

SUMMARY

This draft Garnet Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) addresses future management options for approximately 145,660 surface acres and 213,385 acres of federal mineral estate administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) through its Garnet Resource Area office in Missoula, Montana. Although the Garnet Resource Area encompasses nine counties in northwestern Montana, BLM administers substantial surface acreage in only three counties—Missoula, Granite, and Powell.

When completed, the Garnet RMP will provide a comprehensive framework for managing public land and allocating resources in the resource area during the next ten or more years. However, this RMP/EIS document is primarily focused on five broad issues and the decisions needed to address each issue. The broad issues involve the management of renewable resources, such as timber and livestock forage; special attention resources, including wilderness and wildlife habitat; nonrenewable resources, such as energy and minerals; land ownership and administration, including withdrawals and access; and recreation, cultural, and aesthetic resources.

The Garnet RMP/EIS is based on the concept of management areas as developed by the Lolo National Forest Plan (USDA, FS 1982b). First, the capabilities of the land are evaluated in a resource inventory. Then possible management options, appropriate for managing the resources on the land, are developed. (Fourteen different management area prescriptions were developed for the Garnet RMP and are listed in Appendix A.) Next, the capabilities of a given area of land is matched with an array of management options; all of the options are compatible with the multiple use management directives of the BLM but give emphasis to different resources. Finally, the management options for all lands are arranged into five alternative management plans. (The management area assignments for each alternative in the Garnet RMP are shown on the Alternative maps in the map packet.)

Five RMP alternatives are considered in this document. One represents no action, which means a continuation of current management direction. The other four alternatives provide a range of choices from those emphasizing resource protection to those emphasizing resource production.

The preferred alternative, which is the proposed Resource Management Plan, incorporates portions of the other four alternatives and generally represents a balance between resource production and environmental protection. The management actions, resource allocations, and environmental consequences that characterize each alternative are summarized below.



ALTERNATIVE A

Alternative A is a continuation of present management. It is called the no action alternative because no change in management is proposed.

Approximately 87,920 acres (78 percent) of the Commercial Forest Lands (CFL) will be managed essentially as they are at present. Annual harvest will affect 1,216 acres, yielding 6,370 mbf/year. Approximately 9.6 miles of new road construction will be required annually. The only significant acreages of CFL that will not be available for harvest are set aside areas and active mining sites. Approximately 500 acres of CFL will be subject to restrictive timber management to protect and maintain riparian and watershed values; approximately 22,000 acres will be subject to restrictive timber management to protect or enhance important wildlife values; and approximately 24,000 acres will be set aside to protect or enhance wildlife, watershed, soils, and recreation values. Forest management activities will be emphasized on 65,500 acres (57 percent) of CFL, subject to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to maintain site productivity and water quality.

The annual harvest will result in 158 acres (13 percent) clearcut, 766 acres (63 percent) shelterwood cut, 49 acres (4 percent) seed tree cut, 207 acres (17 percent) selection cut, and 36 acres (3 percent) commercially thinned. Although the acreage of stands suitable for treatment will increase, it is assumed under this alternative and all other alternatives that very little appropriated money will be available for thinning and planting the backlog of old, understocked cutting units. Approximately 100 acres of planting and 40 acres of precommercial thinning will be accomplished annually. Planting of problem reforestation sites in a timber sale and timber stand improvement work on occasional overstory removal units will be accomplished under the terms of the timber sale contract.

At present ten Allotment Management Plans (AMPs), comprising 35,663 acres, are under intensive grazing management. Authorized livestock grazing will remain at current levels (5,930 AUMs) in the short term. In the long term, livestock forage production is projected to increase 17 percent over current levels. These increased AUMs will be due primarily to the cumulative effect of intensive grazing management systems already in place and to the continued creation of transitory range as a result of timber harvesting.

The range improvements required to implement this alternative include about 200 acres of weed control, 22 miles of fence, 7 cattleguards, 25 springs, and 2 miles of pipeline. The estimated initial cost for all improvements is \$217,400.

Long-term vegetative trend under this alternative is projected to remain static on 74 leases and show a slight improvement on the 10 existing AMPs. Current projections indicate that approximately 6,633 acres in fair and poor vegetative condition in the existing

AMPs will be improved up one condition class to good and fair vegetative condition.

Livestock use affects 48 percent of the aquatic habitat in the resource area, and 21 percent of the aquatic habitat is in suboptimum condition. In the long term, it is estimated that this alternative will improve half of the suboptimum habitat through increased bank stability and cover.

None of the four areas currently under wilderness study will be recommended to Congress for wilderness designation or any other formal designation. No public land in the resource area will be proposed for formal designation.

Under this alternative 1,400 acres will be managed primarily for riparian values. All other riparian habitat will be managed under SOPs to protect watershed values. Approximately 9,500 acres of noncommercial forest land containing important wildlife features will be available primarily for wildlife use. Winter range land, with good summer range potential for elk, and areas with concentrations of habitat features totalling 32,000 acres will be managed to protect or enhance wildlife habitat while allowing for the harvest of timber. In addition, 28,460 acres of largely undeveloped lands, set aside in previous land use plans, will be managed primarily for wildlife values. Cumulative adverse impacts to wildlife habitat due to grazing, timber management, and mineral activities are expected to be moderate. The impacts to wildlife will be mitigated on about 51 percent of the land base.

Under Alternative A, oil and gas leasing will be permitted on 205,586 acres of federal mineral estate (100 percent of the total acreage available for consideration). Oil and gas leasing will be subject to seasonal restrictions on 36,874 acres and to stipulations prohibiting surface occupancy on 33,340 acres. The restricted areas and areas prohibiting surface occupancy consist largely of road closure areas, river tracts, cultural and historical sites, and special management areas. The remaining 135,372 acres will be leased subject to standard stipulations.

Exploration and development for locatable minerals in the resource area will not be significantly affected under this alternative. A total of 1,460 acres will remain or be withdrawn from mineral entry. The areas to be withdrawn are to protect recreation, scientific, and historical sites. Approximately 203,850 acres (99 percent) of federal minerals in the resource area will be available for mineral entry and development.

For purposes of analysis, all public land will be retained in public ownership. In actual practice, some public land could be sold or exchanged as a result of tract-specific land use plan amendments, but the net result will be little or no change in the land ownership pattern.

Public access currently is available to 95 tracts totaling 114,600 acres (78 percent public land base). Administrative access is available to an additional 13 tracts totalling 5,320 acres. Under this alternative additional access will be secured only for timber management.

Approximately 30,060 acres will be identified as avoidance areas for utility corridor development. The remaining 115,600 acres (79 percent) will remain available for further consideration. Public land within avoidance areas generally will not be available for corridor development. Criteria provided in the plan will guide future site-specific decisions regarding corridor development.

Recreation opportunities will not be significantly affected by this alternative as developmental activities are directed away from key recreation areas. Forty undeveloped recreation sites, near water or road closure gates, are identified for protection. Other recreation management is generally the same for all alternatives. This includes maintaining existing and potential walk-in hunting areas, cooperatively managing Garnet Ghost Town, establishing the Garnet National Winter Recreation Trail, developing cross-country ski trails, and acquiring access to river tracts. No new outfitters and guides will be licensed for hunting under any alternatives, except in conjunction with adjoining national forest lands. There will be no significant effects on visual quality. Management of cultural or historical sites will be the same for all alternatives, with interpretation of key sites around Garnet and with all others receiving protective management. There will be a beneficial effect on cultural resources in all alternatives.

Under this alternative and all others, most public land will be designated as limited, with all vehicles including Off-road Vehicles (ORV's), restricted to open roads and trails. Exceptions may be made for snowmobile use. Also under all alternatives the need for road closures will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Seasonal closures will be implemented in areas to provide wildlife security, reduce recreation conflicts, reduce road maintenance, provide watershed protection, and enhance recreation, including the opening of private lands for hunting. It is generally the policy that new roads be closed or limited for motorized vehicle use. All existing closures will continue.

Air quality will not be significantly affected. Watershed conditions are expected to remain at the present level. Water quality, which is generally good, should remain at its present level.

This alternative will not have significant social or economic impacts.

ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B emphasizes resource production.

Forest resources under this alternative will be utilized to the fullest extent possible under the principles of sustained yield management. Approximately 112,000

acres (97 percent) of the CFL will be available for forest management activities. Annual harvest will affect 1,660 acres, yielding 8,560 mbf of timber per year. Approximately 12.9 miles of new road construction will be required annually. The only significant areas of CFL not available for harvest will be active mining sites. No acreage will be set aside or subject to restrictions for other resource values; the 112,000 acres of CFL will be available, without restrictions, for sustained yield management subject to SOPs to maintain site productivity and water quality.

The annual harvest activities will include 216 acres (13 percent) clearcut, 1,050 acres (63 percent) shelterwood cut, 66 acres (4 percent) seed tree cut, 282 acres (17 percent) selection cut, and 50 acres (3 percent) commercially thinned. Intensive management practices will be the same as in Alternative A.

Under this alternative 9,211 AUMs will be allocated to livestock use over the short term. In the long term available AUMs are projected to increase by 2,451. These additional AUMs will be a result of placing 24 allotments (14 more than in Alternative A) under intensive grazing management, improving vegetative conditions, and increasing timber harvest. The greatest increase will be on allotments under intensive grazing management that also have a sizeable number of acres subject to timber harvest.

Range improvements required to implement this alternative include about 500 acres of weed control, 104 miles of fence, 32 cattleguards, 69 springs, and 4 miles of pipeline. The estimated initial cost for all improvements is \$829,000.

Vegetative conditions are projected to improve from fair to good on 11,699 acres and from poor to fair on 1,297 acres in the long term. Significant improvement in vegetative condition can be expected on the 14 proposed AMPs. Conditions on the ten existing AMPs will be similar to those discussed in Alternative A.

Livestock use will affect 62 percent of the aquatic habitat in the resource area; 21 percent of the aquatic habitat is in suboptimum condition. Intensive grazing management is projected to improve all of the suboptimum habitat through increased bank stability and cover.

None of the four areas currently under wilderness study will be recommended to Congress for wilderness designation, nor will any areas be recommended for any other formal designation. In the long term wilderness values generally will be forgone in all areas.

Under this alternative there will be no management primarily for riparian values. All riparian habitat will be managed under SOPs to protect watershed values. Approximately 22,000 acres of noncommercial forest land containing important wildlife features will be available primarily for wildlife use, but there will be no management to protect or enhance wildlife habitat. Cumulative adverse impacts to wildlife habitat are expected to be moderate. These impacts will be mitigated on only 22 percent of the

land base. However, intensive grazing management will bring substantial improvement to wildlife habitat.

All land available for oil and gas leasing, 205,586 acres, will be leased. There will be no seasonal restrictions on any leases. Stipulations prohibiting surface occupancy will be imposed on 160 acres consisting largely of cultural and historical sites. The remaining 205,426 acres will be leased with standard stipulations.

Exploration and development for locatable minerals in the resource area will not be significantly affected under this alternative. The acres available for mineral entry and the acres to remain or be withdrawn from mineral entry remain the same as in Alternative A.

Under Alternative B, and under all remaining alternatives, the land ownership adjustment issue will be resolved by identification of retention zones in areas where public lands will primarily be retained or enhanced. These retention zones total 126,872 acres. Most are characterized by reasonably consolidated holdings or contain resource values appropriate for public ownership. Public lands outside the retention zones total 18,788 acres. In general, these lands are in small tracts, widely scattered, and often without legal or physical access. They will be considered on their individual merits for retention, exchange, transfer, or sale. All site-specific decisions regarding land ownership adjustments will be made based on criteria identified in the plan.

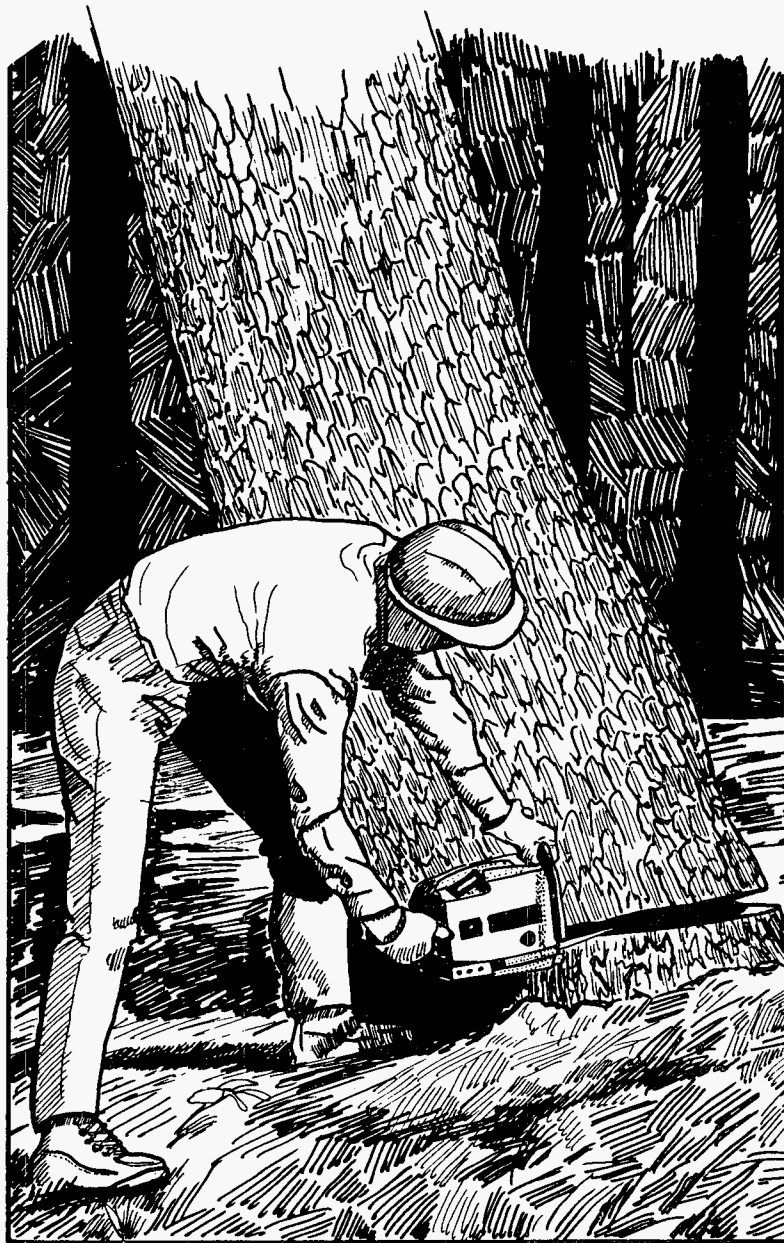
Future investments in public facilities and improvements, including land and access acquisition, generally will receive highest priority in retention areas. In this alternative and the remaining alternatives, public access is proposed to an additional 9,500 acres; administrative access is proposed to an additional 8,150 acres. Alternatives B through E will result in overall improvement in the land ownership pattern and in legal access to public land.

Identified avoidance areas for utility corridor development in this alternative will be reduced to 160 acres, protecting historical and cultural sites. This will leave the remaining 145,500 acres available for further consideration. Criteria provided in the plan will guide any future site-specific decisions on corridor development.

Recreation resources and opportunities will be significantly affected by developmental activities under Alternative B, and no undeveloped recreation sites will be identified for protection. Visual impacts could be significant, particularly in areas of high visual sensitivity. Management of cultural and historical sites is the same as in Alternative A.

Road closure proposals and restrictions on vehicle use remain the same as Alternative A.

Air quality will not be significantly affected, although short term impacts will be slightly greater than in Alternative A. Watershed conditions and water quality are expected to improve slightly because of implementation of 14 new AMPs.



The timber harvest level of this alternative will provide 20 additional jobs compared to Alternative A. Increases in ranch income could be significant for some individuals due to increases in authorized livestock use.

ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C emphasizes environmental protection.

Under this alternative more acres of CFL will be subject to management restrictions, although the CFL acreage available for management is essentially the same as under current management. There will be an 8 percent reduction in the number of acres harvested annually and a 6 percent reduction in the annual timber harvest. There will also be a 6 percent reduction in the acreage required for roads. Approximately 2,780 acres of CFL will be set aside or subject to restrictive timber management to protect and maintain riparian and watershed values; approximately 46,700 acres will be subject to restrictive timber management to protect or enhance important wildlife values; and approximately 2,000 acres within special management areas will be set aside to protect or enhance wildlife, watershed, soils, and recreation. The remaining 38,500 acres (33 percent) of CFL will be available for a full range of forest management activities subject to SOPs to maintain site productivity and water quality.

The annual harvest activities on 1,120 acres will include 145 acres (13 percent) clearcut, 706 acres (63 percent) shelterwood cut, 45 acres (4 percent) seed tree cut, 190 acres (17 percent) selection cut, and 34 acres (3 percent) commercially thinned. Intensive timber management practices will be the same as Alternative A.

With 56 percent of the available CFL acreage subject to volume reduction and 22 percent of the CFL unavailable for harvest, the annual harvest will be 5,960 mbf, a significant reduction from the possible harvest level of 8,560 mbf.

Under this alternative 3,595 AUMs, or 65 percent of the current licensed use, will be allocated to livestock grazing in the short term. An increase of 637 AUMs is projected in the long term. These reductions are the result of management goals to protect riparian habitat. Topography in the resource area causes livestock to travel and concentrate in or near the valley bottoms and associated riparian areas. Because of this heavy use, 95 percent of the poor and fair condition range is found in the valley bottoms. This alternative strives to improve riparian habitat conditions primarily by reducing stocking levels.

Range improvements required to implement this alternative include about 82 miles of fence and 22 cattleguards. The estimated initial cost for improvements is \$465,000.

Vegetative conditions are expected to improve significantly on the 28 allotments proposed for intensive management and to remain in or near the same condition on the remaining 56 allotments.

Livestock use affects 48 percent of the aquatic habitat in the resource area; 21 percent of the aquatic habitat is in suboptimum condition. Intensive grazing management is projected to improve all of the suboptimum habitat through increased bank stability and cover.

All four of the areas currently under wilderness study will be recommended to Congress for wilderness designation. As a result wilderness values generally will be maintained on 27,737 acres in the resource area. These areas will be closed to motorized vehicle use.

A unique geologic feature in the resource area (20 acres) will be recommended as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

Under this alternative 4,300 acres will be managed primarily for riparian values. All other riparian habitat will be managed under SOPs to protect watershed values. Approximately 5,300 acres of noncommercial forest land containing important wildlife features will be available primarily for wildlife use. Winter range, land with good summer range potential for elk, and areas with concentrations of habitat features totalling 61,200 acres will be managed to protect or enhance wildlife habitat while allowing for the harvest of timber. Cumulative adverse impacts to wildlife habitat are expected to be low. The impacts to wildlife will be mitigated on about 70 percent of the land base.

Oil and gas leasing will be permitted on 177,849 acres of federal mineral estate (86.5 percent). Oil and gas leasing will be subject to seasonal restrictions on 66,050 acres and to stipulations prohibiting surface occupancy on 2,560 acres. These restricted areas consist largely of road closure areas, river tracts, cultural and historical sites, and the periphery of special management areas. Approximately 27,737 acres will not be leased mainly to meet a Congressional mandate not to lease in WSAs or wilderness (subject to change by Congressional discretion). The remaining 109,239 acres will be leased subject to standard stipulations.

Exploration and development for locatable minerals will be affected by the recommendation of 27,737 acres for wilderness designation. This will increase the total acreage withdrawn from mineral entry to 29,217 acres, 14 percent of the available acres.

Resolution of the land ownership adjustment issue and access proposals will be the same as in Alternative B.

The 27,757 acres recommended for wilderness and for ACEC under this alternative will be excluded from corridor development. Another 12,253 acres will be identified as avoidance areas; public land within avoidance areas generally will not be available for corridor development. The remaining 105,650 acres (76 percent) will be available for further consideration. Criteria provided in the plan will guide future site-specific decisions regarding corridor development.

Most recreational activities will benefit, particularly unroaded backcountry and dispersed recreation activities. Sixty-one undeveloped recreation sites are identified for protection. Visual quality will be retained. Management of cultural and historical sites is the same as in all other alternatives.

Road closure proposals and restrictions on vehicle use will be the same as in all other alternatives, except that areas recommended for wilderness designation will be closed.

Air quality will not be significantly affected. Watershed conditions are expected to improve significantly. Water quality should improve moderately.

This alternative will reduce direct employment in timber harvest by approximately four jobs per year. Some gains could occur in jobs and income related to nonmotorized recreation and wildlife related recreation.

ALTERNATIVE D

Alternative D, like Alternative C, emphasizes environmental protection. However, Alternative D differs from Alternative C in that only portions of Wales Creek WSA, Hoodoo Mountain WSA, and Gallagher Creek 202 WSA, and all of Quigg West 202 WSA will be recommended for wilderness designation.

Alternative D will allocate 101,130 acres of CFL (90 percent) for forest management. Annual harvest activities will affect 1,313 acres, yielding 6,780 mbf/year. Approximately 10.2 miles of new road construction will be required annually. The only significant areas which will not be available for harvest are those included in the partial wilderness recommendation and active mining sites. Approximately 3,580 acres of CFL will be set aside or allocated to restrictive timber management to protect and maintain riparian and watershed values; 58,350 acres will be subject to restrictive timber management to protect or enhance important wildlife values; and 400 acres will be set aside to protect or enhance wildlife, watershed, soils, and recreation values. Forest management will be emphasized on the remaining 39,250 acres (34 percent) of CFL, subject to SOPs to maintain site productivity and water quality. Although the percentage of CFL acres allocated for forest management is high, 54 percent are subject to management restrictions in this alternative. Overall, the degree of impacts will be similar to current management.

The annual harvest activities will include 171 acres (13 percent) clearcut, 827 acres (63 percent) shelterwood cut, 53 acres (4 percent) seed tree cut, 223 acres (17 percent) selection cut, and 39 acres (3 percent) commercially thinned. Intensive management activities will be the same as Alternative A.

Range resources will be treated the same as in Alternative C and will have essentially the same impacts and results.

Portions of WSAs, totalling 14,350 acres, will be recommended for wilderness designation. Of the remaining acres, 440 will become a special management area and 12,600 acres will be allocated to other management areas with primary emphasis on wildlife habitat.

A unique geologic feature (20 acres) will be recommended as an ACEC.

Under this alternative, 5,311 acres will be managed emphasizing riparian values. All other riparian habitat will be managed under SOPs to protect watershed values. Approximately 5,300 acres of noncommercial forest land containing important wildlife features will be available primarily for wildlife use. Winter range, land with good summer range potential for elk, and areas of concentrations of habitat features totalling 75,000 acres will be managed to protect or enhance wildlife habitat while allowing for the harvest of timber. In addition, 440 acres of largely undeveloped lands, set aside in previous land use plans, will be managed primarily for wildlife values. Cumulative habitat impacts will be the same as in Alternative C.

Oil and gas leasing will be permitted on 191,236 acres of federal mineral estate (93 percent). Oil and gas leasing will be subject to seasonal restrictions on 78,550 acres and to stipulations prohibiting surface occupancy on 600 acres. These areas consist largely of important big game habitat. The 14,350 acres not leased are within areas recommended for wilderness designation. The remaining 112,086 acres will be leased subject to standard stipulations.

Exploration and development for locatable minerals will be permitted on 189,480 acres (92 percent). This is 7 percent less than under current management. The 15,830 acres withdrawn from mineral entry include the powersite withdrawals and the areas to be withdrawn to protect recreation, scientific, and historical sites, plus the recommendation of 14,350 acres for wilderness designation.

Resolution of the land ownership adjustment issue and access proposals remains the same as in Alternative B.

The reduced wilderness recommendation and the ACEC recommendation will result in the exclusion of 14,370 acres from corridor development. Another 11,640 acres will be identified as avoidance areas; public land within avoidance areas generally will not be available for corridor development. The remaining 119,650 acres (82 percent) will be available for further consideration. Criteria provided in the plan will guide future site-specific decisions.

Recreational activities will benefit as in Alternative C, except that 13,387 acres of WSA lands could be subject to development activities. The number of undeveloped recreation sites identified for protection will be the same as in Alternative C. Reduction of acres recommended for wilderness will result in fewer areas allocated to VRM Class I. Management of cultural and historical sites is the same as in all other alternatives.

Road closure proposals and restrictions on vehicle use will be the same as in all other alternatives, except that areas recommended for wilderness designation will be closed.

Air quality will not be significantly affected. Watershed conditions are expected to improve significantly. Water quality should improve moderately.

This alternative will increase direct forest employment by four jobs over the current situation. Changes in ranch income will not be significant. Some increases in jobs and income related to nonmotorized and wildlife related recreation could occur.

ALTERNATIVE E

Alternative E is the preferred alternative.

The acreage of CFL available for timber management will fall between Alternatives A and B. Approximately 105,020 acres (93 percent) of CFL will be available for forest management activities. Annual harvest will affect 1,352 acres, yielding 7,030 mbf/year. Approximately 10.5 miles of new road construction will be required annually. The only significant areas of CFL not available for harvest will be special management areas; however, management restrictions will apply to 62 percent of the available CFL. Approximately 2,080 acres of CFL will be set aside or subject to restrictive timber management to protect and maintain riparian and watershed values; approximately 62,700 acres will be subject to restrictive management to protect or enhance important wildlife values; and approximately 6,620 acres will be set aside to protect or enhance wildlife, watershed, soils, and recreation values. The remaining 40,300 acres (38 percent) of CFL will emphasize forest management activities, subject to SOPs to maintain site productivity and water quality.

The annual harvest activities will include approximately 176 acres (13 percent) clearcut, 852 acres (63 percent) shelterwood cut, 54 acres (4 percent) seed tree cut, 230 acres (17 percent) selection cut, and 41 acres (3 percent) commercially thinned. Intensive management practices will be the same as Alternative A.

In this alternative 6,245 AUMs will be allocated to livestock use in the short term, a 5 percent increase over current licensed use. In the long term, available AUMs are projected to increase to 8,013. These additional AUMs are a combined estimate of additional forage from range improvements, increased timber harvest, and improvement of vegetative conditions on 20 allotments under intensive grazing management.

Range improvements required to implement this alternative include about 300 acres of weed control, 75 miles of fence, 25 cattleguards, 38 springs, and 4 miles of pipeline. The estimated initial cost for improvements is \$585,600.

Livestock carrying capacity of the range resource is projected to increase 28 percent in the long term. It is

expected that 90 percent of the range available for livestock grazing (excluding logged areas) will be in good or excellent condition over the long term.

Livestock use affects 48 percent of the aquatic habitat in the resource area; 21 percent of the aquatic habitat is in suboptimum condition. Intensive grazing management is projected to improve all of the suboptimum habitat through increased bank stability and cover.

Quigg West, a 520-acre 202 WSA which adjoins a Forest Service RARE II area, will be recommended for wilderness designation in this alternative contingent upon the designation of the Quigg RARE II area (FS 1807) for wilderness. Special management will be emphasized on 8,120 acres largely comprised of portions of the WSAs.

A unique geologic feature (20 acres) will be recommended as an ACEC.

Under this alternative 3,500 acres will be managed emphasizing riparian values. All other riparian habitat will be managed under SOPs to protect watershed values. Approximately 5,800 acres of noncommercial forest land containing important wildlife features will be available primarily for wildlife use. Winter range, land with good summer range potential for elk, and areas of concentrations of habitat features totaling 80,450 acres will be managed to protect or enhance wildlife habitat while allowing for the harvest of timber. In addition 8,140 acres of largely undeveloped lands, set aside in previous land use plans, will be managed primarily for wildlife values. Cumulative adverse impacts to wildlife habitat are expected to be low to moderate. The impacts to wildlife will be mitigated on about 69 percent of the land base.

Oil and gas leasing will be permitted on 205,066 acres (99 percent) of federal mineral estate. Leasing will be subject to seasonal restrictions on 84,076 acres and to stipulations prohibiting surface occupancy on 8,180 acres. These restricted areas consist largely of road closures, important big game habitat, and special management areas. Approximately 520 acres, recommended for wilderness designation, will not be leased. The remaining 112,810 acres will be leased subject to standard stipulations.

Exploration and development for locatable minerals will be permitted on 203,310 acres (99 percent) in the resource area, similar to current management but with slightly more acreage withdrawn from mineral entry. In addition to the 1,460 acres withdrawn to protect recreation, scientific, and historical sites under current management; withdrawal will also be proposed for the 520 acres recommended for wilderness designation and for the 20 acres recommended as an ACEC. A total of 2,000 acres will be withdrawn from mineral entry.

The land ownership adjustment issue will be resolved by identification of retention zones in areas where public lands will primarily be retained or enhanced. These retention zones total 126,872 acres. Most are characterized by reasonably consolidated holdings

or contain resource values appropriate for public ownership. Public lands outside the retention zones total 18,788 acres. In general, these lands are in small tracts, widely scattered, and often without legal or physical access. They will be considered on their individual merits for retention, exchange, transfer, or sale. All site-specific decisions regarding land ownership adjustment will be made based on criteria identified in the plan.

Future investments in public facilities and improvements, including land and access acquisition, generally will receive highest priority in retention areas. Public access is proposed to an additional 9,500 acres; administrative access is proposed to an additional 8,150 acres. This alternative will result in overall improvement in the land ownership pattern and in legal access to public land.

Alternative E will exclude 540 acres, the wilderness recommendation and the ACEC recommendation, from corridor development. Another 17,620 acres will be identified as avoidance areas; public land with avoidance areas generally will not be available for corridor development. The remaining 127,500 acres (87.5 percent) will be available for further consideration. Criteria provided in the plan will guide future site-specific decisions.

Recreation opportunities will not be significantly affected by this alternative as developmental activities are directed away from key recreation areas. A total of 41 undeveloped recreation sites, near water or road closure gates, are identified for protection; this is one more than under current management. Other recreation management includes maintaining existing and potential walk-in hunting areas, cooperatively managing Garnet Ghost Town, establishing the Garnet National Winter Recreation Trail, developing cross-country ski trails, and acquiring access to river tracts. No new outfitters and guides will be licensed except in conjunction with adjoining national forest lands. There will be no significant effects on visual quality. Management of cultural or historical sites will include interpreting key sites around Garnet and all others receiving protective management. There will be a beneficial effect on cultural resources.

Most public land will be designated as limited, with all vehicles, including ORVs, restricted to open roads and trails. Exceptions may be made for snowmobiles. The 520-acre Quigg West and the 20-acre ACEC will be closed. Karshaw Mountain 240 acres and Ram Mountain 4800 acres are also closed. The need for additional road closures will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Seasonal closures will be implemented in areas to provide wildlife security, reduce recreation conflicts, reduce road maintenance, provide watershed protection, and enhance recreation, including the opening of private lands for hunting. It is generally the policy that new roads be closed or limited for motorized vehicle use. All existing closures will continue.

Air quality will not be significantly affected. Watershed conditions are expected to improve significantly. Water quality should improve moderately.

This alternative will lead to an increase of five direct jobs in timber harvest and processing. Small increases in average ranch income will also occur under this alternative.