now.

This decision does change the designation of areas for wheeled motorized cross-country travel for future decisions not just for a specific situation.

It does not change the desired future condition of the land and resources as described in the existing plans or make a consequential change in goods and services that are produced.

Conclusion: Based on a consideration of the four factors, and considering the nine Plans being amended, I have determined that the adoption of this amendment is not significant under NFMA. This amendment is fully consistent with the current goals and objectives of the respective plans.

### **National Forest Management Act: Diversity and Viability Provisions for Fish and Wildlife**

The National Forest Management Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to specify “guidelines for land management plans developed to achieve the goals of the Program which provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives” (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(B)). In accord with this diversity provision, the Secretary promulgated a regulation that provides in part: “Fish and wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area” (36 CFR 219.19).

The scientific community and courts recognize that NFMA does not create a concrete, precise standard for diversity. The Committee of Scientists that provided scientific advice to the Forest Service on drafting of NFMA regulations stated that “it is impossible to write specific regulations to ‘provide for’ diversity” and “there remains a great deal of room for honest debate on the translation of policy into management planning requirements and into management programs” (44 Fed. Reg. 26,600-01 & 26,608).

In this planning context, absolute certainty is not possible. Thus, the determination is a matter of risk or likelihood when considering the effects of the action.

In making the determination for this decision the effects displayed in chapter 4 of the FEIS, indicate alternative 5 will be beneficial for wildlife by reducing disturbance of the animals and damage to plants. It will reduce the damage to habitat and reduce the spread of invasive exotic plants. It will reduce the amount of sediment introduced to streams, result in less damage to riparian zone soil and vegetation. Therefore, I conclude this decision will positively contribute to the maintenance of diversity and viability of fish and wildlife on the national forest lands affected.

### **Endangered Species Act**

A team of biologists and botanists prepared a Biological Assessment on this proposed amendment to the Forest Plans. This Biological Assessment, which is included as Appendix C of the Final EIS, summarizes the consultation process on the proposed plan amendment, and evaluates the potential effects of the proposed amendment on listed species and species proposed for listing. The Biological Assessment determined that the proposed amendment is may effect, not likely to adversely affect the, threatened grizzly bear, bald eagle, piping plover, bull trout and Canada lynx or bull trout, endangered gray wolf and black-footed ferret, or mountain plover and Spalding’s catchfly. The last two determinations would be made if the final rule were to list them. It was determined the amendment will have no effect on the endangered least tern, whooping crane, pallid sturgeon, white sturgeon, American burying beetle or the threatened water howellia, Ute ladies’ tresses and western prairie fringed orchid.

The Forest Service requested that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review the Biological Assessment in a letter dated December 7, 2000. The Fish and Wildlife Service concurred and stated that it did not anticipate any incidental take of listed species as a result of the proposed amendment. As a result, they concluded that formal consultation under the Endangered Species Act is not required.

### **NEPA: Environmentally Preferred Alternative**

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA require that the Record of Decision specify “the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable” (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). This alternative has generally been interpreted to be the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA’s Section 101 (CEQ’s “Forty Most-Asked Questions”, 46 Federal Register, 18026, March 23, 1981). Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Alternative 1 is the environmentally preferred alternative since it has the greatest level of restrictions on the use of wheeled motorized OHV’s traveling cross-country, therefore it would have the least effects on the biological, physical, cultural and historic resources.

## **Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)**

Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," requires that Federal agencies make achieving environmental justice part of their mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

We have conducted a qualitative assessment of environmental justice considerations based on the information in the Final EIS. My conclusion is that the risk of such disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations from this amendment is very low. The Final EIS consistently ranks Alternative 5 as among those with the lowest risk of adverse environmental effects from land management activities. Based on the assessment there is no evidence that the low level or risk is disproportionately placed on low income or minority populations.

Alternative 5 also does not pose any significant socioeconomic risks that disproportionately affect low income or minority populations in communities where timber producing employment opportunities and workers are located. Alternative 5 will not cause a significant change in local employment or revenue sharing with local communities. Thus, this decision should not disproportionately affect low-income or minority populations and communities.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Implementation of this decision shall not occur until 7 days following publication of the legal notice of the decision in the following newspapers of record: Missoulian, Great Falls Tribune, Billings Gazette, Montana Standard, Ravalli Republic, Bismark Tribune, Rapic City Journal, Daily Interlake, Bozeman Chronicle and the Independent Record.

This decision to adopt a is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217.

This Forest Plan Revision was developed using planning regulations that were adopted in 1982 under 36 CFR 219. On Thursday November 9, 2000 new regulations for the appeal process (36 CFR 217) and the forest planning process (36 CFR 219) were adopted through publication in the Federal Register. Instead of an appeal process an objection process will be used for any decisions made using the new planning regulation.

Since this plan was developed using the 1982 planning regulation that means there is neither an appeal or objection process for this decision. Given this situation I have decided to provide for what I am calling a voluntary appeal process on the Forest Service's part using the same procedures as outlined in the now obsolete 36 CFR 217 appeal process. Therefore, this decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217 prior to their removal. What that means is a written appeal of this decision, a nonsignificant Forest Plan amendment, must be filed in duplicate within 45 days of the date of the published legal notice. Appeals must be filed with:

Chief, USDA Forest Service  
14<sup>th</sup> and Independence, SW  
201 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
Washington, DC 20250

Any notice of appeal must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 and include at a minimum:

- A statement that the document is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to 36 CFR part 217.
- The name, address, and telephone number of the appellant.
- Identification of the decision to which the objection is being made.
- Identification of the document in which the decision is contained, by title and subject, date of the decision, and name and title of the Deciding Officer.
- Identification of the specific portion of the decision to which objection is made.
- The reasons for objection, including issues of fact, law, regulation, or policy and, if applicable, specifically how the decision violates law, regulation, or policy.
- Identification of the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks.

For questions concerning the appeal process, contact:

USDA Forest Service  
Attention: Ecosystem Management Staff (Steve Segovia)  
P.O. Box 96090  
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090  
(202) 205-1066

For questions concerning this amendment, contact:

Dave Atkins  
Interdisciplinary Team leader  
200 East Broadway  
Missoula, MT 59870  
(406) 329-3134



Dale N. Bosworth  
REGIONAL FORESTER, Northern Region

**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Forest Plan Amendment Number 21  
Site Specific Amendment for the Jimtown Project**

**Decision:** It is my decision to amend the 1986 Helena National Forest Plan for lands encompassed by the Jimtown Project. This site-specific amendment allows for implementation of the project without complying with the Forest Plan standard for hiding cover/road density.

**Rationale for the Decision:** The Forest Plan contains an objective for maintaining big game habitat capability and hunter opportunity so as to provide for a first week [of the big game rifle season] bull elk harvest that does not exceed 40 percent of the total bull harvest [of the five week general season]. To help meet this objective, the Plan adopted a standard that calculates habitat capability [security] on an index that combines open road density and hiding cover. One difficulty with this standard is the degree to which calculation of both factors is subject to interpretation. In some instances, such as the elk herd units which surround the Jimtown Project, biologists have concluded that existing vegetative conditions, which provide little calculatable hiding cover, are such that the standard could not be met even if every road, including County roads and private land access roads, within the herd unit were to be closed to motorized use.

The wildlife analysis for this project concluded that even the “no action” alternative fails to comply with the standard. This is due in large part to the nature of the vegetation in the Jimtown project area which is dominated by warm/dry forests. These forests tend to be relatively open through much of their seral progression and thus often do not provide hiding cover as defined in the Plan. While continued exclusion of fire can allow for development of dense sapling understories and thereby provide hiding cover for a period, these conditions are clearly not sustainable over time. Fire, silvicultural, and wildlife specialists all concluded that selection of the no action alternative for the Jimtown project will at some point time lead to a lengthy period with very little forested cover as a result of inevitable stand-replacing wildfire such as the adjacent Cave Gulch fire of 2000. I believe that sustaining some cover over time is preferable to losing a large percentage of it in a single event.

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Department harvest surveys in recent years have not been sufficiently comprehensive to allow us to determine with any precision whether or not we are meeting the 40% objective; however, the FWP hasn't detected any obvious trend (through general observations) that overharvest of bulls in the 1st week is occurring with a frequency that would

necessitate major management actions to increase security. Instances in which a 40 percent harvest or greater is believed to have occurred have corresponded to years in which the first week of the season coincided with severe snowfall. This has been the case for herd units that do and those that do not meet the hiding cover/road density standard.

Forest Plan monitoring and other planning efforts have repeatedly identified the need to adopt more current methods for determining what attributes contribute to elk security. Current research has emphasized the need for providing large security blocks (>500 acres) that are at least ½ mile from open roads—less emphasis is given to vegetative cover. Helena Forest biologists and biologists from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks believe that elk security can best be determined by these updated methods. It is anticipated that these methods will be incorporated into the Forest Plan during Plan Revision. The effectiveness of elk security in the Jimtown area is being determined for the various travel plan alternatives being considered in the North Belts Travel Plan, an analysis currently underway. Travel management decisions being made with that project will be made with consideration for achieving the Forest Plan objective of limiting the first week bull harvest and otherwise providing adequate security.

This amendment does not alter management allocations for the Forest Plan. This amendment is a site-specific amendment and is applicable only to implementation of Alternative B of the Jimtown Project.

**Significance:** Based on the wildlife analysis provided in the Jimtown Project EA, I have determined that the change is not a significant Forest Plan amendment since the decision will not alter Forest management allocations or multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management. The entire project area is in an L-1 management allocation which has the primary management goal to “Maintain or improve vegetative conditions and livestock forage productivity.” My selected actions will accomplish this goal. The hiding cover directly affected by the amendment represents less than a tenth of a percent of the Helena Forest, and the change to available hiding cover within the Hedges Mountain herd unit is a reduction of about 3 %. The timing of this amendment is late in the planning cycle as the schedule for revision of the Helena Forest Plan is 2003. Adoption of this amendment will not change the forest-wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement.

**Implementation:** This decision will be implemented prior to implementation of the Jimtown Project.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 DWIGHT G. CHAMBERS, Acting Forest Supervisor  
 Helena National Forest  
 USDA-Forest Service

**HELENA NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Forest Plan Amendment Number 22  
Site Specific Amendment for the North Elkhorns Vegetation Project**

**Decision:** It is my decision to amend the 1986 Helena National Forest Plan for lands encompassed by the North Elkhorns Vegetation Project. This site-specific amendment allows for implementation of the project without complying with the Forest Plan standard on page II/19 which states that the “Montana Cooperative Elk-Logging Study Recommendations, in Appendix C, will be followed during timber sale and road construction projects”. In Appendix C, on page 10, the recommendation for winter ranges states that “where timber harvest is acceptable, slash cleanup and logging should be scheduled outside the winter period”.

**Rationale for the Decision:** This project is designed to rejuvenate the winter range forage base for big game species such as deer, elk, and moose, and to create a sustainable forest structure that would eventually provide suitable habitat for wildlife species, such as flammulated owls, that are associated with old growth ponderosa pine/Douglas fir forests. The project may have other benefits including the reduction of the potential for a stand replacement fire.

This project isn't a timber sale per se, it is a wildlife habitat improvement project that will involve a timber sale (commercial thinning) as the tool to achieve part of the desired condition. Based on the analysis of environmental effects, I have concluded that the benefits of conducting the logging during the winter months, in terms of reducing weed spread and potential soil erosion, outweigh the potential minor and temporary displacement of big game.

As mentioned in the wildlife effects analysis (FEIS, page 3-72), summer logging activity would be more likely to displace wildlife on a larger scale “simply because more animals are present in the project area during the summer (nesting, breeding) than in winter”. In addition, Alternative 2 (winter logging) minimizes the risk of soil disturbance and hence erosion and noxious weed spread.

Based on a map of winter range for the Sheep Creek Elk Herd Unit (produced by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks), the project area is classified as winter range and comprises less than 4% of the total winter range for this elk herd. The main



wintering area for elk and mule deer in the Sheep Creek herd unit is the Corral, Sheep, and Spokane Creeks region at the northern tip of the Elkhorn Range, which lies outside of the project area.

Although the project area is “classified” as winter range, as mentioned in the FEIS (page 3-48), most of the project area functions not as key winter range, but as transitional range in spring and fall. In addition, the FEIS (page 3-52) notes that the project area currently has very little winter forage and is not heavily used by big game during the winter months.

The big game analysis does disclose that winter logging activity could displace the few animals that generally use the project area during the winter months. The analysis also states that “considering the reduced number of animals in this herd unit, and if care is taken to meet the objectives in the Maupin Allotment Management Plan, there would be sufficient winter range outside of the project area (94% of the total Sheep Creek Herd winter range) to accommodate displacement of a few animals from the project area.” In addition, only half of the project area would be treated at a time. It is also possible, as stated in the analysis, that big game can and will habituate to predictable disturbances. For all these reasons, the analysis concludes that this potential displacement effect is minor.

The effects are also temporary. There is a mitigation measure for wildlife that limits the timber sale contract to 2-3 years. For all these reasons, and considering the indirect potential effects of summer logging (e.g. increased noxious weeds), I have decided that a site-specific amendment to allow for winter logging is reasonable.

This amendment does not alter management allocations for the Forest Plan. This amendment is a site-specific amendment and is applicable only to implementation of Alternative 2 of the North Elkhorns Vegetation Project.

**Significance:** Based on the wildlife analysis provided in the North Elkhorns Vegetation Project FEIS, and the comments provided by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (ROD, Attachment 2), I have determined that the change is not a significant Forest Plan amendment since the effects of Alternative 2, relative to the site-specific amendment needed, are minor and short-term. This decision will not alter Forest management allocations or multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management. The entire project area is in Management Area E-4 which has the primary management goal to “Optimize moose, elk, and mule deer habitat”. The selected alternative will help accomplish this goal and will rejuvenate the forage base on publically-owned winter range while minimizing the threat of noxious weed invasion.

The timing of this amendment is late in the planning cycle as the schedule for revision of the Helena Forest Plan is 2003.

Adoption of this amendment will not change the forest-wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement.

**Implementation:** This decision will be implemented prior to implementation of the North Elkhorns Vegetation Project.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thomas J. Clifford  
Forest Supervisor  
Helena National Forest  
USDA-Forest Service

# Forest Plan Amendment Number 23

## HELENA NATIONAL FOREST LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Forest Plan Amendment Number 23

#### *Site Specific Amendment for the Cave Gulch Post-Fire Salvage Project*

**Decision:** It is my decision to amend the 1986 Helena National Forest Plan for lands encompassed by the Cave Gulch Post-Fire Salvage Project. This site-specific amendment allows for implementation of the project through a short term and minor increase in road density due to temporary roads required with the selected alternative. Please refer to the Forest Plan standard for hiding cover/road density on pages II/17 and II/18 of the Forest Plan.

**Rationale for the Decision:** The Forest Plan contains an objective for maintaining big game habitat capability and hunter opportunity so as to provide for a first week [of the big game rifle season] bull elk harvest that does not exceed 40 percent of the total bull harvest [of the five week general season]. To help meet this objective, the Plan adopted a standard that calculates big game security on an index that combines open road density and hiding cover.

The wildlife analysis for this project concluded that even the "no action" alternative does not meet the standard. This is due in part to the loss of existing hiding cover from the Cave Gulch wildfire. Another factor is the nature of the vegetation in this portion of the Big Belt Mountains which is dominated by warm/dry forests. These forests tend to be relatively open through much of their seral progression and thus often do not provide hiding cover as defined in the Plan.

The temporary roads are short term and minor in length. .85 miles are needed. The roads are expected to remain in place no longer than 2 years before they will be fully decommissioned. No public travel will occur on these roads. The .85 miles of road will temporarily increase the road density from 2.41 to 2.50 miles/square mile. Following decommissioning of these roads, the open road density will return to the existing 2.41 miles/square mile. Following decommissioning of 3.5 miles of existing roads, the open

road density will be reduced to 2.3 miles/square mile, representing an improvement toward the standard in the long term.

**Significance:** This amendment is a site-specific amendment and is applicable only to implementation of Alternative 4 of the Cave Gulch Post-Fire Salvage Project. Based on the wildlife analysis provided in the Cave Gulch Post-Fire Salvage Project FEIS, I have determined that the change is not a significant Forest Plan amendment since the decision will not alter Forest management allocations or multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management. All of the temporary road construction will take place within T-1 and T-3 management allocations, both of which are in the suitable base. Both management allocations "emphasize cost-effective timber production". This amendment will help accomplish this goal. Both management allocations allow for road construction to meet goals and objectives. The temporary increase in open road density within the project is less than .1 miles/square mile overall. After approximately two years, the Cave Gulch decision will result in an improvement over current open road density. The timing of this amendment is late in the planning cycle as the schedule for revision of the Helena Forest Plan is 2005. Adoption of this amendment will not change the forest-wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Helena Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement.

**Implementation:** This decision will be implemented prior to implementation of the Cave Gulch Post-Fire Salvage Project.

/s/ Allen L. Christophersen

November 1, 2002

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ALLEN L. CHRISTOPHERSEN, Acting Forest Supervisor

Helena National Forest

USDA-Forest Service