

CHAPTER 1 - REVISION OVERVIEW

The term forest plan in this document refers to forest land and resource management plans in general. The term 1986 Plan refers to the Beaverhead National Forest Plan signed in 1986. The term 1987 Plan refers to the Deerlodge National Forest Plan signed in 1987. The term “revised plan” refers to this document.

This plan consists of five chapters and a glossary. Chapter 1 introduces the revised Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest Plan and explains the purpose, structure, and relationship to other documents with a general description of the forest. Chapter 2 summarizes and finalizes the Analysis of the Management Situation, (AMS), issued as a draft in 2002, including a description of the need to change for the eight revision topics. Chapter 3 presents forestwide desired conditions, goals, objectives, and standards. Chapter 4 contains specific management area direction. Chapter 5 provides the monitoring and evaluation followed by the glossary. Definitions for recreation allocations, are grouped under “recreation allocations” in the glossary.

Forest plans are prepared in accordance with the 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other laws and regulations. This revised Forest Plan implements Alternative 6 outlined in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). It guides all natural resource management activities and sets management standards for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF).

PURPOSE OF THE REVISED PLAN

A forest plan establishes guidance for all resource management activities on a National Forest based on the following six decisions required by the 1982 Code of Federal Regulations:

Forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives including projections of goods and services that may be produced (36 CFR 219.11(b)).

Forestwide management requirements (standards) (36 CFR 219.13 – 219.27).

Management area direction and prescriptions, including management practices (36 CFR 219.11(c) and 36 CFR 219.13-219.27).

Lands not suited for timber and the allowable sale quantity (ASQ) (36 CFR 219.14 and 219.16).

Monitoring and evaluation requirements (36 CFR 219.11(d)).

Recommendation to Congress of areas eligible for Wilderness designation as required (36 CFR 219.17).

Land use allocations, suitable management practices, desired conditions, goals, objectives, and standards are statements of the management direction in this plan. Future projects will

follow direction contained in this plan. While forest plans estimate future management activities, actual activities accomplished are determined by annual budgets and site-specific project decisions. Environmental analyses will be conducted, when required, for all projects as they are proposed. In addition to direction in this plan, projects are also guided by Forest Service manuals, handbooks, and other directives.

GENERAL FOREST DESCRIPTION

The BDNF covers 3.38 million acres, in Beaverhead, Butte-Silver Bow, Deer Lodge, Granite, Jefferson, Madison, Powell, and Gallatin counties, in southwestern Montana. Its mountain ranges encompass trout streams and elk populations, Wilderness, and roadless areas. They feature patterns of forest and meadows, expanses of sagebrush and grasslands. The culture is one of western open space traditions and customs.

Table 1. Acres of Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest by County in 2004

County	BDNF Acres	Percent of BDNF
Beaverhead	1,372,841	41%
Deer Lodge	207,503	6%
Gallatin	21	< ½%
Granite	472,204	14%
Jefferson	361,066	11%
Madison	694,806	20%
Powell	84,469	2%
Silver Bow	187,090	6%
	3,380,000	100%

The Forest Supervisor's Office is located in Dillon, Montana. Ranger District offices are in Butte, Dillon, Ennis, Philipsburg, Whitehall, Wisdom, and Wise River. The Forest is managed for a wide range of resources and opportunities including watersheds, wildlife, Wilderness, livestock grazing, recreation, wood products, and minerals, oil and gas.

FOREST NICHE - DISTINCTIVE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION

The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest is unique for its nationally renowned trout streams, large elk populations, and uncrowded backcountry recreation. It contributes to species diversity, Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, public open space, recreation, tourism, commodity production, and to local economic opportunities.

Straddling the Continental Divide the BDNF provides the headwaters for rivers flowing through both the western and central United States. These streams are valued for abundant fish habitat and recreational opportunities. They are also important to local communities and agricultural enterprises.

Complex geology contributes to the scenery, recreational opportunities, and local economies. Mineral extraction has attracted people since prehistoric times and continues today.

There is a continental climate and four distinct seasons. About half of Montana's native plant species are present. The BDNF also supports diverse wildlife and is recognized for large populations of big game, especially elk.

The rich cultural history of southwestern Montana is inextricably tied to the resources. Historic features are common, from aboriginal flint collection sites to European settlements which created the area's mining and ranching heritage. Forest resources support the present day lifestyles and traditions which include hunting and fishing, camping, ranching, firewood cutting, etc.

The BDNF offers a wide variety of recreation activities. Day hikes in non-motorized settings, picnicking, and OHV trails are available within a 30 minute drive of regional population centers including Butte, Anaconda, Deerlodge, Philipsburg, Boulder, Ennis, Whitehall, Helena, and Dillon. Hunting includes a mix of walk-in and OHV activities. In the winter people go downhill and cross-country skiing as well as snowmobiling when snow conditions are favorable. There are opportunities for backpacking and stock use in Wilderness and other primitive areas. Backcountry travel routes in other areas provide off-highway vehicle and bicycle riding opportunities. The high country offers more than 240 mountain lakes in a variety of settings.

Recreation opportunities are also available through private business operations including skiing and snowmobiling, recreation resorts, outfitters and guides. Partnerships and agreements with local recreation groups provide groomed cross-country skiing and snowmobile trails. Recreation opportunities across the Forest are also enhanced by roads, trails, picnic and campgrounds, trailheads, and interpretive sites.

Unique qualities are preserved and ecosystem integrity is a management focus, in addition to providing the settings for activities which will enrich communities into the future.

