36 CFR 60 - Establishes minimum standards and procedures for determining the significance of heritage properties and nominating eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places.

36 CFR 63 - Establishes criteria for nominating significant historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places.

36CFR68 - Establishes the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

36 CFR 79 - Provides direction for the preservation and curation of archaeological collections (and associated records) removed from federal lands.

36 CFR 219.24 - Directs that Forest Planning shall provide for the identification, protection, interpretation and management of significant heritage resources on National Forest lands.

36 CFR 296 - Provides for the protection of archaeological resources and implements the Archaeological Resources Protection Act.

36 CFR 800 - Implements the National Historic Preservation Act and provides explicit direction for the identification of heritage properties, the determination of project effects on heritage properties, requirements for agency consultation with State Historic Preservation Officers and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (Section 106). The regulation also requires federal agencies to develop proactive programs for the stewardship and preservation of heritage properties (Section 110).

43 CFR 10 - Implements the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS AND NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM ADDITIONS

UPDATE of roadless area terminology and direction

Terminology - The roadless area discussion on pages 274 – 294 used the term "Inventoried Roadless Areas" or "IRAs" throughout. This terminology was commonly applied to roadless areas prior to the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule and acceptable under the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) used to inventory and evaluated areas for potential wilderness in Appendix C (FSH 1909.12, chapter 7, Amendment 1909.12-92-1, 08/03/1992). Inventoried roadless areas now have a distinct status imparted to them by RACR and continued use of that term may be confusing to the public. Forest Service Handbook direction developed since RACR modifies terminology for roadless areas to clarify these are areas being evaluated for wilderness potential, FSH 1909.12, chapter 70, 1/21/2007). This terminology is now being applied agency-wide and incorporated in this FEIS. This section of the FEIS describes the existing condition and effects to areas mapped in the current 2006 inventory of areas with potential for wilderness, described in detail in Appendix C, which are different than IRAs.

Roadless Area Direction - The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR) formalized boundaries of the earlier generation of Forest Plan inventoried roadless areas through electronic maps submitted by Forests across the nation in 1999 and established as part of the rulemaking. RACR applied specific prohibitions with exceptions on activities which can take place within the boundaries of these Inventoried Roadless Areas, road construction in particular.

The 2001 RACR has been in and out of legal status during development of the Revised Forest Plan. RACR was in place when the FEIS was published in January 2008; however, on August 12, 2008, the Federal District Court for the District of Wyoming enjoined RACR nationally. In addition, Judge LaPorte modified her order to retain RACR in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and New Mexico. It is difficult to predict when or how the status of the RACR will be resolved. The Record of Decision contains further discussion of this dilemma.

The evaluation of areas with wilderness potential, documented in Appendix C, complies with the implementing regulations of NFMA, 36 CFR 219.17(1), 1982. This regulation tells us that "roadless areas within the NFS shall be evaluated and considered for recommendation as potential wilderness areas during the forest planning process." The undeveloped areas evaluated for wilderness potential based on the 2006 inventory may include all or only portions of "Inventoried Roadless Areas" in addition to new areas identified, as explained in Appendix C. See the Glossary for a description of "A*reas With Wilderness Potential"* and "*Inventoried Roadless Areas*". All acre figures presented on the pages following are based on the Appendix C inventory and evaluation of "Areas with Wilderness Potential." This section of Chapter 3 discusses the effects to roadless areas mapped in 2006. Only discussions which mention RACR or road construction prohibitions relate to IRAs mapped in 2001. These areas were addressed in the 2001 RACR FEIS.

Changes from Draft to Final

- This section was changed to address effects on inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) and effects to the wilderness preservation system. Because recommendations for wilderness are based on the suitability of individual roadless areas, an adverse effect on an IRA is an adverse effect on that areas ability to be recommended wilderness. Therefore the discussion of effects on wilderness characteristics in recommended wilderness was incorporated into the discussion of effects on those characteristics in inventoried roadless areas. For a more detailed discussion of wilderness suitability for individual IRAs see Appendix C.

- Twelve ten-year oil and gas leases were issued in Garfield Mountain IRA in April 2007. The wilderness suitability evaluation of that IRA was reassessed. Because oil and gas potential is moderate, and because the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR) does not allow road constructions for leases issued since 2001, development potential in this area is low. The rating remained the same.
- Stony Mountain IRA surfaced in public comments as an area meeting the criteria for recommended wilderness which was overlooked in the DEIS. After evaluation, it was included in Alternative 6 as recommended wilderness. The Lolo National Forest is also considering their portion of the Stony IRA as recommended wilderness.
- The Regional Wilderness Needs Assessment and related discussion were updated.
- Appendix C was updated with a discussion of effects to individual roadless areas by alternative.
- The wilderness suitability evaluation was updated to incorporate updates and additions to Appendix C.

Analysis Area

The analysis area for direct and indirect effects includes all lands identified as Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF). The cumulative effects area includes BLM lands in southwest Montana (7 counties) and 11 IRAs on other national forests shared with the BDNF. There are 53 IRAs totaling approximately 1.9 million acres (Appendix C). The inventory of roadless areas is a constant that does not change by alternative.

Analysis Methods and Assumptions

Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12.7 provides a process and terminology for evaluating inventoried roadless area for wilderness recommendation. Forest Service policy, FSM 1923.03 (2) states that any area being recommended for Wilderness is not available for any use or activity that may reduce the area's Wilderness potential. The effects of alternatives were based on assumptions about activities which are likely to occur over the life of the plan (15 years) under each alternative. It was assumed that the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule or similar national policy for the management of IRAs will continue to direct IRA management. Alternatives were evaluated for the contribution to the National Wilderness Preservation System

of the composite of areas proposed based on size, location and quality of the area. Wilderness characteristics include both social and physical elements.

Effects Indicators

- Changes to the roadless and undeveloped character of IRAs
- Effects to the wilderness preservation system from areas and acres recommended for wilderness.

Affected Environment

Inventoried Roadless Areas

When revising forest plans, national forests are required to evaluate inventoried roadless areas and assess their wilderness characteristics, and to make recommendations to Congress regarding areas suitable for inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS or Wilderness System). Through the Wilderness Act of 1964 (PL 88-577), Congress created the NWPS to provide protection for lands relatively untouched by human activity. Under this Act, the Department of Agriculture is directed to recommend “primitive” areas suitable for addition to NWPS. The Forest Service can only recommended wilderness allocations to Congress via forest plans and only Congress can designate wilderness through the legislative process. Recommendations and designation are often very controversial and Congress may defer the issue for many years before taking action. In the interim, the Forest Service shall manage any IRAs recommended for wilderness through forest plan direction that will protect their wilderness characteristics and values, and potential for inclusion into NWPS.

Inventoried Roadless Areas are inventoried tracts of National Forest System land characterized as having an undeveloped character. On the Beaverhead and Deerlodge Forests, IRAs were initially identified during the Roadless Area Resource Evaluation of 1972 (RARE I) and the RARE II of 1979. These inventories were updated and the areas evaluated for wilderness suitability as part of the initial forest planning efforts completed for the Beaverhead National Forest in 1986 and the Deerlodge National Forest in 1987. As part of the current forest plan revision process, these inventories were again reviewed, updated, and reevaluated for wilderness suitability.

Management of roadless areas is fraught with controversy between competing interests. Roadless areas are valued for a variety of resource benefits including relatively undisturbed habitat for fish and wildlife, protection of key watersheds, and biological diversity. They offer the best potential for any substantial additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System. They are coveted for dispersed recreation opportunities (motorized and non-motorized), as well as timber supplies and other commodity uses. The awareness of IRA values is increasing as the human population continues to expand, and demand for outdoor recreation and other forest products intensifies. Public opinion regarding the management of IRAs spans a range from full commodity development to preservation through wilderness designation.

During the Clinton Administration, management direction for IRAs was proposed on a national scale. Called the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR), road construction and reconstruction were prohibited in inventoried roadless areas with some exception. However,

RACR did not categorically prohibit motorized vehicles, logging, or mining within IRAs. On May 10, 2001, just before RACR was to take effect, the Forest Service was enjoined from implementing it by an Idaho District Court ruling (Kootenai Tribe of Idaho v. Veneman and the State of Idaho v. USDA Forest Service).

The Court's decision to grant a preliminary injunction was appealed and brought before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. On June 7, 2001, the Chief of the Forest Service and Secretary of Agriculture issued a letter concerning the interim protection of IRAs, stating: "The Forest Service is committed to protecting and managing roadless areas as an important component of the National Forest System. The best way to achieve this objective is to ensure that we protect and sustain roadless area values until they can be appropriately considered through forest planning." On December 12, 2002 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the May 10, 2001 ruling by the Idaho District Court. The 2001 RACR currently applies.

The criteria for determining whether an area of the National Forest System qualifies as in IRA are provided in FSH 1909.12 which states:

> "Roadless areas qualify for placement on the inventory of potential wilderness if, in addition to meeting the statutory definition of wilderness (Section 2 (c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act), they meet one or more of the following criteria:
>
> 1. They contain 5,000 acres or more.
> 2. They contain less than 5,000 acres but:
>   a. Due to physiography or vegetation, they are manageable in their natural condition.
>   b. They are self-contained ecosystems such as an island.
>   c. They are contiguous to existing wilderness, primitive areas, Administration-endorsed wilderness, or roadless areas in other Federal ownership, regardless of their size.
> 3. They do not contain improved roads maintained for travel by standard passenger-type vehicles, except as permitted in areas east of the 100th meridian."

Contrary to the implication, IRAs *can* contain low-standard "roads". As noted above under item 3, only roads that are improved and maintained are excluded from IRAs. On the BDNF there are a number of IRAs that have user created roads or travel ways that were never planned, designed, physically constructed, or maintained. The existence of these routes does not in itself preclude roadless designation, although their presence within IRAs has understandably led to some confusion.

Generally, IRAs also do not contain structures, improvements, or obvious landscape alterations that would indicate the presence or influences of man. Such influences might include power line transmission corridors, communications installations, mines, airstrips, or timber harvest units where logging activity is evident. These development features are usually excluded from IRAs when roadless boundaries are defined.

The roadless inventory completed in 1986 for the Beaverhead National Forest and in 1987 for the Deerlodge National Forest identified 50 IRAs totaling about 1.8 million acres (about 54% of

all lands administered by these Forests). The newest inventory, completed in 2004, identified 53 areas and about 1.9 million acres or 57% of the BDNF.

Changes in acreage between the inventories can result for several reasons. Reductions in IRA acreage occur from lawful timber harvest, road building and maintenance, mining activity or other developments which can remove portions of roadless areas from the inventory. Additions result from road obliteration, change in road status, recovery of timber harvest units, additions to the Forest base through land exchanges, or because some areas may have been missed in the original mapping process. Most acreage differences are not the result of landscape changes, but simply reflect the different methods used to calculate IRA size. For example, the computer mapping techniques used in the 2004 inventory is a more accurate tool than the dot grid system of earlier inventories.

Three new IRAs were identified through public comment or by Forest managers as suitable for consideration as wilderness. There are:

- **Madison Roadless –** adjacent to the Taylor Hilgard and Spanish Peaks units of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness;
- **Cowboy Heaven –** adjacent to the Spanish Peaks and Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness;
- **Lost Creek –** northwest of Anaconda, MT.

Table 1. Changes in Acres for All IRAs between 1987 and 2007

Acre Updates to Map Categories	BDNF Acres Only
1987 Total	1,850,475
Added	73,676
Dropped	-69,089
GIS acreage recalculated	-9,894
2006 Total	1,845,168

The complete inventory description and evaluation of wilderness characteristics is contained in Appendix C.

Wilderness Suitability Evaluation

Federal regulations (36 CFR 219.17(a) require that "*Roadless areas within the National Forest system shall be evaluated and considered for recommendation as potential wilderness during the forest planning process*." The wilderness suitability of each IRA was evaluated using the following elements described in FSH 1909.12.7. Because the evaluation for wilderness suitability requires that an entire IRA be evaluated regardless of administrative boundaries, portions of several IRAs shared with other administrative units were included. The evaluation was published in draft form in 2005 and completed in 2007 after review and comment.

Capability

Capability is the degree to which an area contains the basic wilderness qualities. These include the integrity of the natural environment and scenery; opportunities for solitude, challenge, and primitive recreation; unique ecological or cultural features. Factors such as size, shape,

relationship to external influences, and boundary location were examined to determine manageability.

Availability

Availability is conditioned by the value of and need for the wilderness resource compared to the value of and need for other resources. A brief description of uses, wildlife, water resources, livestock grazing, timber, minerals, oil and gas, heritage resources, land use authorizations, lands not in federal ownership, and disturbances is included in the availability section of each roadless inventory form. Wilderness availability is rated high, moderate, or low for each area based on obligations such as special use permitted dams, vehicle access roads, or oil and gas leases which make it difficult to manage for wilderness.

Need

Need is evaluated based on the Region 1 Wilderness Needs Assessment (USDA 2003b) and public comments on the Proposed Action (2003) and the DEIS and Draft Forest Plan (2005). The Regional assessment evaluated potential contributions to the local and national distribution of wilderness and associated ecological and social values. Ecological values which are underrepresented in the NWPS and can be provided by the BDNF include:

Beaverhead and Bitterroot Mountains Ecological Sections, and particularly sagebrush, xeric shrublands, mountain grasslands, riparian shrublands, and aspen woodland communities,

Plant communities which may contribute Montana rare or sensitive plants,

Wildlife refuge for species of concern based on the concepts that 1) Large habitats are better than small habitats; 2) connected habitats are better than isolated habitats, and 3) habitat shape is important (Ibid, page 24). and

Protected habitat for native fish species

Areas were rated high, medium or low for each of the three elements. The wilderness suitability rating is a composite of the three. Areas that rated “High” for wilderness suitability were deemed to have sufficient wilderness potential to warrant further consideration for a recommendation of wilderness. Those rated low or moderate were dropped from further consideration unless recommended for wilderness in previous forest plans, or specifically suggested in public comments received in response to the Proposed Action (2003) for Forest Plan Revision (2003) and the Draft Plan and DEIS (2005). These rankings are relative and apply only to the BDNF. BDNF IRAs, if compared to IRAs on other Forests, say the Lewis and Clark National Forest, which hosts the Bob Marshall Wilderness, may rank lower.

See Appendix C for detailed descriptions of IRAs, the analysis process, and suitability evaluations.

Recommended Wilderness

As a result of decisions made in the 1986 Beaverhead Forest Plan and 1987 Deerlodge Forest Plan, 172,720 acres were recommended for wilderness designation. This is the existing condition of recommended wilderness represented by Alternative 1 and shown in this table.

Table 2. Wilderness Recommendations in the 1986-1987 Plans

Forest	IRA Name	Acres

Forest	IRA Name	Acres
1986 Beaverhead	Torrey Mountain (East Pioneers)	79,555
	Hellroaring / Mussigbrod	6,571
	West Big Hole	55,087
	Italian Peaks	25,664
	Storm Lake	1,729
1987 Deerlodge	Storm Lake	4,114
Total		172,720

Currently, the BDNF allowed the use of motorized and mechanized transport in recommended wilderness to varying degrees. Several areas remain open to snowmobiles in winter and some wheeled motorized opportunities are available. Cross-country travel, off of designated routes, is not allowed for wheeled vehicles since completion of the Off Highway Vehicle Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision in 2001. The following tables display the extent of motorized opportunities within existing recommended wilderness areas.

Table 3. Acres of Motorized Opportunities in Existing Recommended Wilderness Areas)

Motorized Travel Allowed	Acres
Open to SUMMER Cross-Country Motorized Use	0
Open to WINTER Cross –Country Motorized Use	144,500

Table 4. Miles of Motorized Opportunities in Existing Recommended Wilderness Areas

Motorized Travel Allowed	Miles
Miles of SUMMER Trail Open to Motorized Use	34
Miles of SUMMER Road Open to Motorized Use	18
Miles of Groomed Snowmobile Trail	0
Miles of Groomed Cross-Country Ski Trails	0

Levels of motorized travel were much lower in the mid-1980s when the existing forest plans were completed. The increased popularity and expansion of these uses, and the potential of these activities to affect wilderness character and potential for designation, were not fully anticipated.

No recommended wilderness is currently closed to bicycles or other non-motorized mechanized transport such as game carts, backcountry in-line skates or skate boards, hang gliders, or game carts.

Environmental Consequences

Inventoried Roadless Areas Summary of Effects

Outside of existing congressionally designated wilderness, Inventoried Roadless Areas are the last relatively large, undisturbed landscapes remaining within the continental United States. Because roadless area values and undeveloped character are best maintained by limiting human activities that may cause disturbance to soil, water, and vegetation, the alternatives which afford the most protection for the undeveloped character of IRAs are those which most restrict these activities. Alternatives which prescribe land disturbing activities or add structures to the

landscape may reduce the suitability of an IRA for future consideration as wilderness. These activities would be of most concern in IRAs which rate “High” for wilderness suitability, particularly if they are not in the protected status of “Recommended Wilderness” or “Wilderness Study Area.”

Without the RACR, Alternative 1 may have resulted in the most change because suitable timber base is allocated inside IRAs, which prescribes timber management and the associated road construction. Because of the RACR, however, these activities which have the greatest potential impact on roadless areas, are prohibited with few exceptions. Hence, the difference between alternatives in effects to IRAs is small.

Protection of high quality inventoried roadless areas as recommended wilderness can be best accomplished with the selection of Alternative 3. Alternative 3 recommends 37% of IRAs for wilderness, which would most limit other activities such as oil and gas development, motorized transport, and vegetation management and allocates a large percentage of the remaining IRAs to non-motorized use. Alternative 6 ranks higher than Alternative 5 in percent of area protected by wilderness recommendations, 18% compared to 13%. . Alternatives 5 and 6 rank higher than Alternative 2 because they include a higher percent of acres in recommended wilderness and also include a higher percentage of IRAs in non-motorized allocations.

The alternative which provides the least protection to IRA values and undeveloped character is Alternative 4. This alternative does not recommend any wilderness areas for protection of wilderness characteristic, but again, because of the RACR, effects to roadless characteristics would likely still be acceptable.

Appendix C provides an evaluation of the effects to individual IRAs from each alternative as well as a summary of the effects to IRAs as a whole.

Recommended Wilderness Summary of Effects

Wilderness is highly valued by many, and represents a multitude of deeply held values and beliefs. Yet, recommendation and designation of lands for wilderness will necessarily result in opportunity losses for others. The impact recommended wilderness has on other resources is described in other sections of this FEIS. The decision maker must balance these recommendations to fairly allocate lands to different human values based on effects documented in the FEIS. Those tradeoffs will be documented in the Record of Decision.

The alternatives vary in how each composite of proposals meet the Regional Needs, the distribution and size of areas provided, and whether these areas are unique or address public comments. All alternatives which recommend wilderness include Italian Peaks and Torrey Mountain (East Pioneers), two of the larger blocks of roadless on the forest which represent lower elevation sagebrush grassland plan communities and have a broad base of public support.

The NWPS can be improved most with the selection of Alternative 3 which includes the most total acres and the largest number of IRAs rated high for wilderness suitability. But while these units are all rated highly, many are neither unique to the wilderness preservation system nor provide the large blocks which allow natural processes to operate.

Alternative 6 has the next most acres, but several blocks are only rated moderate or low for wilderness suitability. With the exception of add-ons and IRAs adjacent to other recommendations, the proposed blocks are large (25,000 acres plus). Alternative 5 has fewer

acres than Alternative 6, but a higher percentage of the acres are rated higher for wilderness suitability. Alternative 2 only recommends 10% of the IRAs for wilderness and includes West Big Hole, which raised a lot of controversy and does not contribute as well to underrepresented land types and plant communities as other highly ranked IRAs on the forest (Snowcrest Mountains for example). Alternative 1 recommends 9% of the IRAs for wilderness and the least acres. None of the proposals in Alternative 1 garner much public controversy and are generally supported.

Alternative 4 does not contribute to the NWPS.

Effects Common to All Action Alternatives

Management of IRAs and Recommended Wilderness shall comply with appropriate laws, regulations and policies (see the end of this section for the legal framework).

2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule - RACR restricts timber harvest and road building (with some exceptions) in all inventoried roadless areas, regardless of alternative. RACR protects roadless characteristics so adverse effects from these activities under any alternative will be low.

Suitable Timber in IRAs- There are no suitable timber lands identified within IRAs in alternatives 2 through 6. The action alternatives will better protect roadless characteristics than Alternative 1 which schedules harvest on suitable timber lands within IRAs. This effect would only be realized if the RACR were rescinded.

Commercial Harvest in Recommended Wilderness- There will be no timber harvest permitted in recommended wilderness under any alternative so adverse effects from commercial harvest will not occur.

Oil and Gas Leasing and Development - Exploration and development of oil and gas resources will not be permitted in recommended wilderness under any action alternative. Ten-year leases issued in Garfield Mountain IRA in 2007 are based on stipulations from the previous oil and gas leasing decision which allow some development in that area. Alternatives which propose Garfield Mountain IRA as recommended wilderness will prohibit any future leases being issued.

Developed Recreation - Developed recreation sites such as trailheads and campgrounds are inconsistent with roadless character and are usually excluded from IRAs so there will be no effect

Direct and Indirect Effects

Effects on IRAs and NWPS Additions from Aquatic Resource Management

Watershed and fisheries improvement actions can include construction of structures for streambank stabilization (rock gabions, rock riprap, etc.), slope stabilization, and fish habitat improvement. Some structural improvements may be visually evident, and may detract from apparent naturalness. However, any such improvement structures are generally small and localized and would have a negligible effect upon undeveloped character and wilderness characteristics.

Actions which maintain, enhance, restore or protect habitat for native fish and other aquatic species, and improve stream function, promote natural conditions and will likely benefit IRA and wilderness values. Alternatives 1 and 2 identify no key watersheds within IRAs and therefore

have no effect to the existing condition. Alternative 3, 4, 5 and 6 emphasize some level of aquatic resource management which may ultimately benefit roadless and wilderness values by designating 37%, 21%, 26% and 25%, respectively, of IRAs as key watersheds.

Effects on IRAs and NWPS Additions from Fire Management

Forest health, as it affects natural integrity, in an issue of concern within IRAs and recommended wilderness. Effective fire suppression and drought throughout the western US has led to excessive fuel build up, insect infestation and vegetative composition outside the range of historic variability for these ecosystems (MacCleery 1993). Wildland fire use as an appropriate management response for resource benefits would help restore naturally functioning ecosystems and have a positive effect on the undeveloped character of IRAs and wilderness character of recommended wilderness.

Although Alternative 3 and 6 may appear to offer the most benefits to undeveloped character as it allows wildland fire use essentially forestwide, the limitations of implementing this alternative, such as budget constraints, the need for additional fire planning, and risks associated with fire use under current stand conditions may prove impractical on anything but a small scale. Because of these considerations, the substantive differences between Alternatives 1,2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, in terms of the actual acres likely to be treated by wildland fire use, will probably be low.

Effects on IRAs and NWPS Additions from IRAs & Wilderness Recommendations

Each alternative offers a different package of recommended wilderness, ranging from none to 20 areas comprising 707,000 acres distributed throughout the BDNF forest. The different combinations vary in how they might contribute important elements to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). The table below describes which areas are included in each alternative.

Table 5. Recommended Wilderness Areas by Alternative

Recommended Wilderness Area Name	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6
AP Addition – Hell Roaring	6,900	6,900	19,200	0	19,200	19,200
AP Addition - Storm Lake	5,700	5,800	9,400	0	5,900	9,300
AP Addition – Upper East Fork	0	0	8,900	0	0	5,100
Big Horn Mountain	0	0	50,300	0	0	0
Black Butte	0	0	39,100	0	0	0
Electric Peak	0	0	11,300	0	11,300	0
Flint Range/Dolus Lake	0	0	37,300	0	0	0
Freezeout Mountain	0	0	66,900	0	0	0
Garfield mountain	0	0	45,800	0	0	33,100
Italian Peaks	25,500	25,500	41,500	0	25,600	25,300
Lee-Metcalf Wilderness Additions, including Cowboy Heaven	0	15,600	17,700	0	17,500	15,600
Lost Creek	0	0	9,600	0	0	0
Middle Mountain Tobacco Roots	0	0	36,800	0	0	0
Mount Jefferson	0	4,500	4,500	0	4,500	2,200

Recommended Wilderness Area Name	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6
Quigg	0	0	12,700	0	3,700	8,800
Sheep Mountain	0	0	31,400	0	0	0
Snowcrest	0	0	86,500	0	86,900	92,000
Stony Mountain	0	0	0	0	0	15,900
Table Mountain	0	0	20,000	0	0	18,300
Torrey	79,800	79,600	89,700	0	73,500	84,100
West Big Hole	55,900	58,900	68,200	0	0	0
TOTAL	174,000	196,000	707,000	0	248,000	329,000

The alternatives are evaluated below for the degree to which they improve the size, distribution, and ecological protections of the NWPS.

Size- While it only takes 5,000 acres to qualify for roadless or wilderness, larger blocks of land offer more protection of ecological features and processes, more opportunities for solitude, and cost the agency less per acre to manage if designated. The fixed administrative costs of managing designated wilderness are similar regardless of size. Hence, smaller areas would cost more per acre. On the other hand, more areas, though small, offer the advantage of vehicle accessibility to more communities. Alternative 3 adds the most acres and the largest blocks of land to the NWPS (Snowcrest, Torrey Mountain, West Big Hole) along with 10 relatively small units. Alternative 4 adds the least. The remaining alternatives vary in the acreage and size of blocks.

Alternative 1 recommends 174,000 acres for wilderness in 5 areas. Units average 35,000 acres ranging from 79,800 to 25,500 acres.

Alternative 2 recommends the same general areas as Alternative 1, varying the boundaries through additions and deletions. Recommended are 195,000 acres in 7 areas. Units average 28,000 acres and range from 79,600 to 4,500.

Alternative 3 recommends the highest number of acres (707,000) in 20 areas. It includes most highly ranked areas and areas recommended by the public. These areas are well-distributed across the Forest. Many of these areas overlap in the features they contribute to the National Wilderness preservation system. Alternative 3 averages 35,000 acres per unit and ranges from 89,700 to 4,500. Only 10 of the 20 units proposed are over 50,000 acres or contribute to other larger protected areas.

Alternative 4 does not recommend wilderness and addresses concerns from members of the public that current wilderness designations offer sufficient protection.

Alternatives 5 and 6 were developed to come up with a mix of areas that represent the regional needs as well as responding to public concerns. Not all areas which rank high were recommended. Some areas which rank moderate were also recommended because they were contiguous with other Forest's recommendations. Alternative 5 recommends 248,000 acres in 9 areas. Alternative 6 recommends 329,000 acres in 12 areas. Alternative 5 averages 28,000 acres per unit ranging from 86,900 to 4,500 acres. Alternative 6 averages 28,000 acres per unit ranging from 92,000 to 2,200. The 2,200 acre portion of Mount Jefferson is contiguous with the much larger BLM Centennial Mountain WSA.

Quality of the Areas (Wilderness Suitability Rankings)

Wilderness suitability ratings consider the capability, availability and need for wilderness, and directly relate to which areas provide the best addition to the NWPS. The table below displays the number of IRA subunits, by rating, recommended in each alternative. IRAs are broken into subunits when there are distinctions in the characteristics which make up the capability of an area, or if there are buffered roads separating parts of the area. The table reflects the individual ratings for subunits. See Appendix C for the ratings by IRA and subunit.

Table 6. Number of IRAs with a High suitability rating recommended by alternative

IRAs wilderness suitability ranking	subunits	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6
HIGH 616,306 acres	26	5	9	24	0	16	15
MODERATE 685,306 acres	38	3	4	8	0	3	6
LOW 399,137 acres	30	0	0	0	0	0	0

Several alternatives include subunits with only moderate rankings when they are either adjacent to a larger recommended or existing wilderness, were included in a past Congressional wilderness bill, or, in the case of Stony Mountain, were right on the numerical break between high and low capability.

Alternative 1 would continue protection of three of the largest IRAs as well as additions to the existing AP Wilderness. Italian Peaks and Torrey Mountain, in particular, offer all of the features identified by the Regional Needs assessment as underrepresented in the NWPS. Twenty other highly rated areas would continue under other management.

Alternative 2 has a similar effect as Alternative 1, adding two smaller units with unique contributions, Lost Creek and Mount Jefferson (part of the BLM Centennial WSA).

Alternative 3 recommends all but one of the IRA subunits which received a high wilderness suitability rating, contributing the greatest number of high ranking areas to the NWPS. Several of the largest blocks, West Big Hole, Italian Peaks, Torrey Mountain, and Snowcrest offer all of the features underrepresented in the NWPS. Many of the smaller areas, while unique in their own ways, duplicate the underrepresented features. For example, Freezeout, Black Butte, Bighorn and Greenhorn IRAs in the Gravelly Range would contribute very similar underrepresented plant communities, and wildlife refuge for wide ranging species like wolverines.

Alternative 4 adds no acres to the NWPS.

Alternative 5 does not add as many acres to the NWPS as Alternative 3 or 6, but more of those acres are in highly rated subunits than Alternative 6 (263,000 acres compared to 262,000). Alternative 5 includes the highly rated Electric Peak and high elevations of Mount Jefferson, dropped from Alternative 6, as well as the larger Torrey Mountain, Italian Peaks and Snowcrest IRAs. West Big Hole is not included in this alternative. While the West Big Hole does include underrepresented plant communities and wildlife refuge, this area is more typical of the “rocks and ice” land type that is already well represented in the NWPS.

Alternative 6 contributes the next highest number of subunits, but six of them received only a moderate rating. Stony Mountain has a moderate rating, but was only one point away from a high capability rating, which would have given it a High suitability rating and is being recommended by the Lolo NF. The other moderately rated subunits are adjacent to other highly rated areas or designated wilderness. Garfield Mountain, like Italian Peaks, Torrey Mountain and the Snowcrests offers all of the features currently underrepresented in the NWPS.

Effects on IRAs and NWPS Additions from Livestock Grazing

Grazing, under approved allotment management plans, well not affect IRAs. The commercial grazing of livestock is permitted within designated wilderness areas where it was established prior to wilderness designated. Structural range improvements such as stock watering developments and fences can impact apparent naturalness but are not considered inconsistent with undeveloped character or wilderness characteristics unless they create large, obvious impact zones.

The amount of suitable rangeland between the alternatives varies only slightly. Areas closed to grazing are not currently grazed so there is no impact regardless of alternative The effects between the alternatives to IRAs or recommended wilderness will be negligible.

Effects on IRAs and NWPS Additions from Minerals and Oil and Gas

Locatable Mineral Development – Mineral exploration and development activities can vary from small, easily reclaimed operations to larger developments. Large mines may lead to extensive site alterations and long term impacts to the undeveloped character of IRAs and to wilderness characteristics. Road construction, surface disturbance, associated structures, and intensified human activity are impacts generally associated with mining development. These impacts may reduce roadless inventories by removing portions of IRAs where mining occurs. However, evidence of past mining, and even ongoing mining operations do not necessarily preclude wilderness consideration, although they do make it less likely.

The exploration and development of locatable minerals is allowed within IRAs and recommended wilderness as secured by the Mining Act of 1872 and 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule Federal Register, Jan. 12, 2001, 294.12(b)(3)) and does not vary by alternative. Therefore, effects are common to all alternatives.

Oil and Gas – Oil and gas leasing and subsequent development is not allowed in Forest Plan recommended wilderness. Therefore, there would be no effects to recommended wilderness from oil and gas development. (Leases issued prior to this decision are exempted. Subsequent development of these leases will be managed according to the stipulations in the 1986 Forest Plan as amended by the Oil and Gas Leasing Decision [USDA 1996a]).

Currently, road building for oil and gas development is precluded in IRAs by the RACR if the leases were issued after 2001. If oil and gas operations can take place without road building, then they could occur in or under IRAs. All alternatives include a Controlled Surface Use (CSU) stipulation for IRAs that precludes road building. The CSU also contains language that if the 2001 roadless rule is no longer in effect, the CSU could be waived. Then direction controlling oil and gas leasing and development would follow forest plan direction and stipulations for other resources.

Without the ability to build roads, it's unlikely that oil and gas development would occur in IRAs. Oil and gas exploration and development can lead to site alteration and impacts to roadless characteristics from drill pads, pumping facilities, ground disturbance, noise, structures, and increased human activity. The 1995 Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario predicts most activity on BDNF moderate potential lands would be exploratory wells, completed in less than a years time. Monitoring of a wildcat (exploratory) well drilled in the Lima area in 1986 demonstrated that reclamation could be completed one year following and within 5 years visual signs of disturbance that may impact roadless characteristics would be healed (Bump 1995).

Mineral Exploration and Development – Recommended wilderness and inventoried roadless areas preclude roads with exceptions (RACR, 36 CRF Part 294.12) for prior reserved rights and leases issued prior to 2001. The constraint will eliminate most lands from exploration and development of mineral materials or leasable minerals other than oil and gas. There may be development adjacent to the roads that form the boundaries of the IRAs. There would be few effects to IRAs or proposed wilderness from other mineral development.

Effects on IRAs and NWPS Additions from Recreation and Travel Management

Three recreation and travel decisions made by the forest plan have the potential of affecting IRAs:

- Allocation of land as non-motorized in summer or winter, backcountry, or recommended wilderness,
- Restriction of mechanized and motorized travel within recommended wilderness, and
- Establishing travel routes with a forest road and trail map.

Allocations- Non-motorized allocations in IRAs close blocks of areas to motorized recreation, offering opportunities for quiet and solitude and eliminating the possibility of growing motorized use in the area. Backcountry allocations in Alternative 6 establish a requirement for maintaining semi-primitive recreation opportunities, which will constrain density of use and increased developments. Recommended wilderness allocations in all action alternatives restrict all motorized uses to assure protection of roadless and wilderness characteristics in the event of wilderness designation by Congress. The table below indicates the level of protection offered by alternative for the various recreation allocations.

Table 7. Allocations in IRAs by Alternative

Roadless Acres in Allocation	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6
Recommended Wilderness	9%	10%	37%	--	13%	18%
Wilderness Study Area	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%
Summer Non-Motorized *	39%	54%	81%	50%	63%	37%
Backcountry Recreation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	33%
Road-based	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1%
Current Travel Plan Applies	60%	45%	19%	49%	36%	n/a
Winter Non-Motorized	11%	22%	55%	11%	42%	26%
Winter Motorized	89%	78%	45%	89%	58%	74%

** Summer Non-motorized includes Recommended Wilderness and Some Wilderness Study Area allocations for Alternatives 1 through 5. Summer Non-motorized, Recommended Wilderness, and Wilderness Study Area allocations are mutually exclusive in Alternative 6.*

The existing condition (Alternative 1) permits the highest level of motorized use in IRAs in winter and summer, followed by Alternatives 2 and 4. These alternatives have the greatest potential for affecting the undeveloped character of IRAs by increasing human activity and physical impacts. Alternatives 3, 5, and 6 allow the least amount of motorized recreation within IRAs (protecting 81%, 63%, and 66% in non-motorized allocations respectively) and will most protect the undeveloped character of these areas. Alternative 3, as it most restricts motorized recreation, is the best choice to protect roadless character.

Travel restrictions in Recommended Wilderness – Fundamental to the agency's responsibility for recommended wilderness is protection and preservation of wilderness character until either designated by Congress as wilderness, or released from wilderness consideration (FSM 1923.03). The issue is whether or not motorized and mechanized recreation uses affect wilderness characteristics and the potential for Congress to consider these areas as additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Wilderness characteristics are defined in section 2 (c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964:

> *A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has a least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.*

Motorized recreation is permitted in IRAs where approved by site-specific travel management regulations. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule does not prohibit motorized recreation. However, the presence of motorized recreation may diminish the undeveloped character in several ways. Physical impacts to vegetation and soils result from a variety of trail uses,

including motorized vehicles. While the physical impacts of motorcycles may be difficult to distinguish from other uses such as horses, hikers, and mountain bikers, full sized vehicles and ATVs lead to the establishment of two track routes, suggestive of roads and a more developed setting.

Increased visitation is a consequence of easier vehicle vehicle access, which causes more frequent encounters, thus reducing the sense of remoteness and opportunities for solitude. Engine noise detracts from natural settings and increased trail use requires more management. Bridges, culverts, turnpikes, and signs are improvements, which may reduce undeveloped character. Motorized vehicles also transport weed seed. Vehicles driven through populations of invasive plants often pick up seeds in the radiator grill, under carriage, tire treads, etc. and transport these seeds to previously uninfested areas (Trunkle & Fay 1991).

The physical impacts of winter motorized use are generally benign since soils and vegetation are buffered by snow and tracks vanish with snow melt. Although long term physical impacts of over snow motorized use may be difficult to quantify, snowmobiles do cause short term physical and social impacts. Tracks in snow fields and high mark play areas may be widespread and affect natural appearance and sense of solitude. Snow machines are often audible over great distances, affecting solitude and secure wildlife habitat.

Management prescriptions in Alternatives 2, 3, 5 and 6 are specifically designed to protect wilderness characteristics by constraining motorized uses. There will be no motorized conveyance allowed within recommended wilderness except for emergencies or administrative use. This includes the landing of aircraft, and use of snowmobiles, motorcycles, and All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs). Pending designation as wilderness by Congress, use of chainsaws for vegetative management, trail clearing, wildlife habitat improvement, fire fighting, and non-commercial wood gathering (such as for hunting camp use) will not be restricted. Use of motorized wheel chairs for persons with disabilities would not be restricted.

Some people feel the use of mechanized transport (mountain bikes) is inconsistent with visitor expectations in recommended wilderness areas. In these areas, horseback riders and hikers expect a wilderness-style quiet recreational experience. Management prescriptions in all alternatives protect wilderness character in roadless areas. Alternatives 3, 5, and 6 provide a higher degree of protection for wilderness characteristics from the effects of mechanized transport and minimize user conflicts. Use of wheel chairs for persons with disabilities and non-motorized game carts would not be affected.

The alternatives vary in effects of travel management on recommended wilderness. Alternative 1 is the least desirable choice for protecting wilderness characteristics since motorized and mechanized uses are permitted within recommended wilderness. Wilderness characteristics may erode over time. Alternative 2, prohibits motorized recreation within recommended wilderness but allows use of bicycles. The effects of this are described in the paragraph above. Alternative 4 recommends no wilderness and therefore there is no effect. Alternatives 3, 5, and 6 manage recommended wilderness areas in a manner consistent with the protection and preservation of their wilderness characteristics, so as to maintain their potential for consideration and possible designation to the National Wilderness Preservation System. These three alternatives provide the best protection of recommended wilderness.

Mapped vs. Visual Route Determinations - Under the current direction established by the 2001 Off Highway Vehicle Amendment for Montana, South and North Dakota, cross country travel is

prohibited and travel routes are based on a visual determination. With a visual determination, a motor vehicle driver may unknowingly follow a route established recently by an illegal user. Alternatives 1 and 2 continue the use of visual determination as a means for interpreting open routes. User built trails will likely continue to be pioneered into IRAs compromising roadless character and future suitability for wilderness. Alternatives 3, 4, 5, and 6 provide a mapped inventory of roads and trails which eliminates the visual interpretation of whether a road is open to motorized use. This prevents continued expansion of routes into IRAs. Alternatives 3, 4, 5, and 6 provide protection for IRAs. Alternatives 1 and 2 will likely see continued degradation of roadless character.

Effects on IRAs and NWPS Additions from Timber Management

The effects of timber harvest can vary considerably, from regeneration harvests, such as clearcuts with associated roads and skid trails, to very light and widely dispersed timber harvest using helicopter yarding methods.

Alternative 1 is the only alternative with any suitable timber land identified within IRAs. Because any harvest activity, no matter how minor, will reduce the undeveloped character of IRAs, this alternative is the least desirable choice for protecting IRA values. However, the RACR will restrict harvest and road building activities even in Alternative 1, neutralizing the impacts of timber management.

There is no effect to IRAs from timber management in any of the four action alternatives because no suitable timber lands are identified within the IRAs. Timber harvest to meet other resource objectives may take place but with road construction prohibited by RACR, the effect would be similarly small between all alternatives.

There are no effects from timber management to recommended wilderness since timber harvest is not permitted within recommended wilderness under any alternative.

Effects on IRAs and NWPS Additions from Vegetation Management

Vegetation and fuel treatments designed to increase aspen stands, reduce conifer encroachment, reduce fuels, maintain some level of old growth, and trend toward naturally functioning ecosystems are desirable in IRAs because these action help restore natural conditions. Uncharacteristic wildfire and insect infestation are two of the most prominent forest health issues on the BDNF and affect the natural integrity of IRAs and recommended wilderness.

Treatment of vegetation by mechanical means (generally chainsaws) can affect natural appearance with the creation of linear patterns and presence of stumps. However, since treatments under any alternative would take place without road construction and would have to take roadless character into account, the scale of effects would be small. Treatments utilizing wildland fire use and planned ignitions may have less impact to apparent naturalness since the evidence of fire is native to the forest landscape. However, where ecosystem restoration is desired, mechanical treatments may be the only viable option where fire use may prove too risky.

Alternative 1 identifies no measurable objective for active aspen regeneration or active Douglas-fir encroachment reduction. Alternative 2 allows aspen restoration and Douglas-fir reduction but sets no definitive targets. In comparison, Alternatives 3, 4, 5 and 6 all provide an equal range of vegetation management for aspen restoration and Douglas-fir encroachment reduction. These last four choices will most benefit IRA values.

For retention of old growth, the alternatives are fairly similar in range. Alternative 1 provides for slightly less retention of old growth, and Alternative 3, a bit more. Alternatives 4, 5, and 6 each call for 10% retention for all conifer species, while Alternative 2 maintains the present mix. The actual effects to IRAs from old growth management are fairly similar.

Effects on IRAs and NWPS Additions from Wildlife Habitat Management

Wildlife management actions may result in a broad array of physical alterations including road obliteration, vegetation treatments, prescribed burning, and habitat improvement structures. Some of these actions could be visually evident and detract somewhat from IRA values and wilderness characteristics. However, actions which maintain, restore, protect, or enhance wildlife habitat also improve natural integrity and ecosystem function and benefit IRA and wilderness values in the long term. Generally, the physical impacts from wildlife habitat management actions are so small and limited that any effects on undeveloped or wilderness characteristics will be negligible in all alternatives.

Closures from meeting road density objectives should have only beneficial effects on IRAs. Implementation of Alternative 3 would cause the most closures, improving roadless character of individual IRAs. Conversely Alternative 4 would likely result in the fewest closures. Although the beneficial effects of meeting road density objectives for the action alternatives will vary, adverse effects from road construction will be the same for all alternatives because of the RACR.

Cumulative Effects

The US population has grown by over 115 million people since 1960, and it is projected to continue growing rapidly. In recent years, population has risen from about 281 million in 2000 to 288 million in 2002, and to almost 295 million in 2004 (Cordell et al. 2004). Southwest Montana is also experiencing rapid population growth and increased urbanization. The population increased by 12.9% in Montana between 1990 and 2000 (Northern Economics 2002). Four of the fastest growing counties in Montana are in close proximity to the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. These are Gallatin, Ravalli, Broadwater, and Missoula counties. Ravalli County was the fastest growing county during the decade from 1900 to 2000 with a 44% growth rate for the period, followed by Gallatin County which grew 34.4% over the same time. Increased population proximal to the BDNF will increase demand for National Forest amenities, especially recreation. Increased development in southwest Montana resulting from population growth will make undeveloped lands a scarcer more valuable commodity.

Technological advances in ATVs, snowmobiles, mountain bikes, and as yet unforeseen methods of transportation, will influence the use of National Forests in the future. Snowmobile technology, for example, has improved steadily over the last decade to allow expansion into areas formerly considered inaccessible. Technological improvements often create demand for new types of recreation. Improved operational capabilities of snowmobiles, for example, has led to a rapidly expanding and increasing incidence of the relatively new activity of high marking. Advances in mountain bike technology have created more demand for single track mountain biking. The sudden rise in popularity of these activities was not fully anticipated or planned for during previous forest plan implementation. It is often difficult if not impossible to accurately predict recreation trends, but experience has shown that technological advances, coupled with population growth and increased urbanization, will lead to intensified recreational use on public lands and affect opportunities for primitive, undeveloped, and wilderness recreation.

Wilderness Recommendations in Southwest Montana

In southwest Montana both the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service allocate lands for the purpose of protecting wilderness characteristics. The BLM inventories and then designates Wilderness Study Area which meet similar criteria as those of BDNF inventoried roadless areas. BLM Wilderness Study Areas are evaluated to determine suitability for wilderness and are then recommended through a management framework plan. In southwest Montana, BLM offices allocate the following acres, which contribute to the cumulative effects of BDNF IRAs and wilderness recommendations."

Table 8. Acres of BLM Recommended Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas

BLM Unit	Wilderness Study Area Acres	Recommended Wilderness Acres
Dillon Field Office	121,919	49,865
Butte District Office	20,812	19,140
Missoula District Office	520	520
TOTAL	**144,251**	**69,525**

Jointly Administered IRAs

Several IRAs are jointly managed by adjacent forests or the BLM area offices. Differences in land management objectives between administrative units, especially in respect to travel management, can effect the entire IRA and influence future land designations. A consistent approach to the management of IRAs across jurisdictions is preferable when it makes sense. Management of adjacent IRAs was considered and consultation took place with the appropriate unit managers. The following areas are primarily affected by joint management:

Mount Jefferson –The BLM Wilderness Suitability Study and EIS for the Centennial Mountains was completed in 1990. Included in this study were USDA Forest Service lands in the Beaverhead and Targhee National Forests. The Forest Service agreed to manage any areas recommended for wilderness through this process consistently with BLM land use management prescriptions. No lands on the Targhee National Forest were recommended for wilderness, but 4,474 acres on the Beaverhead National Forest were included in the BLM wilderness proposal. The Forest Service did not close the area to snowmobiling, resulting in mismatched management of these adjacent lands. Alternatives 2, 3, and 5 will remedy this situation and fulfill the recommendation of the 1990 Wilderness Suitability Study that these areas be managed consistently to maintain and protect wilderness characteristics.

Italian Peak – The Targhee National Forest completed its Forest Plan revision in 1997. Their portion of the Italian Peak IRA is recommended wilderness. Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 propose the BDNF portion of this IRA for recommended wilderness.

West Big Hole – The Salmon National Forest administers a small portion of this IRA. Due to the presence of several intrusions, including roads, mining, and timber activity, it is unlikely the Salmon portion of the IRA will be recommended for wilderness. "Non-conforming" motorized use is established on both sides of this IRA. Alternatives 4, 5, and 6 do not recommend the West Big Hole for wilderness and provide the most consistent approach across administrative boundaries.

Quigg – This IRA is shared with the Lolo National Forest and the BLM. The Lolo is currently revising their Forest Plan and considering recommending portions of Quigg for wilderness. The BLM has recommended the 520 acre Quigg West WSA for wilderness. The wilderness recommendation on the BDNF side of Quigg in Alternatives 3, 5 and 6 were formulated in consultation with the Lolo National Forest.

Stony – This IRA is shared with the Lolo National Forest. The Lolo is currently revising their Forest Plan and considering recommending portions of Stony for wilderness. The wilderness recommendation on the BDNF side of Stony in Alternative 6 will be consistent with Lolo NF management.

Electric Peak – This IRA is shared with the Helena National Forest. The Helena portion is currently recommended for Congressional designation as wilderness and is closed to motorized recreation. Portions of the Electric Peak IRA on the BDNF side are proposed for wilderness in Alternatives 3 and 5 which will provide management consistency with the Helena National Forest.

National Wilderness Preservation System

The National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) consists of 667 areas in 44 states and totals 106,498,016 acres. Fifty four percent of NWPS is in Alaska. With Alaska wilderness excluded, 2.57% of the continental United States has been preserved and protected as wilderness. Most of the remaining 97% serves other purposes.

The USDA Forest Service wilderness system totals 193 million acres. Of this, nearly 35 million acres are designated wilderness, or about 18% of National Forest System lands. In the Forest Service's Northern Region, which includes Montana, Northern Idaho, North and South Dakota, there are 25 million acres of forest lands, of which 5 million, or 20%, are designated wilderness. On the Beaverhead –Deerlodge National Forest there are portions of two wilderness areas, the Anaconda-Pintler (117,453) and the Lee Metcalf (107,694 acres). Together these areas total 225,147, or 7% of lands administered by the BDNF.

If lands recommended for wilderness under each alternative were to ultimately be designated under NWPS, the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest would be:

- Alternative 1 – 12% wilderness,
- Alternative 2 – 13% wilderness,
- Alternative 3 – 28% wilderness,
- Alternative 4 – 7% wilderness,
- Alternative 5 – 14% wilderness,
- Alternative 6 – 17% wilderness.

Legal and Administrative Framework

Laws and Executive Orders

The Wilderness Act (1964) – Established the National Wilderness Preservation System to be administered in such a manner as to leave these lands unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (1980) – Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to provide adequate vehicle access to non-federal land within the boundaries of the National Forest System, including congressionally designated areas.

Congressional Grazing Guidelines (Sec. 108, PL 96-560, H.R. Report 96-617 dated 11/14/79) – Clarifies the Congressional intent that livestock grazing will be permitted to continue in national forest wilderness areas, when such grazing was established prior to the classification of an area as Wilderness. This policy is reiterated in FSM 2323.22.

Regulations and Policy

The Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 219.17(a): States that "…Roadless areas within the National Forest system shall be evaluated and considered for recommendation as potential wilderness during the forest planning process."

The Forest Service Handbook (1909.12.7.1): Directs national forests to "…identify and inventory all roadless areas that satisfy the definition of wilderness found in section 2 (c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act". FSH 1909.12.7 also details the means by which the capability, availability, and need for potential wilderness areas are assessed.

Forest Service Manual 1923.03 (2): States that any area being recommended for Wilderness is not available for any use or activity that may reduce the area's Wilderness potential.

Forest Service Manual Interim Directives 1920-2001-1, 2400-2001-3, and 7710-2001-3, 3: These dir4ectives implement the Chief of the Forest Service's direction on interim protection of inventoried roadless areas pending any final decision on the Roadless Areas Conservation Rule (RACR) or implementation of a new roadless rule.

Off-Highway Vehicle Record of Decision and Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota and Portions of – January 2001(Tri-State OHV Decision): Restricts wheeled motorized cross-country travel to established routes. Cross country travel is not permitted.

Wilderness Needs Assessment – 2003 USDA Forest Service – Northern Region: This document concluded that there is the need for additional wilderness within the Northern Region to meet future demands for recreation, protect important wildlife habitat and connective corridors, and to include a broader diversity of ecological cover types within the Northern Region's portion of the National Wilderness Preservation System.