

MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST

Revised Land and Resource Management Plan

Final Environmental Impact Statement

Executive Summary

**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

FOR THE

**MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST
REVISED LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

DECEMBER 2003

Located within Carbon, Converse, Albany, Natrona, and Platte counties, Wyoming

Lead agency: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Rocky Mountain Region

Cooperating Agencies: State of Wyoming (including Carbon, Converse Counties)
Seven Southeastern County Conservation Districts
USDI Bureau of Land Management (Wyoming)

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Abstract: This is the summary of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Medicine Bow National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Revision. It summarizes the analysis of seven alternatives developed for programmatic management of the approximately 1.1 million acres administered by the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland. The Forest Service has identified Alternative D FEIS as the Preferred Alternative.

Note to readers:

The Forest Service believes that reviewers should be given notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of Draft EISs must structure their response to the proposal to make clear the reviewer's position and contentions [*Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 US 519, 53 (1978)]. In addition, environmental objections that could be raised at the Draft EIS stage but are not raised until after completion of the FEIS may be waived or dismissed by the courts [*City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Circuit 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980)].

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MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST REVISED PLAN AND FEIS

[Map 1](#) Vicinity map.

Introduction

This is a summary of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) which accompanies the Medicine Bow National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). This summary presents the different alternatives considered and their projected impacts.

In addition to this summary, the following documents are available on request:

- Revised Land and Resource Management Plan
- Final Environmental Impact Statement and Appendices
- Record of Decision
- Management Area Map for the Revised Plan
- CD ROM containing the final documents and maps
- CD ROM of Draft Documents and Maps supporting the DEIS and Proposed (Draft) Plan (incorporated by reference in the FEIS)

This information is available at local Forest Service offices on the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland, public libraries and on our website, www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr.

Overview of Planning Process and History

Forest plans are prepared in accordance with the 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other laws and regulations. The Medicine Bow National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1985 Plan) was issued in November 1985. NFMA regulations state that a forest plan should ordinarily be revised on a 10-year cycle or at least every 15 years (39 CFR 219.10).

In October of 1999, a Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the Federal Register. The NOI contained a description of the Forest Service Proposed Action based on the six major revision topics. Comments were received from the public and analyzed in order to develop alternatives to the proposed action.

A wide range of alternative themes was developed to address these comments and describe the major characteristics of the alternatives. Descriptions of six alternative themes were shared with the public at a series of open houses, in Forest Plan Revision Newsletters, and on the Internet in November of 2001. Based on public comment, the alternative themes were modified to meet public desires (Alternatives B and D). A restoration alternative was combined with the proposed action and was named Alternative E. Additional alternative themes were developed, including three alternatives, which were proposed by interested groups of citizens. These three alternatives when described in detail became Alternatives C, F and G. Alternative A represented the No Action or 1985 Plan, as amended.

A draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) that analyzed six alternatives (A-F) in detail and two benchmark alternatives (G, H) was issued in December 2002 and was available for public comment until April 4, 2003. Forest planners and interdisciplinary team members reviewed these comments and modified the direction in the forest plan, the alternatives, and the supporting analysis as needed. The FEIS incorporates those changes, analyzes seven alternatives, and identifies the selected alternative that will guide future management of the Medicine Bow National Forest. The Regional Forester has documented the basis of this decision in a Record of Decision (ROD).

Purpose of the Revised Plan

A forest plan provides guidance for all resource management activities on a national forest.

- ◆ It establishes forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives (36 CFR 219.11(b)).
- ◆ It establishes forestwide standards and guidelines to fulfill the requirements of 16 USC 1604 applying to future activities and resource integration requirements in 36 CFR 219.13 through 219.27.
- ◆ It establishes management area direction (management area prescriptions) applying to future activities in a management area (resource integration and minimum specific management requirements) 36 CFR 219.11(c).
- ◆ It designates land as suited or not suited for timber production (16 USC 1604(k)) and other resource management activities such as rangelands, and recreation opportunities (36 CFR 219.14, 219.15, 219.20, and 219.21). In addition, it identifies lands available for oil and gas leasing and the associated leasing stipulations (36 CFR 228.102).
- ◆ It establishes monitoring and evaluation requirements (36 CFR 219.11(d)).
- ◆ It recommends the establishment of wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, and other special designations to Congress, as appropriate.

Forest plans estimate future management activities, but the actual amount of activities accomplished is determined by annual budgets and site-specific project decisions. Budgets rarely provide enough money to fully implement a forest plan, so scheduled activities and actions must be adjusted to match available funds and Congressional intent of appropriations acts. The implications of budget changes may require the agency to evaluate the need for future forest plan amendments.

Reader's Guide to the Revised Plan and FEIS

Documents related to the revision of the forest plan include: the Revised Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), FEIS appendices, and a Management Area Map. The Revised Plan describes the overall management direction for the Forest. It includes the following chapters:

- ◆ Chapter 1 – Forestwide Direction
- ◆ Chapter 2 - Management Area Prescriptions
- ◆ Chapter 3 - Geographic Areas
- ◆ Chapter 4 - Monitoring and Evaluation
- ◆ Appendices A-I contain detailed information to assist the reader in understanding or implementing the plan

The Final Environmental Impact Statement contains the analysis of effects for each of the alternatives considered in detail. It is the basis from which the Revised Plan was developed and includes the following sections:

- ◆ Chapter 1 - Purpose and Need
- ◆ Chapter 2 - The Alternatives
- ◆ Chapter 3 - Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences
- ◆ Chapter 4 - Preparers
- ◆ Chapter 5 - Agencies, Organizations and Individuals
- ◆ Appendices A-L contain detailed information to assist the reader in understanding the FEIS.

Between the Draft and Final Forest Plan and EIS

After considering public comments on the draft forest plan and DEIS, the interdisciplinary team made necessary changes and revisions. These are presented in the FEIS and the Revised Forest Plan. Analysis for all seven alternatives is presented in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

Alternative D FEIS, as described in the FEIS, is a modification of Alternative D described in the DEIS based on public comments and additional analysis conducted between draft and final. It is within the range of alternatives described and analyzed and is a modification of Alternative D DEIS. There were changes between the DEIS and FEIS and between Proposed (Draft) Plan and Final Plan in the following areas:

- ◆ Biological Evaluation (BE) and Biological Assessment (BA)
- ◆ Management Indicator Species (MIS)
- ◆ Watershed assessments were updated and watershed analyses
- ◆ Recreation Use Data included new information
- ◆ The timber analysis and the modeled outputs
- ◆ The economic and communities analyses
- ◆ Estimates of potential fire, insects, and disease occurrences
- ◆ Oil and gas leasing stipulations
- ◆ Old growth forest standards
- ◆ Elk and deer winter range allocations

Implementation of the Forest Plan

A forest plan provides the framework to guide the day-to-day land and resource management operations of a National Forest. The forest plan is a strategic programmatic document that does not make project level decisions. Those decisions are made after more detailed, site-specific analysis and further public comment. NFMA requires that resource plans and permits, contracts, and other instruments issued for the use and occupancy of National Forest System lands be consistent with the forest plan. The following are some examples of project decisions that require more detailed environmental analysis:

- ◆ Timber harvesting and related activities, such as slash disposal and road construction.
- ◆ Range allotment management plans.
- ◆ Fish or wildlife habitat improvement projects.
- ◆ Watershed improvement projects.
- ◆ Developed recreation sites or trail construction

Resource inventories, actions plans, and schedules are not binding decisions and do not require additional environmental analysis at the project level.

Public involvement is a key part of implementing the forest plan. Monitoring and evaluation reports are available annually for public review.

Overview of the Medicine Bow National Forest

The Medicine Bow National Forest lies in southeast Wyoming in the north-south trending Central Rocky Mountains. The Forest includes approximately 1.1 million acres and is the only national forest in southeast Wyoming.

Physical Environment

The Medicine Bow National Forest includes four units in three distinct mountain ranges. The Medicine Bow portion of the Central Rockies includes the northern extension of the Colorado Front Range, which divides to include the **Laramie Range** on the east (the southern extension is known as **Sherman Mountains**) and the **Medicine Bow Mountains** on the west. The **Sierra Madre** Mountains, which are the northern part of the Parks Range, occupy the westernmost portion of the Forest.

The Continental Divide bisects the Sierra Madres. The major river drainages flow from the Continental Divide: the Green River Basin flows west into the Colorado River system, and the western Dakota sub-Basin and Platte River Basin flow east.

All of the Medicine Bow National Forest is mountainous. Elevations range from 5050 feet above sea level in the Laramie Range to 12,013 feet above sea level at Medicine Bow Peak in the Snowy Range of the Medicine Bow Mountains.

Biological Environment

Approximately 80% of the Medicine Bow is forested. Lodgepole pine forests are the predominant vegetation type on the Forest. Other vegetation types include spruce-fir, aspen, and Ponderosa pine. All regeneration on the Forest occurs naturally.

The Medicine Bow National Forest supports important and unique wildlife habitat. The only populations of pygmy shrew and brown-capped rosy finch in Wyoming occur on the Forest. The Forest is home to sub-species of pika unique to the Medicine Bow Range and the Sierra Madres. Preble's meadow jumping mouse, a threatened species, is found in the Laramie Range, and the Forest is home to a small but increasing population of river otters, a declining species in the Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service. Colorado River cutthroat trout, a sensitive species, is found on the Medicine Bow National Forest. Mule deer and elk are abundant, and there are three herds of bighorn sheep on the Forest. Black bear and mountain lions are also present and are popular trophy species.

Social and Economic Environment

More than half of Wyoming's population lives in the vicinity of the Medicine Bow National Forest. The state capital, Cheyenne, population 50,000, is 50 miles from the Supervisor's Office and 30 miles from the Forest boundary. Populations of other Medicine Bow area communities are: Laramie, 27,000; Casper, 50,000; and Douglas, 5,700. The state's only four-year university is in Laramie, and most of the population of Colorado's Front Range lives within several hours of the Medicine Bow. Interstate 80 crosses the Forest; in fact, the Medicine Bow National Forest and its ranges of the Rockies are the first mountains encountered on I-80 by westbound travelers from population centers in the Midwest. Interstate 25 is nearby and is within sight of much of the Laramie Range.

The forest provides a wide variety of recreation activities, which play a major role in the social and economic environment of local communities. Activities such as hunting, snowmobiling, skiing, hiking, and camping all provide both social activities as well as contributing to the local economies.

Timber harvest and livestock grazing have been historic uses on the forest since before the turn of the century. Jobs and income generated from timber harvest contribute substantially to local communities.

Forest Plan Revision Topics

As a result of numerous public involvement opportunities including meetings, open houses, and newsletters (described in Appendix A of the FEIS), the Forest Service identified six major revision topics.

Major Revision topics are subjects in which resource conditions, technical knowledge, or public perception of resource management has created a potential need for change. These changes are generally important enough to: affect large areas, change the mix of goods and services produced, or involve decisions in management direction where there is no public consensus on the best course of action.

The following six major revision topics are:

1. Biological Diversity
2. Timber Suitability and Forest Land Management
3. Recreation Opportunities
4. Roadless Area Allocation and Management
5. Special Areas
6. Oil and Gas Leasing

The major revision topics address the central issues to which future management of the Medicine Bow National Forest must respond. Each of the seven forest plan revision alternatives described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS represents a different set of answers to address issues associated with the major revision topics. Here is a summary of the topics.

Biological Diversity

The Medicine Bow National Forest provides a wide diversity of habitats for many species. Species on the Forest include at least 351 vertebrate animals and 1,162 species of higher plants (Von Ahlefeldt 1996). These vertebrate animal species include approximately 24 fishes, 6 amphibians, 19 reptiles, 227 birds, and 75 mammals. These species provide Forest users and visitors with a full range of opportunities that include sport, commercial, and viewing activities.

Human activities such as logging, livestock grazing, road building, and fire suppression have altered some of the natural processes and disturbances that would have otherwise shaped the forest.

Timber Suitability and Forest Land Management

Recent purchasers of Medicine Bow National Forest timber resources are primarily the Louisiana-Pacific (LP), with a mill in Saratoga, WY (recently sold to Intermountain Resources), and Bighorn Lumber, with a mill in Laramie, WY. The Saratoga mill can process a variety of log sizes and species to produce a wide variety and grades of lumber products. The Bighorn mill focuses on high quality lumber products. The Saratoga mill can process up to 53 million board feet annually using one shift. The one-shift capacity for Bighorn is about 15 million board feet.

In recent years, the Medicine Bow National Forest has supplied LP and Bighorn with approximately 20% of their total timber supplies. Private lands and state lands have provided the balance of timber supplies. Lumber prices, energy costs, international imports, and alternative supply sources all influence the share of timber supplies provided by a single

landownership. Consequently, the future demand for timber from the Medicine Bow National Forest cannot be characterized by a simple projection of historic trends. It can be stated with certainty, however, that current mill capacities exceed the volume offered.

Recreation Opportunities

Recent studies indicate by 2020, recreation use levels for all activities together on the Forest may be expected to increase by as much as 27%. Consistent with national studies, viewing activities show a much higher increase (41-49%) than this average. Activities common on the Medicine Bow include viewing wildlife and scenery. The activity showing the highest projected increase in use is cross-country skiing, expected to increase by 89% by 2020.

There are 693 developed campsites on the Forest, with capacity for 500,000 persons over the course of an average season. Most of the campgrounds on the Forest were constructed in the 1960s. Campground use levels average 32%. A 1991 corridor analysis determined there was no need for additional capacity of developed campsites on the Forest. Pressure for backcountry recreation opportunities has leveled in recent years.

There are 237 miles of nonmotorized, multiple use trails outside wilderness areas. Nineteen percent of Medicine Bow National Forest trails are in wilderness. The remaining 81% are in a natural setting, closer to development.

The Medicine Bow National Forest is heavily roaded. Dispersed camping occurs forest-wide alongside roads. For this reason, the 2,592 miles of developed roads on the Forest are highly valued by some members of the public. The 2000 Travel Management Decision prohibits motorized travel off designated routes (except for snowmobiles). Analysis for Phase II of Travel Management Decision is underway. Phase II will establish the Forest network of closed and open roads.

Conflicts between winter motorized and winter nonmotorized recreationists are increasing. Issues include competition for limited parking at selected high use sites, and the desire to experience the same forested settings concurrently. These conflicts and concurrent use present a safety concern in some cases.

Roadless Area Allocation and Management

Planning regulations (36 CFR 219.17) require the Forest Service to inventory, evaluate, and consider all roadless areas for possible inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The roadless area inventory identified 31 roadless areas on the Forest totaling 319,738 acres, about 29% of the Medicine Bow. All 31 areas were found to be capable and available for wilderness and were evaluated for proposed wilderness designation.

The existing designated Wilderness Areas on the Medicine Bow National Forest total 79,323 acres, approximately 7% of the Forest. They are the Platte River Wilderness (22,363 acres); the Encampment River Wilderness (10,400 acres); the Huston Park Wilderness (31,300 acres) and the Savage Run Wilderness (15,260 acres).

Special Areas

Wild and Scenic Rivers: For the Plan Revision, all streams on the Forest were evaluated to determine if they meet the eligibility criteria for Wild and Scenic rivers. As a result, the Forest has six potential Wild and Scenic River candidates: the North Fork of the Little Snake

River, the Roaring Fork of the Little Snake River, the West Branch of the Little Snake River, Rose Creek, the North Platte River, and the Encampment River. Each potential Wild and Scenic River was incorporated in one or more Plan Revision Alternatives.

Special Interest Areas are areas of local interest and are managed to protect or enhance their unusual characteristics. Six areas on the Forest were identified in the 1985 Plan as special interest areas: Ashenfelder on the Douglas Ranger District, for botanical values; Cinnabar Park on the Laramie Ranger District, for botanical values; Dry Park on the Laramie Ranger District, for botanical values; Gambel Oak on Battle Mountain on the Brush Creek/Hayden District, for botanical values; Libby Flats Ribbon Forest on the Laramie and Brush Creek/Hayden Districts, for geologic and botanical values; and Medicine Bow Peak on the Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District, for botanical values. For the Plan Revision, a comprehensive analysis identified 21 additional potential special interest areas representing geologic, botanical, historical, scenic, or zoological values.

Research Natural Areas (RNAs) are selected to provide a spectrum of relatively undisturbed areas representing a wide range of natural variability within important natural ecosystems and environments. RNAs may serve reference, educational, or research purposes. There is one established RNA on the Forest; the Snowy Range Natural Area, 734 acres, which was established in 1937. In 1994, the Forest contracted with The Nature Conservancy to inventory potential RNA candidates. The Nature Conservancy provided reports of potential RNAs on the forest, which included detailed descriptions, distinguishing features, and acreage by vegetation cover types. 13 areas were identified as meeting the criteria for possible inclusion in the RNA network.

Oil and Gas Leasing

Limited areas of the Medicine Bow National Forest have medium and low potential for oil and gas resources, based on geologic factors necessary for oil and gas accumulations. Approximately 75% of the Forest has no known potential for oil and gas resources due to the presence of crystalline rocks at the surface and at depth.

Eleven exploratory wells, all plugged and abandoned, were drilled on the Forest between 1954 and 1983. Thirty-two exploratory wells were drilled between 1919 and 1987 in areas adjacent to the Forest in the western Sierra Madre area and northern and eastern Medicine Bow area. These wells are also plugged and abandoned.

The MBNF currently has no active oil and gas leases on the Forest. Production has been established in fields within five miles of the western Sierra Madre and eastern Medicine Bow areas of the Forest.

Development of the Alternatives

In October of 1999, a Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the Federal Register. The NOI contained a description of the Forest Service Proposed Action based on the six major revision topics. Comments were received from the public and analyzed in order to develop alternatives to the proposed action.

The Forest Service developed themes for alternatives and shared them with the public. The public responded with modifications to themes and recommended new themes. The Forest Service mapped the alternatives and asked the public to validate them before taking them to the responsible official for confirmation.

Eight alternatives, including Alternative A (No Action), were presented to the Regional Forester in April 2002. Based on the Major Revision Topics addressed by each alternative, comparison of major differences between alternatives, responsiveness of the alternatives to the Forest Service Mission and applicable laws and regulations, the Regional Forester selected a range of six alternatives to analyze in detail for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The remaining two alternatives (G and H) were used as benchmarks and were summarized in the DEIS for the six Major Revision Topics and other key issues.

In January 2003, the DEIS and Proposed (Draft) Revised Plan were officially released for public review. Alternative D was identified as the preferred alternative. Based on public review of the DEIS, Preferred Alternative D was modified to address key concerns. Alternative D from the DEIS was renamed as D DEIS and the modified alternative is named Alternative D FEIS.

Important Points About All Alternatives

All alternatives represent to varying degrees the philosophies of multiple use and ecosystem management. The alternatives provide basic protection for the forest resources and comply fully with environmental laws. The alternatives can be implemented and fully achieved.

In all alternatives, including Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, we used revised Management Area prescriptions from the Regional Desk Guide. This is done to ensure consistency with other forests in the Rocky Mountain Region.

Budget estimates have been prepared for each alternative at two funding levels to project activities and outcomes; desired budget level and experienced budget level. Historically, the Forest Service has not received the funds necessary to fully implement its management plans. The budget estimates were allocated among programs based on the theme of each alternative, the expected activities and outcomes, and supporting program expenditures to deliver the activities and outcomes. The desired budget level is the level necessary to fully implement each alternative. The experienced budget level is the level that reflects current funding and estimates of activities and outcomes that can be expected if funding remains constant. Budget information is shown in the Supplemental tables located in the Revised Plan-Appendix H.

Management direction contained in the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan applies to all alternatives except as noted in FEIS-Appendix K.

The Preferred Alternative

The responsible official, the Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region, has identified Alternative D FEIS as the preferred alternative in this FEIS. The Regional Forester's official decision and rationale for that decision are contained in the Record of Decision (ROD).

Description of the Alternatives

Alternatives differ from each other in the way they respond to major revision topics. They address changes to the 1985 Plan: standards and guidelines, management area allocations, monitoring and evaluation, allowable sale quantity, oil and gas leasing availability, wilderness recommendations, identification of eligible wild and scenic rivers, and potential research natural areas.

Desired Conditions Common to All Alternatives

Desired conditions unique to each alternative are described in the following section. Each alternative has unique characteristics, however many similarities exist. For example, all alternatives have a desired condition of providing biological diversity, maintaining viable wildlife populations, maintaining clean water, providing a variety of recreational opportunities, providing reasonable access to the forest, and maintaining a sustained flow of goods and services.

Alternative A

This alternative is an updated form of the no-action alternative and reflects current forest-wide direction. It meets the planning requirement (36 CFR 219.12(f)(7) that a no-action alternative be considered.

‘No Action’ means that current management allocations, activities, and management direction found in the existing Forest Plan, as amended, would continue. This Alternative retains the goals and objectives of the 1985 Forest Plan. However, there have been amendments to the 1985 Plan, changes in law, regulation, Forest Service policy, modeling techniques, and other factors. This Alternative incorporates these changes and would continue current implementation of the Plan. It includes updated Management Area prescriptions identified by the Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service.

As developed in 1985, this Alternative increased wildlife and recreation emphasis and decreased timber emphasis from management compared to pre-1985 levels.

Alternative B

This alternative provides a mix of multiple-use activities with a primary emphasis on scheduled timber harvests, which incorporate ecosystem management principles introduced after 1985. Management will work toward an even distribution of age classes, and will strive to produce a variety of goods and services that contribute to local economies.

Alternative C

This alternative provides a mix of multiple-use activities, with a primary emphasis on enhancing recreation opportunities. Recreation management, together with vegetation management, will strive to produce a variety of goods and services that contribute to local economies.

Alternative D DEIS

(This alternative is named Alternative D in the DEIS)

This alternative provides a mix of multiple-use activities with a primary emphasis on enhancing nonmotorized recreation opportunities while maintaining active forest vegetation management. Nonmotorized uses play a larger role than in Alternative A.

Alternative D FEIS (Preferred Alternative)

This Alternative represents changes to Alternative D as published in the DEIS based on public comment.

This alternative provides a mix of multiple-use activities with a primary emphasis on

enhancing nonmotorized recreation opportunities while maintaining active forest vegetation management. Nonmotorized uses play a larger role than in Alternative A.

Alternative E

This alternative provides a mix of multiple-use activities with a primary emphasis on protecting existing roadless character and emulating natural landscape patch size in many areas where timber harvest is allowed. (Original Proposed Action Combined with Restoration Opportunities).

Alternative F

This alternative provides a mix of multiple-use activities with a primary emphasis on providing non-game wildlife habitat through designation of mature forest core and linkage systems. It allows natural patterns and processes to occur at high levels.

Management Area Allocations

Management areas are defined as parts of the forest that are managed for a particular emphasis. Each management area has a prescription that consists of a theme, desired conditions, and standards and guidelines that apply to it. Management areas describe where different kinds of resource opportunities are available and where different kinds of management activities occur. The management areas are grouped into eight major categories, based on a continuum from least evidence (Category 1) of human disturbance to most (Category 8).

The following table displays how the alternatives allocate Management Areas.

MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST REVISED PLAN AND FEIS

Summary of Land Allocations

Table 1. Summary of key land allocations: management area prescriptions. (Acres unless otherwise noted)

	Management Areas	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D DEIS	Alt D FEIS	Alt E	Alt F
1.13	Wilderness, Semi-primitive	78,850	78,850	78,850	78,850	78,908	78,850	78,850
1.2	Recommended for Wilderness	0	0	0	60,859	27,973	4,553	271,357
1.31	Backcountry Recreation, Year-round Nonmotorized	0	0	13,584	44,080	63,067	25,711	4,866
1.33	Backcountry Recreation, Summer Nonmotorized with Winter Snowmobiling	0	48,933	104,704	90,474	64,561	64,525	0
1.41	Core Areas	0	0	0	0	0	0	31,248
1.5	National River System-Wild Rivers, (outside Wilderness)	0	395	0	0	0	395	90
	Total National River System – Wild Rivers	0	8,270	7,101	7,052	7,052	8,258	13,178
2.1	Special Interest Areas (outside Wilderness)	4,304	17,726	1,776	17,900	18,708	24,097	7,892
	Total Special Interest Areas	4,304	17,726	1,776	29,757	18,708	24,097	7,892
2.2	Research Natural Areas (outside Wilderness)	749	749	749	749	5,433	26,719	33,825
	Total Research Natural Areas	749	749	749	4,229	15,476	38,576	33,825
3.21	Limited Use	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3.24	Wildlife Corridors	0	0	0	0	0	0	208,846
3.31	Backcountry Recreation, Year-round Motorized	0	61,956	84,874	40,361	67,613	19,514	0
3.32	Backcountry Recreation, Summer Nonmotorized with Winter Snowmobiling	52,874	0	0	0	0	0	0
3.33	Backcountry Recreation, Summer Motorized with Winter Nonmotorized	0	0	3,310	0	3,828	0	22,271
3.4	National River System - Scenic Rivers (outside Wilderness)	0	892	341	897	1,285	5,067	1,739
	National River System - Total Scenic Rivers	0	892	341	897	1,285	6,594	7,839
3.5	Forested Flora or Fauna Habitats, Limited Snowmobiling	0	1,749	11,672	63,243	49,156	182,468	1,679
3.51	Crucial Bighorn Sheep Habitat	0	0	0	0	0	8,478	0

MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST REVISED PLAN AND FEIS

	Management Areas	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D DEIS	Alt D FEIS	Alt E	Alt F
3.54	Special Wildlife Areas (Sheep Mountain)	5,352	18,669	18,497	18,669	16,990	5,088	18,669
3.56	Aspen Maintenance and Enhancement	76,320	40,935	32,744	26,236	30,280	0	0
3.57	Late Successional Forests	0	0	0	0	0	0	5,233
3.58	Crucial Deer and Elk Winter Range	0	31,347	28,258	59,062	59,763	54,733	96,024
4.2	Scenery	0	20,423	18,555	16,639	14,878	17,410	19,491
4.22	Scenic Areas, Vistas, or Travel Corridors	55,015	0	0	0	0	0	0
4.3	Dispersed Recreation	7,403	12,673	42,884	34,511	23,442	22,016	0
4.31	Dispersed Recreation, Low Use	81,291	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.11	General Forest and Rangelands – Forest Vegetation Emphasis	0	20,741	15,457	17,770	0	16,864	0
5.12	General Forest and Rangelands – Rangeland Vegetation Emphasis	81,956	107,135	74,789	43,851	66,837	44,300	0
5.13	Forest Products	281,895	425,230	250,877	117,943	132,047	103,404	0
5.15	Forest Products, Ecological Maintenance and Restoration Considering the Historic Range of Variability	0	125,937	231,656	303,981	281,835	256,828	0
5.21	Water Yield	29,098	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.4	Forested Flora and Fauna Habitats	200,271	0	0	0	0	0	271,443
5.41	Deer and Elk Winter Range	122,008	54,268	55,101	32,552	62,610	116,366	3,863
5.42	Bighorn Sheep Habitat	0	8,405	8,335	8,386	7,998	0	0
7.1	Residential/Forest Interface (Sites within Forest Boundary or 1/4 mile outside)	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
8.21	Developed Recreation	5,396	5,396	5,396	5,396	4,788	5,396	5,396
8.22	Ski-based Resort, Existing and Potential	934	1,307	1,307	1,307	1,364	934	934
8.3	Utility Corridors and Electronic Sites (points)	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
8.3	Utility Corridors and Electronic Sites (miles)	55	55	55	55	55	55	55
8.6	Administrative Sites	935	935	935	935	1,040	935	935
	Total	1,084,614	1,084,614	1,084,614	1,084,614	1,084,390	1,084,614	1,084,614

Public Comments Resulted in Creation of Alternative D FEIS

Key public concerns derived from public comments on the DEIS and Proposed Revised Plan addressed in Alternative D FEIS include:

Amount and Distribution of **Old Growth Forest** - Alternative D FEIS contains revised minimum old growth percentages for spruce/fir, lodgepole pine and aspen, provides for recruitment old growth and sets an objective to map old growth by mountain range within the first three years of plan implementation.

Protection of **Bighorn Sheep** – Alternative D FEIS contains additional protective measures in the Geographic Areas for the Laramie Peak herd and the Douglas Creek (Snowy Range) herd.

Confusion over the differences between **Management Area 5.15** and Management Area 5.13 themes and desired conditions – Alternative D clarifies that MA 5.15 manages age classes toward conditions consistent with the historic range of variability, provides security areas and linkages among secure habitats and provides created openings that better reflect size and configuration of natural disturbances.

Changes in **Snowmobile Use** areas could create unacceptable economic impacts to local communities – Alternative D FEIS retains important snowmobile use areas while providing for protection of wildlife and habitats as well as providing important areas for non-motorized winter recreation.

A reduced **Allowable Sale Quantity of Timber** could have adverse economic effects on Carbon County, especially since the mill in Saratoga had just closed - The timber analysis was revised between DEIS and FEIS as well as the economic and social analyses associated with timber sale levels.

Concern that there would be active vegetation and **Fuels Management** and adequate **Fire Suppression** especially adjacent to communities at risk and adjacent private lands – Alternative D FEIS contains changes in management area boundaries adjacent to these areas to allow active management in these interface areas.

Concern about having too much of the Forest in prescriptions that allow natural processes (**Insects and Disease**) to occur – Management area boundaries were changed to provide increased protection from epidemics.

Concerns about Laramie Peak as a **Recommended Wilderness** area and restrictions of mountain bike use in the Rock Creek recommended wilderness area – Laramie Peak was changed from MA 1.2 Recommended Wilderness to MA 1.31 Backcountry non-motorized and MA 2.1 Special Interest Area (Ashenfelder Basin). Mountain bike use in Rock Creek may continue as long as the use does not change the physical character of the area that makes it suitable for wilderness designation.

Concern that there were not enough **Research Natural Areas (RNA)** – Alternative D FEIS does not contain the single pRNA, Standard Park pRNA from Alternative D DEIS, but it does contain five new RNAs that contribute to the regional network and represent unique ecosystems contained on the Medicine Bow National Forest.

Alternatives Considered, but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Four alternatives: (1) Non-commodity based, (2) Maximum timber yield, (3) Maximum water yield and (4) Local governments coalition) were considered and eliminated from detailed study during the planning process. A full discussion can be found in FEIS – Chapter 2.

Other Alternatives

Some commenters requested a greater variety or range of alternative outputs. It is not practical to have numerous alternatives representing every possible mix of outputs. The Responsible Official has the option of selecting a preferred alternative modified by allocations or outputs analyzed in non-preferred alternatives. This avoids the need to have so many alternatives requiring excessive analysis.

Comparison of Alternatives

The following table shows the difference among the alternatives for major and selected other revision topics.

MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST REVISED PLAN AND FEIS

Table 2. Key Outputs and Effects by Alternative

TOPICS, subtopics	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D DEIS	Alt D FEIS	Alt E	Alt F
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY							
Natural Disturbances Natural Processes Primary Change Agent (% of total forest)	20	28	35	46	45	46	72
Late Successional or Old Growth Forests (minimum percent)							
Spruce/Fir	10	20	20	20	25	20	10
Lodgepole Pine	10	10	10	10	15	10	10
Ponderosa Pine	10	25	25	25	25	25	10
Aspen	10	10	10	10	20	10	10
Predicted Natural Disturbances Fire, Insects, Disease (000 acres over 50 years)	22	31	41	53	50	52	82
<i>Fragmentation, Connectivity</i> Forested and open patches, cores, and corridors (000 acres) Management areas 1.41, 3.21, 3.57, 5.15, 5.4	200	126	232	304	281	257	511
Management Indicator Species Species (number)	28	10	10	10	8	10	10
Aspen Maintenance and Enhancement (Expected treatment ac/yr)	350	490	490	560	560	560	308
TIMBER							
Suitable for Timber Production Tentatively Suitable Land (000 acres)	663.6	663.6	663.6	663.6	663.6	663.6	663.6
Suitable land within timber production management areas (000 acres)	474.8	407.8	370.7	330.6	320.8	290.2	172.5
Suitable lands within inventoried roadless areas (000 acres)	124	70	38	8	12	3	2
Scheduled over 200 yrs (acres)	340	333	318	300	286	266	147

MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST REVISED PLAN AND FEIS

TOPICS, subtopics	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D DEIS	Alt D FEIS	Alt E	Alt F
Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) (million board feet /year)	28.9	27.2	25.8	24.2	22.8	20.7	3
Harvest Treatments for ASQ Total (acres/year)	3,245	3,124	2,976	2,835	2,736	2,562	175
Regeneration harvests (acres/year)	2,067	2,103	1,988	1,810	1,687	1,600	8
RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES							
Summer-Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (% of forest)							
Motorized	80	83	78	71	74	76	60
Nonmotorized	20	17	22	29	26	24	40
Winter-Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (% of forest)							
Motorized	81	81	80	69	67	53	11
Nonmotorized	17	17	18	29	31	45	87
Non use (Sheep Mountain)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
SPECIAL AREAS							
Research Natural Areas Number	1	1	1	2	6	7	10
Outside wilderness (acres)	749	749	749	4,229	15,476	38,575	33,825
Within wilderness (acres)	0	0	0	3,480	10,043	11,857	0
Special Interest Areas Number	6	11	8	15	13	15	5
Outside wilderness (acres)	4,304	17,726	1,776	29,987	18,706	24,135	7,892
Within wilderness (acres)	0	0	0	11,857	0	0	0
Wild and Scenic Rivers Number	0	3	2	2	2	6	8
Miles	0	31.4	26.4	27.7	27.7	49.4	67.4
ROADLESS/WILDERNESS							
Wilderness Areas (000 acres)	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9	78.9
Additional Wilderness (000 acres)	0	0	0	60.8	28	4.5	271.4
Inventoried Roadless (000 acres)	320	320	320	320	320	320	320
Retaining Roadless Character (% of Inventory)	66	68	82	97	95	99	98

MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST REVISED PLAN AND FEIS

TOPICS, subtopics	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D DEIS	Alt D FEIS	Alt E	Alt F
OIL AND GAS							
Available for leasing (000 acres)	0	266	266	266	266	266	266
Available for leasing (% of forest)	0	25	25	25	25	25%	25
Standard Stipulations (% of forest)	0	100	30	23	23	21	12
No Surface Occupancy (% forest)	0	0	37	40	38	27	73
WATER PRODUCTION							
Water yield from harvesting, fuel treatments, wildfires, and insects and disease (acre-feet/year)	2,188	2,564	2,873	3,287	3,120	3,138	3,017
GRAZING							
Allotments							
Active Allotments (#)	104	104	104	104	104	104	97
Utilization (%)	40	40	40	40	40	40	3
Use							
Cattle/Horse (000 animal unit months)	74	74	74	74	74	74	55.5
Sheep/goats (000 animal unit months)	12.6	12.6	12.6	12.6	12.6	12.6	9.5
SOCIO-ECONOMICS-COMMUNITIIES							
Jobs (% change from 2001)	10%	11%	10%	10%	10%	8%	-17%
Income (% change from 2001)	12.3%	14.1%	12.3%	12.3%	12.3%	9.7%	-14.6%
FUELS							
Forested Fuel Treatments (acres/yr)	2,500	3,500	3,500	4,000	4,000	4,000	2,200
TRAVEL MANAGEMENT							
Roads							
Forest System Roads (miles)	2,340	2,400	2,350	2,223	2,244	2,210	1,754
New construction (miles/year)	5	5	5	4	4	4	0
Reconstruction (miles/year)	11	11	11	10	9	9	0.4
Decommission (miles/year)	27	27	27	27	27	112	181
Trails (miles/year)							
Construction	3.0	1.5	5.0	5.0	6.0	1.5	0.5
Reconstruction	8.0	5.5	9.0	9.0	9.0	5.5	5.5

MEDICINE BOW NATIONAL FOREST REVISED PLAN AND FEIS

TOPICS, subtopics	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D DEIS	Alt D FEIS	Alt E	Alt F
SCENERY MANAGEMENT							
Scenic Integrity Objective (% of Forest)							
Very High	7	7	7	13	11	8	32
High	1	8	14	22	20	31	28
Moderate	47	34	37	31	35	32	20
Low	45	51	42	34	34	29	20

Where We Go From Here

Based upon public comments, the effects of the alternatives and selected criteria used in decisionmaking, the responsible official will decide which alternative to select and will approve a Revised Land and Resource Management Plan.

The Notice of Availability of the FEIS and accompanying documents will be published in the Federal Register. The Record of Decision must be approved by the Responsible Official and subject to administrative review pursuant to appeal regulations at 36 CFR 217. Appeals of the decision must be filed within 90 days of the date the legal notice is published in the Newspaper of Record, the Denver Post. The Record of Decision will contain additional appeal information.

Document Availability

The Medicine Bow National Forest is committed to helping individuals and groups in our communities understand the impact that the Revised Forest Plan will have on their activities. Full sets of all official documents may be found in the following locations:

Your local library

On our website, www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr

A CD-ROM available from your local Forest Service office

If you would like to request a CD-ROM containing the full set of documents, or have questions and would like to speak with a Forest Service employee, following is a list of our offices on the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland:

Forest Supervisor's Office/Laramie Ranger District Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests 2468 Jackson St. Laramie, WY 82070	Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District South Hwy. 130/230 PO Box 249 Saratoga, WY 82331
Douglas Ranger District 2250 E. Richards St. Douglas, WY 82633	Hahn's Peak Bear's Ears Ranger District 925 Weiss Drive Steamboat Springs, CO 80487
Parks Ranger District 100 Main street PO Box 158 Walden, CO 80480	Yampa Ranger District PO Box 7 300 Roselawn Street Yampa, CO 80483