

Forest Plan Amendment Number 4

Custer National Forest Service
Billings, Montana

Forest Plan Amendment Number 4 was never implemented nor has it ever been officially withdrawn. The April 5, 1991 letter, that is enclosed here, transmitted Forest Plan Amendments 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 notes that the Forest did not have a Forest Wildlife Biologist on staff at the time to do the necessary coordination with US Fish and Wildlife Service to finalize the amendment. However, the May 1996 Beartooth Mountains Oil and Gas Leasing Record of Decision and attendant Final Environmental Impact Statement adopted three site specific Forest Plan amendments, 19, 20, and 21 that accomplish what was proposed in Amendment Number 4, and hence supersede it. The Beartooth Mountains Oil and Gas Leasing Record of Decision and supporting FEIS are available at the Forest Supervisor's Office at 1310 Main Street, Billings, Montana 59105.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Custer
National
Forest

2602 1st Avenue North
P.O. Box 2556
Billings, MT 59103

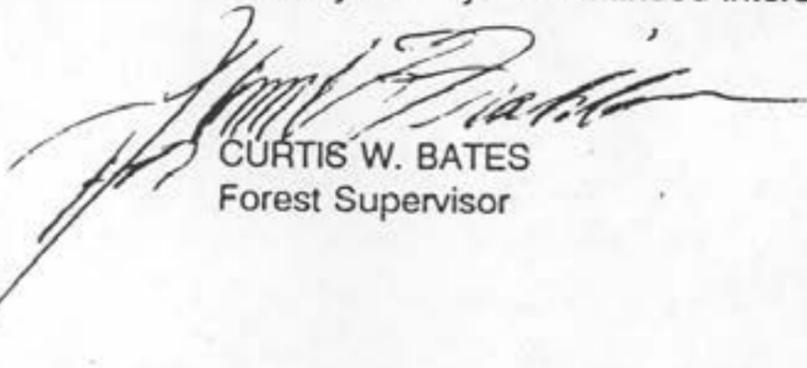
Reply to: 1920

Date: April 5, 1991

To Interested Publics:

Attached please find Forest Plan Amendments Number 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8. I sent these amendments to you in January, 1991 for review. Based on the input received I am implementing all of them except proposed Amendment Number 4. At the current time the Forest does not have a Forest Biologist to do the necessary consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to finalize this amendment.

Thank you for your continued interest in the management of the Custer National Forest.



CURTIS W. BATES
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures; Amendments 1, 3, and 5 - 8



**Proposed Forest Plan Amendment Number 4
Custer National Forest
Billings, Montana**

Oil and Gas Leasing of Grizzly Bear Habitat, Management Situation I

On page 17 of the Forest Plan, Wildlife Management Standards item 4) states: "Grizzly Bear Management Situation I areas will not be leased for oil and gas and will be considered for mineral withdrawal." The only area in Grizzly Bear Management Situation I outside of the Wilderness is in Management Area C. On page 50 of the Management Plan the direction under 2. Wildlife and Fish, item h. states: "All activities proposed within Management Situation I for grizzly bear (Slough Creek) will be consistent with direction presented in the publication (Guidelines for Management Involving Grizzly Bears in the Greater Yellowstone Area). Grizzly Bear Management Situation I areas are not to be leased for oil and gas." The Record of Decision (ROD) signed by the Regional Forester on June 10, 1987 did not make the decision to lease or not lease. The ROD identified areas that were considered available or not available for further leasing consideration but the decision to lease or not will be made after site-specific analysis is completed. The recently released Oil and Gas Regulations, 36 CFR 228, subpart E, March 21, 1990, Federal Register, discusses the requirements for determining lands administratively available for leasing (Section 228.102). The determination of administratively available land can be made in conjunction with the site-specific analysis necessary to support a decision to lease or not lease.

The direction on page 17 and 50 of the Management Plan is not correct as written because the site-specific analysis necessary to support a decision to lease, not lease, or withdrawal was not included in the Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement. Because of the recently released Oil and Gas Regulations, the above wording is hereby changed to the following:

Decisions related to requests for leasing in Management Situation I areas will be based on a site-specific analysis considering the "Guidelines for Management Involving Grizzly Bears in the Greater Yellowstone Area" and in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

This amendment does not change any decision made in the Forest Plan or Record of Decision. It is designed to clarify the intent and incorporate current direction. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forest wide environmental impacts disclosed in the Custer National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement. This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment (FSM 1950 Interim Directive No. 16 and FSH 1909.15 Interim Directive No. 2).