

Lower Elk River Geographic Area

Setting - Spruce/fir (42%), aspen (35%), and lodgepole pine (9%) dominate this 55,601-acre area. Within the forested area, 30% is considered late successional. Occurrence of rock and rubble (8%) is high compared to surrounding areas.

Unique features include:

- Research Natural Areas ranging from low elevation oak brush to high alpine ecosystems.
- The Mt. Zirkel Wilderness.
- A small portion of the Elk River Macro Preliminary Conservation Planning Area.
- Colorado River cutthroat trout.
- Nonmotorized, trail-oriented recreation use.
- Quality backcountry recreation within a short distance of Steamboat Springs.
- Wildlife winter range.
- Low motorized travelway density.

Management Area Prescription Allocation - The management area prescriptions applied to the Lower Elk River Geographic Area are listed below in Table 3-16.

Management Area Prescriptions		Acres	Percent of Total Area
1.11	Wilderness, Pristine	14,419	26
1.12	Wilderness, Primitive	8,637	16
1.13	Wilderness, Semi-Primitive	8,750	16
1.32	Backcountry Recreation, Nonmotorized	5,832	10
4.3	Dispersed Recreation	8	<1
5.13	Forest Products	1,442	3
5.41	Deer and Elk Winter Range	11,053	20
	Nonfederal Land	5,460	10
	Total	55,601	100

Source: GIS (ARC/Info), allocation and geographic area layers

Geographic Area Desired Condition

Spruce/fir, aspen, and lodgepole pine will continue to be the dominant cover types. Forests on 97% of the area will appear older and less disturbed and will have more late successional structure. Vegetation will be managed to provide quality winter habitat for wildlife.

The character of the areas allocated to wilderness and the Mad Creek Research Natural Area will be maintained with little or no evidence of human-caused disturbance. High-quality dispersed nonmotorized recreation opportunities will be available. Encounters with other visitors will be infrequent; opportunities for solitude will be numerous.

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Motorized travelway density will continue to be low due to wilderness, the research natural area, and big game winter range allocations. Some motorized travelways will exist to provide access to trailheads and winter range areas. Travel may be restricted, either seasonally or year-round, where such use does not meet Management Area objectives.

Geographic Area Guidelines

No additional guidelines have been identified that are specific to the Lower Elk River Geographic Area.