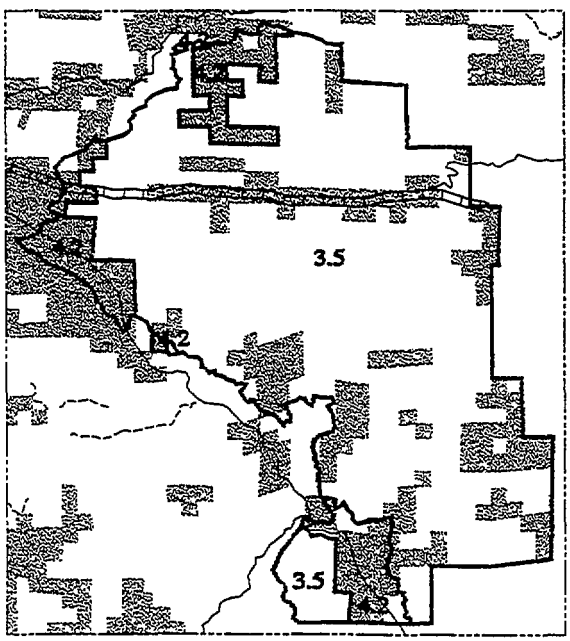
Figure 2.30

Elk Ridge Geographic Area

20,702 NFS Acres 8,023 Non-NFS Acres 28,726 Total Acres

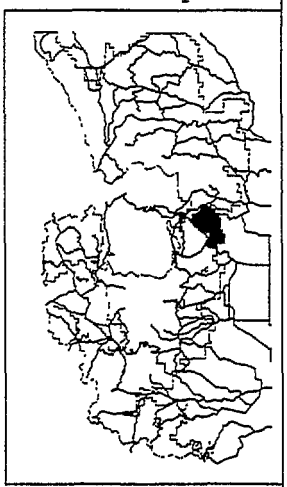
Management Area Prescription Allocation	NFS Acres
3.5 - Forested Flora or Fauna Habitats-Limited Management	20,321
4.2 - Scenery	381

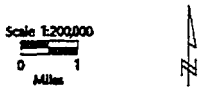


Legend

- Not NFS Lands
- Roads
- Trails
- Utility Corridors (6.62 Mi.)
- Electronic Sites

Locator Map





ELK RIDGE GEOGRAPHIC AREA

Setting

The area is located east of U.S. Highway 36 and south of U.S. Highway 34. It is a mix of foothills shrub-grass communities, juniper-ponderosa pine communities on south slopes, and Douglas-fir on north slopes. Some lodgepole pine occur at higher elevations. Remnants of old-growth ponderosa pine occur in the area. Elevations vary from 6,200 to 9,284 feet. This area has excellent year-round habitat for mule deer. Historically, the area may have provided elk winter range.

Vegetation management has occurred throughout the area for the past 100 years beginning with harvesting for materials for homesteads and ranches. Recent harvesting has been very limited due to limited access. Most of the vegetation in the area is second growth. Spruce budworm affected much of the Douglas-fir in the 1980s. Fuel loadings are high due to the subsequent mortality. Small-scale nonlethal understory and mixed/variable-severity wildland fires occur frequently in the ponderosa pine type. Early and late structural stages are underrepresented in all tree-cover types. The aspen-cover type is being encroached on by conifers as the stands increase in age. Noxious weed infestations are increasing in the area. There are two livestock grazing allotments, one of them vacant. Recreational use (motorized) is moderate during most of the year, except for winter, and increases during the hunting season. Non-federal landownership comprises almost one-fourth of the lands within the geographic boundary. Development on private lands of both year-round and seasonal housing continues to increase.

The current transportation system's primary access routes are U.S. Highway 36 and Colorado Highway 34. Most secondary roads and user-created ways have been closed.

Goals and Desired Conditions

Emphasize wildlife habitat and nonmotorized recreation.

Manage vegetation to achieve a mix needed for wildlife habitat and to reduce fuel loading, especially near subdivisions. Timber harvest is probable in accessible portions of the area to increase habitat potential and control fuel buildups. Manage lodgepole pine to reduce fuels, create openings and maintain thermal and hiding cover. Increase the amount of aspen represented in the landscape. Manage ponderosa pine to emulate conditions representative of a nonlethal understory fire regime, to emphasize old-growth recruitment and retention and to reduce fuels.

Decrease noxious weed infestations and limit new infestations.

Offset losses in big game habitat due to development in the Estes Valley.

The wildland fire management strategy is direct control. Accept insect and disease losses unless they threaten other ownership or cause unacceptable resource damage. Prescribed fire (including nonlethal understory and mixed/variable fires) may be implemented to reduce fuel loading, improve wildlife habitat or assist recruitment of old-growth structural stages.

Manage rangelands toward desired plant communities and management objectives as outlined in management plans for specific grazing allotments.

Close the Little Elk grazing allotment, now vacant, because of lack of public access.

Use some temporary access roads, as needed, to achieve fuels reduction and improve wildlife habitat; close roads once the activity is completed.

Motorized and nonmotorized travel systems will be accommodated on the existing transportation system. Implement seasonal road closures to provide for wildlife habitat and resource protection during critical periods of the year. Consider closure of roads and trails that cause resource damage, or are in excess of National Forest System roads.

Manage grazing, recreation, and timber harvest to reduce erosion or deterioration of riparian areas and watershed conditions.

Evaluate road and trail impacts to aquatic and riparian ecosystems during travel-management planning; manage and restore road networks to reduce erosion and prevent deterioration of watershed conditions.

Improve public access by emphasizing land adjustments. This may be accomplished by acquiring private lands from willing sellers or acquiring rights-of-way.

Travel Management Strategy, Elk Ridge Geographic Area

Management Area	Mode	Existing System	Convert Ways	New Rds/Trls	Extent of Additions	Extent of Obliterations
3.5	4WD	Y	N	N	N	M
	MTR	N	N	N	N	N
	WMT	N	N	N	N	N
	WNM	Y	N	N	N	N
	NMT	Y	N	Y	L	L
4.2	4WD	Y	N	N	N	L
	MTR	N	N	N	N	N
	WMT	N	N	N	N	N
	WNM	N	N	N	N	N
	NMT	N	N	N	N	L