



Management Area 15. Albion Mountains Location Map

Management Area 15 Albion Mountains

MANAGEMENT AREA DESCRIPTION

Management Prescriptions - Management Area 15 has the following management prescriptions (see map on preceding page for distribution of prescriptions).

Management Prescription Category (MPC)	Percent of Mgt. Area
2.2 – Research Natural Area	Trace
5.1 – Restoration and Maintenance Emphasis within Forested Landscapes	30
6.1 – Restoration and Maintenance Emphasis within Shrubland & Grassland Landscapes	70

General Location and Description - Management Area 15 is comprised of Forest Service administered lands on the west side of the Albion Division of the Minidoka Ranger District (see map, preceding page). The entire area is in Cassia County, and the nearest community is Oakley, about 10 miles to the west. The management area is an estimated 20,100 acres, including several small private land inholdings that make up less than 3 percent of the area. The area is bordered by Sawtooth National Forest to the east, the City of Rocks National Preserve to the south, and primarily private ranch lands to the west and north. The primary uses or activities in this area has been livestock grazing and dispersed recreation.

Access - The main access to the area is the gravel-surfaced Oakley-to-Elba Road, Forest Road 548. The only other roads in the area are native-surfaced and rough. The density of classified roads for the management area is low (0.9 miles per square mile) due to the steep terrain. Total road density for area subwatersheds ranges between 0 and 1.8 miles per square mile. Although several trails exist on Forest, access is limited due to private land ownership along the Forest boundary.

Special Features - The primary geographical feature of the area is the Albion Mountain Range that rises steeply 4,000 to 5,000 feet from the high desert within 2 to 3 miles of the Forest boundary. Part of the Mount Harrison Research Natural Area (381 total acres) preserves rare plant species and a representation of relatively undisturbed subalpine vegetation. An estimated 59 percent of the management area is inventoried as roadless, including portions of the Mount Harrison and Cache Peak Roadless Areas.

Air Quality - This management area lies within Montana/Idaho Airshed ID-25 and in Cassia County. Particulate matter is the primary pollutant of concern related to Forest management. The closest ambient air monitor is located in Twin Falls. It is used to obtain current background levels, trends, and seasonal patterns of particulate matter. The closest Class I area is Craters of the Moon National Monument. Visibility monitoring has been expanded for this area.

Between 1995 and 1999, emissions trends in Cassia County improved for PM 10, while PM 2.5 emissions remained constant. The most common source of particulate matter within the county was fugitive dust from unpaved roads and agricultural activities such as tilling. In addition to Forest management activities, crop residue and ditch burning may contribute to particulate matter emissions. The amount of agricultural-related burning was among the highest in the state, over 22,500 acres. There were no point sources located within Cassia County.

Soil, Water, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources - Elevations range from 5,200 feet at the Forest boundary to 9,950 on Mount Independence. Management Area 15 is predominantly in the Humboldt River High Plateau subsection, and the dominant landforms are fluvial mountains, plateaus and escarpments, and depositional lands. Slope gradients range from 40 to 70 percent on the fluvial mountains, to 0 to 30 percent on the plateaus and depositional lands, to near vertical on the escarpments. Surface geology is dominated by limestone schist with some granite. Soils generally have moderate surface erosion potential, and moderate to low productivity. Subwatershed vulnerability ratings for this area are all low (see table below). Geomorphic Integrity ratings for the subwatersheds are all moderate (functioning at risk) (see table below). Some areas have impacts from roads, livestock grazing, and dispersed recreation. These localized impacts include accelerated erosion, upland compaction, and stream bank and channel modification.

The management area is comprised of a portion of the Big Rocky-Birch Watershed that drains west into the Goose Creek Subbasin, which drains north into the Snake River Basin. Although small streams exist in the area, many are intermittent, and none extends more than a mile or two onto National Forest System lands. No lakes or reservoirs occur in the area. Water Quality Integrity ratings for the subwatersheds are all moderate (functioning at risk) (see table below). Some areas have depleted stream flows from irrigation uses, and accelerated sediment and nutrients from roads, livestock grazing, and dispersed recreation. There are currently no 303(d) impaired water bodies or TMDL-assigned subwatersheds associated with this management area.

Subwatershed Vulnerability			Geomorphic Integrity			Water Quality Integrity			No. 303(d) Subs	No. Subs With TMDLs	No. Public Water System Subs
High	Mod.	Low	High	Mod.	Low	High	Mod.	Low			
0	0	7	0	7	0	0	7	0	0	0	0

No currently listed Threatened or Endangered fish species occur in Management Area 15. Small populations of rainbow trout and Yellowstone cutthroat trout may exist in area streams, although habitat is limited by the small and intermittent nature of the streams, and impacts from grazing and dewatering from irrigation. Aquatic habitat is functioning at risk in some areas due to localized sedimentation impacts from livestock grazing, roads, and dispersed recreation, and dewatering from irrigation.

Vegetation - Vegetation is naturally patchy in much of the management area, with islands of coniferous forest surrounded by sagebrush/grass communities. Lower and mid-elevations feature shrubs, sagebrush, and grasslands on south and west aspects. North and east aspects

support Douglas-fir and aspen communities. Lodgepole pine occurs in frost pockets and cold air drainages. Subalpine fir dominates at mid to high elevations. Limber pine is found at the highest elevations, interspersed with rock ledges and talus slopes.

An estimated 59 percent of the management area is non-forested, or covered by grasslands, shrublands, meadows, rock, or water. Much of this area is comprised of the Mountain Big Sagebrush, Basin Big Sage, and Montane Shrub vegetation groups. The dominant forested vegetation groups are Aspen (11 percent), Persistent Lodgepole Pine (24 percent), and Cool Dry Douglas-Fir (5 percent).

The Mountain Big Sagebrush and Montane Shrub groups are functioning at risk, and the Basin Big Sage Group is not functioning properly in some areas due to fire exclusion and livestock grazing impacts, which have altered structure and species composition. Fire exclusion has allowed canopy cover to increase, which has reduced the understory herbaceous cover. The bitterbrush component in the Basin Big Sage group is being replaced by cheatgrass and other introduced species. Non-native grasses have been extensively seeded on lands adjacent to the Forest, with some seeding on Forest as well.

The Persistent Lodgepole Pine group is functioning at risk because fire exclusion has resulted in older, more decadent stands with more shade-tolerant subalpine fir and less early seral species, particularly aspen and lodgepole pine. Aspen is present in pure stands and mixed with lodgepole pine and subalpine fir; however, this group is functioning at risk because some stands are dying out or being replaced by encroaching conifers. Older aspen stands are not regenerating. The Cool Dry Douglas-Fir group is at functioning properly, although fire hazard is increasing due to increasing mortality from insect and disease infestations.

Riparian vegetation is functioning at risk due to localized grazing and dispersed recreation impacts, and fire exclusion. In some areas, introduced grasses and noxious weeds are replacing native plants. Cottonwood and willow communities are becoming old and decadent, and are not regenerating due to fire exclusion and livestock use. Snag levels are likely below historic levels in a few areas due to fuelwood gathering.

Botanical Resources – Christ’s Indian paintbrush, a Candidate species for federal listing, is found globally in only one location at the top of Mount Harrison. An estimated 23 percent of the population (90 acres) occurs in the Mt Harrison Research Natural Area. Davis’ wavewing, a Region 4 Sensitive species, is found in this management area. No federally listed or proposed plant species are known to occur in the area, but potential habitat exists for Ute ladies’-tresses and slender moonwort. Ute ladies’-tresses, a Threatened species, may have moderate potential habitat in riparian/wetland areas from 1,000 to 7,000 feet. Slender moonwort, a Candidate species, may occur in moderate to higher elevation grasslands, meadows, small openings in spruce and lodgepole pine, and open rocky outcrops.

In addition to having the only known population of Christ’s Indian paintbrush, the summit of Mount Harrison has two of the largest intact tall forb communities remaining in Idaho. These communities are characterized by tall (16- to 48-inch) luxuriant plant communities comprised of mesic forbs. Tall forb communities typically cover highly erosive soils that rapidly erode

without protective vegetation. There is a need to establish the Mount Harrison Botanical Special Interest Area to maintain the tall forb communities, the Christ's Indian paintbrush population not encompassed in the RNA, and the other endemic rare plant species found on Mount Harrison.

Non-native Plants – A number of noxious weeds and exotic plants occur in the management area, especially along main travel corridors and in areas of high activity. The main weeds of concern are Canada thistle, leafy spurge, and spotted knapweed, which currently occur in small, scattered populations. An estimated 18 percent of the area is highly susceptible to noxious weed establishment and spread.

Wildlife Resources (Updated as part of the 2012 WCS amendment) - Sagebrush shrublands and grasslands provide habitat for greater sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, Swainson's hawk and ferruginous hawk and limited winter range for mule deer. Pinyon pine has limited distribution and is important habitat for pinyon jay and pinyon mouse. Nesting and foraging habitats for other Region 4 Sensitive species, including goshawk, flammulated owl and Townsend's big-eared bat, are found in the mid-elevation forests. Higher elevation forests provide mule deer summer range and habitat for south hills crossbill and boreal owl. Other species present throughout the area include migratory landbirds and mountain lion. There is no elk-hunting season currently in this unit. This area is within the Central Idaho Wolf Recovery Area, but wolves are not currently known to occur here.

Terrestrial habitat is functioning at risk in some areas due primarily to human-caused disturbance, introduction of invasive species, grazing impacts, and changes in the fire cycle. Increasing recreation has increased disturbance to wildlife populations year-round. Long-term exclusion of fire has altered some habitats so that they no longer function as they did historically. Current livestock grazing in some areas is not allowing localized areas of historic grazing impacts to recover. Habitat fragmentation from roads and development is generally moderate.

The area is not within any of the Canada five lynx geographic areas, as identified in the Canada Lynx Conservation and Strategy (2000); and therefore LAUs and lynx habitat mapping were not developed for the area. Consultation for Canada lynx on the Sawtooth NF was completed in 2003 and the US Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the Forest's findings for lynx. Forest-wide management direction relative to the lynx does not apply in this management area.

Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) was completed in 2005 and provides a framework for conserving 'Species of Greatest Conservation Need' (SGCN), designated by the State, and the habitats upon which they depend. The Forest assisted the State in identifying focal areas, or areas known to be important for SGCN. The eastern half of the Management Area falls within the Jim Sage designated focal area, or biologically important area. This area represents exceptional natural habitat for pinyon pine and aspen with tall forb communities and is identified as core habitat for terrestrial wildlife species including sage grouse, pinyon jay, pinyon mouse, California bighorn sheep, ferruginous hawk and south hills crossbill.

Recreation Resources - Management Area 15 offers dispersed recreation opportunities, including camping, hunting, horseback riding, ATV driving, and mountain biking. However, access is somewhat limited across private ranch land to the west. The area is in Idaho Fish and

Game Management Unit 55. Most of the users come locally from Oakley or private ranches in the vicinity. Several trails exist in the area, most of which have a multiple use emphasis; however, access is limited due to private ownership along the Forest boundary.

Cultural Resources – The main cultural theme in this area is ranching. Little heritage research has been conducted in the area.

Timberland Resources - Of the estimated 5,800 tentatively suited acres in this management area, 5,100 acres have been identified as being suited timberlands, or appropriate for timber production. This represents about 4 percent of the Forest’s suited timberland acres. The suited timberland acres are found in MPCs 5.1 and 6.1, as shown on the map displaying the MPCs for this management area. There have been no timber sales in this area in the recent past. Forest products such as fuelwood, posts, poles, and Christmas trees are collected in designated areas.

Rangeland Resources - This area contains all or portions of three cattle allotments, and has 6,200 acres of capable rangeland, which represents about 1 percent of capable rangeland on the Forest.

Mineral Resources - Current mining activity is very low (one claimant) however, several valid claims exist. Most mining activity stopped in the early 20th century. Potential for mineral development is considered low.

Fire Management - No large fires have occurred in the area in the last 15 years. There are no National Fire Plan communities or wildland-urban interface subwatersheds in the area. Historical fire regimes for the area are estimated to be 1 percent lethal and 99 percent mixed1 or 2. None of the area regimes has vegetation conditions that are highly departed from their historical range. However, 43 percent of the area regimes have vegetation conditions that are moderately departed from their historical range. Wildfire in these areas may result in larger patch sizes of high intensity or severity.

Lands and Special Uses - Special-use authorizations include several water diversion ditches.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

In addition to Forest-wide Goals, Objectives, Standards, and Guidelines that provide direction for all management areas, the following direction has been developed specifically for this area.

Resource/Program	Direction	Number	Management Direction Description
MPC 2.2 Research Natural Areas	General Standard	1501	Mechanical vegetation treatment, salvage harvest, prescribed fire, and wildland fire may only be used to maintain values for which the areas were established, or to achieve other objectives that are consistent with the RNA establishment records or management plans. (Modified as part of the 2012 WCS amendment)

Resource/Program	Direction	Number	Management Direction Description
MPC 2.2 Research Natural Areas	Road Standard	1502	Road construction or reconstruction may only occur where needed: a) To provide access related to reserved or outstanding rights, or b) To respond to statute or treaty, or c) To maintain the values for which the RNA was established.
	Fire Guideline	1503	The full range of fire suppression strategies may be used to suppress wildfires. Fire suppression strategies and tactics should minimize impacts to the values for which the RNA was established.
MPC 5.1 Restoration and Maintenance Emphasis within Forested Landscapes	Vegetation Standard	1534	For commercial salvage sales, retain at least the maximum number of snags depicted in Table A-6 within each size class where available. Where large snags (>20 inches dbh) are unavailable, retain additional snags ≥10 inches dbh where available to meet at least the maximum total number of snags per acre depicted in Table A-6. ¹ (Added as part of the 2012 WCS amendment)
	Vegetation Guideline	1504	The full range of vegetation treatment activities may be used to restore or maintain desired vegetation and fuel conditions. The available vegetation treatment activities include wildland fire. Salvage harvest may also occur. (Modified as part of the 2012 WCS amendment)
	Fire Guideline	1505	The full range of fire suppression strategies may be used to suppress wildfires. Emphasize strategies and tactics that minimize impacts to habitats, developments, and investments.
	Road Guideline	1506	Road construction or reconstruction may occur where needed: a) To provide access related to reserved or outstanding rights, or b) To respond to statute or treaty, or c) To achieve restoration and maintenance objectives for vegetation, water quality, aquatic habitat, or terrestrial habitat, or d) To support management actions taken to reduce wildfire risks in wildland-urban interface areas; or e) To meet access and travel management objectives.
	Road Guideline	1535	Public motorized use should be restricted on new roads built to implement vegetation management projects. Effective closures should be provided in road design. When the project is over, these roads should be reclaimed or decommissioned, if not needed to meet future management objectives. (Added as part of the 2012 WCS amendment)
MPC 6.1 Restoration and Maintenance Emphasis within Shrubland and Grassland Landscapes	Vegetation Standard	1536	For commercial salvage sales, retain at least the maximum number of snags depicted in Table A-6 within each size class where available. Where large snags (>20 inches dbh) are unavailable, retain additional snags ≥10 inches dbh where available to meet at least the maximum total number of snags per acre depicted in Table A-6. ¹ (Added as part of the 2012 WCS amendment)
	Vegetation Guideline	1507	The full range of vegetation treatment activities may be used to restore or maintain desired vegetation and fuel conditions. The available vegetation treatment activities include wildland fire. Salvage harvest may also occur. (Modified as part of the 2012 WCS amendment)
	Fire Guideline	1508	The full range of fire suppression strategies may be used to suppress wildfires. Emphasize strategies and tactics that minimize impacts to habitats, developments, and investments.

¹ This standard shall not apply to activities that an authorized officer determines are needed for the protection of life and property during an emergency event, to reasonably address other human health and safety concerns, to meet hazardous fuel reduction objectives within WUIs, or to allow reserved or outstanding rights, tribal rights or statutes to be reasonably exercised or complied with.

Resource/Program	Direction	Number	Management Direction Description
MPC 6.1 Restoration and Maintenance Emphasis within Shrubland and Grassland Landscapes	Road Guideline	1509	Road construction or reconstruction may occur where needed: a) To provide access related to reserved or outstanding rights, or b) To respond to statute or treaty, or c) To achieve restoration and maintenance objectives for vegetation, water quality, aquatic habitat, or terrestrial habitat, or d) To support management actions taken to reduce wildfire risks in wildland-urban interface areas; or e) To meet access and travel management objectives.
	Road Guideline	1537	Public motorized use should be restricted on new roads built to implement vegetation management projects. Effective closures should be provided in road design. When the project is over, these roads should be reclaimed or decommissioned, if not needed to meet future management objectives. (Added as part of the 2012 WCS amendment)
Vegetation	Objective	1510	Restore and maintain the early seral aspen, lodgepole pine, and Douglas-fir components in the Cool Dry Douglas-Fir, and Persistent Lodgepole Pine vegetation groups, as described in Appendix A.
	Objective	1511	Restore and maintain desired size class structure and diversity in the Aspen vegetation group, as described in Appendix A, by promoting regeneration.
	Objective	1512	Improve size class distribution of lodgepole pine, aspen, and Douglas-fir in the Cool Dry Douglas-Fir and Persistent Lodgepole Pine vegetation groups, as described in Appendix A.
	Objective	1513	Restore mountain big sagebrush canopy cover to desired conditions, as described in Appendix A, in Robinson Creek headwaters, Big Rocky Creek, Summit Creek, North and South Carson Creeks, Myers Canyon, and Fairchild Creek.
Botanical Resources	Objective	1514	Preserve botanical resources in the Mount Harrison RNA consistent with the establishment guidelines.
	Objective	1515	Establish the Mount Harrison Botanical Special Interest Area to maintain the Christ's Indian paintbrush population, tall forb communities, and other botanical resources.
	Objective	1516	Develop and implement a management plan for the Mount Harrison Botanical Special Interest Area.
	Objective	1517	Develop and implement an interpretive program to reduce risks to Christ's Indian paintbrush and educate the public of its uniqueness.
	Objective	1518	Maintain and restore populations and occupied habitats of TEPCS species, including Christ's Indian paintbrush and Davis' wavewing, to contribute to their long-term viability of these species.
	Objective	1519	Emphasize reducing Canada thistle, spotted knapweed, and non-native species within TEPCS plant actual and potential habitat.
	Standard	1520	Maintain habitat and populations of Christ's Indian paintbrush consistent with the conservation strategy developed and signed by the Sawtooth National Forest.
	Standard	1521	Do not allow commercial plant or seed collection at the summit of Mt. Harrison to help retain the rare plant species that currently occupy that site.

Resource/Program	Direction	Number	Management Direction Description														
Botanical Resources	Guideline	1522	Coordinate forested and grassland/shrubland restoration, prescribed fire, and non-native plant eradication efforts with a Forest botanist to minimize impacts to TEPCS plant species, actual or potential habitat, and pollinators.														
Non-native Plants	Objective	1523	Control or contain Canada thistle, leafy spurge, and spotted knapweed infestations.														
Wildlife Resources	Guideline	1524	Management actions in sage grouse habitat should be designed to meet the desired conditions for sagebrush, as described in Appendix A. Where greater than 40 percent of the sage grouse habitat in the management area has less than 10 percent canopy cover, management actions should be designed to maintain or restore canopy cover conditions.														
Recreation Resources	Objective	1525	<p>Achieve or maintain the following ROS strategy:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">ROS Class</th> <th colspan="2">Percent of Mgt. Area</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Summer</th> <th>Winter</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Semi-Primitive Motorized</td> <td>50%</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Roaded Natural</td> <td>15%</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Roaded Modified</td> <td>35%</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The above numbers reflect current travel regulations. These numbers may change as a result of future travel regulation planning</p>	ROS Class	Percent of Mgt. Area		Summer	Winter	Semi-Primitive Motorized	50%	100%	Roaded Natural	15%	0%	Roaded Modified	35%	0%
	ROS Class	Percent of Mgt. Area															
Summer		Winter															
Semi-Primitive Motorized	50%	100%															
Roaded Natural	15%	0%															
Roaded Modified	35%	0%															
Guideline	1526	Coordinate closely with National Park Service and Idaho Department of State Parks and Recreation in managing the area around City of Rocks.															
Cultural Resources	Objective	1527	Complete the interpretive strategy for the Albion Division to guide development of interpretive opportunities.														
Timberland Resources	Objective	1528	Designate firewood-gathering areas in order to maintain snag and large woody debris components for wildlife and aquatic habitat, and soil productivity.														
	Objective	1529	Provide for commercial harvest opportunities associated with restoration activities to reduce fire or insect hazard in the southern half of the management area.														
Mineral Resources	Objective	1530	Provide collection opportunities for Oakley Stone and Building Stone in the southern half of the management area.														
Fire Management	Objective	1531	Identify areas appropriate for Wildland Fire. Use wildland fire to restore or maintain vegetative desired conditions and to reduce fuel loadings. However, emphasize prescribed fire or mechanical treatments over wildland fire use adjacent to off-Forest agricultural investments and on-Forest plantations, and in the Almo Park and City of Rocks. (Modified as part of the 2012 WCS amendment)														
	Guideline	1532	The full range of fire suppression strategies may be used to suppress wildfires. Emphasize full suppression adjacent to off-Forest agricultural investments and on-Forest plantations, the Christ's Indian paintbrush population, and in the Almo Park and City of Rocks areas.														
Lands and Special Uses	Objective	1533	Acquire rights-of-way through private lands to improve public access to National Forest System lands.														