

Flathead National Forest Forest Plan Revision

Reference Materials

For use in collaboration

December 2013



Part I: Revised and annotated sections of the 2006 Proposed Land Management Plan

Part II: A summary of management direction proposed to be carried forward in revised plan

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Preface

This version of the proposed Land and Resource Management Plan includes: 1) changes based upon public comment received on the 2006 proposed plan, and 2) recent comments made by the planning team that address either management direction given the 2012 planning rule requirements or edits that are expected to occur based on new information. The comments within this document were based on a quick review by the planning team and do not reflect all the changes that will need to be made to comply with the new rule. This document only includes management direction for the revision topics that were the basis for the discussions during the assessment and are considered to be the primary issues that will drive alternative development during the NEPA stages of plan revision. This document is not considered final; the Forest Supervisor and the planning team will be looking at all options for management direction that will meet the 2012 planning rule requirements. The expectation for the use of this document is as a reference and starting point for discussion.

The goal of the collaborative effort (December 2013 to June 2014) is to provide the Flathead National Forest with diverse input and identify areas of agreement on what the proposed plan should include to begin the formal scoping process. Completion of the draft proposed plan is September 2014.

The process for the next 6 months is designed to focus first on the forest-wide desired condition and objectives, look for areas of agreement, and recommend other desired condition statements and/or objectives for the planning team to consider. Objectives should help move towards a desired condition. For objectives, it may be difficult to provide a specific number or range of numbers to consider at this time but it's important for the collaborative to provide input as to whether additional objectives are needed or additional clarity is needed. See Importance of Plan Components section for definitions of the terms Desired Condition and Objectives.

After developing recommendations on forest-wide desired conditions and objectives, the collaborative groups will then focus their attention on reviewing and developing recommendations for the desired conditions within the 6 geographic areas (GAs). Once recommendations for desired conditions in the GAs are made, the focus will turn to mapping the management areas (MAs) within respective GAs. The MAs that will be used for this exercise are the same as those in the 2006 plan with the addition of a MA 4.1a and 4.1b (backcountry motorized and non-motorized). It is recommended that the collaborative groups use these MAs (see table 11 on page 55) as a starting point, but if the groups feel strongly that different MAs are needed to meet desired conditions and objectives then you are welcome to suggest changes.

Based on the process outlined above, it is expected that a final report will be developed that identifies areas of agreement and areas where new management direction is being proposed. The Forest will take the final collaborative report in consideration from June through August 2014 as they develop the draft proposed plan to initiate scoping and the formal NEPA process.

The collaborative process and meeting schedule (January-June)

Topical Working Groups

The collaborative will have 2-3 working groups focused on the following revision topics:

- Terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, threatened and endangered species, species of conservation concern/species of public interest, vegetation management, disturbances (invasive species, fire, insects and disease, etc.), and forest products;
- Recreation, access, and scenery; and
- Recommended and existing wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, special designations (inventoried roadless areas, research natural areas, experimental forests, etc.).

Comment [A1]: These topics may be combined into one working group depending on number of people involved.

The 2-3 topical workgroups will be convened during the stakeholder orientation meeting in December, at which time they will get acquainted with their topics and the background materials that will provide a basis for discussions. The workgroups will begin deliberations in January 2014, initially focusing on forest-wide conditions and objectives. During February and March they will work on defining desired conditions and objectives for the geographic areas, and on developing management areas for geographic areas (consistent with the forest-wide desired conditions they previously discussed). Meetings of the 2-3 topical working groups will be scheduled on different days so that stakeholders wishing to participate in both groups can do so. The two workgroups will be brought together periodically in joint sessions so they can compare notes and comment on one-another's work products.

Geographic Area Working Groups

In April topical workgroups will meet in a joint session to report on their recommendations and will then break out into geographic area groups for the purpose of refining management area lines on maps. Management areas and their desired conditions developed by the topical working groups will be incorporated into this process.

Convene new geographic area workgroups, tentatively proposed to focus on:

- Hungry Horse, Middle, and South Forks
- North Fork
- Salish
- Swan

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Part I: Revised and annotated sections of the 2006 Proposed Land Management Plan

Purpose of this Land and Resource Management Plan

The purpose of the Flathead National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (hereinafter referred to as “Plan” or “land management plan”) is to have an integrated set of plan components to provide for social, economic, and ecological sustainability and multiple uses. This Plan sets the overall context for informed decision making by evaluating and integrating social, economic, and ecological considerations relevant to management of the forest. In particular, the Plan:

- Is strategic in nature.
- Describes the desired conditions of National Forest System (NFS) lands and resources.
- Describes the land management plan objectives that are linked to the desired conditions and reflect the responsible official’s priorities.
- Identifies the standards and guidelines for projects and activities.
- Identifies specific lands within the plan area as suitable for various multiple uses or activities based upon the desired conditions applicable to those lands. The plan will also identify lands within the plan area as not suitable for uses that are not compatible with desired conditions for those lands.
- Identifies management areas and areas with special management for their unique characteristics.
- Was developed through public involvement and collaboration, which started at the earliest stages of plan development and continued through completion of the final plan.
- Is adaptive in that new knowledge and information can be analyzed and added to this Plan at any time¹.
- Provides the framework for social, economic, and ecological sustainability. This Plan aspires to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Honors the continuing validity of private, statutory and pre-existing rights.

This Plan emphasizes an adaptive management approach which includes a collaborative public process and results in a dynamic document that can be improved at any time. Such an informed and adaptive guide to land stewardship allows the Forest Supervisor to better utilize resources and manage ecosystems. The adaptive management cycle includes (1) plan development, (2) plan implementation, (3) plan monitoring, inventory and assessment, and (4) plan review and

¹ While new knowledge and information can be incorporated at any time, Plan Components cannot be changed without following appropriate NEPA procedures, including public involvement.

evaluation. The findings of plan review and evaluation reveal any needs to change the Plan, which begins the adaptive cycle again.

The Importance of Plan Components

This Plan is designed to communicate the concepts of strategic guidance and adaptive management for the Flathead National Forest. Plan components guide future projects and activities and the plan-monitoring program. Plan components are not commitments or final decisions approving projects or activities. The following are the definitions and where necessary, a description of their context for the required plan components (36 CFR 219.7(e)):

Desired Conditions: A desired condition is a description of specific social, economic, and/or ecological characteristics of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, toward which management of the land and resources should be directed. Desired conditions must be described in terms that are specific enough to allow progress toward their achievement to be determined, but do not include completion dates. (36 CFR 219.7(e)(1)(i))

Desired conditions describe the ecological, economic, and social conditions that we expect to exist in the future. This Plan presents three types of desired conditions: “forest-wide,” “geographic areas,” and “management areas.”

Forest-wide desired conditions apply across the landscape.

Geographic area desired conditions are specific to an area or place, such as a river basin or valley, and reflect community values and local conditions within the area. They do not substitute for or repeat forest-wide desired conditions. The Flathead National Forest is divided into six geographic areas (see figure 2 on page 23). These desired conditions allow us to focus on specific circumstances in specific geographic locations.

Management area desired conditions are indications of what future conditions would typically be desired in each management area. They help clarify the general suitability of various parts of the forest for different activities and management practices (management area desired conditions are part of the “suitability of areas” component in Chapter 2). These desired conditions help us clarify what outcomes might be expected in land areas with different general suitability descriptions.

In some cases, our desired condition matches the current condition so our goal is to maintain what we have. But in other cases, we need to work toward meeting the desired conditions, and success in achieving them can only be measured over the long-term.

Adjustments may be needed in the desired conditions if monitoring results indicate they are not achievable in the long-term or if there is an imbalance in what the Forest is accomplishing. Budget levels are an important factor in moving towards the desired conditions.

Objectives: An objective is a concise, measurable, and time-specific statement of a desired rate of progress toward a desired condition or conditions. Objectives should be based on reasonably foreseeable budgets. (36 CFR 219.9(e)(1)(ii))

Standards: A standard is a mandatory constraint on project and activity decision making, established to help achieve or maintain the desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements. (36 CFR 219.7(e)(1) (iii))

Guidelines: A guideline is a constraint on project and activity decision making that allows for departure from its terms, so long as the purpose of the guideline is met. (§ 219.15(d)(3)). Guidelines are established to help achieve or maintain a desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements. (36 CFR 219.7(e)(1)(iv))

Suitability of Lands: Specific lands within a plan area will be identified as suitable for various multiple uses or activities based on the desired conditions applicable to those lands. The plan will also identify lands within the plan area as not suitable for uses that are not compatible with desired conditions for those lands. The suitability of lands need not be identified for every use or activity. Suitability identifications may be made after consideration of historic uses and of issues that have arisen in the planning process. Every plan must identify those lands that are not suitable for timber production (§ 219.11). (36 CFR 219.7(e)(1)(v))

Identification of Management Areas and Geographic Areas: Every plan must have management areas or geographic areas or both. The plan may identify designated or recommended designated areas as management areas or geographic areas. (36 CFR 219.7(d))

Identification of Designated Areas: An area or feature identified and managed to maintain its unique special character or purpose. Some categories of designated areas may be designated only by statute and some categories may be established administratively in the land management planning process or by other administrative processes of the Federal executive branch. Examples of statutorily designated areas are national heritage areas, national recreational areas, national scenic trails, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness areas, and wilderness study areas. Examples of administratively designated areas are experimental forests, research natural areas, scenic byways, botanical areas, and significant caves. (36 CFR 219.19)

Chapter 1: Desired Conditions

Forest Wide Component

The Flathead National Forest intends to move toward these forest-wide desired conditions over the next 10 to 15 years although they may not all be achieved for many decades. Some desired conditions may be very difficult to achieve, but it is important to move toward them over time. The desired conditions are described here as they relate to the Flathead National Forest.

Soils, Watersheds, and Aquatic Ecosystems

Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

Lands within the Flathead National Forest supply high quality water that supports a variety of uses throughout the Flathead basin. Watersheds and aquatic ecosystems have changed from historic conditions. Current conditions and trends indicate:

- Eleven stream reaches are listed as impaired by the State of Montana under the Clean Water Act.
- A decline in large migratory bull trout numbers during the past several decades.
- About 19 percent of sub-watersheds within the Flathead National Forest have strong, stable populations of bull trout. The majority of these watersheds are in the South Fork Geographic Area.
- Major threats to bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout include the presence and expansion of non-native species (lake trout and brook trout) and climate change.
- Approximately XXX inventoried road culverts² are confirmed to be partial barriers or total barriers to native fish migration during some part of the year. In some cases, these barriers may be beneficial for retention of native fish populations.

During the last several years, the Flathead National Forest has been working to restore soil, watershed, and aquatic habitat conditions by implementing best management practices, removing excess roads, improving road conditions (reducing sediment), removing fish migration barriers, implementing riparian conservation strategies and threatened and endangered species conservation strategies. Much of this work has been accomplished as part of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plans in cooperation with the State of Montana and Environmental Protection Agency.

Forest-Wide Desired Conditions

- a. Soil organic matter (in the soil and on the surface) and soil physical conditions would be at levels that maintain ecological systems, soil productivity, soil hydrologic function, and hillslope stability. Soils would have adequate physical, biological, and chemical

Comment [A2]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

Comment [A3]: We will be incorporating desired conditions related to ecosystem services in the new plan under the applicable resource areas.

² These culverts are within potential or occupied native fish habitat.

properties to support desired vegetative growth and nutrient cycling within historic disturbance regimes. Fine organic material (needles, leaves, and small sticks) would provide adequate nutrients for the chemical development of soils, while larger woody material would provide adequate physical structure of soils without allowing excessive fuel buildup.

- b. Areas that have incurred detrimental soil disturbance (e.g. past harvest practices, fuel treatments, skidding, piling, burning, high-use recreation area) would continue to improve.
- c. Ground-water resources would be sufficient to sustain the function of surface and subsurface aquatic ecosystem.
- d. Stream channels would transport water, sediment and woody material over time, while maintaining reference dimensions (bankfull width, depth, and entrenchment ratio; slope and sinuosity). Watershed conditions³ would support a natural frequency and magnitude of base flows and flood flows.
- e. Sediment deposits from over-bank floods would allow floodplain development and the propagation of flood-dependent riparian plant species.
- f. National Forest water rights would be sufficient to support instream flows and administrative uses.
- g. Instream flows would be sufficient to provide channel and floodplain dimensions that allow for natural water and sediment conveyance, and overall channel maintenance. Instream flows would also be sufficient to support other desired conditions for water quality, aquatic habitats, and riparian vegetation.
- h. Water quality would meet or exceed applicable state standards for human health and safety while also supporting native amphibians and diverse invertebrate communities.
- i. Lands that contribute to public water systems (source water protection areas) would be in a condition that contributes to consistent delivery of clean water for municipal use.
- j. Riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAs) would provide:
 - Woody material for fish habitat and channel stability.
 - Vegetation that traps and stores sediment.
 - Soil, vegetation and stream channel conditions that route water and sediment during flood events, regulate water table elevations, and provide for natural ranges of water temperature.

³ Hillslope, soil and vegetation characteristics that allow for natural rates of infiltration and surface runoff on an annual, seasonal and storm event basis.

- Terrestrial and aquatic habitats that support ecosystem and species diversity.
 - Native plant communities free of invasive species.
- k. In RHCAs, deciduous trees and shrubs (e.g. cottonwood, aspen, willow, alder) would be vigorous and regenerating where appropriate. Fire and floods would play an important role in maintaining vegetative characteristics that support other terrestrial and aquatic desired conditions.
- l. Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout populations would be strong⁴, self-sustaining, genetically pure, well-distributed, and well-connected forming metapopulations that can expand and endure natural disturbances. Current bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout strongholds would persist through time and continue to serve as recruitment sources to surrounding habitats.
- m. Native westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout habitats are free of man-made migration barriers.
- n. In bull trout habitat, stream water temperatures would be <5° C during incubation, <15° C during rearing, and <9° C during spawning⁵.
- o. Aquatic ecosystems would be free of aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels and New Zealand mudsnails.
- p. Invasive fish species (i.e. lake trout and brook trout) are not expanding into streams or lakes on National Forest system lands.
- q. The introduction of wood into streams would be both continual (normal tree fall) and episodic (due to fires and flood). This results in a large range of natural variation under historic disturbance regime in the amount of wood in streams. In general, the number of pieces of wood in a stream decreases as streams get larger.
- r. Stream habitat features, such as bank stability, pools, large woody material and sediment would be within reference ranges. Some reference ranges for specific habitat features are shown below in tables 1 and 2⁶.

⁴ Strong populations generally consist of 500 adult fish within a sub-watershed.

⁵ Measured as the 7 day moving average of daily maximum. Desired stream temperatures may not be possible, even in pristine conditions, at lower levels, particularly during periods of very low stream flows and warm temperatures.

⁶ During project planning, reference ranges may be developed from several site-specific data sources or may include other habitat parameters.

Table 1. Desired stream habitat features in metasedimentary and sedimentary parent material⁷

Habitat Feature	Median	Minimum	Maximum	One standard deviation	Influential Variables
Large Woody Material (pieces/mile)	222	15	910	82-461	Stream size, forest disturbance, stream type
Pool Frequency (pools/mile)	35	4	154	10-67	Stream type, woody material

Table 2. Desired stream habitat features in metasedimentary parent material⁸

Habitat Features	Median	Minimum	Maximum	One Standard deviation	Influential Variables
Residual Pool Depth (meter)	0.43	0.17	1.0	0.24-0.67	Stream type, bankfull width, stream power
Median Reach Particle Size (mm)	41	17	98	26-65	Channel slope, stream power, sinuosity, woody material
Percent Pool	44	7	88	26-64	Stream type,
Percent Stable Banks	74	18	100	53-95	Stream type, bank material
Bank Angle	112	56	148	87-132	Stream type, bank material

- s. Water diversions would have minimal impacts on bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, channel morphology, riparian vegetation, and water quality. Volumes of water diverted

⁷ Source: R1/R4 Fish Habitat Inventory, Flathead National Forest

⁸ Source: PIBO Effectiveness Monitoring Program (2001-2006), Flathead National Forest

are within the legitimate water rights. Diversion structures are adequately screened to prevent loss of native fish.

- t. Aquatic habitat and species would provide high quality recreational fisheries.

Vegetative Composition, Size Class, and Structure

Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

Maintenance of diverse vegetation, such as species, size, densities, diversity, and patterns, is essential to ecological integrity and sustainability, as well as for the provision of ecosystem services⁹. The Flathead National Forest has quite a diversity of vegetation types due to its geography, geology, elevation, and climate. The diversity ranges from warm, moist and dry valley bottoms to cold, steep, non-forested ecosystems. Disturbance processes that affect these ecosystems result in a pattern of live, dead, and dying vegetation across the landscape.

Current conditions and trends in plant communities indicate that changes from the historic range of conditions affect vegetation and its ability to recover after disturbance. Many ecosystem drivers and stressors, may have contributed to these changes, including fire suppression, succession, climate change, introduction of invasive plant species, timber harvesting, non-native diseases, and human development.

- An analysis of western Montana shows: for the Flathead National Forest portion of the Flathead Valley Ecological Section¹⁰ and the Northern Rockies Ecological Section, the greatest departure from historic conditions is an increase in shade tolerant species. Subsequently, ponderosa pine, western larch, and western white pine are underrepresented across the landscape. Seedling/sapling size class is under-represented and medium size class is over-represented across the landscape as compared to historic levels with some variation due to recent wildfires.
- Due to fires, insects, and disease, snags have increased across the landscape.
- Due to fire suppression, increases in surface, ladder, and aerial fuel loading have occurred across all vegetation types.
- The increase in the density of shade tolerant trees may have the potential to increase the spread of root disease.
- There is a continuing decline of whitebark pine and western white pine due to blister rust, mountain pine beetle, and fire exclusion. Numerous fires and storms have killed or blown down trees, increasing fuels and brood sites for insects. Since 1990, there has been a

Comment [A4]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

⁹ Species composition and size class are derived from multiple sources: Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA), Region One Vegetation Map 2002 (R1VMP), SIMPPLLE model, 1930 inventory and interpretation (Losensky, Berglund), Hessburg, and historical records (Lieberg, Ayers). Updates to R1VMP 2006 are in the Plan Set of Documents.

¹⁰ Ecological Sections are units of a land classification system that identifies areas of similar biological and physical potentials. Nesser, John A.; Ford, Gary L.; Maynard, C. Lee; Page-Dumroese, Deborah S. 1997, Ecological Units of the Northern Region: Subsections. USDA Forest Service, Intermountain Research Station, General Technical Report INT-GTR-369.

steady increase in the number of acres with trees that have been killed by: Douglas-fir beetle, western balsam bark beetle, and mountain pine beetle. Recently, wood borers have increased, killing western larch.

- Land susceptible to invasive plant establishment and spread is associated with disturbance and vegetation type.

Forest-Wide Desired Conditions

- a. Species Composition: Table 3, shown below by forested vegetation and non-forested vegetation types, displays the desired condition for species composition.

Table 3: Species composition desired condition.

Dominance Type	Desired Condition Forest-Wide	Existing Condition	Need for Change
Forested Vegetative types¹¹			
Ponderosa pine (PP)	X%	X%	Increase X%
Douglas-fir (DF) on dry vegetation types	X%	X%	Decrease by X%
Shade intolerant mixed species (PP, western larch, LP, DF) on moist, wet sites	X%	X%	Maintain within desired condition
Lodgepole pine (LP)	X%	X%	Decrease X%
Shade tolerant western red cedar, grand fir, western hemlock (TGCH)	X%	X%	Maintain
Shade tolerant spruce, subalpine fir, mountain hemlock (TASH)	X%	X%	Maintain within desired condition
Non-forested Vegetation Type¹²			
Upland mixed hardwoods (e.g., aspen, birch)	X%	X%	Maintain existing
Riparian hardwoods (e.g., cottonwood, dogwood, willow)	X%	X%	Increase X%
Upland grasses and forbs (e.g., elk sedge, pinegrass, forbs)	X%	X%	Maintain existing
Mixed mesic shrubs (e.g., snowberry, menziesii, huckleberry)	Less than X%	Less than X%	Maintain existing

Comment [A5]: While these statements may still all hold true, the analysis of historical range of variation and trends will be updated for this Assessment and modification and/or additions to these findings may occur.

Comment [A6]: Desired conditions for vegetation will be compatible with other resource needs (e.g. lynx, fuel reduction, etc.)

Comment [A7]: Classifications and Desired conditions for Vegetation Dominance Types will be updated/refined from this 2006 analysis, based on assessment results, vegetation modeling and other inputs

Size Class: The following table displays the desired condition for size class.

¹¹ Approximately 2 million acres. Species composition and size class derived from multiple sources: Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA), Region 1 Vegetation Map (R1 VMP), SIMPPLLE model, 1930 inventory interpretation (Losensky, Berglund), historic records (Lieberg, Ayers).

¹² Approximately 300,000 acres which includes water, rock and scree.

Table 4: Vegetation size class desired condition.

Size Class	Desired Condition Forest-Wide	Existing Condition	Need for Change
Seedling/Sapling 0-4.9" dbh	X%	X%	Increase by X%
Small 5" to 9.9" dbh	X%	X%	Maintain within desired condition
Medium 10" to 14.9" dbh	X%	X%	Decrease X%
Large 15" and greater	X%	X%	Decrease X%

Comment [A8]: Desired conditions for Vegetation Structure Class (size class) will be reviewed and potentially modified for the Assessment, based on new info, vegetation modeling, and other inputs. These numbers will be refined via SIMPLLE modeling analyses.

- b. A diversity of composition, and structure in grassland, shrubland and forest communities would provide for long-term ecosystem function.
- c. Old growth forest composition, structure, and pattern would exist on the landscape consistent with native succession and natural disturbance regimes.
- d. The amount of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir on cool-moist sites, western larch, blister-rus resistant western white pine, and whitebark pine would increase.
- e. Snags and down woody material would be present in amounts that are consistent with historic disturbance and succession.
- f. Insects, and pathogens would play a more natural role in the landscape and contribute to functioning ecosystems, particularly in backcountry and wilderness areas.
- g. Where wildlands interface with urban and rural areas, risk of epidemic levels of mountain pine beetle, and root disease would be low.
- h. The net infested area¹³ containing plants known as Category 2¹⁴ invasive plants would be reduced.
- i. The net infested area containing plants known as Category 1 invasive plants would be reduced.
- j. Areas where invasive plant species are not present would remain free from introduction and spread of invasive plants. Potential and new invaders would not persist on the landscape.

Comment [A9]: ALTERNATIVE DESIRED CONDITION might be: Landscape patterns of early, mid and late successional forest, specifically the acres, patch size and distribution, would be similar to that under natural succession and disturbance regimes. This includes old growth forest.

Comment [A10]: Will change based on analysis.

¹³ The value for Net Infested Area is derived from estimating the actual or percentage of land occupied by invasive plants within a constantly defined gross area (Field Guide – Invasive Plant Inventory, Monitoring and Mapping National Protocol).

¹⁴ Weed categories established by the State of Montana based on establishment: Category 1 = Widespread Invaders, 3rd priority; Category 2 = New Invaders, 2nd priority; Category 3 = Potential Invaders, 1st priority.

Fire and Fuel Management

Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

On the Flathead National Forest, disturbance processes such as wildfire, insects, and diseases have played a key role in the development of forest and grassland ecosystems. Historically, wildfire maintained the inherent productivity of the land, and created a diversity of habitats and plant and animal species resilient to the disturbance that produced them.

Although about 73% of the forest is within the historic fire regime and over half is in the stand replacement regime, landscapes have become more homogeneous in species composition and structure. There has been a decline in fire adapted tree species associated with mixed-severity fires, such as western white pine, western larch, ponderosa pine and whitebark pine. Ecosystems that once experienced mixed-severity fire regimes are now experiencing stand replacement fires.

In 2003, over 160,000 acres were burned on the Flathead National Forest. Twenty-one fires were over 100 acres in size and cost over \$98 million dollars to suppress. In the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wildernesses, 12 out of 49 fires were managed for resource benefit. Below is a summary of the total number of fires and acres where the appropriate management response was wildland fire use (WFU).

Comment [A11]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

Comment [A12]: Need to update this section

Table 5. Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wildernesses Fire Summary 2000 to 2004

Year	Total acres of fire	Total acres of WFU	% of WFU	Total # of fires	Total # of WFU fires	% of WFU Fires
2000	25,407	7,562	30%	32	13	41%
2001	26,519	10,532	40%	13	3	23%
2002	11	0.1	1%	1	3	34%
2003	88,245	42,263	48%	49	12	25%
2004	6	3	60%	4	2	50%

Forest-wide Desired Conditions

- Vegetation conditions resilient to fire disturbance would dominate the landscape with tree densities and fuel conditions consistent with historic fire regimes in most cases, exceptions would be in the wildland urban interface as described below.
- Fire would contribute to functioning ecosystems, particularly in backcountry and wilderness areas.
- Wildland fire and prescribed fire on all lands would help move vegetation conditions closer to desired conditions for species composition, size class, pattern (see Vegetation and Wildlife sections) and fuel loads.
- Wildland fire would play an increasing role where appropriate and desirable but would be suppressed where necessary to protect life, resources, and property.

- e. In the wildland urban interface, fire behavior of wildland fires would be low-intensity surface fire with limited crownfire potential, and low-risk of stand replacement fires which would reduce the risk to structures and provide for firefighter and public safety.
- f. An integrated fire prevention/fire ecology/public information program would keep the public informed about ongoing fire and fuel management activities, fire risk, fire ecology, and urban interface/residential fire prevention responsibilities.
- g. Public understanding and acceptance of fires and their effects would increase as residents become more accustomed to living with fire.

Air Quality

Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

The Clean Air Act and subsequent amendments give federal land managers the responsibility to protect Air Quality Related Values in Class 1 areas and to protect human health and basic resource values in all areas. The Bob Marshall and Mission Mountains wilderness areas are classified as Class 1 attainment areas where very little deterioration of air quality is allowed. All other areas on the Flathead National Forest are classified as Class 2, where only moderate deterioration of air quality is allowed. The Great Bear Wilderness airshed is Class 2, but has been managed as Class 1. Columbia Falls, Kalispell, and Whitefish, are the closest non-attainment areas that fail to meet national ambient air quality standards for PM10 during some portion of the year; although virtually all land management activities on the Flathead Forest occur outside the non-attainment boundaries. The greatest potential to affect air quality would be from smoke (wildfires, prescribed fires) and road dust.

Comment [A13]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

Forest-Wide Desired Conditions

1. The use of prescribed fire, timber harvesting, and integrated pest management to restore healthy ecosystems would be accomplished while remaining within national and state air quality standards.

Wildlife and Plant Species Diversity

Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

Large scale assessments of landscape condition and trends within the Interior Columbia River basin have identified at least three major causes for changes in forested habitat conditions since early European settlement. These include: wildfire exclusion, intensive timber harvesting, and development of roads. Some habitat factors and risks to wildlife and plants include:

- A fragmented landscape and uncharacteristic vegetation structures.
- A reduction or degradation of habitats for many forest-associated wildlife and plant species.

Comment [A14]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

- Land development, increased human activity, and competition from invasive plant species which compromises plant diversity, habitat quality, and connectivity.

Within the Flathead National Forest, about 67 percent of the Forest is designated wilderness and inventoried roadless areas. The Flathead National Forest has very large areas of habitat that are relatively undisturbed by humans. These, and similar habitats on adjacent ownerships, are extremely valuable for wildlife, especially wide ranging carnivores. The occurrence of large undeveloped habitat areas are one reason that nearly all the terrestrial and aquatic species, present on the Flathead National Forest when Lewis and Clark journeyed through Montana 200 years ago, persist today. Large wild areas and a full suite of native species on the forest are nationally important and even merit global importance. As the population of western Montana continues to grow, there is ever increasing pressure on the remaining open space and on the quality and diversity of native habitat.

The Flathead National Forest is uniquely positioned within a complex of wilderness areas and borders Glacier National Park and a remote portion of British Columbia. This location, among some of the largest wild areas in the United States, enhances its importance as a connector of remote habitat needed by some wildlife.

The Flathead National Forest is known for its wetlands, fens, glaciated ponds, and riparian areas. The threatened plant, water howellia, is found in the Swan valley. Threatened and endangered species (including proposed, candidate, and recently delisted species), species-of-conservation-concern, and species-of-interest are associated with these and other unique habitats.

Forest-Wide Desired Conditions

The Flathead National Forest would continue to have the full complement of plant, animal, and fish species native to the plan area, that are able to persist over time and contribute to population viability at the landscape scale.

- Unique features such as wallows, seeps, wetlands, fens, glaciated ponds and licks would continue to provide natural habitat elements for plants and wildlife and remain well-represented across the landscape.
- Riparian conservation areas, as described in the Glossary, would provide suitable habitat for aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals.
- Species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) would trend toward recovery or be **delisted**.
- Management activities within the recovery area (known as the Primary Conservation Area or PCA in the Grizzly Conservation Strategy) would promote continued recovery of grizzly bears.
- In lynx habitat and critical habitat, vegetation management would promote development of multistoried hare and stand initiation hare habitat within ecosystem capabilities.

Comment [A15]: ALTERNATIVE DESIRED CONDITION of more specificity might be: Recovery of the grizzly bear is promoted by motorized access management within the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) Primary Conservation Area (PCA) and Zone 1, as mapped and directed by the Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy (2014). A forestwide system of large areas with low levels of disturbance to facilitate denning activities, spring use, limit displacement, and reduce human/bear conflicts and potential bear mortality. Spring, summer, and fall forage is available for the grizzly bear. This desired condition provides benefits for other species such as elk and wolverines.

- f. Wildlife conservation education programs and media would be used to promote conservation practices for threatened and endangered species and species-of-conservation-concern.
- g. Habitat for species-of-conservation concern and species-of-interest would remain healthy within the inherent capability of the plan area.
- h. Active nests for species-of-conservation concern and species-of-interest would be undisturbed during the nesting season.
- i. Big game-winter range would be maintained or improved unless incompatible with human safety and property protection.
- j. Big game winter range would provide sustainable thermal cover and snow interception, forage, and low levels of human disturbance to reduce physiological stress on wintering herds of deer and elk.
- k. Ecosystem connectivity would allow movement of desired animals and plants across the Forest and adjacent lands.
- l. Invasive species or diseases would not spread to new habitats.
- m. Hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing opportunities would continue to provide economic and aesthetic benefits to local communities and forest visitors using a variety of access types including motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized.
- n. Human food and attractants would be stored to prevent human conflict with wildlife in accordance with forest-wide Food Storage Orders..
- o. Traditional plant and animal resources would continue to be available for Tribal use.
- p. Research natural areas, special interest areas, and experimental forests would provide high quality habitat and opportunities for research and education.
- q. In dry Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine ecosystems, more open understory conditions reflective of desired habitats for species such as flammulated owls and goshawks, would be restored.
- r. Fire management and salvage harvest practices would maintain habitats burned with a variety of intensities to create habitat conditions suitable for species such as black-backed woodpeckers, grizzly bears, and elk.

Forest Products

Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

The Flathead National Forest has a long history of providing forest products to meet local and national needs. For more than a century, the Flathead valley was the center of a flourishing forest products industry that created jobs and products that were a dominant feature of the local

Comment [A16]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

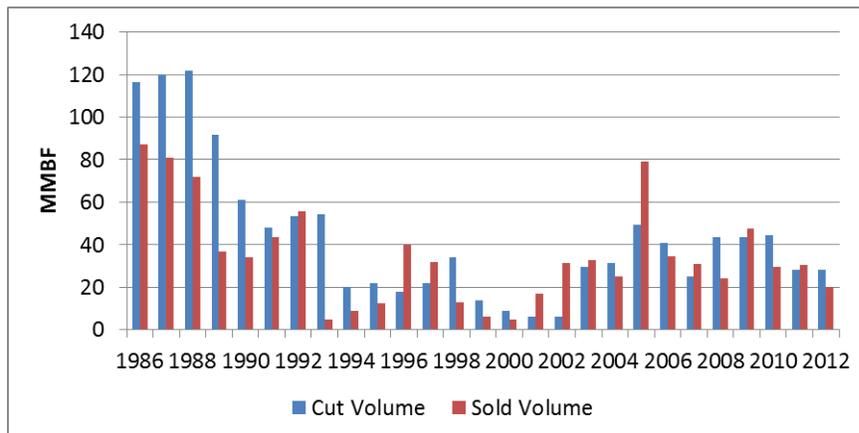
economy. This continued for a period following World War II, when the Flathead National Forest contributed forest products to an expanding national economy. Beginning in the mid-1960s, stronger environmental laws, changing public desires, increasing foreign imports, and declining budgets had the following effects:

- A decline in the forest timber outputs, from an annual average of about 130 MMBF¹⁵ in the 1970s to about 25 MMBF in the late 1990s. The harvest level has varied with salvage logging offerings and budget levels, but has averaged about 25 MMBF since 2000.
- A decline in the forest products industry, loss of jobs in this sector, and an associated decline in the contribution to the economic stability of communities. Other factors, such as increased mechanization and efficiency, also contributed to the loss of jobs in the forest products industry.

Comment [A17]: This will be updated

Figure 1, shown below, illustrates the trend in timber volume sold by the Flathead National Forest from 1986 through 2012. The volume sold in 2005 reflects the salvage of burned timber from the 2003 fires.

Figure 1: Timber Volume Sold on the Flathead National Forest.



Expansion of local tourism and the retail economy is increasing the economic diversity in the Flathead valley, although the forest products industry is still an important sector.

The Flathead National Forest has always been a place where local residents and tribes could harvest miscellaneous forest products, such as firewood, berries, or mushrooms. These uses of the national forest provide an important connection between people and their forest.

¹⁵ MMBF = million board feet

Forest-Wide Desired Conditions

- a. Land classified as suitable for timber production and lands classified where timber harvest for purposes other than timber production would provide a stable, predictable and sustainable supply of forest products while contributing to ecosystem health and sustainability.
- b. Burned areas of land suitable for regularly scheduled timber production would be stocked with native tree species adapted to the specific site and exhibit their full productive capability.
- c. Managed forests would have tree species and size classes that are more similar to historical forest conditions as described in the vegetation section of plan components.
- d. Forested lands on the Flathead National Forest where timber may be harvested would have a long-term sustained yield capacity (forest-wide) of about XX MMCF¹⁶ per decade (XXX MMBF¹⁷) and provide a stable, predictable and sustainable supply of forest products¹⁸.
- e. Trees that have been killed or damaged by fire, wind, insects or disease (especially large-scale events) would contribute to the available supply of forest products.
- f. Small diameter forest biomass would provide a variety of forest products such as hog fuel, fuel chips, pulp, small diameter roundwood, and firewood.
- g. Non-timber forest products, such as berries, and mushrooms, would continue to be available for gathering in sustainable amounts for the general public, commercial and tribal use. There would be areas that are open to personal use, but closed to commercial and mechanized harvest of non-timber forest products.

Comment [A18]: These numbers will change based upon new modeling and MA allocations.

Developed and Dispersed Recreation

Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

Developed and dispersed recreation encompasses a broad and diverse range of activities. On the Flathead National Forest, there is a variety of recreation opportunities, including motorized and non-motorized travel, hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, Nordic skiing, downhill skiing, snowmobiling, driving for pleasure, white water boating, and other water and lake related opportunities.

Demographic and population studies show that visitation to the forest and adjacent public land will continue to grow. The Flathead valley and surrounding areas continue to experience high growth and development. With the increasing numbers of recreationists, the Flathead National Forest faces the task of managing the land in a way that offers a wide spectrum of opportunities

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¹⁶ Million cubic feet

¹⁷ Million board feet

¹⁸ Based on modeled capability with an unconstrained budget.

while minimizing conflict between different user groups and effects on ecosystems. Despite the increasing need, funding for managing recreation resources has been inadequate to meet public expectations.

New recreation activities have appeared in the last 15 years such as specialized mountain biking, mountain skateboards, paintballing, specialized hunting areas, trail running, hang gliding, skate skiing, snowboarding, and use of personal flying craft.

The evaluation, authorization, and administration of recreation special uses of National Forest System lands ensure that the public interest is being served. Recreation special use permits authorize the occupancy and use of national forest land by private individuals or companies for a wide variety of recreation activities, such as outfitter and guides, recreation events, summer homes, and other private or commercial recreation uses.

Forest-Wide Desired Conditions

Comment [A20]: These will be updated to reflect recent terminology.

- a. The forest's diverse wildlands would be a draw for visitors and provide a scenic backdrop that enhances the quality of life for local communities.
- b. Recreation settings would range from the developed slopes of downhill ski areas to the remote banks of wild and scenic rivers, mountain lakes and wilderness, offering self-reliance, challenge and renewal.
- c. Rivers and lakes would offer a mix of whitewater and quiet water in rocky and forested canyons with outstanding mountain views and a rich native history.
- d. There would be a sustainable level of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities while providing for the safety of users, minimizing environmental impacts, and contributing to the economic benefit of the surrounding communities.
- e. Quality maintained standard recreation facilities would be located at key destinations and portals to accommodate concentrations of use, enhance visitor's experience, and protect the natural resources of the area.
- f. Forest vegetation in developed sites would be diverse (species, size, and age) and complement recreational activities and visual quality.
- g. Forest users would be knowledgeable about primitive skills and low impact techniques, such as "Tread Lightly" and "Leave No Trace."
- h. New and existing recreation special use authorizations and permits would serve the public interest, meet national standards, and complement the recreation settings and experiences.
- i. Outfitters and guides would provide high quality public services while assuring public health and safety, protecting resources, avoiding degradation of social settings, and minimizing conflicts with other users.
- j. The Forest would accommodate existing, well-maintained recreation residences that are compatible with other resources.

- k. The Forest would provide existing and additional recreation cabin rental opportunities that are clean, safe, and compatible with other resources.
- l. The Flathead National Forest would provide quality interpretive and conservation programs to both local communities and the visiting public to instill an appreciation and respect for this diverse ecosystem, while ensuring its long-term sustainability.
- m. The scenic resources of the Flathead National Forest would complement the recreation setting and experiences while reflecting healthy and sustainable ecosystem conditions.
- n. In concentrated recreation use areas, human waste impacts would not exist. For example, in the designated Wild and Scenic River corridor (North, Middle and South Fork of the Flathead) and around Hungry Horse Reservoir.
- o. Local communities would be key partners in providing effective information and interpretation about natural resources of surrounding public lands.

Designated Wilderness

Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

The Flathead National Forest contains over a million acres of designated wilderness, which accounts for about 47 percent of the forest. These wilderness lands provide hiking, hunting, fishing, and horseback riding at the primitive end of the spectrum. Table 6 below provides information on designated wilderness areas on the forest.

Management responsibility for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC)¹⁹ is shared with adjoining forests. Management direction for the BMWC was developed through a public “limits of acceptable change” process and implemented in April of 1987. The plan, as amended, continues to provide direction.

Table 6: Designated wilderness on the Flathead National Forest.

Name of Designated Wilderness	Total Acres	Acres within the Flathead National Forest	Percent Percentage within the Flathead National Forest	National Forests other Governments agencies or national forests with shared Wilderness Management
Bob Marshall	1,009,356	709,356	70%	Lewis & Clark, Lolo, Helena
Great Bear	286,700	286,700	100%	None
Mission	168,137	73,877	44%	Confederated

¹⁹ The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC) is comprised of the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat wilderness areas on the Flathead, Lolo, Lewis and Clark, and Helena national forests.

Comment [A21]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

Name of Designated Wilderness	Total Acres	Acres within the Flathead National Forest	Percent Percentage within the Flathead National Forest	National Forests other Governments agencies or national forests with shared Wilderness Management
Mountains				Salish and Kootenai Tribes

Use of the BMWC is considered moderately low compared to other units in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The BMWC contains almost one-half of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River System, providing a unique opportunity for river recreation in a wilderness setting. Recent studies show that day visits and trips of short duration are increasing and that extended stays are in decline. Impacts are expected to increase in areas near trailheads with resource and social impacts declining further from trailheads.

Management of the Mission Mountains Wilderness (MMW) is coordinated with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). This designated wilderness has limited access with hikers representing the majority of visitors. Day use is concentrated at three areas on the eastern boundary. There is potential for impacts to increase at trailheads and those areas and lakes that are easily accessible.

With an increasing number of recreationists, the Flathead National Forest faces the task of managing its designated wilderness areas in ways that offer a spectrum of primitive opportunities, minimizes effects to the ecosystem and maintains wilderness character.

Forest-Wide Desired Conditions

- a. The Flathead National Forest would provide high quality wilderness settings while protecting wilderness character consistent with the Wilderness Act of 1964.
- b. Ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, and floods would occur with minimal human influence.
- c. Primitive settings and experiences in designated wilderness would be consistent with assigned opportunity classes.
- d. Opportunity classes would be consistent with limits of acceptable change (LAC) guidelines for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.
- e. The BMWC would provide up to 30,000 outfitter and guide service days annually²⁰.
- f. Wildland fire and prescribed fire would mimic natural fire processes.

Comment [A22]: This DESIRED CONDITION was put in place to meet the Wilderness 10-year challenge. That goes up in 2014 and they are working on a new set of elements which isn't done yet. As they are finalized, we will add in the required elements.

²⁰ Outfitter and guide use in the Great Bear and Bob Marshall Wilderness portions within the Flathead National Forest is estimated to be xx percent of the total service days annually on the National Forests across the complex.

- g. Wilderness would contain native plant and animal communities, while managing invasive plant species to either contain or eradicate them.
- h. Wilderness areas would offer connectivity for many species of wildlife that depend on large expansive areas for habitat.
- i. Facilities in recommended wilderness would exist if they provide for resource protection, human safety, and/or have historical value.
- j. Professional outfitters and guides would provide an example of wilderness ethics and knowledge by playing an active role in promoting good wilderness stewardship and applying practices such as “Leave No Trace” and being good hosts for all wilderness users.
- k. Unauthorized motorized and mechanized entry into designated wilderness would not occur.

Recommended Wilderness

Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

Recommended wilderness lands are lands that have the potential to become designated as official Wilderness through legislation. The Forest Service only recommends these lands to the United States Congress for consideration. Congress, and ultimately the President, must establish legislation (through a Wilderness Bill) to officially designate Wilderness Areas.

Opportunities for public participation and collaboration will be provided in this process as well as coordination with state and local governments and tribal consultation required as part of the broader planning process. Public participation efforts will engage the public and other governments early and throughout the process to provide feedback and input on the inventory, evaluation, and analysis of areas for wilderness recommendation.

The following steps will be followed as the basis for developing the wilderness evaluation process:

1. **Inventory:** Identify and create an inventory of all lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This inventory shall identify lands based on information obtained during the assessment and using inventory criteria. Inclusion in the inventory is not a designation that conveys or requires a particular kind of management. Lands included in the inventory must be documented and identified on a map.
2. **Evaluation:** Evaluate the wilderness characteristic of each area in the inventory using a set of criteria based on the Wilderness Act of 1964 and document.
3. **Analysis:** The responsible official will consider the areas evaluated and determine the specific areas to carry forward in the EIS for further analysis. These areas must be

Comment [A23]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

identified in the EIS as part of one or more alternatives. Not all lands included in the inventory and subsequent evaluations are required to be analyzed.

4. **Decision:** The responsible official will decide, based upon the analysis disclosed in the EIS and input from tribes, state and local government and the public, which areas, if any, to recommend for inclusion in the NWPS and identify them in the final decision document.

Areas on the Flathead National Forest that are recommended for Wilderness include:

Comment [A24]: To be developed as part of process identified above.

Recommended Wilderness Name	Acres

Forest-wide Desired Conditions

- a. These lands would retain their wilderness character over time.
- b. Ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, and floods would occur with minimal human influence.
- c. Nonconforming uses would not degrade the potential for future wilderness designation.
- d. Facilities in recommended wilderness would exist if they provide for resource protection, human safety, and/or have historical value.
- e. Wildland fire and prescribed fire would mimic natural fire processes.
- f. Unauthorized motorized and mechanized entry into recommended wilderness would not occur.

Access and Travel Management

Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

The Flathead National Forest has about 3,400 miles of system roads and 2,300 miles of system trails that were constructed to support forest management activities, such as fire suppression, timber harvesting, mining, and recreation. Much of the trail system has been in existence since the early 1900s. Later, as motorized transportation became common, many of the trails were abandoned or replaced by roads. The bulk of the road system was constructed in the decades following World War II when demand for building materials was high and the Flathead National Forest had a large timber sale program.

In the last few decades, funding has not been sufficient to maintain all forest roads and trails to national standards that are important for minimizing resource impacts. Where maintenance requirements are not accomplished, conditions and trends show:

- User convenience has decreased.
- Risk of damage to water quality and aquatic habitat has increased on some roads.

With population growth there has been an increase in demand on forest roads as primary access routes to residential developments. Use of much of the road system has shifted from resource extraction to recreation and residential access, with requirements for higher safety standards. Protection of wildlife habitat and lack of maintenance funding has limited motorized travel.

Trail maintenance is generally focused on high-use trails. Overall, fewer trails are being maintained to standard. Recreation use and the demand for motorized and non-motorized access have increased. Advances in performance and technology have resulted in increased use during summer and winter by off-highway vehicles (OHVs), mountain bikes, and snowmobiles.

Forest-Wide Desired Conditions

- a. The transportation system would provide reasonable and legal access for resource management and recreation while protecting other important resources.
- b. Open roads and trails would provide for user safety and be maintained to the appropriate service level.
- c. Roads with high residential access needs would be managed by the appropriate local, state, or federal agency.
- d. Motorized use would only occur on designated roads, trails, or areas.
- e. The transportation system would not encroach onto streams and riparian areas in ways that impact channel function or geometry. Sediment delivery from the transportation system would not measurably impact pool frequency, pool habitat, or salmonid spawning habitats.

Comment [A25]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

- f. Roads, trails, and their use would have minimal impacts on resources including threatened and endangered species, species-of-conservation-concern, species-of-interest, heritage sites, watersheds, and fish habitat.
- g. Roads in long-term storage would pose minimal risk to water quality and aquatic ecosystems. Road surfaces, cross drains, ditches, culverts, and other structures would have a minimal risk of failure, and would provide adequate drainage that prevents accelerated surface runoff, erosion, and sediment delivery to surface waters.
- h. Existing open public airstrips (Condon, Spotted Bear, Meadow Creek, and Schafer Meadows) would be maintained for public use.

Geographic Area Component

Introduction

While the forest-wide desired conditions indicate broad trends which we would expect to see over the next 10 to 15 years, we recognize that individual places across the Flathead National Forest have their own unique characteristics and conditions. These places, referred to as “geographic areas,” define a landscape that people associate with on the Forest. Identifying these areas gives us the opportunity to fine-tune our forest-wide management to better respond to more local conditions and situations. The Flathead National Forest has been divided into the following six geographic areas (see vicinity map available at the end of this introduction):

- Hungry Horse
- Middle Fork Flathead
- North Fork Flathead
- Salish Mountains
- South Fork Flathead
- Swan Valley

Geographic Areas

Each geographic area description provides the following:

Geographic area map shows management areas (defined in Chapter 2), and acres of each, location of unique features, primary population centers, and major rivers and roads.

Unique characteristics and distinctive roles and contributions provides a brief characterization of the area such as landscape features, primary land uses and ownership patterns, resource and recreational uses, and an indication of social and economic factors.

Geographic area desired conditions describe what we want to achieve in specific geographic areas that are not necessarily covered by forest-wide desired conditions. While all resources have been considered, the only desired conditions specified here are those that are not adequately addressed by forest-wide desired conditions.

Figure 2: Vicinity Map of the Flathead National Forest Geographic Areas.

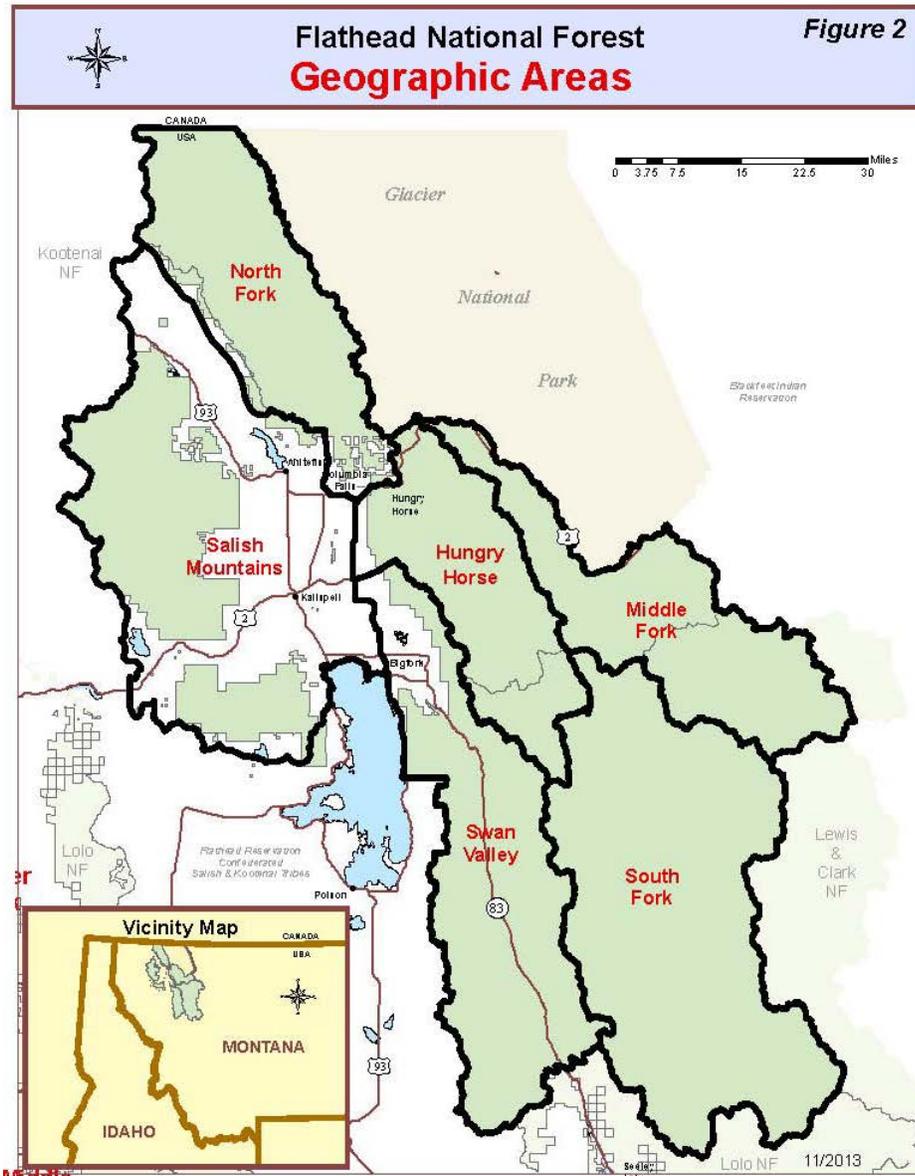
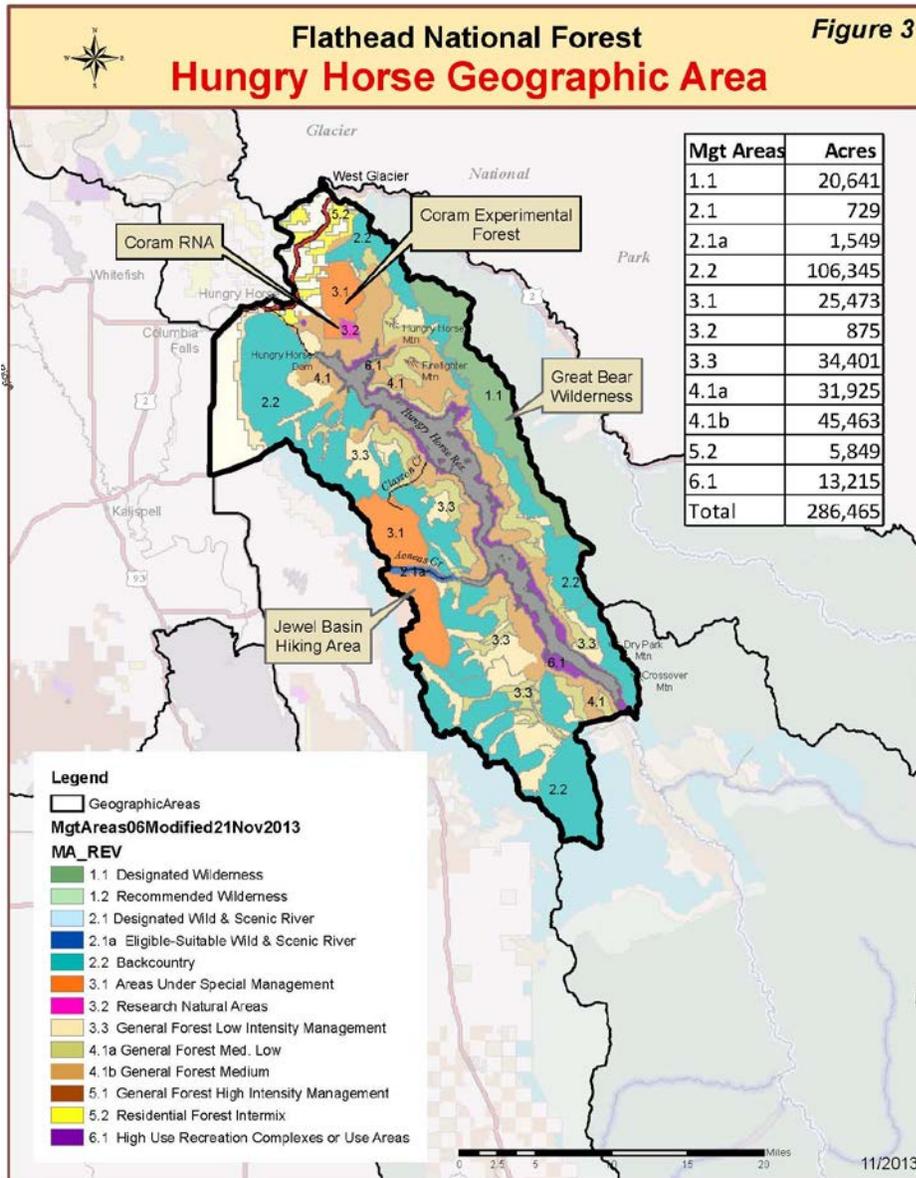


Figure 3: Map of the Hungry Horse Geographic Area.



Hungry Horse Geographic Area

Unique Characteristics and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

- Hungry Horse Dam and Reservoir on the South Fork Flathead River. The dam impounds a reservoir, which is 35 miles long and covers over 23,000 acres.
- There is a popular 110-mile-long driving loop around Hungry Horse Reservoir that provides access to areas of the reservoir.
- A portion of the Great Bear Wilderness lies within this geographic area.
- The Swan Crest trail (Alpine #7) provides a unique experience by providing a long stretch of trail on a high mountain ridge.
- The area has a high quality fishery with a healthy bull trout population.
- The area has a high quality fishery with a healthy bull trout and westslope cutthroat population.
- The 15,000 acre Jewel Basin Hiking Area, designated in 1970, contains 38 miles of hiking trails without motorized, mechanized, or stock use.
- The Coram Experimental Forest has been set aside for forest/ecological research purposes. This 8,000-acre area also contains a Research Natural Area (RNA). Coram Experimental Forest and RNA has been designated as a Biosphere Reserve within the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Man and Biosphere Program.

Comment [A26]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

General Overview

This geographic area provides for a wide variety of recreational opportunities, from the primitive experiences in the wilderness to driving for pleasure on the open loop roads that surround the Hungry Horse Reservoir. Approximately XX percent of the geographic area is within designated/recommended wilderness or other primitive settings. XX percent of the geographic area offers opportunities for higher intensities of resource management.

Lands on the west side of the Hungry Horse Reservoir are some of the most productive timber lands on the Flathead National Forest. The crest of the Swan Range runs north-south and provides limited motorized recreation in a semi-primitive setting.

The section of Highway 2 between Hungry Horse and West Glacier provides the gateway to Glacier National Park. This corridor has high use during the summer. There is a growing number of sub-divisions and developments occurring along this corridor.

Aeneas Creek has been found eligible for further study for potential designation into the Wild and Scenic River System¹.

Desired Conditions

Comment [A27]: Geographic Area Desired Conditions are subject to change based upon assessment and further discussions with district staff.

Watershed, Fisheries, and Aquatic Habitat

- High mountain lakes contain only native westlope cutthroat trout and bull trout. Handkerchief Lake would contain the only non-native fish population (artic grayling).
- The South Fork Flathead River and Hungry Horse Reservoir would provide quality angling opportunities for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout.

Wildlife and Plant Species Diversity

- Elk habitat would be sufficient to maintain thriving herds. Priority winter range areas would include Firefighter/Hungry Horse Mountains, Dry Park/Crossover Mountain, and other areas identified through coordination with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MT FWP). Periodic habitat improvement projects would be developed to insure that suitable conditions persist.

Fire and Fuel Management

- The response to wildland fire would maintain and/or enhance ecological function to the extent that fuel and weather conditions permit an acceptable risk to recreation and other resource values.

Developed and Dispersed Recreation

Jewel Basin Hiking Area

- The Jewel Basin Hiking Area would continue as a hiking-only area with realigned boundaries in adjacent areas that contribute to the overall non-motorized/mechanized and non-stock experience with more land included in the special designation.
- Camp Misery and Clayton Creek would continue to be the primary access points into the Jewel Basin Hiking Area, with Wheeler and Graves Creek as secondary access.
- Current outfitting and guiding use would be authorized under special use permits. New commercial uses would not be entertained. Recreation events would not occur.

Hungry Horse Reservoir Area

- New developed and dispersed recreation sites would be limited, and existing sites would be expanded or reconstructed before new development occurs.
- High quality recreation opportunities exist at the Hungry Horse Reservoir with concentrated use areas throughout the management area 6.1 designation.

¹ Information on the outstanding remarkable value (ORV), for which the river was found eligible and its potential classification, is in the Plan Set of Documents.

- The north end of the Hungry Horse Reservoir would have more recreational development that accommodate high use levels at developed sites.
- Day Use boat launch on the north end of the Hungry Horse reservoir would exist.
- The loop road around the Hungry Horse Reservoir would have numerous vistas to view the reservoir and surrounding landscape and would allow for passenger vehicles to travel in a moderate degree of user comfort and conveniences.

Access and Travel Management

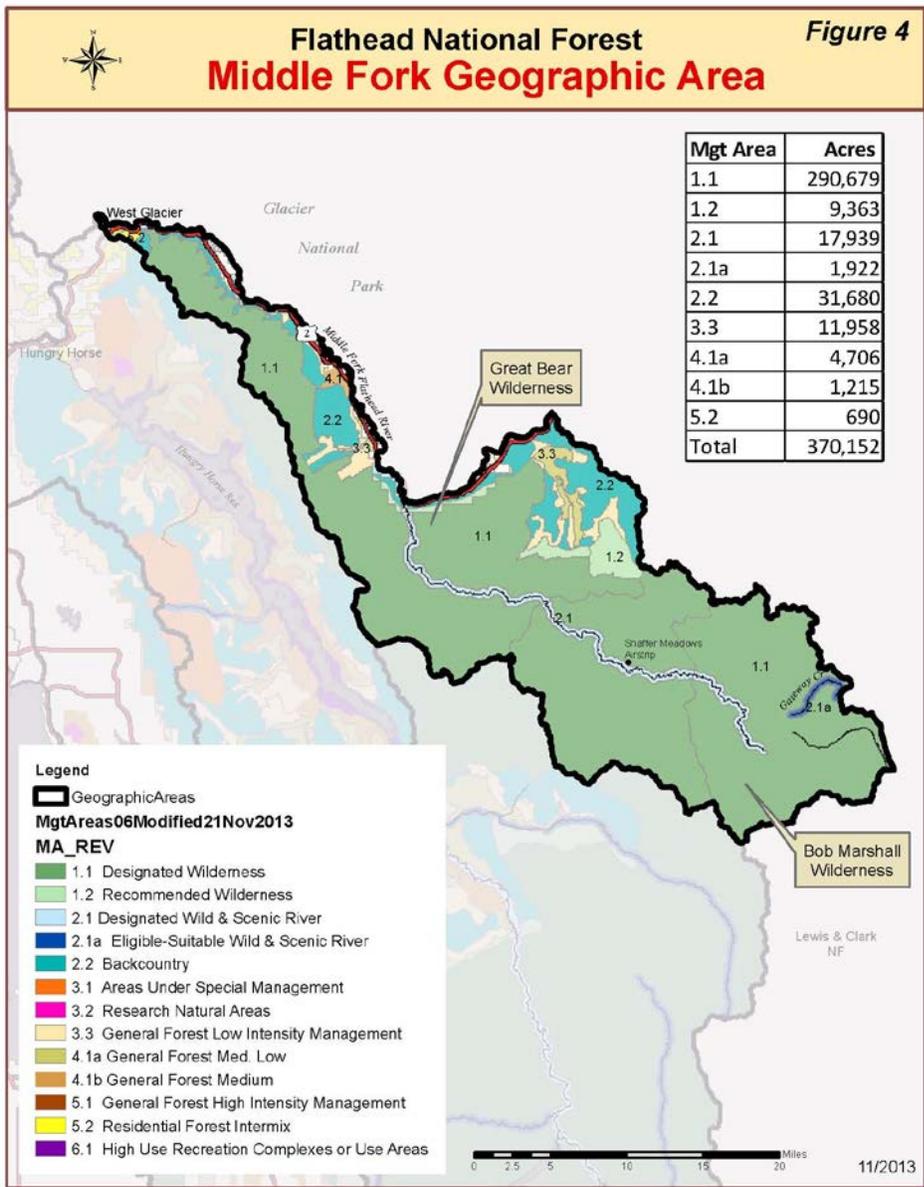
- Portions of this geographic area are within backcountry management areas (MA 2.2) which would provide a primarily non-motorized recreation opportunity. However, the following motorized trails currently exist, are suitable, and would still provide a semi-primitive recreation experience (table 5 below).

Table 7: Motorized trails in the Hungry Horse GA MA 2.2.

Trail Name and Number	Type of Use Allowed
Alpine #7 from Columbia Mountain #51 south to Strawberry Mtn #5	Motorcycle
Columbia Mountain #51	Motorcycle
Doris Ridge #52	Motorcycle
Doris Creek #295	Motorcycle
South Fork Hemler Creek #20	Motorcycle
Peters Ridge #37	Motorcycle
Jimmie Ridge #297	Motorcycle
Quintonkon Creek #72 from the jct. of Rd 381C to jct. of Alpine #7	Motorcycle
Quintonkon Creek Spur #72A and Road #381C	Motorcycle
Alpine #7 from Sixmile Lookout #10 south to Crevice Lake #101A	Motorcycle

- MA 2.2 lands within this geographic area may also have additional existing motorized road and trail routes that may or may not be suitable with the overall direction of MA 2.2. These routes would be evaluated later, when site-specific travel management planning is done.

Figure 4: Map of the Middle Fork Flathead Geographic Area.



Middle Fork Flathead Geographic Area

Unique Characteristics and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

- Over 75 percent of the geographic area is in the Great Bear Wilderness and Bob Marshall Wilderness, and is part of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC).
- The Schafer Meadows Airstrip is the only open airstrip within the BMWC.
- The area has a high quality fishery with healthy bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout populations.
- The Middle Fork Flathead River, a designated Wild and Scenic River, is a free-flowing river which originates in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The river provides a wide range of floating experiences.
- The Nyack Flats floodplain on the Middle Fork hosts a significant research effort by the University of Montana.
- The State Highway 2 corridor is an important transportation, communication, and utility corridor.
- Shares a boundary with Glacier National Park.
- The Schafer Meadows Ranger Station is a seasonally operating historical facility. Schafer Meadows RS, along with several backcountry guard stations, and an intricate trail system for hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and wilderness management, offer a view and preservation of a lifestyle from the past.

Comment [A28]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

General Overview

The Great Bear Wilderness and a portion of the Bob Marshall Wilderness make up the vast majority of this geographic area and contain world-class wilderness and wild and scenic rivers. This area is largely wild and undeveloped due to the Bob Marshall Wilderness and Badger Two Medicine area to the south and east, Glacier National Park to the north, and the vast steep terrain. This area is popular for recreational use. It is a focal point for hiking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, and for river float trips on the Wild and Scenic Middle Fork Flathead River.

Approximately XX percent of the geographic area is within designated/recommended wilderness or other primitive settings. XX percent of the geographic area offers opportunities for higher intensities of resource management.

The Montana State Highway 2 corridor, on the northern boundary of this geographic area, is a busy area separating Glacier National Park on the north and the Great Bear Wilderness to the south. This corridor includes heavy recreational use on the Middle Fork River, heavy recreational and general traffic on the state highway, the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe railroad line, a natural gas line, electrical transmission lines, and other utility and communications facilities.

Gateway Creek has been found eligible for further study for potential designation to the Wild and Scenic River System¹.

The Nyack Flats floodplain, located on the Middle Fork River on private land, national forest land, and within Glacier National Park, is one of the most studied floodplains in the world. It is the focus of continuing research by the University of Montana.

Desired Conditions

Comment [A29]: Geographic Area Desired Conditions are subject to change based upon assessment and further discussions with district staff.

Watershed, Fisheries, and Aquatic Habitat

- Bear Creek, Granite Creek, Lodgepole Creek, Morrison Creek, Dolly Varden Creek, Schafer Creek, Clack Creek, Bowl Creek, Strawberry Creek, and Long Creek would provide high quality bull trout habitat and production.
- Local populations of adfluvial bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout would remain stable or would improve despite changed ecological conditions in Flathead Lake. Cooperative inter-agency efforts effectively reduce adverse effects of non-native fish on National Forest lands.
- Non-native fish (primarily rainbow trout and brook trout) and hybridized fish would be absent in high mountain lakes and very scarce in the lower river system.
- Essex Creek would continue to provide clean water for public use by the community of Essex.

Fire and Fuels Management

- The response to wildland fire would maintain and/or enhance ecological function to the extent that fuel and weather conditions permit an acceptable risk to recreation and other resource values.

Wilderness

- Work centers and guard stations within the wilderness would continue to be used for wilderness management and help interpret the history of wilderness management.
- Impacts from recreational use would be managed per the Recreation Management Direction (Bob Marshall, Scapegoat and Great Bear Wilderness) which is located in the Plan Set of Documents.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

- The Middle Fork of the Flathead would be managed per the Flathead River Wild and Scenic River Recreation Direction. Commercial outfitted river use, at levels determined in the River Recreation Direction, would continue to be a key element in providing public access to the river.

¹ Information on the outstanding remarkable value (ORV), for which the river was found eligible and its potential classification is in the Plan Set of Documents.

- Recreational river use, such as rafting or kayaking, on the Middle Fork would be compatible with streamside angling.

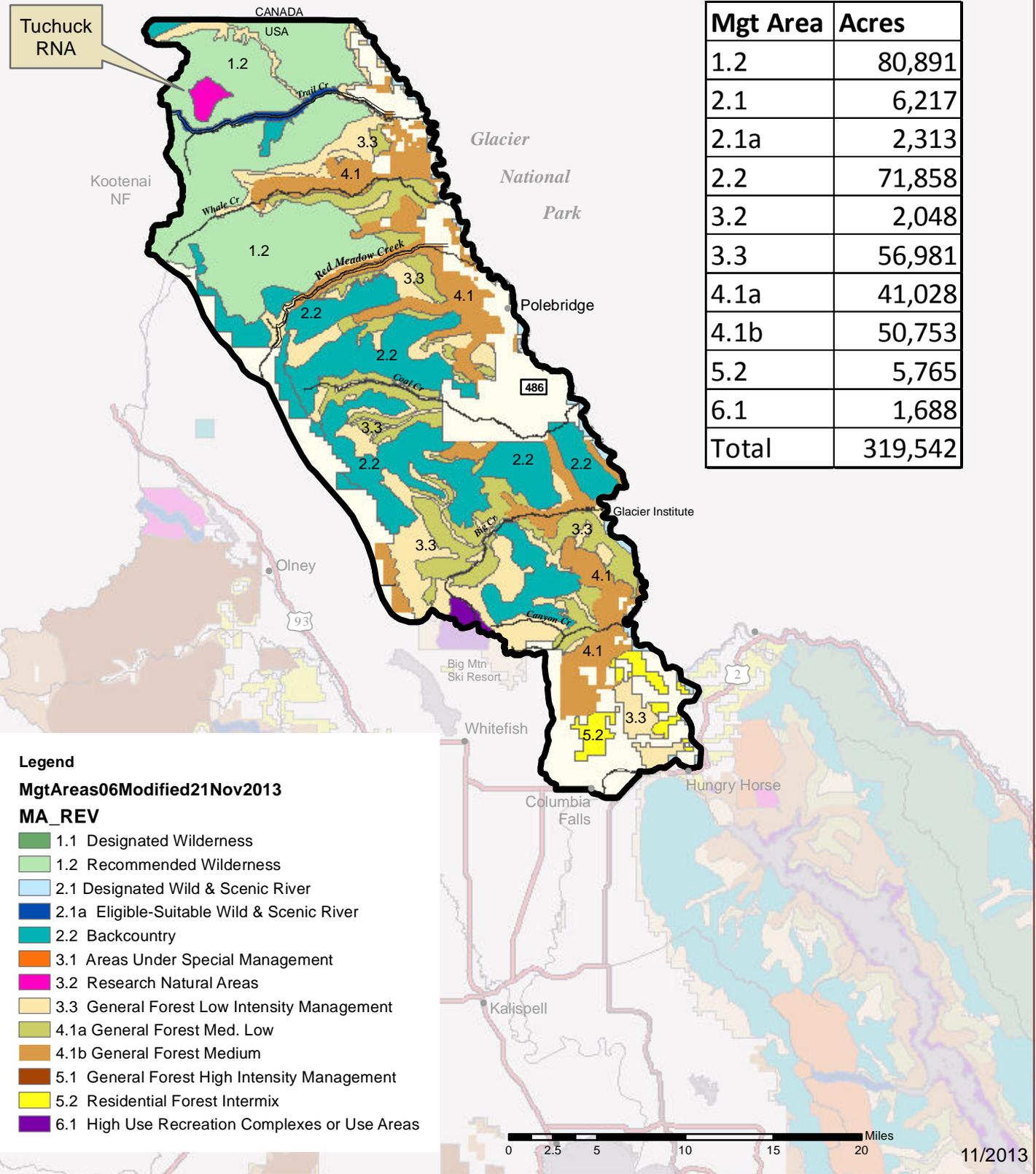
Access and Travel Management

- The geographic area would provide opportunities for winter motorized use consistent with the winter motorized recreation map.
- The Schafer Meadows Airstrip would continue to provide public and administrative access for small aircraft at current use levels developed in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex Wilderness Plan, "Limits of Acceptable Change" which is located in the Plan Set of Documents.
- The Challenge-Skyland groomed trails would be maintained.



Flathead National Forest North Fork Geographic Area

Figure 5



Mgt Area	Acres
1.2	80,891
2.1	6,217
2.1a	2,313
2.2	71,858
3.2	2,048
3.3	56,981
4.1a	41,028
4.1b	50,753
5.2	5,765
6.1	1,688
Total	319,542

Legend

MgtAreas06Modified21Nov2013

MA_REV

- 1.1 Designated Wilderness
- 1.2 Recommended Wilderness
- 2.1 Designated Wild & Scenic River
- 2.1a Eligible-Suitable Wild & Scenic River
- 2.2 Backcountry
- 3.1 Areas Under Special Management
- 3.2 Research Natural Areas
- 3.3 General Forest Low Intensity Management
- 4.1a General Forest Med. Low
- 4.1b General Forest Medium
- 5.1 General Forest High Intensity Management
- 5.2 Residential Forest Intermix
- 6.1 High Use Recreation Complexes or Use Areas

North Fork Flathead Geographic Area

Unique Characteristics and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

- The North Fork Flathead River is a free-flowing, designated Wild and Scenic River that originates in Canada and is co-managed with Glacier National Park.
- Contains seven significant wetland complexes; some of the least impacted wetlands in the Flathead River watersheds.
- The Big Creek Work Center is currently occupied by Glacier Institute, which provides quality environmental education in cooperation with the Forest Service and other resource management agencies.
- The area has some of the highest densities of grizzly bears in the lower 48 states and is key grizzly bear habitat.
- Shares a boundary with Glacier National Park and an international border with Canada.
- Contains the Tuchuck RNA which is a reference habitat for a subalpine larch/subalpine fir habitat type.

Comment [A30]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

General Overview

All of the National Forest System Lands are on the west side of the North Fork Flathead River. Land on the east side of the river is managed by Glacier National Park. The combination of numerous inventoried roadless areas and its proximity to Glacier National Park make this geographic area a wild and undeveloped place. Fire has played a major role in the area since 1910, and its effects are clearly visible.

The North Fork valley bottom contains a large portion of private lands that are being subdivided. More and more people are building homes here with the unintended effects of habitat fragmentation, loss of wildness, and potential effects on grizzly bear and wolves. Industrial private and state lands occur on the western, southern, and eastern perimeters of the area. The small community of Polebridge is within the geographic area.

Yakinikak, Trail, and Nokio creeks have been found eligible for further study for potential designation into the Wild and Scenic River System¹.

Comment [A31]: Other streams may be found eligible based upon an updated eligibility process.

Desired Conditions

Comment [A32]: Geographic Area Desired Conditions are subject to change based upon assessment and further discussions with district staff.

Watershed, Fisheries, and Aquatic Habitat

- Trail Creek, Whale Creek, Red Meadow Creek, Coal Creek, Shorty Creek, Hallowat Creek and Big Creek would provide high quality bull trout habitat and production.

Comment [A33]: DEREK review with Craig

¹ Information on the outstanding remarkable value (ORV), for which the river was found eligible and its potential classification, is in.

- Watershed conditions would be improved in Coal Creek and Big Creek in response to implementing the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Watershed Restoration Plan.
- Adfluvial populations of bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout would remain steady or increase, despite changed ecological conditions in Flathead Lake.

Wildlife and Plant Species Diversity

- The plants associated with Mud Lake, Teepee Lake, and Hay Creek Wetland Complexes, which possess wetland and botanical values, would persist or expand.

Fire and Fuel Management

The response to wildland fire would maintain and/or enhance ecological function to the extent that fuel and weather conditions permit an acceptable risk to private lands and structures, timber, recreation and other resource values.

Scenery

- The Upper North Fork Road would have numerous vistas to view Glacier National Park and the North Fork of the Flathead River.

Access and Travel Management

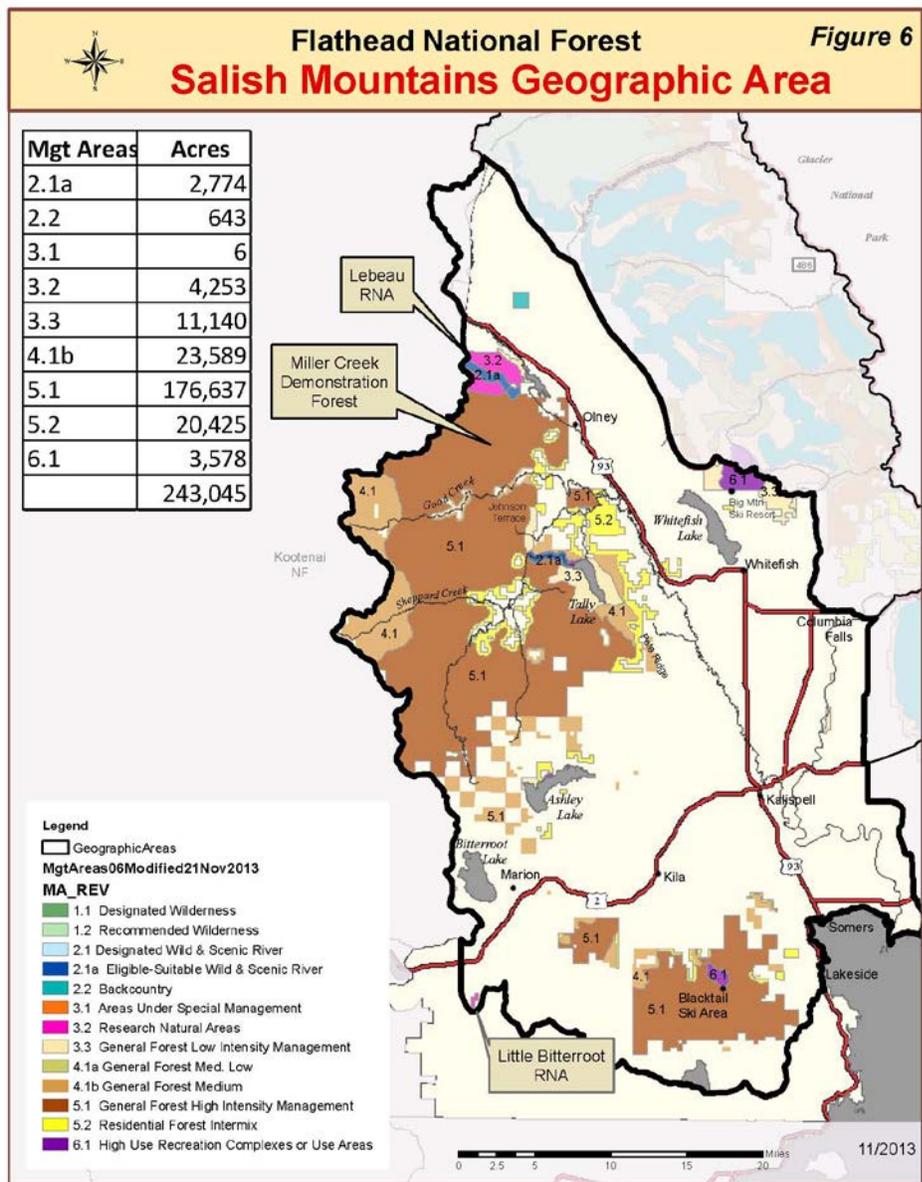
- Red Meadow and Trail Creek roads would continue to provide access to the North Fork for a variety of uses including recreation opportunities and potential escape routes in the event of large wildfires.
- The Canyon Creek groomed trail system would be maintained for winter recreation opportunities.
- Groomed snowmobile routes would continue to provide recreation opportunities and access Big Mountain and to the Montana state lands to the west. Snowmobiling opportunities would co-exist with skiing opportunities provided by Big Mountain.

Developed and Dispersed Recreation

Whitefish Mountain Resort

- Facilities at the ski area would be developed in accordance with the approved portions of the Master Development Plan for both winter and summer operations.
- Summer recreation opportunities would be concentrated on south facing slopes.
- Summer use on the north slope and Hellroaring basin would be compatible with grizzly bear desired conditions. Grizzly bear and human interactions would be limited.

Figure 6: Map of the Salish Geographic Area.



Salish Mountains Geographic Area

Unique Characteristics and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

- Many large lakes such as Tally Lake, Little Bitterroot Lake, Upper and Lower Stillwater lakes, Ashley Lake, and Whitefish Lake, provide a variety of water-based recreational opportunities.
- Whitefish Mountain Resort and Blacktail Mountain ski areas are popular destinations for both local residents and tourists from around the region.
- The Pete Ridge area is one of the most important white-tailed deer winter ranges in Montana.
- Whitefish Divide Trail, of which a portion is a National Recreation Trail, traverses through this geographic area and offers panoramic mountain views.
- Lebeau and Little Bitterroot RNAs and Johnson Terrace are unique topographic features that harbor a diversity of plants unique among the forested landscape.
- Seven wetland complexes with a diversity of plants and features.
- The Miller Creek Demonstration Forest is an important active fire research area on the Flathead National Forest.

Comment [A34]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

General Overview

The Salish Mountain Geographic Area includes most of the Tally Lake Ranger District and a portion of the Swan Lake Ranger District. These lands have a network of roads to access private ownership and federal lands that have been managed primarily for timber production during the last several decades. Elevation is relatively low compared to the rest of the forest and is unique because of the rolling nature of the topography. Other large forested areas adjacent to this geographic area include the Stillwater State Forest, Kootenai National Forest, and a checkerboard of industrial-managed forest lands. Communities near this area include Whitefish, Kalispell, Olney, Lakeside, Marion, Kila and Somers.

The major use of National Forest System lands in this geographic area has been timber management and recreation. This area is roaded, allowing easy access to the rolling terrain. Popular recreation activities include hiking, hunting, mountain biking, motorized trail riding, horseback riding, and winter recreation.

Within the Miller Creek drainage, 6,000 acres have been identified as a “demonstration forest.” Management objectives for the area have historically been to maximize growth and yield.

Lebeau and Logan creeks have been found eligible for further study for potential designation into the Wild and Scenic River System¹.

Comment [A35]: Other streams may be found eligible based upon an updated eligibility process.

¹ Information on the outstanding remarkable value (ORV), for which the river was found eligible and its potential classification is in the Plan Set of Documents.

Desired Conditions

Comment [A36]: Geographic Area Desired Conditions are subject to change based upon assessment and further discussions with district staff.

Watershed, Fisheries, and Aquatic Habitat

- Both Good Creek and Sheppard Creek would continue to support a stable population of genetically pure cutthroat trout. These populations would be protected by barriers that would prevent invasion of non-native fish species.
- For the headwaters of Sheppard and Good Creeks, moderate levels of dispersed recreation would exist.
- Haskill Basin would continue to provide clean water for municipal use by the city of Whitefish.

Wildlife and Plant Species Diversity

- Suitable cover and foraging areas for wintering deer and elk would persist, particularly in the Pete Ridge area.
- The scenic, geological, botanical, and ephemeral special characteristics of Johnson Terrace would persist.

Fire and Fuel Management

- The response to wildland fire would maintain and/or enhance ecological function to the extent that fuel and weather conditions permit an acceptable risk to private lands and structures, timber, recreation, and other resource values.

Developed and Dispersed Recreation

- Campgrounds on the Tally Lake Ranger District area would be expanded and/or reconstructed as needed to accommodate an increase in use and to protect resources.
- The Blacktail and Round Meadows cross country ski areas would continue to operate on the existing system of roads and trails.
- The Tally Lake Road would have vistas to view Tally Lake and surrounding mountain scenery

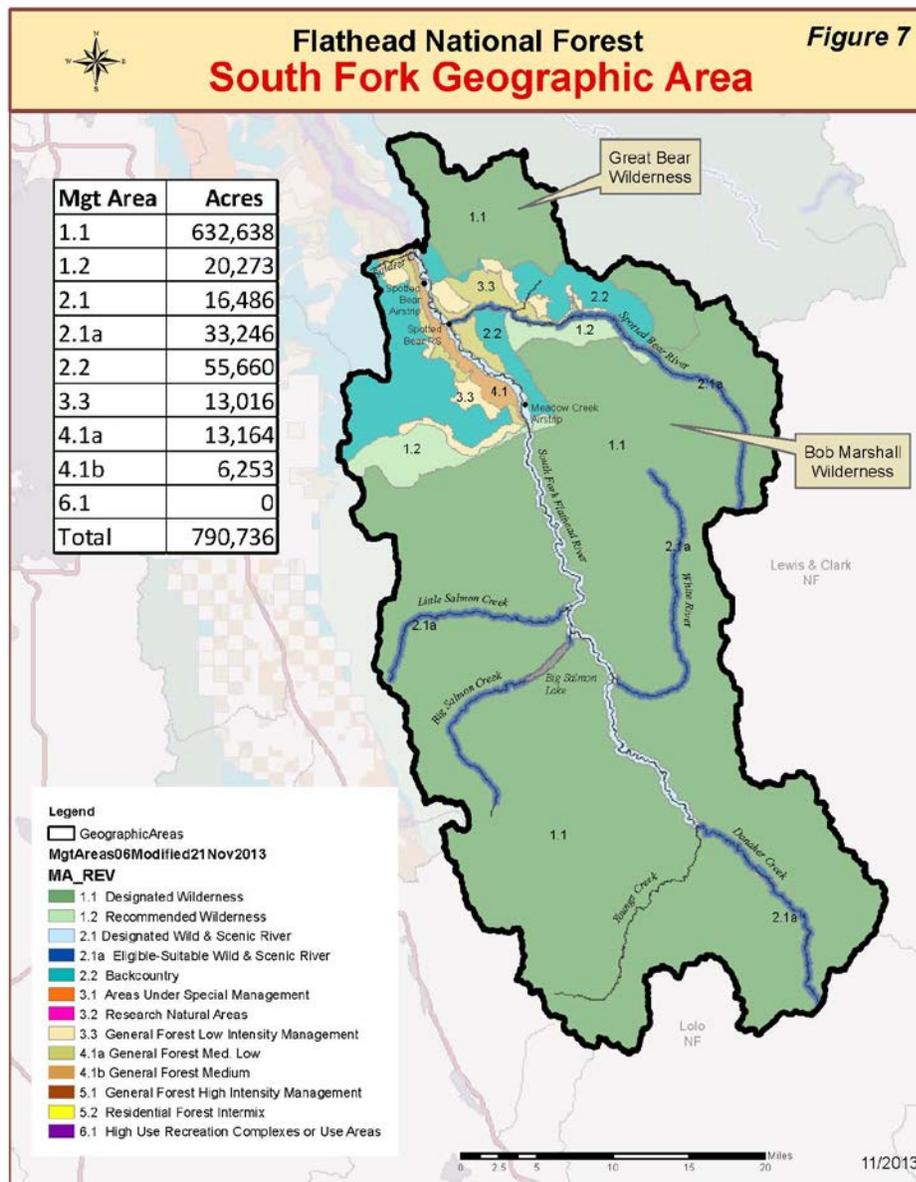
Whitefish Mountain Resort

- Facilities at the ski area would be developed in accordance with the approved portions of the Master Development Plan for both winter and summer operations.
- Summer recreation opportunities would be concentrated on south facing slopes.
- Summer use on the north slope and Hellroaring basin would be compatible with grizzly bear desired conditions. Grizzly bear and human interactions would be limited.

Blacktail Mountain Ski Area

- Facilities at the ski area would be developed in accordance with the approved portions of the Master Development Plan for both winter and summer operations.

Figure 7: Map of the South Fork Geographic Area.



South Fork Flathead Geographic Area

Unique Characteristics and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

- The Bob Marshall Wilderness and a portion of the Great Bear Wilderness, which are part of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, make up the majority of this geographic area and contain world-class backcountry.
- The South Fork of the Flathead River, from Young's Creek to the Hungry Horse Reservoir, is a designated Wild and Scenic River.
- The area has a high quality fishery with healthy bull trout and westslope cutthroat populations.
- Two airstrips, Meadow Creek and Spotted Bear, are maintained for public use.
- Bent Flat and Trail Creek, two significant, high quality fens located along the Spotted Bear River, harbor numerous rare wetland plant species.
- The Spotted Bear Ranger Station, and Big Prairie Ranger Station are seasonally operating historical facilities. These, along with several backcountry guard stations, forty miles of operational historic phone line, and an intricate trail system for hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and wilderness management, offer a view and preservation of a lifestyle from the past.

Comment [A37]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

General Overview

The Bob Marshall Wilderness and Great Bear Wilderness comprise the majority of this geographic area. The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC) includes lands on the Flathead, Lewis and Clark, Lolo, and Helena national forests. The BMWC is part of one of the largest remaining wildland areas in the lower 48 states and is entirely in National Forest System lands ownership. This area is popular for recreational use. It is a focal point for hiking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, and for river float trips on the Wild and Scenic South Fork of the Flathead River. Many of the visitors to the wilderness utilize outfitter services given the vastness and remoteness.

This geographic area is in the heart of the South Fork of the Flathead River within the Swan Mountains and contains world-class backcountry. This vast undeveloped area provides outstanding habitats for native fish and wildlife species such as grizzly bears, gray wolves, and bull trout. This wilderness area also contains some cultural elements including historic facilities, trails, and historic phone lines.

Spotted Bear River, Little Salmon Creek, Big Salmon Creek, Danaher Creek, and the White River in the South Fork Geographic Area have been found eligible for further study for potential designation to the Wild and Scenic River System¹.

Comment [A38]: Other streams may be found eligible based upon an updated eligibility process.

¹ Information on the outstanding remarkable value (ORV), for which the river was found eligible and its potential classification, is in the Plan Set of Documents.

Desired Conditions

Comment [A39]: Geographic Area Desired Conditions are subject to change based upon assessment and further discussions with district staff.

Wildlife and Plant Species Diversity

- Habitat would be maintained to support existing elk herds consistent with the state elk management plan.

Fire and Fuels Management

- The use of wildland fire and appropriate management response would maintain and/or enhance ecological function to the extent that fuel and weather conditions permit an acceptable risk to recreation and other resource values.

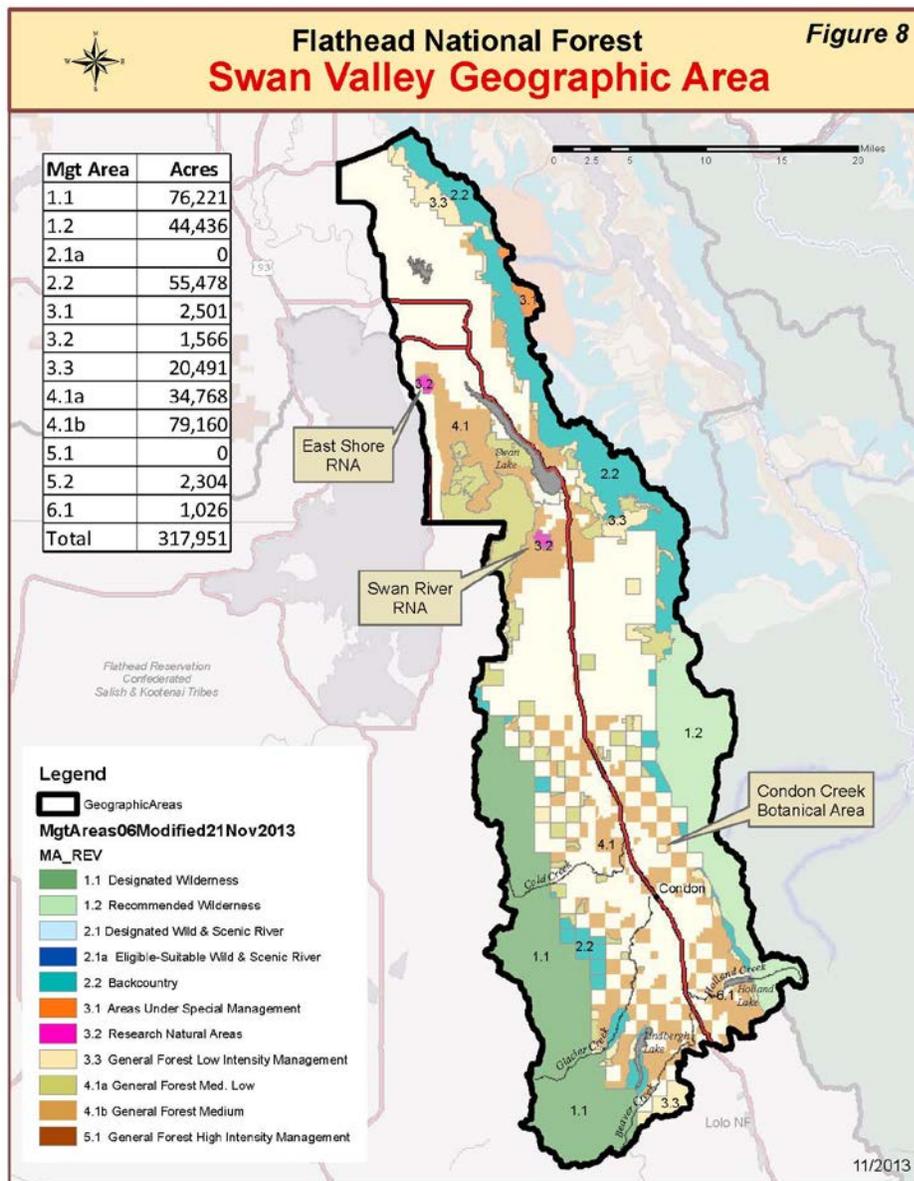
Wilderness

- Ranger stations and guard stations within the wilderness would continue to contribute to management efforts in the wilderness and help interpret the rich history of wilderness management.

Access and Travel Management

- Two airstrips, Meadow Creek and Spotted Bear would continue to provide air-based recreational opportunities.
- Portions of this geographic area are within backcountry management areas (MA 2.2) which would provide primarily non-motorized recreation opportunities.
- MA 2.2 lands within this geographic area may also have additional existing motorized road and trail routes that may or may not be suitable with the overall direction of MA 2.2. These routes would be evaluated later, when site-specific travel management planning is done.

Figure 8: Map of the Swan Valley Geographic Area.



Swan Valley Geographic Area

Unique Characteristics and Distinctive Roles and Contributions

- The Mission Mountains Wilderness is within this geographic area.
- This geographic area contains the Swan, Holland, and Lindbergh lakes which are popular day-use and camping areas.
- The most extensive, floristically diverse concentration of peatlands (fens) on the Flathead National Forest occurs on the valley floor of this geographic area.
- Swan River Research Natural Area that is managed in partnership with the Nature Conservancy to preserve rare aquatic habitats.
- The Condon Airstrip, is an open public airstrip in the Swan Valley.
- The East Shore Research Natural Area (RNA) has a long-standing special-use permit which serves the communities of Shievers Creek and Woods Bay.
- This GA and the Condon Botanical Area supports a significant concentration of water howellia; a federally-listed, threatened plant that depends on seasonally drying ponds.

Comment [A40]: Background and Distinctive Roles and Contributions may look quite different in the new plan as we have not added the Distinctive Roles and Contributions piece nor have we added or revised this information to reflect the new assessment, including information about ecosystem services.

General Overview

A major use in the Swan valley area over the past decades has been timber production. Private lands near the river bottom are increasingly being subdivided and developed into residences.

This geographic area links two wilderness areas, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and the Mission Mountains Wilderness and is an important connectivity zone for many species of wildlife including grizzly bears. The Swan Valley Grizzly Bear Conservation Agreement and Plan direction would continue to be implemented under the Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy.

Desired Conditions

Comment [A41]: Geographic Area Desired Conditions are subject to change based upon assessment and further discussions with district staff.

Watershed, Fisheries, and Aquatic Habitat

- Approximately 18 genetically pure or nearly pure cutthroat trout population strongholds would persist in the Swan River sub-basin. These cutthroat trout strongholds would be located upstream of natural or man-made barriers that provide sufficient habitat to maintain populations. Non-native fish upstream of these barriers are absent or very scarce.
- Cooperative inter-agency efforts effectively reduce impacts of lake trout invasion on bull trout populations on National Forest lands. Local populations of adfluvial bull trout would increase in response to suppression of lake trout in Swan Lake.

Wildlife and Plant Species Diversity

- Existing grizzly bear and lynx corridors would be maintained in the Swan Valley to maintain the connectivity between sub-populations in the Mission Mountains and Bob Marshall wilderness areas.

Fire and Fuel Management

- The response to wildland fire would maintain and/or enhance ecological function to the extent that fuel and weather conditions permit an acceptable risk to private lands and structures, timber, recreation, and other resource values.

Scenery

- The Swan Highway (#83) from Swan Lake to Holland Lake would have numerous vistas to view the Mission Mountains Range and Swan Range.

Access and Travel Management

- Portions of this geographic area are within backcountry management areas (MA 2.2) which would provide primarily non-motorized recreation opportunities. However, the following motorized trails currently exist, are suitable, and still provide a semi-primitive recreation experience (table x).

Table 8: Motorized trails in the Swan valley GA MA 2.2.

Trail Name and Number	Type of Use Allowed
South Fork Hemler Creek #20 to junction w/ Alpine #7	Motorcycle
Peters Ridge #37 to junction w/Alpine #7	Motorcycle
Strawberry Lake #5 to junction w/Alpine #7	Motorcycle
Alpine #7 from Strawberry Lake #5 north	Motorcycle
Peterson Creek #293	Motorcycle
Alpine #7 from Crevice Lake #101A north to Sixmile Lookout #10	Motorcycle
Sixmile Lookout #10	Motorcycle
Sixmile Sidehill #27	Motorcycle
Wire #78 to junction with Alpine #7	Motorcycle

- MA 2.2 lands within this geographic area may also have additional existing motorized road and trail routes that may or may not be suitable with the overall direction of MA 2.2. These routes would be evaluated later, when site-specific travel management planning is done.
- The Condon Airstrip would be open for public use.

Chapter 2: Objectives

The following objectives are stepping stones of accomplishment that will move us toward the desired conditions described in Chapter 1. They are strongly influenced by current and expected near-future budgets; however, their accomplishment will also be influenced by factors, such as:

- Shifts in management priorities brought about by such things as weather events or large natural disturbances that may change resource conditions.
- Delays in project-level planning and decision making that may be beyond Forest control.

Some objectives are marked with a double asterisk (**). These things are highly desirable, but can only be accomplished if we receive additional funding, beyond the level that is anticipated.

Soils, Watersheds, and Aquatic Ecosystems

- a. Restore XX to XX priority watersheds to Functioning Properly status within ten years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- b. Improve hydrologic conditions on at least XX to XX miles of roads within RHCAs in active restoration watersheds within ten years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- c. Remove XX to XX passage barriers for native trout in active restoration watersheds within ten years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- d. Reduce XX to XX sediment sources that are impacting water quality and/or aquatic habitat within ten years of signing the Plan Approval Document.

Vegetative Composition, Size Class, and Structure

Vegetation and Fire

- e. Move toward more disturbance resistant forest and non-forest conditions by using vegetation treatments on XX to XX acres within signing the Plan Approval Document.

Invasive Plants

- f. Upon discovery of new invasive, Category 3¹, plant occurrences, contain the new occurrence within the discovered site to result in no expansion or spread from the new occurrence into new areas.
- g. Within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document, manage xx percent of inventoried areas containing plants known as Category 2 species in priority areas that pose a risk to native plant communities and other resource values.

¹ Weed categories established by the State of Montana based on establishment: Category 1 = Widespread Invaders, 3rd priority; Category 2 = New Invaders, 2nd priority; Category 3 = Potential Invaders, 1st priority.

- h. ** Within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document, manage xx percent of inventoried areas containing plants known as Category 1 species in priority areas that pose a risk to native plant communities and other resource values.

Fire and Fuels Management

- i. As part of total treatment acres described in vegetation section previously, use naturally-ignited fire on xx to xx acres and within the WUI, reduce fuel loading and crown fire hazard on xx to xx acres within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document.

Wildlife and Plant Species Diversity

Threatened and Endangered Plants and Plant Species-of-conservation-concern and Species-of-Interest

- j. ** Designate xx to xx botanical interest areas within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document.

Big Game

- k. ** Accomplish at least xx to xx habitat improvement projects, such as weed control, access control, or vegetative treatments that improve winter range conditions for big game within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document.

Food Storage

- l. To minimize conflicts with wildlife and to reduce bear mortality, enact food storage orders covering all Flathead National Forest lands within ten years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- m. Ensure that all Flathead National Forest campgrounds, rural administrative facilities, and permitted structures are either equipped with wildlife resistant garbage facilities, or subject to a “pack it in-pack it out” policy within ten years of signing the Plan Approval Document.

Forest Products

- n. Plan, prepare and offer for sale a Total Sale Program Quantity (TSPQ) consisting of the following elements:
- XX to XX MMCF¹ (XXX to XXX MMBF²) per decade from regularly scheduled timber harvests on lands suitable for timber production.

¹ MMCF = Million cubic feet

² MMBF = Million board feet

- X to X MMCF (XX to XX MMBF) per decade from timber harvests on lands not suitable for timber production, but where timber harvesting may occur for other multiple-use purposes (other lands).
 - Approximately 0.X MMCF (X to X MMBF) per decade of biomass and other small diameter roundwood available for commercial use (volume is included in the estimates above).
- o. Annually prepare and offer for sale xx to xx permits for personal or commercial use of non-timber forest products and firewood.
- p. Establish, within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document and in consultation with tribal leaders, a minimum of xx areas that are closed to commercial or mechanized harvest of non-timber forest products that are important to the tribe.

Comment [A42]: These numbers will be modified based on new analysis.

Developed and Dispersed Recreation

- q. Maintain XX developed recreation sites to national standards, as per recommendations and ranking of the Recreation Sites Facility Master Plan within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- r. Complete at least xx visual enhancement projects within ten years of signing the Plan Approval Document.

Designated Wilderness

- s. Develop a new wilderness plan for the Mission Mountains Wilderness within X years of signing the Plan Approval Document.

Access and Travel Management

Roads

- t. Complete XX of road improvement projects within ten years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- u. ** Maintain xx to xx miles of road according to manual/handbook guidance and applicable BMPs within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- v. ** Reduce the current deferred road maintenance backlog by five percent within 10 years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- w. Decommission xx to xx miles of road within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- x. ** Monitor all maintenance level 1 roads and treat any of the stream crossings that have a high risk of failure.

Trails

- y. Maintain xx percent (xx miles) of Flathead National Forest trails and trail structures with xx percent of those trails (xx miles) maintained to manual/handbook standard within ten years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- z. ** Maintain a web site that provides current information on trail conditions, restrictions, and information regarding trail opportunities on the forest within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document.
- aa. ** Construct xx to xx miles of new trails and/or relocate existing trails to address social and/or resource concerns within xx years of signing the Plan Approval Document.

Suitability of Lands Component

Introduction

For the most part, management areas are used in the Plan to identify the general suitability of lands for different uses and management activities. However, suitability for some uses and activities is better identified in terms of the entire forest, rather than a particular management area. While both forest-wide and management area descriptions are used to identify areas that are generally suitable for different types of management and use, they do not determine what uses and management activities would actually take place at any given time or location. Those decisions will be made later through site-specific analysis of proposed projects and activities.

This is a general prediction of suitability based on boarder levels of information and analysis of conditions by management area. Site specific project analyses will make final determination of suitability and will include the appropriate documentation.

General Suitability—Forest-Wide

National Forest System lands are generally suitable for a variety of uses, such as outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and enjoyment of wildlife and fish habitat. Topics discussed in this section do not apply to specifically mapped management areas on the Forest; they apply anywhere their respective suitability criteria are met. The section following this one, “General Suitability—by Management Areas,” helps identify which particular mapped locations within the Forest are best suited for which types of uses. Final determinations on project implementation will be subject to site-specific analysis.

Winter Range

Winter range as identified on the winter range map in the Plan Set of Documents is:

- Generally suitable for vegetation management to maintain or improve habitat conditions.

Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas

- RHCA's are generally suitable for activities that improve, restore, or maintain aquatic and riparian ecosystem desired conditions (see aquatic guidelines).

Access and Travel Management

- Flathead National Forest lands are generally suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated routes and areas.
- Lands are generally suitable for motorized travel and equipment in emergency or the exercise of valid existing rights.

Timber Suitability

The timber suitability map on the following page displays areas where timber harvest could occur. These lands are categorized as:

- Lands generally suitable for timber production. These are lands where timber production is compatible with desired condition and objectives. Timber harvest will occur on a regulated, scheduled basis.
- Other lands where timber harvest is compatible with desired conditions and objectives. These lands are generally not suitable for timber production. Timber harvest may occur, but is not a regularly scheduled use.

The following table summarizes the timber suitability classification.

Table 9: Timber suitability categories

Timber Suitability Categories	Acres
Total National Forest Lands	XX
• Lands generally not suitable for timber harvest	XX
• Lands generally suitable for timber production	XX
• Other lands where harvest is compatible with desired conditions	XX

The Forest has XX acres where timber harvest could be used as a tool to achieve desired conditions. This represents approximately XX% of the Flathead National Forest or 68% of lands not designated as wilderness. Of those lands, approximately XX acres are generally suitable for timber production. This represents XX percent of the Flathead National Forest. Biological and physical aspects of timber suitability will be reviewed at a site-specific scale during project implementation and may deviate from this analysis without a plan amendment.

Comment [A43]: These numbers will change based on outcome of this plan revision process.

General Suitability—by Management Areas

General suitability of areas is identified for each management area (MA). The degree of human influence on the landscape tends to increase from the level of least impact (MA 1.1, Designated Wilderness) to the level of greatest impact (MA 6.1, High Use Areas).

In some cases, there may be one management area located within a specially designated areas such as a designated wilderness. For example, eligible wild and scenic rivers (MA 2.1) may fall within designated wilderness. Where this occurs, the more restrictive management direction occurs.

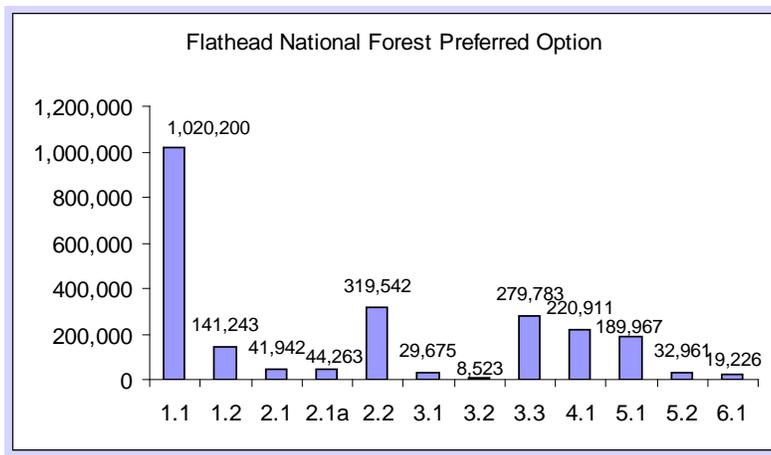
Each management area is characterized by:

- Desired conditions that give a sense of the type and extent of human influence that a forest visitor could expect.
- An idea of the kinds of uses and activities that would be generally suitable in that management area.

Management Area Designations

The following graph displays the total number of Forest acres allocated to each management **area**.

Figure 9. Bar graph of MA acres across the Flathead National Forest.



Comment [A44]: This graph will change based on outcome of this plan revision process

Management Area Designations and timber suitability for harvest and production

The following table displays the total number of Forest acres allocated to each management area and to generally suitable for timber harvest and generally suitable for timber production.

Table 10: Management areas, acres, and percent of the Forest generally suitable for timber harvest and timber production.

MA	Management Area Designation	Acres	Percent	Acres generally suitable for timber harvest	Acres generally suitable for timber production
1.1	Designated Wilderness				
1.2	Recommended Wilderness				
2.1	Wild and Scenic Rivers - Designated				
2.1a	Wild and Scenic Rivers – Eligible or Suitable				
2.2	Backcountry				
3.1	Areas under Special Management (Jewel Basin Hiking Area and Coram Experimental Forest)				
3.2	Research Natural Areas				
3.3	Low Intensity Management				
4.1a	Active Management, Low Intensity				
4.1b	Active Management, Moderate Intensity				
5.1	Active Management High Intensity				
5.2	Residential Forest Intermix				
6.1	High Use Recreation Complexes or Use Areas				
Total					

1.1 Designated Wilderness

Desired Conditions

- Designated wilderness areas would be characterized by a natural environment. Ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, insects, and disease would function with limited amount of human influence. Natural processes and conditions would be only minimally affected by human use, and impacts from visitation would not detract from the natural setting.
- Primitive and unconfined recreation would allow opportunities for solitude and self-reliance with appropriate management restriction. Contacts with other users would be very low and evidence of other users would be minimal. There would be a very high chance of being isolated from sights and sounds of humans and experiencing independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance on outdoor skills in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk.

Suitability

Recreation

- Tethering and grazing of recreational stock is generally suitable beyond 200 feet of lakeshores within designated wilderness.
- Designated wilderness areas are generally suitable for the construction of temporary structures when needed to provide for human safety (for example, when avoiding conflicts with bears).
- Designated wilderness areas are generally suitable for the construction of permanent trails and associated structures necessary for safe foot and stock travel.

Forest Products

- Designated wilderness areas are not suitable for timber harvest.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are generally suitable for small Forest Service radio repeater sites to assist in wilderness administration.
- These areas are generally suitable for the preservation of historic administrative structures and facilities and associated infrastructure.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are generally suitable for non-motorized travel and equipment and non-mechanized travel.

1.2 Recommended Wilderness

Desired Conditions

- Designated wilderness areas would be characterized by a natural environment. Ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, insects, and disease would function with limited amount of human influence. Natural processes and conditions would be only minimally affected by human use, and impacts from visitation would not detract from the natural setting.
- Primitive and unconfined recreation would allow opportunities for solitude and self-reliance with appropriate management restriction. Contacts with other users would be very low and evidence of other users would be minimal. There would be a very high chance of being isolated from sights and sounds of humans and experiencing independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance on outdoor skills in an environment that offers a high degree of challenge and risk.

Suitability

Recreation

- Recommended wilderness areas are generally suitable for the construction of temporary structures when needed to provide human safety (for example, when avoiding conflicts with bears).
- Recommended wilderness areas are generally suitable for the construction of permanent trails and associated structures necessary for safe foot and stock travel.

Forest Products

- Recommended wilderness areas are not suitable for timber harvest.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are generally suitable for small Forest Service radio repeater sites to assist in administration of these remote sites.
- These areas are generally suitable for the preservation of historic administrative structures and facilities and associated infrastructure.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are generally suitable for non-motorized travel and equipment and non-mechanized travel.

2.1 Designated, Suitable and Eligible Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers

These are river segments that Congress designates under the National Wild and Scenic River Act or that the Forest Service has found to be eligible for Congressional designation. Eligible rivers may be studied for possible inclusion in the national system.

MA 2.1 includes the following eligible wild, scenic and recreations river segments:

Name	Potential Classification
Big Salmon Creek	Wild classification
Spotted Bear River	Wild segment from headwaters to Blue Lake. Recreation segment from Blue Lake to confluence w/SF Flathead River.
White River	Wild classification
Danaher River	Wild classification
Little Salmon River	Wild classification
Gateway Creek	Wild classification
Yakinikak Creek Trail Creek Nokio Creek	Wild classification segment from headwater to Trail Creek Scenic segment from confluence with Yakinikak Creek to Forest Boundary
Lebeau Creek	Wild segment from headwater to Lebeau RNA boundary. Scenic segment is from RNA boundary to Forest Boundary
Logan Creek	Recreation classification
Aeneas Creek	Scenic classification

MA 2.1 includes the following designated wild, scenic and recreation river segments:

Name	Classification in miles ¹
Middle Fork of the Flathead	54 miles of recreation classification 46 miles of wild classification
North Fork of the Flathead	37 miles scenic classification 21 miles recreational classification
South Fork of the Flathead	51 miles wild classification 9 miles recreation classification

¹ Mileage is from the Flathead Wild and Scenic River Recreation Management Direction and are rounded to the nearest mile.

Desired Conditions

- The free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstanding remarkable values that made river segments eligible for designation, or for which they were designated, would be protected and perpetuated.
- Eligible or designated wild rivers would be free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shoreline essentially primitive and waters unpolluted.
- Eligible or designated scenic rivers would be free of impoundments, with shoreline or watersheds still largely primitive and undeveloped but accessible in places by roads.
- Eligible or designated recreational rivers would be accessible by road or railroad, may have some shoreline development and may have had an impoundment or diversion in the past.

Suitability**Forest Products**

- Wild river corridors are generally not suitable for timber harvest.
- Scenic and recreational river corridors are generally not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production; however, timber harvesting for multiple-use purposes and to achieve desired vegetation conditions could occur.
- Scenic and recreational rivers corridors are generally suitable for salvage logging and the commercial use of non-timber forest products.

Other Uses and Activities

- Scenic and recreational river segments are generally suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- Wild river corridors are generally suitable for non-motorized travel.
- Wild river corridors outside of designated wilderness (Lebeau Creek and section of the South Fork of the Flathead, Yakinikat Creek) are generally suitable for mechanized travel.
- Scenic and recreational river corridors are generally suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated routes.
- Some scenic and recreational corridors are generally suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas generally suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area that are identified in the over-snow vehicle use map, are located in the Plan Set of Documents.

2.2 Backcountry Areas

Desired Conditions

- Backcountry areas would be natural-appearing with deviations to the landscape not evident.
- Wildlife would continue to use these areas as functioning secure habitat with limited human disturbance.
- The frequency of contact with other users would be low, but there would often be evidence of other users. There would be high likelihood of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, and experience independence, closeness to nature, tranquility and self-reliance on outdoor skills in an environment that offers challenge and risk. Signing would be subtle.
- Developed recreation sites would be infrequent and rustic in nature to provide site protection. There would be low level of site modification for facilities, with use of native material.

Suitability

Forest Products

- Backcountry areas are generally not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production; however, timber harvesting for multiple-use purposes and to achieve desired vegetation conditions could occur.
- Backcountry areas are generally suitable for salvage logging and the commercial use of non-timber forest products.

Other Uses and Activities

- Backcountry areas are generally suitable for small Forest Service radio repeater sites to assist in administration.
- Backcountry areas are generally suitable for the use of motorized tools and equipment associated with management activities, and for the use of chainsaws by the public.

Access and Travel Management

- Backcountry areas are generally suitable for non-motorized travel. However, the geographic area desired conditions identify and describe several existing motorized routes that are generally suitable for continued motorized use in the summer. In addition, some areas are generally suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified in the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.
- Backcountry areas are generally suitable for motorized access and use associated with management activities that do not require new road construction.

3.1 Areas Under Special Management

Jewel Basin Hiking Area

Background

The 15,000-acre Jewel Basin Hiking Area was designated in 1970 as a hiking-only area providing a unique recreation experience without motorized, mechanized, or stock use. The area is popular due to its accessibility from the valley floor, interconnected trail systems, high elevation experiences, ecological values, and abundant lakes and streams.

Desired Conditions

- The area would provide a recreation experience without motorized, mechanized, or stock use and provide high elevation hiking recreation opportunities in a pristine setting.
- A management plan that guides future management would be in place that addresses increased use, protection of resources, and desired recreation experience.
- Camp Misery and Clayton Creek would be the primary access points into the Jewel Basin Hiking Area with Wheeler Creek and Graves Creek as secondary accesses.
- The area would be natural-appearing. Ecological processes such as plant succession, fire and insect and disease activity would function with limited human influence.
- The frequency of contact with other users would be moderate to high depending on season of year. Evidence of other users would be noticeable but there would be some opportunities for isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance on outdoor skills in an environment that offers challenges and risk.
- Developed sites would be rustic in nature to provide site-protection and interpretation. There would be low to moderate level of site modification for facilities, with use of native material.

Suitability

Recreation

- Jewel Basin Hiking Area is generally suitable for outfitting and guiding at existing use levels.

Forest Products

- Jewel Basin Hiking area is generally not suitable for timber harvest or commercial non-forest products.

Other Uses and Activities

- Jewel Basin Hiking Areas is generally suitable for existing or commercial communication sites or utility corridors and small Forest Service communication sites to assist in administration.

Access and Travel Management

- Jewel Basin Hiking Area is generally suitable for summer hiking and winter skiing and snowshoeing recreation opportunities.

Coram Experimental Forest

Comment [A45]: Will be refined based on coordination with the Rocky Mtn Research Sta.

Background

The 8,000-acre Coram Experimental Forest was established in 1932 for forest/ecological research purposes. Research studies began in the late 1940s focusing on the influence of even-aged harvest methods. Past research on this experimental forest has covered a wide array of subjects ranging from timber production to soil and water, wildlife, understory and overstory vegetative development, young stand management, artificial and natural regeneration techniques, and social aspects of forest management. More information about the relationship of the Coram Experimental Forest to the Coram Research Natural Area and the United Nations Biosphere Reserve are located in the Hungry Horse geographic area section in Chapter 1.

Desired Conditions

- The Coram Experimental Forest would serve as a demonstration area for researchers, educators, forest managers, and the public.
- Re-measurement and evaluation of long-term studies would continue as would the collection of baseline hydrology and climate information.
- Areas would be provided for studies that would answer future management questions.

Suitability

The Coram Experimental Forest would generally be:

Forest Products

- Coram Experimental Forest is generally not suitable for regulated timber production; however, timber harvesting or salvage logging for multiple use purposes and to achieve desired vegetation conditions could occur.

Other Uses and Activities

- Coram Experimental Forest is generally suitable for a small Forest Service radio repeater to assist in administration.
- Coram Experimental Forest is generally suitable for a few facilities to provide comfort or interpretation that support the research program.

- Coram Experimental Forest is generally suitable for day uses such as hunting, fishing, berry picking, picnicking and wildlife viewing.

Access and Travel Management

- Coram Experimental Forest is generally suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are generally suitable for winter motorized travel. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.
- These areas are generally suitable for cross-country over-snow vehicle travel as identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

3.2 Research Natural Areas

Research Natural Areas (RNAs) are part of a network of representative forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, and wetland habitats; riparian systems; geologic formations; wildlife habitats; or aquatic communities where each has special characteristics of scientific importance. RNAs serve as reference areas for evaluating the range of natural variation and the impact of management in similar environments. They protect representative or key elements of biological diversity at the genetic, species, population, community or ecosystem scales. RNAs serve as areas for the study of ecosystems and ecological processes including succession and they provide a baseline for measuring ecological change. RNAs also support educational activities.

Desired Conditions

Each RNA has its own authorization document. Examples of general desired conditions and suitability are given here: however, actual desired condition and suitability for individual RNAs are indicated in their respective authorization document¹.

- RNA lands would generally be natural-appearing. Ecological processes such as plant succession, fire and insect and disease activity, would function with limited human interaction.
- The frequency of contact with other users would be low, but there would be evidence of other users. There would be high likelihood of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, independence, closeness to nature, tranquility, and self-reliance on outdoor skills in an environment that offers challenge and risk. Signing would generally be subtle.
- Developed recreation sites would be infrequent and rustic in nature to provide site protection. There would be low level of site modification for facilities, with use of native material.
- RNAs would serve as areas for the study of ecosystems and ecological processes including succession and baseline areas for measuring ecological change.

Suitability

Forest Products

- RNAs are generally not suitable for timber harvest.
- These areas are generally suitable for management activities that restore conditions that the RNA was designated to represent.

Other Uses and Activities

- RNAs are generally suitable for portable Forest Service communication sites for administrative use.

¹ Establishment records are located in the plan set of documents.

- RNAs are generally suitable for the observation and study of undisturbed, unique habitats and non-manipulative research.

Access and Travel Management

- RNAs are generally suitable for non-motorized travel with limited motorized travel to meet administrative, research and educational objectives.
- Some areas are generally suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes are generally suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

3.3 Mixed-Use, Low Intensity

Desired Conditions

- Areas of low intensity, mixed-use emphasis would have a predominately natural-appearing environment in which landscape character appears slightly altered.
- Contact between users would be low to moderate depending on season of year and evidence of other users would be noticeable. There would be some isolation from the sights and sounds of humans, and opportunities would exist to have a high degree of interaction with the natural environment.
- There would be opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreation.
- Developed recreation sites would be rustic in nature to provide site protection. There would be low to moderate level of site modification for facilities, with use of native material.
- In addition to an assortment of recreational opportunities, lands in low intensity mixed-use areas would provide fish and wildlife habitat, and a variety of other goods and services.
- There would be opportunity for small scale mineral exploration and development.
- Grizzly Bear core area would provide secure habitat.

Suitability

Forest Products

- These areas are generally not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production, although timber harvesting for multiple use purposes and to achieve desired vegetation conditions could occur.
- These areas are generally suitable for salvage logging and commercial use of non-timber forest products.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are generally suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are generally suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated roads, trails and areas.
- Some areas are generally suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.
- Generally suitable for low levels of temporary road construction or relocation of existing roads for environmental improvement.

4.1 Active Management, Low to Moderate Intensity

Desired Conditions

MA 4.1A (Active Management, Low Intensity)

- These lands would have a mixed-use emphasis with low intensity active management for regularly scheduled timber production.
- These lands would be characterized by a modified natural environment in which landscapes character appears moderately altered. Vegetation management activities, road management, and other developments may begin to dominate the landscape character and be compatible with the landscape character being viewed.
- Contact between users would be moderate depending on the season of the year and evidence of other users would be noticeable with moderate frequency of contact between users.
- Developed recreation facilities would provide for user comfort and convenience. There would be moderate level of site modification for facilities, with use of native material.
- There would be opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities.
- In addition to an assortment of recreational opportunities, and a low level of timber production, these lands would provide fish and wildlife habitat and a variety of other goods and services.
- There would be opportunity for small scale mineral exploration and development.
- Grizzly Bear core area would provide secure habitat.

MA 4.1B (Active Management, Moderate Intensity)

- These lands would have a mixed-use emphasis with moderate intensity active management for regularly scheduled timber production.
- Active management areas would be characterized by a modified natural environment in which landscape character appears moderately altered. Vegetation management activities, road management, and other developments may begin to dominate the landscape character being viewed.
- Contact between users would be moderate depending on the season of the year and evidence of other users would be noticeable with moderate frequency of contact between users.
- Developed recreation facilities would provide for user comfort and convenience. There would be moderate level of site modification for facilities, with use of native material.
- There would be opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities with motorized use being more common. Designated open roads and trails would provide commercial access and roaded recreation and motorized opportunities, including access to high use recreation sites.
- Some motorized travel would be on higher standard roads, and developed facilities for motorized travel and parking could be available. Closed roads would sometimes provide for non-motorized and mechanized recreation opportunities.
- In addition to an assortment of recreational opportunities, and a moderate level of timber production, these lands would provide fish and wildlife habitat and a variety of other goods and services.
- There would be opportunity for small scale mineral exploration and development.

Suitability**Forest Products**

- Active vegetation management areas (MA 41.a and b) are generally suitable for regularly scheduled timber production.
- Active vegetation management areas are generally suitable for salvage logging and the commercial use of non-timber forest products.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are generally suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are generally suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are generally suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

- 4.1B areas are generally suitable for permanent and temporary road construction or relocation of existing roads for environmental improvement.

5.1 Active Management, High Intensity

Desired Conditions

- High Intensity Active management areas may be characterized by a moderately to heavily modified natural environment. Vegetation management activities, road building, and other developments may begin to strongly dominate the landscape character.
- Contact between users would be moderate depending on the season of the year and evidence of other users would be noticeable with high frequency of contact between users.
- Developed recreation facilities would provide user comfort and convenience. There would be moderate to high level of site modification for facilities, with use of native and synthetic material.
- Designated open roads and trails would provide commercial access and roaded recreation and motorized opportunities, including access to high use recreation sites. Motorized travel would generally be on higher standard roads and developed facilities for motorized travel and parking could be available. Closed roads would sometimes provide non-motorized and mechanized recreation opportunities.
- These areas would be characterized by coniferous forests where the potential to grow timber is high and regularly scheduled harvests of commercial timber are feasible.

Suitability

Forest Products

- Active vegetation management areas are generally suitable for regularly scheduled timber production.
- Active vegetation management areas are generally suitable for salvage logging and the commercial use of non-timber forest products.

Other Uses and Activities

- Active vegetation management areas are generally suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- Active vegetation management areas are generally suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are generally suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

- These areas are generally suitable for permanent and temporary road construction or relocation of existing roads for environmental improvement.

5.2: Residential and Forest Intermix

Residential and forest intermix areas are characterized by public lands intermingled with private lands, in places where developed residential use and other private uses adjoin National Forest System lands.

Desired Conditions

- Residential and forest intermix areas would be characterized by a modified natural environment. Vegetation management activities, road building, and other developments may begin to dominate the landscape character and be compatible with the landscape character being viewed.
- Contact between users would be moderate depending on season of year and evidence of other users would be noticeable. Sights and sounds of humans would be readily apparent and the frequency of contact between users would be moderate.
- Developed recreation facilities would be rustic in nature to for user comfort and site protection. There would be low to moderate level of site modification for facilities, with use of native and synthetic material.
- Designated open roads and trails would provide commercial access and roaded user opportunities, including access to high use recreation sites; however recreation opportunities involving overnight stays would not be common. Motorized travel would generally be on higher standard roads, and developed facilities for motorized travel and parking could be available. Closed roads could provide non-motorized and mechanized recreational opportunities.

Suitability

Forest Products

- Residential and forest intermix areas are generally not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production, although timber harvesting for multiple-use purposes and to achieve desired vegetation conditions could occur.
- These areas are generally suitable for salvage logging and the commercial use of non-timber forest products.

Other Uses and Activities

- These areas are generally suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are generally suitable for wheeled motorized travel on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are generally suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.
- These areas are generally suitable for permanent and temporary road construction. Relocation of existing roads for environmental improvement would be considered.

6.1 High Use Recreation Use Areas

High Use recreation complexes or use areas would typically have an element that attracts or encourages public use such as reservoir, skiing terrain, campground or trail system. Additional surrounding terrain would also be included in the management area. Examples of high use recreation complexes or use areas include:

- Four-season sports area
- Hiking trail system with a developed trailhead facility
- Developed campground
- Lake or reservoir with combination of developed and dispersed recreation
- Groomed snowmobile trail system with associated trailhead facilities

Desired Conditions

- High use recreation complexes would be characterized by a modified natural environment. Management activities, road building and other developments would begin to strongly dominate the landscape character and would be compatible with the landscape character being viewed.
- Contact between users would be moderate to high depending on season of the year and the evidence of other users would be noticeable with high frequency of contact between users. Sights and sounds of humans would be readily apparent.
- Developed recreation facilities would provide for user comfort and convenience. There would be moderate to high level of site modification for facilities using native and synthetic materials.
- Motorized travel would be on higher standard roads and developed facilities for motorized travel and parking would be available.
- There would be evidence of management necessary to address issues of public safety, health and general user enjoyment such as those connected with recreational shooting on National Forest lands.

Suitability**Recreation**

- These areas are suitable for developed recreation opportunities with multiple facilities designed for use by large number of users. Facilities may be designed for user comfort and convenience.

Forest Products

- High use recreation complexes are generally not suitable for regularly scheduled timber production, although timber harvesting for multiple use purposes and to achieve desired vegetation conditions could occur.
- High use recreation complexes are generally suitable for salvage logging and non-commercial use of non-timber forest products.

Other Uses and Activities

- Active vegetation management areas are generally suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Access and Travel Management

- These areas are generally suitable for wheeled motorized use on designated roads and trails.
- Some areas are suitable for winter motorized use. Specific routes, and areas suitable for motorized use by snowmobiles in portions of the management area are identified on the over-snow vehicle use map in the Plan Set of Documents.

Identification of Designated Areas Component

The areas listed in the following table have unique or special characteristics and are formally designated either by statute or administrative action. Management direction for individual areas can be found in: Chapters 1-3 of this Plan, the Forest Service handbooks and manuals, and in individual area management plans. For example, MA 3.2 has additional guidance for research natural areas, and the Forest Service Manual 2320 contains additional management guidance for National Wilderness Preservation System lands.

Special areas that do not already have explicit management guidance elsewhere in this Plan, in their underlying statute or other designation document, or in Forest Service manuals or handbooks, should be managed in accordance with plan component guidance for the lands which surround them. A “Special Areas Component” map is available in the Plan Set of Documents.

A list of the special areas for the Flathead National Forest begins on the next page.

Table 11: Designated Areas of the Flathead National Forest. ¹

Designated Areas Plan Component				
Special Area	Designation Authority	Additional Guidance	Currently Designated	Recommended Designation
Statutorily Designated Areas				
National Trails Historic Scenic	National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968 Responsible Official recommends, Congressional act designates	FSM 2353.4	Scenic Continental Divide Trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun River Pass Trail #116 • Bowl Cr Trail #324 • Strawberry Creek Trail #161 • Badger Pass Cutoff Trail #147 Will be updated	No changes
Wild and Scenic River (WSR)	Wild and Scenic Rivers Act Responsible Official recommends, Congressional act designates	FSM 1924 FSM 2354, FSH 2409.12 MA 2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle Fork Flathead • North Fork Flathead • South Fork Flathead 	Eligible For Further Study ² <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Salmon • Spotted Bear • White River • Danaher • Little Salmon • Gateway • Yakiniak/ Trail/ Nokio • Lebeau • Logan • Aeneas • Potentially others to be

¹ A map of the special areas is in the Plan Set of Documents.

² This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. The Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on designation of rivers as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Designated Areas Plan Component				
Special Area	Designation Authority	Additional Guidance	Currently Designated	Recommended Designation
				determined by the eligibility process
Wilderness	Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 Great Bear Authority Act of 1978. Responsible Official recommends, Congressional act designates	FSM 1923 FSM 2320 FSH 2409.19 MA 1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bob Marshall • Great Bear • Mission Mountains 	Recommended Wilderness ¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined
Responsible Official Designated Areas				
Botanical Areas	Responsible Official designates	FSM 2372	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condon Creek 	Recommended Botanical Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teepee Lake Complex • Johnson Terrace • Bent Flat Fen • Trail Creek Fen
Hiking Area	Responsible Official designates	CFR 294	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewel Basin Hiking Area 	

¹ This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. The Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.

Designated Areas Plan Component				
Special Area	Designation Authority	Additional Guidance	Currently Designated	Recommended Designation
Administratively Designated Areas				
Experimental Forest/Range	Responsible Official recommends with concurrence of Station Director, Chief designates	FSM 4062	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coram 	No Changes
National Recreation Trails	Responsible Official recommends, Regional Forester designates	36 CFR 290 FSM 2353.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blacktail Wild Bill OHV Trail • Danny On Memorial • Elk Mountain • Holland Falls • Lupine Lake • Ralph Thayer • Smokey Range/ Whitefish Divide 	No changes
National Register of Historic Places	<p>National Historic Preservation Act of October 15, 1966 (as amended)</p> <p>Archeological Resources Protection Act</p> <p>Responsible Official and State Historic Preservation Officer recommend, Secretary of Interior designates</p>	<p>36 CFR 60 36 CFR 296 36 CFR 800</p> <p>Secretary of Interior Standards and Guidelines for Archeological and Historical Preservation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hornet Peak Lookout • Wurtz Homestead • Stone House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bob Marshall /Great Bear Wilderness Historic District • Big Creek Workcenter • Old Condon Cabin • Swan Guard Station • Ford Cabin • Spotted Bear Ranger Station • Star Meadow Cabin

Designated Areas Plan Component				
Special Area	Designation Authority	Additional Guidance	Currently Designated	Recommended Designation
Research Natural Areas	Responsible Official recommends, Regional Forester designates with concurrence of Station Directors	FSM 4063 MA 3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coram • East Shore • Lebeau • Little Bitterroot • Swan River • Tuchuck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nyack Flats • To be updated
Scenic Byway Forest Service	Responsible Official recommends, Chief designates	None		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Continental Divide Scenic Loop
Research Demonstration Forest	Memorandum of Agreement between Forest Supervisor and Research Station Director	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miller Creek 	No changes

Chapter 3: Standards and Guidelines

Standards Component

Comment [A46]: To be developed. Standards were not a part of previous planning rule requirements and as such no standards were developed as part of the 2006 proposed plan.

Guidelines Component

Guidelines provide technical specifications and guidance for project and activity decision-making to help achieve desired conditions and objectives. Guidelines are not commitments or final decisions approving projects or activities.

A project or activity will apply relevant guidelines, unless there is a documented reason to adjust the guideline. If adjustment would be neutral with regard to the relevant social, economic, or ecological condition or would be a more appropriate way to achieve desired conditions and objectives, the Responsible Official will describe the proposed adjustment and explain the relationship to desired conditions and objectives in the project-level environmental analysis and decision documents.

Soils, Watersheds, and Aquatic Ecosystems

- a. When RHCAs are intact and functioning at desired conditions, then management activities should maintain or improve that condition.
- b. When RHCAs are not intact and functioning at desired condition, then management activities should include restoration components that exceed full compensation for project effects to promote a trend towards desired conditions.
- c. Management activities in RHCAs should not result in long-term degradation to aquatic conditions. Limited short-term effects from activities in the RHCAs may be acceptable when they support long-term benefits to the RHCAs and aquatic resources.
- d. Soil and snow should not be sidecast into surface water.
- e. New, replacement, and reconstructed crossing sites (culverts, bridges and other stream crossings) should be designed using stream simulation principles to:
 - Accommodate 100-year floods including associated bedloads and debris.
 - Prevent diversion of stream flow out of the channels.
 - Provide and maintain fish passage
- f. Roads being decommissioned or put into long-term storage, should be treated to provide hydrologic stability and fish passage where native fish populations occur.
- g. Grazing management should prevent trampling of native fish redds by livestock.
- h. Minimum impact suppression tactics (for fire suppression) should be used within RHCAs.

- i. Trees felled in RHCAs for safety concerns should be left on-site.
- j. When drafting water from streams, pumps should be screened to prevent entrainment¹ of fish and aquatic organisms.
- k. Project proposals larger than 1,000 acres that are located within active restoration watersheds, should include aquatic restoration elements or contribute to long-term improvement of watershed and aquatic ecosystem conditions (prescribed fire and wildland fire use are excluded).
- l. New stream diversions and associated ditches should be screened to prevent loss of fish and other aquatic organisms.
- m. Mineral projects should be designed and implemented so that mine waste (waste rock, spent ore, tailings, etc.) and facilities are located outside of RHCAs and minimize impacts to aquatic resources.

Vegetative Composition, Size Class, and Structure

- a. Revegetation projects should favor native seed mixes; use locally collected seed if possible.
- b. Design vegetation management projects in accordance with Flathead Management Guidelines located in plan set of documents.

Fire and Fuel Management

- a. Response to wildland fire should be consistent with safety and values at risk, while minimizing adverse impacts on resources.

Wildlife and Plant Species Diversity

- a. Project activities should not occur within one mile of known active dens or rendezvous sites of wolves between April 15 and June 30.
- b. All special-use permits and operating plans should specify sanitation measures to reduce wildlife conflicts and minimize bear mortality.
- c. The following table displays the wildlife species-of-interest and the project guidelines that should be followed for projects that could affect those species. See the plan set of documents for the analysis and wildlife species-of-conservation-concern and species-of-interest lists.

¹ Screens are needed on pumps to prevent fish or other aquatic organisms from being sucked into them.

Table 12: Animal species-of-interest with guidelines specific to a group or species.

Comment [A47]: Needs to be UPDATED

Common name	Species scientific name	Guideline
common loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Continue to cooperate in educating the public on how to avoid disturbing nesting loons.
peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Continue with cooperative monitoring.
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	Survey mines, caves and structures for hibernacula or nurseries before implementing projects. Protect occupied sites.
Rocky Mountain elk	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Work with the state towards meeting population objectives using vegetation and access management.
White-tailed deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	

- d. The following table displays the wildlife species-of-conservation-concern and project guidelines for each species or group of species that require management above what is provided with existing direction for ecosystem diversity.

Table 13: Animal species-of-conservation-concern with guidelines specific to a group of species

Comment [A48]: This needs to be UPDATED

Common name	Species scientific name	Guidelines
alpine mountainsnail	<i>Oreohelix alpine</i>	Survey suitable habitat that may be impacted by a project if that project is within 20 miles of a known dry mollusk population. Occupied habitat should be protected by a 50-meter buffer zone or some other appropriate mitigation.
carinate mountainsnail	<i>Oreohelix elrodi</i>	
lake disc	<i>Discus brunsoni</i>	

- e. The Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy shall direct project planning and implementation.
- f. The over-snow vehicle use map would be used for consistency for motorized access and road closures in big game winter range habitat.
- g. In the Emery Creek winter range and calving areas, motorized access restrictions from December 1 to July 1 should be applied as necessary to prevent disturbance to big game.
- h. During facilities planning, new facilities (or expansion of existing facilities) in important wildlife connectivity areas should be avoided. Expansion and/or improvement of existing facilities should be favored over the construction of new ones.

- i. When designing projects in important wildlife connectivity areas, consider lynx conservation agreements and grizzly bear Memorandum of Understanding (date) regarding connectivity.
- j. The March 23, 2007 Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction should be followed. Dialogue with US Fish and Wildlife Service continues, to determine the best ways to incorporate the science with respect to the Canada lynx into Forest Service management.
- k. During project planning, applicable elements of the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan should be incorporated.
- l. Water howellia: Incorporate Flathead Conservation Strategy prescriptions which are located on page 17-19 of the conservation strategy.
- m. For Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*), incorporate recommendations for grazing, invasive plant management and prescribed fire in the Montana Natural Heritage Program Conservation Strategy, pages 41-42.
- n. For plant species-of-conservation-concern and species-of-interest:
 - Minimize and/or mitigate impacts to plant species-of-conservation-concern and species-of-interest from ground disturbance, grazing, recreation use, and herbicide application. Short-term impacts may be considered when outweighed by long-term benefits to species-of-conservation-concern and species-of-interest populations and their habitats.
 - Prevent invasive plant introduction and spread at known sites for all species-of-conservation-concern and species-of-interest plants.
 - Minimize and/or mitigate impacts to plants from rock climbing routes for species-of-conservation-concern and species-of-interest associated with (1) canyon walls, crevices, rock outcrops, and slides and (2) vernal moist cliffs and mossy talus slopes. Short-term impacts may be considered when outweighed by long-term benefits to species-of-conservation-concern and species-of-interest populations and their habitats.
- o. Short-term impacts in RHCAs may be considered when long-term benefits to species-of-conservation-concern or species-of-interest populations and their habitats would result.
- p. In RHCAs, adverse impacts on species-of-conservation-concern or species-of-interest should be avoided or mitigated.
- q. The RHCA widths described in the Glossary would apply except where site-specific analysis supports modification.

Forest Products

- a. Where feasible, vegetation management projects should be designed to integrate one or more of the following: forest health, watershed, fuels, wildlife habitat, and timber management and other resource objectives.
- b. Utilization of small diameter tress and woody biomass should be considered in design of all vegetation management projects, as market conditions allow.

Developed and Dispersed Recreation

- a. When issuing and re-issuing permits for recreation residences, recreation resorts, outfitter and guide operations, ski areas, and recreation events, permit conditions should include food storage requirements and protection requirements for wildlife.
- b. Dispersed and developed recreation use or occupancy should be adjusted if they are impacting water quality, riparian areas, aquatic ecosystems (including instream habitat features), or other resource values. Where adjustment measures, such as education, use limitations, traffic control devices, increased maintenance, relocation of facilities, and/or specific site closures, are not effective in reducing resource impacts, applicable practices or site occupancy should be eliminated.

Designated and Recommended Wilderness

- Use of motorized equipment related to wildlife and fisheries would follow the Fish Wildlife Management Framework (1995) for the BMWC.
- Bear relocation, fish stocking and other covered wildlife management practices should be conducted in accordance with the 1995 Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex Fish and Wildlife Framework.
- Wilderness party sizes should be limited to the following:
 - Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex: 15 persons, 35 stock
 - Mission Mountains Wilderness: 8 persons, 8 stock with site-specific allowance of up to 16 stock at Molman Lake.

Access and Travel Management

- a. When roads are closed to wheeled vehicular traffic and converted to maintenance level 1, all stream crossing structures should be evaluated and treated¹, if necessary, to minimize or avoid the potential for a crossing failure.

¹ Treatments at stream crossings may include construction of overflow channels, vegetation removal, structure modification, etc.

- b. If a road is planned to be converted to a trail, and crossing structures are needed for trail use (winter or summer), they should be evaluated and treated¹, if necessary, to minimize or avoid the potential for a crossing failure.
- c. As soon as access use is completed on temporary roads, they should be stabilized and closed to motorized traffic and treated for invasive plants.
- d. Trail widths should be designed for permitted uses.
- e. Following vegetation management activities in areas with potential for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, skid trails should be blocked or obliterated to prevent illegal use.
- f. When decommissioning roads that are used as winter motorized routes, consider designing stream crossings that provide for over-snow use.

Part II: Management direction proposed to be carried forward in revised plan

The Flathead National Forest has been asked by the collaborative to provide information on the sideboards that the Forest considers as guiding the management of the Flathead NF. The following information is what the interdisciplinary team of resource specialists for the Flathead NF compiled that we consider as sideboards that should be considered in developing management direction for the Flathead National Forest. Following table 14, which contains a partial list of management direction proposed to be carried forward in the revised plan, is additional information on some of the management direction listed.

Table 14. A partial list of management direction proposed to be carried forward in revised plan

Management Direction	Date	Summary	Comments
Amendment 20: Conservation Measures for the Threatened Plant, Water howellia (<i>Howellia aquatilis</i>)	1994	Established forest-wide goals, objectives and standards related to for the threatened plant, Water howellia (<i>Howellia aquatilis</i>), to ensure for long term viability	Management direction related to water howellia would be brought forward into the revised Forest Plan.
Amendment 21: Management Direction Related to Old Growth Forests	January 1999	Established forest-wide goals, objectives and standards related to the management of old growth forests, to ensure that old growth (OG) habitat is maintained and restored to provide for long term viability of OG associated wildlife species.	Management direction related to old growth forests would be brought forward into the revised Forest Plan.
Current travel management direction Amendment 24 (A24): Management Direction related to winter motorized recreation	2006	Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUMs) identify those roads, trails, and areas designated for the motor vehicle use under 36 CFR 212.51 for the purpose of enforcing the prohibition at 36 CFR 261.13.	Current MVUM production will be carried through into revised Forest Plan. Changes can occur through site specific analysis. A24: The FNF is proposing to carry forward the designated routes and play areas, seasons of use, and standards and guidelines from A24, but may be able to consider some additional routes and areas as suitable for over snow motorized activity if over the snow activity is restricted to the core of the winter period (Dec 1- March 31).
Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH)	1995	INFISH establishes strategy for conservation of native fish, with an emphasis on bull trout.	Will provide clarification in regard to management activities within riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAs)

Management Direction	Date	Summary	Comments
Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD)	2007	Established Forest-wide goals, objectives and standards related to the management of forests, providing boreal forest habitat for Canada lynx to ensure that lynx habitat is maintained and restored to provide for lynx recovery.	Will provide clarification on terms in the NRLMD glossary and propose changes in management direction to allow thinning of some young stands to promote future multi-story hare habitat.
Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR)	2001	Established management direction for inventoried roadless areas (IRAs).	Management direction related to IRAs will be brought forward into the revised Forest Plan.
Amendment #1 Wild and Scenic River Management Direction	1986	Establishes direction for the designated Wild and Scenic Rivers segment by including limits of acceptable change (LAC) criteria for protection of river attributes.	Management direction related to WSRs will be brought forward into the revised Forest Plan.
Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy (NCDE GBCS)	2014	Describes and summarizes the coordinated strategies, standards, and guidelines developed for managing the grizzly bear population, grizzly bear/human conflicts, and grizzly bear habitat to ensure their continued conservation in the NCDE. Documents the regulatory mechanisms, legal authorities, policies, management documents, and monitoring programs that will maintain the recovered grizzly bear population.	Final conservation strategy will be incorporated into the revised Forest Plan.
Designated critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, Canada lynx and bulltrout	2009	Critical habitat designated and primary constituent elements (PCEs) defined by US Fish and Wildlife Service.	Forest will abide by the critical habitat Final Rule.

Management Direction	Date	Summary	Comments
Amendment #2- Wilderness Management Direction	1987	Amended the recreation management direction for the Bob Marshall/Great Bear/Scapegoat wilderness complex by adding limits of acceptable change criteria for protection of the wilderness attributes.	Will provide clarification as to Mission Mountain's wilderness direction.

Special Designations

Management Direction Related to Inventoried Roadless Areas

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule prohibits cutting, selling or removing timber in inventoried roadless areas (IRA) except in specific cases where the responsible official determines that a special circumstance exists: The cutting, sale or removal of generally small diameter timber is needed to improve threatened and endangered, proposed or sensitive species habitat or to maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure that would be expected to occur under natural disturbance regimes; if the roadless characteristics have been substantially altered in a portion of an inventoried roadless area due to the construction of a classified road and subsequent timber harvest. Both the road construction and subsequent timber harvest must have occurred after the area was designated an inventoried roadless area and prior to January 12, 2001. Timber may be cut, sold, or removed only in the substantially altered portion of the inventoried roadless area.

Management Direction Related to Research Natural Areas

Research Natural Areas are part of a national network of ecological areas designated in perpetuity for research and education and/or to maintain biological diversity on National Forest System lands. Research Natural Areas are principally for non-manipulative research, observation, and study. .

Standards for protection and management of a Research Natural Area must support and promote the basic objectives and purposes of establishing the area.

Because the prime consideration in managing Research Natural Areas is maintenance of natural conditions and processes, to the extent practicable, protect Research Natural Areas against human activities that directly or indirectly modify the integrity of the ecological processes.

- Logging or wood gathering activities are not allowed.
- Restrict or prohibit recreational use if such use threatens or interferes with the purposes for which the Research Natural Area is established.
- New roads, trails, fences, or signs are not allowed unless they contribute to the protection of the area. Boundary fencing is permitted for protection against livestock or excessive human use. Buildings are not permitted. In rare instances, temporary gauging stations and instrument shelters may be desirable. Follow procedures set forth at FSM 4063.31 for authorizing temporary physical improvements.
- As a general guide, extinguish as quickly as possible fires that endanger Research Natural Areas using means that would cause minimal damage to the area. Allow natural fires to burn only within a prescription designed to accomplish objectives of the specific natural area.
- Allow endemic insects, diseases, wild plants, or animals unless deemed such action necessary to protect the features for which the Research Natural Area was established or to protect adjacent resources.

- Encourage educational and scientific research use of Research Natural Areas as long as such use will not impact the values for which the Research Natural Area was established.
- Access to a Research Natural may be authorized and approved by the District Ranger as long as conditions specified in approved study plans and/or cooperative agreements are met.
- Vegetation management practices must provide a close approximation of the naturally occurring vegetation and the natural processes governing the vegetation than would be possible without management.
- Management for invasive weed control or to preserve the vegetation for which the Research Natural Area was created may be authorized.

Management Direction Related to Experimental Forests

Experimental Forests and Ranges are places and programs that provide a wealth of records and knowledge of environmental change in natural and managed forest and rangeland ecosystems across the United States. The network provides places for long-term science and management studies in major vegetation types of the 195 million acres of public land administered by the Forest Service.

Develop adequate resource management plans for each experimental area. At a minimum, management plans must include natural resource guidelines to protect experimental areas from activities that would reduce their Research and Development value. Study plans may provide specific direction for the management of experimental areas.

Management Direction related to eligible or designated Wild and Scenic Rivers

The free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstanding remarkable values that made river segments eligible for designation, or for which they were designated, would be protected and perpetuated.

- Eligible or designated *wild* rivers would be free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shoreline essentially primitive and waters unpolluted.
- Eligible or designated *scenic* rivers would be free of impoundments, with shoreline or watersheds still largely primitive and undeveloped but accessible in places by roads.
- Eligible or designated *recreational* rivers would be accessible by road or railroad, may have some shoreline development and may have had an impoundment or diversion in the past.

Direction for Airstrips

Four existing airstrips on the Flathead National Forest would continue to provide public access:

- Condon
- Schafer
- Meadow Creek
- Spotted Bear

Wurtz and Sondreson were private airstrips on land acquired by the Forest Service through willing sellers to protect the scenic values and wildlife habitat in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and Flathead River Management Plan. These two former airstrips were never open to public use and are not maintained for that purpose.

Forest Plan Amendment 20 (1996)

Management Direction Related to the Water *Howellia* Conservation Measures

Established new Forest wide goals, objectives and standards related to the management of the threatened plant, water howellia, to ensure that water howellia populations and suitable habitat are protected.

- Addition of water howellia to the Forest Plan's list of Threatened and Endangered species
- Designation of Condon Creek Botanical Area
- Provide conservation direction aimed at protecting water howellia ponds
- Prevent Federal activities that would otherwise compromise the viability of water howellia
- Develop Forest Plan monitoring to determine population trends
- Design site-specific protection measures utilizing goals and objectives contained in the Conservation Strategy for *Howellia aquatilis*.

Principle features:

1. Maintain unoccupied, potential pond habitats in suitable condition as colonization sites.
2. Give emphasis to land acquisition, exchanges, or conservation easements with willing private landowners that would protect water howellia habitat, giving priority to ponds occupied by the species, particularly in the Lindbergh Lake occurrence cluster.
3. Retain a forested buffer of a minimum width of 300 feet from the margins of ponds (both occupied and unoccupied) that provide *Howellia aquatilis* habitat. Avoid ground-disturbing activities within the buffer. Human-caused alteration of vegetation within the buffer should not occur unless it is consistent with natural ecological processes. No herbicides should be used within the Swan Valley watershed without prior evaluation through the biological assessment/evaluation process.
4. Allow aquatic and adjacent upland vegetation to recover in and around previously disturbed water howellia pond habitats (including both occupied and unoccupied).
5. Provide appropriate protection to threatened and endangered plants and their habitat during fire management activities, including prescribed natural fires, planned ignitions and fire suppression. In particular, retardant drops and fire line construction should be avoided near water howellia habitat, and water howellia ponds should not be considered as water sources for helicopter bucket operations.
6. The description of Management Area 3A is amended by inserting the following paragraph: *Management Area 3A also includes 229 acres in the Condon Creek Botanical Special Interest Area (SIA), located along Condon Creek on the Swan Lake Ranger District.*

7. The Goals for Management Area 3A are amended by inserting the following paragraph: “...*Water howellia* habitat in the Condon Creek Botanical SIA will be managed in accordance with direction set in the Conservation Strategy for *Howellia aquatilis*. The remainder of the SIA will be managed to allow natural vegetative changes to occur with minimum human interference. Vegetation manipulation in upland areas may occur in the SIA to restore a more natural ecological system, for example where fire suppression has allowed unnatural accumulation of fuels and an unnatural shift in species composition. However, this vegetation management may only occur through activities that emulate natural ecological processes.”

Forest Plan Amendment 21 (1999)

Management Direction Related to Old Growth Forests

Established new Forest wide goals, objectives and standards related to the management of old growth forests, to ensure that Old Growth (OG) habitat is maintained and restored to provide for long term viability of OG associated wildlife species.

- Addresses individual stands and broader landscapes
- Meets legal obligations to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species
- Determined necessary to reverse the trend of declining amounts of OG (past harvest, fire suppression, and development), particularly in warmer, drier forest types
- Recognizes dynamics of forest – OG will not stay OG forever – and includes direction for management of some early and mid-successional forests to emphasize OG development, sustaining OG forest over time
- Local definitions for OG forest types, varying by habitat type and forest cover type, have been developed by the Forest Service (Green et al 1992).

Principle features:

1. Maintain all existing OG stands
2. Vegetation management actions within existing OG are permitted for the purposes of:
 - a. Maintaining and restoring OG composition and structure consistent with native disturbance and succession regimes; or
 - b. Reducing risks to sustaining OG composition and structure
3. Actively manage the FNF to achieve an amount and distribution of OG similar to what occurred historically (within 75% range around the median of the historical range of variability).
4. Actively manage the FNF to maintain or restore landscape patterns, considering all successional stages of vegetation, to achieve conditions similar to that expected under natural succession and disturbance regimes. This affords the highest probability of maintaining the elements of biological diversity, including OG, and resilience of the ecosystem
5. Manage landscape patterns to develop larger OG patch sizes where needed to satisfy wildlife habitat requirements.
6. Establishes new objectives and standards for retention of large live trees, snags, and coarse woody debris throughout the forest and in timber harvest areas.

Forest Plan Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment (2007)

Management Direction Related to Lynx Habitat

Established Forest wide goals, objectives and standards related to the management of forests, providing boreal forest habitat for Canada lynx to ensure that lynx habitat is maintained and restored to provide for lynx recovery.

Addresses individual stands and broader landscapes by establishing 4 key standards for vegetation management which apply to lynx habitat mapped by the national forests

Principle features:

In mapped lynx habitat:

1. Maintain or create mature multistory stands with dense understories providing snowshoe hare habitat, the primary lynx prey species.
2. Maintain or create dense young stands providing hare habitat by restricting precommercial thinning.
3. At the landscape scale, lynx analysis units (LAUs) are designated that are the approximate size of the home range of a female lynx. LAUs are to be used for analysis.
4. Each LAU should not have more than 30% of lynx habitat in an early stand initiation condition, where young trees are not yet tall enough or dense enough to provide winter snowshoe hare habitat. Early stand initiation conditions can be the result of timber harvest or fire.
5. On national forest lands, no more than 15% of lynx habitat in an LAU can be regenerated in a 10 year time period.
6. Connectivity of lynx habitat should be maintained—in identified linkage areas, in ski areas, etc.
7. There are exceptions to the standards for fuel treatment projects in the WUI and under other specific conditions. If in the WUI, no more than 3 adjacent LAUs can have more than 30% of lynx habitat in an LAU in an early stand initiation conditions.
8. Other exceptions include vegetation treatments around administrative sites, whitebark pine trees, and rust-resistant white pine trees.

Management Direction Related to Grizzly Bears

A decision in 1995 established new Forest wide goals, objectives and standards related to the management of roads and security core habitat for grizzly bears, to provide for grizzly bear recovery. This amendment, known as A19, would be replaced by the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy (GBCS), which applies to 5 national forests, Glacier Park, BLM lands, state lands and tribal lands, as part of the FNF Revised Forest Plan proposed action.

Principle features¹:

The GBCS divides the NCDE into the following management zones:

- The Primary Conservation Area (PCA) (similar to the original recovery area);
- Management zones 1, 2 and 3. FNF lands are in the PCA and management zone 1 (an area that surrounds the PCA). Management Zone 1 is similar in concept to the 10-mile buffer around the Recovery Zone within which population data were recorded while listed under the ESA. Population and mortality data will be collected in all of the PCA and Zone 1.
- On the northwest and southwest corners of Zone 1, there will be two Demographic Connectivity Areas (DCAs) with specific habitat measures to support female grizzly bear occupancy and eventual dispersal to other ecosystems in the lower 48 States (i.e., the Cabinet-Yaak and Bitterroot ecosystems). In these DCAs, habitat protections will focus on limiting miles of open road and managing current roadless areas as stepping stones to other ecosystems.

Within the PCA:

1. Open motorized access density, total motorized access density, and grizzly security core would be maintained at 2011 baseline levels, since these conditions support a recovered grizzly population. High use non-motorized trails would no longer be counted in calculations.
2. Temporary increases in open road densities and temporary decreases in secure core would be allowed for projects. These increases could not exceed 5/3/2% of the respective open/total/secure core in a grizzly bear subunit, calculated over a 10 year period.
3. The Food Storage Order would continue to apply across the forest.
4. Developed recreation sites would be limited to one new site in a bear management unit (BMU) in a 10 year period.
5. In the Swan Valley, the Swan Valley Grizzly Bear Conservation Agreement would continue to be applied to grizzly subunits where it currently applies.
6. All management agencies would continue work to reduce the risk of grizzly mortality and human injury resulting from conflicts.

¹ The GBCS contains additional direction on management of grazing, minerals, oil and gas, vegetation, and recreation.

The GCS contains additional guidelines for vegetation and recreation management activities, as well as mineral/oil & gas development. Zone 1 and the Salish Demographic Connectivity Area (DCA) includes most of the Salish Geographic Area as displayed in the 2006 Proposed Forest Plan. Within Zone 1:

1. Open road densities for each geographic unit would be maintained as specified in the 1986 Forest Plan (Table II-6 on pg 2-64), generally ranging from 1.3-3.2 miles per square mile.
2. Timber harvest would not be restricted.
3. The Food Storage Order would continue to apply across the forest, but recreation developments would generally not be restricted.
4. Grizzly bears would be expected to use habitat in Zone 1 and would not be actively removed unless there is a grizzly human conflict situation and the determination to move a bear is made by MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks bear management specialists. The bear density is not expected to be as high as it is in the PCA.
5. All management agencies would continue work to reduce the risk of grizzly mortality and human injury resulting from conflicts.

Forest Plan Amendment 24

Management Direction Related to Winter Motorized Recreation

The FNF is proposing to carry forward the designated routes and play areas, seasons of use, and standards and guidelines from A24, but may be able to consider some additional routes and areas as suitable for over snow motorized activity if this activity is restricted to the core of the winter period (Dec 1- March 31), The effects of changes to A24 would need to be assessed in relation to lynx critical habitat, wolverine denning habitat; wolverines are a proposed threatened species and the listing decision is likely to be made this winter.

Inland Native Fish Strategy

The Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH) (USDA Forest Service 1995) standards place a greater emphasis on protection of aquatic habitat than earlier standards. INFISH established priority watersheds and riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCA) for bull trout recovery. The strategy discourages timber harvest within riparian areas while describing appropriate vegetation management scenarios that do not inhibit riparian objectives. RHCAs are defined as 300 feet from either side of fish bearing streams; 150 feet from perennial streams, lakes or wetlands larger than one acre; and 50 feet from intermittent streams or wetlands less than one acre in size. The key goals of RHCAs are as follows:

- Prevention of sediment inputs from non-channelized flows
- Delivery of organic matter and woody debris
- Stream shading
- Bank stability

The forest will incorporate management intent of INFISH into the new planning framework defined by the 2012 planning rule. In addition, new scientific information will be incorporated to reflect more contemporary issues facing aquatic ecosystems.