

DECISION NOTICE
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

RECREATION MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
for the
NOISY FACE GEOGRAPHIC UNIT

USDA Forest Service R-1
Flathead National Forest
Swan Lake Ranger District
Flathead County, Montana

I. INTRODUCTION

This Decision Notice documents my decision to implement specific recreation, ORV, trail, and road management direction for the Noisy Face Geographic Unit of the Swan Lake Ranger District. My decision is based on the Northern Swan Recreation Analysis and Environmental Assessment, November 12, 1986; the Biological Evaluation, May 3, 1987; additional input from Task Force members, other concerned publics; and consultation with the Fish and Wildlife service. The analysis area is the entire Noisy Face Geographic Unit as delineated in the Flathead Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), page IV-25.

My goal is to implement the management direction stated in the Forest Plan for the Noisy Face Geographic Unit, ". . . to provide for the mix of activities presently occurring in the area. Coordination will be done with the various user groups and only those restrictions necessary will be implemented. . ." and ". . . develop and implement ORV and road management direction that provides adequate security for the grizzly bear but continues to provide reasonable access for motorized recreational use" (pages IV-23 and IV-24 respectively).

The specific management direction described in this Decision Notice is designed to implement the general direction in the Forest Plan.

II. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Environmental Assessment for the Northern Swan Recreation Analysis describes the initial public involvement as follows:

"The Flathead Forest Plan states that formulation of management direction for the Noisy Face Geographic Unit will be coordinated with various concerned citizens and user groups working together with the Forest Service and other governmental agencies. The Forest

Service Interdisciplinary Team decided that a task force of concerned citizens and user group representatives would be the best way to obtain public input for the analysis process. By forming a task force, it was felt that the analysis process would benefit by relying heavily on citizen participation for information exchange, education, support building, supplemental decisionmaking, and representational input.

In December of 1985, the Forest Service ID Team identified a list of potential members to serve on the Citizen Task Force. These potential members were personally contacted and invited to participate on the Task Force and were asked who else they thought might be interested in working on such a team. Eventually, 43 individuals were contacted to form the task force"

Through a series of ten evening meetings between January and July of 1986, the Northern Swan Range Recreation Task Force was instrumental in helping the Forest Service ID Team identify issues, concerns, and opportunities within the Noisy Face area. Discussions at the Task Force meetings also led to the development of alternatives for managing recreational use in the area.

There were three additional meetings held with the Task Force members. On November 19, 1986, the ID Team presented the analysis; on December 10, 1986, the ID Team met with the Task Force to answer questions about the analysis; and on January 14, 1987, I presented my proposed decision for managing recreation use of the area. Following that meeting, some members of the Task Force met with me and presented their concerns about my proposed direction. Throughout the time we were meeting with the Task Force, interested publics who were not members of the Task Force also submitted comments and recommendations regarding the analysis and the proposed direction.

On July 30, 1987, my proposed direction was submitted to the Fish and Wildlife Service for formal consultation. On November 16, 1987, Fish and Wildlife Service issued a draft biological opinion which concluded that the proposed action would likely jeopardize the grizzly bear. Through informal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service, I revised the proposed management direction. The Fish and Wildlife Service issued a non-jeopardy opinion on the revised proposal on March 14, 1988.

III. ISSUES AND MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Throughout the Task Force meetings, issues and concerns were identified and discussed. A lengthy list of these issues and concerns was recorded and eventually condensed to help eliminate duplicate issues and those not within the scope of the Task Force. Some of the issues and concerns that were very specific in nature were used in formulating alternatives. All of the issues and concerns identified by the Task Force relate to the following key issues and concerns which were analyzed during the analysis process:

- Threatened and endangered wildlife species.
- Wildlife (primarily big game).
- Water quality.
- Soil erosion.
- Safety.
- Private land conflicts.

- Visuals.
- Forest Plan proposed wilderness.
- Suitability to user groups.
- Feasibility of implementation.

IV. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

A. Description of the Alternatives

The alternatives analyzed by the ID Team represent a continuum of recreational development, with lower numbered alternatives having lesser ORV use and higher numbered alternatives having greater trail miles and motorized use. Different trail systems than those displayed could be possible under various alternative developments if the intent of the alternative was met. The alternatives were structured as they are in order to facilitate a link between changes in the alternatives and changes of impact to resources. These alternatives were developed from the input received at the Task Force meetings.

1. Alternative I

Non-motorized emphasis: Motorized use of the area is limited to the period of July 1 through October 1. All motorized use is restricted to the identified system roads. The following special features were incorporated:

- a. No motorized use of the upper portion of the Noisy Creek (Jewel Basin) Road.
- b. Move Hemler Creek trailhead down below the switchback in Trail Creek (Section 31).
- c. No special use competitive events permitted.
- d. Hiking use only on the following trails:
 - Strawberry Lake to Wildcat Lake (Alpine 7)
 - From Camp Misery parking area to Jewel Basin
 - Switchback Trail (#725)
 - Crater Notch Trail (#187)
- e. No ORV use of system trails.

2. Alternative II

Limited motorized access and no ORV use of high country areas. Limited ORV use of lower elevation areas. The following special features were incorporated:

- a. High elevation motorized use is limited to the Noisy Creek Road during the snow-free season.
- b. Snowmobile use is restricted to the area between Deer Creek and Krause Creek and below 4,600 feet.
- c. Move Hemler Creek trailhead down below the switchback in Trail Creek (Section 31) (same as Alternative I).

- d. No ORV use of non-system trails during the April 1 through July 1 period.
- e. Peters Ridge Road open for normal traffic from July 1 through October 1.
- f. No special use competitive events permitted (same as Alternative I).
- g. Hiking use only on the following trails (same as Alternative I):
 - Strawberry Lake to Wildcat Lake (Alpine 7)
 - From Camp Misery parking area to Jewel Basin
 - Switchback Trail (#725)
 - Crater Notch Trail (#187)
- h. No ORV use of system trails (same as Alternative I).

3. Alternative III

Limited motorized access and ORV use of high country areas. Limited ORV use of lower elevation areas with increased use period and better trail layout. The following special features were incorporated:

- a. High elevation motorized use of the Noisy Creek Road (road damage restriction).
- b. Snowmobile use is restricted to the area between Deer Creek and Krause Creek.
- c. Open ORV use of identified non-system trails.
- d. Peters Ridge Road closed to normal traffic April 1 through July 1.
- e. ORV use of the Strawberry Lake and Hemler Creek trails.
- f. No special use competitive events permitted (same as Alternative I).
- g. Hiking use only on the following trails (same as Alternative I):
 - Strawberry Lake to Wildcat Lake (Alpine 7)
 - From Camp Misery parking area to Jewel Basin
 - Switchback Trail (#725)
 - Crater Notch Trail (#187)

4. Alternative IV

Limited use area and access for motorized and ORV use of high elevation area. Limited ORV use of lower elevation areas having a more coordinated trail system with adjacent landowners. The following special features were incorporated:

- a. High elevation motorized use of the Noisy Creek Road (road damage restriction) (same as Alternative III).
- b. Snowmobile use is restricted to the area between Deer Creek and Krause Creek (same as Alternative III).
- c. Open ORV use of identified non-system trails.
- d. Peters Ridge Road closed to normal traffic April 1 through July 1 (same as Alternative III).

- e. ORV use of the Strawberry Lake, Hemler Creek, and Alpine 7 north of Strawberry Lake trails.
- f. Consider special use non-motorized competitive events from July 1 through April 1.
- g. Hiking use only on the following trails (same as Alternative I):
 - Strawberry Lake to Wildcat Lake (Alpine 7)
 - From Camp Misery parking area to Jewel Basin
 - Switchback Trail (#725)
 - Crater Notch Trail (#187)
- h. Motorized use of road from Noisy Creek Road into Birch Creek (Section 36).

5. Alternative V

Limited use area and access for motorized and ORV use of high elevation area. Increased use of lower elevation areas by ORV with seasonal restrictions to help mitigate impacts. The following special features were incorporated:

- a. High elevation motorized use of the Noisy Creek Road (road damage restriction) (same as Alternative III).
- b. Snowmobile use is restricted to the area between Deer Creek and Peters Ridge.
- c. Open and seasonally restricted use of identified non-system trails.
- d. Peters Ridge Road closed to normal traffic April 1 through July 1 (same as Alternative III).
- e. ORV use of the Strawberry Lake, Hemler Creek, and Alpine 7 north of Strawberry Lake trails (same as Alternative IV).
- f. Consider special use non-motorized competitive events from July 1 through April 1 (same as Alternative IV).
- g. Hiking use only on the following trails (same as Alternative I):
 - Strawberry Lake to Wildcat Lake (Alpine 7)
 - From Camp Misery parking area to Jewel Basin
 - Switchback Trail (#725)
 - Crater Notch Trail (#187)
- h. Motorized use of road from Noisy Creek Road into Birch Creek (Section 36) (same as Alternative IV).

6. Alternative VI

Increased year-long ORV use of both high and low elevation areas. The following special features were incorporated (same as Alternative V, except for):

- a. ORV use of Peters Ridge, Wolf Creek and Broken Leg, and Patterson Creek trails.
- b. Snowmobile use of the Trail Creek Road.
- c. ORV use of the identified non-system trails is not restricted by season.

- d. Consider special use motorized and non-motorized competitive events from July 1 through April 1.

7. Alternative VII

Continued increased use of upper elevation areas and expansion and further increases in area and miles of lower elevation non-system trails. Some seasonal restrictions on lower elevation areas. The following special features were incorporated (same as Alternative VI, except for):

- a. Increase ORV use trails in lower elevation area, with spring restriction on added trails.
- b. ORV use of Switchback Trail (#725), Crater Notch Trail (#187), and Alpine 7 south from Strawberry Lake to Jewel Basin boundary.

8. Alternative VIII

Existing situation: The trails limit the type of use, in some cases, but the restrictions in place are the following:

- a. System trails--no vehicles over 40 inches.
- b. The road from Camp Misery parking area to upper parking lot closed to motorized use year round.
- c. Roads in Bear Creek, Patterson Creek, and Pederson Creek closed to motorized use year round.

9. Alternative IX

This alternative is the same as Alternative VIII, except for the following special features:

- a. Improvements to facilities at the Camp Misery area would be made to better provide for use by handicapped persons.
- b. The Bear Creek Road (#5398) and the spur towards Wolf Creek (#10319) would be opened for summer motor vehicle use.
- c. A connecting trail from the end of Road #10319 to the Wolf Creek Trail would be made.

B. Discussion

I directed the ID Team to not recommend a preferred alternative. I wanted the Task Force to focus on the effects of the alternatives on each of the issues and not on a specific proposed alternative. After considering the analysis of the above alternatives and listening to Task Force discussion on their effects, I developed my proposed management direction which was a mixture of several of the alternatives. This proposed management direction was presented to the Task Force. After considering additional input, I altered portions of the proposed direction and distributed it to the Task Force members and other interested groups and individuals.

Through the environmental analysis process, I felt that ongoing recreational and other activities would result in a "may effect" determination regarding grizzly bears. Through informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we agreed that by initiating a spring restriction on motorized vehicles in the Krause Creek-Peters Ridge area, formal consultation would not be necessary at this time. I, therefore, implemented interim restrictions so that our analysis efforts could be focused on the proposed management direction.

On March 17, 1987, I sent a memo to Task Force members informing them of my decision to implement an interim spring closure in the Krause Creek-Peters Ridge area. That same day, Forest Supervisor Edgar B. Brannon, Jr. signed a closure order for that area effective April 1 through July 1, 1987.

On March 24, 1987, Montana Trail Bike Riders Association filed a Notice of Appeal of Supervisor Brannon's decision to implement interim travel restrictions on the Krause Creek-Peters Ridge area. The notice also included a request to stay implementation of the decision and a request for extension of time to file the statement of reasons.

On April 13, 1987, Regional Forester James C. Overbay granted a stay of the decision, but denied the request for extension of time to submit statement of reasons.

Also on April 13, 1987, Supervisor Brannon directed me, ". . . to proceed as quickly as possible to complete a cumulative effects analysis using the best biological information available."

Between April 6 and 22, 1987, one individual and five organizations requested intervention on behalf of the Forest Service in this appeal. Each of these were subsequently granted intervener status by the Regional Forester. Three individuals and one organization submitted comments regarding this appeal between April 13 and 23.

On April 20, 21, and 23, 1987, three organizations each filed a Notice of Appeal of the Regional Forester's decision to stay the closure. One of these organizations also filed Notice of Intent to File Suit if the stay was not rescinded prior to April 27, 1987.

On April 24, 1987, the Regional Forester advised the appellant and interveners that he would reconsider his stay decision and asked each to send any comments they wished to have him consider.

On April 28, 1987, a complaint was filed in U.S. District Court by Swan View Coalition, Inc. and the National Wildlife Federation to "Enjoin the Department of Agriculture and the United States Forest Service from staying the road and area closure until such time as the agencies comply with the Endangered Species Act and the National Forest Management Act." Before the court could consider the case, the Chief granted a

stay of the Regional Forester's decision to stay the Forest Supervisor's decision to implement an interim closure in the Krause Creek-Peters Ridge area.

The area was posted and closed to motor vehicles until July 1, 1987.

On May 5, 1987 Ranger Pederson's proposed decision and the Biological Evaluation of the proposed management direction was submitted to the Regional Forester with a request that formal consultation be initiated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Regional Office requested additional informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the proposal prior to formal consultation.

Informal consultation was conducted and Ranger Pederson revised his May proposed management direction. The Biological Evaluation was amended to reflect these revisions. A may effect conclusion was reached in relation to grizzly bear and no effect on gray wolf, peregrine falcon and bald eagle.

The proposed Decision Notice of June 10, 1987 and Biological Evaluation was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on July 30, 1987, for formal consultation. On November 16, 1987, I received a draft biological opinion from the Fish and Wildlife Service which concluded my proposed action of June 10, 1987, is likely to jeopardize the grizzly bear. Formal consultation on my June 10, 1987, proposed decision was terminated based on the draft opinion. Through informal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service I revised my proposal. The revised proposal was submitted for formal consultation on February 17, 1988. The Fish and Wildlife Service issued a non-jeopardy opinion on March 14, 1988.

V. DECISION

I decided not to select a specific alternative as outlined in the Northern Swan Range Recreation Analysis. I developed my decision by incorporating the major points of several alternatives which I feel provide for better overall management of the recreation use in the area. The attached map displays my management direction. Following are the main points of my decision:

A. Management Direction for System Trails

1. Close Trail #544 (Wolf Creek-Broken Leg) and Trail #187 (Crater Notch) to motorized use year long.
2. Close Trails #7, #8, #68, and #717 to motorized use year long, except snowmobiles in the Camp Misery area.
3. Trail #37 (Peters Ridge) is open to motorized use from July 1 to March 31. Closed to motorized use April 1 to July 1.

4. Trails #725 (Switchback), #5 (Strawberry Lake), #20 (Hemler Creek) and #7 (Alpine 7 north and south of Jewel Basin) are open year long for motor vehicles less than 40 inches wide.
5. Sign the Strawberry Lake Trail (#5) to inform users that it is open to a variety of users (i.e., hikers, horses, and motor vehicles) and instruct users how to react when horses are encountered.
6. Trail #293 is open to motor vehicles less than 40 inches wide from July 1 through November 30.

B. Management Direction for System Roads

1. Bear Creek area--move the gate on the Bear Creek Road at Peterson Creek back to the Wolf Creek Road junction and close the area behind the gate to motorized use from December 1 to July 1.
2. Close the Peters Ridge Road #5388 at the lower end of Section 16 from April 1 to July 1 to all motorized use.
3. Camp Misery area--open Road #5392 from lower parking area to upper parking area to vehicles less than 40 inches wide year long and to other vehicles by permit, as long as the road is passable.

C. Management Direction for Non-system Roads and Trails

Approximately 13 miles will be refrained for use by ORV's and other forest users. Routes will not be marked on the ground. Motorized use will be restricted from April 1 to July 1 and from September 1 to November 30, in the Krause Creek-Peters Ridge Area. (See Map).

D. Management Direction for Occasional Events

1. Follow Forest Plan direction which states, "Occasional Events - Handle requests such as for cross-country ski or snowmobile races, youth or church organization outings, and recreation trails on a case-by-case basis. Do not allow permanent structural facilities to be built or permit use where unacceptable resource damage could occur" (page II-49).
2. In addition, permits in this area will adhere to the following guidelines:
 - a. Permits for competitive motorized events will not be issued.
 - b. Permits will not be issued between April 1 to July 1 and September 1 to November 30.
 - c. Permits will be confined to identified routes, trails, and/or roads.
 - d. If private or State land is involved, the permission of the other landowners is required.

E. Area Closure

In the Krause Creek - Peters Ridge area motorized vehicle use will be restricted from April 1 to July 1 and from September 1 to November 30, except Peters Ridge Road #5388 and Trail #37 will remain open during September 1 to November 30, period. Strawberry Lake Road #5390 and Strawberry Lake Trail #5, are open yearlong.

In the Bear Creek area which lies south of Trail #544 (Wolf Creek Trail), continue the area closure to all motorized use from October 15 to November 30 as outlined in the 1987 Flathead National Forest Travel Plan. Road #5398 (Bear Creek Road) and Trail #293 (Peterson Creek Trail) will remain open to motorized use from July 2 to November 30, even though they are within this area closure.

VI. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

In making my decision, I looked at the issues and concerns analyzed in the Environmental Assessment, Forest Plan direction, information in the Forest Plan appeals, Task Force input, concerned public input, appeals associated with the interim closure, the Biological Evaluation and consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The management direction which I have developed is within the range of alternatives analyzed and provides for continuation of a mix of recreational uses for maximum net public benefit.

A. Water Quality and Soil Erosion

The analysis found these issues to be within acceptable limits for all alternatives. I feel my proposal is also within acceptable limits for these issues.

B. Visuals

The ORV trail between Trail Creek and Mill Creek was identified as the only trail or road which dominated views from major viewing areas. Under my proposal, this route will be closed and rehabilitated to near natural condition.

C. Forest Plan Proposed Wilderness

None of the alternatives affect the potential of the area for inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System. Broken Leg Trail #544 passes through the Forest Plan proposed wilderness area. Motorized use on this trail is relatively low at this time. My proposal to close Trail #544 to motorized use is in line with the wilderness proposal in the Forest Plan, and will bring this area into conformance with wilderness standards for motorized use.

D. Private Land Conflicts

The analysis determined that the total number of road miles within 1/4 mile of private land remained fairly constant for all alternatives. The majority of the miles are associated with system roads which are already in place and would be difficult to relocate away from private land.

Although I did not propose a maximum decibel level for ORV's in this decision, I am continuing to pursue the feasibility of developing a noise level decibel limit.

Some of the adjacent landowners have requested restrictions on motorized use to reduce impacts. In arriving at my decision, I also considered public access needs. Movement of the closure on the Bear Creek Road and the elimination of some ORV routes adjacent to Section 17 in the Olsen Creek-Krause Creek area address some of the concerns expressed by adjacent landowners.

E. Feasibility of Implementation

Field review during the summer of 1987 determined that many of the inventoried ORV routes scheduled for closure are not receiving ORV use and have brushed in naturally. Cattle use appears to be the reason the tread has not grassed in. ORV use on these routes not scheduled for retention will be discouraged by placement of barriers such as trees and brush in the trail.

Administrative restrictions will require commitment of funds on a continuing bases for implementation and enforcement.

F. Safety

The Task Force discussion regarding safety centered primarily around encounters between horse users and non-horse users on steep sidehill trails. The Strawberry Lake Trail was identified as the most hazardous situation. Signing the Strawberry Lake Trail will warn users of the mix of uses and inform them of the proper actions to take when encountering horse users. Horse users requested the desirability of having a trail from the valley that they could ride without fear of encounters with ORV's. Closure of the Wolf Creek Trail and the Crater Notch Trail to motorized use provides this. These trails are presently lightly used by ORV's. Peterson Creek Trail #293 will continue to provide ORV users access to Alpine Trail #7.

G. Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species, Big Game, and Suitability to User Groups

The most difficult situations I had to deal with in arriving at my decision were the issues involving the effects recreation use levels have on grizzly bear and big game and the suitability of the various alternatives to various user groups.

As discussed in my March 17, 1987 letter to Task Force members, I hoped through the Task Force process to:

- depolarize conflicts between interest groups, individuals, and user organizations; and
- develop, through user group interaction and understanding, recreation management direction that is acceptable.

My observations, and that of other Forest Service staff involved in the Task Force, indicates little progress was made in depolarizing strongly held positions and/or opinions by many of the members. Attitudes expressed in initial meetings tended to carry through the process, were still being articulated in our final meetings, and are still present.

Through the Task Force process, I developed a better understanding of use patterns and user group preference and I utilized this in making my decision.

Much of the debate centered around how various levels and types of recreation use affects grizzly bear and big game. Habitat alteration due to current recreation use levels is not a significant problem. The issue primarily involves the amount of displacement various levels of recreation use has on grizzly bears. Much of debate has centered around the application of the Management Situation I guidelines.

The identification of Management Situations across the Flathead National Forest was intended to display areas of importance to the grizzly bear on a relative scale. Areas of Management Situation 1, are more important to the grizzly bear population than areas of Management Situation 2, and therefore should receive higher consideration for grizzly bear management.

Management Situation I designation is not "critical habitat" designation as defined in the Endangered Species Act. It was not intended that all acres of management situation I are of equal value or would be managed to optimize grizzly bear habitat potential. A basic assumption in the Flathead National Forest Planning process is that Management Situation 1 direction and land use management emphasis are not synonymous. The Grizzly Bear Standards ("Grizzly Bear Guidelines") are Forest-wide Standards that are applied to all areas of management emphasis within occupied grizzly bear habitat on the Flathead National Forest. Grizzly Bear Standards ensure that other land uses will be designed and carried out in a manner that will permit the Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan goals to be achieved. Experience has shown that many types of land management emphasis can be accomplished and still be within the Forest-wide Grizzly Bear Standards.

The cumulative effects analysis displayed how my proposed June 10, 1987, management directions affected grizzly habitat within the Noisy Face Geographic Unit.

In arriving at my proposed June 10, 1987, decision on non-system trail and road restrictions, I met with Task Force members representing ORV and horse users. We reached agreement on a system I believed provided adequate security for the grizzly bear and which they felt they could agree to as providing reasonable access.

My proposed June 10, 1987, decision to continue to allow spring motorized use in the Krause Basin area was based on:

1. Historic use and the importance placed upon this area by various user groups.
2. My opinion that removal of motorized use alone would not materially change the potential grizzly bear use of the area due to the amount of non-motorized recreation activities that occur in the area.
3. I also did not feel it was advisable to change current recreational use patterns in close proximity to a populated residential area to encourage increased use by grizzly bears. I felt this would lead to increased human/grizzly bear encounters, and could result in increased mortality to the bear.
4. Spring ORV use in the Krause Basin area is concentrated in close proximity to populated areas (within 3 km). The spring area closure north of Peters Ridge Road provided a security area free of motorized use. It will also prevent spring motorized use from spreading or increasing outside the Krause Basin area, but does provide for continued use of some additional trails after July 1.
5. Closure of Trail #544 (Wolf Creek - Broken Leg) and Trail #187 (Crater Notch) yearlong and adjustments of the present road closure in Bear Creek limits spring motorized use south of the Jewel Basin Road. The net effect is that along the Swan Front from Columbia Mountain to Six Mile (approximately 30 miles) spring motorized use on National Forest land occurs only in the Krause Basin Area and on the Jewel Basin Road.
6. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks indicate that grizzly bear population, conditions, and trends on the Flathead National Forest are healthy and increasing, and that current populations are probably at or exceeding the target specified in the recovery plan (Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, The Grizzly Bear in Northwestern Montana, March 1986).
7. As displayed in the Biological Evaluation my proposal to limit spring ORV use to the Krause Basin area reduced existing impacts on spring grizzly bear habitat values by approximately 50 percent. For subunit 2 the static disturbance from development adjacent to the national forest reduced habitat potential by 8%; spring ORV and other recreational use resulted in an additional 5% habitat potential loss, with a total potential spring habitat loss of 13% for all factors.

The Fish and Wildlife Service issued a draft biological opinion on November 16, 1987, which determined that my June 10, 1987, proposal would jeopardize the grizzly bear. Formal consultation was then terminated and through informal procedures I worked with the USFWS to modify my June 10, 1987, proposal considering habitat security needs. Both spring and fall habitat protection became the primary criteria in developing a new alternative.

My revised proposal differs from my June 10, 1987, proposal in that it changes the spring closure from the area North of Peters Ridge road to the area from Peters Ridge South to the Strawberry Lake road and also initiated a fall closure in this same area. The effect of these changes is to increase security and habitat use potential for bears during the spring and fall in the Peters Ridge to Strawberry Lake road area.

Through formal consultation, the USFWS determined a non-jeopardy decision as stated in their March 14, 1988, biological opinion.

I decided to continue the current area closure and road closures to motorized use in the Bear Creek area with the exception that Road #5398 will be closed at the Wolf Creek Road junction from December 1 to July 1 to motorized use. Road #5398 will be open for motorized use to Peterson Creek trailhead from July 2 to November 30. This provides motorized access to the trailhead during the summer and fall use period. Motorized restrictions in the area provide security for mule deer and elk during the winter use periods and grizzly bear security during the spring.

By restricting motorized use on Trails #7, #8, #68, and #717 in the Camp Misery area, hikers will be provided trail access from the lower parking area to the Jewel Basin free of motorized use. Opening the road between the lower and upper parking lots to vehicles less than 40 inches and to other vehicles by permit will allow motorized users access to the upper parking area. Handicapped and elderly persons would be given permits to drive to the upper parking area if their vehicles are capable of negotiating the road. Snowmobiles would be allowed to use the area and trail system but are still prohibited from entering the Jewel Basin.

H. Occasional Events

With the exception of motorized competitive events, I chose to follow Forest Plan direction for occasional events requiring a permit since each application will need a site specific analysis to determine if it should be permitted.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Implementation of this management direction will begin immediately after the signing and distribution of this Decision Notice.

Monitoring of recreation use within the Noisy Face Geographic Unit will be scheduled to evaluate the success of the management direction. Necessary adjustments will be made as needed to achieve desired results.

VIII. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

As the official responsible for the use and management of the land affected by this proposal, and based on my review of its likely effects, it is my judgement that the management direction, as implemented, neither constitutes a major Federal action, nor will it significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be filed on the proposed action. This determination is based on the following factors:

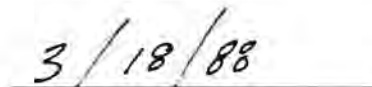
1. There are no significant cumulative effects.
2. The impacts resulting from this activity should not adversely affect the well being or recovery of the threatened and endangered species involved.
3. This action is within the context of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Flathead National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
4. There are no irreversible resource commitments.

IX. APPEAL RIGHTS

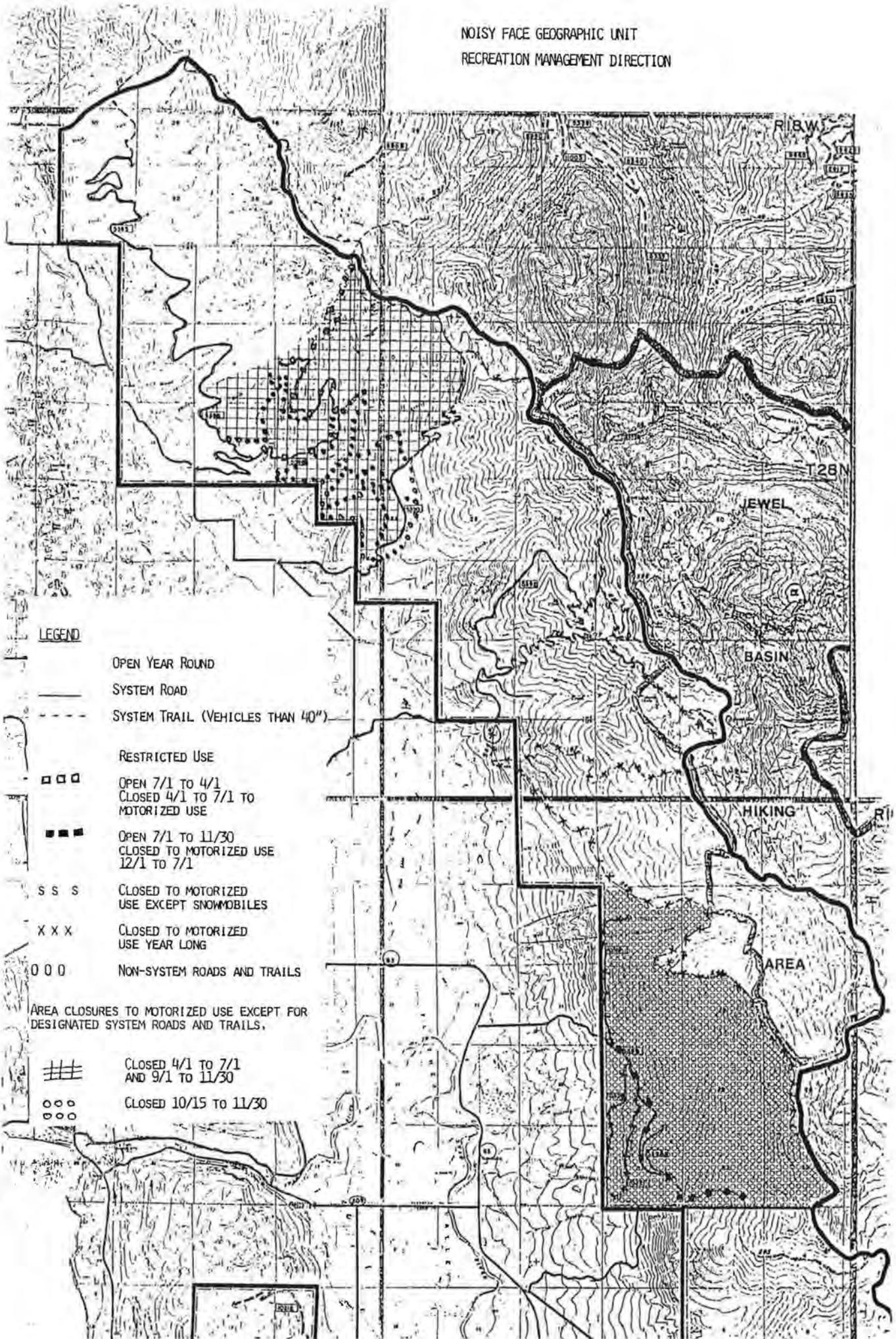
This decision is subject to administrative appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 211.18 for 45 days after the date on this notice.

Inquiries regarding this decision should be sent to the District Ranger, Post Office Box 370, Bigfork, Montana 59911.










WILLIAM L. PEDERSON
District Ranger


Date



NOISY FACE GEOGRAPHIC UNIT
 RECREATION MANAGEMENT DIRECTION



LEGEND

-  OPEN YEAR ROUND
-  SYSTEM ROAD
-  SYSTEM TRAIL (VEHICLES THAN 40")
- RESTRICTED USE**
-  OPEN 7/1 TO 4/1
CLOSED 4/1 TO 7/1 TO
MOTORIZED USE
-  OPEN 7/1 TO 11/30
CLOSED TO MOTORIZED USE
12/1 TO 7/1
-  CLOSED TO MOTORIZED
USE EXCEPT SNOWMOBILES
-  CLOSED TO MOTORIZED
USE YEAR LONG
-  NON-SYSTEM ROADS AND TRAILS

AREA CLOSURES TO MOTORIZED USE EXCEPT FOR DESIGNATED SYSTEM ROADS AND TRAILS.

-  CLOSED 4/1 TO 7/1
AND 9/1 TO 11/30
-  CLOSED 10/15 TO 11/30