



File Code: 1920-2

Date: January 13, 2004

Dear Friend:

I am pleased to send you the documents or CD you requested for the Medicine Bow National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. Regional Forester Rick D. Cables approved the Record of Decision for the Revised Plan on December 29, 2003. Thank you for your interest of and input to this effort. It is a significant milestone in the management of this national forest. This plan is a living document intended to guide management for the next ten to fifteen years. We will be working with the public as we implement this Revised Plan.

The Revised Plan provides a management strategy for the Medicine Bow National Forest that sets broad direction for sustaining healthy forest and rangeland conditions. This plan was developed with thorough scientific analysis and review, extensive public involvement and the help of cooperating agencies. It charts a course that provides a mix of multiple use activities with a primary emphasis on enhancing non-motorized recreation opportunities while maintaining active forest vegetation management.

The revised management plan will:

- Ensure the *long-term health of the land*, including maintaining and enhancing the viability of native plant and animal species and contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species.
- Implement a *balanced variety of natural resource programs featuring a sustainable output of multiple uses*.
- Continue an emphasis on *providing high-quality significant recreation opportunities* while protecting the environment.
- Contribute to the *economic vitality of neighboring communities* by implementing a variety of natural resource programs that provide a sustainable output of multiple uses.

Highlights of the decision for the approximately 1.1 million-acre Medicine Bow National Forest include:

Recommendation of 28 miles of rivers to Congress for designation as wild and scenic rivers on the Encampment River and North Platte River.

Recommendation of 27,960 acres to Congress for designation as Wilderness Areas; (8080 acres added to the existing Huston Park Wilderness Area, 2350 acres to the existing Encampment River Wilderness Area and one additional wilderness area with 17, 530 acres, Rock Creek.



These areas would join the 78,850 acres of designated Wilderness Areas: Huston Park, Encampment River, Platte River and Savage Run.

Thirteen Special Interest Areas totaling 18,700 acres will be managed for their unique botanical, geologic, historical, zoological and scenic features.

Five new Research Natural Areas totaling 15,480 acres will be added to the Research Natural Area network joining the existing Snowy Range Research Natural Area established on the Medicine Bow in the 1930's.

266,300 acres or 24% of the Forest will be available for oil and gas leasing with certain lease stipulations.

132,050 acres will be allocated to Management Area 5.13 – Forest Products. 281,830 acres will be allocated to Management Area 5.15 – Forest Products, Ecological Maintenance and Restoration Considering the Historic Range of Variability. These management areas provide potential resource outputs of up to 22.8 million board feet per year of timber for sale per year.

Seventy-four percent of the MBNF is allocated to summer motorized recreation on existing roads and trails. Sixty-nine percent of the area is allocated to winter-motorized recreation.

1360 acres of Management Area 8.22, Ski-based Resorts will allow for potential expansion of the Snowy Range Ski Area.

95% of Inventoried Roadless Areas retain roadless character.

884,230 acres are suitable for cattle grazing and 958,250 acres are suitable for sheep grazing. One hundred and four allotments will remain active, although several are currently vacant.

Sheep Mountain, a 16,990 acre National Game Refuge, will be managed to emphasize habitat for deer and elk and remain relatively undisturbed by human activity.

59,760 acres are allocated to Crucial Deer and Elk Winter Range. 62,610 acres are allocated to other Deer and Elk Winter Range.

8,000 acres area allocated to Bighorn Sheep Habitat.

Public Meetings

We intend to schedule open houses to provide an opportunity for you to ask questions about the revised Plan and FEIS. Those communities and dates are: Saratoga, WY – February 3, 2004, Laramie, WY – February 4, 2004, and Douglas, WY – February 5, 2004. Meeting locations and times will be announced in the local media approximately a week before the open houses are scheduled.

Document Availability

The documents or CD containing the documents related to the Medicine Bow Forest Plan Revision are available on request from the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, Forest Supervisor's Office, the

local Forest Service Offices in Saratoga, Laramie, and Douglas, at County Libraries for Converse, Carbon, Albany, Natrona and Platte Counties, and are also posted on the internet at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr>

Erratas

Erratas will be posted on our website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr>.

Appeal Opportunities:

The decision is subject to administrative review. Appeals to the decision must be fully consistent with 36 Code of Federal Regulations 217 and must be filed with the Chief of the Forest Service within 90 days of the legal notice publication in the Denver Post, the newspaper of record. Appeals should be sent to the following address:

USDA Forest Service
Attn: NFS-EMC Staff
Stop Code 1104
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-1104

Again, I sincerely thank you for your interest and involvement in the management of the Medicine Bow National Forest, and I look forward to working together to implement this Revised Plan over the coming years.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mary H. Peterson
MARY H. PETERSON
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure