SPECIES: Scientific [common]	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus* [Bald Eagle]
Forest:	Bridger-Teton National Forest
Forest Reviewer:	Randall Griebel, James Wilder
Date of Review:	10/4/2019; reviewed 5/21/2025
Forest concurrence (or recommendation if new) for inclusion of species on list of potential SCC: (Enter Yes or No)	NO

FOREST REVIEW RESULTS:

1. The Forest concurs or recommends the species for inclusion on the list of potential SCC:
   Yes____ No__X__

2. Rationale for not concurring is based on (check all that apply):
   Species is not native to the plan area _____
   Species is not known to occur in the plan area _____
   Species persistence in the plan area is not of substantial concern _X_

FOREST REVIEW INFORMATION:

1. Is the Species Native to the Plan Area? Yes__X_ No___

   If no, provide explanation and stop assessment.

2. Is the Species Known to Occur within the Planning Area? Yes_X__ No___

   If no, stop assessment.

Table 1. All Known Occurrences, Years, and Frequency within the Planning Area

Year Observed	Number of Individuals	District
1978-1989	33	Greys River Ranger District
1992-2018	133	
1978-1989	33	Kemmerer Ranger District
1990-2017	45	
1979-1989	13	Pinedale Ranger District
1990-2018	346	
1980-1988	14	Big Piney Ranger District
1990-2018	74	
1979-1989	61	Blackrock Ranger District
1990-2018	160	
1966-1989	432	Jackson Ranger District
1990-2018	1,640	

a. Are all Species Occurrences Only Accidental or Transient?

Yes___ No_X__

If yes, document source for determination and stop assessment.

b. For species with known occurrences on the Forest since 1990, based on the number of observations and/or year of last observation, can the species be presumed to be established or becoming established in the plan area?

Yes_X__ No___

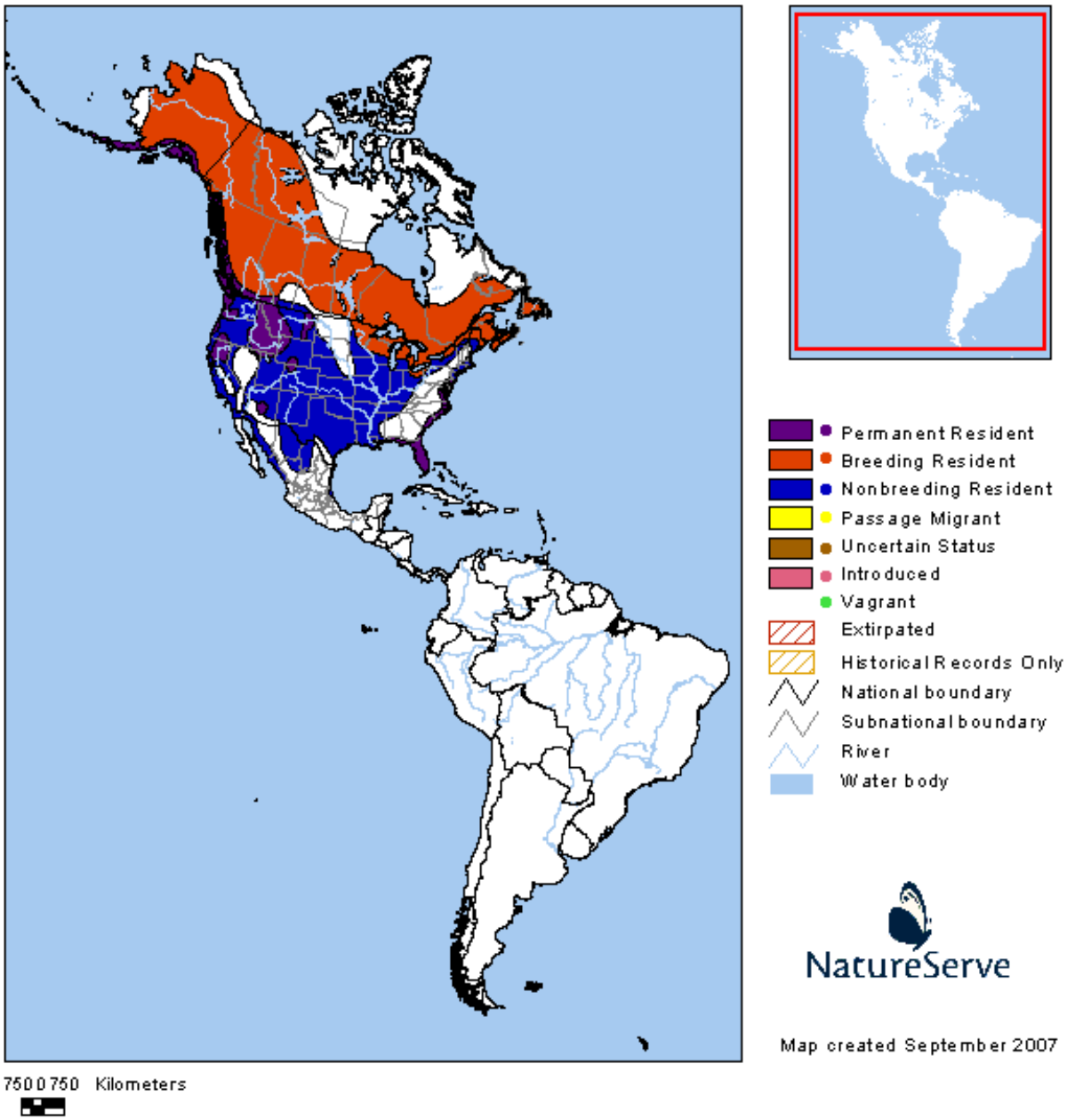
If no, provide explanation and stop assessment.

c. For species with known occurrences on the Forest predating 1990, does the weight of evidence suggest the species still occurs in the plan area?

Yes_ X__ No___

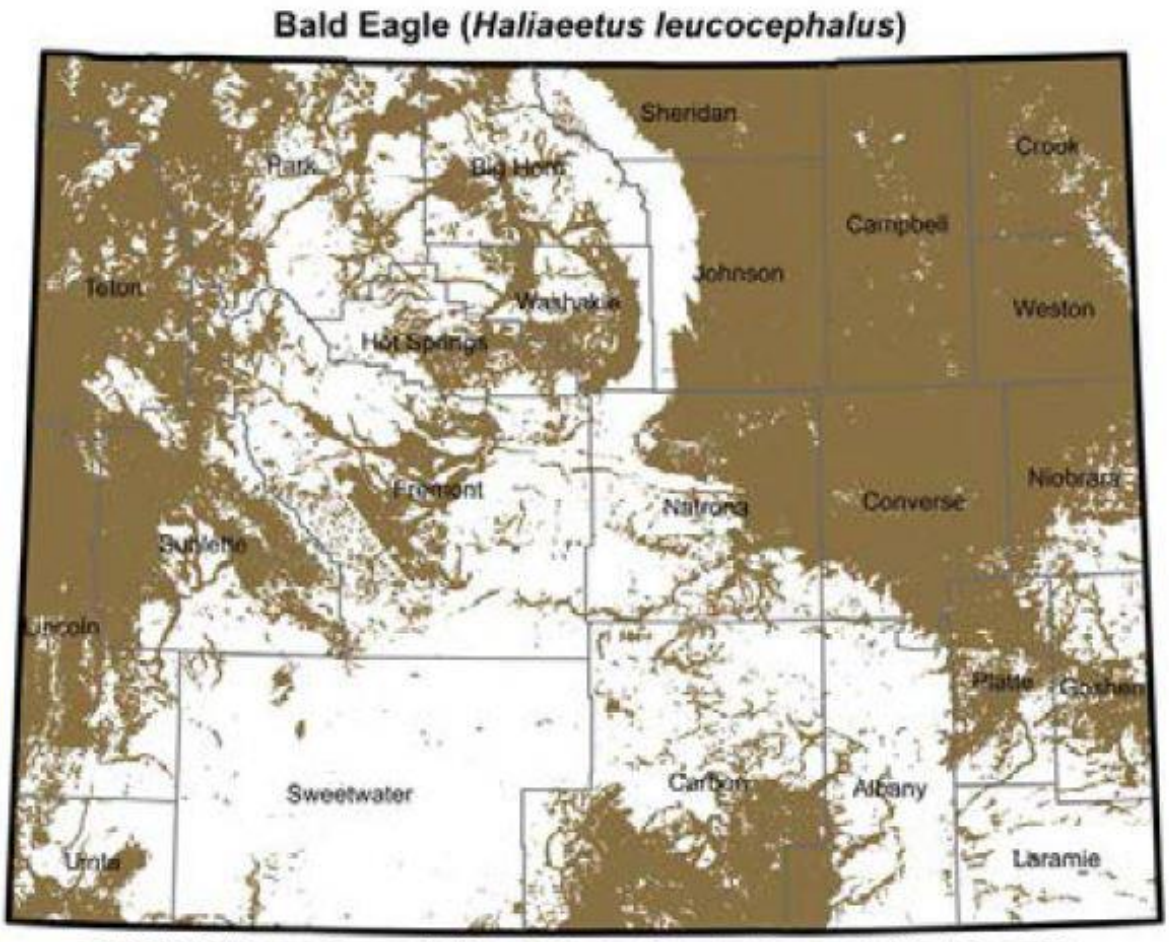
If no, provide explanation and stop assessment.

d. **Map 1**: Bald Eagle range map of North America (Nature Serve, Accessed October 2019)



NatureServe. 2019. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available http://explorer.natureserve.org. (Accessed: October 4, 2019).

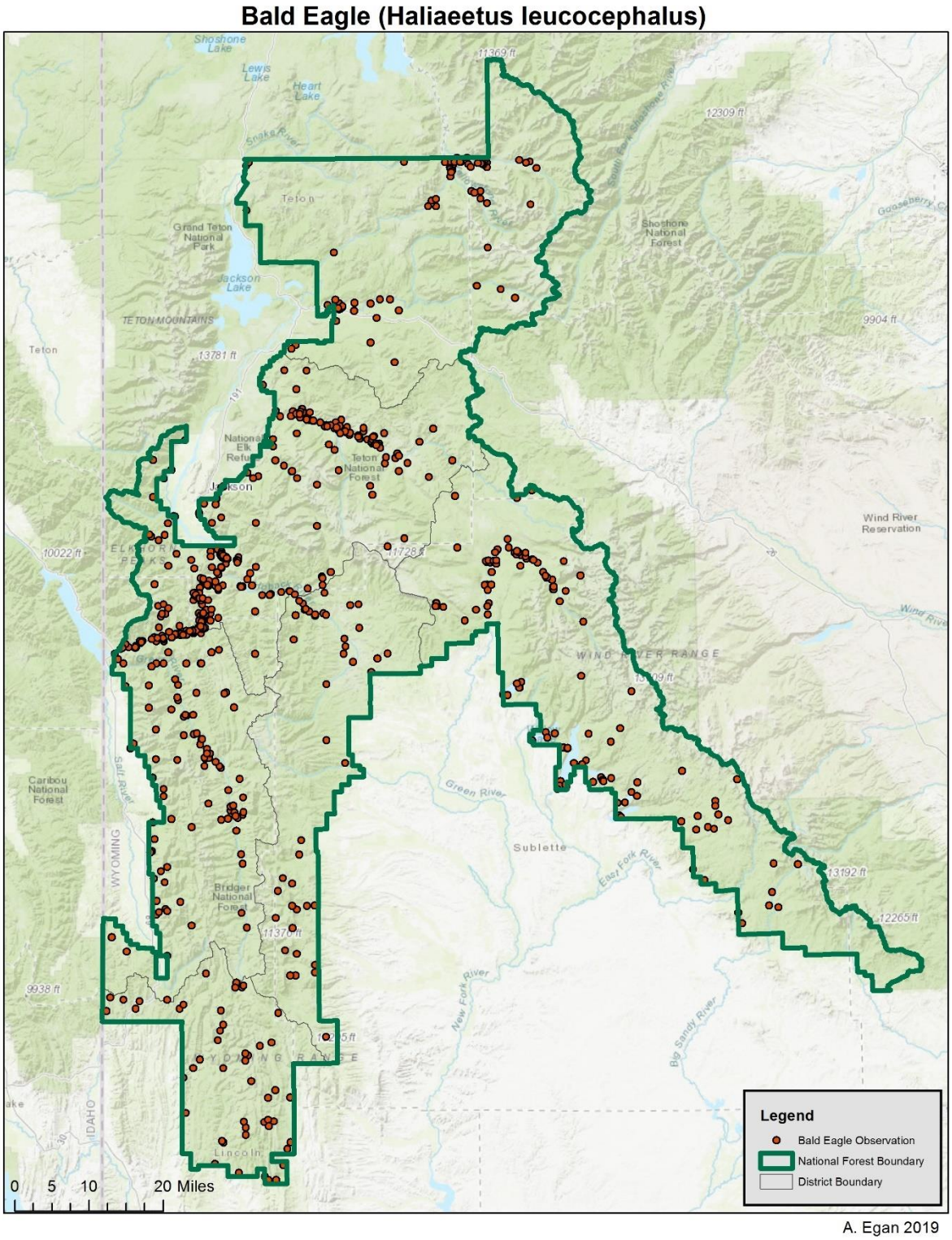
e. **Map 2**: Range and predicted distribution of *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* in Wyoming.



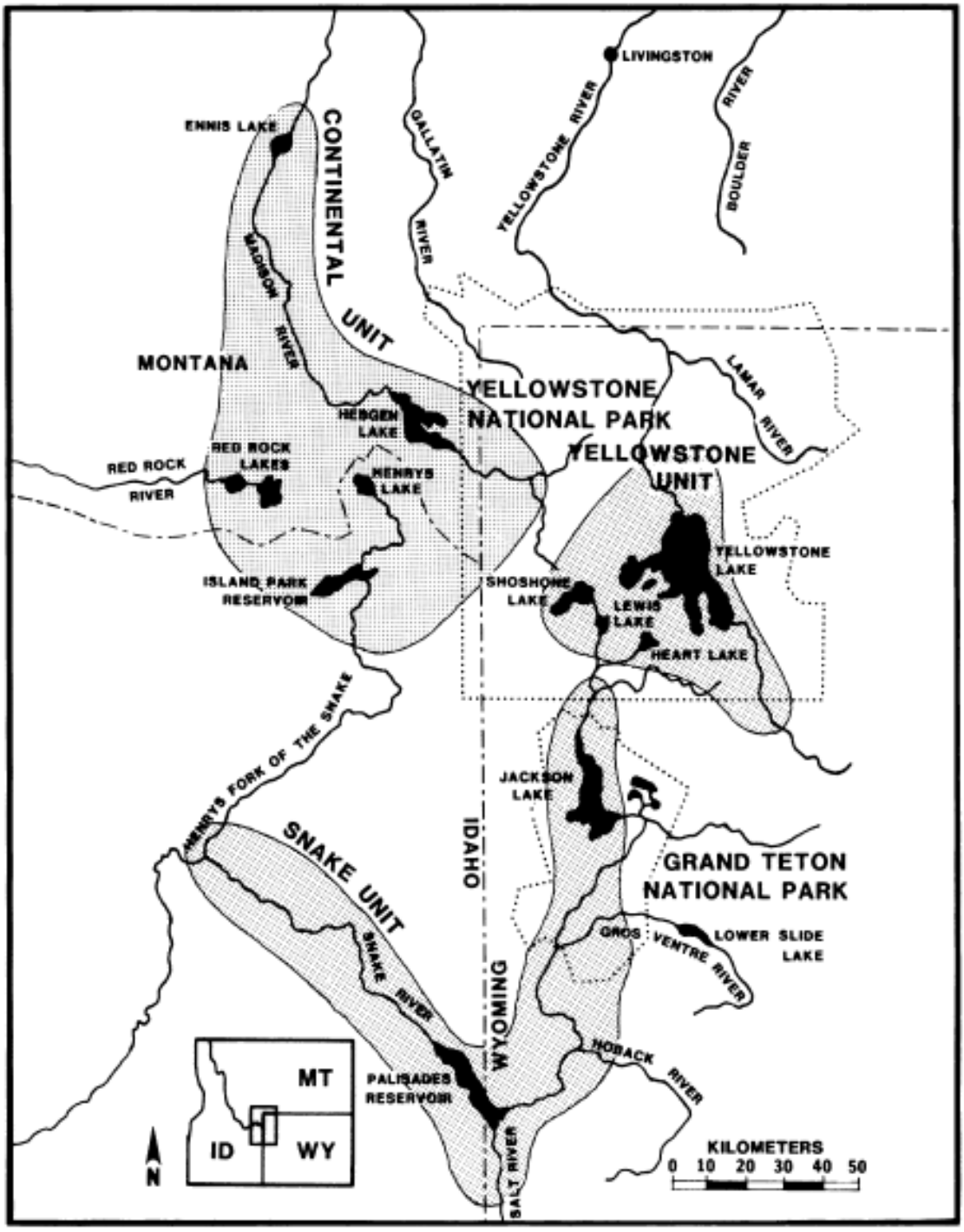
SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: Sept. 2016.
Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming.
Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution of the species;
heavy black lines indicate outermost boundaries of possible occurrence.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).

f. **Map 3**: Map of Bald Eagle occurrences on the Bridger-Teton National Forest (Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, USFS Natural Resource Information System, eBird [September 2018])



g. **Map 4**: Map of Bald eagles in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, divided into three units as shown below. The Bridger Teton National Forest overlaps with the Snake River Unit and a portion of the Yellowstone Unit.



U.S. Forest Service. 2019. Bridger-Teton National Forest Sensitive Species Conservation Assessment for the Bald Eagle. Unpublished Report. On file, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Jackson, Wyoming, USA.

3. Is There Substantial Concern for the Species' Capability to persist Over the Long-term in the Plan Area Based on Best Available Scientific Information?

Table 2. Status summary based on existing conservation assessments

Entity	Status/Rank (include definition if Other)
NatureServe Global Status	**G5— Secure** *Common; widespread and abundant.*
NatureServe State Status	**S4B/S5N— *Vulnerable/Secure*** *Breeding —At moderate risk of extinction due to a restricted range, relatively few populations (often 80 or fewer), recent and widespread declines, or other factors.* *Non-Breeding —Common; widespread and abundant.*
WGFD	**NSS3 (Bb), Tier II** *Population Status: VULNERABLE Population size or distribution is restricted or declining but extirpation is not imminent.* *Limiting Factors: SEVERE Limiting factors are severe and not increasing significantly.* *Tier II: Moderate Priority* *[The WGFD's Species of Greater Conservation Need (SGCN) designation process is based upon its **Native Species Status (NSS)** classification system that compares population and limiting factor variables using a 16 cell matrix. As a species moves from a placement closest to the upper left corner of the matrix (Aa/NSS1) toward the lower right corner (Dd/NSS7) the species' population status in Wyoming is considered more secure. Numerical scores were assigned to each of these variables and summed to provide a total score (i.e. NSS3). SGCN were placed into one of three tiers based on their total score: Tier I – highest priority, Tier II – moderate priority, and Tier III – lowest priority.]* (WGFD - Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need)
WYNDD	**Species of Concern** *Species vulnerable to extirpation at the global or state level due to:* *a. their rarity (e.g., restricted distribution, small population size, low population density)* *b. inherent vulnerability (e.g., specialized habitat requirements, restrictive life history)* *c. threats (e.g., significant loss of habitat, sensitivity to disturbances)*

	(Wyoming Natural Diversity Database - Species of Concern)
USDA Forest Service	**Region 4: Sensitive Species** *Those plant and animal species identified by a Regional Forester for which population viability is a concern, as evidenced by* *a. Significant current or predicted downward trends in population numbers or density.* *b. Significant current or predicted downward trends in habitat capability that would reduce a species' existing distribution.* (FSM 2670.5 – Threatened, Endangered & Sensitive Species)
UDI FWS	**Delisted; Migratory Bird**
WY BLM	**Sensitive** *1. Sensitive species must be native species found on BLM-administrated lands for which BLM has the capability to significantly affect the conservation status of the species through management, and either:* *a. There is information that a species has recently undergone, is undergoing, or is predicted to undergo a downward trend such that the viability of the species or a distinct population segment of the species is at risk across all or a significant portion of the species range, or* *b. The species depends on ecological refugia or specialized or unique habitats on BLM-administrated lands, and there is evidence that such areas are threatened with alteration such that the continued viability of the species in that area would be at risk.* *2. All federally designated candidate species, proposed species, and delisted species in the 5 years following their delisting shall be conserved as Bureau sensitive species* (BLM Wyoming Sensitive Species Policy and List; March 31, 2010)
IUCN	**LC – Least Concern** *A taxon is Least Concern when it has been evaluated against the criteria and does not qualify for Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable or Near Threatened. Widespread and abundant taxa are included in this category.* (IUCN – Red List Categories and Criteria)
Partners in Flight (PIF) Continental Concern Score	**9**

Table 3. Status summary based on best available scientific information.

Species (Scientific and Common Name): ***Haliaeetus leucocephalus [Bald Eagle]***		
Criteria	**Rationale**	**Literature Citations**
Distribution on Bridger-Teton National Forest	Throughout Wyoming, the Bald eagle is a permanent resident and is distributed across much of the state (Maps 1 & 2). Wyoming is on the southern portion of the Bald eagles northern breeding range, although the entire state is part of the species' wintering range (WYGFD 2017). Bald eagle distribution on the Bridger-Teton National Forest coincides greatly with optimal foraging and nesting habitat, including major river drainages and lakes. Based on documented occurrence records, the Bald eagle is well distributed throughout its suitable habitat on the BTNF, and the species occurs on all 6 ranger districts (Table 1, Map 3). On the BTNF, Bald eagles tend to move locally, rather than migrating, in order to take advantage of the available resources on the Snake River. There are three distinct units that make up the Bald eagles of the Great Yellowstone Ecosystem (Map 4). The Yellowstone Unit overlaps with the eagles on the very north end of BTNF that utilize the Yellowstone River on the Blackrock Ranger District. The Snake River Unit, which encompasses most Bald eagle residents across the BTNF, has an influx of birds during the winter, and fewer immatures leave due to the abundance of food (Swenson et al. 1986). This influx of Bald eagles includes some birds that summer in Montana, Canada, and Alaska (USFS 2019).	Swenson, J. E., Alt, K. L., and Eng, R. L. 1986. Ecology of bald eagles in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Wildlife monographs, 95: 3-46. U.S. Forest Service. 2019. Bridger-Teton National Forest Sensitive Species Conservation Assessment for the Bald Eagle. Unpublished Report. On file, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Jackson, Wyoming, USA. Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).
Abundance on the Bridger-Teton National Forest	Northwest Wyoming, including the BTNF and Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, has the highest concentration of Bald eagles in the state (WYGFD 2017). Within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), including the BTNF, Bald eagles are common and occur in relatively high densities within suitable habitat. During the breeding season, Bald eagles nest along all major river systems in Wyoming, with the largest number of nesting pairs occurring in the GYE along the Snake River drainage and its tributaries (WGFD 2017). The highest concentrations of birds are found near food sources such as the late elk hunt area in Jackson Wyoming (USFS 2019). According to the state of Wyoming, nesting data from 83 territories shows high Bald eagle occupancy (89%) and productivity (85%).	U.S. Forest Service. 2019. Bridger-Teton National Forest Sensitive Species Conservation Assessment for the Bald Eagle. Unpublished Report. On file, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Jackson, Wyoming, USA. Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).
Population Trend on the Bridger-Teton National Forest	Bald eagle populations have fluctuated over the past 200 years, becoming rare in the mid to late 1900s due to pesticide use and human harassment. Since its Endangered Species Act listing, Bald eagle populations have been increasing in	Sauer, J. R., D. K. Niven, J. E. Hines, D. J. Ziolkowski, Jr, K. L. Pardieck, J. E. Fallon, and W. A. Link. 2017. The North

Species (Scientific and Common Name): ***Haliaeetus leucocephalus [Bald Eagle]***		
Criteria	**Rationale**	**Literature Citations**
	North America, and the number of nesting territories nearly tripled between 1980 and 1990 (WGFD 2017). According to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Bald eagles occupied a high proportion of nests in 2017, similar to previous years, and populations in western Wyoming continue to increase slowly (WGFD 2017b). Nesting pairs appear to have stabilized in the Snake River basin, and the Green River basin nesting population is increasing (WGFD 2017). Occupancy rate and productivity within the Green River and Snake River drainages remain high. North American Breeding Bird Survey data from Sauer et al. (2017) indicates a significant, long-term (1966–2015) increase of 9.7% per year and short-term (2005–2015) increase of 10.6% per year in Bald eagle populations across Wyoming. Corresponding data for the Northern Rockies shows a significant increase of 5.39% long-term and 8.65% short-term per year, respectively. There is no robust population trend data for the Bridger-Teton National Forest.	American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966 - 2015. Version 2.07.2017 USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD. Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). Wyoming Game and Fish Department Nongame Program. Statewide Wildlife and Habitat Management Section Wildlife Division. 2017b. Threatened, Endangered, and Nongame Bird and Mammal Investigations. Annual Completion Report.
Habitat Trend on the Bridger-Teton National Forest	<u>Nesting Habitat</u> Bald eagle nesting habitat is found throughout the Bridger-Teton National Forest and includes many of the forested areas adjacent to rivers, lakes, and large bodies of water. More commonly used nesting areas include the Snake, Green, Gros Ventre, and Yellowstone Rivers, among the many other rivers and lakes. Nesting typically occurs within mature, old growth trees capable of supporting large nest structures, and where forest edge and suitable foraging habitat is present (USFS 2019). Human disturbance and distance from development is an important habitat selection component for nesting birds. On the BTNF, a highly productive nest site has open water in the winter, limited human activity, and high river sinuosity with an abundance of islands, riffles, runs, and pools (WGFD 2017). Snags are a common feature of nesting habitat, used for accessing the nest, foraging, displaying, and defending the territory (USFS 2019). A significant limiting factor for nest locations on the BTNF is human disturbance due to motorized use and river recreational activities.	Helmbrecht, D., M. Williamson, and D. Abendroth. 2012. Bridger-Teton National Forest Vegetation Condition Assessment. Swenson, J. E., Alt, K. L., and Eng, R. L. 1986. Ecology of bald eagles in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Wildlife monographs, 95: 3-46. U.S. Forest Service. 2019. Bridger-Teton National Forest Sensitive Species Conservation Assessment for the Bald Eagle. Unpublished Report. On file, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Jackson, Wyoming, USA. Wyoming Game and Fish Department Nongame Program. Statewide Wildlife and Habitat Management Section

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Criteria	**Rationale**	**Literature Citations**
	The Snake River Bald eagles preferred nesting habitat includes narrowleaf cottonwood (45%), then blue spruce (28%), and Englemann spruce (8%). Although, eagles in the Snake River unit that nested on lakes and reservoirs also utilized Douglas fir (17%) (USFS 2019). In other areas throughout northwest Wyoming, lodgepole pine was the most predominant nesting tree species. Multiple vegetation classes have been identified as providing suitable nesting habitat for Bald eagles on the BTNF, including Engelmann spruce, Subalpine fir, Aspen-Conifer Mix, Lodgepole pine, Cottonwood, and Douglas fir, respectively. Considering "late development" tree classification for each vegetation type, a total of 35% of the forested habitat on the Bridger-Teton National Forest is suitable, so long as other habitat characteristics, such as proximity to foraging habitat is available. Currently there is an overabundance of late development forest cover type across the BTNF (Helmbrecht et al 2012). <u>Foraging Habitat</u> Optimal foraging habitat can be found throughout the BTNF and is an important factor for Bald eagle nest selection. Preferred habitat consists of foraging perches generally close to a reliable food source such as shallow fishing habitat and riffled water (WGFD 2017). According to Swenson et al. (1986), the availability of birds and mammals as eagle prey, in addition to fish, is also relevant in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Aquatic birds' make-up a significant portion of the eagle diet, while mammals make up a small percentage. Foraging habitat includes lakes and river drainages with an available food source, which is present across the BTNF. <u>Winter Habitat</u> After the breeding season, some birds disperse to winter areas while many remain on their breeding grounds in the BTNF (USFS 2019). Winter habitat on the BTNF includes open water where waterfowl and fish are an available resource. Bald eagles on the BTNF also take advantage of, and congregate near, wintering ungulate herds. Winter roost sites provide shelter and protection from inclement	Wildlife Division. 2017b. Threatened, Endangered, and Nongame Bird and Mammal Investigations. Annual Completion Report.

Species (Scientific and Common Name): ***Haliaeetus leucocephalus [Bald Eagle]***		
Criteria	**Rationale**	**Literature Citations**
	weather and are often in conifers or cottonwoods across the Forest (USFS 2019).	
Threats to the Species and its Habitat on the Bridger-Teton National Forest	<u>Vegetation Management</u> A decrease in late-development cottonwood and conifer trees along river corridors that provide suitable nesting habitat can be a limiting factor for Bald eagles on the BTNF. Bald eagles prefer large diameter, taller trees for nesting and perching, potentially conflicting with timber that is desirable for harvesting. However, timber management on the BTNF is typically not located within optimal Bald eagle nesting and foraging habitat. Wildfire does not appear to pose a significant threat to Bald eagles so long as large dead trees or groups of living trees remain (Swenson et al. 1986). This concept is also true for managing timber harvest in a way that is compatible for Bald eagles. Eagles have been known to continue nesting during wildfire and have returned to nests the following year. Contrarily, high-intensity fires that kill the old growth are known to reduce eagle populations. Low-intensity fires are necessary to reduce fuels and prevent high-intensity, stand-reducing fires, as well as promote old growth habitat for Bald eagles (USFS 2019). Fires can also increase snag density and therefore increase perches for Bald eagles. <u>Human Related Threats</u> Humans are the cause for most mortalities of Bald eagles and impacts to Bald eagles increase with duration and frequency of the disturbance (WGFD 2017). Bald eagles are particularly susceptible to disturbance effects during the breeding season, which can result in expending energy from defending the nest or flushing, as opposed to tending to the nest (USFS 2019). When adults are absent from the nest for any period of time, eggs and young are jeopardized. In some areas, Bald eagle population carrying capacity may be limited due to human development and expansion. In addition to human disturbance, indirect and direct effects to Bald eagles include habitat loss, water contamination and environmental toxins, illegal	Bedrosian, B., Craighead, D., and Crandall, R. 2012. Lead exposure in bald eagles from big game hunting, the continental implications and successful mitigation efforts. PLoS ONE 7(12): e51978.doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0051978. Bedrosian, B., Crandall, R., and Patla, S. 2013. Bald eagle avoidance of natural gas infrastructure in the Pinedale anticline project area. Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Jackson, Wyoming. Halofsky, Jessica E.; Peterson, David L.; Ho, Joanna J.; Little, Natalie J.; Joyce, Linda A.; eds. 2018. Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation in the Intermountain Region. Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-GTR-375. Fort Collins, C: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. Part 1. pp. 1-197. Swenson, J. E., Alt, K. L., and Eng, R. L. 1986. Ecology of bald eagles in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Wildlife monographs, 95: 3-46. U.S. Forest Service. 2019. Bridger-Teton National Forest Sensitive Species Conservation Assessment for the Bald Eagle. Unpublished Report. On file, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Jackson, Wyoming, USA.

Species (Scientific and Common Name): ***Haliaeetus leucocephalus [Bald Eagle]***		
Criteria	**Rationale**	**Literature Citations**
	harvesting, vehicle collisions, wind farms, and electrocution from power lines (WGFD 2017). In Wyoming, site specific risks from energy development, rural development, recreational activities, and environmental contaminants have impacted nesting individuals. Habitat alteration and loss, fragmentation, and increased disturbance has been noted in the Green River Valley of Wyoming from natural gas development (USFS 2019). Bedrosian and others (2013) found Bald eagles to alter their nesting behaviors due to infrastructure, particularly during well drilling. Bald eagles that utilize the Snake River corridor on the BTNF are known to avoid perching on the side of the river near the highway (USFS 2019). However, habituation to traffic disturbance has been observed. Reduction in native trout communities and development along the Snake and Green River are among the concerns for Bald eagle habitat impacts on the BTNF (USFS 2019). Recreational activities from boating, fishing, and rafting have been documented to impact habitat use on the BTNF. Radio-collared eagles on the Snake River avoided using the river during peak hours of human recreational activity, preferring to forage in early morning and evening (USFS 2019). Birds have been observed foraging on the opposite side of lakes from actively used hiking trails. Once the use ended, eagles would resume activity in the areas they had avoided. Carrion is an important component in the Bald eagle diet, particularly during the winter season (USFS 2019). The risk of Bald eagle collisions with motorized vehicles increases when scavenging roadkill near roads. Four Bald eagles banded in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem from 1979 to 1998 were killed in vehicle collisions (USFS 2019). Although motorized use is common on the BTNF, Bald eagle fatalities are uncommon, and users are typically going speeds that allow for a greater reaction time in order to avoid wildlife collisions. Colliding with power lines is also a significant cause for Bald eagles deaths in the	Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2017. State Wildlife Action Plan. Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).

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	Yellowstone area with ten Bald eagles killed from 1979 to 1998 (USFS 2019). As Bald eagle habitat is increasingly impacted by development, collisions are becoming more common in eagle mortality. However, Bald eagle moralities from powerline collisions are uncommon on the BTNF due to less infrastructure and development. <u>Herbicides, Pesticides, and Other Contaminants</u> The second largest cause for mortalities of recovered banded Bald eagles in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, aside from vehicle and power line collisions, was poisoning (USFS 2019). Lead poisoning is a threat to eagles in the Jackson Hole Valley. Eagles tested higher for lead exposure during the hunting season than they did before or afterward (Bedrosian et al. 2012). Bedrosian and others found that 93% of the non-nestling eagles had been exposed to at least background levels of lead, while 33% exhibited clinical levels of lead exposure. Low levels of lead in Snake River nestlings suggested that those resident birds appear to remain near their nest sites and continue to forage on fish and waterfowl. For these reasons, it is suggested that lead exposure from the Jackson hunt may be more problematic for migratory eagles than resident eagles on the BTNF. Since Bald eagles are piscivores and top trophic-level consumers, they are extremely susceptible to mercury exposure. Every nestling sampled from the Yellowstone River, its tributaries, and the Snake River in Wyoming, exhibited the presence of mercury and selenium in the blood (USFS 2019). The Snake River eagles had the highest level of mercury, followed by the Yellowstone River birds, then the tributary birds. Mercury levels can have neurological effects, and impede reproduction, development, metabolism, and behavior (USFS 2019). Given the ability for mercury to move through the environment and its prevalence in nesting birds, monitoring mercury levels should be a priority. In the Greater Yellowstone area, few Bald eagles appeared to have suffered from pesticide impacts (Swenson et al. 1986); the Snake River unit was the least affected from DDT use.	

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	<u>Climate Change</u> Climate change may in some cases be altering conifer mortality, cottonwood regeneration, temperature regimes, and weather patterns. Such alterations to the environment can cause direct influences on Bald eagle behavior and nest success as well as indirect consequences to hydrological components, resulting in a decrease in fish populations. Water quantity and quality is anticipated to change due to climatic effects to snowpack. Water yield is expected to decrease over the next 4 to 8 decades, in some places considerably (Halofsky et al. 2018). With a vast majority of cold-water fish habitat on Federal lands, effects from climate change will be increasingly important.	
Summary and recommendations: The BTNF contains both Bald eagle nesting and wintering range. Bald eagles are distributed across suitable nesting and foraging habitat forest-wide, defined by open water, adequate food resources, and large conifer and cottonwood trees for nesting, perching, and shelter. Bald eagle populations on the BTNF and throughout Northwestern Wyoming are increasing, and the highest concentration of Eagles occurs on the BTNF and surrounding area. Bald eagles are found in high densities, with the largest number of nesting pairs on the Snake River. Significant long- and short-term population trends are increasing for Bald eagles in the state of Wyoming and throughout the Northern Rockies Region. The BTNF, and areas particularity along the Snake River provide nesting and wintering habitat for both local and migratory eagles. Adequate foraging habitat and favorable resources during both seasons are available across the Forest, including the Snake, Gros Ventre, Green, and Yellowstone Rivers, and their tributaries. There are many potential threats to Bald eagles on the Forest, including human disturbance, environmental contamination, vegetation treatments, and collisions. However, few are known to decrease occupancy or nest success to the extent that significant changes in Bald eagle populations would occur at the Forest scale. Vegetation treatments are a common management practice on the BTNF, although they are not typically within optimal Bald eagle nesting and foraging habitat. Additionally, there is an overabundance of suitable Bald eagle habitat—old growth conifer and cottonwood stands—across the BTNF. Prescribe fire on the Forest would benefit and improve Bald eagle habitat on the BTNF and is not considered a threat to populations. Recreational activities on the rivers and lakes of the BTNF is very common, including boating,		Date: October 4, 2019

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fishing, and hiking. Such activities may impact individuals and localized nesting behavior. However, they are not impacting populations across the unit. Increasing Bald eagle population trends, densities, and nest success rates suggests that there is not a substantial concern for the species' capability to persist over the long-term within the planning unit. Adequate nesting, foraging, and wintering resources will likely remain available on the Forest, and there are no significant threats influencing the population dynamics for this species. Thus, it is recommended that the Bald eagle is not a Species of Conservation Concern for the BTNF. Evaluator(s): Ashley Egan, Randall Griebel		