

Appendix E. Recommended Wilderness Analysis Process

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Recommended Wilderness Process

When developing or revising a forest plan, the FS must identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and determine whether to recommend any such lands to be designated as wilderness. This is done in four steps: inventory, evaluation, analysis, and recommendation. An opportunity for public input and review is required after each of these steps.

In all of the tables in this document, the acres reported are approximate.

Inventory and Evaluation

The wilderness inventory was developed using both the size and the improvements criteria outlined in Chapter 70 of the 2015 Final Land Management Planning Directives, FSH 1909.12. The HLC NF identified 46 distinct areas that had potential for inclusion based on this criteria. Maps of the wilderness inventory polygons and documentation of the inventory process were made available for public review in November of 2015.

Each of the areas identified in the wilderness inventory step were evaluated to determine their potential suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System using the criteria included in the Wilderness Act of 1964. An opportunity for public review of the evaluation of the wilderness polygons was made available with the release of the proposed action in March 2016.

A more detailed review of the inventory and evaluation steps is documented in appendix F of the Draft Plan, along with maps of all wilderness inventory polygons. In appendix F, the factors that guided the selection of recommended wilderness for the proposed action (alternatives B and C) are described.

Analysis

Based on the evaluation of the inventory and input from public participation, the responsible official identified specific areas to take forward as recommended wilderness areas (RWAs) in the alternatives in the DEIS. Not all of the lands included in the inventory and studied in the evaluation steps are required to be carried forward in an alternative and studied in the DEIS. Maps of each RWA included in the alternatives are located in appendix A of the DEIS. In addition to the analysis in the DEIS, the FSH 1909.12, chapter 70, requires that the following items be discussed for each RWA in each Alternative where it was identified:

- The name of the area and number of acres to be considered for recommendation;
- The location and a summarized description of a boundary for each recommended area;
- A brief description of the general geography, topography and vegetation of the recommended area;
- A brief description of the current uses and management of the area.
- A description of the area's wilderness characteristics and the ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics;
- A brief summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternatives;
- A brief summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for the area's suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Alternatives

Table 1 provides a snapshot of the RWAs that are included in each alternative, including the GA where it is located, the inventory polygon it originated from, and the approximate acres.

Table 1. Recommended wilderness areas included in each alternative

| RWA | GA | Wilderness Inventory Polygon | Alternative A Acres | Alternatives B and C Acres | Alternative D Acres |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Big Log | Big Belts | BB1 | 9,150 | 7,086 | 7,086 |
| Camas Creek | Big Belts | BB6 | -- | -- | 22,350 |
| Mount Baldy | Big Belts | BB7 | 8,420 | 8,314 | 8,314 |
| Wapiti Peak | Castles | CA1 | -- | -- | 30,606 |
| Loco Mountain | Crazies | CR1 | -- | -- | 24,977 |
| Blackfoot Meadows/ Electric Peak | Divide | D3 | 16,657 | 18,296 | 26,900 |
| Colorado Mountain | Divide | D5 | -- | -- | 14,189 |
| Deep Creek | Little Belts | LB1a | -- | 14,490 | 14,490 |
| Tenderfoot Creek | Little Belts | LB1b | -- | -- | 45,870 |
| Big Horn Thunder | Little Belts | LB2 | -- | -- | 47,107 |
| Middle Fork Judith | Little Belts | LB16 | -- | -- | 62,452 |
| Big Snowies | Snowies | S1 | -- | 95,299 | 95,299 |
| Dearborn Silverking | Upper Blackfoot | UB1 | -- | 20,088 | 20,088 |
| Red Mountain | Upper Blackfoot | UB2a | -- | 1,901 | 1,901 |
| Arrastra Creek | Upper Blackfoot | UB2b | -- | 8,257 | 8,257 |
| Nevada Mountain | Upper Blackfoot | UB10 | -- | 39,345 | 44,702 |
| | | | 34,227 | 213,076 | 474,589 |

Alternative A, the no-action alternative is based on the 1986 Forest Plan, which has three RWAs totaling approximately 34,227 acres. These RWAs are under the guidance of the 1986 Helena NF Plan.

The nine RWAs identified in Alternatives B and C are located on 5 GAs and total approximately 213,076 acres. These RWAs were derived from the wilderness inventory polygons identified in the first step of the wilderness evaluation process, but do not necessarily include all of the original acres. They were selected based on consideration of the information in the wilderness evaluation, which indicated these areas had wilderness characteristics such as naturalness, undeveloped, outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined recreation or other special features such as ecological, geological, or scientific, educational, scenic or historic value. Boundaries for the RWAs were redrawn to tie the boundary lines to naturally occurring ridgelines, stream bottoms, or other locatable features on the landscape to make them more manageable.

Alternative D responds to comments received during public scoping asking the Forest to consider an alternative that increased the amounts of RWAs and primitive recreation opportunities. Alternative D identifies sixteen (16) RWAs. These RWAs include the nine areas identified for Alternatives B and C as well as seven additional areas. Additional acreages were also added to the Nevada Mountain and Blackfoot Meadows RWAs in this alternative. The RWAs in Alternative D are located across seven geographic areas and total roughly 474,589 acres. All of the recommended wilderness areas for

Alternative D 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.

No areas were recommended for wilderness in alternative E to respond to issues identified in the scoping of the proposed action. Scoping comments identified a desire to not recommend any acres to be managed as recommended wilderness. While the wilderness inventory displays many areas and acres that possess wilderness characteristics, this alternative is designed to respond to the public input received in scoping and to display a reasonable range of alternatives as required under NEPA.

Recommended wilderness area analysis by alternative

Big Log Recommended Wilderness Area

The Big Log RWA was included in the 1986 Helena NF Plan. The area description is based on the Big Log wilderness inventory polygon, Big Belts 1 (BB1). This area is included as a RWA in alternatives A, B, C, and D. The boundary is the same for alternatives B, C, and D, and varies slightly for alternative A.

Table 2. Big Log recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Acres – alternative A | 9,150 (alternative A); 7,086 (alternatives B, C, D) |
| Description of the recommended boundary - alternative A | The RWA is comprised of three parcels. The northern parcel follows section 18 13 N 2 W from the east, north, west the south section of the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness and section 19 to complete the north parcel. The western parcel traverses the east boundary of the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness area and follows the south ridgeline of the Merriweather picnic site and then follows the Missouri river to the west. The southern boundary follows section line 1, and 6 T13 N 2 W and borders private property to complete the southern portion of the boundary. The southeast parcel north follows the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Boundary and south buffering Beaver Creek Indian Creek Rd 138. The east boundary follows Big Log Gulch and American Bar Rd 1812 to section line 7 and 8 T 12 R 2. |
| Description of the recommended boundary – alternatives B, C, D | The RWA is comprised of five parcels. The northeast parcel boundaries south and east boundary border the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness. The north and west boundary borders a Montana State parcel. The north central boundary borders a Montana State section east, north and west. The southern boundary borders the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness boundary. The north western parcel follows a Montana state section boundary to the north, west and southern boundary. The eastern boundary follows the adjacent Gates of Mountains wilderness. The Southwest parcel follows the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness boundary from the south to the east. The northern and western boundary follows a Montana state parcel. The southeast parcel north follows the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Boundary and south buffering Beaver Creek Indian Creek Rd 138. The east boundary follows Big Log Gulch and American Bar Rd 1812 to section line 7 and 8 T 12 R 2. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | Much of the area is moderately steep to very steep, with limestone cliff features adjacent to the Missouri River as well as other unique geological landforms. Existing vegetation includes dry grasslands, shrublands, open and dry ponderosa pine forests, and Douglas-fir forests, along with small amounts of lodgepole pine, and Rocky Mountain juniper. |
| Current uses and management | The 1986 Helena NF Plan included this area as a RWA. Except for the river corridor, which is semi-primitive motorized, the entire polygon is available for primitive recreation opportunities in both summer and winter. There are no motorized trails, or open roads, or motorized over snow uses. There are 5.3 miles of non-motorized trail. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no motorized uses.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: horseback riding, hiking, backpacking, dispersed camping, hunting, and cross country skiing.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. Areas that are closer to the Gates of the Mountains wilderness have greater opportunity for solitude, and this diminishes in areas closer to the Missouri River and the Beaver Creek road.</p> <p>Other Features of Value –Features of this area include an introduced population of mountain goats; cliffs and rock formations along the river corridor and Meriwether Canyon; the unique rock formations and slot canyon in Refrigerator Canyon; many cultural resources including cabin ruins, tipi ring, mining and prehistoric rock art sites; and the Beaver Creek eligible Wild & Scenic River; and rare plant and animal species such as grizzly bear, lynx, flammulated owl, and Lewis' woodpecker.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because the area is adjacent to existing wilderness and has been managed as recommended wilderness since 1986. It is also within Big Log inventoried roadless area, and is adjacent to the Devil's Tower inventoried roadless area to the south. There are no motorized uses. Mechanized uses on non-motorized trails would be discontinued in alternative B but allowed to continue in alternative C. |
| Summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A large portion of this area was previously included as a RWA in the 1986 Forest Plan. o This RWA is located adjacent to the existing Gates of the Mountain wilderness and would expand it. o High interest exists for this area to be RWA; a majority of public comments received were in favor of the designation. o The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species. |
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as it is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is very high and there are no motorized uses. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for horseback riding, hiking, backpacking, dispersed camping, hunting, and Nordic skiing. |

Camas Creek Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from portions of the Camas Creek Wilderness Inventory Area, Big Belts 6 (BB6). It is included only in alternative D.

Table 3. Camas Creek recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Acres | 22,350 acres (alternative D) |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Description of the recommended boundary | The Camas Creek RWA's northeastern boundary buffers Atlanta Mule Road north bordering a private property section to the north and ridgeline to the northwest. The western borders private property parcels. The southwestern boundary then follows the GA boundary. The southern boundary follows the existing ridgeline and private property section boundary. The southeast boundary follows Duck Creek to Camas Ridge to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | Camas Creek RWA is located in the Big Belts GA and contains the high peaks of Boulder Mountain and Boulder Baldy. It also contains the Boulder Lakes and Camas Lakes. This area contains a mix of vegetation, including Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, and subalpine fir/Engelmann spruce forests. There are also dry grasslands, whitebark pine forest, and very small amounts of shrublands, limber pine, aspen, and sparse vegetation (scree slopes). |
| Current uses and management | This area is in Camas Creek inventoried roadless area. There are no motorized trails or motorized over-snow uses, but 0.3 miles of open road occur in the polygon. Most of the area is available for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized summer and winter recreation opportunities. There are 16 miles of nonmotorized trails. |
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no motorized trails or motorized over-snow uses. 0.3 miles of open road are present in the area.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: hiking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, and backpacking in to high mountain lakes.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. This value is diminished in close proximity to the 0.3 miles of open road.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include an introduced population of mountain goats; the Confederate Historic Mining District; high mountains (Boulder Mountain and Boulder Baldy), wide vistas, and small alpine lakes; and rare plant and animal species such as grizzly bear, whitebark pine, lynx, and wolverine.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because it is within Camas Creek inventoried roadless area. There are no private land inholdings. There are no motorized trails or motorized over-snow uses. There are currently 0.3 mile of open road; this use along with mechanized use on the 16 miles of nonmotorized trails would be discontinued under alternative D. |
| Summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outstanding opportunities for solitude. ○ High interest exists for this area based on public comment. ○ The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species. |
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. ○ The undeveloped quality of the area is very high. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude ○ There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for hiking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, and backpacking in to high mountain lakes. |

Mount Baldy Recommended Wilderness Area

The Mount Baldy RWA was included in the 1986 Helena NF Plan. The area description is based on the Mount Baldy wilderness inventory polygon, Big Belts 7 (BB7). This area is included as a RWA in alternatives A, B, C, and D. The boundary is the same for alternatives B, C, and D, and varies in alternative A.

Table 4. Mount Baldy recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Acres | 8,420 (alternative A); 8,314 acres (alternatives B, C, D) |
| Description of the recommended boundary – alternative A | The RWA's northern boundary follows a private property section, pack trail 150 and the existing ridge line west. The western boundary follows the Broadwater County and Meager County boundary to make the south and southeast boundary. The east boundary follows a private property parcel to complete the area. |
| Description of the recommended boundary – alternatives B, C, D | The RWA's northern boundary follows a private property parcel, pack trail 150 and the existing ridgeline west. The west boundary buffers microwave Spur Road 082 and follows the Broadwater and Meager County boundaries to make the south and southeast boundary. The east boundary follows private property to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | This area includes several high peaks (Mount Baldy and Mount Edith), and includes the Needles rock formation, numerous alpine lakes, and valley vistas. Vegetation is dominated by high elevation lodgepole pine and subalpine fir/Engelmann spruce forests, with some Douglas-fir forests. Sparsely vegetated areas are common, including rocky alpine sites. Whitebark pine forest is also present, along with grasslands, shrublands, and limber pine. |
| Current uses and management | The 1986 Forest Plan included this area as a RWA. The entire polygon is available for primitive and semi-primitive summer and winter recreation. There are no open roads, motorized trails, or motorized over snow uses. There are 13.6 miles of nonmotorized trail. |
| Description of the wilderness characteristics. | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no motorized uses.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: horseback riding, hiking, backpacking, dispersed camping, and hunting.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. This is slightly diminished in close proximity to the communication site road in the summer.</p> <p>Other Features of Value –Features of this area include an introduced population of mountain goats; numerous high alpine lakes; the Needles unique rock formations; unique wetland vegetation; and rare plant and animal species such as whitebark pine, grizzly bear, lynx, wolverine, black rosy finch, and westslope cutthroat trout in Ray Creek.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage wilderness characteristics is high because the area has been managed as a RWA since 1986, and contains no private inholdings. The area is located in the Mount Baldy Inventoried Roadless Area. The only administrative motorized use is on the road to the communication site in the summer. There are no motorized uses. Mechanized uses on non-motorized trails would be discontinued in alternative B but allowed to continue in alternative C. |
| Summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A large portion of this area was previously included as a RWA in the 1986 Forest Plan. o High interest exists for this area to be recommended for wilderness. o The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. ○ The undeveloped quality of the area is very high, with no motorized uses. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude. ○ There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for horseback riding, hiking, backpacking, dispersed camping, and hunting. |

Wapiti Peak Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA was derived from the Wapiti Peak wilderness inventory area, Castles 1 (CA1). It is included only in alternative D.

Table 5. Wapiti Peak recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Acres | 30,606 acres (alternative D) |
| Description of the recommended boundary | The Wapiti Peak RWA consists of four parcels. The small three parcels follow the boundary of three small inholdings within the interior of the larger parcel. The larger parcels northeastern boundary follows the existing ridgeline north buffering Four Mile and Grasshopper road to the northwest and also following the GA boundary southwest bordering a private property sections south and south east. The southeastern and eastern boundary then follows Hamilton Creek trail and Hamilton Ridge trail to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | Wapiti Peak RWA is located in the west side of the Castles GA and 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. The most common vegetation is lodgepole pine forest, as well as Douglas-fir, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce. Dry grasslands are also present, along with small amounts of whitebark pine, limber pine, including shrublands, and cottonwood. |
| Current uses and management | This area is in the Castle Mountains inventoried roadless area. With 6.1 miles of open road and 31.9 miles of motorized trail, most of the area is available for summer motorized activity and therefore there is little opportunity for primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized recreation in the summer. There are 9.5 miles of nonmotorized trail. The majority of the area is also open to snowmobile use in the winter, although the terrain and vegetation make this use impracticable and therefore there are opportunities for primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized recreation in the winter. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – Much of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. However, motorized use is allowed on open roads and trails in the summer, as well as over-snow use over most of the area in the winter.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: horseback riding, hiking, rock climbing, hunting, fishing, mountain biking, dispersed camping around the periphery, and recreational mining.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude in the winter as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. Opportunities for solitude in the summer are diminished by current motorized uses.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include Castle geology and outcroppings; cultural resources; municipal watershed for White Sulphur Springs; sinkhole wetlands; and rare species such as whitebark pine and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because this area is within the Castle Mountains inventoried roadless area. There are two small private land inholdings (patented mining claims). The motorized uses on open roads and motorized trails, along with over-snow motorized use in the winter, would be discontinued under alternative D. In addition, mechanical means of transport on nonmotorized trails would also be discontinued under alternative D. |
| A summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Opportunities for solitude ○ High interest exists for this area based on public comment. ○ The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species. |
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. ○ The undeveloped quality of the area is high. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area offers opportunities for solitude. ○ There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for horseback riding, hiking, rock climbing, hunting, fishing, mountain biking, dispersed camping around the periphery, and recreational mining. |

Loco Mountain Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA was derived from the Loco Mountain wilderness inventory polygon, Crazyies 1 (CR1). It is included only in alternative D.

Table 6. Loco Mountain recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Size | 24,977 acres (alternative D) |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|---|--|
| Description of the recommended boundary | The Loco Mountain RWA's northeastern boundary follows the GA boundary and buffers Station Spring Road. The northern boundary then follows private property inholdings to the northwest. The western boundary buffers Forest Lake Road and Forest lake Guard Station and follows and a private property parcel to the southwest. The southwestern boundary follows the ridgeline buffering a road system continuing to the ridgeline of Target Peak. The southern boundary follows Crow Creek Trail and Lebo Fork Ridgeline and buffering American Fork Road to the southeast. The eastern boundary follows private property inholding boundaries to the northeast and the GA boundary to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | Loco Mountain RWA is located on the east side of the Crazies GA, at the north end of the mountain range and shares a border with the Gallatin NF. The area contains a number of high, craggy peaks covered in talus, scree, and boulders. Vegetation on the upper ridges is mostly alpine and lacks forest cover. Glaciation has imparted many of these landforms with sharp and scoured edges. The vegetation includes lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and Douglas-fir forests as well as dry grasslands, whitebark pine forest, and limber pine. Small amounts of shrublands and juniper are also present. |
| Current uses and management | This area is in the Crazy Mountains inventoried roadless area. There are no open roads or motorized trails; the entire area is available for primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation use in the summer. There are 23.5 miles of nonmotorized trails. Motorized over-snow uses are currently allowed in 4,754 acres; the remainder of the area is available for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation in the winter. |
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no open roads or motorized trails, but motorized over-snow uses are currently allowed in a portion of the area.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: hiking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, dispersed camping, and wildlife viewing.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. The opportunity for solitude is diminished in the winter where over-snow motorized use is allowed.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include bare, rocky and high mountain peaks; and rare plant and animal species such as whitebark pine and harlequin duck.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because it is within the Crazy Mountains inventoried roadless area. The land to the north of the polygon is checkerboard ownership that is busy during hunting season. There are no private land inholdings. There are no open roads or motorized trails. Approximately 4,754 acres are available for motorized over-snow use; this use, along with mechanized means of transport on 23.5 miles of nonmotorized trail, would be discontinued under alternative D. |
| Summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Outstanding opportunities for solitude o High interest exists for this area based on public comment. o The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is very high <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude. o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for hiking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, dispersed camping, and wildlife viewing. |

Blackfoot Meadows/Electric Peak Recommended Wilderness Area

The Electric Peak RWA is included in the 1986 Helena NF Plan. The area description is based on the Blackfoot Meadows wilderness inventory description, Divide 3 (D3). This area is included as a RWA in alternative A, as well as in alternatives B, C, and D under the name “Blackfoot Meadows”. The boundary delineation for this area is slightly different for alternatives A, B/C, and D.

Table 7. Blackfoot Meadows recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Acres | 16,657 (alternative A); 18,296 acres (alternatives B, C); 26,900 acres (alternative D) |
| Description of the recommended boundary, alternative A | This RWA follows the HLC NF Boundary to complete the west, south and southeast portion of the boundary. The east boundary follows the base of Bison Mountain and traverses the ridgeline north to the confluence of Little Blackfoot River and Ontario Creek. The boundary follows the Little Blackfoot River to the east to complete the area. |
| Description of the recommended boundary – alternative B, C | The RWA follows the HLC NF Boundary to the west, south and southeast portion of the boundary. The east boundary follows the ridge of Bison Mountain and traverses Ontario Creek north to the confluence of the Little Blackfoot River and Ontario Creek. The boundary follows the Little Blackfoot River to the east of trail 227-009 and the HLC NF boundary to complete the area. |
| Description of the recommended boundary, alternative D | The RWA’s western boundary follows a private property parcel, ridgeline and Baldy Ridge Trail and continues south following the HLC NF boundary to complete the west, south and southeast portion of the boundary. The east boundary follows the ridgeline to Ontario Creek north to the Monarch Creek and buffering Ontario Creek and Ontario Creek Road. The boundary buffers the Little Blackfoot River and Kading Campground to the south and the confluence of Ontario Creek and Little Blackfoot River to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | This RWA is located in the Divide GA. Portions of this RWA were identified as the Electric Peak RWA in the current 1986 Helena NF Plan. The Blackfoot Meadows RWA is not the same acreage or configuration 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. Vegetation is dominated by lodgepole pine forests, with Douglas-fir also common as well as subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce. Less common vegetation types include grasslands, shrublands, and whitebark pine forests. |
| Current uses and management | Much of the area has been managed as a RWA since 1986. The entire polygon is available for non-motorized summer and winter recreation. Under alternative B/C, there are no open roads or motorized trails, but approximately 11 acres within the polygon is available for motorized over-snow uses. There are 16.3 miles of nonmotorized trail. Under alternative D, there are 2.4 miles of motorized trails. 4,754 acres are open to motorized over-snow use. There are 23.5 miles of nonmotorized trails. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no motorized trails or roads, and minimal motorized over-snow use.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: horseback riding, hiking, hunting, fishing, mountain biking, and camping.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. The opportunity for solitude is somewhat diminished in portions closest to Highway 12 and where the Little Blackfoot road is visible.</p> <p>Other Features of Value –Features of this area include the Little Blackfoot eligible wild and scenic river; cultural resources; and rare plant and animal species such as whitebark pine, grizzly bear, lynx, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | <p>The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because the area has been managed as a RWA since 1986, and is adjacent to the Electric Peak RWA on the adjacent Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF. It is also within the Electric Peak inventoried roadless area. There is only one private inholding, along the Little Blackfoot road. Under alternatives B/C, there are currently no motorized trails or open roads, but a small area is available for over-snow motorized use. This use would be discontinued with alternative B but allowed with alternative C. Mechanized uses on non-motorized trails would be discontinued in alternative B but allowed to continue in alternative C. Motorized uses as well as mechanized means of transport would be discontinued under alternative D.</p> |
| Summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Most of the area was previously included as a RWA in the 1986 Helena NF Plan. o Outstanding opportunities for solitude. o High interest exists for this area to be recommended for wilderness. o The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species. |
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o There are no motorized trails or open roads. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude. o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for horseback riding, hiking, hunting, fishing, mountain biking, and camping. |

Colorado Mountain Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from portions of the Colorado Mountain wilderness inventory polygon, Divide 5 (D5). It is included only in alternative D.

Table 8. Colorado Mountain recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Acres | 14,189 acres (alternative D) |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Description of the recommended boundary | The Colorado Mountain RWA's eastern boundary follows irregular private property parcels and buffers Grizzly Gulch Road to the northeast. The northern boundary then follows the GA boundary. The southern boundary follows Rimini Road and borders existing private property parcels. The southern boundary follows Rimini Road to Chessman Road and buffering Chessman Reservoir to complete the area. There are two small private inholding parcels within the interior of the larger area that the boundary excludes. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | Colorado Mountain RWA is located in the upper reaches of the Colorado Gulch drainage in the Divide GA, southwest of Helena, Montana. The busy, dispersed recreation area known as the South Hills is located to the east. This RWA contains Black Mountain and Colorado Mountain. Douglas-fir forests are the most common vegetation type. Lodgepole pine forests are also common, with small amounts of dry grasslands, mesic grasslands, shrublands, ponderosa pine, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, cottonwood, and aspen. |
| Current uses and management | This area is in Lazyman Gulch inventoried roadless area. There are no open roads or motorized trails; the entire polygon is available for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation in the summer. A portion of the area (1,240 acres) is open for motorized over-snow uses; the remainder of the area is available for primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation in the winter. There are 1.9 miles of nonmotorized trail. |
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no open roads or motorized trails. A small portion of the area is open for motorized over-snow uses.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: hiking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, mountain biking, and hunting.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude in most of the polygon as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. This opportunity is diminished where Highway 12 can be heard; where the residential area in Colorado Gulch may be seen and heard; and where over-snow motorized uses occur in the winter.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include Black Mountain and Colorado Mountain; Helena, Rimini, and Clancy Historic Mining Districts; historic Red Mountain Flume; municipal watershed for the city of Helena; and rare plant and animal species such as grizzly bear, lynx, flammulated owl, and wolverine.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because it is within Lazyman Gulch inventoried roadless area. However, there are 2 private land inholdings; the northern boundary is adjacent to private land; and the western boundary is adjacent to a superfund site. There are no open roads or motorized trails; however motorized over-snow use is allowed in a portion of the area. This use, along with mechanized means of transport on nonmotorized trails, would be discontinued under alternative D. |
| Summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Opportunities for solitude. o High interest exists for this area based on public comment. o The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is very high. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude. o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for hiking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, mountain biking, and hunting. |

Deep Creek Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from the Deep Creek Tenderfoot wilderness inventory area, Little Belts 1a (LB1a). It is included in alternatives B, C, and D with the exact same boundary.

Table 9. Deep Creek recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Acres | 14,490 acres (alternatives B, C, and D) |
| Description of the recommended boundary | The Deep Creek RWA follows the Cascade and Meagher County boundaries to complete the northern section of the boundary. The boundary buffers the Smith River completing the western portion of the boundary section. The south and eastern portion of the boundary follows the existing ridgeline to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | Deep Creek RWA is located in the northwestern corner of the Little Belts 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 motorized national recreation trails. Existing vegetation is dominated by Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine. Dry grasslands and subalpine fir/Engelmann spruce forests are also common, with some ponderosa pine. Small amounts of other types are present, including shrublands, whitebark pine, limber pine, cottonwood, aspen, and juniper. |
| Current uses and management | The area lies in the Tenderfoot- Deep Creek inventoried roadless area. There are currently no motorized recreation uses or open roads within the Deep Creek RWA. There are 12.9 miles of non-motorized trail. |
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are currently no motorized uses.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: Hunting, fishing, backpacking, horseback riding, boating on the Smith River, and mountain biking.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features include the eligible wild and scenic Smith River;; cultural resources; and rare species such as whitebark pine, lynx, wolverine, and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because it is a large polygon adjacent to NFS lands to the east and south. There is only one private inholding, along Deep Creek Park. There are no motorized uses. Mechanized uses on nonmotorized trails would be discontinued in alternative B, but allowed in alternative C. |
| A summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Outstanding opportunities for solitude. o High interest exists for this area to be recommended for wilderness. o The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species. |
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is very high as there are currently no motorized recreation uses. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude. o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for hunting, fishing, backpacking, horseback riding, boating on the Smith River, mountain biking. |

Tenderfoot Creek Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from the Deep Creek Tenderfoot Creek wilderness inventory polygon, Little Belts 1b (LB1b). It is included only in alternative D.

Table 10. Tenderfoot Creek recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Acres | 45,870 acres (alternative D) |
| Description of the recommended boundary | The Tenderfoot RWA consists of four parcels. The three smaller parcels follow the boundary of three small inholdings within the interior of the larger parcel. The eastern boundary of the large parcel buffers Williams Mountain Trail, Lost Stove Trail and Lost Stove Road northeast. The northern boundary buffers the Divide Road, Balsinger to Taylor trail, Monument Ridge Road and Old Baldy trail to the northwest. The northwest boundary buffers Smart Fork Trail, bordering a private property parcel and Simmons Park Road. The western boundary borders a private property parcel and the GA boundary. The southern boundary follows Tenderfoot Trail and borders a private property parcels to the southeast. The boundary then follows Tenderfoot Creek and a private property parcel to the southeast. The boundary buffers Williams Park Road to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | The Tenderfoot Creek RWA is located within the Tenderfoot Creek drainage in the Little Belt Mountains GA. Existing vegetation is dominated by Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine. Dry grasslands and subalpine fir/Engelmann spruce forests are also common, and some ponderosa pine is present. Very small amounts of other types are also present, including shrublands, whitebark pine, limber pine, cottonwood, aspen, and juniper. |
| Current uses and management | The area lies within the Tenderfoot- Deep Creek inventoried roadless area. There are no open roads, but 5.9 miles of motorized trail are present and 5,872 acres open to motorized over-snow motorized use; primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation opportunities are provided in the remainder of the area in the summer and winter respectively. There are also 29.7 miles of nonmotorized trail. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no open roads, but motorized trails are currently present along with some areas open to motorized over-snow use.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: hunting, fishing, backpacking, horseback riding, and mountain biking.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include the waterfalls on Tenderfoot Creek; Tenderfoot Creek eligible wild and scenic river; cultural resources; and rare plant and animal species such as whitebark pine, lynx, wolverine, and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because it is a large polygon adjacent to NFS lands to the east and south. There are some motorized summer and over-snow uses as described above. These uses, along with mechanized uses on nonmotorized trails, would be discontinued in alternative D. |
| Summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outstanding opportunities for solitude. ○ High interest exists for this area to be recommended for wilderness. ○ The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species. |
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. ○ The undeveloped quality of the area is high. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude ○ There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for hunting, fishing, backpacking, horseback riding, mountain biking. |

Big Horn Thunder Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from the Big Horn Thunder wilderness inventory polygon, Little Belts 2 (LB2). It is included only in alternative D.

Table 11. Big Horn Thunder recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Acres | 47,107 acres (alternative D) |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Description of the recommended boundary | The Big Horn Thunder RWA consists of four parcels. The small three parcels follow the boundary of three small inholdings within the larger parcel. The eastern boundary of the large parcel follows private property section boundaries north and continues to follow private property parcels to the north and northwest. The western boundary borders private property parcels and buffers Divide Road to the southwest. The southwest boundary continues to buffer Long Coulee Trail and buffering Divide Road bordering a private property parcel to the south and southeast to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | The Bighorn Thunder RWA is located east of Logging Creek and north of the Divide Road in the Little Belt Mountains GA. It contains the high mountain peaks of Big Horn Mountain and Thunder Mountain. Pilgrim Creek runs north-south and bisects the area. The most common vegetation types are Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine forests, with some subalpine fir and Engelmann-spruce at higher elevations. Minor amounts of other types also occur, including dry grasslands, sparsely vegetated areas (rock and scree), ponderosa pine, shrublands, whitebark pine, limber pine, cottonwood, and aspen. |
| Current uses and management | This area is within the Pilgrim Creek inventoried roadless area. There are 2.6 miles of open road. There are also 3 motorized trails open seasonally (summer) to motorcycles, totaling 15.7 miles. The areas east and west of the Pilgrim Creek Trail are available for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized summer recreation. There are 11.2 miles of nonmotorized trail. There is a snowmobile corridor along the boundary with FS road 839 totaling 2,308 acres; the remainder of the polygon is available for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation in the winter. |
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. Motorized uses currently occur on open roads, motorized trails, and in areas open to motorized over-snow use.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: horseback riding, fishing, archery, rifle hunting, and mountain biking.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude in most of the polygon as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. This opportunity is diminished where motorized uses are allowed.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include Big Horn Mountain, Thunder Mountain, Pilgrim Creek, Tillinghast Creek, and rock scree under Thunder Mountain; cultural resources; and rare species such as whitebark pine and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because it is within the Pilgrim Creek inventoried roadless area. There are 2 private inholdings, and recreation residences along the periphery. Under alternative D, motorized use on open roads, motorized trails, and in areas open to motorized over-snow use would be discontinued, along with mechanized means of transport. |
| Summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outstanding opportunities for solitude. ○ High interest exists for this area based on public comment. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is high. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude. o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for horseback riding, fishing, archery, rifle hunting, and mountain biking. |

Middle Fork Judith Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from portions of the Middle Fork Judith wilderness inventory polygon, Little Belts 16 (LB16). It also includes portions of the Middle Fork Judith Wilderness Study area. It is only included in alternative D.

Table 12. Middle Fork Judith recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Acres | 62,452 acres (alternative D) |
| Description of the recommended boundary | The Middle Fork Judith RWA's eastern boundary buffers the Ettien Ridge Trail northwest following the Middle Fork Judith River and a private property parcel. The eastern boundary then buffers Schaeffer Ridge Trail, Woodchopper Ridge Trail, Morris Creek Trail and Yogo Creek Road. The northern boundary follows private property parcels and buffers Dry Wolf Road northwest. The western boundary buffers Dry Wild Road to the west. The southwestern boundary borders patented mining claims south on the existing ridgeline and buffering Sand Point Road. The boundary continues southwest following the North Fork of the Musselshell River Divide Road to the southwest. The southern boundary buffers Burnt Ridge Road and existing ridgeline to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | The Middle Fork Judith RWA is located in the Little Belt Mountains GA. It 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. The most common vegetation types consist of Douglas-fir, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and lodgepole pine forests. Dry grasslands also occur, along with limber pine, shrublands, ponderosa pine, rock/scree, and whitebark pine. Several large fires have occurred in this area recently. |
| Current uses and management | The majority of this area is in the Middle Fork Judith wilderness study area; and is in within Middle Fork Judith inventoried roadless area. There are 0.7 miles of open road, but no motorized trails. In addition, about 4,996 acres are open to motorized over-snow use (the outer perimeter of the polygon). There are 56 miles of nonmotorized trails. The majority of the area is available for primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation in both summer and winter. The Russian Flats airstrip is located near the polygon. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are 0.7 mile of open road and approximately 4,996 acres open to motorized over-snow recreation uses.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: horseback riding, fishing, hunting, mountain biking, dispersed camping, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing outfitting.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude in most of the polygon as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. This opportunity is diminished in proximity to the Russian Flats airstrip, and where motorized uses are allowed.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include the Middle Fork Judith River; Yogo Peak; cultural resources; Judith River eligible Wild and Scenic River; and rare plant and animal species such as wolverine, black rosy finch, western toad, dwarf shrew, whitebark pine and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because it has been managed as a Wilderness Study Area since 1977. Existing motorized use as well as mechanized means of transport would be discontinued with alternative D. |
| Summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The majority of the area has been a wilderness study act area since 1977. o Outstanding opportunities for solitude. o High interest exists for this area based on public comment. o The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species. |
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is very high. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude. o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for horseback riding, fishing, hunting, mountain biking, dispersed camping, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing outfitting in the fall. |

Big Snowies Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from the Big Snowies wilderness inventory area, Snowies 1 (S1). It includes all lands designated as the Big Snowies Wilderness Study area. It is included in alternatives B, C, and D with the exact same boundary.

Table 13. Big Snowies recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|-------------------|---|
| Acres | 95,299 acres (alternatives B, C, and D) |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Summarized description of the recommended boundary | The Big Snowies RWA follows the GA boundary for the east boundary. The northern boundary follows the North GA boundary and buffers Crystal Lake Road and the Crystal Lake Recreational area. The boundary then follows the geographic administrative boundary to complete the northern boundary. The east boundary follows the GA boundary. The Southern boundary buffers the Neil Connection Trail 653 to bordering a private property parcel and following the existing ridgeline to the southwest. The boundary then parallels private property to the southwest and follows the GA boundary to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | This RWA encompasses the majority of the island mountain range of the Big Snowies, and 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 treeless plateau of alpine with rock and tundra. The dominant vegetation includes Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce forests. Sparsely vegetated areas (such as rock/scree) are also found along with grasslands, whitebark pine, and very small occurrences of shrublands, ponderosa pine, limber pine, cottonwood, and aspen. |
| Current uses and management | This area has been managed as a wilderness study area since 1977 and is lies within the Big Snowies inventoried roadless area. It contains several research natural areas. The area is popular with mountain bike users in the summer and snowmobile users in the winter months. The southern portion of the polygon is open to motorized use in the summer, containing 11.8 miles of open road and 0.1 miles of motorized trail. Primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities are provided in the entire polygon north of Trails 652 and 653 in the summer. There are 98.3 miles of nonmotorized trail in the polygon. Winter motorized recreation is allowed on 13,145 acres. |
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention; however there are some motorized uses associated with open roads in the summer and over-snow uses in portions of the area in the winter.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: Hiking, horseback riding, dispersed camping, back country skiing, fishing, mountain biking, caving, and hunting.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. The opportunity for solitude is diminished in portions of the polygon that contain motorized trails (area north of Trails 653 and 653 in the summer; and where snowmobiles are allowed in the winter in the western portion of the polygon).</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include an introduced population of mountain goats; cirque basins in Careless Creek and Swimming Woman Creek; ice caves; several research natural areas; Swimming Woman eligible Wild and Scenic River; municipal watershed for Lewistown; cultural resources; and rare plant and animal species such as <i>Goodyera repens</i>, whitebark pine, lynx, dwarf shrew, and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because it has been managed as a wilderness study area since 1977 and covers the majority of the island mountain range of the Big Snowies. There is some private land adjacent to the polygon. There are some motorized summer and over-snow uses as described above. These uses, along with mechanized uses on nonmotorized trails, would be discontinued in alternative B, but allowed in alternative C. |
| A brief summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Designation as a wilderness study act area o Outstanding opportunities for solitude; very remote area. o High interest exists for this area to be recommended for wilderness. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Brief summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is very high as the majority of this area is un-roaded. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for hiking, horseback riding, dispersed camping, back country skiing, fishing, mountain biking, caving, and hunting. |

Dearborn Silverking Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from the Dearborn Silverking wilderness inventory area, Upper Blackfoot 1 (UB1). It is included in alternatives B, C, and D with the exact same boundary.

Table 14. Dearborn Silverking recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Acres | 20,088 acres (alternatives B, C, and D) |
| Summarized description of the recommended boundary | The Dearborn Silverking RWA's east boundary buffers Alice Creek road 293 and buffering Lewis and Clark Pass Trail 493. The east boundary then borders a private property section and existing GA boundary to the northeast. The northern boundary follows the ridgeline to the Continental Divide trail and following the Bob Marshall Wilderness boundary. The eastern boundary section continues to follow the Bob Marshall Wilderness boundary south. The southern boundary follows the ridgeline and buffers the Indian Meadows Trailhead and Guard Station. The boundary then borders a private property parcel and follows the GA boundary to complete the area. |
| Brief description of the general geography, topography, and vegetation | The Dearborn Silverking RWA is located in the Upper Blackfoot and Rocky Mountain Range GAs north and east of Lincoln, Montana, and lies adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness Area in the upper reaches of the Alice Creek and Landers Fork drainages. The area is dominated by Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine forests, with dry grasslands, subalpine fir forests, and small amounts of Engelmann spruce, whitebark pine, limber pine, cottonwood, aspen, and Rocky Mountain juniper. Wildfire disturbances have been prominent in this polygon. |
| Current uses and management | This area is adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness, and within the Silver King-Falls Creek inventoried roadless area. A portion is also within the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area. It contains one research natural area. There are no motorized trails or open roads; the entire polygon is available for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized summer recreation. There are 20.8 miles of nonmotorized trail. Most of the area is available for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized winter recreation, except for 17 acres which are open for motorized over-snow uses. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no motorized uses except for a small area where over-snow motorized use is allowed in the winter.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: Hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, dispersed camping, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing. Historic interpretation along the upper portions of Alice Creek, Landers Fork and in the Lewis and Clark pass area.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. Solitude is slightly diminished in close proximity to the Alice Creek road.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include the Alice Creek National Registered Historic District, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail; Limestone Reef caves; Blowout Mountain and Flattop; waterfalls on Falls Creek; many historic and cultural resources; Alice and Landers Fork eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers; and rare plant and animal species such as grizzly bear, western toad, fisher, trumpeter swan, whitebark pine, lynx, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because it is adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness, lies within an inventoried roadless area as well as partly in a Conservation Management Area. There are no private inholdings. There are currently no motorized trails or open roads, but a small area is available for over-snow motorized use. This use along with mechanized uses on non-motorized trails would be discontinued with alternative B but allowed with alternative C. |
| A brief summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Outstanding opportunities for solitude; very remote area. o Adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness area. o High interest exists for this area to be recommended for wilderness. o The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species, including Canada lynx and grizzly bear. |
| Brief summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is very high and there are no motorized trails. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, dispersed camping, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing as well as historic interpretation along the upper portions of Alice Creek, Landers Fork and in the Lewis and Clark pass area. |

Red Mountain Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from the Red Mountain wilderness inventory area, Upper Blackfoot 2a (UB2a). It is included in alternatives B, C, and D with the exact same boundary.

Table 15. Red Mountain recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|-------------------|--|
| Acres | 1,901 acres (alternatives B, C, and D) |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Description of the recommended boundary | The Red Mountain RWA's northern boundary follows The Bob Marshall Wilderness boundary to the west to over the ridgeline of Red Mountain peak and the existing ridgeline to the southwest. The southeast boundary follows the Red Creek drainage and section line 1 to make the south and southeast portion. The east boundary follows the private property section to complete the area. |
| Description of the general geography, topography, and vegetation | The Red Mountain RWA is locate south and east of Red Mountain Peak in Red Creek, within the Copper Creek drainage. This area is characterized by subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, Douglas-fir, and lodgepole pine forests with a small amount of whitebark pine, ponderosa pine and limber pine. Much of this area has been recently impacted by wildfire and some is in a non-forested or newly reforested state. |
| Current uses and management | This area is adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness, the area is within the Bear-Marshall - Scapegoat-Swan inventoried roadless area. It is a research natural area which is managed. There are no open roads or motorized trails, and no motorized over-snow uses, the entire polygon is available for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation. There is less than 0.1 miles of nonmotorized trail. |
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no motorized uses or open roads.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, and dispersed camping.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include the Copper Lakes; the Lincoln Historic Mining District; a research natural area; Snowbank and Copper Creek eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers; and rare plant and animal species such as grizzly bear, whitebark pine, lynx, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because it is adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness, has been managed as a research natural area since 1986, and there are no motorized uses in the area. There is one patented mining claim in the polygon. There is one very short segment (<0.1 miles) of nonmotorized trail; mechanized use of this trail would be discontinue in alternative B but allowed in alternative C. |
| A summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Outstanding opportunities for solitude. o Adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness area. o The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species, including Canada lynx and grizzly bear. |
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is very high because the area is un-roaded and there are no motorized uses. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude. o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, and dispersed camping. |

Arrastra Creek Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from the Arrastra wilderness inventory area, Upper Blackfoot 2b (UB2b). It is included in alternatives B, C, and D with the exact same boundary.

Table 16. Arrastra recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|---|--|
| Acres | 8,257 acres (alternatives B, C, and D) |
| Description of the recommended boundary | The Arrastra RWA's northern boundary follows The Bob Marshall Wilderness boundary to the west over the ridgeline of Arrastra Mountain peak and the existing ridgeline to the southwest. The western boundary traverses the Meadow Creek trail and a Montana State land section. The southern boundary buffers Beaver Creek - Dry Creek road extending to Upper Beaver Spur Road. The east boundary follows the Klondike Creek drainage and existing ridgeline to complete the area. |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | The Arrastra Creek RWA is located in the Upper Blackfoot GA north and west of Lincoln, Montana, and lies adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness Area in the upper reaches of the Beaver Creek and Dry Creek drainages. It includes Arrastra Mountain. This area is characterized by subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, Douglas-fir, and lodgepole pine forests with a small amount of whitebark pine, ponderosa pine and limber pine. |
| Current uses and management | This area is adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness, within the Bear - Marshall - Scapegoat – Swan inventoried roadless area. There are no open roads or motorized trails, and therefore the area is available for primitive or semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation in the summer. There are 7.9 miles of nonmotorized trails. There are 2,239 acres that are open to motorized over-snow use; the remainder of the area is available for primitive or semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation in the winter. |
| Description of the wilderness characteristics and the ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no open roads or motorized trails, but a portion of the area does allow motorized over-snow use.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, and dispersed camping.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. These opportunities are diminished in the winter where motorized use is allowed.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features include; the Lincoln Historic Mining District; a research natural area, rare plant and animal species such as grizzly bear, whitebark pine, lynx, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because the area is adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness. There are currently no motorized trails or open roads, but there is some motorized over-snow use allowed in portions of the area in the winter. This use, along with mechanized use on 7.9 miles of nonmotorized trails, would be discontinued with alternative B, but allowed with alternative C. |
| Summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Outstanding opportunities for solitude. o Adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness area. o High interest exists for this area to be recommended for wilderness. o The location and configuration of this RWA helps maintain or enhance habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species, including Canada lynx and grizzly bear. |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is very high because the area is un-roaded. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, and dispersed camping. |

Nevada Mountain Recommended Wilderness Area

This RWA is derived from the Nevada Mountain wilderness inventory area, Upper Blackfoot 10 (UB10). It is included in alternatives B, C, and D. The boundary delineation for this area is slightly different for alternative D as compared to alternatives B and C.

Table 17. Nevada Mountain recommended wilderness area

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|--|
| Acres | 39,345 acres (alternatives B, C); 44,7012 acres (alternative D) |
| Description of the recommended boundary (alternatives B/C) | <p>The RWA's northeastern boundary traverses the Helmville-Gould pack trail and a segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail north following Poorman Creek to the northwest bordering patented mining claims. The western boundary follows the McClellan Gulch to the Helmville-Gould pack trail and existing ridgeline to Huckleberry Creek west. The southwestern western boundary then buffers Nevada Creek Road and a private property land parcel to the southwest following the Geographic area boundary. The southern boundary follows the Black Mountain ridgeline and follows the Continental Divide over the ridge of Myers Hill. The southeast boundary follows the ridgeline to the South Fork of Little Prickly Pear Road, the ridgeline and buffering Mcquithy Gulch Road bordering a private property parcel. The boundary continues Northeast on the ridgeline crossing the Helmville-Gould pack trail and a segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail to complete the area.</p> |
| Description of the recommended boundary (alternative D) | <p>The RWA consists of two parcels. The large parcels northeastern boundary traverses the Helmville-Gould pack trail and a segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail north following Poorman Creek to the northwest bordering patented mining claims. The western boundary follows the McClellan Gulch to the Helmville-Gould pack trail and existing ridgeline to Huckleberry Creek west. The southwestern western boundary then buffers Nevada Creek Road and a private property land parcel to the southwest following the Geographic area boundary. The southern boundary follows the Black Mountain ridgeline and follows the Continental Divide over the ridge of Myers Hill. The southeast boundary follows the ridgeline to the South Fork of Little Prickly Pear Road, the ridgeline and buffering Mcquithy Gulch Road bordering a private property parcel. The boundary continues Northeast on the ridgeline crossing the Helmville-Gould pack trail, bordering a segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail bordering a private inholding and following the Geaographic area boundary to complete the area. The small parcel section borders a patented mining claim section to complete the area.</p> |
| Description of the geography, topography, and vegetation | <p>Nevada Mountain RWA is located south and west of Lincoln, Montana in the Upper Blackfoot and Divide GAs. It 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. The area straddles the continental divide, and portions of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail cross through it. This area is characterized by lodgepole pine forests, along with Douglas-fir, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and dry grasslands. Less common types are present include shrublands, whitebark pine, limber pine, cottonwood, and aspen. There are some sparsely vegetated areas as well (scree/rock).</p> |

| Analysis Criteria | Description |
|--|---|
| Current uses and management | <p>This area is in Nevada Mountain inventoried roadless area. There is active mining in the polygon. In alternatives B/C, there are no open roads or motorized trails; the entire polygon is available for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized summer recreation. 8,878 acres south of Jefferson Creek are open to motorized over-snow use; the remainder of the area is available for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation in the winter. There are 30.5 miles of nonmotorized trails. In alternative D, there are 1.3 miles of open roads and 3.4 miles of motorized trails. 13,099 acres are open to motorized over-snow use. There are 31.2 miles of nonmotorized trails.</p> |
| Description of the wilderness characteristics | <p>Natural Quality – The majority of this area is very natural appearing and the current vegetation is primarily affected by natural ecological processes. Most of this area has intact ecological integrity and generally appears to reflect ecological conditions that would be associated with the area without human intervention.</p> <p>Undeveloped – The majority of this area is undeveloped and not affected by human intervention. There are no motorized trails or open roads within the area.</p> <p>Unconfined and/or primitive recreation – This area has an outstanding amount of unconfined and primitive recreation opportunities: hunting, hiking (including the Continental Divide National Scenic trail), horseback riding, and mountain biking.</p> <p>Solitude – There is outstanding opportunity for solitude as the sights and sounds of human activities and improvements are screened by topography or do not have impact due to distance. These opportunities are diminished in the winter in areas where motorized use is allowed.</p> <p>Other Features of Value – Features of this area include Nevada Mountain, Black Mountain, and open scenic ridges along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail; cultural resources; and rare plant and animal species such as grizzly bear, whitebark pine, lynx, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat trout.</p> |
| The ability to protect and manage the area so as to preserve its wilderness characteristics | <p>The ability to protect and manage these wilderness characteristics is high because the RWA is within Nevada Mountain inventoried roadless area. There are patented mining claims and access road inholdings in the polygon. In alternatives B/C, there are no motorized trails or open roads; however over-snow motorized use is allowed on a portion of the area. This use, along with mechanized use on nonmotorized trails, would be discontinued under alternative B but allowed in alternative C. Motorized uses as well as mechanized means of transport would be discontinued under alternative D.</p> |
| A summary of the factors considered and the process used in evaluating the area and developing the alternative(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Outstanding opportunities for solitude. o Aligns with the management of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. o High interest exists for this area to be recommended for wilderness, including collaborative comments from diverse stakeholders. o The location and configuration is in an area important for habitat connectivity for large, wide-ranging wildlife species, including Canada lynx and grizzly bear. |
| Summary of the ecological and social characteristics that would provide the basis for suitability for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System | <p>The <u>ecological characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The naturalness of the area is very high as much of the area is affected primarily by natural forces, has mostly intact ecological integrity and contains many indigenous species. o The undeveloped quality of the area is very high because the area is un-roaded. <p>The <u>social characteristics</u> that provide the basis for suitability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The area offers outstanding opportunity for solitude o There is high amount of primitive and/or unconfined recreation for hunting, hiking (including the Continental Divide National Scenic trail), horseback riding, and mountain biking. |

Rationale for Including or Excluding Wilderness Inventory Polygons from DEIS Alternatives

The reasons for excluding wilderness inventory polygons, or portions thereof, from further analysis in one or more alternative in the DEIS are documented in the following table. For maps of all wilderness inventory polygons are provided in appendix F of the Draft Plan.

Table 18. Summary of wilderness evaluation with rationale for inclusion as recommended wilderness by alternative

| GA | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Name | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Number | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Acres | Recommended Wilderness Acres Alternatives B and C | Recommended Wilderness Acres Alternative D | Recommendation/Rationale |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Big Belts | Big Log | BB1 | 10,254 | 7,086 | 7,086 | Recommended with modifications in alternatives B, C, and D because it is adjacent to the existing Gates of the Mountain wilderness and was recommended in 1986. |
| | Hogback | BB2 | 5,784 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended due to motorized system roads and trails that affect opportunities for solitude. |
| | Trout Creek | BB3 | 39,383 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended due to motorized system roads and trails that affect opportunities for solitude. |
| | North Belts | BB4 | 14,140 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended due to motorized system roads and trails that affect opportunities for solitude. |
| | Bilk Mountain | BB5 | 25,787 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended due to motorized system roads and trails that affect opportunities for solitude. |
| | Camas Creek | BB6 | 23,878 | 0 | 22,350 | Not recommended in alternatives B/C because of resource management activities that would be inconsistent with wilderness characteristics. Recommended in alternative D due to public comment and ecological characteristics. |
| | Mount Baldy | BB7 | 18,335 | 8,314 | 8,314 | Recommended with modifications in alternatives B, C, and D. Recommended in 1986. Provides outstanding opportunity for solitude. |
| | Grassy Mountain | BB8 | 6,194 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended due to the effects to the wilderness characteristic of solitude from activities around Highway 12 and adjacent subdivision. |
| Castles | Wapiti Peak | CA1 | 33,002 | 0 | 30,606 | Not recommended in alternatives B/C because of motorized trails that affect solitude and opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized recreation. Recommended in alternative D due to public comment and ecological characteristics. |

| GA | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Name | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Number | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Acres | Recommended Wilderness Acres Alternatives B and C | Recommended Wilderness Acres Alternative D | Recommendation/Rationale |
|----------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| | Whetstone Ridge | CA3 | 8,676 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended due to motorized trails and activity that affect solitude and opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized in both summer and winter. |
| Crazies | Loco Mountain | CR1 | 25,605 | 0 | 24,977 | Not recommended in alternatives B/C because checkerboard ownership and adjacent private lands affect FS ability to manage as wilderness and limit public access. Recommended in alternative D due to public comment and ecological characteristics. |
| | Bald Ridge | CR3 | 13,210 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended due to motorized trails and activity that affect solitude and opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive nonmotorized in both summer and winter. |
| Divide | Sweeney Creek | D2 | 7,978 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended because motorized activity outside of the polygon affects solitude. |
| | Blackfoot Meadows | D3 | 29,066 | 18,296 | 26,900 | Recommended with modifications in alternatives B, C, and D because of outstanding opportunities for solitude; and the area was recommended in 1986. |
| | Colorado Mountain | D5 | 8,168 | 0 | 14,189 | Not recommended in alternatives B/C due to proximity to private lands and population center that affect opportunities for solitude; and FS management that would be inconsistent with wilderness characteristics. Recommended in alternative D based on public comment and ecological characteristics. |
| | Continental Divide North | D13 | 4,173 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended due the effects to wilderness solitude from communication sites, shooting range, Highway 12, Priest Pass road, and groomed snowmobile trails. |
| Elkhorns | Eagle Basin | E1 | 57,279 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended because the Elkhorns GA is managed as a wildlife management unit. |
| | Elkhorn Peak | E3 | 15,180 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended because the Elkhorns GA is managed as a wildlife management unit. |
| Highwood | Highwood Baldy | H1 | 15,824 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended because wilderness characteristics are affected by electronics site and adjacent private lands; and there is a lack of public access. |
| | Arrow Prospect | H2 | 26,210 | 0 | 0 | Not recommended because motorized trails in summer and winter affect solitude experience. |

| GA | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Name | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Number | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Acres | Recommended Wilderness Acres Alternatives B and C | Recommended Wilderness Acres Alternative D | Recommendation/Rationale |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Little Belts | Deep Creek (Tenderfoot) | LB1 | 89,321 | 14,490 | 14,490 | Most of the inventory polygon was not recommended due to motorized uses. The remainder was partitioned into LB1a and LB1b. In alternatives B, C, and D, LB1a (Deep Creek) is recommended based on outstanding opportunities for solitude and ecological characteristics. In alternative D, LB1b (Tenderfoot Creek) is recommended based on public comment and ecological characteristics. |
| | | | | 0 | 45,870 | |
| | Big Horn Thunder | LB2 | 45,334 | | 47,107 | Not recommended in alternatives B/C because motorized use affects solitude. Recommended in alternative D based on public comment and ecological characteristics. |
| | Sun Mountain | LB3 | 7,965 | | | Not recommended because open motorized roads, residential areas, and recreation areas impact solitude. |
| | McGee Sawmill | LB4 | 8,355 | | | Not recommended because the Dry Fork Belt Creek road affects solitude. |
| | Peterson Mountain | LB5 | 6,839 | | | Not recommended because activities on surrounding private land affect opportunities for solitude. |
| | Taylor Mountain | LB6 | 11,374 | | | Not recommended because activities on surrounding private land affect opportunities for solitude. |
| | Big Baldy | LB8 | 49,068 | | | Not recommended because motorized use throughout limits opportunities for solitude, plus impacts from historic mining. |
| | Eagle Creek | LB10 | 6,337 | | | Not recommended because adjacent private land, checkerboard ownership, and motorized routes affect opportunities for solitude and manageability. |
| | Calf Creek | LB11 | 12,598 | | | Not recommended because motorized trails and snowmobiling limit opportunities for solitude. |
| | North Fork Smith | LB15 | 9,817 | | | Not recommended because surrounding motorized use and winter motorized access limit opportunities for solitude. |
| | Middle Fork Judith | LB16 | 98,312 | | 62,452 | Not recommended in alternatives B/C because motorized trails and private inholdings accessed by open roads impact solitude. Recommended in alternative D based on public comment and ecological characteristics. |
| East Little Belts | LB18 | 106,178 | | | Not recommended because motorized trails affect opportunities for solitude. | |

| GA | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Name | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Number | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Acres | Recommended Wilderness Acres Alternatives B and C | Recommended Wilderness Acres Alternative D | Recommendation/Rationale |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Rocky Mountain Range | Badger Two Medicine | RM1 | 125,795 | | | Not recommended because existing Blackfeet Nation reserved rights may conflict with wilderness characteristics. |
| | Teton Blackleaf | RM2 | 56,002 | | | Not recommended because solitude is affected by open roads and snow play area; and the area is a Conservation Management Area. |
| | Sun Canyon Willow | RM3 | 71,106 | | | Not recommended because activities along Sun Canyon Road, Beaver Willow Road, Benchmark Road Area, and Mortimer Gulch area affect solitude; and the area is a Conservation Management Area. |
| | Sawtooth Ridge | RM4 | 15,312 | | | Not recommended because of the effects to solitude from Sun Canyon and Beaver Willow roads; and the area is a Conservation Management Area. |
| | Elk Smith | RM5 | 30,030 | | | Not recommended because motorized activities affect solitude, and the area a Conservation Management Area. |
| Snowies | Big Snowies | S1 | 103,480 | 95,299 | 95,299 | Recommended with modifications in alternatives B, C, and D because the area is remote and has excellent opportunities for solitude. |
| Upper Blackfoot | Dearborn Silverking ¹ | UB1 | 44,141 | 20,088 | 20,088 | Recommended with modifications in alternatives B, C, and D because the area is adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness and has excellent opportunities for solitude. |
| | Stonewall (Red Mountain, Arrastra) | UB2 | 30,046 | 1,901 | 1,901 | Most of the inventory polygon was not recommended due to motorized uses. The remainder was partitioned into UB2a and UB2b. In alternatives B, C, and D, UB2a (Red Mountain) and UB2b (Arrastra) are recommended because they are adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness and offer outstanding opportunities for solitude. |
| | | | | 8,257 | 8,257 | |
| | Black Mountain | UB3 | 10,220 | | | Not recommended because snowmobile use limits opportunities for solitude. |
| | Anaconda Hill | UB4 | 21,539 | | | Not recommended because motorized uses near the polygon impact opportunities for solitude. |
| | Paige Gulch | UB5 | 17,569 | | | Not recommended because motorized uses impact opportunities for solitude. |
| Bear Gulch | UB9 | 5,636 | | | Not recommended because motorized uses and patented mining claims affect solitude. | |

| GA | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Name | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Number | Wilderness Inventory Polygon Acres | Recommended Wilderness Acres Alternatives B and C | Recommended Wilderness Acres Alternative D | Recommendation/Rationale |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| | Nevada Mountain ² | UB10 | 51,027 | 39,345 | 44,702 | Recommended with modifications in alternatives B, C, and D based on opportunities for solitude and ecological characteristics. |

1 Inventory polygon is located on both the Upper Blackfoot and Rocky Mountain Range GAs.

2 Inventory polygon and recommended wilderness area is located on both the Upper Blackfoot and Divide GAs.