

**Item #22a – b: Bald Eagle Nesting Territories, Annual Productivity, and Potential Nesting Habitat**

**Methods:** Bald eagle nesting territories are generally surveyed twice a year; once early in the nesting season to determine if adult eagles are using the territory, and once late in the nesting season to determine the number of young (productivity) expected to fledge from the nest.

**Evaluation:** Nest production has been monitored since 1979, with more consistent data collected after 1981. Some uncertainty exists concerning which nest sites were reported in the Forest Plan (FEIS page II-15), but 10 active territories on or adjacent to the forest were reported for 1980. Although monitoring has become more sporadic due to changing nest trees and other commitments, the number of known active nesting territories on or adjacent to the forest is probably around 10 since the 1990s. Seventy to ninety percent of known territories were occupied by adult eagles each year, with 25-80 percent successful in production of young. Total annual production ranged from 2 to 14 young eagles (Table 22-1).

**Table 22-1.** Bald Eagle Annual Territories and Productivity.

YEAR	Total Territory Number	Active Territory Number	Number of Successful Nests	Total Young Produced	Young Per Successful Nest
1980	2	2	2	4	2.0
1981	3	3	3	5	1.67
1982	5	5	3	4	1.3
1983	6	6	6	11	1.83
1984	6	4	4	7	1.75
1985	7	5	4	4	1.0
1986	7	6	4	6	1.5
1987	8	7	6	9	1.29
1988	9	7	7	11	1.57
1989	9	9	9	14	1.56
1990	11	9	5	8	1.6
1991	11	8	6	10	1.67
1992	10	10	7	9	1.29
1993	10	9	7	9	1.29
1994	10	9	8	14	1.75
1995	10	9	3	5	1.7
1996	10	7	5	6	1.2
1997	10	9	7	10	1.43
1998	10	7	4	5	1.25
1999	10	8	4	6	1.5
2000	10	7	2	3	1.5
2001	10	8	5	4	0.8
2002	10	8	2	2	1.0
2003	10	7	3	3	1.0

YEAR	Total Territory Number	Active Territory Number	Number of Successful Nests	Total Young Produced	Young Per Successful Nest
2004	11	9	8	8	1.0
2005	11	10	8	8	1.0
2006	13	8	5	7	1.4
2007	13	10	8	12	1.5
2008	12	7	6	6	1.0
2009	13	11	4	6	1.5
2010					
Ave.	9.2	7.47	5.17	7.2	1.4

Data from across Montana suggest that the nesting population of bald eagles has increased considerably between 1980 and 2010. The estimated territories in Montana have gone from 120 in 1990 to 526 in 2009. In the 1986 Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan the bald eagle breeding pair population goal of 99 was set for Montana, with a goal of 52 for zone 7, the area west of the Continental Divide which includes the FNF. Montana currently has an estimated breeding population of over 380 pairs. Biologists cooperated in monitoring 421 out of an estimated 526 bald eagle territories in Montana in 2009. Biologists estimated 284 successful nests and 503 young fledged. Zone 7 had an estimated 197 occupied territories in 2009. Montana nesting populations continue to increase and the nesting success was excellent. The population across the state continues to grow since the last monitoring report.

The bald eagle was down listed from endangered to threatened on the Federal Endangered Species List in 1995 and removed (delisted) from the list of threatened and endangered species on June 28, 2007. It continues to be a Forest Service Sensitive Species.

**Recommended Action:** Continue to cooperate in the annual monitoring of cooperatively assigned nest territories. Monitoring will continue for a minimum of 5 years of surveys after delisting. Continue to protect nest sites and key foraging areas during proposed project coordination by using the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan.