

CHEROKEE PARK GEOGRAPHIC AREA

Setting

The area is located approximately 40 miles northeast of Fort Collins. Elevations vary from 7,000 to 8,400 feet. The area consists of flat basins or draws broken by large granite outcrops. Vegetation types are ponderosa and lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, bitterbrush, mountain mahogany, willow and grasses. Pockets of old-growth ponderosa pine and associated wildlife species are located throughout the area. The North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River is the dominant feature in the area. Important big-game migration corridors and wintering areas are present.

Vegetation management has occurred in the area over the last 100 years but has been limited in the recent past due to limited access. 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 throughout the area. Small-scale nonlethal understory and mixed/variable wildland fires occur frequently. There are seven livestock grazing allotments in the area, five of them vacant. Management in the area is complicated by a checkerboard ownership pattern and lack of access. Approximately 60 percent of the total land area is private or state owned. Private landownership consists mainly of 35-acre tracts. Year-round residency by land owners is increasing. Recreational use (both motorized and nonmotorized) is moderate during most of the year and increases during the fall.

The current transportation system's primary access routes are the Cherokee Park Road (Larimer County Road 80C) and Larimer County Road 59. There is an extensive network of secondary roads both National Forest System and user-created. There are some nonmotorized System trails within the area.

Goals and Desired Conditions

Provide habitats for a wide variety of wildlife species and associated plant communities. Manage vegetation to provide the needed mix of wildlife habitats or to reduce fuels loading. Maintain the current composition of the foothills shrub-grass type. Manage ponderosa pine to emulate conditions representative of a nonlethal understory fire regime. Reduce Douglas-fir encroachment by favoring ponderosa pine and aspen. Increase the amount of aspen in the lodgepole pine type, where appropriate, using timber harvest and prescribed fire. Emphasize old-growth recruitment of ponderosa pine to compensate for earlier losses of this component due to past insect and disease infestations and past fire management practices.

Limited timber harvest is tentatively suitable and not available. Accept insect and disease losses unless they pose a threat to other ownerships or cause unacceptable resource damage. Prescribed fire (including nonlethal understory and mixed/variable fires) may be implemented in the ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir types in conjunction with vegetation manipulation. Cooperate

with private landowners in implementing this strategy. Use temporary access roads, as needed, to achieve fuels reduction and improve wildlife habitat; close roads once the activity is completed.

Develop a cooperative program with landowners to improve riparian areas.

Increase solitude opportunities for wintering wildlife. Collaborate with landowners on methods of reducing impacts to wintering wildlife.

Decrease noxious weed infestations and limit new infestations.

The wildland fire management strategy is perimeter control.

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

Close the Sheeley, North Trail Creek and Diamond Peak grazing allotments, currently vacant, because of lack of access to livestock.

Accommodate motorized use on the existing transportation system. Consider closure of roads and trails that cause resource damage, or are in excess of National Forest System needs.

Conduct land exchanges with private and other government landowners to consolidate holdings and to improve overall management of the area. Maintain and/or improve public access. Schedule landline surveys of private/National Forest boundaries and implement regularly scheduled maintenance of these boundaries to discourage encroachment on National Forest land.

Management Area 1.5

Emphasize the National Wild and Scenic River system.

Timber harvest is not allowed. Accept insect and disease losses. Allow natural processes to be the primary actions that affect the vegetation mix and structure. Prescribed fire (including nonlethal understory and mixed/variable fires) may be implemented to maintain a natural landscape, increase habitat potential and control fuels accumulations.

Standards and Guidelines

1. **(GL)** Monitor for illegal trespass, road construction, and cattle grazing on National Forest land.
2. **(GL)** Monitor current and future development for its effect on wildlife.