



United States Department of Agriculture

Record of Decision for the Forest Plan Amendments to Incorporate Habitat Management Direction for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Population

**Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, Kootenai National
Forest, Lolo National Forest**



Forest Service

Northern Region

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Record of Decision for the Forest Plan Amendments to Incorporate Relevant Direction from the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Draft Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy

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Terms

Short form	Additional information/full name
amendment forests	Collective term for the Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests
draft Conservation Strategy	Draft NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy (USFWS, 2013)
NCDE Conservation Strategy	Conservation Strategy for the Grizzly Bear in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (IGBC, 2018)
the Forest	Flathead National Forest (or, in the context of the amendments, the Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, or Lolo National Forest)
assessment	Assessment of the Flathead National Forest
forest plan	Flathead National Forest Revised Land Management Plan (or, in the context of the amendments, the Helena, Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, or Lolo forest plan)
1986 forest plan	Flathead National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1986) (or, in the context of the amendments, the Helena, Lewis and Clark, or Lolo forest plan)
2012 planning rule	National Forest System land management planning rule (effective 2012)

List of Abbreviations

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
d.b.h.	diameter at breast height
DC	desired condition (forest plan component)
DCA	demographic connectivity area
EIS	environmental impact statement
FW	forestwide (forest plan component)
GA	geographic area
GBCS	Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy
GDL	Guideline (forest plan component)
GIS	geographic information system
INFISH	Inland Native Fish Strategy
MA	management area
mi	mile
mmbf	million board feet
mmcf	million cubic feet
MFWP	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
NCDE	Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFS	National Forest System
NRLMD	Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction
PACFISH	Pacific Fish Strategy
PCA	primary conservation area
PIBO	PACFISH/INFISH Biological Opinion
STD	standard (forest plan component)
TMDL	total maximum daily load
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

The Decision

About This Decision

This record of decision documents our decision and rationale for selecting alternative 2 modified as described in the final environmental impact statement (EIS) for amending the land management plans (forest plans) of the Helena-Lewis and Clark,¹ Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests (also referred to as “amendment forests”) to incorporate habitat management direction for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) grizzly bear population. We base this decision upon our review of the effects of the alternatives documented in volume 3 of the final EIS and public comments received on the draft EIS. In making our decision on the amendments, we followed the objection process as described in Subpart B of 36 CFR 219 and made modifications in response to objections (addressed below).

This decision amends the Helena, Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo forest plans by incorporating habitat-related management direction on National Forest System (NFS) lands within the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2 (see figure 1), see appendix 1, and volume 3 of the final EIS. No habitat management direction is amended in zone 3.

Existing forest plan standards and guidelines for grizzly bear habitat will not be changed, except where they are outdated or would conflict with the amended plan direction, as shown in appendix 2 of this record of decision. National Forest System lands in the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1, the demographic connectivity areas, and zone 2 provide for a variety of multiple uses, such as timber harvest, fish and wildlife habitat, livestock grazing, mining, recreation, and wilderness. Reconsideration of other goals, desired conditions, objectives, land allocations, and standards and guidelines in the forest plans that do not pertain to grizzly bear habitat is not part of this decision.

This decision provides the framework for future decisionmaking by establishing consistent management direction that will contribute to sustaining the recovery of the NCDE grizzly bear population. This decision is programmatic in nature and guides implementation of site-specific projects that tier to forest plans. Additional National Environmental Policy Act compliance is required for future site-specific projects that implement the forest plans.

We find that this amendment of the forest plans is not significant under the National Forest Management Act regulations as described in the “Significance finding” section of this record of decision.

Brief Description of the Decision

Our decision selects all of the direction listed in appendix 1 of this record of decision. Forest plan components (desired conditions, standards, and guidelines) that conserve grizzly bear habitat will be added to the Helena, Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo forest plans. These plan components will guide future land management actions related to motorized access and secure core, developed recreation sites, vegetation management, livestock grazing, and energy and mineral development. In general, habitat conditions in the primary conservation area will be maintained at levels that occurred during the time period when the grizzly bear population was known to be growing and increasing in distribution and will

¹ The Helena National Forest and the Lewis and Clark National Forest were officially administratively consolidated on December 11, 2015, into the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. The 1986 Helena forest plan provides management direction for the old Helena National Forest portion, and the 1986 Lewis and Clark forest plan provides management direction for the old Lewis and Clark National Forest portion of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. Both of those forest plans will be amended by this decision.

contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population. In zone 1 and the demographic connectivity areas, plan components will be added to limit grizzly bear mortality risk and provide for demographic connectivity to neighboring grizzly bear recovery zones. In a portion of zone 2, a desired condition aimed at providing for genetic connectivity between the NCDE and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem will be added. A desired condition and a standard regarding food/wildlife attractant storage special order(s) will apply across the primary conservation area, zone 1 including the demographic connectivity areas, and zone 2. New forest plan monitoring items will be added to the forest plans. The complete text of these forest plan components is displayed in appendix 1 of this record of decision. Our decision incorporates by reference the analysis of effects of the management direction disclosed in the final EIS and the planning record in its entirety.

Modifications That Were Made to Alternative 2

Alternative 2 in the draft EIS was based primarily on the draft NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy (USFWS, 2013) (hereafter “draft Conservation Strategy”). In response to internal and external reviews and public comments on the draft EIS, we made adjustments and additions to alternative 2, referred to as “alternative 2 modified” in the final EIS. Minor wording changes were made to many of the plan components to clarify the intent, use more precise terminology, or add examples. Substantive changes include the following. NCDE-STD-AR-04, which allows for temporary public motorized use of restricted roads, was modified to exclude temporary use within secure core. Two standards proposed under alternative 3 were added to alternative 2 modified: NCDE-STD-AR-07, requiring new or reauthorized permits for ski areas to include requirements to limit the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts, and NCDE-STD-AR-08, requiring no net increase in the percentage of area of miles of routes designated for over-snow vehicle use during the den emergence time period. Four of the standards for grazing (NCDE-STD-GRZ-01, 03, 04, and 06) were modified to apply not only to the primary conservation area but also to zone 1 in order to reduce the risk of grizzly bear mortality. A standard under alternative 3 that requires a no surface occupancy stipulation in new leases for leasable minerals was added to alternative 2 modified (NCDE-STD-MIN-08), but it differs from alternative 3 by applying only to the primary conservation area. A desired condition was added for areas located between the primary conservation area and the Salish and Ninemile demographic connectivity areas (NCDE-KNF Zone 1-DC-02 and NCDE-LNF Zone 1-DC-02) to encourage consolidation of NFS lands and support for conservation easements, to provide habitat connectivity and to facilitate the movement of wildlife. Similarly, desired condition NCDE-HNF Zone 1&2-DC-02 was added for the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest zone 1 and the portion of zone 2 west of Interstate 15 to consolidate NFS lands adjacent to highways and to support other efforts that will reduce barriers to genetic connectivity with the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population. Standard NCDE-STD-VEG-01 was removed because its requirement to analyze project effects on the grizzly bear is already mandated by law, regulation, and agency policy. Two forest plan monitoring items concerning the duration of projects (NCDE-MON-06) and grizzly bear-livestock conflicts (NCDE-MON-10) were added.

Location Where the Decision Applies

This decision applies to areas within the Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests that are identified as NCDE recovery zone/primary conservation area, zone 1, or zone 2 (see figure 1). Habitat-related management direction for the Flathead National Forest will be incorporated into the Flathead’s forest plan concurrently through a separate decision (Flathead forest plan revision, record of decision). This decision does not apply to any other Federal, State, tribal, county, or private lands, although the effects of our decision on those lands were considered.

The NCDE grizzly bear recovery zone identified in the recovery plan (USFWS, 1993) encompasses about 5.7 million acres, of which about 3.48 million acres (61 percent) are NFS lands. The total acres of NFS lands included within the primary conservation area, zone 1 including the demographic connectivity areas, and zone 2 (the area affected by this decision) is about 5.1 million acres (see table 1).

Table 1. Acres and percentages of NFS land included within the NCDE recovery zone/primary conservation area (PCA), zone 1 within and outside of the demographic connectivity areas (DCA), zone 2, and zone 3

National Forest	Recovery zone/PCA acres (percent)	Zone 1 within DCA acres (percent)	Zone 1 outside DCA acres (percent)	Zone 2 acres (percent)	Zone 3 acres (percent)
Flathead	2,136,536 (37%)	95,840 (3%)	135,708 (2%)	-	-
Helena portion of Helena-Lewis and Clark	183,758 (3%)	-	149,207 (3%)	642,786 (14%)	5,792 (< 1%)
Lewis and Clark portion of Helena-Lewis and Clark	777,963 (14%)	-	6 (< 1%)	2 (< 1%)	972,612 (8%)
Kootenai	118,770 (2%)	276,822 (6%)	6,480 (< 1%)	-	-
Lolo	268,390 (5%)	231,072 (5%)	155,202 (3%)	38 (< 1%)	-
Total for NFS lands	3,480,417 (61%)	1,050,337 (22%)		642,826 (14%)	978,404 (8%)
Total acres, all ownerships	5,712,862	4,808,719		4,658,932	12,158,183

Decision Authority

In accordance with NFMA planning regulations and agency policy, the authority for this decision belongs to the forest supervisors of three Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem national forests: Kootenai, Helena-Lewis and Clark, and Lolo National Forests (36 CFR 219.2(b)(3) and Forest Service Manual 1926.04b).

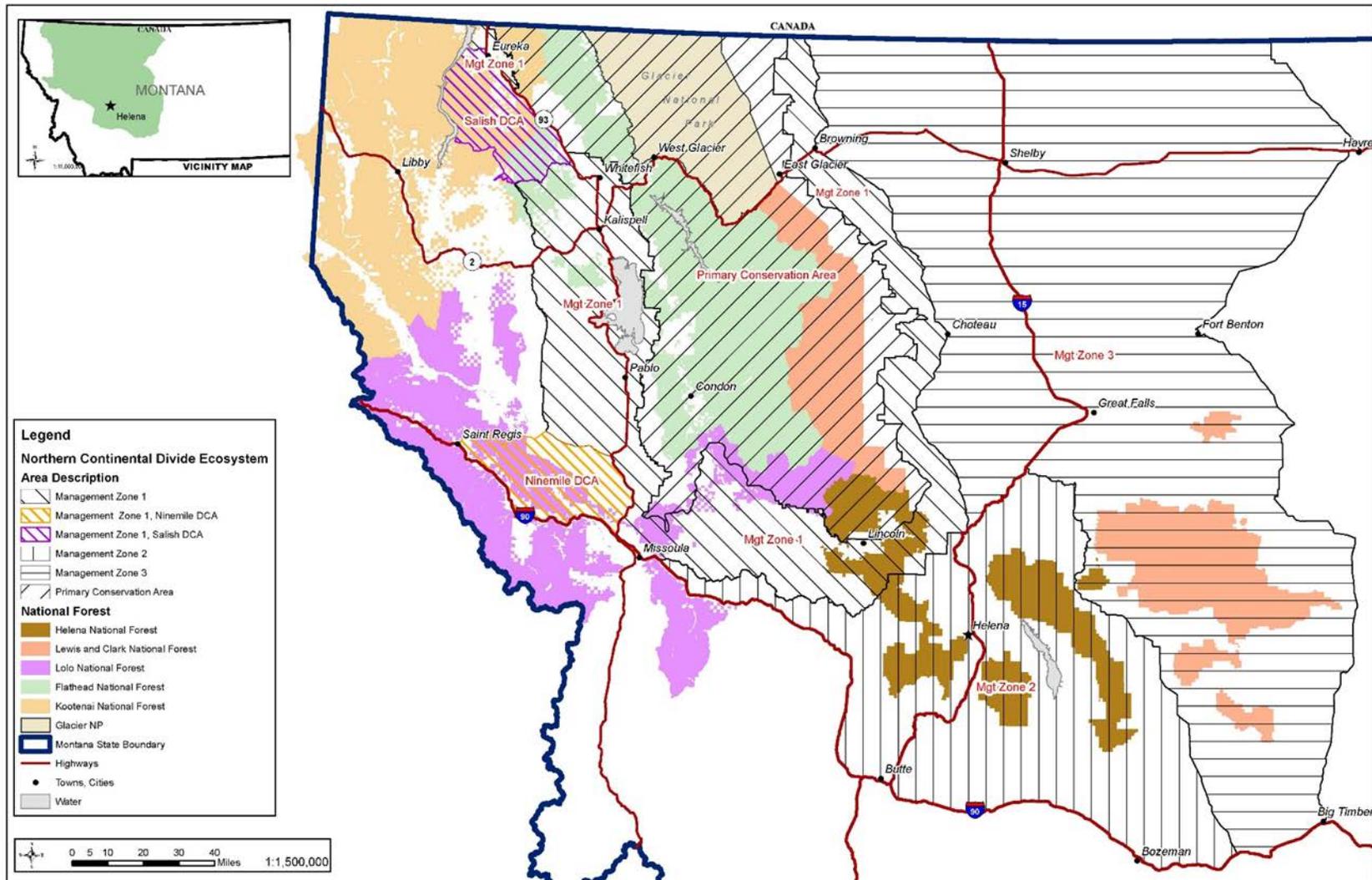


Figure 1. The Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem vicinity map. Note: The Helena and Lewis and Clark portions of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest are shown separately because they are managed under separate forest plans.

Background

Historically, grizzly bears were widely distributed across North America between the Great Plains and the Pacific Ocean (Mattson & Merrill, 2002), but currently they are restricted primarily to the mountainous regions of northwestern North America (Proctor et al., 2012). In 1975, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the grizzly bear as a threatened species in the lower 48 states, giving the species Federal protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. To facilitate recovery efforts, four recovery zones—the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE), the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem, and the Selkirk Ecosystem—were established, as well as the Bitterroot, Cascades, and San Juan evaluation areas. Of these, the NCDE supports the largest number of grizzly bears (USFWS, 2011b).

The grizzly bear recovery plan outlines the management actions needed to achieve recovery. Minimum population goals were established for each grizzly bear recovery zone to ensure a population of grizzly bears that is (1) adequately distributed throughout the recovery zone, (2) reproducing, and (3) able to sustain existing levels of human-caused mortality (USFWS, 1993, as amended, p. 26). The recovery plan also specifically called for development of a conservation strategy for each recovery zone so that continuity and consistency of management would be provided following delisting.

Since the listing of the grizzly bear, government agencies have worked together to improve management coordination and habitat conditions, minimize grizzly bear-human conflicts and bear mortality, and increase public awareness of and appreciation for the grizzly bear. The Forest Service has actively participated in many interagency efforts to maintain or improve grizzly bear habitat and to reduce grizzly bear-human conflicts on the national forests. For example, all of the national forests within the NCDE have implemented food/attractant storage orders within the recovery zone, and in some cases forestwide, to prevent food-conditioning of grizzly bears and provide for public safety.

Forest plan direction is an effective approach to conserve habitat of wide-ranging species such as the grizzly bear. The Helena, Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo forest plans all contain management direction based on the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines (IGBC, 1986). Some forests have subsequently incorporated additional forest plan components or have completed Endangered Species Act section 7 consultations that modified implementation of the forest plans to further support recovery of the grizzly bear. Because of these and other recovery efforts, the NCDE grizzly bear population has been increasing, and its distribution has expanded to more than double the size of the recovery zone (Costello, Mace, & Roberts, 2016).

In May 2013, the draft Conservation Strategy for the NCDE grizzly bear population was released to the public for review and comment (78 FR 86, p. 26064, May 2, 2013). The final Conservation Strategy was made available in July of 2018 (NCDE Subcommittee 2018). Forest Service representatives participated as members of the Interagency Conservation Strategy Team throughout the development of both the draft and final documents. The purposes of the NCDE Conservation Strategy are to:

- Describe and summarize the coordinated strategies, standards, and guidelines developed for managing the grizzly bear population, human-grizzly bear conflicts, and grizzly bear habitat to ensure their continued conservation in the NCDE;
- Compile and reference the regulatory mechanisms, legal authorities, policies, management documents, and monitoring programs that will maintain the recovered grizzly bear population; and
- Document the commitments agreed upon by the participating agencies.

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee has endorsed the 2018 NCDE Conservation Strategy, which means as a body, the IGBC Executive Committee believes it is adequate. Approval of the Conservation Strategy will occur when all the agencies who have commitments represented in the strategy have signed the Memorandum of Understanding. The NCDE Conservation Strategy will not change the legal status of grizzly bears in the NCDE. However, the Conservation Strategy is a needed step to support future delisting under the Endangered Species Act by demonstrating the agencies' ongoing commitment to sustaining the NCDE grizzly bear population.

Purpose and Need for Action

In 2011, the USFWS completed a five-year status review of the grizzly bear in the lower 48 states (USFWS, 2011b). The USFWS concluded that existing regulatory mechanisms to protect the grizzly bear were incomplete. Specific to NFS lands, regulatory mechanisms were found to be lacking or incomplete with respect to incorporating motorized access direction into the forest plans, and portions of some national forests lacked food storage orders, which will become increasingly important to grizzly bear conservation as grizzly bear and human populations both expand.

The purpose of amending the Helena, Kootenai, Lewis and Clark, and Lolo National Forest plans is to provide consistent direction that will support the continued recovery of the NCDE grizzly bear population. The amended forest plan management direction is needed to address the lack of regulatory mechanisms on NFS lands previously identified by the USFWS. The amended forest plan direction will be considered by the USFWS when conducting future assessments of the status of the grizzly bear.

Rationale for Our Decision

How This Decision Best Meets the Purpose and Need

Our decision fully meets the purpose and need by incorporating management direction applicable to the portions of the Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests that are within the NCDE to ensure that habitat conditions are conserved and key habitat stressors are managed in order to sustain the NCDE grizzly bear population.

Continues past and ongoing recovery efforts

Our decision continues past recovery efforts and maintains existing forest plan management direction that has been shown to be effective in supporting the recovery of the NCDE grizzly bear population. Our decision to select alternative 2 modified is based in part upon the following information.

Under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, Federal agencies are directed to use their authorities to seek to conserve endangered and threatened species. Maintaining habitat to ensure the recovery of the NCDE grizzly bear population has been a cooperative goal of the Forest Service, National Park Service, and the USFWS along with state wildlife management agencies and tribal partners since the listing of the grizzly bear as a threatened species in 1975.

Although demographic data were limited at that time, the grizzly bear recovery plan (USFWS, 1993) estimated that in 1993 the minimum population size in the NCDE was 306 grizzlies and set a goal of at least 391 grizzlies for the NCDE. In 2004, a DNA-based mark-recapture study conducted in occupied grizzly bear range in and around the NCDE recovery zone resulted in a minimum population estimate of 765 grizzly bears Kendall et al. (2009). Monitoring of 83 different female bears between 2004 and 2009

showed that the population was increasing at a rate of 3.06 percent per year (Mace & Roberts, 2012). By 2012, Mace and others (2012) estimated that more than 1,000 grizzly bears resided in or adjacent to the NCDE recovery zone. As of 2014, the population estimate for the NCDE monitoring area (recovery zone and zone 1) is 960 grizzly bears, with an estimated population growth rate of 2.3 percent/year (Costello et al., 2016).

Grizzly bears are well distributed throughout the NCDE recovery zone. In 2004, at least one female bear was detected in each of the 23 bear management units and an additional 12 were detected outside the recovery zone (Kendall et al., 2009). Using the six-year running tally as called for by the recovery plan, full occupancy of the recovery zone was documented starting in 2009 and continuing through 2014 (Costello et al., 2016).

Outside of the recovery zone, grizzly bear presence has been documented in most of zone 1 and parts of zones 2 and 3 (Costello et al., 2016). Both males and females are becoming increasingly common to the east of the recovery zone boundary along the Rocky Mountain Front. Three female grizzly bear dens have been documented in short-grass prairie habitat along the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains (Mace & Roberts, 2014).

Genetic analysis indicates that few barriers to genetic exchange exist within the NCDE (Kendall et al., 2009). The NCDE population in the United States is well connected to the adjoining portion of the population in Alberta and British Columbia south of Highway 3 in Canada (Proctor et al., 2015).

Survival of adult and subadult females is thought to have the largest influence on grizzly bear population trend (Mace & Waller, 1997). In the NCDE, human-caused mortality is the most significant factor influencing grizzly bear survival. Costello et al. (2016) analyzed grizzly bear mortality data and reported that poaching/malicious kills likely accounted for the highest proportion of total independent bear mortality (27 percent), followed by management removals (16 percent), illegal defense of property (11 percent), and natural causes (9 percent). The majority of management removals result from conflicts at sites on private lands associated with frequent or permanent human presence (USFWS, 2013). Unsecured attractants on private lands such as chicken coops, garbage, human foods, pet/livestock foods, bird food, livestock carcasses, compost piles, orchard fruits, and vegetable gardens are usually the source of these conflicts. Despite these mortalities, the survival rate for adult females (the most important group affecting population trend), is high at 0.947 (Costello et al., 2016).

Habitat management efforts on NFS lands, including seasonal and permanent motorized access restrictions, closure of many sheep allotments, provisions included in livestock grazing and special-use permits to resolve conflicts, food/attractant storage orders, installation of bear-resistant facilities, information and educational materials and programs, and the development of coordinated direction for management of forest resources, have been instrumental in the improved status of this bear population. Our decision will continue to build on these successful recovery efforts.

Sustains habitat and manages key stressors

Our decision will contribute habitat conditions needed to sustain the NCDE grizzly bear population. Alternative 2 modified addresses the key stressors related to habitat management that are identified in the NCDE Conservation Strategy.

Grizzly bear habitat

Grizzly bears use a variety of habitats in the NCDE, including meadows, shrublands, open forests, avalanche chutes, and alpine habitats. Bears are large animals with high metabolic demands during the

non-denning season and are dependent upon learned food locations within their home ranges. Grizzlies in the NCDE consume a wide variety of foods, particularly berries, roots and bulbs, insects such lady bird beetles and army cutworm moths, and other sources of meat, and have the ability to switch foods according to which food sources are readily available. In the past, whitebark pine nuts were an important food source for bears in the late summer to fall, particularly in the Whitefish Range and on the Rocky Mountain Front (Aune & Kasworm, 1989; Kendall & Arno, 1990; Mace & Jonkel, 1986). However, high infection rates and mortality of whitebark pine caused by white pine blister rust (Kendall & Keane, 2001) have dramatically reduced or eliminated this food source for bears in the NCDE. Despite the loss of this food source, the bear population has continued to increase.

Adequate nutritional quality and quantity are important factors for successful reproduction. Teisberg and others studied grizzly bear population health and body condition, finding that adult females throughout the NCDE entered their dens having average fat levels above those thought to be critical for cub production. Their data indicate that grizzly bears in all regions of the NCDE are able to exploit diverse combinations of food items to support productive body conditions (Teisberg, Madel, Mace, Servheen, & Robbins, 2015).

The amount of habitat that is available to grizzly bears is determined largely by people and their activities. Maintaining large blocks of secure habitat is important to the survival and reproductive success of grizzly bears, especially females (Mace, Waller, Manley, Ake, & Wittinger, 1999; Schwartz, Haroldson, & White, 2010). The NCDE contains a substantial acreage of wilderness and inventoried roadless areas (see the final EIS, figure 1-73) that provide a high degree of security for grizzly bears. Congressionally designated wilderness totals about 1.7 million acres (about 30 percent) of all lands within the recovery zone/primary conservation area. The Wilderness Act of 1964 precludes road construction, motorized and mechanized uses, permanent human habitation, new livestock allotments, new mining claims, new oil and gas leases, and other developments that would impair the wilderness character of wilderness areas, except for those specifically allowed by the enabling legislation. Inventoried roadless areas also have little or no permanent human presence or road development.

Key stressors

Motorized route density in the primary conservation area: Research has clearly demonstrated that the presence of roads and associated human activities negatively impact grizzly bears by displacing them from important habitats and lowering their survival rates during the non-denning season (Boulanger & Stenhouse, 2014; Mace, Waller, Manley, Lyon, & Zuuring, 1996; McLellan & Shackleton, 1988; Waller & Mace, 1997). Mace and Manley (1993) also showed that grizzly bears adjusted their habitat use patterns in response to total road densities and open road densities as well as to the traffic levels on roads.

Almost all of the 25 bear management subunits on the amendment forests currently have less than 19 percent of their area with open motorized route density > 1 mile/mile², less than 19 percent of their area with total motorized route density > 2 miles/mile², and 68 percent or more in security core, providing excellent quality and availability of habitat for grizzly bears, including reproductive females. We selected alternative 2 modified because it will maintain the baseline levels in all grizzly bear management subunits within the primary conservation area. Consistent definitions and direction will also be established regarding temporary use of roads for projects, administrative use, temporary motorized use by the public outside of secure core, and limits on project duration. These plan components will provide the conditions needed to maintain grizzly bear survival, reproduction, and distribution throughout the primary conservation area.

Developed recreation sites: The frequent or prolonged human occupancy that occurs at developed recreation sites increases the risk of habituation, food conditioning, and grizzly bear-human conflicts. In the past, conflicts have occurred at such sites in the NCDE, but there is no history of recurring conflicts or bear mortalities on NFS lands in the NCDE. Implementation and monitoring of the food storage orders, public education, and increases in the availability of bear-resistant food storage devices have all helped to reduce the number of grizzly bear-human conflicts on the national forests in recent decades, and these efforts will continue. Our decision will add forest plan components to limit future increases in the number or capacity of developed recreation sites designed and managed for overnight use during the non-denning season on NFS lands in the primary conservation area. We believe that with the new plan components, the risk of grizzly bear mortality will remain low despite some increases in the number or capacity of developed recreation sites on NFS lands. Other new plan components provide additional guidance to avoid displacement of grizzly bears from developed recreation sites.

Vegetation management: Our decision will add a consistent set of desired conditions and guidelines applicable to vegetation management in the primary conservation area. These plan components will provide for diverse cover and forage conditions and reduce the potential for grizzly bear displacement as a result of timber sale activities.

Livestock grazing: In the final rule listing the grizzly bear as a threatened species, the USFWS identified livestock use of the national forests as potentially detrimental due to competition for forage, displacement of bears, and direct mortality as a result of conflicts. Our decision will not allow increases in the number of cattle grazing allotments above the baseline in the primary conservation area, or in the number of domestic sheep allotments or permitted animal unit months in the primary conservation area and zone 1. Other new plan components provide additional guidance to help prevent conflicts and protect key grizzly bear food production areas.

Minerals and energy development: Mineral and energy development may potentially result in permanent habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, or displacement from habitat as well as increase grizzly bear mortality risk from associated human activities and/or grizzly bear-human encounters and conflicts. Our decision will add plan components to guide new or reauthorized leases, permits, and/or plans of operation for mineral activities in the primary conservation area and zone 1 in a manner that will help to reduce conflicts, promote public safety, and reduce impacts on grizzly bears. In the primary conservation area, a no surface occupancy stipulation will be required on new leases for leasable minerals.

Food and attractant storage: Standard NCDE-STD-WL-02 will require a food/wildlife attractant storage order(s) to be in place on NFS lands in the primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2. Existing special orders will remain in place. Over time, this standard will help to limit mortality risk in zone 2, where food storage orders have not been issued in the past. Proper food/attractant storage in zone 2 will help to support genetic connectivity with the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population by reducing the risk of bear mortality.

Incorporates consistent management direction into forest plans

Our decision incorporates consistent management direction into the forest plans for the national forests within the NCDE rather than relying on the requirements of biological opinions. We believe this directly addresses the findings of the USFWS's five-year status review concerning the lack of adequate regulatory mechanisms to protect the grizzly bear. A brief summary of forest-related management direction is as follows:

The amended *Helena forest plan* will incorporate standards to maintain baseline levels of open and total motorized route density and secure core in the three bear management subunits within the primary conservation area. In zone 1, a new standard will require no net increase above the baseline in the density of motorized routes (roads and trails) open to public use during the non-denning season on NFS lands. Previously, requirements for motorized route density and secure core within the recovery zone and for management of bears occurring outside the recovery zone were established through Endangered Species Act section 7 consultations. Unique to the Helena forest plan is a desired condition for zone 1 and the portion of zone 2 west of Interstate 15 to consolidate NFS lands adjacent to highways and to support other efforts to reduce barriers to genetic connectivity between the NCDE and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem populations. The requirement for a food storage order in zone 2 would support genetic connectivity with the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population of bears while providing for increased public safety. This decision will provide habitat conditions that support the continued recovery of the NCDE grizzly bear population, further reduce the potential for conflicts on NFS lands in the primary conservation area and zone 1, and help provide opportunity for the movement of bears from the NCDE to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population.

The existing *Lewis and Clark forest plan* does not contain standards for open motorized route density, total motorized route density, or secure core within the primary conservation area. As with the other amendment forests, the amendment will add a requirement for no net increase above the baseline in open and motorized route density and no net decrease in secure core as well as provide consistent definitions and procedures for managing temporary changes for projects, administrative use, and temporary use by the public outside of secure core. Updating the management direction to address key stressors identified in the conservation strategy and adding several monitoring items will provide consistency across NFS lands in the NCDE. Our decision will help to ensure that habitat conditions supporting recovery are maintained and that the potential for grizzly bear-human conflicts is reduced in the primary conservation area.

Unlike the other NCDE forest plans, the *Kootenai forest plan* has recently been revised (USDA, 2015b). Therefore, compared to the other amendment forests, the amended direction represents less of a change to this forest plan. For example, the Kootenai forest plan already includes a standard (FW-WL-STD-03) that requires maintaining or improving open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core in the two bear management subunits in the NCDE. The revised forest plan also provides direction for management of the Tobacco Bears Outside the Recovery Zone (BORZ) polygon, an area that largely coincides with zone 1 and the Salish demographic connectivity area. The existing plan direction for motorized routes in the Tobacco Bears Outside the Recovery Zone will be retained and supplemented with a new desired condition to support habitat connectivity in areas between the primary conservation area and the Salish demographic connectivity area, which is especially important to sustain the small grizzly bear population in the Cabinet-Yaak recovery zone. The forestwide food/wildlife attractant storage order will remain in place. The amendment will add new plan components for other key stressors, such as developed recreation sites, livestock grazing, and minerals and energy development. By incorporating a consistent set of plan components, definitions, and monitoring items for the NCDE, our decision will help to maintain conditions supporting the recovery of the NCDE grizzly bear population and the occupancy by female bears of the Salish demographic connectivity area.

The existing *Lolo forest plan* does not specifically address open motorized route density, total motorized route density, or secure core in the recovery zone/primary conservation area, nor does it directly address management of grizzly bears that occur outside of the recovery zone. Instead, Endangered Species Act section 7 consultations have provided requirements and recommendations to reduce impacts to grizzly bears. The amendment will add forest plan standards to maintain baseline levels of open and total motorized route density and secure core in the primary conservation area and will update management

direction for coordination of resource management to address the key stressors identified in the conservation strategy. In zone 1, the amendment will add a standard requiring no net increase from the baseline in the density of roads open to public motorized use on NFS lands; in the Ninemile demographic connectivity area, there will be no net increase from the baseline in the density of motorized routes (roads and trails) open to public motorized use. Our decision will help to maintain conditions that support recovery of the NCDE grizzly bear population, limit mortality risk in zone 1, support occupancy by female bears in the Ninemile demographic connectivity area, and allow movement to the Bitterroot potential recovery zone.

How Environmental Issues Were Considered

Two environmental issues were identified in the EIS: grizzly bear habitat and access and recreation. In making our decision, we considered comments provided by the public, tribes, local governments, and Forest Service specialists who conducted the environmental review of the proposed action.

Grizzly bear habitat protections

Some groups and individuals commented that the amendments do not include enough protections for grizzly bear habitat, and offered specific ideas for ways to provide greater protections. For example, some wanted all forest plan grizzly bear direction to be mandatory standards, or the same standard to apply across all grizzly bear management zones. Others wanted more standards or guidelines that address connectivity between the NCDE and other recovery zones, specifically the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. In contrast, others stated that protections are adequate and expressed the need for more management flexibility.

Our decision to select alternative 2 modified is fully consistent with the NCDE Conservation Strategy that was specifically developed to maintain a recovered grizzly bear population. Alternative 2 modified is designed to maintain the habitat conditions that supported a stable to increasing grizzly bear population while also allowing resource management activities to continue at about the same levels that occurred during the same time period. As suggested by the public, we considered the effects of expanding protections for grizzly bear habitat and decided to incorporate a few plan components from alternative 3 into alternative 2 modified and to extend some forest plan components beyond the primary conservation area to zone 1 and/or the demographic connectivity areas.

Alternative 2 modified provides the necessary habitat protections to contribute to the conservation and recovery of the NCDE population and addresses the issue of adequate regulatory mechanisms to protect the grizzly bear population.

Access and recreation

Several commenters stated that the amendments limit motorized access too much. In contrast, others stated a need for additional road and trail closures to protect the grizzly bear and a preference for further reducing motorized access and increasing opportunities for nonmotorized recreational access. Some felt there should be additional limitations applied to the number or capacity of developed recreation sites, while others felt there should be no limitations.

Our decision will maintain the baseline densities of open and total motorized routes in the primary conservation area. The miles of open roads or densities of open roads/routes will also be held to the baseline in zone 1 and the demographic connectivity areas. Flexibility is provided to allow for development or use of roads needed for multiple-use management activities such as timber harvest and to provide temporary public motorized use of restricted roads outside of secure core for uses such as

firewood gathering. We believe our decision achieves a balance in providing both the habitat needed to support grizzly bear recovery and the access needed to provide for recreation and for management of other multiple uses.

Recreation use is expected to increase in the analysis area over time. Experience has shown that developed recreation sites with overnight use have a higher risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts due to the frequent or prolonged human use and the presence of food, garbage and other attractants. Therefore, our decision will limit increases in the number or capacity of these types of sites to no more than one per decade in each bear management unit. Over time, this limitation could result in some visitors shifting their activities to a different time of year when use is lower, to dispersed sites, or to other portions of the Forests or off-Forest. We will also continue other efforts that have been effective in reducing the risk of conflicts on NFS lands, such as providing public information and the use of bear-resistant storage containers.

Other issues

We also considered several other issues raised by the public, including concerns that a grizzly bear hunting season could jeopardize grizzly bear recovery efforts, population size and growth rate should not be relied upon for delisting, the decision to amend forest plans should not be made prior to completion of the final NCDE grizzly bear conservation strategy, and habitat-based recovery criteria should be established before the amendments are completed and delisting is considered.

At this time, it is uncertain if and when delisting will occur or whether a hunting season will be established for grizzly bears following delisting. The tribes, USFWS, and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks have primary jurisdiction over the establishment of hunting seasons for delisted species in the NCDE.

The process and criteria for delisting are established by the Endangered Species Act. Population size and growth rate are not the only factors that must be considered. USFWS is responsible for evaluating the status of the grizzly bear and whether delisting may be warranted. The purpose and need for amending the forest plans is to provide consistent habitat management direction that will continue to contribute to the conservation and recovery of the grizzly bear population.

Subsequent to our release of the Final EIS and draft RODs in December 2017, the grizzly bear recovery plan was supplemented in May 2018 with habitat based recovery criteria for the NCDE, and the NCDE Conservation Strategy was finalized in July 2018. We reviewed new science, the habitat based recovery criteria, and the 2018 NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy and determined that no changes to the forest plan components are necessary to provide for conservation of the grizzly bear. We also concluded that these documents do not provide significant new information that was not previously considered in the development of alternatives and analysis of effects in the final EIS (Warren & Kuennen, 2018a, 2018b).

Other Factors That Were Considered

Local communities and social and economic values

Social and economic impacts on local communities have been a cornerstone in our decision to select alternative 2 modified.

Throughout the planning process, we have carefully considered the unique needs and desires of our local communities, including their dependence on the national forests. Economic activity is not expected to be significantly affected by the amendments, but we recognize there may be different perceptions of this. For

example, the amendments' direction to maintain a robust grizzly bear population may be viewed by some as a positive effort to maintain a functioning ecosystem. Others may view this direction as an effort to limit traditional uses and enjoyment of their public lands. We considered these perspectives when making our decision.

The presence of the grizzly bear in itself adds significantly to the communities located in the Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests. The grizzly bear is one of many charismatic megafauna, including Canada lynx, elk, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats, that inhabit Montana and add to its mystique as a State of rugged wilderness filled with beauty and charm. This aura draws millions of dollars in revenue to local communities each year as visitors from around the world come to visit our forests and nearby national parks and national wildlife refuges with the anticipation of seeing a grizzly bear or other wild animal along with natural scenery. Protecting the habitat of the grizzly bear will continue the recovery of the species and maintain the economic base of communities that rely upon recreation and tourism.

National Forest System roads and trails provide access for recreation (e.g., wildlife viewing, scenic drives, all-terrain vehicle use, mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding) and personal subsistence (e.g., hunting, native plant gathering, firewood gathering, guiding, and outfitting). Although the amendments will prohibit an increase in open roads and trails in some portions of the Forests and thereby limit the potential for expanding economic opportunities associated with motorized access, these opportunities may be provided elsewhere across the amendment forests. The economic and social benefits of nonmotorized recreation will be maintained at about the same level.

In general, commercial use of the Forests will not be diminished by the amendments. For example, road construction for timber harvest or minerals development may occur as long as the new roads do not remain open to motorized vehicles other than those necessary for project activities. Timber harvest may still occur. Timber harvest is currently designed to consider the needs of the grizzly bear, and the amendments will not change this. Existing grazing levels will be retained. Mineral development may still occur. Similar to timber harvest, new mineral development activities are currently designed to consider the needs of the grizzly bear, and the amendments will not change this.

Monitoring and adapting to changing conditions

Under alternative 2 modified, ten monitoring items that apply to one or more of the amendment forests are identified. As it has been in the past and as envisioned by the NCDE Conservation Strategy, the overall monitoring program for the NCDE will be coordinated and evaluated in an interagency framework. The Forest Service will be responsible for collecting and reporting data concerning key habitat conditions on NFS lands. The Forest Service has actively participated for many years in conducting habitat monitoring, including establishing and maintaining data standards, definitions, formats, and procedures that allow for data collection and evaluation across jurisdictions, and will continue to do so.

Since 1983, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee has coordinated management, monitoring, and research actions for the recovery of the grizzly bear nationally. The NCDE Subcommittee coordinates the compilation and exchange of information between Federal and State agencies and the tribes concerning the status and trend of the NCDE grizzly bear population. If the NCDE population is delisted, interagency monitoring and evaluation will continue under a coordinating committee as set forth in the Conservation Strategy. An adaptive management framework will enable appropriate responses to deviations from expected population and/or habitat conditions and trends.

Role of Science

One of the pieces of scientific information we relied heavily on to develop our proposed action was the draft Conservation Strategy (USFWS, 2013). We considered the best available scientific information on the grizzly bear and other resources to develop alternatives to the proposed action and to make our preliminary decision to select alternative 2 modified. The final EIS for the amendment forests references almost 200 citations considered during the evaluation process. In addition, we have considered input from the public and local government officials and consulted with various authorities on the grizzly bear, including the USFWS, MFWP, and tribes, as detailed in the planning record. In response to the instructions from the Regional Forester resulting from the objection review process, we identified a list of scientific information referenced by objectors and, if not already disclosed, documented how it had been considered in our analysis (FNF, 2018). Although new science is constantly being developed, we are confident that our decision is based on the most accurate, reliable, and relevant information available at this time. New science will be considered in the future as site-specific projects are implemented.

Public Involvement and Issues

Public involvement for both the Flathead forest plan revision and the forest plan amendments to incorporate habitat management direction for the NCDE grizzly bear population was initiated with the publication of a notice of intent in the Federal Register on March 6, 2015 (USDA, 2015a). The scoping period for the proposed action was made available to the public for 60 days (until May 5, 2015) and was subsequently extended by 10 days. Open houses were held in seven communities throughout the NCDE during the scoping period to provide information about the proposed action and accept public comments. Comments received from the public, other agencies, tribes, and organizations were used to develop a list of issues. This list was sorted into topics specific to the Flathead National Forest revision effort, specific to the amendment effort, or relevant to both. Issues specific to the Flathead forest plan revision are discussed further in section 2.2 of the final EIS. The two issues that drove the development of alternatives for the amendments were (1) grizzly bear habitat and (2) access and recreation.

A draft EIS was prepared that analyzed the environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives. This document was made available for public comment in June 2016 with publication of the notice of availability in the Federal Register. Open houses were held in Kalispell and Missoula during the 120-day comment period. In addition to the open houses, the planning team and forest supervisors continued to provide information to address questions from the public throughout the comment period. The interagency group continued to meet to discuss and provide input with respect to each agency's concerns.

The comment period for the draft EIS ended on October 3, 2016. Over 33,000 comments were received on the Flathead forest plan revision and/or the amendments to incorporate habitat management direction for the NCDE grizzly bear population. These comments included 568 unique letters and 33,112 form letters (groups of letters that have the same content, usually from organizations or their members). The comments were aggregated into unique concern statements. Responses to these concerns are provided in appendix 8 of the final EIS.

The public comments and the interdisciplinary team's responses were critical to improving the analysis displayed in the final EIS, refining forest plan direction, and aiding us in making our decision.

Other Alternatives Considered

Public comments received in response to the proposed action provided suggestions for alternative approaches to achieve the purpose and need or requested that forest plan components applicable to the primary conservation area be extended to zone 1, demographic connectivity areas, zone 2, and/or zone 3. Some of these alternatives were considered but were dismissed from detailed consideration for reasons summarized in the final EIS.

In addition to the selected alternative, we considered two other alternatives in detail, which are discussed briefly below. A detailed description and analysis of these alternatives can be found in section 5.6 of the final EIS.

Alternative 1—No Action

Under the no-action alternative, existing forest plans would continue to guide management. Thus, the current provisions for management of grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE would remain in effect. Because of the lack of adequate regulatory mechanisms as determined by USFWS, it is expected that the grizzly bear would remain listed under the Endangered Species Act. Therefore, it is assumed that the requirements of biological opinions that address incidental take of grizzly bears would remain in place and are considered to be part of the no-action alternative. A detailed list of existing forest plan direction and whether it would be retained, changed, or replaced under the action alternatives can be found in appendix 2 of this record of decision.

Alternative 3

Development of alternative 3 was based on various comments and suggestions that were offered during scoping that requested a greater level of protection for the grizzly bear. Like alternative 2 modified, alternative 3 would remove references to management situations and instead would specify whether habitat management direction would be applicable to the primary conservation area, zone 1, the Salish and Ninemile demographic connectivity areas, and/or zone 2. Alternative 3 would adopt the same plan components for the primary conservation area as alternative 2 modified except that it would also add NCDE-STD-GRZ-07 and it has different wording for NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01. Alternative 3 also differs from alternative 2 modified by extending some forest plan components to zone 1 and/or the demographic connectivity areas. A comparison of the forest plan components under alternative 2 modified and under alternative 3 can be found in appendix 2 of this record of decision.

Environmentally preferable alternative

Regulations implementing NEPA require agencies to specify “the alternative or alternatives which are considered to be environmentally preferable” (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). The environmentally preferable alternative is “the alternative that will best promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA’s section 101 (42 U.S.C. 4321). Ordinarily, the environmentally preferable alternative is that which causes the least harm to the biological and physical environment; it is also the alternative which best protects and preserves historic, cultural, and natural resources” (36 CFR 220.3).

I find, based upon the laws and regulations guiding NFS lands management, that alternative 2 modified is the environmentally preferred alternative. When compared to the alternatives analyzed in detail, it best contributes to, and moves the Forest towards, ecological, social, and economic sustainability and desired conditions that will benefit future generations. Alternative 3 would be most protective of grizzly bear habitat, however we selected alternative 2 modified because it will contribute to conservation and recovery of the grizzly bear while also providing a balance with other resource uses and management

needs. Alternatives 1 and 3 do not address the six goals of NEPA as well as alternative 2 modified does. I base my finding on the following comparison showing how the alternatives address the goals of section 101 of NEPA.

1. Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustees of the environment for succeeding generations.

Alternative 2 modified emphasizes grizzly bear conservation and recovery while contributing to ecological, social, and economic sustainability for future generations.

2. Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.

Alternative 2 modified achieves maintenance of a safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing Forest better than the other alternatives because it provides the best mix of resource utilization along with the safeguards provided by measures to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts and standards and guidelines for maintaining grizzly bear habitat.

3. Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.

The beneficial uses that are most varied between alternatives and that I considered in this finding are livestock grazing, minerals, and recreation opportunities (including developed recreation sites, motorized, and non-motorized uses). Alternative 2 modified achieves a higher level of reasonable, sustainable beneficial uses than alternatives 1 or 3 without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable or unintended consequences.

4. Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.

Part of preserving our historic and cultural national heritage is recognizing that humans are a natural aspect of our national heritage—humans have utilized the physical and cultural resources offered by the Forest for thousands of years. Recognizing this, I find that the best way to preserve this heritage, and an environment that supports diversity and variety of choice, is to manage for national forests that provide for physical resource use and the appropriate protection of cultural resources, including the grizzly bear population that is an important part of our cultural national heritage. Based upon the public engagement efforts, tribal consultation, and the effects of each alternative displayed in the final EIS, I find that alternative 2 modified meets this goal better than the other alternatives.

5. Achieve a balance between population and resource use, which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.

The public demands a variety of products and uses that can be provided by their national forests. National forest system lands and resources are evaluated as important local resources that contribute to the quality of life in the region. The final EIS alternative analysis compares the various values the public uses to determine their quality of life, varying from economic values (grazing, timber harvest, and minerals) to less tangibly defined resources such as semi-primitive recreation opportunities and enjoyment of wildlife. The challenge is in defining the balance sought in this goal, and I find that alternative 2 modified achieves that balance better than the other alternatives.

6. Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

I find alternative 2 modified enhances the quality of renewable resources and provides sustainable use of renewable resources. The standards and guidelines under alternative 2 modified provide for levels of resource use that are similar to current levels while providing protection for the grizzly bear.

The environmentally preferable alternative causes the least damage to the biological and physical environments and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources. Based on the description of the alternatives considered in detail in the final EIS and this record of decision, we determined that alternative 3 is most protective of grizzly bear habitat and is the environmentally preferable alternative. However, we selected alternative 2 modified because it will support the continued recovery of the grizzly bear while also providing a balance with other resource uses and management needs.

Alternatives Considered But Eliminated from Detailed Study

Federal agencies are required to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR § 1502.14). In response to the proposed action, the public provided suggestions for alternative approaches to achieving the purpose and need or requested that forest plan components applicable to the primary conservation area be extended to zone 1, demographic connectivity areas, zone 2, and/or zone 3. We incorporated many of these suggestions into alternatives 2 and 3. We also considered nineteen other alternatives but eliminated them from detailed study for various reasons. The suggested alternatives included identifying a role for the Forest Service in managing a science-based grizzly bear hunt; delaying the amendments until the draft Conservation Strategy and/or habitat-based recovery criteria are finalized; applying Flathead National Forest amendment 19 direction to all bear management subunits across the NCDE; requiring lower road density standards in zone 1; allowing no administrative use of roads that have public restrictions; shortening the duration of project activities in the primary conservation area; not allowing temporary changes in open motorized route density, total motorized route density, or secure core in the primary conservation area or providing a rest period after changes in secure core; removing secure core from the suitable timber base; identifying a demographic connectivity area on the Helena National Forest in the Big Belt or Little Belt Mountains; extending all of the plan components for the primary conservation area to zone 2; extending plan components for the primary conservation area or the demographic connectivity areas to zone 3; amending the Beaverhead-Deerlodge forest plan as part of this decision; adding plan components for elk security in zones 1 and 2 that would also benefit grizzly bears; prohibiting over-snow motorized recreation; changing the start date defining the non-denning season to March 15; allowing no increase in developed recreation sites on NFS lands in the primary conservation area, zone 1, zone 2, and/or zone 3; allowing only one increase in developed recreation sites in zones 2 or 3; requiring ski area mitigation in zones 1 and 2; restricting spring logging; extending livestock grazing components to all other zones; and reducing protections for the grizzly bear. Section 5.6.5 in the final EIS includes additional description of these other alternatives and our rationale for not analyzing them in detail.

Findings Required by Other Laws, Regulations, and Policy

We have determined that our decision is consistent with the laws, regulations, and agency policies pertaining to forest plan amendments. The following summarizes findings required by other major laws, regulations, and Forest Service policy.

National Forest Management Act

These amendments were prepared in accordance with the provisions of the 1982 planning regulations, in accordance with the transition provision of the 2012 planning rule.

Significance finding

The National Forest Management Act regulations (1982) direct that

The Forest Supervisor may amend the forest plan. Based on an analysis of the objectives, guidelines, and other contents of the Forest Plan, the Forest Supervisor shall determine whether a proposed amendment would result in a significant change in the plan. If the change resulting from the proposed amendment is determined to be significant, the Forest Supervisor shall follow the same procedure as that required for development and approval of a Forest Plan [i.e., conduct a plan revision]. If the change resulting from the amendment is determined not to be significant for the purposes of the planning process, the Forest Supervisor may implement the amendment following appropriate public notification and satisfactory completion of National Environmental Policy Act procedures. (36 CFR 219.10(f))

The test we used to determine whether the forest plan amendments would result in a significant change included the following four factors.

Timing

Identify when the change is to take place. Determine whether the change is necessary during or after the plan period (the first decade) or whether the change is to take place after the next scheduled revision of the forest plan.

The amendments take place late in the life of the Lolo, Helena, and Lewis and Clark forest plans. According to the Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, chapter 5.32, “The later the change, the less likely it is to be significant for the current forest plan.” Although this amendment occurs fairly early in the lifespan of the 2015 forest plan for the Kootenai, that Forest’s revision process already addressed many of the grizzly bear key indicators (such as motorized access). The amendment changes are minor and yet necessary to ensure conservation of habitat to sustain the Northern Continental Divide grizzly bear population. We find that the timing of the amendments would not result in a significant change.

Location and size

Determine the location and size of the area involved in the change. Define the relationship of the affected area to the overall planning area.

As disclosed in the final EIS, most of the changes to plan components included in this amendment affect only the primary conservation area within the respective Forests for a total of approximately 1.3 million acres. The Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest has 961,721 acres within the primary conservation area (about 34 percent of its total acreage), the Kootenai National Forest has 118,770 acres within the

NCDE primary conservation area (about 5 percent of its total acreage), and the Lolo National Forest has 268,390 acres in the NCDE primary conservation area (about 12 percent of its total acreage). The general approach of this decision is to maintain baseline habitat conditions within the primary conservation area. A few new plan components will be added for zone 1 and the demographic connectivity areas, as well as a new desired condition and a new food storage order requirement for zone 2. As previously noted, the primary conservation area and the demographic connectivity areas contain a large acreage of wilderness and roadless areas, which provides a high degree of security for grizzly bears. If not already incorporated into the forest plans, the requirements of previous biological opinions have imposed limitations on motorized route densities, livestock grazing allotments, and other aspects of grizzly bear habitat management in the primary conservation area or areas where grizzly bears are present. Although the amendments are important in providing the regulatory mechanisms that could support the potential future delisting of the grizzly bear population, the amount of area that would experience an actual change in effects is small. Therefore, we determined that this is not a significant change.

Goals, objectives, and outputs

Determine whether the change alters long-term relationships between the levels of goods and services projected by the forest plan. Consider whether an increase in one type of output would trigger an increase or decrease in another. Determine where there is a demand for goods or services not discussed in the forest plan.

Amendment of the plans for grizzly bear habitat conservation as outlined in alternative 2 modified will not alter the level of goods and services provided on the national forests in the NCDE area. We have considered effects on key goods and services that are provided by the NCDE national forests, including recreation, livestock grazing, timber harvest, fire management, and minerals. For example, the analysis in section 6.18.7 of the final EIS concluded that alternative 2 modified will not result in a substantive change in timber supply or opportunities for timber sales or stand-tending activities. We determined the levels of goods and services can continue at present levels and that the amendments will not alter long-term relationships between the levels of goods and services projected by the forest plans.

Management prescription

Determine whether the change in a management prescription is only for a specific situation or whether it would apply to future decisions throughout the planning areas. Determine whether the change alters the desired future condition of the land and resources or the anticipated goods and services to be produced.

This action does not change management prescriptions or alter management area boundaries. Each plan component specifies to what area it will be applicable. We determined that the new plan direction is compatible with the existing desired conditions and does not alter the anticipated goods and services to be produced.

National Forest Management Act viability finding

The four forest plans are being amended under the provisions of the previous (1982) regulations. According to the 1982 regulations at 36 CFR 219.19, fish and wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area. For planning purposes, a viable population shall be regarded as one that has the estimated numbers and distribution of reproductive individuals to insure its continued existence. For this decision, the planning area is NFS lands within the NCDE analysis area. The analysis of viability focused on federally listed threatened and endangered species, the regional forester's sensitive species, and the management indicator species identified in each forest plan.

The best available scientific information shows that the NCDE grizzly bear population has the estimated numbers and distribution of reproductive individuals to be self-sustaining. Since the grizzly bear was listed, the NCDE population has substantially increased in size to more than double the recovery plan's goal of a minimum of 391 bears. Grizzly bears are well distributed throughout the NCDE recovery zone. In 2004, at least one female bear was detected in each of the 23 bear management units and an additional 12 were detected outside the recovery zone (Kendall et al., 2009). Costello et al. (2016) evaluated occupancy of the 23 bear management units in the NCDE by females with offspring during 2004 to 2014. Using the six-year running tally as set forth in the recovery plan USFWS (1993), the authors documented full occupancy of the recovery zone starting in 2009 and continuing through 2014 (Costello et al., 2016). The NCDE population has expanded its distribution to more than double the size of the recovery zone (Costello et al., 2016). Proctor et al. (2012) showed that the U.S. population is well connected to the grizzly bear population across the international boundary in Alberta and British Columbia. Genetic analysis by Mickle et al. (2016) found evidence that reconnection and increasing genetic diversity is occurring at the eastern and southern periphery of the NCDE. Based on this information, we have a high degree of confidence that the NCDE grizzly bear population currently is self-sustaining and well distributed across NFS lands in the NCDE.

The grizzly bear amendments will maintain habitat conditions relative to motorized access, vegetation management, livestock grazing, and energy and minerals development that have supported the improved status of grizzly bears in the NCDE. Developed recreation sites will be allowed to increase at the same rate as was allowed during the period when the grizzly bear population was stable to increasing, and efforts to prevent grizzly bear-human conflicts will be continued. The national forests comprise the majority (about 61 percent) of lands in the NCDE primary conservation area; thus, Forest Service management actions make a substantial contribution to the conservation of the grizzly bear population. However, because the grizzly bear is a wide-ranging species that uses a broad range of elevations and habitats during the year, the actions of other landowners in the NCDE are also very important, particularly with regard to mortality risk. The Forest Service has and will continue to cooperate with other Federal, State, local, and tribal agencies and private landowners in the NCDE to support coordinated grizzly bear conservation efforts. Incorporating the management direction detailed in the amendments into the NCDE forest plans will contribute to maintaining a viable population of grizzly bears in the NCDE.

The purpose and need of this decision is to support the recovery of the NCDE population of grizzly bears. However, we have also acknowledged the potential of the NCDE to serve as a source population for other recovery areas that have small populations (e.g., Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem) or are geographically isolated (Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem). Our decision includes provisions that are aimed at providing demographic or genetic connectivity among recovery areas. We believe this will result in the species as a whole being more robust and resilient in the future.

Existing forest plan management direction for lynx will not be changed by the grizzly bear amendments. Lynx and grizzly bear habitat overlap to a large extent in northwestern Montana. However, as explained in section 6.5.6 of the final EIS, the additional standards and guidelines for grizzly bear are not likely to have a measureable effect on lynx. The record of decision for the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (USDA, 2007) concluded that under this management direction, the national forests would provide habitat to maintain a viable population of lynx in the northern Rockies over the long term by maintaining the current distribution of occupied lynx habitat and maintaining or enhancing the quality of that habitat.

The amendments will be beneficial to bull trout by limiting the amount of road construction, livestock grazing, and surface occupancy impacts from leasable minerals. Allowances for temporary roads and an increase in developed recreation sites may have some adverse impacts, depending on location. The

standards and guidelines of the Inland Native Fish Strategy (USDA, 1995) that are in place for the Lolo National Forest, Kootenai National Forest, and the Blackfoot River drainage on the Helena National Forest will be retained. Bull trout status varies between river drainages, as do the threats to each subpopulation. Habitat restoration efforts have been successful and are ongoing, but competition and hybridization with non-native fish species continue to pose a major threat in many areas. The amendments will contribute to maintaining a viable population of bull trout, with the most benefit occurring in bull trout habitat within the primary conservation area.

As documented in the final EIS and the biological assessment (available on the Flathead National Forest's forest plan website, www.fs.usda.gov/goto/flathead/fpr), the selected alternative will have no effect on the remaining federally listed entities: western distinct population segment of the yellow-billed cuckoo, Kootenai River white sturgeon, Spalding's campion, and water howellia. The amended forest plan will continue to provide habitat to support viable populations of these species.

The final EIS also discloses the analysis of effects of the amendments on Forest Service sensitive species and management indicator species. The selected alternative will not lead to a loss of viability of any sensitive species on NFS lands in the planning area, as documented in sections 6.5.7, 6.6.5, 6.8.6, and 6.10.6 of the final EIS and in Warren et al. (2017). The amended forest plans will also continue to provide habitat that supports viable populations of management indicator species in the planning area, as documented in section 6.5.8 of the final EIS.

Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act creates an affirmative obligation that "all federal departments and agencies shall seek to conserve endangered and threatened (and proposed) species" of fish, wildlife, and plants. Federal agencies are also required to ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat (Endangered Species Act, section 7(a)(2)).

It is Forest Service policy that management direction in a forest plan will contribute to the recovery of federally listed species (Forest Service Manual 2622). The responsible official may consult on the plan as a "conservation program" for listed species under ESA section 7(a)(1). If a plan, plan revision, or amendment may affect federally listed species or critical habitat (Forest Service Manual 1920.3), the responsible official will consult on forest plans under the provisions of Endangered Species Act section 7(a)(2). The responsible official may also consult on the effects to species or critical habitats that are proposed for listing.

Recognizing the complexity of consulting on the amendments to three forest plans in conjunction with revision of the Flathead forest plan, we developed a consultation agreement with the USFWS (USDA-USFWS, 2015). We obtained lists of proposed, threatened, endangered, and candidate species identified by the USFWS in 2017 (exhibits #00116 to #00119). The lists were reviewed in October, 2018 and there were no changes in species status (exhibit #00991). A biological assessment evaluating the potential effects of amending the three forests plans on all listed and proposed species occurring in the affected area was submitted to USFWS on March 13, 2017, and a corrected version was submitted on September 22, 2017. As described in the biological assessment, the selected alternative will have *no effect* on the western distinct population segment of the yellow-billed cuckoo, the Kootenai River white sturgeon, Spalding's campion, and water howellia. The selected alternative *may affect, is not likely to adversely affect* the conterminous U.S. distinct population segment of Canada lynx, Canada lynx critical habitat, bull trout, and bull trout critical habitat. The selected alternative *may affect, is likely to adversely affect* the grizzly

bear. The biological assessment determined that the selected alternative *may affect, is not likely to jeopardize* the North American wolverine, a species proposed for listing. The biological assessment also stated that implementation of the amendments, in concert with existing forest plan direction and other ongoing conservation actions, demonstrates that the agency is fulfilling its Endangered Species Act section 7(a)(1) responsibilities to contribute to the recovery of listed species.

We consulted with the USFWS regarding threatened, endangered, and proposed species and critical habitats throughout the planning process, in accordance with our consultation agreement. In its reply to the biological assessment, the USFWS concurred with the determinations that the selected alternative *may affect, and is not likely to adversely affect* bull trout, bull trout critical habitat, Canada lynx, and Canada lynx critical habitat. The USFWS also concurred with the determination that the selected alternative *may affect, but is not likely to jeopardize* North American wolverine. USFWS prepared a biological opinion for the grizzly bear dated October 3, 2017 (USFWS, 2017). After reviewing the current status of the grizzly bear, the environmental baseline for the action area (the Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests), the effects of the action, and cumulative effects, the USFWS concluded that the forest plan amendments are *not likely to jeopardize* the continued existence of the grizzly bear. No critical habitat has been designated for this species, and therefore none will be affected. USFWS also provided an incidental take statement for grizzly bear. In order to be exempt from the taking prohibitions of section 9 of the ESA, the Forest Service must comply with a reasonable and prudent measure and four terms and conditions that address motorized access and motorized over-snow vehicle use during the den emergence time period.

Reasonable and prudent measure: Minimize or reduce the potential for project-related mortality and displacement of grizzly bears.

Terms and conditions that implement the reasonable and prudent measure and are nondiscretionary:

1. The Forest Service shall comply with standards NCDE-STD-AR-01, NCDE-STD-AR-02, NCDE-STD-AR-03, NCDE-STD-AR-04, and NCDE-STD-AR-08.
2. The Forest Service shall ensure that projects comply with guidelines NCDE-GDL-AR-01 and NCDE-GDL-AR-02. If projects will be unable to comply with the above guidelines, the Forest Service shall contact the USFWS immediately to determine further consultation needs.
3. Concurrent, temporary increases in open motorized route density or total motorized route density, or concurrent temporary decreases in secure core for projects (*as defined in the glossary for the NCDE*) on NFS lands shall not occur in more than three adjacent grizzly bear management subunits on each national forest.
4. The Forest Service shall continue to implement food/attractant storage and handling programs in the primary conservation area, zone 1 (including the Salish and Ninemile demographic connectivity areas), and zone 2. This includes ensuring that all Forest Service employees and contractors adhere to appropriate protocols and educating the public on measures to avoid conflicts and/or food conditioning of grizzly bears.

Implementation of the amendments will comply with the above requirements of the incidental take statement. We also will adhere to the monitoring and reporting requirements referenced in the biological opinion. As required by the ESA, we will reinitiate consultation if appropriate.

Each of the amendment forests has undergone previous consultation(s) on their respective forest plans. Previous programmatic biological opinions and their associated incidental take statements that will remain in effect include the following:

- Biological opinion on the Helen National Forest plan (as amended in 2014) (USFWS 2014)
- Biological opinion on the Lewis and Clark National Forest plan (USFWS 1986)
- Biological opinion on the Kootenai National Forest revised forest plan (USFWS 2013)
- Biological opinion on the Lolo National Forest plan (as amended in 2004) (USFWS 2004)

In addition to the above consultations done at the forest plan level, biological opinions issued for travel plans on some of the amendment forests are discussed in the programmatic biological opinion (USFWS, 2017). These biological opinions and their associated incidental take statements will remain in effect. Further, project decisions that were completed prior to this decision will not be changed and are still subject to any project-specific biological opinions and incidental take statements. Project decisions made after this decision goes into effect will be required to be in compliance with the incidental take requirements outlined in this record of decision or to go through project-specific consultation, if appropriate.

The biological opinion identified the following conservation recommendations that, in addition to the amendments and other ongoing conservation actions, will support the recovery of the NCDE grizzly bear population (USFWS, 2017, pp. 111-112). These conservation recommendations are discretionary. We will take these into consideration as management actions are planned and conducted:

1. Continue to maintain, or install, grizzly bear informational signs at major access points that provide the public with the following information: potential grizzly bear presence; proper sanitation/food storage techniques; and distinguishing characteristics between grizzly bears and black bears.
2. Participate in ongoing interagency efforts to identify, map, and manage linkage areas that may be important in providing landscape connectivity within and between grizzly bear ecosystems, across all land ownerships for grizzly bears.
3. Plan and manage development on NFS lands in a manner that facilitates grizzly bear use of key habitats within the primary conservation area and zone 1 (including demographic connectivity areas).
4. In cooperation with other agencies, identify areas where grizzly bears concentrate during specific time periods to take advantage of concentrated and/or diverse food sources. Where grizzly bear use is known or likely to occur and where practicable, plan activities in a fashion that minimizes displacement of grizzly bears.
5. The Forest Service continues to plan recreational development, and manage recreational and operational uses to provide for grizzly bear and Canada lynx movement and to maintain effectiveness of these species' habitats.
6. The Forest Service continues to identify and prioritize roads for rehabilitation or seasonal restrictions within watersheds with relatively high road densities so as to improve habitat quality and/or security for grizzly bears, Canada lynx, and bull trout, as well as other fish and wildlife species.

Upon review of existing forest plan components and the components that will be added by this decision, the USFWS concluded that features of the amended forest plans can be considered a "conservation program" for endangered species and threatened species, as described in section 7(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act, and demonstrate the Forest Service's commitment to the conservation of threatened and endangered species on NFS lands in the action area.

In conclusion, the forest plan amendments provide programmatic management direction, including desired conditions, standards, and guidelines, that will contribute to the recovery of endangered and threatened species. Before signing this record of decision, we verified that there had been no new listings or changes in status of threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat subsequent to completion of our Section 7 consultation (exhibit #00991). We find this decision to be in compliance with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.

National Environmental Policy Act

NEPA requires Federal agencies to (a) use a systematic interdisciplinary approach in planning and decision making; (b) consider the environmental impact of proposed actions; (c) identify adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided should the proposal be implemented; (d) consider alternatives to the proposed action; (e) consider the relationship between local short-term uses of the human environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity; and (f) identify any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources which would be involved in the proposed action should it be implemented.

The final EIS documents our interdisciplinary planning process and the members of the interdisciplinary team. The development of alternatives is described in chapter 5 and the analysis of effects of the alternatives are disclosed in chapter 6 of the final EIS.

Our decision to amend the four forest plans does not represent an irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. This is a programmatic action and does not authorize site-specific activities. Any proposed on-the-ground disturbance to resources cannot occur without further analyses and decision documents.

We find that the planning process used and the analysis documented in the final EIS for amending the land management plans of the Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests to incorporate habitat management direction for the NCDE grizzly bear population is in compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

National Historic Preservation Act, American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The forest plan amendments are a programmatic action and do not authorize site-specific activities. Projects undertaken in response to the direction in the amendments will comply fully with the laws and regulations that ensure protection of cultural resources.

It is our determination that the forest plan amendments comply with the National Historic Preservation Act and other statutes that pertain to the protection of cultural resources.

The Forest Service consulted with the Nez Perce, Blackfeet, and Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes during the analysis process. The intent of this consultation is to remain informed about Tribal concerns regarding the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) and other tribal issues. The Flathead, Kootenai, and Upper Pend d'Oreille Tribes have reserved rights under the Hellgate Treaty of 1855. These rights include the "right of taking fish at all usual and accustomed places, in common with citizens of the Territory, and of erecting temporary buildings for curing; together with the privilege of hunting, gathering roots and berries, and pasturing their horses and cattle upon open and unclaimed land." The Federal government has trust responsibilities to the tribes under a government-to-government relationship to insure that the tribes' reserved rights are protected. Consultation with the tribes during the planning

process helped ensure that these trust responsibilities were met. Comments from the tribes were incorporated into the alternatives and considered when making our decision.

Invasive Species (Executive Order 13112)

Executive Order 13112 directs Federal agencies not to authorize any activities that would increase the spread of invasive species. The forest plan amendments are a programmatic action and do not authorize site-specific activities. We have determined the forest plan amendments comply with Executive Order 13112.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)

Executive Order 12898 directs Federal agencies to identify and address, as appropriate, any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations. We have determined from the analyses disclosed in the final EIS that the forest plan amendments comply with Executive Order 12898.

Prime Farmland, Rangeland, and Forest Land

We have determined from the analyses disclosed in the final EIS that prime farmland, rangeland, and forest land will not be affected because the selected alternative is a programmatic action and does not authorize site-specific activities.

Equal Employment Opportunity, Effects on Minorities, Women

The final EIS describes the impacts to social and economic factors in chapter 6. The selected alternative will not have a disproportionate impact on any minority or low-income communities. We have determined that the selected alternative will not differentially affect the civil rights of any citizens, including women and minorities.

Wetlands and Floodplains (Executive Orders 11988 and 11990)

The selected alternative is a programmatic action and does not authorize site-specific activities. We have determined that the selected alternative will not have adverse impacts on wetlands and floodplains and will comply with Executive Orders 11988 and 11990.

Other Policies

The existing body of national direction for managing national forests remains in effect.

Implementation

Our decision to amend the four forest plans of the Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests will become effective with the publication of the notice of approval in the Federal Register.

The amended forest plans will be implemented through a series of project-level decisions based on site-specific environmental analysis and public involvement. These analyses will be done in accordance with NEPA, and documented in the appropriate NEPA documents, i.e., environmental assessments or environmental impact statements, or will be categorically excluded from such documentation. Projects,

practices, and activities will be designed to be consistent with the applicable desired conditions, standards and guidelines in the amendments.

Transition to the Direction in This Amendment

This decision does not affect or apply to existing occupancy and use authorized by permits, contracts, or other instruments implementing approved projects and activities. All projects, activities, and resource plans authorized after approval of the amendments must be consistent with the amended plan components.

Delisting

The grizzly bear is listed as a threatened species in the 48 contiguous states. The revised Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan was approved by the USFWS on September 10, 1993. The recovery plan identifies six distinct recovery zones, including the NCDE, and unique recovery criteria for each population, with the intent that these individual populations would be delisted as they each achieve recovery (USFWS, 1993, pp. ii, 33-34). The Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan established two separate requirements that must be met before a population can be delisted: (1) attainment of the population demographic parameters for that ecosystem within the monitoring period specified and (2) development and completion of an interagency conservation strategy that will ensure that adequate regulatory mechanisms will continue to be present after delisting. The NCDE Conservation Strategy (USFWS, 2013) was completed and made available in July of 2018 (IGBC, 2018). The conservation strategy provides the interagency management strategy to ensure that the recovery of the NCDE grizzly bear population is sustained post-delisting. Each of the signatories will use their own authorities and procedures to approve and implement the conservation strategy.

Delisting of a species involves a formal process that must address the five factors in section 4(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act. These factors include population and habitat status and the existence of adequate regulatory mechanisms to ameliorate the identified threats. In its most recent status review of the grizzly bear, USFWS (2011a) concluded with regard to NFS lands in the NCDE that adequate regulatory mechanisms were lacking or incomplete with respect to food storage orders and the incorporation of motorized access direction into the forest plans.

We have chosen to amend the Helena, Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo forest plans at this time to provide a consistent, updated set of plan components for the NCDE based on the best available scientific information, including the draft and final NCDE Conservation Strategy and extensive published literature on the grizzly bear and its habitat. We believe the amendments will satisfy the requirement for adequate regulatory mechanisms on NFS lands to support a potential future delisting proposal for the NCDE. The amendments will be implemented regardless of if or when the USFWS proposes to delist the NCDE population. We are confident that the adoption of these habitat-related plan components will serve to support the continued recovery of the NCDE grizzly bear population.

Administrative Review and Objections

This decision was subject to the objection process identified in 36 CFR Part 219 Subpart B (219.50 to 219.62). A legal notice of the initiation of the 60-day objection period on the draft records of decision, forest plan for the Flathead National Forest, NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy forest plan amendments, and final environmental impact statement was published on December 14, 2017 in the Flathead, Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests' newspapers of record: *Daily Interlake*, *Missoulian*, and *Helena Independent*. The Forest Service received seventy-four timely objections. Interested parties and objectors attended a series of meetings, April 11-13, 2018 in Kalispell,

Montana to discuss objection issues. The reviewing officers issued their written responses to the objection issues on August 16, 2018. The written responses set forth the reasons for the response and contain instructions to the responsible officials. The written responses are the final decision by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the objections.

The reviewing officer found that for most issues, the review of the final EIS, the land management plan, the draft record of decision, and associated planning record established that the responsible official sufficiently addressed the objection issues and is in compliance with current law, regulation, and policy. For those issues that required additional clarification or modifications, the reviewing officer issued instructions to the Forest.

Modifications Made in Response to Instructions

As instructed by the reviewing officer, modifications to the final EIS, amendments, and to the planning record have been completed as indicated below. The instructions are organized by topic and include a summary of the issue and the Forest response. Some instructions required clarification or review of new information. Others required minor modifications in plan components or management area allocations. All modifications fall within the effects considered across the range of alternatives and are responsive to issues identified in previous comment periods and during objections.

Instructions were issued for eight broad topics. Two of the instructions are applicable to the decision on the amendments, while six apply only to the Flathead forest plan. The two instructions applicable to the amendments and our response are as follows.

Plan framework

Overall scientific integrity

Issue summary: Multiple objectors alleged a lack of scientific integrity throughout the analysis in general or regarding a specific issue. There were specific objections regarding the science used to inform grizzly bear habitat, aquatic habitat, and other resource plan components, addressed separately. This response addresses the broad obligations under the NEPA and the NFMA as they relate to considering scientific information during planning and environmental analysis.

Instruction: Clarify in the record how scientific information that was provided in public comment, but not cited in the assessment or final EIS, was considered during plan development and analysis.

Forest Response: Refer to “Role of Science” on page 14 of this document. Planning record exhibits #00984 (FNF, 2018) and #00675 (Kuennen, 2014) further describe how scientific information was considered during the planning process.

Grizzly bear

Use of Draft NCDE Conservation Strategy and Lack of Final Habitat-Based Recovery Criteria

Issue summary: Objectors are concerned that the EIS improperly relied on the draft NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy and a lack of final habitat-based recovery criteria. They believe this deprives the public of an opportunity to comment on actual decision documents.

Instruction: Review the final conservation strategy and habitat-based recovery criteria to determine whether changes to the plan and amendments are necessary, or whether additional analysis is warranted, prior to signing the final ROD.

Forest Response: Neither the habitat-based recovery criteria nor the final NCDE conservation strategy provide significant new information that was not previously considered in the development of alternatives and analysis of effects in the final EIS. No changes to the forest plan are necessary, with one exception, a minor rewording of guideline FW-GDL-REC-01 was made to fully capture one of the conservation strategy's application rules. The intent was already implied in the guideline and the rewording does not alter the previous analysis or conclusions. The USFWS concurred that the wording change does not alter the analysis or conclusions of their biological opinion. See planning record exhibits #00993 and #00994.

We have completed our response to the instructions from the Regional Forester and may proceed with signing the final records of decision for the amendments.

Contact person

For additional information concerning this decision contact Julie Schaefers, Director Ecosystem Assessment and Planning (address: USDA Forest Service, Northern Region, 26 Fort Missoula Rd., Missoula, MT 59804), telephone (406) 329-3453.

Responsible Officials



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Appendix 1: Forest Plan Amendments—Incorporating Habitat Management Direction for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Population Helena-Lewis and Clark, Kootenai, and Lolo National Forests

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Abbreviations

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DC	desired condition (forest plan component)
DCA	demographic connectivity area
GBCS	Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy
GDL	guideline (forest plan component)
NCDE	Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem
NFS	National Forest System
OMRD	open motorized route density
PCA	primary conservation area
STD	standard (forest plan component)
TMRD	total motorized route density
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Amendment Management Direction

The desired conditions, standards, and guidelines have specific alphanumeric identifiers. All identifiers for the management direction begin with “NCDE” because they are only applicable to the NCDE and are not applicable to other grizzly bear ecosystems. The identifiers are further differentiated as follows:

- area where direction applies (e.g., NCDE or NCDE-HNF Zone 1);
- type of forest plan component (i.e., DC = desired condition, STD = standard, GDL = guideline), or MON = monitoring item;
- resource (e.g., AR = access and recreation, GRZ = grazing, SFP = special forest products); and
- a unique number (i.e., numerical order starting with “01”).

As an example, direction from this amendment for a desired condition associated with access and recreation would be identified as NCDE-DC-AR-01.

For clarity, the plan components have been tailored to each forest plan to reflect whether the various zones and demographic connectivity areas occur on that unit (table 1-1). For example, only those plan components that are applicable to the recovery zone/primary conservation area, zone 1, and the Salish demographic connectivity area are included for the Kootenai National Forest plan since there is no zone 2 or zone 3 on the Kootenai National Forest. See figure 1-1 for the vicinity map of the NCDE national forests and management zones. The section on each Forest includes a Forest-specific map that shows the draft Conservation Strategy management zones.

Table 1-1. Acres of NFS land and percent* of total acres of all lands in each grizzly bear management zone, for each of the forest plans in the NCDE

National Forest	Recovery zone/PCA acres (percent)	Zone 1 including DCA acres (percent)	Zone 2 acres (percent)	Zone 3 acres (percent)
Flathead	2,136,536 (37%)	231,548 (5%)	-	-
Helena	183,758 (3%)	149,207 (3%)	642,786 (14%)	5,792 (< 1%)
Kootenai	118,770 (2%)	283,302 (6%)	-	-
Lewis and Clark	777,963 (14%)	6 (< 1%)	2 acres (< 1%)	972,612 (8%)
Lolo	268,390 (5%)	386,274 (8%)	38 acres (< 1%)	-

Note. DCA = demographic connectivity area, PCA = primary conservation area.

* Percent is Forest’s acres of that zone by the total acres for all lands within that zone.

Project and activity consistency with the plan amendment

As required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976, all projects and activities authorized by the Forest Service after the record of decision for the forest plan amendments must be consistent with the applicable plan components (16 U.S.C. 1604 (i)). Consistency with the plan components within this amendment are defined as follows:

1. **Desired conditions and objectives.** The project or activity contributes to the maintenance or attainment of one or more desired conditions or objectives or does not foreclose the opportunity to maintain or achieve any desired conditions or objectives over the long term.
2. **Standards.** The project or activity complies with applicable standards.
3. **Guidelines.** The project or activity

- i. complies with applicable guidelines as set out in the plan or
 - ii. is designed in a way that is as effective in achieving the purpose of the applicable guidelines (§ 219.7(e)(1)(iv)).
4. **Suitability.** A project or activity occurs in an area
- i. that the plan identifies as suitable for that type of project or activity or
 - ii. for which the plan is silent with respect to its suitability for that type of project or activity.

When a proposed project or activity would not be consistent with the applicable plan components, the responsible official shall take one of the following steps, subject to valid existing right::

- modify the proposed project or activity to make it consistent with the applicable plan components,
- reject the proposal or terminate the project or activity,
- amend the plan so that the project or activity will be consistent with the plan as amended, or
- amend the plan contemporaneously with the approval of the project or activity so that the project or activity will be consistent with the plan as amended. This amendment may be limited to apply only to the project or activity.

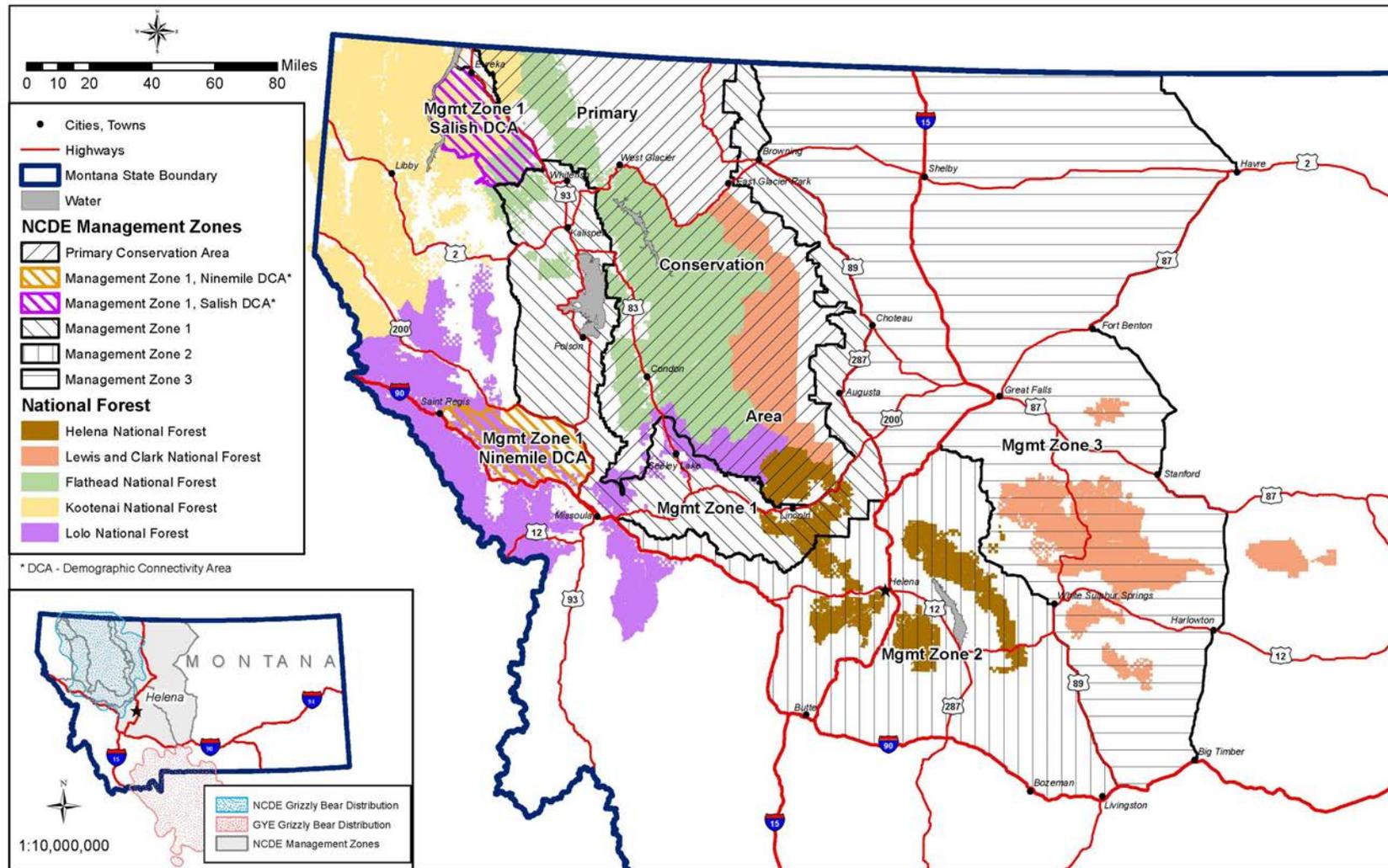


Figure 1-1. The Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem vicinity map, with inset showing NCDE and Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem grizzly bear distributions.

Helena National Forest Plan Amendment

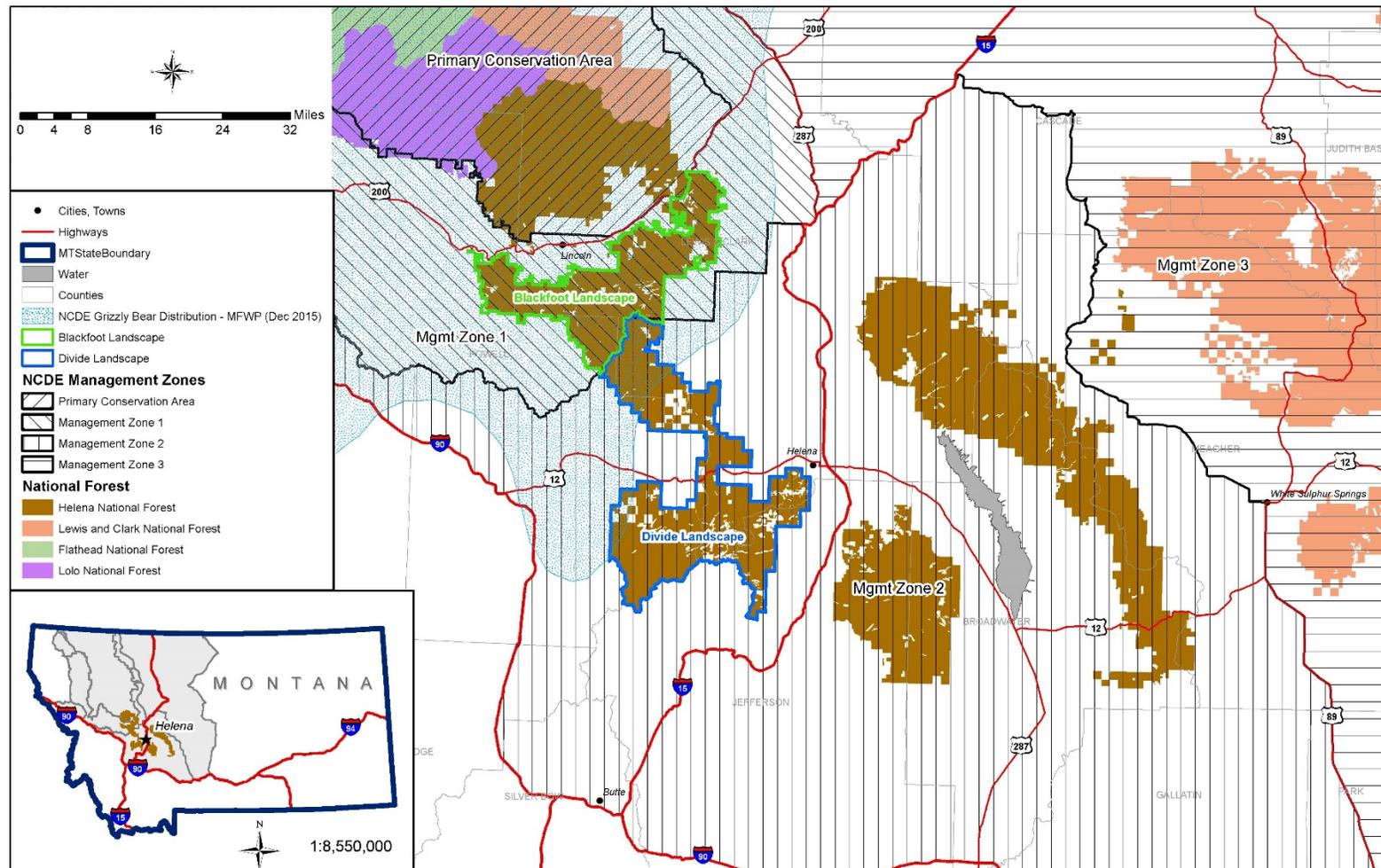


Figure 1-2. Grizzly bear management zones on the Helena National Forest and NCDE grizzly bear distribution (MFWP 2015)

Wildlife (WL)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-WL-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2, bear attractants on NFS lands are stored in a manner that reduces the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, grizzly bear habitat on NFS lands contributes to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE and contributes to connectivity with neighboring grizzly bear recovery zones.

NCDE-DC-WL-03. The risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts is reduced by information, education, and design features or criteria for management activities.

Standards

NCDE-STD-WL-01. Grizzly bear habitat on NFS lands in the NCDE shall be delineated and managed as primary conservation area, zone 1, zone 2, or zone 3 (see figure 1-2 or subsequent USFWS updates if applicable).

NCDE-STD-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2, food/wildlife attractant storage special order(s) shall apply to NFS lands.

NCDE-STD-WL-03. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, temporary changes in the open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall be calculated for roads used for projects (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)”) during the non-denning season (see glossary). Calculations will include estimated changes for each year of the anticipated duration of the project and shall be incorporated into the 10-year running average required by standard NCDE-STD-AR-03.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-WL-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2, contractors, permittees, lessees, operators, and their employees should be informed of food/wildlife attractant storage special order(s) and procedures for safely working and recreating in grizzly bear country, prior to turnout of livestock or beginning work and annually thereafter, in order to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2, if a contractor, permittee, lessee, or operator or their employees elect to camp on NFS lands other than in a developed recreation site, the site should be evaluated and written authorization (i.e., a campsite agreement that includes the food/wildlife attractant storage special order) should be provided before the campsite is established. The purpose is to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-WL-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, clover should not be used in seed mixes on NFS lands. Native seed mixes or those that are less palatable to grizzly bears should be used so that seeded areas do not become an attractant.

Access and Recreation (AR)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-AR-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, motorized access provides for multiple uses (such as harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products; hunting, fishing, and recreation opportunities) on NFS lands while providing open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core levels that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-AR-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number, capacity, and improvements of developed recreation sites provide for user comfort and safety while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands.

NCDE-DC-AR-03. Within each bear management unit in the primary conservation area, increases in the number and capacity of developed recreation sites on NFS lands that are designed and managed for overnight use during the non-denning season are at levels that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

Standards

NCDE-STD-AR-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, motorized use of roads with public restrictions shall be permitted for administrative use (see glossary) as long as doing so does not exceed either six trips (three round trips) per week *or* one 30-day unlimited use period during the non-denning season (see glossary). The exception to this standard is:

- emergency situations as defined by 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 218.21.

Note: Administrative use is not included in baseline calculations and is not included in calculations of net increases or decreases. If the level of administrative use exceeds this standard, the use is counted as a project (see “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-02. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net decrease to the baseline (see glossary) for secure core and no net increase to the baseline for open motorized route density or total motorized route density on NFS lands during the non-denning season (see glossary). The following conditions are not considered a net increase/decrease from the baseline:

- administrative use (see glossary);
- temporary use of a motorized route for a project (see “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) that meets the conditions stipulated in NCDE-STD-AR-03;
- mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) conducted in accordance with valid existing rights and applicable standards and guidelines listed under NCDE-MIN;
- updated or improved data on a motorized route without an actual change on the ground;
- changes in technology or projections that result in changed open motorized route density, total motorized route density, or secure core values without actual change on the ground (e.g., a switch from the North American Datum of 1927 to the North American Datum of 1983 geodetic reference system);

- a road closure location is moved a short distance to a better location (e.g., to the nearest intersection or turnout) to allow a turn-around providing for public safety, to reduce vandalism, or to improve enforcement of the road closure;
- the agency exchanges, acquires, buys, or sells lands with motorized routes;
- a change in a motorized route necessary to comply with Federal laws;
- a change in a motorized route necessary to address grizzly bear-human conflicts, human safety concerns, or resource damage or concerns (e.g., a road paralleling a stream may be decommissioned and replaced by a new upslope road to reduce water quality impacts);
- a change made by an adjacent landowner that decreases the percentage of secure core or increases open motorized route density or total motorized route density values on an adjacent national forest;
- use of a motorized route for emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21; and
- temporary roads (see glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-03. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, temporary changes in open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall be allowed for projects (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary). The 10-year running average for open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall not exceed the following limits during the non-denning season (see glossary):

- 5 percent temporary increase in open motorized route density in each bear management subunit (i.e., open motorized route density baseline plus 5 percent);
- 3 percent temporary increase in total motorized route density in each bear management subunit (i.e., total motorized route density baseline plus 3 percent); and
- 2 percent temporary decrease in secure core in each bear management subunit (i.e., secure core baseline minus 2 percent).

Exceptions to this standard include

- temporary changes for emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21 and
- temporary changes for actions where valid existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases).

Refer to page 1-55 for examples of how to calculate and apply the 10-year running average and temporary increase/decrease.

NCDE-STD-AR-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, a restricted road may be temporarily opened for public motorized use to allow authorized uses (such as firewood gathering), provided the period of use does not exceed 30 consecutive days during one non-denning season and occurs outside of spring and fall bear hunting seasons. However, temporary public use of a restricted road shall not be authorized in secure core (see glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number and capacity of developed recreation sites on NFS lands that are designed and managed for overnight use by the public during the non-denning season (e.g., campgrounds, cabin rentals, huts, guest lodges, recreation residences) shall be limited to one increase above the baseline (see glossary) in the number or capacity per decade per bear management unit. The following conditions are not considered an increase from the baseline:

- the agency obtains better information or updated information in its database(s);

- the agency acquires land that contains developed recreation sites;
- the agency increases the number or capacity of a developed recreation site in order to comply with Federal laws;
- the agency maintains or modifies an existing overnight developed or dispersed recreation site in such a way that does not increase the number or capacity of the site (e.g., installing a pit toilet to avoid damage to water resources or installing a bear-resistant food storage structure to reduce grizzly bear-human conflicts);
- the agency modifies an existing developed recreation site to enhance human safety (e.g., enlarging a road pullout to allow trailers to safely turn around);
- the agency operates a developed recreation site to allow overnight use only during the denning season (see glossary); and
- the agency makes a corresponding reduction in the number or capacity of overnight developed recreation sites in the same bear management unit through any of the following means: (1) equal reduction in capacity at another site; (2) closure of a developed site(s); or (3) consolidation and/or elimination of dispersed camping, when and where it can be enforced effectively and it is reasonably assured that new dispersed sites will not develop nearby. If these measures are used to offset an increase in number or capacity, they must be in place before the initiation of the increase. If the agency reduces the number or capacity of developed sites below baseline levels, these reductions may be used at a future date to mitigate equivalent impacts of an increase, expansion, or change of use in developed sites within that bear management unit.

Note: This standard does not apply to dispersed recreation sites or to developed recreation sites managed for day use only (e.g., outfitter camps, roadside trail crossings, or interpretive pullouts; trailheads, picnic areas, or boat launches that are closed at night; ski areas that do not have overnight lodging).

NCDE-STD-AR-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new or reauthorized recreation permits shall include a clause providing for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities if needed to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-AR-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new or reauthorized permits for ski areas on NFS lands that operate during the non-denning season shall include requirements to limit the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts (e.g., to store garbage in a bear-resistant manner).

NCDE-STD-AR-08. Within modeled grizzly bear denning habitat in the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net increase in the percentage of area or miles of routes designated for motorized over-snow vehicle use on NFS lands during the den emergence time period (see glossary).

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-AR-01. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, each project (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) should be designed so that on-the-ground implementation does not exceed 5 years to reduce the potential for grizzly bear disturbance or displacement. Exceptions may be made where necessary, for example to accommodate:

- actions where existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases);

- prescribed burning (including slash disposal), best management practices to protect water quality, or required reforestation activities; or
- emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21.

If an extension to the five-year time limitation is required (e.g., to meet contractual obligations or to complete on-the-ground treatments), the reasons should be documented in writing prior to authorization of the extension.

NCDE-GDL-AR-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, secure core, open motorized route density, and total motorized route density should be restored to pre-project levels (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) within 1 year after completion of the project to reduce the potential duration of grizzly bear disturbance due to project-related activities. Exceptions may be made where necessary, for example to accommodate:

- actions where existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases);
- prescribed burning (including slash disposal), best management practices to protect water quality, or required reforestation activities; or
- emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21.

If an extension to the 1-year time limitation is made (e.g., to meet contractual obligations or to complete on-the-ground treatments), the reasons should be documented in writing prior to authorization of the extension.

NCDE-GDL-AR-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, if the number or capacity of day-use or overnight developed recreation sites is increased, the project should include one or more measures to reduce the risk of grizzly-bear human conflicts in that bear management unit. The measure(s) should be in place prior to completion of the project or be included as one of the design criteria. Measures can include but are not limited to additional public information and education; providing backcountry food-hanging poles or bear-resistant food or garbage storage devices; project design criteria that would limit capacity increases to those needed for public health and safety; and increasing law enforcement and patrols.

Terrestrial Ecosystems Vegetation (VEG)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-VEG-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the amount, type, and distribution of vegetation provide for the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of NFS lands while providing habitat components that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-VEG-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, there is a mosaic of successional stages to provide for grizzly bear habitat needs over the long term.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-VEG-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, measures to reduce the risk of disturbance to the grizzly bear population should be incorporated into vegetation and fuels project design criteria, which vary on a site-specific basis (e.g., some activities should be restricted in spring habitat during the spring; areas with low levels of human activity should be provided adjacent to areas with high levels of disturbance). Note: Management activities such as pre-commercial thinning, burning, weed spraying, and implementation of road best management practices may need to be completed during the spring in order to meet resource objectives (especially if needed to prevent resource damage), in which

case other measures should be used to reduce the risk of disturbance (e.g., limiting the duration of the activity or limiting the use of closed roads).

NCDE-GDL-VEG-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management activities should be designed to avoid detrimental effects on the grizzly bear population and to include one or more measures to protect, maintain, increase, and/or improve grizzly habitat quantity or quality (e.g., promoting growth of berry-producing shrubs, forbs, or grasses known to be bear foods) in areas where it would not increase the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-VEG-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, measures to retain cover (where present) along a portion of grass/forb/shrub openings, riparian wildlife habitat, or wetlands should be incorporated in project design criteria (this varies on a site-specific basis).

NCDE-GDL-VEG-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management projects (including timber sales and other non-commercial vegetation management contracts) should include a provision for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities, if needed, to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-GDL-VEG-05. To reduce the risk of grizzly-bear human conflicts within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management activities designed to enhance grizzly habitat (e.g., to increase huckleberry production) should not occur in or next to campgrounds, administrative facilities, or other developed recreation sites that operate during the non-denning season.

Grazing (GRZ)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number, capacity of, and improvements on cattle and sheep grazing allotments support ecologically sustainable grazing, and temporary grazing permits are used effectively for management of noxious weeds while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands.

Standards

NCDE-STD-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, new or reauthorized livestock grazing permits and annual operating plans shall incorporate requirements to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts (e.g., a food/wildlife attractant storage special order). New or reauthorized permits shall include a clause providing for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities, if needed, to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, a sheep grazing permit in non-use status shall not be allowed to increase allowable animal unit months beyond what was previously permitted prior to being in non-use when it is returned to use.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, permits for livestock grazing shall include a provision that requires the reporting of livestock carcasses within 24 hours of discovery, which shall be followed by proper disposal of the carcass. Boneyards shall not be established on NFS lands.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, there shall be no increase in the number of active sheep allotments or in permitted sheep animal unit months above the baseline (see glossary) on NFS lands. Allowable animal unit months shall not be increased for inactive allotments.

Note: Existing allotments may be combined or divided as long as doing so does not result in grazing allotments in currently unallotted lands or an increase in animal unit months.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net increase in the number of active cattle grazing allotments above the baseline (see glossary) on NFS lands. Note: Existing allotments may be combined or divided as long as doing so does not result in grazing allotments in currently unallotted lands.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, temporary permits for grazing by small livestock for purposes such as controlling invasive exotic weeds, reducing fire risk, or trailing of small livestock across NFS lands shall not result in an increase in bear-small livestock conflicts.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01. On NFS lands within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number of open or active sheep grazing allotments should be reduced if an opportunity exists with a willing permittee, to reduce the risk of conflicts with grizzly bears.

NCDE-GDL-GRZ-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, an allotment management plan and plan of operation should specify any needed measures to protect key grizzly bear food production areas (e.g., wet meadows, stream bottoms, aspen groves, and other riparian wildlife habitats) from conflicting and competing use by livestock (this varies on a site-specific basis).

Special Forest Products (SFP)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-SFP-01. National forest system lands provide a variety of public services and special forest products (such as mushrooms, huckleberries, firewood) while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands in the NCDE.

Standard

NCDE-STD-SFP-01. Special-use permits for apiaries (beehives) located on NFS lands shall incorporate measures including electric fencing to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts, as specified in the food/wildlife attractant storage special order.

Renewable/Non-Renewable Energy and Mineral Resources (MIN)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-MIN-01. Mineral materials are available based upon public interest, in-service needs, material availability, and valid existing rights, where consistent with desired conditions for other resources.

Standards

NCDE-STD-MIN-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) occurring on NFS lands, where feasible shall avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate environmental impacts to grizzly bears or their habitat, subject to valid existing rights. Stipulations or mitigation measures already included in existing leases, permits, or plans of

operation on NFS lands shall not be changed, nor will additional stipulations or mitigation measures be added, without the lease, permit, or plan of operation holder's agreement.

NCDE-STD-MIN-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, new or reauthorized permits, leases, and/or plans of operation shall include a provision for modification or temporary cessation of activities if needed to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-MIN-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include measures to reasonably mitigate potential impacts of mineral development for the following:

- land surface and vegetation disturbance;
- water table alterations that affect bear foods on the surface; and
- construction, operation, and reclamation of mine-related facilities such as impoundments, rights of way, motorized routes, pipelines, canals, transmission lines, or other structures.

NCDE-STD-MIN-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, in addition to measures included in the food/wildlife attractant special order(s), new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include the following measures regarding grizzly bear attractants:

- bear-resistant food storage and garbage containers shall be used at development sites and at any campgrounds or dispersed sites where exploration or production-related human occupancy is anticipated;
- garbage shall be removed in a timely manner;
- road kills shall be removed daily during active operating periods to a designated location determined in close coordination with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks;
- feeding of wildlife shall not be allowed; and
- locations of work camps shall be approved in advance of operations. Food storage requirements shall be strictly adhered to in any work camps.

NCDE-STD-MIN-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, if minerals activities have the potential to adversely affect grizzly bears or their habitat as determined by a site-specific analysis, new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include the following mitigation measures, stipulations, or surface use criteria regarding grizzly bear habitat:

- ground-disturbing activities in identified grizzly bear spring habitat (as identified in a site-specific biological evaluation or other environmental document) shall be avoided between April 1 and June 30. If timing restrictions are not practicable, other measures shall be taken to reasonably mitigate negative impacts of mineral activity to grizzly bears;
- seismic activity in identified grizzly bear denning habitat (as identified in a site-specific biological evaluation or other environmental document) shall be avoided during the denning season (see glossary). If timing restrictions are not practicable, other measures shall be taken to reasonably mitigate negative impacts to the grizzly bear;
- cumulative impacts of multiple concurrent seismic and/or drilling operations shall be limited by timing restrictions. If timing restrictions are not practicable, reasonable and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate negative impacts to the grizzly bear;
- reasonable and appropriate measures regarding the maintenance, rehabilitation, restoration, or mitigation of functioning aquatic systems and riparian habitat conservation areas shall identify how

reclamation will occur, plant species to be used in reclamation, a timeframe of when reclamation will be completed, and monitoring criteria; and

- reclamation and revegetation of motorized routes, drilling pads, and other areas disturbed by mineral activities shall be completed as soon as practicable by the operator.

NCDE-STD-MIN-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, if mineral activities have the potential to adversely affect grizzly bears or their habitat as determined by a site-specific analysis, new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases shall include the following mitigation measures regarding motorized access:

- public motorized use that is not associated with minerals activities shall be prohibited on motorized routes constructed for exploration and/or development;
- a traffic management plan shall be developed as part of the proposed activity to identify when and how motorized routes will be used, maintained, and monitored (if required) and how motorized route standards and guidelines will be implemented after activities have ended;
- helicopter use associated with seismic activity, exploration, drilling, or development must follow an approved plan or permit; and
- speed limits shall be adopted on motorized routes if needed to prevent or reduce collisions with grizzly bears.

NCDE-STD-MIN-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, minerals contractors and lessees shall require employees to attend training related to safely living near and working in grizzly bear habitat prior to starting work and on an annual basis thereafter.

NCDE-STD-MIN-08. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new leases for leasable minerals shall include a no surface occupancy stipulation (see glossary).

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-MIN-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, in addition to forestwide guidelines, the following guidelines apply to new leasable minerals activities, including leases, surface use plans for proposed wells or operations, and permits to conduct seismic exploration or drilling. To reduce potential grizzly bear disturbance or displacement, helicopter use plans should:

- avoid establishing recurring helicopter use (see glossary), especially in spring habitats or other known important grizzly bear habitats or use areas; and
- avoid establishing landing zones, especially in spring habitats or other known important grizzly bear habitats or use areas. If a landing zone is deemed necessary for safe implementation of the seismic or surface use plan or permit to drill, the landing zone should be constructed only in an area that has had site-specific analysis and approval.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, leasable energy activities should use the best available noise-reduction technology on equipment and motorized vehicles to reduce potential disturbance or displacement of grizzly bears, whenever possible.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, along motorized routes, seismic corridors, and pipelines constructed for leasable energy activities, wildlife cover should be maintained at regular intervals where present (this varies on a site-specific basis) in order to provide habitat connectivity for grizzly bears.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, for locatable and non-energy leasable minerals activities with the potential to adversely affect the grizzly bear or its habitat (this varies on a site-specific basis), the following tiered measures should be considered to mitigate impacts to grizzly bear habitat. Beginning at step 1, any subsequent steps would be implemented only if the prior steps are not possible or achievable.

- Step 1: The operator should reclaim the affected area back to suitable bear habitat that has similar or improved characteristics and qualities compared to the original habitat (such as the same native vegetation).
- Step 2: If step 1 is not attainable, operators should either acquire a perpetual conservation easement (or easements) or purchase comparable or better replacement grizzly bear habitat within the primary conservation area. Acquisition of habitat within connectivity corridors could also be considered for mitigation, when appropriate. Habitat acquired for mitigation may require a purchase rate of > 1:1 on an acreage basis, depending on the quality of habitat degraded and habitat available for acquisition.
- Step 3: If steps 1 and 2 are not achievable, the next option is to offset negative effects to bears and grizzly bear habitat with other appropriate types of actions.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, carrying bear deterrent spray should be recommended to mineral permittees, lessees and operators to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, available resources at existing gravel pits should be used before constructing new pits to reduce the risk of grizzly bear disturbance or displacement associated with blasting of rock or crushing of gravel.

Helena National Forest—Zone 1

Desired conditions

NCDE-HNF Zone 1-DC-01. Within zone 1 on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest (see figure 1-2), roads and trails provide for public and administrative access to NFS lands. Grizzly bear habitat in zone 1 contributes to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE and providing the opportunity for movement of male bears to provide genetic connectivity with the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

NCDE-HNF Zone 1&2-DC-02. On the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, within zone 1 and the portion of zone 2 west of Interstate 15, NFS lands adjacent to highways are consolidated and other efforts to reduce barriers to genetic connectivity of grizzly bear populations are supported.

Standard

NCDE-HNF Zone 1-STD-01. Within zone 1 on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest (see figure 1-2), there shall be no net increase above the baseline in density of motorized routes (roads and trails) open to public motorized use during the non-denning season on NFS lands. Open motorized route density is calculated by dividing the total miles of open motorized routes on NFS lands in zone 1 by the total square miles of NFS land area in that same area (see figure 1-2). This standard does not apply to the following:

- motorized use by agency personnel or others authorized by the appropriate agency personnel;

- temporarily opening a road for a short period of time to allow for public firewood gathering and other authorized use;
- updated or improved road data without an actual change on the ground;
- changes in technology or projections that result in changed calculations without actual change on the ground (e.g., a switch in geodetic systems from the North American Datum of 1927 to the North American Datum of 1983);
- a road closure location is moved a short distance to a better location (e.g., to the nearest intersection or turnout) to allow a turn-around providing for public safety, to reduce vandalism, or to improve enforcement of the road closure;
- the agency exchanges, acquires, buys, or sells lands with motorized routes;
- a change in an open road necessary to comply with Federal laws;
- motorized use for mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) conducted in accordance with valid existing rights and applicable standards and guidelines;
- a change in a motorized route necessary to address grizzly bear-human conflicts, resource damage, or human safety concerns;
- use of motorized routes in emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21; and
- temporary roads (see glossary).

Kootenai National Forest Plan Amendment

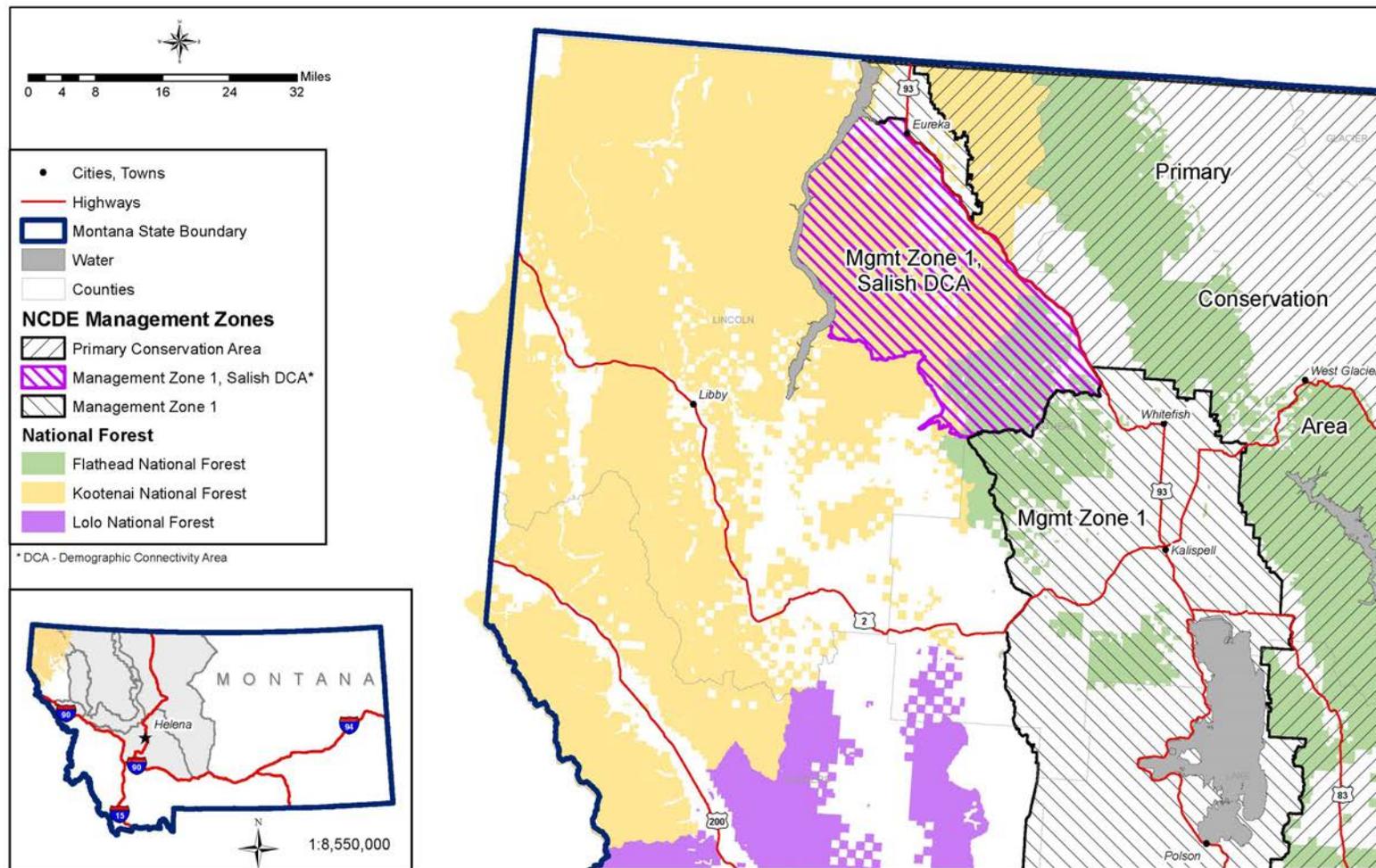


Figure 1-3. Grizzly bear management zones on the Kootenai National Forest

Wildlife (WL)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-WL-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), bear attractants on NFS lands are stored in a manner that reduces the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), grizzly bear habitat on NFS lands contributes to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE and contributes to connectivity with neighboring grizzly bear recovery zones.

NCDE-DC-WL-03. The risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts is reduced by information, education, and design features or criteria for management activities.

Standards

NCDE-STD-WL-01. Grizzly bear habitat on NFS lands in the NCDE shall be delineated and managed as primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area) (see Figure 1-3 or subsequent USFWS updates if applicable).

NCDE-STD-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), food/wildlife attractant storage special order(s) shall apply to NFS lands.

NCDE-STD-WL-03. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, temporary changes in the open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall be calculated for roads used for projects (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)”) during the non-denning season (see glossary). Calculations will include estimated changes for each year of the anticipated duration of the project and will be incorporated into the 10-year running average required by standard NCDE-STD-AR-03.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-WL-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), contractors, permittees, lessees, operators, and their employees should be informed of food/wildlife attractant storage special order(s) and procedures for safely working and recreating in grizzly bear country, prior to turnout of livestock or beginning work and annually thereafter, in order to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), if a contractor, permittee, lessee, operator or their employees elect to camp on NFS lands other than in a developed recreation site, the site should be evaluated and written authorization (i.e., a campsite agreement that includes the food/wildlife attractant storage special order) should be provided before the campsite is established. The purpose is to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-WL-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), clover should not be used in seed mixes on NFS lands. Native seed mixes or those that are less palatable to grizzly bears should be used so that seeded areas do not become an attractant.

Access and Recreation (AR)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-AR-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, motorized access provides for multiple uses (such as harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products; hunting, fishing, and recreation opportunities) on NFS lands while providing open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core levels that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-AR-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number, capacity, and improvements of developed recreation sites provide for user comfort and safety while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands.

NCDE-DC-AR-03. Within each bear management unit in the primary conservation area, increases in the number and capacity of developed recreation sites on NFS lands that are designed and managed for overnight use during the non-denning season are at levels that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

Standards

NCDE-STD-AR-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, motorized use of roads with public restrictions shall be permitted for administrative use (see glossary) as long as doing so does not exceed either six trips (three round trips) per week *or* one 30-day unlimited use period during the non-denning season (see glossary). The exception to this standard is:

- emergency situations as defined by 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 218.21.

Note: Administrative use is not included in baseline calculations and is not included in calculations of net increases or decreases. If the level of administrative use exceeds this standard, the use is counted as a project (see “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-02. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net decrease to the baseline (see glossary) for secure core and no net increase to the baseline for open motorized route density open motorized route density or total motorized route density on NFS lands during the non-denning season (see glossary). The following conditions are not considered a net increase/decrease from the baseline:

- administrative use (see glossary);
- temporary use of a motorized route for a project (see “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) that meets the conditions stipulated in NCDE-STD-AR-03;
- mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) conducted in accordance with valid existing rights and applicable standards and guidelines listed under NCDE-MIN;
- updated or improved data on a motorized route without an actual change on the ground;
- changes in technology or projections that result in changed open motorized route density, total motorized route density, or secure core values without actual change on the ground (e.g., a switch from the North American Datum of 1927 to the North American Datum of 1983 geodetic reference system);

- a road closure location is moved a short distance to a better location (e.g., to the nearest intersection or turnout) to allow a turn-around providing for public safety, to reduce vandalism, or to improve enforcement of the road closure;
- the agency exchanges, acquires, buys, or sells lands with motorized routes;
- a change in a motorized route necessary to comply with Federal laws;
- a change in a motorized route necessary to address grizzly bear-human conflicts, human safety concerns, or resource damage/concerns (e.g., a road paralleling a stream may be decommissioned and replaced by a new upslope road to reduce water quality impacts);
- a change made by an adjacent landowner that decreases the percentage of secure core or increases open motorized route density or total motorized route density values on an adjacent national forest;
- use of a motorized route for emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21; and
- temporary roads (see glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-03. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, temporary changes in open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall be allowed for projects (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary). The 10-year running average for open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall not exceed the following limits during the non-denning season (see glossary):

- 5 percent temporary increase in open motorized route density in each bear management subunit (i.e., open motorized route density baseline plus 5 percent);
- 3 percent temporary increase in total motorized route density in each bear management subunit (i.e., total motorized route density baseline plus 3 percent); and
- 2 percent temporary decrease in secure core in each bear management subunit (i.e., secure core baseline minus 2 percent).

Exceptions to this standard include

- temporary changes for emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21; and
- temporary changes for actions where valid existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases).

Refer to page 1-55 for examples of how to calculate and apply the 10-year running average and temporary increase/decrease.

NCDE-STD-AR-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, a restricted road may be temporarily opened for public motorized use to allow authorized uses (such as firewood gathering), provided the period of use does not exceed 30 consecutive days during one non-denning season and occurs outside of spring and fall bear hunting seasons. However, temporary public use of a restricted road shall not be authorized in secure core (see glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number and capacity of developed recreation sites on NFS lands that are designed and managed for overnight use by the public during the non-denning season (e.g., campgrounds, cabin rentals, huts, guest lodges, recreation residences) shall be limited to one increase above the baseline (see glossary) in the number or capacity per decade per bear management unit. The following conditions are not considered an increase from the baseline:

- the agency obtains better information or updated information in its database(s);

- the agency acquires land that contains developed recreation sites;
- the agency increases the number or capacity of a developed recreation site in order to comply with Federal laws;
- the agency maintains or modifies an existing overnight developed or dispersed recreation site in such a way that does not increase the number or capacity of the site (e.g., installing a pit toilet to avoid damage to water resources or installing a bear-resistant food storage structure to reduce grizzly bear-human conflicts);
- the agency modifies an existing developed recreation site to enhance human safety (e.g., enlarging a road pullout to allow trailers to safely turn around);
- the agency operates a developed recreation site to allow overnight use only during the denning season (see glossary); and
- the agency makes a corresponding reduction in the number or capacity of overnight developed recreation sites in the same bear management unit through any of the following means: (1) equal reduction in capacity at another site; (2) closure of a developed site(s); or (3) consolidation and/or elimination of dispersed camping, when and where it can be enforced effectively and it is reasonably assured that new dispersed sites will not develop nearby. If these measures are used to offset an increase in number or capacity, they must be in place before the initiation of the increase. If the agency reduces the number or capacity of developed sites below baseline levels, these reductions may be used at a future date to mitigate equivalent impacts of an increase, expansion, or change of use in developed sites within that bear management unit.

Note: This standard does not apply to dispersed recreation sites or to developed recreation sites managed for day use only (e.g., outfitter camps, roadside trail crossings, or interpretive pullouts; trailheads, picnic areas, or boat launches that are closed at night; ski areas that do not have overnight lodging).

NCDE-STD-AR-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new or reauthorized recreation permits shall include a clause providing for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities if needed to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-AR-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new or reauthorized permits for ski areas on NFS lands that operate during the non-denning season shall include requirements to limit the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts (e.g., to store garbage in a bear-resistant manner).

NCDE-STD-AR-08. Within modeled grizzly bear denning habitat in the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net increase in the percentage of area or miles of routes designated for motorized over-snow vehicle use on NFS lands during the den emergence time period (see glossary).

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-AR-01. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, each project (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) should be designed so that on-the-ground implementation does not exceed 5 years to reduce the potential duration of grizzly bear disturbance or displacement due to project-related activities. Exceptions may be made where necessary, for example to accommodate:

- actions where existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases);

- prescribed burning (including slash disposal), best management practices to protect water quality, or required reforestation activities; or
- emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21.

If an extension to the five-year time limitation is required (e.g., to meet contractual obligations or to complete on-the-ground treatments), the reasons should be documented in writing prior to authorization of the extension.

NCDE-GDL-AR-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, secure core, open motorized route density, and total motorized route density should be restored to pre-project levels (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) within 1 year after completion of the project to reduce the potential duration of grizzly bear disturbance due to project-related activities. Exceptions may be made where necessary, for example to accommodate:

- actions where existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases);
- prescribed burning (including slash disposal), best management practices to protect water quality, or required reforestation activities; or
- emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21.

If an extension to the 1-year time limitation is made (e.g., to meet contractual obligations or to complete on-the-ground treatments), the reasons should be documented in writing prior to authorization of the extension.

NCDE-GDL-AR-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, if the number or capacity of day-use or overnight developed recreation sites is increased, the project should include one or more measures to reduce the risk of grizzly-bear human conflicts in that bear management unit. The measure(s) should be in place prior to completion of the project or be included as one of the design criteria. Measures can include but are not limited to: additional public information and education; providing backcountry food-hanging poles or bear-resistant food or garbage storage devices; project design criteria that would limit capacity increases to those needed for public health and safety; and increasing law enforcement and patrols.

Terrestrial Ecosystems Vegetation (VEG)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-VEG-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the amount, type, and distribution of vegetation provide for the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of NFS lands while providing habitat components that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-VEG-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, there is a mosaic of successional stages to provide for grizzly bear habitat needs over the long term.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-VEG-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, measures to reduce the risk of disturbance to the grizzly bear population should be incorporated into vegetation and fuels project design criteria, which vary on a site-specific basis (e.g., some activities should be restricted in spring habitat during the spring; areas with low levels of human activity should be provided adjacent to areas with high levels of disturbance). Note: Management activities such as pre-commercial thinning, burning, weed spraying, and implementation of road best management practices may need to be completed during the

spring in order to meet resource objectives (especially if needed to prevent resource damage), in which case other measures should be used to reduce the risk of disturbance (e.g., limiting the duration of the activity or limiting the use of closed roads).

NCDE-GDL-VEG-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management activities should be designed to avoid detrimental effects on the grizzly bear population and to include one or more measures to protect, maintain, increase, and/or improve grizzly habitat quantity or quality (e.g., promoting growth of berry-producing shrubs, forbs, or grasses known to be bear foods) in areas where it would not increase the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-VEG-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, measures to retain cover (where present) along a portion of grass/forb/shrub openings, riparian wildlife habitat, or wetlands should be incorporated in project design criteria (this varies on a site-specific basis).

NCDE-GDL-VEG-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management projects (including timber sales and other non-commercial vegetation management contracts) should include a provision for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities, if needed, to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-GDL-VEG-05. To reduce the risk of grizzly-bear human conflicts within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management activities designed to enhance grizzly habitat (e.g., to increase huckleberry production) should not occur in or next to campgrounds, administrative facilities, or other developed recreation sites that operate during the non-denning season.

Grazing (GRZ)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number, capacity of, and improvements on cattle and sheep grazing allotments support ecologically sustainable grazing, and temporary grazing permits are used effectively for management of noxious weeds while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands.

Standards

NCDE-STD-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), new or reauthorized livestock grazing permits and annual operating plans shall incorporate requirements to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts (e.g., a food/wildlife attractant storage special order). New or reauthorized permits shall include a clause providing for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities, if needed, to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, a sheep grazing permit in non-use status shall not be allowed to increase allowable animal unit months beyond what was previously permitted prior to being in non-use when it is returned to use. Note: The Kootenai National Forest does not have any sheep allotments.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), permits for livestock grazing shall include a provision that requires the reporting of livestock carcasses within 24 hours of discovery, which shall be followed by proper disposal of the carcass. Boneyards shall not be established on NFS lands.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), there shall be no net increase in the number of active sheep allotments or in permitted sheep animal unit months above the baseline (see glossary) on NFS lands. Allowable animal unit months shall not be increased for inactive allotments. Note: Existing allotments may be combined or divided as long as doing so does not result in grazing allotments in currently unallotted lands or an increase in animal unit months.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net increase in the number of active cattle grazing allotments above the baseline (see glossary) on NFS lands. Note: Existing allotments may be combined or divided as long as doing so does not result in grazing allotments in currently unallotted lands.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), temporary permits for grazing by small livestock for purposes such as controlling invasive exotic weeds, reducing fire risk, or trailing of small livestock across NFS lands shall not result in an increase in bear-small livestock conflicts.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01. On NFS lands within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number of open or active sheep grazing allotments should be reduced if an opportunity exists with a willing permittee, to reduce the risk of conflicts with grizzly bears.

NCDE-GDL-GRZ-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, an allotment management plan and plan of operation should specify any needed measures to protect key grizzly bear food production areas (e.g., wet meadows, stream bottoms, aspen groves, other riparian wildlife habitats) from conflicting and competing use by livestock (this varies on a site-specific basis).

Special Forest Products (SFP)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-SFP-01. National Forest System lands provide a variety of public services and special forest products (such as mushrooms, huckleberries, firewood) while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands in the NCDE.

Standard

NCDE-STD-SFP-01. Special-use permits for apiaries (beehives) located on NFS lands shall incorporate measures including electric fencing to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts, as specified in the food/wildlife attractant storage special order.

Renewable/Non-Renewable Energy and Mineral Resources (MIN)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-MIN-01. Mineral materials are available based upon public interest, in-service needs, material availability, and valid existing rights, where consistent with desired conditions for other resources.

Standards

NCDE-STD-MIN-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) occurring on NFS lands, where feasible shall avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate environmental impacts to grizzly bears or their habitat, subject to valid existing rights. Stipulations or mitigation measures already included in existing leases, permits, or plans of operation on NFS lands shall not be changed, nor will additional stipulations or mitigation measures be added, without the lease, permit, or plan of operation holder's agreement.

NCDE-STD-MIN-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), new or reauthorized permits, leases, and/or plans of operation shall include a provision for modification or temporary cessation of activities if needed to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-MIN-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include measures to reasonably mitigate potential impacts of mineral development for the following:

- land surface and vegetation disturbance;
- water table alterations that affect bear foods on the surface; and
- construction, operation, and reclamation of mine-related facilities such as impoundments, rights of way, motorized routes, pipelines, canals, transmission lines, or other structures.

NCDE-STD-MIN-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), in addition to measures included in the food/wildlife attractant special order(s), new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include the following measures regarding grizzly bear attractants:

- bear-resistant food storage and garbage containers shall be used at development sites and at any campgrounds or dispersed sites where exploration or production-related human occupancy is anticipated;
- garbage shall be removed in a timely manner;
- road kills shall be removed daily during active operating periods to a designated location determined in close coordination with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks;
- feeding of wildlife shall not be allowed; and
- locations of work camps shall be approved in advance of operations. Food storage requirements shall be strictly adhered to in any work camps.

NCDE-STD-MIN-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), if minerals activities have the potential to adversely affect grizzly bears or their habitat as determined by a site-specific analysis, new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include the following mitigation measures, stipulations, or surface use criteria regarding grizzly bear habitat:

- ground-disturbing activities in identified grizzly bear spring habitat (as identified in a site-specific biological evaluation or other environmental document) shall be avoided between April 1 and June 30. If timing restrictions are not practicable, other measures shall be taken to reasonably mitigate negative impacts of mineral activity to grizzly bears;

- seismic activity in identified grizzly bear denning habitat (as identified in a site-specific biological evaluation or other environmental document) shall be avoided during the denning season (see glossary). If timing restrictions are not practicable, other measures shall be taken to reasonably mitigate negative impacts to the grizzly bear;
- cumulative impacts of multiple concurrent seismic and/or drilling operations shall be limited by timing restrictions. If timing restrictions are not practicable, reasonable and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate negative impacts to the grizzly bear;
- reasonable and appropriate measures regarding the maintenance, rehabilitation, restoration, or mitigation of functioning aquatic systems and riparian habitat conservation areas shall identify how reclamation will occur, plant species to be used in reclamation, a timeframe of when reclamation will be completed, and monitoring criteria; and
- reclamation and revegetation of motorized routes, drilling pads, and other areas disturbed by mineral activities shall be completed as soon as practicable by the operator.

NCDE-STD-MIN-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), if mineral activities have the potential to adversely affect grizzly bears or their habitat as determined by a site-specific analysis, new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases shall include the following mitigation measures regarding motorized access:

- public motorized use that is not associated with minerals activities shall be prohibited on motorized routes constructed for exploration and/or development;
- a traffic management plan shall be developed as part of the proposed activity to identify when and how motorized routes will be used, maintained, and monitored (if required) and how motorized route standards and guidelines will be implemented after activities have ended;
- helicopter use associated with seismic activity, exploration, drilling, or development must follow an approved plan or permit; and
- speed limits shall be adopted on motorized routes if needed to prevent or reduce collisions with grizzly bears.

NCDE-STD-MIN-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), minerals contractors and lessees shall require employees to attend training related to safely living near and working in grizzly bear habitat prior to starting work and on an annual basis thereafter.

NCDE-STD-MIN-08. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new leases for leasable minerals shall include a no surface occupancy stipulation (see glossary).

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-MIN-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), in addition to forestwide guidelines, the following guidelines apply to new leasable minerals activities, including leases, surface use plans for proposed wells or operations, and permits to conduct seismic exploration or drilling. To reduce potential grizzly bear disturbance or displacement, helicopter use plans should:

- avoid establishing recurring helicopter use (see glossary), especially in spring habitats or other known important grizzly bear habitats or use areas and
- avoid establishing landing zones, especially in spring habitats or other known important grizzly bear habitats or use areas. If a landing zone is deemed necessary for safe implementation of the

seismic or surface use plan or permit to drill, the landing zone should be constructed only in an area that has had site-specific analysis and approval.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), leasable energy activities should use the best available noise-reduction technology on equipment and motorized vehicles to reduce potential disturbance or displacement of grizzly bears, whenever possible.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), along motorized routes, seismic corridors, and pipelines constructed for leasable energy activities, wildlife cover should be maintained at regular intervals where present (this varies on a site-specific basis) in order to provide habitat connectivity for grizzly bears.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), for locatable and non-energy leasable minerals activities with the potential to adversely affect the grizzly bear or its habitat (this varies on a site-specific basis), the following tiered measures should be considered to mitigate impacts to grizzly bear habitat. Beginning at step 1, any subsequent steps would be implemented only if the prior steps are not possible or achievable.

- Step 1: The operator should reclaim the affected area back to suitable bear habitat that has similar or improved characteristics and qualities compared to the original habitat (such as the same native vegetation).
- Step 2: If step 1 is not attainable, operators should either acquire a perpetual conservation easement (or easements) or purchase comparable or better replacement grizzly bear habitat within the primary conservation area. Acquisition of habitat within connectivity corridors could also be considered for mitigation, when appropriate. Habitat acquired for mitigation may require a purchase rate of > 1:1 on an acreage basis, depending on the quality of habitat degraded and habitat available for acquisition.
- Step 3: If steps 1 and 2 are not achievable, the next option is to offset negative effects to bears and grizzly bear habitat with other appropriate types of actions.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), carrying bear deterrent spray should be recommended to mineral permittees, lessees and operators to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area), available resources at existing gravel pits should be used before constructing new pits to reduce the risk of grizzly bear disturbance or displacement associated with blasting of rock or crushing of gravel.

Kootenai National Forest—Zone 1

Desired conditions

NCDE-KNF Zone 1-DC-01. Within the Kootenai National Forest portion of NCDE zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area) (see figure 1-3), roads provide for public and administrative access to NFS lands while contributing to sustaining the grizzly bear population in the NCDE. The demographic connectivity area provides habitat that can be used by female grizzly bears and allows for bear movement between grizzly bear ecosystems.

NCDE-KNF Zone 1-DC-02. In areas between the primary conservation area and the Salish demographic connectivity area, NFS lands are consolidated and conservation easements with willing landowners are supported in a manner that provides habitat connectivity and facilitates movement of wildlife.

Standards

NCDE- KNF Zone 1-STD-01. Within zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area) (see figure 1-3) on the Kootenai National Forest, there shall be no increases in permanent linear miles of open roads, total roads, or motorized trails within the bears outside recovery zone polygons, with listed exceptions (Kootenai forest plan, appendix B). A temporary increase in open and total miles of road is allowed under specified conditions (Kootenai forest plan, appendix B, p. 150).

NCDE-KNF Zone 1-STD-02. Within zone 1 (including the Salish demographic connectivity area) on the Kootenai National Forest (see figure 1-3), NFS lands that lie outside the area covered by the Tobacco bears outside recovery zone polygons (Kootenai forest plan, appendix B, pp. 150-151) shall be managed according to the Kootenai forest plan direction.

Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan Amendment

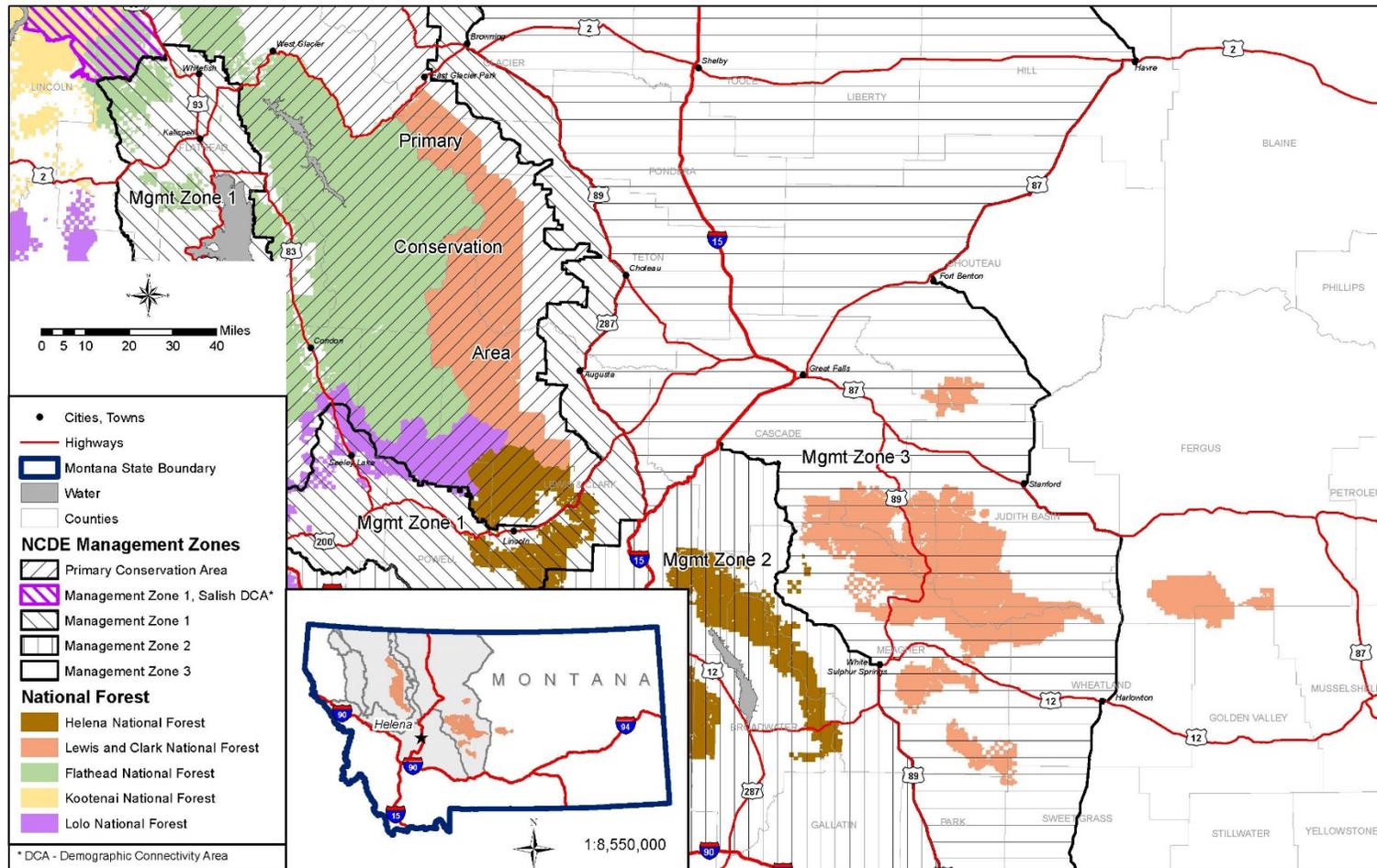


Figure 1-4. Grizzly bear management zones on the Lewis and Clark National Forest.

Wildlife (WL)

Desired Conditions

NCDE-DC-WL-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2, bear attractants on NFS lands are stored in a manner that reduces the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, grizzly bear habitat on NFS lands contributes to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE and contributes to connectivity with neighboring grizzly bear recovery zones.

NCDE-DC-WL-03. The risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts is reduced by information, education, and design features or criteria for management activities.

Standards

NCDE-STD-WL-01. Grizzly bear habitat on NFS lands in the NCDE shall be delineated and managed as primary conservation area, zone 1, zone 2, or zone 3 (see figure 1-4 or subsequent USFWS updates if applicable).

NCDE-STD-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2, food/wildlife attractant storage special order(s) shall apply to NFS lands.

NCDE-STD-WL-03. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, temporary changes in the open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall be calculated for roads used for projects (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)”) during the non-denning season (see glossary). Calculations will include estimated changes for each year of the anticipated duration of the project and will be incorporated into the 10-year running average required by standard NCDE-STD-AR-03.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-WL-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2, contractors, permittees, lessees, operators, and their employees should be informed of food/wildlife attractant storage special order(s) and procedures for safely working and recreating in grizzly bear country, prior to turnout of livestock or beginning work and annually thereafter, in order to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2, if a contractor, permittee, lessee, operator or their employees elect to camp on NFS lands other than in a developed recreation site, the site should be evaluated and written authorization (i.e., a campsite agreement that includes the food/wildlife attractant storage special order) should be provided before the campsite is established. The purpose is to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-WL-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, clover should not be used in seed mixes on NFS lands. Native seed mixes or those that are less palatable to grizzly bears should be used so that seeded areas do not become an attractant.

Access and Recreation (AR)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-AR-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, motorized access provides for multiple uses (such as harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products; hunting, fishing, and recreation opportunities) on NFS lands while providing open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core levels that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-AR-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number, capacity, and improvements of developed recreation sites provide for user comfort and safety while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands.

NCDE-DC-AR-03. Within each bear management unit in the primary conservation area, increases in the number and capacity of developed recreation sites on NFS lands that are designed and managed for overnight use during the non-denning season are at levels that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

Standards

NCDE-STD-AR-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, motorized use of roads with public restrictions shall be permitted for administrative use (see glossary) as long as doing so does not exceed either six trips (three round trips) per week *or* one 30-day unlimited use period during the non-denning season (see glossary). The exception to this standard is:

- emergency situations as defined by 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 218.21.

Note: Administrative use is not included in baseline calculations and is not included in calculations of net increases or decreases. If the level of administrative use exceeds this standard, the use is counted as a project (see “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-02. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net decrease to the baseline (see glossary) for secure core and no net increase to the baseline for open motorized route density or total motorized route density on NFS lands during the non-denning season (see glossary). The following conditions are not considered a net increase/decrease from the baseline:

- administrative use (see glossary);
- temporary use of a motorized route for a project (see “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) that meets the conditions stipulated in NCDE-STD-AR-03;
- mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) conducted in accordance with valid existing rights and applicable standards and guidelines listed under NCDE-MIN;
- updated or improved data on a motorized route without an actual change on the ground;
- changes in technology or projections that result in changed open motorized route density, total motorized route density, or secure core values without actual change on the ground (e.g., a switch from the North American Datum of 1927 to the North American Datum of 1983 geodetic reference system);

- a road closure location is moved a short distance to a better location (e.g., to the nearest intersection or turnout) to allow a turn-around providing for public safety, to reduce vandalism, or to improve enforcement of the road closure;
- the agency exchanges, acquires, buys, or sells lands with motorized routes;
- a change in a motorized route necessary to comply with Federal laws;
- a change in a motorized route necessary to address grizzly bear-human conflicts, human safety concerns, or resource damage/concerns (e.g., a road paralleling a stream may be decommissioned and replaced by a new upslope road to reduce water quality impacts);
- a change made by an adjacent landowner that decreases the percentage of secure core or increases open motorized route density or total motorized route density values on an adjacent national forest;
- use of a motorized route for emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21; and
- temporary roads (see glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-03. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, temporary changes in open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall be allowed for projects (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary). The 10-year running average for open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall not exceed the following limits during the non-denning season (see glossary):

- 5 percent temporary increase in open motorized route density in each bear management subunit (i.e., open motorized route density baseline plus 5 percent);
- 3 percent temporary increase in total motorized route density in each bear management subunit (i.e., total motorized route density baseline plus 3 percent); and
- 2 percent temporary decrease in secure core in each bear management subunit (i.e., secure core baseline minus 2 percent).

Exceptions to this standard include

- temporary changes for emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21 and
- temporary changes for actions where valid existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases).

Refer to page 1-57 for examples of how to calculate and apply the 10-year running average and temporary increase/decrease.

NCDE-STD-AR-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, a restricted road may be temporarily opened for public motorized use to allow authorized uses (such as firewood gathering), provided the period of use does not exceed 30 consecutive days during one non-denning season and occurs outside of spring and fall bear hunting seasons. However, temporary public use of a restricted road shall not be authorized in secure core (see glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number and capacity of developed recreation sites on NFS lands that are designed and managed for overnight use by the public during the non-denning season (e.g., campgrounds, cabin rentals, huts, guest lodges, recreation residences) shall be limited to one increase above the baseline (see glossary) in the number or capacity per decade per bear management unit. The following conditions are not considered an increase from the baseline:

- the agency obtains better information or updated information in its database(s);

- the agency acquires land that contains developed recreation sites;
- the agency increases the number or capacity of a developed recreation site in order to comply with Federal laws;
- the agency maintains or modifies an existing overnight developed or dispersed recreation site in such a way that does not increase the number or capacity of the site (e.g., installing a pit toilet to avoid damage to water resources or installing a bear-resistant food storage structure to reduce grizzly bear-human conflicts);
- the agency modifies an existing developed recreation site to enhance human safety (e.g., enlarging a road pullout to allow trailers to safely turn around);
- the agency operates a developed recreation site to allow overnight use only during the denning season (see glossary); and
- the agency makes a corresponding reduction in the number or capacity of overnight developed recreation sites in the same bear management unit through any of the following means: (1) equal reduction in capacity at another site; (2) closure of a developed site(s); or (3) consolidation and/or elimination of dispersed camping, when and where it can be enforced effectively and it is reasonably assured that new dispersed sites will not develop nearby. If these measures are used to offset an increase in number or capacity, they must be in place before the initiation of the increase. If the agency reduces the number or capacity of developed sites below baseline levels, these reductions may be used at a future date to mitigate equivalent impacts of an increase, expansion, or change of use in developed sites within that bear management unit.

Note: This standard does not apply to dispersed recreation sites or to developed recreation sites managed for day use only (e.g., outfitter camps, roadside trail crossings, or interpretive pullouts; trailheads, picnic areas, or boat launches that are closed at night; ski areas that do not have overnight lodging).

NCDE-STD-AR-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new or reauthorized recreation permits shall include a clause providing for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities if needed to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-AR-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new or reauthorized permits for ski areas on NFS lands that operate during the non-denning season shall include requirements to limit the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts (e.g., to store garbage in a bear-resistant manner).

NCDE-STD-AR-08. Within modeled grizzly bear denning habitat in the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net increase in the percentage of area or miles of routes designated for motorized over-snow vehicle use on NFS lands during the den emergence time period (see glossary).

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-AR-01. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, each project (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) should be designed so that on-the-ground implementation does not exceed 5 years to reduce the potential duration of grizzly bear disturbance or displacement due to project-related activities. Exceptions may be made where necessary, for example to accommodate:

- actions where existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases);

- prescribed burning (including slash disposal), best management practices to protect water quality, or required reforestation activities; or
- emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21.

If an extension to the five-year time limitation is required (e.g., to meet contractual obligations or to complete on-the-ground treatments), the reasons should be documented in writing prior to authorization of the extension.

NCDE-GDL-AR-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, secure core, open motorized route density, and total motorized route density should be restored to pre-project levels (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) within 1 year after completion of the project to reduce the potential duration of grizzly bear disturbance due to project-related activities. Exceptions may be made where necessary, for example to accommodate:

- actions where existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases);
- prescribed burning (including slash disposal), best management practices to protect water quality, or required reforestation activities; or
- emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21.

If an extension to the 1-year time limitation is made (e.g., to meet contractual obligations or to complete on-the-ground treatments), the reasons should be documented in writing prior to authorization of the extension.

NCDE-GDL-AR-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, if the number or capacity of day-use or overnight developed recreation sites is increased, the project should include one or more measures to reduce the risk of grizzly-bear human conflicts in that bear management unit. The measure(s) should be in place prior to completion of the project or be included as one of the design criteria. Measures can include but are not limited to: offering additional public information and education; providing backcountry food-hanging poles or bear-resistant food or garbage storage devices; project design criteria that would limit capacity increases to those needed for public health and safety; and increasing law enforcement and patrols.

Terrestrial Ecosystems Vegetation (VEG)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-VEG-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the amount, type, and distribution of vegetation provide for the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of NFS lands while providing habitat components that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-VEG-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, there is a mosaic of successional stages to provide for grizzly bear habitat needs over the long term.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-VEG-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, measures to reduce the risk of disturbance to the grizzly bear population should be incorporated into vegetation and fuels project design criteria, which vary on a site-specific basis (e.g., some activities should be restricted in spring habitat during the spring; areas with low levels of human activity should be provided adjacent to areas with high levels of disturbance). Note: Management activities such as pre-commercial thinning, burning, weed spraying, and implementation of road best management practices may need to be completed during the

spring in order to meet resource objectives (especially if needed to prevent resource damage), in which case other measures should be used to reduce the risk of disturbance (e.g., limiting the duration of the activity or limiting the use of closed roads).

NCDE-GDL-VEG-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management activities should be designed to avoid detrimental effects on the grizzly bear population and to include one or more measures to protect, maintain, increase, and/or improve grizzly habitat quantity or quality (e.g., promoting growth of berry-producing shrubs, forbs, or grasses known to be bear foods) in areas where it would not increase the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-VEG-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, measures to retain cover (where present) along a portion of grass/forb/shrub openings, riparian wildlife habitat, or wetlands should be incorporated in project design criteria (this varies on a site-specific basis).

NCDE-GDL-VEG-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management projects (including timber sales and other non-commercial vegetation management contracts) should include a provision for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities, if needed, to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-GDL-VEG-05. To reduce the risk of grizzly-bear human conflicts within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management activities designed to enhance grizzly habitat (e.g., to increase huckleberry production) should not occur in or next to campgrounds, administrative facilities, or other developed recreation sites that operate during the non-denning season.

Grazing (GRZ)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number, capacity of, and improvements on cattle and sheep grazing allotments support ecologically sustainable grazing, and temporary grazing permits are used effectively for management of noxious weeds while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands.

Standards

NCDE-STD-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, new or reauthorized livestock grazing permits and annual operating plans shall incorporate requirements to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts (e.g., a food/wildlife attractant storage special order). New or reauthorized permits shall include a clause providing for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities, if needed, to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, a sheep grazing permit in non-use status shall not be allowed to increase allowable animal unit months beyond what was previously permitted prior to being in non-use when it is returned to use. Note: The Lewis and Clark National Forest does not have any sheep allotments.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, permits for livestock grazing shall include a provision that requires the reporting of livestock carcasses within 24 hours of discovery, which shall be followed by proper disposal of the carcass. Boneyards shall not be established on NFS lands.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, there shall be no net increase in the number of active sheep allotments or in permitted sheep animal unit months above the baseline (see glossary) on NFS lands. Allowable animal unit months shall not be increased for inactive allotments. Note: Existing allotments may be combined or divided as long as doing so does not result in grazing allotments in currently unallotted lands or an increase in animal unit months.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net increase in the number of active cattle grazing allotments above the baseline (see glossary) on NFS lands. Note: Existing allotments may be combined or divided as long as doing so does not result in grazing allotments in currently unallotted lands.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1, temporary permits for grazing by small livestock for purposes such as controlling invasive exotic weeds, reducing fire risk, or trailing of small livestock across NFS lands shall not result in an increase in bear-small livestock conflicts.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01. On NFS lands within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number of open or active sheep grazing allotments should be reduced if an opportunity exists with a willing permittee, to reduce the risk of conflicts with grizzly bears.

NCDE-GDL-GRZ-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, an allotment management plan and plan of operation should specify any needed measures to protect key grizzly bear food production areas (e.g., wet meadows, stream bottoms, aspen groves, and other riparian wildlife habitats) from conflicting and competing use by livestock (this varies on a site-specific basis).

Special Forest Products (SFP)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-SFP-01. National Forest System lands provide a variety of public services and special forest products (such as mushrooms, huckleberries, firewood) while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands in the NCDE.

Standard

NCDE-STD-SFP-01. Special-use permits for apiaries (beehives) located on NFS lands shall incorporate measures including electric fencing to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts, as specified in the food/wildlife attractant storage special order.

Renewable/Non-Renewable Energy and Mineral Resources (MIN)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-MIN-01. Mineral materials are available based upon public interest, in-service needs, material availability, and valid existing rights, where consistent with desired conditions for other resources.

Standards

NCDE-STD-MIN-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil

and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) occurring on NFS lands, where feasible shall avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate environmental impacts to grizzly bears or their habitat, subject to valid existing rights. Stipulations or mitigation measures already included in existing leases, permits, or plans of operation on NFS lands shall not be changed, nor will additional stipulations or mitigation measures be added, without the lease, permit, or plan of operation holder's agreement.

NCDE-STD-MIN-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new or reauthorized permits, leases, and/or plans of operation shall include a provision for modification or temporary cessation of activities if needed to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-MIN-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include measures to reasonably mitigate potential impacts of mineral development for the following:

- land surface and vegetation disturbance;
- water table alterations that affect bear foods on the surface; and
- construction, operation, and reclamation of mine-related facilities such as impoundments, rights of way, motorized routes, pipelines, canals, transmission lines, or other structures.

NCDE-STD-MIN-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, in addition to measures included in the food/wildlife attractant special order(s), new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include the following measures regarding grizzly bear attractants:

- bear-resistant food storage and garbage containers shall be used at development sites and at any campgrounds or dispersed sites where exploration or production-related human occupancy is anticipated;
- garbage shall be removed in a timely manner;
- road kills shall be removed daily during active operating periods to a designated location determined in close coordination with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks;
- feeding of wildlife shall not be allowed; and
- locations of work camps shall be approved in advance of operations. Food storage requirements shall be strictly adhered to in any work camps.

NCDE-STD-MIN-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, if minerals activities have the potential to adversely affect grizzly bears or their habitat as determined by a site-specific analysis, new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include the following mitigation measures, stipulations, or surface use criteria regarding grizzly bear habitat:

- ground-disturbing activities in identified grizzly bear spring habitat (as identified in a site-specific biological evaluation or other environmental document) shall be avoided between April 1 and June 30. If timing restrictions are not practicable, other measures shall be taken to reasonably mitigate negative impacts of mineral activity to grizzly bears;
- seismic activity in identified grizzly bear denning habitat (as identified in a site-specific biological evaluation or other environmental document) shall be avoided during the denning season (see glossary). If timing restrictions are not practicable, other measures shall be taken to reasonably mitigate negative impacts to the grizzly bear;
- cumulative impacts of multiple concurrent seismic and/or drilling operations shall be limited by timing restrictions. If timing restrictions are not practicable, reasonable and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate negative impacts to the grizzly bear;

- reasonable and appropriate measures regarding the maintenance, rehabilitation, restoration, or mitigation of functioning aquatic systems and riparian habitat conservation areas shall identify how reclamation will occur, plant species to be used in reclamation, a timeframe of when reclamation will be completed, and monitoring criteria; and
- reclamation and revegetation of motorized routes, drilling pads, and other areas disturbed by mineral activities shall be completed as soon as practicable by the operator.

NCDE-STD-MIN-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, if mineral activities have the potential to adversely affect grizzly bears or their habitat as determined by a site-specific analysis, new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases shall include the following mitigation measures regarding motorized access:

- public motorized use that is not associated with minerals activities shall be prohibited on motorized routes constructed for exploration and/or development;
- a traffic management plan shall be developed as part of the proposed activity to identify when and how motorized routes will be used, maintained, and monitored (if required) and how motorized route standards and guidelines will be implemented after activities have ended;
- helicopter use associated with seismic activity, exploration, drilling, or development must follow an approved plan or permit; and
- speed limits shall be adopted on motorized routes if needed to prevent or reduce collisions with grizzly bears.

NCDE-STD-MIN-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, minerals contractors and lessees shall require employees to attend training related to safely living near and working in grizzly bear habitat prior to starting work and on an annual basis thereafter.

NCDE-STD-MIN-08. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new leases for leasable minerals shall include a no surface occupancy stipulation (see glossary).

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-MIN-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, in addition to forestwide guidelines, the following guidelines apply to new leasable minerals activities, including leases, surface use plans for proposed wells or operations, and permits to conduct seismic exploration or drilling. To reduce potential grizzly bear disturbance or displacement, helicopter use plans should:

- avoid establishing recurring helicopter use (see glossary), especially in spring habitats or other known important grizzly bear habitats or use areas; and
- avoid establishing landing zones, especially in spring habitats or other known important grizzly bear habitats or use areas. If a landing zone is deemed necessary for safe implementation of the seismic or surface use plan or permit to drill, the landing zone should be constructed only in an area that has had site-specific analysis and approval.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, leasable energy activities should use the best available noise-reduction technology on equipment and motorized vehicles to reduce potential disturbance or displacement of grizzly bears, whenever possible.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, along motorized routes, seismic corridors, and pipelines constructed for leasable energy activities, wildlife cover should be maintained at regular intervals where present (this varies on a site-specific basis) in order to provide habitat connectivity for grizzly bears.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, for locatable and non-energy leasable minerals activities with the potential to adversely affect the grizzly bear or its habitat (this varies on a site-specific basis), the following tiered measures should be considered to mitigate impacts to grizzly bear habitat. Beginning at step 1, any subsequent steps would be implemented only if the prior steps are not possible or achievable.

- Step 1: The operator should reclaim the affected area back to suitable bear habitat that has similar or improved characteristics and qualities compared to the original habitat (such as the same native vegetation).
- Step 2: If step 1 is not attainable, operators should either acquire a perpetual conservation easement (or easements) or purchase comparable or better replacement grizzly bear habitat within the primary conservation area. Acquisition of habitat within connectivity corridors could also be considered for mitigation, when appropriate. Habitat acquired for mitigation may require a purchase rate of > 1:1 on an acreage basis, depending on the quality of habitat degraded and habitat available for acquisition.
- Step 3: If steps 1 and 2 are not achievable, the next option is to offset negative effects to bears and grizzly bear habitat with other appropriate types of actions.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, carrying bear deterrent spray should be recommended to mineral permittees, lessees and operators to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, available resources at existing gravel pits should be used before constructing new pits to reduce the risk of grizzly bear disturbance or displacement associated with blasting of rock or crushing of gravel.

Lolo National Forest Plan Amendment

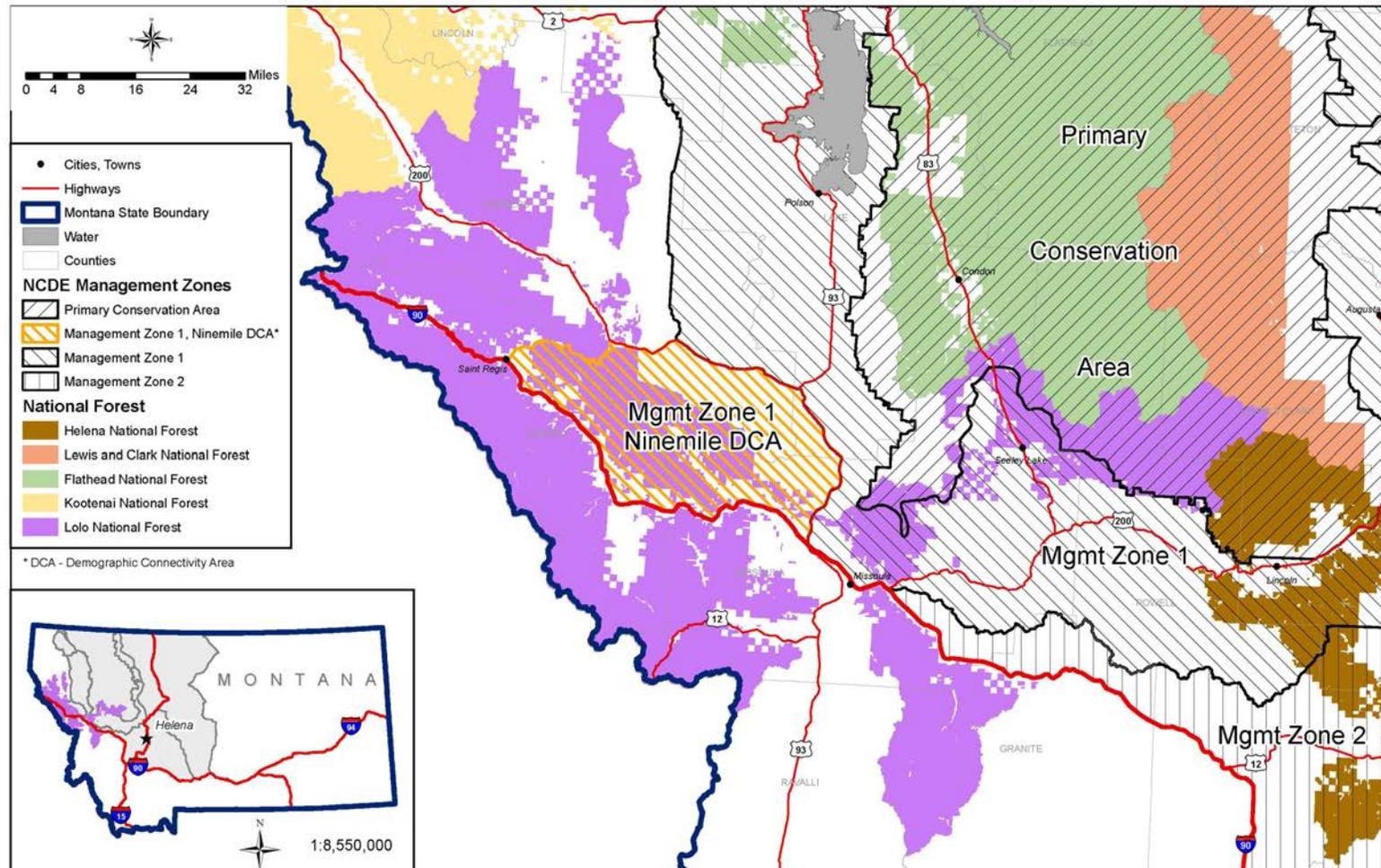


Figure 1-5. Grizzly bear management zones on the Lolo National Forest.

Wildlife (WL)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-WL-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), and zone 2, bear attractants on NFS lands are stored in a manner that reduces the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), grizzly bear habitat on NFS lands contributes to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE and contributes to connectivity with neighboring grizzly bear recovery zones.

NCDE-DC-WL-03. The risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts is reduced by information, education, and design features or criteria for management activities.

Standards

NCDE-STD-WL-01. Grizzly bear habitat on NFS lands in the NCDE shall be delineated and managed as primary conservation area, zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), or zone 2 (see figure 1-5 or subsequent USFWS updates if applicable).

NCDE-STD-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), and zone 2, food/wildlife attractant storage special order(s) shall apply to NFS lands.

NCDE-STD-WL-03. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, temporary changes in the open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall be calculated for roads used for projects (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)”) during the non-denning season (see glossary). Calculations will include estimated changes for each year of the anticipated duration of the project and will be incorporated into the 10-year running average required by standard NCDE-STD-AR-03.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-WL-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), and zone 2, contractors, permittees, lessees, operators, and their employees should be informed of food/wildlife attractant storage special order(s) and procedures for safely working and recreating in grizzly bear country, prior to turnout of livestock or beginning work and annually thereafter, in order to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-WL-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), and zone 2, if a contractor, permittee, lessee, operator or their employees elect to camp on NFS lands other than in a developed recreation site, the site should be evaluated and written authorization (i.e., a campsite agreement that includes the food/wildlife attractant storage special order) should be provided before the campsite is established. The purpose is to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-WL-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), clover should not be used in seed mixes on NFS lands. Native seed mixes or those that are less palatable to grizzly bears should be used so that seeded areas do not become an attractant.

Access and Recreation (AR)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-AR-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, motorized access provides for multiple uses (such as harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products; hunting, fishing, and recreation opportunities) on NFS lands while providing open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core levels that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-AR-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number, capacity, and improvements of developed recreation sites provide for user comfort and safety while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands.

NCDE-DC-AR-03. Within each bear management unit in the primary conservation area, increases in the number and capacity of developed recreation sites on NFS lands that are designed and managed for overnight use during the non-denning season are at levels that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

Standards

NCDE-STD-AR-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, motorized use of roads with public restrictions shall be permitted for administrative use (see glossary) as long as doing so does not exceed either six trips (three round trips) per week *or* one 30-day unlimited use period during the non-denning season (see glossary). The exception to this standard is:

- emergency situations as defined by 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 218.21.

Note: Administrative use is not included in baseline calculations and is not included in calculations of net increases or decreases. If the level of administrative use exceeds this standard, the use is counted as a project (see “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-02. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net decrease to the baseline (see glossary) for secure core and no net increase to the baseline for open motorized route density or total motorized route density on NFS lands during the non-denning season (see glossary). The following conditions are not considered a net increase/decrease from the baseline:

- administrative use (see glossary);
- temporary use of a motorized route for a project (see “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) that meets the conditions stipulated in NCDE-STD-AR-03;
- mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) conducted in accordance with valid existing rights and applicable standards and guidelines listed under NCDE-MIN;
- updated or improved data on a motorized route without an actual change on the ground;
- changes in technology or projections that result in changed open motorized route density, total motorized route density, or secure core values without actual change on the ground (e.g., a switch from the North American Datum of 1927 to the North American Datum of 1983 geodetic reference system);

- a road closure location is moved a short distance to a better location (e.g., to the nearest intersection or turnout) to allow a turn-around providing for public safety, to reduce vandalism, or to improve enforcement of the road closure;
- the agency exchanges, acquires, buys, or sells lands with motorized routes;
- a change in a motorized route necessary to comply with Federal laws;
- a change in a motorized route necessary to address grizzly bear-human conflicts, human safety concerns, or resource damage/concerns (e.g., a road paralleling a stream may be decommissioned and replaced by a new upslope road to reduce water quality impacts);
- a change made by an adjacent landowner that decreases the percentage of secure core or increases open motorized route density or total motorized route density values on an adjacent national forest;
- use of a motorized route for emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21; and
- temporary roads (see glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-03. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, temporary changes in open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall be allowed for projects (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary). The 10-year running average for open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall not exceed the following limits during the non-denning season (see glossary):

- 5 percent temporary increase in open motorized route density in each bear management subunit (i.e., open motorized route density baseline plus 5 percent);
- 3 percent temporary increase in total motorized route density in each bear management subunit (i.e., total motorized route density baseline plus 3 percent); and
- 2 percent temporary decrease in secure core in each bear management subunit (i.e., secure core baseline minus 2 percent).

Exceptions to this standard include

- temporary changes for emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21 and
- temporary changes for actions where valid existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases).

Refer to page 1-51 for examples of how to calculate and apply the 10-year running average and temporary increase/decrease.

NCDE-STD-AR-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, a restricted road may be temporarily opened for public motorized use to allow authorized uses (such as firewood gathering), provided the period of use does not exceed 30 consecutive days during one non-denning season and occurs outside of spring and fall bear hunting seasons. However, temporary public use of a restricted road shall not be authorized in secure core (see glossary).

NCDE-STD-AR-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number and capacity of developed recreation sites on NFS lands that are designed and managed for overnight use by the public during the non-denning season (e.g., campgrounds, cabin rentals, huts, guest lodges, recreation residences) shall be limited to one increase above the baseline (see glossary) in the number or capacity per decade per bear management unit. The following conditions are not considered an increase from the baseline:

- the agency obtains better information or updated information in its database(s);

- the agency acquires land that contains developed recreation sites;
- the agency increases the number or capacity of a developed recreation site in order to comply with Federal laws;
- the agency maintains or modifies an existing overnight developed or dispersed recreation site in such a way that does not increase the number or capacity of the site (e.g., installing a pit toilet to avoid damage to water resources or installing a bear-resistant food storage structure to reduce grizzly bear-human conflicts);
- the agency modifies an existing developed recreation site to enhance human safety (e.g., enlarging a road pullout to allow trailers to safely turn around);
- the agency operates a developed recreation site to allow overnight use only during the denning season (see glossary); and
- the agency makes a corresponding reduction in the number or capacity of overnight developed recreation sites in the same bear management unit through any of the following means: (1) equal reduction in capacity at another site; (2) closure of a developed site(s); or (3) consolidation and/or elimination of dispersed camping, when and where it can be enforced effectively and it is reasonably assured that new dispersed sites will not develop nearby. If these measures are used to offset an increase in number or capacity, they must be in place before the initiation of the increase. If the agency reduces the number or capacity of developed sites below baseline levels, these reductions may be used at a future date to mitigate equivalent impacts of an increase, expansion, or change of use in developed sites within that bear management unit.

Note: This standard does not apply to dispersed recreation sites or to developed recreation sites managed for day use only (e.g., outfitter camps, roadside trail crossings, or interpretive pullouts; trailheads, picnic areas, or boat launches that are closed at night; ski areas that do not have overnight lodging).

NCDE-STD-AR-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new or reauthorized recreation permits shall include a clause providing for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities if needed to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-AR-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new or reauthorized permits for ski areas on NFS lands that operate during the non-denning season shall include requirements to limit the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts (e.g., to store garbage in a bear-resistant manner).

NCDE-STD-AR-08. Within modeled grizzly bear denning habitat in the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net increase in the percentage of area or miles of routes designated for motorized over-snow vehicle use on NFS lands during the den emergence time period (see glossary).

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-AR-01. In each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, each project (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) should be designed so that on-the-ground implementation does not exceed 5 years to reduce the potential duration of grizzly bear disturbance or displacement due to project-related activities. Exceptions may be made where necessary, for example to accommodate:

- actions where existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases);

- prescribed burning (including slash disposal), best management practices to protect water quality, or required reforestation activities; or
- emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21.

If an extension to the five-year time limitation is required (e.g., to meet contractual obligations or to complete on-the-ground treatments), the reasons should be documented in writing prior to authorization of the extension.

NCDE-GDL-AR-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, secure core, open motorized route density, and total motorized route density should be restored to pre-project levels (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary) within 1 year after completion of the project to reduce the potential duration of grizzly bear disturbance due to project-related activities. Exceptions may be made where necessary, for example to accommodate:

- actions where existing rights preclude or constrain agency discretion (e.g., certain contracts, permits, leases);
- prescribed burning (including slash disposal), best management practices to protect water quality, or required reforestation activities; or
- emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21.

If an extension to the 1-year time limitation is made (e.g., to meet contractual obligations or to complete on-the-ground treatments), the reasons should be documented in writing prior to authorization of the extension.

NCDE-GDL-AR-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, if the number or capacity of day-use or overnight developed recreation sites is increased, the project should include one or more measures to reduce the risk of grizzly-bear human conflicts in that bear management unit. The measure(s) should be in place prior to completion of the project or be included as one of the design criteria. Measures can include but are not limited to additional public information and education; providing backcountry food-hanging poles or bear-resistant food or garbage storage devices; project design criteria that would limit capacity increases to those needed for public health and safety; and increasing law enforcement and patrols.

Terrestrial Ecosystems Vegetation (VEG)

Desired conditions

NCDE-DC-VEG-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the amount, type, and distribution of vegetation provide for the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of NFS lands while providing habitat components that contribute to sustaining the recovery of the grizzly bear population in the NCDE.

NCDE-DC-VEG-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, there is a mosaic of successional stages to provide for grizzly bear habitat needs over the long term.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-VEG-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, measures to reduce the risk of disturbance to the grizzly bear population should be incorporated into vegetation and fuels project design criteria, which vary on a site-specific basis (e.g., some activities should be restricted in spring habitat during the spring; areas with low levels of human activity should be provided adjacent to areas with high levels of disturbance). Note: Management activities such as pre-commercial thinning, burning, weed spraying, and implementation of road best management practices may need to be completed during the spring in order to meet resource objectives (especially if needed to prevent resource damage), in which

case other measures should be used to reduce the risk of disturbance (e.g., limiting the duration of the activity or limiting the use of closed roads).

NCDE-GDL-VEG-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management activities should be designed to avoid detrimental effects on the grizzly bear population and to include one or more measures to protect, maintain, increase, and/or improve grizzly habitat quantity or quality (e.g., promoting growth of berry-producing shrubs, forbs, or grasses known to be bear foods) in areas where it would not increase the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-VEG-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, measures to retain cover (where present) along a portion of grass/forb/shrub openings, riparian wildlife habitat, or wetlands should be incorporated in project design criteria (this varies on a site-specific basis).

NCDE-GDL-VEG-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management projects (including timber sales and other non-commercial vegetation management contracts) should include a provision for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities, if needed, to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-GDL-VEG-05. To reduce the risk of grizzly-bear human conflicts within the NCDE primary conservation area, vegetation management activities designed to enhance grizzly habitat (e.g., to increase huckleberry production) should not occur in or next to campgrounds, administrative facilities, or other developed recreation sites that operate during the non-denning season.

Grazing (GRZ)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number, capacity of, and improvements on cattle and sheep grazing allotments support ecologically sustainable grazing, and temporary grazing permits are used effectively for management of noxious weeds while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands.

Standards

NCDE-STD-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), new or reauthorized livestock grazing permits and annual operating plans shall incorporate requirements to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts (e.g., a food/wildlife attractant storage special order). New or reauthorized permits shall include a clause providing for modification, cancellation, suspension, or temporary cessation of activities, if needed, to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, a sheep grazing permit in non-use status shall not be allowed to increase allowable animal unit months beyond what was previously permitted prior to being in non-use when it is returned to use. Note: The Lolo National Forest does not have any sheep allotments.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), permits for livestock grazing shall include a provision that requires the reporting of livestock carcasses within 24 hours of discovery, which shall be followed by proper disposal of the carcass. Boneyards shall not be established on NFS lands.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), there shall be no net increase in the number of active sheep allotments or in permitted sheep animal unit months above the baseline (see glossary) on NFS lands. Allowable animal unit months shall not be increased for inactive allotments. Note: Existing allotments may be combined or divided as long as doing so does not result in grazing allotments in currently un-allotted lands or an increase in animal unit months.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, there shall be no net increase in the number of active cattle grazing allotments above the baseline (see glossary) on NFS lands. Note: Existing allotments may be combined or divided as long as doing so does not result in grazing allotments in currently un-allotted lands.

NCDE-STD-GRZ-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), temporary permits for grazing by small livestock for purposes such as controlling invasive exotic weeds, reducing fire risk, or trailing of small livestock across NFS lands shall not result in an increase in bear-small livestock conflicts.

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01. On NFS lands within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number of open or active sheep grazing allotments should be reduced if an opportunity exists with a willing permittee, to reduce the risk of conflicts with grizzly bears.

NCDE-GDL-GRZ-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, an allotment management plan and plan of operation should specify any needed measures to protect key grizzly bear food production areas (e.g., wet meadows, stream bottoms, aspen groves, and other riparian wildlife habitats) from conflicting and competing use by livestock (this varies on a site-specific basis).

Special Forest Products (SFP)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-SFP-01. National Forest System lands provide a variety of public services and special forest products (such as mushrooms, huckleberries, firewood) while minimizing the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts on NFS lands in the NCDE.

Standard

NCDE-STD-SFP-01. Special-use permits for apiaries (beehives) located on NFS lands shall incorporate measures including electric fencing to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts, as specified in the food/wildlife attractant storage special order.

Renewable/Non-Renewable Energy and Mineral Resources (MIN)

Desired condition

NCDE-DC-MIN-01. Mineral materials are available based upon public interest, in-service needs, material availability, and valid existing rights, where consistent with desired conditions for other resources.

Standards

NCDE-STD-MIN-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) occurring on NFS lands, where feasible shall avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate environmental impacts to grizzly bears or their habitat, subject to valid existing rights. Stipulations or mitigation measures already included in existing leases, permits, or plans of operation on NFS lands shall not be changed, nor will additional stipulations or mitigation measures be added, without the lease, permit, or plan of operation holder's agreement.

NCDE-STD-MIN-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), new or reauthorized permits, leases, and/or plans of operation shall include a provision for modification or temporary cessation of activities if needed to resolve a grizzly bear-human conflict situation.

NCDE-STD-MIN-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include measures to reasonably mitigate potential impacts of mineral development for the following:

- land surface and vegetation disturbance;
- water table alterations that affect bear foods on the surface; and
- construction, operation, and reclamation of mine-related facilities such as impoundments, rights of way, motorized routes, pipelines, canals, transmission lines, or other structures.

NCDE-STD-MIN-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), in addition to measures included in the food/wildlife attractant special order(s), new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include the following measures regarding grizzly bear attractants:

- bear-resistant food storage and garbage containers shall be used at development sites and at any campgrounds or dispersed sites where exploration or production-related human occupancy is anticipated;
- garbage shall be removed in a timely manner;
- road kills shall be removed daily during active operating periods to a designated location determined in close coordination with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks;
- feeding of wildlife shall not be allowed; and
- locations of work camps shall be approved in advance of operations. Food storage requirements shall be strictly adhered to in any work camps.

NCDE-STD-MIN-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), if minerals activities have the potential to adversely affect grizzly bears or their habitat as determined by a site-specific analysis, new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases for mineral activities shall include the following mitigation measures, stipulations, or surface use criteria regarding grizzly bear habitat:

- ground-disturbing activities in identified grizzly bear spring habitat (as identified in a site-specific biological evaluation or other environmental document) shall be avoided between April 1 and June 30. If timing restrictions are not practicable, other measures shall be taken to reasonably mitigate negative impacts of mineral activity to grizzly bears;

- seismic activity in identified grizzly bear denning habitat (as identified in a site-specific biological evaluation or other environmental document) shall be avoided during the denning season (see glossary). If timing restrictions are not practicable, other measures shall be taken to reasonably mitigate negative impacts to the grizzly bear;
- cumulative impacts of multiple concurrent seismic and/or drilling operations shall be limited by timing restrictions. If timing restrictions are not practicable, reasonable and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate negative impacts to the grizzly bear;
- reasonable and appropriate measures regarding the maintenance, rehabilitation, restoration, or mitigation of functioning aquatic systems and riparian habitat conservation areas shall identify how reclamation will occur, plant species to be used in reclamation, a timeframe of when reclamation will be completed, and monitoring criteria; and
- reclamation and revegetation of motorized routes, drilling pads, and other areas disturbed by mineral activities shall be completed as soon as practicable by the operator.

NCDE-STD-MIN-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), if mineral activities have the potential to adversely affect grizzly bears or their habitat as determined by a site-specific analysis, new plans of operation, permits, and/or leases shall include the following mitigation measures regarding motorized access:

- public motorized use that is not associated with minerals activities shall be prohibited on motorized routes constructed for exploration and/or development;
- a traffic management plan shall be developed as part of the proposed activity to identify when and how motorized routes will be used, maintained, and monitored (if required) and how motorized route standards and guidelines will be implemented after activities have ended;
- helicopter use associated with seismic activity, exploration, drilling, or development must follow an approved plan or permit; and
- speed limits shall be adopted on motorized routes if needed to prevent or reduce collisions with grizzly bears.

NCDE-STD-MIN-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), minerals contractors and lessees shall require employees to attend training related to safely living near and working in grizzly bear habitat prior to starting work and on an annual basis thereafter.

NCDE-STD-MIN-08. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, new leases for leasable minerals shall include a no surface occupancy stipulation (see glossary).

Guidelines

NCDE-GDL-MIN-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), in addition to forestwide guidelines, the following guidelines apply to new leasable minerals activities, including leases, surface use plans for proposed wells or operations, and permits to conduct seismic exploration or drilling. To reduce potential grizzly bear disturbance or displacement, helicopter use plans should:

- avoid establishing recurring helicopter use (see glossary), especially in spring habitats or other known important grizzly bear habitats or use areas; and
- avoid establishing landing zones, especially in spring habitats or other known important grizzly bear habitats or use areas. If a landing zone is deemed necessary for safe implementation of the

seismic or surface use plan or permit to drill, the landing zone should be constructed only in an area that has had site-specific analysis and approval.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), leasable energy activities should use the best available noise-reduction technology on equipment and motorized vehicles to reduce potential disturbance or displacement of grizzly bears, whenever possible.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), along motorized routes, seismic corridors, and pipelines constructed for leasable energy activities, wildlife cover should be maintained at regular intervals where present (this varies on a site-specific basis) in order to provide habitat connectivity for grizzly bears.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), for locatable and non-energy leasable minerals activities with the potential to adversely affect the grizzly bear or its habitat (this varies on a site-specific basis), the following tiered measures should be considered to mitigate impacts to grizzly bear habitat. Beginning at step 1, any subsequent steps would be implemented only if the prior steps are not possible or achievable.

- Step 1: The operator should reclaim the affected area back to suitable bear habitat that has similar or improved characteristics and qualities compared to the original habitat (such as the same native vegetation).
- Step 2: If step 1 is not attainable, operators should either acquire a perpetual conservation easement (or easements) or purchase comparable or better replacement grizzly bear habitat within the primary conservation area. Acquisition of habitat within connectivity corridors could also be considered for mitigation, when appropriate. Habitat acquired for mitigation may require a purchase rate of > 1:1 on an acreage basis, depending on the quality of habitat degraded and habitat available for acquisition.
- Step 3: If steps 1 and 2 are not achievable, the next option is to offset negative effects to bears and grizzly bear habitat with other appropriate types of actions.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), carrying bear deterrent spray should be recommended to mineral permittees, lessees and operators to reduce the risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.

NCDE-GDL-MIN-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), available resources at existing gravel pits should be used before constructing new pits to reduce the risk of grizzly bear disturbance or displacement associated with blasting of rock or crushing of gravel.

Lolo National Forest—Zone 1

Desired conditions

NCDE-LNF Zone 1-DC-01. Within the Lolo National Forest portion of NCDE zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area) (see figure 1-5), roads provide for public and administrative access to NFS lands while contributing to sustaining the grizzly bear population in the NCDE. The Ninemile demographic connectivity area provides habitat that can be used by female grizzly bears and allows for bear movement between grizzly bear ecosystems.

NCDE-LNF Zone 1-DC-02. In areas between the primary conservation area and the Ninemile demographic connectivity area, NFS lands are consolidated and conservation easements with willing landowners are supported in a manner that provides habitat connectivity and facilitates movement of wildlife.

Standards

NCDE-LNF Zone 1-STD-01. Within zone 1 (outside the Ninemile demographic connectivity area) on the Lolo National Forest, there shall be no net increase above the baseline (see glossary) in the density of roads open to public motorized use during the non-denning season on National Forest System lands. Inside the Ninemile demographic connectivity area, there shall be no net increase above the baseline (see glossary) in the density of roads and trails open to public motorized use during the non-denning season on National Forest System lands. Density is calculated by dividing the total miles open to public motorized use on NFS lands during the non-denning season, by the total square miles of NFS lands in that same area. This standard does not apply to the following:

- motorized use by agency personnel or others authorized by the appropriate agency personnel;
- temporarily opening a road for a short periods of time to allow for public firewood gathering and other authorized use;
- updated/improved data on a motorized route without an actual change on the ground;
- changes in technology or projections that result in changed calculations without actual change on the ground (e.g., a switch from the North American Datum of 1927 to the North American Datum of 1983 geodetic reference system);
- a road closure location is moved a short distance (e.g., to the nearest intersection or turnout) to a better location to allow turn-arounds providing for public safety, to reduce vandalism, or to improve enforcement of the road closure;
- the agency exchanges, acquires, buys, or sells lands with motorized routes;
- a change in an open road necessary to comply with Federal laws;
- motorized use for mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) conducted in accordance with valid existing rights and applicable standards and guidelines;
- a change in a motorized route is necessary to address grizzly bear-human conflicts, human safety concerns, or resource damage/concerns (e.g., a road paralleling a stream may be decommissioned and replaced by a new upslope road to reduce water quality impacts);
- motorized use for emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21; or
- temporary roads (see glossary).

Monitoring (MON)

NCDE-MON-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the levels of secure core, open motorized route density (> 1 mile/mile²), and total motorized route density (> 2 miles/mile²) within each bear management unit subunit during the non-denning season will be monitored and compared to the baseline.

NCDE-MON-02. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number and overnight capacity of developed recreation sites designed and managed for overnight use on NFS lands within each bear management unit will be monitored and compared to the baseline. The number of day-use recreation sites

and trailheads in each bear management unit in the NCDE primary conservation area and administrative sites (see glossary) will also be monitored.

NCDE-MON-03. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the number of commercial livestock grazing allotments and the number of sheep animal unit months will be monitored and compared to the baseline. The number of grizzly bear-livestock conflicts occurring on NFS lands within the primary conservation area, zone 1, and zone 2 will be monitored.

NCDE-MON-04. Within the NCDE primary conservation area and zone 1 (including the Ninemile demographic connectivity area), where it is determined there is potential for adverse effects to the grizzly bear population or its habitat resulting from leasable or locatable mineral activities, a monitoring plan will be developed for the life of the mineral activity. The monitoring plan will outline how changes in habitat and/or disturbance to bears will be monitored and how mitigations (e.g., monitoring of mining reclamation measures) will be identified and funded.

NCDE-MON-05. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the 10-year running average of open motorized route density, total motorize route density and secure core will be monitored by the Forest and documented for each project (see NCDE STD-AR-03 and “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary).

NCDE-MON-06. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, the duration of projects will be monitored by the Forest (see NCDE-GDL-AR-01 and the definition of “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary).

NCDE-MON-07. In NCDE zone 1 on the Helena National Forest, the density of motorized routes open for public use during the non-denning season on National Forest System lands will be monitored and compared with the baseline.

NCDE-MON-08. In NCDE zone 1 on the Kootenai National Forest, the permanent linear miles of open roads, total roads and motorized trails on National Forest System lands within the bears outside recovery zone (BORZ) polygons will be monitored.

NCDE-MON-09. In NCDE zone 1 outside of the Ninemile demographic connectivity area on the Lolo National Forest, the density of roads open for public motorized use during the non-denning season on NFS lands will be monitored and compared with the baseline. Inside the Ninemile demographic connectivity area, the density of roads and trails open to public motorized use on NFS lands will be monitored and compared with the baseline.

NCDE-MON-10. In the NCDE primary conservation area, the percentage of modeled grizzly bear denning habitat (as updated by MFWP) where public motorized over-snow vehicle use is allowed during the den emergence time period will be monitored and compared to the baseline.

How Changes in Route Density and Secure Core Would Be Implemented

As stated in NCDE-STD-AR-03, in each bear management subunit within the NCDE primary conservation area, temporary changes in the open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core shall be allowed for projects (as defined by “project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE)” in the glossary).

The 10-year running average for open motorized route density, total motorized route density, and secure core numeric parameters shall not exceed the following limits per bear management subunit:

- 5 percent temporary increase in open motorized route density in each subunit (i.e., open motorized route density baseline plus 5 percent);
- 3 percent temporary increase in total motorized route density in each subunit (i.e., total motorized route density baseline plus 3 percent);
- 2 percent temporary decrease in secure core in each subunit (i.e., secure core baseline minus 2 percent).

Hypothetical Example

The following hypothetical example (displayed as table 1-2 and table 1-3) shows how temporary changes in open motorized route density (OMRD), total motorized route density (TMRD), and secure core would be implemented for a project.

Table 1-2. Values in a bear management subunit for OMRD, TMRD, and secure core for project in years 11 through 14

Variable	Baseline Value	Allowed Value for Project	year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4	year 5	year 6	year 7	year 8	year 9	year 10	project year 11	project year 12	project year 13	project year 14	year 15	year 16	year 17
OMRD	19	24	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	31	31	31	31	19	19	19
TMRD	19	22	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	22	22	22	22	19	19	19
Secure Core	69	67	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	63	63	63	63	69	69	69

Table 1-3. Using data from table 1-2 to show the 10-year running averages for OMRD, TMRD, and secure core before, during, and after project completion

Variable	Before yr 1-10	During yr 2-11	During yr 3-12	During yr 4-13	During yr 5-14	During yr 6-15	After yr 7-16	After yr 8-17
OMRD	19	20	21	23	24	24	24	24
TMRD	19	19	20	20	20	20	20	20
Secure Core	69	69	68	67	67	67	67	67

yr = year

It should be noted that in this hypothetical example, another project in this subunit would not be possible until year 24, unless that project did not require any changes in values for open motorized route density, total motorized route density, or secure core.

Glossary

If a term's definition(s) is associated with a particular species or management direction or originates from a specific source, the source is cited or applicable direction is referenced using the following bracketed abbreviations:

The following terms, and definitions, are to be used only where they apply within the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) for grizzly bears, see amendment standard NCDE-STD-WL-01.

administrative site A location or facility constructed for use primarily by government employees to facilitate the administration and management of public lands. Examples on NFS lands include, but are not limited to, ranger stations, warehouses, and guard stations.

administrative use A generic term for authorized agency activity. Specifically, in the portion of the NCDE for grizzly bears mapped as the primary conservation area, motorized use of roads closed to the public is permitted for Federal agency personnel or other personnel authorized to perform duties by appropriate agency officials as long as doing so does not exceed either six trips (three round trips) per week *or* one 30-day unlimited use period during the non-denning season (see also **non-denning season**).

baseline The baseline for the NCDE is defined as conditions as of December 31, 2011, as modified by changes in numbers that were evaluated and found to be acceptable through the Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation with USFWS while the grizzly bear was listed as threatened. The baseline will be updated to reflect changes allowed under the standards and guidelines.

bear management subunit An area of a bear management unit, in the portion of the NCDE for grizzly bears mapped as the primary conservation area, representing the approximate size of an average annual female grizzly bear home range (e.g., 31-68 square miles, (Mace & Roberts, 2012¹)).

bear management unit An area about 400 square miles, in the portion of the NCDE for grizzly bears mapped as the primary conservation area, that meets yearlong habitat needs of both male and female grizzly bears.

boneyard An established site that is used repeatedly by a grazing permittee for disposing of entire animal carcasses.

capacity (of developed recreation sites within the NCDE primary conservation area) The number of sites available for overnight use (e.g., the number of sites in a campground; the number of rooms available for lodging (as a commercial rental); or the number of cabins, bunkhouses, or recreation residences managed under a special-use permit).

consultation See **interagency consultation**.

cover The elements of the environment used by an animal for hiding. Cover varies on a site-specific basis and depends on the species or the time of year. Cover may include topography as well as a variety of vegetation types (e.g., shrubs, dead trees, and live trees). The amount and quality of cover needed depends on the animal's size, mobility, and reluctance or willingness to venture into relatively open areas.

¹ R. D. Mace & L. L. Roberts (2012), Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem grizzly bear monitoring team annual report, 2012 (Kalispell, MT: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks), retrieved from <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/grizzlyBear/monitoring.html>.

demographic connectivity area an area intended to allow female grizzly bear occupancy and potential dispersal beyond the NCDE to other recovery areas.

den emergence time period The time period in the spring when a grizzly bear emerges from its den and remains in the vicinity before moving to lower elevations. The den emergence time period occurs at the beginning of the non-denning season. Females with cubs usually emerge later and spend more time (a few days to a few weeks) near the den after emergence than do male bears.

denning season The typical time period, within the NCDE, during which most grizzly bears are hibernating in dens. There are no restrictions on motorized use related to grizzly bears during the denning season, which occurs

- west of the Continental Divide: from December 1 through March 31.
- east of the Continental Divide: from December 1 through April 15.

developed recreation site capacity within the NCDE primary conservation area For purposes of implementing standard NCDE-STD-AR-05, developed recreation site capacity on NFS lands that are designed and managed for overnight use includes

- the number of camp sites available in a campground,
- the number of rooms available for lodging at a ski area or guest lodge,
- the maximum sleeping capacity of a cabin rental or bunkhouse that is available for overnight use by the public, and
- the maximum parking capacity at picnic areas, trailheads, or boat launches that are not closed to overnight use.

developed recreation site within the NCDE primary conservation area For purposes of implementing standard NCDE-STD-AR-05, developed recreation sites on NFS lands that are designed and managed for overnight use include campgrounds, lodging at ski areas, cabin rentals, huts, guest lodges, and recreation residences. This standard does not apply to dispersed recreation sites nor to developed recreation sites managed for day-use only (e.g., outfitter camps, roadside trail crossings or interpretive pull-outs; trailheads, picnic areas, or boat launches that are closed at night; and ski areas that do not have overnight lodging).

dispersed recreation An area in a national forest or national grassland with limited or no amenities provided for recreational users (36 CFR § 261.2).

emergency situation A circumstance on NFS lands for which immediate implementation of all or part of a decision is necessary for relief from hazards threatening human health and safety or natural resources on those NFS or adjacent lands or that would result in substantial loss of economic value to the Federal Government if implementation of the decision were delayed (must meet the requirements of 36 § CFR 218.21).

grazing allotment A designated area of land that is available for livestock grazing and is represented on a map. A grazing allotment can include NFS and non-NFS lands. Permits are issued for the use of allotments or portions of allotments. Allotments may be

- **active:** Livestock grazing allotments that are in use, including pack and saddle stock allotments.
- **closed:** Areas having suitable livestock range that have been closed to livestock grazing by administrative decision or action.

- **combined:** An allotment that has been combined into another allotment and therefore no longer exists as an independent allotment.
- **vacant:** An allotment that does not have a current grazing permit issued. (Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2205)

grazing permit in inactive status A grazing permit for which all permitted uses have expired, been cancelled, or been waived.

grazing permit in non-use status A grazing permit that is not being used. Non-use of a term grazing permit, in whole or in part, must be approved by a Forest supervisor and is allowed for permittee convenience, resource protection or development, or range research (Forest Service Manual 2231.7).

grizzly bear-human conflict An interaction between a grizzly bear and human in which bears either do, or attempt to, injure people, damage property, kill or injure livestock, damage beehives, or obtain anthropogenic foods or attractants or agricultural crops.

interagency consultation A process required by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act whereby federal agencies proposing activities that may affect a listed species or critical habitat confer with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about the impacts of the activity on the species (50 CFR 402).

livestock A type of domestic animal raised for commercial production purposes, e.g., cattle. Small livestock refers to animals smaller than a cow, such as sheep, goats, and llamas.

mitigate To avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate the adverse environmental impacts associated with an action.

motorized route A NFS road or trail that is designated for motorized use on a motor vehicle use map pursuant to 36 CFR 212.51.

motorized use The designation of roads, trails, and areas that are open to motor vehicle use as specified in Federal Register / Vol. 70, No. 216 / Wednesday, November 9, 2005 /36 CFR §§ 212, 251, 261, Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule.

moving window analysis A geographic information system procedure that quantifies the density of roads and trails by incrementally moving a template across a digital map.

net change The difference in a measurement (such as road density) after on-the-ground changes are accounted for pre- and post-project; allows for temporary changes during a project.

no surface occupancy A stipulation in a fluid mineral lease that prohibits use or occupancy of the land surface in order to protect identified resource values. Lessees may develop the oil and gas or geothermal resources under the area restricted by this stipulation through the use of directional drilling from sites outside the no surface occupancy area.

non-denning season The time period when grizzly bears typically are not hibernating:

- West side of the Continental Divide: from 1 April through 30 November.
- East side of the Continental Divide: from 16 April through 30 November.

Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem A region identified in the Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy encompassing about 27.3 million acres of land in western and central Montana that is one of five areas in the lower 48 states where grizzly bear populations occur.

Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) Coordinating Committee An interagency group that evaluates implementation of the NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy, promotes the exchange of data and information about the NCDE grizzly bear population among agencies and the public, and makes recommendations to the management agencies regarding implementation of the strategy. Members of the interagency group may include Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; U.S. National Park Service; U.S. Forest Service; U.S. APHIS Wildlife Services; U.S. Geological Survey; U.S. Bureau of Land Management; the Blackfoot Tribe; and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

open motorized route density A moving window analysis calculation that applies to the primary conservation area portion of the NCDE and includes Federal, State, and tribal roads and motorized trails that are open to wheeled motor vehicle use by the public for any part of the non-denning season. *Note:* Motorized routes closed only by sign or order are considered to be open for purposes of this calculation. See also **moving window analysis**.

primary conservation area An area identified in the NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy to be managed as a source area for the grizzly bear population where continuous occupancy by grizzly bears would be maintained. Habitat within the primary conservation area would receive the most stringent protection. The primary conservation area is the same area as the NCDE grizzly bear recovery zone identified in the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan (USFWS, 1993²).

project An organized effort to achieve an outcome on NFS lands identified by location, tasks, outputs, effects, times, and responsibilities for execution (36 CFR § 219.19).

project (in grizzly bear habitat in the NCDE) For purposes of the motorized access standards and guidelines in the primary conservation area of the NCDE, refers to any temporary activity requiring construction of new roads, temporary roads, reconstruction or opening of restricted roads during the non-denning season, if such use exceeds administrative use levels (see **administrative use**). Activities involving recurring helicopter use (see **recurring helicopter use**) are also considered to be a project.

recurring helicopter use A type of helicopter flight that involves multiple trips/passes each day consisting of low-altitude (< 500 meters above-ground-level) flights that continues for a duration longer than 48 consecutive hours.

road A motor vehicle route more than 50 inches wide, unless identified and managed as a trail (36 CFR 212.1, Forest Service Manual 7705):

decommissioned: An unneeded road that has been stabilized and restored to a more natural state (36 CFR § 212.1). Decommissioned roads do not count towards total motorized route density as long as they meet the definition of impassable.

forest road or trail: A route wholly or partly within or adjacent to and serving National Forest System lands that is necessary for the protection, administration, and utilization of the National Forest System and the use and development of its resources (36 CFR § 212.1 – Definitions).

impassable: A road that has been treated in such a manner that the road is blocked and there is little resource risk if road maintenance is not performed on a regular basis (self-maintaining). These roads are not counted in the total motorized route density as long as the road (generally the first 50 to 300 feet) has been treated to make it inaccessible to wheeled motorized vehicles during the non-denning

² USFWS (1993), Grizzly bear recovery plan (Missoula, MT: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), retrieved from https://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/es/species/mammals/grizzly/Grizzly_bear_recovery_plan.pdf, <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/grizzly/>.

season. Roads may become impassable due to a variety of causes, including but not limited to one or more of the following: natural vegetation growth, road entrance obliteration, scarified ground, fallen trees, boulders, or culvert or bridge removal. Impassable roads may remain on the inventoried road system if use of the road is anticipated at some point in the future. Some, but not all, roads placed in intermittent stored service may be impassable. [NCDE]

intermittent stored service/intermittent service road, closed to traffic: The road is in a condition such that there is little resource risk if maintenance is not performed.

maintenance level: The level of service provided by, and maintenance required for, a specific road, consistent with road management objectives and maintenance criteria (Forest Service Handbook 7709.59, 62.32):

Level 1: Assigned to roads that have been placed in storage between intermittent uses. The period of storage must exceed 1 year. Basic custodial maintenance is performed to prevent damage to adjacent resources and to perpetuate the road for future resource management needs. Emphasis is normally given to maintaining drainage facilities and runoff patterns.

Level 2: Assigned to roads open for use by high-clearance vehicles. Passenger car traffic, user comfort, and user convenience are not considerations.

Level 3: Assigned to roads open and maintained for travel by a prudent driver in a standard passenger car. User comfort and convenience are not considered priorities

Level 4: Assigned to roads that provide a moderate degree of user comfort and convenience at moderate travel speeds

Level 5: Assigned to roads that provide a high degree of user comfort and convenience.

National Forest System: A forest road other than a road that has been authorized by a legally documented right-of-way held by a State, county, or other local public road authority (36 CFR § 212.1)

temporary: A road necessary for emergency operations or authorized by contract, permit, lease, or other written authorization that is not a forest road and that is not included in a forest transportation atlas (36 CFR § 212.1). In the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem primary conservation area, temporary roads will meet the definition of impassable when no longer needed.

running average A method for computing the average of a stream of numbers for a specified period. A 10-year running average computes the mean for the values in the current year plus the previous 9 years. A running average is commonly used with time series data to smooth out short-term fluctuations and highlight longer-term trends or cycles.

secure core (grizzly bear) An area of the NCDE primary conservation area 500 meters or more from (1) a route open to public wheeled motorized use during the grizzly bear non-denning season, (2) a gated route, or (3) a route closed only with a sign that is greater than or equal to 2,500 acres in size. Roads restricted with physical barriers (not gates), decommissioned roads, impassable roads, temporary roads, over-the-snow motorized routes/areas, and non-motorized trails are allowed within secure core, unless otherwise restricted (e.g., by other national forest plan direction).

total motorized route density A moving window analysis calculation that applies to the primary conservation area portion of the NCDE and includes Federal, State, and tribal roads and motorized trails that do not meet the definition of an impassable road. See also **moving window analysis**.

zone 1 An area surrounding the grizzly bear primary conservation area in the NCDE where the intent is to maintain occupancy by grizzly bears but at expected lower densities than inside the primary conservation area. Zone 1 also includes two demographic connectivity areas (Salish and Ninemile).

zone 2 An area adjacent to the grizzly bear zone 1 and/or zone 3 in the NCDE where grizzly bears, particularly males, would have the opportunity to move between the NCDE and adjacent ecosystems. The intent of the zone 2 area is to allow for resource management and recreational opportunities while responding to grizzly bear-human conflicts with appropriate management actions.

zone 3 The area that primarily consists of areas where grizzly bears do not have enough suitable habitat to support population growth. Grizzly bear occupancy will not be actively discouraged in zone 3, and the management emphasis is on conflict response.

Appendix 2. NCDE Forest Plan Amendment Alternatives—Comparison of Forest Plan Components Under Alternative 1 (No-Action Alternative), Alternative 2 Modified, and Alternative 3

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Introduction

This document contains detailed information showing current forest plan management direction pertaining to the grizzly bear for the amendment forests and the changes that would be made under the action alternatives. Forest plan components include desired conditions, standards, and guidelines. Monitoring items for grizzly bear habitat are also shown.

The full text of the forest plan language and a glossary of terms that would be incorporated into the amended Helena, Kootenai, Lewis and Clark, and Lolo forest plans under the selected alternative, alternative 2 modified, is located in appendix 1 of the draft record of decision.

A subset of resource management activities were identified that need to be coordinated with grizzly bear habitat to support recovery of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) grizzly bear population. These are: motorized access and secure core, developed recreation sites, livestock grazing, vegetation management, and minerals and energy development. **Only the management direction applicable to this subset of resource management programs is included in this comparison.**

For each national forest plan in turn, the current forest plan language that is specifically relevant to grizzly bear habitat management is presented. The column identified as alternative 1 quotes directly from the existing forest plan, with minor edits for clarity. The columns identified as the selected alternative, alternative 2 modified, and alternative 3 state whether the existing direction would be retained or would be replaced. If it would be replaced, a specific reference to the forest plan component (e.g., NCDE-DC-WL-01) is given.

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Helena National Forest Plan

Current Forest Plan Direction and Changes Under the Action Alternatives

Table 2-1 presents the management direction relevant to grizzly bear habitat management that would be included in the Helena National Forest Plan under each of the alternatives. The Helena National Forest contains land within the primary conservation area (PCA), zone 1, and zone 2.

Table 2-1. Helena National Forest: Comparison of the no-action alternative (the current forest plan) to the selected alternative, 2 modified, and 3

Helena National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Helena Forest Plan)	Selected Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Wildlife and Fish	<p>p. II-4</p> <p>Management will emphasize meeting the recovery target of 18 grizzly bears on the essential habitat and the maintenance or enhancement of elk and cold-water fish habitat throughout the Forest. Programs will also be conducted to provide habitat for small game, furbearers, and other existing wildlife and fish species.</p> <p>To achieve grizzly bear objectives, the emphasis in the Forest Service regional action plan calls for coordination with range managers, outfitters and guides, public information programs for hunters, and law enforcement to curtail illegal killing of bears.</p>	<p><i>No change.</i></p>	<p><i>No change.</i></p>
Wildlife and Fish	<p>Desired future condition of the Forest, pp. II-11 to II-13</p>	<p>Add NCDE-DC-WL-01, 02, and 03.</p> <p>Add NCDE-DC-AR-01, 02, and 03.</p> <p>Add NCDE-DC-VEG-01 and 02.</p> <p>Add NCDE-DC-GRZ-01.</p> <p>Add NCDE-DC-SFP-01.</p> <p>Add NCDE-DC-MIN-01.</p> <p>Add NCDE- HNF Zone1-DC-01 and NCDE-HNF Zone 1&2-DC-02.</p>	<p><i>Wording change to NCDE-DC-GRZ-01: also applies to zone 1</i></p>

Helena National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Helena Forest Plan)	Selected Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
		<p>Add NCDE-KNF Zone 1-DC-01, NCDE-KNF Zone 1-DC-02 (which all apply to the PCA).</p> <p>Add NCDE-LNF Zone 1-DC-01, NCDE-LNF Zone 1-DC-02 (which all apply to the PCA).</p>	
Wildlife and Fisheries: Big Game	<p>pp. II-17 to II-18.</p> <p>Implement an aggressive road management program to maintain or improve big game security.</p> <p>Roads will be managed during the general big game hunting season to limit open road densities.</p>	<i>No change.</i>	<i>No change.</i>
Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species: Grizzly Bear	<p>p. II-19</p> <p>Apply the guidelines in appendix D to management situations 1 and 2 (referred to as essential and occupied prior to 1984) grizzly bear habitat on the Forest (see map in appendix D).</p> <p>Initiate field studies in undesignated areas known to be used by grizzlies to determine whether the areas should be designated as grizzly habitat. Until sufficient evidence is available to determine the status of these areas, manage them according to appendix E, Grizzly Management Guidelines Outside of Recovery Areas.</p>	<p>Replace first paragraph with NCDE-STD-WL-01.</p> <p>Add NCDE-STD-WL-02, NCDE-STD-WL-03, NCDE-GDL-WL-01, NCDE-GDL-WL-02, and NCDE-GDL-WL-03.</p> <p>Retain the second paragraph.</p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species: Grizzly Bear	<p>In occupied grizzly habitat, to minimize human-caused mortality the open road density will not exceed the 1980 density of 0.55 miles per square mile, which was determined to have little effect on habitat capability.</p>	<p>Replace this standard with NCDE-STD-AR-01 through 04, NCDE-GDL-AR-01, and NCDE-GDL-AR-02 (which apply to the PCA); and NCDE-HNF Zone1-STD-01 (which applies to zone 1).</p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species: Grizzly Bear	<p>Appendix D, Guidelines for Management of Grizzly Bear Habitat</p>	<p>Replace paragraphs addressing management situation 1 and management situation 2 with map and description of the PCA, zone 1, and zone 2.</p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Helena National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Helena Forest Plan)	Selected Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species: Grizzly Bear	Appendix E, Grizzly Bear Management Outside of Recovery Areas	<i>No change.</i>	<i>No change.</i>
Facilities: Road Management	<p>Forestwide Standards, p. II-31</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Helena National Forest will generally be open to vehicles except for roads, trails, and areas that may be restricted. (See Forest Visitor Map for specific information). The Forest Road Management Program will be used to review, evaluate, and implement the goals and standards of the management areas in the forest plan with regard to road, trail, and area-wide motorized vehicle use. 2. Road management decisions will be based on user needs, public safety, resource protection, and economics. Most existing roads will be left open. But most <i>new</i> roads will be closed, at least during critical periods for big game. The criteria . . . 3. The travel restrictions will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary to meet the goals and objectives of the forest plan. 4. Enforcement of the Road Management Program will be a high priority. Weekend patrolling, signing, gating, obliterating unnecessary roads, and public education will be used to improve enforcement. Enforcement will be coordinated with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and other State and local agencies. 	<p><i>Retain existing standards.</i></p> <p>Add NCDE-STD-AR-01 through NCDE-STD-AR-04 and NCDE-GDL-AR-01 and 02 (which all apply to the PCA).</p> <p>Add NCDE-HNF Zone 1-STD-01 (which applies to zone 1).</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified with the following addition.</i></p> <p>Add NCDE-HNF Zone 1&2-STD-02. Within zone 1 and the portion of zone 2 west of Interstate 15 on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest (see appendix 1 of this ROD, figure 1-2), motorized routes (roads and trails) open to public motorized use during the non-denning season shall not exceed 2.4 miles/mile², calculated as the miles of motorized routes on National Forest System lands divided by the acres of National Forest System lands. The purpose of this standard is to support grizzly bear presence and the opportunity for movement of male bears from the NCDE to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.</p>
Developed Sites	<p>Forestwide standards, p. II-14</p> <p>New campgrounds and other developed recreation facilities, such as boat ramps or picnic areas, will generally not be constructed. Continue to maintain existing developed sites, but emphasize providing dispersed recreation opportunities. Removal of</p>	<p><i>Retain existing standard.</i></p> <p>Add NCDE-STD-AR-05 through NCDE-STD-AR-08 and NCDE-</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>

Helena National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Helena Forest Plan)	Selected Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	existing sites may be necessary in some cases due to site deterioration or excessive maintenance costs.	GDL-AR-03 (which all apply to the PCA).	
Grazing	<p>Forestwide standards, p. II-22</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Riparian condition within livestock allotments will be mapped and become part of the allotment management plan. Where analysis shows range resource damage, the cause will be identified and corrective action will be initiated through an allotment management plan. 2. Chemical spraying should not be used on sagebrush control projects if other control methods are feasible. 3. Best management practices will be used to minimize livestock damage to lakeside soils, streambanks, and other fragile areas. 4. Allotment management plans will specify the utilization standards of key plant species needed to protect the soil and water quality. Allowable forage utilization of these plants should be based on local range conditions, soil stability, and known individual plant requirements. The guides for allowable utilization of key species, by condition classes, are in the Range Management Handbook (Forest Service Handbook 2209.21). 5. Allotment management plans will be developed using the interdisciplinary process. 	<p><i>Retain existing range standards.</i></p> <p>Add NCDE-STD-GRZ-01 through 06 and NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01 and 02. (NCDE-STD-GRZ-02 and 05 apply to the PCA; NCDE-STD-GRZ-01, 03, 04, and 06 apply to the PCA and zone 1; NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01 and 02 apply to the PCA).</p>	<p><i>Wording change</i> NCDE-STD-GRZ-02 : also apply to zone 1.</p> <p><i>Different wording:</i> NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, where recurring grizzly bear-human conflicts occur on sheep or cattle allotments and an opportunity exists with a willing permittee, the Forest Service should consider phasing out grazing or moving the livestock to a vacant allotment where there is less likelihood of grizzly bear-human conflicts. <i>See also</i> NCDE-STD-GRZ-07.</p> <p><i>Add standard:</i> NCDE-STD-GRZ-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, sheep grazing allotments shall be closed, if the opportunity arises with a willing permittee, to reduce the potential risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.</p>
Revegetation	<p>Forestwide standards, p. II-23</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seeding will be done in a timely manner on disturbed areas to prevent erosion and to achieve best revegetation results. 2. Seeding mixtures of native plants (naturally occurring) should be used, if practical, in all revegetation projects greater than two acres. On smaller disturbances, the responsible official may authorize the use of exotic species. 	<p><i>Retain existing revegetation standards.</i></p> <p>Refer to NCDE-GDL-WL-03 regarding seed mixes in the PCA and zone 1.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>

Helena National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Helena Forest Plan)	Selected Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>3. Seeding guidelines, based on elevation, soil type, parent material, habitat type, and reasonable cost, are listed in appendix F.</p>		
Timber	<p>Forestwide standards, pp. II-23 and II-24</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Silvicultural examinations and prescriptions will be required before any timber manipulation or silvicultural treatment takes place. Exceptions include cutting of trees that block vision along roads, cutting hazard trees, clearing right-of-way, clearing for mineral development, minor and incidental amounts of free use, and cutting personal firewood. Final determination of which silvicultural system will be used for a particular project will be made by a certified silviculturist after an on-the-ground site analysis. This site-specific analysis will determine the appropriate even- or uneven-aged silvicultural system that best meets the goals and objectives of the management area. Standards for applying all silvicultural systems, as well as supporting research references, are in the USDA Forest Service Northern Region guide (June 10, 1983). In addition, broad guidelines are found in appendices B and M. Even-aged management methods will be used only where they are determined to be appropriate to meet objectives. Clearcutting will be used only where it is the optimum method. 2. Tree improvement will be conducted in accordance with the current Region- and Forest-level tree improvement plans 3. Transportation plans and logging systems must be designed jointly to provide for long-term stand management, with full consideration given to topography and slope, the overall economic efficiency of roading and yarding costs, and the needs of other resources. 	<p><i>Retain existing timber standards.</i></p> <p><i>Add NCDE-GDL-VEG-01 through 05 (which all apply to the PCA).</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative alt. 2alt. 2 modified.</i></p>

Helena National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Helena Forest Plan)	Selected Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>4. Timber stand openings created by even-aged silvicultural systems will normally be 40 acres or less. Creation of larger openings will require a 60-day public review and regional forester approval. Exceptions are listed in the USDA Forest Service Northern Region Guide.</p>		
Special Forest Products	--	Add NCDE-STD-SFP-01 (this is regarding apiaries; there is no such section in the existing forest plan).	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
General Minerals	<p>Forestwide standards, p. II-26)</p> <p>3. Access for development of locatable and leasable minerals will be allowed on a case-by-case basis. Access should be directed toward minimizing resource impacts and should be coordinated with other land uses.</p>	<p><i>Retain existing standard.</i></p> <p>Add NCDE-STD-MIN-01 through 07 and NCDE-GDL-MIN-01 through 06 (which all apply to locatable and leasable minerals in the PCA and zone 1).</p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Locatable Minerals	<p>p. II-27</p> <p>1. Consistent with the Mining and Mineral Policy Act of 1970, continue to encourage the responsible development of mineral resources on National Forest System lands. Concurrently, require mitigation measures to protect surface resources.</p> <p>2. Provide guidance to miners and prospectors to plan reclamation and to minimize environmental damage.</p> <p>7. Following mineral development, the Forest Service will require reclamation of surface disturbance to prevent or control on- and off-site damage. Reclamation includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Control of erosion and landslides. b. Control of water runoff. c. Isolation, removal, or control of toxic materials. d. Reshaping and revegetation of disturbed areas. 	<i>Retain existing locatable minerals standards.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Helena National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Helena Forest Plan)	Selected Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	e. Rehabilitation of fisheries and wildlife habitat.		
Locatable Minerals	Amendment 19: Withdrawal of areas for locatable minerals on the Lincoln Ranger District	<i>Retain existing standards in amendment 19.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Locatable Minerals	Saleable minerals forestwide standards, p. II-28 1. Common-variety mineral permits will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be issued only if consistent with the management area goals.	<i>Retain existing saleable minerals standard.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Leasable Minerals: Oil and Gas Leasing Availability and Lease Stipulations	Amendment 13, p. II-28 Helena National Forest lands that are unavailable for oil and gas leasing are wilderness areas (P-1 and P-2 management areas), forest plan recommended wilderness (P-3 management areas), the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit, and the Helena City Municipal Watershed (the Ten Mile drainage above the city water treatment plan). All other Forest lands with Federal mineral ownership are available for lease and will be recommended to the BLM for issuance. The recommendation will include appropriate stipulations as determined in the record of decision for the Helena National Forest and Deerlodge National Forest Portion of the Elkhorns Oil and Gas Leasing EIS and will be displayed as the new appendix N of the forest plan.	<i>Retain this standard.</i> Refer to NCDE-STD-MIN-08 for leasable minerals in the PCA.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Leasable Minerals: Oil and Gas Leasing Availability and Lease Stipulations	Amendment 13, p. II-28 No surface occupancy is allowed in management situation 1 grizzly bear habitat pursuant to the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines and if considered important to conservation of the grizzly bear, as outlined in an approved grizzly bear conservation strategy, following a change in legal status under the Endangered Species Act. No surface occupancy also applies to overlapping occupied denning and summer habitat in management situation 2.	<i>Replace these leasable minerals standards with NCDE-STD-MIN-08 (which applies to the PCA).</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified with wording change to NCDE-STD-MIN-08 to apply to the PCA and zone 1</i>

Helena National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Helena Forest Plan)	Selected Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	Timing limitations also applies to grizzly bear denning areas in management situation 2 (October 15 to April 15) and spring habitat in management situation 2 (April 1 to June 30).	See also NCDE-STD-MIN-05 (which applies to the PCA and zone 1).	
Seismic Exploration	<p>p. II-28</p> <p>An environmental analysis will be completed for each application. A prospecting permit will be issued on a case-by-case basis and will contain stipulations designed to coordinate surface resource values. The following apply where appropriate:</p> <p>a. Water quality and quantity: Stipulations may be issued to limit activities within 100 feet of all streams, lakes, springs, and ponds.</p> <p>b. Threatened and endangered species habitat: Stipulations will be issued to protect threatened and endangered species by limiting activities during critical periods and protecting important habitat elements.</p> <p>c. Nongame habitat: Stipulations may be used to limit surface use as a coordination and/or mitigation measure for species listed by the State of Montana as species of special interest and concern. (The State species list is part of the wildlife planning record.)</p> <p>d. Big game habitat: To protect key areas for big game (i.e., winter range, summer concentration habitats, calving areas, lambing areas, big game travel routes, etc.), stipulations may be used during critical periods.</p>	<p><i>Retain existing seismic exploration standards.</i></p> <p>See NCDE-STD-MIN-05 and 06 and NCDE-GDL-MIN-01 and 03 (which all apply to the PCA and zone 1).</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Monitoring	<p>p. IV-8</p> <p>Wildlife C6. Grizzly bear habitat effectiveness/population (habitat diversity, open road density)</p>	<p><i>Replace with</i> NCDE-MON-01 and NCDE-MON-07</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Monitoring	<p>p. IV-6</p> <p>Recreation A1. Actual use and condition of developed recreation facilities</p>	<p><i>Retain and add</i> NCDE-MON-02.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>

Helena National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Helena Forest Plan)	Selected Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Monitoring	p. IV-10 Range D2. Allotment management planning and update	<i>Retain and add</i> NCDE-MON-03 and NCDE-MON-10.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Monitoring	p. IV-16 Minerals G1. Forest Service land uses that may have an effect on minerals activities; minerals activities that have an effect on surface resources	<i>Retain and add</i> NCDE-MON-04.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Monitoring	p. IV-17 Facilities L2. Road management. Ensure that assumptions are valid concerning yearlong closures and seasonal closures on collector roads and local roads	<i>Retain and add</i> NCDE-MON-01, NCDE-MON-05, and NCDE-MON-06.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Additional Requirements	<p>In 2006, USFWS administratively amended the 1985 biological opinion on the Helena forest plan. The 2006 biological opinion was superseded by a 2014 biological opinion f on the effects of the Helena National Forest plan on grizzly bears that occur both inside and outside the NCDE recovery zone and by a 2017 biological opinion on the Blackfoot travel plan.</p> <p>The 2014 biological opinion includes an incidental take statement with the following terms and conditions, which are required in order to be exempt from the taking prohibition of the Endangered Species Act:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Forest will consult the Service if a net increase in permanent National Forest System roads on the Divide landscape exceeds 5 linear miles over the next 10-year period succeeding this incidental take statement. Decommissioning of permanent National Forest System roads contributes to decreasing the net increase. 2. The Forest will consult the USFWS if the amount of temporary roads constructed on the Divide landscape exceeds 30 miles over the next 10-year period succeeding this incidental take statement. 	<p><i>The 1985 biological opinion would be administratively amended for the grizzly bear, superseding the 2014 biological opinion</i></p> <p>Travel plan decisions and associated biological opinions would not be changed by this amendment.</p> <p>See NCDE-STD-AR-02.</p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Helena National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Helena Forest Plan)	Selected Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>3. Allow no new sheep allotments on the Forest within the NCDE recovery zone.</p> <p>4. Include a clause in all grazing permits that occur within the action area requiring the permittee to notify the Forest of any grizzly bear depredation on livestock or conflicts between grizzly bears and livestock, even if the conflict did not result in the loss of livestock, within 24 hours of discovery. The Forest shall work with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and wildlife control personnel to determine the appropriate action.</p> <p>5. Include a clause in all grazing permits that occur within the action area requiring the permittee to notify the Forest of any livestock losses, regardless of the cause, within 24 hours of discovery. Agency personnel and the permittee would then jointly determine how to properly treat or dispose of livestock carcasses so as to eliminate any potential attractant for bears.</p> <p>The 2017 biological opinion on the Blackfoot travel plan includes an incidental take statement with the following terms and conditions that are required to reduce the potential for the displacement of grizzly bears:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Forest shall follow access management direction within the proposed action; 2. The Forest shall ensure that restricted roads are effectively restricted and are not being used by wheeled motorized vehicles after route closure; 3. The Forest shall ensure that closed routes used for administrative purposes are gated to the public and that use is limited to Forest personnel, permittees, or contractors; 4. Within the Red Mountain subunit, implement actions on roads proposed for closure via decommissioning, storage, and/or gating within a three-year period from the date the travel plan decision is signed. 	<p>See NCDE-STD-GRZ-03 and 04 and NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01.</p>	

Kootenai National Forest Plan

Current Forest Plan Direction and Changes Under the Action Alternatives

This table presents the forest plan components relevant to grizzly bear habitat management that would be included in the Kootenai National Forest plan under each alternative. The Kootenai National Forest contains land in the primary conservation area (PCA) and in zone 1, which includes the Salish demographic connectivity area (DCA).

Note that the amendment would apply only to the portions of the Kootenai National Forest that are within the NCDE and not to those portions that are within the Cabinet-Yaak grizzly bear recovery area.

Table 2-2. Kootenai National Forest comparison of the no-action alternative (the current forest plan) to alternatives 2 and 3

Kootenai National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (current forest plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Wildlife	Desired conditions, pp. 28-29 FW-DC-WL-01. Nests and den sites and other birthing and rearing areas for terrestrial threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species are relatively free of human disturbance during the period they are active at these sites. Individual animals that establish nests and den sites near areas of pre-existing human use are assumed to be accepting of that existing level of human use at the time the animals establish occupancy.	<i>No change.</i>	<i>No change.</i>
Wildlife	FW-DC-WL-02. A forestwide system of large remote areas is available to accommodate species requiring large home ranges and low disturbances, such as some wide-ranging carnivores (e.g., grizzly bear).	<i>No change.</i>	<i>No change.</i>
Wildlife	FW-DC-WL-03. Recovery of the terrestrial threatened and endangered species is the long-term desired condition. Foraging, denning, rearing, and security habitat is available for occupation. Populations trend toward recovery through cooperation and coordination with USFWS, State agencies, other Federal agencies, tribes, and interested groups.	<i>No change.</i>	<i>No change.</i>
Wildlife	FW-DC-WL-04. All grizzly bear management units have low levels of disturbance to facilitate denning activities	<i>No change.</i>	<i>No change.</i>

Kootenai National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (current forest plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)												
	and spring use, limit displacement, and reduce human-bear conflicts and potential bear mortality. Spring, summer, and fall forage is available for the grizzly bear.														
Wildlife	FW-DC-WL-05. Recovery of the grizzly bear is promoted by motorized access management within the Kootenai National Forest portion of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem and the Cabinet-Yaak recovery zones.	<i>No change.</i>	<i>No change.</i>												
Wildlife	FW-DC-WL-17. Forest management contributes to wildlife movement within and between national forest parcels. Movement between those parcels separated by other ownerships is facilitated by management of the National Forest System portions of linkage areas identified through interagency coordination. Federal ownership is consolidated at these approach areas to highway and road crossings to facilitate wildlife movement.	<i>No change.</i> Add NCDE-KNF Zone 1-DC-01 and 02.	<i>No change.</i>												
Wildlife	--	Add NCDE-DC-WL-0102, and 03.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>												
Wildlife	<p>Wildlife standards, p. 30</p> <p>FW-STD-WL-03. Within the Kootenai portion of the NCDE recovery zone, bear management unit subunits shall maintain or improve the access and habitat parameters as shown in table 6. Site-specific motorized access densities and security core habitat are developed at the project level in consultation with the USFWS and through appropriate public involvement and National Environmental Policy Act procedures.</p> <p>Table 6. NCDE Recovery Zone Bear Management Units</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="430 1166 1045 1399"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="430 1166 604 1300">Bear Management Unit Subunit</th> <th data-bbox="604 1166 758 1300">Open Motorized Route Density¹</th> <th data-bbox="758 1166 911 1300">Total Motorized Route Density²</th> <th data-bbox="911 1166 1045 1300">Security Core Area</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 1300 604 1349">Krinklehorn</td> <td data-bbox="604 1300 758 1349">≤ 18%</td> <td data-bbox="758 1300 911 1349">≤ 11%</td> <td data-bbox="911 1300 1045 1349">≥ 75%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="430 1349 604 1399">Therriault</td> <td data-bbox="604 1349 758 1399">≤ 23%</td> <td data-bbox="758 1349 911 1399">≤ 10%</td> <td data-bbox="911 1349 1045 1399">≥ 71%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Bear Management Unit Subunit	Open Motorized Route Density ¹	Total Motorized Route Density ²	Security Core Area	Krinklehorn	≤ 18%	≤ 11%	≥ 75%	Therriault	≤ 23%	≤ 10%	≥ 71%	<p><i>Retain this standard.</i></p> <p><i>Note: This is the baseline (adjusted through Section 7 consultation) in relation to NCDE-STD-AR-02.</i></p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Bear Management Unit Subunit	Open Motorized Route Density ¹	Total Motorized Route Density ²	Security Core Area												
Krinklehorn	≤ 18%	≤ 11%	≥ 75%												
Therriault	≤ 23%	≤ 10%	≥ 71%												

Kootenai National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (current forest plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>¹ The standard for open motorized route density and total motorized route density is to be ≤ the percentage listed in the table above. This is calculated based on the percentage of the bear management unit with an open motorized route density ≥ 1 mile per mile squared and a total motorized route density ≥ 2 mile per mile squared. Open motorized route density and total motorized route density are defined in the glossary.</p> <p>² The standard for core is to be ≥ the percentage listed in the table. This is calculated based on the definition of “grizzly bear core habitat” in the glossary.</p>		
Wildlife	FW-STD-WL-04. Permits and operating plans (e.g., special use, grazing, and mining) shall specify sanitation measures and adhere to the forestwide food/wildlife attractant storage order in order to reduce human-wildlife conflicts and mortality by making wildlife attractants (e.g., garbage, food, livestock carcasses) inaccessible through proper storage or disposal.	<p><i>Retain this standard and add NCDE-STD-WL-02.</i></p> <p>Note: FW-STD-WL-04 is broader than NCDE-STD-WL-02, which applies to the NCDE PCA and zone 1.]</p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Wildlife	FW-STD-WL-05. No grooming of snowmobile routes in grizzly bear core habitat in the spring after April 1 of each year.	<p><i>Retain this standard.</i></p> <p>Add NCDE-STD-AR-08 (which applies to the PCA)</p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Wildlife	--	Add NCDE-STD-WL-01.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Wildlife	Wildlife guidelines, pp. 31-32 FW-GDL-WL-01. Grizzly Bear. Management activities should avoid or minimize disturbance in areas of predicted denning habitat during spring emergence (April 1 through May 1).	<p><i>Retain this guideline.</i></p> <p>See also NCDE-STD-AR-08 (which applies to the PCA).</p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Wildlife	FW-GDL-WL-15. Grizzly bear. Elements contained in the most recent Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines, or a conservation strategy once a grizzly bear population is delisted, would be applied to management activities.	<p><i>Revise as shown in bold:</i> Elements contained in the most recent Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines, or a conservation strategy incorporated into the forest plan, would be applied to management activities.</p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Wildlife	--	Add NCDE-GDL-WL-01 through 03.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Kootenai National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (current forest plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Access and Recreation	<p>Access and recreation, pp. 33-35</p> <p>FW-DC-AR-01. Quality, well-maintained recreation facilities exist at key locations to accommodate concentrations of use, enhance the visitor's experience, and protect the natural resources of the area. Day use access is available for relaxation, viewing scenery and wildlife, and water and snow-based play. Recreation rental cabins and lookouts provide safe, comfortable overnight facilities that allow visitors to experience and learn about the rich history of the area. Dispersed camping opportunities are available for a wide variety of users while considering resource concerns, activity conflicts, or over-use. Food and garbage storage do not contribute to conflicts between recreation users and wildlife.</p>	<p><i>Retain this desired condition and add NCDE-DC-AR-02 and 03 (which apply to the PCA).</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Access and Recreation	<p>FW-DC-AR-07. A transportation system is in place that provides safe and efficient public and administrative access to the Forest for recreation, special uses, forest resource management, and fire management activities. It is efficiently maintained, environmentally compatible, and responsive to public needs and desires. The transportation system and its use have minimal impacts on resources including threatened and endangered species, sensitive species, heritage and cultural sites, watersheds, and aquatic species. Newly constructed or reconstructed roads do not encroach into streams and riparian areas in ways that impact channel function, geometry, or sediment delivery. Roads in intermittent stored service pose minimal risks to water quality and aquatic ecosystems. Drainage structures have a minimal risk of failure and provide adequate drainage that prevents accelerated runoff, erosion, and sediment delivery to streams. In addition, stream crossings provide for passage of aquatic organisms. Unauthorized roads and trails are no longer created.</p>	<p><i>Retain this desired condition and add NCDE-DC-AR-01 (which applies to the PCA).</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Access and Recreation	<p>--</p>	<p>Add NCDE-STD-AR-01 through 04, NCDE-STD-WL-03, and NCDE-GDL-AR-01</p>	

Kootenai National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (current forest plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
		through 03 (which all apply to the PCA).	
Access and Recreation	--	Add NCDE-STD-AR-05 through 07 (which apply to the PCA).	
--	--	<p>Add NCDE-KNF Zone1-DC-01 and NCDE-KNF Zone 1-DC-02.</p> <p>Add NCDE-KNF Zone1-STD-01 and NCDE-KNF Zone 1-STD-02 (which apply to zone 1 and the Salish DCA).</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified except modify the wording of NCDE-KNF Zone 1-STD-02:</i></p> <p>NCDE-KNF Zone 1-STD-02. Within the Kootenai National Forest portion of NCDE Zone 1 outside of the area covered by the Tobacco BORZ (forest plan appendix B, pp. 150-151) (see appendix 1 of this ROD, figure 1-3), there shall be no net increase above the baseline in miles of roads open to public motorized use during the non-denning season on National Forest System lands. This standard does not apply to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ motorized use by agency personnel or others authorized by the appropriate agency personnel; ▪ temporarily opening a road for a short period of time to allow for public firewood gathering and other authorized use; ▪ updated/improved road data without an actual change on the ground; ▪ changes in technology or projections resulting in changed calculations without actual change on the ground (e.g., a switch in geodetic systems from the North American Datum of 1927 to the North American Datum of 1983); ▪ a road closure location is moved a short distance (e.g., to the nearest intersection or turnout) to a better

Kootenai National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (current forest plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
			<p>location to allow turnarounds providing for public safety, to reduce vandalism, or to improve enforcement of the road closure;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the agency exchanges, acquires, buys or sells lands with motorized routes; ▪ a change in an open road is necessary to comply with Federal laws; ▪ motorized use for mining activities (as authorized under the Mining Law of 1872) and oil and gas activities (as authorized under the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987) conducted in accordance with valid existing rights and applicable standards and guidelines; ▪ a change in an open road necessary to address grizzly bear-human conflicts, human safety concerns, or resource damage or concerns (e.g., a road paralleling a stream may be decommissioned and replaced by a new upslope road to reduce water quality impacts); ▪ motorized use for emergency situations as defined by 36 CFR 218.21; and ▪ temporary roads (see glossary).
Grazing	<p>Grazing, p. 38</p> <p>FW-DC-GRZ-01. Grazing occurs at sustainable levels in suitable locations while protecting resources.</p> <p>FW-DC-GRZ-03. Vacant allotments are evaluated and may be closed when there is either a lack of use, a shortage of forage for a viable allotment, or the likelihood of a significant resource conflict.</p>	<p><i>Retain existing grazing desired condition statements and add NCDE-DC-GRZ-01 (which applies to the PCA).</i></p>	<p><i>Wording change in NCDE-DC-GRZ-01 to make it also applicable to zone 1, including the Salish DCA.</i></p>

Kootenai National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (current forest plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Grazing	--	Add NCDE-STD-GRZ-01 through 06 and add NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01 and 02 (NCDE-STD-GRZ-02 and 05 and NCDE-GDL-GRZ 01 and 02 apply to the PCA; NCDE-STD-GRZ-01, 03, 04 and 06 apply to the PCA and zone 1).	<p><i>Wording change in standard NCDE-STD-GRZ-02 to make it also applicable to zone 1, including the Salish DCA.</i></p> <p><i>Wording change NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, where recurring grizzly bear-human conflicts occur on sheep or cattle allotments and an opportunity exists with a willing permittee, the Forest Service should consider phasing out grazing or moving the livestock to a vacant allotment where there is less likelihood of grizzly bear-human conflicts. See also NCDE-STD-GRZ-07.</i></p> <p><i>Add standard: NCDE-STD-GRZ-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, sheep grazing allotments shall be closed if the opportunity arises with a willing permittee, to reduce the potential risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.</i></p>
Timber	Timber, pp. 38-39 FW-DC-TBR-01. Production of timber contributes to ecological, social, and/or economic sustainability and associated desired conditions. A sustainable mix of timber products (including both sawtimber and non-sawtimber) is offered under a variety of harvest and contract methods in response to market demand. Salvage of dead and dying trees captures as much of the economic value of the wood as possible while retaining the amount needed for wildlife habitat, soil productivity, and ecosystem functions.	Retain existing timber desired condition statement and add NCDE-DC-VEG-01 and 02 (which apply to the PCA).	Same as alternative 2 modified.
Vegetation	--	Add NCDE-GDL-VEG-01 through 05 (which all apply to the PCA).	Wording change in NCDE-GDL-VEG-01 through 05 makes them also applicable to the Salish DCA.
Special Forest Products	--	Add NCDE-DC-SFP-01 and add NCDE-STD-SFP-01 (which apply to the PCA).	Same as alternative 2 modified.

Kootenai National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (current forest plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Minerals	Minerals, p. 39 FW-STD-MIN-01. Locatable mineral development is not allowed in areas withdrawn from mineral entry. (Refer to appendix D for areas withdrawn from mineral entry.)	Add NCDE-DC-MIN-01.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Minerals	--	Add NCDE-STD-MIN-01 through 07 (which all apply to the PCA and zone 1). Add NCDE-STD-MIN-08 (which applies to the PCA).	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified</i> <i>Wording change to make standard NCDE-STD-MIN-08 also apply to zone 1:</i>
Minerals	--	Add NCDE-GDL-MIN-01 through 06 (which all apply to the PCA and zone 1).	<i>Same as modified.</i>
Monitoring	Monitoring, p. 100 MON-FLS-01-01: Grizzly Bear: Progress towards achieving and maintaining standards for percent core area, open motorized route density, and total motorized route density within the recovery zones (see monitoring requirements for the Grizzly Bear Access Amendment in appendix B).	Add NCDE-MON-01, NCDE-MON-05, and NCDE-MON-08.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Monitoring	Monitoring–Access and Recreation, p. 102 MON-AR-01-01: Number and type of recreation sites. MON-AR-01-02: Number of persons at one time.	Add NCDE-MON-02.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Monitoring	Monitoring–Grazing	Add NCDE-MON-03 and NCDE-MON-10.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Monitoring	Monitoring–Minerals and Energy Development	Add NCDE-MON-04.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Monitoring	--	Add NCDE-MON-06.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Additional Requirements	Additional Requirements, Kootenai National Forest In 2013, USFWS issued a biological opinion on the effects of the revised forest plan on grizzly bears in the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem and the NCDE. The incidental take statement includes the following terms and conditions,	<i>The 2013 biological opinion will be amended by the consultation on the NCDE grizzly bear amendment</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Kootenai National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (current forest plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>which are required in order to be exempt from the taking prohibition of the Endangered Species Act.</p>		
<p>Additional Requirements</p>	<p>The Forest shall conduct monitoring and reporting of incidental take as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By April 15 each year, the Kootenai National Forest shall submit an annual report to the USFWS that details the progress made toward achieving and maintaining the standards for percent core area, open motorized route density, and total motorized route density within the recovery zones. 2. The annual report shall provide an ongoing list detailing the locations, dates, duration, and circumstances for invoking the access amendment allowance for entering core area for the purposes of road decommissioning or stabilization. 3. The Kootenai National Forest shall coordinate with State and Federal agency biologists to collect credible grizzly bear observations that occur outside of the recovery zone boundaries and add this information to the 6th-order hydrologic unit code database for inclusion in the annual report. 4. During the first year of implementation of the revised forest plan, the Forest and the USFWS shall cooperatively develop a plan to monitor the scope and magnitude of late-season snowmobiling (post-April 15) as it relates to effects on post-den emergent grizzly bears (see incidental take statement). Within 5 years of implementation of the revised forest plan, the Forest shall complete a winter travel plan, which will include considerations for grizzly bear and other federally listed species. 5. The Forest shall notify the grizzly bear recovery coordinator or Service's Montana Field Office within 24 hours of any bear-human conflicts that occur on the Forest, regardless of cause or season. 		

Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan

Current Forest Plan Direction and Changes Under the Action Alternatives

This table presents the forest plan components that are relevant to grizzly bear habitat management that would be included in the Lewis and Clark forest plan under each alternative. The Lewis and Clark National Forest contains land within the primary conservation area (PCA) and zone 3, with negligible amounts in zone 1 (6 acres) and zone 2 (2 acres).

Table 2-3. Lewis and Clark (L&C) National Forest comparison of the no-action alternative (the current forest plan) to alternatives 2 and 3

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Wildlife and Fish	<p>Forestwide Objectives, Wildlife and Fish (pp. 2-5 and 2-6)</p> <p>Management will emphasize the recovery of the endangered gray wolf and threatened grizzly bear on the Rocky Mountain Division and the maintenance of current populations of elk and coldwater fish throughout the Forest. Programs will also be conducted to provide for huntable and trappable populations of small game and furbearers and viable populations of other existing wildlife and fish species. (See Appendices D, E, F, H, I and K.)</p>	<p><i>Retain the first paragraph.</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Wildlife and Fish	<p>To achieve grizzly bear objectives, the emphasis in the Forest Service regional action plan calls for coordination with range managers, outfitters and guides, public information programs with hunters, and law enforcement to curtail illegal killing of bears (see appendix J). To improve analytical capabilities on the effect of activities of grizzly bears and their habitat, a computerized cumulative effects model will be developed from this effort and area coordination plans will be prepared to regulate activities in time and space (see appendix L).</p>	<p><i>Remove this paragraph.</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Desired Future Condition of the Forest	<p>Desired Future Conditions (pp. 2-18 to 22)</p>	<p>Add NCDE-DC-WL-01, NCDE-DC-WL-02, and NCDE-DC-WL-03.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
		Add NCDE-DC-AR-01, 02, and 03. Add NCDE-DC-VEG-01 and 02. Add NCDE-DC-GRZ-01. Add NCDE-DC-S Add NCDE-DC-MIN-01. (all apply to the primary conservation area) FP-01.	<i>Wording change in NCDE-DC-GRZ-01 makes it applicable to primary conservation area and zone 1.</i>
Wildlife and Fish	Wildlife and Fish Forestwide Management Standards C-2, p. 2-23 (5) Participate in the Interagency Wildlife Monitoring/Evaluation Program for the Rocky Mountain Front. The members chartered the program in 1980 to promote better coordination of wildlife studies along the Front. The interagency program is reviewed in Appendix H. Data gathered through this program is the basis of the grizzly bear management guidelines (appendix I). The Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines will be used to coordinate multiple-use activities with the biological requirements of endangered and threatened species (appendix V).	<i>Remove this standard.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Wildlife and Fish	(7) The occupied grizzly bear habitat (all of the Rocky Mountain Division) has been stratified according to the 1979 Guidelines for Management Involving Grizzly Bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Appendix K describes this stratification and the management direction based on this stratification. Forest management on occupied grizzly bear habitat will comply with this management direction.	<i>Replace with NCDE-STD-WL-01. Delete appendix K.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Wildlife and Fish	(8) Manage problem grizzly bears in accordance with the Guidelines for Determining Grizzly Bear Nuisance Status and for Controlling Nuisance Grizzly Bears in the Northern Continental Divide and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Ecosystems. These guidelines were	<i>No change.</i>	<i>No change.</i>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	developed by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Forest Service; National Park Service; Bureau of Indian Affairs; and Border Grizzly Bear Project. It is revised as needed. The document specifies the criteria for accepting nuisance grizzlies and identifies suitable relocation sites.		
Wildlife	--	Add NCDE-STD-WL-02 (which applies to the PCA, zone 1, and zone 2). Add NCDE-STD-WL-03 (which applies to the PCA).	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Wildlife	--	Add NCDE-GDL-WL-01 through 03.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Access and Recreation	Developed Recreation Forestwide Management Standards A-2, p. 2-25 (5) Administer provisions of the Endangered Species Act in occupied T&E species habitat (appendix I). Use the management guidelines developed under the Interagency Rocky Mountain Front Wildlife Monitoring/Evaluation Program to avoid or mitigate conflicts between developed recreation and T&E species (appendix I)	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>
Access and Recreation	--	Add NCDE-STD-AR-05 through 08 and add NCDE-GDL-AR-03 (which all apply to the PCA).	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Livestock Grazing	Livestock Grazing Forestwide Management Standards D-4, p. 2-41 6) Grazing that affects grizzly bears and/or their habitat will be made compatible with grizzly needs or such uses will be disallowed or eliminated.	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Livestock Grazing	--	Add NCDE-STD-GRZ-01 through 06 and add NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01 and 02 (NCDE-STD-GRZ-02 and 05, and NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01 and 02 apply to the PCA; NCDE-STD-GRZ-01, 03, 04, and 06 apply to the PCA and zone 1).	<p><i>Wording change in grazing standards</i> NCDE-STD-GRZ-02 and 05 makes them applicable to zone 1.</p> <p><i>Wording change</i> NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, where recurring grizzly bear-human conflicts occur on sheep or cattle allotments and an opportunity exists with a willing permittee, the Forest Service should consider phasing out grazing or moving the livestock to a vacant allotment where there is less likelihood of grizzly bear-human conflicts. See also NCDE-STD-GRZ-07.</p> <p><i>Add standard:</i> NCDE-STD-GRZ-07. Within the NCDE PCA, sheep grazing allotments shall be closed, if the opportunity arises with a willing permittee, to reduce the potential risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.</p>
Vegetation	<p>Timber Forestwide Management Standards, Firewood Administration E-2, p. 2-42</p> <p>(4) When roads approach diverse complexes of T&E habitat components such as those in the upper ends of drainages, they should not be opened to firewood cutting during any season. For roads that enter areas of low vertical relief and limited component diversity, access for firewood cutting is compatible with grizzly bear use as long as the access is prohibited during important use seasons. Firewood cutting should be limited to 2 to 3 years after timber harvest. Then, the road should be permanently closed to the public.</p>	<p><i>Retain this standard.</i></p> <p><i>Note: In the NCDE primary conservation area, this is modified by NCDE-GDL-VEG-01 through 05 as well as by NCDE-STD-AR-02 and 04.</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Timber Harvest	<p>Timber Harvest E-4, p. 2-46 and 2-47</p> <p>The following standards apply to occupied grizzly bear habitat on the Rocky Mountain Division.</p> <p>(14) Coordinate timber harvest activities with seasonal grizzly habitat use patterns to minimize the disturbance</p>	<p>Add guidelines NCDE-GDL-VEG-01 through 05 (which apply to the PCA).</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>to grizzly bears. This can most easily be accomplished with seasonal restrictions on logging and road building activities.</p> <p>(15) Maintain or improve the production of grizzly food species on harvesting sites. To accomplish this, soil scarification during logging and post-logging treatments will be done to the minimum level necessary to ensure timber regeneration.</p> <p>(16) Broadcast burning will be favored over dozer piling in areas where broadcast burning will not adversely affect timber regeneration.</p> <p>(17) Use equipment no bigger than necessary to complete the job.</p> <p>(18) Encourage horse logging where it is feasible because it is generally 'easy on the land,' allowing many bear foods to recover rapidly.</p>		
Timber Harvest	<p>19) Maintain escape cover and a degree of isolation for the grizzly. This standard can be met by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating irregular borders where possible to provide nearby cover for a great proportion of the cutting unit. • screening clearcuts from the road by a strip of trees between the road and the cut. • maintaining visual cover along streams; around wet areas such as seeps, wet meadows and marshes; along ridgetops; and adjacent to open habitat components such as snow chutes, shrubfields, sidehill parks, and slabrock areas. • retaining stringers of timber that serve as travel routes as well as feeding sites along riparian zones, snowchutes, and between adjacent cutting units. • limiting timber harvest activities at or near ridgetops, at drainage heads, and along creek 	<i>No change.</i>	<i>No change.</i>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>bottoms. These sites are important grizzly travel/feeding areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting travel corridors, denning areas, or feeding sites. • harvesting timber systematically so as to allow cover, food, and trees time to recover adequately before re-entry. 		
Special Forest Products	--	<i>Add NCDE-STD-SFP-01.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Minerals	<p>Minerals Forestwide Management Standards, Seismic Exploration G-1, p. 2- 54</p> <p>(14) Protect T&E wildlife species through compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Use the Interagency Guidelines to avoid or mitigate conflicts with seismic exploration and T&E species (appendix I).</p>	<p><i>Retain this standard.</i></p> <p><i>Note: See NCDE-STD-MIN-05 and 06 specific to grizzly bears, applicable to the PCA and zone 1.</i></p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Minerals	<p>Minerals Forestwide Management Standards; Oil and Gas Leasing, Exploration Drilling Field Development, and Production G-2, p. 2-57</p> <p>(9) Protect threatened and endangered species through Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (consultation procedures), the standard stipulation, the controlled surface use stipulation, timing limitations, and the use of the interagency guidelines. An analysis of proposed actions will identify conditions under which activities must be restricted, delayed, or modified to prevent adverse effects on threatened and endangered species and their habitat.</p>	<p><i>Retain this standard.</i></p> <p><i>Add NCDE-STD-MIN-08 (which applies to the PCA).</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p> <p><i>Wording change in NCDE-STD-MIN-08 makes it apply to primary conservation area and zone 1</i></p>
Minerals	<p>Minerals Forestwide Management Standards, Mineral Withdrawal G-3, p. 2-59</p> <p>(2) Use withdrawal only where protection is definitely needed and cannot be achieved through other management options. All National Forest System lands on the Rocky Mountains Division have been withdrawn from entry under the general mining laws. Management</p>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	area prescriptions for these lands are to be interpreted consistent with this direction.		
Minerals	<p>Minerals Forestwide Management Standard, Locatable and Common Variety Minerals G-5, p. 2-59</p> <p>(1) Consistent with the Mining and Mineral Policy Act of 1970, continue to encourage the development of mineral resources on National Forest System lands by private enterprise. Activities authorized under notices of intent, plans of operation, and mineral material permits will contain conditions and specifications appropriate to meet the intent of standards G-1 and G-2; except, conditions may not be imposed on locatable mineral operations that are contrary to the surface use regulations for locatable minerals (36 CFR 228).</p> <p>(2) Access to valid mining claims is guaranteed under the mining laws. However, the claimant/operator must be able to justify the need for a particular type of access. The type of access approved under 36 CFR 228 will be consistent with the next logical step in the development of the property involved. Access roads for mineral needs will be coordinated with the Forest Transportation Plan.</p>	<i>Retain these standards.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Minerals	--	Add NCDE-STD-MIN-01 through 08 and add NCDE-GDL-MIN-01 through 06 (which all apply to the PCA - no zone 1 on LCNF).	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p> <p><i>Wording change in NCDE-STD-MIN-08 to make it apply to primary conservation area and zone 1</i></p>
Roads	<p>Facilities Forestwide Management Standards, Travel Planning L-2, p. 2-62</p> <p>(1) The Lewis and Clark National Forest will generally be open to vehicles except for roads, trails, or areas that may be restricted. (See Forest Visitor Map for specific information.)</p>	<i>Retain the Travel Planning standards.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>(2) Manage road and trail use to provide public access, public safety, and resource protection while minimizing environmental and user conflicts.</p> <p>(3) Manage off-road vehicle use to protect the resources, to promote public safety, and to minimize user conflicts.</p>		
Roads	<p>Facilities Forestwide Management Standards, Maintenance and Construction of Roads, Trails, and Other Facilities L-4, p. 2-65-71</p> <p>(1) Road construction will be the minimum density, cost, and standards necessary for the intended need, user safety, and resource protection.</p> <p>[The following standards apply to occupied grizzly bear habitat on the Rocky Mountain Division]</p>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
	<p>(33) Administer provisions of the Endangered Species Act in occupied T&E species habitat. Use the interagency wildlife guidelines to avoid or mitigate conflicts between road construction and use and T&E species (appendix I).</p> <p>(34) Limit new road construction to an absolute minimum to provide isolation and disturbance-free areas for grizzlies. Where new road construction is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Roads will be built to the minimum specifications necessary to complete the project. --Roads will avoid wet areas, including stream bottoms, snowchutes, and wet meadows, which are important grizzly feeding sites and travel corridors. --Roads should not bisect known or suspected grizzly travel corridors. When corridors must be entered, cover should be retained for 120 feet on each side of the road. 	<i>Remove standard 34 and replace with NCDE-STD-AR-01 through 04 and NCDE-GDL-AR-01 and 02 (which all apply to the PCA).</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>--Public traffic should be restricted on new Forest roads to minimize the disturbances to bears.</p> <p>--The initial section of permanently closed roads should be destroyed and planted with shrubs or trees that help maintain the closure and provide cover and/or food.</p> <p>--Implement seasonal or year-round closures on existing or proposed roads if the biological evaluation indicates they are necessary to allow grizzly use of important habitat, to reduce human/bear conflicts, and to meet stated habitat effectiveness objectives.</p>		
Monitoring	<p>Monitoring Wildlife, p. 5-10 C-1: Maintain occupied grizzly bear habitat capacity. To be measured and reported annually.</p>	<p><i>Replace with</i> NCDE-MON-01, NCDE-MON-05, and NCDE-MON-06.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Monitoring	<p>Recreation, pp. 5-9 and 5-10</p>	<p>Add NCDE-MON-02.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Monitoring	<p>Grazing, p. 5-12</p>	<p>Add NCDE-MON-03 and NCDE-MON-10.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Monitoring	<p>Minerals, p. 5-15 and 15</p>	<p>Add NCDE-MON-04.</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Monitoring	<p>Facilities, p. 5-16</p>		<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Appendices	<p>Appendix I, Rocky Mountain Front Interagency Wildlife Guidelines. Part B—Species-Specific Management Guidelines.</p> <p>Grizzly Bear, pp. I-6 to I-8</p> <p>1. Avoid human activities in identified grizzly bear habitat constituent elements or portions of constituent elements containing specific habitat values during the following seasonal use periods (see data summarization):</p> <p>A. Spring habitat (concentrated use areas): April 1-June 30.</p>	<p><i>Retain numbers 1 and 2 only.</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>B. Breeding areas: May 1-July 15. (Currently identified breeding areas include upper Muddy Creek, the head of Rinkers Creek, the Ear Mountain area, and the head of the North Fork Dupuyer Creek.)</p> <p>C. Alpine feeding sites: July 1-September 15.</p> <p>D. Subalpine fir/whitebark pine habitat types: August 1-November 30.</p> <p>E. Denning habitat: October 15-April 15.</p> <p>2. Avoid human activities in grizzly bear habitat components that provide important food sources during spring and early summer, April 1-July 15.</p> <p>These habitat components include riparian shrub types, <i>Populus</i> stands, wet meadows, sidehill parks, and avalanche chutes. Maintain an undisturbed zone of at least 1/2 mile between activities and the edge of these habitat components where many important bear foods occur.</p>		
Appendices	3. Establish flight patterns in advance when activities require the use of helicopters. Flight patterns should be located to avoid seasonally important grizzly bear habitat constituent elements and habitat components during the designated seasonal use periods.	<i>Remove.</i> (Covered under NCDE-STD-MIN-05 and 06.)	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Appendices	4. No seismic or exploratory drilling activities should be conducted within a minimum of one mile of den sites during the October 15-April 15 period.	<i>Remove.</i> (See NCDE-STD-MIN-05.)	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
	5. Seismic permits should include a clause providing for cancellation or temporary cessation of activities, if necessary, to prevent grizzly-human conflicts.	<i>Remove.</i> (Covered under NCDE-STD-MIN-02.)	
Appendices	6. Scheduling of well drilling on adjacent sites, within important grizzly bear use areas, should be staggered to provide a disturbance-free area for displaced bears.	<i>Remove.</i> (Covered under NCDE-STD-MIN-05.)	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
	7. Pipeline construction required for the development of a gas or oil field should be condensed into the shortest	<i>Remove.</i> (Covered under NCDE-STD-MIN-05.)	

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	time frame possible and should be subject to seasonal restrictions when conducted in important grizzly bear habitat.		
	8. Field operation centers associated with seismic or oil and gas exploration activities should be placed carefully to avoid seasonally important habitat components or constituent elements. Such placement of sites is necessary in order to avoid direct potential conflicts between humans and grizzly bears.	<i>Remove.</i>	
Appendices	9. Retain frequent dense cover areas adjacent to roads for travel corridors and security cover necessary to protect important habitat components. Three sight distances are desirable to provide visual security for grizzlies. A sight distance is the average distance at which a grizzly or other large animal is essentially hidden from the view of an observer by vegetation cover. The same security cover guidelines also apply to timber harvest units.	<i>Remove. (Covered by NCDE-GDL-MIN-03.)</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
	10. No off-duty work camps will be allowed within occupied seasonally important constituent elements.	<i>Remove. (Covered under NCDE-GDL-WL-02)</i>	
Appendices	11. Incinerate garbage daily or store in bear-proof containers and remove to local landfill dumps daily.	<i>Remove. (Covered by NCDE-STD-MIN-04.)</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
	12. Commercial activities permitted on public land should be planned and coordinated to avoid conflicts with grizzly bear trapping operations being conducted under the monitoring program. General public use of areas where trapping operations are active will be controlled through appropriate administrative actions by the agencies involved.	<i>Remove.</i>	
Appendices	The following are grizzly bear management guidelines specifically oriented toward livestock grazing: 1. Livestock grazing on important spring habitat for grizzly bears should be deferred until after July 1.	<i>Remove. (Covered under NCDE-STD-GRZ-03, 04, and 05 and NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01 and 02.)</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified (with addition of standard NCDE-STD-GRZ-07.)</i>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>Boneyards and livestock dumps are prevalent along the East Front and are frequented by grizzly bears. Ranchers and landowners should be encouraged to place carcasses of dead livestock and garbage on remote areas of their land. Dead cows and calves should be hauled a considerable distance from calving grounds to discourage bears from feeding on carrion and newborn calves.</p> <p>3. Sheep grazing allotments in management situation 1, as defined in the Yellowstone Guidelines, on lands administered by government agencies should be eliminated.</p> <p>4. In riparian habits that receive high amounts of bear use, fencing to exclude livestock grazing and trampling may be necessary where livestock turn-out dates prior to July 1 are allowed.</p>		
Appendices	Appendix K, Grizzly Bear Stratification	<i>Replace content (from 1986 Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines) with map and description of the PCA and zones 1 and 3.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Appendices	Appendix L, Wildlife Habitat Activity Coordination Analysis Process	<i>Remove.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Appendices	Appendix V, 1986 Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines (Amendment 3 incorporated these into the forest plan).	<i>Remove.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Additional Requirements	<p>Additional Requirements, Lewis and Clark National Forest</p> <p>In 2007, the Birch Creek South travel plan decision was issued, which encompasses eight bear management unit subunits. Potential impacts to grizzly bears considered route density and core area as outlined in the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Taskforce Report and the Interim Motorized Access Management Guidelines for the NCDE. Only two of the subunits in the travel plan area are $\geq 75\%$ Federal ownership, to</p>	<i>Birch Creek South travel plan decision would not be changed by this amendment.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Lewis and Clark National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>which numeric guidelines apply. The guidelines for the remainder of the subunits are no net increase in the percent of the subunit at specified total and open motorized route densities and no net decrease in the percent of the subunit in core area. The decision reduced both total and open motorized route densities on National Forest System lands in all subunits. The two subunits that are $\geq 75\%$ National Forest System lands will be brought within the reference guidelines. Core area will be increased for all subunits, although it will remain slightly below the reference guideline for one subunit. The USFWS concurred with the determination that the decision may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the grizzly bear.</p>		
Additional Requirements	<p>In 2008, the Badger-Two Medicine travel plan decision was completed, which encompassed three bear management unit subunits on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. All three subunits have $< 75\%$ of their total area on National Forest System lands. The decision will result in all three subunits meeting the numeric objectives of the interim guidelines for the NCDE. USFWS concurred with the determinations in the biological assessment and supplement that the decision may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the grizzly bear.</p>	<p><i>The Badger-Two Medicine travel plan decision would not be changed by this amendment.</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>

Lolo National Forest Plan

Current Forest Plan Direction and Changes Under the Action Alternatives

This table presents the forest plan components relevant to grizzly bear habitat management that would be included in the Lolo forest plan under each alternative. The Lolo National Forest contains land within the primary conservation area (PCA), zone 1, the Ninemile demographic connectivity area (DCA), and zone 2. The acreage in zone 2 is negligible (38 acres).

Table 2-4. Lolo National Forest comparison of the no-action alternative (the current forest plan) to alternatives 2 and 3

Lolo National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Wildlife	<p>Forestwide Objectives, Resource/Activity Summaries, p. II-2</p> <p>The plan provides for the recovery of threatened species on the Forest. It regulates human access and use in and through occupied grizzly bear habitat. In addition, tools such as prescribed burning will be used to enhance food-producing areas and improve habitat. The plan supports expansions in populations of the endangered peregrine falcon, bald eagle, and gray wolf through Forest goals and standards.</p>	<i>No change.</i>	<i>No change.</i>
Wildlife	Desired Future Condition of the Forest, p. II-6	<p><i>Add NCDE-DC-WL-01, NCDE-DC-WL-02 and NCDE-DC-WL-03.</i></p> <p><i>Add NCDE-DC-AR-01, 02 and 03.</i></p> <p><i>Add NCDE-DC-VEG-01 and 02.</i></p> <p><i>Add NCDE-DC-GRZ-01.</i></p> <p><i>Add NCDE-DC-SFP-01.</i></p> <p><i>Add NCDE-DC-MIN-01.</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p> <p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p> <p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p> <p><i>Wording change in NCDE-DC-GRZ-01 makes it applicable to zone 1 (including the Ninemile DCAs).</i></p> <p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p> <p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>

Lolo National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Wildlife	--	<i>Add NCDE-LNF Zone1-DC- 01 and NCDE-LNF Zone 1-DC-02.</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified</i>
Wildlife	<p>Forestwide Standards, Wildlife and Fish, p. II-13-14</p> <p>24. All threatened and endangered species occurring on the Lolo, including the grizzly bear, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and gray wolf, will be managed for recovery to nonthreatened status. Forest Service-designated essential habitat will provide interim management direction for those species until critical habitat is designated by the USFWS. Within essential grizzly bear habitat (management situation I), the Forest wildlife biologist will establish vegetative management objectives for all projects that involve vegetative manipulation. Outside of management situation I, where grizzly bear use is suspected or known to occur on an occasional basis (management situation 2), schedule activities so as to not conflict with the grizzly bear. If departures from this standard are deemed necessary, the Forest wildlife biologist will assist in developing treatment alternatives (management situations I and 2 are defined by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines.)</p>	<i>Delete the last three sentences.</i>	<i>Delete the last three sentences.</i>
Wildlife	<p>27. Management practices in essential habitat of threatened and endangered species must be compatible with habitat needs of the species (grizzly bear, gray wolf, bald eagle, and peregrine falcon) consistent with the goal of recovery to nonthreatened status. There are no other known plant or animal species on the Forest that have been identified as threatened or endangered under provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. If and when such habitats are identified, appropriate measures, pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, will be taken to protect the species and its habitat consistent with national goals for species recovery to nonthreatened status. Cooperate with future interagency efforts to recover those species for which recovery goals have not yet been defined. For plant and animal species that are not threatened or endangered but whose viability is a concern (i.e., sensitive species), manage to maintain population viability. Habitat for management indicator</p>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>

Lolo National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	species, which include the elk, goshawk, and pileated woodpecker, will be monitored. Elk population data, collected by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will be compared against habitat data to test elk/habitat relationships. As monitoring technology becomes available for the goshawk and pileated woodpecker, population trends will be monitored. In the interim, habitat parameters, including old-growth acres and condition and snag densities, will be monitored as an indicator of population trend.		
Wildlife	--	Add NCDE-STD-WL-01, NCDE-STD-WL-02 and NCDE-DC-WL-03 and add NCDE-GDL-WL-01 through 03 (which all apply to the PCA).	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Recreation	Recreation, p. II-10 7. The Forest Service will not significantly expand the capacity of developed recreation sites on the Lolo National Forest during the next 10-year period. Emphasis will be placed on increasing the use of existing sites by making them usable by a wide segment of society, including the elderly and handicapped. Those existing sites receiving low levels of public use or that are not cost effective to operate will be considered for temporary or permanent closure. The private sector and other agencies will be encouraged to provide for increased public needs on National Forest System land and on lands adjacent to the Forest. If and when development proposals are received for expansion of existing or construction of new ski areas, they will be evaluated according to the normal procedures for determining ski area feasibility. The Forest will use the Analysis Procedure for Prioritizing Recreation Projects on the Lolo National Forest (appendix K) to determine funding for recommended recreation projects.	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>
Access and Recreation	--	Add NCDE-STD-AR-05 through 08 and NCDE-GDL-AR-03 (which all apply to the PCA).	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Lolo National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Roads	<p>Forestwide Standards, Roads, p. II-18</p> <p>52. Manage Forest roads to provide for resource protection, wildlife needs, commodity removal, and a wide range of recreation opportunities. In most areas on the Forest, this will involve leaving some roads open, closing some roads seasonally, and closing other roads on a permanent basis. Generally, arterial and major collector roads will be left open, whereas local roads will generally be closed. Decisions for road management will be based upon public involvement through the travel plan revision process. Primary benefits to be considered are optimizing big-game production, providing a variety of hunting recreation experiences, protecting critical grizzly bear habitat, reducing sediment in streams, reducing road maintenance costs, and providing for firewood and commodity removal. The criteria to be used to analyze the need for road use restrictions are from the 1984 edition of the Forest Travel Plan and are detailed as follows:</p> <p>e. Roads within grizzly bear habitat may be closed seasonally if it is determined that an open road may be increasing the risk of human-caused bear mortality. Within designated essential habitat spring range, all non-arterial systems will be closed April 15 to June 15. On summer range, roads that bisect identified critical habitat components will be closed July 15 through October 15.</p>	<p><i>Retain existing standard but remove item e.</i></p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Access and Recreation	<p>--</p>	<p>Add NCDE-STD-AR-01 through 04 and NCDE-GDL-AR-01 and 02 (which all apply to the PCA).</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Access and Recreation	<p>--</p>	<p>Add NCDE-LNF Zone1-STD-01 (which applies to zone 1 and the Ninemile DCA).</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i></p>
Grazing	<p>Forestwide Standards, Range, p. II-9</p> <p>4. Conflicts between livestock and big game will be resolved so big game are allocated the forage required to meet their needs. Domestic livestock will be allowed to utilize any forage surplus not conflicting with the planned</p>	<p><i>Retain these range standards.</i></p>	<p><i>Retain these range standards.</i></p>

Lolo National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>expansion of big-game populations. Reductions in livestock numbers will be avoided if possible but will be acceptable to meet management goals.</p> <p>5. Allotments with no animal unit months shown for the proposed action in appendix B will be phased out unless the permittee is willing to make necessary investments in livestock management and structural improvement to maintain range conditions at an acceptable level.</p>		
Grazing	--	<p>Add NCDE-STD-GRZ-01 through 06 and add NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01 and 02 (NCDE-STD-GRZ-02 and 05 and NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01 and 02 apply to the PCA; NCDE-STD-GRZ-01, 03, 04, and 06 apply to the PCA and zone 1).</p>	<p><i>Same as alternative 2 modified with a wording change in NCDE-STD-GRZ-02 that makes it applicable to zone 1, including the Ninemile DCA.</i></p> <p><i>Different wording in NCDE-GDL-GRZ-01. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, where recurring grizzly bear-human conflicts occur on sheep or cattle allotments and an opportunity exists with a willing permittee, the Forest Service should consider phasing out grazing or moving the livestock to a vacant allotment where there is less likelihood of grizzly bear-human conflicts. See also NCDE-STD-GRZ-07.</i></p> <p><i>Add this standard: NCDE-STD-GRZ-07. Within the NCDE primary conservation area, sheep grazing allotments shall be closed if the opportunity arises with a willing permittee, to reduce the potential risk of grizzly bear-human conflicts.</i></p>
Timber Harvest	<p>Forestwide Standards, Timber, pp. 11-11 to 11-12</p> <p>10. Regional standards will be followed for tree utilization, management intensity, measurement, growth suitability for timber production, tree openings, and silvicultural systems.</p>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>
Vegetation	--	<p>Add NCDE-GDL-VEG-01 through 05 (which all apply to the PCA).</p>	<p><i>Wording change in NCDE-GDL-VEG-01 through 05 makes them applicable to the Ninemile DCA.</i></p>

Lolo National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
Special Forest Products		Add NCDE-STD-SFP-01 (which applies to the PCA).	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Minerals	Forestwide Standards, Minerals, pp. II-15 to 11-16 33. Areas currently withdrawn from mineral entry will be evaluated in accordance with the provisions of Section 204 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 to determine whether the withdrawal is still necessary.	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>
Minerals	34. Congressionally designated wilderness areas on the Lolo National Forest are withdrawn from mineral entry and leasing. No new mining claims may be located nor may any mineral leases be issued in these areas. Valid existing rights established prior to the withdrawal date will be recognized, subject to stipulations ensuring compliance with the acts creating these administrative areas.	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>
Minerals	35. The right to prospect, develop, and mine on National Forest System lands open to entry and location will be recognized.	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>
Minerals	36. When applicable, claimants/operators must have an approved notice of intent or plan of operation and bonding in accordance with 36 CFR 228 prior to initiating mining activity.	<i>Retain this standard.</i>	<i>Retain this standard.</i>
Minerals	41. Before oil and gas lease stipulation recommendations are made, site-specific analysis of environmental effects will be made. Stipulations that are displayed in appendix F and based upon the 1982 Environmental Analysis for Oil and Gas of Nonwilderness Lands on the Lolo National Forest will be recommended in accordance with management area direction in chapter III. In some instances, the stipulations will include a provision for "no surface occupancy." The lessee or designated operator has the right to explore for and extract oil/gas from his/her lease in accordance with the stipulations attached to the lease. Drilling requests are handled individually and receive an additional site-specific environmental	<i>Retain this standard and add NCDE-STD-MIN-08 (which applies to the PCA)</i>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified, with wording change to make NCDE-STD-MIN-08 also apply to zone 1.</i>

Lolo National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	analysis. Drilling permits are issued by the Bureau of Land Management. The Bureau of Land Management will consult with the Forest Service in order to obtain site-specific concerns and stipulations prior to approving the drilling permit.		
Minerals	--	Add NCDE-STD-MIN-01 through 07 and add NCDE-GDL-MIN-01 through 06 (which all apply to the PCA and zone 1).	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Monitoring	Monitoring, p. V-6	Add: NCDE-MON-01, NCDE-MON-02, NCDE-MON-03, NCDE-MON-04, NCDE-MON-05, NCDE-MON-06, NCDE-MON-09 and NCDE-MON-10.	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>
Additional Requirements	<p>Additional Requirements, Lolo National Forest</p> <p>In 1996, the 1982 biological opinion on the effects of the forest plan was administratively amended for the grizzly bear and an incidental take statement provided. Terms and conditions applicable to the NCDE recovery zone portion of the Forest are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compliance with the NCDE Access Committee recommendation that no more than 19 percent of a subunit exceed 1 mile of open motorized route density per square mile shall be achieved within 5 years of the date of this incidental take statement. Within 2 years, the Forest shall be halfway to attaining these levels of open motorized access. Forest actions shall not increase open motorized access in subunits that exceed this standard. 2. Compliance with the NCDE Access Committee recommendation that no more than 19 percent of a subunit exceed 2 miles of total motorized route density per square mile shall be achieved within 5 years of the date of this incidental take statement. 	<p><i>The 1982 biological opinion would be administratively amended for the grizzly bear. The 1996, 2004, 2011 and 2012 biological opinions and incidental take statements would be superseded by the biological opinion on the grizzly bear amendment.</i></p>	<i>Same as alternative 2 modified.</i>

Lolo National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>3. The NCDE Access Committee recommendation of a minimum core of 68 percent or greater of a subunit shall be achieved within 5 years of the date of the incidental take statement. Within 2 years, the Forest shall be halfway to attaining these levels of core areas within subunits. Forest actions shall not decrease core habitat in subunits that exceed this standard.</p> <p>4. For subunits in which more than 25 percent is privately owned, the Forest shall not contribute to increases in open or total motorized access density or to decreases in core area.</p> <p>A 2004 biological opinion and incidental take statement on the effects of the forest plan on grizzly bears focused on access management, livestock grazing and food/attractant storage outside the recovery zone, and livestock grazing and food/attractant storage inside the recovery zone. The following term and condition was included:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The Forest will contact the Service if a net increase in permanent system roads exceeds 2 linear miles in the distribution area outside the recovery zone during the 4-year period succeeding this incidental take statement. Decommissioning of permanent system roads contributes to decreasing the net increase.</p> <p>For the Swan subunit, the 1996 requirements were modified to no more than 17 percent total motorized access density, no more than 31 percent open motorized access density with 22 percent open motorized access density during the spring, and at least 55 percent security core. No more than 4 miles of temporary roads would be constructed at any given time, and these temporary roads would be decommissioned within three years. The biological opinion on the final access management strategy for the Swan subunit. The biological opinion issued in 2011 concluded that the decision adequately reduced the potential for and minimized the effect of any</p>		

Lolo National Forest Resource	Alternative 1 No Action (Current Forest Plan)	Alternative 2 Modified	Alternative 3 (Identical to Alternative 2 Except as Indicated)
	<p>incidental take. Therefore no reasonable and prudent measures or terms and conditions were necessary.</p> <p>In 2012, USFWS provided an extension of the 2004 incidental take statement. The incidental take statement concluded that the direction in the forest plan, the food storage special orders, and administrative direction on livestock grazing effectively minimize the effects of incidental take on grizzly bears. Therefore no reasonable and prudent measures or terms and conditions were necessary.</p>		

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