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Department of
Agriculture



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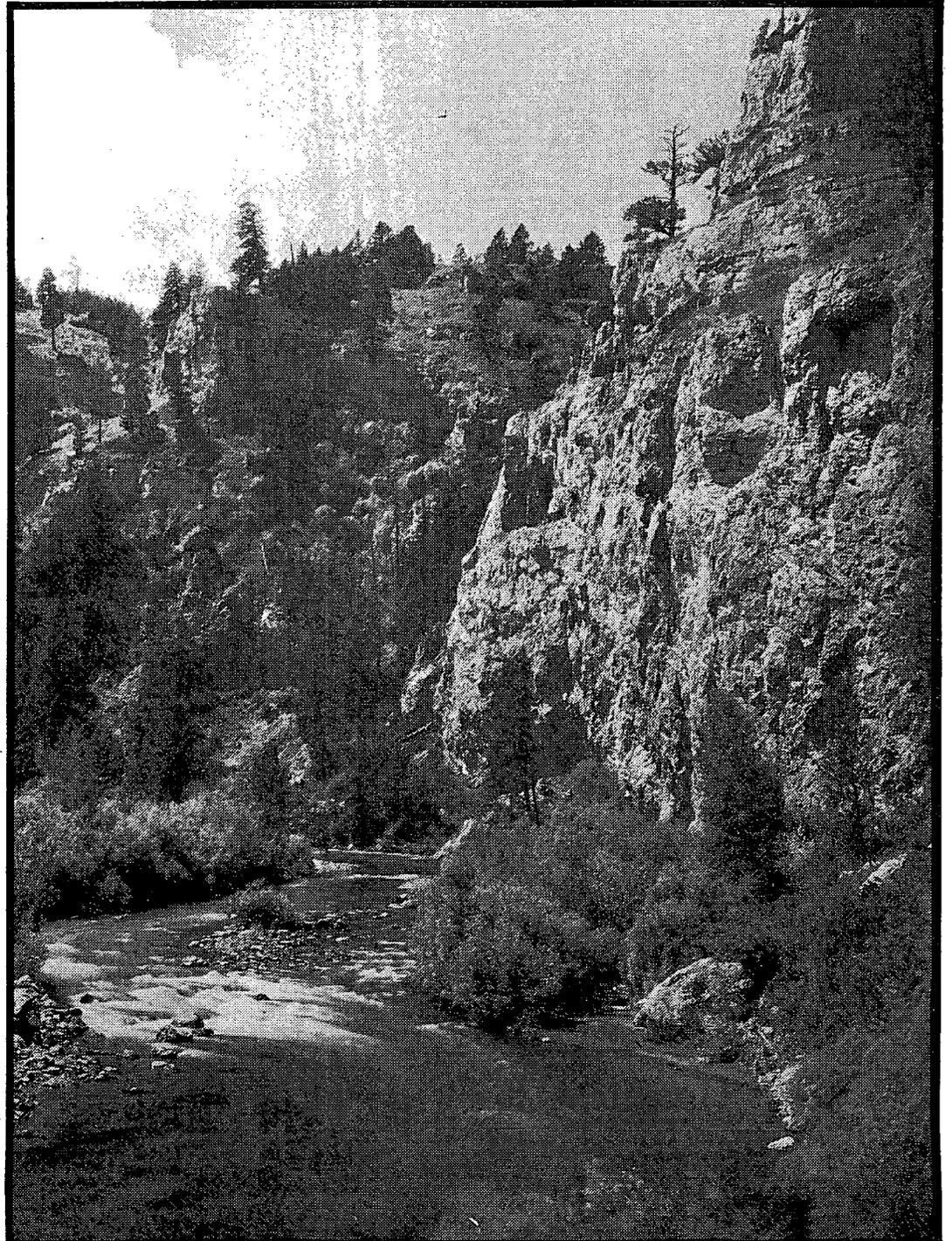


SUMMARY

Five-Year Review 1987-1991

Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan

J-9



Belt Creek Canyon below Monarch in the Little Belt Mountains.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The *Lewis and Clark National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (Forest Plan) was approved on June 4, 1986 by Regional Forester, James C. Overbay. The Forest Plan provides long-term direction for management of the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Each year, we have assessed our progress implementing the direction in the Forest Plan and reported our results in an annual Forest Monitoring and Evaluation Report.

Under the National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning Act (NFMA), we are directed to review the conditions on the lands covered by the Forest Plan at least every five years to determine whether conditions or demands of the public have changed significantly. This process has been termed the 5-Year Review of the Forest Plan.

Because 1991 was the fifth year we implemented the Forest Plan direction (first year of implementation was FY 1987), we conducted our review during the summer and fall of 1992. This document summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Lewis and Clark National Forest 5-Year Review Team.

The 5-Year Review Team examined the five annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports, past and current project analyses, Forest Plan and project appeals, project implementation results, and new laws affecting Forest management. Review of these materials revealed the Forest Plan is, in most instances, providing adequate management direction and is being properly implemented. Seven findings identified in the 5-Year Review will result in some changes to the Forest Plan. Those seven findings include:

1. Research Natural Areas Direction
2. Heritage Program Monitoring
3. Sensitive Species
4. Cave Management Direction
5. Grizzly Bear Management Situation
6. Riparian/Grazing
7. Elk Management

Each of these findings and their respective recommendations are described in this document. Several of the recommendations are to change the Forest Plan. These changes are disclosed in Forest Plan amendments and included in the attached Appendix.

Thirty additional findings, identified by the Review Team do not necessitate a change to the Forest Plan at this time. In some cases, we can resolve these findings by changing how we implement Forest projects; some require additional study before we can recommend a change to the Forest Plan; still others were not related to a Forest Plan decision (ie. Congressional budgets). A brief description of these 30 findings is also included in this 5-Year Review summary document.

II. FINDINGS RESULTING IN FOREST PLAN CHANGES

FINDING 1: RESEARCH NATURAL AREAS DIRECTION: During the 5-Year Review, we discovered an inconsistency between our Forest Plan standards for selecting and establishing a Research Natural Area and Forest Service Manual Direction. The Forest Plan specifies habitat types are to be assigned by the Northern Region Guide, a guide that will not be reissued. Forest Service Manual direction 4060 contains Research Natural Area habitat types and aquatic targets recommended by the Northern Region Natural Areas Committee. A second issue concerned the Forest Plan description for Management Area M. Management Area M is currently written specifically for the Paine Gulch Natural Research Area. With additional Research Natural Areas under evaluation for nomination, we realized the language in the Forest Plan limited us from adding newly established Research Natural Areas to Management Area M. Another inconsistency between Forest Plan direction and Forest Service Manual direction involved the issue of fencing Research Natural Areas. Forest Plan standard N-1(c) (Forest Plan, page 2-48) specifies that candidate areas for Research Natural Area designation should be manageable without needing to fence out livestock. Forest Service



Manual direction allows fencing Research Natural Areas under certain circumstances. The last issue in this finding involved a Forest Plan error. During the preparation of the Establishment Record for the Paine Gulch Research Natural Area, an acreage error was identified.

Recommended Action: The Forest Plan will be amended (Amendment #9 in the Appendix) to allow Research Natural Area habitat type assignments from the Regional Guide, the Northern Region Natural Areas Committee, as well as other sources. Management Area M direction will be modified to allow the inclusion of other Research Natural Areas as they are established through site-specific reports and environmental analysis. Language regarding the fencing limitations will be modified. Acreage calculations for the Paine Gulch Research Natural Area will be corrected. In addition to the Research Natural Area issues, Amendment #9 also adds Management Area T to the Forest Plan to address management prescriptions for the ponderosa pine forest in the Little Snowy Mountains. The need for Management Area T was identified in the environmental analysis for the Little Snowies, not during the 5-Year Review.

FINDING 2: HERITAGE PROGRAM MONITORING: The Forest Plan monitoring item for the Heritage Program is vague and needs clarification if the Forest is to adequately assess compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and compliance with direction established in the Forest Plan. Current monitoring does not assess whether identification, protection, management and interpretation of cultural resources has met the intent of Forest-wide management standards. We are unable to determine whether all "undertakings" have received a cultural resources survey and whether compliance requirements (including mitigation to identified sites) have been met. With the existing monitoring item, we cannot determine the effectiveness of the Heritage Program or whether changes in the cultural program are warranted to comply with new legislation, new direction, or an increased workload.

Recommended Action: The Forest Plan will be amended (Amendment #10 in the Appendix) to eliminate the current monitoring item for cultural resources (Forest Plan, page 5-9, Item A-8) and replace it with five more specific monitoring items (A-8 through A-12). Revised Item A-8 will monitor compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act for providing cultural resource surveys on Forest projects. Item A-9 will monitor whether mitigation measures were followed during project implementation. Item A-10 will monitor how well Forest objectives and standards are being met. Item A-11 will monitor impacts to cultural sites that have received interpretation treatments. Item A-12 will monitor the effectiveness of inventory methods.

FINDING 3: SENSITIVE SPECIES: While the Forest Service Manual System provides direction for the management of sensitive species, the Forest Plan does not contain specific standards for sensitive wildlife and plant species. Also, no monitoring items exist to record the progress of the Sensitive Species Program, to document whether or not goals and objectives are being met, to document the presence of sensitive species, or to determine management's effect on sensitive species.

Recommended Action: The Forest Plan will be amended (Amendment #12 in the Appendix) to add goals, objectives, standards, and monitoring items to the Forest Plan adding emphasis to the Sensitive Species Program. The amendment does not change the way the Sensitive Species Program is presently implemented, but recognizes the Program within the context of the Forest Plan.

FINDING 4: CAVE MANAGEMENT DIRECTION: With the exception of one Forest-wide standard, the Forest Plan lacks specific direction for managing caves to ensure compliance with the 1988 Federal Cave Resources Protection Act. The Federal Cave Resources Protection Act was passed two years after the approval of the Lewis and Clark Forest Plan. The policy of this Act establishes that "...Federal lands be managed in a manner which protects and maintains, to the extent practical, significant caves." The purposes of the Act and legislative direction are not addressed in the Forest Plan.

Recommended Action: The Forest Plan will be amended (Amendment #13 in the Appendix) in the following manner:

1. The reference to "caves" in Forest-wide management standard A-6 (Forest Plan, page 2-26) will be deleted.

2. A Forest-wide objective for Caves will be added to the Forest Plan (page 2-5).
3. A definition of "caves" will be added to the Forest Plan glossary.
4. Six Forest-wide management standards relating to cave management will be added to Special Areas (N-3(1) through N-3(6)) within the Forest Plan (Forest Plan, page 2-49).

FINDING 5: GRIZZLY BEAR MANAGEMENT SITUATION: A 4,000 acre area along U.S. Highway 2, adjacent to Glacier National Park, is mapped in the Forest Plan as Grizzly Bear Management Situation 2. These acres represent the only Management Situation 2 lands on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Management Situation 2 areas are to be designated where *"current information indicates that the area lacks distinct population centers; highly suitable habitat does not generally occur... [and] Habitat resources in Management Situation 2 either are unnecessary for survival and recovery of the species..."* In recent environmental analyses, we have identified this area as an important travel corridor for big game and grizzly bears entering and exiting Glacier National Park. We believe these lands should be re-classified Management Situation 1.

Recommended Action: The Forest Plan will be amended (Amendment #14 in the Appendix) to correct this mapping error and convert the 4,000 acres of Management Situation 2 lands to Management Situation 1. This correction will increase the Forest's Management Situation 1 lands to 767,959 acres and eliminate Management Situation 2 from Forest designation.

FINDING 6: RIPARIAN AREA GRAZING MANAGEMENT: The 5-Year Review Team identified three issues relating to grazing within riparian areas. 1). The riparian utilization portion of Forest Plan Standard D-3(4) has been misinterpreted as a stand-alone standard. As a result, the description has been incorrectly incorporated into a third of the Forest's grazing permits without the benefit of an environmental analysis or development/revision of an Allotment Management Plan. The intent of the Forest Plan was to apply Standard D-3(4) only through the Allotment Management Planning (AMP) process. An environmental analysis and AMP may result in the implementation of site-specific utilization standards. These site-specific riparian utilization standards might differ from those described in the Forest Plan. 2). Many riparian areas are not meeting the goals and objectives of Management Area R (riparian, MA-R) because of inadequate development and implementation of riparian standards. There is no universal riparian utilization standard that can be applied to allotments containing riparian habitat. Site-specific management systems and riparian classification must be considered in developing riparian utilization standards on a particular allotment. Even with our accelerated range analysis program, implemented in 1991, we estimate it will take 20 years to fully develop and apply site-specific riparian utilization standards on all of the Forest's allotments. 3) Under current management and funding, riparian goals and objectives in MA-R cannot be met with the current animal unit months (AUMs) of grazing. Stocking reductions will be greater if riparian utilization standards are implemented without the benefit of an AMP/environmental analysis, because mitigating management techniques (which may lessen the need to reduce stocking) cannot be applied without such an analysis.

Recommended Action: The Forest Plan will be amended (Amendment #15 in the Appendix) to clarify Forest Plan standard D-3(4) and prevent future misinterpretation/misapplication. The language in the standard (Forest Plan, page 2-39) will be revised to specify that riparian utilization standards will be implemented **only** through the Allotment Management Planning process and analysis. Permits containing riparian utilization guidance in Part-3 will be modified to exclude language that incorrectly applied Forest Plan Standard D-3(4). We will incorporate site-specific riparian utilization standards and respective management practices to meet riparian objectives in our Allotment Management Plans, by continuing with the same range analysis schedule/priorities agreed upon in 1991. Using information from our ongoing range analyses, riparian/fish monitoring, and data from other Forests we will develop Forest-wide guidelines to facilitate consistent riparian utilization standards. These guidelines will be developed over the next 5 years, in preparation for the 10-year Forest Plan revision. In the meantime, language in the Forest Plan does allow for implementation of new management techniques; therefore, the new guidelines may be implemented prior to the 10-year revision.



FINDING 7: ELK MANAGEMENT: The composition of elk populations (number of mature bulls, ratio of bulls:cows), and overall elk populations, are critical elements in attaining the goals and objectives of both the Forest Plan and the 1992 State Elk Management Plan. During the 5-Year Review, three issues relating to elk management were identified. 1). We had not addressed elk security during the hunting season during the initial Forest Planning effort. 2). Recent site-specific project analyses where elk security was an issue revealed the open road standard set for Management Area B (MA-B), which is 1.5 to 3.0 miles of open road per square mile, is not being met. In many cases, less than 1.5 miles of road per square mile has remained open to motorized use because of elk security reasons. 3). The present Management Area allocations (MA-C and MA-B) in the Spring Creek area on the Musselshell Ranger District (Little Belt Mountains) do not ensure longterm retention of elk security.

Recommended Action: To address the issue of elk security during hunting season, the Forest Plan will be amended (Amendment #16 in the Appendix) to add a Forest-wide objective stating, *"An elk vulnerability process will be jointly developed by the Forest and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and applied when completing effects analyses on projects that have the potential to modify the vegetation or access within elk summer/fall range."* Under this amendment, we will develop, apply, and adjust (with Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks biologists concurrence) a process to assess the effects of timber harvest on security areas. Our wildlife biologists have already been working closely with the MDFWP during the analysis and implementation of timber sale projects. Amendment #16 will also delete the lower value (1.5 miles) from the open road density standard. The standard will be revised to state, *"Up to 3 miles of road per section could be available for motorized travel."* Deleting the lower limit allows the flexibility of closing all roads, if necessary, to provide for elk security in Management Area B where the cover component has been reduced. By deleting the lower value, we are in concurrence with the direction for road densities defined by the MDFWP in their Road Management Policy (see Appendix G in the Forest Plan). To resolve the Spring Creek management area allocation issue, the Forest Plan will be amended (Amendment #17 in the Appendix). The amendment will change the present allocations from MA-B and MA-C to a combination of MA-C and MA-G. The lands allocated to Management Area C would remain in the Forest's suitable timber base and would allow a tie of common allocations along the north slope of Muddy Mountain. The lands allocated to Management Area G would maintain an undeveloped character and be managed as a large block of undeveloped ground serving as security habitat for resident elk herds and providing semi-primitive recreation opportunities. Lands in Management Area G are not part of the suitable timber base; therefore, this change represents a 1% reduction in the Forest's suitable timber base.

III. FINDINGS NOT RESULTING IN FOREST PLAN CHANGES

As discussed in the **Introduction**, thirty additional findings were identified during the 5-Year Review. These findings were distinct from the other seven findings because they will NOT result in a recommendation to modify the Forest Plan at this time. A Forest Plan change is not warranted for one of several reasons:

- The finding was not a decision in the Forest Plan (ie. inadequate Congressional appropriations).
- The finding was a result of project implementation, NOT Forest Plan direction.
- Not enough variation from the Forest Plan expectation was experienced to warrant a change to the Forest Plan at this time.
- Not enough information was available to recommend how the Forest Plan should be changed at this time.

1. BIODIVERSITY & LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT: We considered whether we should include goals, objectives, definitions, and standards in the Forest Plan to address ecosystem management concepts. We feel our interdisciplinary teams use ecosystem management concepts in implementing the Forest Plan. A recent example is our analysis for the Little Snowies Mountains where we considered the historic landscapes resulting from past wildfires to help us resolve what management practices to implement in the future. We feel no change is needed to the Forest Plan at this time.

2. WILDLIFE STANDARDS: Some of the Forest-Wide Standards for wildlife (C in Forest Plan, pages 2-30 through 2-37), have only very general management direction. In comparing the expectations in the Forest Plan with the implementation, the standards do provide a framework and the flexibility to adapt the standards to the site-specific situation. We feel there is not enough variation between the expectations and our ability to implement sound wildlife principles to warrant a recommendation to change the Forest Plan at this time.

3. FISH STANDARDS: Currently there is no Forest Plan Standard that addresses the amount of sedimentation that would be allowed or how far production capability of fish habitat could be reduced. In reviewing this situation, we found there is not enough information to determine the relationship of existing substrate conditions to substrate conditions that were present prior to the influence of man. We also do not know what the natural range of variability was in those early times. We want to place emphasis on gathering and analyzing the stream substrate information from all geologic types within the Forest and intensify efforts to document the condition of fish habitat within the various types of riparian classification designations. We will concentrate our efforts on gathering data that will allow us to write meaningful, definitive standards for fish habitat components for the 10-year Forest Plan revision.

4. ABANDONED MINE LAW: The Abandoned Mine Law, dealing with the reclamation of abandoned mines, came into effect several years after the approval of the Forest Plan. Guidance in Forest-wide management standard (G-5(3), Forest Plan, page 2-59) provides adequate direction to allow for the coordination with the State in their decisions on abandoned mines on the National Forest. No Forest Plan change is needed.

5. WILDLIFE/FISH PROGRAM DOCUMENT: In 1990, our wildlife biologists developed a program document outlining a larger budget and workload than originally identified in the Forest Plan. The program document is linked to the Forest Plan goals and objectives and is a valuable tool in preparing our outyear budgets. The Forest Plan does not to be changed as a result of the development of the document.

6. SNAG MANAGEMENT STANDARDS: We discovered our snag management standard is not being met, for two reasons: 1). snags are being harvested by personal and commercial use firewood cutters after timber harvest and 2). timber contractors are not retaining the necessary snags during harvest. This situation can be resolved by revising our implementation procedures. We will reassess our position on allowing firewood cutting in sale areas, and will begin marking snags within harvest units to ensure timber contractors retain snags during harvest.

7. OLD GROWTH: We identified a need to develop an old growth inventory process to ensure that old growth is inventoried consistently across the Forest. This finding is an implementation problem. Our wildlife biologist has developed an *Old Growth Inventory and Allocation Process* that will enable us to complete old growth inventory for use in the 10-Year Forest Plan revision.

8. MANAGEMENT INDICATOR SPECIES: The Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement did not disclose the effects on all Management Indicator Species for any of the alternatives analyzed. Those species not analyzed are: blue grouse, mountain lion, beaver, bobcat, wolverine, lynx, golden eagle, prairie falcon, goshawk, and northern 3-toed woodpecker. We feel that we should re-examine the list of Management Indicator Species to determine which species or groups of species are true indicators of management, and then analyze how our activities are affecting those species. We decided to analyze the effects of the Forest Plan preferred alternative on all Management Indicator Species not originally addressed in the Forest Plan FEIS. By completing this analysis we will be able to determine which species are true indicators. Only after the analysis has been completed will there be adequate information that may lead to a possible Forest Plan change.

9. LAND OWNERSHIP ADJUSTMENTS: We discovered that we have not been incorporating landbase changes resulting from land ownership adjustments into the Timber Stand Data Base system. This situation is an implementation problem and can be remedied through the monitoring process. Corrections to the Timber Stand Data Base will now be made at the time a land exchange is finalized.

10. SMALL SALES ON THE KINGS HILL RANGER DISTRICT: Several Management Area boundaries on the Kings Hill Ranger District need to be adjusted to reflect changes resulting from NFMA (National Forest Management Act) work conducted in an area north of the Smokey Corridor project area. Boundary



refinements to the Forest Plan Management Areas is expected during site-specific analyses. The boundary changes in this area are not enough variation to warrant further analysis or changes to the Forest Plan. The mapped boundary adjustments will be retained in the documentation files and made at the Forest Plan 10-Year revision.

11. ASQ INCREASE: A decision made by the Chief of the Forest Service directed us to "*Examine the timber market situation and other relevant factors to consider if an increase in the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) within the goals of Alternative G [Forest Plan selected alternative] is warranted and document the finding in the 5-year review.*" During the 5-Year Review, we examined the calculations used in the Forest Plan (suitable acres, volume of timber on suitable acres, and rate of harvest); our ability to sustain the current level of timber harvest; and the timber supply and demand. We decided to continue with the 121 MMBF ASQ for the first decade of the Forest Plan. The accomplishments within the first half of the decade demonstrate our ability to annually produce and sell an average of 11.5 million board feet chargeable to the ASQ. Our projections indicate that the Forest will be about 4 million board feet short of the ASQ ceiling after 10 years of implementation. The ASQ is reasonable and the overall timber program achievable; we feel there is not enough variation in the timber ASQ and our timber program to warrant a change to the Forest's ASQ at this time.

12. DOCUMENT TIMBER VALUES AND COSTS: A decision made by the Chief of the Forest Service directed us to analyze timber values and costs in the 5-Year Review. We were to consider both the recent past as well as possible future events. We examined our timber stumpage prices and the costs associated with the timber program (sale preparation and road costs). Stumpage price comparisons indicate that the stumpage prices used in forest planning were higher than prices are in reality for the initial five year period of implementation. A sensitivity analysis would be needed to determine the effect that the lower stumpage values would have had on the Present Net Value and Forest Plan decision. Because more data is needed before a recommendation to change the Forest Plan can be made, we decided to continue implementation and monitoring. In the next five years, our staff will continue to gather timber price data and perform a sensitivity analysis to ensure more accurate timber values are used in the 10-Year Forest Plan Revision. In contrast to the timber values situation, sale preparation costs are very close to those used in forest planning. Therefore, a Forest Plan change is not warranted.

13. THINNING ACRES EXCEED PROJECTIONS: The amount of timber acres being thinned on the Forest exceeds the acres projected in the Forest Plan by an average of 178%. The Forest Plan projections were based on economics, not site-specific analysis. Our silviculturists have been recommending more intensive management on more productive timber sites to improve the productivity at a faster rate. Projected outputs in the Forest Plan are not hard and fast decisions. We do not recommend a change to the Forest Plan. We will continue to monitor and report our thinning accomplishments in our annual *Monitoring and Evaluation Report*.

14. NOXIOUS WEED OUTPUT: The Forest Plan projected noxious weed treatment at 300 acres per year during the first decade of implementation. We have treated an average of 711 acres/year for the five year period. Current inventory figures show 1755 acres infested with noxious weeds, compared to 826 acres inventoried in 1986. We will continue our monitoring efforts, and not change the Forest Plan at this time. Currently, an environmental analysis of the noxious weed program is underway. Any decisions from that analysis warranting a change to the Forest Plan will be handled as part of that analysis.

15. NOXIOUS WEED MONITORING: The Forest Plan does not contain a monitoring item specifically tracking the effectiveness of noxious weed treatments. We feel more analysis is needed to determine whether the past noxious weed treatments have accomplished their intent of controlling infestations. Because an environmental analysis of the noxious weed program is underway, an evaluation and recommendation on additional monitoring item(s) will be determined as part of that analysis.

16. ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING: Allotment Management Plan completion for the first five years of implementation has been significantly less than the Forest Plan output projection. In 1991, we implemented a Range Analysis Team to improve this situation. The team is working with a prioritized schedule, budget, and methodology for developing Allotment Management Plans to meet Forest Plan



direction. No change is needed to the Forest Plan; the Range Analysis Team will continue their analysis of the scheduled allotments.

17. GALT LAND ACQUISITION: Lands acquired in the Crazy Mountains by the Galt land purchase need to be analyzed and assigned to management area allocations and prescriptions that conform to the Forest Plan standards. As an immediate measure, we are initiating erosion control measures on several of the roads in the land purchase. We will complete an analysis to determine management allocation as soon as practicable.

18. OUTFITTER & GUIDE INCREASES: The Forest Plan does not contain direction on increasing/decreasing outfitter and guide services. At this time, requests for increased service days or new guided services are handled individually by each District Ranger. We have identified the need to determine the level and kinds of non-guided activities occurring on the Forest, assess the need for additional guided services and where; and develop criteria to evaluate requests for additional guided services. Until this information is collected and analyzed, it is premature to recommend a change to the Forest Plan.

19. TRAVEL PLAN: The Lewis and Clark National Forest Travel Plan map has not been revised since 1988. In the last 3-4 years we have made numerous travel planning decisions as part of our site-specific project analyses. We recognize the need to revise the map and display these travel management decisions. Since there is a substantial supply of the Jefferson Division map, we will focus, first, on revising the Rocky Mountain Ranger District map. Travel decisions made since the 1988 map version will be cartographically corrected; and reprinting of the map will be undertaken.

20. RECREATION INFORMATION: Under Forest-wide Management Standard A-1 (Forest Plan, page 2-25), we were to, "Make recreation information more visible by completing the Recreation Opportunity Guide..." Although we have traditionally used other means of relating recreation information to the public, we have not completed *Recreation Opportunity Guides* for the entire Forest. We will place a higher priority on completing these Guides if and when funds become available; in the meanwhile, we will seek creative ways to complete them with cooperative partnerships.

21. DEVELOPED RECREATION FUNDING: With existing Congressional appropriations, we have been unable to provide adequate service at our developed sites (campgrounds, picnic areas). Lack of adequate operation and maintenance funding has hampered our efforts to provide the necessary cleanup, toilet pumping, and facility maintenance. Changing the Forest Plan will not solve this problem. We will continue to seek adequate funding through the appropriate budgeting process.

22. WILDERNESS FUNDING: Funding for Wilderness recreation management is substantially less than our identified needs. As discussed in above, this situation is a budgeting issue, not a Forest Plan issue. We will continue to seek adequate funding through the appropriate budgeting process.

23. INTERPRETATION DIRECTION: The Forest Plan does not contain specific direction for interpretive planning. We feel that the language and intent in the Forest Plan does not preclude the development of master plans for interpretive programming. In fact, interpretive planning has been prepared by individual Ranger Districts. This finding is an implementation issue; there is no need to change the Forest Plan. As funds permit, we will develop a long-range interpretive master plan to provide consistency across the Forest.

24. VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: Several viewpoints along U.S. Highways 200, 294, 287, 191, and along the Smith River were not identified/analyzed during the forest planning process. These viewpoints were not included in the Forest Plan because of their very long viewing distance from the Forest and/or no management activities were proposed which would effect the viewshed. Had these viewpoints been in the Forest Plan, implementation of management activities during the previous five years would not have been done differently. Therefore, we recommend no change to the Forest Plan at this time. However, these viewpoints will be examined in the 10-Year Forest Plan Revision.

25. LEWIS AND CLARK INTERPRETIVE CENTER: We will be acquiring lands for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center. None of the existing management areas described within the Forest Plan meet the intent of this kind of facility. Because funding for the Interpretive Center has not been



appropriated since 1990, the land acquisition has not been completed. The Forest Plan will not be changed until the acquisition occurs.

26. CULTURAL RESOURCES IN WILDERNESS: Initially, it appeared there may be an inconsistency between Forest Plan direction for managing administrative facilities and historic facilities within Wilderness. Management direction in Wilderness (Forest Plan, page 3-80) directs us to allow above-ground evidence of sites or structures to be subject to natural processes. Management direction for administrative facilities (Forest Plan, page 3-82) does allow for the operation and maintenance of facilities needed for administrative purposes. Several of our historic structures are used for administrative purposes and are maintained on an annual basis to prevent deterioration. Management direction for administrative facilities clearly permits maintenance of structures needed for administrative purposes. When the Forest Plan undergoes revision, we should clarify the situation by adding language to the cultural resources direction such as, *"Above ground evidence of sites or structures, other than those needed for administrative purposes, will be subject to natural processes."*

27. CULTURAL NOMINATIONS: Forest-wide Management Standard A-7(1), (Forest Plan, page 2-26) could be interpreted as a requirement that ALL eligible cultural properties be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. We have focused our time and expertise on cultural resource site evaluation and protection. Within the first five years of Forest Plan implementation, only the Judith Guard Station has been nominated to the Federal Register of Historic Places. Since the Forest-wide standard does not specify a timeframe for completion of nominations, and no one has commented on the need to nominate sites, we will continue to nominate sites as time and budget permit. When the Forest Plan is revised, the language in this standard could be clarified by adding the words, *"will be considered for nomination."*

28. NEW GUIDANCE AFFECTING THE HERITAGE PROGRAM: Initially, we were concerned that guidelines in National Register Bulletin 38 (*Guidelines for Evaluation and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*) and Forest Service interpretation of those guidelines would affect our procedures for completing environmental analyses on site-specific project proposals. Because this Bulletin was written **after** the approval of the Forest Plan, there is no reference of this new information in the Forest Plan. After review, we have determined that Bulletin 38 is technical guidance, not regulation. Therefore, the guidance does not alter our responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act; nor does it impose new consultation requirements. For these reasons, Bulletin 38 does not conflict with our current Forest Plan direction.

29. MONTANA STREAMSIDE MANAGEMENT ZONE ACT: The Montana State Legislature enacted the Montana Streamside Management Zone Act in 1991, five years after the approval of the Forest Plan. Therefore, the Forest Plan does not specifically reference the requirements of this state law. In reviewing the law and the Forest Plan, we identified one Forest-wide objective and many Forest Plan standards that apply to the intent of the state law. We have determined that the Forest Plan is not in conflict with the Montana Streamside Management Zone Act; and there is no documentation demonstrating that Forest activities implemented over the last 5 years are in conflict with stipulations identified in the state law. While we recommend no changes to the Forest Plan at this time, additional language to clarify compliance with the state law will be considered in the 10-Year Forest Plan Revision.

30. SOIL PRODUCTIVITY: While the Forest Plan requires that soil productivity be maintained, no Forest-wide management standards establishing threshold values for measuring soil productivity are included in the Forest Plan. Since Regional guidance for threshold values for determining soil productivity exists in the Soils Handbook, it is not necessary to duplicate these standards in the Forest Plan. No changes to the Forest Plan are recommended at this time.



RECORD OF DECISION

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 9

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

AUGUST 1993

DECISION

It is my decision to amend the Lewis and Clark Land and Resource Plan (Forest Plan) by changing the management area designation on 13,310 acres in the Little Snowies project area. This change will require creating a new management area (Management Area T), changing the current direction on one management area (Management Area M), and clarifying the direction for Forest-wide Standard N-1 (Research Natural Areas). The Little Snowies Vegetation Management and Public Access Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) provides the environmental analysis for this decision.

BACKGROUND

The National Forest land within the Lewis and Clark National Forest has been divided into 18 management areas, each with different management goals, resource potential, and limitations (Forest Plan, pages 3-1 and 3-2). Under the Forest Plan, almost all of the Little Snowies are in Management Area C. Management Area C includes important elk and deer habitat on the Jefferson Division. The goal is to maintain or enhance existing elk habitat.

In reviewing management area suitability in the Little Snowies project area, the Interdisciplinary Team found that on-the-ground conditions did not fit with the Management Area C goal as identified in the Forest Plan (Forest Plan, pages 3-15 to 3-21). While elk and their habitat are important in the Little Snowies, other wildlife such as whitetail deer and turkey rank higher because of their uniqueness on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. The Little Snowies provide an opportunity to manage primarily a ponderosa pine forest which is not found on other parts of the Forest. Because of these factors, the Interdisciplinary Team has recommended creating a new management area, Management Area T, for the Little Snowies. This new management area will focus on maintaining the Little Snowies in a more natural ecological state (see page A-12).

Management Area T is primarily a ponderosa pine forest in the Little Snowies. Important wildlife species include whitetail deer, and turkeys. Management is focused on moving the existing vegetative condition to a more natural ecological state, that in the past was maintained by light ground fires. The emphasis is also directed toward providing a mosaic of different vegetative successional stages for habitat diversity within a ponderosa pine forest to ensure the welfare of a variety of indigenous wildlife and plant species.

The Interdisciplinary Team also recommended creating a 330 acre research natural area (RNA) in Minerva Creek to serve as a vegetative benchmark for the area. RNAs are used to maintain representation of forest vegetation and aquatic ecosystems for non-manipulative research and observation. The Minerva RNA includes both Ponderosa pine/snowberry habitat type, Douglas-fir/snowberry habitat type, and riparian sites. The private fence on the Forest boundary forms the south and east sides of the RNA. The Forest Service will build the needed fence on the north and south sides.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives for this proposal were evaluated in the Little Snowies Vegetation Management and Public Access Final EIS. These alternatives were:

Alternative A: Make no changes in the management areas.

Alternative B: Delay any changes in management areas until the 10-15 year Forest Plan revision.

Alternative C: Provide some other type of management for the Little Snowies.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

The proposed changes in management area designations will improve the overall resource management in the Little Snowies. The new Management Area T direction will be more specific to the ecological conditions of the ponderosa pine forest found in the Little Snowies. The management emphasis is directed toward providing for habitat diversity to ensure the welfare of a variety of indigenous wildlife and plant species. Manipulation of vegetation with fire, timber harvest, and mechanical means will provide for a mosaic of vegetative successional stages within a ponderosa pine forest (see pages A-12 through A-17).

The change reallocates 12,980 acres of Management Area C to the new, proposed Management Area T. There will be no change in Forest Plan scheduled outputs nor in suitable forest acres and allowable sale quantity (ASQ), although the rotation period for timber harvest will be longer. A lower level of public open roads will be provided.

Leaving the management area as it is would result in management direction that is not fully capable and meaningful for the area involved. Delaying the decision until the 10-15 year Forest Plan revision would only delay changes that are needed to keep the Forest Plan current. I believe that the new direction provides the best resource management for the Little Snowies and is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan.

The change will reallocate 330 acres of Management Area C to Management Area M. The 330 acre Research Natural Area (RNA) will be used for non-manipulative research. Prescribed fire will not be used until a management plan is completed. With the lack of fire or other vegetation manipulation, conifer encroachment will continue to invade the grasslands in Minerva Creek thus reducing the value of the area as a foraging area for wildlife. However, only 330 acres or 2% of the total Little Snowies area are affected.

Timber harvest will not be permitted on the productive land as it would adversely affect the natural processes and research studies. The estimated 200 acres of suitable forest land will be removed from the timber base. These lands have an estimated growth of 5000 cubic feet yearly.

The RNA will have no adverse effect on the soil and water resources unless overloading of fuels would set the stage for a high intensity fire. Such a fire could reduce organic layer thickness to a point where water erosion could be a severe hazard.

Approximately 2.5 miles of fence will be needed to enclose the area to eliminate cattle grazing. Stocking capacity will be adjusted due to the 177 acres of suitable acres fenced out from grazing. The term grazing permit will be reduced by about 50 AUMs (70 yearling AMs) or 17 yearlings.

Creating the Minerva Creek RNA requires changing the Forest Plan direction for Management Area M. Currently, Management Area M includes only the Paine Gulch RNA. The direction for this management area has been rewritten to include Minerva Creek and other RNAs as they are established through site-specific reports and environmental analysis (see Appendix B).

Forest Plan Standard N-1(1) states that the Forest will "establish sufficient research natural areas to meet Forest assignments in the Northern Regional Guide" (page 2-48). The Regional Guide will not be reissued. An amendment to Forest Service Manual direction 4060 was approved in 1990, four years after the approval of the Forest Plan. Under this amendment, habitat types and aquatic targets have been revised by the Northern Region Natural Areas Committee. The Forest Plan standards (p. 2-48) for selecting and establishing a Research Natural Area are inconsistent with FSM 4063.3. Forest Plan Standard N-1(1) has been clarified to allow direction from both the Regional Guide and the Northern Region Natural Areas Committee, as well as other sources (see page A-6). This change would have no environmental consequences.

Fencing the RNA will also require changing the Forest Plan (see page A-6). Forest Plan Management Standard N-1(c) states, "Candidate areas should be manageable without needing to fence out livestock." This standard conflicts with current manual direction which allows for fencing under certain circumstances (FSM 4063.3) and does not meet the need to protect RNAs. This change will have little environmental consequences.

During the preparation of the Establishment Record for the Paine Gulch RNA, an adjustment of the boundary to the watershed divide and a recalculation of the acreage showed an inconsistency with the area allocated to Management Area M in the Plan. This reduced the acres in Management Area M from 3,281 to 2,405. The 876 acres belonged in Management Area A.

The proposed changes and cumulative changes in management area designations for the Lewis and Clark National Forest are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Allocations of Management Areas and Acres¹

Management Area	1987 Acres	Changed Acres	Current Acres	Little Snowies	1993 Acres
Management Area A	16,261	+1243	17,504		17,504
Management Area B	330,838	-8,988	321,850		321,850
Management Area C	111,664	-8,847	102,817	-13,310	89,507
Management Area D	24,456	No change	24,456		24,456
Management Area E	116,519	+8,765	125,284		125,284
Management Area F	352,746	+474	353,220		353,220
Management Area G	247,644	+8,425	256,069		256,069
Management Area H	31,778	-292	31,486		31,486
Management Area I	37,867	No change	37,867		37,867
Management Area J	11,100	No change	11,100		11,100
Management Area K	9,125	No change	9,125		9,125
Management Area L	16,112	No change	16,112		16,112
Management Area M	3,281	-876	2,405	+330	2,735
Management Area N	41,838	No change	41,838		41,838
Management Area O	22,702	No change	22,702		22,702
Management Area P	384,407	No change	384,407		384,407
Management Area Q	51,834	No change	51,834		51,834
Management Area R	33,225	+96	33,321		33,321
Management Area T	0	No change	0	+12,980	12,980
Total Forest Acres	1,843,397		1,843,397		1,843,397
Total Acres Modified		25,428		13,310	
Suitable Acres	282,307	-7,834	274,473	-200	274,273

¹ (Forest Plan, page 3-2)

NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

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

RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of Notice of Appeal" including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with: Regional Forester, Northern Region, Post Office Box 7669, Missoula, Montana, 59807, within 45 days from the date of publication of notice in the legal section of the Great Falls Tribune newspaper. It is anticipated that the publication date will be September 3, 1993. This date will coincide with the Record of Decision for the Little Snowies Vegetation Management and Public Access Final EIS.

JOHN D. GORMAN
Forest Supervisor

DATE:

FOREST-WIDE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

Special Areas N-1 and N-2

Management Standard N-1 Research Natural Areas

(1) Establish sufficient research natural areas to meet Forest assignments in the Northern Regional Guide (see page 2-16), direction from the Northern Region Natural Area Committee, and other appropriate sources. Establishment reports will be prepared for each area.

(2) All research natural areas will be included in Management Area M.

(3) To select research natural areas and to minimize the conflict with other resources the following evaluation criteria will be used.

(a) Candidate areas should not contain known valuable mineral deposits.

(b) Candidate areas should, to the extent possible, meet regional targets for habitat types or aquatic ecosystems.

(c) Consider the condition of existing fences, and the need and cost of additional fences to exclude livestock. Also consider if livestock grazing might be necessary to achieve research natural area objectives in place of fencing.

(d) Management as a research natural area should not seriously disrupt established land uses.

(4) Complete an environmental analysis to determine the management necessary to protect the research natural area before classification. As a minimum, this analysis will evaluate withdrawal from mineral entry under the 1872 Act, determine what controls on recreation use are necessary, recommend appropriate changes in the Forest Travel Plan, and determine if any other special management practices are needed to protect the area.

Management Standard N-2
Rare Plants

(1) There are no known occurrences on the Forest of plants classified, as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. However, there are rare plants of limited distribution that may require special consideration in land management to maintain diversity within the species gene pool.

For the purposes of this Plan, rare plants are those species of limited distribution on the Forest which are susceptible to elimination by modification of relatively small areas of habitat. The following list of rare plants should not be considered complete, but merely a statement of current knowledge.

FOREST-WIDE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

Special Areas N-2

(2) Conduct on-the-ground inventories for rare plant species before surface disturbing activities are permitted in landtypes cited as including in rare plant habitat on the following list. Provide special management as necessary to allow the continued existence of these rare plants in these habitats.

1. Botrychium paradoxum - W.H. Wagner, (peculiar Moonwort). Meadows along Continental Divide near Glacier National Park (landtype 177).

2. Erigeron lackschewitzii - Nesom and Weber (Lackschewitz's fleabane). rocky slopes near or above timberline, 7500-8500 feet in the Rockies (landtype association VI).

3. Physaria saximontana - Var. denata. (Mountain twinpod.) Open, rocky slopes (often calcareous) near or above timberline in the Rockies (landtype association VI).

4. Cypripedium passerinum - Richards. (Bird's egg, or Franklin's lady's-slipper). Spruce-horsetail bogs in Rockies (landtype 21A).

5. Orchis rotundifolia - Banks. (Small round-leaved orchis). Spruce-horsetail bogs in the Rockies (landtypes 21A, 23A, and 71A).

6. Erigeron flagellaris - Gray. (Trailing fleabane.) Open meadows on alluvial benches in the Rockies (landtype 23A).

7. Astragalus molybdenus - Barneby. (Leadville milkvetch). Open slopes and ridges near timberline in the Rockies (landtype association VI).

8. Oxytropis podocarpa - Gray. (Stalked-pod crazyweed.) Open slopes and ridges above timberline in the Rockies (landtype association VI and 202).

9. Carex incurviformis - Var. damaensis (Stacey) F.J. Herm. (Curved sedge.) Meadows near or above timberline 7500-9000 feet in the Rockies (landtype association VI and 202).

10. Dryas integrifolia - Vahl. (Entire-leaved dryad). Rocky slopes above timberline in the Big Snowy Mountains (landtype 30).

MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

MANAGEMENT AREA M

MANAGEMENT AREA M

Management Area M (2,735 acres; 0.2 percent).

Description

Management Area M are the established (designated) Research Natural Areas (RNAs) on the Forest. They contain representations of forest vegetation and aquatic ecosystems assigned by the Northern Region to the Lewis and Clark National Forest. These undisturbed ecosystems typify important forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, aquatic, and geologic types on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. As other RNAs are designated they will be added to this management area through appropriate environmental analysis and Forest Plan amendment.

Established RNAs are:

Paine Gulch--2,405 acres
Minerva Creek--330 acres

Goal

Establish RNAs fulfilling the assigned habitat type targets during the first decade of the Plan. Leave the areas in their natural condition. Use the areas for non-manipulative research and observation.

In addition to the Forest-wide Standards in Chapter II, the following applies:

RESOURCE ELEMENT	MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
<p>Recreation Dispersed (AP2a)</p> <p>Setting</p> <p>Visual Quality Objective</p>	<p>Manage dispersed recreation settings with consideration for research natural area values. Prepare travel plans.</p> <p>These are predominantly semi-primitive, natural environments of moderate-to-large size. Concentration of users is low, but there is often evidence of other area users. The area is managed in such a way that <i>minimum on-site controls and restrictions</i> may be present, but are subtle. Motorized use may be permitted.</p> <p>The VQO is preservation. This objective allows for ecological changes only. Management activities, except for very low visual-impact recreation facilities, are prohibited.</p>
<p>Wildlife</p>	<p>Do not allow habitat improvement, in order to protect natural values.</p>
<p>Range</p>	<p>Do not allow livestock grazing, in order to protect natural values unless it necessary to achieve research natural area objectives.</p>

RESOURCE ELEMENT	MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
Timber	Do not harvest timber, in order to protect natural values.
Soil and Water Protection (FW2c)	Adhere to State water quality standards and maintain current soil productivity. Priority for funding will be low for structural or land treatments which maintain or rehabilitate watersheds or soil.
Minerals Administration	Recommend no surface occupancy leases for all oil and gas leases. The area will be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry under the 1872 Mining Law.
Land Use Special-Use Permits	Special-use permits conflict with the goals of the management area. This management area should be avoided during utility-transportation corridor allocation or facility siting. The research values must be given the highest consideration during any special-use permitting process.
Roads	Do not build roads.
Trails Management (LT2b)	Open all areas and trails to ORVs except where use is restricted by season, type of vehicle, or type of activity. Closures or restrictions may be used to: (1) resolve user conflict; (2) promote user safety; or (3) protect resources. Protect research natural area values. (Also see Appendix O.)
Construction/Reconstruction	Do not build trails.
Protection Suppression (PD8b)	The appropriate suppression response ranges from "control" to "confinement" in this management area depending upon location, expected fire behavior, and other decision-logic criteria related to values at risk. This decision criteria will be stated in a Fire Management Action Plan. (See Appendix P for specific Fire Management Direction.)
Prescribed Fire (PS12b)	Prescribed fire with <u>unplanned</u> ignitions may be used in this management area for the enhancement and maintenance of resources, when within pre-established prescribed fire criteria. This criteria will be detailed in a Fire Management Action Plan. (See Appendix P for specific Fire Management Direction.)

SCHEDULE OF PRACTICES (Average Annual)

No investment for timber, range, or wildlife is scheduled in the first 2 decades.

All other practices are assumed to be implemented in the first decade and apply to all acres.

The following monitoring requirements apply to this management area. (See Chapter V.)

A-1, A-2, A-3, A-5, A-6, A-7, A-8, B-3, C-2, C-3, C-5, C-6, C-7, C-8, C-9, C-10, C-11, E-9, E-10, E-11, F-1, F-2, F-5, F-6., G-5, L-1, P-2, P-3, P-4, P-5, P-6, P-7, 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4.

The procedures outlined in Chapter V will be followed to evaluate the data gathered during monitoring.

MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS MANAGEMENT AREA T

MANAGEMENT AREA T

Management Area T (12,980 acres; 0.7 percent). (Suitable timber acres 11,900).

Description

Management Area T is primarily a ponderosa pine forest in the Little Snowies. Important wildlife species include whitetail deer, turkeys, and nongame species.

Goal

Management emphasis will be directed toward providing for habitat diversity to ensure the welfare of a variety of indigenous wildlife and plant species. Commodity resource management will be practiced where it is compatible with wildlife management objectives. Manipulation of vegetation with fire, timber harvest, and mechanical means will provide for a mosaic of vegetative successional stages within a ponderosa pine forest. Longer rotation periods will be practiced within this management areas. This direction will move the existing vegetative condition to a more ecologically natural state that, in the past was maintained by light ground fires.

In addition to the Forest-wide Standards in Chapter II, the following applies:

RESOURCE ELEMENT	MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
<p>Recreation Dispersed (AP2a)</p> <p>Improvements (AP3c)</p> <p>Setting</p> <p>Visual Quality Objectives</p>	<p>Manage dispersed recreation settings and existing recreation improvements, prepare travel plans, and administer recreation special use permits.</p> <p>Improvements may consist of day use (occupancy spots), visitor information services, trailheads, parking facilities, and sanitation facilities.</p> <p>The recreation setting is mostly roaded natural. Interaction between users may be low to moderate, but with evidence of other users prevalent. Resource activities will be evident, but will blend with the natural environment.</p> <p>The VQO will be modification. If the VQO is not achieved and the visual impacts can be classed as EVC 5 or greater, the land should be rehabilitated within 2 years to at least an EVC class 4. (See Appendix N.)</p>

RESOURCE ELEMENT	MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
<p>Wildlife Operation, Protection, and Maintenance (CW2a)</p> <p>Nonstructural Improvements (CW3d)</p> <p>Structural Improvements (CW3e)</p>	<p>Maintain or enhance important identified wildlife habitat, big-game winter ranges, calving/fawning areas, raptor nesting sites, and significant nongame habitat.</p> <p>Maintain effective hiding cover percentages by timber compartment at an average of 40 percent with a minimum of 35 percent (or the natural level if less than 35 percent) for any individual sub-compartment. Exception to these percentages are permissible if a benefit for wildlife is demonstrated. Maintaining areas free from motorized use will be positively managed through area and road restrictions and other necessary controls on resource activities.</p> <p>Maintain 10-15% of the commercial forest land in an old growth forest condition. A minimum block size of 20 acres is recommended.</p> <p>Emphasize habitat improvement projects, including prescribed burning and revegetation. Priority for funding is high. Some down woody material may be left for small game and nongame habitat. Plant desirable forage species on heavy-use sites, as well as sites disturbed by development. Use other methods of habitat improvement, including mechanical treatment and hand cutting, where desirable to maintain or create early successional stages of vegetation.</p> <p>Priority for funding is high for wildlife habitat improvements, such as fencing important habitat, building nest boxes, and developing water sources. KV funds will also be programmed for wildlife habitat improvement in timber sale areas where appropriate needs are identified.</p>
<p>Range Administration (DR2b)</p> <p>Nonstructural Improvements (DR3a)</p> <p>Structural Improvements (DR3e)</p>	<p>Administer existing range permits, monitor range use, and cooperate with permittees in maintaining existing range improvements (range improvements will normally be replaced on a 20-year schedule). Prepare range allotment plans, or other plans involving range management, based on a 10-year schedule. Continue to use and develop range agreements with other agencies or landowners. Priority for funding will be moderate.</p> <p>Use prescribed fire to control tree/shrub encroachment and to maintain or enhance forage production on range. Mechanical or chemical methods are also acceptable. Cooperate closely with other Federal and State agencies, individuals, contractors, and permittees to control noxious weed and pest infestations.</p> <p>Build/rebuild improvements (fences, water developments) to improve livestock distribution and/or to maintain existing AUMs, in response to other resource values (wildlife, recreation, timber).</p>

RESOURCE ELEMENT	MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
<p>Timber Unprogrammed (ET2)</p> <p>Reforestation (ER3a)</p> <p>Precommercial Thinning (EI3)</p> <p>Commercial Thinning (EC3)</p>	<p>Harvest unprogrammed amounts of forest products including Christmas trees, firewood, ornamentals, and miscellaneous wood products through administrative use, free use, permits, salvage, and sanitation cutting.</p> <p>Natural regeneration is the primary objective. When natural regeneration is not successful, planting or seeding may be used on an estimated 20 percent of the stands. A harvested area will no longer be considered a forest opening when the density and height of the regeneration meets the management area's goal. Usually this will be when the area is considered hiding cover for big game species and the area is certified as stocked.</p> <p>Stands will be precommercially thinned if they are identified to meet the needs for wildlife and are silviculturally desirable. Fire and mechanical means are methods that will be used. Stands under <u>extensive</u> management will not be precommercially thinned, except where over stocking could significantly reduce growth, or wildlife needs are identified. For stands under <u>intensive</u> management, precommercial thinning may be done on 20 percent of the stands.</p> <p>Commercial thinning will be based on the stand's silvicultural prescription, which considers size, site productivity, species, stocking, basal area, costs, stand condition, and wildlife needs. Commercial thinning will be used on many of the immature stands.</p>
<p>Even-Aged Management Clearcutting (EP3d)</p>	<p>Clearcuts are appropriate in the ponderosa pine type. The size and shape will be dictated by the needs of wildlife and habitat diversity. Undulating edges, leaves patches for cover, snags, and visual barriers will be tools used to duplicate a more natural setting that at one time was created by fire. Harvest will generally occur beyond the culmination of mean annual increment.</p>

RESOURCE ELEMENT	MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
<p>Roads Management (LR2c)</p> <p>Construction/Reconstruction (LS10a)</p> <p>Minerals Access (LS10b)</p>	<p>Provide for a low level of public access through permitting motorized use on designated roads. Low access is defined as up to 1.5 miles of open road per square mile of area. Closures or restrictions may be used to: (1) resolve user conflict; (2) promote user safety; or (3) protect resources. Roads which cannot be maintained for motorized use may be restricted or closed. Closed roads may be occasionally opened for firewood gathering. (Also see Appendix O.)</p> <p>Roads constructed for mineral exploration and development will usually be closed to public use and obliterated when no longer needed. If the road is constructed for mineral exploration and development and opened for public use, minerals permit clauses will regulate use to minimize user conflicts. If the road is closed to public use, but maintained for administrative use, the permittee must leave it in a condition suitable for non-use maintenance.</p> <p>Roads <u>opened</u> to public use will be located and constructed or reconstructed for the most economical resource management and safe public use. All resources should be protected.</p> <p>Roads <u>closed</u> to public use will be located and constructed or reconstructed for economical resource management, while protecting other resources.</p> <p>Construct or reconstruct mineral access roads to the minimum standard consistent with the intended long-range use of the roads. Use existing roads whenever possible.</p>
<p>Protection Suppression (PD8b)</p> <p>Prescribed Fire (PS12a)</p> <p>Fuels (PS11)</p>	<p>The appropriate suppression response ranges from "control" to "confinement" in this management area depending upon location, expected fire behavior, and other decision logic criteria related to values at risk; with "control" being the normal response because of smallness of area and adjacency of private land. The decision criteria will be stated in a Fire Management Action Plan. (See Appendix P for specific Fire Management Direction).</p> <p>Prescribed fire with <u>planned</u> ignitions will be used in this management area for the enhancement and maintenance of resources. (See Appendix P for specific Fire Management Direction.)</p> <p>Fuel reduction methods for <u>activity</u> created fuels include burning, removing residue, or rearranging such as dozer trampling. Disposal activities will meet wildlife objectives. (see Appendix P for specific Fire Management Direction.)</p>

SCHEDULE OF PRACTICES (Average Annual)¹

	Proposed-Decade 1	Probable-Decade 2
Wildlife (See Appendix R) CW3d (Nonstructural Improvements) CW3e (Structural Improvements)	250 Acres 1 Structures	250 Acres 1 Structures
Range (See Appendix M) DR3a (Nonstructural Improvements) DR3e (Structural Improvements)	60 Acres 10 Structures	60 Acres 10 Structures
Timber (See Appendix A) EP3e (Seed Tree Cutting) EP3f (Selection Cutting) EI3 (Precommercial Thinning) EC3 (Commercial Thinning) ER3a (Reforestation) PS12a (Prescribed Fire for Stocking Control)	10 Acres (70 MBF) 10 Acres (50 MBF) 10 Acres 80 Acres (150 MBF) 20 Acres	10 Acres (200 MBF) 20 Acres (100 MBF) 10 Acres 50 Acres (180 MBF) 30 Acres 20 Acres 50 Acres

¹All other practices are assumed to be implemented in the first decade and apply to all acres.

The following monitoring requirements apply to this management area. (See Chapter V.)

A-1, A-2, A-3, A-5, A-6, A-7, A-8, B-3, C-3, C-5, C-6, C-7, C-8, C-9, C-10, C-12, D-1, D-2, D-3, D-4, E-1, E-2, E-3, E-4, E-5, E-6, E-7, E-8, E-9, E-10, E-11, F-1, F-2, F-5, F-6, G-1, G-2, G-3, G-4, G-5, J-1, J-2, J-3, L-1, L-2, P-1, P-2, P-3, P-4, P-5, P-6, P-7, 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4.

The procedures outlined in Chapter V will be followed to evaluate the data gathered during monitoring.

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 10**

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

AUGUST 1993

PROPOSED ACTION

The Lewis and Clark National Forest proposes to add monitoring items to the Forest Plan to monitor compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and compliance with established direction.

BACKGROUND

Problems with the cultural resource monitoring item were identified in the 1991 Forest Monitoring Report (page 9). Recommendations in the 1991 Monitoring Report include the suggestion to clarify the monitoring item "...to ensure the effectiveness of the Forest's cultural resource protection measures." The Forest Archaeologist also recommended that "a list of sites should be compiled and a rotation schedule should be developed to monitor these sites."

The current item requires annual monitoring of selected sites, using the Forest's cultural resource records. The monitoring item does not specify the Forest-Wide Standards being assessed. Also, the Forest Plan does not include a list of "selected sites" or describe any specific monitoring criteria.

LEWIS AND CLARK FOREST PLAN

A Forest-wide objective for the cultural resources (FP, p. 2-5) states that the Forest will inventory, evaluate, protect and interpret its cultural resources. By the year 2000, the Forest is to have completed an overview of the prehistory and history of the Forest.

Under Forest-wide Standard A-7 (FP, p. 2-26) cultural resources are to be managed to provide public education and to identify, protect, manage, and interpret both historic and prehistoric sites.

Monitoring activities on the Forest documented in the FY 1987 through FY 1991 Monitoring Reports partially addressed the issue of site identification. The number of cultural resource site surveys completed as part of site specific NEPA analyses was reported each year.

Past monitoring has not addressed the issues of site protection, management, or interpretation. The Forest has no mechanism to schedule and track follow-up visits to sites to determine compliance with site specific mitigation. Consequently, the Monitoring Reports do not include any discussion of sites revisited following implementation of a site specific project. Monitoring activities, also, did not assess whether the cultural resources program complied with the National Historic Preservation Act or met the intent of the Forest Plan.

No cultural resource implementation monitoring is being conducted on the Forest. The Forest monitoring item has not assessed whether identification, protection, management and interpretation of cultural resources has met the intent of Forest-wide management standard A-7 (FP, p. 2-26 and 2-27). Also, under the existing monitoring item the Forest is unable to determine whether all "undertakings" have received a cultural resources survey and whether compliance requirements (including mitigation measures) have been met.

Adequate monitoring is also essential to assess the effectiveness of the Heritage Program. With the existing monitoring item, the Forest cannot determine if changes in the cultural program are warranted to comply with new legislation, new direction, or an increased workload. The Forest does not know whether the desired results are being achieved. Past monitoring reports merely include the number of cultural resource surveys accomplished and no analysis of the data or indications of the programs effectiveness.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

The Forest proposes to add monitoring items to the Forest Plan to monitor compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and compliance with established direction.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A: Continue with the current monitoring item in the Forest Plan.

Alternative B: Eliminate the current monitoring item in the Forest Plan and replace it with the items A-8 through A-12 listed below.

Items A-8 through A-12, while listed and addressed separately, can in some cases be attained simultaneously and provide for the monitoring of NHPA compliance, Forest Plan compliance, program effectiveness, and program adequacy.

The following monitoring items, A-8 through A-12, are proposed to be added to the Forest Plan:

a. Item A-8: To monitor compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act an annual comparison between the number of Forest projects identified as "undertakings" and the number of cultural resource surveys conducted is recommended. This comparison will enable the Forest to determine if all projects needing a cultural survey are receiving one.

OUTPUT, MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION, EFFECTS TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY (+/-) WHICH WOULD INITIATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Comparison between Forest Projects which needed cultural resources consideration and Forest Projects which received consideration of the cultural resources.	Annually	More than 10% of Forest projects out of compliance.

b. Item A-9: Another method to assess compliance is to visually inspect sites discovered in project areas to determine if identified mitigation measures (i.e. avoidance, protection, etc.) were followed during the work associated with the project. Visual inspection of previously surveyed areas, after project completion, would also enable the Forest Cultural Resource Specialist to assess the adequacy of the original survey methodology. If previously unidentified sites were located after implementation of a project, a change in survey methodology might be warranted. This type of monitoring would assess the effectiveness of the program (have expected results been achieved?).

OUTPUT, MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION, EFFECTS TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY (+/-) WHICH WOULD INITIATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Effectiveness of cultural resource mitigation proposed during the FY.	Annually - 20% sites	10% or more of inspected sites impacted.

c. Item A-10: Additional analysis of the data in past monitoring reports is needed to determine how well Forest objectives and Forest-wide standards are being met. A comparison between the total number of sites recorded and the total number of sites interpreted, nominated, or protected will provide some of this information.

OUTPUT, MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION, EFFECTS TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY (+/-) WHICH WOULD INITIATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Interpreting, nominating, or protecting cultural resource sites (Management Standard A-7(2)(3)).	Annually - 100% sites	If no sites have been interpreted, nominated, or protected during the fiscal year.

d. **Item A-11:** Sites that have received some interpretive treatment should be inspected to determine whether increased visitor use and visibility have caused impacts. Monitoring could correlate the number of visitor days with any observed impacts to determine the effects of interpretation.

OUTPUT, MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION, EFFECTS TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY (+/-) WHICH WOULD INITIATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Inspect interpreted sites for impacts caused by increased public awareness and visitation.	Annually - 20% of sites	If an interpreted site was damaged as a result of interpretation.

e. **Item A-12:** Information should be acquired to monitor the effectiveness of the cultural resources program and the implementation of the Forest Plan (assessment of inventory methods used to identify cultural resources as identified in Management Standard A-7).

OUTPUT, MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION, EFFECTS TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY (+/-) WHICH WOULD INITIATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Effectiveness of Heritage Program and implementation of Forest Plan (assessment of inventory methods used to identify cultural resources as identified in Management Standard A-7).	Annually - 5% of sites	If previously unidentified cultural resources are discovered in surveyed areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

If unchanged, there will be no effect on the current program of work or other resources. Maintaining the current level of monitoring, however, may open the Forest to litigation similar to the lawsuit filed against the Southwest Region over compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act. Currently, the Forest has no method to determine compliance with the law, adequacy of the program, or success of the program. The cultural resources program cannot grow without some monitoring to provide future direction.

During the last five years the Lewis and Clark National Forest has completed an average of 41 cultural resource projects and recorded an average of 26 sites per year. The proposed monitoring items call for a 5% monitoring of completed projects (2 projects) and 20% of recorded sites (5 sites). An estimate of 8 days per year is anticipated to complete all of the proposed monitoring items. This estimate includes report writing and travel time and will only impact other resources in that it will add to the number of annual work days scheduled in cultural resources. In FY 1992 there were 384 days scheduled for cultural resource time (this figure does not include monitoring). To implement the proposed monitoring schedule there would be an estimated 2% increase in the annual cultural resource workload.

Alternative B will affect other resources and assigned and projected outputs. Adding monitoring to the existing cultural resources program would increase the workload for the Forest Archeologist which may in turn affect other resources and assigned and projected outputs. The proposed monitoring should not have any social, political, or economic effects.

The selected alternative is **Alternative B**.

NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

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

REVIEW PERIOD

Following receipt of this amendment there will be a 30 day review and comment period. Please send any comments to Lewis and Clark Forest Supervisor, Post Office Box 869, Great Falls, Montana 59403, by September 7, 1993. I will use any comments received during the review period to finalize the amendment. Copies of the final amendment will be sent to all respondents.

RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of Notice of Appeal" including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with: Regional Forester, Northern Region, Post Office Box 7669, Missoula, Montana 59807, within 45 days from the date of publication of notice in the legal section of the Great Falls Tribune newspaper. It is anticipated that the publication date will be September 23, 1993.

JOHN D. GORMAN
Forest Supervisor

DATE:

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 12**

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

AUGUST 1993

PROPOSED ACTION

The Lewis and Clark National Forest proposes to add goals, objectives, standards, and monitoring items to the Forest Plan to add emphasis to the Sensitive Species program.

BACKGROUND

The Sensitive Species program was initiated by the Forest Service after the approval of the Lewis and Clark Forest Plan (June, 1986). The Northern Region and the Lewis and Clark National Forest are presently functioning under a Sensitive Species list that was reviewed and revised by the Regional Forester in June, 1991. This list is dynamic. As new information becomes available, species can be added or deleted upon approval of the Regional Forester.

LEWIS AND CLARK FOREST PLAN

Currently, the Forest Plan has a **management standard** providing general guidance for wildlife and fish habitat management on National Forest lands (FP, 2-30,C-1(1)). While sensitive species are not specifically mentioned, this general guidance can be interpreted to encompass the sensitive species program.

The **long range goal** (see Forest Plan p. 2-2) of the Forest Plan in terms of wildlife management is to "promote high quality, wildlife, and fish habitat to insure a desired mixture of well-distributed species and numbers for public benefit..."

Objectives that support this goal (see Forest Plan p. 2-5) are: "Management will emphasize...the maintenance of current populations of...coldwater fish throughout the Forest. Programs will also be conducted to provide for...viable populations of other existing wildlife and fish species."

There are no goals and objectives that specifically address sensitive plants. However, **Management Standard N-2** (see Forest Plan p. 2-48) was developed to address the needs of rare plants that were identified during the development of the Forest Plan, and that they may require special consideration in land management to maintain diversity within the species gene pool. As stated above **Management Standard C-1(1)** provides direction for wildlife and fish habitat which includes sensitive wildlife and fish species.

Based on the Forest Plan goals, objectives, and management standards, viable populations of all species would be maintained across the Forest, and Forest populations would contribute to a viable Regional population.

Because the Sensitive Species program was initiated after the completion of the Forest Plan and the signing of the Record of Decision, the Forest Plan contains no expectation specifically addressing Sensitive Species. The exception is some plant species that were addressed as rare plants in Management Standard N-2 became Sensitive Species. Although the term sensitive species was not used, the desired future condition does state that wildlife populations should not change on both the Rocky Mountain and Jefferson Divisions in the first decade and into the fifth decade (see Forest Plan pp. 2-18 to 2-21).

Even though the Forest Plan states that viable populations will be maintained, no monitoring has been developed to aid in this effort for Sensitive Species.

Currently, the Forest Service Manual provides the direction for management of sensitive species. Under the FSM 2672.1 "There must be no impacts to sensitive species without an analysis of the significance of adverse effects on the populations, its habitat, and on the viability of the species as a whole. It is essential to establish population viability objectives when making decisions that would significantly reduce sensitive species numbers." It is difficult to determine population viability because the necessary inventory to determine the extent of the populations is lacking.

Lacking an adequate population inventory, the most effective method of ensuring Forest Management Practices do not move a species toward Federal listing is to defer or modify the project so no adverse impacts occur. This strategy would result in reducing outputs projected in the Forest Plan.

Although no specific standards providing direction for Sensitive Species appear in the Forest Plan, a connection between the Forest Plan and Forest Service Manual direction is provided (Standards C-1(1) and N-2). Adding Forest Plan standards would not change the Forest's current process for implementing decisions. However, Forest Plan standards would heighten the importance of the Sensitive Species program.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

The Forest proposes to add goals, objectives, standards, and monitoring items to the Forest Plan to add emphasis to the Sensitive Species program.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A: The No-Action Alternative would defer a change in the Forest Plan until the 10-year revision.

Alternative B: Add the following goals, objectives, standards, and monitoring items to the Forest Plan:

Goal: Add "Give special emphasis to Sensitive Species (plant, animal, and fish) management", at the end of Goal Statement 3 (FP p. 2-2).

Forest-Wide Objective: Add "Emphasis in the Sensitive Species program (plant, animal, and fish) will center on gathering inventory data and providing coordination with other programs to insure maintenance of Sensitive Species populations." (FP p. 2-5)

Standards: Add the words "Sensitive Species" to the existing Management Standards C-2(2), C-2(4) and C-2(11) (FP pp. 2-32 to 2-34).

Delete existing Standard N-2 (FP 2-48).

Add a new standard C-2(13) that states, "There are sensitive plants, as listed by the Regional Forester, of limited distribution that occur on the Forest and may require special consideration in land management to maintain diversity within the species gene pool. Assessments of suitable habitats for sensitive plants will be conducted before surface disturbing activities are permitted."

Monitoring Items: Add monitoring item C-14 Sensitive Wildlife and Fish, and monitoring item C-15 Sensitive Plant Program.

C-14 Sensitive Wildlife & Fish

OUTPUT, MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION, EFFECTS TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY (+/-) WHICH WOULD INITIATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Determine distribution of sensitive wildlife & fish species on the Forest. Monitor annual trends in wildlife & fish habitat and species populations.	Annually	Failure to record any information within a two year period.

C-15 Sensitive Plant Program

OUTPUT, MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION, EFFECTS TO BE MEASURED	REPORTING PERIOD	VARIABILITY (+/-) WHICH WOULD INITIATE FURTHER EVALUATION
Determine distribution of sensitive plants on the Forest. Conduct demographic monitoring & taxonomic studies to assess population viability.	Annually	Failure to record any information in a two year period.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The additional goal, objective, standards, and monitoring items have no environmental consequences. The Forest is currently operating under the manual direction and tradeoffs may have to be made to consider the effects on sensitive species. The amendment adds information to the Forest Plan and keeps it current with management direction. The selected alternative is **Alternative B**.

NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

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

REVIEW PERIOD

Following receipt of this amendment there will be a 30 day review and comment period. Please send any comments to Lewis and Clark Forest Supervisor, Post Office Box 869, Great Falls, Montana 59403, by September 7, 1993. I will use any comments received during the review period to finalize the amendment. Copies of the final amendment will be sent to all respondents.

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JOHN D. GORMAN
Forest Supervisor

DATE:

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 13

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

AUGUST 1993

PROPOSED ACTION

The Lewis and Clark National Forest proposes to amend the Forest Plan to include a more specific Forest-wide objective and glossary item, for cave management. In addition, include Forest-wide Management Standards for caves under Special Areas N. These additions would ensure the forest is in compliance with the 1988 Federal Cave Resources Protection Act.

BACKGROUND

The origin of the cave amendment is two-fold: (1) passage of the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 (FCRPA) and (2) existing Forest Plan direction for caves is limited to only one Forest-wide management standard. The FCRPA was passed two years after the implementation of the Forest Plan. The purposes of the Act and legislative direction are not addressed in the Plan. The second origin of the amendment extends beyond the FCRPA. Existing Forest Plan direction does not provide enough management direction for caves.

1. ***New Law: Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988***

The Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 provides specific authority to protect cave resources on federal lands. The policy of this Act establishes that "...Federal lands be managed in a manner which protects and maintains, to the extent practical, significant caves."(Section 2(c))

The two purposes of the Act are:

- (1) to secure, protect, and preserve significant caves on Federal lands for the perpetual use, enjoyment, and benefit of all people; and,
- (2) to foster increased cooperation and exchange of information between governmental authorities and those who utilize caves located on Federal lands for scientific, education, or recreational purposes. (Section 2(b)(1)(2))

This Act recognizes that significant caves on Federal lands are an invaluable and irreplaceable part of the Nation's natural heritage; and in some instances, these significant caves are threatened due to improper use, increased recreational demand, urban spread, and a lack of specific statutory protection. (Section 2 (a)(1)(2))

In addition to the findings, purposes, and policy of the FCRPA, the Act includes the following direction:

- * identification of the significant caves on federal lands (Section 4(b)(1))
- * regulation or restriction of use of significant caves, as appropriate (Section 4(b)(3))
- * entering into volunteer management agreements with persons of the scientific and recreational caving community; (Section 4(b)(3))
- * imposing the confidentiality of information concerning nature and location of significant caves (may not be made available to the public under section 552, title 5, USC) unless the disclosure of such information would further the purposes of the FCRPA and would not create a substantial risk of harm, theft, or destruction of such cave. (Section 5(a))

- * issuing permits for the collection and removal of cave resources (Section 6(a))
- * Prohibited acts and criminal penalties (Section 7) and civil penalties (Section 8)

2. **Caves and their Associated Values**

To understand why the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act was passed, a brief review of caves and their associated values is warranted.

Caves are valuable for a variety of reasons, from recreation to scientific study. As resources, caves, their features, and contents are extremely fragile. A common feature of all caves is that they are essentially nonrenewable resources. Cave resources can not be repaired, replaced, or rejuvenated. Once destroyed they are lost forever.

While some of the contents in caves (i.e. cultural, paleontological, threatened and endangered species) are protected under federal laws, other values were not afforded protection. While the understanding of cave ecosystem management is still in its infancy, contemporary research acknowledges surface and sub-surface impacts which can act to degrade or destroy caves and their contents. The FCRPA is the first federal law recognizing caves and their associated values as a whole "invaluable" and "irreplaceable" resource.

LEWIS AND CLARK FOREST PLAN

1. **Existing Forest Plan Direction**

The passage of the FCRPA occurred after the completion of the Forest Plan. This law requires consideration of significant cave resources and requires that they be managed in a manner which protects and maintains, to the extent practical. Current Forest Plan direction does not ensure that caves will be considered under the mandate of this law. While the FCRPA does not require an amendment or revision of the Lewis and Clark Forest Plan, an amendment would best meet its intent and provide consistent Forest-Wide interpretation and application.

Current Forest Plan direction for caves states:

Forest-Wide Management Standard A-6 (Special Interest Areas) states "Inventory and manage, but do not publicly identify, special interest areas which need protection. These areas include caves, areas with rare or unusual vegetation, and other special sites." (FP, p. 2-26)

2. **Existing Cave Resource Situation**

There are approximately 90 reported or rumored cave locations (one location can have more than one cave) identified in a publicly distributed book, *Caves of Montana*, by Newell Campbell. This number exceeds all other Northern Region Forests combined. These caves are located on all four Districts specifically within the Rocky Mountains, Little Belts, Big Snowies, Crazyes, and Castles. Some of the caves listed in this book have had their surface locations ground-truthed. Approximately 15 cave locations are known by at least one Forest Service employee and an additional 5 to 10 cave locations are known by local cavers.

Based on ground-truthing, data from cavers, and reported locations in *Caves of Montana*, the approximately number of non-wilderness caves per Management Area are as follows: MA A-(1); MA B-(17); MA C-(3); MA E-(9); MA F-(37); MA G-(9); MA H-(6); MA I-(1); MA N-(1); MA O-(1); MA Q-(2) (NOTE: a few cave locations were reported in two management areas since it was impossible to determine their exact location).

In addition, caves are also being located that are not disclosed in *Caves of Montana*. Geologically, there are many unexplored areas on the Forest that are conducive to having caves.

3. **Existing FCRPA Direction**

To date, final FCRPA regulations issued jointly by the USDA and USDI and changes to FSM 2356 reflecting the FCRPA have not been completed. Washington Office and Northern Region direction have reminded Forests to integrate the FCRPA into project-level analyses. Some Forests have amended their plans to better reflect FCRPA direction while others incorporated direction as part of their final plan.

As it relates to Forest Planning, the FCRPA includes two sections:

- a. Ensure that significant caves are considered in the preparation or implementation of any land management plan if the preparation or revision of the plan began after the enactment of this Act (Section 4(c)(1)); and
- b. Nothing in this Act shall require the amendment or revision of any land management plan, the preparation of which began prior to the enactment of this Act (Section 9(b)).

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT

The Forest proposes to include a more specific Forest-wide objective and glossary item, for cave management. In addition, include Forest-wide Management Standards for caves. These additions would ensure the forest is in compliance with the 1988 Federal Cave Resources Protection Act.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A: No change to the Forest Plan, continue with the one Forest-wide standard A-6.

Without more specific direction, the Forest cannot ensure the requirements under FCRPA have been met.

Alternative B: Amend the Forest Plan to include a more specific Forest-wide objective and a glossary item.

1. **Delete reference to "caves" under Forest-Wide Management Standard A-6.**
2. **Add the following Forest-Wide Objective for Caves:**

"To the extent practicable, protect and preserve non-renewable cave resources so their scientific, aesthetic, and recreational values do not decline. The majority of caves on the Forest will be managed as sensitive or undeveloped caves with limited visitation. A few caves will encourage public access as shown on Forest travel maps, trail signs, or District literature but will still offer a "wild" or undeveloped caving experience. Many caves will be protected for research or educational opportunities associated with resource attributes."

3. **Add a glossary definition for caves:**

"Cave as defined by FCRPA is 'any naturally occurring void, cavity, recess, or system of interconnected passages which occurs beneath the surface of the earth or within a cliff or ledge and which is large enough to permit an individual to enter, whether or not the entrance is naturally formed or man-made. Such term shall include any natural pit, sinkhole, or other feature which is an extension of the entrance.'"

Alternative C: Amend the Forest Plan to include a more specific Forest-wide objective and glossary item, as in Alternative B. In addition, **include Forest-wide Management Standards for caves under Special Areas**

N. Since caves are scattered across the forest in high numbers (as are Research Natural Areas and Rare Plants), the following specific standards for cave management could easily be inserted as N-3, under Special Areas (FP, p 2-49):

N-3(1): Caves will be managed as required by the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 and its implementing regulations. In general, this includes: (1) managing caves in a manner that protects and maintains, to the extent practicable, significant caves; (2) fostering increased cooperation and exchange of information with those utilizing caves for scientific, education, or recreational purposes; and (3) not releasing a cave's location to the public unless it would further the purposes of the Act and would not create a substantial risk of harm, theft, or destruction of such cave.

N-3(2): Inventory, map, and evaluate caves. Inventory includes the underground resources but also considers a cave's interaction with its surface surrounds. Encourage partnerships with cavers, researchers, and interested publics to inventory and map caves. Inventory data collection requires an interdisciplinary effort of resource specialists.

Inventory will not include any collection of any cave feature by any individual or group without a permit authorized by the Forest Supervisor.

Cave inventory will include scientific and recreational values. Inventory should include visits at more than one time of the year to consider the seasonal changes (i.e. ice speleothems, water concentrations, cave fauna like bats). Biological inventory must recognize that small and inconspicuous invertebrate animals contribute a large part of a cave's biological importance. This includes plant and animal communities in and adjacent to the cave entrance. Individual cave management plans may be developed based on the inventory findings.

N-3(3): Caves, sinkholes, and other connected geological features will be protected based on their resource values and classification. Using inventory information which identifies resource values, develop a cave classification system that manages caves and their contents into different management strategies. Management strategies should include delineating some caves for public access and others for protection and preservation of sensitive or pristine resources and/or scientific study which limits or excludes general public access.

N-3(4): Caves where public access is encouraged or directed should be managed under an individual cave management plan. Plan contents should include but not be limited to: search and rescue considerations, visitor use including cave register maintenance and monitoring trends, monitoring human use and the relationship to cave attributes, management actions such as seasonal restrictions to protect bats or other fauna, area closures etc.

N-3(5): Prior to ground-disturbing activities, caves within the project area should be identified, inventoried, mapped and evaluated. Since caves are non-renewable resources, the following measures will minimize or protect caves and/or their contents:

- a. Trees will not be harvested in a 150 to 200 foot radius around cave entrances and important infeeder drainages. There will be no ground disturbing activities on slopes steeper than 30 degrees adjacent to cave entrances. Tree harvest or removal outside this radius will ensure that trees are directionally felled away from the entrance.
- b. Clearcutting should be prohibited within 250 feet of the entrance to caves with sensitive or significant populations of bats. A 150 to 200 foot wide forested corridor between the entrance of these caves and the nearest foraging area should be maintained.

- c. Road construction or reconstruction shall ensure designs that do not visually open new views of a cave entrance, establish pull-outs or parking areas near a cave, or encourage increased use of an existing trail that may lead to a cave if the cave is not being managed for public access.
- d. Any surface activity will not divert surface drainage into a cave or its connected features (e.g. sinkhole, fissure, drainage).
- e. Cave entrances will not be used as disposal sites for slash, spoils, or other refuse.
- f. Management activities will not be permitted within any area draining into a cave if they may affect the cave ecosystem with sedimentation, soil sterilization, the addition of chemicals, including pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, or change the cave's natural hydrology.
- g. Recognize that blasting and other surface management activities can result in detrimental disturbance of cave-roosting bats. Seasonal closures prohibiting construction or visitation to the cave may be required to maintain these populations.
- h. Drilling is not allowed over known caves. If previously undiscovered caves are encountered during drilling operations, then reasonable precautions will be taken to protect the cave. This includes sealing the casing above and below the cave to prevent air flow and water leakage.
- i. Controlled seismic surveys requiring explosives or other similar techniques are not to be conducted over or close enough to known caves to create unnatural disturbances.

N-3(6): Known caves and associated geological features with high resource values may be considered for withdrawal from mineral entry.

In addition to the new N-3 standards, a Cave Management Process package would be developed. This package would be handled as a stand-alone document providing more specific process guidance on cave management. Several of these process packages have been developed on the Forest in the past. Some have been inserted into the Forest Plan appendix, others have been prepared as separate documents and never formally linked to the Forest Plan. The Cave Management Process package, along with previously developed process documents (Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidance, Rocky Mountain Front Wildlife Guidelines, Elk Logging Guidelines, Snag Management Guidelines), would be assembled into a Forest guidance package titled "***The Lewis and Clark Approach.***" The following items should be considered in the cave management process package:

- Cave locations will not be published or distributed to the public as specified under the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act. Exchanged information with partners will not be made public if it could lead to the degradation of sensitive caves. Any request for a cave location must be coordinated through the Forest Cave Coordinator and approved by the Forest Supervisor. Other resource information, such as cultural resources and threatened and endangered species data, may be exempt under the Freedom of Information Act.
- Make accessible information on cave safety and conservation practices to interested individuals and groups. This includes existing brochures from the National Speleological Society, American Cave Conservation Association, and other groups.
- A permit must be issued by the Forest Supervisor for anyone to collect and remove any resource from a cave. The request for a permit must include the time, scope, location, and specific purpose of the proposed collection, removal or associated activity, and how the collection will occur.

- Emphasize enforcement of laws protecting caves from collectors and vandals.

Alternative D: This solution is identical to Alternative C with one exception. Standard N-3(5) would contain only a general statement. The remaining items (a-i) would be included in the Cave Management Process Package titled, "*The Lewis and Clark Approach*," as discussed in Alternative C. Standard N-3(5) would be written:

N-3(5): Prior to ground-disturbing activities, caves within the project area should be evaluated to determine the effects that the proposed action would have on the cave structure and its ecosystem.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The "no action" alternative (Alternative A) would not ensure compliance with the FCRPA. Alternative B, while providing more direction than currently in the Forest Plan, is also considered inadequate. Standard N-3(5) suggested under Alternative C is too specific and more process-related than necessary for inclusion in the Forest Plan. While the general statement written for standard N-3(5) in Alternative D will probably not affect the Forest as a whole, it will require design specifications at the site-specific level -- especially road reconstruction/construction. Drainages that feed into caves are very important to maintaining cave ecosystems. Analyses will require hydrological surveys to determine how the drainage patterns fit with a specific cave.

Alternative D is the selected alternative because it provides sufficient direction to meet the intent of the FCRPA and the flexibility to allow changes to be made to the process package without requiring a Forest Plan amendment.

NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

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

REVIEW PERIOD

Following receipt of this amendment there will be a 30 day review and comment period. Please send any comments to Lewis and Clark Forest Supervisor, Post Office Box 869, Great Falls, Montana 59403, by September 7, 1993. I will use any comments received during the review period to finalize the amendment. Copies of the final amendment will be sent to all respondents.

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JOHN D. GORMAN
Forest Supervisor

DATE:

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 14

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

AUGUST 1993

PROPOSED ACTION

The FY 1991 monitoring report recommended that a mapping error of management situations for grizzly bear on the Rocky Mountain Division be corrected. The present and proposed conditions are expressed in the attached maps.

When one compares the Management Situations in the Badger-Two Medicine (BADTW) BMU with the adjacent Management Situations in Glacier National Park and the Flathead National Forest, there appears to be an error in the Management Situations in the BADTW BMU. All the ground adjacent to the highway corridor is mapped as MS-1 with the exception of on the Lewis and Clark National Forest, which is mapped as MS-2.

This situation does not conform to the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines guidance for mapping of Management Situations. MS-2 states "Current information indicates that the area lacks distinct population centers; highly suitable habitat does not generally occur...Habitat resources in Management Situation 2 either are unnecessary for survival and recovery of the species..."

During the analysis for the Chevron/Fina EIS, the area along Highway 2 that borders Glacier National Park in the Badger-Two Medicine Bear Management Unit (designated MS-2) was discussed as an important travel corridor for grizzly bear as well as other ungulates. This area functions as a travel corridor for ingress and egress between the Park lands and National Forest System Lands.

Correcting this mapping error will increase management situation one by 4,000 acres on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District to 767,959, and reduce the amount of acres in management situation two to zero acres. This will result in the Forest having only two management situations: MS-1 and MS-3.

NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

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

REVIEW PERIOD

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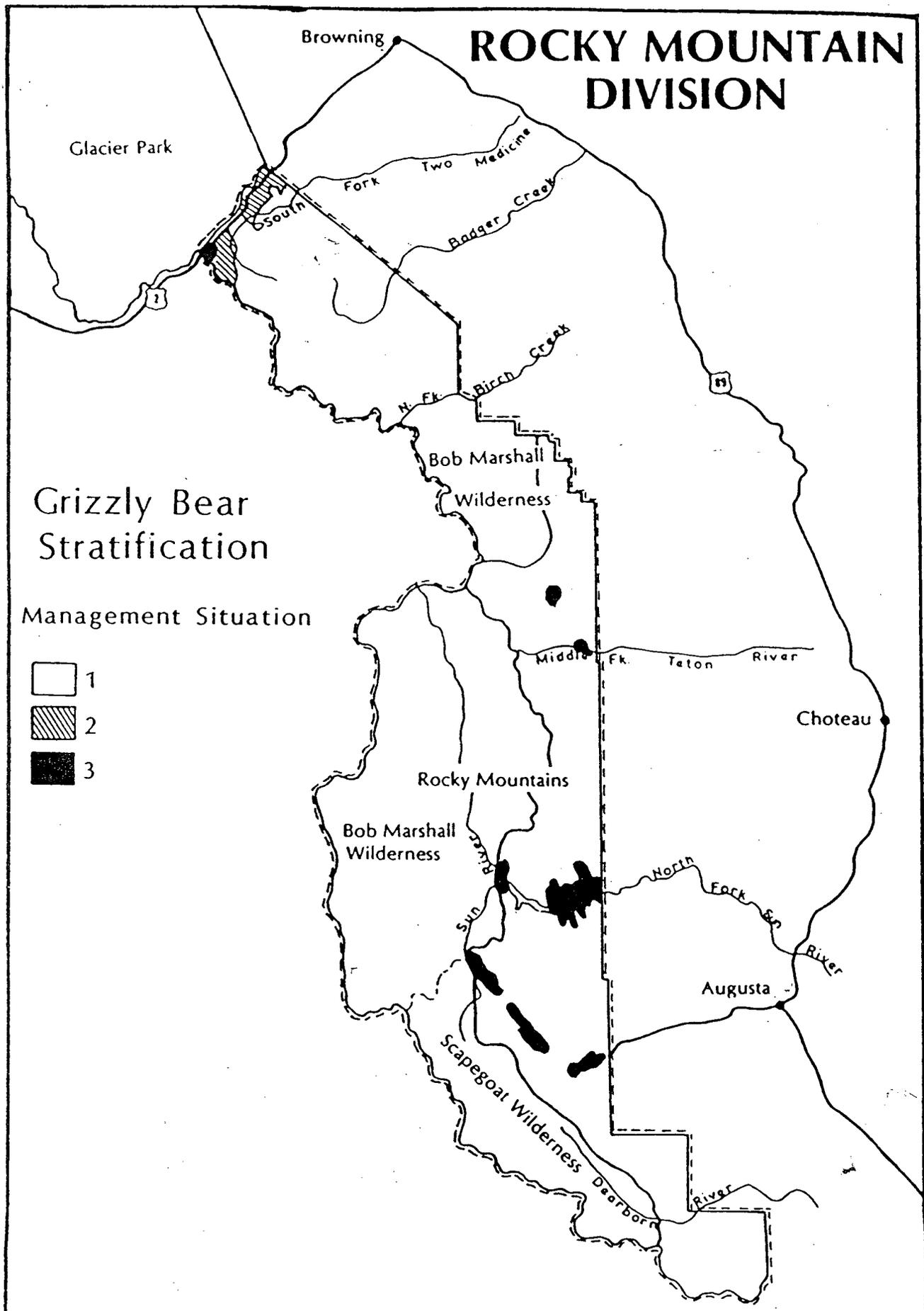
RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

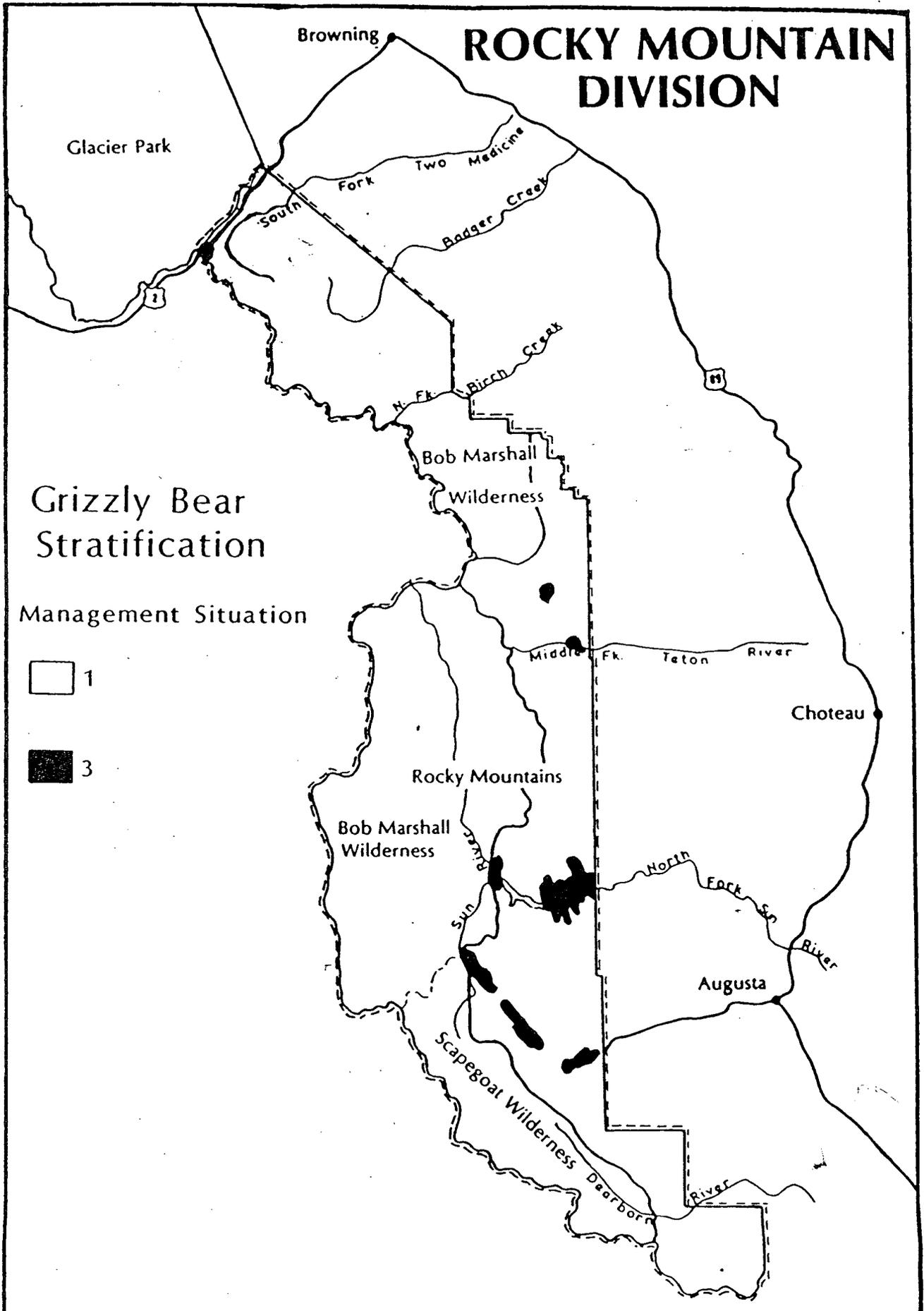
This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of Notice of Appeal" including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with: Regional Forester, Northern Region, Post Office Box 7669, Missoula, Montana 59807, within 45 days from the date of publication of notice in the legal section of the Great Falls Tribune newspaper. It is anticipated that the publication date will be September 23, 1993.

JOHN D. GORMAN
Forest Supervisor

DATE:

ROCKY MOUNTAIN DIVISION





**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 15**

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

AUGUST 1993

PROPOSED ACTION

The Lewis and Clark National Forest proposes to clarify the riparian utilization portion of Management Standard D-3(4) which has been misinterpreted and misapplied.

LEWIS AND CLARK FOREST PLAN

Forest-Wide Management Standard D-3(4) reads as follows:

(4) Protect fish and wildlife habitat in riparian areas when developing allotment management plans. This should be considered in the assignment of AUMs, grazing season, and indicators of time for removal of livestock.

Three factors which indicate livestock use may be damaging to fisheries habitat in areas adjacent to low gradient (less than 5 percent) streams with small amounts of bank rock and deep, erosive soils are:

- (a) Total physical bank damage on key areas in excess of 30 percent. (This includes natural erosion.)
- (b) Poor reproduction survival of streamside shrubs.
- (c) Excessive grass/forb use.

Grass/forb use is the most sensitive indicator of levels of livestock use which may adversely affect fisheries habitat values. Use of grass/forb vegetation should be restricted to no more than 40 percent in areas with little or no shrub cover adjacent to low gradient streams, in order to maintain acceptable levels of shrub vigor and total bank damage. In areas with high levels of stream-side shrub cover and/or bank rock content, grass/forb use can vary between 50 percent to 60 percent before fish habitat values are seriously impacted.

If water delivery systems, salting, and other indirect management techniques are not effectively keeping livestock use of riparian areas within management objectives, then construct and maintain fencing as necessary to achieve these objectives.

The statement in Standard D-3(4) describing excessive grass/forb use has generally been interpreted as a stand-alone standard. As a result, the description has been incorporated into a third of the Forest's grazing permits without an environmental analysis or an AMP. These permits need to be modified to remove the wording that has been interpreted as a standard. The intent of the Forest Plan was to apply Standard D-3(4) only through the AMP process. An environmental analysis and AMP may result in the implementation of site-specific utilization standards. These site-specific utilization standards might differ from those described in Forest Plan Standard D-3(4).

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

The Forest proposes to revise the first paragraph of Forest-Wide Management Standard D-3(4) for clarification. The first paragraph would be revised to read:

Protect fish and wildlife habitat in riparian areas when developing allotment management plans. Protection considerations should include the assignment of AUMs, grazing season, and indicators of time for removal of livestock. The following standards, or other adequate standards, will be implemented only through the AMP process.

Permits containing the riparian utilization guidance in Part-3 will be modified to exclude the incorrect language. See attached Grazing Permit-Part 3 for revised content.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Misinterpretation and misapplication of the riparian utilization guidance in Forest Plan Standard D-3(4) will be eliminated. Permit modifications will be required on 33% of grazing permits. By providing an amended interpretation of the D-3(4) Standard, the public is formally notified of the corrected interpretation and application of this guidance.

NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

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

REVIEW PERIOD

Following receipt of this amendment there will be a 30 day review and comment period. Please send any comments to Lewis and Clark Forest Supervisor, Post Office Box 869, Great Falls, Montana 59403, by September 7, 1993. I will use any comments received during the review period to finalize the amendment. Copies of the final amendment will be sent to all respondents.

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JOHN D. GORMAN
Forest Supervisor

DATE:

Lewis & Clark National Forest

GRAZING PERMIT - PART 3
(Reference FSM 2230)

Page of
Permittee Number

Permit Number

Special Terms and Conditions

Conditions Required By Lewis and Clark Forest Plan

This grazing permit is subject to direction contained in the Lewis and Clark National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Specific application of this direction will be detailed in the Allotment Management Plan(s), which is/are scheduled for revision or completion as scheduled below. The revised or new Allotment Management Plan(s) will become a condition of this grazing permit. Implementation of the Allotment Management Plan(s) may result in changes in the livestock number, season, and management requirements authorized by the grazing permit.

ALLOTMENT

YEAR SCHEDULED

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 16**

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

AUGUST 1993

PROPOSED ACTION

The Lewis and Clark National Forest proposes to add a Forest-wide Objective to the Forest Plan that outlines the development of an elk vulnerability analysis process. The Forest also proposes to revise the open road standard set for Management Area B to better provide for elk security.

BACKGROUND

1. External Factors

In 1988, two years after the approval of the Lewis and Clark Forest Plan, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks initiated a planning process to develop a state wide elk management plan. In January 1992, the State Commission approved the final plan. Conclusions in the State Elk Management Plan stressed the importance of maintaining elk security areas on the National Forests during the hunting season in order to reduce elk vulnerability.

As a result of the State Elk Management Plan, elk vulnerability is a regional issue in Montana and Idaho. A working group composed of State and Federal personnel was created in 1988 to address the elk vulnerability issue. In 1990, a symposium was sponsored by the working group. The proceedings were published in a document: A. G. Christensen, L. J. Lyon and T. N. Lonner, comps., Proceedings Elk Vulnerability Symposium, Montana State University, Bozeman. 330 pp. The proceedings reveal that the question of elk vulnerability is not just a Forest issue but an issue of concern across the entire western United States.

2. Monitoring Data (Implementation NEPA documents)

Elk vulnerability was an issue in several of the Forest's recent environmental analyses. In 1990, the South Fork Complex and the Mill-Lion timber sale analyses (both EISs) were underway when the State Elk Plan was in its infancy. Elk vulnerability was an issue in both of these projects, and the analyses incorporated preliminary concepts from the State's work. Integration of the results of the final State Elk Plan were more extensive in both the 1991 Moose Creek and Spring Creek environmental analyses (both EISs). Elk vulnerability is presently an issue in the ongoing Smokey Corridor and Running Wolf environmental analyses. A process to examine the issue of elk vulnerability has been jointly developed between the Forest and Department biologists and will be applied to these two analyses.

Mitigation measures to accommodate the State's goals for elk management, reduce the effects on elk, and increase the amount of area that elk could use for security, has resulted in less miles of open road per square mile than projected in the Forest Plan. This situation was apparent in the Mill-Lion, Moose Creek, and Spring Creek analyses. In the Moose Creek FEIS, security was provided by closing 35 miles of non-system roads and restricting motorized use on 30 miles of system road. In addition to some road closures, in the Spring Creek FEIS, no activity was proposed in the East Fork Spring Creek-Fawn Creek area where an elk security area already existed.

LEWIS AND CLARK FOREST PLAN

Elk Vulnerability - The development of the Forest Plan goals, objectives, standards, and management prescriptions was based on the information and recommendations of the Montana Cooperative Elk-Logging Study. The Study examined relationships between elk and timber harvest activities. The Study produced a series of recommendations directed toward coordinating the design and conduct of timber sales to minimize adverse effects on elk populations. The Study limited its data analysis to addressing the needs of elk during the summer/fall period. A major portion of the Study examined the effects of road construction, road use, and timber harvest on elk distribution and population. The Study did not address the needs of elk during the hunting season. Because the Elk-Logging Study did not include the effects of hunting on elk populations, the assumptions used to develop the Forest Plan standards and management prescriptions were incomplete.

Applying the Elk-Logging Guidelines to determine elk needs during the hunting season draws incorrect conclusions that became the basis for the Forest Plan standards relating to elk management.

Public demands on elk management have changed since the approval of the Forest Plan in 1986. Monitoring elk herds, timber management practices, and public desires throughout the states of Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, revealed the issue is not simply the number of elk. Population structure, the ratio of bulls:cows, is increasingly more important. The public wants to successfully kill or see large mature bulls, as well as, have large elk populations available for hunting.

To provide for this changing need, the issue of elk security during the hunting season has emerged; and additional questions about what is needed to reduce bull elk vulnerability have been raised.

During the development of the Forest Plan, the assumptions that were used for elk were relevant in terms of producing numbers. The assumptions were flawed in providing security areas for elk during the hunting season. Therefore, the major goal and objective of maintaining the elk populations may not be met with the current direction within the Forest Plan. The overall numbers may remain the same, but the population composition will not.

Personnel from the Forest and MDFWP are developing a process to address elk vulnerability when analyzing and implementing timber sale projects. The basic parameters of this process are patterned after a process that was developed by Mike Hillis (Forest Service Biologist on the Lolo National Forest) and Jodi Canfield (Forest Service Biologist on the Helena National Forest). The process basically looks at numbers of roads, their locations, size of large blocks (>250 acres) of undisturbed cover, and how these blocks are distributed across a landscape and how many of these blocks are available. The development of this process between the two agencies is in concert with Regional Forester's direction (June 18, 1992 Memo to Montana Forest Supervisors). This process would be applied in timber sale analyses.

Road Density - Elk security was an issue in the Spring Creek, Mill-Lion and Moose Creek analyses. As previously stated, road closures were planned to maintain secure areas for elk during the hunting season. The open road densities were changed from a Moderate to Low status in all three instances. In the Spring Creek EIS the open road density, considering yearlong and seasonal restrictions, would range from 0.8 -1.6 miles of open road per square mile; Mill-Lion would have 0.4 miles of open road per square mile during the hunting season; and Moose Creek would have 0.7 miles of open road per square mile. In all three cases the resulting open road densities are less than predicted in the Forest Plan, and more closely resemble the standard that was established for MA C.

These management prescriptions were developed for the Forest Plan to assist in accomplishing the goals and objectives for elk management.

- * **Management Area B (MA B)** emphasizes timber management. The goal for MA B is to "Emphasize timber management and provide a moderate level of livestock forage production, while minimizing impacts to other resources." Effective cover is to meet the specifications of Forest-Wide management standard C-1.5 (see above). Roads are to be managed to "Achieve moderate public access...Moderate access is defined as 1.5 to 3.0 miles of open road per square mile of area" (FP, p. 3-12).
- * **Management Area (MA C)** emphasizes elk management and timber production. The goal for MA C is to "Maintain or enhance existing elk habitat by maximizing habitat effectiveness as a primary management objective...commodity resource management will be practiced where it is compatible with these wildlife management objectives." Management decisions are to "Maintain effective hiding cover percentages by timber compartment at an average of 40 percent with a minimum of 35 percent (or the natural level if less than 35 percent) for any individual sub-compartment..."(FP, p. 3-16). Also, roads will be managed to "Achieve low public access...Low access is defined as 0.5 to 1.5 miles of open road per square mile of area" (FP, p. 3-19).

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

The Forest proposes to add a Forest-wide Objective that encourages the continued cooperation between the Forest Service and the MDFWP in developing an effects analysis process for elk vulnerability. The Forest also proposes to revise the Road Standard in the Management Prescription for Management Area B to allow compliance with the Forest Plan while protecting other resources.

ALTERNATIVES

Elk Vulnerability

Alternative A: Proceed as in the past. This would mean using the road density and effective cover standards in predicting the effects on elk during the hunting season. There would be no change in the Forest Plan until the 10 year revision.

Alternative B: Amend the Forest Plan with the following Forest-wide Management Standard:

"An elk vulnerability process will be jointly developed by the Forest and the MDFWP and applied when completing effects analyses on projects that have the potential to modify the vegetation or access within elk summer/fall range."

Alternative C: Amend the Forest Plan with the following Forest-wide Objective:

"An elk vulnerability process will be jointly developed by the Forest and the MDFWP and applied when completing effects analyses on projects that have the potential to modify the vegetation or access within elk summer/fall range."

Road Density

Alternative A: Defer change of the existing management prescription until the 10 year revision.

Alternative B: Delete the lower figure in the standard and simply state, "Up to 3 miles of road per section could be available for motorized travel."

Alternative C: Change the standard to expand the range of miles per section, e.g. 0.7 to 2.0.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Elk Vulnerability

Alternative A: This alternative would not follow the Regional Forester's direction in the memo dated June 18, 1992 to the Montana Forest Supervisors. It would not strengthen Department and Forest relationships in terms of elk management. It would not be responsive to the total needs of elk management on the Forest.

Alternative B: Amending the Forest Plan to include this standard is meaningless. Standards are to be measurable, and this standard, as written, is not measurable. The Forest is not ready to create measurable standards for elk vulnerability.

Alternative C: This type of objective would ensure that whatever process is developed will continue to be applied in effects analyses throughout the life of the Forest Plan and the ingress and egress of biologists from the Forest. This objective also allows the Forest and the MDFWP flexibility in the development and application of the process to garner the desired results without having to continually

amend the Forest Plan. This process could be monitored under the existing monitoring item C-3. Once the process has been used and tested, some site-specific standards may be developed, and then amended to the Forest Plan.

The selected alternative is **Alternative C**.

Road Density

Alternative A: This alternative would not result in any change of our implementation of the Forest Plan. However, the Forest would continue to be in noncompliance with the open road density standard for Management Area B.

Alternative B: This alternative would also not result in any change in implementation, but would alert the public to the Forest's authority to close all roads, if needed. This alternative allows the agency to be in compliance with the Forest Plan when less than 1.5 miles of open road is needed to protect other resources.

Alternative C: Even when the lower threshold is reduced, there may be occasions when managers, to protect elk, would require no open miles of road or less than 0.7 mile/section. This revised standard would still not be met.

The selected alternative is **Alternative B**.

NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

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

REVIEW PERIOD

Following receipt of this amendment there will be a 30 day review and comment period. Please send any comments to Lewis and Clark Forest Supervisor, Post Office Box 869, Great Falls, Montana 59403, by September 7, 1993. I will use any comments received during the review period to finalize the amendment. Copies of the final amendment will be sent to all respondents.

RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

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JOHN D. GORMAN
Forest Supervisor

DATE:

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 17**

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

AUGUST 1993

PROPOSED ACTION

The Lewis and Clark National Forest proposes to change the management area designation on 4,970 acres in the Spring Creek project area.

BACKGROUND

During the Spring Creek EIS process, the Forest reallocated a portion of the project area from Management B to Management Area C, via Forest Plan Amendment No. 7. This reallocation involved the entire East Fork of Spring Creek, Fawn Creek, and a portion of the headwaters of Spring Creek. In total about 5,500 acres within this area are allocated to Management Area C. These lands were considered key if bull elk were to survive in Hunting District 540 throughout the hunting season. Maintaining this area for security would contribute toward meeting the goals and objectives of the State Elk Management Plan for Hunting District 540. If these lands are developed for timber purposes, the bull:cow ratio and number of mature bulls would likely not be met. The State would probably be faced with having to institute a more restrictive hunting season and reduce the total hunter days. Although the Spring Creek EIS process resulted in a reallocation of some lands from Management Area B to Management Area C, the opportunity to manage the timber resource on these lands is not precluded.

LEWIS AND CLARK FOREST PLAN

The analysis completed during the Spring Creek FEIS showed this area is habitat for a resident herd of about 250 elk. It also provides summer range for part of the migratory herd that uses the Judith River Wildlife Management Area for their wintering area. The East Fork of Spring Creek and Fawn Creek provide a mix of wet microsites, open parks, old growth stands, and closed canopy timber. This combination allows elk to remain in the area all summer and fall, and still escape hunters. It also allows for some elk harvest. The lack of roaded access and the motorized trail closures, implemented under the 1988 Travel Plan, provide the key elements favorable for both elk and hunter. Under these Travel Plan restrictions, the area has maintained a semi-primitive setting. The area is currently used by both motorized and non-motorized recreationists.

Although the present situation provides adequate elk security, the reallocation to Management Area C does not ensure these conditions will remain. This portion of the Spring Creek area could be developed. With a development scenario, both the State and the Forest may not be able to achieve the wildlife goals, objectives, and projected outputs of their respective Plans. During the analysis for the Spring Creek FEIS, the ID Team did consider a proposal to change the land allocation to a non-development prescription. This decision was deferred; but a mitigation measure required the Forest to reexamine an allocation for non-development during the 5-Year Review.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

The Forest proposes to change the management area prescription in the East Fork of Spring Creek (and the upper reaches of Spring Creek) to one that provides greater protection for elk security.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A: Change the prescription of the entire area from Management Area C (Wildlife/Timber) to Management Area F (Semi-Primitive Recreation).

Alternative B: Change the prescription of the entire area from Management Area C to Management Area G (Minimal Management).

Alternative C: Change the prescription on 260 acres in the area between road number 189 and Daisy Peak from Management Area B to Management Area C. Leave the 690 acres north of Muddy Mountain in Management Area C. Change the remaining 4,710 acres from Management Area C to Management Area G (see Maps I, II and III).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Alternative A: The effect of this alternative would be removing areas from availability for timber harvesting. A review of photographs, stand exams, soil productivity, and a sample ground review has resulted in identifying those areas that are suitable for timber production according to NFMA regulations. An estimated 4,200 acres of the 5,400 acres were identified as suitable lands for timber production. Changing the Management Area prescription from C to F would remove this 4,200 acres from the suitable timber base, but would contribute to meeting the goals and objectives of the State Elk Plan. An F allocation would emphasize managing this area for semi-primitive recreation opportunities, as it is currently being used by recreationists. Therefore, recreationists would not be noticeably affected.

Alternative B: A Management Area G allocation would result in the same effects as changing the area to Management Area F. However, the goal of Management Area G is to maintain and protect Forest resources with minimal investments. This Management Area designation does not preclude management for semi-primitive recreation.

Alternative C: If the 260 acres between road number 189 and Daisy Peak (Area 1 on Map II) are changed from Management Area B to Management Area C the suitable acres (all 260) would remain in the suitable base. If the 690 acres north of Muddy Mountain (area developed by the Greasewood Park Timber Sale, Area 2 on Map II) is maintained in Management Area C, the 500 suitable acres would remain in the suitable base. If the remaining 4,710 acres (Area 3 on Map II) are changed from Management Area C to Management Area G, about 3,700 suitable acres would revert to a non-developmental Management Area. Timber harvest would be foregone on these 3,700 acres. This would represent a 1% decrease in the Forest's suitable base.

Map II Areas	Existing Total Acres	Existing Suitable Acres	New Suitable Acres
Area 1	260	260	260
Area 2	690	500	500
Area 3	4,710	3,700	0
Total	5,660	4,460	760

The acres removed from the suitable base along with other acres removed from previous management area changes will result in a cumulative 4.8% decrease in suitable acres on the Forest.

Allocations of Management Area/Acre Changes (Forest Plan, page 3-2)

Management Area	1987 Acres	Net Past Changes	Current Acres	Net New Changes	1993 Acres
Management Area A	16,261	+13,582	29,843	No Change	29,843
Management Area B	330,838	-25,666	305,172	-260	304,912
Management Area C	111,664	-19,856	91,808	-4,450	87,358
Management Area D	24,456	No change	24,456	No Change	24,456
Management Area E	116,519	+7,901	124,420	No Change	124,420
Management Area F	352,746	+2,767	355,513	No Change	355,513
Management Area G	247,644	+8,425	256,069	+4,710	260,779
Management Area H	31,778	-326	31,452	No Change	31,452
Management Area I	37,867	No change	37,867	No Change	37,867
Management Area J	11,100	No change	11,100	No Change	11,100
Management Area K	9,125	No change	9,125	No Change	9,125
Management Area L	16,112	No change	16,112	No Change	16,112
Management Area M	3,281	-546	2,735	No Change	2,735
Management Area N	41,838	No change	41,838	No Change	41,838
Management Area O	22,702	No change	22,702	No Change	22,702
Management Area P	384,407	No change	384,407	No Change	384,407
Management Area Q	51,834	No change	51,834	No Change	51,834
Management Area R	33,225	+96	33,321	No Change	33,321
Management Area S	0	+643	643	No Change	643
Management Area T	0	+12,980	12,980	No Change	12,980
Total Forest Acres	1,843,397		1,843,397		1,843,397
Total Acres Modified		63,105		4,970	
Suitable Acres	282,307	-9,874	272,433	-3,700	268,733

Alternative C is the selected alternative.

This recommended action was selected on the basis of what has happened through past management. The area that will remain in Management Area C has already had a road constructed into the area and several harvest units have been harvested via a timber sale in the mid 1980s. The area that would be changed from Management Area B to Management Area C allows for a tie of common Management Areas along the north slope of Muddy Mountain and does not remove the area from the suitable timber base.

The area that would be placed into Management Area G would maintain its undeveloped character and be managed as a large block of undeveloped ground that will serve as a large block of security habitat for resident elk herds and can be used for semi-primitive recreation opportunities. This new designation consolidates two adjacent areas of Management Area G with the area in the East Fork of Spring Creek-Fawn Creek area. These other two areas were designated as such through the Spring Creek EIS (see Map I).

Assigning this area as Management Area F instead of Management Area G was not selected for the following reasons:

- * During Forest Planning, Management Area F was used to designate large undeveloped areas that were being considered for Wilderness Study and were currently receiving considerable amounts of recreation use throughout the year. By designating the area to Management Area F the original intent of Management Area F in Forest Planning would not be followed.
- * The East Fork Spring Creek-Fawn Creek area currently receives higher recreation use only during the fall hunting season, whereas the other Management Area F areas on the Forest receive high uses of recreation during the summer months as well as the fall period.

NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

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

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JOHN D. GORMAN
Forest Supervisor

DATE:

MAP I

EXISTING SITUATION

SPRING CREEK

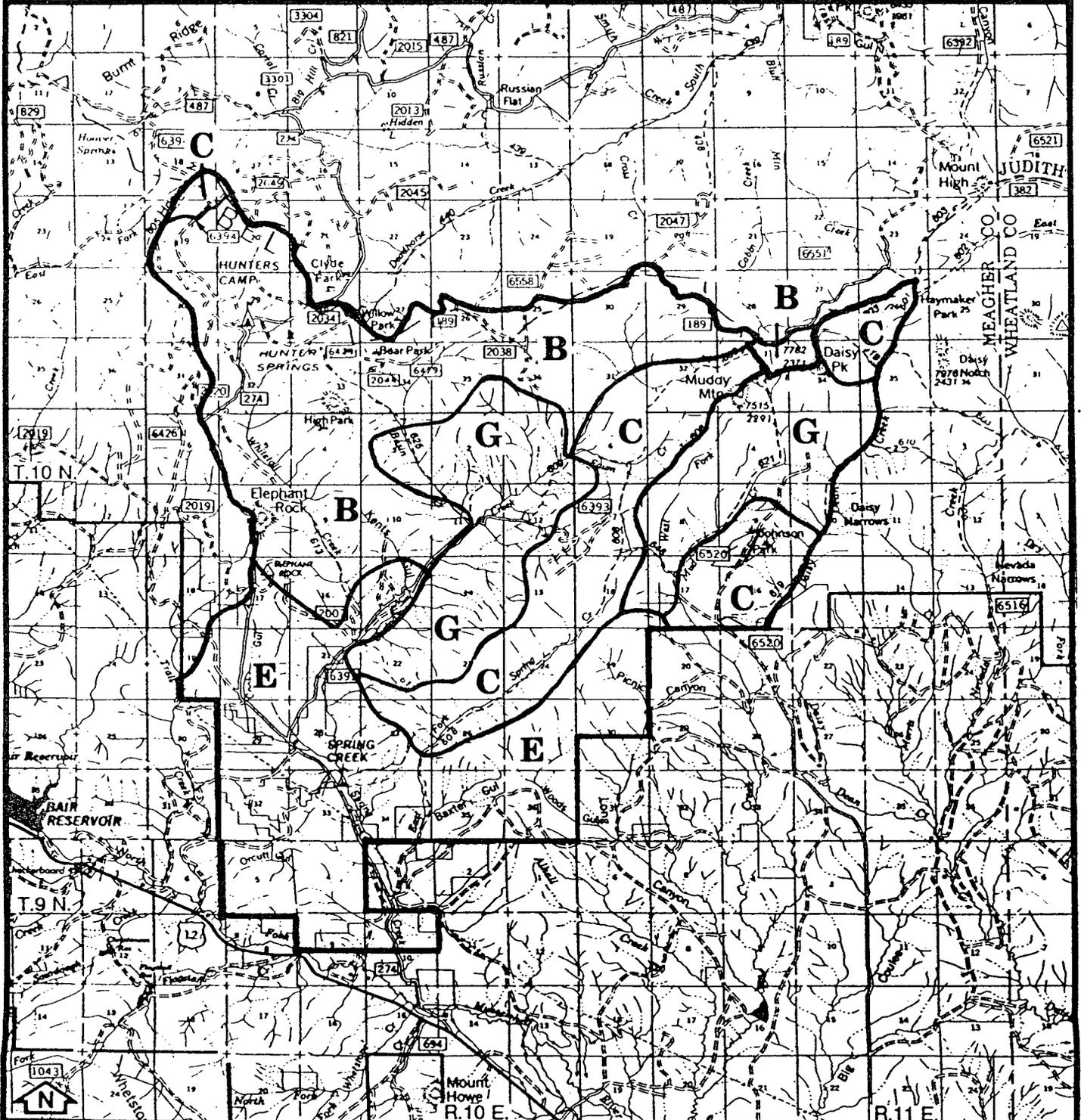


Existing Management Area Boundary



Little Belt Mountains
SPRING CREEK AREA

LOCATION MAP



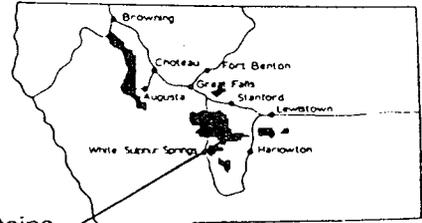
MAP II

REVISION AREA

SPRING CREEK

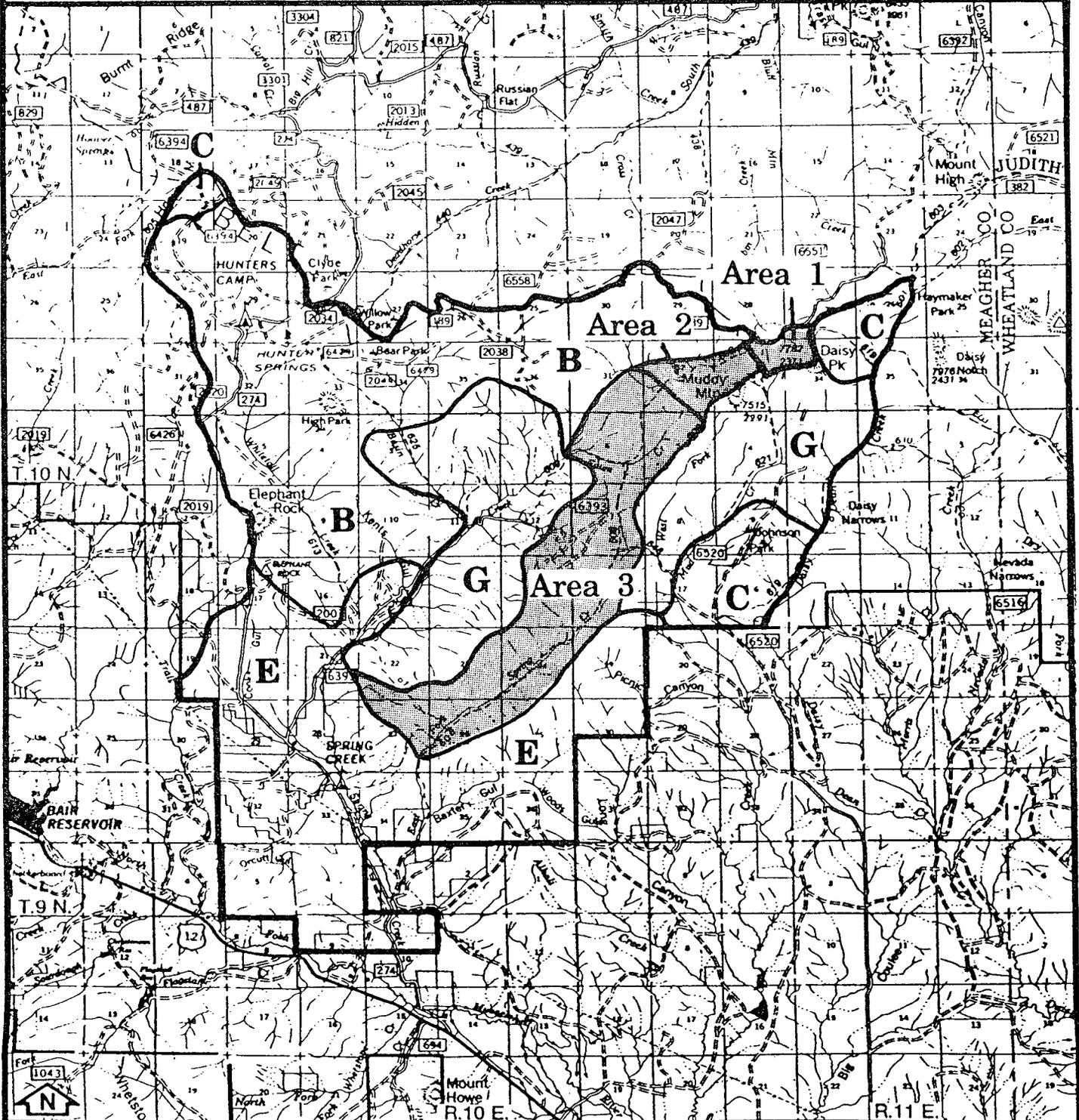


Area to be Revised



Little Belt Mountains
SPRING CREEK AREA

LOCATION MAP

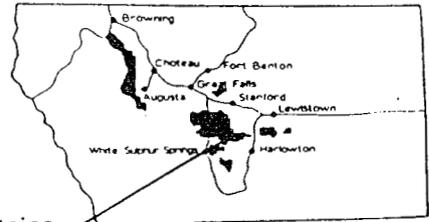


MAP III

NEW MANAGEMENT AREA

SPRING CREEK

G New Management Area Boundary



Little Belt Mountains
SPRING CREEK AREA

LOCATION MAP

