SIO Visual quality objective	Alt. A Acres	Alt. B % of Forest	Alt. B Acres	Alt. B % of Forest	Alt. C Acres	Alt. C % of Forest	Alt. D Acres	Alt. D % of Forest	Alt. E Acres	Alt. E % of Forest
Moderate (Partial Retention)	647,433	22	228,769	8	376,944	13	224,266	8	231,842	8
Low (Modification)	1,372,287	48	223,702	8	223,480	8	222,402	8	225,064	8
Very Low (Maximum Modification)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

3.22 Administratively Designated Areas

3.22.1 Introduction

Designated areas are specific areas within a forest that have been given permanent designation to maintain their unique special character or purpose. Some designated areas may be established by statute or law while others may be established through other administrative processes. Certain purposes and restrictions are usually established for designated areas, particularly for those areas that have been designated by law.

Land management plans may include recommendations to establish additional or modify existing previously designated areas. Some administrative designations, such as RNAs, may be designated or established concurrent with a plan decision. Once a designated areas is established by the plan decision, the designation continues until a subsequent decision by the appropriate authority removes, or adds to, the designation.

This section analyzes the effects of the draft revised forest plan to the areas that are administratively designated on the Forest. It also analyzes the recommendation of four additional areas for potential future administrative designations (*). The following areas will be covered in this section:

- IRAs
- National Recreation Trails
- RNAs
- Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest
- Missouri River Corridor *
- Smith River Corridor *
- South Hills Recreation Area *
- Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit
- Kings Hill Scenic Byway
- Badger Two Medicine *

Issues

A number of issues surfaced during the scoping period for the proposed action. Some of these issues arose from within the FS and some were brought forward by the public. The issues that drove alternatives for administratively designated areas in this analysis were:

- Mountain bike use in the core area of the Elkhorns GA
- Mountain bike use in portions of the South Hills Recreation Area.

Other issues that were raised and analyzed were:

- Additions to RNAs
- ROS setting changes in the Elkhorns and Badger Two Medicine area

Measurement indicators

Effects to administratively designated areas resulting from the proposed action and alternatives were measured using the following:

- Acres of IRA located within RWAs.
- Miles of nonmotorized trail open to mountain bike uses in the core area of the Elkhorns GA
- Acres of existing and proposed RNAs by alternative
- Miles of nonmotorized trail open to mountain bike uses in the South Hills Recreation Area.

Analysis area

The geographic scope of the analysis varies by the administratively designated area being analyzed. The following describes the analysis area used for each of the administratively designated areas. These analysis areas will also be used as the geographic scope for cumulative effects. The temporal scope for effects is the life of the plan (15 years).

- **IRAs:** the HLC NF boundary
- **National Recreation Trails:** the National Recreation Trails located on the HLC NF
- **RNAs:** the HLC NF boundary
- **Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest**: the Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest boundary, located within the Little Belts GA
- **Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit:** the Elkhorns GA boundary
- **Kings Hill Scenic Byway:** the length of US Highway 89 (approximately 71-miles) in the Little Belts GA
- **South Hills Recreation Area:** All NFS lands in the South Hills Recreation Area boundary, located within the Divide GA
- **Missouri River Corridor:** All NFS lands within the identified Missouri River Corridor boundary, located within the Big Belts GA
- **Smith River Corridor:** All NFS lands within the identified Smith River Corridor boundary, located within the Big Belts and Little Belts GAs
- **Badger Two Medicine:** All NFS lands within the identified Badger Two Medicine area boundary, located within the Rocky Mountain Range GA

3.22.2 Regulatory framework

2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B): The 2001 Roadless Rule establishes prohibitions on road construction and road reconstruction, and limitations on timber cutting, sale or removal within IRAs on NFS lands. The intent of the 2001 Roadless Rule is to provide lasting protection for IRAs within the NFS in the context of multiple-use management.

Trails for America in the 21st Century (Executive Order 13195): Signed by President Clinton in 2001 to achieve the common goal of better establishing and operating America's national system of trails.

Region 1 Natural Areas Assessment 1996 (Chadde et al 1996): Provided an assessment of plant community types needed to fulfill the national spectrum of types to be placed in RNA status in Region 1.

Establishment records for each RNA: These records provide information on the natural features, plant communities and species present in each RNA, as well as management guidance.

1986 Helena NF Plan: Established the Elkhorns as a Wildlife Management Unit and set up management areas to provide guidance for future activities in the Elkhorn mountain range.

3.22.3 Assumptions

The primary assumption is that these identified administratively designated areas would continue to be managed for their unique and special values for the duration of the plan (approximately 15 years).

3.22.4 Best available scientific information used

The HLC NF used the best available data and science to inform the analysis for the new forest plan components for administratively designated areas on the forest. Data sources included GISs for mapping and site-specific knowledge from forest personnel. All road miles, trail miles and acres are approximate.

3.22.5 Inventoried roadless areas, affected environment

IRAs are designated areas under the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR). There are approximately 1,499,181 acres of lands established as official IRAs across the Forest. These IRAs constitute approximately 50% percent of the entire lands administered by the HLC NF. Table 158 identifies each IRA and its location.

Table 158. IRAs within the HLC NF

GA	IRA	Acres
Big Belts	Big Log	8,948
Big Belts	Camas Creek	29,168
Big Belts	Cayuse Mountain	20,131
Big Belts	Devils Tower	7,139
Big Belts	Ellis Canyon	5,574
Big Belts	Grassy Mountain	6,734
Big Belts	Hellgate Gulch	16,809
Big Belts	Holter	1,964
Big Belts	Irish Gulch	7,315
Big Belts	Middleman Mtn./Hedges Mtn.	32,282
Big Belts	Mount Baldy	16,349
Total Acres in Big Belts GA		152,413
Castles	Castle Mountains	29,386
Total Acres in Castles GA		29,386
Crazies	Box Canyon	12,574
Crazies	Crazy Mountains	24,924
Total Acres in Crazies GA		37,489
Divide	Electric Peak	27,858
Divide	Jericho Mountain	8,440
Divide	Lazyman Gulch	11,608
Divide	Nevada Mountain[1]	16,085
Total Acres in Divide GA		63,991
Elkhorns	Elkhorn WSA Plus Additions	75,415
Total Acres in Elkhorns GA		75,415

GA	IRA	Acres
Highwoods	Highwood Baldy	15,293
Highwoods	Highwoods	24,360
Total Acres in Highwoods GA		39,653
Little Belts	Big Baldy	43,102
Little Belts	Bluff Mountain	38,033
Little Belts	Calf Creek	10,100
Little Belts	Eagle Park	5,908
Little Belts	Granite Mountain	10,330
Little Belts	Middle Fork Judith	9,707
Little Belts	Middle Fork Judith WSA	81,069
Little Belts	Mount High	33,461
Little Belts	North Fork Smith	8,438
Little Belts	Paine Gulch	7,869
Little Belts	Pilgrim Creek	44,572
Little Belts	Sawmill Creek	11,578
Little Belts	Spring Creek	17,827
Little Belts	Tenderfoot-Deep Creek	85,546
Little Belts	Tollgate-Sheep	24,026
Little Belts	TW Mountain	8,381
Total Acres in Little Belts GA		439,947
Rocky Mountain Range	Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan[1]	395,248
Rocky Mountain Range	Sawtooth	15,687
Total Acres in Rocky Mountain Range GA		410,935
Snowies	Big Snowies	9,254
Snowies	Big Snowy Mountains WSA	87,965
Total Acres in the Snowies GA		97,219
Upper Blackfoot	Anaconda Hill	18,536
Upper Blackfoot	Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan[1]	51,339
Upper Blackfoot	Crater Mountain	9,261
Upper Blackfoot	Lincoln Gulch	8,247
Upper Blackfoot	Nevada Mountain[1]	34,027
Upper Blackfoot	Ogden Mountain	12,144
Upper Blackfoot	Silver King-Falls Creek	6,808
Upper Blackfoot	Specimen Creek	12,362
Total Acres in Upper Blackfoot GA		152,724
Total IRA Acres on the HLC NF		**1,499,181**

2. Located in more than GA; acres reflected are what are in that particular GA.

3.22.6 Inventoried roadless areas, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

All IRA boundaries and acreages within the plan area were firmly established as a part of the 2001 Roadless Rule and would not change in any of the alternatives.

Effects common to all action alternatives

Plan components developed for IRAs would remain the same in all action alternatives and provide general guidance for these areas. This guidance would be in addition to the guidance provided in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Table 159 summarizes the expected effects of each plan component related to IRAs.

Table 159. Summary of proposed plan components for IRAs

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-IRA-DC-01 and 02	These two desired conditions ensure IRAs provide high quality soil, water, and air, a diversity of plan and animal communities, and secure habitats for fish and wildlife species. These desired conditions also ensure IRAs provide areas where natural, ecological conditions exist, and contribute to reference landscapes utilized for future study and research.
FW-IRA-DC-03	This component ensures that high scenic quality is provided in IRAs.
FW-IRA-DC-04	This desired condition provides remote primitive and semi-primitive (both motorized and non-motorized) recreation opportunities in IRAs.
FW-IRA-DC-05	This desired condition ensures the protection of public drinking water, traditional cultural properties and sacred sites, and locally identified unique characteristics.
FW-IRA-GDL-01	This guideline ensures that scenic quality is consistent with SIOs.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and management activities for aquatic ecosystems and soil management would have little effect related to the overall management within IRAs. The plan components that may have the greatest influence are those associated with RMZs. East of the Continental Divide (the majority of the HLC NF), RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. West of the Continental Divide, the area influenced by riparian plan components is the same across all alternatives because RMZs would be defined the same way as riparian habitat conservation zones are in the no-action alternative. Please refer to the RMZ section. Vegetation treatments such as prescribed fire and harvest that may occur in IRAs would be limited within RMZs, or modified to comply with plan components for those areas. The area on which these components apply is greater with the action alternatives than with the no-action alternative on landscapes east of the Continental Divide.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur within IRAs, and provide opportunities for natural fire to promote and/or enhance the wilderness characteristics of these areas.

Timber and vegetation management

IRAs are not suitable for timber production, but timber harvest may occur for other resource purposes. Timber harvest is limited by the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Where it does occur, it would consist of cutting small diameter trees. Plan components associated with timber harvest would ensure that all resource protection measures are met. Harvest would be required to meet other plan components, such

as SIOs. Plan components related to desired vegetation conditions could influence whether vegetation treatments (such as harvest or management-ignited fires) are conducted, and help define the objectives for those treatments.

Livestock grazing and management

While livestock grazing itself has the potential to degrade plant communities through factors such as invasive plant spread and damage to riparian areas, plan components emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components should help protect the ecological integrity of IRAs, to a greater degree with the action alternatives as compared to the no-action alternative.

Recreation and scenery management

Plan components for recreation settings, opportunities, and access along with scenery management would complement the management of IRAs. In the action alternatives, IRAs have a primitive or semi-primitive ROS setting and a high SIO. These classifications would ensure that potential recreation and other activities, such as restoration treatments, would be consistent with IRA desired conditions.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components related to cultural, historic, and tribal resource would have little to no effect on IRAs. The protection of these resources would be consistent with maintaining the wilderness characteristics of these areas.

Road access and infrastructure

Plan components related to road access and infrastructure would have little effect on IRAs, because these areas are generally unroaded. However, where roads do occur, road maintenance activities may occur and would be guided by road access and infrastructure plan components which include protections for other resources. The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule further guides and constrains road construction or reconstruction.

Minerals management

IRAs are discretionarily unavailable for mineral leasing and saleable mineral activities but still open to locatable mineral prospecting, exploration, and development.

Alternative A, no action

In alternative A, the IRAs on the Forest would be managed under the guidance established by the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule and plan components provided in the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark Forest Plans. Table 160 describes the plan components in the 1986 plans that provide direction for IRAs.

Table 160. Summary of existing plan components for IRAs

Plan component	Expected effects
Helena NF Goals 1 and 2	These plan components provide for a range of outdoor recreation opportunities, including motorized and non-motorized opportunities.
Helena NF Objectives	A number of roadless areas were identified in the objectives section of the 1986 Forest Plan. Roadless areas and undeveloped areas are well-distributed throughout the Helena Forest and offer semi-primitive recreation opportunity setting experiences.
Helena NF Management Areas R-1 and P-3	Management area R-1 provides direction for large blocks of undeveloped lands suited for dispersed recreation. Motorized uses are not allowed in these areas and they are managed for a semi-primitive non-motorized ROS setting and experiences. Management area P-3 provides direction for three RWAs which are also IRAs. Under this direction the areas are managed to maintain their existing wilderness characteristics.

Plan component	Expected effects
Helena NF Forest Plan Amendment 4	This amendment requires the Helena NF to show Allowable Sale Quantities of timber by both roaded and roadless lands on the forest. This amendment also requires a careful accounting of allowable sale quantity that is removed from roadless lands.
Lewis and Clark NF Objectives	An objective for roadless areas recognizes over a million acres of roadless on the Lewis and Clark Forest. Some of these lands lie adjacent to the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat wilderness areas. Some of these lands have been identified as WSAs. The majority of these lands are spread out across the forest and would be managed for their roadless values.
Lewis and Clark NF Management Areas F, G, and I	Management areas F and G provide direction for blocks of undeveloped land with limited motorized access and semi-primitive recreation opportunity settings. Management area I provides direction for important wildlife habitat on large, undeveloped landscapes that offer semi-primitive recreation settings.
Lewis and Clark NF Amendment 6	This amendment requires the Lewis and Clark NF to show Allowable Sale Quantities of timber by both roaded and roadless lands on the forest. This amendment also requires a careful accounting of allowable sale quantity that is removed from roadless lands.

Alternatives B and C

Alternatives B and C identify nine different RWAs across the forest. Approximately 62% of the RWAs are located on lands that have been designated as IRAs. While the boundaries and acreages of IRAs within the HLC NF are firmly established and would not change in alternatives B and C, the actions taken in IRAs located within RWAs would follow forest plan components for RWAs. Plan components for RWAs would be more restrictive and would also protect the values of the IRAs.

In alternatives B and C the following IRA acres fall within identified RWAs. Table 161 shows the IRA acreages that would be affected by RWA designation in alternatives B and C.

Table 161. Acres of IRAs within RWAs (alternatives B & C)

IRA (Acres)	RWA (Acres)	Acres of IRA in RWA
Big Log (8,948)	Big Log (7,086)	6,233
Holter (1,964)	Big Log (7,086)	225
Mount Baldy (16,349)	Mount Baldy (8,314)	8,314
Electric Peak (27,858)	Blackfoot Meadows (18,296)	18,040
Tenderfoot-Deep Creek (85,546)	Deep Creek (14,490)	14,490
Big Snowies (9,254)	Big Snowies (95,298)	6,907
Big Snowy Mountains WSA (87,965)	Big Snowies (95,298)	87,669
Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan (343,910)	Dearborn Silverking (20,088)	13,056
Silver King - Falls Creek (6,808)	Dearborn Silverking (20,088	6,815
Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan (343,910)	Red Mountain (1,901)	1,780
Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan (343,910)	Arrastra Creek (8,257)	7,669
Nevada Mountain (50,112)	Nevada Mountain (39,345)	36,205
Total acres of inventoried roadless in RWAs		207,404

Alternative D

Additional RWAs are recognized in alternative D, and these areas include many acres of IRAs across the forest. This is in response to the pubic asking the Forest to consider an alternative that increases the amounts of RWAs on the forest. The boundaries and acreages of IRAs within the HLC NF are firmly

established and would not change in alternative D. However, the acres of IRAs that have been identified as RWAs would follow the forest plan components for RWAs. Table 162 shows the acres of IRAs that fall within RWAs in alternative D.

Table 162. Acres of IRAs within RWAs (alternative D)

IRA (Acres)	RWA (Acres)	Acres of IRA within RWA
Big Log (8,948)	Big Log (7,086)	6,233
Holter (1,964)	Big Log (7,086)	225
Camas Creek (29,168)	Camas Creek (22,350)	22,005
Mount Baldy (16,349)	Mount Baldy (8,314)	8,314
Castle Mountains (29,386)	Wapiti Peak (30,606)	28,397
Crazy Mountains (24,924)	Loco Mountain (24,977)	22,214
Electric Peak (27,858)	Blackfoot Meadows (26,900)	26,109
Lazyman Gulch (11,608)	Colorado Mountain (14,189)	11,551
Tenderfoot-Deep Creek (85,546)	Deep Creek (14,490)	14,490
Tenderfoot-Deep Creek (85,546)	Tenderfoot Creek (45,870)	38,213
TW Mountain (8,381)	Big Horn Thunder (47,107)	41,131
Middle Fork Judith (9,707),	Middle Fork Judith (62,452)	1,271
Middle Fork Judith WSA (81,069)	Middle Fork Judith (62,452)	59,563
Big Snowies (9,254)	Big Snowies (95,298)	6,907
Big Snowy Mountains WSA (87,965)	Big Snowies (95,298)	87,669
Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan (343,910)	Dearborn Silverking (20,088)	13,056
Silver King - Falls Creek (6,808)	Dearborn Silverking (20,088)	6,815
Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan (343,910)	Red Mountain (1,901)	1,780
Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan (343,910)	Arrastra Creek (8,257)	7,669
Nevada Mountain (50,112)	Nevada Mountain (44,702)	37,430
Total acres of inventoried roadless in RWAs		441,042

Alternative E

All IRAs would be managed under the guidance established by the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule and the plan components established by the draft revised Forest plan.

Conclusions

The IRA boundaries and acreages were firmly established as a part of the 2001 Roadless Rule and would not change in any of the alternatives.

In alternative A, the IRAs on the Forest would continue to be managed only under the guidance established by the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule and the guidance for roadless areas provided by the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark Forest Plans.

Plan components developed for IRAs would remain the same in all action alternatives and would provide general guidance for IRAs on the Forest. This guidance would be in addition to the guidance provided in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. By providing the plan components outlined in the action alternatives, the HLC NF meets the purpose and need of the revised forest plan, ensuring that the nature

and purposes for which IRAs were identified are enhanced and/or protected for present and future generations.

3.22.7 National recreation trails, affected environment

National scenic trails (such as the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail) and national historic trails may only be designated by Congress. National recreation trails may be designated by the Secretary of Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture to recognize exemplary trails of local and regional significance in response to an application from the trails managing agency or organization. Through designation, these trails are recognized as part of America's National Trail System.

The national recreation trails on the HLC NF are generally single track, linear features that pass through a great variety of physical features ranging from natural-appearing settings to locations where developments are noticeable. There are 9 national recreation trails on the HLC NF totaling 40 miles. Most of these trails are located in the Little Belt Mountains GA. Approximately 65% of the national recreation trails on the forest are open to motorized trail uses. See Table 163.

Table 163. National recreation trails

GA	Trail Name	Trail Number	Miles
Big Belts	Hanging Valley	247	6
Divide	Mt. Helena	373	6
Little Belt Mountains	North Fork Deep Creek	303	6
Little Belt Mountains	Ming Coulee	307	3
Little Belt Mountains	South Fork Deep Creek	316	5
Little Belt Mountains	Blankenbaker	320	4
Little Belt Mountains	Deep Creek Ridge	338	6
Little Belt Mountains	Monument Ridge	339	2
Snowies	Crystal Lake	404	2
Total			40

3.22.8 National recreation trails, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Under all alternatives, the national recreation trails would meet the purpose of the National Trails System Act which is "to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation."

Effects common to all action alternatives

Plan components developed for national recreation trails would remain the same in all action alternatives and provide general guidance for these specifically identified trails. See Table 164.

Table 164. Summary of proposed plan components for national recreation trails

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-NRT-DC-01	This desired condition ensures that management of the national recreation trails protect and/or enhance the nature and purposes for which they have been established.
FW-NRT-DC-02	This component ensures that trails would be clearly marked, and will provide interpretation and education in such a manner as to not impair the identified trail features and/or values.

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-NRT-GDL-01	This guideline would maintain and enhance the valued attributes for which the trail(s) have been established.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and activities related to aquatic ecosystems and soil management would generally have little effect to national recreation trails. Where the trails cross or parallel streams, plan components related to RMZs would help maintain the scenic quality of those areas, and therefore complement the management of the trail. Trail maintenance activities may be influenced by plan components related to the maintenance of vegetation conditions in riparian areas, downed wood requirements within streams, and the condition of stream crossings.

East of the Continental Divide (the majority of the HLC NF), RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. West of the Continental Divide, the area influenced by riparian plan components is the same across all alternatives because RMZs would be defined the same way as riparian habitat conservation zones are in the no-action alternative. Please refer to the RMZ section.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur near national recreation trails, and provide opportunities for natural fire to alter the vegetation condition of the landscape. When fire does occur, whether natural or management-ignited, it could change the scenery visible from the trails, including charred vegetation in the short term as well as re-growth in the longer term.

Timber and vegetation management

Some stretches of the trails may be located in areas where timber harvest could occur. Where harvest does occur, it could impact the scenic values visible from the trail, including more open vegetation and stumps, as well as soil disturbance in the short term. Conversely, harvest could be used to improve the scenic quality by creating vistas, mimic vegetation structures that would be created by natural disturbance, and promote healthy vegetation. Vegetation plan components would help define the objectives for treatments that may occur near the trail. In addition to harvest, plan components would allow for other vegetation treatments such as tree planting and weed spraying near the trails.

Livestock grazing and management

Livestock grazing allotments could occur along or in proximity to the trails. Evidence of grazing, including cows, cow patties, grazed vegetation, and weeds could occur. However, plan components for livestock grazing emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components should help protect the scenic quality of the trails, to a greater degree with the action alternatives as compared to the no-action alternative.

Recreation and scenery management

Recreation and scenery management plan components would complement the management of the trails by specifying ROS settings and scenic quality objectives that are consistent with the desired conditions of the trail, along with providing the facilities and infrastructure needed for the public to access and use the trail system.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components for cultural, historic, and tribal resources would complement the management of the national recreation trails.

Road access and infrastructure

To the extent that trails or routes in proximity to the trails may be maintained, reconstructed, or relocated, the plan components for access and infrastructure would ensure that this work is done in a manner that meets the need of trail users and has minimal impacts to other resources. These components would complement the management of the trail system.

Minerals management

Lands along national recreation trails would be available for minerals activities.

Alternative A, no action

National recreation trails do not receive special recognition in the 1986 Helena Forest Plan. However, the 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan does recognize these trails, and created a forestwide standard to address them. In the no-action alternative, national recreation trails covered by the Helena Forest Plan would be managed by direction provided for all forest trails on the Helena NF. The national recreation trails covered by the Lewis and Clark Forest Plan would be managed as national recreation trails as per Forestwide standard L-4/32.

The following plan components provide overall direction for trail and specific direction for national recreation trails in the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark Forest Plans. The expected effects from specific plan components are summarized in Table 165.

Table 165. Summary of existing plan components for all trails, including National Recreation Trails

Plan component	Expected effects
Helena NF Goals 1 and 2	These plan components provides for a range of outdoor recreation opportunities that can be developed for visitor use and satisfaction, including motorized and non-motorized opportunities.
Helena NF Objectives	The Helena NF objectives provide for the construction of a cost effective roads and trails system that meets the Forest land and resource objectives and forest visitor needs.
Helena NF Forest-wide Trail Standards 1, 2, 3, 4	These forestwide trails standards provide overall guidance for managing a forest trail system to meet established standards, and address trail maintenance, funding, use, construction and reconstruction.
Helena NF, Management Area R-1	This management area provides direction for the construction of trailhead facilities to increase access and continue to enhance recreation opportunities.
Lewis and Clark NF Objectives	The Lewis and Clark NF objectives for facilities include direction for roads, trails, and airfields. These facilities will be constructed, managed, and maintained to meet the land and resource objectives of the Forest in a cost effective manner.
Lewis and Clark NF Forest-wide Standard L-4/32	This standard specifically states that all National Recreation Trails corridors would be protected and maintained.

Alternatives B – E

See effects common to all alternatives.

Conclusions

Under alternative A, the nine national recreation trails on the Forest would continue to be managed according to direction provided for all trails in the 1986 Helena Forest Plan and for the specific national recreation trails in the Lewis and Clark Forest Plan. There would be no additions to the national recreation trail inventory and travel plans would continue to provide the direction for where motorized uses can and cannot occur.

Plan components developed for national recreation trails are very similar to those presently providing direction in the 1986 Forest Plans. The plan components for national recreation trails would remain the same in all action alternatives and would provide general guidance for these trails. By providing the plan components outlined in the action alternatives, the HLC NF would meet the purpose and need of the revised forest plan, ensuring that the nature and purposes for which these national recreation trails were identified is enhanced and/or protected for present and future generations.

3.22.9 Research natural areas, affected environment

RNAs are permanently established to maintain areas of natural ecosystems and areas of special ecological significance. These protective designations were made in an attempt to maintain the natural ecosystem components and processes of these areas and are cooperatively identified, established, and managed with the USDA FS established as baseline areas for non-manipulative research, education, and the maintenance of biodiversity. They are administratively designated by the Regional Forester with research station director concurrence. In some cases stewardship management is needed to maintain or restore the target plant communities in RNAs, including actions such as invasive weed control or prescribed fire. These management activities are also coordinated between the NFs and the research station.

The HLC NF has 12 designated RNAs under all alternatives, one proposed under all alternatives (Granite Butte), and one candidate (Poe-Manley) under alternative D.

- Designated RNAs are those that have been formally established by a decision signed by the Regional Forester, with concurrence of the Research Station Director, after being vetted through the Forest and Rocky Mountain Research Station via forest planning, during revision or by amendment.
- Proposed RNAs have been vetted through the Forest and Rocky Mountain Research station via forest planning (either in revision or by amendment), but they have not been established by a Regional Forester decision.
- Candidate RNAs have not been fully vetted by the Forest and Rocky Mountain Research station and/or have not been included in a forest plan decision.

When combined, these areas total approximately 21,000 acres. Table 166 describes the RNAs.

Table 166. Designated, proposed, and candidate RNAs

RNA	GA	Purpose for Establishment	Status	Acres
Cabin Gulch	Big Belts	Douglas-fir with bunchgrass understory.	Designated	2,408
Bartleson Peak	Little Belts	Spruce/cleft leaf groundsel and cinquefoil/Idaho fescue habitat types	Designated	1,600
O'Brien Creek	Little Belts	A variety of riparian vegetation types, an un-entrenched, moderate to gentle gradient stream.	Designated	692
Onion Park	Little Belts	Tufted hairgrass-sedge, subalpine fir/grouse whortleberry and subalpine fir/bluejoint reedgrass; mesic meadow	Designated	1,208
Paine Gulch	Little Belts	Long-lived seral Douglas-fir on subalpine fir series sites, seral ponderosa pine and limber pine communities on Douglas-fir series sites.	Designated	2,403
Wagner Basin	Rocky Mountain Range	Unique wetland complexes containing large populations of Giant helleborine and yellow lady's-slipper.	Designated	939
Walling Reef	Rocky Mountain Range	High-elevation forest, shrubland, grassland, wetland, and alpine ecosystems.	Designated	834

RNA	GA	Purpose for Establishment	Status	Acres
Greathouse Peak	Snowies	Alpine tundra plant communities on an alpine plateau composed of calcareous (limestone) substrate	Designated	1,280
Big Snowy – Old Baldy	Snowies	Alpine tundra plant communities on an alpine plateau composed of calcareous (limestone) substrate	Designated	1,866
Minerva Creek	Snowies	Ponderosa pine/snowberry interspersed with meadows	Designated	336
Indian Meadows	Upper Blackfoot	Douglas fir/blue huckleberry, Douglas fir/pine grass, Douglas fir/elk sedge, Subalpine fir/beargrass, Subalpine fir/bluejoint, Subalpine fir/menziesia and wet meadows.	Designated	949
Red Mountain	Upper Blackfoot	Subalpine fir and whitebark pine habitat types, high alpine non forest habitat types, scree and type I and II streams	Designated	1,901
Granite Butte	Upper Blackfoot	Subalpine fir and white bark pine habitat types, montane grassland dominated by rough fescue.	Proposed	394
Poe-Manley	Elkhorns	Montane grassland dominated by rough fescue	Candidate, (alternative D)	4,505

Granite Butte Proposed RNA

The Granite Butte area, located in the Upper Blackfoot GA, was proposed as a potential RNA to represent a montane grassland dominated by rough fescue (*Festuca campestris*) with subalpine fir and whitebark pine habitat types. This site was proposed in the 1986 Helena NF Plan. In addition to an extensive grassland, the site contains a unique ribbon forest/snow glade community and a sedge-rush (*Carex-Juncus*) community. The grassland is in excellent condition and includes key indicators of high productivity. Missoula phlox (*Phlox kelseyi var. missoulensis*) is also present. The ribbon forest consists primarily of whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis)* and subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), with much of the whitebark pine dying or dead. In the open areas on the edge of the melting snowbank, early spring ephemerals are found. The presence of a low-standard, 2-track road in the area where motorized use was allowed was the limiting factor on formally establishing this area as a RNA. However, the Blackfoot Travel Plan has now designated this trail as nonmotorized.

Poe-Manley Candidate RNA

The Poe-Manley site has been identified as a candidate montane grassland RNA dominated by rough fescue (*Festuca campestris*) under alternative D. This area is located in the Elkhorns GA, in close proximity to the Tizer basin loop and administrative cabin. The grasslands are in excellent condition, with a mix of various grasses and forbs. Rough fescue is the dominant grass species. In Poe Park, there is a population of Missoula phlox (*Phlox kelseyi var. missoulensis*). Only one small area of noxious weeds is present – Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). No domestic livestock grazing is allowed in the area. The forests around these two grassland parks have substantial mortality, especially in lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) and whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*). There is no evidence of roads. The hiking trail through the area receives only light to moderate use.

3.22.10 Research natural areas, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Under all alternatives, the 12 existing RNAs would maintain their designations. In these areas, direction in the establishment records and FS manual 4063 would be followed to conserve the plant associations for which they were established.

The Granite Butte area, which has been reviewed and vetted, could be recommended to become an established RNA through a separate decision by the Regional Forester. Final establishment would take place upon completion of the establishment record based on the Research Station Director's concurrence.

The potential for additional RNAs in the future would exist under any alternative. The Northern Region Status and Needs Assessment for Research Natural Areas (Chadde et al. 1996) recommend additional unrepresented plant associations on each NF in Region 1 so that the entire range of associations could be represented in the RNA network.

Effects common to all action alternatives

All action alternatives include the following plan components (Table 167).

Table 167. Summary of proposed plan components for RNAs

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-RNA-DC-01	This DC would ensure that the natural processes within RNAs function with little human influence.
FW-RNA-GDL-01	This GDL would ensure that RNAs are managed and monitored according to their site establishment records and FS manual 4063.
FW-RNA-SUIT-01	The RNAs are not suitable for timber production, although vegetation treatments could occur if consistent with establishment records or management plans.
FW-RNA-SUIT-02	This component ensures that nonmotorized travel is allowed in RNAs, along with motorized access along designated routes only.
FW-RNA-SUIT-03	This component allows livestock grazing to occur if consistent with establishment records or management plans.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Activities related to watershed, soil, riparian, or aquatic habitat would generally not occur in RNAs, and there would be little to no effect related to the management of these resources.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for prescribed fire and wildfire could affect RNAs. Fire is a primary natural ecosystem process, and all alternatives emphasize the importance of allowing such processes to occur. Prescribed fire and fire suppression tactics would adhere to site establishment records and FS manual 4063, which ensure that natural fires are allowed to burn only within a prescription designed to accomplish objectives specific to the RNA. Further, fires that occur on the broader landscape could influence the type and severity of wildfire that enters RNAs.

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur in RNAs, and provide opportunities for natural fire to alter the vegetation condition of the landscape. Fire on the landscape would generally complement the desire for natural ecological processes within these areas. Plan components are in place to ensure that minimum impact suppression tactics or other tactics appropriate for the protection of the trail values are used.

Timber and vegetation management

Under all alternatives, RNAs are not suitable for timber production. The existing forest plans (alternative A) prohibit timber harvest for any purpose in these areas, and therefore timber management should have no effect. The revised forest plan under the action alternatives allows that some vegetation treatments could occur where consistent with site establishment records and plans. However, generally site records would preclude this as well. Any activities that may occur would have minimal impact to vegetation conditions, or be designed to maintain or restore natural conditions. Timber harvest and other vegetation management activities that occur on the broader landscape could influence the type and severity of wildfire that enters RNAs.

Livestock grazing and management

The existing forest plans (alternative A) prohibit livestock grazing in RNAs, and therefore grazing management should have no effect. The revised forest plan under the action alternatives allows for grazing to occur where consistent with site establishment records and plans. However, generally site records would preclude this. Therefore, grazing would have minimal impact.

Wildlife management

Activities related to wildlife management would generally not occur within RNAs, and therefore there would be little to no effect.

Recreation and scenery management

Under all action alternatives, the ROS setting for established and proposed RNAs is primitive, and the SIO is generally high or very high. Managing for primitive recreation opportunities would not result in substantial impacts to the natural vegetation and natural processes in these areas. Alternative A does not include the concepts of ROS nor SIOs, but the visual quality objectives prescribed for RNAs (retention or preservation) would result in similar effects.

Alternative D includes the Poe-Manley candidate RNA. Unlike the established RNAs, the ROS in this area includes primitive in the central core area during both summer and winter, some areas of roaded natural in the summer; and semi-primitive motorized and semi-primitive nonmotorized in the winter. The summer roaded natural areas and winter semi-primitive nonmotorized areas accommodate the existence of the nearby motorized Tizer Lakes loop route to the west and other routes near the eastern boundary. These routes do not enter the candidate area. The winter semi-primitive motorized area accommodates snowmobile use on the western portion of the candidate area. These uses are compatible with the RNA management guidance, but may do less to protect the desired characteristic of the area than the primitive ROS setting that is applied to the established and proposed RNAs found in all alternatives.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Activities related to cultural, historic, and tribal resources would generally not occur in RNAs, and therefore there would be little to no effect.

Road access and infrastructure

All action alternatives are similar in terms of plan components for road access and infrastructure. New road and trail construction, or other infrastructure and facilities, would not generally occur in RNAs under any alternative, because FS manual 4063 prohibits new roads, trails, fences, or signs on an established RNA unless they contribute to the objectives or protection of the area.

Minerals management

RNAs are available for minerals activities. However, per FS manual 4063 proposals to offer Federal mineral, oil, and gas leases would be evaluated by the Regional Forester, with concurrence of the Station Director, using standards set forth in FS manual 2820. The proposal with recommendation is forwarded by the Regional Forester to the Chief for the final decision.

Alternative A, no action

The existing forest plans (1986) include components for RNAs, and these would apply to the no-action alternative. The RNAs included in this alternative are the 12 existing areas, some of which were established after the 1986 plans were developed. The expected effects from plan components are summarized in Table 168. Both plans limit most management activities from occurring in these areas, with the exception of prescribed fire.

Table 168. Summary of existing plan components for RNAs

Plan component	Expected effects
Helena NF Management Area N-1	The standards for management area N-1 would ensure that within RNAs the following activities would not occur: improvements, developed or dispersed recreation facilities, wildlife habitat improvements, livestock grazing, timber harvest, mineral sales, utility corridors, road construction, or occupancy special use permits. Insects and disease levels would not be controlled. Prescribed burning could be used to perpetuate the natural diversity of plant communities. Fire suppression would be selected to minimize soil and vegetation disturbance. The visual quality objective would be retention.
Lewis and Clark NF Management Area M	The standards for management area M would allow dispersed recreation and motorized use in RNAs. The visual quality objective would preservation, which allows for ecological changes only. The standards preclude the following activities: wildlife habitat improvements, livestock grazing, timber harvest, occupancy leases for minerals, special use permits, road construction, and trail construction. Prescribed fire could occur when commensurate with the goals for the RNA. Fire suppression response would depend on multiple factors. Changes to the vegetation could be caused by prescribed fire, natural processes, or minor impacts from dispersed recreation and motorized use.

Alternatives B-E

Alternatives B, C, and E would be the same as A with respect to the number and location of designated and proposed RNAs. The effects would be as described under effects common to all action alternatives.

Alternative D would include Poe-Manley as a candidate RNA. This eligibility is based upon an analysis of the site and the value it would add to the RNA network in the Region. The 4,505 acres that comprise this area would be managed as described in Table 169, and would contribute to fulfilling the ecosystem representation assigned to the HLC NF. Vegetation management would be limited to actions that maintain or restore natural processes. This designation would preclude development of future motorized recreation opportunities other than over-snow use in the area.

Cumulative effects

Under all alternatives, the network of RNAs would contribute to the understanding of key ecosystems and plant communities by being part of the broader array of sites that are designated across other NFs in the region. This network would continue to contribute to the conservation of biological diversity, and provide for research and educational opportunities in the plan area. Similar designations are not known to occur on lands of private ownership, nor on state lands in the area, increasing the importance of maintaining them on NFS lands.

Conclusions

All alternatives provide for a network of RNAs across the HLC NF, by including the existing designations of 12 RNAs (16,416 acres) and one proposed RNA (Granite Butte, 394 acres). Alternative D would include the addition of one candidate RNA, Poe-Manley (4,505 acres). The 1986 Forest Plans more explicitly prohibit management activities within RNAs than does the revised plan, which allows for more uses when those uses are consistent with the site establishment record and standards in FS manual 4063.

3.22.11 Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest, affected environment

The Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest is managed by the Rocky Mountain Research Station and encompasses 9,125 acres of the headwaters of Tenderfoot Creek in the Little Belt Mountains. Research emphasis within the experimental forest was expanded in 1991 to develop and evaluate ecosystem-based treatments for sustaining productivity and biodiversity of lodgepole pine forests and watersheds. A map of the Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest can be found in appendix A.

3.22.12 Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

The administrative designation of the Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest would remain in place under all alternatives, and potential future research activities based on mutual agreement with the Rocky Mountain Research Station would be conducted in a similar manner.

Effects common to all action alternatives

All action alternatives would contain the same plan components related to the Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest. These components and their expected effects are summarized in Table 169.

Table 169. Summary of proposed plan components for Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest

Plan component	Expected effects
LB-TCEF-DC-01; 02; 03; 04	The DCs would ensure that desired research and demonstration activities, as agreed upon with the Rocky Mountain Research Station, are supported by the vegetation conditions, facilities, infrastructure, and recreation management in this designated area.
LB-TCEF-SUIT-01	This component allows that while timber harvest may be conducted if it is part of research or demonstration, the area is not suitable for timber production and would not necessarily be managed in a way that emphasizes the production of timber. Timber harvest activities would affect the vegetation of this area when it is programmed as a research activity.
LB-TCEF-SUIT-02; 03	These components ensure that no non-timber forest products could be utilized commercially. Personal use of firewood, Christmas trees, boughs, and surface rock would not occur. This would ensure that such activities would not interfere with research. Other products such as mushrooms and botanical products could be utilized for personal use.
LB-TCEF-SUIT-04	No livestock grazing would occur, and therefore there would be no potential conflict of research activities with this use.
LB-TCEF-SUIT-05	This component allows for motorized travel on designated routes or trails, and would ensure that public access is maintained in the area, as determined in travel plans.
Forestwide and GA plan components	The suite of forestwide and GA plan components include but not limited to components related to wildlife, SIOs, aquatic ecosystems, soils, vegetation, recreation, minerals, roads, and land uses. These components would ensure that these resource values are maintained within the area.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Watershed, aquatic ecosystems, riparian, and soil management

Plan components related to watershed, aquatic, riparian and soil resources may limit some research activities specifically with respect to harvest activities (type, location, intensity and/or prescriptions applied). RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used.

Fire and fuels management

Alternative A emphasizes the control of fire in this area, while the action alternatives do not prescribe a particular management response to wildfire. In the action alternatives, plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires, and provide opportunities for natural fire to alter the vegetation condition of the landscape. If fire does occur, it could change the vegetation in the experimental forest and influence potential future research opportunities.

Timber and vegetation management

Under all alternatives, the area is unsuitable for timber production but timber harvest may be used when part of an approved research activity. Timber harvest therefore has the potential to affect vegetation and other resources in this area. Timber plan components would ensure this activity protects other resources.

Livestock grazing and management

Livestock grazing would not be permitted under any alternative, and therefore there would be no effects from livestock grazing management.

Wildlife management

Specific requirements for the management of threatened and endangered wildlife species, such as Canada lynx and grizzly bear, could limit or modify research activities. Considerations relative to the Canada lynx are the most likely to have effects related to timber harvest. Please refer to the discussion about lynx management in the timber specialist section.

Recreation and scenery management

Under the no-action alternative (1986 forest plans), the recreation setting of this area is roaded natural, which would not likely influence activities that may occur within this area for research. With the no-action alternative, the visual quality objective is partial retention or modification, or retention in areas seen from high sensitivity areas. Areas with a partial retention or retention visual quality objective may have some limitations to the harvest that could be conducted for research.

With the action alternatives, in both summer and winter the setting of the area is mostly semi-primitive nonmotorized with some roaded natural and primitive. The plan components associated with these settings would limit the type and extent of harvest that could occur in the semi-primitive (harvest would be constrained) and primitive (no harvest could occur). The scenic quality objectives under the action alternatives is high for most of this area, which would also limit harvest opportunities to meet research objectives. The influence of recreation opportunity settings and scenic quality objectives would likely be somewhat more limiting to harvest for research purposes than the no-action alternative.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components for cultural, historic, and tribal resources would have similar effects under all alternatives, in that protections for these resources would apply to proposed activities.

Minerals management

Lands within the Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest would be available for minerals activities.

Alternative A, no action

The existing 1986 forest plan for the Lewis and Clark NF includes guidance for the Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest, as summarized in Table 170. This area is described as management area K, with a goal of managing the experimental forest to meet research objectives.

Table 170. Summary of existing plan components for Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest

Plan component	Expected effects
Recreation, 3-53	This section would ensure that recreation and visual quality are managed in a manner that supports research. The roaded natural setting and partial retention/modification visual quality objectives would allow for vegetation modification as needed to meet research purposes. Dispersed recreation would be managed with consideration for research values.
Wildlife, 3-54	This component provides for the maintenance of specific wildlife habitats, such as big-game winter ranges, calving or lambing areas, migration routes, elk summer ranges, and raptor nesting sites. This may somewhat limit research opportunities in specific areas.
Range, 3-54	This component ensures that no livestock grazing would occur, and therefore there would be no potential conflict of research activities with this use.
Timber, 3-54	This component allows for timber to be managed for research needs, and that timber removed is unregulated. Timber harvest activities may therefore affect the vegetation of this area when it is programmed as a research activity.
Soil and water, 3-54	This component allows that state water quality and soil productivity maintenance may be violated if needed for research. Adverse effects could occur to water quality and soils.
Minerals, 3-54	Surface occupancy would not be allowed, and requests for mineral exploration and development would be evaluated and administered through permits and leases.
Land use, 3-54	This component ensures that any new special-use permits would not conflict with the research goals of the area, and the area would not be impacted by utility corridors.
Roads, 3-54	These plan components would minimize public access and limit motorized access to existing roads. Roads could be constructed for research but would be closed to the public.
Mineral access, 3-55	This component specifies that mineral access roads would be constructed or reconstructed to minimum standards, and existing roads used when possible.
Trails, 3-55	Trails would be designed to be compatible with adjacent recreation settings. Trail management would ensure research values are protected.
Protection, 3-55	This component specifies that aggressive “control” fire suppression tactics are generally the appropriate response in this area.

Alternatives B-E

See effects common to all action alternatives.

Cumulative Effects

Under all alternatives, the designation and management of the Tenderfoot Creek Experimental Forest would contribute to ongoing research efforts to better understand treatment methods and the effects of management in lodgepole pine ecosystems, providing information relevant to the HLC NF, other NFs, and lands managed by other federal agencies, the state, and private entities. Experimental forest designations are not known to occur on lands of private ownership, nor on state lands in the area, increasing the importance of this area.

Conclusions

Under all alternatives the administrative designation of this area, and the research activities that occur within it, would be similar. All alternatives would meet research objectives. The primary difference between the no-action alternative and the action alternatives is the ROS setting. The action alternatives may be more limiting to potential future research activities because of inclusion of primitive and semi-primitive recreation opportunity settings within the experimental forest. Alternative A would be permissive to potential vegetation management for research purposes with a recreation opportunity setting of roaded natural across the entire area.

3.22.13 Missouri River Corridor, affected environment

The Missouri River is a nationally recognized river famous for its fishing, outstanding scenery, and the history present along its shores. The area is a primary access route through the Gates of the Mountains, a distinctive limestone cliff formation along this portion of the Missouri River. Recreation use of the Missouri River Corridor is year-round but particularly high during the summer months when water recreation is the most active. A commercial tour boat operation offers boat trips and there are a number of developed and dispersed recreation sites along the banks of the river. This area also provides access to the western portions of the Gates of the Mountain Wilderness. In addition, there are concentrations of cliff nesting raptors in this corridor (also see FW-WLO-DC-03).

3.22.14 Missouri River Corridor, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Under all alternatives, the Missouri River Corridor would continue to provide motorized and non-motorized water-based recreation opportunities.

Effects common to all action alternatives

The plan components developed for the Missouri River Corridor would remain the same in all action alternatives. These plan components focus on protecting and enhancing the natural, cultural, and historic values along the Missouri River as well as providing guidance for interpretation and signage. Table 171 summarizes the expected effects of each plan component related to the Missouri River Corridor.

Table 171. Summary of proposed plan components for Missouri River Corridor

Plan component	Expected effects
BB-MISCOR-DC-01; 05; 06	These DCs establish recreation settings and opportunities that are compatible with ecological and cultural/historic features within the corridor.
BB-MISCOR-DC-02; BB-MISCOR-GDL-01	The scenic values within the Missouri River Corridor are valued and will be managed at a High or Very High SIO.
BB-MISCOR-DC-03; 04	The cultural and historic values in the Missouri River Corridor are valued and would be protected and enhanced. The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the Mann Gulch Fire Historic Landscape would be preserved and interpreted to enhance visitor appreciate for the area.
BB-MISCOR-GO-01	This plan component promotes working collaboratively with partners and volunteers to accomplish work within the Missouri River Corridor.
BB-MISCOR-SUIT-01	The Missouri River Corridor would be unsuitable for timber production, although vegetation treatments could occur for reasons of public safety and to enhance the recreation or aesthetic values of the area.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and activities related to watershed, soil, riparian, or aquatic habitat improvements would influence the management of the Missouri River Corridor, primarily through the management of RMZs. East of the Continental Divide, RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. Plan components for the management of RMZs would help ensure that desirable conditions are maintained or promoted.

Fire and fuels management

Natural, unplanned ignitions and prescribed fires may be used to maintain ecological conditions in the corridor. Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management

response to wildfires and provide opportunities for natural fire to promote and/or enhance the characteristics of the area.

Timber and vegetation management

The Missouri River Corridor is not suitable for timber production, but harvest may be allowed to provide for public safety and enhance the recreational or aesthetic values. Where harvest does occur, it could impact the scenic values, including more open vegetation and stumps, as well as soil disturbance in the short term. Conversely, harvest could be used to improve the scenic quality by creating vistas, mimic vegetation structures that would be created by natural disturbance, promoting healthy vegetation, and mitigating hazard trees in public use areas. Vegetation plan components would help define the objectives for treatments. In addition to harvest, plan components would allow for other vegetation treatments such as tree planting and weed spraying, which could enhance the scenic quality of the corridor.

Recreation and scenery management

Recreation and scenery management plan components would complement the management of the Missouri River Corridor by specifying ROS settings and scenic quality objectives that are consistent with maintaining or moving toward the desired conditions of the corridor, along with providing the facilities and infrastructure needed for the public to access and use the area.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components for cultural, historic, and tribal resources would complement the management of this area by helping to preserve the unique characteristics of the corridor.

Road access and infrastructure

Plan components for road access and infrastructure would help ensure that roads that may occur in proximity to the corridors are maintained in a condition that protects the resources of the area.

Minerals management

Lands within the Missouri River corridor would be available for minerals activities.

Alternative A, no action

Under alternative A, the Missouri River corridor would not be identified as an administratively designated area and would continue to be managed according to direction provided in the 1986 Helena NF plan. Recreation and interpretation along the corridor would continue to be managed through site specific and case-by-case management decisions on the Forest. Table 172 displays the plan components from the existing 1986 Helena NF Plan that would provide guidance for the Missouri River Corridor.

Table 172. Summary of 1986 Helena NF plan components for the Missouri River Corridor

Plan component	Expected effects
Helena NF Goals 1, 2, 9, 10, and 18	These goals provide for a range of outdoor recreation opportunities that could be developed for visitor use and satisfaction. Developed recreation sites, boat docks and landings, trails, and interpretive sites in the area would continue to be popular with locals as well as out of state visitors. Commercial boat trips and motorized boat access to the corridor for fishing, camping, and other recreation would continue to affect the recreation of the area. Additionally, the corridor would continue to provide access to the Gates of the Mountains wilderness.
Helena NF Objectives	The Missouri River corridor provides motorized boat access to a diverse ecosystem. The objectives that provide guidance include recreation, visual, cultural, water, fish and wildlife.
Helena NF Management Areas R-1 and R-2	The R-1 management area provides direction for large blocks of undeveloped lands suited for dispersed recreation. There are larger blocks of undeveloped lands along the Missouri River corridor that receive dispersed recreation activities. Off of the main corridor of the river, these lands would provide semi-primitive non-motorized recreation settings. Management Area R-2 provides direction for developed recreation settings along the river.

Plan component	Expected effects
	Developed recreation sites within the corridor are Meriwether Picnic area, the Meriwether and Coulter boating sites, and the Coulter Campground. These sites would continue to provide access to the Missouri River Corridor and undeveloped lands adjacent to the river.

Alternatives B-E

See effects common to all action alternatives.

Conclusions

Under alternative A, the Missouri River corridor would not be identified as an administratively designated area and would continue to be managed according to direction provided in the 1986 Helena NF plan. Recreation and interpretation along the corridor would continue to be managed through site specific and case-by-case management decisions on the Forest. In alternatives B- E, plan components for the Missouri River Corridor would be established. By providing the plan components outlined in the action alternatives, the HLC NF would meet the purpose and need of the revised forest plan, ensuring that the river corridor is managed for the natural and cultural resources that make this unique area.

3.22.15 Smith River Corridor, affected environment

The Smith River is a nationally recognized river noted for its fishing, outstanding scenery, and the opportunities it provides for a 60-mile float through private, state, and NFS lands during the late spring and early summer months. The majority of the Smith River Corridor is located in the Little Belts GA. However, the southern portion lies within the Dry Range which is located within the Big Belts GA. HLC NFS lands bordering the Smith River are heavily utilized for recreation. The FS manages the lands along the Smith River through a cooperative agreement with MTDFWP.

3.22.16 Smith River Corridor, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Under all alternatives, the Smith River Corridor would continue to provide water-based recreation opportunities and recreation special use permits for outfitter guide operations. Additionally, the revised forest plan would not alter the cooperative agreement between the FS and MTDFWP for the overall management of the Smith River corridor as the Smith River State Park.

Effects common to all action alternatives

The plan components developed for the Smith River Corridor would be the same in all action alternatives. These plan components focus on protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural values along the Smith River. Table 173 summarizes the expected effects of plan components for the Smith River Corridor.

Table 173. Summary of proposed plan components for Smith River Corridor

Plan component	Expected effects
LB-SMITH-DC-01; 04	These DCs guide the recreation settings and opportunities and ensure that they are compatible with ecological and cultural/historic features within the corridor.
LB-SMITH-DC-02; LB-SMITH-GDL-01	High scenic values are desired within the Smith River Corridor and these values would be managed at High or Very High SIOs.
LB-SMITH-DC-03	The DC for the cultural and historic values is to conserve, protect, and/or enhance the identified values in the Smith River Corridor. Interpretation would be provided to enhance visitor appreciation for the area.
LB-SMITH-GO-01	This plan component promotes working collaboratively with partners and volunteers to operate, maintain, and deliver river floating opportunities in the Smith River Corridor.

Plan component	Expected effects
LB-SMITH-SUIT-01	The Smith River Corridor would be unsuitable for timber production, although vegetation treatments could occur for reasons of public safety and enhancing the recreation or aesthetic values along the river.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and activities related to watershed, soil, riparian, or aquatic habitat improvements would influence the management of the Smith River Corridor, primarily through the management of RMZs. East of the Continental Divide, RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. Plan components for the management of RMZs would help ensure that desirable conditions are maintained or promoted.

Fire and fuels management

Natural, unplanned ignitions and prescribed fires may be used to maintain ecological conditions in the corridor. Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires and provide opportunities for natural fire to promote and/or enhance the characteristics of the area.

Timber and vegetation management

The Smith River Corridor is not suitable for timber production, but harvest may be allowed to provide for public safety and enhance the recreational or aesthetic values of the corridor. Where harvest does occur, it could impact the scenic values in the corridor, including more open vegetation and stumps, as well as soil disturbance in the short term. Conversely, harvest could be used to improve the scenic quality by creating vistas, mimic vegetation structures that would be created by natural disturbance, promoting healthy vegetation, and mitigating hazard trees in public use areas. Vegetation plan components would help define the objectives for treatments. Plan components would allow for other vegetation treatments such as tree planting and weed spraying, which could further enhance the scenic quality of the corridor.

Recreation and scenery management

Recreation and scenery management plan components would complement the management of the Smith River Corridor by specifying ROS settings and scenic quality objectives that are consistent with maintaining or moving toward the desired conditions of the corridor, along with providing the facilities and infrastructure needed for the public to access and use the area.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components for cultural, historic, and tribal resources would complement the management of this area by protecting the unique characteristics of the area.

Road access and infrastructure

Plan components for road access and infrastructure would help ensure that roads that may occur in proximity to the corridors are maintained in a condition that protects the resources of the area.

Minerals management

Lands within the Smith River Corridor would be available for minerals activities.

Alternative A, no action

Under alternative A, the Smith River corridor would not be identified as an administratively designated area and would continue to be managed according to direction provided in the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark NF Plans. There is no specific direction in either existing Forest Plan but there is overall

direction for dispersed recreation areas, cultural and natural resources, and eligible WSRs (Lewis and Clark NF Plan only) that would apply. Table 174 displays the components from the existing 1986 forest plans that would provide guidance for the Smith River Corridor in alternative A.

Table 174. Summary of existing plan components for the Smith River Corridor from the 1986 HLC NF plans

Plan component	Expected effects
Helena NF Goals 1, 2, 9, 10, and 18	These components provide for a range of outdoor recreation opportunities that could be developed for visitor use and satisfaction. Developed recreation sites, boat docks and landings, trails, and interpretive sites within the area would continue to be popular with locals as well as out of state visitors. Permitted river float trips to the area for fishing and camping would continue to affect the many natural and cultural features in the river corridor.
Helena NF Objectives	The Smith River corridor provides non-motorized boat access to a diverse ecosystem along the Smith River. The objectives in the 1986 Helena NF Plan would provide guidance for this area would be recreation, visual, cultural, water, fish and wildlife.
Helena NF Management Area R-1	The R-1 management area provides direction for large blocks of undeveloped lands suited for dispersed recreation. The Smith River flows through larger blocks of undeveloped lands interspersed with private lands that have more development and the undeveloped lands would provide semi-primitive non-motorized recreation settings.
Lewis and Clark NF Goals 1, 3, 7, and 11	These plan components provide for the protection and improvement of visual quality, high quality wildlife and fish habitat, quality and quantity of water, and protecting the existing condition and outstandingly remarkable values of eligible WSRs.
Lewis and Clark NF Objectives	The Smith River corridor provides non-motorized boat access to a diverse ecosystem along the Smith River. The objectives in the 1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan provide guidance for recreation, visual, cultural, water, wildlife and fish and WSRs.
Lewis and Clark NF Forestwide Standards W-1, W-2, W-3	The forestwide standards for eligible wild, scenic, and recreation rivers on the Lewis and Clark NF focus on protecting the outstandingly remarkable values identified for the eligible rivers.

Alternatives B-E

See effects common to all action alternatives.

Conclusions

In all alternatives, the Smith River Corridor would continue to be managed through cooperative agreement with MTDFWP. Under alternative A, the Smith River Corridor would not be identified as an administratively designated area and would continue to be managed according to direction provided in the 1986 forest plans. Designated dispersed recreation sites along the river corridor and outfitter and guide special use permits would continue to be managed through site-specific and case-by-case management decisions. In alternatives B- E, plan components for the Smith River Corridor would be established. By providing the plan components outlined in the action alternatives, the HLC NF would meet the purpose and need of the revised forest plan, ensuring that the river corridor is managed for the natural and cultural resources that make it a unique and special place.

3.22.17 South Hills Recreation Area, affected environment

The proposed South Hills Recreation Area is located just to the south and west and adjacent to the community of Helena, Montana. It is approximately 50,180 acres in size and extends to MacDonald Pass and the Continental Divide. This large landscape includes lands in and around private land ownership, shares boundaries with the City of Helena, and has shared jurisdiction with the City of Helena on many of the trails nearest the community. Additionally, the area includes large portions of nonmotorized inventory

roadless areas as well as portions of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. This area is identified for alternatives B, C, and D. It is not included in alternatives A or E.

3.22.18 South Hills Recreation Area, environmental consequences

Effects common to all action alternatives

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and management activities for aquatic ecosystems and soil management would affect the management of the South Hills Recreation Area. The plan components that may have the greatest influence are those associated with RMZs. East of the Continental Divide, RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. West of the Continental Divide, the area influenced by riparian plan components is the same across all alternatives because RMZs would be defined the same way as riparian habitat conservation zones are in the no-action alternative.

Vegetation treatments such as prescribed fire and harvest that may occur in the South Hills Recreation Area would be limited or modified in RMZs. Riparian area plan components may limit or influence recreation-related activities, such as trail construction or maintenance, within the RMZs. The area on which these components apply is greater with the action alternatives than with the no-action alternative east of the Continental Divide.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur within the South Hills Recreation Area, and provide opportunities for natural fire to influence the vegetation condition of these areas. If fire does occur, it may alter the aesthetic quality of the landscape and may also create short term barriers to certain recreation uses (for example, dead trees that need to be cleared from trails). However, the potential negative impacts from fire would be ameliorated by fire and fuels plan components that emphasize hazardous fuel mitigation in high-use areas such as the South Hills Recreation Area. Fire management activities may help meet the desired conditions described in DI-SHRA-DC-03 related to resilience and low fire hazard.

Timber and vegetation management

The South Hills Recreation Area would not be suitable for timber production, but timber harvest may occur for other resource purposes, specifically for resource management objectives compatible with the recreation values of the area (DI-SHRA-SUIT-01). Harvest could be used to move towards the desired conditions described in DI-SHRA-DC-03. Plan components associated with timber harvest would ensure that all resource protection measures are met. Plan components related to desired vegetation conditions could influence whether vegetation treatments (such as harvest or management-ignited fires) are conducted, and help define the objectives for those treatments.

Livestock grazing and management

Livestock grazing could occur in portions of the South Hills Recreation Area. While livestock grazing itself has the potential to degrade plant communities through factors such as invasive plant spread and damage to riparian areas, plan components emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components should help protect the ecological integrity of the area.

Recreation and scenery management

Plan components for recreation settings, opportunities, and access along with scenery management would complement the management of the South Hills Recreation Area and ensure that potential recreation and other activities, such as restoration treatments, would be consistent with its desired conditions.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components related to cultural, historic, and tribal resource would have little to no effect on the South Hills Recreation Area.

Road access and infrastructure

Where road or trail maintenance, construction, or re-construction activities occur they would be guided by road access and infrastructure plan components which include protections for other resources.

Minerals management

Lands within the South Hills Recreation Area would be available for minerals activities.

Alternative A, no action

There is currently no direction for the proposed South Hills Recreation Area in the 1986 Helena NF Plan. However, there is plan direction for roadless areas and dispersed recreation areas that would apply to this area of the Forest. The following plan components from the existing 1986 Helena NF Plan would provide guidance for recreation uses within the area commonly considered the South Hills Recreation Area. This information is summarized in Table 175.

Table 175. Summary of existing Helena NF plan components for landscapes in the South Hills Recreation Area

Plan component	Expected effects
Helena NF Goals 1 and 2	These plan components provides for a range of outdoor recreation opportunities that could be developed for visitor use and satisfaction. Trails and trailheads in the area known as the South Hills would continue to be popular with locals as well as out of state visitors. Development of additional trails and trailhead facilities may be necessary to accommodate growth in recreation.
Helena NF Roadless Objective	Mount Helena IRA is located in the area. Additionally, the Lazyman Gulch area, also located within the area known as the South Hills, was formally established as an IRA in 2001. Management of these IRAs for their roadless characteristics would continue into the future.
Helena NF Management Area R-1	The R-1 management area provides direction for large blocks of undeveloped lands suited for dispersed recreation. These lands include the Mount Helena area which is located within the area commonly referred to as the South Hills. The focus in this management area is providing a variety of primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. Motorized activities are generally prohibited in this area and recreation facilities provide access to and support dispersed recreation. Management area-specific standards apply to recreation, visual quality, wildlife, range, timber, water/soils, minerals, protection, and facilities. Due to the proximity to populated areas, there is an emphasis of construction of trailhead facilities and wildlife suppression for this area. Specific restrictions apply to motorized recreation access, livestock animal use months, timber harvest, minerals, and road construction.

Alternatives B and C

Alternatives B and C identify the South Hills Recreation Area as an area to be managed with specific direction and emphasis. The focus of this area would be on dispersed nonmotorized recreation use provided by a network of trails throughout the area. These areas are supported by facilities such as trail treads and trailheads.

Due to the popularity of the proposed South Hills Recreation Area and the increased recreation use that this area receives, additional protections would be necessary to ensure safety and to reduce damage to natural and cultural resources. As a result, mountain bike activities would be permitted to occur on FS established roads and trails only. Mountain bike use off of established roads and trails would be prohibited in alternatives B and C.

This area would provide a semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation setting, although there are smaller pockets within the overall recreation area that would provide remote and more solitary experiences. Table 176 summarizes the expected effects of each plan component related to the South Hills Recreation Area in alternatives B and C.

Table 176. Summary of proposed plan components for South Hills Recreation Area (alternatives B and C)

Plan component	Expected effects
DI-SHRA-DC-01; 02	These DCs establish the South Hills Recreation Area as a non-motorized area available for a variety of dispersed, trail-oriented, non-motorized recreation activities.
DI-SHRA-DC-03	This DC provides direction to manage the vegetation in the South Hills Recreation Area to support safe recreation experiences. This would include creating vegetative conditions that are resilient to fire disturbances, promote low fire hazards near values at risk, emphasize fire resistant species, and manage for open stands more resistant to wildfire.
DI-SHRA-GO-01	This plan component promotes working collaboratively with partners and volunteer to accomplish work within the South Hills Recreation Area.
DI-SHRA-SUIT-01	The South Hills Recreation Area would not be suitable for timber production, although vegetation treatments could occur if consistent with the recreation values of the area.
DI-SHRA-SUIT-02	Mountain bike activities would be suitable in the South Hills Recreation Area on FS established roads and trails. Mountain bike activities off of designated roads and trails would be prohibited.

Alternative D

Alternative D is similar to alternatives B and C in that it also identifies the South Hills Recreation Area as an area to be managed with specific direction and emphasis. The focus of the South Hills Recreation Area in alternative D would also be on dispersed non-motorized recreation use provided by a network of trails throughout the area. Alternative D responds to comments received during pubic scoping asking the Forest to consider an alternative that increases the amount of RWAs and primitive recreation opportunities on the Forest. Commenters also asked the Forest to consider an alternative in the South Hills Recreation Area that would not allow mountain bike uses in portions of the area.

In response to these comments, alternative D identified a RWA in the Colorado Gulch area. This RWA would be managed for a primitive ROS setting, providing a recreation area within the South Hills Recreation Area where solitude and primitive recreation opportunities would be provided. Motorized and mechanized means of transportation (including bicycles) would not be allowed within the RWA.

The plan components for alternative D are the same as those developed for alternatives B and C above, except for the following plan component, described in Table 177 below.

Table 177. Summary of additional proposed plan component for South Hills Recreation Area (alternative D)

Plan component	Expected effects
DI-SHRA-SUIT-03	This plan component prohibits mountain bike use within the Colorado Mountain RWA and would create a primitive ROS setting within the overall South Hills Recreation Management Area.

Alternative E

Alternative E responds to comments received during pubic scoping asking the Forest to consider an alternative that did not identify RWAs and that increased the amounts of NFS lands available for timber harvest. In response to these comments, the South Hills Recreation Area would not be identified as a special area in alternative E. By not identifying this area for special recreation management, a subset of these lands would be available for timber production.

Recreation uses of this area would continue unaltered from the existing condition unless impacted by future timber harvesting, road construction, or travel planning. Due to the focus of timber management in this alternative, the ROS settings would shift, resulting in an increase in motorized ROS settings and a decrease in the amount of semi-primitive nonmotorized ROS settings.

There would be no specific plan components for the South Hills Recreation Area for alternative E.

Conclusions

Alternatives A and E do not identify a specific area designation for this area. Recreation would continue to be managed through site-specific and case-by-case management decisions on the Forest. Travel plans would provide guidance on where motorized uses could and could not occur.

Alternatives B and C would establish the South Hill Recreation Area as an administratively designated area on the HLC NF. By providing the plan components in these alternatives, the HLC NF would meet the purpose and need of the revised forest plan, ensuring that the South Hills Recreation Area is managed in the long term for its semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation uses.

Alternative D would establish the South Hill Recreation Area as an administratively designated area on the HLC NF. It also would meet the purpose and need of the revised forest plan by providing plan components that would ensure that it is managed for nonmotorized recreation uses into the future. The only exception would be that in addition to semi-primitive non-motorized settings, this alternative would also provide an area within the South Hills Recreation Area that provides primitive recreation opportunity settings. This primitive area would prohibit the use of mountain bikes.

3.22.19 Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit, affected environment

The Elkhorn Mountains are an island mountain range that lies in Broadwater, Jefferson, and Lewis and Clark Counties - approximately 18 air miles southeast of Helena, MT. This prominent mountain range is approximately 21 miles long and 19 miles wide and NFS lands within this mountain range total approximately 160,000 acres. The landscapes and the vegetation have been substantially altered by historic placer and lode mining, free range grazing, and recreation. Additionally, in the early years of European settlement, the area was heavily hunted and the populations of many big game species in the area were depleted. These influences have had serious and lasting impact on the natural resources of the area and the protection and restoration of this important landscape are some of the primary reasons it has been designated as a wildlife management area.

Although a portion of the Elkhorns GA is located on and administered by the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF, the components found in HLC NF revised forest plan would apply to the entire area.

In 1986-1987, both the Helena and Deerlodge Forest Plans included goals and standards for management of the Elkhorns. Two amendments to the Helena Forest Plan, Amendments 10 and 11, were established in 1995. These amendments provide direction for the Elkhorns in future management of the vegetative component on this landscape.

In the interest of managing this ecosystem with an emphasis on fish and wildlife values, the BLM; MTDFWP; and the Helena and Beaverhead-Deerlodge NFs entered into a memorandum of understanding in 1992 to provide consistent management across administrative boundaries. In 2013, the Natural

Resource Conservation Service signed on as a partner. Additionally, there are two citizens groups involved with the Elkhorns: the Elkhorn Working Group and the Elkhorn Restoration Committee.

The Elkhorn Working Group was initially established in 2002 to advise the MTDFWP, and the BLM in the development of collaborative recommendations related to wildlife/livestock management strategies in the Elkhorns. Over time, the Elkhorn Working Group has become a catalyst for self-sustaining, local responsibility for problem solving in the Elkhorns. The Elkhorn Working Group is composed of local landowners; representatives of business, sporting, and environmental communities; and employees from the FS, counties, BLM, and MTDFWP.

The Elkhorn Restoration Committee has its roots as a subcommittee of the Elkhorns Working Group. The goal of the Elkhorns Restoration Committee is to work with agency staff, organizations, and other interested parties to develop site-specific proposals for landscape restoration in the Elkhorns.

3.22.20 Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

The administrative designation of the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit would remain in place under all alternatives. Even though the plan components would be structured differently, all alternatives include components that would ensure the area is managed in a manner consistent with the Elkhorn Management Unit designation and the recommendations within the Final Report on the Elkhorn WSA (USDA 1981b).

Effects common to all action alternatives

All action alternatives would contain the similar plan components related to the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit. The primary difference between the action alternatives and the no-action alternative is that the land would be managed by a suite of plan components that apply forestwide, to the entire Elkhorns GA, or to specific land allocations within the GA (such as ROS settings). The land would not be divided into management units, as was done in the 1986 plans. Revised plan components are reflective of the plan components from the 1986 Helena NF Plan, but have been modified to meet the new 2012 Planning Rule direction.

Plan components relevant to the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit and their expected effects are summarized in Table 178. There are also additional plan components that apply to the Elkhorns GA that are not directly related to the purpose of the wildlife management unit, although they apply to the same landbase. These components are summarized as appropriate in other resource sections.

Table 178. Summary of proposed plan components for Elkhorns wildlife management unit

Plan component	Expected effects
EH-WMU-DC-01	This DC establishes that the Elkhorn Mountains GA would support native species and emphasize seclusion as a habitat feature.
EH-WMU-GO-01, 02, 03, 04, 05	These GOs would help ensure that the Elkhorn wildlife management unit is managed seamlessly across ownership boundaries, in close cooperation with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks as well as other agencies.
EH-WMU-GDL-01	This GDL would ensure that management activities would not have negative impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitats.
EH-WMU-SUIT-01; 02	These SUIT statements would result in the Elkhorns being unsuitable for timber production, but the utilization of harvest and prescribed fire would be emphasized to achieve purposes other than timber production, such as restoration, wildlife habitat improvements, hazardous fuel reduction, and protection of values at risk.

Plan component	Expected effects
EH-WMU-SUIT-03	This component would ensure that elk are not disturbed by motorized travel in elk wintering areas from the end of hunting season to the spring, which would limit stress and minimize displacement from forage and cover when food is scarce and energetic demands are high.
EH-WL-DC-01	This DC would help ensure that habitat for the needs of species with seclusion as a requirement is available.
EH-WL-STD-01	This STD would ensure that the most current recommendations or interagency efforts to maintain separation of bighorn sheep from domestic sheep and goats would be followed.
EH-WL-GDL-01, 02	These GDLs would ensure that activities or permits (including grazing, special uses, and others) would be designed to minimize impacts to wildlife, through measures such as timing, location, access, and retention of vegetation as needed.
EH-ACCESS-DC-01	This DC ensures that the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit provides dispersed nonmotorized recreation opportunities, and that authorized motorized recreation opportunities occur in defined areas and within defined timeframes.
EH-ACCESS-GDL-01	This GDL would ensure that access to private inholdings or mining claims would protect wildlife habitat.
EH-ACCESS-SUIT-01	This plan component prohibits the use of mountain bikes in a “core area” of the Elkhorns GA (alternative C only). This would create a more undeveloped recreation setting in this area.
EH-RT-STD-01 and 02	This STD establishes direction for when and where new permanent roads may be constructed and prohibits the establishment of a permanent road bisecting the Elkhorns Mountain Range. These actions support maintaining and enhancing an undeveloped setting in the core of the Elkhorns GA.
EH-RT-GDL-01	This GDL instructs that roads constructed for exploration or development of leasable minerals should avoid identified elk winter range, big-game calving areas or other identified wildlife habitats in which wildlife are known to be sensitive to disturbance or displacement. Permanent roads should meet the wildlife habitat objectives.
EH-TIM-GDL-01	This plan component would limit the harvest of timber and other forest products in elk winter range to the non-winter season. The effect of this would be to reduce the potential to disturb elk while they are using winter range resources, and the timing limitations may lower the feasibility of some harvest projects.
EH-EMIN-GDL-01, 02	These GDLs would limit the disturbance associated with energy and minerals activities that occurs during timeframes, or in locations, that are known to be sensitive for wildlife.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and management activities for aquatic ecosystems and soil management would affect the management of the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit. The plan components that may have the greatest influence are those associated with RMZs. East of the Continental Divide, RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. Vegetation treatments such as prescribed fire and harvest that may occur would be limited within RMZs, or modified to comply with plan components for those areas. The area on which these components apply is greater with the action alternatives than with the no-action alternative.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur within the Elkhorns wildlife management unit, and provide opportunities for natural fire to influence the vegetation condition of this area.

Timber and vegetation management

Under all alternatives, timber harvest and other vegetation management activities, such as reforestation, prescribed fire, and fuel reduction activities could occur within the Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit.

Plan components would ensure that these activities improve wildlife habitat, restore or maintain desired vegetation conditions, reduce hazardous fuels, and/or to protect values at risk. Prescribed fire could potentially be utilized anywhere in the GA. Projects with a purpose of restoration or maintenance of desired vegetation conditions could include maintaining or increasing nonforested plant communities, reducing conifer encroachment, promoting large trees and open forests, and increasing or promoting species such as limber pine, ponderosa pine, aspen, and whitebark pine.

While the Elkhorns GA would be unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest could be utilized in areas that do not specifically preclude this activity (such as primitive recreation settings). Table 179 displays the area where harvest could be allowed, excluding IRAs. While some very limited amounts of harvest could potentially occur in these areas, it would be restricted by the terms of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, and due to accessibility is unlikely to occur in the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit. Timber harvest could occur on a similar area under all alternatives.

Table 179. Acres[1] and proportion of lands unsuitable for timber production where harvest can occur in the Elkhorns GA, outside of IRAs

Alternative A	Alternative B/C	Alternative D	Alternative E
83,026 (51%)	86,482 (54%)	84,376 (52%)	86,482 (54%)

3. The acres of NFS lands unsuitable for timber production, but where harvest may occur. Excludes lands where harvest would not be permitted for any purpose, such as designated wilderness, WSAs, RWAs, RNAs, or primitive recreation settings. The total also excludes IRAs, where harvest would be greatly limited.

The modeling done to analyze terrestrial vegetation included treatment constraints and opportunities in the Elkhorns GA, as well as expected natural disturbances and processes. Please refer to the terrestrial vegetation section and appendix B for the expected trend of vegetation in the Elkhorns.

Livestock grazing and management

Livestock grazing may occur in portions of the Elkhorns wildlife management unit. While livestock grazing has the potential to degrade plant communities through factors such as invasive plant spread and damage to riparian areas, plan components emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components would help protect the ecological integrity of the area.

Wildlife management

Forestwide and Elkhorns GA plan components for wildlife management would complement the specific wildlife management plan components associated with the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit.

Recreation and scenery management

Plan components for recreation settings, opportunities, and access along with scenery management would complement the management of the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit and ensure that potential recreation and other activities, such as restoration treatments, would be consistent with its desired conditions for wildlife habitat.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components related to cultural, historic, and tribal resource would have little to no effect on the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit.

Road access and infrastructure

Where road or trail maintenance, construction, or re-construction activities occur they would be guided by road access and infrastructure plan components which include protections for other resources.

Minerals management

The Elkhorns would be available for minerals activities.

Alternative A, no action

The existing 1986 Forest Plan for the Helena NF includes guidance for the Elkhorn Wildlife Management Unit, as summarized in Table 180.

Table 180. Summary of existing plan components for Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit

Plan component	Expected effects
Management Area Elkhorns-1	The plan components provide direction for lands in the lower Crow Creek, Johnny Gulch, Slim Sam, lower Indian Creek, Kimber Gulch, Whitehorse Creek, Spokane Creek and Sheep Creek drainages in the norther, southern, and eastern portions of the Elkhorn Mountain Range. The focus is elk winter range, with goals including but not limited to improving vegetation through livestock management and prescribed fire. MA-specific standards apply to recreation, visual quality, wildlife, range, timber, water/soils, minerals, protection, and facilities. These standards would result in promoting winter elk security and elk winter range values. Specific restrictions apply to motorized winter recreation, livestock AUMs, timber harvest, minerals, and open roads.
Management Area Elkhorns-2	The plan components provide direction for lands in the unroaded areas within the central and western portions of the Elkhorns. This includes areas in the higher elevations (6,500 to 9,400 feet) in the upper Beaver Creek drainage, Casey Peak, High Peak, Casey Meadows, the upper Tizer Basin, Crow Peak, and Elkhorn Peak. The focus is maintaining or enhancing mountain goat and elk summer range. Goals for this area provide for other resource objectives, if they can be accomplished with minimal development while optimizing mountain goat and elk summer habitat. Specific standards apply to recreation, visual quality, wildlife, range, timber, water/soils, minerals, protection, and facilities. These standards would result in improving security for wildlife species and mountain goat and elk summer habitat. Restrictions apply to motorized summer recreation, livestock AUMs, timber harvest, minerals, and road construction.
Management Area Elkhorns-3	The plan components provide direction for lands in high elevations (6,000-7,000 feet) in the east-central and northeast portions of the Elkhorns. This includes portions of the Tizer Basin, Crow Creek drainage, and numerous small drainages. The focus of this management area is elk calving and summer range. Goals also focused on maintaining and enhancing moose, mule deer, and other wildlife habitat if they are compatible with elk calving and summer habitat. Management area-specific standards apply to recreation, visual quality, wildlife, range, timber, water/soils, minerals, protection, and facilities. These standards would result in improving security for elk calving and summer habitat. Specific restrictions apply to limiting motorized dispersed recreation, livestock AUMs, timber harvest, minerals, and road locations and densities.
Management Area Elkhorns-4	The plan components emphasize big game habitat management in the northwest portion of the Elkhorns Mountain Range. This are includes the McClellan Creek drainage and number of smaller drainages that drain west into Prickly Pear Creek. The focus is the optimization of moose, elk, and mule deer habitat and the maintenance or improvement of water quality and stream stability in McClellan Creek which contributes to the municipal water supply for East Helena. Specific standards apply to recreation, visual quality, wildlife, range, timber, water/soils, minerals, protection, and facilities. These standards would result in maintaining and enhancing big game wildlife habitat. Specific restrictions apply to motorized uses, livestock animal use months, timber harvest, minerals, and road locations and densities.

Alternatives B and E

Under alternatives B and E there would be no anticipated changes to recreation from the existing condition. The “core” area of the Elkhorns would be largely encompassed by an IRA, which would contribute to the availability of secluded habitat conditions. Potential mechanized use of the trails in this area could result in wildlife disturbance or displacement during the summer months, but this is not likely

to be substantially greater than the displacement caused by foot or equestrian travel. Over-snow motorized use would be allowed as currently designated by travel plans. Where it is permitted, this use has the potential to displace or disturb wildlife during the winter months. Refer to appendix A for a map of the ROS settings for these alternatives.

Alternative C

The core of the Elkhorns holds special significance for many people. During scoping, the public asked for the FS to consider prohibiting the use of mountain bikes in this core area to provide a more undeveloped recreation setting. In alternative C, mountain bikes would be prohibited from using approximately 60 miles of nonmotorized trails in a core area of the Elkhorns GA (see map in appendix A). These nonmotorized trails would be open to other nonmotorized uses.

This feature of alternative C would eliminate the potential of mountain bikes to disturb or displace wildlife in the core area; this effect would generally only occur in the summer months, which is a less vulnerable time for most wildlife species as compared to winter. Excluding mountain bikes may incrementally improve the quality of habitat for species that require seclusion. However, foot and equestrian travel could still occur, and the magnitude of this effect would be negligible.

Additionally, alternative C changes the winter ROS setting in a portion of the area from semi-primitive motorized, which allows for over-snow motorized uses (including snowmobiling), to semi-primitive non-motorized, which would prohibit those uses. This occurs on an area in the northwestern portion of the GA (see map in appendix A). Snowmobiling would continue to be allowed within roaded natural settings along roads that are open for this activity. By reducing over-snow motorized use, the quality of habitat for species that require seclusion would be improved in these areas in the winter in alternative C as compared to alternatives A, B, D and E. This improvement would correspond to the time of year when species such as elk are most vulnerable to stress.

Alternative D

Alternative D responds to comments received during pubic scoping asking the Forest to consider an alternative that identified a need to provide additional primitive, undeveloped recreation opportunities in the Elkhorns GA. This was accomplished by specifying a primitive ROS setting for an area in the central Elkhorns (see appendix A for a map). This results in a shift in the ROS settings, increasing the amount of primitive classes in both summer and winter seasons. A primitive ROS setting would prohibit the use of motorized uses in this area. This would create changes to the winter recreation uses in this area where motorized over-snow uses are currently authorized by the winter travel plan. Creating this primitive area would reduce the acres available to over snow winter recreation by 17,878 acres.

The area specified with a primitive ROS setting is generally the same as the Elkhorns Core area identified in alternative C where no mechanized use would occur. However, under alternative D mechanized use would be allowed in this area, while motorized uses would not. Excluding motorized uses in the winter would contribute to the availability and quality of habitat for species requiring seclusion, and reduce the potential for displacement or disturbance of these species during a time when they are the most vulnerable to stress. This is offset somewhat because the area where motorized over-snow use is prohibited in alternative C does not overlap this area. Therefore, while the overall net potential improvement to secluded habitat would be greatest in alternative D, in some specific locations alternative C contributes to habitat quality to a greater degree.

Cumulative Effects

Changing human population

Additional stressors that may increase in the future is increasing population, with resulting increasing demands and pressures on public lands. Locally, at present populations are increasing in the counties on

the west side of the plan area, but are declining or stable in other areas. These changes may lead to increased demands for recreational use, including hunting, in the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit. This pressure may elevate the importance of providing for habitat needs of wildlife.

Management of adjacent lands

Portions of the HLC NF adjoin other NFs, each having its own forest plan. The HLC NF is also intermixed with lands of other ownerships, including private lands, other federal lands, and state lands. The Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit encompasses portions of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF as well state, private, and BLM lands. This area is unique in that a memorandum of understanding is in place to ensure seamless management of the area occurs across agency boundaries.

Some adjacent lands are subject to their own resource management plans. The cumulative effects of these plans in conjunction with the HLC NF revised forest plan are summarized in Table 181, for those plans applicable to the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit.

Table 181. Summary of cumulative effects to the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit from other resource management plans

Resource plan	Description and Summary of effects
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Plan	To ensure seamless management, the entire Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit is guided by the HLC NF Forest Plan. Therefore there is no potential for conflict with the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF plan with respect to this area.
Montana Statewide Forest Resource Strategy (2010)	This plan guides forest management on state lands. It includes many concepts that are complementary to revised plan components for the HLC NF, including providing wildlife habitat. This strategy supports the management of the Elkhorns Wildlife Management unit which occurs cooperatively across agencies.
BLM Resource Management Plans (RMP)	BLM lands in the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit is managed by the Butte field office. The Butte plan was recently revised (2009). This plan contain components that complement the HLC NF forest plan (all alternatives) and supports the management of the area cooperatively across agencies.
Montana Army National Guard – Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for the Limestone Hills Training Area 2014	This plan is relevant to an area adjacent to NFS lands in the Elkhorns GA. The Limestone Hills area is primarily non-forested, and calls for managing for fire-resilient vegetation as well as restoration of native vegetation. This plan would be generally complementary to the management of the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit with regards to promoting the health of native vegetation. However, the disturbances that occur in this area may displace wildlife and increase the importance of seclusion on lands of other ownerships.
Montana's State Wildlife Action Plan	This plan describes a variety of vegetation conditions related to habitat for wildlife. This plan would be complementary to the habitat goals for the Elkhorn Wildlife management unit, and support the management of the area cooperatively across agencies.
County wildfire protection plans	Some county wildfire protection plans map and/or define the WUI. Where WUI occurs in the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit, these plans would support an emphasis on restoration and fuels reduction, which is consistent with revised plan components.

Conclusions

- Under all alternatives, the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit would be managed in a manner consistent with its original purpose for establishment.
- The action alternatives place a greater emphasis on restoration activities to improve wildlife habitat and to meet other resource objectives as compared to alternative A.
- The effects of alternatives B and E would be generally the same as alternative A. Mechanized use on nonmotorized trails has the potential to disturb wildlife in the summer months. Where it is permitted, motorized over-snow use has the potential to displace or disturb wildlife in the winter.

- In alternative C, the exclusion of mechanized use in the Elkhorns Core area may incrementally increase or improve the quality of habitat for species that require seclusion. However, foot and equestrian travel would still occur, and wildlife are generally less vulnerable when this use would occur (summer); therefore, the magnitude of this effect would be negligible.
- In alternative C, habitat quality for species that require seclusion would be improved in an area in the northwestern part of the GA due to exclusion of motorized over-snow uses. This improvement would correspond to the time of year when species such as elk are most vulnerable.
- In alternative D, the area in the Elkhorns Core would be designated as a primitive ROS setting, where mechanized use would be allowed but motorized uses would not, including over-snow uses. The overall net potential improvement to secluded habitat would be greatest in alternative D.

3.22.21 Kings Hill Scenic Byway, affected environment

The Kings Hill Scenic Byway is a 71-mile long National Forest Scenic Byway that begins at the junction of US Highways 89 and 12 near White Sulphur Springs, MT. Approximately 40 miles of the byway passes through NFS lands located in the Little Belts GA. The route provides access to NFS campgrounds, numerous dispersed camping opportunities, cross-country and downhill skiing, snowmobile play areas, and numerous trails and roads. A number of interpretive signs along the route highlight the many scenic, historic, and recreation features found along the scenic byway. Some of these signs are located on NFS lands but several are located on private and state lands and provide interpretations to these lands as well.

3.22.22 Kings Hill Scenic Byway, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Under all alternatives, the Kings Hill Scenic Byway would continue to be emphasized for providing access to and interpretation of the landscape and history of the area, and the many outdoor recreation opportunities accessed by the route.

Effects common to all action alternatives

Plan components developed for the Kings Hill Scenic Byway would remain the same in all action alternatives. These plan components focus on protecting and enhancing the scenic qualities along the route as well as providing guidance for interpretation and signage in the area. Table 182 summarizes the expected effects of each plan component related to the Kings Hill Scenic Byway.

Table 182. Summary of proposed plan components for Kings Hill Scenic Byway

Plan component	Expected effects
LB-KHSB-DC-01	This DC ensures that the scenic quality along the Kings Hill Scenic Byway is natural appearing and provides high scenic values.
LB-KHSB-DC-02 and 03	This DC ensures that the interpretive and recreation infrastructure located along the Kings Hill scenic byway protect, compliment, and promote the intrinsic scenic values along this route, and is cohesive and enhances the appreciation of the natural and cultural landscapes of this area.
LB-KHSB-GO-01	This GO aims to update, promote, and maintain the interpretation and signing along the scenic byway with assistance from partnerships with local and state highway districts and volunteers.
LB-KHSB-GDL-01	This GDL provides direction for the protection of scenic quality during the implementation of management activities along the Kings Hill Scenic Byway. This guidance should provide a consistent approach to the management of scenery along the route.
LB-KHSB-SUIT-01	Lands adjacent to the Kings Hill scenic byway would not be suitable for timber production but timber harvest may be used to improve or enhance the scenic quality along this route.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and activities associated with aquatic ecosystems and soil management would have no measurable influence on the King's Hill Scenic Byway.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur near the King's Hill Scenic Byway, and provide opportunities for natural fire to alter the vegetation condition of the landscape. When fire does occur, whether natural or management-ignited, it could change the scenery visible from the road, including charred vegetation in the short term as well as re-growth in the longer term. Fire on the landscape is a natural process that would generally complement the scenic quality objectives for the King's Hill Scenic Byway.

Timber and vegetation management

The area surrounding the King's Hill Scenic Byway is unsuitable for timber production, but harvest and other vegetation management activities could occur to provide for public safety and/or to enhance the recreational and scenic values of the area. Where harvest does occur, it could impact the scenic values visible from the road, including more open vegetation and stumps, as well as soil disturbance in the short term. However, harvest could be used to improve the scenic quality by creating vistas, mimic vegetation structures that would be created by natural disturbance, promote healthy vegetation, and remove hazardous trees. Vegetation plan components would help define the objectives for treatments. In addition to harvest, plan components would allow for other vegetation treatments such as tree planting and weed spraying, which could further enhance the scenic quality of the byway. All vegetation treatments would be designed to meet the required SIO of the byway (high).

Livestock grazing and management

Plan components and activities associated with livestock grazing are not likely to have an effect on the King's Hill Scenic Byway.

Recreation and scenery management

Recreation and scenery management plan components would complement the management of the King's Hill Scenic Byway by specifying ROS settings and scenic quality objectives that are consistent with maintaining or moving toward the desired conditions of the byway, along with providing the facilities and infrastructure needed for public access and interpretation.

Wildlife management

Plan components and activities associated with wildlife management are not likely to have an effect on the King's Hill Scenic Byway.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components and activities associated with cultural, historic, and tribal resource management are not likely to have an effect on the King's Hill Scenic Byway.

Road access and infrastructure

Plan components associated with road access and infrastructure would have little effect on the management of the King's Hill Scenic Byway because the highway itself is not maintained by the FS.

Minerals management

Lands along the Kings Hill Scenic Byway would be available for mineral activities.

Alternative A, no action

Table 183 summarizes the existing Forest Plan components for the Kings Hill Scenic Byway. A number of plan components in the 1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan guide the management of the visual resource within the seen areas from this major route. The Kings Hill Scenic Byway is also managed through the Scenic Byway Master Plan, a separate plan developed in 1992 that provides guidance for the interpretation sites along the scenic byway as it passes through the Forest.

Table 183. Summary of existing plan components for Kings Hill Scenic Byway

Plan component	Expected effects
Lewis and Clark NF Goal 1	This goal provides for resource development and use activities so long as land and resource quality and productivity are protected and/or improved. This direction includes the consideration of natural beauty.
Lewis and Clark NF Objectives	Visual resource management would be emphasized in areas seen from identified visually sensitive roads and trails.
Lewis and Clark NF Forest-wide Standard A-8	Highway 89, Kings Hill Scenic Byway, is identified as a Sensitivity Level 1 viewpoint. Seen areas from Sensitivity Level 1 roads occur in different management areas with different prescriptions, however, views from them are important and would be managed to reflect visual quality objectives.
Lewis and Clark NF Management Area A	This management area identifies the high scenic values near US Highway 89 (Kings Hill Scenic Byway). Scenic values would be protected, maintained or enhances along this highway. The visual quality objectives of retention and partial retention would be met.
Lewis and Clark NF Forest Plan Amendment 16	This plan amendment recognizes the importance of the scenic values along US Highway 89 and increase the number of acres next to the route to protect and enhance those scenic values.

Alternatives B-E

See effects common to all action alternatives.

Conclusions

There is currently no specific direction for the Kings Hill Scenic Byway in the 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan. In alternative A, the no-action alternative, direction for the scenic byway would continue to be provided through the Scenic Byway Master Plan, a separate plan developed in 1992 to provide guidance for the interpretative sites along the scenic byway as it passes through the Forest.

In the action alternatives, (alternatives B- E) all plan components for the Kings Hill Scenic Byway would remain the same. By providing the plan components outlined in the action alternatives, the HLC NF would meet the purpose and need of the revised forest plan, ensuring that the nature and purposes for which the Kings Hill Scenic Byway was identified is enhanced and/or protected for present and future generations.

3.22.23 Badger Two Medicine, affected environment

The area commonly known as the Badger Two Medicine encompasses approximately 129,600 acres at the northern end of the Rocky Mountain Range GA. The majority of this area is located within the Badger-Two Medicine Traditional Cultural District, an area acknowledged for its significance to the oral traditions and culture practices of the Blackfeet people, who have used the lands for traditional purposes for generations and continue to value the area as important to maintaining their community's continuing cultural identity.

The Badger Two Medicine also falls within the 1895 Agreement with the Indians of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana, which states that the Blackfeet Nation will retain treaty rights to extract timber, fish, animals, and other resources in the Badger Two Medicine area.

3.22.24 Badger Two Medicine, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Under all alternatives, the Badger Two Medicine would continue to provide primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation opportunity settings. The Badger Two Medicine Traditional Cultural District would remain intact and would continue to acknowledge the significance of this area to the Blackfeet people. The 1895 Agreement with the Indians of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana would continue to provide the Blackfeet Nation with treaty rights to extract timber, fish, animals, and other resources in the Badger Two Medicine area.

Variances for travel for traditional and cultural purposes would be permitted to meet treaty obligations with the Blackfeet Nation and to protect or enhance the Badger Two Medicine Traditional Cultural District in all of the alternatives.

Effects common to all action alternatives

The plan components developed for the Badger Two Medicine area would remain the same in all action alternatives. These plan components focus on protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural values throughout the Badger Two Medicine area. Table 184 summarizes the expected effects of each plan component related to the Badger Two Medicine.

Table 184. Summary of proposed plan components for Badger Two Medicine

Plan component	Expected effects
RM-BTM-DC-01	This DC identifies that the Badger Two Medicine is a special area of the Blackfeet Nation and should be managed as a large undeveloped landscape with important traditional and cultural values.
RM-BTM-DC-02	This DC recognizes the outstanding natural and ecological environment of the Badger Two Medicine area and provides for management actions only to the extent that they do not detract from the natural settings and are in harmony with the purposes of the Badger Two Medicine Traditional Cultural District.
RM-BTM-DC-03	This DC acknowledges that the Badger Two Medicine has value for education and research opportunities.
RM-BTM-STD-01	This STD ensures that the Badger Two Medicine is managed in close consultation with the Blackfeet Nation to fulfill Blackfeet treaty rights and the federal trust respectively. The area shall protect and honor the Blackfeet reserved rights and sacred lands. The uses of the area must be compatible with desired conditions with compatibility determined through government to government consultations.
RM-BTM-STD-02	Management activities in the Badger Two Medicine shall not pose adverse effects to the Badger Two Medicine Traditional Cultural District. Management activities shall consider research and ethnographic research as they relate to the Blackfeet cultural land-use identities.
RM-BTM-STD-03	Blackfeet tribal members shall have access to the Badger Two Medicine for the exercise of reserved treaty rights, and opportunities to practice spiritual, ceremonial, and cultural activities.
RM-BTM-SUIT-01	Lands within the Badger Two Medicine would not be suitable for timber production but timber harvest may be used to emphasize habitat restoration, hazardous fuel reduction, and support tribal treaty rights.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and management activities for aquatic ecosystems and soil management may affect the management of the Badger Two Medicine. The plan components that may have the greatest influence are those associated with RMZs. East of the Continental Divide, RMZs would be adopted and result in more

acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. Vegetation treatments such as prescribed fire and harvest that may occur would be limited within RMZs, or modified to comply with plan components for those areas. Riparian area plan components may also limit or influence recreation-related activities, such as trail construction or maintenance, within the RMZs. The area on which these components apply is greater with the action alternatives than with the no-action alternative.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur within the Badger Two Medicine area, and provide opportunities for natural fire to influence the vegetation condition of this area.

Timber and vegetation management

The Badger Two Medicine area is not suitable for timber production, but timber harvest may occur for other resource purposes, specifically for habitat restoration, hazardous fuel reduction, and to support tribal treaty rights (RM-BTM-SUIT-01). Plan components associated with timber harvest would ensure that all resource protection measures are met. Plan components related to desired vegetation conditions could influence whether vegetation treatments (such as harvest or management-ignited fires) are conducted, and help define the objectives for those treatments.

Livestock grazing and management

While livestock grazing itself has the potential to degrade plant communities through factors such as invasive plant spread and damage to riparian areas, plan components emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components would help protect the ecological integrity of the area.

Recreation and scenery management

Plan components for recreation settings, opportunities, and scenery management would complement the management of the Badger Two Medicine area by establishing ROS settings and SIOs consistent with the desired conditions for the area.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components related to cultural, historic, and tribal resource would help preserve these important features of the Badger Two Medicine area.

Road access and infrastructure

Where road or trail maintenance, construction, or re-construction activities occur they would be guided by road access and infrastructure plan components which include protections for other resources.

Minerals management

In 2006, Public Law 109-432 withdrew the lands in the Badger Two Medicine area from mineral entry. Mineral activities may still occur within the areas that have been withdrawn as long as a proponent has demonstrated they have a valid existing right.

Alternative A, no action

Under alternative A, the Badger Two Medicine would not be identified as an administratively designated area and would be managed according to direction provided in the 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan. There is no specific direction for the Badger Two Medicine in the existing 1986 Forest Plan but there is overall direction for cultural and natural resources that would apply. The Badger Two Medicine Traditional Cultural District would remain intact and would continue to acknowledge the significance of this area to the Blackfeet people. The 1895 Agreement with the Indians of the Blackfeet Indian

Reservation in Montana would continue to provide the Blackfeet Nation with treaty rights to extract timber, fish, animals, and other resources in the Badger Two Medicine area.

Table 185 displays the general plan components from the existing 1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan that would provide guidance for the Badger Two Medicine in alternative A.

Table 185. Summary of existing plan components for the Badger Two Medicine area

Plan component	Expected effects
Lewis and Clark NF; Goals 3, 7, 8, and 9	These plan components provide for the protection and improvement high quality wildlife and fish habitat, quality and quantity of water, and protecting the existing condition of the Badger Two Medicine area.
Lewis and Clark NF; Objectives	The objectives in the 1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan provide guidance for recreation, visual, cultural, water, soils, and wildlife and fish habitats found within the Badger Two Medicine.
Lewis and Clark NF; Forest-wide Standards A-7, A-8, C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, C-5, N-2, N-3, F-3, H-1, and H-2	The Forest-wide standards for the affected resources within the Badger Two Medicine on the Lewis and Clark Forest focus on protecting the cultural, historic, scenic, and natural resource values within this area.

Alternatives B, C, and E

The plan components for the Badger Two Medicine area are the same in all of the action alternatives and are noted above in the effects common to all action alternatives section.

Alternative D

Alternative D responds to comments received during pubic scoping asking the Forest to consider an alternative that increases the amounts of primitive recreation opportunities on the forest. In response to these comments, the entire Badger Two Medicine would be managed for a primitive ROS setting. Establishing this area as a primitive setting would limit the development of facilities and the type and extent of management activities that would occur within the area.

Despite the primitive ROS class changes, the plan components for the Badger Two Medicine area are the same in alternative D as they are in all of the other action alternatives.

Conclusions

Under all alternatives, the Badger Two Medicine would continue to provide primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity settings. The Badger Two Medicine Traditional Cultural District would remain intact and would continue to acknowledge the significance of this area to the Blackfeet people. The 1895 Agreement with the Indians of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana would continue to provide the Blackfeet Nation with treaty rights to extract timber, fish, animals, and other resources in the Badger Two Medicine area.

Under alternative A, the Badger Two Medicine would not be identified as an administratively designated area and would continue to be managed according to direction provided in the 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan.

In alternatives B- E, plan components for the Badger Two Medicine would be established and would be the same for all action alternatives. Alternative D would manage the area for a primitive ROS setting which would limit the construction of facilities and the management of natural resources within the area. While this change would affect overall recreation settings, the plan components would remain the same as all of the other action alternatives.

By providing the plan components outlined in the action alternatives, the HLC NF would meet the purpose and need of the revised forest plan, ensuring that the Badger Two Medicine is managed for the significant cultural and natural resources that make this area a unique and special place.

3.23 Congressionally Designated Areas

3.23.1 Introduction

The term “designated area” refers to a specific area on a landscape that has been established by statute, regulation, or policy, and once established the designation continues until a subsequent decision by the appropriate authority removes the designation. Designated areas within the Forest have been given permanent designation to maintain their unique special character or purpose.

Land management plans may include recommendations to establish additional or modify existing previously designated areas. Some designations, such as RWAs and eligible WSRs, may be designated or established concurrent with a plan decision, while others may not.

This section analyzes the effects of a new forest plan to the areas that are currently designated congressionally by law. It also analyzes the recommendation of additional areas for potential future congressional designations. The following existing designated areas will be covered in this section:

- Designated Wilderness Areas
- WSAs
- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
- Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
- Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center
- Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area

The section also covers the following recommendations for additional designated areas:

- RWAs
- Eligible WSRs

Issues

A number of issues were raised during the scoping period for the proposed action. Some of these issues arose from within the FS and some were brought forward by the public. The issues that drove alternatives for congressionally designated areas were:

- The amount and location of RWAs.
- The allowance or restriction of motorized over-snow uses, motorized trail use, and mechanized means of transport, including bicycles, within RWAs.

Other issues that were analyzed include:

- The identification of eligible WSR segments and outstandingly remarkable values for those rivers.
- Plan components associated with the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center and Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area.

Measurement indicators

Effects to RWAs resulting from the proposed action and alternatives are measured using the following indicators:

- Acres of RWA
- Acres open to motorized over snow use within RWAs
- Miles of motorized trail within RWAs
- Miles of nonmotorized trail open to mechanical means of transport (including bicycles) within RWAs

The alternatives are compared qualitatively for the other designated areas, with respect to their overall management and desirable characteristics.

Analysis areas

The geographic scope of the analysis changes by the designated area being analyzed. The following describes the analysis area used for each of the congressionally designated areas and areas proposed for future designation. These analysis areas form the scope for cumulative effects. The temporal scope for effects is the life of the plan (approximately 15 years).

- **Wilderness:** the congressionally determined boundaries of the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Gates of the Mountains wilderness areas, including recent 2014 additions to those wilderness areas.
- **Wilderness Study Areas:** the congressionally determined boundaries of the Big Snowies and Middle Fork Judith WSAs.
- **Continental Divide National Scenic Trail**: the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail corridor on the HLC NF.
- **Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail:** the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail corridor on the HLC NF.
- **The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center:** the congressionally determined boundary of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center as well as the buildings and facilities associated with the interpretive site.
- **Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area:** the congressionally determined boundary of the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area.
- **Recommended wilderness**: the proposed boundaries for each RWAs are developed for each alternative based on the wilderness inventory and evaluation process.
- **Eligible wild and scenic rivers**: the eligible WSR segments were determined through the WSR process. The analysis area for the rivers includes the identified segments and associated corridor where plan components apply (1/4 mile on either side of the river).

3.23.2 Regulatory framework

Public Law 92-395 (1972): Identifies and designates by law the Scapegoat Wilderness Area on the Lolo, Helena, and Lewis and Clark National Forests.

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Public Law 113-291) The stated purpose for this conservation management area is to “conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the recreational, scenic, historical, cultural, fish, wildlife, roadless, and ecological values of the Conservation Management Area”. The law directs the management of motorized vehicles on roads and trails, decommissioning of temporary roads, grazing, vegetation management, noxious weed management, and nonmotorized recreation opportunities. This law also created additions to both the Bob Marshall and the Scapegoat Wilderness Areas.

Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-150): This act identified 9 different areas as WSAs within the state of Montana and required the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct studies on these areas to determine their wilderness suitability. Two of the WSAs fall within the HLC NF: Middle Fork Judith and the Big Snowies.

Final Impact Statement, Middle Fork Judith and Big Snowies Montana Wilderness Study Act Areas, 1982: This study was conducted as a requirement of the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977. Its purpose was to determine whether these areas were suitable for inclusion as wilderness in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of October 2, 1968 (P.L. 90-542, 82 Stat. 906, as amended): This act establishes a National WSRs System with three classes of river systems: wild, scenic, and recreation. The purpose of the act was to protect the river "…for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations."

Public Law 100-552, establishing the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center: This law authorized the FS to plan, build, and manage an interpretive facility to "further the public's understanding and provide appropriate interpretation of the scope and accomplishments of the Lewis and Clark Expedition" of 1804-1806.

Public Law 113-291: National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015: This act includes approximately 195,073 acres of federal lands managed by the FS and approximately 13,087 acres of federal land managed by the BLM. The stated purpose for this conservation management area is to "conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the recreational, scenic, historical, cultural, fish, wildlife, roadless, and ecological values of the Conservation Management Area."

3.23.3 Assumptions

Congressionally designated areas on the HLC NF have all been designated through an act of Congress and the direction for these areas is provided by the associated enabling laws. It is assumed that the HLC NF will manage these areas according to these enabling laws indefinitely or until the current laws are superseded or supplemented by new and/or additional laws.

3.23.4 Best available scientific information used

The Forest used the best available data and science relevant to inform the analysis for the new forest plan components for designated areas on the forest. Data sources included GISs for mapping, the latest information from the National Visitor Use Data project, information stored in the corporate data base, and site-specific knowledge from forest personnel.

3.23.5 Designated wilderness, affected environment

In 1964 Congress passed the Wilderness Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-577) and defined wilderness as a place "in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape… where earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain… an area of undeveloped Federal lands retaining its primeval character and influences, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed to preserve its natural condition and which:

- Generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable;
- Has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation;
- Has at least 5,000 acres or is of sufficient size as to make it practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition;
- May also contain ecological, geological, or other feature of scientific, educational, scenic, or historic value."

The Wilderness Act of 1964 requires the preservation of wilderness character and recognizes multiple values and public benefits found in these areas.

The HLC NF manages three designated wilderness areas: the Bob Marshall, the Scapegoat, and the Gates of the Mountains. Portions of both the Bob Marshall and the Scapegoat lie outside of the plan area on adjacent forests so management of these wilderness areas is shared with surrounding forests. The entire Gates of the Mountains Wilderness lies within the HLC NF and is managed solely by the Forest. These three wilderness areas comprise approximately 20% of the Forest for a total of 565,158 acres. Table 186 describes the three wilderness areas on the HLC, the GAs in which they are found, and their total acres.

Table 186. Designated wilderness areas

Wilderness	GA	Total Wilderness Acres within the HLC-NF
Gates of the Mountains	Big Belts	28,440
Bob Marshall	Rocky Mountain Range	352,437
Scapegoat	Upper Blackfoot and Rocky Mountain Range	184,281
Total acres of wilderness in the plan area		**565,158**

Bob Marshall Wilderness

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Area totals approximately 1,059,757 acres. Management of this wilderness is shared between the Flathead NF and the HLC NF. The HLC NF portion of the total wilderness area is approximately 352,437 acres. The “Bob”, as it is commonly referred to, straddles the Continental Divide with elevations that range from 4,000 feet along the valley floor to more than 9,000 feet atop the serpentine Continental Divide. It includes the headwaters of the Flathead River to the west and the Sun River to the east. The Bob is noted for excellent hunting, fishing, scenery, and geology. Its vast beauty is highlighted by a huge escarpment known as the “Chinese Wall.” The wall averages 1,000 feet in height and extends 22 miles along the Continental Divide. Topography ranges from rugged precipitous ridge tops to gentle sloping alpine meadows and forested river bottoms.

Scapegoat Wilderness

The Scapegoat Wilderness Area is approximately 256,647 acres. Management of this wilderness is shared between the Lolo NF and HLC NF. The HLC NF portion is approximately 184,281 acres. Located just south of and bordering the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area, the Scapegoat also straddles the Continental Divide. Most of this wilderness lies between the elevations of 5,000 feet at the Blackfoot River to 9,400 feet at the top of Red Mountain. Topography of the Scapegoat Wilderness Area ranges from rugged ridge tops, to gently sloping alpine meadows, to forested slopes and river bottoms. The massive limestone cliffs of the Scapegoat Mountain are an extension of the “Chinese Wall” in the adjacent Bob Marshall Wilderness.

Gates of the Mountains Wilderness

The Gates of the Mountains Wilderness is located on the east slope of the Continental Divide and, at 28,562 acres, it is one of Montana’s smaller wilderness areas. The Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Area is characterized by massive limestone beds which naturally eroded over millions of years to create the towering cliffs and deep canyons that inspired Captain Meriwether Lewis to call the area “the gates of the Rocky Mountains” during his passage up the Missouri River in 1805. This historical feature is located on the Missouri River adjacent to the wilderness area and is how the wilderness got its name.

3.23.6 Designated wilderness, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Since direction for wilderness management is detailed in law, regulation, and agency policy and in specific management plans, the effects to designated wilderness as a result of the revised plan do not differ by alternative. In all alternatives, the acres of the existing Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Areas would remain the same. There would be no effect to undeveloped or special features and values in any of the alternatives. Significant effects to these wilderness areas are also not expected under any of the alternatives.

A primitive experience would be maintained in the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Areas in all alternatives. Natural ecological processes and disturbance would continue to be the primary forces affecting the composition, structure, and patterns of vegetation. Management under all of the alternatives would continue to protect and preserve the wilderness character found within the wilderness areas on the HLC NF.

All alternatives would carry forward the need for wilderness patrols, wilderness rehabilitation of any impacted sites, wilderness education, and wilderness-specific management plans. These activities would be common to all alternatives.

Effects common to all action alternatives

The plan components developed for designated wilderness would remain the same in all action alternatives. Table 187 summarizes the expected effects of each plan component related to designated wilderness areas.

Table 187. Summary of proposed plan components for designated wilderness areas

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-WILD-DC-01	This DC ensures that the key qualities of wilderness character in the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Areas contribute to the public purposes for which these wilderness areas were designated.
FW-WILD-DC-02	This DC ensures that the primary forces that affect wilderness character in designated wilderness areas are natural ecological processes and disturbances.
FW-WILD-DC-03	This DC ensures that the large remote areas within the Bob Marshal, Scapegoat, and Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Areas contribute to wildlife species habitat and wildlife movement within and across the Forest.
FW-WILD-DC-04	This DC provides for undisturbed quality habitat for fish, amphibians, and other aquatic-associated species.
FW-WILD-DC-05	This DC ensures that summer and winter recreation opportunities are consistent with the ROS classification of primitive.
FW-WILD-DC-06	This DC ensures that facilities, trails, and signage within designated wilderness areas is minimal, and where present, is constructed of rustic, native, or natural appearing materials to maintain the primitive setting.
FW-WILD-DC-07	This DC ensures that non-motorized and non-mechanized recreation opportunities for exploration, solitude, risk, challenge and primitive recreation are retained within designated wilderness areas.
FW-WILD-DC-08	This DC establishes that opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be moderate to high on the existing trail system, and very high when traveling cross country within designated wilderness areas.
FW-WILD-DC-09	This DC ensures that outfitter and guide services within the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Gates of the mountains wilderness areas provide support to recreation opportunities and respond to relevant public need.

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-WILD-GO-01	This GO promotes working collaboratively with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and the USFWS to manage wildlife resources to protect wilderness character.
FW-WILD-GO-02	The plan components promotes the collaborative efforts between the Lolo, Flathead, and HLC NF in the management of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex which includes the Great Bear, Bob Marshall, and Scapegoat wilderness areas.
FW-WILD-GDL-01	This GDL provides direction for the grazing and tethering of recreational stock along water sources within designated wilderness settings.
FW-WILD-GDL-02	This GDL provides management direction for the cave resources in designated wilderness.
FW-WILD-SUIT-01; 02; 03; 04	Designated wilderness areas allow for existing livestock grazing allotments, but are not suitable for timber production or timber harvest, commercial use of non-timber forest products, motorized uses, or mechanical means of transportation.

During scoping, multiple members of the public asked the Forest to consider allowing both recreation aviation (internal airstrips) and mountain biking activities within designated wilderness. Currently, these activities are prohibited by law and are not allowed within the Gates of the Mountains, Scapegoat, and Bob Marshall Wilderness Areas on the HLC NF. The revised forest plan must meet and uphold the current law of the land. Therefore, the plan cannot make designated wilderness areas suitable for these activities.

In all action alternatives wilderness management plans would exist outside of the forest plan. This allows the Forest the ability to provide additional direction for each individual wilderness area. These wilderness management plans would adhere to the plan components of the revised forest plan.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and activities related to watershed, soil, riparian, or aquatic habitat improvements would have little to no effects related to the overall management within designated wilderness areas.

Fire and fuels management

Natural, unplanned ignitions would continue the long-term ecological processes in these areas. In limited cases, planned ignitions may also occur within designated wilderness for specific, limited purposes. During and following fire, there could be a temporary loss of vegetation, reduction in water quality due to sedimentation, and increased air pollution. However, these effects are part of the natural ecological processes which are essential to wilderness character in designated wilderness areas. Changes in trail access due to down timber resulting from fire activity may disrupt recreation access patterns in wilderness areas.

Timber and vegetation management

Designated wilderness areas are withdrawn from timber production and are not suitable for timber harvest. There would be no effect to designated wilderness from harvest or other vegetation management.

Livestock grazing and management

Existing range allotments would continue to be managed as specified within permits in all alternatives. New or expanded livestock grazing allotments would not be allowed.

Wildlife management

Activities related to wildlife management would have little to no effects related to the overall management of designated wilderness areas.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Activities related to cultural, historic, and tribal resource management would have little to no effects related to the overall management of designated wilderness areas.

Minerals management

The Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Areas have been withdrawn from mineral entry and are not available for new leases or filing of new unpatented mining claims. Mining activities may still occur within designated wilderness areas as long as a proponent has demonstrated they have a valid existing right.

Alternative A, no action

In the no-action alternative, designated wilderness areas would continue to be managed under the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark Forest Plans. Amendment 1 in both 1986 Forest Plans provides additional direction through the Bob Marshall Complex Recreation Management Plan. This plan provides baseline information for limits of acceptable change for both the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wilderness Areas. Future wilderness and other laws may determine where additional wilderness areas could be allocated.

Table 188 describes the plan components in the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark Forest Plans that provide direction for designated wilderness areas.

Table 188. Summary of existing plan components for designated wilderness areas

Plan component	Expected effects
1986 Helena NF Plan, Goals 3, Page II/1	Wilderness values are protected and provide benefit to the public in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964.
1986 Helena NF Plan, Objectives; Resource Activities/Summaries, Wilderness, Page II/3	This objective ensures that designated wilderness areas will be managed according to the Wilderness Act of 1964 and emphasizes the importance of wildlife habitat for big game species, significant nongame species, and threatened and endangered species. This objective provides direction for grazing allotments within wilderness, and the gathering of recreation use data for maintaining long-term opportunities for wilderness experiences. It also points to fire management direction for the Scapegoat wilderness.
1986 Helena NF Plan, Forest-wide Standard, Recreation 5 and 6, Page II/15	Standard 5 under Recreation emphasizes the “Pack-In, Pack-Out” policy within dispersed recreation areas and wilderness. Standard 6 provides information to users of remote areas and wilderness about proper camping methods to avoid potential conflicts with humans and bears.
1986 Helena NF Plan, Management Areas P-1 and P-2, Pages III/56 through III/72	Management area P-1 provides direction for the portions of the Scapegoat wilderness located on the Helena NF. Management area P-2 provides direction for the Gates of the Mountain wilderness area.
1986 Helena NF Plan, Forest Plan Amendment 1	This amendment adopts the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wildernesses – Recreation Management Plan, which provides overall direction and consistency for management across the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan Goal 2, Page 2-2	This goal provides for long-term opportunities for wilderness experiences in the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat wilderness areas.
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan, Forest-wide Objectives, Wilderness, Page 2-5	This objective ensures that designated wilderness areas would be managed according to the Wilderness Act of 1964, and emphasizes the importance of wildlife habitat for big game species, significant nongame species, and threatened and endangered species. This objective provides direction for grazing allotments within wilderness and provides direction for the use of Limits of Acceptable Change policy for determining the limits on the amounts and types of recreation use that can be tolerated within wilderness areas.
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan, Management Area P, Pages 3-72 t0 3-84	This management area provides direction for the portions of the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat wilderness areas that are located on the Lewis and Clark NF.

Plan component	Expected effects
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan, Forest Plan Amendment 1	This amendment adopts the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wildernesses – Recreation Management Plan, which provides overall direction and consistency for management across the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

Alternatives B-E

See effects common to all action alternatives, above.

Cumulative Effects

Portions of the HLC NF adjoin other NFs, each of which have their own plans. The HLC NF is also intermixed with lands of other ownerships, including private lands, other federal lands, and state lands. Some adjacent lands are subject to their own resource management plans. The cumulative effects of these plans in conjunction with the HLC NF revised forest plan are summarized in Table 189.

Table 189. Summary of cumulative effects to designated wilderness from other resource management plans

Resource plan	Description and Summary of effects
Adjacent National Forest Plans	The forest plans for NFS lands adjacent to the HLC NF include the Lolo, Flathead, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge NFs. All of those plans address designated wilderness. Management of designated wilderness is consistent across all NFs due to law, regulation, and policy. The cumulative effect would be that the management of designated wilderness would be generally complementary. This includes specific adjacent landscapes where shared wilderness management occurs, such as, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex where management of the complex is shared between the Flathead, Lolo, and HLC NF.
Montana Statewide Forest Resource Strategy (2010)	This plan guides resource management on state lands. It includes many concepts that are complementary to revised plan components for the HLC NF. State forest lands are more actively managed than NFS lands.
BLM Resource Management Plans (RMP)	BLM lands near the HLC NF are managed by the Butte, Missoula, and Lewistown field offices. The Butte plan was recently revised (2009) while the existing plans for the Missoula and Lewistown areas are under revision. These plans contain components related to wilderness and would therefore be complementary to the plan components for the HLC NF.
National Park Service - Glacier National Park General Management Plan 1999	The general management plan for Glacier National Park calls for preserving natural vegetation, landscapes, and disturbance processes. Broadly, the wilderness characteristics in this area are likely similar to the wilderness area in the adjacent Rocky Mountain Range GA and would likely complement these conditions.
Montana's State Wildlife Action Plan	This plan describes a variety of vegetation conditions related to habitat for specific wildlife species. This plan would likely result in the preservation of these habitats on state lands, specifically wildlife management areas. This plan would interact with the Montana Statewide Forest Resource Strategy. The vegetation conditions described would be complementary to the conditions being managed for with the HLC NF revised forest plan.
County wildfire protection plans	Some county wildfire protection plans map and/or define the WUI. The HLC NF notes that these areas may be a focus for hazardous fuels reduction, and other plan components (such as NRLMD) have guidance specific to these areas. Managing for open forests and fire adapted species may be particularly emphasized in these areas. Overall, the effect of the county plans would be to influence where treatments occur to contribute to desired vegetation conditions.

Conclusions

Since only Congress can establish wilderness areas, the acres and locations of designated wilderness would not vary in any of the alternatives, including alternative A. The action alternatives include plan components that would provide direction for the management of the existing designated wilderness areas

on the Forest, including the protection and preservation of existing wilderness character and guidelines for the management of facilities, trails, and outfitter and guide permits within designated wilderness. By providing the plan components outlined in the action alternatives, the HLC NF would meet the purpose and need of the forest plan, ensuring that designated wilderness areas are managed in ways that are ecologically and socially sustainable for present and future generations.

Wilderness management plans would exist outside of the forest plan providing additional wilderness-specific management direction for each individual wilderness area. These wilderness management plans would adhere to the plan components of the revised forest plan.

3.23.7 Recommended wilderness, affected environment

RWAs are lands that contain wilderness characteristics and have potential for inclusion in future wilderness designations. These lands are generally free from roads and other constructed features and have high potential to provide solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation. RWAs are also important for species diversity, protection of threatened and endangered species, protection of watershed scientific research, and various social values.

The current 1986 Helena Forest Plan identifies and provides management direction for three RWAs: Electric Peak, Big Log, and Mount Baldy. These RWAs total approximately 34,365 acres. Of the three, Big Log lies adjacent to the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness area. Both Big Log and Mount Baldy are completely located on the HLC NF. Only a portion of the Electric Peak RWA lies within the HLC NF. The remainder of Electric Peak RWA is located on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF. Table 190 identifies the three existing RWAs, the GAs in which they are located, and the number of acres for each.

Table 190. 1986 Helena Forest Plan RWAs

Recommended Area	GA	Adjacent Designated Wilderness	Total Acres	Acres on the HLC NF
Electric Peak	Divide*	N/A	21,556	16,655
Big Log	Big Belts	Gates of the Mountains	9,190	9,190
Mount Baldy	Big Belts	N/A	8,420	8,420
Total Acres of RWAs in the Plan Area				34,265

3.23.8 Recommended wilderness, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

In all alternatives, natural disturbances, recreation use patterns, and emerging technologies would continue to influence the wilderness characteristics of undeveloped landscapes on the HLC NF.

Effects common to all action alternatives

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and management activities for aquatic ecosystems and soil management would have little effect related to the overall management within RWAs. The plan components that may have the greatest influence are those associated with RMZs. East of the Continental Divide (the majority of the HLC NF), RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. West of the Continental Divide, the area influenced by riparian plan components is the same across all alternatives because RMZs would be defined the same way as riparian habitat conservation zones are in the no-action

alternative. Please refer to the RMZ section. The potential effects of RMZ plan components to recreation opportunities within RWAs are discussed in the recreation opportunities section.

Little to no active management would occur in RWAs. However, restoration treatments such as prescribed fire that would occur in RWAs may be limited within RMZs, or modified to comply with plan components for those areas. The area on which these components apply is greater with the action alternatives than with the no-action alternative on landscapes east of the Continental Divide; however, the effect would be minor and insubstantial with regards to the wilderness characteristics of RWAs.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur within RWAs, and provide opportunities for natural fire to promote and/or enhance the wilderness characteristics of these areas. Fire and fuels management plan components also specify the use of minimum impact strategies and tactics to manage wildland fire within RWAs, which would further protect wilderness characteristics.

Timber and vegetation management

There would be no effect to RWAs from plan components related to timber harvest because no timber harvest would be allowed in these areas. Plan components related to desired vegetation conditions could influence whether restoration treatments (such as management-ignited fires) are conducted in RWAs, and help define the objectives for those treatments. Vegetation management activities such as planting of whitebark pine would also be allowed in RWAs. These plan components would help promote and/or enhance the wilderness characteristics of these areas.

Livestock grazing and management

The plan components for the action alternatives do not allow for new or expanded livestock grazing allotments to occur within RWAs; however, existing allotments may be retained. Therefore, the plan components that guide livestock grazing and management would influence RWAs. While livestock grazing itself has the potential to degrade plant communities through factors such as invasive plant spread and damage to riparian areas, plan components emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components should help protect the wilderness characteristics of RWAs, to a greater degree with the action alternatives as compared to the no-action alternative.

Wildlife management

Plan components related to wildlife management would have little to no effect on RWAs.

Recreation and scenery management

Plan components for recreation settings, opportunities, and access along with scenery management would complement the management of RWAs for their wilderness characteristics. In the action alternatives, RWAs have a primitive ROS setting and a very high SIO. These classifications would ensure that potential recreation and other activities, such as restoration treatments, would be consistent with RWAs desired conditions.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components related to cultural, historic, and tribal resource would have little to no effect on RWAs. The protection of these resources would be consistent with maintaining the wilderness characteristics of these areas.

Road access and infrastructure

Plan components related to road access and infrastructure would have little to no effect on RWAs, because RWAs would not be suitable for road construction or reconstruction and these areas are generally unroaded.

Minerals management

RWAs are discretionarily unavailable for mineral leasing and saleable mineral activity but still open to locatable mineral prospecting, exploration, and development.

Alternative A, no action

In the no-action alternative, the three current RWAs would continue to be managed under the 1986 Helena Forest Plan. Table 191 describes the plan component in the 1986 Helena Forest Plan that provides direction for the three RWAs.

Table 191. Summary of the existing 1986 Helena Forest Plan component for RWAs (alternative A)

Plan component	Expected effects
1986 Helena NF Plan, Management Area P-3, Pages III/73 through III/77	This management area ensures that the three RWAs are managed to maintain their existing wilderness characteristics.

Summer and winter travel plans provide the direction for where motorized uses can and cannot occur within RWAs. Table 192 shows the existing miles of open roads, motorized trail, and non-motorized trail within the three existing RWAs in alternative A. This table also shows the acres open to motorized over snow uses in these RWAs.

Table 192. Miles of existing open road, motorized trail, non-motorized trail, and acres of motorized over snow uses within RWAs (alternative A).

GA	Miles of Open Road	Miles of Motorized Trail	Miles of Nonmotorized Trail	Acres Open to Motorized Over Snow Uses
Big Log	0.6	0	8.0	0
Mount Baldy	0	0	13.3	0
Electric Peak	3.4	0.1	16.1	131.4
Totals	4.0	0.1	37.4	131.4

Big Log

There are no motorized trails or motorized over-snow areas within this RWA. Table 193 and Table 194 describe the open road and nonmotorized trails within the Big Log RWA in alternative A.

Table 193. Open roads in Big Log RWA (alternative A)

Road Number	Road Name	Miles
4140	Hunters Gulch	0.6

Table 194. Nonmotorized trails in Big Log RWA (alternative A)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
252	Big Log Gulch	2.3
255	Hunters Gulch	1.8

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
257	Missouri River Canyon	2.9
259	Refrigerator Canyon	1.0
Total		8.0

Mount Baldy

There are currently no motorized recreation uses within the Mount Baldy RWA. Table 195 describes the nonmotorized trails within the Mount Baldy RWA in alternative A.

Table 195. Nonmotorized trails in the Mount Baldy RWA (alternative A)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
149	Needles	2.2
150	Gipsy/Birch Creek	5.2
151	Hidden Lake	3.6
152	Edith Lake	0.7
155	Grace Lake	1.6
Total		13.3

Electric Peak

Table 196, Table 197, and Table 198 describe the open roads, motorized trails, and nonmotorized trails within the Electric Peak RWA in alternative A.

Table 196. Open roads in Electric Peak RWA (alternative A)

Road Number	Road Name	Miles
127	Ontario	0.2
227	Little Blackfoot	2.8
4046	Kading Campground	0.4
Total		3.4

Table 197. Motorized trail in the Electric Peak RWA (alternative A)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
501	Limburger Spring	0.1

Table 198. Nonmotorized trails in the Electric Peak RWA (alternative A)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
326	Kading	<0.1
328	Bison-Blackfoot	1.3
329	Blackfoot Meadows	7.7
330	Bison MT	1.1
337	Continental Divide	1.1
359	Larabee Gulch	2.3
362	Monarch Creek	2.5

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
Total		16.1

Alternative B

Alternative B identifies nine (9) areas to be RWAs. These RWAs were identified after the HLC NF conducted a wilderness inventory and evaluation. Identifying an area as RWA in the draft revised forest plan does not create a wilderness, as only Congress has the right to designate wilderness by passing legislation. However, the nine RWAs identified in alternative B would be managed to protect their wilderness characteristics.

The nine RWAs in alternative B are located within five GAs and total approximately 213,076 acres. These RWAs were derived from the original wilderness inventory polygons identified in the first step of the wilderness evaluation process, but do not necessarily include all of those original acres. Boundaries for the individual RWAs are located on naturally occurring ridgelines, stream bottoms, or other locatable features on the landscape to make them more manageable.

Table 199 provides the name of each RWA in alternative B, the inventory polygon it originated from, the GA in which it is located, whether it lies adjacent to existing designated wilderness, and the approximate acres of the RWA.

Table 199. Recommended wilderness (alternative B)

RWA	Wilderness Inventory Polygon	GA	Adjacent Designated Wilderness	Acres
Big Log	BB1	Big Belts	Gates of the Mountains	7,086
Mount Baldy	BB7	Big Belts	NA	8,314
Blackfoot Meadows	D3	Divide	NA	18,296
Deep Creek	LB1	Little Belts	NA	14,490
Big Snowies	S1	Snowies	NA	95,299
Dearborn Silverking	UB1	Upper Blackfoot	Scapegoat	20,088
Red Mountain	UB2a	Upper Blackfoot	Scapegoat	1,901
Arrastra Creek	UB2b	Upper Blackfoot	Scapegoat	8,257
Nevada Mountain	UB10	Upper Blackfoot	NA	39,345
Total				213,076

In alternative B, motorized uses and mechanized means of transport would be considered unsuitable and would not be allowed in RWAs. This is a change from the existing condition on the landscape where some motorized uses and mechanized means of transport (including bicycles) are currently allowed. Overall, motorized recreation uses and mechanical means of transportation (including bicycles) on approximately 11.8 miles of road, less than a mile of motorized trail, and 24,290 acres of motorized over snow areas would not be allowed in RWAs in alternative B.

Mechanized means of transportation (including bicycles) would also be considered unsuitable and would not be allowed within RWAs in alternative B on approximately 205.7 miles of nonmotorized trails. Closing nonmotorized trails to mechanized means of transportation (including bicycles) is a change from the existing condition where recreation via mechanized means of transportation is currently allowed on all nonmotorized trails.

RWAs are characterized as generally being without permanent improvements or human occupation. Mechanized means of transportation (including bicycles) and motorized recreation uses might affect the

undeveloped nature (ecological characteristic) and primitive recreation (social characteristic) of these RWAs. In addition, the sounds of motorized recreation uses (such as snowmobiling or off-road vehicle use) could impact the RWA's solitude and primitive recreation (social characteristic). Because of these impacts, motorized and mechanized recreation uses would not be allowed within RWAs in alternative B.

Table 200 shows the overall miles of open roads, motorized trail, and nonmotorized trail that would be closed to motorized uses and mechanized uses (including bicycles) within RWAs in alternative B. This table also shows the acres of motorized over snow areas that would be closed to these motorized uses.

Table 200. Miles of open road, motorized trail, nonmotorized trail, and acres of motorized over-snow uses that would be closed to these uses in RWAs (alternative B)

RWA	Miles of Open Road	Miles of Motorized Trail	Miles of Nonmotorized Trail	Acres Open to Motorized Over Snow Uses
Big Log	0	0	5.3	0
Mount Baldy	0	0	13.6	0
Blackfoot Meadows	0	0	16.3	11.1
Deep Creek	0	0	12.9	0
Big Snowies	11.8	0.1	98.3	13,144.5
Dearborn Silverking	0	0	20.8	16.9
Red Mountain	0	0	<0.1	0
Arrastra Creek	0	0	7.9	2,239.2
Nevada Mountain	0	0	30.5	8,878.3
Totals	**11.8**	**0.1**	**205.7**	**24,290**

Displacement of motorized recreation uses and mechanized means of transportation (including bicycles) from RWAs would occur in alternative B. Closure of these trails and areas may concentrate motorized and mechanized means of transportation uses in other areas identified as suitable for motorized uses by travel planning direction.

The expected effects of the plan components for alternative B are summarized in Table 201. These plan components provide overall management direction for RWAs on the HLC NF.

Table 201. Summary of proposed plan components for RWAs (alternative B)

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-RECWILD-DC-01	This DC ensure that the identified wilderness characteristics, both social and ecological, of the RWAs are protected and preserved.
FW-RECWILD-DC-02	This DC describes the ecological conditions in RWAs, to include natural processes such as natural successions, wildfire, avalanches, and insects and diseases.
FW-RECWILD-DC-03	This DC ensures that RWAs provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.
FW-RECWILD-SUIT-01	This DC ensures that the trail system within RWAs support the identified wilderness characteristics.
FW-RECWILD-DC-05	This DC ensures that outfitter and guide services within RWAs are based on resource condition and identified public need.
FW-RECWILD-GDL-01	This GDL provides direction for restoration activities within RWAs.
FW-RECWILD-GDL-02	This GDL provides for the use of motorized equipment to accomplish restoration or administrative work within RWAs.
FW-RECWILD-SUIT-01	This plan component prohibits motorized recreation uses and mechanical means of transportation within RWAs, except for authorized permitted users, valid existing

Plan component	Expected effects
(Alternatives B and D)	rights, or in emergencies related to public health and safety. Exceptions are established on a case-by-case basis.
FW-RECWILD-SUIT-02	This plan component states that restoration activities, such as management ignited fire and active weed management, are suitable within RWAs.
FW-RECWILD-SUIT-03	This plan component ensures that the use of motorized equipment, such as chain saws, is suitable within RWAs to achieve restoration activities and administrative work.
FW-RECWILD-SUIT-04; 05; 06; and 07	These components provide direction for timber production, timber harvesting, new commercial communication sites, new utility corridors, road construction, road reconstruction, and developed recreation sites and facilities within RWAs. None of these actions are suitable in RWAs.
FW-RECWILD-SUIT-06	This plan component allows for existing livestock grazing allotments but prohibits new or expanded livestock grazing allotments within RWAs.

Direct Effects

Identifying RWAs would create the following closures for motorized and mechanized recreation within the RWAs. These changes are summarized by RWA below.

Big Log

Big Log RWA is located adjacent to the Gates of the Mountain wilderness area in the Big Belts GA. The majority of the Big Log area lies along the southern boundary of the Gates of the Mountains. However, there are also several small isolated parcels on the northern boundary of the wilderness that are included in the RWAs. The majority of the Big Log RWA was identified in the 1986 Helena NF Plan as RWAs.

There are currently no existing motorized recreation uses or open roads within the Big Log RWA in alternative B. However, approximately 5.3 miles of nonmotorized trail would be closed to mechanized means of transport (including bicycles). See Table 202.

Table 202. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in Big Log RWA (alternative B)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
252	Big Log Gulch	2.1
255	Hunters Gulch	1.8
258	Mann Gulch	0.2
259	Refrigerator Canyon	1.2
Total		5.3

Mount Baldy

Mount Baldy RWA is located in the Big Belts GA. This RWA consists of high elevation ecosystems dotted with a number of alpine lakes and unique granite rock formations (the Needles). The Mount Baldy RWA was identified as one of the three RWAs in the 1986 Helena Forest Plan.

There are currently no motorized recreation uses or open roads within the Mount Baldy RWA in alternative B. However, there are approximately 13.6 miles of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanized means of transport (including bicycles) within this RWA. See Table 203.

Table 203. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in the Mount Baldy RWA (alternative B)

Number	Name	Miles
149	Needles	2.2
150	Gipsy/Birch Creek	5.7

Number	Name	Miles
151	Hidden Lake	3.4
152	Edith Lake	0.7
155	Grace Lake	1.6
Total		13.6

Blackfoot Meadows

The Blackfoot Meadows RWA is located within the Divide GA. Portions of this RWA were identified as the Electric Peak RWA in the current 1986 Helena Forest Plan. The Blackfoot Meadows RWA is not the exact same acreage or configuration as what has been identified as the Electric Peak RWA. Blackfoot Meadows RWA lies along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and includes several mountain peaks that are well over 8000 feet in elevation.

There are no motorized trails or open roads within the Blackfoot Meadows RWA. Approximately 16.3 miles of nonmotorized trail would be closed to mechanized means of transport (including bicycles) within the Blackfoot Meadows RWA. Additionally, an estimated 11.1 acres of motorized over-snow area would also be closed in this alternative. See Table 204.

Table 204. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in the Blackfoot Meadows RWA (alternative B)

Number	Name	Miles
326	Kading	<0.1
328	Bison-Blackfoot	1.3
329	Blackfoot Meadows	6.9
330	Bison MT	1.0
337	Continental Divide	1.2
359	Larabee Gulch	2.8
362	Monarch Creek	3.0
Total		16.3

Deep Creek

Deep Creek RWA is located in the northwestern corner of the Little Belt Mountains GA. This area is bordered by the Smith River on the west, private lands to the north and south, and by motorized national recreation trails to the south and east. The primary access to this area is from the Smith River, private lands, and from the motorized national recreation trails.

There are currently no motorized recreation uses or open roads within the Deep Creek RWA in alternative B. However, there are 12.9 miles of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanized means of transport (including bicycles) within this RWA. See Table 205.

Table 205. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in the Deep Creek RWA (alternative B)

Number	Name	Miles
303	North Fork Deep Creek	2.3
308	Temple Gulch	4.5
309	Parker Ridge	4.4
311	Smith River	1.7
Total		12.9

Big Snowies

The Big Snowies RWA is located in the Big Snowies GA south of Lewistown, Montana. The primary ridgeline of this island mountain formation is oriented east-west and is 25 miles long and 10 miles wide. The area is dominated by limestone geology and karst topography which conceals many caves including an ice cave on West Peak. The RWA is also characterized at its highest elevations by a tree-less plateau of alpine with rock and tundra. The Big Snowies RWA is popular with mountain bike users in the summer and snowmobile users in the winter months.

There are 11.8 miles of open road and 0.1 mile of motorized trail within the Big Snowies that would be closed to motorized use and mechanical means of transport in alternative B. There are approximately 98.3 miles of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanized means of transport (including bicycles) within this RWA. Additionally, an estimated 13,144.5 acres of motorized over-snow uses would be closed to motorized use and mechanical means of transport in this alternative. See Table 206, Table 207, and Table 208.

Table 206. Open roads closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in Big Snowies RWA (alternative B)

Road Number	Road Name	Miles
270	Timber Creek	0.1
656	656	1.8
8954	Snowy Ridge	2.4
15862	Webbers Road	0.1
15869	Careless Canyon	0.1
15852	Dry Coulee Loop	0.8
270-A	East Fork Timber	0.7
210001	Permit Road	2.2
410001	Permit Road	1.9
8954001	Permit Road	0.5
8954002	Permit Road	0.1
8954004	Permit Road	1.0
Total		11.8

Table 207. Motorized trail closed to motorized use and mechanical means of transport in the Big Snowies RWA (alternative B)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
652	Southside	0.1

Table 208. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in the Big Snowies RWA (alternative B)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
403	Grandview	4.1
403-A	Grandview Point	<0.1
405	V.J. Springs	0.1
406	Jump Off Peak	5.3

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
410	E FK Big Spring Creek	9.3
445	Crystal Cascades	2.6
445-A	Crystal Cascades Connector	1.1
481	Dry Pole Creek	5.1
483	Logan Ridge	2.3
489	East Fork Cottonwood Creek	8.5
490	West Peak	7.1
490-A	West Peak Alt Spur	1.0
491	Promontory Point	0.4
492	Hidden Basin Wildflower	0.2
493	Ulhorn	18.4
494	Maynard Ridge	5.35
627	Swimming Woman	2.2
627-A	Swimming Woman Alt	2.2
650	Big Snowy Trail	7.5
652	Southside	4.9
654	Neil Creek	2.3
655	Blake Creek Summit	1.8
670	Timber Creek	3.6
671	Bad Canyon	2.8
Total		98.3

Dearborn Silverking

The Dearborn Silverking RWA is located in the Upper Blackfoot GA north and east of Lincoln, Montana. This RWAs lies adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness Area in the upper reaches of the Alice Creek and Landers Fork drainages.

There are no open roads or motorized trails within this RWA. However, there are 20.8 miles of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanized means of transportation (including bicycles). Additionally, approximately 16.9 acres of motorized over-snow areas that would be closed to motorized winter uses and mechanical means of transportation (including bicycles). See Table 209.

Table 209. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanical means of transport in the Dearborn Silverking RWA (alternative B)

Trail Number	Name	Miles
219	East Fork Falls Creek	0.1
420	Silver King Trail	2.9
438	Landers Fork Trail	3.9
440	Continental Divide Trail	6.1
477	Lone Mountain Trail	2.3
481	Mainline Trail	1.2
490	Alice Creek	4.3
Total		20.8

Red Mountain

The Red Mountain RWA is locate south and east of Red Mountain Peak in Red Creek, within the Copper Creek drainage. This small RWA borders the Scapegoat Wilderness Area and is also a RNA).

There are no motorized uses or open roads within this RWA. However there is one very short segment (<0.1 miles) of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanical means of transportation (including bicycles), and is described in Table 210.

Table 210. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanical means of transport in the Red Mountain RWA (alternative B)

Trail Number	Name	Miles
423	Red Mountain Trail	<0.1

Arrastra Creek

The Arrastra Creek RWA is located in the Upper Blackfoot GA north and west of Lincoln, Montana. This RWAs lies adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness Area in the upper reaches of the Beaver Creek and Dry Creek drainages and includes Arrastra Mountain.

There are no open roads or motorized trails within this RWA. However, there are 7.9 miles of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanical means of transportation (including bicycles). Additionally, approximately 2,239.2 acres of motorized over-snow areas would be closed to motorized winter uses and mechanical means of transport. See Table 211.

Table 211. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanical means of transport in the Arrastra Creek RWA (alternative B)

Trail Number	Name	Miles
482	Arrastra Creek Trail	4.2
483	Dry Creek Trail	1.3
488	Porcupine Basin	2.4
Total		7.9

Nevada Mountain

Nevada Mountain RWA is located south and west of Lincoln, Montana in the Upper Blackfoot GA. This large area includes Nevada Mountain, Black Mountain, and the head end of many drainages such as Nevada Creek and Washington Creek, as well as several smaller drainages that flow into Poorman Creek. Portions of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail also cross through this RWA.

There are no open roads or motorized trails within this RWA. However, there are 30.5 miles of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanical means of transportation (including bicycles). Additionally, approximately 8,878.3 acres of motorized over-snow areas would be closed to motorized winter uses and mechanical means of transportation (including bicycles). See Table 212.

Table 212. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanical means of transport in the Nevada Mountain RWA (alternative B)

Trail Number	Name	Miles
337	Continental Divide Trail	4.2
405	Washington Gulch Trail	2.3
440	Continental Divide Trail	6.9
466	Nevada Creek Trail	4.3
467	Gould/Helmville Trail	7.2

Trail Number	Name	Miles
487	Prickly/Nevada Trail	5.6
Total		30.5

Alternative C

Alternative C identifies nine RWAs. These RWAs are the same as those identified in alternative B; see Table 199. The expected effects of the RWA plan components for alternative C are the same as alternative B except that alternative C would allow for the continuation of motorized uses and mechanized means of transportation (including bicycles) within RWAs.

Table 213 provides a summary of the suitability plan component that allows for motorized and mechanized means of transportation to continue within RWAs in alternative C. All other plan components would be the same as described above in Table 201 for alternative B.

Table 213. Summary of proposed plan component for recommended wilderness (alternative C)

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-RECWILD-SUIT-01 (Alternative C only)	This plan component provides direction allows motorized uses and mechanized means of transportation (including bicycles) to occur within RWAs. Motorized recreation uses would continue to be governed by current and updated summer and winter travel plans.

In alternative C, existing and/or updated travel plans would provide direction for where motorized uses would occur and would not occur. Mechanized means of transportation would continue to be allowed on all nonmotorized trails within the RWAs.

Mechanized means of transportation (including bicycles) and motorized recreation uses might affect the undeveloped nature (ecological characteristic) and primitive recreation (social characteristic) of these RWAs. In addition, the sounds of motorized recreation uses (such as snowmobiling or off-road vehicle use) could impact the RWA's solitude and primitive recreation (social characteristic).

Not every person traveling through the RWAs in alternative C would meet a mountain biker or motorized user as these areas are remote and currently have relatively low levels of recreation use. Any type of trail, whether for hikers or horseback riders, could affect the undeveloped wilderness characteristics (ecological characteristic) because a trail is considered a development. Solitude could be affected by noise but could also be affected by encounters with other people who are hiking or horseback riding, particularly if they are traveling in large groups.

Table 214 shows the overall miles of open roads, motorized trail, and non-motorized trail that would continue to be open to motorized and mechanized uses (including bicycles) within RWAs in alternative C. This table also shows the acres open to motorized over-snow areas that would continue to be available in this alternative.

Table 214. Miles of open road, motorized trail, non-motorized trail, and acres of motorized over snow uses that would be open to motorized and mechanical means of transport in RWAs (alternative C)

RWA	Miles of Open Road	Miles of Motorized Trail	Miles of Nonmotorized Trail	Acres Open to Motorized Over Snow Uses
Big Log	0	0	5.3	0
Mount Baldy	0	0	13.6	0

RWA	Miles of Open Road	Miles of Motorized Trail	Miles of Nonmotorized Trail	Acres Open to Motorized Over Snow Uses
Blackfoot Meadows	0	0	16.3	11.1
Deep Creek	0	0	12.9	0
Big Snowies	11.8	0.1	98.3	13,144.5
Dearborn Silverking	0	0	20.8	16.9
Red Mountain	0	0	<0.1	0
Arrastra Creek	0	0	7.9	2,239.2
Nevada Mountain	0	0	30.5	8,878.3
Totals	11.8	0.1	205.7	24,290

Alternative D

Alternative D responds to comments received during pubic scoping asking the Forest to consider an alternative that increased the amounts of RWAs and primitive recreation opportunities on the forest. Alternative D identifies sixteen areas as RWAs. These RWAs include the nine areas identified for alternatives B and C as well as seven additional areas with wilderness characteristics. Additional acreages were also added to the Nevada Mountain and Blackfoot Meadows RWAs in this alternative. In total, the RWAs in alternative D are located across seven GAs and total approximately 474,589 acres.

All of the RWAs were derived from the original wilderness inventory polygons identified in the first step of the wilderness evaluation process, but do not necessarily include all of the original acres of those wilderness inventory polygons. For specific boundary locations of RWAs, see maps provided in appendix A. Table 215 describes the RWA polygons and acres associated with RWAs identified in alternative D.

Table 215. Recommended wilderness in alternative D

RWA	Wilderness Inventory Polygon	GA	Adjacent Designated Wilderness	Acres
Big Log	BB1	Big Belts	Gates of the Mountains	7,086
Camas Creek	BB6	Big Belts	NA	22,350
Mount Baldy	BB7	Big Belts	NA	8,314
Wapiti Peak	CA1	Castles	NA	30,606
Loco Mountain	CR1	Crazies	NA	24,977
Blackfoot Meadows	D3	Divide	NA	26,900
Colorado Mountain	D5	Divide	NA	14,189
Deep Creek	LB1a	Little Belts	NA	14,490
Tenderfoot Creek	LB1b	Little Belts	NA	45,870
Big Horn Thunder	LB 2	Little Belts	NA	47,107
Middle Fork Judith	LB16	Little Belts	NA	62,452
Big Snowies	S1	Snowies	NA	95,299
Dearborn Silverking	UB1	Upper Blackfoot	Scapegoat	20,088
Red Mountain	UB2a	Upper Blackfoot	Scapegoat	1,901
Arrastra Creek	UB2b	Upper Blackfoot	Scapegoat	8,257
Nevada Mountain	UB10	Upper Blackfoot	NA	44,702
Total				474,589

Similar to alternative B, motorized recreational uses and mechanized means of transport (including bicycles) would not be considered suitable and would not be allowed in RWAs in alternative D. Approximately 22.8 miles of road, 59.4 miles of motorized trail, and 79,109 acres of motorized over-snow uses would be closed to motorized recreation uses and mechanical means of transport within RWAs in this alternative. Additionally, mechanized means of transportation (including bicycles) would be considered unsuitable and would not be allowed on approximately 360.2 miles of nonmotorized trails within the identified RWAs.

Table 216 shows the miles of open roads, motorized trail, nonmotorized trail, and acres open to over-snow uses that would not allow motorized and mechanized means of transportation in the RWAs in alternative D.

Table 216. Miles of open road, motorized trail, nonmotorized trail, and acres of motorized over-snow uses that would not be allowed in RWAs in alternative D

GA	Miles of Open Road	Miles of Motorized Trail	Miles of Non-Motorized Trail	Acres Open to Motorized Over-Snow Uses
Big Log	0	0	5.3	0
Camas Creek	0.3	0	16.0	0
Mount Baldy	0	0	13.6	0
Wapiti Peak	6.1	31.9	9.5	26,331.5
Loco Mountain	0	0	23.5	4,753.7
Blackfoot Meadows	0	2.4	22.3	5,107.3
Colorado Mountain	0	0	1.9	1,240.4
Deep Creek	0	0	12.9	0
Tenderfoot Creek	0	5.9	29.7	5,871.7
Big Horn Thunder	2.6	15.7	11.2	2,308.4
Middle Fork Judith	0.7	0	56.0	4,996.3
Big Snowies	11.8	0.1	98.3	13,144.5
Dearborn Silverking	0	0	20.8	16.9
Red Mountain	0	0	<0.1	0
Arrastra Creek	0	0	7.9	2,239.2
Nevada Mountain	1.3	3.4	31.2	13,099.1
Totals	22.8	59.4	360.1	79,109.3

Direct Effects

Big Log

The direct effects are the same as those described above in alternative B.

Camas Creek

Camas Creek RWA is located in the Big Belts GA. This RWA contains the high peaks of Boulder Mountain and Boulder Baldy. Additionally, it contains the Boulder Lakes and Camas Lakes areas.

There are currently 0.3 mile of open road but no other motorized uses within the Camas Creek RWA, and this open road would be closed to motorized use as well as mechanical means of transport in alternative D. There are approximately 16 miles of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanized means of transport. See Table 217 and Table 218.

Table 217. Open road closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in Camas Creek RWA (alternative D)

Road Number	Road Name	Miles
383	Camas	0.3

Table 218. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanical means of transport in the Camas Creek RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Name	Miles
118	Belt Mountain Divide	6.4
140	Camas	2.3
140A	Camas Lake	0.8
141	Pickfoot	1.9
142	Boulder Lakes	4.5
143	Spruce Creek	0.1
Total		16.0

Mount Baldy

The direct effects are the same as those described above in alternative B.

Wapiti Peak

Wapiti Peak RWA is located in the west side of the Castles GA. This RWA contains a series of high peaks including Beartrap Peak, Woodchuck Mountain, Wapiti Peak, Elk Peak, and Castle Mountain. The area is characterized by numerous castle-like outcrops of granite. Most of the higher elevations are covered by forest with large open grasslands dominating the lower elevations.

There are currently 6.1 miles of open road, 31.9 miles of motorized trail, and 26,331.5 acres of motorized over-snow area within the Wapiti Peak RWA. These areas would be closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in alternative D. Additionally, there are approximately 9.5 miles of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanical means of transportation. See Table 219, Table 220, and Table 221.

Table 219. Open roads closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in Wapiti Peak RWA (alternative D)

Road Number	Road Name	Miles
8878	South Castle Lake	2.7
8880	South Castle Lake/Reynolds	0.6
15991	Cumberlin Divide	0.7
15993	Wapiti Burn	0.3
15995	Frontier Road	0.6
15998	Little Oly Can Road	1.2
Total		6.1

Table 220. Motorized trail closed to motorized use and mechanical means of transport in the Wapiti Peak RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
618	Willow Creek/Warm Springs Creek	2.1

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
622	Castle Elk Connector	3.0
624	Alabough-Castle Lake	1.3
713	Fourmile Creek	0.4
713-A	Fourmile Connector	1.3
716	Grasshopper	2.1
717	Wapiti Peak	6.9
718	Elk Peak	5.3
719	Manger Park	4.8
723	Horse Park	2.5
725	Woodchuck	2.2
Total		31.9

Table 221. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in the Wapiti Peak RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
617	Loweth	0.8
618	Willow Creek/Warm Springs Creek	4.4
622	Castle Elk Connector	0.1
713	Fourmile Creek	1.3
716	Grasshopper	2.9
Total		9.5

Loco Mountain

Loco Mountain RWA is located on the east side of the Crazies GA. This RWA lies at the north end of the Crazy Mountain range and shares a border with the Gallatin NF. The area contains a number of high, craggy peaks that are often covered in talus, scree, and boulder areas. Vegetation on the upper ridges is mostly alpine and lacks forest cover. Glaciation has imparted many of these landforms with sharp and scoured edges.

There are no open roads or motorized trails in the Loco Mountain RWA. Approximately 4,753.7 acres are available for motorized over-snow areas. The motorized recreation uses would be closed in alternative D. Additionally, there are approximately 23.5 miles of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanical means of transportation within this RWA. See Table 222.

Table 222. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport (including bicycles) in the Loco Mountain RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
630	Boundary	3.2
630-A	South Boundary	0.6
631	Little Elk	0.6
632	Loco Creek	1.7
633	Loco Creek/Castle Creek Connector	0.8

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
634	Groveland	0.4
636	Crow Creek	6.8
640	Shields Big Elk	4.8
641	Castle Creek	4.6
641-A	Old 634 Off Castle	0.0
Total		23.5

Blackfoot Meadows

The size and configuration of the Blackfoot Meadows RWA in alternative D is different from the Blackfoot Meadows RWA identified in alternatives B and C. In alternative D, the RWA would be expanded north of the Little Blackfoot River and would extend along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail east of Bison Mountain.

In alternative D, there are no open roads within this RWA but there are approximately 2.4 miles of motorized trail which would be closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport. Approximately 22.3 miles of nonmotorized trail would be closed to mechanized means of transport. Additionally, an estimated 5,107 acres of motorized over-snow area would be closed to motorized uses and mechanized means of transport. See Table 223 and Table 224.

Table 223. Motorized trails closed to motorized use and mechanical means of transport in the Blackfoot Meadows RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
501	Limburger Spring	1.9
1870-T	Baldy Ridge	0.5
Total		2.4

Table 224. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in the Blackfoot Meadows RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Name	Miles
326	Kading	1.6
328	Bison-Blackfoot	1.3
329	Blackfoot Meadows	7.7
330	Bison MT	1.3
337	Continental Divide	4.6
359	Larabee Gulch	2.8
362	Monarch Creek	3.0
Total		22.3

Colorado Mountain

Colorado Mountain RWA is located in the upper reaches of the Colorado Gulch drainage in the Divide GA, south and west of Helena, MT. This RWA lies also extends into the Tenmile watershed on its north and western edges. The busy, dispersed recreation area known as the South Hills makes up its eastern boundary. This RWA also contains Black Mountain and Colorado Mountain.

There are no open roads or motorized trails within this RWAs. Approximately 1,240.4 acres of motorized over-snow area would also be closed to motorized uses and mechanized means of transport in this alternative. Additionally, there is one nonmotorized trail (1.9 miles in length) that would be closed to mechanical means of transportation. See Table 225.

Table 225. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in the Colorado Mountain RWA (alternative D).

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
375	Tenmile Environmental	1.9

Deep Creek

The direct effects are the same as those described above in alternative B.

Tenderfoot Creek

The Tenderfoot Creek RWA is located within the Tenderfoot Creek drainage in the Little Belt Mountains GA. This RWA extends from the Smith river drainage on the west to just west of Williams Mountain in the east. The southern border of the RWA follows Tenderfoot and South Fork Tenderfoot creek and skirts larger parcels of private land on the southern border.

The Tenderfoot Creek RWA does not contain any open roads. However, there are approximately 5.9 miles of motorized trails and 5, 871 acres of motorized over-snow areas that would be closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transportation in this alternative. Additionally, there are 29.7 miles of nonmotorized trails that would be closed to mechanized means of transportation. See Table 226 and Table 227.

Table 226. Motorized trail closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in the Tenderfoot Creek RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
301	Old Baldy	0.1
343	Balsinger to Taylor	0.8
345	Bald Hills	5.0
Total		5.9

Table 227. Non-motorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in the Tenderfoot Creek RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
301	Old Baldy	4.9
310	Bear Gulch	2.7
317	Strawberry Ridge	4.2
331	Cow Coulee	1.5
342	Tenderfoot	12.2
345	Bald Hills	1.2
354	Double Gulch	3.0
Total		29.7

Bighorn Thunder

The Bighorn Thunder RWA is located east of Logging Creek and north of the Divide Road in the Little Belt Mountains GA. This RWA contains the high mountain peaks of Big Horn Mountain and Thunder Mountain. Pilgrim Creek runs north-south and bisects the area.

This RWA contain approximately 2.6 miles of open road, 15.7 miles of motorized trail, and 2,308 acres of motorized over-snow recreation area. Motorized uses and mechanical means of transportation would not be allowed on these roads nor in areas within RWAs. Additionally, there are 11.2 miles of nonmotorized trails that would be closed to mechanized means of transportation in this RWA. See Table 228, Table 229, and Table 230.

Table 228. Open roads closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in Big Horn Thunder RWA (alternative D)

Road Number	Road Name	Miles
839-F	Lower Pilgrim Trailhead	0.1
6384	Log Spur Wilson 9-Part	2.4
838067	839067	0.1
Total		2.6

Table 229. Motorized trail closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in the Big Horn Thunder RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
304	Pilgrim Creek	9.3
305	Deer Creek	1.6
315	Tobins Gulch	4.8
Total		15.7

Table 230. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in the Big Horn Thunder RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
304	Pilgrim Creek	2.5
315	Tobins Gulch	<0.1
318	Dry Gulch	2.6
322	Tillinghast Creek	0.0
336	Bighorn	6.0
Total		11.2

Middle Fork Judith

The Middle Fork Judith RWA is located in the Little Belt Mountains GA. This area includes the lower Lost Fork and Middle Fork of the Judith River with the major high points being Yogo Peak, Cabin Mountain, Grendah Mountain, Sandpoint Mountain, and Lost Fork Ridge. A large portion of this RWA is also designated as the Middle Fork Judith WSA. Only the northeastern portion of the WSA is not included in the RWA boundary.

There are 0.7 mile of open road and approximately 4,996 acres of motorized over-snow recreation uses within this RWA. These motorized miles and acres would be closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in alternative D. Additionally, there are approximately 56 miles of nonmotorized trail that would be closed to mechanized means of transport. See Table 231 and Table 232.

Table 231. Open roads closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in Middle Fork Judith RWA (alternative D)

Road Number	Road Name	Miles
825	Middle Fork Judith River	0.1
6538	Middle Fork Cabin #1	0.6
Total		0.7

Table 232. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanized means of transport in the Middle Fork Judith RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
407	Doerr Creek	3.6
409	Lost Fork Judith River	12.2
422	West Fork Lost Fork	5.1
428	Prospect Ridge	5.3
429	King Creek	1.9
433	Burris-Ettien	2.3
434	Halzel Coulee	3.5
436	Sand Point Ridge	4.4
441	Cleveland Creek	7.0
442	Stiner Creek	3.7
444	Woodchopper Ridge	3.4
450	Yogo Creek	3.6
Total		56.0

Big Snowies; Dearborn Silverking; Red Moutain; Arrastra Creek

The direct effects are the same as those described above in alternative B.

Nevada Mountain

The size and configuration of the Nevada Mountain RWA in alternative D is different than the Nevada Mountain RWA identified in alternatives B and C. In alternative D, the Nevada Mountain RWA would be expanded to include a greater portion of Deadman Creek.

There are approximately 1.3 miles open road and 3.4 miles of motorized trails that would be closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transportation within this RWA in alternative D. In alternative D, 31.2 miles of nonmotorized trail would be closed to mechanical means of transportation. Additionally, an estimated 13,099 acres of motorized over-snow areas would be closed to motorized winter uses and mechanical means of transportation. See Table 233, Table 234, and Table 235.

Table 233. Open roads closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in Nevada Mountain RWA (alternative D)

Road Number	Road Name	Miles
774	Cottonwood Gulch	1.0
774-B1	Cottonwood Gulch Spur B1	0.3
1845	Towsley Gulch	0.0
Total		1.3

Table 234. Motorized trail closed to motorized uses and mechanical means of transport in the Nevada Mountain RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Trail Name	Miles
1811-T	Jerusha Gulch	3.4

Table 235. Nonmotorized trails closed to mechanical means of transport in the Nevada Mountain RWA (alternative D)

Trail Number	Name	Miles
337	Continental Divide Trail	5.1
405	Washington Gulch Trail	2.1
440	Continental Divide Trail	6.9
466	Nevada Creek Trail	4.3
467	Gould/Helmville Trail	7.2
487	Prickly/Nevada Trail	5.6
Total		31.2

Alternative E

Alternative E responds to comments received during pubic scoping asking the Forest to consider an alternative that does not identify RWAs and increases the amount of forest lands available for timber production. In response to these comments, alternative E does not include any RWAs.

The miles of open road, motorized trail, nonmotorized trail, and acres open to motorized over-snow uses would be determined by travel plans for these areas. Mechanized means of transportation would continue to be allowed on roads and trails throughout the HLC NF. There would be no plan components for RWAs in alternative E.

Cumulative Effects

Reasonable and foreseeable future actions on the HLC NF include vegetation management, mining, grazing, prescribed burning, and the reduction of fuels in the wildland-urban interface. These actions could impact the wilderness characteristics of solitude, depending on the proximity and pervasiveness of these actions, although typically just the sights and sounds within the RWA are used to determine effects on wilderness characteristics.

Alternatives A, B, C, and D identify RWAs, some of which are located adjacent to designated wilderness. In alternatives B and D, motorized recreation uses and mechanical means of transportation would not be allowed in RWAs. Both the location of these RWAs and the closure of motorized and mechanized means of transport would extend the opportunities for solitude and primitive unconfined

recreation into these locations and improve the wilderness characteristics of existing wilderness areas overall.

Alternative C also identifies RWAs, some of which are adjacent to designated wilderness areas. However, existing motorized and mechanized recreational uses would be allowed to continue within these areas in alternative C. While RWAs combined with designated wilderness would still contribute to larger areas with wilderness characteristics, effects from motorized and mechanized recreation uses within RWAs may impact the opportunities for solitude and primitive unconfined recreation in those areas.

Conclusions

In alternative A, the HLC NF would continue to manage three RWAs, for an estimated total of 34,265 acres, as per the guidance found in the 1986 Helena NF Plan. Direction for motorized uses within these areas would be provided by existing travel plans. Mechanical means of transportation would be allowed to continue on existing roads and trails.

All of the action alternatives meet the purpose and need because they are consistent with the 2012 Planning Rule and associated directives, which provides direction to complete a wilderness inventory and evaluation process to determine lands with wilderness characteristics that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System when conducting a forest plan revision.

Alternatives B and C identify nine areas to be RWAs for a total of approximately 213,076 acres. These nine RWAs would be managed to protect their wilderness characteristics. Boundaries for the individual RWAs would be located on naturally occurring ridgelines, stream bottoms, or other locatable features on the landscape to make them more manageable.

In response to public comment, sixteen RWAs would be identified in alternative D, for a total of approximately 474,589 acres. These sixteen areas would be managed to protect their wilderness characteristics and, similar to alternatives B and C, the boundaries for the individual RWAs would be located on naturally occurring ridgelines, stream bottoms, or other locatable features on the landscape to make them more manageable.

In response to public comment, alternative E would not identify any lands as RWAs.

In alternatives B and D, motorized uses and mechanical means of transportation within RWAs would be considered unsuitable and would not be allowed to occur. By closing RWAs to these uses, wilderness characteristics would be most protected and enhanced. In response to public comment, alternative C would allow motorized uses and mechanized means of transportation to continue within RWAs. Table 236 summarizes the acres and allowed uses within RWAs by alternative.

Table 236. Summary of acres and allowed uses in RWAs by alternative

Alternative	Number of RWAs	Acres[1]	Motorized uses	Mechanical means of transportation
A	3	34,265	Allowed per existing travel plans	Allowed
B	9	213, 076	Not allowed	Not allowed
C	9	213, 076	Allowed per existing travel plans	Allowed
D	16	474,589	Not allowed	Not allowed
E	0	0	Allowed per existing travel plans	Allowed

Identifying an area as a RWA through the forest plan does not create a wilderness, as only Congress has the right to designate wilderness by passing legislation. However, RWAs adjacent to designated wilderness can affect existing wilderness areas by providing larger areas with wilderness characteristics.

3.23.9 Wilderness study areas, affected environment

The HLC NF manages two WSAs: the Big Snowy Mountains and the Middle Fork Judith. See Table 237.

Table 237. Montana wilderness study act areas

WSA	GA	Acres
Middle Fork Judith	Little Belts	82,127
Big Snowies	Snowies	87,968
Total Acres		170,095

The Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 states that these lands should be managed for their "presently existing wilderness character." This has been interpreted to include the allowance of those recreation uses that were present in 1977. During scoping, the public informed the Forest that existing mountain biking was a valued recreation activity in WSAs, particularly in the Big Snowies area.

3.23.10 Wilderness study areas, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

The WSAs on the HLC NF are governed by the terms of the Montana Wilderness Study Act (Public Law 95-150) which are designed to protect and retain wilderness characteristics until Congress makes a final decision about these areas. The Big Snowies and the Middle Fork Judith WSAs will be managed and regulated according to the direction provided in this law.

In all alternatives, the acres of the Big Snowies and Middle Fork Judith WSAs would remain the same. There would be no effect to the existing undeveloped values or special features of these WSAs in any of the alternatives. All of the alternatives would continue to protect and preserve the wilderness characteristics found within the WSAs on the HLC NF.

Effects common to all action alternatives

The plan components for WSAs would remain the same in all action alternatives. See Table 238.

Table 238. Summary of plan components for WSAs

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-WSA-DC-01	This DC ensures an environment in WSAs where ecological process such as natural succession, wildfire, avalanches, insects and disease are the primary forces affecting the environment.
FW-WSA-DC-02	This DC ensures that WSAs provide opportunities primitive recreation, while allowing for recreation uses established prior to the 1977 Montana Wilderness Study Act, if those uses retain the wilderness characteristics of the area.
FW-WSA-SUIT-01; 02; 06	These plan components provides direction for timber production, timber harvesting, new commercial communication sites, new utility corridors, and developed recreation sites and facilities within RWAs. None of these management actions are suitable within RWAs.
FW-WSA-SUIT-03	This plan component states that restoration activities, such as management ignited fire and active weed management, are suitable within WSAs, so long as they protect and/or enhance the wilderness characteristics of these areas.

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-WSA-SUIT-04	This component ensures that the use of motorized equipment, such as chain saws, is suitable in WSAs to achieve restoration activities and administrative work.
FW-WSA-SUIT-05	This plan component provides direction for road construction and reconstruction within WSAs.
FW-WSA-SUIT-07	This plan component allows for existing livestock grazing allotments but prohibits new or expanded livestock grazing allotments within WSAs.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and management activities for aquatic ecosystems and soil management would have little effect related to WSAs. The plan components that may have the greatest influence are those associated with RMZs. East of the Continental Divide, RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. All of the WSAs are east of the Continental Divide.

Little to no active management would occur in WSAs. However, restoration treatments such as prescribed fire that could occur may be limited or modified within RMZs. The area on which these components apply is greater with the action alternatives than with the no-action alternative on landscapes east of the Continental Divide; however, the effect would be minor and insubstantial with regards to the wilderness characteristics of WSAs.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur within WSAs, and provide opportunities for natural fire to promote and/or enhance the wilderness characteristics of these areas. Fire and fuels management plan components also specify the use of minimum impact strategies and tactics to manage wildland fire within WSAs, which would further protect wilderness characteristics.

Timber and vegetation management

There would be no effect to WSAs from plan components related to timber harvest because no timber harvest would be allowed in these areas. Plan components related to desired vegetation conditions could influence whether restoration treatments (such as management-ignited fires) are conducted in WSAs, and help define the objectives for those treatments. Vegetation management activities such as planting of whitebark pine could also be allowed. Vegetation plan components would help promote and/or enhance the wilderness characteristics of these areas.

Livestock grazing and management

The plan components for the action alternatives do not allow for new or expanded livestock grazing allotments to occur within WSAs; however, existing allotments may be retained. Therefore, the plan components that guide livestock grazing and management would influence these areas. While livestock grazing itself has the potential to degrade plant communities through factors such as invasive plant spread and damage to riparian areas, plan components emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components should help protect the wilderness characteristics of WSAs, to a greater degree with the action alternatives as compared to the no-action alternative.

Wildlife management

Plan components related to wildlife management would have little to no effect on WSAs.

Recreation and scenery management

Plan components for recreation settings, opportunities, and access along with scenery management would complement the management of WSAs for their wilderness characteristics. In the action alternatives, WSAs have a primitive ROS setting and a very high SIO. These classifications would ensure that potential recreation and other activities, such as restoration, would be consistent with WSA desired conditions.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components related to cultural, historic, and tribal resource would have little to no effect on WSAs. The protection of these resources would be consistent with maintaining the wilderness characteristics of these areas.

Road access and infrastructure

Plan components related to road access and infrastructure would have little to no effect on WSAs, because these areas would not be suitable for road construction or reconstruction. However, road reconstruction or rerouting for the purpose of eliminating impacts to natural or cultural resources is allowed, provided the abandoned routs are fully rehabilitated (FW-WSA-SUIT-05); plan components for infrastructure would help ensure this work is done in a manner that protects hydrological resources.

Minerals management

WSAs are discretionarily unavailable for mineral leasing and saleable mineral activity but still open to locatable mineral prospecting, exploration, and development.

Alternative A, no action

In alternative A, the Big Snowies and the Middle Fork Judith WSAs would continue to be managed under the 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan and direction found in Public Law 95-150. Future wilderness and other laws may determine the fate of these WSAs. Table 239 describes the plan components in the 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan that provide direction for the Big Snowies and Middle Fork Judith WSAs.

Table 239. Summary of existing plan components for WSAs (alternative A)

Plan component	Expected effects
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan, Objectives – Roadless Areas, Page 2-5	An objective for roadless areas which recognizes over a million acres of roadless on the Lewis and Clark NF. Some of these roadless acres have been identified as WSAs.
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan, Geographic Unit Direction, Little Belt Mountains, Middle Fork Judith Pages 4-69 through 4-70	Establishes that the Middle Fork Judith WSA will be managed to protect its wilderness characteristics until Congress acts on the FS's recommendations.
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan, Geographic Unit Direction, Snowy Mountains, Big Snowies, Pages 4-89 through 4-90	Establishes that the Big Snowies WSA will be managed to protect its wilderness characteristics until Congress acts on the FS's recommendations.

Alternatives B and C

In alternatives B and C the entire Big Snowies WSA would be identified as a RWA. Therefore, the plan components for RWAs would apply to the Big Snowies WSA in alternatives B and C, rather than the plan components for WSA.

The Middle Fork Judith WSA is *not* identified as a RWA in alternatives B and C. The plan components for WSAs, as described in effects to all action alternatives, above, would apply to the Middle Fork Judith WSA.

Alternative D

In alternative D, the entire Big Snowies WSA would be identified as a RWA. Therefore, the plan components for RWAs would apply to the Big Snowies WSA in alternative D.

In alternative D, a portion, but not all of, the Middle Fork Judith WSA would also be identified as a RWA. The plan components for RWAs would apply to those portions of the Middle Fork Judith WSA that would be identified as RWAs. The portions of the Middle Fork Judith WSA outside of the RWA would follow the plan components for WSAs identified in effects to all action alternatives, above.

Alternative E

In alternative E, neither the Big Snowies nor the Middle Fork Judith WSAs would be identified as RWAs. The plan components for WSAs, identified in effects to all action alternatives, above, would apply.

Conclusions

Since these areas are congressionally designated WSAs, the acres and locations of the Big Snowies and Middle Fork Judith WSAs would not vary in any of the alternatives, including alternative A. In alternative A, the Big Snowies and the Middle Fork Judith WSAs would continue to be managed under the 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan and direction found in Public Law 95-150.

The action alternatives (alternatives B-E) include plan components that would provide direction for the management of the WSAs on the Forest including the protection and preservation of existing wilderness characteristics and guidelines for the management of facilities, utilities, trails, and outfitter and guide permits within WSAs. By providing the plan components outlined in the action alternatives, the HLC NF meets the purpose and need of the forest plan, ensuring that WSAs are managed in ways that are ecologically and socially sustainable for present and future generations.

In alternatives B, C, and D, the Big Snowies WSA would be identified as a RWA. In these three alternatives, activities/management in the Big Snowies WSA would be subject to the more restrictive plan components for RWAs.

Similarly, in alternative D, portions of the Middle Fork Judith WSA would be identified as a RWA. The more restrictive plan components for RWAs would apply to those acres of the Middle Fork Judith that have been identified as such. The acres of the Middle Fork Judith WSA that are not identified as RWA would follow the plan components developed for WSAs.

No RWAs were identified in alternative E so both the Big Snowies and the Middle Fork Judith WSAs would follow the plan components for WSAs in this alternative.

3.23.11 Eligible wild and scenic rivers, affected environment

In 2015, under the direction of the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR Part 219), a WSRs eligibility study was conducted on the HLC NF. The 2015 eligibility study process included the review of all named and free-flowing streams/rivers within the HLC NF and a determination of whether these streams/rivers had any outstandingly remarkable values. After the completion of the study, the HLC NF identified 45 rivers as eligible for consideration as wild, scenic, or recreational rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The designation of eligible WSRs pertains only to federally owned lands. Rivers and segments of rivers that pass through private lands were not considered in the eligibility study.

In order for a river to be identified as eligible for WSR designation if must (1) be free flowing, and (2) possess at least one outstandingly remarkable value.

Once identified, a corridor of ¼ mile either side of the eligible river/river segment is identified for the protection and management of the WSR-related values. For management purposes, identified eligible WSR segments are classified as wild, scenic, or recreational.

- **Wild** – Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted.
- **Scenic**– Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.
- **Recreational**– Those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

Table 240 identifies the eligible rivers, the outstandingly remarkable values present, the preliminary classification, and the mileage associate with each river. For information about the WSRs eligibility study, including maps and documentation, see appendix G of the Draft Plan.

Table 240. Eligible WSRs

Eligible river/river segment	Segment Description	Preliminary Classification	Outstanding Remarkable Value(s)	Miles
Beaver Creek	Segment 1: From mouth to Bridge Creek, west of Nelson	Recreational	Recreation, Geology, Fish, Cultural	5.5
	Segment 2: From Sheep Gulch to Pike Creek	Recreational		3.7
Whites Gulch	From FS boundary west to private boundary.	Recreational	Fish	3.0
Missouri River	Hauser Dam to Cochran Gulch	Recreational	Recreation (Fishing), Geology, Wildlife	2.2
Ray Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters.	Scenic	Fish	3.4
Little Blackfoot River	Segment 1: From mouth to private land boundary near Charter Oaks.	Recreational	Fish Cultural	0.8
	Segment 2: From private land boundary south of Sawmill Creek to private land boundary north of Conner's Gulch.	Recreational		5.0
	Segment 3: From private land boundary north of Kading Campground to the headwaters.	Wild		9.0
High Ore Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters	Scenic	Fish	1.1
Kady Gulch	From FS boundary to mining claim boundary	Recreational	Fish	1.1
South Fork Quartz	From mouth to mining claim boundary	Recreational	Fish	2.2
Skelly Gulch	From FS boundary to headwaters	Recreational	Fish	2.5
Staubach Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters	Scenic	Fish	2.4
North Fork Highwood Creek	From fish barrier to headwaters	Scenic	Fish	3.4
Big Coulee Creek	From natural cascade fish barrier to upper tributary fork	Wild	Fish	2.1

Eligible river/river segment	Segment Description	Preliminary Classification	Outstanding Remarkable Value(s)	Miles
Cottonwood Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters	Scenic	Fish	2.5
North Fork Little Belt Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters	Wild	Fish	2.1
Pilgrim Creek	From cascade fish barrier to headwaters	Wild	Fish	10.7
Middle Fork Judith River	From FS boundary to Big Arch Coulee	Recreational	Cultural	4.7
South Fork Judith River	Segment 1: From Bower Creek to Dry Pole Creek Segment 2: From Bluff Creek to Cabin Creek Segment 3: From Cabin Creek to headwaters	Recreational Scenic Wild	Fish Cultural	3.6 1.3 10.0
Smith River *(FS lands only)*	The Smith River is comprised of 14 small segments of NFS lands interspersed with private lands. Only NFS lands are considered for eligibility. To view individual segments, see detail maps located in the summary.	Scenic	Scenic Recreation Geology Wildlife Cultural	17.1
Tenderfoot Creek	From FS boundary to Iron Mines Creek	Scenic	Recreation, Fish	21.5
South Fork Two Medicine River	Segment 1: From FS boundary to Box Creek Segment 2: From private land boundary to headwaters	Wild Wild	Scenery, Cultural	3.4 9.5
Badger Creek	From FS boundary to confluence with North and South Badger Creeks	Wild	Cultural Scenery	7.2
North Badger Creek	From confluence with main Badger and South Badger Creeks to headwaters	Wild	Fish Cultural	10.4
South Badger Creek	From confluence with main Badger and North Badger Creek to headwaters	Wild	Cultural	10.9
Lee Creek	From mouth to headwaters	Wild	Fish	4.6
Badger Cabin Creek	From mouth to headwaters	Wild	Fish	3.2
Red Poacher Creek	From confluence with North Badger Creek to headwaters	Wild	Fish	3.1
North Fork Birch Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters	Wild	Cultural, Scenery	7.8
Middle Fork Birch Creek	From confluence to the headwaters	Wild	Scenery, Cultural	5.2
South Fork Birch Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters	Wild	Scenery, Recreation, Fish, Wildlife, Cultural	9.8
North Fork Deep Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters	Wild	Scenery	5.3

Eligible river/river segment	Segment Description	Preliminary Classification	Outstanding Remarkable Value(s)	Miles
North Fork Teton River	Segment 1: From FS Boundary to road crossing above Elko Campground (bottom of box canyon) Segment 2: from road crossing to West Fork Campground (through the box canyon) Segment 3: from West Fork Campground to headwaters	Recreation Wild Scenic	Recreation Scenery Fish	5.5 4.1 7.6
Middle Fork North Fork Teton River	From the confluence with North Fork Teton River to headwaters.	Scenic	Fish	6.8
Waldron Creek	From the confluence with North Fork Teton River to headwaters	Recreational	Fish	4.3
North Fork Sun River	From wilderness boundary to the headwaters	Wild	Scenery, Recreation	26.2
South Fork Sun River	From wilderness boundary to headwaters	Wild	Recreation, Wildlife	26.2
West Fork South Fork Sun River	From mouth to junction with Ahorn Creek	Wild	Recreation, Wildlife	8.5
Green Fork Straight Creek	From mouth to headwaters	Wild	Scenery, Geology	5.9
Wood Creek	From below the dam on Wood Lake to the confluence with Straight Creek	Recreational	Wildlife	7.1
Dearborn River	From FS boundary to Whitetail Creek	Wild	Scenery	6.5
Swimming Woman Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters	Scenic	Scenery, Geology	3.9
East Fork Big Spring Creek	From south end of Section 33 to headwaters	Wild	Fish	5.3
Alice Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters	Recreational	Cultural	7.0
Copper Creek	From FS boundary to headwaters	Recreational	Fish	14.0
Landers Fork	From FS boundary to headwaters	Wild	Fish	18.8
Snowbank Creek	From confluence with Copper Creek to headwaters	Scenic	Fish	4.4
Total				**363.4**

3.23.12 Eligible wild and scenic rivers, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Under all alternatives, the identified eligible WSRs (and area within ¼ mile on either side of each river) would be managed to protect their free-flowing condition and to preserve and enhance the outstandingly remarkable value(s) for which they were identified.

Effects common to all action alternatives

The plan components developed for eligible WSRs are based on FS policy and remain the same in all action alternatives. Table 241 summarizes the expected effects of each plan component related to eligible WSRs.

Table 241. Summary of proposed plan components for eligible WSRs

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-WSR-DC-01	This DC establishes that all eligible WSRs/river segments will retain their free-flowing condition and the outstandingly remarkable value for which they were identified.
FW-WSR-GDL-01	This guideline provides interim protection measure for the eligible WSRs and lands ¼ mile on either side of these rivers.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and activities related to watershed, soil, riparian, or aquatic habitat improvements would have a minor effect to eligible WSRs due to the protections already in place for these areas with interim protection measures (FW-WSR-STD-01).

East of the Continental Divide (the majority of the HLC NF), RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. West of the Continental Divide, the area influenced by riparian plan components is the same across all alternatives because RMZs would be defined the same way as riparian habitat conservation zones are in the no-action alternative. The standard for eligible WSR management defines a ¼ mile area on either side of the stream where interim protection measures apply; this area would encompass RMZs. Plan components for the management of RMZs are consistent with the interim protection measures.

Fire and fuels management

Natural, unplanned ignitions and prescribed fires are used as tools to maintain ecological conditions within river corridors. These fire and fuels management tools may remain so long as they maintain the outstandingly remarkable values and free flowing nature of the identified rivers. Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires and provide opportunities for natural fire to promote and/or enhance the characteristics of these areas.

Timber and vegetation management

Eligible wild classified rivers are not suitable for timber production and timber harvest is not allowed. Therefore, there would be no effects from timber harvest on those segments. On eligible recreational or scenic classified rivers, timber production is not suitable but timber harvest is allowed for multiple-use purposes, for salvage logging, and to achieve desired vegetation conditions, so long as the outstandingly remarkable values of the river or river segment are not affected. Plan components related to desired vegetation would help define the objectives for any harvest treatments that could occur in these areas.

Livestock grazing and management

Livestock grazing is common on the HLC NF and may potentially affect the outstandingly remarkable values along eligible WSRs. Grazing, along with existing and new facilities necessary for grazing allotments, may remain so long as the outstandingly remarkable values and free flowing nature of the identified rivers is maintained.

While livestock grazing itself has the potential to degrade plant communities through factors such as invasive plant spread and damage to riparian areas, plan components emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components should help protect eligible WSRs, to a greater degree with the action alternatives as compared to the no-action alternative.

Recreation and scenery management

Although eligible WSR corridors may be used for camping, canoeing, hiking, and other activities, the impacts are expected to remain at existing levels. In order to provide an essentially primitive character, eligible segments classified as wild generally would not have developed recreation sites. Dispersed camping and day-use sites may occur in river corridors. In segments classified as scenic or recreational, recreation development would be allowed when such sites would protect and maintain the outstandingly remarkable values for which the river was deemed eligible. Trail maintenance work can be expected to have little if any impact in the river corridors.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components for cultural, historic, and tribal resources would complement the management of eligible WSRs.

Road access and infrastructure

Plan components for road access and infrastructure would help ensure that roads that may occur within eligible WSR corridors are maintained in a condition that protects the hydrological resources of those areas.

Minerals management

Eligible rivers with scenic or recreation classification areas are not withdrawn for mineral entry and are suitable for mineral exploration and development while protecting and maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values for which the river was identified. Eligible segments classified as wild would not be available for mineral material development upon designation.

Alternative A, no action

Under alternative A, the eligible WSRs would be managed under direction provided in the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark Forest Plans. Table 242 describes the plan components in the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark Forest Plans that provide direction for eligible WSRs.

Table 242. Summary of existing plan components for the eligible WSRs.

Plan component	Expected effects
1986 Helena NF Plan Goal 19, Page II/2	This goal provides direction to protect stream segments found eligible for classification under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act until suitability studies are complete.
1986 Helena NF Plan Objective, Resource Activity/ Summaries Wild and Scenic Rivers, Page II/6	This objective lists the eligible stream segments identified in the 1989 eligibility study and provides direction to protect and/or maintain the outstandingly remarkable resource values and potential classification until suitability studies can be completed.
1986 Helena NF Plan Forest-wide Standards, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Page II/36	These forestwide standards provide direction for the following located on or adjacent to eligible WSRs: hydroelectric power, water supply, flood control, range, timber production, mining, road construction, motorized travel, utilities, recreation development, structures, and fisheries.
1986 Helena NF Plan; Implementation/Monitoring, Page IV/6	This forestwide monitoring requirement requires the monitoring of any action that would adversely impact eligible river qualifications or potential classifications.
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan Goal 11, Page 2-3	This goal protects the existing condition of the eligible WSRs, and maintains or enhances the outstandingly remarkable resource value(s) for each river while providing for public recreation and resource uses which do not adversely impact or degrade those values.
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan Objectives, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Page 2-9	This objective identifies the rivers that were found to be eligible in the 1989 eligibility study and provides interim direction to protect and/or maintain the

Plan component	Expected effects
	outstandingly remarkable resource values and potential classification until suitability studies can be completed.
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan Forest-wide Management Standards W-1, W-2, and W-3 Pages 2-75 through 2-81	These standards provide management direction for the following activities located on or adjacent to eligible WSRs: hydroelectric power, water supply, flood control, range, timber production, mining, road construction, motorized travel, utilities, recreation development, structures, and fisheries.

Alternatives B- E

See effects common to all alternatives.

Conclusions

Under all alternatives, the identified eligible WSRs would be managed to protect their free-flowing condition and to preserve and enhance the outstandingly remarkable value(s) for which they were identified. Alternative A would manage the eligible rivers as per the direction from the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark Forest Plans. These plans provide interim direction for the eligible streams and emphasize the need for suitability studies for these rivers.

Similar to alternative A, the plan components of alternatives B-E provide interim management direction for the identified eligible rivers. All of the action alternatives would meet the purpose and need because they are consistent with the 2012 Planning Rule and associated directives, which provides direction to complete an eligible WSR study on all free flowing streams when conducting a forest plan revision.

3.23.13 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, affected environment

Approximately 273 miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail are located on the HLC NF (Table 243). An estimated 65 miles of the trail is located within the Upper Blackfoot GA, approximately 68 miles are located within the Divide GA, and approximately 140 miles are located within the Rocky Mountain GA.

Table 243. Continental Divide National Scenic Trail segments

Trail Name	Trail #	GA	County	Miles
Continental Divide	337	Divide	Lewis and Clark	68
Two-Med-Heart Butte	101	Rocky Mountain Range	Pondera	4
North Fork Badger	103	Rocky Mountain Range	Pondera	1
North Fork Sun	110	Rocky Mountain Range	Teton	4
Rock Creek	111	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	12
Open Fork	116	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	6
North Fork Red Shale	130	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	7
Summit Campground Cutoff	133	Rocky Mountain Range	Glacier	2
Elk Calf Mountain	137	Rocky Mountain Range	Glacier and Pondera	10
Lee Creek-Sidney Creek	141	Rocky Mountain Range	Pondera	5
Kip Creek	142	Rocky Mountain Range	Pondera	3
Elbow Creek	145	Rocky Mountain Range	Pondera	4
Muskrat Creek	147	Rocky Mountain Range	Pondera	7
North Wall	174	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	11
Wall Trail	175	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	6

Trail Name	Trail #	GA	County	Miles
My Lake	194	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	4
South Fork Sun	202	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	13
West Fork Sun	203	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	16
Dearborn River	206	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	9
Blacktail-Landers Fork	207	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	3
Straight Creek	212	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	10
Elbow Pass	248	Rocky Mountain Range	Lewis and Clark	3
Continental Divide National Scenic Trail	440	Upper Blackfoot	Lewis and Clark	65
Total				273

3.23.14 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

All of the alternatives would continue to manage the trail as outlined in the 2009 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan. Additionally, all alternatives carry forward the need for rehabilitation of any impacted sites along the trail, education and interpretation along the trail, and implementation of Continental Divide National Scenic Trail management plans.

Effects common to all action alternatives

The portions of the Continental Divide Trail on the Rocky Mountain Range GA are located within the Bob Marshall and the Scapegoat Wilderness areas. Natural ecological processes and disturbance would continue to be the primary forces affecting the composition, structure, and patterns of vegetation in these areas. The primitive recreation opportunity setting with wilderness would ensure the trail is managed for a primitive experience.

The remainder of the Continental Divide Trial is located within the Divide and Upper Blackfoot GAs. In these GAs, the trail passes though undeveloped areas as well as areas where timber management, road building, and mining have historically been present. As the trail corridor is managed according to the plan components, the visual effects of these past activities would continue to fade.

Plan components developed for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail remain the same in all action alternatives. Table 244 summarizes the expected effects of each of these plan components.

Table 244. Summary of proposed plan components for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-CDNST-DC-01	This DC ensures that the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail provides high-quality primitive and/or semi-primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and other compatible non-motorized activities, in a highly scenic setting along the Continental Divide. The significant scenic, natural, historic, and cultural resources along the trail corridor are conserved. The trail provides users with expansive views of the surrounding landscapes.
FW-CDNST-DC-02	This DC ensures that foreground views, up to ½ mile either side of the trail, are natural-appearing and generally appear unaltered by human activities. Middleground and background views consider the effects on scenic integrity and trail experience as seen from trail segments.

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-CDNST-DC-03	This DC ensures that the trail corridor provides primitive and/or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS settings. The trail may pass through more developed settings to provide a continuous route.
FW-CDNST-DC-04	This DC ensures a variety of access points along the trail.
FW-CDNST-DC-05	User conflicts along the trail are managed so that they are infrequent.
FW-CDNST-DC-06	This DC ensures that the trail is maintained, signed, and passable and that alternate routes are established when portions of the trail are temporarily closed due to natural events or for public safety purposes.
FW-CDNST-DC-07	Interpretation along the trail enhances visitor experiences and increases awareness of the cultural and historic features along the trail.
FW-CDNST-GO-01	This component promotes working collaboratively with partners, volunteers, communities, and federal, tribal, and state land and wildlife managers to conserve the valuable natural, wild land, scenic, historic and cultural resources along the trail.
FW-CDNST-OBJ-01	This objective works to maintain the entire length of the trail and to reroute selected portions in order to improve scenic viewing opportunities, reconstruct trail to standard, and/or provide nonmotorized experiences.
FW-CDNST-STD-01; 02	These STDs prohibit surface occupancy for oil and gas or geothermal energy leasing activities and common variety mineral extraction within the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail corridor.
FW-CDNST-STD-03	This STD prohibits new motorized recreation events on the trail, thereby supporting the primitive and semi-primitive settings along the trail, but does provide for exceptions in sections that are currently along motorized routes.
FW-CDNST-GDL-01	This guideline provides direction for the retaining or promoting the primitive and/or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS settings along the trail.
FW-CDNST-GDL-02; 03; and 06	These GDLs protect and enhance the scenic quality of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail by being consistent or making progress toward achieving the SIOs of high and/or very high within the foreground of the trail (up to 1/2 mile either side of the trail).
FW-CDNST-GDL-04	This GDL ensures that the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is not located onto routes open to motorized recreation uses.
FW-CDNST-GDL-05; 07	These GDLs promote natural-appearing settings by providing direction for minimal facility development along the trail and by ensuring that linear utilities and rights-of-way are limited to a single crossing of the trail unless additional crossings are documented as the only prudent and feasible alternative.
FW-CDNST-GDL-08	This GDL provides direction for the construction of new or temporary roads or motorized trails across or adjacent to the trail.
FW-CDNST-GDL-09	This GDL restricts the use of the trail as a landing or temporary road during vegetative management activities and limits the hauling or skidding of logs along or across the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.
FW-CDNST-GDL-10	This GDL ensures that minimum fire suppression tactics are used with unplanned fires in the foreground (up to ½ mile either side) of the trail.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and activities related to aquatic ecosystems and soil management would generally have little effect to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, because the trail most often follows ridgetops rather than stream bottoms. Where the trail does cross or parallel streams, plan components related to RMZs would help maintain the scenic quality of those areas, and therefore complement the management of the trail.

East of the Continental Divide (the majority of the HLC NF), RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which

SMZs would be used. West of the Continental Divide, the area influenced by riparian plan components is the same across all alternatives because RMZs would be defined the same way as riparian habitat conservation zones are in the no-action alternative.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur near the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, and provide opportunities for natural fire to alter the vegetation condition of the landscape. When fire does occur, whether natural or management-ignited, it could change the scenery visible from the trail, including charred vegetation in the short term as well as re-growth in the longer term. Fire on the landscape would generally complement the scenic quality objectives for the trail. Plan components are in place to ensure that minimum impact suppression tactics or other tactics appropriate for the protection of the trail values are used.

Timber and vegetation management

Many stretches of the trail lie within designated wilderness, where timber harvest is prohibited. Other stretches are in inventoried roadless, where timber harvest is largely constrained. However, some stretches of this trail are located in areas where harvest could occur, including both areas that are suitable for timber production and those unsuitable for timber production where harvest can occur for other purposes. Alternative D would have the least amount of overlap with the trail corridor in both lands suitable for timber production and unsuitable lands where harvest could occur for other purposes, largely as a function of RWAs. Alternative A has the most overlap of lands suitable for timber production, while alternative E has the most overlap of unsuitable lands where harvest may occur for other purposes.

Where harvest does occur, it could impact the scenic values visible from the trail, including more open vegetation and stumps, as well as soil disturbance in the short term. Conversely, harvest could be used to improve the scenic quality by creating vistas, mimic vegetation structures that would be created by natural disturbance, and promote healthy vegetation. Vegetation plan components would help define the objectives for treatments that may occur near the trail. In addition to harvest, plan components would allow for other vegetation treatments such as tree planting and weed spraying, which could further enhance the scenic quality of the trail.

While harvest could have the potential to degrade the scenic quality along the trail, such effects are unlikely to occur because of plan components to maintain a high or very high SIO within ½ mile of either side of the trail (FW-CDNST-GDL-02, 03). Guidelines also limit harvest-related activities such as temporary roads, skidding, hauling, and log landings (FW-CDNST-GDL-08, 09, 10).

Livestock grazing and management

Livestock grazing allotments could occur along or in proximity to the trail; therefore, plan components for livestock grazing would have an effect. Evidence of grazing, including cows, cow patties, grazed vegetation, and weeds could occur. However, plan components for livestock grazing emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components should help protect the scenic quality of the trail, to a greater degree with the action alternatives as compared to the no-action alternative.

Recreation and scenery management

Recreation and scenery management plan components would complement the management of the Continental Divide National Scenic trail by specifying ROS settings (primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized) and scenic quality objectives (high or very high) that are consistent with maintaining or moving toward the desired conditions of the trail, along with providing the facilities and infrastructure (such as signs) needed for the public to access and use the trail system.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components for cultural, historic, and tribal resources would complement the management of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

Road access and infrastructure

Plan components for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail include objectives and guidelines that encourage nonmotorized use. To the extent that the trail itself or motorized routes in proximity to the trail may be maintained, reconstructed, or relocated, the plan components for access and infrastructure would ensure that this work is done in a manner that has minimal impacts to other resources. These components would therefore complement the management of the trail.

Minerals management

Plan components for minerals management would have little to no effect on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, because components are in place that preclude surface occupancy and common variety mineral extraction within the trail corridor.

Alternative A, no action

Under alternative A, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail would continue to be managed under direction provided in the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark Forest Plans. Additionally, the 2009 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan and FS Handbook direction, would continue to provide management guidance for the trail.

Table 245 describes the plan components in the 1986 plans that provide direction for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

Table 245. Summary of existing plan components for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.

Plan component	Expected effects
1986 Helena NF Plan Forest-wide Standard, Recreation 4, Page II/15	This standard defers to the direction provided in the 2009 Comprehensive Management Plan for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.
1986 Helena NF Plan Forest-wide Standard, Visual 1, Page II/15	The visual quality along the Continental Divide National Scenic trail will be the same as those identified for the management areas through which the trail passes.
1986 Helena NF Plan Management Areas H-1 and H-2, Pages III/17 and III/20	Mentions Continental Divide National Scenic Trail but does not provide any trail-specific direction.
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan, Forest-wide Management Standard L-3 (1) and (2), Page 2-65	(1) These standards refer to the management direction along the trail provided in the National Trails System Act. (2) The management of the trail will be done in coordination with the Glacier National Park, especially in regard to developments along Marias Pass.
Lewis and Clark NF Management Area P, Page 3-83	This management area provides direction for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail in the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat wilderness areas. The specific route locations were identified once the 2009 Comprehensive Management Plan was developed. Individual inquiries regarding the trail would be handled on a case-by-case basis and an assigned trail coordinator would be responsible for any inquiries.

Alternatives B- E

See Effects common to all action alternatives, above.

Conclusions

In alternative A, the no-action alternative, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail would continue to be managed as per guidance found in the 1986 Helena and Lewis and Clark NF Plans, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Act of 1978, the 2009 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan, and FS Handbook direction. In the 1986 Helena NF Plan, the visual quality along the trail would be the same as the visual quality identified for the management areas through which the trail passes.

Alternatives B-E would meet the purpose and need by providing specific plan components for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. These plan components would remain the same in all action alternatives and support the scenic trail legislation and the 2009 Comprehensive Management Plan by establishing guidance and direction for the trail within the Forest Plan. The visual quality along the trails would be consistent with or make progress toward achieving the SIOs of high and/or very high within the foreground of the trail (up to 1/2 mile either side of the trail).

3.23.15 Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, affected environment

Approximately 12.9 miles of the 3,700 mile long trail are located on the HLC NF. Recreation sites within the plan area that specifically tie to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail include the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center in Great Falls, Montana, as well as Lewis and Clark Pass in Alice Creek in the Upper Blackfoot GA, and Meriwether Day Use site within the Big Belts GA.

3.23.16 Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Since the trail is established by law, all of the alternatives would continue to manage the trail as outlined in that legislation. Additionally, all alternatives would carry forward the need for continued education and interpretation along the trail and the need to work with partner groups.

Effects common to all action alternatives

Plan components developed for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail remain the same in all action alternatives. Table 246 summarizes the expected effects of each of these plan components.

Table 246. Summary of proposed plan components for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-LCNHT-DC-01	This DC promotes the opportunity to for forest visitors to learn about the 1805-1806 journey of the Lewis and Clark Expedition through the HLC NF.
FW-LCNHT-DC-02	This DC ensures that the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is clearly marked and identified.
FW-LCNHT-DC-03	This DC provides direction for the accuracy and delivery of interpretive and education themes along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.
FW-LCNHT-GO-01	This plan component promotes working collaboratively with partners and volunteers to maintain the trail and deliver accurate and quality education and interpretation along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.
FW-LCNHT-STD-01	This STD ensures that new sites and cultural landscapes along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail are documented and evaluated for nomination and inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.
FW-LCNHT-GDL-01	This GDL provides direction for the protection of the natural and cultural resources along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-LCNHT-GDL-02	This GDL provides direction for the protection of scenic quality along the trail. This guidance would provide a consistent approach to the management of scenery.
FW-LCNHT-SUIT-01	This plan component provides for the suitability of timber production. Specifically, lands along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail are not suitable for timber production. However, timber harvest may be used to provide for public safety and enhancing the scenic and recreation values along the trail.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and activities related to aquatic ecosystems and soil management would generally have little effect to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Where the trail crosses or parallel streams, plan components related to RMZs would help maintain the scenic quality of those areas, and therefore complement the management of the trail.

East of the Continental Divide (the majority of the HLC NF), RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. West of the Continental Divide, the area influenced by riparian plan components is the same across all alternatives because RMZs would be defined the same way as riparian habitat conservation zones are in the no-action alternative.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur near the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, and provide opportunities for natural fire to alter the vegetation condition of the landscape. When fire does occur, whether natural or management-ignited, it could change the scenery visible from the trail, including charred vegetation in the short term as well as re-growth in the longer term. Fire on the landscape would generally complement the scenic quality objectives for the trail.

Timber and vegetation management

Relatively little of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail lies on NFS lands within HLC NF, and for the most part it is within or adjacent to designated wilderness areas. Further, plan components are in place stating that areas within ¼ mile of the trail are unsuitable for timber production. Therefore, plan components associated with timber harvest and vegetation management would have little effect to the management of the trail. Timber harvest could be visible in the distance from some parts of the trail. While harvest could have the potential to degrade scenic quality, such effects are unlikely to occur because of plan components to maintain a high or very high SIO.

Livestock grazing and management

Livestock grazing allotments could occur along or in proximity to the trail. Evidence of grazing, including cows, cow patties, grazed vegetation, and weeds could occur. However, plan components for livestock grazing emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components should help protect the scenic quality of the trail, to a greater degree with the action alternatives as compared to the no-action alternative.

Recreation and scenery management

Recreation and scenery management plan components would complement the management of the Lewis and Clark National Historic trail by specifying ROS settings and scenic quality objectives that are consistent with maintaining or moving toward the desired conditions of the trail, along with providing the facilities and infrastructure (such as signs) needed for the public to access and use the trail system.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components for cultural, historic, and tribal resources would complement the management of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail by further protecting the resources that are integral to the value and purpose of the trail.

Road access and infrastructure

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail generally lies in nonmotorized areas. To the extent that routes in proximity to the trail may be maintained, reconstructed, or relocated, the plan components for access and infrastructure would ensure that this work is done in a manner that has minimal impacts to other resources. These components would therefore complement the management of the trail.

Minerals management

Areas along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail may be discretionarily unavailable for mineral leasing and saleable mineral activity but still open to locatable mineral prospecting, exploration, and development.

Alternative A, no action

In the no-action alternative, the Lewis and Clark National Historic trail would continue to be managed as per guidance under the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 and the direction provided for this trail in the 1986 Helena Forest Plans. The 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan does not make any mention of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail as most of the route is located off-forest in the Lewis and Clark portion of the HLC NF. Table 247 describes the plan components in the 1986 Helena Forest Plans that provide direction for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Table 247. Summary of existing plan components for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

Plan component	Expected effects
1986 Helena NF Plan Goals 1 and 2, Page II/1	These plan components provides for a range of outdoor recreation opportunities, including motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities.
1986 Helena NF Plan, Forest-wide Standards, Cultural Resources, Page II/16	Provides direction for minimal disturbance along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and interpretive sites during normal management practices.
1986 Helena NF Plan appendix B, Sensitive Viewing Areas, Page B/1	The Missouri River is identified as a Sensitivity Level 1 viewpoint and would be managed for the Retention Visual Quality Objectives in the foreground and Partial Retention Visual Quality Objectives in the middleground and background viewing distances.

Alternative B-E

See effects common to all action alternatives, above.

Conclusions

In alternative A, the no-action alternative, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail would continue to be managed as per guidance found in the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 and the 1986 Helena Forest Plan. The 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan does not make any mention of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail as most of the route is located off-forest in the Lewis and Clark portion of the HLC NF. Alternatives B-E meet the purpose and need by providing plan components for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. These plan components would remain the same in all action alternatives and support the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 by establishing guidance and direction for the trail within the Forest Plan.

3.23.17 Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center, affected environment

The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, which opened its doors to the public on May 5, 1998. The building is approximately 25,000 square feet and includes a 158 seat theater, a 6000 square foot exhibit hall, and a 1500 square foot resource center that is used for education programming, training center, and reception area. It was established to further the public's understanding and provide appropriate interpretation of the scope and accomplishments of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, within the State of Montana and along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. As an economic driver and top rated attraction, the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center serves not only Great Falls, but the community at large by educating visitors to the Great Falls area and the HLC NF. It also continues to be a resource for providing school programs to schools throughout Montana.

3.23.18 Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Since the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center was established by public law, all of the alternatives would continue to manage the center as outlined in that legislation. Additionally, all alternatives would carry forward the need for continued education and interpretation at the interpretive center and the need and desire to work with partner groups to strengthen those interpretive and educational messages. These activities are common to all alternatives.

Effects common to all action alternatives

The plan components developed for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center remain the same in all action alternatives. Table 248 summarizes the expected effects of each plan component related to the interpretive center.

Table 248. Summary of proposed plan components for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-LCIC-DC-01; 02; 03	These desired conditions provide direction for the interpretive and education themes and exhibits at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center.
FW-LCIC-GO-01	This component promotes working collaboratively with partners and volunteers to operate, maintain, and deliver education and interpretation at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center.
FW-LCIC-GO-02	This goal focuses on the economic contributions of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center to the local community and the State of Montana.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Forest plan components associated with other resource management such as aquatic resources, soil, fire and fuels, timber and vegetation management, livestock grazing, wildlife management, recreation and scenery, cultural and historic resources, and road access and infrastructure would not have an effect to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center due to its location.

Minerals Management

While the land that the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center is located on have not been withdrawn from mineral entry, it is not likely that this area would be affected by future minerals management.

Alternative A, no action

In the no-action alternative, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center would continue to be managed as per guidance under Public Law 100-552 and the general direction provided in the 1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan. There is no specific direction for the interpretive center provided by the 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan. Table 249 describes the goals in the 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan that provide general direction for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center.

Table 249. Summary of existing 1986 Forest Plan goals that provide general direction for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center

Plan component	Expected effects
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan Goals 8 and 9, Page 2-2	Goals 8 and 9 mention the development of closer ties with local communities, governments, local Indian tribes, individuals and private groups for continued resource management and economic development.
1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan Goal 10, Page 2-3	Goal 10 recognizes the need for public education programs in all FS planning to develop cooperative and mutually supportive relationships that will benefit both community and agency futures.

Alternative B-E

See effects common to all action alternatives, above.

Conclusions

In alternative A, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center would continue to be managed as per guidance under Public Law 100-552 and the general direction provided in the 1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan. There is no specific direction for the interpretive center provided by the 1986 Lewis and Clark Forest Plan. Alternatives B-E meet the purpose and need by providing plan components for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center. These plan components remain the same in all action alternatives and support Public Law 100-552 by establishing specific guidance and direction for the interpretive center within the Forest Plan.

3.23.19 Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area, affected environment

On December 19, 2014, President Obama signed into effect Public Law 113-291. Language within this law established the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area. The conservation management area includes approximately 195,073 acres of NFS lands and approximately 13,087 acres of federal land managed by the BLM. Under Public Law 113-291, the purpose for the conservation management area is to "conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the recreational, scenic, historical, cultural, fish, wildlife, roadless, and ecological values of the Conservation Management Area". The law also directs the management of motorized vehicles on roads and trails, decommissioning of temporary roads, grazing, vegetation management, noxious weed management, and nonmotorized recreation opportunities.

3.23.20 Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area, environmental consequences

Effects common to all alternatives

Since the conservation management area is established by Public Law 113-291, all of the alternatives would continue to manage the area as outlined in that legislation. There is currently no direction provided for this area in the 1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan.

Effects common to all action alternatives

The plan components developed for the conservation management area remain the same in all action alternatives. Table 250 summarizes the expected effects of each plan component related to the conservation management area.

Table 250. Summary of proposed plan components for the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area

Plan component	Expected effects
FW-CMA-DC-01	This DC ensures the conservation management area conserves, protects, and enhances the recreational, scenic, historic, cultural, fish, wildlife, roadless, and ecological values of the area for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.
FW-CMA-DC-02	This DC provides direction for the management of vegetation for the public health and safety, ROS settings and user experiences, enhanced scenic values, and the protection of facilities and infrastructure.
FW-CMA-DC-03	This DC provides access to non-motorized trail opportunities in primitive and semi-primitive ROS settings.
FW-CMA-STD-01; 02	These STD provide direction for the construction of new or temporary roads, and the restoration of these roads after vegetation management along these roads has occurred.
FW-CMA-GDL-01	This GDL provides for the control, prevention, and eradication of invasive species with the conservation management area.
FW-CMA-SUIT-01	This plan component provides for the suitability of timber production. Specifically, lands within the conservation management area are not suitable for timber production. However, timber harvest may be used to meet other resource objectives.
FW-CMA-SUIT-02	This suitability plan component allows for grazing to continue within conservation management areas on the forest.

Effects from forest plan components associated with:

Aquatic ecosystems and soil management

Plan components and management activities for aquatic ecosystems and soil management would complement the overall management of the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Areas by promoting the ecological integrity of watersheds, soil, and aquatic habitats.

East of the Continental Divide (where the conservation management area occurs), RMZs would be adopted and result in more acres being subject to riparian area plan components as compared to the no-action alternative, in which SMZs would be used. Potential vegetation treatments such as prescribed fire that may occur in the conservation management area may be limited within RMZs, or modified to comply with plan components for those areas. The area on which these components apply is greater with the action alternatives than with the no-action alternative.

Fire and fuels management

Plan components for fire and fuels management would encourage an appropriate management response to wildfires that may occur within the conservation management area, and provide opportunities for natural fire to promote the desired condition.

Timber and vegetation management

The Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area is unsuitable for timber production. Timber harvest could occur for other purposes, although opportunities would be limited due to other regulations such as those specified for IRAs. Where it does occur, harvest may be used to help meet the desired conditions for the area, including enhancing public health and safety, scenic values, and protecting facilities and infrastructure (for example, mitigating hazardous fuels). Plan components for harvest would ensure that it is conducted in a manner that protects other resources. Plan components related to desired

vegetation conditions could influence whether harvest or other treatments (such as management-ignited fires) are conducted, and help define the objectives for those treatments.

Livestock grazing and management

The plan components for the action alternatives allow for livestock grazing. While livestock grazing itself has the potential to degrade plant communities through factors such as invasive plant spread and damage to riparian areas, plan components emphasize the maintenance of resilient native plant communities as well as desirable riparian area conditions. These components should help protect the ecological values of the conservation management area, to a greater degree with the action alternatives as compared to the no-action alternative.

Recreation and scenery management

Plan components for recreation settings, opportunities, and access along with scenery management would complement the management of the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management area.

Cultural, historic, and tribal resource management

Plan components related to cultural, historic, and tribal resource would complement the management of the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management area.

Road Access and infrastructure

New or temporary road construction within the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management area would generally not occur, with a few specific exceptions (RM-CMA-STD-01). To the extent that re-location, decommissioning, or road construction occurs, the plan components for road access and infrastructure would ensure that other resource values are protected.

Minerals management

In 2006, Public Law 109-432 withdrew the lands in the Rocky Mountain Range GA from mineral entry. The conservation management areas fall within these lands that have been withdrawn. Mineral activities may still occur within the areas that have been withdrawn as long as a proponent has demonstrated they have a valid existing right.

Alternative A, no action

In the no-action alternative, the conservation management area would continue to be managed as per guidance under Public Law 113-291. There is currently no direction provided for this area in the 1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan.

Alternative B-E

See effects common to all action alternatives, above.

Conclusions

In alternative A, the conservation management area would continue to be managed as per guidance under Public Law 113-291. There is currently no direction provided for the conservation management area in the 1986 Lewis and Clark NF Plan. Alternatives B-E would meet the purpose and need by providing plan components for the conservation management area. These plan components would remain the same in all action alternatives and support the legislation by establishing guidance and direction for the conservation management area within the forest plan.

3.24 Cultural, Historical, and Tribal Resources

3.24.1 Introduction

Cultural and historical resources

Cultural resources are defined by the National Historic Preservation Act and by FS Manual 2200, section 2360, as objects or definite locations of human activity, occupation, or use identifiable through field survey, historical documentation, or oral evidence. Cultural resources can be prehistoric, historic, or archaeological sites, structures, places, or objects and traditional cultural properties.

Areas of tribal importance

The FS has obligations under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian (Public Law 95-341). Executive Order 13007 of 1996 further directs federal agencies to accommodate access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners and to avoid adversely affecting such sites. Consultation with recognized tribal governments is further defined and required by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-601), the 1992 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act, and the 1999 revisions to the implementing regulations in 36 CFR Part 800; Protection of Historic Properties. These obligations are applicable to all management actions no matter where they occur on the forest.

Indicators

Key indicators used to measure the effects of alternatives are:

- Potential ground disturbance: management activities and natural disturbances can both pose a threat to sacred sites and other cultural and historical resources.
- Ease of access: the ability to access sacred sites is important to local Tribes. At the same time, greater access to some cultural and historical resources could lead to detrimental effects such as vandalism and looting.

These measurement indicators were identified and defined through consultation with Tribes. Consultation provides the opportunity for Tribes to identify potential effects to tribal interests, including to native knowledge, tribally affiliated cultural resources, sacred sites, treaty rights, and religious freedom. Ground disturbance is a key consideration for effects, as ground disturbance may negatively impact sacred sites and areas. These impacts can be further exacerbated by interactions with fire, weather events, human actions, and environmental change. Access to sacred areas to exercise religious ceremonies and freedoms is another key consideration for effects. Management actions that change access could either beneficially or negatively impact the exercise of treaty rights and expression of religious freedom.

3.24.2 Regulatory framework

Laws and executive orders

Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 USC 461-467) declares that is it a national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the benefit of the people of the U.S.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (public laws 89-665, as amended, 91-243, 94-422, 94-458 and 96-515) establishes a program for the preservation of historic properties throughout the United States. It created the National Register of Historic Places, State Historic Preservation Offices and the Section 106 review process.