

Affected Environment

National Roads and Trails

The Pioneer Mountain Scenic Byway was designated by the Forest Service in 1987. Its designation led to reconstruction and new construction of the road and recreation facilities along it. The road provides a paved scenic route from Wise River to Highway 278 between the east and west portions of the Pioneer Mountains. The Beaverhead Forest Plan was site-specifically amended to allow recreation developments, but was not amended to specifically acknowledge or manage the Byway as a national designation. Much of the Byway and right-of-way are under the jurisdiction of Beaverhead County.

Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) - The BDNF contains the most NFS trail miles along the route. The Forest Service is the lead agency for management of the CDNST, which lies along the Continental Divide, with some sections on the forest and others on adjacent Forests, BLM, State, and private lands. Several sections of trail were constructed or re-constructed over the last 15 years. Two overland routes where there is no constructed trail remain on the Forest. These are being planned for completion.

Management of the CDNST is guided by the 1985 CDNST Management Plan, Montana CDNST EA (1989) and additional national policy. The most recent policy requires construction and management for non-motorized uses on all newly constructed sections of the CDNST, and includes as a long term goal a non-motorized route for the entire length of the trail.

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail (LCNHT) - The road and trail follows a route from St. Louis, Missouri to the mouth of the Columbia River in Oregon following the approximate route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Two portions of the trail lie on the Forest; the Lemhi Pass portion of the east to west route, and the Gibbons Pass & Trail Creek portions of the return route.

The National Park Service is the lead agency for the management of the LCNHT, but with the least disturbed portions of the routes on National Forest lands, Forest Service interest and involvement is high. **The 1982 LCNHT Comprehensive** Management Plan and further NEPA guides management of the trail. *See Heritage Resource Section for more about this trail.*

Nez Perce National Historic Trail (Nee Me Poo Trail or NPNHT) - The NPNHT is a 1170 mile route from the Wallowa Valley in Oregon to Chief Joseph Battleground of the Bear Paw State Monument in north-central Montana is on the BDNF. The Forest's section follows approximately the same route as the Trail Creek section of the Lewis and Clark Trail. Another part follows the Bloody Dick road to Horse Prairie. The Forest Service is the lead agency for management of the NPNHT. The NPNHT Comprehensive Management Plan was published in 1990, and guides management of the trail.

Both the Deerlodge Forest Plan MA3, pages III-8, III-9, and the Beaverhead Forest Plan MA 29, pages III-92 through III-95, provide guidance for the management of these three scenic and historic National Trails. They also require use of the direction which can be found in their respective comprehensive plans.

There are eight designated National Recreation Trails (NRTs) on the Forest. These trails are recognized as unique recreation opportunities on the Forest. The existing Forest Plans have no direction for their use because they were designated after the Plans were approved.

May Creek National Recreation Trail is a seven mile long non-motorized summer route and winter snowmobile route from May Creek Campground to the Continental Divide paralleling Highway 43 in the Big Hole Landscape.

Pioneer Loop National Recreation Trail is a 32 mile loop trail in through the West Pioneers with varied motorized and non-motorized designation.

Wise River Polaris National Recreation Trail provides a 30 mile snowmobile route over the Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway.

Grasshopper Loop National Recreation Trail is a three mile non-motorized trail in the southern part of the Pioneers used in summer and winter

Haystack National Recreation Trail just west of Elk Park offers a three mile hike and 2000 ft elevation gain to the top of Haystack Mountain for outstanding views of the area.

Lodgepole National Recreation Trail is a three mile loop trail through varied mountain vegetation types north of Georgetown Lake providing summer OHV travel and winter cross-country ski opportunities.

Louise Lake National Recreation Trail is a one mile trail from the end of the South Boulder Road in the Tobacco Root landscape for a spectacular hike to this lake basin near the top of the range.

Lost Cabin Lake National Recreation Trail is a 3-mile trail from the end of the South Boulder Road in the Tobacco Root Landscape to this high mountain lake.

Research Natural Area and Botanical Special Interest Areas

The purpose of a Research Natural Area (RNA) is to preserve a wide spectrum of pristine representative areas that typify important ecological areas. An area qualifies by containing forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, aquatic, geological; and special or unique characteristics of scientific interest and importance. In combination, RNAs form a national network of ecological areas for research, education, and maintenance of biological diversity. The objectives for Research Natural Areas are to:

1. Preserve and maintain genetic diversity.
2. Protect against serious environmental disruptions.
3. Serve as reference areas for the study of succession.
4. Provide on-site and extension educational activities.
5. Serve as baseline areas for measuring long-term ecological changes.
6. Serve as control areas for comparing results from manipulative research.
7. Monitor effects of resource management techniques and practices.

Fourteen RNAs covering 17,993 acres, and one botanical Special Interest Area (SIA) of 486 acres, are designated on the BDNF. They represent specific plant community types for study and monitoring in areas where human influence and management is minimal. RNAs and the SIA serve to protect many of the 34 Region 1 Sensitive Plant Species listed in the Biological