Chapter 2: Strategy

Introduction

This chapter describes how we plan to move the Forest toward the desired conditions. It includes the following four sections:

Program Emphases: General approach to management in each program area.

Objectives Component: Objectives are measurable and time-specific accomplishments.

Suitability of Areas Component: This section describes general land use suitability for each management area.

Special Areas Component: This includes areas whose physical, biological, or social circumstances warrant placing them under special management, with unique guidance that is consistent with this Plan.

Program Emphases

Program emphases are not plan components and can be revised without further analysis or public involvement. Their purpose is to set the general context and framework for project-level planning. They will help determine how and where projects and activities will be proposed. Details of design and implementation will be largely determined by application of science and professional experience at the project level. Our management strategy is built around three broad elements:

- Achieving Ecosystem Health and Sustainability.
- Providing Multiple Benefits to People.
- Understanding and Incorporating American Indian Rights and Interests.

There is one strategy that is applied across all program areas. To be realistic about what can be accomplished, the outcomes identified in our objectives are based on anticipated budgets for the foreseeable future. If funding levels are significantly higher than expected, we would revise our objectives upward; however, at this time we do not want to set objectives that we are not reasonably certain we can meet.

Soils, Watersheds, and Aquatic Ecosystems

Purpose of Program: To maintain or restore watersheds and productive soils that provide clean water, sustainable populations of native aquatic species, and multiple benefits to people.

Our strategy for aquatic ecosystem diversity and species diversity involves a two-tiered approach. First, in a coarse filter approach, aquatic ecosystems are managed toward reference conditions, which are approximated by conditions found in watersheds that have experienced minimal human disturbances. The assumption is that managing toward reference conditions would provide the necessary habitats to support the native aquatic species that have evolved here. Due to cultural and ecological changes, the Flathead National Forest cannot be managed to exactly mimic reference conditions, but managing aquatic ecosystems within this context would provide suitable aquatic habitats for native species. A primary mechanism of the coarse filter is the designation of "riparian conservation areas" (RCAs). These are areas along streams, lakes, ponds, and other wet areas that have specific protections in the form of guidelines and suitability designations. In addition, "Montana Best Management Practices" and "Soil and Water Conservation Practices" are implemented to protect or restore water quality under the Clean Water Act. These practices are also considered a key element of the coarse filter.

Second, using a fine filter assessment, rare species are evaluated to determine limiting habitats, population influences, and whether they have special habitat needs that may not be provided through ecosystem-level management. Fine filter species are listed in one of the following categories: threatened and endangered species, species of concern, and species of interest. Species identified through the fine filter may need additional protection as specified in conservation strategies for individual species or groups of species. An example of a conservation strategy would be to survey for potential habitats during project planning in order to protect known populations of a fine filter species through project-specific measures.

Bull trout is currently listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. This species would trend toward recovery and delisting through designed plan components of desired conditions, suitability, objectives, and guidelines.

In aquatic resource planning, we use a multi-scale assessment process to evaluate the needs of fine filter species. On the Flathead National Forest, the focus is on bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. This process begins at the broadest scale and works down to smaller watershed and sub-watershed scales. This planning tool identifies existing population and habitat conditions, risks, threats, and restoration needs.

One of the key elements of multi-scale assessment is the identification of the highest priority areas for restoration. These priority areas, called "active restoration watersheds," are places where watershed analysis may help us assess site-specific conditions and further prioritize restoration needs. Using this "step-down" approach, we plan to emphasize the following elements in active restoration watersheds:

a. Improving habitat for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout.

b. Improving water quality by implementing "Montana Best Management Practices" (BMPs) and "Soil and Water Conservation Practices."

c. Restoring water quality and stream habitats by improving watershed scale processes and through direct riparian and in-channel treatments.

d. Reducing aquatic habitat fragmentation through removal of man-made, native fish migration barriers.

e. Working toward the delisting of impaired water bodies in cooperation with Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through water quality assessment, total maximum daily loads (TMDLs), restoration plans, BMP implementation, and monitoring.

f. Cooperating with private land owners and other land management agencies to improve water quality and restore aquatic ecosystems across multiple ownerships.

We will continually update our restoration priorities as conditions change and new information becomes available. We will take advantage of convenient opportunities to do restoration work in lower priority areas if they arise. For example, post-fire rehabilitation of a newly burned area might create unexpected opportunities to do some restoration work that funding and other resource limitations would not otherwise allow.

We will rely on plan monitoring and on the effectiveness of plan guidance to move toward the desired conditions. This will be an evaluation of our coarse filter/fine filter approach and will help us identify needs for possible plan amendments or other changes in management practices.

Vegetative Composition, Size Class, and Structure

Purpose of Program: To maintain or restore vegetative conditions that are resilient to disturbance.

In terrestrial ecosystems, we employed multi-scale assessments which began at the broadest scale such as Bailey's Ecological Sections or an entire river basin, and worked down to smaller subsections or watershed and sub-watershed scales. Using this approach, we identified historical conditions, existing conditions, risks, and threats. The analysis shows species and size class components that are within, and that have departed from, the historic range of variation.

Our overall strategy is to use vegetation management as a tool to move toward the historic range of variation. The amount of time, money, and uncertainty involved in achieving desired conditions requires that we set project level priorities as to where and how we implement vegetation treatments. Accordingly, our emphasis will be on:

a. Landscapes within the wildland urban interface (WUI) that have experienced altered fire regimes and/or have areas with high fuel loadings.

b. Landscapes that are at a high risk for developing epidemic levels of insect and disease infestation.

c. Areas where we can most effectively help shift the amount and distribution of age classes, size classes, density and species, including old growth, closer to their desired future conditions.

d. Areas treated previously to maintain healthy conditions.

Within these emphasis areas, the strategy would be:

a. Outside the wildland urban interface (WUI), silvicultural prescriptions would be designed so they are compatible with natural disturbance processes, contribute to the historic range of variability (HRV), encourage regeneration of shade intolerant species, and minimize the potential for epidemic outbreaks of insects and disease.

b. Inside the WUI, silvicultural prescriptions would be designed to reduce fuel hazard, address human safety, and consider community fire plans, HRV, and big game winter range.

c. Silvicultural prescriptions would have patch sizes that are consistent with historic fire regimes.

Old Growth, Snags, and Downed Wood

a. Planning and implementation of projects and activities would be guided by applicable elements included in the *Flathead National Forest Reference Guide – Management of Old Forest Conditions, Snags, and Down Woody Debris.*

b. Vegetation management in old growth stands would encourage old growth characteristics or habitat function, unless within the WUI.

c. Silvicultural prescriptions would be designed to increase the resilience of late successional and old growth stands from disturbances that threaten their composition and structure.

Fire

Fire management priorities on all fires are: first, ensure firefighter and public safety; and second, protect property and natural and cultural resources based on the relative values to be protected.

Our management will include both planned application of proven methods, and opportunistic use of naturally occurring events such as fires. We plan to make greater use of both natural and management-ignited fires, taking into consideration fuels, weather conditions, and proximity to high-value resources and structures. In wilderness and backcountry areas, disturbance processes are the primary tool that can help us move toward desired conditions. In areas where timber harvesting is identified as a suitable use, both mechanical methods and disturbance processes would help us move toward desired conditions.

a. Fire planning would be designed to create conditions that emulate the natural range of variation on the landscape. In this context, management prescriptions would provide for the protection and enhancement of big game winter range habitat, whitebark pine restoration, western larch regeneration, and allow fire to play a natural role where appropriate.

Invasive Plants

We use an integrated pest management approach to controlling invasive plants, prioritizing areas based on weed categories, weed ecology of a species, its potential to displace native vegetation within that community, potential for offsite movement of seeds, ecological importance or rarity of a site, and the effectiveness of the control methods for that site. Treatment areas would include:

a. Areas with new invaders.

b. Infested areas categorized as having high risk to alter native plant communities or spread into adjacent sensitive or rare habitats.

c. Areas relatively free of weeds, such as designated wilderness and backcountry areas.

d. Trailheads, trails, and roads that lead to relatively weed-free areas.

e. Invasive plants on National Forest System lands that adjoin or are close to other land ownerships that have active weed control programs.

f. Invasive plants on administrative sites, developed recreation sites, and pastures.

g. Grasslands and big game winter range.

h. Areas where natural or man-caused events have disturbed the soil and vegetation.

Air Quality

Purpose of Program: To contribute to maintaining air quality within state parameters.

The Flathead National Forest will participate with the State of Montana in the air quality regulatory process. Air quality related values (AQRV) will be identified in Class I areas and AQRV inventory and monitoring integrated into wilderness implementation plans.

Wildlife and Plant Species Diversity

Purpose of Program: To provide ecological conditions that support a diversity of native plant and animal species over the long term and that promote recovery of federally listed species.

Our overall strategy is to provide conditions that support the full complement of native wildlife and plant species on the Forest. This strategy involves a two-tiered approach. First, in a coarse filter approach to wildlife and plant conservation, the structure, composition, and disturbance processes of ecosystems that maintain habitat are managed within or toward historic conditions found in the early 1800s. Historic conditions are estimated using computer modeling and reviews of historic records. Due to cultural and ecological changes, the Flathead National Forest cannot be managed to exactly mimic overall conditions found in the 1800s, but managing key ecosystem elements within historic conditions would provide suitable habitat to sustain most species found on the forest. Specifically, we would strive to conserve or restore representative, resilient, and redundant ecosystems as displayed in the vegetative desired condition of Chapter 1.

Second, using a fine filter assessment, rare species are evaluated to determine limiting habitats, population influences, and whether they have special habitat needs that may not be provided through coarse filter ecosystem-level management. Species identified through the fine filter may need additional protection as specified in conservation strategies for individual species or groups of species. An example of a conservation strategy would be to survey for potential habitats during project planning to protect known populations of a fine filter species through project-specific measures.

Here are some examples of plan items that have resulted from our coarse filter/fine filter findings:

a. Road management or removal emphasis would be on roads that affect big game security, native fish habitat, or water quality.

b. Important habitat connectivity areas would be identified and considered during project design and travel management decision making.

c. Food storage orders would be phased-in gradually to allow time for public acceptance and to increase voluntary compliance.

Fine filter species are listed in one of the following categories: threatened and endangered species, species of concern, or species of interest.

The following table shows species on the Flathead National Forest that are listed under the Endangered Species Act:

Table 9: Species listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
bald eagle	*Haliaeetus*	Threatened
Canada lynx	*Lynx canadensis*	Threatened
gray wolf	*Canis lupus*	Endangered
grizzly bear	*Ursus arctos horribilis*	Threatened
Spalding's catchfly	*Silene spaldingii*	Threatened
water howellia	*Howellia aquatalis*	Threatened

Guidance provided in the plan components of desired conditions, objectives, and guidelines will help assure that the above listed threatened or endangered species will trend toward recovery and delisting.

In the grizzly bear recovery area, planning and implementation of projects and activities would be guided by applicable elements included in the *Flathead National Forest Reference Guide – Motorized Access Management in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone*.

Those species of concern and species of interest that fine filter analysis has indicated may need additional protection are listed in the guidelines component of this plan. All species of concern and species of interest are addressed in the plan set of documents.

As we implement this Plan, we will coordinate with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and Idaho Fish and Game. We intend to incorporate their plans and multi-agency strategies into our projects and activities. We will work jointly to meet habitat and population goals for a variety of species.

We will rely on plan guidance and monitoring to move toward the desired conditions. Monitoring will provide an evaluation of our coarse filter/fine filter approach and will help us identify needs for possible plan amendments or other changes in management practices.

Forest Products

Purpose of Program: To provide diverse and sustainable outputs of forest products and uses from National Forest System lands, while protecting environmental, historic, cultural, and other social resources.

We will use timber harvesting as both a tool for helping achieve a variety of resource desired conditions and management objectives and a source of products that contribute to the regional economy. Applications of this tool will include:

a. Fire, wind-thrown trees, insects, and disease are common and expected events on the Flathead National Forest; although the frequency and amount of these natural events are highly variable and not predictable in any given year. We expect to salvage or sanitation harvest a portion of the trees that have been, or are in imminent danger of being killed or damaged by fire, wind, insects or disease (especially large-scale events) in a timely and economical manner.

b. Assuring opportunities for personal and Tribal use of non-timber forest products.

c. Using a combination of logging systems to achieve environmental protection criteria, especially to reduce impacts on soil and water resources.

d. Providing small diameter trees from thinning, fuels reduction, and other vegetation management projects for emerging biomass markets.

National Forest System Lands

Purpose of Program: To provide diverse and sustainable outputs of forest products and uses from National Forest System lands, while protecting environmental, historic, cultural, and other social resources.

Our primary strategic tools will be:

a. Adjusting land ownership through purchase, exchange or other authority, to protect resources and improve efficiency of management. The following criteria would be considered when evaluating land adjustments (not in any particular order):

- Acquisition:
  - Lands that can contribute to recovery of threatened or endangered species.
  - Lands important for wildlife connectivity and big game winter range.
  - Lands needed for the protection of important historical or cultural resources.
  - Lands that enhance recreation, public access, and protection of aesthetic values.
  - Lands that contain rivers with potential for Wild and Scenic designation.
  - Other environmentally sensitive lands.
  - Lands that reduce expenses and support more logical and efficient management.
- Conveyance:
  - Lands and administrative buildings adjacent to communities that are chiefly valuable for non-National Forest System uses.
  - Lands with low resource value.
  - Inaccessible, isolated, or intermingled ownership parcels.
  - Lands with long-term special use permits non consistent with national forest purposes and character.
  - Lands not logical and efficient to manage.
  - Lands eligible under the Small Tracts Act.

b. Giving highest priority to National Forest System lands boundary location where trespass is most likely.

c. Identifying areas generally suitable for utility corridors and communication sites.

d. Authorizing and administering appropriate occupancy and use of National Forest System land.

Livestock Grazing

Purpose of Program: To provide diverse and sustainable outputs of forest products and uses from National Forest System lands, while protecting environmental, historic, cultural, and other social resources.

Our general approach to grazing management implements resource management practices to maintain the health of all occupied livestock grazing allotments and rangelands. We will do this by:

a. Assessing and updating allotment management plans to ensure that sustainable stocking levels, forage utilization standards, mitigation measures, and appropriate grazing systems are used and that lands are still suitable for livestock grazing.

b. Eliminating grazing allotments or pastures as they become vacant if there is no demand for livestock forage or if desired vegetation conditions cannot be met.

Minerals and Geology

Purpose of Program: To provide diverse and sustainable outputs of forest products and uses from National Forest System lands, while protecting environmental, historic, cultural, and other social resources.

Our primary strategic tools are:

a. Provide mineral materials such as gravel, rip-rap, and landscape rock for Forest Service, personal, and limited commercial use in accordance with material source development and rehabilitation plans.

b. Managing the exploration, development and reclamation of mineral claims, including the currently suspended oil and gas leases.

c. Identifying, evaluating, mapping, inventorying, and nominating as significant all known cave resources not previously designated as significant.

d. Evaluating and mitigating geologic hazards associated with the location and construction of new facilities before they are approved, designed, and constructed.

e. Managing caves to minimize evidence of human use and to protect cave resources. Partnerships and mutually-supported agreements would be used to specify schedules, party sizes, skills required, equipment, and handling.

Heritage Resources

Purpose of Program: Protect and interpret environmental, historic, cultural and other social resources while providing diverse and sustainable outputs of forest products and uses from National Forest System lands.

The primary elements of our strategy are:

a. Guiding project planning and heritage preservation/interpretation efforts using knowledge and information gained through inventories, site evaluations, Tribal consultation, and other sources.

b. Using partnership arrangements to help preserve and interpret significant heritage resources.

c. Relying on a strong heritage program to fulfill the Forest's legal obligation for public outreach and education about heritage resources.

d. Develop and participate in national, regional, interregional, and interagency programmatic agreements and memoranda with the State Historic Preservation Office, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and other partner agencies and Tribes.

Developed and Dispersed Recreation

Purpose of Program: To provide a wide range of recreation opportunities; these include a range of outdoor experiences and services in less-developed settings that complement more highly developed recreation opportunities offered by the private sector.

As recreation demand continues to grow, there may be situations when we must limit or control site impacts or use in order to sustain a desirable recreation setting and experience. For example, as the demand for backcountry camping opportunities grows, the increasing number of campers can diminish the setting qualities and the experience of solitude and remoteness that users value most. In order to maintain that experience, our strategy is to maintain the desired recreation setting and experience by early detection of overuse and implementation of corrective actions. The following are some examples of the tools we may use for directing, limiting, or restricting user impacts. They are listed in increasing order of restriction.

1. Improving educational and informational messages to accurately describe area amenities and provide visitors with realistic expectations.
2. Informing and educating users about “Leave No Trace” techniques for responsible, non-motorized outdoor activities with minimal impact on public recreational areas.
3. Implementing subtle site hardening techniques to direct use and control impacts.
4. Considering alternatives for managing visitor impacts rather than building or maintaining facilities such as toilets, trailheads, parking areas, access roads, trails, and campsites.
5. Issuing legal orders that restrict certain activities and/or numbers of users.
6. Prohibiting recreational use in an area until the area is rehabilitated and restored.

Increased demand for developed site recreation will be accommodated through the limited expansion of existing areas. We will pay particular attention to dispersed backcountry sites to prevent over-development that could diminish our ability to provide less developed and more secluded recreation settings and associated experiences.

As we design projects, we plan to evaluate any potential changes on recreation settings and experience in a consistent manner by using the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS). We plan to integrate recreation values into project designs and management decisions, by evaluating potential effects on ROS indicators. Evaluation of these indicators provides a consistent way to measure project effects that may enhance or degrade recreation.

The key component of the ROS framework is the recreation setting. Management of the setting can only influence the likelihood of a particular experience being achieved or maintained. Changing the nature of the ROS indicators (access, remoteness, visual quality, social encounters, visitor management, visitor impacts, and facilities) can greatly affect the type and level of use an area receives.

For scenic integrity, we plan to utilize vegetation management and other activities, including natural disturbance processes, as a means for improving the scenery wherever possible.

Designated Wilderness and Recommended Wilderness

Purpose of Program: To manage our world-class wilderness resources by offering a full range of very primitive recreation experiences while also maintaining the high integrity of this resource for future generations.

Our strategy for designated wilderness is to use the concepts of wilderness "opportunity class" and "limits of acceptable change" as guidance in meeting the intent of the Wilderness Act. In cases where a wilderness jurisdiction is shared by more than one national forest or agency, we will continue to coordinate management activities, usually through a jointly-supported wilderness management plan.

Within recommended wilderness areas, our approach is to protect wilderness values and resources until such time as Congress either designates the area as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System or releases the area from consideration. Land managers will use a variety of visitor management strategies to maintain recommended wilderness values and protect the wilderness resources.

Access and Travel Management

Purpose of Program: To provide a road and trail system that is safe, responsive to public and Forest Service needs, and efficiently managed to minimize adverse ecological effects and aligned with available funding.

Our access and travel management strategy is to focus on road and trail management, road and trail maintenance, and efforts to secure public access to all National Forest System lands. We will:

- Continue to prohibit cross-country, wheeled motorized travel.
- Continue to work with willing partners to secure rights-of-way and complete land exchanges that improve public access to National Forest System lands.
- Designate motorized use on forest roads, trails, or areas by vehicle type and time of year.
- Provide winter over-snow vehicle use as guided by applicable elements included in the *Flathead National Forest Reference Guide – Over-the-Snow Vehicle Use and Management.*

Our maintenance strategy is to efficiently use our resources (financial and otherwise) to maintain the highest priority roads and trails and to begin reducing a significant backlog of deferred maintenance. Specific emphases could include:

a. Storing of infrequently used roads for the long-term.

b. Reducing maintenance levels on low-use roads while maintaining road drainage features.

c. Shifting roads with high residential access needs to non-Forest Service jurisdictions.

d. Improving, closing, or decommissioning roads that have adverse impacts on aquatics, watersheds, and wildlife.

e. Focusing new trail development on loop trails using existing routes whenever feasible.

Partnerships

Purpose of Program: Promote partnerships with local communities, Tribal governments, and other government and non-government entities to improve overall resource management.

We will use partnerships to more effectively and efficiently meet our mutual goals in all resource areas. These partnerships can include local, state, federal, and Tribal governments, communities, organizations, individuals, and/or research institutions.

American Indian Rights and Interests

Purpose of Program: To identify and protect traditional cultural properties, and to recognize and support treaty rights and Tribal values when planning and implementing forest management activities.

Our overall strategy is to be proactive in building relationships and mutual understanding between the Forest Service and Tribal governments. We want to address potential problems before they become serious and find opportunities for cooperation to the mutual benefit of federal and Tribal governments.

To ensure the identification and protection of traditional cultural properties and other sensitive sites, the Forest Service will work in

cooperation with Tribes to take a systematic approach to identifying areas, rather than relying solely on project-by-project site surveys.

We will ensure the consideration of treaty rights and Tribal values in the planning and implementation of forest management activities. Strategies include:

a. Forest Service-Tribal Memoranda of Understanding should address issues of Tribal member access to National Forest System lands for purposes of exercising treaty rights or practicing activities consistent with religious or other ceremonial activities.

b. Memoranda of Understanding should address the proper procedures to follow when working with a particular Tribe to ensure the protection of traditional cultural properties and other sensitive sites.

c. Areas should be identified in which Tribal members could sustainably practice traditional gathering and harvesting activities and/or where culturally sensitive animal and plant species could receive special protection.

Objectives Component

The following objectives are stepping stones of accomplishment that will move us toward the desired conditions described in Chapter 1. They are strongly influenced by current and expected near-future budgets; however, their accomplishment will also be influenced by factors, such as:

Plan Components

Desired Conditions
Objectives
Suitability of Areas
Special Areas
Guidelines

- Shifts in management priorities brought about by such things as weather events or large natural disturbances that may change resource conditions.
- Delays in project-level planning and decision making that may be beyond Forest control.

Some objectives are marked with a double asterisk (**). These things are highly desirable, but can only be accomplished if we receive additional funding, beyond the level that is anticipated.

Soils, Watersheds, and Aquatic Ecosystems

a. Restore five to seven watersheds to conservation status within ten years of Plan implementation.

b. Improve hydrologic conditions on at least 10 to 20 miles of roads within riparian conservation areas (RCAs) in active restoration watersheds within ten years of Plan implementation.

c. Remove 20 to 40 native fish passage barriers in active restoration watersheds within ten years of Plan implementation.

d. Reduce 20 to 40 sediment sources that are impacting water quality and/or aquatic habitat within ten years of Plan implementation.

Vegetative Composition, Size Class, and Structure

Vegetation and Fire

a. Move toward more disturbance resistant forest and non-forest conditions by using vegetation treatments on 70,000 to 200,000 acres within the planning period. The above acreage would include objectives to use naturally-ignited fire on 50,000 to 200,000 acres,

and within the WUI, reduce fuel loadings and crown fire hazard on 11,000 to 60,000 acres within ten years of plan implementation.

Invasive Plants

b. Upon discovery of new invasive, Category 3[1], plant occurrences, contain the new occurrence within the discovered site to result in no expansion or spread from the new occurrence into new areas.

c. Within ten years of Plan implementation, manage 50 percent of inventoried areas containing plants known as Category 2 species.

d. Within ten years of Plan implementation, manage 25 percent of inventoried areas containing plants known as Category 1 species.

Wildlife and Plant Species Diversity

Threatened and Endangered Plants and Plant Species of Concern and Species of Interest

a. **Designate three to five botanical interest areas.

Big Game

b. **Accomplish at least 10 to 20 habitat improvement projects, such as weed control, access control, or vegetative treatments that improve winter range conditions for big game.

Food Storage

c. To minimize conflicts with wildlife and to reduce bear mortality, enact food storage orders covering all Flathead National Forest lands within ten years of Plan implementation.

d. Ensure that all Flathead National Forest campgrounds, rural administrative facilities, and permitted structures are either equipped with wildlife resistant garbage facilities, or subject to a “pack it in-pack it out” policy within ten years of Plan implementation.

[1] Weed categories established by the State of Montana based on establishment: Category 1 = Widespread Invaders, 3rd priority; Category 2 = New Invaders, 2nd priority; Category 3 = Potential Invaders, 1st priority.

Forest Products

a. Plan, prepare and offer for sale a Total Sale Program Quantity (TSPQ) consisting of the following elements:

- 38 to 47 MMCF[1] (186 to 227 MMBF[2]) per decade from regularly scheduled timber harvests on lands suitable for timber production.
- 11 to 13 MMCF (52 to 64 MMBF) per decade from timber harvests on lands not suitable for timber production, but where timber harvesting may occur for other multiple-use purposes (other lands).
- Approximately 0.7 MMCF (2 to 3 MMBF) per decade of biomass and other small diameter roundwood available for commercial use (volume is included in the estimates above).

b. Annually prepare and offer for sale 1,100 to 1,600 permits for personal or commercial use of non-timber forest products and firewood.

c. Establish, within ten years of Plan implementation and in consultation with Tribal leaders, a minimum of two areas that are closed to commercial or mechanized harvest of non-timber forest products that are important to the Tribe.

National Forest System Lands

a. Survey, mark, and post 35 to 45 miles of national forest and/or administrative boundary lines to keep them visible, protect the investment, and deter encroachment within ten years of Plan implementation.

b. **Grant and/or acquire 10 to 15 right-of-way easements for roads and trails.

c. ** Acquire 4,000 to 6,000 acres of high value resource lands.

[1] MMCF = Million cubic feet
[2] MMBF = Million board feet

Livestock Grazing

a. Ensure that, within ten years of Plan implementation, 50 percent of grazing allotments are meeting or trending toward desired riparian and upland biophysical conditions.

b. Revise allotment management plans for 80 percent of allotments with conditions below the desired condition and where changes in livestock management are necessary to restore an upward trend within ten years of Plan implementation.

Minerals and Geology

a. **Reclaim two or more abandoned mines.

b. **Re-evaluate areas withdrawn from mineral entry and recommend additions, deletions, or changes to withdrawn areas.

Heritage Resources

a. Evaluate and determine eligibility of five to ten heritage sites for the National Register of Historic Places within ten years of Plan implementation.

b. Nominate two heritage sites for the National Register of Historic Places within ten years of Plan implementation.

c. Complete 1,000 acres of Section 110 (non-project) heritage surveys, National Historic Preservation Act on previously unsurveyed National Forest System lands with high potential for heritage resources within ten years of Plan implementation.

Developed and Dispersed Recreation

a. Maintain 80-90 developed recreation sites to national standards, as per recommendations and ranking of the “Recreation Sites Facility Master Plan.”

b. Complete at least two visual enhancement projects within ten years of Plan implementation.

Designated Wilderness

a. Within the BMWC, provide 30,000 outfitter and guide service days annually. This would be a mix of traditional outfitted use, institutional outfitted use, and non-traditional outfitted use. On the Flathead National Forest, Great Bear and Bob Marshall wilderness portions are estimated to be 50 to 60 percent of the total service days on an annual basis. Additional days will be provided (in addition to the 30,000 days) for the adjacent recommended wilderness to the existing Bob Marshall and Great Bear wildernesses (e.g., Swan Face)at current use levels within those areas.

b. Bring all air taxi services under special use permit within ten years of Plan implementation.

c. Develop a wilderness education plan for the Mission Mountains Wilderness within ten years of Plan implementation.

Access and Travel Management

Roads

a. Complete 100 to 300 miles of road improvement projects within ten years of Plan implementation.

b. **Maintain 400 to 800 miles of road according to manual/handbook guidance and applicable BMPs.

c. **Reduce the current deferred road maintenance backlog by five percent.

d. Decommission 100 to 500 miles of road within ten years following Plan implementation.

e. **Monitor all maintenance level 1 roads and treat any of the stream crossings that have a high risk of failure.

Trails

f. Maintain 85 percent (1,870 miles) of Flathead National Forest trails and trail structures at a useable level with 25 percent of those useable trails (470 miles) maintained to manual/handbook standard within ten years of Plan implementation.

g. **Develop a web site that provides current information on trail conditions, restrictions, and information regarding trail opportunities on the forest.

h. **Construct 40 to 50 miles of new trails and/or relocate existing trails to address social and/or resource concerns.

American Indian Rights and Interests

Enter into Memoranda of Understanding on key Tribal-Forest Service issues with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai, and other interested Tribes with treaty rights on the Flathead National Forest within ten years of Plan implementation.

Suitability of Areas Component

Introduction

Plan Components

Desired Conditions
Objectives
Suitability of Areas
Special Areas
Guidelines

For the most part, management areas are used in the Plan to identify the general suitability of lands for different uses and management activities. However, suitability for some uses and activities is better identified in terms of the entire forest, rather than a particular management area. While both forest-wide and management area descriptions are used to identify areas that are generally suitable for different types of management and use, they do not determine what uses and management activities will actually take place at any given time or location. Those decisions will be made later through site-specific analysis of proposed projects and activities.

It is important to understand that the term "generally" means "for the most part" and "what is usually the case" for a particular management area. This is a general prediction of suitability, based upon very broad levels of information and analysis. We incorporated this flexibility because past experiences has taught us that situations arise where rigid interpretation of forest plan guidance is in conflict with good science and professional judgment no matter how carefully we try to anticipate future circumstances. So, "generally suitable" or "generally not suitable" is applied with the understanding that site-specific project analysis will make the final determination of suitability and will include the appropriate documentation.

General Suitability—Forest-Wide

National Forest System lands are generally suitable for a variety of uses, such as outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and enjoyment of wildlife and fish habitat. Topics discussed in this section do not apply to specifically mapped management areas on the Forest, but they do apply anywhere their respective suitability criteria are met. The section following this one, "General Suitability—by Management Areas," helps identify which particular mapped locations within the Forest are best suited for which types of uses. Final determinations on project implementation will be subject to site-specific analysis.

Off-Highway Vehicles

- Flathead National Forest lands are generally suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated routes.
- Flathead National Forest lands are not suitable for wheeled cross-country motorized travel.

Livestock Grazing

- Primary and transitory rangelands within existing commercial grazing allotments have been identified as capable and generally suitable for commercial livestock grazing by cattle or horses. The Flathead National Forest has 17,330 acres classified as capable rangeland. Of this total, about 494 acres in grazing allotments have been classified as suitable for livestock grazing. There is an un-estimated area of transitory range within these allotments. Nearly all of the grazing on the Flathead Forest occurs on transitory range created by timber harvest or fire. A map of the rangeland classification is available in the Plan Set of Documents.

Winter Range

Areas designated on the winter range map in the Plan Set of Documents are:

- Suitable for vegetation management for the purpose of improving habitat conditions.
- Suitable for the use of access control to help meet big game management objectives.

Utility Corridors and Commercial Communication Sites

- Existing communication sites and major utility corridors have been identified as generally suitable for such uses. A map of these sites and corridors is available in the Plan Set of Documents.

Riparian Conservation Areas

- Riparian conservation areas (RCAs) are generally suitable for activities that improve, restore, or maintain aquatic and riparian ecosystem desired conditions.

Timber Suitability

The timber suitability map (figure 10) displays areas where timber harvest could occur. These lands are designated as:

- Lands generally suitable for timber production. These are lands where timber production is compatible with desired condition and objectives. Timber harvest will occur on a regulated, scheduled basis.
- Other lands where timber harvest is an appropriate tool to achieve desired conditions. These lands are not suitable for timber production. Timber harvest may occur, but is not scheduled or regulated. Timber harvest is compatible with desired conditions and may occur for purposes other than timber production.

The following table summarizes the timber suitability classification.

Table 10: Timber suitability classification.

Classification	Acres
Suitable for Timber Production	328,328
Other Lands	660,159
Responsible Official determines harvest is not appropriate as a tool to achieve desired condition (plan guideline)1	91,600
Responsible Official determines harvest is appropriate as a tool to achieve desired condition	568,559

The Forest has 896,887 acres where timber harvest could be used as a tool to achieve desired conditions. This represents approximately 38 percent of the Flathead National Forest. Of those lands, approximately 328,328 acres are generally suitable for timber production. This represents 14 percent of the Flathead National Forest. Biological and physical aspects of timber suitability will be reviewed at a smaller, site-specific scale during project implementation and may deviate from this analysis without a plan amendment.

[1] Management Areas 1.2, 2.1 wild segments outside designated wilderness, 3.1 (Jewel Basin and botanical areas), and 3.2.

Figure 10: Timber Suitability Map.

See the attached timber suitability map.
Map size: 5.55mb.

General Suitability—by Management Areas

General suitability of areas is identified for each management area (MA). The degree of human influence on the landscape tends to increase from the level of least impact (MA 1.1, Designated Wilderness) to the level of greatest impact (MA 6.1, High Use Areas).

Plan Components

Desired Conditions
Objectives
Suitability
Special Areas
Guidelines

Each management area is characterized by:

- Desired conditions that give a sense of the type and extent of human influence that a forest visitor could expect.
- A general idea of the kinds of uses and activities suitable in that management area.

Management Area Designations

The following graph displays the total number of Forest acres allocated to each management area.

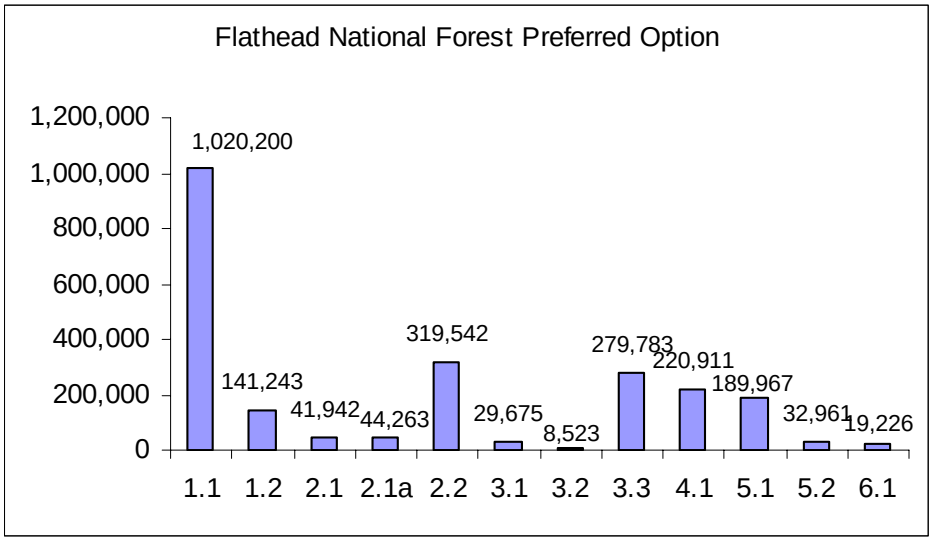

Figure 11. Bar graph of MA acres across the Flathead National Forest.

Management Area Designations and timber suitability for harvest and production

The following table displays the total number of Forest acres allocated to each management area and to generally suitable for timber harvest and generally suitable for timber production.

Table 11: Management areas, acres, and percent of the Forest generally suitable for timber harvest and timber production.

MA	Management Area Designation	Acres	Percent	Acres generally suitable for timber harvest	Acres generally suitable for timber production
1.1	Designated Wilderness[1]	1,020,200	43.4	0	0
1.2	Recommended Wilderness	141,243	6.0	0	0
2.1	Wild and Scenic Rivers - Designated	41,942	1.8	23,691	0
2.1a	Wild and Scenic Rivers – Eligible or Suitable	44,263	1.9		0
2.2	Backcountry	319,542	13.6	194,541	0
3.1	Areas under Special Management (Jewel Basin Hiking Area and Coram Experimental Forest)	29,675	1.3	6,375	0
3.2	Research Natural Areas	8,523	0.4	0	0
3.3	General Forest Low Intensity Management	279,783	11.9	242,410	0
4.1	General Forest Moderate Intensity Management	220,911	9.4	41,039	161,089
5.1	General Forest High Intensity Management	189,967	8.1	15,284	167,239
5.2	Residential Forest Intermix	32,961	1.4	30,024	0
6.1	High Use Recreation Complexes or Use Areas	19,226	0.8	15,196	0
Total		**2,348,237**	**100.0**	**568,560**	**328,328**

[1] The officially designated Wilderness on the Flathead National Forest totals 1,069,933 acres which is about 45 percent of the total Forest. This figure includes some designated and eligible wild and scenic rivers which are located within designated Wilderness. In the table above, the acres of these areas are shown separately and not included in the wilderness acres to avoid double counting them.

1.1 Designated Wilderness

Desired Conditions

- National Wilderness Preservation System lands designated by Congress would be managed to protect and perpetuate their natural state.
- Settings for primitive and unconfined recreation that allow opportunities for solitude and self-reliance.
- Natural processes and conditions would be only minimally affected by human use, and impacts from visitation would not detract from the natural setting.
- Ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, insects, and disease would function with a minimum of human influence.

Suitability

Generally:

Recreation

- Designated wilderness areas are not suitable for tethering and grazing of recreational stock within 100 feet of lakeshores.
- Designated wilderness areas are suitable for the construction of temporary structures when needed to provide for human safety (for example, when avoiding conflicts with bears).
- Designated wilderness areas are suitable for the construction of permanent trails and associated structures necessary for safe foot and stock travel.

Forest Products and Fire

- Designated wilderness areas are not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production, timber harvesting, salvage logging, or the commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- Designated wilderness areas are suitable for wildland fire use, prescribed burning, and fire suppression.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are not suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors, although the Forest Service may have small radio repeater sites to assist in wilderness administration.
- These areas are suitable for the preservation of historic administrative structures and facilities and associated infrastructure.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are not suitable for motorized or mechanized use or travel (including such devices as hang gliders, carts, or bicycles), except in emergency or other special situations.

1.2 Recommended Wilderness

Desired Conditions

- These lands would be recommended to Congress for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- These lands would retain their wilderness characteristics.
- They would offer settings for primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities for solitude and self-reliance.
- Natural processes and conditions would be only minimally affected by human use, and impacts from visitation would not detract from the natural setting.
- Ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, insects, and disease would be allowed to function with a minimum of human influence.

Suitability

Generally:

Recreation

- Recommended wilderness areas are suitable for the construction of temporary structures when needed to provide human safety (for example, when avoiding conflicts with bears).
- Recommended wilderness areas are suitable for the construction of permanent trails and associated structures necessary for safe foot and stock travel.

Forest Products and Fire

- Recommended wilderness areas are not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production or the commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- Recommended wilderness areas are suitable for wildland fire use, prescribed burning, and fire suppression.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are not suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors, although the Forest Service may have small radio repeater sites to assist in wilderness administration.
- These areas are suitable for the preservation of historic administrative structures and facilities and associated infrastructure.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are not suitable for motorized or mechanized use or travel (including such devices as hang gliders, carts, or bicycles), except in emergency or other special situations.

2.1 Designated, Suitable and Eligible Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers

These are river segments that Congress designated under the National Wild and Scenic River System or that the Forest Service has found to be suitable or eligible for congressional designation. Eligible rivers may be studied for possible inclusion in the national system. Wild and scenic rivers, or segments of a river, fall within one of these categories:

- A "wild" river is free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted.
- A "scenic" river is free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.
- A "recreational" river is accessible by road or railroad, may have some shoreline development, and may have had an impoundment or diversion in the past.

Desired Conditions

- The free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable value, that made them eligible for designation or for which they were designated for, are protected and perpetuated.

Suitability

Generally:

Forest Products and Fire

- Wild river corridors are not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production or the commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- Scenic and recreational river corridors are not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production; however, timber harvesting or salvage logging for multiple-use purposes and to achieve desired vegetation conditions could occur. These corridors are suitable for the commercial use of non-timber forest products.

- Wild, scenic, and recreational river segments are suitable for wildland fire use, prescribed burning, and fire suppression.

Other Uses and Activities

- Wild river segments are not suitable for new commercial communication sites or utility corridors.
- Scenic and recreational river segments are suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- Wild river corridors are not suitable for motorized travel.
- Scenic and recreational river corridors are suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated routes.
- Some scenic and recreational corridors are suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area that are identified in the over-snow vehicle use map, are located in the Plan Set of Documents.

In addition to the items specifically addressed above, eligible wild, scenic and recreational rivers are generally suitable for management according to their potential classification as shown in the following table.

Table 12: Potential classification of eligible wild, scenic, and recreational rivers.

Name	Potential Classification
Big Salmon Creek	Wild classification
Spotted Bear River	Wild segment from headwaters to end of Rd 568 (Silvertip Trailhead # 83).Scenic/Recreation segment from Silvertip trailhead to confluence w/SF Flathead River
White River	Wild classification
Danaher River	Wild classification
Little Salmon River	Wild classification
Gateway Creek	Wild classification
Yakinikak Creek Trail Creek Nokio Creek	Wild classification segment from headwater to Trail Creek Scenic/Recreation segment from confluence with Yakinikak Creek to Forest Boundary
Lebeau Creek	Wild segment from headwater to Lebeau RNA boundary Scenic/Recreation segment is from RNA boundary to Forest Boundary
Logan Creek	Recreation classification
Aeneas Creek	Scenic/Recreation classification

2.2 Backcountry Areas

Desired Conditions

- Backcountry areas would provide less developed recreation opportunities.
- Backcountry areas would be natural-appearing, with little evidence of recent, human-caused disturbance.
- These areas would provide opportunities for self-reliance.
- Ecological processes, such as natural succession, fire, and insect and disease activity, would function with minimal human influence.
- Motorized travel would be limited.

Suitability

Generally:

Forest Products and Fire

- Backcountry areas are not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production, although they are suitable for low intensity timber harvesting (including salvage logging) for multiple-use purposes and to achieve desired vegetation conditions.
- Backcountry areas are suitable for helicopter access
- These areas are suitable for commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- Backcountry areas are suitable for wildland fire use, prescribed burning, and fire suppression.

Other Uses and Activities

- Backcountry areas are not suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors, although the Forest Service may have small radio repeater sites to assist in administration.

Access and Travel Management

Differences in suitability for motorized travel are reflected below.

- Backcountry areas are not suitable for motorized travel except in emergency situations. However, the Chapter 1 geographic area desired conditions identify and describe several existing motorized routes that are suitable for continued motorized use in the summer. In addition, some areas are suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified in the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

3.1 Areas Under Special Management

Jewel Basin Hiking Area

Background

The 15,000-acre Jewel Basin Hiking Area was designated in 1970 as a hiking-only area providing a unique recreation experience without motorized, mechanized, or stock use. The area is popular due to its accessibility from the valley floor, interconnected trail systems, high elevation experiences, ecological values, and abundant lakes and streams.

Desired Conditions

- The area would be designated as a national recreation area to showcase its unique recreation experience.
- The area would provide a quiet recreation experience without motorized, mechanized, or stock use.
- A management plan that guides future management would be in place. It would address increased use, protection of resources, and desired recreation experience.
- The area would provide high elevation hiking recreation in a pristine setting.
- Camp Misery and Clayton Creek would be the primary access points into the Jewel Basin Hiking Area with Wheeler Creek and Graves Creek as secondary accesses.

Suitability

The Jewel Basin Hiking Area would generally be:

Recreation

- Suitable for outfitting and guiding at existing use levels. It is not suitable for new commercial or institutional uses.
- Suitable for summer and winter recreation opportunities and experiences without pack-stock or motorized vehicles.

Forest Products and Fire

- Not suitable for regulated timber production or the commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- Suitable for wildland fire use, both natural ignition and management ignited, as a tool for helping to restore and maintain recreation settings consistent with national recreation area objectives.

Other Uses and Activities

- Not suitable for livestock use.
- Not suitable for new commercial communication sites or utility corridors.
- Suitable for other uses as long as they are consistent with the designated purpose.
- Suitable for a few rustic facilities to provide comfort, interpretation, and/or resource protection.

Access and Travel Management

- Not suitable for motorized or mechanized vehicle use.
- Not suitable for horseback travel.

Coram Experimental Forest

Background

The 8,000-acre Coram Experimental Forest was established in 1932 for forest/ecological research purposes. Research studies began in the late 1940s focusing on the influence of even-aged harvest methods. Past research on this experimental forest has covered a wide array of subjects ranging from timber production to soil and water, wildlife, understory and overstory vegetative development, young stand management, artificial and natural regeneration techniques, and social aspects of forest management. More information about the relationship of the Coram Experimental Forest to the Coram Research Natural Area and the United Nations Biosphere Reserve are located in the Hungry Horse geographic area section in Chapter 1.

Desired Conditions

- The Coram Experimental Forest would serve as a demonstration area for researchers, educators, forest managers, and the public.
- Re-measurement and evaluation of long-term studies would continue as would the collection of baseline hydrology and climate information.
- Areas would be provided for studies that would answer future management questions.

Suitability

The Coram Experimental Forest would generally be:

Forest Products and Fire

- Not suitable for regulated timber production or the commercial use of non-forest timber products.
- Suitable for timber harvesting or salvage logging for multiple-use purposes (including research) and to achieve desired vegetation conditions.
- Suitable for wildland fire use, prescribed burning, and fire suppression.

Other Uses and Activities

- Not suitable for new commercial communication sites or utility corridors.
- Suitable for a few facilities to provide comfort or interpretation that support the research program.

Access and Travel Management

- Suitable for wheeled motorized use on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.
- These areas are suitable for cross-country over-snow vehicle use as identified on the over-snow vehicle use map.

3.2 Research Natural Areas

Research Natural Areas (RNAs) are part of a network of representative forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, and wetland habitats; riparian systems; geologic formations; wildlife habitats; or aquatic communities where each has special characteristics of scientific importance. RNAs serve as reference areas for evaluating the range of natural variation and the impact of management in similar environments. They protect representative or key elements of biological diversity at the genetic, species, population, community or ecosystem scales. RNAs serve as areas for the study of ecosystems and ecological processes including succession and they provide a baseline for measuring ecological change. RNAs also support educational activities.

Desired Conditions

Research Natural Areas would:

- Serve as reference areas for evaluating the range of natural variability and the impacts of management in similar environments.
- Maintain representative or key elements of biological diversity at the genetic, species, population, community, or ecosystem levels.
- Serve as areas for the study of ecosystems and ecological processes including succession.
- Support educational activities.
- Be baseline areas for measuring ecological change.

Suitability

Generally:

Forest Products and Fire

- RNAs are not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production or the commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- These areas are suitable for management activities that restore conditions that the RNA was designated to represent.
- RNAs are suitable for wildland fire use, prescribed burning, and fire suppression.

Other Uses and Activities

- RNAs are not suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.
- These areas are generally suitable for the observation and study of undisturbed, unique habitats and non-manipulative research.
- RNAs are suitable for other uses that are consistent with the designated purpose for that area.

Access and Travel Management

- RNAs are not suitable for additional summer motorized travel except in emergency situations. Existing motorized routes could remain open and other existing valid access rights would be allowed to continue.
- Some areas are suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

3.3 General Forest Low Intensity Management

Desired Conditions

- Low intensity, mixed-use areas would have a combination of fish and wildlife habitat, an assortment of recreational opportunities, and a variety of other goods and services.
- These areas are generally suitable for managing vegetation at low intensities, although initial entries in areas with moderate to high fuels may be managed more intensively to reduce the hazard.
- Management in these areas emphasizes ecosystem management goals using a wide variety of methods.

Suitability

Generally:

Forest Products and Fire

- These areas are not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production, although timber harvesting or salvage logging could occur.
- These areas are suitable for the commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- These areas are suitable for wildland fire use, prescribed burning, and fire suppression.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

4.1 General Forest Moderate Intensity Management

Desired Conditions

- Landscapes would be characterized by a modified natural environment.
- Vegetation management activities, roads and evidence of other developments are apparent.
- Developed and dispersed recreation facilities may be present for comfort and convenience.
- Concentration of users is moderate and there is often evidence of other users.

Suitability

Generally:

Recreation

- These areas are suitable for moderate dispersed recreation use and developed facilities that are designed to provide a rustic level of comfort, convenience, and interpretation.

Forest Products and Fire

- These areas are suitable for regularly scheduled timber production and salvage logging.
- These areas are suitable for the commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- These areas are suitable for prescribed burning and fire suppression. They are generally not suitable for wildland fire use.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

5.1 General Forest High Intensity Management

Desired Conditions

- Landscapes would be characterized by a substantially modified environment. Landscapes appear managed. Forest activities would be readily apparent.
- High intensity, mixed use areas would provide a variety of forest products. This could include commercial and non-commercial forest products and uses, forage production, a diversity of fish and wildlife habitats, minerals development, and a natural visual quality setting with high evidence of human management activities.
- Developed facilities may be present for comfort and convenience, sights and sounds of human development are very evident.
- These areas would be characterized by coniferous forests where the potential to grow timber is high and regularly scheduled harvests of commercial timber are feasible.
- Roads would provide management access and motorized recreational opportunities, including access to higher use dispersed recreation sites. Some designated trails would provide a motorized recreation experience. Closed roads and trails would sometimes provide non-motorized and mechanized recreation opportunities.

Suitability

Generally:

Recreation

- These areas are suitable for high levels of dispersed recreation use, and developed facilities that are designed for user comfort, convenience, and interpretation.

Forest Products and Fire

- These areas are suitable for regularly scheduled timber production and salvage logging.
- These areas are suitable for the commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- These areas are suitable for prescribed burning and fire suppression. They are generally not suitable for wildland fire use.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

5.2: Residential and Forest Intermix

These areas are characterized by public lands intermingled with private lands where private use and developed residential use adjoins National Forest System lands.

Desired Conditions

- The scenery would reflect moderate intensity management where human influence is evident.
- Evidence of forest activities may be readily apparent up-close.
- Developed facilities may be present for comfort and convenience, sites and sounds of human development are evident.
- Numerous open roads provide access to private land, and to roaded recreational and motorized opportunities on designated roads and trails. Motorized transportation is common.
- Some closed roads may provide non-motorized and mechanized recreation settings and associated opportunities if access through private land is available.
- Dispersed recreation activities requiring overnight stays are not common.
- Access to existing high use areas would be available.
- Sights and sounds of people would predominate.

Suitability

Generally:

Forest Products and Fire

- These areas are not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production, although timber harvesting or salvage logging could occur.
- These areas are suitable for the commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- These areas are suitable for prescribed burning and fire suppression. They are generally not suitable for wildland fire use.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

6.1 High Use Recreation Complexes or Use Areas

Desired Conditions

- An array of recreational opportunities and experiences in a forested environment would exist. Examples include:
    - Four-season sports area.
    - Hiking trail system with a developed trailhead facility.
    - Developed campground.
    - Lake or reservoir with developed and dispersed recreation opportunities.
    - Groomed snowmobile trail system with associated trailhead facilities.
- Recreation experiences would be the attraction, and other natural resources would be complementary to the recreation setting and experience.
- Areas would have an attractive element, such as a reservoir, skiing terrain, campground, or trail system, that encouraged public use.
- Surrounding terrain would also be included in the management area to ensure an attractive setting for the recreational development and to provide for future expansion.
- The visual quality of the setting would reflect planned, high intensity management on the immediate site with moderate to high intensity management of surrounding areas.

Suitability

Generally:

Recreation

- These areas are suitable for developed recreation opportunities with multiple facilities designed for use by large numbers of users. Facilities may be designed for user comfort and convenience and could be highly refined.

Forest Products and Fire

- These areas are not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production, although timber harvesting or salvage logging could occur.
- These areas are not suitable for the commercial use of non-timber forest products.
- These areas are generally not suitable for wildland fire use.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are suitable for wheeled motorized use on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

Blank Page

Special Areas Component

Plan Components

Desired Conditions
Objectives
Suitability of Areas
Special Areas
Guidelines

The areas listed in the following table have unique or special characteristics and are formally designated either by statute or administrative action. Management direction for individual areas can be found in: Chapters 1-3 of this Plan, the Forest Service handbooks and manuals, and in individual area management plans. For example, MA 1.2 has additional guidance for research natural areas, and the Forest Service Manual 2320 contains additional management guidance for National Wilderness Preservation System lands.

Special areas that do not already have explicit management guidance elsewhere in this Plan, in their underlying statute or other designation document, or in Forest Service manuals or handbooks, should be managed in accordance with plan component guidance for the lands which surround them. A "Special Areas Component" map is available in the Plan Set of Documents.

A list of the special areas for the Flathead National Forest begins on the next page.

Table 13: Special Areas of the Flathead National Forest. [1] (This table continues to page 123).

Special Areas Plan Component				
Special Area	**Designation Authority**	**Additional Guidance**	**Currently Designated**	**Recommended Designation**
Statutorily Designated Areas				
National Recreation Area	Responsible Official recommends, Congressional act designates	FSM 2371	Recreation Area authorized by 36 CFR 294, approved by Regional Forester	**National Recreation Area** • Jewel Basin Hiking Area
National Trails **Historic** **Scenic**	National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968 Responsible Official recommends, Congressional act designates	FSM 2353.4	**Scenic** Continental Divide Trail • Bowl Cr Trail #324 • Sun River Pass Trail #116 • Strawberry Creek Trail #161 • Badger Pass Cutoff Trail #147	No changes
Wild and Scenic River (WSR)	Wild and Scenic Rivers Act Responsible Official recommends, Congressional act designates	FSM 1924 FSM 2354, FSH 2409.12 MA 2.1	• Middle Fork Flathead • North Fork Flathead • South Fork Flathead	**Eligible For Further Study** [2] • Big Salmon • Spotted Bear • White River • Danaher • Little Salmon • Gateway • Yakinikak/ Trail/ Nokio • Le Beau • Logan

[1] A map of the special areas is in the Plan Set of Documents.
[2] This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. The Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on designation of rivers as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Special Areas Plan Component				
Special Area	**Designation Authority**	**Additional Guidance**	**Currently Designated**	**Recommended Designation**
				• Aeneas
Wilderness	Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 Responsible Official recommends, Congressional act designates	FSM 1923 FSM 2320 FSH 2409.19 MA 1.1	• Bob Marshall • Great Bear • Mission Mountains	**Recommended Wilderness** [1] • South Fork Flathead • Middle Fork Flathead • Swan Front • North Fork • Limestone Addition • Alcove Addition
Responsible Official Designated Areas				
Botanical Areas	Responsible Official designates	FSM 2372	• Condon Creek	**Recommended Botanical Areas** • Teepee Lake Complex • Johnson Terrace • Bent Flat Fen • Trail Creek Fen
Administratively Designated Areas				
Experimental Forest/Range	Responsible Official recommends with concurrence of Station Director, Chief designates	FSM 4062	• Coram	No Changes

[1] This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. The Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.

Special Areas Plan Component				
Special Area	**Designation Authority**	**Additional Guidance**	**Currently Designated**	**Recommended Designation**
National Recreation Trails	Responsible Official recommends, Regional Forester designates	36 CFR 290 FSM 2353.4	• Blacktail Wild Bill OHV Trail • Danny On Memorial • Elk Mountain • Holland Falls • Lupine Lake • Ralph Thayer • Smokey Range/ Whitefish Divide	No changes
National Register of Historic Places	National Historic Preservation Act of October 15, 1966 (as amended) Archeological Resources Protection Act Responsible Official and State Historic Preservation Officer recommend, Secretary of Interior designates	36 CFR 60 36 CFR 296 36 CFR 800 Secretary of Interior Standards and Guidelines for Archeological and Historical Preservation	• Hornet Peak Lookout • Wurtz Homestead • Stone House	• Bob Marshall /Great Bear Wilderness Historic District
Research Natural Areas	Responsible Official recommends, Regional Forester designates with concurrence of Station Directors	FSM 4063 MA 3.2	• Coram • East Shore • Le Beau • Little Bitterroot • Swan River • Tuchuck	• Nyaak Flats

Special Areas Plan Component				
Special Area	**Designation Authority**	**Additional Guidance**	**Currently Designated**	**Recommended Designation**
Scenic Byway Forest Service	Responsible Official recommends, Chief designates	None		• Northern Continental Divide Scenic Loop
Research Demonstration Forest	Memorandum of Agreement between Forest Supervisor and Research Station Director	None	• Miller Creek	No changes

Blank Page