

O'Gorman

KNF

1920 Land and Resource Planning

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S. 393 Public Issues

Regional Forester

Enclosed are the issue situation statements for the issues relating to Mt. Henry and Ten Lakes. We will forward the situation statement concerning Insect and Disease upon receipt of your updated information.

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TIMBER

Mt. Henry

Of the 21,000 acres in the Mt. Henry study area, 19,419 acres are suitable for timber production; 1,581 acres are unsuitable. Suitability is defined as the ability to produce a minimum of 20 cubic feet per acre per year and be harvested.

During the Unit Planning process, the Mt. Henry area was allocated to various uses. Of the acres to which timber harvest was allocated to some intensity, 9,638 acres are in the "standard" timber land use class and 4,426 acres are in the "special" class.

Within the "standard" category, 6,821 acres are mature sawtimber stands with a volume of 102,097 MBF. Immature sawtimber stands comprise 2,099 acres of the "standard" class with a volume of 17,353 MBF.

The "special" class contains 2,748 acres of mature sawtimber and 1,523 acres of immature sawtimber with volumes of 35,814 MBF and 9,405 MBF respectively. Total regulated acres and volume of mature sawtimber are 9,569 acres and 137,911 MBF, and immature sawtimber, 3,672 acres and 26,758 MBF.

The estimated potential yield is 2.9 MMBF.

Timber harvest activities have been numerous in the last 20 years in areas immediately adjacent to the study area. The area contains some of the most productive timber growing sites in the Yaak River Valley and conventional harvesting suitability is generally high. Two timber sales within the study area, North Vinal and Turner Creek (25,060 MBF total volume) were halted with passage of S. 393.

Ten Lakes

Of the 33,885 acres in the Ten Lakes study area, 11,848 acres are suitable for timber production; 22,037 acres are unsuitable. As with Mt. Henry, some acres were allocated during the Unit Planning process to timber production. The regulated timber classification included 1,522 acres of "standard", 2,930 acres of "special", and 6,015 acres of "marginal" lands, 10,467 acres in total.

Mature sawtimber stands comprise 1,132 acres of "standard", 1,763 acres of "special", and 2,861 acres of "marginal", with a total volume of 76,737 MBF. Immature sawtimber comprises 220 acres of "standard", 985 acres of "special", and 2,916 acres of "marginal", with a total volume of 23,773 MBF.

Potential yield within the area is estimated to be 2.3 MMBF.

Timber harvesting has been extensive in drainages immediately adjacent to the study area. These include Blacktail, Clarence, Foundation, Divide, Stahl, and Wigwam Creeks. Clearcutting has been the primary harvest method. Within the study area itself, timber harvesting suitability using conventional methods generally ranges from unsuited to marginal, due to oversteepened slopes, soil instability, and low timber productivity.

NO

WILDERNESS SUITABILITY

Mt. Henry

The study area varies from steep, rocky cliffs near the Fish Lakes and in the vicinity of Mt. Henry, to generally rolling topography with less than 40 percent slopes over much of the area. An almost continuous forest cover, with lodgepole pine the dominate tree species, blankets the land.

The majority of the Mt. Henry area contains marginal suitability or is otherwise unsuited for primitive recreation. Very high suitability is found in the immediate vicinity of Mt. Henry, along the Vinal Creek Trail (including Fish Lakes), and in the area of Hoskins Lake, about 3500 acres in all. These suitabilities were determined during the Unit Planning process and were based upon 1) solitude, 2) uniqueness of natural beauty, and 3) variety of unconfined recreational opportunities.

The study area has been evaluated for wilderness qualities using three systems, a Quality Index Rating, the Northern Region 100 point system, and the Wilderness Attribute Rating.

The Quality Index Rating is a 200-point system that was used during the RARE I inventory. The system evaluated landscape, scenery, isolation, size, camping quality, and variety of experiences. Under this system, Mt. Henry received a rating of 90.

The Northern Region 100 point system, also used during RARE I, evaluated natural conditions, opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation, ecological and geological features, and scenic and scientific values. Under this system, Mt. Henry received a rating of 57.

During the RARE II study, the 28-point Wilderness Attribute Rating (WAR) was used. This system evaluated natural integrity, apparent naturalness, solitude opportunity, and primitive recreation opportunity. Mt. Henry received a rating of 19 under this system.

Contributing to Mt. Henry's low to moderate rating is the general lack of opportunities for solitude.

Ten Lakes

The topography within the study area is rough, with talus slopes, rock outcroppings, and bare ridges common. Prominent mountain peaks are Green Mountain (7,830 feet), Poorman Mountain, Independence Peak, Ksanka Peak, St. Clair Peak, Stahl Peak, and Mt. Wam. Subalpine basins with clear lakes, beautiful mountain meadows with an abundance of flowers, and gnarled veteran alpine larch and whitebark pine, make this an area of scenic beauty.

Much of the vegetative cover is subalpine in character, where the timber quality is poor. Predominant species are Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, whitebark pine, lodgepole pine, and alpine larch. The growing season is very short. Snow depth usually exceeds 12 feet.

Much of the Ten Lakes study area contains suitability for primitive roadless recreation, about 25,000 acres in all. Suitability ranges from very high (7,800 acres), high (6,700 acres), and moderate (10,300 acres).

Ten Lakes was evaluated with the same systems applied to Mt. Henry, as well as other inventoried roadless areas. Under the Quality Index Rating, the Ten Lakes Scenic Area or "core" area, was rated at 140 (out of a possible 200 points). This was one of the highest rated areas on the Forest, comparing favorably with the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness which was rated at 154. The remainder of the study area received a rating of 119. (When rated, the area was called Krinkehorn-Gibraltar-Mt. Wam Roadless Area RARE I No. 170.)

Under the Northern Region 100-point system, only the roadless areas outside the "core" Scenic Area (RARE I No. 170) was rated. The configuration of this area is composed of "lobes" or segments which were termed the northwest, south, and the northeast and which were evaluated separately. Under the 100-point system, the northwest segment was rated at 64, the southern segment was rated 44, and the northeast segment was rated 50.

Under the 28-point Wilderness Attribute Rating used during RARE II, the study area was rated at 20.

The reviewers concluded that the area rated highly in naturalness and natural integrity, but that the area had a relative lack of opportunities for solitude.

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ECONOMICS

Mt. Henry and Ten Lakes

Historically, the economy of Lincoln County has been based to a great extent on wood products manufacturing--logging, sawmill operation, plywood fabrication, and by-product processing. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis' employment figures from 1967, roughly one-fourth of Lincoln County's total employment has been in the wood products industry. The major employer in this industry is the St. Regis Paper Company in Libby.

In 1972, wood fibre from the Kootenai National Forest contributed 57 percent of the wood products earnings in the county. Much of the growth in other sectors of the county, such as wholesale and retail trade, financial institutions, public utilities, etc. has been dependent on the timber resource base. Economic growth of the county is therefore tied, to a large extent, to the success of its timber exports. Growth could take place either as a result of an improved position of these exports relative to the market or as a result of the development of new exports. In response to the question, "What would you like to see happen in the next 10 years in this area?", one out of five Lincoln County residents interviewed in an opinion survey, conducted in 1975-76, recommended: "Get some type of light industry or business into the area for steady employment."

Unemployment is a chronic problem in Lincoln County due to the seasonal nature of employment and attraction of more construction workers to the area than there are jobs available. The 1970 census places the unemployment rate for Lincoln County at roughly 10 percent. According to the Libby Job Service Center, the unemployment rate usually reaches a low of three to five percent during the summer months but rises to approximately 18 percent in the winter. In the opinion survey of Lincoln County residents, "lack of employment" was identified as a major problem in the county.

Unemployment rates are similar for Eureka and Libby. However, seasonal work ends slightly earlier in Eureka than in Libby because of weather conditions.

MINERALS/MINING

Ten Lakes

Minerals occur primarily in copper-bearing quartz veins. Several prospects in the Poorman Mountain-Independence Park area of the Whitefish Range have intercepted copper-bearing quartz veins. These deposits occur as veins and veinlets of quartz in fractures within the Purcell Basalt or along the interface between the basalt flow and the underlying and overlying Belt metasedimentary rocks. Copper and other sulphide minerals occur within the quartz vein and carry both silver and gold. These deposits average from a few to several percent copper, several tenths of an ounce silver per ton, and a trace of gold. These copper deposits are the most extensive mineral showings within the study area; however, production has been cursory, although there are several patented claims within the Poorman basin.

From the knowledge at present, the nonenergy mineral resources within the study area are considered to be minor. Expectations for a substantial increase are low; however, a fair amount of prospecting activity is likely considering the general geology of the area. Also, future increases in mineral prices and further discoveries could place added emphasis on the various deposits within the study area especially the copper/quartz deposits within the Whitefish Range.

Oil and gas lease applications have been received from Texaco, Inc., Phillips Petroleum Co., Tim Keating, and Thomas H. Connelly for permits to explore lands surrounding the study area. Although no applications have been made on lands within the study area, (one application, however, does top over into a portion of the area), should positive results be obtained in adjacent areas, the Ten Lakes area could receive industry interest.

The chance of oil and gas-bearing rock strata existing at depth beneath overthrust sheets is a definite geologic possibility within the study area. Recent oil and gas discoveries within the Fold and Thrust Belt (which runs through the study area) have occurred in Canada, Montana, Wyoming, and Utah, thus increasing probability of a successful find. In fact, the overthrust belt is considered to have the highest exploration potential within the lower 48 states. Detailed surface geologic mapping, seismic profiling, and wildcat drilling will be necessary in order to test the existence or non-existence of oil and gas-bearing formations at depth.

Mt. Henry

Mt. Henry contains no significant mineral potential nor are there mining claims within the study area. The lack of public concern indicates that minerals is not an issue associated with Mt. Henry.

RECREATION

Mt. Henry

Recreation use in the study area is low and is primitive/dispersed in nature with hiking, hunting, and fishing the primary activities. In 1976, 650 visitor days were recorded. Several trails serve the area with the Vinal Lake-Fish Lakes and the two trails leading to Mt. Henry being the most popular.

Of the 21,000 acres in the Mt. Henry study area, about 15,000 acres have been identified as having primitive recreation suitability. Four thousand two hundred acres have very high and high suitability while 10,800 acres are moderate.

Three segments of the study area have significant attributes for natural beauty and opportunities for unconfined recreation. These include scenic Hoskins Lake (which is also an excellent cutthroat trout fisheries, the Fish Lakes Canyon and Vinal Creek (visually attractive and good fishing in three of the five Fish Lakes), and the high mountain ridge around Mt. Henry, extending south to the vicinity of Boulder Mountain. Viewing is excellent along the high ridge from Mt. Henry Lookout and the ridge to the south, which has a very pleasing subalpine setting.

The remainder of the study area offers limited opportunity for unconfined recreation and is situated in a typical, rolling, heavily timbered environment.

Ten Lakes

The Ten Lakes Scenic Area was first established in 1964 and comprised about 6,500 acres. Subsequent allocations made during the Unit Planning process expanded the Scenic Area to around 15,700 acres.

Of the 34,000 acres in the Ten Lakes study area, about 25,000 acres have primitive recreation suitability. This includes about 7,800 acres of very high, 6,700 acres of high, and 10,800 acres of moderate suitability.

The study area has opportunities for hiking, nature study, camping, fishing, and hunting. The area receives much visitor use; approximately 9,200 visiting days in 1976 and 3,600 visitor days in 1978. Most of the use is in the form of nonmotorized/undeveloped, and hunting and fishing. Snowmobiling has been permitted in the Scenic Area since 1976, from December 1 to April 15, and this form of use is increasing.

There are developed campgrounds at Therriault Lakes, immediately adjacent to the study area boundary, which provide a main access route into the area.

There are several small lakes and ponds scattered throughout the study area including Bluebird, Rainbow, and Wolverine Lakes, all of which support rainbow and cutthroat trout. Unique features of the area include Therriault Pass which is a prominent glacial feature, together with rock outcroppings, snow-slide areas, and a number of prominent peaks. There is a 31-mile trail system which makes the area accessible to hikers and horseback riders. Much of this trail system is along the open ridgetops, which affords long panoramic views including vistas into Glacier National Park to the east. Camping opportunities are numerous and the small lakes and streams provide an adequate water supply for campers.

WILDLIFE

NO

Mt. Henry

The Mt. Henry study area is generally heavily forested with mature timber broken only by open ridges and steep slopes. The timber stands provide habitat for goshawks, pileated woodpeckers, barred owls, and numerous songbirds such as warblers, vireos, and kinglets.

Use by big game species such as deer, elk, moose, and black bear is primarily restricted to late spring, summer, and fall. Approximately 1,400 acres are suitable for big game winter range management, most being located in lower Vinal Creek and the Hoskins Lake areas.

While no essential grizzly bear habitat has been delineated in the area, their occasional presence would not be unusual due to their mobility and the proximity of other, more heavily used habitats.

Small mammals, such as tree squirrels, snowshoe hares, weasels, and marten are common to timbered areas. In addition, larger and more mobile mammals such as coyotes, lion, bobcat, and lynx are also present.

Because of its undeveloped nature, the area may afford habitat for wolverines. In general, the area supports a healthy wildlife community but ranks only moderate in terms of diversity of species when compared to other areas on the Forest.

Opportunities for HABITAT ALTS, E. of and GRIZZLY BEAR

Ten Lakes

The Ten Lakes study area is characterized by a broad diversity of habitats ranging from gentle, forested foothills, to glaciated alpine basins. This diversity of habitats is reflected in a diverse wildlife community where virtually all species groups are represented.

Common big game species include elk, moose, black bear, whitetail deer, and mule deer. Most of the area functions as late spring, summer, and fall range. Small parcels of winter range totalling less than 500 acres border private lands on the southwest boundary of the area. Some evidence indicates elk winter in Canada in lower Wigwam and Weasel Creeks.

Virtually the entire study area is delineated as essential habitat for grizzly bear and Northern Rocky Mountain Wolves. Management for these species entails maintenance of food sources, maintenance of relatively large and undisturbed areas, and limitation of conflict with man.

High elevation species such as Clark's nutcrackers, hoary marmots, pika, and grey-crowned rosy finches are relatively common to the study area.

Wolverine, while not common, have been regularly seen in the study area.

Lower elevation timber stands support numerous species of songbirds; raptors such as goshawks and Cooper's hawks, and cavity-dependent species such as pileated woodpeckers, northern flying squirrels, and American kestrels.

Riparian zones support species such as water ouzels, belted kingfishers, and occasionally harlequin ducks. Overall, the area supports a rich and diverse wildlife community with a relative abundance of species characteristic of pristine, undeveloped habitats.

SUITABILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Mt. Henry

Road development is the largest impact forest management can have on the land. The lack of road development suitability is the principal potential limiting factor to intensive management of any area. Road suitability is based upon land slope, earth materials, and moisture. High suitability is a site with low erosion or mass failure potential and limited rock requiring blasting.

Approximately 80 percent of the Mt. Henry area is well suited for roads; ten percent is moderate, and ten percent is poorly suited. The majority of the land slopes are generally less than 40 percent, the earth materials are glacial till with loess cap, and little exposed bedrock. The erosion hazard and mass failure potential is moderate. Precipitation averages between 28 inches annually, 40-45 percent of which is snow. The rain-on-snow flood potential is rated at medium based upon averages for the Kootenai.

The ten percent of the land that is moderately suitable is limited by shallow soils, rock outcrops, and some oversize rock, all of which increase construction costs. Erosion and mass failure potentials are low to moderate. These "moderate" lands are found primarily on noses of ridges and on 30 to 50 percent land slopes.

Most of the ten percent of the land that is rated poorly suited for roads is limited by steep slopes and shallow, rocky earth materials. Road construction costs are often high to very high. These areas are found adjacent to Fish Lakes, Upper Vinal Creek, the upper elevations of Mt. Henry, and in other smaller scattered areas. The remainder of these poorly suited lands are small floodplain areas, where road building would often result in large aquatic resource tradeoffs. The erosion and mass failure potentials of all these moderate and poorly suited areas are generally low but can vary from very low to moderate.

There are presently 8.5 miles of road within the Mt. Henry study area boundary, located on the periphery. There are also approximately 645 acres of clearcut units and 185 acres of partial cut units within the boundary, also along the periphery.

Ten Lakes

Over half the land area is poorly suited for roads. The limiting factors are shallow soils, rock outcrops, steep slopes, and harsh climate. High mass failure potential exists on less than one percent of the area and high soil erosion hazard on 20 percent of the area. Avalanche hazard is high on the north to northeast slopes greater than 55 percent.

About one quarter of the area has moderate suitability for roads and 22 percent is well suited. The well suited areas are flatter and lack soil and slope stability problems. The soils are formed in deep glacial till.