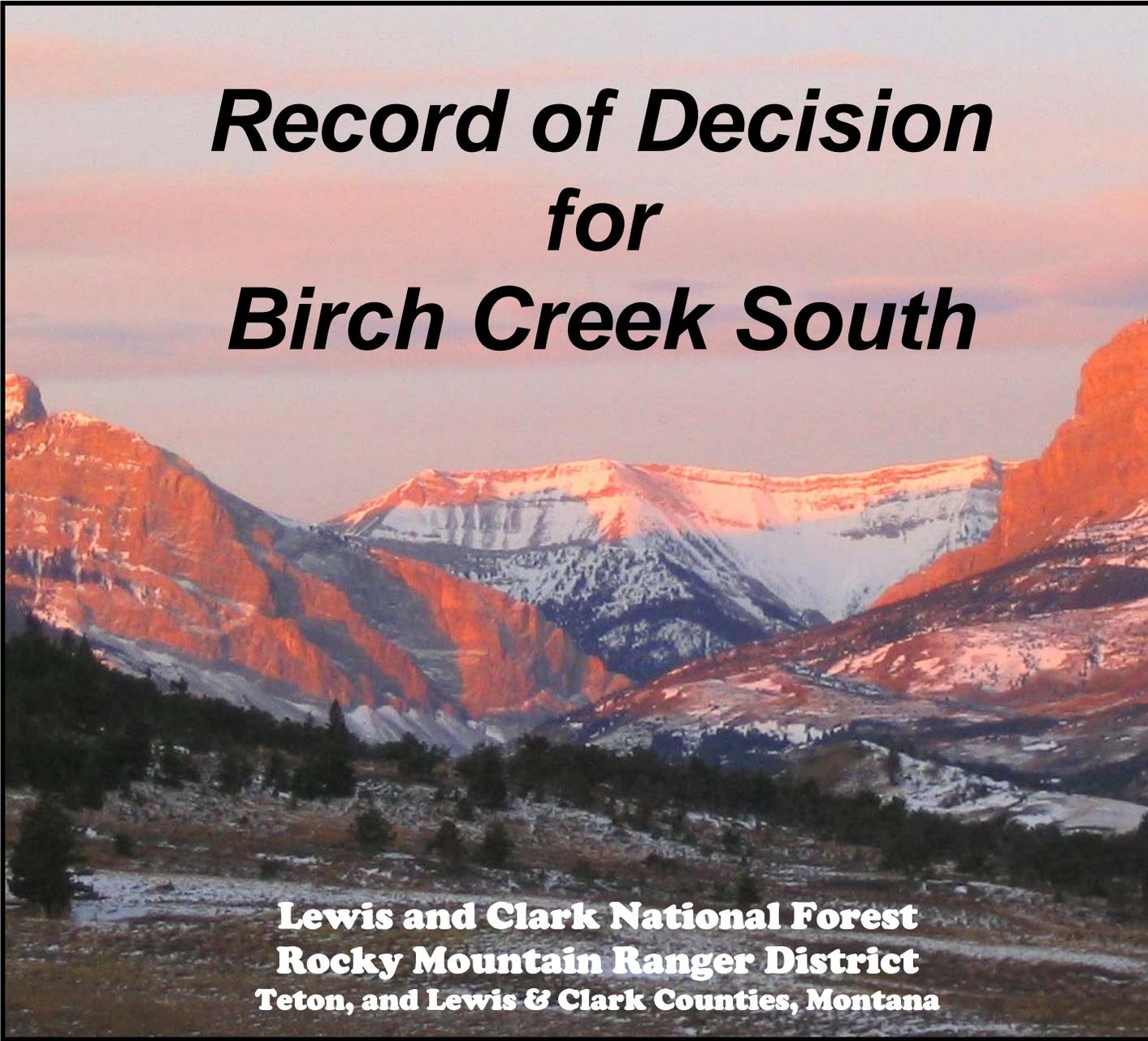


Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan

Record of Decision for Birch Creek South



**Lewis and Clark National Forest
Rocky Mountain Ranger District
Teton, and Lewis & Clark Counties, Montana**

October 2007

Lead Agency: USDA Forest Service

Responsible Official: Lesley W. Thompson
FOREST SUPERVISOR

For Further Information, Contact:

**Dick Schwecke, Project Leader
1101 15th Street North
Great Falls, Montana 59403
(406) 791-7700**

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Birch Creek South -- Travel Management Plan Record of Decision

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I. INTRODUCTION

Motorized and non-motorized travel on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District has been managed for the past 19 years under regulations described on the 1988 Lewis and Clark Forest Travel Plan map for the Rocky Mountain Division. In 2005, the Lewis and Clark National Forest proposed to revise and update the travel management plan for the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. In doing so, the Lewis and Clark National Forest proposed to designate roads, trails, and airfields that would be managed as system routes and comprise part of the Forest transportation system.

The analysis area encompassed approximately 391,700 acres (the entire non-wilderness portion of the Rocky Mountain Division) of the 777,600 total acres that comprise the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. Approximately 385,900 acres of designated Wilderness in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC) were not addressed in an Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) prepared for the project.

Of the 391,700 acres analyzed in the FEIS, about one-third (129,520 acres) are located in the Badger-Two Medicine area, and about two-thirds (262,180 acres) are located south of there in the Birch-Teton-South Fork Sun-Dearborn-Elk Creek area.

II. DECISION

This decision covers the southern two-thirds of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District, referred to as the Birch Creek South area. It encompasses approximately 262,180 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands that are located south of Birch Creek (that flows into Swift Reservoir). The project area extends from Birch Creek which is situated about 17 miles west of the town of Dupuyer, Montana, south about 70 miles to Red Mountain near Highway 200.

It is important to note that this decision **does not** include NFS lands commonly referred to as the Badger-Two Medicine area. A separate decision will be made at a later date for travel management in the Badger-Two Medicine area.

After careful consideration of the potential impacts of the alternatives analyzed and documented in the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan FEIS issued in October 2007, I have decided to implement Alternative 4 for the southern two-thirds of the Ranger District with several modifications. An overview of management actions selected from Alternative 4, including the actions selected to modify Alternative 4, is outlined below. ROD Tables 1 and 2 list key features from the various alternatives that were selected for implementation under this decision. These key features will serve as focal points for discussion of the rationale involved in selecting all of the specific actions detailed in the electronic datatables. ROD Tables 1 and 2 do not list all the features of the decision.

There is a tremendous amount of detail involved in all of the specific actions related to every segment of road and trail. Literally, there are about 2,054 lines of data to describe travel management on all of the segments of roads and trails involved. This tremendous amount of detail is captured in an electronic database that corresponds to an electronic GIS map of the

selected action. Tabular reports were inserted in appendices to this document or the project file. Most people, including Forest Service employees, will find it time consuming to read these tabular lists and locate all segments of a particular road or trail of interest to them. We published lists of the most commonly asked categories, but we may not have listed everything that is of interest. Printed copies of the datatable and GIS map are in the project files, and electronic copies are available upon request.

**ROD Table 1. Key Features of Summer Recreation Alternatives
Selected and Modified for Implementation**

HIGHLIGHTS OF MOTORIZED WHEELED-VEHICLE TRAVEL SELECTED FOR SUMMER RECREATION MANAGEMENT:		
LOCATION:	SELECTED ACTION ANALYZED IN:	TRAVEL MANAGEMENT FEATURES:
Old Beaver-Willow road, & Red Lake loop Trails 277/utr 144	Alt. 4	Select Alt. 4 and manage as ATV trails. Restrict all motorized wheeled vehicle travel 10/15 to 12/1.
Waldron Crk Trl. 2005, Wright Crk. Rd. 8980, and other miscellaneous spurs	Alt. 4	Select Alt. 4 and manage as ATV trails. Restrict all motorized wheeled vehicle travel 10/15 to 6/30.
Home Gulch / Lime Gulch Trail 267 (& connector to Red Lk.), Cut Reef Creek Trail 275, Norwegian Gulch Trail 271, & Ford Basin Trl. 258 (& spurs)	Alt. 4	Select Alt. 4 and manage as motorcycle trails. Restrict all motorized wheeled vehicle travel 10/15 to 6/30.
Fairview Crk Trl. 204 and Renshaw Lake Trl 236 (and associated connectors)	Alt. 4	Select Alt. 4 and manage as motorcycle trails. Restrict all motorized wheeled vehicle travel 10/15 to 6/30.
Cyanide Crk.Trl. 257 (& spurs), Hannan Gulch Trail 3305	Alt. 4	Select Alt. 4 and manage as ATV trails, open yearlong.
Bailey Basin Trail 253	Alt. 4	Select Alt. 4 and manage as motorcycle trail, open yearlong.
Lonesome Ridge Trail 154 & Route Crk Pass Trl. 108	Alt. 2	Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 2 for portions of these trails, and manage as motorcycle trails open yearlong.
Petty-Crown loop Trails 270/232/244 (and connectors)	Alt. 1	Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 1 for these trails, relocate 0.2 miles of Crown Mtn. Trl. 270, and manage all three as motorcycle loop trail, open yearlong.
HIGHLIGHTS OF NON-MOTORIZED TRAVEL SELECTED FOR SUMMER RECREATION MANAGEMENT:		
Cow Creek Trail 191 and Mt. Frazier-Chicken Coul. Trl. 153	Alt. 3	Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 3 for these trails and manage as non-motorized for stock, bicycles and hiking.
Deep Crk., Lange Crk., Benchmark, and Smith Crk areas.	Alt. 4	Select Alt. 4 for trails not listed separately (above) and manage trails in these areas as non-motorized trails, open to stock, bicycles, and hiking.
West Fk. Teton, Middle Fk. Teton, South Fk. Sun, & Falls Crk. areas.	Modified Alt. 4.	Modify Alt. 4 as discussed in the FEIS by prohibiting bicycles on trails within the four areas recommended for wilderness in the Forest Plan.

ROD Table 2. Key Features of Winter Recreation Alternatives Selected and Modified for Implementation

HIGHLIGHTS OF MOTORIZED OVER-SNOW VEHICLE TRAVEL SELECTED FOR WINTER RECREATION MANAGEMENT:		
LOCATION:	SELECTED ACTION ANALYZED IN:	TRAVEL MANAGEMENT FEATURES:
Teton area	Alt. 4	Modify Alt. 4 in the Teton area by choosing boundaries that allow for open cross-country snowmobiling during the winter south and west of the Teton River. Trail #107 would be closed to snowmobile use. Restrict over-snow cross-country motorized travel 4/1 to 12/1.
Beaver-Willow area	Alt. 4	Modify Alt. 4 by choosing boundaries for open cross-country snowmobiling during the winter along Beaver-Willow road in a definable area east of the West Fork of Beaver Creek; and choosing boundaries for open cross-country snowmobiling during the winter in the Benchmark area that can be easily understood and followed by the recreating public. Restrict over-snow cross-country motorized travel 4/1 to 12/1.
Benchmark area	Alt. 4	
HIGHLIGHTS OF NON-MOTORIZED TRAVEL SELECTED FOR WINTER RECREATION MANAGEMENT:		
Blackleaf area	Alt. 3	Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 3 in the Blackleaf area and restrict snowmobiling yearlong.
Jones Creek area	Alt. 3	Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 3 in the Jones Creek area and restrict snowmobiling yearlong.
Elk Creek area	Alt. 3	Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 3 (MWA/MSA winter recreation agreement) in the Elk Creek area and restrict snowmobiling yearlong except on the main road.
Deep Creek and Falls Creek areas	Alt. 4	Select Alt. 4 for areas not listed separately (above) and manage for non-motorized winter recreation, open to cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS SPECIFIC TO DECISION:

1. Designate 4 Trails for Hiking Travel Only (no horses, no bicycles¹):

All or portions of 4 trails (listed in Appendix A), totaling about 7 miles would allow hiking only. The use of stock, bicycles¹, and motorized trail vehicles would be restricted yearlong.

¹Bicycles is a generic term that includes all forms of gear-driven mechanized transportation powered by human muscles, such as mountain bicycles.

2. Designate 25 Trails for Hiking and Stock Travel Only (no bicycles¹):

All or portions of 25 trails (listed in Appendix B), totaling about 93 miles would allow hiking and stock only. Use of bicycles¹ and motorized trail vehicles would be restricted yearlong.

3. Designate 66 Routes for Hiking, Stock, and Bicycle¹ Travel Only (non-motorized):

All or portions of 56 trails (listed in Appendix C), totaling about 164 miles would allow hiking, stock, and bicycle¹ travel yearlong. All or portions of 10 roads (listed in Appendix C), totaling about 3 miles would allow hiking, stock, and bicycle¹ travel yearlong. The use of motorized wheeled vehicles would be restricted yearlong on all of these trails and roads.

4. Designate 17 Trails and 2 Roads for Motorcycle Travel (no ATVs):

All or portions of 7 trails, totaling about 13 miles would allow motorcycle travel yearlong. All or portions of another 10 trails, totaling about 33 miles would allow motorcycle travel after December 1 until October 15 (restricted during the rifle hunting season). Likewise, all or portions of 2 roads, totaling about 1 mile, would allow motorcycle travel after Dec. 1 until Oct. 15. Non-motorized travel by hiking, stock, and bicycles¹ would be allowed yearlong on all of these routes. All-terrain-vehicles would be restricted yearlong. (See Appendix D for complete list of trails and roads.)

5. Designate 13 Trails and 10 Roads for ATV and Motorcycle Travel:

All or portions of 8 trails, totaling about 12 miles would allow ATV and motorcycle travel yearlong. All or portions of another 4 trails, totaling about 5 miles would allow ATV and motorcycle travel after December 1 until October 15 (restricted during the rifle hunting season). One trail, totaling 1 mile, would allow ATV and motorcycle travel from July 1 until October 15. All or portions of 6 roads, totaling about 3 miles, would allow ATV and motorcycle travel yearlong; one road, less than 1 mile in length, would allow ATV and motorcycle travel after Dec. 1 until Oct. 15; and all or portions of 3 roads, totaling about 2 miles, would allow ATV and motorcycle travel from July 1 until October 15. Non-motorized travel by hiking, stock, and bicycles¹ would be allowed yearlong on all of these routes. Full-sized (passenger type) motor vehicles would be restricted yearlong. (See Appendix E for complete list of trails and roads.)

6. Designate 23 Roads for Passenger Vehicle Travel on Seasonal basis:

All or portions of 21 roads, totaling about 12 miles would allow full sized (passenger type) vehicle travel from after December 1 until October 15 (restricted during the rifle hunting season). All or portions of another 2 roads, totaling about 3 miles would allow full sized (passenger type) vehicle travel from July 1 until October 15 (restricted during the rifle hunting, winter, and spring bear seasons). Street legal motorcycles and ATVs would be allowed on these roads during the same time periods. Non-motorized travel by hiking, stock, and bicycles¹ would be allowed yearlong on all routes. (See Appendix F for complete list of roads.)

7. Adopt and Designate 74 Roads for Dispersed Camping Access on Yearlong basis:

All or portions of 74 undetermined (non-system) roads, totaling about 10 miles would be adopted as part of the official road transportation network, and managed to allow full sized (passenger type) vehicle travel yearlong to access dispersed campsites adjacent to the main access roads. Street legal motorcycles and ATVs would also be allowed yearlong on these

roads, as would non-motorized travel by hiking, stock, and bicycles¹. (See Appendix G for complete list of roads.)

8. Relocate and/or Reconstruct 2 Existing Routes:

Approximately 1,000 feet (0.2 miles) of Crown Mountain Trail 270 would be relocated and reconstructed to single-track motorcycle trail standards. This modification in alignment at the junction of Trails 270 and 232 would divert motorcycle loop traffic away from the Wilderness boundary, and provide a loop route via the Petty-Crown trail system.

About 0.5 mile of old Beaver Willow Road (utrl48) would be relocated and reconstructed to ATV trail standards to bypass private land and connect with Road 233 at the gate/trailhead. This modification at the south end of the private inholding in Willow Creek would allow public access into the Beaver Creek drainage via the old road, and provide a loop route.

9. Construct 5 Handicapped Accessible Trails:

My decision is to proceed with construction of fully accessible trails as follows:

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TRAIL LOCATION	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION
Mill Fall campground	0.1 mile	Connect campground to waterfall.
Elk Creek trailhead	0.3 mile	Connect trailhead to Cataract Falls.
West Fork campground	1.1 mile	Connect rental cabin to junction with Trail 106 near wilderness boundary.
Wagner Basin trail/road	1.0 mile	Downstream from Hannan Gulch bridge on north side of river. View mountain sheep.
Hannan Gulch Interpretive Site	1.0 mile	Upstream from Hannan Gulch bridge on north side of river to connect with Sun Canyon road.

10. Adopt some Previously Undetermined Routes. Designate and Manage them as System Routes.

Prior to the analysis we inventoried as many undetermined (non-system) roads and trails as we could locate on the ground. Our analysis indicated that some undetermined routes were desirable for public use and were feasible to manage as part of the designated transportation system. Therefore, several undetermined routes described in previous sections and identified by footnotes in Appendices A – G would be adopted and managed as part of the official road and trail transportation network. Overall, a total of about 1 mile of trail would be adopted for hiking only, about 12 miles of trail would be adopted for non-motorized hike, horse, or bicycle travel, about 7 miles of trail would be adopted for motorized OHV (motorcycle or ATV) travel, about 1 mile of road would be adopted for future resource management options but closed to motorized travel at this time, and about 10 miles of spur roads would be adopted for full sized passenger vehicles to access dispersed campsites adjacent to the main road system. Appendix I consolidates all of the information about undetermined routes in one location, and shows the disposition of all identified “undetermined” roads and trails.

11. Eliminate Unneeded Roads and Trails.

During the analysis process several roads and trails (both system and undetermined routes) were deemed unnecessary for public use and/or were contributing to undesirable resource degradation. Appendix J lists all identified routes that would be eliminated and not managed as part of the transportation system. All these routes would be closed to motorized travel yearlong under this decision. They would remain legally open to the public for foot, horse, and bicycle travel, but the agency would not encourage nor maintain the routes for such use. The simple action of prohibiting motorized traffic yearlong may be sufficient to allow some unneeded routes to naturally fade away. Other routes may take additional action to hasten re-growth of vegetation or repair resource degradation. The need for further actions to decommission some routes is expected to be addressed in separate analyzes as deemed necessary by the Ranger District and resource specialists. Overall, a total of about 6 miles of trail, and about 6 miles of road would be eliminated.

12. Allow travel off Designated Motorized Routes for parking/passing/turning around.

Restricting motorized vehicles to designated routes has an inherent problem related to the constructed width of the travelway. Long segments of constructed roads and trails are not wide enough to accommodate two vehicles passing one another, and most routes do not have constructed wide spots for parking or turning around. Some leeway needs to be allowed for two-way traffic to be safely and reasonably accommodated on designated motorized vehicle routes. I have decided that motorized travel off all designated motorized roads and trails would be allowed for parking, passing, or turning around under the following criteria.

Wheeled vehicle off-road / off-trail travel exceptions - Motorized wheeled vehicle travel off the traveled way of designated system roads and off the constructed tread of designated system trails for **parking, passing, or turning around is allowed within the length of the vehicle and attached trailer** (unless signed otherwise) as long as:

- 1) parking/passing/turning around is accomplished within a minimum distance,
[can be either perpendicular or parallel to the main travel-way]
- 2) parked vehicles and trailers do not impede traffic on the main traveled-way,
[parked vehicles are off the edge of the road]
[people exiting/entering parked vehicles can safely do so without stepping into traffic]
[animals/OHVs/equipment can be safely unloaded/loaded without obstructing traffic]
- 3) no new permanent routes are created by this activity,
- 4) existing vegetation is not killed or removed,
- 5) no damage to soil or water resources occurs,
- 6) travel off route does not cross streams, and
- 7) travel off route does not traverse riparian or wet areas.

Snowmobile off-road / off-trail travel exceptions - Motorized over-snow vehicle travel off designated snowmobile roads and trails that go through a “restricted area” **is allowed within the standard width of a road right-of-way** (normally 66-feet wide, unless signed otherwise) for turning around or avoiding obstructions as long as:

- 1) no new permanent routes are created by this activity,
- 2) existing vegetation is not killed or removed, and
- 3) no damage to soil or water resources occurs.

13. Designate areas for Over-Snow Motorized Vehicle Travel:

Allow motorized over-snow cross-country travel from December 1 through March 31 on about 29,170 acres as shown on the ROD Winter Decision map. Restrict all motorized over-snow cross-country travel yearlong on about 232,595 acres as shown on the ROD Winter Decision map. Motorized over-snow travel through closed areas would be allowed on designated snowmobile routes only.

MANAGEMENT NOT SPECIFIC TO DECISION:

1. Roads and airstrip that will remain a part of the designated system, and roads that will remain open to facilitate special uses.

We did not propose any changes in how the following roads and airstrip would be used in the future. Approximately 47 roads, totaling about 60 miles in length, that provide primary access to trailheads, campgrounds, recreation residences, dispersed campsites and other features on NFS lands. Another 11 roads, totaling about 3 miles, provide access within developed campgrounds. All 63 miles of these roads (listed in Appendix H) have been open to motorized vehicle travel, and will remain a part of the designated system as part of this decision. There are also a number of roads and trails under Special Use Permits authorizing access to recreation residences, dams and irrigation facilities, resorts, and private land. These Special Use Permit roads and trails would remain open under the authority upon which they were issued. The Benchmark airstrip will continue to be open to public use under this decision.

2. Subsequent determination to designate segments of some roads for “mixed traffic”.

The issue of designating some roads for mixed traffic was considered as non-significant in the Draft EIS. Some public comment expressed an interest in this concept, and the new national OHV policy issued in 2005 recognized mixed traffic could be allowed as a management tool for recreation. To fairly address this issue, mixed traffic was discussed in the Final EIS as a new transportation issue. After considering all comments about this issue, a decision concerning specific roads to designate for mixed traffic will be made following an engineering evaluation as outlined in EM-7700-30. A separate decision will be made on a case-by-case basis as to whether or not to designate each road for mixed traffic. Providing for public safety will be the most important criteria.

III. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

I have determined that my decision to select Alternative 4 with the specific modifications listed in Appendices A-J and ROD Tables 1 and 2 are consistent with all laws, regulations, and agency policy. I have considered reasonably foreseeable activities and potential cumulative effects. I believe that my decision provides the best balance of management activities that respond to the purpose and need and issues. My decision also strikes a balance between competing interests such as the interest for unrestricted motorized recreation and wildlife habitat protection and enhancement.

The factors I used to make my decision on this project included:

- Achievement of the project’s purpose and need (FEIS, pages 3-5)
- Relationship to environmental and social issues (FEIS, pages 36 - 310)
- Public comments (FEIS, pages 313 - 388)

The analysis and decision processes for this project are based on the consideration of the best available science. The manner in which best available science is addressed can be found throughout the disclosure of rationale found within the ROD, DEIS, FEIS, Response to Comments, Biological Assessments, and the project file.

A. Meeting the Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for action in regard to travel management on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District -- Birch Creek South area are based on Forest Plan goals, objectives, and standards. More specifically, this project addresses the following purposes and needs.

A comprehensive evaluation on the best way to manage recreational travel has not been done since 1988. Due to recent trends in recreation use on the District, and the many resource and environmental protection issues that have emerged in the past decade, it is timely and appropriate to develop an updated travel management plan.

In general, the present road and trail system evolved incrementally over many decades based on site-specific demands for various recreational activities, and capabilities of the land to accommodate those activities. Use of roads and trails has changed substantially since the last Travel Plan was signed in 1988. ATVs, while rare in 1988, have become common on many roads and trails. Use of snowmobiles has grown in popularity, as has the demand for cross-country skiing. Advances in technology now allow motorized vehicles to travel on terrain that they could not traverse in 1988. Demand for access by people with disabilities has increased. A new Travel Plan is needed to incorporate these changes in recreational demand and extent.

The 24 types of travel restrictions shown on the 1988 Travel Plan map for the Rocky Mountain Division are confusing. Many visitors are unable to correctly interpret the map, and the 1988 map has errors. Non-system roads and trails exist on the landscape but are not shown on the map; hence visitors don’t know what rules apply to traveling on them. Visitors are also confused when they encounter different travel restrictions as they cross from one National Forest to another. A new Travel Plan is needed that is simpler with fewer categories of restrictions. A new Travel Plan is also needed to comply with National standards for mapping, and to be consistent with adjoining National Forests.

Conflicts between different uses generally occur on trails and roads that are not designed to accommodate the types of uses allowed, or on trails and roads not designed for the level of use occurring. Also, conflicts can occur when visitors encounter other types of uses that they had not expected. A new Travel Plan is needed on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District so that the road and trail system provides safe travel routes for an appropriate mix of uses.

In 2001, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management issued a joint decision to prohibit motorized cross-country travel on all National Forest System and BLM public lands in a three state area. This decision did not address winter travel. The decision also directed all National Forests to set up a schedule for completing site-specific planning that would designate appropriate uses on all system and non-system roads and trails. The Lewis and Clark National Forest determined that the Rocky Mountain Ranger District was a high priority for completing a detailed site-specific travel management plan.

Ever since the 1988 Travel Plan was issued there have been questions about its legality. There is a need to complete an analysis of the effects of current travel management to comply with direction issued following appeal of the 1988 Travel Plan.

Since the publication of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan DEIS, the Forest Service promulgated new regulations governing OHV use throughout the National Forest System. These 2005 regulations mandate individual National Forests to complete travel plan analysis within 4 years, and designate the roads and trails where motorized vehicle use will be allowed. The Lewis and Clark National Forest expects the results of this travel planning decision to be in full compliance with the new regulations.

The purpose for this Birch Creek South decision is to:

1. Provide for public access and recreation travel in the Birch Creek South area, considering both the quantity and quality of recreation opportunities provided.
2. Bring the area, road, and trail use into compliance with laws, regulations, and other higher level management direction.
3. Provide for public understanding of the types of use and season of use allowed for each road and trail.

B. Consideration of Public Comments

The Interdisciplinary Team developed a Response to Comments for the project file, and these responses are summarized in the Final EIS. In addition, I have reviewed all the public comments made on the project, and met with many groups and individuals.

One recurring theme of public comment was the value people placed on the wild, remote setting offered by the front country of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. Many commenters emphasized the diversity of wildlife species, the presence of the grizzly bear and wolf, and asked that my decision help maintain the undeveloped character of the Rocky Mountain Front. The vast majority of public comments we received favored emphasizing traditional non-motorized modes of travel on the Rocky Mountain Front. However, I did receive comments from local individuals and community members which indicate that this area receives some motorized use in summer and winter. Nearby residents and visitors have come to ride motorcycles, ATV's and snowmobiles while hunting, camping, or sightseeing.

This use, although limited, is important to some who live in communities along the front and to those who occasionally visit the area.

After reviewing the information contained in the analysis and public comments, my conclusion is this area provides the highest quality opportunities on the Lewis and Clark National Forest for non-motorized types of outdoor recreation. For these reasons, I have decided to increase our emphasis on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District as a primary place to enjoy solitude, wildlife viewing, hiking, backcountry hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and pack trips. In order to address concerns of motorized users, my decision will include limited opportunities for motorized recreation activities off designated roads or for snowmobiling. Although there will be limited motorized trail opportunities, licensed operators with street legal vehicles are welcome to use the 88 mile road system for motorized recreation, sightseeing, and dispersed camping. In addition, as we identify roads where mixed use is safe, unlicensed drivers with non-street legal vehicles will be allowed to use these roads if they comply with state laws regarding mixed use on Forest Service roads.

Public comment is reflected in the issues identified and addressed in the environmental analysis. My rationale for how my decision addresses each issue is also my rationale for how I considered various public comments.

C. Consideration of the Issues

Significant issues, as defined under 40 CFR 1501.7(a)(2), guided the range of alternatives and development of mitigation measures, and were used to incorporate into the analysis the measured effects of the alternatives. The issues focused the environmental disclosure on site-specific, direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that may occur under the alternatives. Other impacts and concerns were also analyzed and summarized as they related to the proposal as directed under 40 CFR 1501.7(a)(3). Issues identified in public scoping were similar to those identified by the Interdisciplinary Team. Similar issues were combined into one statement where appropriate. The team determined the following issues were significant issues. The following section addresses how my decision responds to these issues.

AIR QUALITY / WATER QUALITY / SOILS:

Effects on air quality due to motorized OHV travel. There was nothing in the analysis to indicate a significant impact on air quality as a result of the current level and extent of OHV use. The analysis indicated that all of the action alternatives may reduce the potential for effects on air quality, because all of the action alternatives reduce the mileage of roads and trails open to motorized travel. This is based on an assumption that fewer miles of motorized roads and trails equate to lower amounts of dust particles being lifted into the air. My decision reduces the mileage of roads and trails open to motorized travel. The most likely problem that may arise in the next 10 to 20 years is dust along the main access roads. This problem is shared by all the alternatives and all recreationists. Heavy traffic by stock trucks and trailers, campers, and cabin owners would all contribute to the issue. Potential solutions may include hard surfacing, dust abatement on roads, limiting speeds, and limiting traffic. These solutions may affect a broad array of recreationists. Road dust problems can be dealt with annually as cases arise.

Effects on water quality from existing road and trail system under current levels of maintenance. As stated in the analysis, the risks of impacts to water quality are greater at stream crossings and when roads and trails are within 100 feet of perennial streams. Research indicates impacts to water quality are caused by OHVs, livestock, hikers to a limited extent, using trails in riparian areas. Other factors such as inadequate maintenance, poor route location, and high use levels exacerbate (or aggravate) erosion problems and increase sediment delivery to streams from roads and trails. Water Quality is important along the Rocky Mountain Front. My decision will change the type and season of use allowed on many roads and trails, and should allow limited maintenance funds to be prioritized on trails causing impacts to water quality.

Effects on water quality if human use levels or road/trail mileages increase. My rationale for selecting a particular travel management action is based on public comments favoring non-motorized modes of transportation, my desire to maintain the undeveloped character of the Rocky Mountain Front and to better protect or enhance wildlife and fish habitats. My decision is not expected to increase the amount of OHV use along the Front. If there are increases in motorized use or livestock uses that result in detrimental effects to water quality the District Ranger may take further actions, on a site specific basis, to change route locations, eliminate stream crossings, construct bridges, or increase maintenance levels to protect water quality and aquatic habitats.

Effects on soil quality due to motorized OHV travel. There is very little difference between alternatives in regard to the miles of roads and trails on sensitive soil types. Cross-country travel by motorized modes of travel is prohibited under all alternatives, including the no-action alternative. The District Ranger may take actions, on a site specific basis, to change route locations or increase maintenance levels to protect soil quality

HERITAGE RESOURCES:

Potential effects on the Blackfoot Traditional Cultural District. This issue was analyzed in the FEIS, and is being discussed further with the Blackfoot Tribe. It is one of the reasons for delaying a decision about travel management for the Badger-Two Medicine area. It will be an important part of my future decision for the Badger-Two Medicine.

Potential for effects on other identified and unidentified archaeological and historical sites. As indicated in the FEIS, I have further considered cultural resources through the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 process in order to avoid, minimize, or mitigate effects to cultural resources. The Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has concurred with our procedures. I have chosen a stepped process. The first step was identification of properties through the DEIS analysis. The second included field inventory in locations common to all alternatives, site evaluations, and determinations of effect. This site-specific review resulted in a finding of “no effect” for nine (9) cultural sites, a result of allowable travel methods under my decision. These nine sites co-exist with routes; they include the three (3) sites where potential mitigation was anticipated (see table in FEIS Ch. 2). As a condition of the ‘no effect’ findings, and in accordance with the Lewis and Clark Forest Plan, archaeologists will periodically monitor these sites during the next five years.

A third step in the outlined process is the procedural review for those construction and relocation projects that I have identified in the Record of Decision (see 8 and 9 above), and for those user trails and decommissioning-related locations (identified in 10 and 11) which were not already covered in the ‘common to all alternatives’ inventory. These reviews will take place in site-specific detail, *prior to the implementation* of each of these actions. In this manner, effects to archaeological and historical resources are addressed, effects minimized, and procedural requirements met.

RECREATION:

Opportunities for solitude/quiet trails. The analysis displayed the opportunities for solitude by comparing the acreages within different “Recreation Opportunity Spectrum” classifications. ROS is a useful means by which to compare and discuss non-motorized and motorized recreational opportunities. The following tables display acreages by ROS class for my selected action versus all of the alternatives. My decision places about 71% of the Birch Creek South area in a primitive (which is non-motorized) or semi-primitive non-motorized setting, which is a significant increase over the existing condition (Alt. 1 = 51%), and a slight increase over Alternative 4 (70%). During my deliberations, I modified Alt. 4 (see ROD Table 1) by making Cow Creek Trail 191 and Mt. Frazier-Chicken Coulee Trail 153 non-motorized. My primary reason to make these two trails non-motorized was to protect wildlife habitat, but the effect of making this decision also increased opportunities for solitude beyond the Blackleaf trailhead. Overall, my decision provides significant opportunities for someone to find solitude and a “quiet” trail experience.

**ROD Table 3. Summer ROS Acreage - Outside Wilderness
In the Birch Creek South area**

SUMMER ROS CLASSIFICATION	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
RURAL	1,820 ac. 1 %	1,820 1 %	1,820 1 %	1,820 1 %	1,820 1 %	1,820 1 %
ROADED NATURAL	42,680 ac. 16 %	48,060 18 %	46,720 18 %	45,990 18 %	46,410 18 %	46,410 18 %
SEMI-PRIMITIVE MOTORIZED	29,320 ac. 12 %	80,260 30 %	60,580 23 %	4,760 2 %	27,920 11 %	27,920 11 %
SEMI-PRIMITIVE NON-MOTORIZED	152,790 ac. 58 %	130,770 50 %	129,840 50 %	174,040 66 %	150,470 57 %	150,470 57 %
PRIMITIVE	35,570 ac. 13 %	1,270 1 %	23,220 8 %	35,570 13 %	35,560 13 %	35,560 13 %
Total Acreage	262,180 ac. 100 %	262,180	262,180	262,180	262,180	262,180

My decision also places about 12% of the area in a semi-primitive motorized setting during the summer, which is a slight increase over the selected Alternative 4. This is due to modifying Alt. 4 (see ROD Table 1) by continuing to allow motorcycle travel on Lonesome

Ridge Trail 154, a portion of Route Creek Pass Trail 108, and the Petty-Crown loop trail 270/232/244. My primary reasons for including these as motorcycle trails is because motorized use is compatible with wildlife habitat in those drainages, and because they provided additional OHV riding opportunities near other OHV riding trails, near camping opportunities, and specific destination points. My objective is to allow OHV riding where we can provide a quality recreation experience. My decision provides some opportunities to enjoy riding a motorcycle in the backcountry while placing more emphasis on non-motorized modes of travel and enhancing the undeveloped character of the Rocky Mountain Front..

My decision results in about 35 miles of “undetermined” routes being adopted as system roads or trails as detailed in Appendix I. Of the total, 13 miles of adopted trails would be for non-motorized travel by hikers, horsemen, and bicyclists; 7 miles for motorized travel by motorcycles or ATVs; and 1 mile would be useful for future resource management of the area. As shown in the analysis, these routes serve a useful purpose in accommodating public travel for recreational purposes, and can be managed by the agency as system routes. About 14 miles of the total would be adopted as spur roads to formally designate and manage dispersed camping opportunities along the main system roads. Dispersed campsites are a key feature of future management of NFS lands. Allowing and managing designated access routes to dispersed campsites is an important step in minimizing the proliferation of new routes, and in accommodating public enjoyment of the area. My decision to designate all access routes to dispersed campsites prohibits indiscriminate motorized travel to reach new dispersed campsites, and allows the public ample opportunity to enjoy the dispersed campsites that have been in use for many years.

My decision also results in about 6 miles of unneeded roads and 6 miles of unneeded trails being closed to motorized wheeled vehicle use under this decision. Further analysis of these unneeded routes would be accomplished at some future date to determine more specific needs to fully decommission them. My objective is to prevent any further resource degradation on these routes, and begin the process of restoration and re-vegetation to a natural landscape.

Restricting motorized vehicles to designated routes has an inherent problem related to the constructed width of the traveled-way. Long segments of constructed roads and trails are not wide enough to accommodate two vehicles passing one another, and most routes do not have constructed wide spots for parking or turning around. We received comments concerned about the provision in the 3-State OHV Decision to allow motorized travel off road 300 feet to camp. However, public comments did not advocate that vehicles, stock trailers, campers, equipment trailers, etc. only be parked within constructed road turnouts or in designated parking lots. It seemed that most people agreed with the concept of being able to choose their own parking spot alongside designated routes, and to choose their own spot to turn around. The issue is defining a “reasonable” distance to allow people to pull their vehicles off a designated travel-way in order to park or turn around. It is illegal under current law for people to park and leave their vehicle or OHV as an obstruction on the traveled-way of a trail or road. We must allow visitors the reasonable opportunity to park their car, 4x4, ATV, or motorcycle a short distance off a designated route so that they are not a hazard to other traffic, and so that they can safely stop and go about enjoying other activities. The 2005 National OHV regulations (36 CFR 212.51(b)) provides leeway to designate limited use of motor vehicles within a specified distance of certain designated routes. Consistent with the National OHV regulations, I have decided that motorized travel off all designated motorized roads and trails would be allowed for parking, passing, or turning around under the criteria specified in my decision. This allows people an opportunity to make reasonable decisions about how to best pull off the travel-way to park in a safe manner. This decision conforms to standard practice

that the public has been doing for many years. We do not have any evidence that parking or turning around adjacent to main travel-ways has resulted in undue resource damage in this area. The allowance for motorized off-route travel to park and turn-around assures that recreationists have an opportunity to enjoy their visit to the National Forest.

**ROD Table 4. Winter Recreation Acreage - Outside Wilderness
In the Birch Creek South area**

WINTER CLASSIFICATION	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
RURAL	415 ac. 0 %	415 0 %	415 0 %	415 0 %	415 0 %	415 0 %
SEMI-PRIMITIVE MOTORIZED	29,170 ac. 11 %	246,720 94 %	159,680 61 %	0 0 %	98,440 38 %	98,440 38 %
SEMI-PRIMITIVE NON-MOTORIZED	232,595 ac. 89 %	15,045 6 %	102,085 39 %	261,765 100 %	163,325 62 %	163,325 62 %
Total Acreage	262,180 ac. 100 %	262,180	262,180	262,180	262,180	262,180

For winter recreation, my decision places about 89% of the area in a non-motorized setting. This is a significant increase in solitude during the winter months in comparison to the existing condition or Alternative 4. My decision to restrict snowmobiling during the winter is heavily influenced by collaborative efforts between Montana Wilderness Association, Montana Snowmobile Association, and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. The areas open for snowmobile use are areas historically used and popular with local residents. I used the collaborative efforts of Montana Wilderness Association, Montana Snowmobile Association, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and input from Forest Service recreations specialists and law enforcement personnel to identify areas that are historically used, provide a quality experience, and have boundaries that can be easily communicated and enforced in the Falls Creek, Elk Creek, Deep Creek, Beaver-Willow, and Benchmark areas. I recognize that in some cases using an easily communicated boundary creates, on the map, larger areas open. In reality smaller portions of these open areas will actually be used. Due to dense tree cover and terrain features that naturally prohibit snowmobile use there are areas included that are not useable.

In the Sun Canyon area, we received input to allow snowmobiling on a limited amount of terrain around the cabin sites. I believe that allowing snowmobile use in small areas around the cabins is likely to be disturbing to some of the owners. Therefore, I decided to restrict cross-country snowmobile use yearlong around the Home Gulch, Hannah Gulch, and Gibson Reservoir cabin sites. People that do want to snowmobile in the Sun Canyon area, including cabin owners, would have the opportunity to snowmobile on the Beaver-Willow road to reach motorized over-snow (cross-country) recreation. [Cabin owners in Sun Canyon would be allowed to snowmobile to their cabins during times when deep snow prevents vehicle access.]

North of the South Fork Teton River area I selected Alternative 4 with some modifications (see ROD Table 2). The South Fork Teton road and area north of the road would remain open for snowmobiling on a seasonal basis. The North Fork Teton and West Fork Teton would remain as primary snowmobile areas on the same seasonal basis. These areas have a long history of snowmobile activity, and are the areas most important to avid snowmobilers.

Boundaries of open snowmobile areas follow logical landscape features to help snowmobilers stay out of closed areas. Due to the concern that a snowmobile could trespass into the Wilderness up the North Fork of the Teton, I am continuing the existing closure of Trail #107 to snowmobiles. Features such as the head of Waldron Creek have been retained as “quiet” areas to provide opportunities for cross-country skiing accessible from a plowed road, and to protect grizzly bear spring range.

In the Blackleaf area, I decided to select Alternative 3 and prohibit snowmobiling yearlong to protect important winter and spring range. Wildlife that winter in this area move up and down the slope, and move from drainage to drainage as snow conditions change. Due to the variability of snow cover, this area provides only intermittent opportunity for snowmobiling. It is more important to minimize disturbance of wintering animals in this area than to provide marginal and intermittent opportunities for motorized over-snow recreation.

In the Jones Creek area, I decided to select Alternative 3 and prohibit snowmobiling yearlong based on comments stressing the importance of the area for solitude and quiet recreation, and on the limited value of the area as a snowmobile opportunity. Like the Blackleaf area, Jones Creek provides only intermittent opportunity for snowmobiling, but provides a valuable opportunity for solitude that is easily accessible from a main access road. Selecting this alternative for Jones Creek may have the added benefit of further minimizing the potential for disturbance of wildlife that winter in the area.

In order to protect grizzly bears if they emerge early in the spring, I decided that cross-country snowmobiling would be restricted starting April 1 in all portions of the Birch Creek South area. It is important to minimize disturbance of grizzly bears when they first emerge in the spring, especially if they emerge early. Since the entire area provides habitat for these bears, I have decided to restrict all motorized over-snow travel during the period of time when the bears are in their weakest condition. On a similar note, I decided to not allow cross-country snowmobiling until after December 1. This restriction date provides protection for animals throughout the rifle hunting season in the fall, and accommodates the generally recognized start of the winter recreation season.

People that own cabins (recreation residences) in the Elk Creek area would have access with snowmobiles on the main access road if it is snow covered. The Elk Creek cabin owners would not be able to ride their snowmobiles on surrounding public lands. Cabin owners in the Sun Canyon area would have the opportunity to haul their snowmobiles to the trailhead below Gibson Dam and access the Beaver-Willow road in order to ride their snowmobiles. In the Benchmark area, my decision retains the right of cabin owners to access their property by riding snowmobiles on the snow covered portion of the road, and also provides them an opportunity to use snowmobiles to play on adjoining hillsides north of the main road. In Sun Canyon, cabin owners would be allowed to snowmobile on the main roads to their cabins during times when deep snow prevents vehicle access.

In areas where a designated snowmobile route goes through an otherwise restricted area, my decision allows snowmobilers to maneuver within the standard right-of-way width of a roadway (33-feet on either side of the centerline) to make a U-turn or to avoid obstructions. This allowance gives recreationists an opportunity to maneuver depending upon snow conditions or obstacles, and provides guidance for law enforcement officers.

Overall, my decision allows motorized over-snow travel on about 11% of the Birch Creek South area. This 11% is a significant reduction from the current 94% of the area open to snowmobiles, but is more in line with areas being used for motorized winter recreation.

Current and potential use levels by activity. Projected use levels did not vary by alternative. Use levels are a reflection of national and regional trends and are not likely to change because of a travel management decision.

Opportunities for diverse winter recreation. Vehicle access to snow covered terrain during the winter months is relatively uncertain due to main roads being alternately blown clear or blown shut by snowdrifts. Only two plowed roads (N. Fk. Teton and Sun Canyon) provide reliable access for winter recreation in the Birch Creek South area. Other roads offer intermittent access based upon intensity of snowstorms, and can change quickly due to drifting and melting. Although not plowed beyond the Forest boundary, the S. Fk. Teton road also offers reasonably reliable access to snow covered terrain for skiing, snowshoeing, or snowmobiling. As shown in the analysis, the existing condition provides winter access to 4 non-motorized routes for day-trip skiing and snowshoeing. My decision increases this to 16 non-motorized routes being reasonably available for day-trips on cross-country skis or snowshoes. This is a substantial increase in the number of opportunities for quiet trips into the backcountry. In particular there is a substantial increase for non-motorized excursions in the Sun Canyon area, and in the Clary Coulee/Jones Creek/Massey Creek drainages of the North Fork Teton area.

**ROD Table 5. Miles of Trails / Roads Accessible*
for Non-Motorized Winter Recreation within Birch Creek South area**

Non-Motorized Trails / Roads Accessed from Plowed Roads	DECISION	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5
N. Fk. Teton Road	4 routes 14.4 mi.	1 route 1.2 mi.	2 routes 6.2 mi.	8 routes 27.7 mi.	2 routes 6.2 mi.	2 routes 6.2 mi.
Sun Canyon Road	5 routes 22.1 mi.	1 route 1.0 mi.	1 route 1.0 mi.	6 routes 27.1 mi.	2 routes 10.0 mi.	2 routes 10.0 mi.
S. Fk. Teton Road	7 routes 25.6 mi.	2 routes 7.0 mi.	7 routes 24.8 mi.	8 routes 27.7 mi.	8 routes 27.7 mi.	8 routes 27.7 mi.
Total	16 routes 62.1 mi.	4 routes 9.2 mi	10 routes 32.0 mi.	22 routes 82.5 mi.	12 routes 43.9 mi.	12 routes 43.9 mi.

(* Table includes approximate mileage of routes that are closed to motorized use during all or most of winter, and that are immediately accessible from plowed roads and S.Fk. Teton Rd. Trails or roads more than 5 miles distance from roads shown are not included. More miles are available for overnight cross-country skiers or snowshoers than are shown in this table.)

Reliable access to snow covered terrain for snowmobiling is also a problem during the winter due to the fact there are only two plowed roads. The analysis showed there are 19 routes available for snowmobiles to travel in the Birch Creek South area under the existing travel management plan. My decision would reduce this to 6 routes. This reduction is due to restricting snowmobiles in the Jones Creek area, and in the Sun Canyon area except on Beaver-Willow Road 233. Jones Creek was restricted to maintain solitude and wilderness character; Sun Canyon was restricted to minimize disturbance to cabin owners. Both areas represent marginal opportunities for snowmobiling. The remaining opportunity for snowmobiling on the Beaver-Willow road should accommodate the snowmobilers that visit

Sun Canyon. There remains ample opportunity for motorized winter activity in the Teton area.

**ROD Table 6. Miles of Trails / Roads Accessible*
for Motorized Winter Recreation within Birch Creek South area**

Motorized Trails/Roads Accessed from Plowed Roads	DECISION	Alt 1 (miles)	Alt 2 (miles)	Alt 3 (miles)	Alt 4 (miles)	Alt 5 (miles)
N.Fk. Teton Road	4 routes 8.3 mi.	7 routes 25.5 mi.	6 routes 17.0 mi.	2 routes 4.3 mi.	6 routes 16.5 mi.	6 routes 16.5 mi.
Sun Canyon Road	1 route 5.0 mi.	6 routes 27.1 mi.	6 routes 27.1 mi.	1 route 1.0 mi.	5 routes 18.1 mi.	5 routes 18.1 mi.
S. Fk. Teton Road	1 route 2.1 mi.	6 routes 19.8 mi.	1 route 2.1 mi.	0 routes 0.0 mi.	0 routes 0.0 mi.	0 routes 0.0 mi.
Total	6 routes 15.4 mi.	19 routes 72.4 mi.	13 routes 46.2 mi.	3 routes 5.3 mi.	11 routes 34.6 mi.	11 routes 34.6 mi.

(* Table includes approximate mileage of routes that are open to snowmobile use during all or most of winter, and that are immediately accessible from plowed roads and S. Fk. Teton Rd. 109. Trail or road miles more than 5 miles distance from roads shown are not included for ease of comparison between alternatives. More miles are available for snowmobilers than are shown in this table. Note that trails and roads open to snowmobile use may be more difficult to use than existing established snowmobile routes.)

Opportunities for disabled access. As stated in the analysis, about 16% of Montana’s population has some type of disability. It is important that outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands be available to them. At present there is only one handicapped accessible trail on the Ranger District located at Wood Lake. My decision is to proceed with construction of fully accessible trails as shown in the following list, as funding allows:

ROD Table 7. Wheelchair Accessible Trails

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TRAIL LOCATION	LENGTH	DESCRIPTION
Mill Fall campground	0.1 mile	Connect campground to waterfall.
Elk Creek trailhead	0.3 mile	Connect trailhead to Cataract Falls.
West Fork campground	1.1 mile	Connect rental cabin to junction with Trail 106 near wilderness boundary.
Wagner Basin trail/road	1.0 mile	Downstream from Hannan Gulch bridge on north side of river. View mountain sheep.
Hannan Gulch Interpretive Site	1.0 mile	Upstream from Hannan Gulch bridge on north side of river to connect with Sun Canyon road.

The analysis considered designating two roads for motorized access by disabled hunters only. Some members of the public, including representatives of people with disabilities, did not want special privileges granted to people with disabilities, while others supported this idea. Regional policy allows district rangers to provide disabled hunters access on some closed roads during hunting season under certain circumstances. Considering the limited number of roads and motorized trails on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District it is my decision to continue allowing yearlong motorized access, rather than a seasonal restriction with an exception for handicap access, on Hannan Gulch trail (6.8 miles) and on Green Gulch road (2.1 miles) for everyone. All hunters will have the opportunity to use ATVs to drive on these two routes during the hunting season, as well as drive an ATV on Cyanide Creek Trail 257

(1.2 miles). There are 85 miles of open motorized routes during the fall hunting season, but these three trails (totaling about 10 miles) are the only ones in the Birch Creek South area that would offer motorized hunting opportunities that disabled hunters are likely to use. Four motorcycle trails (totaling about 12 miles) also would offer motorized access during the hunting season, but it is unlikely that very many disabled people would utilize these routes.

Cumulative effects of past closures on opportunities for motorized recreation. As stated in the FEIS, in the early 1960s there were no management restrictions on where motorized vehicles could be driven on the Rocky Mountain Front. But as the population of our country has grown, and as technology has allowed motorized vehicles to travel over more difficult terrain, it has become necessary to manage the use of motorized vehicles on National Forests. The 2001 TRI State OHV Decision reduced the opportunities to drive motorized vehicles off road and trail in the Northern Region of the Forest Service and BLM in those states. The Chief of the Forest Service identified unmanaged recreation as one of the four threats to our National Forests. The 2005 OHV rule directed each National Forest to designate which roads and trails are appropriate for motorized use. In addition, many private land owners and most state agencies prohibit OHV use on their lands. The result has been a reduction in the number of miles of roads and trails open to motorized use on National Forest system lands. Our challenge is to protect forest resources while allowing motorized uses. My decision will have a cumulative effect in reducing the total miles of roads and trails available to motorized travel.

Opportunities for hiker-only trails. Providing hiker-only trails reflects a need to protect resources or to limit use in a heavily congested site. There are only 4 trails that warrant such protection. My decision is to impose yearlong travel restrictions on stock and bicycles on about 7 miles of trails as listed in Appendix A. The entire length of the trail to Our Lake, and the trail by Wood Lake are popular for hiking and are congested on weekends and other times throughout the season. Both of these trails warrant the added precaution of keeping stock and bicycles off to provide a safer and more enjoyable trip for hikers. The Mount Wright trail and Mill Falls Ridge trail are quite steep and difficult to negotiate. Both of these trails warrant the added precaution of keeping stock and bicycles off to protect the trail surface and to provide a safer trip for everyone.

ROADLESS/WILDERNESS:

Effects on roadless characteristics. The analysis displayed the effects on the two inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. Two of the following tables display miles of roads and trails in each of the IRAs, and two other tables display acreages open and restricted to snowmobiling.

For the Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan IRA, my decision continues to allow motorized travel on about 14% of the roads and trails within the roadless area. This is a significant reduction from the current situation that allows motorized travel on about 60% of the roads and trails within the IRA. The change in travel management will increase the opportunity for solitude and the opportunity for a primitive recreation experience. My decision would place about 82% of the IRA in a primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS category. Under the existing situation, only about 58% of the IRA has a semi-primitive non-motorized setting.

About 2 miles of undetermined road, and 12 miles of non-system trail would be adopted and managed as part of the designated transportation system within the IRA. Only about 4 miles of these adopted routes would be open to motorized travel, which is entirely offset by the decommissioning of about 6.2 miles of unneeded existing roads and trails. Overall, there would be an increase in opportunity for solitude and a primitive recreation experience during the summer recreation season.

**ROD Table 8. Miles of Roads and Trails In the Birch Creek South area
Within Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan Inventoried Roadless Area**

BEAR-MARSHALL-SCAPEGOAT-SWAN IRA	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Motorized Roads	6 mi. (2%)	18	13	3	12	12
Motorized Trails	31 mi. (12%)	154	104	0	34	34
Subtotal -- motorized	37 mi. (14%)	172	117	3	46	46
Non-Motorized Roads	0 mi. (0%)	0	2	10	0	0
Non-Motorized Trails	236 mi. (86%)	117	158	260	228	228
Subtotal -- non-motorized	236 mi. (86%)	117	160	270	228	228
Subtotal – motorized & non-motorized	273 mi. (100%)	289	277	273	274	274

During the winter recreation season, my decision for the Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan IRA continues to allow motorized over-snow travel on about 9% of the area. This is a significant reduction from the current situation that allows motorized over-snow travel on about 94% of the IRA. One route about 2 miles in length would continue to be designated as a snowmobile trail in the vicinity of the Teton snowmobile trailhead.

**ROD Table 9. Winter Travel Restrictions In the Birch Creek South area
Within Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan Inventoried Roadless Area**

BEAR-MARSHALL-SCAPEGOAT-SWAN IRA	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Acres open seasonally to snowmobiling.	21,460 ac. (9%)	217,240	131,590	0	72,420	72,420
Acres restricted yearlong to snowmobiling.	208,910 ac. (91%)	13,130	98,780	230,370	157,950	157,950
Subtotal – IRA Acreage	230,370 ac. (100%)	230,370	230,370	230,370	230,370	230,370
Miles of designated snowmobile trail.	2 mi.	2	2	0	2	0

For the Sawtooth IRA, my decision continues to allow motorized travel on about 97% of the roads and trails within the roadless area. This is the same level of motorized access allowed in the IRA for the past 18 years (existing condition). My decision would not change the existing opportunity for solitude and a primitive recreation experience. No part of the IRA would be classified as primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS category, which is the same as

the existing condition for the past 18 years. About 2 miles of undetermined road, and 5 miles of non-system trail would be adopted and managed as part of the designated transportation system within the IRA. About 5 miles of these adopted routes would be open to motorized travel, which is partially offset by the decommissioning of about 2 miles of unneeded existing roads and trails. Overall, there could be a decrease in opportunity for solitude and a primitive recreation experience during July-August-September. Since most of the routes are closed to motorized use from Oct. 15 through June 30, there would be a great opportunity for solitude from mid-October through the end of June.

**ROD Table 10. Miles of Roads and Trails In the Birch Creek South area
Within Sawtooth Inventoried Roadless Area**

SAWTOOTH IRA	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Motorized Roads	4 mi. (14%)	5	2	3	3	3
Motorized Trails	24 mi. (83%)	21	21	0	24	24
Subtotal -- motorized	28 mi. (97%)	26	23	3	27	27
Non-Motorized Roads	0 mi. (0%)	0	0	1	0	0
Non-Motorized Trails	1 mi. (3%)	4	1	25	1	1
Subtotal -- non-motorized	1 mi. (3%)	4	1	26	1	1
Subtotal – motorized & non-motorized	29 mi. (100%)	30	24	29	28	28

During the winter recreation season, my decision for the Sawtooth IRA continues to allow motorized over-snow travel on about 10% of the area. This is a significant reduction from the current situation that allows motorized over-snow travel on 100% of the IRA. There would be a noticeable increase in opportunity for solitude and a primitive recreation experience from mid-October through June.

**ROD Table 11. Winter Travel Restrictions In the Birch Creek South area
Within Sawtooth Inventoried Roadless Area**

SAWTOOTH IRA	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Acres open seasonally to snowmobiling.	1,470 ac. (10%)	15,040	15,040	0	15,040	15,040
Acres restricted yearlong to snowmobiling.	13,570 ac. (90%)	0	0	15,040	0	0
Subtotal – IRA Acreage	15,040 ac. (100%)	15,040	15,040	15,040	15,040	15,040
Miles of designated snowmobile trail.	0	0	0	0	0	0

Consistency with adjacent BLM management of Outstanding Natural Areas. There are four “outstanding natural areas” adjacent to NFS lands in the Birch Creek South area. The BLM manages these ONAs, totaling 13,087 acres, to protect their wilderness character. Motorized use is not allowed within them. I specifically modified Alternative 4 by making Mt. Frazier-Chicken Coulee Trail 153 non-motorized in order to prevent inadvertent trespass into the Ear Mountain ONA by motorcycles. This makes management of Trail 153 the same on both BLM and NFS lands. My decision allows non-motorized travel only on all of the trails leading into and adjacent to the ONAs. Likewise, my decision restricts snowmobile travel on any NFS lands immediately adjacent to the ONAs. Therefore, my decision is fully compatible with management on the outstanding natural areas.

Consistency with adjacent National Forest management. There is one area along the boundary of the Birch Creek South area that adjoins the Flathead National Forest, and two areas that adjoin the Helena National Forest. My decision in the headwaters of the West Fork Teton area is fully consistent with summer and winter management of travel on the Flathead National Forest. The Flathead NF manages their side as Wilderness, and the Lewis and Clark NF side would be managed for non-motorized travel yearlong.

Similarly, my decision in the Falls Creek area is fully consistent with summer and winter management of travel on the Helena National Forest. The Helena NF manages part of their side as Wilderness, and the remaining part for non-motorized recreation. Under my decision, the Lewis and Clark NF side would be managed yearlong for non-motorized recreation.

Effects on Wilderness Study Areas. My decision increases the protection of the Deep Creek “further planning” wilderness study area. Although my decision continues to allow motorized travel on about 8 miles of road and trail within the Deep Creek area, this is a significant reduction from the current 51 miles of roads and trails open to motorized use. Hannan Gulch would be the only route open to motorized vehicles in the entire 42,730 acre area. About the first mile of Hannan Gulch would be open yearlong to all motorized wheeled vehicles to allow for dispersed camping. The remaining 7 miles of Hannan Gulch would be managed as a trail open to ATVs and motorcycles yearlong.

ROD Table 12. Miles of Roads and Trails in the Birch Creek South area Within Deep Creek “Further Planning” Management Area N

ROADS & TRAILS WITHIN MANAGEMENT AREA “N”	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Motorized Roads	1 mi.	8	7	0	7	7
Motorized Trails	7 mi.	43	38	0	1	1
Subtotal -- motorized	8 mi. (13%)	51	45	0	8	8
Non-Motorized Roads	0 mi.	0	0	6	0	0
Non-Motorized Trails	55 mi.	18	18	55	55	55
Subtotal -- non-motorized	55 mi. (87%)	18	18	61	55	55
Total – motorized and non-motorized	63 mi.	69	63	61	63	63

Decommissioned Roads & Trails	0.6 mi.	0	0.6	2.3	0.6	0.6
Assigned as Special Use Trails	5.6 mi.	n/a	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6

The entire Deep Creek area would be restricted yearlong to cross-country over snow travel by snowmobiles under this decision. This is a significant increase in the protection of the wilderness character of the area during the winter months.

ROD Table 13. Winter Travel Restrictions in the Birch Creek South area Within Deep Creek “Further Planning” Management Area N

WINTER TRAVEL WITHIN MANAGEMENT AREA “N”	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Acres open seasonally to snowmobiling.	0 ac.	42,570	25,880	0	0	0
Acres restricted yearlong to snowmobiling.	42,730 ac.	160	16,850	42,730	42,730	42,730
Total – Deep Creek acreage	42,730 ac.	42,730	42,730	42,730	42,730	42,730
Miles of designated snowmobile trail.	0 mi.	0	0	0	0	0

Effects on Recommended Wilderness Areas. The Forest Plan recommended four areas totaling about 51,834 acres for inclusion in the wilderness preservation system. As shown in the following table, my decision would restrict all motorized wheeled vehicle travel within those four areas. My decision prohibits the use of bicycles on all 60 miles of trail within these recommended wilderness areas. I took this action because the area’s wilderness values would be best protected by not allowing incompatible uses to become established, and there is no discernible use of the areas by bicyclists at present.

ROD Table 14. Miles of Roads and Trails Within Forest Plan Recommended Wilderness Management Areas Q

ROADS & TRAILS BY FOREST PLAN MANAGEMENT AREA “Q”	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Motorized Roads	0 mi.	0	0	0	0	0
Motorized Trails	0 mi.	9	0	0	0	0
Subtotal -- motorized	0 mi.	9	0	0	0	0
Non-Motorized Roads	0 mi.	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Motorized Trails	60 mi.	51	60	60	60	60
Subtotal -- non-motorized	60 mi.	51	60	60	60	60
Total – motorized and non-motorized	60 mi.	60	60	60	60	60
Decommissioned Roads & Trails	0 mi.	n/a	0	0	0	0
Assigned as Special Use Trails	0 mi.	n/a	0	0	0	0

Likewise, my decision would restrict motorized over-snow travel yearlong within the four areas recommended for wilderness designation.

ROD Table 15. Winter Travel Restrictions Within Forest Plan Recommended Wilderness Management Areas Q

WINTER TRAVEL WITHIN MANAGEMENT AREA “Q”	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Acres open seasonally to snowmobiling.	0 ac.	49,180	12,500	0	0	0
Acres restricted yearlong to snowmobiling.	55,770 ac.	6,590	43,270	55,770	55,770	55,770
Total acreage	55,770 ac.	55,770	55,770	55,770	55,770	55,770
Miles of designated snowmobile trail.	0 mi.	0	0	0	0	0

SOCIAL-ECONOMICS

Effect on the “western heritage” social value of the Rocky Mountain Division. As stated in the Final EIS, all of the action alternatives maintain the features that are most valued in this premier landscape. My decision enhances these features by emphasizing the Rocky Mountain Ranger District as a primary place to enjoy hiking, horseback riding, pack trips, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. The following table shows that 9 trailheads would provide direct non-motorized access to the Wilderness via 29 different routes, which are 11 more routes than under the existing travel plan.

ROD Table 16. Trailheads Providing Non-Motorized Trail Access to Wilderness Trail System within Birch Creek South area

TYPE OF RECREATION ACTIVITY	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
<p>Access to Wilderness Trail System</p> <p>Trip lengths of 1 to 100+ miles</p>	<p><u>Trailhead:</u> Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (2) N. Fork Teton (4) S. Fork Teton (4) Sun River (4) Benchmark (5) Smith Creek (2) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (4)</p> <p>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 29 routes.</p>	<p><u>Trailhead:</u> Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (1) N. Fork Teton (5) S. Fork Teton (1) Sun River (1) Benchmark (4) Smith Creek (1) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (1)</p> <p>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 18 routes.</p>	<p><u>Trailhead:</u> Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (1) N. Fork Teton (5) S. Fork Teton (1) Sun River (1) Benchmark (6) Smith Creek (2) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (4)</p> <p>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 24 routes.</p>	<p><u>Trailhead:</u> Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (2) N. Fork Teton (5) S. Fork Teton (5) Sun River (4) Benchmark (9) Smith Creek (3) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (4)</p> <p>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 36 routes.</p>	<p><u>Trailhead:</u> Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (1) N. Fork Teton (5) S. Fork Teton (5) Sun River (4) Benchmark (7) Smith Creek (3) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (4)</p> <p>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 33 routes.</p>	<p><u>Trailhead:</u> Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (1) N. Fork Teton (5) S. Fork Teton (5) Sun River (4) Benchmark (7) Smith Creek (3) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (4)</p> <p>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 33 routes.</p>

(The number of non-motorized trails from each trailhead are shown in parentheses.)

Likewise, my decision provides about 264 miles of non-motorized trails outside the wilderness to enjoy horse, foot, and bicycle excursions. That is an increase of over 130 miles from the existing condition.

ROD Table 17. Miles of Non-Motorized Trails outside Wilderness

within Birch Creek South area

AREA	DECISION	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Birch – Teton	104 mi.	43 mi.	42 mi.	105 mi.	90 mi.	90 mi.
South Fork Sun	104 mi.	62 mi.	62 mi.	136 mi.	91 mi.	91 mi.
Dearborn - Elk	56 mi.	29 mi.	59 mi.	63 mi.	59 mi.	59 mi.
TOTAL	264 mi.	134 mi.	163 mi.	304 mi.	240 mi.	240 mi.

Overall, my decision enhances the Rocky Mountain Ranger District as a starting point for lengthy excursions or short trips into the Wilderness. There are additional trails to use as access routes for horse and foot trips into the wilderness, and there are additional miles of trails outside the wilderness to enjoy non-motorized excursions into the backcountry.

Social conflict between motorized and non-motorized activities. The vast majority of commentors discussed the need for quiet trails to reduce the conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users. Many favored Alternative 3 and felt motorized use should be reduced or eliminated on the RMF. Motorized users and non-motorized users have opposing view points on whether or not quality experiences are possible while sharing the same trail at the same time. Each person’s perspective determines if they enjoy their particular activity while sharing trails with others. My decision emphasizes non-motorized travel but includes some opportunities for recreationists to share use of trails.

For the Birch Creek South area, my decision continues to allow motorized ATV and motorcycle travel on about 74 miles of trail, which is 22% of the non-wilderness trail system in the area. This is a sizeable reduction in opportunity for motorized recreation from the existing 209 miles (61%) of the trail system open currently. Motorized recreationists may feel they have lost opportunities to visit the backcountry. In my judgment, the backcountry is still open to all visitors by non-motorized modes of travel. The 74 miles of trail designated for motorized travel provides some high quality opportunities for visitors to ride motorcycles or ATVs in the backcountry. Although limited in number of miles, these motorized trails provide several loops, connect to popular dispersed camping sites, and access destination features such as Renshaw Lake.

To reduce conflicts, it is important to direct visitors to the type of experience they are seeking, and to forewarn visitors as to other types of people they may encounter along the trail. Most of the conflict between motorized and non-motorized recreation could be eliminated by informing people at the trailhead what they may encounter on the trail. Information goes a long way in meeting people’s expectations, and preventing surprises. Potential conflicts could be reduced by applying mitigation measures listed in the FEIS, including: (1) trailhead signing about types of uses that one may encounter on multiple-use trails, and (2) recreational maps and information emphasizing areas for non-motorized activities, and motorized activities.

Many commentors favored Alternative 3 (non-motorized Alternative), and some may be unhappy if any trails remain open to motorized travel. My decision responds to the interests expressed by many in having a predominately non-motorized area with access to 267 miles of trail (79% of the non-wilderness system) to hike, ride horseback, or pedal a bicycle without

risk of encountering a motor. Should safety conflicts arise on trails open to both pedal bikes and other uses, the District Ranger can determine an appropriate action to address the situation. There will be 93 miles of trail that are open only to hikers and stock travel (closed to bicycles); or people can use West Fork Teton, South Fork Teton, Gibson Lake, South Fork Sun, Straight Creek, Dearborn, or Falls Creek trailheads to access 463 miles of Wilderness trails (on just the Rocky Mountain Ranger District) where they can hike or ride horseback without risk of encountering a motorized vehicle or a pedal bike.

Effects on grazing and Special Use permits. Main access roads to recreation residences would remain open yearlong to both motorized wheeled vehicles and snowmobiles. Permittees with cabins in the Benchmark and Sun Canyon areas would still have access to their cabins in the winter by snowmobiling on the main road. Cabin owners in the Sun Canyon area would not be able to use snowmobiles to play on the adjacent hillsides as in the past. Cabin owners in the Benchmark area would have access to snowmobile in a designated area on both sides of the main access road, in an area similar to the historic use areas. People renting the West Fork Cabin in the winter would still be able to snowmobile in the surrounding area. A local guest ranch would have to share the first 2 miles of trail with motorcycle riders when taking clients into the backcountry up the Middle Fork Teton River. If clients of the 7 guest ranch wanted to ride into the South Fork Teton River, they would have to share about 4 miles of trail with motorcycle riders. Grazing permittees, outfitters, and other special use permit holders in the Birch Creek South area would not be affected by my decision.

Benefits to the local and State economy. The analysis in the Final EIS indicated that none of the action alternatives would affect the local or State economy to any noticeable extent. My decision to emphasize non-motorized modes of travel and restrict motorized travel is expected to have very little influence on the local economy. It is unlikely that there will be a noticeable change in visitor use levels as a result of this decision for the Birch Creek South area. There will continue to be a low level of visitors that bring motorcycles or ATVs to use during their stay. Visitors who bring horses or bicycles, or who come to hunt, fish or hike will have more opportunities for non-motorized recreation but their use levels are not expected to dramatically increase. Although snowmobiling opportunities in the Benchmark and Beaver-Willow areas are limited in acreage, the areas will provide enough opportunity for the existing demand. Snowmobilers that generally seek riding opportunities in the Sun Canyon area will still find the Beaver-Willow area open, and probably won't shift their use to the Teton area. Any shifting of day-use traffic that may occur during the winter could reduce spending in Augusta and increase spending in the Choteau area.

Effects on Blackfeet Reserved Rights – the Ceded Strip. This issue was analyzed in the FEIS, and is being discussed further with the Blackfeet Tribe. It is another reason for delaying a decision about travel management for the Badger-Two Medicine area. It will be an important part of my future decision for the Badger-Two Medicine.

TRANSPORTATION:

Effect on management of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. As disclosed in the Final EIS, only about 7 miles of the CDNST is located within the Birch Creek South area. These 7 miles were analyzed for non-motorized travel under all alternatives, including the no action alternative. My decision is to continue the yearlong restrictions on motorized travel on all 7 miles of the CDNST outside of the Wilderness in the southern two-thirds of the Rocky Mountain Division. This is in full compliance with the 1985 Comprehensive Plan for the CDNST, and also in compliance with a July 3, 1997, policy memo from the Deputy Chief of the Forest Service emphasizing non-motorized recreation.

Designation of some Roads for Mixed Traffic. As disclosed in the Final EIS, there are some roads that may be suitable for mixing ATV/motorcycle traffic with highway vehicles in order to provide more recreational opportunities. Likewise, there is a need to evaluate and properly sign some roads to warn motorists that they may encounter hikers, horseback riders, packstrings, and bicycle riders on the roadway. An engineering evaluation must be completed on each of these roads before a final determination can be made. Therefore, no decision will be made at this time as to which roads, if any, would be designated for mixed traffic.

VEGETATION:

Potential for spread of noxious weeds. The analysis showed no correlation between the mode of recreational travel and the spread of noxious weeds. From the analysis, horse and foot traffic are just as likely to spread weeds as motorized OHVs. It appears that the potential for spread of noxious weeds is closely connected to the amount of infestation at the trailhead and the amount of use on the trails leading from the trailhead. If there is a large infestation of weeds at the trailhead, and there are a lot of people using the trails from the trailhead, then there is a higher potential for weeds to be spread along the trail. Management of the type of travel allowed on the trail has no relationship to the extent of weed spread. Use levels, not type of use, has the greatest potential impact on the spread of weeds. Because of this finding the potential for the spread of noxious weeds was not an influence in my decision about modes of travel allowed on roads and trails.

Effects on sensitive plant species. The analysis shows that none of the alternatives would affect sensitive plant species because this decision only applies to management of road and trail surfaces, an area where sensitive plant species do not grow. Off-road and off-trail travel is restricted by this decision, thereby eliminating the potential for motorized vehicles to affect sensitive plant populations. As stated in the Final EIS, the only potential to affect three known populations of sensitive plants is associated with decommissioning of two routes. It is important that the method of decommissioning these routes is closely coordinated with plant specialists to minimize effects on the identified sensitive species. For right now, decommissioning means the routes will not be designated for motorized use, and the routes will not be signed nor managed for any type of non-motorized use. A separate analysis would be made before any more ground disturbing activity (such as barricading, ripping, seeding, drainage dips, etc.) took place to decommission a road or trail. Mitigation measures described in the FEIS would be incorporated.

WILDLIFE / FISH:

Effects on Seasonally Important Habitats for Wildlife / Potential for Disturbance and Displacement – Wheeled Travel. My decision will reduce the mileage of open motorized routes within important seasonal habitats, will increase the acreage of spring habitats that are potentially secure from disturbance by motorized travel, and will increase the overall acreage of wildlife summer and fall habitat potentially secure from motorized travel in the Birch Creek South Area (see tables below). My decision will retain motorized travel in a few specific areas leaving some large areas free from motorized travel, unlike in the existing situation. This change in pattern is likely to benefit wildlife.

ROD Table 18. Miles of Open Motorized Routes Within Seasonal Habitats for Birch Creek South area (Table III-87 in DEIS)

Seasonal Habitat	DECISION	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5
Grizzly Bear Spring	111	184	128	85	106	106
Grizzly Bear Denning	1	7	2	0	1	1
Elk Calving	10	27	7	5	5	5
Elk Winter	35	89	68	25	56	56
Bighorn Sheep Lambing	2	19	12	0	11	11
Bighorn Sheep Winter	42	71	57	32	46	46
Mountain Goat Kidding	1	12	2	1	1	1
Mountain Goat Yearlong	9	31	20	3	9	9

ROD Table 19. Total Acreage and % Beyond 500m of Open Motorized Routes in key Spring Wildlife Habitats on NF Land within Birch Creek South area

Spring Wildlife Habitat	DECISION	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5
Grizzly Bear Spring	137,740* (87%)**	125,310 (79%)	134,210 (85%)	141,880 (89%)	138,740 (87%)	138,740 (87%)
Elk Calving	51,560 (93%)	47,440 (85%)	52,640 (95%)	53,400 (96%)	53,400 (96%)	53,400 (96%)
Bighorn Sheep Lambing	34,690 (98%)	28,970 (82%)	30,630 (86%)	35,140 (99%)	31,560 (89%)	31,560 (89%)
Mountain Goat Kidding	102,790 (99%)	99,010 (96%)	101,850 (98%)	102,870 (99%)	102,810 (99%)	102,810 (99%)

* Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 acres

** Percents are the portion of seasonal habitat within the NF boundary in the Birch-South area that is outside a 500m buffer.

ROD Table 20. Percent of Bear Management Unit (BMU) Subunits Outside 500m Buffer in Summer and Fall – Simple Buffer Method; Birch Creek South Area

BMU Subunit	DECISION	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5
	% of Subunit Outside 500m Buffer*					
Birch	99%	91%	94%	100%	94%	94%
Teton	87%	76%	77%	91%	86%	86%
Pine Butte	89%	59%	65%	91%	91% 89%	91% 89%
Deep Creek	89%	63%	66%	95%	95% 89%	95% 89%
Route Biggs	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Lick Rock	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
W Fk Beaver	91%	90%	89%	96%	91%	91%
S Fk Willow	85%	81%	83%	91%	84%	84%
Scapegoat	92%	92%	95%	97%	95%	95%
Falls Creek	100%	72%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* Where 2 percentages are shown, figures for summer differ from those for fall. The first figure is summer, and the second figure is fall.

The table above, although displaying results in terms of Bear Management Unit Subunits, serves as a means to estimate in general the amount of summer/fall wildlife habitat that would potentially be secure from impacts of motorized recreation.

Whether the reduction in potential disturbance from motorized travel displayed in these analyses would result in any measurable impacts to wildlife populations in terms of survival or reproduction is impossible to determine. It is important to understand that non-motorized travel may also cause disturbance and/or displacement of wildlife. The potential impacts of non-motorized travel on wildlife have not been analyzed for this Decision, and are assumed to be similar across all alternatives.

Effects on Seasonally Important Habitats for Wildlife / Potential for Disturbance and Displacement – Snowmobile Travel. My decision will dramatically reduce the acreage open to snowmobiles during identified seasons in key seasonal wildlife habitats as compared to the existing situation, as displayed in the table below. Results for Canada lynx are discussed in a separate section below.

Under the decision less than one mile of designated snowmobile route will enter mapped grizzly bear denning habitat, and approximately 1 mile of designated snowmobile route will enter grizzly bear spring habitat in the Birch-South Area. This is the same as in the existing situation. Results of this analysis are displayed in the FEIS.

ROD Table 21. Total Acreage and % of Seasonal Habitat Open to Snowmobiles for Birch Creek South Area (Table III-93 in DEIS)

Spring Wildlife Habitat*	DECISION	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5
Grizzly Bear Denning	8,150**	82,710	51,300	70	27,340	27,340

	(3%)***	(29%)	(18%)	(<<1%)	(9%)	(9%)
Grizzly Bear Spring	8,420 (5%)	68,550 (43%)	38,070 (24%)	0	26,310 (17%)	26,310 (17%)
Elk Winter Range	9 (<<1%)	42,240 (52%)	33,730 (57%)	0	28,000 (47%)	28,000 (47%)
Bighorn Sheep Winter Range	2,980 (5%)	48,340 (73%)	37,210 (56%)	0	31,000 (47%)	31,000 (47%)
Bighorn Sheep Lambing	1,230 (3%)	28,750 (81%)	18,140 (51%)	0	15,200 (43%)	15,200 (43%)
Mountain Goat Yearlong	11,350 (5%)	84,180 (40%)	48,730 (23%)	170 (<1%)	26,710 (13%)	26,710 (13%)
Wolverine Natal Denning	220 (2%)	2,580 (23%)	1,290 (11%)	0	640 (6%)	640 (6%)

* Mountain goat kidding and elk calving ranges are not included because the dates of importance for those habitats begin May 1, when snowmobiling activity is generally minimal to nonexistent.

** Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 acres.

*** Percents are the portion of seasonal habitat within the NF boundary in the Birch-South area that is open to snowmobiles at least 25% of the season of concern.

Effects on Wildlife Habitat Connectivity. Habitat connectivity, the term used to describe the maintenance of connections between seasonal habitats (east-west connectivity on the RMRD) and between larger areas with potentially distinct wildlife populations (north-south connectivity on the RMRD), was analyzed for Alternatives 1-5 in the FEIS. The analysis looked at the number and size of habitat ‘patches’, or areas >10 acres in size that were >500 meters from an open motorized trail or road open during the summer season (the season during which the most roads and trails would be open to motors). In general, fewer, larger patches maintain connectivity more effectively than more, smaller patches.

My decision was not numerically analyzed, but visual inspection shows that it will strongly resemble Alternative 4 in the size, location, and number of patches. Alternative 4 (as displayed in Table III-97 and Map 8 in the FEIS) would reduce the proportion of small patches and increase the proportion of large patches as compared to the existing situation.

My decision, as in Alternatives 3-5 (see FEIS Maps 7-9), will allow motorized use in localized areas providing large areas in which no motorized trails will potentially impact east-west movements of wildlife. North-south connectivity will be maintained as well, reinforced by the relatively large expanse of designated Wilderness along both sides of the Continental Divide west of the project area.

Effects to Threatened and Endangered Species. Effects of Alternatives 1-5 on Canada lynx and grizzly bear were analyzed in the FEIS and in a Biological Assessment (BA) submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Impacts to grizzly bear that were analyzed in the FEIS are reviewed above in the sections on disturbance and displacement from seasonal habitats. Additional analysis carried out for the BA is summarized below. The FEIS analysis for lynx parallels the analysis in the BA, and is summarized below.

Consultation.

Effects of my decision on the four federally listed species occurring on the RMRD were analyzed in a BA and Supplement that were sent to the FWS for informal consultation on August 7, 2006 (Supplement sent on September 5, 2006). On September 18, 2006 the FWS concurred with the determinations in the BA and Supplement that the Decision will have “No Effect” on the Threatened Bald Eagle, and “May Affect, But is Not Likely to Adversely Affect” the Threatened Gray Wolf, Canada Lynx, and Grizzly Bear. The FWS based its concurrence on the findings of the analysis in the BA as summarized below for each species.

The decision analyzed for the BA differs very slightly from my final decision discussed in this document, through removal of wheeled and over-snow motorized travel in the Jones Creek area, and addition of over-snow motorized travel in the Benchmark area. The changes do not affect conclusions from the analysis for any of the 4 listed species. The change in mileage of wheeled travel will have a very small positive effect on the grizzly bear analysis for one Subunit compared to what was reported in the BA. The change will not result in an effect to grizzly bears that differs from that reported in the BA, and will not change the determination or the basis for concurrence by the FWS. FWS personnel indicated by telephone (1/30/07; see project file) that the described changes will not require new consultation.

The change in over-snow areas will result in an increase of approximately 4,370 acres of area open to snowmobile travel within lynx habitat over that reported and analyzed in the BA. My decision still represents a significant reduction in acres of lynx habitat open to snowmobiles as compared to the existing situation (see below). Potential effects will not be different from those reported in the BA, and will not result in changes to the determination or the basis for concurrence by the FWS. FWS personnel indicated by telephone (1/30/07; see project file) that the described changes will not require new consultation.

Gray Wolf

One wolf pack, known as the Red Shale Pack, is known to be established on the RMRD roughly seven miles west of the Travel Plan boundary in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The project area does not include any known den or rendezvous sites that will be affected. My decision will not result in any impacts to the wolf prey base, and will not increase mortality risk to wolves. Because the decision covers a large area and is expected to be in place for a minimum of 10-15 years, however, impacts to individual wolves could potentially occur during the life of the plan.

Grizzly Bear

Motorized Access Management

Potential impacts to grizzly bears were analyzed in the BA by looking at route density and core area as outlined in the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) Taskforce Report on Grizzly Bear/Motorized Access Management and the Interim Motorized Access Management Direction (Interim Guidelines) for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE). Values from the Interim Guidelines for motorized route densities and for core area, based on percent federal ownership of BMU Subunits, were applied as reference guidelines to the RMRD analysis. Only two Subunits in the Travel Plan area are above the percent federal ownership level ($\geq 75\%$) for which numeric guidelines for motorized route density and core area apply. The guideline for the remainder of the Subunits is no net increase in the percent of the Subunit at specified total and open motorized route densities, and no net decrease in the

percent of the Subunit in core area. Specific numbers, definitions, and other analysis information can be found in the BA.

My decision will reduce both total and open motorized route densities on National Forest lands in all Subunits, and will result in route densities within the reference guideline for the two Subunits that are $\geq 75\%$ National Forest lands. Core area will be increased for all Subunits under the Decision, although it will remain slightly below the reference guideline for one Subunit with $\geq 75\%$ National Forest land. When calculated by season, core area in that Subunit does not meet the guideline only during the fall season. The analysis shows that high-use non-motorized trails, which are included along with motorized trails in core calculations, are the factor that limits this Subunit's ability to meet the guideline value during the fall season.

CEM

The east-side NCDE Cumulative Effects Model (CEM) for grizzly bears was run as another means of assessing potential impacts of the decision on grizzly bear habitat. The model assigns a value (Habitat Value, or HV) to grizzly bear habitat based on vegetation characteristics, and then decreases that value according to the amount and type of human activity occurring in it. The resulting value, called Habitat Effectiveness (HE), reflects the relative worth of a specific area (usually a BMU Subunit) as compared to other areas or as compared to the same area with different levels of human activity. CEM calculations are carried out separately for spring, summer, and fall.

The impact of the decision as compared to the existing situation was measured by relative amount of change from HV to HE in each Subunit. The analysis showed that the decision either does not alter or decreases the amount by which HV is reduced by human activity, effectively maintaining or improving the value of grizzly bear habitat in all Subunits over all seasons.

Canada Lynx

The USDA Forest Service Region 1 is a signatory to the Lynx Conservation Agreement (USFS #00-MU-11015600-013).). Signatories have agreed to follow specific recommendations and guidelines in the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS; Reudiger et al. 2000) that includes mapping potential lynx habitat, and establishing Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs) as the standard unit at which analyses should occur. The LCAS guides land managers to "...allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and snowmobile play areas by LAU unless the designation serves to consolidate unregulated use and improves lynx habitat" (Modifications of LCAS, August 2000 Edition- Clarifying Language; Memo to Deputy Regional Forester, August 28, 2003).

The table below shows the mileage of designated over-snow routes (trails designated on maps or other official documentation as snowmobile trails or cross-country ski trails) and the miles of road known to be used by snowmobiles in lynx habitat by LAU for both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. Because plowed roads also provide a compacted surface during winter, the miles of plowed road within lynx habitat are also displayed below. There are no designated snowmobile play areas on the RMRD and none will be created by the decision.

ROD Table 22. Miles of Designated Over-Snow Routes and Regularly Used Roads

in Lynx Habitat, by LAU

LAU Name	Miles of Designated Over-Snow Route		Miles of Road Regularly Used by Snowmobiles		Miles of Plowed Road	
	Existing	DECISION	Existing	DECISION	Existing	DECISION
RM9	1.9	1.9	1.5	1.5	0.7	0.7
RM12	0	0	0.2	0.2	0	0
RM20	0	0	0.2	0.2	0	0
RM23	0	0	1.4	1.4	0	0
TOTAL	1.9	1.9	3.3	3.3	0.7	0.7

There will be no change in the mileage of over-the-snow routes or the mileage of road regularly used by snowmobiles between the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan.

The LCAS does not provide specific recommendations for dispersed over-the-snow recreation, but it recommends maintaining “... a landscape of interconnected blocks of foraging habitat where snowmobile, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, or other snow compacting activities are minimized or discouraged”. The table below displays the acreage and percent of lynx habitat in each LAU in the Birch-South area that is currently open to snowmobiles and that will be open under the Decision. This table differs from Table 15 in the BA, reflecting the aforementioned changes that were made after consultation had occurred.

ROD Table 23. Acres Open to Snowmobiling in Lynx Habitat by LAU and Percent of Habitat in LAU Open to Snowmobiling

LAU Name	Existing Condition (Alt. 1)		DECISION	
	Acres	Open Acres as Percent of Lynx Habitat in LAU	Acres	Open Acres as Percent of Lynx Habitat in LAU
RM7	1817	19%	10	<<1%
RM9	8704	99%	3766	43%
RM11	2	<1%	0	--
RM12	5686	72%	892	11%
RM14	2	<1%	0	--
RM15	7024	100%	0	--
RM16	4419	36%	0	--
RM18	12	<1%	0	--
RM19	4722	30%	0	--
RM20	13104	97%	692	5%
RM21	965	5%	0	--
RM22	2402	24%	1	<1%
RM23	10326	100%	6435	62%
RM25	2709	99%	0	--
RM26	1987	42%	0	--
RM27	3564	100%	0	--
TOTAL	67,446	29%	11,797	5%

My decision will remove snowmobiling entirely from lynx habitat in 10 of the 22 LAUs in the Birch-South area, and will reduce the acreage open to snowmobiles in the remaining LAUs substantially. Overall the decision will result in a reduction from 29% of lynx foraging/denning habitat open to snowmobiles under the existing situation to 5% of lynx foraging/denning habitat open to snowmobiles. It is important to note that under both situations a certain percentage of area open to snowmobiles is not, in fact, available to snowmobiles due to terrain, vegetation, and other factors. Nevertheless, the decision represents a large decrease in potential impacts to lynx from snowmobile travel.

All other provisions of the LCAS are currently being met and will continue to be met under the decision.

Bald Eagle

There are no known bald eagle nests and no suitable bald eagle nesting habitat on the RMRD. Some bald eagles may winter along the eastern portion of the project area, which is also periodically used by migrating individuals. My decision will have no effect on bald eagles or their habitat.

Effects on Sensitive Species. Impacts to Sensitive Species are summarized in Table III-84A of the FEIS. Wolverine are the only Sensitive Species that received detailed analysis; the results are displayed in the FEIS and in Table III-84A showing potential impacts of snowmobiles on key wildlife habitats. Fisher have not been documented on the RMRD, but potential impacts to fisher will be similar to those described above and in the FEIS for grizzly bear, lynx, and elk. My decision will have no impact on the remaining sensitive species due to the nature of the decision being made, the scale at which their habitat requirements occur, or the location or type of the specific habitats used.

Potential for sedimentation of fish habitat from existing roads and trails. Although none of the alternatives will significantly reduce the total miles of roads and trails within 100 feet of streams in the Birch Creek South analysis area, my decision will result in fewer stream crossings after unneeded routes are decommissioned. Additionally, the decrease in motorized travel on some routes is expected to reduce sediment delivery to perennial streams.

Effects on westslope cutthroat trout. The majority of westslope cutthroat trout habitat occurs in the Badger Two Medicine area and will not be affected by my decision. However, my decision is expected to reduce motorized use and associated effects on westslope cutthroat trout streams in the upper Teton drainage.

IV. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In 2000, the Lewis and Clark National Forest asked the public about the need to update and revise travel management across the entire Forest. A total of 211 people attended 10 open house meetings, and 90 letters were received from the public. In 2002, an Interdisciplinary

Team of Forest Service employees began developing a proposed action for travel management on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. This proposed action was released to the public for comment beginning August 22, 2002. The 30-day comment period was extended to mid-December 2002. Meetings with the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council in October resulted in additional open house meetings being held in December, and the comment period was extended to late January 2003. Seven open house meetings were attended by 192 people during the scoping period. About 6,300 comments were received from the public as a result of this process.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement was released for public comment beginning June 16, 2005. Eight open house meetings were attended by 357 people. About 35,500 comments were received as a result of this process. A content analysis of public comments is contained in the project file.

V. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

The Interdisciplinary Team developed five alternatives (including the No Action Alternative) that were studied in detail. The alternatives are site specific to road and trail location and vary primarily in the mode of travel restricted and season of travel restricted.

No Action Alternative

ALTERNATIVE 1

The No Action alternative provides a baseline for estimating the effects of other alternatives and therefore must be considered in detail (FSH 1909.15, part 14.1; 40 CFR 1502.14(d)). In cases such as this, where ongoing programs or management described within an existing plan continue as new plans are being developed, the No Action alternative means no change from current management direction (FSH 1909.15, part 14.1; CEQ's 40 Most Asked Questions, section 65.12, question 3). The 1988 Travel Plan and the 2001 Three-State OHV Decision define travel management that is currently enforced on the ground. This is the existing condition, and it would be carried forward if there were no decision made to change travel management. Therefore it is appropriately considered the No Action alternative. Analysis of current travel management also fulfills a 1989 directive by the Regional Forester to complete additional analysis of the 1988 Travel Plan.

Action Alternatives

ALTERNATIVE 2

In 2002, an interdisciplinary team (IDT) of resource specialists began developing a proposal for travel management on the RMRD, based on the need for change identified through an early scoping effort conducted in late 2000 and through detailed review of all roads and non-wilderness trails on the RMRD. The IDT considered seven criteria on which to assess the

need for change on roads and trails throughout the non-wilderness portion of the RMRD: wildlife and fish habitat protection, conflict between uses, erosion control, safety, facility/resource protection, wilderness protection, and noxious weed spread. The IDT also identified and proposed corrections to travel management restrictions and ownership that were shown erroneously on the existing 1988 Travel Plan Map.

Based on field visits and knowledge of on-site conditions acquired during 2002/2003, the IDT determined that some modifications were needed to correct errors in and improve the Proposed Action. Because the majority of these modifications were minor corrections or changes that did not alter the basic characteristics of the Proposed Action, the decision was made to carry the new, modified alternative forward for detailed analysis in place of the Proposed Action. This modified alternative is now referred to only as Alternative 2, in accordance with my direction as described above. The original “Proposed Action” that was provided to the public for comment is retained in the Alternatives Not Considered in Detail section of the DEIS, along with the rationale for not carrying it forward for detailed analysis.

ALTERNATIVE 3

Alternative 3 is based largely on comments submitted by the public requesting that travel management on the RMRD emphasize traditional foot and horse travel and eliminate motorized travel on trails.

ALTERNATIVE 4

Alternative 4 is based both on comments submitted by the public requesting greater separation of motorized and non-motorized travel, and on efforts by the IDT to identify areas in which to focus motorized loop opportunities and other areas in which to emphasize enhancement of other resources. In identifying areas in which to restrict motorized travel, the IDT attempted to choose areas in which more than one resource (e.g. wildlife habitat, wilderness/roadless characteristics, traditional travel, etc.) might benefit. In identifying areas in which to focus motorized loop opportunities, the IDT looked for areas in which the existing infrastructure could support a specific type of motorized use, in which loops existed or trail mileages were sufficient to create a reasonable motorized recreational opportunity, and in which other resources could be appropriately protected or impacts of motorized travel mitigated. The IDT also attempted to provide a mix of recreational opportunities throughout various geographic areas of the RMRD.

ALTERNATIVE 5

Alternative 5 was developed by the IDT in response to consultation with the Blackfeet tribal government and to address cultural issues in the Badger-Two Medicine area. The National Forest and the Blackfeet Indian Reservation share a common boundary in this area, and the Blackfeet retain specific reserved rights in the area in accordance with the 1895-96 agreement with the U.S. Government. Much of the Badger-Two Medicine area has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural District.

VI. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND POLICIES

A. Forest Plan Consistency

The Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan provides integrated guidance for all natural resource management activities as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. The Forest Plan established goals and management direction for the entire Forest and identified standards for resource protection. The actions selected in this ROD comply with Forest Plan goals and direction.

- A. National Forest Management Act
- B. National Environmental Policy Act
- C. Endangered Species Act
- D. National Historic Preservation Act
- E. Additional Laws and Regulations

VII. ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Council on Environmental Quality regulations direct the decision-maker to identify the environmentally preferable alternative. The environmentally preferred alternative is not necessarily the alternative that will be implemented and it does not have to meet the underlying need of the project. It does, however, have to cause the least damage to the biological, and physical environment and best protect, preserve, and enhance historical cultural, and natural resources (Section 101 NEPA: 40 CFR 1505.2(b)).

The Forest Service did not identify an environmentally preferred alternative in either the “Draft” or “Final” Environmental Impact Statement. On environmental issues like water quality and air quality the analysis does not indicate great differences between the alternatives. Based on the assumptions used in the analysis Alternative 3 would have slightly less negative impact on water and air quality. The analysis for effects on wildlife is more insightful. In reviewing ROD Tables 18, 19, 20, and 21 Alternative 3 has the least negative effects on wildlife habitat, and is the environmentally preferred alternative. My decision has almost identical impacts to the environmentally preferred alternative.

VIII. APPEAL PROVISIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11. A written appeal must be submitted within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the *Great Falls Tribune*, the newspaper of record. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Paper appeals must be submitted to:

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer
P.O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807

Or

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer
200 East Broadway
Missoula, MT 59802

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Electronic appeals must be submitted to: appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us

In electronic appeals, the subject line should contain the name of the project being appealed. An automated response will confirm your electronic appeal has been received. Electronic appeals must be submitted in MS Word, Word Perfect, or Rich Text Format (RTF).

It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project- or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why my decision should be reversed. The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. At a minimum, the appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14, and include the following information:

- The appellant's name and address, with a telephone number, if available;
- A signature, or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
- When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
- The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;
- The regulation under which the appeal is being filed, when there is an option to appeal under either 36 CFR 215 or 36 CFR 251, subpart C;
- Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
- Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;
- Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the substantive comments; and
- How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy

The decisions identified in this ROD shall be implemented as soon as practicable following opportunity for review and appeal.

IX. PLANNING RECORDS/CONTACT PERSON

The planning records contain detailed information and data used in preparation of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan EIS and in selecting Alternative 4 with modifications for implementation.

Documents are available at:

Lewis and Clark National Forest
1101 15th Street North, Box 869
Great Falls, MT 59403
(406) 791-7700

For additional information concerning this decision please contact Dick Schwecke, ID Team Leader, Lewis and Clark National Forest, Great Falls, Montana, (406) 791-7700.

Lesley W. Thompson

LESLEY W. THOMPSON
Forest Supervisor

October 1, 2007

Date

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures as described in the FEIS for this project will be implemented to minimize, reduce, rectify, avoid, eliminate, and/or compensate the potential impacts to resources identified in Chapter III (40 CFR 1508.20).

Appendices

- Appendix A** Trails for Hiking Travel Only
- Appendix B** Trails for Hiking and Stock Travel
- Appendix C** Trails and Roads for Hiking, Stock, and Bicycle Travel
- Appendix D** Trails and Roads for Motorcycle (single-track) Travel
- Appendix E** Trails and Roads for ATV (double-track) Travel
- Appendix F** Roads for Seasonal Travel with Passenger Vehicles
- Appendix G** Roads for Yearlong Travel with Passenger Vehicles
- Appendix H** Yearlong Access Roads Not Changed or Included in ROD
- Appendix I** Disposition of “Undetermined” Routes
- Appendix J** Decommissioned Trails and Roads
- Appendix K** Biological Assessment**

**Appendix K includes a copy of the Biological Assessment (BA) submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and subsequent correspondence.

A Biological Evaluation (BE) was completed as part of the analysis of alternatives, and is documented and displayed in both the FEIS and Rationale for the Decision.

APPENDIX A

“HIKING ONLY” TRAILS

10/01/2007

TRAILS RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO TRAVEL BY BICYCLES, STOCK AND ALL TYPES OF MOTORIZED WHEELED VEHICLES

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code A3 in FEIS) are trails that would be restricted yearlong to travel by bicycles, stock, and all types of wheeled motorized vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
160	Mt Wright Hiker	Birch Teton	3.06
184	Our Lake	Birch Teton	2.83
263	Wood Lake Hiker	South Fk Sun	0.65
utrl72*	Mill Falls Ridge	Birch Teton	0.88
TOTAL MILEAGE			7.42 miles

* Undetermined (non-system) route to be adopted and managed as a system trail.

APPENDIX B

HIKING and STOCK ONLY TRAILS

10/01/2007

TRAILS RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO TRAVEL BY BICYCLES AND MOTORIZED WHEELED VEHICLES

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code A4 in FEIS) are trails that would be restricted yearlong to travel by bicycles and all types of motorized wheeled vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
108	Route Cr Pass	Birch Teton	4.72
114	West Fk Teton	Birch Teton	5.14
117	Washboard Reef	Birch Teton	2.92
157	Nesbit - Olney Cr	Birch Teton	2.08
165	Headquarters Cr	Birch Teton	3.84
201	North Fk Sun	South Fk Sun	7.80
201.1	Beaver-Mortimer Connector	South Fk Sun	1.50
202	South Fk Sun	South Fk Sun	7.60
204	Fairview Cr	South Fk Sun	4.39
206	Dearborn River	Dearborn Elk	5.26
208	Arsenic Cr	South Fk Sun	3.92
212	Straight Cr	South Fk Sun	2.92
213	Patrol Mtn LO	South Fk Sun	3.36
229	Falls Cr	Dearborn Elk	8.53
230	S Fk Sun - 202 Access	South Fk Sun	0.38
241	Windfall Cr	South Fk Sun	1.35
242	Bighead Cr	South Fk Sun	4.38
243	Lange Cr	South Fk Sun	11.50
255	South Fk Sun Cutoff	South Fk Sun	0.04
255.1	S Fk Sun TH Connector	South Fk Sun	0.28
256	Benchmark Cr	South Fk Sun	5.90
266	Middle Fk Falls Cr	Dearborn Elk	3.51
276	Deer Cr	South Fk Sun	0.58
utrl40*	North Fk Sun Alt	South Fk Sun	0.52
Kencks**	Kencks Cabin Access	South Fk Sun	0.58
TOTAL MILEAGE			92.99 miles

* Undetermined (non-system) route to be adopted and managed as a system trail.

** Special use road converted to and managed as a system trail.

APPENDIX C

HIKING, STOCK, AND BICYCLE TRAILS

10/01/2007

TRAILS RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO TRAVEL BY ALL TYPES OF MOTORIZED WHEELED VEHICLES

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code A in FEIS) are trails that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all types of motorized wheeled vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
106	Blackleaf	Birch Teton	2.07
107	North Fk Teton	Birch Teton	5.27
108002*	ns	South Fk Sun	0.96
112	South Fk Dupuyer	Birch Teton	0.51
113	Indian Head Rock	Birch Teton	1.32
114	West Fk Teton	Birch Teton	0.42
124	North Fk Dupuyer	Birch Teton	1.03
126	Rierdon Gulch	Birch Teton	12.35
127	green gulch	Birch Teton	6.35
128	Deep Cr-Biggs Cr	Birch Teton	6.83
135	North Fk Deep Cr	Birch Teton	2.04
153	MT Frazier-Chicken Coulee	Birch Teton	12.66
155	Jones Cr	Birch Teton	3.17
156	West Fk Jones Cr	Birch Teton	1.01
168	South Fk Teton	Birch Teton	11.41
177	Clary Coulee	Birch Teton	5.27
191	Cow Cr	Birch Teton	3.73
	cow creek	Birch Teton	0.18
192	Muddy Cr	Birch Teton	1.27
197	Wagner Basin	South Fk Sun	0.44
201.2*	Carrols Access	South Fk Sun	0.21
201.3	Mortimer Spur 3	South Fk Sun	0.23
201.4	Mortimer Spur 4	South Fk Sun	0.14
204	Fairview Cr	South Fk Sun	0.96
204.1	Fairview Spur	South Fk Sun	0.16
205	Elk Pass	Dearborn Elk	5.04
210	Beaver Cr	South Fk Sun	4.75
214	Jakie Cr	Dearborn Elk	3.38
215	Smith Cr	Dearborn Elk	6.45
219	East Fk Falls Cr	Dearborn Elk	8.69
220	Cabin Cr	South Fk Sun	3.71

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
223	Blacktail Cr	South Fk Sun	9.86
229	Falls Cr	Dearborn Elk	2.23
233	Sawmill Cr	Dearborn Elk	1.38
237	Cataract Falls	Dearborn Elk	0.08
238	Moudess Cr	Dearborn Elk	1.45
239	Steamboat LO	Dearborn Elk	1.52
244	Petty Ford Cr	Dearborn Elk	1.19
245	Weasel Creek	Dearborn Elk	3.51
251	Big George Gulch	South Fk Sun	6.93
252	Mortimer Gulch	South Fk Sun	5.77
252.1	Mortimer NFK Connector	South Fk Sun	0.04
255	South Fk Sun Cutoff	South Fk Sun	0.58
255.1	S Fk Sun TH Connector	South Fk Sun	0.45
259	Mortimer Pass	South Fk Sun	1.99
264	Benchmark Corral Spur	South Fk Sun	0.56
264.1	Benchmark Cabin Spur	South Fk Sun	0.29
269	North Fk Beaver - Leavitt	South Fk Sun	2.14
8988	cow creek	Birch Teton	0.49
8989	south fork dupuyer	Birch Teton	1.02
sutrl71*	Ford ATV spur	South Fk Sun	1.45
utrl45*	home gulch ns	South Fk Sun	1.41
utrl58*	Falls Area ns	Dearborn Elk	0.89
utrl59*	Falls Area ns	Dearborn Elk	2.72
utrl62*	alt114	Birch Teton	0.10
utrl65*	Wood Creek Snotel	South Fk Sun	1.07
utrl70*	Ford Basin ATV	South Fk Sun	2.62
TOTAL MILEAGE			163.75 miles

* Undetermined (non-system) route to be adopted and managed as a system trail.

HIKING, STOCK, AND BICYCLE ROADS

ROADS RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO TRAVEL BY ALL TYPES OF MOTORIZED WHEELED VEHICLES

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code A in FEIS) are roads that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all types of motorized wheeled vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
108F	gravel pit	South Fk Sun	0.06
233003*	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.09
233009*	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.37
3308	green gulch west	Birch Teton	1.35
9167004*	home gulch ns	South Fk Sun	0.06
9200A	benchmark fs station	South Fk Sun	0.22
9206001*	Airstrip Service Road	South Fk Sun	0.22
*	Airstrip/CG Access	South Fk Sun	0.40
9206004*	Pilots CG Admin Road	South Fk Sun	0.07
9206005*	airstrip creek access	South Fk Sun	0.01
TOTAL MILEAGE			2.85 miles

* Undetermined (non-system) route to be adopted and managed as a system trail.

APPENDIX D

MOTORCYCLE (Single Track) TRAILS

10/01/2007

TRAILS UNRESTRICTED TO TRAVEL BY MOTORCYCLES AND RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO TRAVEL BY ATVs

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code R in FEIS) are trails that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all types of motorized wheeled vehicles that do not meet the definition of a motorcycle. These trails would be open yearlong to travel by motorcycles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
108	Route Cr Pass	Birch Teton	1.66
154	Lonesome Ridge	Birch Teton	2.11
232	Petty Crown	Dearborn Elk	2.91
244	Petty Ford Cr	South Fk Sun	1.87
253	Bailey Basin	Dearborn Elk	1.16
270	Crown Mtn	South Fk Sun	2.60
270.1	Petty Crown Connector	South Fk Sun	0.19
TOTAL MILEAGE			12.50 miles

The junction of Trails 270 and 232 would be modified by relocating about 0.2 miles of Trail 270 onto a new location, to divert motorcycle traffic away from the Wilderness boundary.

TRAILS RESTRICTED SEASONALLY TO MOTORCYCLES, and RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO TRAVEL BY ATVs

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code N in FEIS) are trails that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all motorized wheeled vehicles not meeting the definition of a motorcycle. They would be seasonally restricted to travel by motorcycles from October 15 to June 30 annually.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
204	Fairview Cr	South Fk Sun	5.51
236	Renshaw Lake	South Fk Sun	0.19
243	Lange Cr	South Fk Sun	1.29
256	Benchmark Cr	South Fk Sun	1.03
258	Ford Basin	South Fk Sun	4.43
267	Home Gulch-Lime Gulch	South Fk Sun	10.25
271	Norwegian Gulch	South Fk Sun	4.47
275	Cut Reef Cr	South Fk Sun	3.73
277	Red Lake	South Fk Sun	1.09
utrl50*	Ford Basin Spur	South Fk Sun	0.81
TOTAL MILEAGE			32.81 miles

* Undetermined (non-system) trail to be adopted and managed as a system trail.

**ROADS RESTRICTED SEASONALLY TO MOTORCYCLES,
and RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO TRAVEL BY ATVs,
and RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO FULL-SIZE VEHICLES**

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code N in FEIS) are roads that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all motorized wheeled vehicles not meeting the definition of a motorcycle. They would be seasonally restricted to travel by motorcycles from October 15 to June 30 annually.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
235018	dual use road	South Fk Sun	0.58
235-C	14 mile sale	South Fk Sun	0.24
TOTAL MILEAGE			0.81 miles

APPENDIX E

ATV (Double Track) TRAILS

10/01/2007

TRAILS UNRESTRICTED TO TRAVEL BY ATVs AND RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO FULL SIZE VEHICLES

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code B in FEIS) are trails that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all types of motorized wheeled vehicles that do not meet the definition of an ATV or motorcycle. These trails would be open yearlong to travel by ATVs and motorcycles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
200	Hannan Blacktail Connector	South Fk Sun	1.31
240	Hannan Gulch	South Fk Sun	1.53
240.1	Hannan Gulch Shortcut	South Fk Sun	0.19
257	Cyanide Cr	Dearborn Elk	1.24
3305	Hannan west	South Fk Sun	5.31
utrl34*	west fork firewood	Birch Teton	0.86
utrl56*	Cyanide ns	Dearborn Elk	1.32
utrl66*	elk ATV	Dearborn Elk	0.49
TOTAL MILEAGE			12.26 miles

* Undetermined (non-system) route to be adopted and managed as a system trail.

TRAILS RESTRICTED SEASONALLY TO ATVs, and RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO FULL SIZE VEHICLES

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code E2 in FEIS) are trails that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all motorized wheeled vehicles not meeting the definition of an ATV or motorcycle. The following trails would be seasonally restricted to travel by ATVs and motorcycles from October 15 to December 1.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
277	Red Lake	South Fk Sun	1.55
utrl44*	old road-red lake	South Fk Sun	1.24
utrl48*	Old Beaver Willow	South Fk Sun	0.42
*	Old Beaver Willow Rd***	South Fk Sun	1.91
TOTAL MILEAGE			5.11 miles

* Undetermined (non-system) route to be adopted and managed as a system trail.

*** About 0.5 mile of old Beaver Willow Road (utrl48) would be relocated and reconstructed to ATV trail standards to bypass private land and connect with Road 233 at the gate/trailhead.

The following trail (code J in FEIS) would be seasonally restricted to travel by ATVs and motorcycles from October 15 to June 30.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
2005	waldron creek	Birch Teton	1.22
TOTAL MILEAGE			1.22 miles

**ROADS UNRESTRICTED TO TRAVEL BY ATVs
AND RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO FULL SIZE VEHICLES**

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code B in FEIS) are roads that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all types of motorized wheeled vehicles that do not meet the definition of an ATV or motorcycle. These roads would be open yearlong to travel by ATVs and motorcycles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
8996	teton firewood access 1	Birch Teton	0.49
8997	teton firewood access 2	Birch Teton	0.79
8998	teton firewood access 3	Birch Teton	0.53
8999	teton firewood access #4	Birch Teton	0.25
9151	teton firewood access 5	Birch Teton	0.30
9152	teton firewood access 6	Birch Teton	0.38
TOTAL MILEAGE			2.75 miles

**ROADS RESTRICTED SEASONALLY TO ATVs,
and RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO FULL SIZE VEHICLES**

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following routes (code E2 in FEIS) are roads that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all motorized wheeled vehicles not meeting the definition of an ATV or motorcycle. The following road would be seasonally restricted to travel by ATVs and motorcycles from October 15 to December 1.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
6497	flat creek	South Fk Sun	0.59
TOTAL MILEAGE			0.59 miles

The following roads (code J in FEIS) would be seasonally restricted to travel by ATVs and motorcycles from October 15 to June 30, and restricted yearlong to travel by all motorized wheeled vehicles not meeting the definition of an ATV or motorcycle

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
8980	wright creek	Birch Teton	0.70
8995	snowmobile loop	Birch Teton	0.84
8995001*rd	ns	Birch Teton	0.10
TOTAL MILEAGE			1.63 miles

*rd Undetermined (non-system) route to be adopted and managed as a system road.

APPENDIX F

ROADS OPEN SEASONALLY TO MOTORIZED TRAVEL

10/01/2007

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following roads (code E in FEIS) would be restricted seasonally from October 15 to December 1 annually to travel by all types of wheeled motorized vehicles. Conversely, these roads would be open seasonally from December 2 to October 14 for travel by all types of street legal, motorized wheeled vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
233	beaver-willow	South Fk Sun	7.48
233002 ^{*rd}	Bear Tree Rd	South Fk Sun	0.27
233004 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.13
233005 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.84
233006 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.20
233007 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.12
233010 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.13
233011 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.10
233012 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.18
233013 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.24
233014 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.10
233015 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.05
233016 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.07
233037 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.10
233039 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.14
233040 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.25
233041 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.27
3310	lower beaver creek	South Fk Sun	0.12
6497	flat creek	South Fk Sun	0.84
6497005 ^{*rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.20
9153	sawmill flat	South Fk Sun	0.45
TOTAL MILEAGE			12.28 miles

^{*rd} Undetermined (non-system) route to be adopted and managed as a system road.

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following roads (code F in FEIS) would be restricted seasonally from October 15 to June 30 annually to travel by all types of wheeled motorized vehicles. Conversely, these roads would be open seasonally from July 1 to October 14 for travel by all types of street legal, motorized wheeled vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
9193	north fork dupuyer creek	Birch Teton	1.37
9209	wood lake hogback	South Fk Sun	1.56
TOTAL MILEAGE			2.94 miles

APPENDIX G

ROADS OPEN YEARLONG TO MOTORIZED TRAVEL

10/01/2007

Travel management would change on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. The following “undetermined” roads would be adopted and managed as part of the road transportation system, because they provide necessary public access to dispersed campsites and trailheads along the main access roads in the Birch Creek - South area. The following routes (code B2 in FEIS) are roads that would be open yearlong to all types of street legal motorized vehicle access.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
8992	W.Fk. CG Dispersed Site & RecRes Access	Birch Teton	0.09
108001	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.60
108002	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.32
108003	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.23
108004	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.05
108005	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.34
108006	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.55
108007	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.09
108009	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.10
108010	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.12
108012	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.20
108017	Diversion Lake Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.14
108019	Diversion Lake Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.20
108020	Diversion Lake Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.12
108022	Diversion Lake Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.20
108023	Diversion Lake Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.07
108024	Home Gulch Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.14
108052	Norwegian Gulch Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.10
108053	French Gulch Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.24
108C001	Gibson Dam	South Fk Sun	0.06
108C003	Blacktail Creek Trailhead & Access to Special Use Camp (K-L)	South Fk Sun	0.02
108C004	Gibson Dam	South Fk Sun	0.03
108E01	Gibson Dam	South Fk Sun	0.05
109001	Rierdon Gulch Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.12
109003	S.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.03
109005	S.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.17
109010	S.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.14
144002	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.38
144003	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.06
144004	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.56
144006	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.11
144007	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.12
144009	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.26
144040	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.10

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
144B	Jones Creek Trailhead	Birch Teton	0.05
145003	Blackleaf Trailhead Dispersed Site	Birch Teton	0.10
196001	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	Dearborn Elk	0.29
196002	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	Dearborn Elk	0.05
196003	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	Dearborn Elk	0.09
196004	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	Dearborn Elk	0.10
196005	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	Dearborn Elk	0.02
196006	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	Dearborn Elk	0.10
196007	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	Dearborn Elk	0.01
233042	Willow Creek Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.06
235003	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.08
235006	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.40
235009	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.17
235010	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.05
235010A	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.09
235011	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.14
235012	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.11
235012A	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.06
235014	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.07
235016	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.14
235025	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.13
235061	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.08
235063	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.06
235066	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.11
235067	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.04
235069	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.08
235078	Benchmark Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.07
235b004	Crown Mtn Parking	South Fk Sun	0.08
3318A001	willow cr dispersed	South Fk Sun	0.07
3318A002	willow cr dispersed	South Fk Sun	0.02
3327A	Benchmark Packer Corrals	South Fk Sun	0.25
8982A	ns at Cave Mtn TH	Birch Teton	0.24
8992003	w fk corral access	Birch Teton	0.09
9167001	Home Gulch Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.10
9167003	Home Gulch Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.09
9167004	home gulch Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.19
9182002	West Fork CG overflow	Birch Teton	0.06
9206002	Fairview Creek Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.29
9206003	Fairview Creek Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.02
9229001	Benchmark Dispersed Site	South Fk Sun	0.07
TOTAL MILEAGE			10.43 miles

APPENDIX H
ROADS OPEN YEARLONG TO MOTORIZED TRAVEL
AND
NOT CHANGED BY THE RECORD OF DECISION
FOR BIRCH CREEK-SOUTH

10/01/2007

No change in travel management would occur on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. These roads have been open to public motorized vehicle travel since the time they were originally constructed, and remain open as originally authorized. Nothing in the Record of Decision for the Birch Creek – South area attempts to make a decision about these roads. The following routes (code B2 in FEIS) are roads open yearlong to all types of street legal, motorized wheeled vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
108	sun river	South Fk Sun	7.29
108A	sun river spur a	South Fk Sun	0.26
108B	gibson overlook	South Fk Sun	0.09
108C	gibson dam access	South Fk Sun	0.27
108D	gibson dam access	South Fk Sun	0.28
108E	beaver trailhead	South Fk Sun	0.18
108H	Hannan Gulch-Wagner	South Fk Sun	0.47
108I	ns	South Fk Sun	0.13
109	south fork teton river	Birch Teton	5.05
109A	ns	Birch Teton	0.13
144	north fork teton river	Birch Teton	11.70
144A	ns	Birch Teton	0.06
144C	ns	Birch Teton	0.03
145	blackleaf canyon	Birch Teton	0.62
196	elk creek	Dearborn Elk	2.90
196a	bailey basin th	Dearborn Elk	0.27
2004	mill falls	Birch Teton	0.22
233	beaver-willow	South Fk Sun	5.52
233A	beaver basin trailhead	South Fk Sun	0.17
235	benchmark	South Fk Sun	13.82
235a	Petty Ford TH	South Fk Sun	0.20
3305	hannon gulch	South Fk Sun	1.07
3307	green gulch	Birch Teton	2.09
3318	Willow Creek Guard Station	South Fk Sun	1.26
3318A	Fairview Trailhead	South Fk Sun	0.65
3327	benchmark creek	South Fk Sun	0.43
6327A	Wood Lake CG spur	South Fk Sun	0.10
6330	wood lk boat Indng	South Fk Sun	0.16
8981	west fork teton river	Birch Teton	0.02
8982	m.f. teton river	Birch Teton	0.60

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
8982A	Cave Mtn TH	Birch Teton	0.05
8983	hannon guard station	South Fk Sun	0.73
8988	cow creek	Birch Teton	0.12
8998	teton firewood access 3	Birch Teton	0.09
9167	home gulch	South Fk Sun	0.58
9182	West Fork CG	Birch Teton	0.16
9182001	West Fork CG spur	Birch Teton	0.02
9200	straight cr packer camp	South Fk Sun	0.35
9205	fairview creek	South Fk Sun	0.23
9206	airstrip road	South Fk Sun	0.29
9207	wood lk picnic area	South Fk Sun	0.05
9209	wood lake hogback	South Fk Sun	0.11
9225	home gulch boat lndng	South Fk Sun	0.10
9229	benchmark rec. area	South Fk Sun	0.16
9229A	benchmark spur a	South Fk Sun	0.14
9234	south fork camp	South Fk Sun	0.29
9234A	South Fork Camp A	South Fk Sun	0.16
TOTAL MILEAGE			59.67 miles

No change in travel management would occur on the following routes as a result of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan. These roads have been open to public motorized vehicle travel since the time they were originally constructed, and remain open as originally authorized. Nothing in the Record of Decision for the Birch Creek – South area attempts to make a decision about these roads. The following routes are roads managed as part of the developed campground system, and the roads are subject to seasonal restrictions when the campgrounds are closed for the winter (code Z in FEIS). When the campgrounds are open, these roads are open to all types of street legal, wheeled, motorized vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
6327	wood lake campground	South Fk Sun	0.26
8801	fairmule	South Fk Sun	0.50
9181	wf guard station	Birch Teton	0.11
9220	home gulch c.g.	South Fk Sun	0.34
9228	cave mtn cg	Birch Teton	0.25
9229	benchmark rec. area	South Fk Sun	0.54
9229B	benchmark camp B	South Fk Sun	0.21
9229C	Benchmark Camp C	South Fk Sun	0.17
9229D	Benchmark Camp D	South Fk Sun	0.13
9231	mortimer glch c.g.	South Fk Sun	0.30
9231A	south mortimer gulch c.g.	South Fk Sun	0.22
TOTAL MILEAGE			3.04 miles

APPENDIX I

DISPOSITION OF “UNDETERMINED” (Non-System) ROUTES BY THE RECORD OF DECISION FOR BIRCH CREEK-SOUTH

10/01/2007

The following “undetermined” roads provide necessary public access to dispersed campsites along the main Beaver-Willow access road in the Birch Creek South area. They will be adopted and managed as part of the road transportation system. The following routes are listed in Appendix F as roads that would be restricted seasonally October 15 to December 1 (code E in FEIS) to all types of motorized vehicle access. They would be open to motorized wheeled vehicles from December 2 to October 14.

ROUTE #	GENERAL LOCATION	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
233002	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.27
233004	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.13
233005	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.84
233006	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.20
233007	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.12
233010	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.13
233011	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.10
233012	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.18
233013	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.24
233014	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.10
233015	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.05
233016	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.07
233037	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.10
233039	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.14
233040	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.25
233041	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.27
6497005	Beaver-Willow Dispersed Site	SFS	0.20
TOTAL MILEAGE			3.39 miles

The following “undetermined” road provides necessary access for future resource management. It will be adopted and managed as part of the road transportation system. The following undetermined road is listed in Appendix E as a road that would be seasonally restricted (code J in FEIS) to travel by ATVs and motorcycles from October 15 to June 30, and restricted yearlong to travel by all motorized wheeled vehicles not meeting the definition of an ATV or motorcycle

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
8995001* rd	ns	Birch Teton	0.10
TOTAL MILEAGE			0.10 miles

The following “undetermined” roads provide necessary public access to dispersed campsites and trailheads along the main access roads in the Birch Creek South area. They will be adopted and managed as part of the road transportation system. The following routes are listed in Appendix G as roads that would be open yearlong (code B2 in FEIS) to all types of motorized vehicle access.

ROUTE #	GENERAL LOCATION	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
8992	W.Fk. CG Dispersed Site & RecRes Access	BT	0.09
108001	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	SFS	0.60
108002	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	SFS	0.32
108003	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	SFS	0.23
108004	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	SFS	0.05
108005	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	SFS	0.34
108006	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	SFS	0.55
108007	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	SFS	0.09
108009	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	SFS	0.10
108010	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	SFS	0.12
108012	Sun Canyon Dispersed Site	SFS	0.20
108017	Diversion Lake Dispersed Site	SFS	0.14
108019	Diversion Lake Dispersed Site	SFS	0.20
108020	Diversion Lake Dispersed Site	SFS	0.12
108022	Diversion Lake Dispersed Site	SFS	0.20
108023	Diversion Lake Dispersed Site	SFS	0.07
108024	Home Gulch Dispersed Site	SFS	0.14
108052	Norwegian Gulch Dispersed Site	SFS	0.10
108053	French Gulch Dispersed Site	SFS	0.24
109001	Rierdon Gulch Dispersed Site	BT	0.12
109003	S.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	BT	0.03
109005	S.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	BT	0.17
109010	S.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	BT	0.14
144002	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	BT	0.38
144003	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	BT	0.06
144004	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	BT	0.56
144006	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	BT	0.11
144007	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	BT	0.12
144009	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	BT	0.26
144040	N.Fk. Teton Dispersed Site	BT	0.10
145003	Blackleaf Trailhead Dispersed Site	BT	0.10
196001	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	DE	0.29
196002	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	DE	0.05
196003	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	DE	0.09
196004	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	DE	0.10
196005	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	DE	0.02
196006	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	DE	0.10
196007	Elk Creek Dispersed Site	DE	0.01
233042	Willow Creek Dispersed Site	SFS	0.06
235003	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.08
235006	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.40
235009	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.17
235010	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.05

ROUTE #	GENERAL LOCATION	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
235011	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.14
235012	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.11
235014	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.07
235016	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.14
235025	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.13
235061	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.08
235063	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.06
235066	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.11
235067	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.04
235069	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.08
235078	Benchmark Dispersed Site	SFS	0.07
8992003	W.Fk. Campground Dispersed Site	BT	0.09
9167001	Home Gulch Dispersed Site	SFS	0.10
9167003	Home Gulch Dispersed Site	SFS	0.09
9167004	Home Gulch Dispersed Site	SFS	0.19
9182002	West Fk Teton CG - overflow	BT	0.06
9206002	Fairview Creek Dispersed Site	SFS	0.29
9206003	Fairview Creek Dispersed Site	SFS	0.02
9229001	Benchmark Dispersed Site	SFS	0.07
108C001	Gibson Dam	SFS	0.06
108C003	Blacktail Creek Trailhead & Access to Special Use Camp (K-L)	SFS	0.02
108C004	Gibson Dam	SFS	0.03
144B	Jones Creek Trailhead	BT	0.05
235010A	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.09
235012A	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.06
235b004	Benchmark Road Dispersed Site	SFS	0.08
3318A001	Willow Creek Dispersed Site	SFS	0.07
3318A002 (3318A012)	Willow Creek Dispersed Site	SFS	0.02
3327A	Benchmark Dispersed Site	SFS	0.25
8982A	Cave Mtn. Campground Disp. Site	BT	0.29
1080E01	Gibson Dam	SFS	0.05
TOTAL MILEAGE			10.43 miles

The following “undetermined” roads provide necessary access for future resource management. They will be adopted and managed as part of the road transportation system. The following undetermined roads are listed in Appendix C as roads that would be restricted yearlong (code A in FEIS) to travel by all types of motorized wheeled vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
233003*	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.09
233009*	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.37
9167004*	home gulch ns	South Fk Sun	0.06
9206001*	Airstrip Service Road	South Fk Sun	0.22
*	Airstrip/CG Access	South Fk Sun	0.40
9206004*	Pilots CG Admin Road	South Fk Sun	0.07
9206005*	airstrip creek access	South Fk Sun	0.01
TOTAL MILEAGE			1.22 miles

The following “undetermined” trail provides necessary public access for a recreational experience and enjoyment. It will be adopted and managed as part of the trail transportation system. The following undetermined route is listed in Appendix A as a trail that would be restricted yearlong (code A3 in FEIS) to travel by bicycles, stock, and all types of wheeled motorized vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
utrl72*	Mill Falls Ridge	Birch Teton	0.88
TOTAL MILEAGE			0.88 miles

The following “undetermined” trail provides necessary public access for a recreational experience and enjoyment. It will be adopted and managed as part of the trail transportation system. The following undetermined route is listed in Appendix B as a trail that would be restricted yearlong (code A4 in FEIS) to travel by bicycles and all types of wheeled motorized vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
utrl40*	North Fk Sun Alt	South Fk Sun	0.52
TOTAL MILEAGE			0.52 miles

The following “undetermined” trails provide necessary public access for a recreational experience and enjoyment. They will be adopted and managed as part of the trail transportation system. The following undetermined trails are listed in Appendix C as trails that would be restricted yearlong (code A in FEIS) to travel by all types of motorized wheeled vehicles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
108002*	ns	South Fk Sun	0.96
201.2*	Carrols Access	South Fk Sun	0.21
sutrl71*	Ford ATV spur	South Fk Sun	1.45
utrl45*	home gulch ns	South Fk Sun	1.41
utrl58*	Falls Area ns	Dearborn Elk	0.89
utrl59*	Falls Area ns	Dearborn Elk	2.72
utrl62*	alt114	Birch Teton	0.10
utrl65*	Wood Creek Snotel	South Fk Sun	1.07
utrl70*	Ford Basin ATV	South Fk Sun	2.62
TOTAL MILEAGE			11.42 miles

The following “undetermined” trail provides necessary public access for a recreational experience and enjoyment. It will be adopted and managed as part of the trail transportation system. The following undetermined route is listed in Appendix D as a trail that would be restricted yearlong (code N in FEIS) to travel by all motorized wheeled vehicles not meeting the definition of a motorcycle. It would be seasonally restricted to travel by motorcycles from October 15 to June 30 annually.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
utrl50*	Ford Basin Spur	South Fk Sun	0.81
TOTAL MILEAGE			0.81 miles

The following “undetermined” trails provide necessary public access for a recreational experience and enjoyment. They will be adopted and managed as part of the trail transportation system. The following undetermined trails are listed in Appendix E as trails that would be restricted yearlong (code B in FEIS) to travel by all types of motorized wheeled vehicles that do not meet the definition of an ATV or motorcycle. These trails would be open yearlong to travel by ATVs and motorcycles.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
utrl34*	west fork firewood	Birch Teton	0.86
utrl56*	Cyanide ns	Dearborn Elk	1.32
utrl66*	elk ATV	Dearborn Elk	0.49
TOTAL MILEAGE			2.67 miles

The following “undetermined” trails provide necessary public access for a recreational experience and enjoyment. They will be adopted and managed as part of the trail transportation system. The following undetermined trails are listed in Appendix E as trails that would be restricted yearlong (code E2 in FEIS) to travel by all motorized wheeled vehicles not meeting the definition of an ATV or motorcycle. The following trails would be seasonally restricted to travel by ATVs and motorcycles from October 15 to December 1.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
utrl44*	old road-red lake	South Fk Sun	1.24
utrl48*	Old Beaver Willow	South Fk Sun	0.42
*	Old Beaver Willow Rd***	South Fk Sun	1.91
TOTAL MILEAGE			3.57 miles

The following “undetermined” trails are not needed for recreational or resource management purposes, and will be decommissioned. The following undetermined routes are listed in Appendix J as trails that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all types of wheeled motorized vehicles and decommissioned (code X99 in FEIS).

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
utrl32 ^{*tr}	Scoffin Basin ns	Birch Teton	0.62
utrl33 ^{*tr}	Scoffin Basin ns	Birch Teton	2.77
utrl34 ^{*tr}	west fork firewood	Birch Teton	0.13
utrl47 ^{*tr}	Red Lake ns	South Fk Sun	0.96
utrl49 ^{*tr}	blindhorse ns	South Fk Sun	0.66
utrl53 ^{*tr}	aspen ns	South Fk Sun	0.37
utrl67 ^{*tr}	Mortimer Decom	South Fk Sun	0.02
utrl73 ^{*tr}	atv user	Dearborn Elk	0.31
TOTAL “UNDETERMINED” TRAIL MILEAGE DECOMMISSIONED			5.82 miles

The following “undetermined” roads are not needed for recreational or resource management purposes, and will be decommissioned. The following undetermined routes are listed in Appendix J as roads that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all types of wheeled motorized vehicles and decommissioned (code X99 in FEIS).

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
108018 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.08
108029 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.15
108058 ^{**rd}	User Spur	South Fk Sun	0.23
144005 ^{**rd}	dispersed camp rd	Birch Teton	0.11
144034 ^{**rd}	ns	Birch Teton	0.10
145001 ^{**rd}	Cow Cr Dispersed	Birch Teton	0.18
145002 ^{**rd}	Cow Cr Dispersed	Birch Teton	0.09
233001 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.15
233002 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.09
233008 ^{**rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.06
233010 ^{**rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.37
235001 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.08
235002 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.09
235004 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.14
235007 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.18
235011A ^{**rd}	green timber ns	South Fk Sun	0.04
235013 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.07
235018a ^{**rd}	spur road	South Fk Sun	0.09
235070 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.13
235old1 ^{**rd}	access old 235	South Fk Sun	0.08
3307001 ^{**rd}	ns	Birch Teton	0.07
8992002 ^{**rd}	ns	Birch Teton	0.28
8992012 ^{**rd}	wfk access	Birch Teton	0.03
8992013 ^{**rd}	Massey Firewood	Birch Teton	0.69
9153001 ^{**rd}	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.26
9167002 ^{**rd}	ns	South Fk Sun	0.25
9167004 ^{**rd}	home gulch area	South Fk Sun	0.10
9220001 ^{**rd}	home gulch ns	South Fk Sun	0.07
TOTAL “UNDETERMINED” ROAD MILEAGE DECOMMISSIONED			4.26 miles

APPENDIX J

DECOMMISSIONED ROUTES

10/01/2007

UNNEEDED ROADS AND TRAILS TO BE RESTRICTED YEARLONG TO TRAVEL BY ALL TYPES OF MOTORIZED WHEELED VEHICLES AND DECOMMISSIONED

During the analysis process, some trails and roads were determined to be unnecessary for public use, and provided no benefit for future resource management of the area. As part of the Birch Creek – South decision on the RMRD Travel Management Plan, the following lists of unneeded trails and roads are restricted yearlong to motorized wheeled vehicle travel as the first step in decommissioning them.

The following system and undetermined non-system routes (code X99 in FEIS) are trails that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all types of wheeled motorized vehicles. At some future date, the Forest Service will strive to evaluate each route to determine what other actions may be necessary to fully decommission them and to reduce any resource degradation.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
191	Cow Cr	Birch Teton	0.33
utrl32* ^{tr}	Scoffin Basin ns	Birch Teton	0.62
utrl33* ^{tr}	Scoffin Basin ns	Birch Teton	2.77
utrl34* ^{tr}	west fork firewood	Birch Teton	0.13
utrl47* ^{tr}	Red Lake ns	South Fk Sun	0.96
utrl49* ^{tr}	blindhorse ns	South Fk Sun	0.66
utrl53* ^{tr}	aspen ns	South Fk Sun	0.37
utrl67* ^{tr}	Mortimer Decom	South Fk Sun	0.02
utrl73* ^{tr}	atv user	Dearborn Elk	0.31
TOTAL TRAIL MILEAGE DECOMMISSIONED			6.15 miles

*^{tr} Undetermined (non-system) trail not needed for management of area.

The following system and undetermined non-system routes (code X99 in FEIS) are roads that would be restricted yearlong to travel by all types of wheeled motorized vehicles. At some future date, the Forest Service will strive to evaluate each route to determine what other actions may be necessary to fully decommission them and to reduce any resource degradation.

ROUTE #	ROUTE NAME	MAP ZONE	MILEAGE (approx.)
108014	ns	South Fk Sun	0.11
108018**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.08
108029**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.15
108058**rd	User Spur	South Fk Sun	0.23
108G	ns	South Fk Sun	0.18
144005**rd	dispersed camp rd	Birch Teton	0.11
144034**rd	ns	Birch Teton	0.10
145001**rd	Cow Cr Dispersed	Birch Teton	0.18
145002**rd	Cow Cr Dispersed	Birch Teton	0.09
233001**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.15
233002**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.09
233008**rd	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.06
233010**rd	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.37
235001**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.08
235002**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.09
235004**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.14
235007**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.18
235011A**rd	green timber ns	South Fk Sun	0.04
235013**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.07
235018	old timber sale	South Fk Sun	0.07
235018a**rd	spur road	South Fk Sun	0.09
235070**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.13
235old1**rd	access old 235	South Fk Sun	0.08
3307001**rd	ns	Birch Teton	0.07
3319	Ford Creek	South Fk Sun	0.09
8989	south fork dupuyer	Birch Teton	0.12
8990	roughlock	Birch Teton	0.79
8992002**rd	ns	Birch Teton	0.28
8992012**rd	wfk access	Birch Teton	0.03
8992013**rd	Massey Firewood	Birch Teton	0.69
9153001**rd	Beaver Willow Spur	South Fk Sun	0.26
9167002**rd	ns	South Fk Sun	0.25
9167004**rd	home gulch area	South Fk Sun	0.10
9220001**rd	home gulch ns	South Fk Sun	0.07
TOTAL ROAD MILEAGE DECOMMISSIONED			5.62 miles

**rd Undetermined (non-system) road not needed for management of area.

APPENDIX K

BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Record of telephone conversation, Jan. 30, 2007	- 1 page
USFWS concurrence letter, Sept. 18, 2006	- 2 pages
LCNF letter transmitting Supplement BA, Aug. 31, 2006	- 1 page
Supplement to the Biological Assessment, Aug. 30, 2006	- 6 pages
LCNF letter transmitting BA, Aug. 4, 2006	- 1 page
Biological Assessment, Aug. 3, 2006	- 69 pages

RECORD OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

DATE: 1/30/07
TIME: 12:30 P.M.
CALL TO: Katrina Dixon, Consultation Biologist, US Fish & Wildlife Service
SUBJECT: Changes to RMRD Travel Plan decision since consultation completed

I called Katrina to discuss with her some changes that we recently made in the Travel Plan Decision that differ slightly from the Decision as analyzed and consulted on in the BA sent to FWS in August (Supplemented in September). I explained the changes to her, namely that we were removing both snowmobile and wheeled travel from the Jones Creek area, and expanding snowmobile use in the Benchmark area. I informed her that my preliminary analysis showed that there would be an additional approximately 4370 acres of lynx foraging/denning habitat open to snowmobiles under the new Decision. I asked whether we would need to re-consult on the Decision because of these changes.

Katrina asked whether the changes would result in any alteration of my Determination of Effects to lynx or grizzly bear as displayed in the BA (I answered no), whether the change would result in our not meeting the LCAS guidelines (we would still meet the guidelines, and there are no specific acreage or %LAU guidelines for dispersed snowmobiling, anyway), and whether the Decision would still reduce the amount of lynx habitat open to snowmobiles as compared to the Existing Situation (yes, by a great deal). I informed her that the removal of wheeled travel from Jones Creek would result in a small improvement in the road density and core figures in one BMU for grizzly bears over those reported in the BA. Katrina then referred to the concurrence letter from FWS, that stated that if the changes do not result in effects other than those described in the BA, then there is no need to revise the BA or re-consult. She noted that some units prefer to re-analyze and re-consult under such a situation, to create a firm "paper trail", but that it is not necessary where the effects would not be different. She also noted that although they are supposed to respond to informal consultation requests within 30 days, that despite their best efforts she could not guarantee that timeline if we chose to re-consult, due to their current workload.

/s/ Wendy C Maples 1/30/07

Wendy C Maples
USDA Forest Service
Rocky Mountain Ranger District
Wildlife Biologist

United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ECOLOGICAL SERVICES
MONTANA FIELD OFFICE
585 SHEPARD WAY
HELENA, MONTANA 59601
PHONE (406) 449-5225, FAX (406) 449-5339

File: M19 Lewis and Clark National Forest (I)

September 18, 2006

Lesley W. Thompson, Forest Supervisor
Lewis and Clark National Forest
1101 15th Street North
P.O. Box 869
Great Falls, Montana 59403-0869

Dear Mr. Thompson:

This is in response to your August 4, 2006 request for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) review of the biological assessment for federally listed threatened and endangered species regarding the effects of the proposed Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan (Travel Plan). Your request was received August 7, 2006 and a supplement to the biological assessment was received September 5, 2006.

The Travel Plan would be implemented on the non-wilderness portion of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District south of the North Fork of Birch Creek. The proposed Travel Plan would decrease the amount of roads open to motorized travel as well as trails open to ATV and motorcycle travel. The proposed plan would also incorporate provisions of the 2001 three-state OHV decision signed by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management that prohibits motorized cross-country on all National Forest System and BLM public lands.

The Service has reviewed the biological assessment and supplement to the biological assessment and concurs with the determination that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the threatened grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), the threatened Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and the endangered gray wolf (*Canis lupus*). The Service acknowledges the no effect determination for the threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). Therefore, pursuant to 50 CFR 402.13 (a), formal consultation on the species referenced above is not required.

The Service bases its concurrence on the information and analysis in the biological assessment and the supplement to the biological assessment prepared by Wendy Maples, District Biologist. Eight grizzly bear subunits occur within the analysis area. Forest Service ownership is less than 75 percent in six of these subunits. Open and total motorized access route densities would be reduced and core area would be increased on Forest lands in all grizzly bear subunits. Several lynx analysis units occur within the analysis area. The overall acreage available for dispersed snowmobiling would be greatly reduced and concentrated within two main areas. All aspects of the proposed Travel Plan are compatible with applicable standards in the LCAS. One wolf pack is known to

occur on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. The Red Shale pack is established roughly seven miles west of the Travel Plan boundary, in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The Travel Plan is a long-term plan, expected to be in place for a minimum of 10 to 15 years. During this timeframe, the potential for disturbance to grizzly bears, Canada lynx and gray wolves does exist, however impacts would be insignificant.

If the final project design is changed so as to have effects on threatened or endangered species other than those described in the biological assessment, a revised biological assessment will be necessary. The Service will then issue a letter of concurrence/non-concurrence on the revised biological assessment.

We appreciate your efforts to ensure the conservation of threatened and endangered species as part of your responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act, as amended. If you have questions or comments related to this issue, please contact Katrina Dixon or me at 406-449-5225.

Sincerely,



R. Mark Wilson
Field Supervisor



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Lewis and Clark
National Forest

1101 15th Street North
P.O. Box 869
Great Falls, MT 59403-0869
406 791-7700
FAX 406 731-5302

File Code: 2670/1920
Date: August 31, 2006

Mark Wilson
Field Supervisor
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services
585 Shepard Way
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Mr. Wilson:

On August 4, 2006 I requested informal consultation on the Biological Assessment for the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan. After additional discussion with your staff, I am submitting the enclosed Supplement to the Biological Assessment. This supplement revises determinations made for the gray wolf and Canada lynx based on reconsideration of existing information. There are no changes to the Proposed Project.

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, I request concurrence with the biologist's determinations that the proposed Federal Action may effect, but is not likely to adversely affect the threatened grizzly bear (*Ursos arctos horribilis*) or Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), or the endangered gray wolf (*Canis lupus*).

The biologist's determination that this action will have no effect on the threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is unchanged.

If you have any questions regarding this Supplement to the Biological Assessment please contact Wendy Maples, District Biologist at 406-466-5341.

Sincerely,

Nancy Hall
for: LESLEY W. THOMPSON
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: Michael A Munoz, Wendy C Maples



**SUPPLEMENT
TO THE BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
FOR
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE SPECIES**

Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan

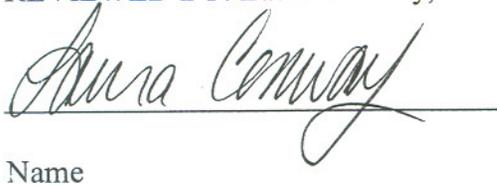
Rocky Mountain Ranger District
Lewis and Clark National Forest

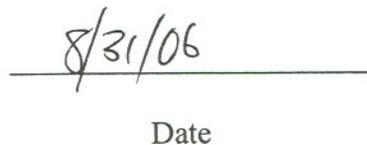
Prepared By: Wendy C Maples, District Biologist, Rocky Mountain RD


Name


Date

REVIEWED BY: Laura Conway, Forest Biologist, Lewis and Clark NF


Name


Date

Introduction

This Supplement to the Biological Assessment (BA) for Terrestrial Wildlife Species regarding the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Proposed Travel Management Plan contains revised determinations of affect for the Threatened Canada lynx and the Endangered gray wolf. In the original BA, a determination of NO EFFECT was arrived at for both species. After additional consideration and discussion with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service has determined that the Proposed Travel Plan MAY AFFECT, BUT WOULD NOT LIKELY ADVERSELY AFFECT both the Canada lynx and gray wolf. This re-consideration was based primarily on the longevity and scope of the Travel Management Plan once it is implemented.

This document is not a Revised Biological Assessment, but a Supplement to the existing Assessment based on additional consideration of existing information. The Proposed Plan has not been modified, nor have additional listed species been found in the project area or added to the federal listing of Threatened and Endangered Species. This supplement addresses only Canada lynx and gray wolf. Determinations for the Threatened bald eagle and grizzly bear remain as in the Biological Assessment submitted to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on August 4, 2006.

Information on the Proposed Project and on the legal status, local population and habitat status, and direct, indirect and cumulative effects for Canada lynx and gray wolf can be found in the BA. This document references the BA and includes only a discussion of the re-consideration and rationale for changing the Determination of Effects for both species.

Gray Wolf

Re-Consideration of Existing Information

A discussion of the status of the gray wolf on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District (RMRD) and the anticipated effects of the Proposed Plan can be found on pages 15-18 of the BA. On page 16, the BA references Claar et al. (1999) in stating, “Humans are responsible for the majority of mortalities of wolves through shooting and trapping both illegally and for management purposes, through vehicle collisions, and potentially due to den abandonment of displacement of packs due to disturbance”. The BA also states, “Humans may also impact wolves by altering distribution or abundance of their prey”.

Analysis in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) indicates that the expected impact of Alternatives similar to the Proposed Plan on distribution and abundance of ungulates (i.e. wolf prey) on the RMRD would be negligible (DEIS pp 255 - 270). The Proposed Plan would reduce the total mileage of motorized wheeled routes in the project area (the non-wilderness portion of the RMRD), and would reduce the total acreage available for snowmobiling. The existing known wolf pack (Red Shale Pack) is based almost entirely in wilderness, where no motorized travel occurs. Although livestock grazing occurs on the RMRD, it does not occur in the known territory of the existing pack, and the Lewis and Clark National Forest (LCNF) Plan includes provisions to make management decisions that favor Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species where conflict may arise with livestock grazing (LCNF Forest Plan, p. 2-41). Based on these considerations and on the overall low level of motorized use within the project area (the non-

wilderness portion of the RMRD), the original determination in the BA was that the Proposed Plan would have No Effect on the gray wolf.

Although the Proposed Plan would reduce the overall mileage of motorized wheeled routes in the project area and would reduce the overall acreage available for snowmobiling, it would retain some opportunities for motorized travel. Under the Proposed Plan there would be 85 miles of road open to seasonal or year-round use; most of this mileage is main access roads to trailheads, campgrounds, and recreation residences. Traffic levels on these roads are therefore not likely to decrease. An additional 24 miles of trail would be open year-round or seasonally to ATV use, primarily in areas immediately adjacent to roads. Another 50 miles of trail would be open seasonally or year-round to motorcycle use. Approximately 27,500 acres would be open to snowmobiles in winter, along with roughly 24 miles of road or trail.

In the short term, with little or no wolf activity outside the wilderness, this mileage of motorized routes is unlikely to impact wolves. The Proposed Plan, however, is expected to be in place for at least 10-15 years after implementation. During this time, wolf activity within the project area could change. The Red Shale Pack could alter its territory, including den and rendezvous sites. One or more new pairs or packs of wolves could become established within the non-wilderness of the RMRD. It is not possible to predict what may happen with levels of motorized use under the Proposed Plan (refer to the Recreation section of the DEIS for a discussion of trends in motorized recreation). The Proposed Plan covers a large area (approximately 264,000 acres). Although motorized use would be confined to a few concentrated areas, the overall effect is a mix of motorized and non-motorized trails across a broad landscape.

The vast majority of wolf mortality in Montana is currently associated with private lands, through management removals related to livestock depredation (Sime et al. 2006). A small number of wolves are killed annually by vehicles (Sime et al. 2006), most or all of which occurs in association with high-speed travel on highways. Some known mortality cannot be assigned a cause (Sime et al. 2006), and it must be assumed that some illegal mortality may occur on both public and private lands. Illegal mortality requires access of humans into areas occupied by wolves. Both motorized routes and non-motorized routes provide that access. As noted in Claar (1999), "Of all recreational activities in Montana, big-game hunting probably has the greatest potential for detrimental impact to wolves". This is because hunters, armed with rifles, enter via foot, horse or vehicle into areas occupied by wolves.

Page 16 in the BA notes that wolves "exhibit a wide variety of individual behaviors with respect to humans. Some individuals within a pack may be extremely sensitive to human disturbance, while others may be extremely tolerant (Claar et al. 1999)". The Red Shale Pack has demonstrated great tolerance for human activity throughout the summer and fall, establishing a rendezvous site adjacent to one of the busiest wilderness administrative sites on the RMRD, near trails that are non-motorized but receive some of the heaviest foot and horse traffic on the RMRD during the summer and during hunting season. Nevertheless, the area experiences very little human activity during the spring, when denning takes place.

It has not been established whether motorized travel itself has greater or less potential to disturb or displace wolves than non-motorized travel. Claar et al. (1999) noted that all linear travel

routes, including roads and motorized trails, may provide easy travelways for wolves, but that there is a trade-off between easier travel and increased potential for mortality resulting from increased risk of human encounters. Various studies have shown a wide range of tolerance by wolves for motorized travel routes, depending on the location, nature, and level of motorized travel (Claar et al. 1999), as well as on individual wolves themselves. The potential exists, however, for motorized travel under the Proposed Plan to disturb or displace wolves that may colonize the project area in the future.

Determination of Effect

I have determined that implementation of the proposed Federal Action MAY AFFECT, BUT WILL NOT LIKELY ADVERSELY AFFECT the Endangered gray wolf. This determination is based on the following rationale:

1. The Proposed Plan is expected to be in place for a minimum of 10-15 years. This may mean:
 - a. Wolves could recolonize the project area and potentially be affected by travel management, particularly if they establish dens or rendezvous sites during a time of year when human visitation is minimal and subsequently experience unexpected human activity in the area.
 - b. Trends in both motorized and non-motorized use are not possible to predict over the expected life of the plan.
2. The Proposed Plan encompasses the entire non-wilderness portion of the RMRD. Therefore it includes a large area in which individual wolves may already occur, and in which wolves could establish packs and territories in the future.
3. Illegal mortality of wolves could occur as a result of both motorized and non-motorized access into areas currently inhabited by wolves, or into areas wolves may occupy in the future.

Canada Lynx

Re-Consideration of Existing Information

A discussion of the status of the Canada lynx on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District (RMRD) and the anticipated effects of the Proposed Plan can be found on pages 51-62 of the BA. As displayed in the BA (p.57), the Proposed Plan would maintain the existing mileage of over-the-snow routes in lynx habitat at 1.9 miles, the mileage of road regularly used by snowmobiles within lynx habitat at 3.3 miles, and the mileage of plowed road within lynx habitat at 0.7 miles. The Proposed Plan would reduce the overall acreage available for dispersed snowmobile activity in lynx habitat from a current total of 67,400 acres (29% of mapped lynx habitat in the project area) to a total of 7,400 acres (3% of mapped lynx habitat in the project area), eliminating dispersed snowmobiling from 10 of 16 Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs) in which it is currently allowed (BA p.55). As displayed on pages 57-61 of the BA, the RMRD meets all the relevant guidelines set forth in the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS), including specific guidelines for recreation and travel planning ([Agencies must] “provide a landscape with interconnected blocks of foraging habitat where snowmobile, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, or other snow compacting activities are minimized or discouraged”). Based on these

considerations, the original determination in the BA was that the Proposed Plan would have No Effect on Canada lynx.

Despite the overall reduction in over-snow travel, however, some opportunities for over-snow travel on designated routes, roads, and in dispersed areas would remain. The LCAS suggests that maintaining snowmobiling opportunities in mapped lynx habitat could have an impact on lynx. Furthermore, in early 2000 the USDA Forest Service submitted determinations of effect for ongoing actions occurring on several National Forests, including the LCNF. At that time it was determined that the existing level of snow compacting activity “May Affect, is Not Likely to Adversely Affect” Canada lynx. The mileage of routes available for over-the-snow activity would remain the same under the Proposed Plan as under the Existing Condition, for which that determination was made. Therefore the Proposed Plan should logically result in the same determination of effect. The acreage available for dispersed snowmobile activity was not included in the 2000 determination. Although that acreage would be substantially decreased under the Proposed Plan, opportunities for dispersed snowmobiling, and consequently for snow compaction and its possible impacts on lynx, would still occur on approximately 7,400 acres of lynx habitat in localized areas of the RMRD.

The Proposed Plan would likely be in place for a minimum of 10-15 years, ensuring that some level of dispersed snowmobile travel would be allowed on the RMRD for a lengthy period of time. As noted in the Recreation section of the DEIS, it is not possible to predict whether snowmobile use levels might increase or decrease over the life of the Proposed Plan.

Determination of Effect

I have determined that implementation of the proposed Federal Action MAY AFFECT, BUT WILL NOT LIKELY ADVERSELY AFFECT the Threatened Canada lynx. This determination is based on the following rationale:

1. The Proposed Plan would be in place for a minimum of 10-15 years. This may mean:
 - a. The existing mileage of over-the-snow routes in lynx habitat that would be maintained under the Proposed Plan would be in place through the life of the plan.
 - b. Approximately 27,500 total acres, of which approximately 7,400 acres are in mapped lynx habitat, would be open to dispersed snowmobiling through the life of the plan.
 - c. Trends in both motorized and non-motorized use are not possible to predict over the expected life of the plan.
2. The Determination of Effects made in 2000 for ongoing activities, which included the same mileage of over-the-snow routes as in the Proposed Plan, was “May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect” Canada lynx.
3. Screens developed by the Level I Team, based on the LCAS, recommend a NLAA determination when any over-the-snow activities will occur within lynx habitat.

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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Lewis and Clark
National Forest

1101 15th Street North
P.O. Box 869
Great Falls, MT 59403-0869
406 791-7700
FAX 406 731-5302

File Code: 2670/1920

Date: August 4, 2006

Mark Wilson
Field Supervisor
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services
585 Shepard Way
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Mr. Wilson:

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, I request informal consultation on the enclosed Biological Assessment for the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan. In particular, I request concurrence with the biologist's determination that the proposed Federal Action may effect, but is not likely to adversely affect the threatened grizzly bear (*Ursos arctos horribilis*).

The biologist has also determined that this action will have no effect upon the threatened bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) or Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), or the endangered gray wolf (*Canis lupus*).

If you have any questions regarding the project or Biological Assessment please contact Wendy Maples, District Biologist at 406-466-5341, or Laura Conway, Forest Biologist at 406-791-7739.

Sincerely,

LESLEY W. THOMPSON
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: Michael A Munoz, Wendy C Maples



BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
FOR
TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE SPECIES

Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan

Rocky Mountain Ranger District
Lewis and Clark National Forest

Prepared By: Wendy C Maples, District Biologist, Rocky Mountain RD

Wendy C Maples
Name

8/3/06
Date

REVIEWED BY: Laura Conway, Forest Biologist, Lewis and Clark NF

Laura Conway
Name

8/3/06
Date

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SUMMARY

The Lewis and Clark National Forest (LCNF) proposes to revise Travel Management on the non-wilderness portion of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District (RMRD) south of Birch Creek. This Biological Assessment analyzes the potential impacts of the Proposed Plan on four species listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act: gray wolf, grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and bald eagle.

Gray wolves inhabit primarily the wilderness portion of the RMRD that would not be affected by the Proposed Plan. The Proposed Plan would reduce the total mileage of motorized routes and the total area available to snowmobiles in the non-wilderness adjacent to the area occupied by wolves. There would be no anticipated impacts to wolf denning or rendezvous areas or to the prey base (ungulates). Therefore the Proposed Plan would have *no effect* on gray wolves or their habitat.

The Proposed Plan would result in motorized route densities that would be at or below threshold levels recommended by the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) Interim Access Management Direction for grizzly bears and levels recommended in the Flathead National Forest A-19 Amendment regarding motorized access and grizzly bears. The Proposed Plan would also result in security core areas at or above levels recommended in the those guidelines. Analysis using the NCDE Eastside Cumulative Effects Model (CEM) indicates that the Proposed Plan would maintain or improve Habitat Effectiveness for grizzly bears as compared with the Existing Situation. The LCNF Forest Plan standards would provide additional protection from future increases in motorized access. Therefore the Proposed Plan *is not likely to affect* grizzly bears or their habitat.

The Proposed Plan would decrease the total area available to snowmobiles in winter, thus reducing the potential for dispersed snow compaction and for fragmentation of Canada lynx travel and foraging habitat. The plan would maintain the existing low mileage of designated over-the-snow routes and roads used regularly by snowmobiles. The Proposed Plan would therefore have *no effect* on Canada lynx or their habitat.

There are no known bald eagle nesting areas and little if any nesting habitat on the RMRD. Use of the RMRD by bald eagles is primarily by transient birds along the eastern boundary during migration. The Proposed Plan would not alter habitats currently used by eagles. Therefore the Proposed Plan would have *no effect* on bald eagles or their habitat.

DETERMINATION OF EFFECTS

Implementation of the proposed Federal action **WILL HAVE NO EFFECT** on Gray Wolf, Canada Lynx, and Bald Eagle, and **IS NOT LIKELY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT** Grizzly Bear.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), its implementation regulations, and FSM 2671.4, the Lewis and Clark National Forest is required to request written

concurrence from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) with respect to determinations of potential effects on Threatened Gray Wolf, Canada Lynx, Bald Eagle, and Grizzly Bear.

NEED FOR RE-ASSESSMENT BASED ON CHANGED CONDITIONS

The Biological Assessment findings are based on the best current data and scientific information available. A revised Biological Assessment must be prepared if: (1) new information reveals affects, which may impact threatened, endangered, and proposed species or their habitats in a manner or to an extent not considered in this assessment; (2) the Proposed Plan is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an affect, which was not considered in this assessment; or (3) a new species is listed or habitat identified, which may be affected by the action.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Biological Assessment is to review the possible effects of a proposed federal action (revising the travel management plan for the Rocky Mountain Ranger District of the Lewis and Clark National Forest) on threatened, endangered, and proposed species and their habitats. Threatened, endangered, and proposed species are managed under the authority of the Federal Endangered Species Act (PL 93-205, as amended) and the National Forest Management Act (PL 94-588). Under provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Federal agencies shall use their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of listed species, and shall insure any action authorized, funded, or implemented by the agency is not likely to: (1) adversely affect listed species or designated critical habitat; (2) jeopardize the continued existence of proposed species; or (3) adversely modify proposed critical habitat (16 USC 1536).

This Biological Assessment analyzes the potential effects of the proposed federal action on all threatened, endangered, and proposed species known or suspected to occur in the Proposed Plan influence area (Table 1). This species list was confirmed on 19 July 2006 by referencing the FWS website:

http://montanafieldoffice.fws.gov/Endangered_Species/Listed_Species/Forests/L&C_sp_list.pdf.

The list for the Rocky Mountain Division of the Lewis and Clark National Forest was most recently updated on the website on 17 July 2006. Life history information on these species can be found in the reference document “The Distribution, Life History, and Recovery Objectives For Region One Threatened, Endangered, and Proposed Terrestrial Wildlife Species” (2001) and is incorporated by reference in this Biological Assessment.

Table 1. Threatened, Endangered And Proposed Species Known Or Suspected To Occur Within The Influence Area Of The Proposed Plan.

Species	Status	Occurrence
Gray Wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>)	Endangered	Established pack in Wilderness portion of Rocky Mountain RD west of project area, limited documented use of project area
Grizzly Bear (<i>Ursus arctos</i>)	Threatened	Known to occur throughout Rocky Mountain RD
Canada Lynx (<i>Lynx canadensis</i>)	Threatened	Known to occur throughout Rocky Mountain RD
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Threatened	May occur occasionally, particularly during migration; no known nests or suitable nesting habitat on Rocky Mountain RD

PROPOSED PROJECT

Project Purpose and Need

The purpose of travel management is to provide the public with opportunities to use both non-motorized and motorized modes of transportation to access public lands and travel on National Forest System (NFS) lands, roads, and trails. Motorized and non-motorized travel on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District has been managed for the past 18 years under regulations described on the 1988 Lewis and Clark Forest Travel Plan map for the Rocky Mountain Division. In recent years several concerns regarding the Travel Plan have been identified and need resolution. Revision of the current Travel Plan is needed to:

- Simplify the number and type of restrictions and their display on the map, both to reduce confusion by the public and to increase enforceability on the ground
- Improve consistency in travel types and restriction dates with adjoining National Forests and state and BLM managed lands
- Reduce conflicts among different user groups
- Reduce any negative impacts to resources that may be occurring as a result of current travel management
- Evaluate the impacts of recreational ATV use, which was in its infancy in 1988, and decide where and when this type of travel is appropriate
- Evaluate a number of non-system routes and determine whether they should be retained as system routes or decommissioned
- Address the impacts of changes in snowmobile technology and identify appropriate areas and seasons for snowmobile use
- Assess opportunities for disabled access
- Respond to an outstanding appeal to the 1988 Travel Plan that directed the Forest Service to conduct additional analysis on that plan
- Fully implement the provisions of the 2001 three-state OHV decision that was signed by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Implement Forest Service regulations that were passed in November 2005 regarding management of motorized travel on NFS lands

Proposed Action (Proposed Plan)

The Lewis and Clark National Forest proposes to implement revised travel management on the non-wilderness portion of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District south of the North Fork of Birch Creek. Although alternatives were considered and analyzed for the entire District in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) released in June 2005, a decision on travel management for the Badger-Two Medicine area, between U.S. Highway 2 and the North Fork of Birch Creek, has been postponed awaiting further analysis and consultation with the Blackfoot Tribe. This Biological Assessment addresses the Proposed Plan selected for the non-wilderness portion of the District extending from the Dupuyer Creek area in the north to the Falls Creek drainage in the south. This area will be referred to as the Project Area or as the Birch-South area.

The alternative selected as the Proposed Plan is based both on comments submitted by the public requesting greater separation of motorized and non-motorized travel, and on efforts by the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) to identify areas in which to focus motorized loop opportunities and other areas in which to emphasize enhancement of other resources. In identifying areas in which to restrict motorized travel, the IDT attempted to choose areas in which more than one resource (e.g. wildlife habitat, wilderness/roadless characteristics, traditional travel, etc.) might benefit. In identifying areas in which to focus motorized loop opportunities, the IDT looked for areas in which the existing infrastructure could support a specific type of motorized use, in which loops existed or trail mileages were sufficient to create a reasonable motorized recreational opportunity, and in which other resources could be appropriately protected or impacts of motorized travel mitigated. The IDT also attempted to provide a mix of recreational opportunities throughout various geographic areas of the RMRD.

Travel management proposals are quite complex due to the amount of detail involved with each road and trail. The Proposed Plan developed by the IDT consists of a map and accompanying data tables containing information on how each road, trail, and area would be managed for motorized and non-motorized travel, including seasons of allowed use. Maps displaying the Proposed Plan and the Existing Condition (for comparison) are included as attachments (Appendices A and B) to this document, and the information contained in the data tables is summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2. Miles of Roads and Trails In the Birch Creek South area by Type of Wheeled Vehicle Management

<i>ROADS & TRAILS ON ROCKY MTN. RANGER DISTRICT</i>	EXISTING SITUATION	PROPOSED PLAN
Roads (open yearlong or seasonally to motorized travel).	105 mi.	85 mi.
Trails (open seasonally to ATV travel).	65 mi.	24 mi.
Trails (open seasonally to motorcycle travel).	144 mi.	50 mi.
Subtotal -- motorized	314 mi.	159 mi.
Roads (closed yearlong to motorized travel).	2 mi.	3 mi.
Trails (closed yearlong to motorized travel).	136 mi.	259 mi.
Subtotal--non-motorized	138 mi.	262 mi.
Grand Total	452 mi.	421 mi.

NOTE: differences in grand totals between alternatives are due to the differences in mileage of road and trail abandoned (decommissioned) and not managed as a designated system route.

In addition to the travel management detailed in the map and summarized in the table above, the Proposed Plan would incorporate provisions of the 2001 three-state OHV decision signed by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. This decision prohibits motorized cross-country travel on all National Forest System and BLM public

lands in a three state area, including the entire Lewis and Clark National Forest. It allows motorized cross-country travel within 300 feet of a designated route for the purposes of accessing a campsite, provided that streams are not crossed, trees or other vegetation are not cut or removed, and other resource damage does not occur. The 2001 decision did not address winter travel, but winter travel has been thoroughly considered and incorporated in the travel management DEIS and the Proposed Plan.

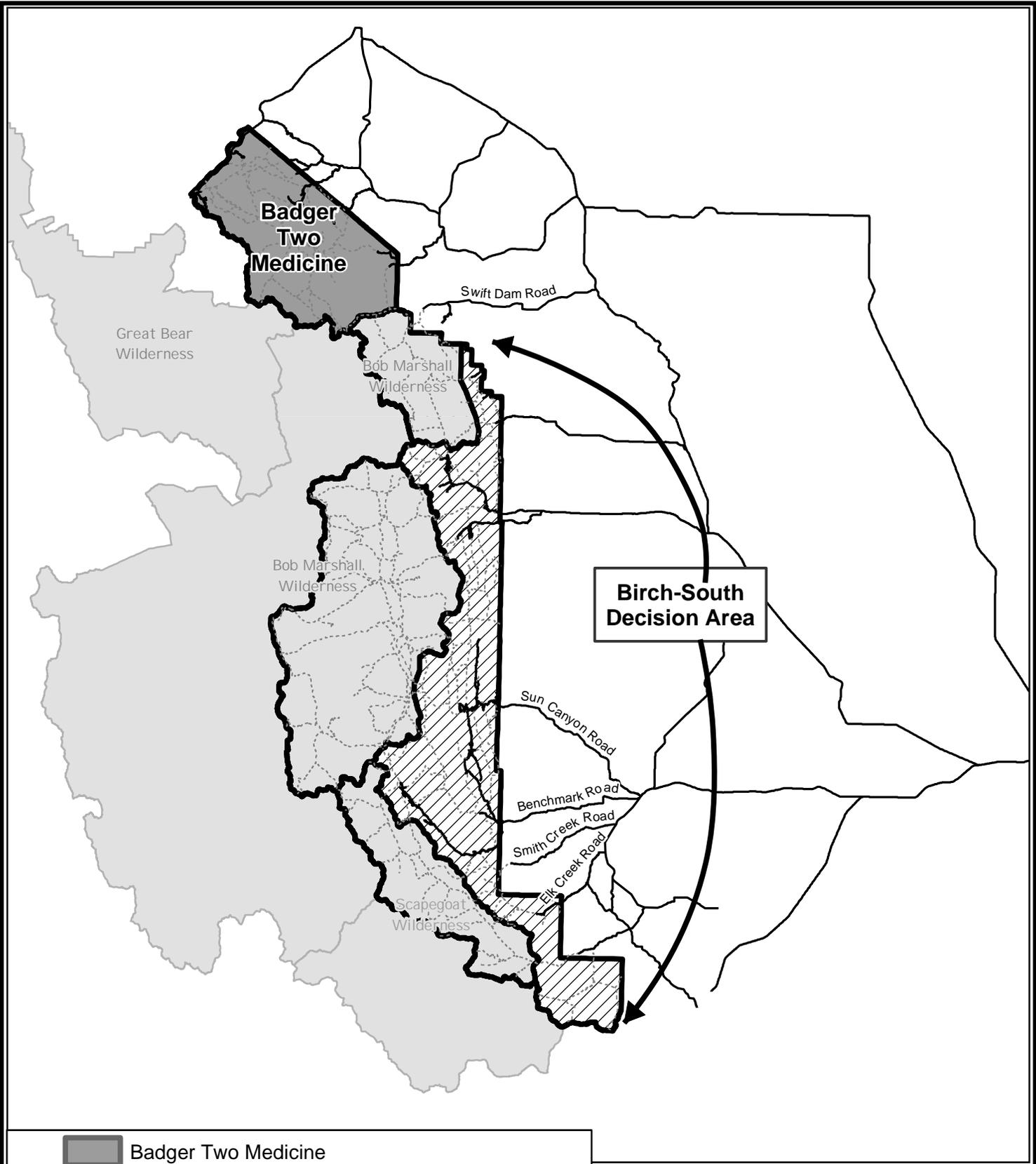
In November 2005 the Forest Service issued revised regulations for motor vehicle use on all National Forest System lands. These rules are to be implemented over the course of the next 4 years. The new regulations require designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use. The new rules prohibit the use of motorized wheeled vehicles off of routes specifically designated for motorized travel (closed unless designated open). The new rules also apply to snowmobiles, but provide local land managers more flexibility in allowing cross-country travel by snowmobiles within areas appropriate for such use. The Proposed Plan considers and is in compliance with these new regulations.

Project Area

The project area is the non-wilderness portion of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District (RMRD) of the Lewis and Clark National Forest south of the North Fork of Birch Creek (Map 1). It encompasses approximately 264,000 acres, or about 67% of the 777,600 total acres that comprise the Rocky Mountain Ranger District.

Approximately 385,900 acres of designated Wilderness in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC), which includes the Scapegoat and Bob Marshall Wilderness areas, will not be specifically addressed in this Biological Assessment. Travel management in these two wilderness areas will continue to occur in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964 and Recreation Management Direction for the Bob Marshall Complex (USDA, 1987). An additional 133,000 acres in the Badger-Two Medicine area, or approximately 33% of the non-wilderness portion of the RMRD will not be specifically addressed here, but will be in a future decision and Biological Assessment.

The vicinity map (Map 2) shows the location of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District in relation to other locations in Montana. Due to the complexity of travel management issues, some discussions in the analysis focus on general areas.



- Badger Two Medicine
- Birch-South Decision Area
- Wilderness Areas
- Roads
- Trails

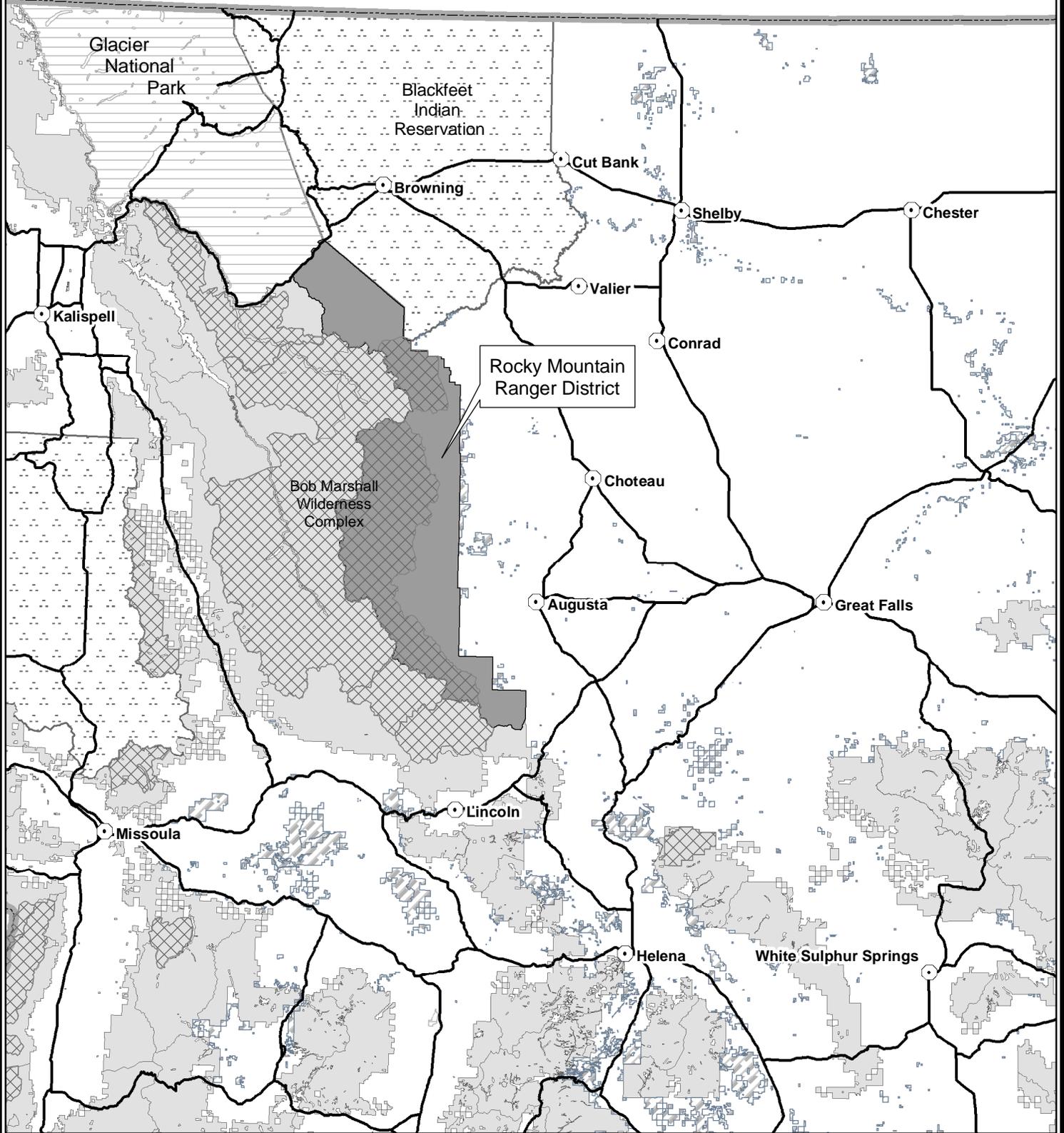
Rocky Mountain Ranger District
Travel Management Plan

Project Area

0 5 10 20 Miles

/

CANADA



- | | |
|---|---|
|  Rocky Mountain Ranger District |  Forest Service Lands |
|  Wilderness |  BLM Lands |
|  Reservation Lands |  National Park Service |

Rocky Mountain Ranger District
Travel Management Plan

Vicinity Map

0 12.5 25 50 Miles

SPECIES ASSESSMENTS

GRAY WOLF (Canis lupus)

Legal Status

The RMRD Travel Management plan occurs within the Northwest Montana Recovery Area for the gray wolf. Wolves within this area are classified as Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The USFWS is currently undergoing a status review to determine whether wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains constitute a Distinct Population Segment (DPS), separate from wolves elsewhere in the United States, and whether this DPS has recovered and can be removed from the Endangered Species list.

The population objective stated in the Northwest Montana Recovery Plan is to establish a minimum of 10 breeding pairs, or approximately 100 wolves, in the Northwest Montana Recovery Area for three successive years (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1987). The FWS, which is the agency responsible for administering the ESA, believes that 30 or more breeding pairs of wolves, with an equitable distribution among the 3 states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming for 3 successive years constitutes a viable and recovered wolf population. That criterion was met at the end of 2002. If other provisions required for delisting are met, primarily adequate regulatory mechanisms in the form of state laws and wolf management plans that would reasonably assure that the gray wolf would not become threatened or endangered again, the USFWS will propose delisting (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2005).

Local Population and Habitat Status

According to the most recent available Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Annual Report (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service et al. 2006), at the end of 2005 there were 16 packs containing a total of 126 wolves in the Northwest Montana Recovery Area. Gray wolves are resident on the RMRD, in Glacier National Park (GNP) to the north, and on the Flathead National Forest to the west. One pack is known to occur on the RMRD. The Red Shale pack has established a territory in the North Fork Sun River drainage in the Bob Marshall Wilderness on the RMRD, roughly 7 miles west of the western boundary of the area for which this travel management decision is being made.

Observed pack size in the Red Shale pack has ranged from 2 to 14 individuals, with a minimum of 7 wolves (4 adults and 3 pups) observed in November 2005. Two radio-collars were placed on wolves in the Red Shale pack in late 2002; one collar was shed in 2003 and the other has not been successfully located since early 2004. Information since that time has been from observations of wolves, wolf sign (tracks, scats and killsites), and howling reported by a number of experienced observers.

The Red Shale pack appears to use primarily the upper North Fork Sun River drainage within the Wilderness, although occasional winter movements outside the wilderness in the upper Gibson Reservoir area have been documented. Sporadic observations of

individual wolves have been recorded in the non-wilderness portion of the RMRD and on non-NFS lands to the east. It is not known whether these observations represent wolves from the Red Shale pack, other wolves traveling through the area, or both. No regular activity, dens, or rendezvous sites are known to occur in the project area.

Habitat requirements for the gray wolf are extremely general. Wolves require only 2 key habitat components: 1) an adequate year-round supply of wild ungulate prey, and 2) freedom from excessive persecution by humans (Fritts et al. 1994, Fritts and Carbyn 1995 *in* Claar et al. 1999). Habitat used by wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains has been correlated with ungulate distribution and abundance (Carbyn 1974, Huggard 1993, Weaver 1994, Kunkel 1997, Boyd-Heger 1997 *in* Claar et al. 1999). In Montana, lower-elevation landscapes that tend to contain productive riparian areas and higher year-round concentrations of wild ungulates also frequently contain livestock, recreationists, and human development (Claar et al. 1999).

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects Analysis

Direct and Indirect Effects

Humans are responsible for the majority of mortalities of wolves through shooting and trapping both illegally and for management purposes, through vehicle collisions, and potentially due to den abandonment or displacement of packs due to disturbance (Claar et al. 1999). Because wolves are highly intelligent and depend on learning and behavioral plasticity as a survival strategy, they exhibit a wide variety of individual behaviors with respect to humans. Some individuals within a pack may be extremely sensitive to human disturbance, while others may be extremely tolerant (Claar et al. 1999). Humans may also impact wolves by altering distribution or abundance of their prey.

The Proposed Plan would reduce the total mileage of motorized wheeled routes in the non-wilderness portion of the RMRD, as well as reducing the total acreage available to snowmobiles. Motorized travel would be confined to main roads or concentrated in specific areas, rather than being distributed throughout the non-wilderness of the RMRD as it is under the Existing Condition. Non-motorized recreation would continue to occur throughout the RMRD. Whether these changes may have any impact on recreation use patterns or levels is unknown.

Although specific measurements have not been made, it is generally recognized that very little trail-based motorized travel occurs in the area encompassed by the Proposed Plan. Furthermore, because the Red Shale Pack territory is almost exclusively in the Wilderness, changes in pattern and amount of motorized travel resulting from the Proposed plan are unlikely to have any impact on the wolves or their prey. Individual wolves using other portions of the RMRD and adjoining lands are likely transient individuals that would also be unaffected by changes in the pattern of motorized travel.

Cumulative Effects

A number of factors could potentially result in impacts to wolves cumulative to those of the Proposed Travel Plan. These factors are: prescribed burning/wildfire, timber harvest, wildlife habitat on adjacent lands, and livestock grazing.

Two large wildfires have burned in the Red Shale Pack territory since the pack became established there. During that time two prescribed fires were carried out in areas outside the known Red Shale Pack territory. Within the perimeter of all 4 of these fires, a mosaic of fire effects was achieved. Additional prescribed burning is scheduled within the Scapegoat Wilderness as soon as conditions are favorable. This planned fire is expected to create a varied patchwork of fire intensity and effects. Additional natural and prescribed fires may occur throughout the RMRD and adjoining lands in future years. Impacts on habitat will vary depending on the location and severity of the fires and on other factors. Generally, however, fires result in improved forage for ungulates (i.e. wolf prey) within 1-5 years of their occurrence.

Very little timber harvest has occurred on the RMRD since 1988. A total of 107 acres were harvested between 1988 and 2002, using a variety of techniques ranging from small (1-20 acre) clearcuts, to small (1- 8 acre) thinning and other limited harvest projects. The sum of these past harvests has had no detectable impact on wolf prey numbers or distribution. These projects occurred and any future projects would occur outside the known territory of the Red Shale pack.

Several small fuels treatment projects are planned that will alter the vegetation on a total of approximately 750 acres of the RMRD in the Benchmark drainage. The size of individual units varies from 3 to 236 acres, and all units are located immediately adjacent to recreation residences or to the National Forest boundary. All treatment units are outside the area known to be used by the Red Shale pack, and most are outside of areas mapped as important ungulate ranges. The result of these projects will be a variety of small openings or thinned canopy that may improve forage for wolf prey species.

The area to the west of the project area, including the territory of the Red Shale pack, is the heart of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. Wildlife habitats there are subject almost exclusively to natural forces, such as climate and fire, and receive only minimal influence from human activity. Lands east of the NF boundary are largely privately-owned ranch lands, where livestock husbandry is the primary activity. Although there are 3 state-owned Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) that provide key ungulate winter range, large numbers of elk and deer also winter on private lands. Despite the presence of the WMAs and of a large block of land owned by The Nature Conservancy, it is unlikely that wolves would exist for long east of the NF boundary without eventually coming into conflict with livestock operations. The history of the Sawtooth Pack, which established a territory in 1993 on private land in the Smith Creek area and eventually had to be removed (in 1996-97) after a series of livestock depredations, lends weight to this assumption.

Livestock grazing occurs within the project area on permitted grazing allotments. No cattle grazing permits are allowed within designated wilderness, where the Red Shale pack lives. The pack has not been observed to frequent any of the cattle grazing allotments on the RMRD. Several allotments also exist for limited outfitter/guide horse and mule grazing, some of which are in wilderness near or within the Red Shale pack territory. The LCNF Forest Plan states that “the Interagency Wildlife Guidelines [will be used] to avoid or mitigate conflicts between livestock razing [sic] and T&E Species”. The RMF Guidelines do not specifically address wolves, but guidelines for grizzly bear/livestock conflict would likely be used as a basis by which to manage wolf/livestock conflicts. The Guidelines stress that any actions taken as a result of conflict should minimize disturbance to bears, and that in general, management of multiple-use activities on the RMRD should favor bears.

Determination of Effects

I have determined implementation of the proposed Federal Action will have NO EFFECT on the Gray Wolf. My determination is based on the following rationale:

1. The project area does not include any known den or rendezvous sites, and the Proposed Plan would not affect the known den/rendezvous site on the RMRD west of the project area.
2. The Proposed Plan would not affect the wolf prey base, and would not increase mortality risk to wolves.
3. Although livestock grazing occurs within the project area, it does not occur within the known territory of the Red Shale pack, and the Proposed Plan would not result in any changes to existing grazing practices. Current grazing of outfitter/guide horses may occur within the Red Shale pack territory, which is outside the project area, and would not be changed by the Proposed Plan.

Recommendations For Removing, Avoiding, or Compensating Adverse Effects

No adverse effects are anticipated.

GRIZZLY BEAR (Ursus arctos)

Legal Status

The grizzly bear is currently listed as a Threatened species throughout the conterminous United States. The Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan identifies 5 recovery zones, based on ecosystem characteristics, in which grizzly bear populations could be self-sustaining (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1993). The RMRD is entirely within the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) Recovery Zone, which extends approximately 20 miles eastward from the NF boundary to U.S. Highway 89, northward across U.S. Highway 2 into Glacier National Park, west of the RMRD into the Flathead and Lolo National Forests, and south of the RMRD into the Helena National Forest. Recovery of grizzly bears in the NCDE is contingent on (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1993):

- presence of 10 females with cubs inside GNP and 12 females with cubs outside GNP over a running six-year average both inside and outside the Recovery Zone (excluding Canada)
- occupation of 21 out of 23 Bear Management Units (BMUs) by females with young from a running 6-year sum of verified sightings and evidence, with no 2 adjacent BMUs unoccupied
- known human-caused mortality not to exceed 4%, during any 2 consecutive years, of the population estimate based on the most recent 3-year sum of females with cubs; no more than 30% of this mortality limit shall be females
- occupation of the Mission Mountains portion of the ecosystem

Local Population and Habitat Status

Population estimates of grizzly bears on the RMRD portion of the NCDE have ranged from 80 to 115 bears (USDI Bureau of Land Management 1992), although these estimates are several years old and based on limited mark-recapture data. An effort is currently underway to estimate the entire population of the NCDE using DNA samples collected systematically across the ecosystem. When that study is complete (estimated in late 2006) a more precise estimate of the grizzly bear population on the RMRD should be available. An additional effort is underway to analyze grizzly bear population trend in the NCDE. Results from that study may help determine population trend on the RMRD as well.

In 2004, the most recent year for which recovery measures were calculated, the NCDE did not meet recovery goals for females with cubs inside GNP or overall, and exceeded the mortality limits established in the Recovery Plan. The distribution goals (occupation of 21 out of 23 BMUs as described above), however, were met (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service data revised 3/16/06, C. Servheen). Grizzly bear mortality, particularly along the Highway 2 corridor and on private lands within the NCDE continues to be an issue with respect to recovery.

Grizzly bears are opportunistic and adaptable omnivores. Habitat use varies between areas, seasons, local populations, and individuals (Servheen 1983, Craighead and Mitchell 1982 in Claar et al. 1999). In Montana, important grizzly bear habitats include coniferous forest for thermal and security cover, and meadows, riparian zones, shrubs, parks, avalanche chutes, and alpine areas for foraging. Grizzly bears frequently exhibit wide-ranging seasonal movements in search of widely dispersed and varying food sources.

On the RMRD, grizzly bears generally den in the higher elevation areas well within the NF boundary (Aune and Kasworm 1989). Many grizzly bears then move to low-elevation foothill habitat along the eastern NF boundary as well as to adjacent non-NFS lands in spring to forage on greening vegetation and winter-killed carcasses on ungulate winter ranges. Spring habitats are generally used between April 1 and June 30 in this area (USDI Bureau of Land Management et al. 1987).

Summer grizzly bear habitat is primarily on the RMRD, although a few grizzly bears remain on non-NFS lands throughout the non-winter months. Bears generally use higher elevation forests and meadows during the summer, although they may be found throughout the RMRD during this time. Many grizzly bears return to lower elevations, including non-NFS lands, in late summer and fall to take advantage of ripening buffaloberry (*Sheperdia canadensis*) and chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*). During fall, some bears may shift to areas with concentrations of hunters throughout the RMRD and lands to the east to capitalize on gut piles and carcasses left by big-game hunters. Summer habitats are generally used between July 1 and August 31, while fall habitats are used between September 1 and November 30 (USDI Bureau of Land Management et al. 1987).

Potential grizzly bear spring and denning habitats have been mapped for the RMRD based on general habitat and landscape characteristics and information derived from studies of radio-collared bears. Table 3 shows the amount of mapped grizzly bear habitat in and adjacent to the RMRD, as well as the amount and percent on NFS lands and within the project area. For completeness, this table includes figures for the Badger-Two Medicine area that are not under consideration in the current decision. Nearly all denning habitat in the area occurs on NFS lands, while a large majority of the spring habitat occurs on non-NFS lands east of the boundary.

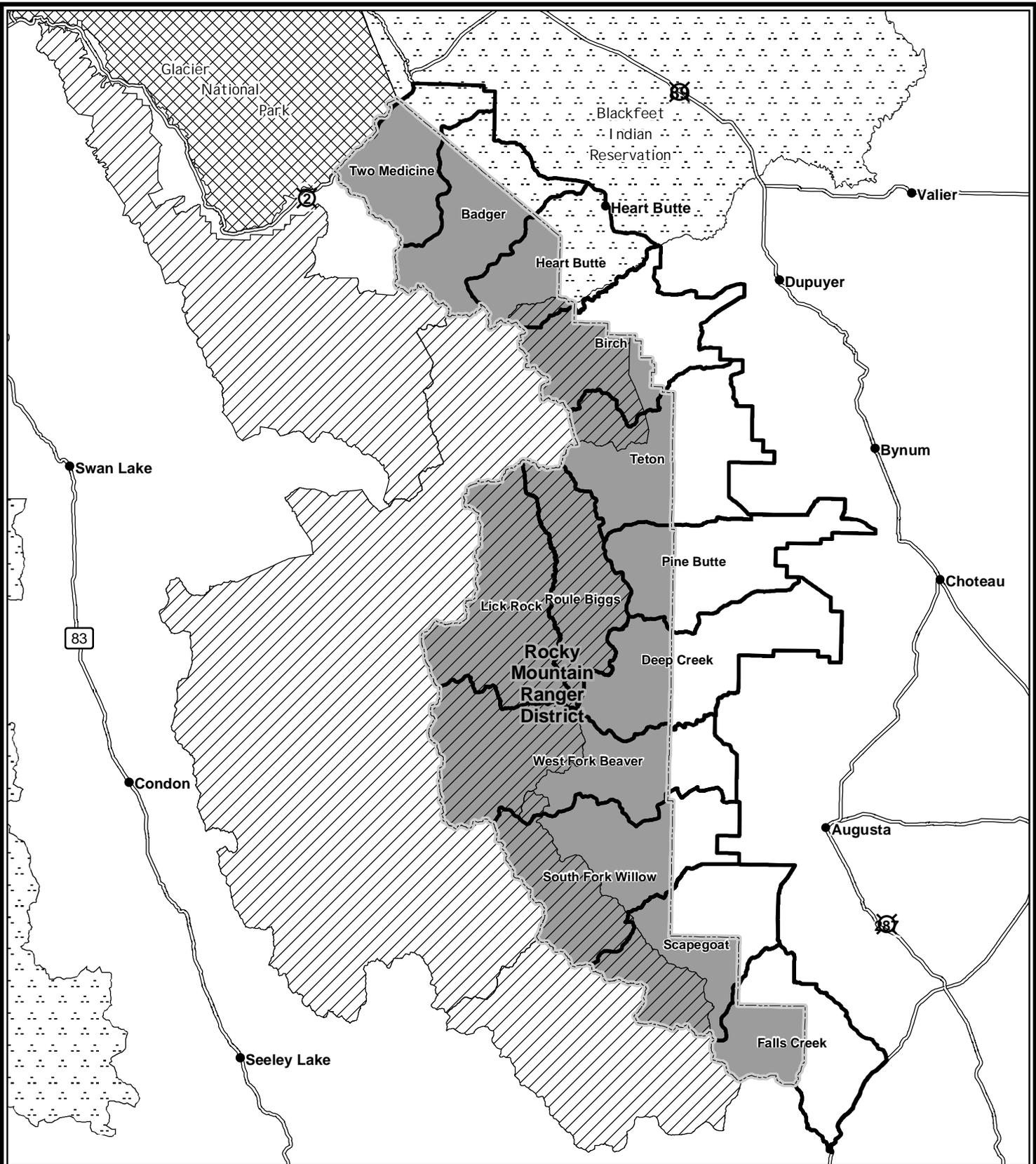
Table 3. Total Acreage of Grizzly Bear Denning and Spring Habitats, and Acreage and Percent of each Habitat within National Forest Boundary and within Badger-Two Medicine and Birch-South Areas

Habitat	Total Acreage	Acreage Within NF Boundary	% of Total Habitat Within NF Boundary	Acreage of Habitat in Badger-Two Medicine	% of NF Habitat in Badger-Two Medicine	Acreage of Habitat in Birch-South ¹	% of NF Habitat in Birch-South ¹
Grizzly Bear Denning	340,840	333,200	98%	45,270	14%	287,930	86%
Grizzly Bear Spring ²	632,870	205,410	32%	46,720	23%	158,680	77%

¹ Acreage and percent of habitats in Birch-South portion includes habitat within designated Wilderness

² Acreage and percent of spring habitat within NF boundary includes approximately 1% of total spring habitat that occurs on private inholdings inside the NF boundary

The RMRD has been divided into Bear Management Units (BMUs) and Subunits to facilitate analysis of project effects and to evaluate recovery goals (Map 3). Each BMU Subunit approximates the size of an adult female grizzly bear’s annual home range. See Table 4 for acreage of each BMU subunit and the portion of each that is on NFS lands and within Wilderness. For completeness, this table includes figures for the 3 Subunits in the Badger-Two Medicine area that are not under consideration in the current decision, as



-  Grizzly Bear BMU Subunits
-  Rocky Mountain Ranger District
-  Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex
-  Indian Reservation

Rocky Mountain Ranger District
Travel Management Plan

BMU - Bear Management Unit Subunits



well as figures for 2 subunits that fall entirely within designated Wilderness and are therefore outside the project area. The project area (the non-wilderness portion of the RMRD south of the North Fork of Birch Creek) includes portions of 8 BMU Subunits out of a total of 13 on the RMRD. The portions of the 8 Subunits within the project area that extend onto non-NFS lands to the east, as well as the portions of 5 of those Subunits that fall within designated Wilderness are not included in the travel management decision. Nevertheless, most of the analysis with respect to grizzly bears occurs at the level of the Subunit and will therefore incorporate both non-NFS lands and designated wilderness.

Table 4. Total Acreage of BMU Subunits, and Acreage and Percent of each BMU within National Forest Boundary and within Designated Wilderness

Subunit	Total Acreage in Subunit	Acreage Within NF Boundary	% of Subunit Within NF Boundary	Acreage in Wilderness	% of Subunit Within NF Boundary in Wilderness	% of Subunit in Wilderness
<i>Badger Two Medicine Area:</i>						
Two Medicine	62,780	47,520	76%	0	--	--
Badger	82,430	56,660	69%	0	--	--
Heart Butte	71,020	33,380	47%	5,620	17%	8%
<i>Birch South Area:</i>						
Birch	94,640	47,050	50%	40,240	86%	43%
Teton	113,200	58,250	51%	14,800	25%	13%
Roule Biggs	64,120	64,120	100%	64,120	100%	100%
Lick Rock	101,060	101,060	100%	101,060	100%	100%
Pine Butte	87,170	25,960	30%	0	--	--
Deep Creek	104,700	40,850	39%	0	--	--
West Fork Beaver	142,420	120,830	85%	78,920	65%	55%
South Fk Willow	120,730	97,380	81%	50,620	52%	42%
Scapegoat	100,900	58,030	58%	30,350	52%	30%
Falls Creek	84,950	30,540	36%	0	--	--

Following direction in the Interagency Grizzly Bear Management Guidelines (Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee 1986), the RMRD has been stratified into Management Situations (MS) to prioritize habitat and multiple-use management in relation to grizzly bear recovery. Nearly all (98%, or over 760,000 acres) of the RMRD is classified as MS-1, which contains grizzly bear population centers and habitat key to species survival and recovery. Management priorities in MS-1 are to maintain/improve

grizzly bear habitat, minimize grizzly-human conflicts, and to make management decisions that favor the needs of the grizzly bear when grizzly habitat and other land use values compete. A small portion (2%, or roughly 14,000 acres) of the RMRD is designated MS-3. This habitat is located around existing centers of human activity such as recreation residence tracts, permitted lodges, and campgrounds. Management priorities in MS-3 habitat are to manage grizzly-human conflicts and to discourage grizzly bear presence and factors contributing to their presence. An additional roughly 5,000 acres that fall within the boundary of the RMRD are privately owned; nearly half of this private inholding acreage is at the north end of the Badger-Two Medicine area immediately adjacent to U.S. Highway 2.

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects Analysis

Direct and Indirect Effects

Access Management

Overview

To protect important seasonal grizzly bear habitat from disturbance, the Lewis and Clark National Forest has relied primarily upon the dates recommended in the Rocky Mountain Front Interagency Wildlife Guidelines (RMF Guidelines) to restrict motorized access in those habitats. Adherence to the RMF Guidelines is incorporated as a Forest-Wide Wildlife Management Standard (C-1, p.2-31) in the LCNF Forest Plan. Restriction dates recommended by the RMF Guidelines were incorporated into the 1988 Travel Plan, and were included as key factors in developing the Proposed Plan. Thus LCNF has not adopted formal motorized access route density objectives as have some other national forests in the NCDE and other ecosystems where grizzly bears are present.

The IGBC Access Management Taskforce Report on Grizzly Bear/Motorized Access Management (Taskforce Report) published in 1993 provided the basis for development in 1995 of the Interim Motorized Access Management Direction for the NCDE (Interim Direction). The Interim Direction calls for calculating total motorized access route density (TOTMARD), to include all routes that are designated as motorized regardless of seasonal or year-round restrictions, and open motorized access route density (OPMARD), to include all routes that are open to motorized travel at any time during the non-denning season (1 April – 30 November). Core, consisting of blocks of habitat that are ≥ 2500 acres in size and more than 500m from an open motorized or high-use non-motorized road or trail, is also to be calculated. According to the Interim Direction TOTMARD, OPMARD and CORE are to be calculated for each BMU Subunit regardless of ownership pattern, for the entire non-denning season. Guideline values for the % of each Subunit at a certain density of TOTMARD and OPMARD or in Core are to be applied only to federal lands within the Subunit. The Interim Direction recommendations are as follows:

- TOTMARD: No increase; move toward $\leq 19\%$ of Subunit in ≥ 2 mi/mi² density category on federal lands
- OPMARD: No increase; move toward $\leq 19\%$ of Subunit in ≥ 1 mi/mi² density category on federal lands

- CORE: No decrease in % of analysis area in Core. Move toward $\geq 68\%$ of Subunit in Core on federal lands.

The Taskforce Report was updated in 1998, noting among other things that OPMARD and Core may be calculated or identified by season. The Report recommended that each ecosystem subcommittee of the IGBC develop or update their access management direction based on relevant ecosystem-specific information. The NCDE Access Management Rule Set Proposed Direction (IGBC 2001) was subsequently developed, proposing a set of guidelines that addressed some difficulties in applying the original guidelines, and suggested more specific protocols for calculation of densities. The Proposed Direction also incorporated important differences between grizzly bear habitats and land ownership and management east of the Continental Divide versus west of it, included consideration of percent federal ownership of subunits, and attempted to address seasonal changes in grizzly bear habitat needs. Objectives for the Proposed Direction are measured in kilometers per square kilometer, to be more in line with units used in scientific research, but they are therefore difficult to compare directly with calculations made under the Interim Direction. The Proposed Direction has not yet been formally accepted by the IGBC.

Meanwhile, in 1995 the Flathead National Forest adopted Amendment 19 (A-19), amending their Forest Plan to incorporate access management standards. These standards are based on the 1995 NCDE Interim Direction but include more specific application of density standards based on percent federal ownership in a Subunit. A protocol was developed to calculate TOTMARD, OPMARD, and Core for all projects to evaluate compliance with A-19. The A-19 standards are as follows:

- TOTMARD
 - Subunits $\geq 75\%$ NFS lands: $\leq 19\%$ of Subunit in ≥ 2 mi/mi² density category
 - Subunits $< 75\%$ NFS lands: no net increase in % of Subunit in ≥ 2 mi/mi² density category
- OPMARD
 - Subunits $\geq 75\%$ NFS lands: $\leq 19\%$ of Subunit in ≥ 1 mi/mi² density category
 - Subunits $< 75\%$ NFS lands: no net increase in % of Subunit in ≥ 1 mi/mi² density category
- CORE
 - Subunits $\geq 75\%$ NFS lands: $\leq 68\%$ of Subunit in core areas ≥ 2500 acres
 - Subunits $< 75\%$ NFS lands: no net decrease in % of Subunit in core areas ≥ 2500 acres.

Despite not having adopted access management standards based on the NCDE Interim or Proposed Direction, the LCNF has conducted an access management analysis to evaluate motorized access on the RMRD under the existing (1988) Travel Plan and under the Proposed Plan. The FNF A-19 standards provide a useful and familiar point of reference because they have been formally established in a Forest Plan Amendment and applied to

a number of land management projects on the FNF. Therefore the A-19 protocol used by the Flathead National Forest, modified slightly to account for some minor differences in available type and quantity of data, was used to carry out the analysis for the RMRD travel plan. Specific information regarding those modifications as well as other details on application of the access management analysis to the RMRD is available in the project file. Results are compared to A-19 standards for a point of reference, as well as to the NCDE Interim Direction.

In addition to calculations made for the entire non-denning season OPMA and Core were calculated by season, as suggested in the 1998 IGBC Taskforce Report and in the NCDE Proposed Direction. Calculating these values by season better reflects specific concerns about impacts to important grizzly bear habitats, and allows better evaluation of the effectiveness of adhering to the RMF Wildlife Guideline recommendations for seasonal restrictions on motorized access. The results for the Birch-South area are displayed by analysis category in Tables 5-11 below, and are organized to group Subunits by ownership level per the A-19 divisions. The tables do not include the Badger-Two Medicine portion of the RMRD, for which a later decision will be made. The tables also do not include the 2 wilderness Subunits, which meet objectives for TOTMARD, OPMARD, and Core in both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. In all tables, numbers in **Bold** indicate Subunits or portions of Subunits that would not be in compliance if the A-19 standards were applied to the RMRD Existing Situation. Numbers in *Italics* indicate Subunits or portions of Subunits that would not meet the A-19 numeric objective under the Proposed Plan, even if they meet the standard by moving toward the numeric objective.

Total Motorized Access Route Density (TOTMARD)

TOTMARD calculations include all roads and trails that are designated for motorized travel, regardless of whether or not there are seasonal or yearlong restrictions present.

Table 5. TOTMARD: Percent of each Subunit portion in >2mi/mi² density class, by ownership category.

	Subunit	NFS Lands Portion		All Lands in Subunit		Non-NFS Lands Portion ¹	
		<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
≥75% NFS Lands	<i>W. Fork Beaver</i>	2.90	2.65	7.06	7.00	29.73	30.68
	<i>S. Fork Willow</i>	2.43	1.63	5.59	4.92	17.76	17.60
<75% NFS Lands	<i>Birch</i>	3.26	0.13	23.04	21.03	42.62	41.72
	<i>Teton</i>	5.82	3.97	17.47	16.03	29.45	28.42
	<i>Pine Butte</i>	11.7	3.38	20.83	18.35	24.70	24.70
	<i>Deep Creek</i>	9.1	1.23	18.26	15.35	23.53	23.48
	<i>Scape-goat</i>	2.29	2.22	14.00	13.96	29.76	29.76
	<i>Falls Creek</i>	5.99	0.17	22.47	19.90	31.71	30.98

¹ Differences between Existing and Proposed numbers on Non-NFS lands are likely due to portions of routes that are included and managed as NF system routes but that travel across non-NFS lands. Note that all such differences are minor, involving short portions of road or trail, and do not affect compliance of those lands.

The NFS lands portion of all Subunits meets the A-19 standard in both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. Three of 6 Subunits with <75% NFS lands do not meet the A-19 recommendation as a whole in the Existing Situation, but all 6 subunits would move in that direction under the Proposed Plan, thus meeting the A-19 standard, and the Interim Direction.

Open Motorized Access Route Density (OPMARD)

OPMARD calculations included all routes that are open for motorized travel during the season for which the calculation was made. Routes are included regardless of the estimated use level; i.e. some routes may be open during all or part of the non-denning season, and therefore included in OPMARD calculations, but they may receive little or no use all or part of that time. Development of OPMARD differs from the A-19 protocol as follows: under A-19, the method of closure (e.g. berm vs. gate) determines inclusion or exclusion from OPMARD, and that determination differs for roads and trails. For the RMRD calculation, method of closure was not considered, and all motorized routes were treated the same.

The Proposed Direction stresses that the benefits of the proposed access management “depend heavily on effective implementation of a ‘gated’ road management system”. The RMRD, however, has a total of only 135 miles of road within an area of over 776,000 acres (with 105 road miles on 264,000 acres considered in the current travel management decision). Almost all of these roads are closely tied to major public access points such as trailheads, campgrounds, and recreation residences, and are therefore considered “uncloseable”. Thus very few roads are involved in the access management issue and in TOTMARD calculations on the RMRD. Roads may be a more critical issue both on the west side and with respect to requirements for gates or other physical closure devices. The RMRD access issue revolves primarily around motorized trails, and very few physical closure devices are used to implement seasonal or other restrictions on trails. The majority of ATV trails are in the Badger-Two Medicine area. Motorized trails in the Birch-South decision area are almost entirely single-track motorcycle trails that receive almost no use at any time of year due to a combination of terrain, trail structure, and lack of a significant motorcycle user group. Most of these single-track trails are also relatively inaccessible until after the critical spring season.

OPMARD calculations were carried out for the entire non-denning season (1 April – 30 November), as well as for spring (1 April – 30 June), and summer/fall (1 July – 30 November). Seasonal calculations were done to examine the effectiveness of seasonal restrictions on motorized routes based on the RMF Guidelines.

Summer and/or fall also include the maximum number of routes that might be open at any time during the non-denning season, because most seasonal closures are in place either in spring to protect grizzly bear spring or elk calving habitats, or in fall to protect elk and other big game habitats during general rifle hunting season. Summer/fall OPMARD is thus the same as OPMARD for the entire non-denning season. Therefore the results for overall non-denning OPMARD and summer/fall OPMARD are presented in a single table (Table 6) below.

A number of motorized routes on the RMRD are restricted to motorized access between 15 October and 1 December (general rifle hunting season) under both the Existing Condition and the Proposed . These routes were included in fall OPMARD totals, however, because the fall season for bears is considered to begin 1 September, fully 6 weeks before the restrictions begin. Therefore OPMARD for both summer and fall include the same routes. It should be noted, however, that OPMARD is further reduced for half the bear fall season, at a time when motorized use likely increases on many unrestricted routes and human activity overall likely increases as well. Hunting season restrictions on motorized access likely provide additional security for bears that have not yet entered hibernation.

It is important to note that nearly all of the 105 miles of road open seasonally or yearlong on the RMRD under the Existing Condition are open yearlong or for a long enough period to be included in all OPMARD calculations. With respect to trails, of the 209 miles of motorized trail in the Existing Condition, 144 miles are single-track trail open to motorcycle use only. Although no numeric data are available regarding use levels, it is

generally accepted that these trails receive very low levels of use throughout the time period they are open. All or part of most of these trails are inaccessible during the spring due to snow, high water, or wet and muddy conditions. Similar patterns of use are expected under the Proposed Plan, with the available motorized trail miles greatly reduced (74 total trail miles, 24 of them open to ATV and motorcycle, and 50 of them single-track trails open to motorcycle only). Thus many trails included in OPMARD calculations for both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan may actually receive little or no use.

Table 6. OPMARD for Entire Non-Denning Season (1 April – 30 November) and for the Summer/Fall Season (1 July – 30 September): Percent of each Subunit portion in >1mi/mi² density class, by ownership category

	Subunit	NFS Lands Portion		All Lands in Subunit		Non-NFS Lands Portion ¹	
		<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
≥75% NFS Lands	<i>W. Fork Beaver</i>	10.64	9.60	20.04	19.18	71.3	71.41
	<i>S. Fork Willow</i>	14.5	9.96	23.3	19.63	57.17	56.85
<75% NFS Lands	<i>Birch</i>	8.95	1.55	43.34	40.40	77.37	78.85
	<i>Teton</i>	23.16	12.54	44.46	38.30	66.37	64.78
	<i>Pine Butte</i>	46.59	12.62	54.00	43.88	57.14	57.14
	<i>Deep Creek</i>	40.43	9.25	57.13	45.51	66.74	66.38
	<i>Scape-goat</i>	7.36	7.24	29.12	29.05	58.43	58.43
	<i>Falls Creek</i>	33.64	2.70	54.96	43.12	66.93	65.81

¹ Differences between Existing and Proposed numbers on Non-NFS lands are likely due to portions of routes that are included and managed as NF system routes but that travel across non-NFS lands. Note that all such differences are minor, involving short portions of road or trail, and do not affect compliance of those lands.

The NFS lands portion of all Subunits with ≥ 75% NF ownership meets the A-19 standard in both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. Four of 6 Subunits with <75% NFS lands do not meet the A-19 recommendation on NFS lands or as a whole in the Existing Situation. It should be noted that the Falls Creek subunit does not meet the standard because trails on NFS lands in that Subunit are designated as open to motorcycle use on the travel plan map. These trails, however, are in fact not currently available for motorized use due to restrictions placed by the private landowner who controls access to the Falls Creek trail system.

Under the Proposed Plan the NFS portion of all 6 subunits would meet the density goal, and all 6 subunits would move in that direction in their entirety under the Proposed Plan, thus meeting the A-19 standard as well as the Interim Direction.

Table 7. OPMARD for Spring Season (1 April – 30 June): Percent of each Subunit portion in >1mi/mi² density class, by ownership category

	Subunit	NFS Lands Portion		All Lands in Subunit		Non-NFS Lands Portion ¹	
		<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
≥75% NFS Lands	<i>W. Fork Beaver</i>	8.14	4.69	17.84	14.94	70.73	70.83
	<i>S. Fork Willow</i>	6.31	4.34	16.76	14.80	56.98	55.07
<75% NFS Lands	<i>Birch</i>	3.58	0.77	40.66	40.01	77.35	78.85
	<i>Teton</i>	18.77	9.69	42.05	36.85	65.97	64.78
	<i>Pine Butte</i>	19.31	12.62	45.87	43.88	57.14	57.14
	<i>Deep Creek</i>	18.85	9.25	49.10	45.51	66.52	66.38
	<i>Scape-goat</i>	7.36	7.24	29.12	29.05	58.43	58.43
	<i>Falls Creek</i>	30.29	2.70	53.57	43.12	66.64	65.81

¹ Differences between Existing and Proposed numbers on Non-NFS lands are likely due to portions of routes that are included and managed as NF system routes but that travel across non-NFS lands. Note that all such differences are minor, involving short portions of road or trail, and do not affect compliance of those lands.

The NFS lands portion and the entire portion of all Subunits with ≥ 75% NF ownership meets the A-19 standard in both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. Only 1 of 6 Subunits with <75% NFS lands does not meet the A-19 density objective on NFS lands in the Existing Situation, and that subunit is at the borderline for meeting the objective. Once again it should be noted that the Falls Creek subunit does not comply on paper, but currently does comply on the ground as discussed above. The greater overall compliance and lower OPMARD densities in spring compared to the entire non-denning season demonstrate the effectiveness of existing seasonal road and trail closures in protecting key seasonal habitats.

Under the Proposed Plan the NFS portion of all 6 subunits with <75% NFS lands would meet the standard, and all 6 subunits would move in that direction in their entirety under the Proposed Plan, thus meeting the A-19 standard, as well as the Interim Direction.

Core Area (CORE)

The analysis of Core Area involves buffering all open motorized roads and trails as well as all high-use non-motorized trails by 500 m. Remaining blocks of habitat ≥ 2500 acres are then identified and assigned status as secure areas, or Core. Many large blocks of Core are bisected by >1 Subunit boundary. The percentage of each subunit in Core reflects the portion of each Subunit that contains entire blocks of Core or portions of blocks of Core.

Core calculations were carried out for the entire non-denning season (1 April – 30 November), as well as for spring (1 April – 30 June), summer, (1 July – 30 August) and fall (1 September – 30 November). Seasonal calculations were done to examine the effectiveness of seasonal restrictions on motorized routes based on the RMF Guidelines. Unlike OPMARD, Core differs between summer and fall as well as between those seasons and the entire non-denning season due to differences in high-use non-motorized trails. Non-motorized trails receive different levels of use in summer vs. fall because of seasonal changes in recreational pursuits (e.g. hiking/camping vs. hunting) as well as differences in weather and trail condition.

Although a rule exists for determining whether a non-motorized trail is considered high use (>20 parties per week; see NCDE Cumulative Effects Model Manual - 2005), actual data do not exist with which to determine whether a particular trail should be considered high use or not. Use levels were assigned to all trails after discussion with trails and wilderness managers and other FS personnel familiar with those trails and the use they receive in each season. Where there was doubt between 2 use levels, the higher level was assigned in order to arrive at the most conservative estimate of secure grizzly bear habitat.

As noted above under the OPMARD discussion, many trails included in OPMARD calculations, particularly single-track motorcycle trails, may receive little if any actual use during all or part of the non-denning season. Considering this and the manner in which use levels were assigned to non-motorized trails, the results presented below are more likely to underestimate Core than to overestimate it.

Table 8. Core for Entire Non-Denning Season (1 April – 30 November): Percent of each Subunit in Core by ownership category

	Subunit	NFS Lands Portion		All Lands in Subunit		Non-NFS Lands Portion ¹	
		<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
≥75% NFS Lands	<i>W. Fork Beaver</i>	78.12	78.17	68.65	68.7	17.00	17.00
	<i>S. Fork Willow</i>	66.95	67.01	59.21	59.28	29.42	29.50
<75% NFS Lands	<i>Birch</i>	82.81	89.01	47.05	50.55	11.66	12.48
	<i>Teton</i>	68.82	75.76	44.06	49.65	18.60	22.80
	<i>Pine Butte</i>	46.16	81.30	40.75	53.72	38.46	42.01
	<i>Deep Creek</i>	44.98	62.36	29.87	39.20	21.18	25.87
	<i>Scape-goat</i>	62.48	62.58	50.96	51.02	35.46	35.46
	<i>Falls Creek</i>	60.24	86.11	37.47	48.59	24.69	27.53

¹ Differences between Existing and Proposed numbers on Non-NFS lands are likely due to portions of routes that are included and managed as NF system routes but that travel across non-NFS lands. Note that all such differences are minor, involving short portions of road or trail, and do not affect compliance of those lands.

The NFS lands portion of one Subunit with $\geq 75\%$ NF ownership meets the A-19 standard in both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. The South Fork Willow Subunit does not meet the standard in either situation, although the Proposed Plan moves this subunit closer to the standard. As displayed in Tables 9-11 below for seasonal Core calculations, the South Fork Willow Subunit meets the A-19 standard for Core in spring and summer, but not in fall. As discussed above in the OPMARD section, the density of open motorized routes is the same in both summer and fall. The only difference between these seasons that influences the amount of Core area is the density of high-use non-motorized trails in the Subunit. Thus it is the contribution of fall (likely hunting-related) travel on non-motorized trails, rather than motorized travel, that heavily influences Core calculations in this Subunit and prevents it from achieving $\geq 68\%$ Core for the entire non-denning season. Under the Proposed Plan this Subunit meets the Interim Direction, however, by not decreasing Core and by moving toward the 68% objective. As discussed above, it is possible that Core is underestimated in this as in other subunits due to the way in which use levels were assigned to non-motorized trails.

Four of 6 Subunits with $<75\%$ NFS lands do not meet the A-19 Core objective on NFS lands or as a whole in the Existing Situation. The Falls Creek subunit does not meet the standard because trails on NFS lands in that Subunit are designated as open to motorcycle

use on the travel plan map. These trails, however, are in fact not currently available for motorized use due to restrictions placed by the private landowner who controls access to the Falls Creek trail system.

Under the Proposed Plan the NFS portion of 4 of those 6 subunits would meet the objective, and all 6 subunits would move in that direction in their entirety under the Proposed Plan, thus meeting the A-19 standard, as well as the Interim Direction. As with the South Fork Willow Subunit, Core in the Deep Creek and Scapegoat subunits is limited by high use of non-motorized trails during the fall (hunting) season.

Table 9. Core for Spring Season (1 April – 30 June): Percent of each Subunit portion in >2mi/mi² density class, by ownership category

	Subunit	NFS Lands Portion		All Lands in Subunit		Non-NFS Lands Portion ¹	
		<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
≥75% NFS Lands	<i>W. Fork Beaver</i>	87.95	91.50	76.98	79.98	17.17	17.17
	<i>S. Fork Willow</i>	93.27	95.22	80.11	81.69	29.42	29.61
<75% NFS Lands	<i>Birch</i>	95.39	97.40	53.31	54.73	11.67	12.50
	<i>Teton</i>	81.14	89.98	51.58	59.47	21.18	28.10
	<i>Pine Butte</i>	80.21	86.46	50.89	55.25	38.46	42.01
	<i>Deep Creek</i>	79.80	88.81	42.59	48.86	21.18	25.87
	<i>Scape-goat</i>	91.46	91.56	67.69	67.75	35.7	35.70
	<i>Falls Creek</i>	71.26	96.07	41.49	52.18	24.77	27.55

¹ Differences between Existing and Proposed numbers on Non-NFS lands are likely due to portions of routes that are included and managed as NF system routes but that travel across non-NFS lands. Note that all such differences are minor, involving short portions of road or trail, and do not affect compliance of those lands.

During the spring season, the NFS lands portion of all subunits, regardless of ownership level, would meet the A-19 standard and Interim Direction under both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. In the Existing Situation this is likely due to a combination of adherence to the RMF Guidelines in restricting motorized travel, and low levels of use on all trails at this time of year. Under the Proposed Plan, overall reductions in density of motorized routes in combination with low levels of use during spring contribute to the generally high levels of Core. The Proposed Plan would increase the amount of Core in all Subunits considered in their entirety regardless of ownership.

Table 11. Core for Summer Season (1 July – 31 August): Percent of each Subunit portion in >2mi/mi² density class, by ownership category

	Subunit	NFS Lands Portion		All Lands in Subunit		Non-NFS Lands Portion ¹	
		<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
≥75% NFS Lands	<i>W. Fork Beaver</i>	78.4	79.91	68.89	70.17	17.00	17.00
	<i>S. Fork Willow</i>	80.16	82.74	69.70	71.76	29.42	29.50
<75% NFS Lands	<i>Birch</i>	82.81	89.01	47.05	50.55	11.66	12.48
	<i>Teton</i>	68.82	75.79	44.06	49.66	18.60	22.80
	<i>Pine Butte</i>	46.16	81.30	40.75	53.72	38.46	42.01
	<i>Deep Creek</i>	54.22	77.69	33.25	44.80	21.18	25.87
	<i>Scape-goat</i>	84.12	84.22	63.48	63.54	35.69	35.69
	<i>Falls Creek</i>	60.24	86.20	37.47	48.62	24.69	27.53

¹ Differences between Existing and Proposed numbers on Non-NFS lands are likely due to portions of routes that are included and managed as NF system routes but that travel across non-NFS lands. Note that all such differences are minor, involving short portions of road or trail, and do not affect compliance of those lands.

During the summer season, the NFS lands portion and the entire subunit of all subunits ≥75% NF ownership would meet the A-19 standard as well as the Interim Direction under both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. Three of 6 Subunits with <75% NFS lands do not meet the A-19 numeric objective on NFS lands, and none of the 6 meet the objective when considered as a whole. As discussed above in the OPMARD section, the Falls Creek subunit may meet the objective on the ground, despite not meeting it on paper, due to actual restrictions on motorized access into the area by the private owner of the trailhead.

All Subunits would experience increases in Core as a whole under the Proposed Plan, thus meeting the A-19 standard and the Interim Direction. These increases are due entirely to reductions in density of motorized routes on NFS lands under the Proposed Plan, since non-motorized use levels are assumed to remain the same under either situation.

Table 11. Core for Fall Season (1 September – 30 November): Percent of each Subunit portion in >2mi/mi² density class, by ownership category

	Subunit	NFS Lands Portion		All Lands in Subunit		Non-NFS Lands Portion ¹	
		<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
≥75% NFS Lands	<i>W. Fork Beaver</i>	84.03	84.09	73.64	73.69	17.00	17.00
	<i>S. Fork Willow</i>	66.99	67.05	59.24	59.31	29.42	29.50
<75% NFS Lands	<i>Birch</i>	82.81	89.01	47.05	50.55	11.66	12.48
	<i>Teton</i>	68.82	78.62	44.06	51.68	18.6	23.99
	<i>Pine Butte</i>	48.00	83.15	41.30	54.27	38.46	42.01
	<i>Deep Creek</i>	45.86	65.15	30.20	40.22	21.18	25.87
	<i>Scape-goat</i>	62.81	62.91	51.15	51.21	35.46	35.46
	<i>Falls Creek</i>	60.24	86.11	37.47	48.59	24.69	27.53

¹ Differences between Existing and Proposed numbers on Non-NFS lands are likely due to portions of routes that are included and managed as NF system routes but that travel across non-NFS lands. Note that all such differences are minor, involving short portions of road or trail, and do not affect compliance of those lands.

Results for the the fall season are similar to those displayed above for the entire non-denning season. The NFS lands portion of one Subunit with ≥ 75% NF ownership meets the A-19 standard in both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. The South Fork Willow Subunit does not meet the standard in either situation due to the level and pattern of high-use non-motorized trails used during the fall (hunting) season rather than to motorized travel.

Four of 6 Subunits with <75% NFS lands do not meet the A-19 numeric objective on NFS lands or as a whole in the Existing Situation. As in summer and for the entire non-denning season, the Falls Creek subunit does not meet the objective on paper but likely does meet it on the ground. This is illustrated by the fact that it would easily meet the standard under the Proposed Plan, in which the only change from the Existing Situation is the removal of the motorized designation from all trails in that area. Use levels are assumed to remain the same under both situations.

Under the Proposed Plan the NFS portion of 4 of the 6 subunits with <75% NFS lands would meet the A-19 numeric objective, and all 6 subunits would move in that direction in their entirety under the Proposed Plan, thus meeting the A-19 standard as well as the Interim Direction. As discussed above for the South Fork Willow Subunit, Core in the

Deep Creek and Scapegoat subunits is limited by high use of non-motorized trails during the fall (hunting) season.

Summary of Access Management Analysis

In summary, the Proposed Plan would result in the NFS portion of all Subunits meeting A-19 standards and Interim Direction for TOTMARD, OPMARD, and Core. In 3 Subunits, Core is limited by fall use levels on non-motorized trails, but the Proposed Plan would meet the standards by moving those Subunits closer to the objective.

A key management tool on the RMRD has been seasonal restrictions on motorized access in seasonally important habitats. However the methods used to determine compliance with the Interim Direction do not include consideration of seasonal restrictions (note that the 1998 Revised IGBC Taskforce Report indicates that OPMARD “may be calculated for a season or yearlong”). Therefore stating that under the Existing Situation some Subunits fail to comply with the Interim Directions when calculated only for the entire non-denning season ignores the fact that some or all of those Subunits may actually comply with the direction during the seasons when bears would most likely be using those areas. This is most likely to be the case in spring, when many trails and some roads are closed to motorized use specifically to provide security for grizzly bears. The relatively high compliance with the Interim Direction for OPMARD on NFS lands when calculated seasonally, particularly in spring, illustrates that the existing system of seasonal restrictions on the RMRD is an effective means for providing habitat security for grizzly bears.

The Proposed Plan would generally not affect the non-NFS lands portion of Subunits. The figures for non-NFS lands for all Subunits illustrate the contribution of those lands to TOTMARD, OPMARD, or Core, and demonstrate very clearly the limit to which decreasing the density of motorized access routes on NFS lands can contribute to increasing grizzly bear security in Subunits as a whole.

Cumulative Effects Model

Overview

Efforts have been made since the late 1980’s to develop both unified and area-specific models with which to analyze the cumulative effects of human activity on grizzly bears. Most recently in the NCDE, a Cumulative Effects Model (CEM) has been developed that uses multivariate analysis of data from field studies on grizzly bears to predict seasonal grizzly bear habitat preference (USDA Forest Service et al. 2005). The model was adjusted to create an east-side and a west-side version, recognizing that habitats and grizzly bear use of them appear to differ substantially east vs. west of the Continental Divide. Simply put, the CEM for each area incorporates habitat features identified from satellite imagery that, based on data from research on grizzly bears, are assigned a value to indicate relative importance as grizzly bear habitat. These features in combination provide a Habitat Value (HV) for a given area, indicating the potential importance of that area to grizzly bears as compared to other areas. Calculations are made on a BMU or

BMU Subunit scale, so that each BMU or Subunit is assigned a HV for each season (spring, summer, and fall).

The key to the CEM and the reason behind its development, however, goes beyond simply assigning HV. The CEM uses information on human activities in the area of analysis to adjust the HV. Different types of human activity are assumed to decrease HV by different amounts. The adjustments to the HV made by the CEM after considering all human activities in an area are referred to as the Habitat Effectiveness (HE). Thus a Subunit may have a high HV for spring, for example, indicating that it has the potential to be more valuable than other Subunits, but it may have a relatively low HE because of the presence of a large amount of human activity or influence as compared to other Subunits. Specific information about development of the model, data and rationale behind values used in HV and HE calculations, and parameterization of the model can be found in the NCDE Cumulative Effects Manual (USDA Forest Service et al. 2005).

Development of the various CEMs was intended to provide an objective, repeatable, and quantifiable measure of the accumulated impact of individual human activities on grizzly bear habitat. The NCDE CEM does that, but it is critically important to understand that the calculated HV and HE values have no intrinsic meaning beyond providing a means to compare local areas or different activities within a single area. The technical group working on development and interpretation of the NCDE CEM agreed that the most useful way to use and understand outputs from the CEM is to look at the relative amount of change from HV to HE in each Subunit. The group agreed that looking at percent loss ($[1 - (HE/HV)] \times 100$) appeared to be the simplest and most appropriate way of looking at the CEM results. As an example, if a Subunit has an HV of 10 but an HE of 5, it has experienced a 50% loss in the value of its habitat as a result of human activity. When looking at several Subunits, it is then possible to identify which Subunits have experienced greater or lesser impacts to their inherent habitat potential as a result of accumulated human activities. This method can be used to predict the relative impact of a new activity, such as a road or timber sale, on grizzly bear habitat in an area. It can also be used to compare the relative impacts of alternative activities within a specific area by comparing the percent loss in HV that would be caused by each alternative.

CEM Analysis

To provide a means of comparing the potential impacts on grizzly bear habitat of the existing (1988) RMRD Travel Plan with the potential impacts of the Proposed Plan, the east-side NCDE CEM was run at the BMU Subunit level for both situations. For both situations the only differences were in travel management – the quantity and pattern of motorized access routes on the RMRD. All other habitat features and human activity features were the same in both situations.

The most appropriate way to look at this analysis is to compare the percent loss for each Subunit, as described above, under the Existing Condition with the percent loss for each Subunit under the Proposed Plan. Habitat Value (HV) is the same under the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan, so the comparison of percent loss provides some idea of the reduction in value of grizzly bear habitat due to travel management under the

Proposed Plan as compared to the Existing Situation. The results are displayed by season in Table 12 below for the Birch-South area; wilderness subunits are not included because travel management would be the same under the Proposed Plan as under the Existing Situation, so both HE and HV are the same under both situations. The percent loss under both the Existing Situation and Proposed Plan is displayed, as well as a measure of the degree to which that value would change under the Proposed Plan as compared to the Existing Situation.

Table 12. NCDE East-Side Cumulative Effects Model Results: Percent Loss $([1-(HE/HV)] \times 100)$ Comparison under Existing Situation and Proposed Plan by Subunit and Season

Subunit	SPRING			SUMMER			FALL		
	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Change in %: (Ex-Pref)x100</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Change in %: (Ex-Pref)x100</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Change in %: (Ex-Pref)x100</i>
<i>Birch</i>	26.03%	24.82%	1.21%	18.84%	15.65%	3.19%	16.06%	13.38%	2.68%
<i>Teton</i>	23.31%	21.82%	1.49%	17.23%	14.23%	3.00%	13.65%	10.98%	2.67%
<i>Pine Butte</i>	29.21%	28.93%	0.28%	18.11%	18.11%	0.00%	17.23%	16.92%	0.31%
<i>Deep Creek</i>	25.21%	23.85%	1.36%	18.48%	16.11%	2.37%	16.48%	16.10%	0.38%
<i>W. Fork Beaver</i>	8.28%	7.67%	0.61%	6.25%	6.25%	0.00%	4.39%	4.16%	0.23%
<i>S. Fork Willow</i>	13.38%	12.89%	0.49%	10.80%	7.95%	2.85%	8.22%	6.67%	1.55%
<i>Scape-goat</i>	21.42%	21.42%	0.00%	16.17%	16.17%	0.00%	13.21%	13.21%	0.00%
<i>Falls Creek</i>	27.25%	27.25%	0.00%	19.82%	19.37%	0.45%	16.49%	16.14%	0.35%

Summary of CEM Analysis

In all Subunits and all seasons, the Proposed Plan either does not alter or decreases the amount by which HV is reduced by human activity, effectively maintaining or improving the value of grizzly bear habitat. The amount by which the Proposed Plan does this indicates the relative degree of improvement and is displayed in the “Change in %” column in Table 12 above. In the Birch Subunit in spring, for example, there would be a 1.21% less reduction in HV due to human activity in the Proposed Plan than in the Existing Situation. Put another way, the habitat in the Birch Subunit would be 1.21% better under the Proposed Plan.

Differences between the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan appear to be greatest in the summer. Summer is when the most motorized routes would be open under either situation, so the greater difference during that season illustrates the degree to which the overall reduction in motorized routes under the Proposed Plan would affect grizzly bear habitat. Differences between the Existing and Proposed are least in spring, reflecting the existing protection of important seasonal habitat through restrictions on motorized travel in the spring.

Use levels on motorized routes were assigned as described in the Access Management analysis above for non-motorized routes. Where there was question, the higher level was assigned in order to be conservative about estimates of grizzly bear habitat.

Forest Plan Direction

The LCNF Forest Plan includes a variety of standards and guidelines that either directly or indirectly address management of grizzly bears and grizzly bear habitat management. Table 13 below summarizes Forest Plan standards that are relevant to the proposed project or that pertain directly or indirectly to grizzly bear habitat management. This table also displays how both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan comply with those standards, with differences highlighted in the Proposed Plan column.

Table 13. Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan Standards for Grizzly Bear and Management of Roads and Motorized Trails.

Forest Plan Standards	Existing	Proposed Plan	Compliance
Manage motorized use on NFS lands... to reduce effects on wildlife during periods of high stress (Wildlife & Fish C-1-6)	RMF Guidelines used to apply seasonal restrictions on motorized use primarily in grizzly bear spring and denning habitats	Continued use of restrictions in addition to overall reduction in mileage/density of motorized routes	YES
Use the Interagency Wildlife (RMF) Guidelines to manage land-use activities occurring within the habitat of these species on the RMF (Wildlife & Fish, C-1-11)	RMF Guidelines used to apply seasonal restrictions on motorized use primarily in grizzly bear spring and denning habitats	Continued use of restrictions in addition to overall reduction in mileage/density of motorized routes	YES
Maintain active communication with research and use current research for planning and implementation of projects in T&E species habitat (Wildlife & Fish, C-2-4)	Ongoing involvement with NCDE subcommittee and other groups at Forest and District level	No change	YES
Use the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines to coordinate multiple-use activities and manage T&E habitat (Wildlife & Fish, C-2-5; C-2-7, C-2-8)	Entire RMRD stratified into MS-1 (98%) and MS-3 (2%) habitat; appropriate management based on Interagency Guidelines applied to all activities accordingly	No change	YES
Schedule direct habitat improvement projects (Wildlife & Fish, C-2-6)	Periodic habitat improvement projects usually designed to benefit multiple species, including grizzly bears	No change	YES

Forest Plan Standards	Existing	Proposed Plan	Compliance
Establish an active public information and education program addressing T&E species management; emphasize protective measures (Wildlife & Fish, C-2-11)	Various ongoing public information efforts; major emphasis on enforcement of the NCDE Food Storage Order	No change	YES
Grazing will be made compatible with grizzly bears and/or habitat or discontinued (Range, D-4-6)	Most on-dates after July 1; ongoing monitoring of livestock forage consumption in riparian zones	No change	YES
Coordinate timber harvest activities with seasonal grizzly bear habitat use (Timber E-4-14); maintain or improve bear food production on harvest sites (Timber E-4-15,16,17,18); maintain escape cover and isolation for grizzly bears (Timber E-4-19)	Standard applied to past sales and incorporated into project development for planned fuels reduction projects. Projects since 1988 have averaged 3.5 acres, and maximum size has been ≤ 20 acres.	No change	YES
Limit firewood cutting on timber harvest roads, and permanently close after 2-3 years (Timber, E-2-4)	Minimal mileage of road, all within 1 mile of existing main access road, available for firewood cutting. No new roads for past >10 years.	Slightly reduced mileage of road available for firewood cutting.	YES
Protect T&E species through no surface occupancy and controlled surface use stipulations, timing limitations, and use of Interagency Guidelines for minerals operations and leases (Oil & Gas Leasing, Exploration Drilling Field Development, and Production, G-2-9, 10)	Stipulations and timing restrictions applied to all leases and to proposals for exploration and production. No active oil and gas operations for past >10 years.	No change	YES

Forest Plan Standards	Existing	Proposed Plan	Compliance
Unacceptable damage to.. wildlife... will be mitigated by road restrictions or other road management actions...Coordinate wildlife restrictions with MFWP (Facilities/Travel Planning, L-2-4)	RMF Guidelines used to apply seasonal restrictions on motorized use primarily in grizzly bear spring and denning habitats	Continued use of restrictions in addition to overall reduction in mileage/density of motorized routes	YES
Use the Interagency Wildlife Guidelines to avoid or mitigate conflicts between road construction and use and T&E species (Facilities/Travel Planning, L-2-33)	RMF Guidelines used to apply seasonal restrictions on motorized use primarily in grizzly bear spring and denning habitats	Continued use of restrictions in addition to overall reduction in mileage/density of motorized routes	YES
Implement seasonal or year-round closures on existing or proposed roads if... they are necessary to allow grizzly use of important habitat, to reduce conflict, or to meet habitat objectives (Facilities/Travel Planning, L-2-34)	RMF Guidelines used to apply seasonal restrictions on motorized use primarily in grizzly bear spring and denning habitats	Continued use of restrictions in addition to overall reduction in mileage/density of motorized routes	YES
Management Area (MA) Direction			
MA-E (79,900 acres or 10% of RMRD) Goal: Provide sustained high level of forage for livestock and big game. Objectives: Maintain important identified wildlife habitat, including T&E habitat; achieve low (0.5-1.5 mi. open road/mi ² area) public access through permitting motorized use on all arterial and most collector roads	Overall open road density 0.2 mi/mi ² ; motorized travel permitted on designated trails; no off-trail motorized travel allowed	Overall open road density 0.16 mi/mi²; reduced mileage of motorized trails; no off-trail motorized travel allowed	YES

Forest Plan Standards	Existing	Proposed Plan	Compliance
<p>MA-F (58,500 acres or 7.5% of RMRD) Goal: Emphasize semi-primitive recreation opportunities, while maintaining and protecting other Forest resources. Objectives: Minimize impact on identified wildlife habitat, including T&E habitat; Do not construct roads for surface use activities; obliterate roads built for subsurface use when not needed; close all areas and trails to ORVs except designated routes</p>	<p>No new roads built; road provisions and other stipulations included in leases and applications for subsurface use; no off-trail motorized travel allowed</p>	<p>No new roads proposed; road provisions and other stipulations included in leases and applications for subsurface use; no off-trail motorized travel allowed; reduced mileage of motorized trails</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>MA-G (103,400 acres or 13% of RMRD) Goal: Maintain and protect Forest resources with minimal investment. Objectives: Maintain important identified wildlife habitat, including T&E habitat; minimize public access by limiting motorized use to existing roads and travelways; obliterate roads built for subsurface use when not needed.</p>	<p>No new roads built; road provisions and other stipulations included in leases and applications for subsurface use; no off-trail motorized travel allowed</p>	<p>No new roads proposed; road provisions and other stipulations included in leases and applications for subsurface use; no off-trail motorized travel allowed; reduced mileage of motorized trails</p>	<p>YES</p>

Forest Plan Standards	Existing	Proposed Plan	Compliance
<p>MA-H (11,500 acres or 1.5% of RMRD) Goal: Provide recreation supported by public and private developments while maintaining other resource values Objectives: Minimize impacts on important identified wildlife habitat, including T&E habitat; achieve high (+3.0 mi. open road/mi² area) public access through permitting motorized use on all arterial and most collector roads</p>	<p>Primarily areas around main access roads, recreation residences and other developed areas. Patrols by recreation guards for public information and enforcement of NCDE Food Storage Order; overall open road density 2.99 mi/mi²</p>	<p>Overall open road density 3.51 mi/mi²; no other change</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>MA-I (20,100 acres or 3% of RMRD) Goal: Maintain or enhance important big-game habitat... emphasize the management of T&E species habitat such as grizzly bear spring range Objectives: Maintain important identified wildlife habitat, including T&E habitat; allow occupancy for minerals where wildlife habitat can be maintained and surface quality can be fully reclaimed; achieve low (0.5-1.5 mi. open road/mi² area) public access through permitting motorized use on all arterial and most collector roads</p>	<p>Overall open road density 0.31 mi/mi²; no new roads built; road provisions and other stipulations included in leases and applications for subsurface use; motorized travel permitted on designated trails; no off-trail motorized travel allowed</p>	<p>Overall open road density 0.35 mi/mi²; no new roads proposed; road provisions and other stipulations included in leases and applications for subsurface use; motorized travel permitted on designated trails after June 30; no off-trail motorized travel allowed</p>	<p>YES</p>

Forest Plan Standards	Existing	Proposed Plan	Compliance
<p>MA-N (42,700 acres or 5.5% of RMRD) Goal: Manage to maintain wilderness characteristics pending decision on wilderness recommendation Objectives: Maintain important identified wildlife habitat, including T&E habitat; minimize public access by limiting motorized use to existing roads and travelways; do not construct roads for surface use; roads for subsurface use will be closed to public and obliterated when not needed</p>	<p>No new roads built; road provisions and other stipulations included in leases and applications for subsurface use; motorized travel permitted on designated trails; no off-trail motorized travel allowed</p>	<p>No new roads proposed; road provisions and other stipulations included in leases and applications for subsurface use; greatly reduced mileage of motorized trails; no off-trail motorized travel allowed</p>	
<p>MA-O (23,100 acres or 7.5% of RMRD) Goal: Protect, maintain, and improve resource quality while providing timber at low intensity level to meet local need. Objectives: Maintain important identified wildlife habitat, including T&E habitat; minimize public access by limiting motorized use to existing roads and travelways; roads constructed for surface and mineral use will be closed to the public; roads will be located...for the most economical commodity... management along with production of T&E species habitat.</p>	<p>No new roads built; road provisions and other stipulations included in leases and applications for subsurface use; no new roads for proposed fuels reduction projects; motorized travel permitted on designated trails; no off-trail motorized travel allowed</p>	<p>No new roads proposed; road provisions and other stipulations included in leases and applications for subsurface use; no new roads for proposed fuels reduction projects; reduced mileage of motorized trails; no off-trail motorized travel allowed</p>	

Forest Plan Standards	Existing	Proposed Plan	Compliance
<p>MA-P, Designated Wilderness (385,900 acres or 49% of RMRD) Goal: Manage in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964; maintain indigenous animals by protecting natural processes. Objectives: Conservation of T&E species and their habitats will receive high priority; the grizzly bear will continue to be a part of the wilderness experience; public will be informed of but generally not restricted from use of known problem areas; education of bear avoidance techniques will be emphasized.</p>	<p>Fall inspections of hunting camps with estimated >80% contact; bear-resistant container rental program; wilderness ranger public contacts; wildland fire allowed in as many situations as possible</p>	<p>No change</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>MA-Q, Recommended Wilderness (55,800 acres or 7% of RMRD) Goal: Manage these areas to protect wilderness values Objectives: Maintain important identified wildlife habitat, including T&E habitat</p>	<p>No specific actions; overall open road density 0 mi/mi²; motorized travel permitted on designated trails; no off-trail motorized travel allowed</p>	<p>Overall open road density 0 mi/mi²; reduced mileage of motorized trails; no off-trail motorized travel allowed</p>	<p>YES</p>

All MAs on the RMRD meet Forest Plan objectives. The Forest Plan direction for MAs, however, provides density objectives only for roads, and tends to be imprecise about motorized trails or overall motorized route density objectives. Evaluation of Forest Plan Management Area direction is an important component of assessing how well current Forest Plan direction controls access and therefore protects grizzly bear habitat. Because the amount and location of a particular MA may vary greatly by Subunit, however, and because each Subunit may contain anywhere from one to several MA types, this analysis must occur only as a component of overall analysis of access. Evaluation of MA direction and compliance is most useful if accompanied by maps displaying the quantity and configuration of MAs within each Subunit. These maps are available in the project file.

In sum, the LCNF Forest Plan specifically calls for applying seasonal restrictions to all motorized activities in important seasonal wildlife habitats, based largely on the recommendations included in the RMF Guidelines. These recommendations have been applied rigorously to travel management on both roads and motorized trails beginning with the Existing (1988) Travel Plan, as well as to any projects proposed since the Forest Plan was signed in 1986.

The Forest Plan also calls for any proposed new roads to be single-purpose roads that would be closed to the public during the period of use, and either closed permanently or obliterated upon completion of the project activity. Construction and use of these roads is to be carried out according to the seasonal restrictions recommended in the RMF Guidelines. Although no new road construction has been carried out for at least a decade, all proposals that have included new road construction (primarily oil/gas proposals) have incorporated those provisions.

Cumulative Effects

A number of factors could potentially result in impacts to grizzly bears cumulative to those of the Proposed Travel Plan. These factors are: developed and dispersed recreation, prescribed burning/wildfire, timber harvest, wildlife habitat on adjacent lands, and livestock grazing.

Recreation is one of the primary uses by the public of the RMRD. There are 98 permitted recreation residence cabins on the RMRD, clustered in MS-3 habitat mainly in the Sun Canyon and Benchmark areas. There are also 11 developed campgrounds, as well as numerous dispersed campsites, trailhead facilities, and other recreation sites. A large proportion of visitors to the RMRD travel in the backcountry away from these facilities, where they hike, ride horseback, camp, fish, and hunt. The potential for displacement from these activities and consequent reduction in the value of grizzly bear habitat was displayed above in the results of the CEM. The other potential impact of these recreational activities is access by grizzly bears to human food sources. The RMRD initiated development of the NCDE Food Storage Special Order (current version: Food Storage Special Order LC00-18) in the late 1980's. Since that time, the RMRD has led efforts in the NCDE to revise the Food Storage Special Order (the Order) to make it both more effective and more enforceable. Several recreation guards are employed to patrol front-country recreation sites, posting signs and contacting the public as well as enforcing

the Food Storage Order. Several wilderness guards are employed to carry out the same tasks in the backcountry, and all employees are trained annually in the basics of the Order and enforcing it. The RMRD carries out a hunting camp patrol in the fall with an estimated >80% contact rate. Enforcement of the Food Storage Order is a primary purpose of those patrols. All activities permitted on the RMRD (including grazing, recreation residences, outfitting and guiding, etc.) include consequences of failing to comply with the Order within their permits. Through these combined efforts, the potential for grizzly bears to gain access to human foods is minimized.

Several wildfires of varying size as well as several smaller prescribed fires have occurred on the RMRD since 1988. At least one prescribed fire was part of a multi-phase grizzly bear habitat improvement project, and others included grizzly bear habitat improvement as a secondary goal or as a consideration. Within the perimeters of all of these fires, a mosaic of fire effects was achieved. Additional prescribed burning is scheduled within the Scapegoat Wilderness as soon as conditions are favorable. This planned fire is expected to create a varied patchwork of fire intensity and effects. Additional natural and prescribed fires may occur throughout the RMRD and adjoining lands in future years. Impacts on habitat will vary depending on the location and severity of the fires and on other factors. Frequently fires result in improved forage for grizzly bears within 1-5 years of their occurrence.

Very little timber harvest has occurred on the RMRD since 1988. A total of 107 acres were harvested between 1988 and 2002, using a variety of techniques ranging from small (1-20 acre) clearcuts, to small (1- 8 acre) thinning and other limited harvest projects. Several of these projects included grizzly bear habitat improvement as an objective, through improving growing conditions for buffaloberry (*Sheperdia canadensis*). The sum of these past harvests has likely had no impact on grizzly bear numbers or distribution.

Several small fuels treatment projects are planned that will alter the vegetation on a total of approximately 750 acres of the RMRD in the Benchmark drainage. The size of individual units varies from 3 to 236 acres, with the majority of units under 25 acres. All units are located immediately adjacent to recreation residences, most of which are in MS-3 habitat, or next to the National Forest boundary. Many treatment units are within mapped grizzly bear spring habitat, although Forest Plan standards restricting activity until after July 1 will be applied to all treatment projects. The result of these projects will be a variety of small openings or thinned canopy.

The area to the west of the project area is the heart of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. Wildlife habitats there are subject almost exclusively to natural forces, such as climate and fire, and receive only minimal influence from human activity. Lands east of the NF boundary are largely privately-owned ranch lands, where livestock husbandry is the primary activity. Although there are 3 state-owned Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) that provide key ungulate winter range, large numbers of elk and deer also winter on private lands. Grizzly bears are known to frequent lands east of the NF boundary, particularly in spring and late summer/fall. Nearly all grizzly bear-human conflicts occurring in the area known as the Rocky Mountain Front for the past 10+ years

have been on private land. All but one permanent management-related removal (via relocation or killing) from the area have been from private lands. Although significant efforts have been made by agencies and private groups, private lands east of the NF boundary are likely to continue to be a source of grizzly bear mortality.

Livestock grazing occurs within the project area on permitted grazing allotments. Several allotments also exist for limited outfitter/guide horse and mule grazing, most of which are in wilderness. The LCNF Forest Plan (see Table 13 above) requires, through incorporation of the RMF Guidelines and the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines, that grizzly bear-livestock conflicts be resolved in favor of grizzly bears. Known conflicts have been minimal and where they have occurred, livestock permittees have been advised to move cattle from the area to reduce likelihood of further conflict.

Determination of Effects

I have determined implementation of the proposed Federal Action MAY AFFECT, BUT IS NOT LIKELY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT grizzly bears. My determination is based on the following rationale:

1. The Proposed Plan would reduce TOTMARD and OPMARD and increase Core in all Subunits to objectives recommended by the NCDE Subcommittee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. Motorized access densities on BMU Subunit portions east of the NF boundary, however, largely do not meet objectives and no controls exist to limit those densities. The LCNF Forest Plan includes a number of prohibitions and limitations on future road-building (see Table 13), and requires use of the RMF Wildlife Guidelines to implement restriction dates on human activities in grizzly bear habitat. The 2001 FS/BLM OHV decision and the 2005 FS OHV regulations prohibit off-trail motorized travel. In sum, the Proposed Plan would greatly reduce motorized travel on the RMRD, and would be reinforced by additional restrictions included in the Forest Plan and in recent FS regulations. Cumulative effects of other projects will not result in additional motorized access.
2. The NCDE Food Storage Order has been enforced effectively in both the front country and the back country on the RMRD since its inception. Extensive public education efforts are in place, and all permitted activities include provisions regarding the Order.
3. Timber harvest has been and will continue to be minimal. Treatments will have minimal, and potentially positive impacts on grizzly bear spring forage in localized areas. Fire may impact vegetation but generally in a manner that is positive for grizzly bears. These activities will not result in adverse cumulative impacts to grizzly bears or their habitat.
4. LCNF Forest Plan standards require adherence to the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines for management of multiple use activities in grizzly bear habitat on the RMRD, 98% of which is designated as MS-1 habitat in the LCNF Forest Plan.

Recommendations For Removing, Avoiding, or Compensating Adverse Effects

Adverse effects are not likely to occur under the Proposed Plan. Widespread public education efforts regarding new travel management regulations, coupled with enhanced enforcement of new regulations would help make the transition occur more quickly and smoothly. Effective signing, patrolling, and enforcement as ongoing activities would help avoid adverse effects. Ongoing activities by other agencies, and where appropriate by the U.S. Forest Service, to address and limit grizzly/human conflicts on non-NFS lands will continue to be an important component of maintaining a healthy grizzly bear population in the area.

CANADA LYNX (Lynx canadensis)

Legal Status

The Canada Lynx is listed as Threatened throughout the contiguous United States.

The USDA Forest Service Region 1 is a signatory to the Lynx Conservation Agreement (USFS #00-MU-11015600-013). Signatories have agreed to take actions to reduce or eliminate adverse effects or risks to the species and its habitat and to maintain the ecosystems on which lynx depend. This agreement will eventually be superseded by the Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment, which will add specific management direction to Forest Plans, including the LCNF Forest Plan. Specific recommendations and guidelines to be followed under the current agreement are contained in the Lynx Conservation and Assessment Strategy (LCAS; Reudiger et al. 2000).

Local Population and Habitat Status

Lynx generally occur in cool, moist coniferous forest types that support populations of their primary prey, snowshoe hare (Reudiger et al. 2000). Sufficient presence of large, woody debris appears to be important for natal den sites (Reudiger et al. 2000). Lynx have been documented throughout the RMRD, with concentrations of observations in the Two-Medicine, Teton, and Sun River drainages. The accumulation of observations in these areas may result in part from the fact that these areas receive more use by forest visitors and employees than other, more inaccessible portions of the RMRD.

Potential lynx habitat has been mapped for the RMRD, using vegetation type and using models developed by the Kootenai National Forest, that were modified to fit conditions on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Mapped potential lynx habitat is entirely within the NF boundary, and is classified as foraging, denning, or travel habitat (habitat that does not meet the requirements for denning or foraging habitat but that may serve to connect blocks of those habitat types). About 378,500 total acres of lynx habitat has been mapped on the RMRD. Table 14 displays acreage of lynx habitat by area.

Table 14. Total Acreage of Key Wildlife Habitats, and Acreage and Percent of each Habitat within National Forest Boundary and within Badger-Two Medicine and Birch-South Areas

Habitat	Total Acreage	% of Total by Habitat Type	Acreage of Habitat in Badger-Two Medicine	% of Total Habitat in Badger-Two Medicine	Acreage of Habitat in Birch-South	% of Total Habitat in Birch-South
Total Lynx Habitat	378,470	--	61,470	16%	317,000	84%
Lynx Travel Habitat	110,450	29%	25,140	23%	85,320	77%
Lynx Foraging Habitat	171,300	45%	25,980	15%	145,320	85%
Lynx Denning Habitat	96,710	26%	10,350	11%	86,360	89%

As part of the requirements of the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS; Reudiger et al. 2000), Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs) were mapped for the RMRD. LAUs are a conceptual framework meant to approximate the home range of a female lynx. They contain blocks of denning and foraging habitat in sufficient quantity to maintain a female lynx throughout the year. The LAU is generally the unit at which project analysis of impacts to lynx habitat is conducted. The RMRD contains 27 LAUs, encompassing all mapped potential lynx habitat as described above (see Map 4).

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects Analysis

Direct and Indirect Effects

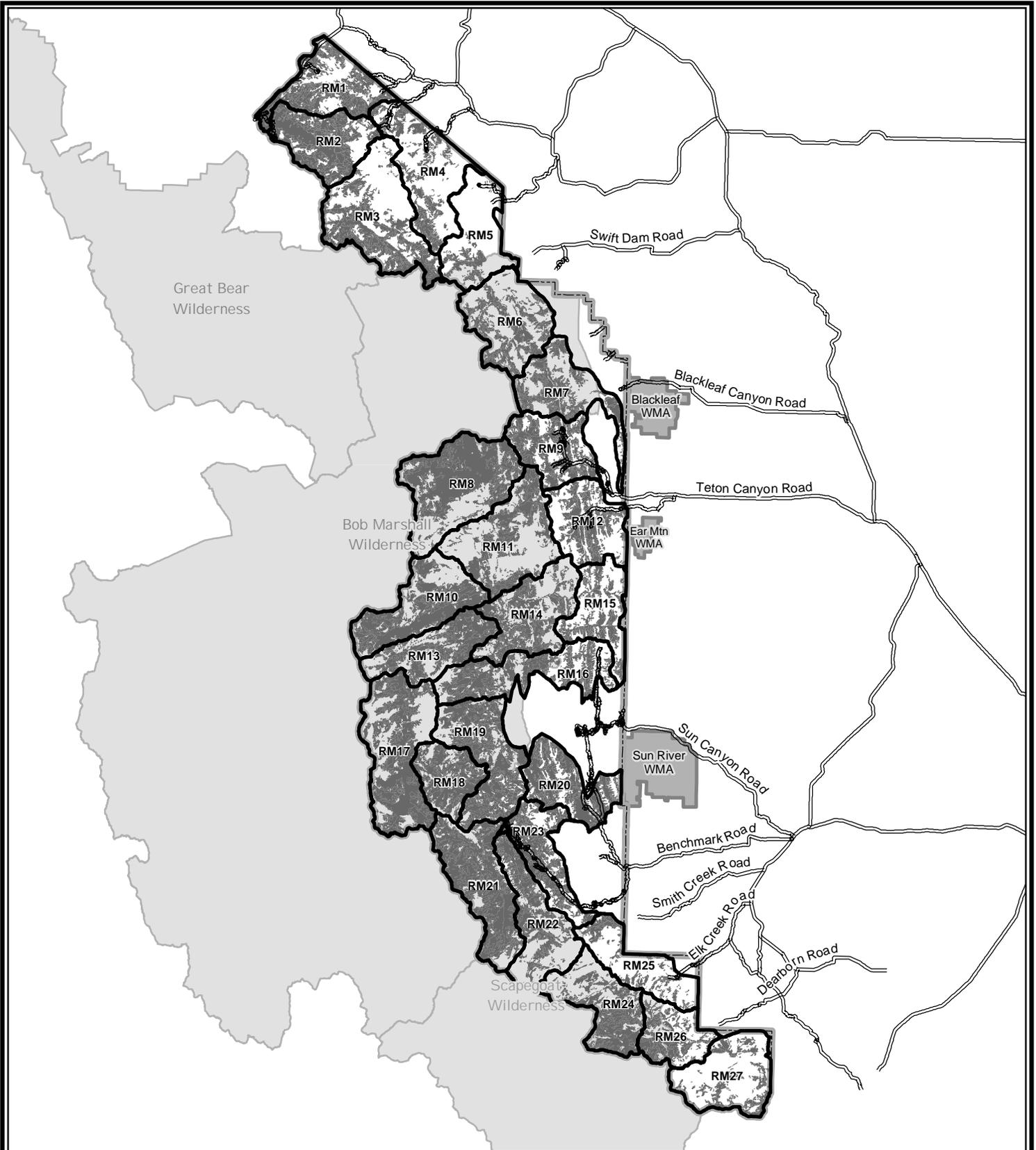
Dispersed Snowmobiling

The LCAS acknowledges that lynx can “adapt to the presence of regular and concentrated recreational use”, but that to do so “it is essential that an interconnected network of foraging habitat be maintained that is not subjected to widespread human intervention or competition from other predator species” (Reudiger et al. 2000).

The LCAS guidelines for recreation and travel management planning efforts include:

Provide a landscape with interconnected blocks of foraging habitat where snowmobile, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, or other snow compacting activities are minimized or discouraged.

Although the LCAS does not set specific numeric guidelines for dispersed snowmobile travel, the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan were analyzed to provide an idea of the potential impact this type of activity might have on lynx habitat. This analysis did not include over-the-snow routes, which are discussed separately below, or designated play areas, of which there are none on the RMRD. Table 15 shows the acreage of lynx habitat open to snowmobiles by LAU, and the percent of each LAU this represents. Lynx habitat includes foraging and denning habitat combined, but not habitat potentially used only for



	Lynx Habitat
	Lynx Analysis Unit
	Rocky Mountain Ranger District Boundary
	Wilderness Areas
	Wildlife Management Areas

Rocky Mountain Ranger District
Travel Management Plan

**Lynx Habitat and
Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs)**

0 5 10 20 Miles

MAP 4

travel. LAUs not listed (i.e. breaks in the numbering sequence) have no acreage open to snowmobiles.

Table 15. Acres Open to Snowmobiling in Lynx Habitat by LAU and Percent of Habitat in LAU Open to Snowmobiling

LAU Name	Existing	Open Acres as Percent of Lynx Habitat in LAU	Proposed	Open Acres as Percent of Lynx Habitat in LAU
RM7	1817	19%	28	<1%
RM9	8704	99%	5000	57%
RM11	2	<1%	0	--
RM12	5686	72%	892	11%
RM14	2	<1%	0	--
RM15	7024	100%	0	--
RM16	4419	36%	0	--
RM18	12	<1%	0	--
RM19	4722	30%	0	--
RM20	13104	97%	692	5%
RM21	965	5%	0	--
RM22	2402	24%	1	<1%
RM23	10326	100%	831	8%
RM25	2709	99%	0	--
RM26	1987	42%	0	--
RM27	3564	100%	0	--
TOTAL	67,446	29%	7444	3%

A substantial portion of the acreage listed as open to snowmobiling under both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan may not actually be available to snowmobiles. Areas indicated as open were designated by drawing general boundaries on a two-dimensional map. Open areas thus include heavily vegetated areas, cliffs, rocks, steep terrain and other features that are actually unavailable to snowmobiles. Therefore the acreage open to snowmobiles in lynx habitat is likely to be substantially less than that displayed above.

The Proposed Plan would eliminate snowmobiling from lynx habitat in 10 of 16 LAUs in which it is allowed under the Existing Situation. In the LAUs where snowmobiling would

continue to be allowed under the Proposed Plan, the acreage available to snowmobiles in lynx habitat would be greatly reduced. Snowmobiling in lynx habitat on the RMRD as a whole would be reduced by 89% (from 67,400 acres to 7400 acres). As displayed on the Proposed Plan travel plan map (Appendix A) dispersed snowmobiling would only be allowed in two main areas (the Beaver-Willow divide, and portions of the North and South Fork Teton drainages). These localized snowmobile areas, within which only a portion of the landscape would be actually available as discussed above, would concentrate snowmobile use and preserve large blocks of lynx habitat undisturbed by this activity.

Over-the-Snow Routes

Concern regarding potential competition from other predator species provides the basis for the LCAS standard for programmatic planning in recreation management. The guideline for over-snow recreation, as stated in the Modifications of Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy, August 2000 Edition – Clarifying Language; Memo from Deputy Regional Forester, August 28, 2003, is to:

... allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and snowmobile play areas by LAU unless the designation serves to consolidate unregulated use and improves lynx habitat.

Designated over-the-snow routes are defined as “over-the-snow routes (such as trails) and snowmobile play areas (usually large, open areas) that are ‘designated’, that is specifically marked on a map, described in the resource or forest plan, described in the travel plan, or signed. This definition does not apply to ski areas” (Modifications of Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy, August 2000 Edition – Clarifying Language; Memo from Deputy Regional Forester, August 28, 2003). There are very few miles of trail specifically designated as over-the-snow routes on the RMRD. There are, however, several stretches of road that are not plowed in winter but that may be used frequently by snowmobiles, and that therefore may experience compaction on a somewhat regular basis.

Table 16 shows the mileage of designated over-snow routes (trails designated on maps or other official documentation as snowmobile trails or cross-country ski trails) and the miles of road known to be used by snowmobiles in lynx habitat by LAU for both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. Because plowed roads may also provide a compacted surface during winter, the miles of plowed road within lynx habitat are also displayed below.

Table 16. Miles of Designated Over-Snow Routes and Regularly Used Roads in Lynx Habitat, by LAU

LAU Name	Miles of Designated Over-Snow Route		Miles of Road Regularly Used by Snowmobiles		Miles of Plowed Road	
	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed
RM9	1.9	1.9	1.5	1.5	0.7	0.7
RM12	0	0	0.2	0.2	0	0
RM20	0	0	0.2	0.2	0	0
RM23	0	0	1.4	1.4	0	0
TOTAL	1.9	1.9	3.3	3.3	0.7	0.7

There would be no change in the mileage of over-the-snow routes or the mileage of road regularly used by snowmobiles between the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. In both situations, the total combined mileage of over-the-snow route, regularly used road, and plowed road within lynx habitat is minimal (6 miles) and is confined to a few localized areas (see Appendix A). In addition to the miles shown, a few other roads, such as access roads to recreation residences, could experience limited over-snow travel. Those roads are usually very short and are located immediately off main access roads that are included under either the regularly used or plowed road totals above. The location and mileage of those would be the same under the Proposed Plan as under the Existing Situation.

The LCAS recommends, with respect to management of forest roads and trails:

Determine where high road densities (>2 miles per square mile) coincide with lynx habitat, and prioritize roads for seasonal restrictions or reclamation in those areas (Reudiger et al. 2000, p. 7-10).

The LCAS also states, however, that "...lynx may not avoid roads, except at high traffic volumes. Therefore, at this time, there is no compelling evidence to recommend management of road density to conserve lynx" (Reudiger et al. 2000). There are only 105 miles of open road in the Birch-South area under the Existing Situation and 85 miles in the Proposed , spread across roughly 264,000 non-wilderness acres on the Birch South portion of the RMRD. Of those non-wilderness acres, over 260,000 acres are Inventoried Roadless.

LCAS Standards

Tables 17-20 below provide a summary of compliance with the appropriate LCAS standards and conservation measures for both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. Text in bold indicates changes between the Existing and the Proposed.

Table 17. Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy Standards; Conservation Measures Applicable to All Programs and Activities (LCAS, 7-2 to 4).

Standards	Existing Situation	Proposed Plan	Compliance
<i>Project Planning (7-4)</i>			
Within each LAU, map lynx habitat;... and topographic features important for lynx movement...; identify non-forest vegetation...adjacent to and intermixed with forested lynx habitat providing habitat for alternate lynx prey species	Lynx habitat mapped and classified; travel management does not alter habitat	No Change	YES
Within each LAU, maintain denning habitat in patches generally larger than five acres comprising at least 10% of suitable lynx habitat	Travel management does not alter habitat	No Change	YES
Maintain habitat connectivity within and between LAUs	Large patches of habitat remain undisturbed by motorized travel	Reduced amount and density of both summer and winter motorized travel	YES

Table 18. Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy Standards; Conservation Measures to Address Risk Factors Affecting Lynx Productivity (LCAS, 7-4 to12).

Standards	Existing Situation	Proposed Plan	Compliance
<i>Recreation Management (7-8 to 9)</i>			
On Federal lands in lynx habitat, allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and snowmobile play areas by LAU	Extremely limited mileage of designated over-the-snow routes; no designated play areas	No Change	YES
Map and monitor the location and intensity of snow compacting activities in lynx habitat	Dispersed snowmobiling allowed in defined areas; plowed roads and roads regularly used for snowmobile travel mapped	Area in which dispersed snowmobiling is allowed greatly reduced; no change in mileage of plowed roads and roads regularly used for snowmobile travel	YES
Ensure Federal actions do not degrade or compromise landscape connectivity when planning and operating new or expanded recreation developments in lynx habitat	Large patches of habitat remain undisturbed by motorized travel	Reduced amount and density of both summer and winter motorized travel	YES
Design trails, roads, and lift terminals to direct winter use away from diurnal security areas	Extremely limited mileage of designated over-the-snow routes, roads used by snowmobiles, and plowed roads	No Change	YES
Evaluate and amend as needed, winter recreational special use permits (outside permitted ski areas) promoting snow compaction in lynx habitat	No winter recreational use permits in project area (except ski area)	No Change	YES
<i>Forest/Backcountry Roads and Trails (7-9 to 10)</i>			

Standards	Existing Situation	Proposed Plan	Compliance
On Federal lands in lynx habitat, allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and snowmobile play areas by LAU (winter logging activities are not restricted)	Extremely limited mileage of designated over-the-snow routes; no designated play areas	No Change	YES

Table 19. Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy Standards; Conservation Measures to Address Mortality Risk Factors (LCAS, 7-12 to 13).

Standards	Existing Situation	Proposed Plan	Compliance
<i>Competition and Predation as Influenced by Human Activities (7-13)</i>			
On federal lands in lynx habitat, allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and snowmobile play areas by LAU (intended for dispersed recreation rather than existing ski areas)	Extremely limited mileage of designated over-the-snow routes; no designated play areas	No Change	YES

Table 20. Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy Standards; Conservation Measures to Address Movement and Dispersal (LCAS, 7-13 to 16).

Standards	Existing Situation	Proposed Plan	Compliance
<i>Programmatic Planning (7-14)</i>			
Identify key linkage areas important in providing landscape connectivity within and between geographic areas, across all ownerships	Additional lynx habitat exists to north in National Park, west in Wilderness, and south in NFS lands. Large patches of habitat remain undisturbed by motorized travel.	Reduced amount and density of both summer and winter motorized travel	YES
Develop and implement a plan to protect key linkage areas on Federal lands from activities creating barriers to movement	Ongoing at Forest level	No Change	YES
Evaluate the potential importance of shrub-steppe habitats in providing landscape connectivity between blocks of lynx habitat	Ongoing at Regional level	No Change	YES

Cumulative Effects

A number of factors could potentially result in impacts to Canada lynx cumulative to those of the Proposed Travel Plan. These factors are: prescribed burning/wildfire, timber harvest, and livestock grazing.

Several wildfires of varying size as well as several smaller prescribed fires have occurred on the RMRD since 1988. Within the perimeters of all of these fires, a mosaic of fire effects was achieved. Additional prescribed burning is scheduled within the Scapegoat Wilderness as soon as conditions are favorable. This planned fire is expected to create a varied patchwork of fire intensity and effects. Additional natural and prescribed fires may occur throughout the RMRD and adjoining lands in future years. Impacts on habitat will vary depending on the location and severity of the fires and on other factors. Fires may alter or remove habitat for lynx prey species within portions of their perimeter, but in some areas regeneration may result in improved snowshoe hare habitat within several years of burning.

Very little timber harvest has occurred on the RMRD since 1988. A total of 107 acres were harvested between 1988 and 2002, using a variety of techniques ranging from small (1-20 acre) clearcuts, to small (1- 8 acre) thinning and other limited harvest projects. The sum of these past harvests has likely had no detectable impact on lynx or their prey.

Several small fuels treatment projects are planned that will alter the vegetation on a total of approximately 750 acres of the RMRD in the Benchmark drainage. The size of individual units varies from 3 to 236 acres, with the majority of units under 25 acres. All units are located immediately adjacent to recreation residences or to the National Forest boundary; several units are outside mapped lynx habitat and LAUs. The result of these projects will be a variety of small openings or thinned canopy that will likely remove lynx prey habitat in very small, localized areas immediately adjacent to recreation residences.

Livestock grazing occurs within the project area on permitted grazing allotments. Many of these allotments contain only limited acreage of lynx habitat, and some are partly or entirely outside of LAUs. Grazing is managed in the project area on a deferred rest-rotation basis. Allotments are monitored and grazing plans adjusted annually to maintain established standards for forage utilization and impacts to vegetation and landscape features. Nevertheless, grazing has the potential to alter habitat for lynx prey species.

Determination of Effects

I have determined implementation of the proposed Federal Action will have NO EFFECT on Canada Lynx My determination is based on the following rationale:

1. The project would reduce the overall acreage available for dispersed snowmobiling and concentrate it in two main areas.
2. The project would maintain a very small mileage of designated over-the-snow routes and roads available for snowmobile and cross country use.

3. The limited area and mileage of routes available to snowmobiles would maintain large blocks of interconnected lynx habitat undisturbed by snow compacting or other activities.
4. The project would reduce overall mileage of wheeled motorized travel in spring, summer, and fall, thus reducing potential for impacts to lynx.
5. Cumulative impacts of other projects on lynx, their habitat, and prey species would be negligible.

Recommendations For Removing, Avoiding, or Compensating Adverse Effects

No adverse effects are anticipated.

Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus)

Legal Status

The Secretary of the Interior, on March 11, 1967, listed bald eagle populations south of the 40th parallel endangered under the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966. However, the decline continued until DDT was banned from use in the United States on December 31, 1972. Bald eagles were listed endangered under the ESA in 1973. From 1973 through 1995 bald eagles were listed as endangered, but due to cooperative efforts by government agencies and public and private non-government organizations, populations have increased and in 1995 it was down-listed to threatened status. The bald eagle is presently listed as threatened in Idaho, Montana, and North Dakota, but is currently proposed for de-listing (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1996).

Local Population and Habitat Status

There are no known bald eagle nesting areas on the RMRD. Bald eagles nest almost exclusively in live trees usually within one mile in line of sight of a large river or lake. Although the RMRD includes all or part of 3 large lakes (Gibson, Diversion, and Swift Reservoirs), these are man-made reservoirs established primarily for irrigation purposes. Water levels in the reservoirs and downstream rivers fluctuate dramatically during the bald eagle nesting season, potentially affecting the foraging opportunities in those water bodies.

Some bald eagles may winter along the eastern portion of the project area, although most bald eagles observed along the Rocky Mountain Front, including the eastern portions of the project area, are migrants. Winter and migration habitat is generally associated with areas of open water where fish and waterfowl congregate (Stalmaster 1987 *in* USDA Forest Service 2001). Bald eagles use perches during the day while hunting, feeding, or resting; roosts are used at night or for protection during bad weather (Stalmaster 1987 *in* USDA Forest Service 2001).

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects Analysis

Management of bald eagle breeding territories may be accomplished by protecting nesting stands and feeding sites and minimizing human activities during the nesting period (Paige et al. 1991 *in* USDA Forest Service 2001). Guidelines have been

developed to provide management direction for bald eagles where there is little information on actual use areas. Because there are no known nesting sites in the project area, and little if any suitable nesting habitat, there will be no impacts from the Proposed Plan. Areas used by migrating bald eagles are frequently open areas where snow conditions seldom allow snowmobile travel, and are generally confined to the eastern portion of the project area, near larger river courses, reservoirs, and prairies east of the NFS boundary where carcasses and waterfowl may be found. Bald eagle use of the area appears to be temporary and flexible. Winter travel management under both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan will not impact bald eagle use of these areas. There would be no cumulative effects of other actions on bald eagles in the project area.

Determination of Effects

I have determined implementation of the proposed Federal Action will have NO EFFECT on bald eagles. My determination is based on the following rationale:

1. No bald eagle nests are known to exist in the project area, and there is little if any suitable bald eagle nesting habitat in the project area.
2. Foraging and perching areas used by migrating bald eagles would not be affected by travel management under the Proposed Plan.

Recommendations For Removing, Avoiding, or Compensating Adverse Effects

No adverse effects are anticipated.

CONSULTATION

Consultation for this project was initiated by a meeting between the following FS personnel: A. Rowley (LCNF Deputy Forest Supervisor), L. Conway (LCNF Forest Biologist), W. Maples (RMRD District Biologist), and the following USFWS personnel: A. Vandehey (Consultation Biologist). The meeting was held on 15 November 2005 in Wolf Creek, MT. Discussion focused primarily around information needs for consultation on grizzly bears pertaining specifically to access management. USFWS personnel expressed concern regarding the lack of a LCNF Forest Plan amendment regarding access management, and requested that the Biological Assessment for the proposed travel plan include: 1) evaluation at the BMU Subunit level of Existing and Proposed motorized access using the Flathead National Forest A-19 procedure or similar methodology and comparing motorized route density and security areas with A-19 and NCDE Direction objectives, 2) analysis and discussion of current method of using seasonal restrictions to limit motorized access, including any available information on actual use, limitations to use (e.g. terrain, weather), and compliance, and 3) discussion of all LCNF Forest Plan standards that would limit or prohibit increases in motorized access on the RMRD, and compliance with those standards. All of that information has been incorporated into this Biological Assessment in the appropriate sections. Additionally, USFWS personnel suggested that a uniform spring snowmobile closure date of 1 April would be recommended for protection of post-denning and spring grizzly bear habitats. That suggestion was fully incorporated into the Proposed Plan.

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