

**United States Department of
Agriculture**

Forest Service

CUSTER

NATIONAL

FOREST

AND NATIONAL GRASSLANDS

Record of Decision



RECORD OF DECISION FOR USDA FOREST SERVICE

LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE CUSTER NATIONAL FOREST
AND NATIONAL GRASSLANDS

Carbon, Carter, Park, Powder River, Rosebud,
Stillwater, and Sweetgrass Counties in Montana;

Billings, Golden Valley, Grant, McHenry, McKenzie,
Ransom, Richland, Sioux, and Slope Counties in North Dakota;

Corson, Harding, Perkins, and Ziebach Counties in South Dakota

JUNE 1987

**CUSTER NATIONAL FOREST
AND NATIONAL GRASSLANDS
RECORD OF DECISION
FOREST PLAN
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I.	INTRODUCTION	4
II.	MAJOR FEATURES OF THE FOREST	5
III.	THE RELATIONSHIP OF PEOPLE TO THE FOREST	6
IV.	A VISION OF THE FUTURE	7
V.	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	8
VI.	DECISION	9
VII.	RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION	13
	A. Response to Issues and Concerns	
	1. Livestock Management	14
	2. Minerals Utilization	14
	3. Low Development and Wilderness Resources	17
	4. Riparian and Woody Draw Management	22
	5. Forest Access Management	22
	6. Other Concerns	23
	B. Economic Efficiency	27
	C. Social and Economic Stability	30
	D. Environmental Quality	30
	E. Compatibility with the Plans of Others	30
	F. Summary of Reasons for Selecting the Plan	32
VIII.	ALTERNATIVES	33
IX.	COMPARISON OF THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE	34
X.	IMPLEMENTATION, MITIGATION, AND MONITORING	35
XI.	PLANNING RECORDS	37
XII.	APPEAL RIGHTS	37

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1 Disposition of The Roadless Resource	i
Table 2 North Dakota Low Development Areas	ii
Table 3 North Dakota Roadless Area Status	iii
Table 4 Montana Low Development and Wilderness Areas	iv
Table 5 Montana Roadless Area Status	v
Table 6 Timber Resource Land Suitability	vi
Table 7 Comparisons of Alternatives	vii
Table 8 Comparison of Roadless and Wilderness Acres by Alternative	viii
Figure 1 Timber Resource Land Suitability Definitions	ix
Figure 2 Historic and Projected Volume	x
Figure 3 Current and Previous Classification	xi

I. INTRODUCTION

What is being decided?

The Record of Decision documents my decision and rationale for selecting Alternative 10 as the management strategy of the Custer National Forest and National Grasslands for the next 10 to 15 years. This strategy is contained in a document entitled Custer National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, dated October 1986, commonly referred to as the "Forest Plan." The Forest Plan provides direction in the form of standards, guidelines, and monitoring requirements. The analysis of alternatives and public comments I considered in this decision can be found in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, dated October 1986.

What is the purpose and goal of the Forest Plan?

The Forest Plan is part of the long-range resource planning process established by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), an amendment to the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA). My goal in selecting Alternative 10 was to maximize net public benefit. In determining net public benefit, I considered public comments, goals of Indian tribes and other agencies, environmental quality, and resources you can place a dollar value on (priced) and those you cannot (non-priced). In the section of this Record of Decision entitled "Rationale For the Decision," I discuss how these factors were considered in making my decision.

What will happen to existing plans on the Custer National Forest and National Grasslands?

Once adopted, the Forest Plan will replace all previous resource management plans, subject to existing rights, contracts, leases, and specific authorities for special areas such as those related to wilderness.

What is the duration of the Forest Plan, and can it be changed?

It will normally be revised every 10 years, but must be revised every 15 years. The Forest Plan can be changed either by amendment or revision. Reasons for changing will be to respond to changing needs and opportunities, Congressional land designations, catastrophic events, monitoring results, or major new management or production technology. The Forest Supervisor will follow amendment or revision procedures outlined in the National Forest Management Act and planning regulations (36 CFR Part 219.10(f)(g), which include public notification and involvement.

What is not being decided?

The Forest Plan contains general management direction but does not include projects or actions on specific sites. Site-specific environmental analysis will be done at the project level. This analysis will follow National Environmental Policy Act procedures. The Forest Plan does not address day-to-day management. For example, personnel matters, internal organization, and equipment and property management are not included.

It is important to note that the production levels projected in the Forest Plan for various resources are not the decision in and of themselves. Although all outputs in the Forest Plan can be accomplished from a physical, biological, economic, and legal perspective, the Forest Plan does not guarantee they will be accomplished. For instance, the projected average annual timber output is dependent upon several external factors beyond the scope of the Forest Plan. This volume is the allowable sale quantity, that is, the maximum volume of commercial timber that can be sold over the planning period. Timber imports, national housing starts, home mort-

gage rates and local demand for raw materials all have an influence on the timber volume that is actually sold. Similarly, the Forest Plan's projected deer population is dependent upon factors as diverse as hunting regulations and the verity of winter weather.

In this Record of Decision, I am not making recommendations for those portions of contiguous roadless areas located on adjacent Forests. Recommendations for these areas will be made in the Record of Decision for those National Forests.

II. MAJOR FEATURES OF THE FOREST

The lands of the Custer National Forest lie within 20 counties in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. They are scattered from the northeast corner of Yellowstone National Park in Park County, Montana, to Richland County in the southeastern corner of North Dakota. Distances involved are about 240 miles north-to-south and 650 miles east-to-west. Most of this area is farming and ranching country except for the Billings area, which is the largest metropolitan area in Montana. Most of the North and South Dakota portion of the Forest is composed of four National Grasslands created from land repurchased by the Federal government under the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act during the dustbowl days of the 1930's. The Montana portion and a small amount in northwestern South Dakota is land that was proclaimed National Forest directly from the Public Domain.

The eastern most District on the Forest is the Sheyenne National Grasslands. This land was deposited by the Sheyenne River as it flowed into ancient glacial Lake Agassiz. The area is composed of rolling sand dunes vegetated by tall grass prairie and contains the largest known population of greater prairie chickens in North Dakota. Elevation differences on the area are small. The North Country National

Scenic Trail crosses the Grasslands.

The Grand and Cedar Rivers National Grasslands are situated southwest of the Sheyenne National Grasslands. They are located in North and South Dakota and are composed of rolling prairie, some badlands, and river bottoms. The giant Canadian goose is common to this area which also offers hunting for sharptail grouse and deer.

The Little Missouri National Grasslands are Teddy Roosevelt country. They are located north and slightly west of the Grand and Cedar River National Grasslands. The two units that make up the Theodore Roosevelt National Park are located within the Grasslands. This area contains the largest free-roaming herd of elk in North Dakota as well as the only bighorn sheep. There are also excellent populations of sharptail grouse and numerous archeological sites. The Little Missouri National Grasslands support a number of cattle and provide an abundance of wildlife habitat. Currently, oil and gas production is approximately 14 million barrels of oil per year, the amount of oil used by the Nation in a day.

The Sioux Ranger District is located in Montana and South Dakota south and west of the Little Missouri National Grasslands. The District is composed of eight "islands" of Federal land and has often been described as "islands of green in a sea of brown prairie." This is an appropriate description as the Federal lands are hills, or mountains of ponderosa pine, sticking up out of rolling grasslands. The area offers excellent deer and turkey hunting, is rich in archeological sites, produces some oil, and supports a sizable livestock population. One of the largest populations of merlins (a small falcon) in North America occurs on the District. There are two National Landmarks on the District, the Castles and Capitol Rock. The Castles are a massive limestone rock uplift that resembles a medieval castle.

Capitol Rock is a massive white limestone uplift that resembles the Nation's Capitol building.

The Ashland Ranger District is located in south-central Montana and is west of the Sioux Ranger District. This district has the largest grazing program of any National Forest Ranger District in the Nation. The area is rich in coal and wildlife and is very popular with trophy deer hunters and turkey hunters. Some oil and gas activity has occurred but no producing wells have been found to date. The District offers a variety of topography varying from rolling grasslands to steep rocky outcrops. Vegetation varies from prairie to dense stands of ponderosa pine.

West of the Ashland Ranger District is the Beartooth Ranger District. Situated about 75 miles from Billings, Montana, it receives heavy recreation use. It is popular with deer, elk, and bighorn sheep hunters as well as fishermen. It also has Red Lodge Mountain Ski Resort. The Pryor Mountains are part of the Beartooth Ranger District and contain numerous caves, archeological sites, and a proposed wilderness area as well as a proposed Research Natural Area. They contain some very steep and difficult terrain formed from limestone. The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Territory is also located in this area. The wild horses are managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

The Beartooth Mountains, also on the Beartooth Ranger District, are located west of the Pryor Mountains. This portion of the Beartooth Ranger District joins the Gallatin and **Shoshone** Forests and Yellowstone National Park. This mountain range is a massive block of precambrian crystalline rock which includes the Stillwater Complex. A mine is currently being developed which contains the largest known platinum and chrome deposits and the second largest nickel deposits in the United States. The Beartooth Mountains are in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilder-

ness, which is located on the Custer, Shoshone and Gallatin National Forests.

III. THE RELATIONSHIP OF PEOPLE TO THE FOREST

The present Custer National Forest includes lands that, at one time or another, were in 15 Forest Reserves or earlier National Forests, plus four National Grasslands.

The lands, however, cannot be described without including their context with people; those who reside close by or those who have a tie -- be it financial or through the heart. The natural environment and people are not separate entities, but an integral part of life.

Settlement of the prairie in the late 1800's was primarily for agricultural purposes under the Homestead Act. By 1900 much of the native prairie land had been plowed and planted to agricultural crops. During the dustbowl days of the 1930's, extended drought and loss of fertility was causing crop failure and the plowed lands were blowing from the loss of protective cover. To correct this situation, the Federal government repurchased much of the submarginal croplands and established a grass cover once again on the lands. These lands were devoted to livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and prevention of soil erosion. The National Grasslands were created to provide management and to serve as areas demonstrating good grassland agriculture.

Settlement in the mountains saw the early trappers and fur traders give way to hardrock miners and associated timber operations. In the mid-1870's, the ranchers started moving into the area and began grazing livestock on the open range with little control. Few communities developed until after the railroads reached Montana Territory in 1881. The lands that became the present Custer National Forest were not on major rail lines.

Today, the Beartooth Ranger District is essentially a farming/ranching area, along with recreation attractions and continuing hardrock mineral activity. The Ashland and Sioux Districts are largely ranching areas with some timber harvesting. Considerable mineral leasing has occurred, but there is little production at this time.

On the prairie, the control of the lands was bitterly contested by the Indians for many years. Some early settlement occurred near the many frontier forts, but significant settlement came only as the railroads pushed across the northern Great Plains. Starting in 1871 from Fargo, North Dakota, near the Sheyenne District, it took 10 years for the rails to reach the Montana Territory line. The vicinity of the Grand River District in northwest South Dakota was the last to be settled. The railroad did not reach Lemmon, South Dakota, until 1907. Development of the Medora and McKenzie Districts of North Dakota kept pace with the building of the railroad.

Except for the final Indian Reservation lands, nearly all of western North Dakota and the northwest corner of South Dakota became public domain and then passed into private or corporate ownership between 1865 and 1920. The settlers on these lands were largely of northern European and Russian heritage, and brought with them the agricultural practices of their homelands and of the eastern and central United States. For many years, there was no recognition of the environmental limitations of the semi-arid prairie lands and of the arid badlands. The intensity of the traditional grazing and crop-raising practices that relied upon a humid climate was beyond the ability of the land to withstand. The accumulated effects of such practices from about 1910 to the early 1930's were disastrous. The land's condition deteriorated as a result of the combination of agricultural practices and se-

vere climatic and insect situations.

Under the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937, many thousands of acres were purchased by the Federal government. They were administered by various agencies and, when finally assigned to the Forest Service in 1953, were integrated into local private ranching operations by means of grazing associations.

Today the prairie is largely ranching land with limited crop-raising. A permit system with the grazing associations allows ranching operations across the intermingled public and private land. In extensive areas of the Little Missouri National Grasslands, and to a lesser extent in the Grand River/Cedar River National Grasslands, oil and gas exploration and production have boomed and now are a major part of the economy.

IV. A VISION OF THE FUTURE

The Forest Service vision of the Custer National Forest is of a Forest managed to benefit the public in harmony with the natural environment. Management direction responds to interested parties, to the affects on peoples lives and to the capability of the land. As Gilford Pinchot, founding father of the Forest Service, noted, "The challenge of the agency is to serve the people -- within that to provide the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run."

This challenge is still in the forefront today, but as we look over the past decades, we see that society's needs have varied over the years. The "Greatest Good" today is different than in the past. It is represented in the changing needs and demands of society. Forest Plan direction attempts to balance varied viewpoints but more importantly to minimize the affects on peoples lives while caring for the land.

The Forest visitor will encounter a mosaic of rolling grasslands and timber on the

Ashland and Sioux Ranger Districts in southeast Montana. On the North Dakota Grassland Districts the view will remain basically unchanged to the casual observer. The more sophisticated eye will notice some subtle changes in riparian areas which will be less heavily used by livestock, and the improving vegetative condition of the grasslands. Neither of these will be drastic changes that are readily apparent, but they will occur under the management direction contained in the Forest Plan. Vegetative cover will remain about the same as they are at present. Some timber will be harvested primarily to enhance other multiple-use values where vegetative manipulation is needed and to provide an opportunity for local employment. Livestock grazing will continue to be noticeable and a pastoral way of life will be predominate, particularly in the National Grasslands and the southeastern Montana portions of the Forest.

There will also be changes in the amount and visibility of oil and gas development throughout the Forest. While the number of oil and gas related facilities is expected to increase over time, the visibility of the developments will decrease as roads and drill pads are revegetated, blending back into the natural environment.

Special emphasis will continue to be focused on threatened and endangered species. The grizzly bear will continue to be of major concern in the Greater Yellowstone area. Peregrine falcons will inhabit the Beartooth Mountains and possibly the Pryor Mountains. The careful study and surveys to try to locate black-footed ferrets will also continue.

The condition of recreation facilities will improve as the funding for replacement and maintenance of facilities increases. Recreation use will continue to increase and there may be some changes in the visitor's preference for recreation opportunities. Through continued public involve-

ment, the Forest will monitor these desires and make adjustments as necessary. Areas will remain roadless to provide opportunities for dispersed non-motorized recreation. The Lost Water Canyon Area (5,812 acres) has been recommended to be added to the Wilderness Preservation System. The size of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness may increase by 6,000 acres.

The vision for the Custer National Forest assures a commitment to listen to the public and respond to its needs promptly, with courtesy and fairness. It envisions being good neighbors, working cooperatively, inviting the involvement of others, and extending recognition for accomplishments.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Notice of Intent to prepare a Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement was published in the Federal Register on March 19, 1981. The Custer National Forest began its public involvement for the Forest Plan by sending flyers to about 1,200 people on the Forest's mailing list. Public involvement was basic to the development of Forest Plan issues and alternatives. At the start of the planning process, all past planning input was reviewed to help define issues. Public mailings were made in May 1981 and various contacts were made with user groups to solicit input on what the issues were and what needed to be resolved through this planning effort.

Additional public involvement was initiated in September 1983 to aid in resolving the question of roadless designation. This became an issue because of the Ninth Circuit Court decision in October 1982 concerning roadless area evaluation (RARE II). This decision resulted in the revision of 36 CFR 219.17 that required the Forest to evaluate roadless areas in the Forest Planning process.

After the Draft Plan was released in April 1985 for public review, over thirty meetings were held around the Forest to discuss the plan with the public. Nearly 1,000 written comments were received.

More information about public involvement and issue development is found in Chapter VI and Appendix A of the Environmental Impact Statement.

The key issues and management concerns used in selecting the Forest Plan from the various alternatives are:

Issue Number 1: At what level of use and management intensity should livestock be managed on the Forest, considering public needs and demands for all resources?

Issue Number 2: In response to National demands for energy and strategic minerals, how can the Forest provide for mineral exploration and development while also providing for renewable resources?

Issue Number 3: What is the long-range need for low development areas, roadless areas, and wilderness, and how should they be managed?

Issue Number 4: How and where will the resource base, including riparian (stream-bank) zones and woody draws, be managed and protected for wildlife in view of competition from other resources?

Issue Number 5: What are the long-term needs for access, for the public and for resource management, and how should they be resolved?

Other management concerns are: size of the timber management program, recreation management, visual quality, and the ability of the Forest to meet public benefits with budget limitations.

VI. DECISION

My decision is to approve the implementation of Alternative 10 to guide the management of the Custer National Forest for the next ten to fifteen years. This alternative establishes a basis to resolve the issues identified on the Custer National Forest and, in my opinion, maximizes net public benefit. It is a change from current management direction, primarily in the degree of emphasis placed on management of the wildlife habitat, in the intensity of the grazing program, in the acreage to be managed without new roads, in how oil and gas development will be facilitated, and in the acreage recommended for wilderness classification.

Some of the major aspects of this decision are:

The decision on this Forest Plan speaks to many of the resources of the land. Underlying these decisions are some basic philosophies. Succinctly, I recognize people as a part of the environment and want the decision and direction to minimize disruption to people's lives and values. As well, I want to ensure a caring for the land and provide choices for future generations.

The Forest will maintain existing permitted livestock numbers (approximately 875,000 animal unit months per year) for the next ten to fifteen years. More intensive livestock management systems will be used than have been used in the past. This will result in improved vegetative conditions, enhanced habitat in riparian areas and woody draws, and improved wildlife habitat. Some adjustments in permitted livestock numbers will be required on a case-by-case basis.

I have identified the lands available for oil and gas leasing, lands available for leasing with No Surface Occupancy stipulations, and lands that I have identified where conditions lead to recommendations not to lease. Areas that are available for leasing using the stipulations identi-

fied in the Forest Plan are Management Areas A, B, D, E, G, R and T. Areas available for leasing with No Surface Occupancy stipulations are Management Areas F, L, M, N, O, P, Q, S and portions of C and J. In these areas, surface disturbance is in compatible with surface resource values. Areas where leasing is not compatible with long term goals are Management Areas H, I, K and portions of C and J. These areas are not accessible by directional drilling, and surface disturbance conflicts with the management area goals.

Leasing stipulations are identified in the Forest Plan by Management Area as well as on a Forest-wide basis. The application of these stipulations and the possible need for additional special stipulations will be determined by site specific analyses.

The Badlands and Rolling Prairie Unit plans of the Little Missouri National Grasslands, developed in the mid-1970's, identified thirteen "essentially roadless areas." Twelve of these were considered in the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II). A stipulation was incorporated into the leases issued in these essentially roadless areas which provided that if drilling had occurred, or that if production had not been established by a specific date (termed the cut-off date), there would be no further opportunity for surface occupancy (i.e., drilling) on that lease. Before the cut-off date was reached, many of these areas had been developed by oil and gas interests and no longer met the criteria as roadless areas. The status of these areas is found in Table 1. (All tables and figures are at the back of the document)

In the Little Missouri National Grasslands I have identified about 44,120 acres (Management Area J, Page 72 of the Forest Plan, Low Development Area status) that should not be developed for oil and gas. These lands have relatively low potential for oil and gas in comparison to

adjacent lands, and the ownership of the mineral estate, or the lease status, is such that the Forest Service has control of development. Woody draws and riparian areas (Management Areas M and N, pages 80 and 83, respectively, in the Forest Plan) are protected from mineral development by no-surface-occupancy stipulations wherever they occur. The Little Missouri Scenic River and the perimeter of the units of Theodore Roosevelt National Park have stipulations to protect the integrity of the area but allow for development where environmentally acceptable. In areas throughout, the Little Missouri National Grasslands, there are special stipulations to be used on a lease-by-lease basis. These "limited surface use" stipulations will be used where necessary to protect small pockets of wildlife habitat that are important to a variety of species.

"Low development areas" are areas that may or may not include roads but they are suitable for management without improved roads now and in the future. Of the 265,920 acres of inventoried roadless areas, approximately 114,700 acres (about 45 percent) will be managed in a generally roadless condition (low development areas) and 11,812 acres are recommended for wilderness. The disposition of these areas is displayed in Table 1. I have identified five areas in the Little Missouri National Grasslands in North Dakota (Lone Butte, Twin Buttes, Bennett-Cottonwood, Long-X Divide, and Horse Creek) and three on the Ashland Ranger District in Montana (Cook Mountain, King Mountain, and Tongue River Breaks) that are to be managed as low development areas. Existing roads will be left as they are. Ranchers and recreationists will be able to use these roads when weather permits, but additional roads are not planned. The Bennett-Cottonwood area is currently the focus of a study analyzing the effects of intensive oil and gas development that is contingent on valid existing rights.

I have developed specific management area direction for wildlife habitat areas (Management Area D, page 53 in the Forest Plan) to protect their integrity and the unique values they contain. Management Area D totals 301,044 acres.

Woody draws and riparian areas are important for both livestock and wildlife. These areas are included in Management Areas M and N. The guidelines for these management areas assure the protection of water quality and wildlife habitat.

Management Area C (Forest Plan page 49) is designed to protect wildlife habitat for specific species throughout the Forest. As an example, in North Dakota, bighorn sheep habitat and elk habitat are included in this management area. Management Area C totals 71,189 acres.

Grizzly bear habitat (Management Situation I and II) that is not within the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness is in Management Area C (Forest Plan page 49). Habitat for other threatened and endangered species has not been identified to date except that some potential hack sites for peregrine falcon have been recently inventoried. Hack sites are those locations where peregrines may be reintroduced and usually consist of a wooden box that is attached to the cliff. The young birds are placed in this box and fed until they are ready to fly. There is no habitat for other threatened or endangered species on the Forest that is known to be occupied. If a threatened or endangered species is located, the habitat necessary for it to survive will be identified and protected under the terms of the Threatened and Endangered Species Act.

We consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on threatened and endangered species and received the opinion that the proposed action would not jeopardize the grizzly bear, black-footed ferret, piping plover, interior least tern, gray

wolf, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and whooping crane. Of these species, the grizzly bear is the only one that has been associated with a specific area. Species that migrate may use portions of the Forest periodically. Efforts are made to identify these areas, if they do in fact exist. No specific management direction is identified except the general direction that is located in the wildlife section of the Management Plan (pages 16 thru 21).

Areas of big game winter range are generally included in Management Area D. The direction for this area allows other resource activities to occur but provides for protection of wildlife habitat. To maintain good thermal and hiding cover in this management area, uneven-aged timber harvest will be designed to maintain a variety of age classes in each stand.

In response to the issue of access to and within the Forest, I have developed guidelines for managing the Forest's road system. I have also directed the Forest Supervisor to develop a rights-of-way acquisition list for the Forest, following approval of the Forest Plan. The guidelines in the Forest Plan, in conjunction with continual refinement of the transportation plan, will identify needed access and management needs of existing roads and trails such as permanent closures, seasonal restrictions, and restrictions on certain types of vehicles.

The timber harvest program is composed of 3.0 MMBF of green, and recently dead, sawtimber and 0.5 MMBF as non-interchangeable component of other forest products such as firewood. This level of harvest exceeds the volume of timber that has traditionally been harvested by those mills that are located on or adjacent to the Forest. Mills that are not located close to the Forest may also compete for this timber.

I have decided to continue the high emphasis on management of the dispersed

recreation program as well as try to maintain or improve the opportunity for developed recreation. Maintenance of developed recreation sites will be increased if sufficient funding is received. If not, those sites that receive very light use will either be closed, or the season of use shortened, to allow for adequate maintenance of the more heavily used sites.

A segment of North Country National Scenic Trail will be built on the Sheyenne National Grasslands. This National Scenic Trail will add a new dimension to the recreation opportunities in North Dakota. This program has been coordinated with other State and Federal agencies and will also provide access to adjacent State Parks. There is little construction to be done, but the trail will be marked on the ground and gates provided as needed.

Two canoe launch sites are planned on the Sheyenne River. Seasonal and permanent road closures will be used to provide for dispersed recreation opportunities. Additional wilderness and low development areas will provide increased opportunities for dispersed recreation.

Management area direction in the Forest Plan provides for the protection of the scenic value of the Forest and is designed to improve the visual quality of the Forest over time.

Currently, there are two Research Natural Areas on the Forest: Poker Jim on the Ashland Ranger District and Two Top-Big Top on the Medora Ranger District. Two additional areas are proposed: the Limber Pine Outlier and Lost Water Canyon.

Existing Research Natural Areas:

Poker Jim contains the following habitat types available in an undisturbed condition for future study. *Pinus ponderosa*/*Agropyron spicatum*, *Pinus ponderosa*/*Symphoricarpus albus*, *Pinus ponderosa*/*Prunus virginiana*, *Agropyron spicatum*/*Agropyron smithii*, and *Festuca idahoensis*/*Agropyron smithii*.

Two Top-Big Top is a relic prairie ecosystem dominated by western wheatgrass, needle-and-thread grass, and big sage.

Proposed Research Natural Areas:

Limber Pine Outlier is an island of limber pine and is the easternmost known extension of limber pine.

Lost Water Canyon is known to contain the following habitat types: *Pseudotsuga menziesii* *Festuca idahoensis*, *Pseudotsuga menziesii* *Physocarpus malvaceus*, *Pseudotsuga menziesii* *Carex geyerii*, *Abies lasiocarpa* *Clematis pseudoalpiny*, *Abies lasiocarpa* *Ribes montigenum*, and type one streams.

Candidate Research Natural Areas: (areas needing more evaluation)

Red Lodge Plateau contains a number of alpine types.

Upper Hellroaring Creek contains a number of features for further consideration such as: alpine types, temporary ponds, low production potential lakes, lakes with fish, lakes without fish, and bog meadows.

White Rock Spring area contains beaver ponds.

Deer Reservoir area contains special faunal populations and representative ponderosa pine grasslands.

Possible Special Interest Areas in North

Dakota:

Black Cottonwood Stand contains a unique species in North Dakota.

Bullion Butte Escarpment, this unique area needs further evaluation.

Burning Coal Vein Natural Area features columnar juniper.

Denbigh Experimental Forest may be a possible Research Natural Area but has not been evaluated.

Ice Caves Geologic Area is one of the few known in North Dakota.

Segments of four streams meet the eligibility criteria for potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. The streams are the Little Missouri River in North Dakota and Rock Creek, the West Fork of Rock Creek, and the Stillwater River in Montana. With the exception of the Little Missouri River, a separate suitability study will be completed at a later date for each river segment or group of river segments.

The State of North Dakota has classified and manages a 274-mile segment of the Little Missouri River as the "Little Missouri State Scenic River." About 80 miles of the river, or 29 percent of this segment, borders National Forest System (NFS) lands. The Forest Plan management standards for adjacent NFS lands are compatible with the "Scenic River" objectives. The Forest Service will cooperate on any suitability studies for the Little Missouri River initiated by the State of North Dakota.

The Forest Plan management standards (Forest Plan pages 13-14) and Management Area prescriptions (Forest Plan pages; 53-63, 67-68, 91-93, and 98-99) provide protection of eligible river segments until a future decision is made on possible Wild and Scenic River designation.

VII. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

No single factor or individual consideration constitutes the total rationale for my decision. Instead, it was the consideration of many factors and their interrelationships, described below and in the Environmental Impact Statement, that led to this decision. I considered factors such as public comments, resource potential and interrelationships, cost effectiveness, social and economic stability, environmental quality, and compatibility with goals of other public agencies and Indian tribes.

In making this decision, I recognize the limitations of the physical and biological systems, and that the Custer National Forest cannot satisfy every individual or group. Of critical importance is to minimize disruption to people's lives and values. By this I mean to contribute to a predictable, orderly, and manageable rate of change in the local communities. Any significant short-run changes caused by this decision would be viewed as undesirable. This **knowledge** allows community leaders, businesses, and people sufficient time to react to those changes.

While the Forest Plan is a decision which shapes and affects communities and people, other factors are also at play. Variables include national supply and demand, changes in preferences, and social changes within communities close to home as well as nationally and world-wide.

In caring for the land and ensuring choices in the future, I recognize the interconnectedness of all resources. This awareness is particularly key in determining a reasonable balance.

Public issues and management concerns have shaped a course for the future. The Forest Plan will move us forward with a

direction that continues to provide benefits and a backdrop for people's lives. The Forest planning effort is one that is based on a long term perspective, however, it is flexible to examine public issues and concerns as they arise over time.

A. Response to Issues and Concerns

One of the major reasons for selecting an alternative is how well it responds to public issues and management concerns.

1. Livestock Management

The proposed action in the draft Forest Plan recommended increasing the permitted number of animal unit months, but public response did not support this. Some would like to see the number of cattle reduced on the Forest. Others felt that the present number is about right.

I have decided to maintain approximately 875,000 animal unit months per year on the Forest. The National Grasslands were acquired under the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act and provide for the livelihood of many ranchers.

The level and intensity of grazing on the Forest is a crucial issue, and the public expressed a strong concern for the condition of the rangelands. Not only the number of livestock, but the intensity of grazing, has significant impacts on several resources and uses that are important to many people. There will be intensive range management practices on 110,900 acres. I believe the past economic, climatic and environmental conditions point out that this is not the time to consider increasing livestock numbers.

I recognize the fact that we have been in a serious drought situation for the past few years and that this has added to the public concern. Some ranges are not in as good condition as we would like, and adjustments in permitted livestock numbers

will continue to be made on a case-by-case basis to resolve this problem. Rangelands that were not in good vegetative condition before the drought have deteriorated, and even after a relatively good year for precipitation, are not responding. Some of the areas that are in the poorest condition will be very slow to recover, and cattle management systems will be modified to allow these ranges to improve. The Forest has the potential of supporting more livestock under optimal weather conditions. If we stock at a higher level, however, and then encounter another drought, we could damage rangelands.

By moving toward more intensive management of permitted livestock, vegetative conditions will improve and this will contribute to improved wildlife habitat. Many ranchers are breeding for larger cattle and this trend is expected to continue. This allows ranchers to own about the same number of cattle as in the past but produce more pounds of beef. This increases the return on their investment in cattle without increasing the cost of grazing fees. To date this trend has not created any significant or measurable effect on the environment.

I feel strongly about this issue and recognize the importance of the rangelands to many segments of society. We want to maintain our rangelands in fair or good condition with an eye to improving them, while dealing with the uncertainty of climatic conditions as well as insect infestations. I am committed to multiple-use management, while maintaining a stable number of cattle on the range.

2. Minerals Utilization

The Concern: This issue involves many divergent needs, demands, and opinions. Many North Dakotans who responded to the draft Forest Plan do not want to see oil and gas development spread into ad-

ditional areas. There was also a considerable amount of input from those who do not think oil and gas development is appropriate on National Forest lands or on the National Grasslands. And there are still others who feel all Federal lands should be available for exploration and development.

Many respondents stated they opposed oil and gas development because of the impact on the open space and the tranquil nature of the area. Most of the grasslands currently contain a few low-standard roads, and the development of oil and gas results in a proliferation of roads and activities by man.

Through Forest Planning, these resource uses were analyzed to determine which uses were compatible on various areas. In addressing the oil and gas issue, I considered how much land will not be available in order to protect other resource values and how this affects the Forest's ability to provide for the development of the oil and gas resource. Previous unit plans defined essentially roadless areas that were to be maintained in their present condition. Many of these areas have been developed for oil and gas as they were leased, and several contained privately owned minerals under Federally owned surfaces where the owners of these minerals have a legal right to develop their holdings. Most of the lands administered by the Custer National Forest, with the exception of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, are leased or have been leased in the past.

North Dakota has only a small amount of land in public ownership. There is an increasing demand for areas in an undisturbed condition. In addition, the national demand for oil and gas has been increasing for the past 50 years. This same increase in demands from a fixed land base is also occurring on other portions of the Forest, but the Little Missouri National Grasslands is the area of greatest con-

flict between oil and gas and open space at this time.

The analysis process: Oil and gas were integrated into the design of management prescriptions along with other resources as identified in Appendix B of the EIS. The integration of oil and gas allowed for the consideration of a wide range of scenarios for oil and gas development in relation to other resources from prescriptions not to lease to prescriptions for full field development with stipulations (EIS p. 178). These scenarios are further discussed in Appendix B Table B-3.

Prescriptions used in the Forest model include the interrelationships of oil and gas development with other resources. These prescriptions were developed on an ecosystem by ecosystem basis to reflect the changes in relationships by ecosystem. By identifying these interrelationships by prescription on an ecosystem basis, it was possible to determine the cumulative effects of oil and gas development on a Forest-wide basis. This also allows for cumulative effects analysis on an area by area basis if needed in the future. Prescriptions were integrated through the Forest model and environmental effects disclosed in the EIS at the Forest level. Reference EIS (pages 127-131) for an explanation of the existing situation as it relates to minerals and EIS (pages 178-191) for an outline of the mineral activity effects.

The effects of oil and gas development on other resources, which were important in my decision, are discussed in the paragraphs which follow.

The construction of roads and drill pads for oil and gas development reduces the amount of forage available for livestock grazing because lands are taken out of production. This potential reduction in livestock grazing is included in the Forest Planning model. Under full development for oil and gas, the maximum reduction

in grazing capacity is five percent (Planning Records, Grazing yield table description). The loss of forage due to oil and gas development is offset in many alternatives by placing more acres under intensive livestock management. The changes in potential grazing capacity are displayed in the EIS, Table IV-25, page 192. The total miles of road are also increased over the amount needed for management of the surface resources (EIS Table IV-29, page 197).

Oil and gas development also affects wildlife habitats. The results of a "full field development scenario" are discussed in the EIS, pages 186-187. As pointed out in this discussion, "full field development" occurs only on a small portion of any one area because of the localized nature of oil and gas reservoirs. The cumulative effects of oil and gas production on deer by alternative are displayed in the EIS, Table 11-6, page 50. As stated in the EIS, under full field development the reduction of deer numbers could be up to 40 percent for a small area. The potential cumulative impact on deer is minimized overall by providing mitigation measures (stipulations) that protect key deer habitat areas throughout the Forest. As an additional mitigating measure, several key mule deer habitat areas are included in management areas that prohibit or limit gas and oil development.

The EIS, Table IV-23, page 186, displays the Existing Visual Condition, Class 4 (EVC-4), or disturbed class. This table reflects the cumulative impacts of oil and gas and other activities on the visual condition of the Forest. Oil and gas development result in a reduction of the visual quality of the Forest during the development stage. The period of recovery back to a near predevelopment condition is relatively short due to mitigation measures such as requiring painting of facilities and reclamation of roads and drill pads. Much of the difference between acres in EVC-4 when comparing Alternatives 10, and Max PNV in the EIS, Table IV-23, page 186, is due to the required mitigation measures which protect the scenic values.

tive 10, and Max PNV in the EIS, Table IV-23, page 186, is due to the required mitigation measures which protect the scenic values.

The reason: Management Areas A, B, D, E, G, R, and T are available for leasing using the stipulations listed in the Forest Plan as a minimum. These areas can be developed to help fulfill the Nation's need for oil and gas without seriously conflicting with other resource values. As leases are reviewed and additional analysis completed, stipulations, in addition to those listed by Management Area, may be added as necessary to protect surface resources.

Management Areas F, L, M, N, O, P, Q, S and portions of C and J are available for leasing for oil and gas development with No Surface Occupancy stipulations. Several exceptions are discussed in the following paragraph. The core, or that area not accessible by directional drilling in Management Areas C and J, is not recommended for leasing at this time and may be considered for withdrawal at a later date. In general, these management areas contain surface resource values that could be irreparably damaged by the impacts of oil and gas development. Some of these areas have a high potential for oil and gas and, therefore, should be available for leasing based on their oil and gas value. However, because of the high surface values, on-site development is not practical. To make as much of the oil and gas available, but still protect other values, these lands are available for leasing, but on-site facilities will be prohibited by applying a No Surface Occupancy stipulation.

Areas where leasing is not compatible with long-term goals are Management Areas H, I, K and portions of C, and J. All of these Management Areas contain unique values and the management objectives are not compatible with oil and gas development. However, leasing may be required

to protect the Federal mineral estate or for other reasons.

Management Area C contains key wildlife habitat for elk, bighorn sheep, raptors, and grizzly bears. Management Area J is managed to provide an opportunity for dispersed recreation and protect some "open space" free of man's activities. It also contains some of the best mule deer habitat in North Dakota. Excluding oil and gas, development will protect this wildlife habitat for mule deer and other wildlife species. Management Area H is recommended wilderness and Management Area I is existing wilderness.

Management Area K is used for Indian religious activities. Oil and gas development has occurred around the perimeter of this area. Oil and gas development is not compatible during periods of use for religious practices and timing restrictions provide this protection. Under ideal conditions, oil and gas development would not be permitted. However, many of the leases which extend into Management Area K contain producing wells outside of this management area. This means that those portions of the leases within Management Area K cannot be terminated, and future oil and gas development is still possible.

Five areas in the Little Missouri National Grasslands do not contain many existing leases. Most of the minerals are owned by the Government and they contain few improved roads. These areas are included in Management Area J and will be managed as low development areas. They are Lone Butte, Bennett-Cottonwood, Long-X Divide, Twin Buttes, and Horse Creek. Based on further analysis, the perimeter (areas accessible by directional drilling) of these areas may be considered for leasing with a no-surface-occupancy stipulation to protect the Federal mineral estate. The central portions, not accessible by directional drilling, will be considered for withdrawal from mineral entry.

It is important to note that portions of the Bennett-Cottonwood area have private mineral rights or are subject to the terms of existing Federal leases. If private parties or **lessees** exercise their rights here, it may not be possible to maintain the roadless character of the entire area.

For leasing in the future, my recommendation or consent decision to lease, not recommend leasing, or lease with specific stipulations will be based upon the findings of site-specific analysis and consistency with the Forest Plan.

3. Low Development and Wilderness Resources

This issue generated more response from the public than all other issues combined. It overlaps into other issues, especially oil and gas development. Several segments of the public feel oil and gas development is inappropriate in the Little Missouri National Grasslands. Many oil fields exist in the area at this time and their size and number is expanding. Most of the lands on the Little Missouri National Grasslands are currently leased. Most of these leases are available for development although there are some that contain no-surface-occupancy stipulations that prohibit development. Some of the essentially roadless areas that were identified through previous unit planning have been impacted by oil and gas interests. Others have lost some roadless acres, and others are essentially intact. The status of the various areas is discussed in the following section on a state-by-state basis. For more information on the status of these areas, refer to pages 46-47 of the Environmental Impact Statement.

a. North Dakota

In this State, the issue centers on the Little Missouri National Grasslands. The unit plans that were developed in the mid-1970's identified 13 essentially roadless areas (ERA's).

In the Rolling Prairie and Badlands Unit Plans, 13 essentially roadless areas were established; only 12 of these were included in RARE II and other roadless inventories. It was recognized that these Essentially Roadless Areas, as they were labeled in the Unit Plans, included both Federal and private mineral leases that could be developed. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, the oil development activities accelerated and most of the 13 areas were partially or heavily developed. The Bennie-Pierre area was identified in the Unit plan but was not included in the RARE II inventory. This area has been altered by oil and gas development and is not considered in the following discussions. Input to the draft Forest Plan showed there was strong public support for protection of these areas from development by oil and gas. People's concerns varied; some indicating little support for retaining the designations, others feeling all areas should be classified wilderness. Public review of the draft indicated a new and growing interest in wilderness classification and protection of the remaining roadless areas in North Dakota.

Unit plans for the Little Missouri National Grasslands established areas where development would be limited and the open space character of the land retained. Since that time, some activities with existing legal authority (primarily oil leases) have taken place and the status of the areas in North Dakota has been altered. Additionally, the reevaluation of roadless areas in 1983 made it necessary to look again at recommended wilderness areas. Table 2 displays the disposition of these areas in North Dakota.

(1). Wilderness: (Management Area H)

At the present time, there is no classified wilderness in North Dakota administered by the Custer National Forest. Parts of both portions of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park that lie within the admin-

istrative boundaries of the Little Missouri National Grasslands do contain classified wilderness. The issue of wilderness in North Dakota did not arise until the draft Forest Plan was circulated for public review. Some people felt that wilderness in the National Grasslands was inappropriate, too constraining, or too difficult to manage in light of the many long-established uses now occurring. Others felt that some areas needed to be protected from oil and gas development and that wilderness classification is the only way to provide that protection.

In the Forest Plan, I do not recommend wilderness classification for any land within the National Grasslands. Considerations were: (1) the close integration of Federal and private lands in the National Grasslands is unique and necessary to demonstrate sound grazing practices as required by the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act; (2) oil and gas resources of potentially high value exist there, private minerals under public lands in many areas, and many areas are already leased; (3) intensive livestock management is needed in many areas, necessitating the continued use of motorized equipment.

(2). Low Development Areas: (Management Area J)

While recognizing the reality of oil and gas development and mineral potential in western North Dakota, I have selected five areas to be managed as low development areas. They have few if any improved roads. Intensive livestock management systems may be implemented in these areas. The intent of management is to retain their general undeveloped nature, preserve their scenic values, provide opportunities for dispersed recreation, and retain their feeling of "open space."

(a). Long-X Divide: (9,760 acres)

Long-X Divide is in McKenzie County, west of U.S. 85 (see below). The area has an outstanding badlands-type of topography and is highly scenic. It was not included in the 1983 roadless inventory because it has a road through much of it. In response to the public's desire for more lands to be managed as low development areas, this area was added. Because existing oil and gas leases have expired and not been reissued, apparent low mineral potential, and its proximity to the Park, it appears that it is an area that we can manage for its open space and undeveloped character. This area adjoins the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. This portion of the park is classified wilderness and low development area management will provide for more dispersed recreation use. Long-X Divide does contain some low standard roads, one of which is in relatively good condition. These roads will remain open to public use and are not expected to detract from the open space values this area has to offer.

(b). Horse Creek: (7,800 acres)

Horse Creek contains rolling prairie and is in McKenzie County, north of Highway 68 near Sather Dam. Part of this area was examined in the 1983 roadless inventory and because of recent oil and gas development this part no longer meets the criteria for a "roadless" area. The remainder of the area is accessible by a single-lane dirt road and several trails. No successful oil or gas development has occurred here and most leases have expired. The area contains a good example of rolling prairie topography and associated vegetative types. Lease status, apparent low oil and gas potential, and the rolling prairie habitat types made it appropriate for management as a low development area. Because of existing roads and the lack of unique scenery and distinct topography,

it was not considered suitable for wilderness classification.

(c). Twin Buttes (8,000 acres)

Twin Buttes lies in Golden Valley County, north of Interstate 94. It was recommended for wilderness classification by RARE II and contains a variety of topographic and vegetative types, as well as limited badland scenery. The Forest received strong public support for classification of this area for wilderness or retaining it as a roadless area. Wilderness classification would prohibit the opportunity to initiate intensive livestock management systems that often require more water and fence development. Permittees now use motorized vehicles to accomplish many range management tasks and I feel the area can provide the values the public wants by being managed as a low development area without the conflicts that could result if it were classified as wilderness. The Wilderness Act speaks directly to areas "untrammelled by man" and this does not seem to me to be compatible with chemical treatment by motorized vehicle or the use of motorized vehicles to do normal livestock management tasks. Oil and gas development will not be recommended. The perimeter will be considered for leasing with a no-surface occupancy stipulation and the remainder of the area will be considered for mineral withdrawal.

(d). Bennett-Cottonwood: (11,840 acres)

Bennett-Cottonwood is located a few miles south of the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. It is adjacent to an area to be managed with emphasis on bighorn sheep. Although Bennett-Cottonwood is recommended for management as a low development area, it may see a considerable amount of development because of some active oil leases and some privately owned minerals under the Federally owned surface. I feel strongly, however, that because of the topography and the scenic values, this area has a lot to offer in the long term by being managed as a low development area. Although new wells are being established, I will try to manage the area to retain its high wildlife values and the opportunity for dispersed non-motorized recreation.

(e). Lone Butte: (6,720 acres)

Lone Butte is located on the east side of the McKenzie Ranger District. The area is "C" shaped and surrounds an area that is to be managed with emphasis on bighorn sheep. The area contains some outstanding badlands topography. It is recommended for management as a low development area because existing lease status and mineral ownership are controlled by the government and it appears that it has relatively low oil and gas potential. It is not suitable for wilderness classification as most of it is only one mile wide.

(3). Other Roadless Areas:

The disposition of roadless areas, or parts of roadless areas not discussed under the previous two sections, are shown in Table 3. For specific direction for these areas refer, to the Forest Plan.

b. Montana:

In Montana, the public interest for wilderness areas runs high. Much of the interest centers on the Beartooth Ranger District. It is an area of heavy public recreation use and is especially important to users from the Billings metropolitan area. The spectacular Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness is a key feature. I was urged by some respondents to expand the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness to include all areas from the RARE II inventory. There was not much said about roadless or low development designations. The issue centered on classified wilderness.

The unit plan for the Ashland Ranger District established three areas where development would be limited and the open space character of the land retained. The roadless integrity of these areas has been maintained and they will continue to be managed without roads. Table 4 is a display of the status of the various areas in Montana. Following is a discussion of how the areas are to be managed.

(1). Wilderness: (Management Area H)

My proposal for Montana is to recommend 5,812 acres of the Lost Water Canyon area for wilderness classification and to recommend adding about 6,000 acres to the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. The remaining roadless areas are assigned to a variety of management strategies. Some of these will remain roadless, not through direct management direction but because of topographic constraints.

This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Final decisions on wilderness designation have been reserved by Congress to itself. This is only a recommendation and as such is not appealable under 36 CFR 211.18.

The recommendations for the areas adjacent to the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness will improve the boundary location to facilitate administration and were supported by public comments. This will add about 6,000 acres to the existing wilderness. These lands are in the following areas: Burnt Mountain (01364) - 4,200 acres, Timberline Creek (01363) 800 acres, Mystic Lake (01366) - 500 acres, and Montana-Wyoming State line - 500 acres. Although some urged me to make larger additions, I have determined that this will add little if anything to the carrying capacity for recreation or quality of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. The existing wilderness already contains the most spectacular scenery of the area and most of the use occurs around lakes and major streams already included in the wilderness.

Lost Water Canyon (01362), which consists of 5,812 acres in the Pryor Mountains, is recommended for wilderness. It was selected through the RARE II process and my decision concurs with the strong public support for that area. I have reduced the size of the area from that recommended in RARE II from about 9,000 acres to 5,812 acres. The eastern half of the original area comprises a portion of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range which is administered by the Bureau of Land Management. This part of the Lost Water Canyon area is not recommended for wilderness since this designation would conflict somewhat with wild horse management practices such as aerial roundups. I recommend interchanging the wild horse territory to the Bureau of Land Management since that agency is responsible by law for the management of wild horses.

Line Creek Plateau in the Beartooth Mountains received general public support for wilderness classification. This area is east of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, separated from it by the

Beartooth Highway and adjacent to the Montana-Wyoming border. Wyoming passed a wilderness bill that added an area south of the Montana-Wyoming border to the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, but the area adjacent to Line Creek Plateau was not included nor given any special consideration for future roadless management. This area contains both key wildlife habitat for elk and bighorn sheep and important mineral potential. The Forest Plan provides a combination of management areas C and D for the area, with direction placing high emphasis on protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat. I feel that placing this area in a management area that provides more options for improving wildlife habitat is more appropriate than recommending the area for wilderness classification. If mineral development does occur, and much of the area is currently leased for oil and gas, it can be accommodated by special requirements that will continue to protect wildlife habitat and still permit development of mineral values. A wilderness classification would not allow this.

(2). Low Development Areas: (Management Area J)

I have decided to manage three areas on the Ashland Ranger District as low development areas. These areas were identified as Riding and Hiking areas in the Ashland Unit Plan and are well suited to this use.

Cook Mountain (11,700 acres), Tongue River Breaks (16,600 acres), and King Mountain (11,700 acres) are to be managed as low development areas. In the past there has been strong local opposition to classification of these areas for wilderness. Tongue River Breaks was recommended for wilderness by RARE II and the Unit Plan supported this recommendation. However, the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Act, 1983, released the area from wilderness consideration.

(3). Other Roadless Areas:

The remaining roadless areas are shown in Table 5 and are all on the Beartooth Ranger District. They are assigned to a variety of management strategies. Important wildlife habitat areas, such as big game winter ranges, are assigned to management areas that place emphasis on wildlife habitat. The topography in many of these areas will limit or preclude development. Roads to facilitate management of the surface resources will generally not be constructed, but oil and gas development and related road building, is possible on portions of the areas.

c. South Dakota:

The National Forest and National Grasslands administered by the Custer National Forest in South Dakota have roads but they are lightly used and developed. No areas meet the criteria for roadless consideration. No lands administered by the Custer National Forest in South Dakota are suitable for management as low development areas or as wilderness.

4. Riparian and Woody Draw Management

The number of people that commented on riparian areas and woody draws was not large but the content of their input was significant. They recognize the need to protect the wildlife habitat these areas contain and also their contribution to protection of water quality. Grazing by livestock is the major concern addressed in public input as it relates to riparian areas and woody draws. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department contributed a significant amount of information relating to woody draws and riparian areas.

Riparian areas and woody draws are of importance and interest because of the wildlife habitat they contain and their contribution to protecting water quality.

Riparian areas are specifically addressed in Executive Order 11988, having to do with floodplain management; Executive Order 11990, dealing with the protection of wetlands; and the National Forest Management Act of 1976. Input to the draft Forest Plan emphasized the importance of these areas, and I recognize the amount of concern for them. They are very limited in size in many parts of the Forest and deserve special consideration.

The Forest Plan establishes two management areas that contain specific direction for riparian areas and woody draws. Management area M (Forest Plan page 80) includes the riparian ecosystem throughout the Forest and provides for healthy, self-perpetuating plant and water communities. Motorized use and road construction are restricted and livestock use is directed away from these areas. The woody draws, Management Area N (Forest Plan page 83), have similar restrictions recognizing the general lack of surface water and high water tables. Both areas have restrictive oil leasing stipulations and development standards. We received strong public support for protection of these areas. Some voiced concern that we were proposing massive fencing of woody draws and riparian areas, but this is not the intent.

5. Forest Access Management

One segment of the public is asking for more legal public access to and within the Forest, and another is saying we already have too much access within the Forest. While these are not necessarily opposing views, I have provided a process to identify and acquire needed access and more specific language on existing road, trail management and road standards in the Forest Plan. I developed a Forest Transportation Inventory (a part of the Planning Record) that identifies major road networks to access the Forest. This inventory displays arterial and collector roads but not local roads. Arterials are the main

roads, collectors are the side roads that join the local roads with the arterials. The Forest Plan also provides direction to seek a point of legal public access for every five miles of Forest boundary. Not all of these access points will be for motorized travel; some may be only trail access. The management of timber and oil and gas will also provide for additional access points in the future. The details of exactly where a new road will go is a concern to some people and will be determined as we plan individual projects. We know that we cannot afford to maintain all the roads that may be constructed over time.

In implementing the Forest Plan, we will develop guidelines that will address the use of specific roads and areas and where seasonal or yearlong road closures will be in effect. Development of these travel guidelines will require input from the public as well as the use of direction from the Forest Plan.

6. Other Concerns

In addition to the protection of riparian areas and woody draws, the Forest Plan contains a number of other factors to enhance or protect wildlife values. In the Little Missouri National Grasslands, significant areas of big game habitat are assigned to Management Area C (Forest Plan, page 49), which provides for the protection of bighorn sheep, elk, and mule deer. These areas, in conjunction with those to be managed on a low development basis, will assure security for these animals. On the Beartooth Ranger District, one of the management areas is to protect Management Situations I and II, grizzly bear habitat. On the Sioux and Ashland Ranger Districts, considerable acreage is assigned to Management Area C to assure protection of wildlife values.

Management Area D (Forest Plan, page 53) is also found throughout the Forest and places high priority on protection of

wildlife habitat. It contains a significant amount of timber. Uneven-aged timber harvesting techniques will be more common in this management area to provide security cover and thermal cover for wildlife.

The public in their review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement raised questions about the timber supply and what effect changes in demand would have on the Preferred Alternative. New information became available after the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was printed from "Montana's Timber Supply: An Inquiry into Possible Futures", USDA, Forest Service Resource Bulletin, INT-40.

Statewide projections indicate an increase in demand and reduced supplies from private industrial owned lands. When the Statewide information is disaggregated on a market share basis, the potential demand for Custer National Forest timber may be as high as 5 MMBF per year in 1990 and 7 MMBF per year by 2030.

During the period 1976 to 1986, the Forest sold an average of 2.0 MMBF per year. The draft Forest Plan proposed an annual harvest program of 4.0 MMBF. The public in their comments on the draft Forest Plan questioned this level of harvest. In response, the final Forest Plan identifies a harvest level of 3.0 MMBF for green and recently dead sawtimber and 0.5 MMBF as a noninterchangeable component of firewood and other miscellaneous products. This volume is adequate to meet anticipated local traditional mill demands and not adversely impact the critical white-tailed deer habitat in southeastern Montana. If demand increases, there is an opportunity to provide an additional harvest of 0.5 MMBF through an amendment of the Forest Plan.

Further analysis was done on the amount of suitable timber acres in the Preferred

Alternative. The results are shown in Table 6. Timber Resource Land Suitability. Figure 1 provides the definitions for the terminology used in the Timber Resource Land Suitability Table. Tentatively suitable timber lands are identified in Section II of Appendix B in the FEIS. Table 6 displays acres, classified as "Not Suited" and "Tentatively Suitable". Tentatively Suitable acres are further separated into "Suitable" and "Tentatively Not Suited". Under the suitable category, the total acres were separated into three additional categories. The analysis indicates there are no tentatively suitable lands on the Custer Forest where direct benefit exceeds direct cost even without considering the associated road costs. The projected returns for the timber are far below the anticipated operating costs because of low volumes per acres, small product size and long log haul distances.

There are 45,515 suitable acres to meet non-timber, multiple-use objectives. Timber harvest is proposed as a tool to maintain or create the necessary vegetative diversity and stand conditions to maintain and provide adequate thermal and security cover for white-tail deer. From these acres the Allowable Sale Quantity is 0.9 MMBF per year average for the first decade. This volume included 0.5 MMBF per year of the non-interchangeable component that will be removed as firewood and other miscellaneous products.

The other 26,845 acres of suitable acres are assigned to timber management to provide opportunities for local jobs. The timber from these lands is used to support three local mills which provide local employment and income to the communities of Bridger and Ashland, Montana and Camp Crook, South Dakota. The Allowable Sale Quantity from these lands averages 2.6 MMBF per year for the first decade.

About 15,000 acres of land in the category "Tentatively Not Suited", and under

the item, "Lands Not Cost Efficient to Meet Objectives - Future Timber Production Possible", lie within ecological settings that are sensitive to timber management activities. In the Pryor Mountains, on the Beartooth Ranger District, there are large blocks of Douglas-fir with large interspersed parks that are bisected by steep limestone formations called palisades. On the grasslands and low hills of the Ashland Ranger District, the ponderosa pine acres in this item tend to be small patches scattered throughout the Ranger District. Significantly higher costs occur to access and operate on these areas. If demand **developes**, there is an opportunity to increase the harvest by 0.5 MMBF per year through amendment of the Forest Plan. While identified as an opportunity, no change is proposed in the Preferred Alternative because of the very high timber prices that would be required before these lands would become economically suitable.

There are 61,671 acres that are "Tentatively Not Suited" because of the high cost of harvesting timber on them and their value for "other uses". The loss to the Government for timber harvest on these lands varies from \$200 to \$500 per acre not including the cost of roading. Much of this acreage is small isolated stands of timber that are important cover for wildlife and livestock. In some areas these stands are interspersed among limestone palisades that make access very difficult. Part of this acreage is in roadless areas on the Beartooth Ranger District where roading is not proposed or recommended.

The historic and projected timber volume and the projected potential National Forest share of the Montana timber supply demand study is shown on Figure 2. In the "Additional Sale Opportunity NFS", there are 0.5 MMBF that could be added through plan amendment.

Figure 3 shows a comparison of the com-

mercial Forest Land Classification used in previous Forest timber management plans with the Forest Plan Preferred Alternative land suitability classification.

Dispersed and developed recreation are both important uses of the Forest. I have decided to continue the high emphasis on management of the dispersed recreation program as well as try to maintain or improve the opportunity for developed recreation. There was some comment by the public on the poor condition of developed recreation facilities and also a few that felt they should be open for a longer period of time. Many of the developed recreation sites have deteriorated in the past few years because of the lack of maintenance. Maintenance will be increased if funding is received, and if it is not, those sites that receive very light use will be closed or the season of use will be shortened to allow for adequate maintenance of the more heavily used sites.

As a result of this Forest Plan there will be more emphasis placed on the use of fire as a management tool. There are many areas on the Forest where the effects of 50 years of fire protection have resulted in heavy accumulations of natural fuels. Throughout those portions of the Forest where ponderosa pine is the dominant tree species, the normal frequency of fire has been preempted and fire needs to be reintroduced to maintain stand vigor and remove the accumulation of fuels. A number of fire management strategies are permitted under the guidelines of the Forest Plan.

A segment of North Country National Scenic Trail and two canoe launch sites may be built on the Shyenenne Ranger District. This trail is part of the National Scenic Trail system and will provide access to some State recreation facilities. This trail has received a considerable amount of attention by State and Federal agencies and it is expected to become a significant recreation feature when com-

pleted. The Forest has coordinated with North Dakota on location of connecting trails that would provide access to State parks. The canoe launch sites will make a unique recreation experience available to recreation-seekers in eastern North Dakota.

Seasonal and permanent road closures will be used to help provide increased opportunities for non-motorized recreation. The public is seeking a good mix of areas for dispersed and developed recreation and the demand for both is growing. In the future the conflicts for these types of recreation will increase. In addition to low development areas, several other areas on the Forest where no development is proposed will add to the opportunity for dispersed recreation.

Little public comment related to the visual quality of the Forest was received and I feel this is because of the emphasis the Forest has put on this resource over the years. Many of the management activities that are common on the Forest do not create significant visual impacts if properly designed and implemented as planned. One of the greatest impacts is the development of the oil fields in North Dakota. Our emphasis on visual resource management will continue across the Forest. Visual quality objectives, which establish the acceptable level of landscape alteration, have been determined for each management area. The overall scenic quality of the Forest will improve over time.

If the budget we receive is proportional to the needs identified in the Forest Plan, significant problems should not occur as we implement the Plan. Additional funding is needed to improve the condition of recreation facilities, protect and enhance wildlife habitat, and provide the work-force needed to manage oil and gas development. The livestock management program does not provide for increased animal numbers but will require a considerable expenditure by the local ranch-

er and the Forest Service to implement intensive livestock management systems. This expense benefits the vegetation, livestock, watershed, and wildlife habitat.

The Forest Plan identifies a number of possible Research Natural Areas and Special Interest Areas. These areas are identified to help fulfill the future needs of research and may one day be valuable as gene pools as well. The areas to be further evaluated as Special Interest Areas are areas that the State of North Dakota has identified as they are unique features to the state. These sites appear to warrant some special consideration in management and will be further evaluated as to what role they may play in the future and what classification is needed to make sure they are not lost.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of October 1, 1968 established the purpose and authority for study of wild and scenic rivers. To be eligible for inclusion, a river must be free-flowing and, with its adjacent land area, must possess one or more "outstandingly remarkable" values. Scenic, geologic, historic, cultural, ecologic, or fish and wildlife habitat, are examples of such values.

The eligible river segments have also been assigned a potential classification of wild, scenic, or recreational. Characteristics of these classifications are:

Wild River areas - Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, generally accessible only by trail, with the watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and the water unpolluted.

Scenic River areas - Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines and watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped but accessible in places by roads.

Recreational River areas - Those rivers, or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by roads, have some development along their shorelines and may have some history of impoundment or diversion.

By application of the eligibility and classification criteria, four rivers were identified as eligible and potential classification assigned. They are:

1. *Little Missouri River* - A 274 mile segment of the Missouri River is classified by the State of North Dakota as the Little Missouri State Scenic River. About 80 miles of this segment border lands administered by the Forest. The Forest Plan provides management standards to protect the integrity of this river where it flows through National Forest System lands. The Little Missouri River traverses many miles of scenic badlands and river bottoms characterized by extensive stands of cottonwood and ash. The deeply incised river valley and its tributaries within the Little Missouri National Grasslands is relatively pristine and offers some of the best scenery and most varied recreational opportunities in the State of North Dakota.

2. *Rock Creek* - Approximately 13 miles of Rock Creek on the Beartooth Ranger District within the Forest boundary will be evaluated for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River classification. Rock Creek traverses a very scenic, glacial canyon, characterized by pyramidal mountain peaks and high granite cliffs. It flows through the most popular developed campground complex on the Beartooth Ranger District and is very popular as a trout stream. The entire length of Rock Creek is paralleled by road and two miles of the stream is on private land. The entire length of the stream receives heavy use by recreationists and is eligible for consideration as "Recreational River".

3. *West Fork Rock Creek* - There are 10 miles of the West Fork of Rock Creek

outside the Wilderness but within the Forest boundary. This segment receives heavy use by recreationist and is paralleled by a road. This segment is eligible for further consideration as a "Recreational River". There are ten miles of this stream within the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness that is paralleled by a trail and is eligible for further consideration as a "Wild River". The West Fork of Rock Creek flows through a spectacular, glacially-scoured canyon. Many popular trailheads, campgrounds, and organization camps are located in the canyon. The West Fork is a popular trout fishery.

4. *Stillwater River* - There are 20 miles of the Stillwater River within the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness and seven miles outside the Wilderness boundary but within the Forest Boundary. About one and one-half miles of the stream outside the wilderness are located on private lands. Roads follow much of the length of the river outside the Wilderness. This portion of the river receives heavy use by recreationists and is suitable for evaluation for "Recreational River" classification. The portion of the river within the Wilderness, a length of about 20 miles, is paralleled by trail and the lower portion receives heavy use by recreationists. This segment is eligible for consideration as a "Wild River". The Stillwater River offers spectacular scenery as it is a glacially scoured valley through high rugged peaks and is also an excellent fishery.

B. Economic Efficiency

In determining the most economically efficient alternative, I used an estimate of present net value, which is the difference between discounted benefits and discounted costs. To figure discounted benefits and discounted costs, a dollar value is assigned to the Forest's outputs. Some of these, such as board feet of timber and barrels of oil, are determined by the marketplace and they produce a revenue

(market). Others, such as recreation visitor days, are assigned values derived from research and generally do not produce revenue (non-market). However, some resources neither produce revenue nor have any basis from which to estimate a value; such as, wildlife habitat or visual quality. Therefore, present net value cannot be the only criterion used in selecting the Forest Plan. The criterion used was the maximization of net public benefit, which includes both the net value of resources that produced revenue, other priced resources, and consideration of those that do not produce revenue.

In making my decision, I felt it was necessary to evaluate how opportunities will change by selecting an alternative with varying combinations of priced and non-priced resources. This helped me understand the interactions occurring among resources in determining net public benefit. Table 7 displays each alternative arranged in order of decreasing present net value. It also shows estimated outputs for selected priced and non-priced resources that relate to the key issues used in selecting the Forest Plan. Details of how present net value and other outputs are calculated for the alternatives are described in Appendix B of the Environmental Impact Statement.

The following discussion summarizes the tradeoffs for those alternatives with a present net value higher than Alternative 10, the selected alternative.

PNV Tradeoffs - Alternative 3

Alternative 3 has the highest present net value of all the alternatives with corresponding high production of priced outputs, especially oil and livestock. The foregone value of implementing this alternative is \$129 million. (The foregone value is the difference in revenue that would be generated by this alternative and the PNV benchmark that has the highest present net value.) This occurs because 120,400 acres are to be managed in a roadless condition. This alternative minimizes wildlife values and as a result of the emphasis on production of commodity outputs the visual quality of the Forest would be the lowest of all alternatives considered. Alternative 10 has a lower present net value than Alternative 3 because it places more emphasis on protection of key wildlife habitat areas, the visual quality, additional wilderness, and areas to be managed as low development areas for wildlife and dispersed non-motorized recreation.

PNV Tradeoffs - Alternative 7

Alternative 7 has the second highest present net value of all the alternatives. This alternative has a foregone benefit of \$164 million. The objective of this alternative is to produce a high level of priced goods and services that would contribute to national and local economies. This alternative will adversely affect the scenic quality of the Forest and wildlife populations will decline. Alternative 10 has a lower present net value than this alternative because it places less emphasis on production of commodity outputs and more emphasis on the protection of wildlife habitat and other non-priced outputs such as scenic quality.

PNV Tradeoffs- Alternative 7a

Alternative 7a has the third highest present net value of all the alternatives. This

alternative has a foregone benefit of \$189 million. This alternative is similar to Alternative 7. The objective of this alternative, however, was to create a high level of priced goods and services while significantly increasing the amount of wilderness and/or roadless acres. Alternative 10 has a lower present net value than Alternative 7a because it places less emphasis on production of priced outputs and more emphasis on the protection of wildlife habitat and other non-priced outputs such as scenic quality.

PNV Tradeoffs - Alternative 9

Alternative 9 has the fourth highest present net value. This alternative has a foregone benefit of \$207 million. This alternative was formulated to produce a moderate level of both priced and non-priced outputs. Alternative 10 has a lower present net value than this alternative because the number of animal unit month remains stable, fewer lands are available for oil and gas production, and Alternative 10 places more emphasis on protection of wildlife habitat and scenic values.

PNV Tradeoffs - Alternative 6

Alternative 6 has the fifth highest present net value. The foregone value of implementing this alternative is \$212 million. This alternative was the preferred alternative in the draft Environmental Impact Statement and was formulated to provide a balanced approach to respond to the issues, concerns, and opportunities facing the Custer Forest. Alternative 10 has a lower present net value mainly because there are fewer lands available for oil and gas development. The livestock program was reduced by stabilizing the number of animal unit months over time instead of projecting an increase. The change in projected livestock grazing was made to provide more opportunity to improve vegetative conditions throughout the Forest which will benefit livestock and wildlife.

PNV Tradeoffs - Alternative 6a

Alternative 6a has the sixth highest present net value and is similar to Alternative 6. The foregone benefit is \$240 million. The objective of this alternative, however, was to create a moderate to high level of priced and non-priced goods and services while significantly increasing the amount of wilderness acres over that of Alternative 6. Alternative 10 has a lower timber harvest program, a reduced number of livestock, and a higher provided capacity for deer, elk, and grouse.

PNV Tradeoffs, Alternative 5

Alternative 5 has the seventh highest present net value. The foregone value of implementing this alternative is \$248 million. Alternative 10 calls for a smaller timber harvest and livestock management program. It also provides more emphasis on deer and elk.

PNV Tradeoffs - Alternative 2

Alternative 2 has the eighth highest present net value. The foregone value of implementing this alternative is \$249 million. Alternative 10 places more emphasis on increasing wildlife outputs and less emphasis on timber and range outputs over time.

PNV Tradeoffs - Alternative 6b

Alternative 6b has the ninth highest present net value. The foregone value of implementing this alternative is \$281 million. Alternative 10 has a lower timber harvest program, a smaller livestock management program, and places more emphasis on wildlife outputs.

PNV Tradeoffs - Alternative 5c

Alternative 5c has the tenth highest present net value. The foregone value of implementing this alternative is \$290 million. Alternative 10 places less emphasis on timber, livestock, and oil production and more emphasis on the production of wildlife related outputs.

PNV Tradeoffs - Alternative 7b

Alternative 7b has the eleventh highest present net value. The foregone economic value of implementing this alternative is \$303 million. Alternative 10 places less emphasis on timber, livestock, and oil production and more emphasis on the production of wildlife related outputs.

PNV Tradeoffs - Alternative 5a and 5b

Alternatives 5b and 5a are ranked twelfth and thirteenth, respectively, in present net value. The foregone economic value of these alternatives is \$309 and \$339, respectively. Alternative 10 places less emphasis on timber, livestock, and oil production and more emphasis on the production of wildlife related outputs.

C. Social and Economic Stability

I considered the social and economic consequences of the various alternatives as I arrived at my decision. The effects are displayed in the Environmental Impact Statement. I feel Alternative 10 is the most desirable because it maintains a stable economy with the least disturbance to peoples lives. The proposed number of livestock remains stable. The proposed timber harvest program is balanced with wildlife habitat needs. Even though the volume of timber doubles over what has been harvested in the past ten to fifteen years, the timber program will not adversely disrupt peoples lives or their lifestyles and will provide an opportunity to generate local employment. Much of the Forest is currently leased for oil and gas, and development is expected to spread over available areas of the Forest in the future. Under any alternative there is apt to be a boom or bust situation as it relates to oil and gas development. I believe the communities around the Forest are elastic enough to absorb the social disruptions that occur as a result of oil and gas development. These social impacts can, and perhaps will, occur under all alternatives. The long-term dependence of these communities on the use of renewable resources will stabilize them over time. Opportunities for outdoor recreation opportunities will increase across the public lands but access to these public lands will continue to be an issue.

D. Environmental Quality

Environmental quality was a significant consideration in my selecting Alternative 10. I considered environmental consequences of the various alternatives. Air quality will be maintained within legal limits and water quality will meet or exceed State standards. Soil erosion will be minimized and long-term soil productivity will be maintained. Fish and wildlife habitat will be maintained and timber

harvest, road construction, and oil and gas activities will be designed to minimize adverse effects on wildlife, especially threatened and endangered species. Forest management will improve the health, vigor, and diversity of the Forest and will reduce the risk of insect and disease epidemics and catastrophic wildfires.

The management standards developed to protect environmental quality are displayed in Chapters II and III of the Forest Plan. These standards provide the specific direction and mitigating measures to assure that long-term productivity is not impaired by the application of short-term management practices.

The environmental consequences of the various alternatives are discussed in Chapter IV of the Environmental Impact Statement. Environmental consequences will be monitored to ensure compliance with the Forest Plan and applicable laws and regulations. The adverse effects that cannot be avoided are identified by resource activity in Chapter IV of the Environmental Impact Statement.

Although the application of Forest-wide standards is intended to limit the number and duration of adverse effects, the following are associated to some extent with all alternatives.

Potential increases in sediment resulting from soil disturbance associated with oil and gas development and other activities that disturb the land.

Short-term reduced air quality from dust, smoke, gasses from oil and gas well development, emissions from internal combustion engines resulting from oil and gas development, and activities associated with timber, recreation, wildlife, and range management.

E. Compatibility with the Plans of Others

From the outset of the planning process, Federal, State, and local agencies have been informed of and involved in the Forest Plan's development. The comments, plans, and goals received from these public agencies were used to develop alternatives and management standards. Refer to Appendix A in the Environmental Impact Statement for a description of the planning coordination.

The Custer National Forest worked closely with the North Dakota Department of Game and Fish, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and the South Dakota Department of Fish and Game. These departments' biologists helped guide development of standards for wildlife management as well as identify areas critical to a variety of wildlife species. The Forest is also using guidelines developed with these departments as they relate to road management, timing restrictions for various activities, and recommendations contained in the Montana Cooperative Elk-Logging Study and the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines.

The Governors of Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota all provided input to the Forest Plan. This information has been used and coordination with governor's offices is continuing.

National Park Service officials (Yellowstone and Theodore Roosevelt National Parks) were informed and consulted about plans for managing land adjacent to their boundaries. The scenic values of the areas adjacent to the parks were considered and incorporated into management direction in the Forest Plan. Possible conflicts between the intent of management of the two agencies have been mitigated where possible. There has been a considerable amount of data sharing among the involved agencies. Management direction has been included in the Forest Plan to protect the scenic quality of the Little Missouri River.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (F&WS) was formally consulted to make sure the Forest Plan would not jeopardize any threatened or endangered species. The U.S. F&WS responded to the draft Forest Plan by letter dated June 10, 1985 and to the final Forest Plan by letter dated May 19, 1986. These letters state that the Forest Plan does not jeopardize any of the species listed below. Threatened and endangered species thought to occur on the Forest include grizzly bear, black-footed ferret, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, gray wolf, whooping crane, interior least tern, and piping plover. The Forest will continue to support recovery plans for all threatened and endangered species.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was consulted on a number of issues. The management of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Territory and proposed interchange of lands to improve management of the herd was closely coordinated. The BLM has participated in the analysis process and has the final responsibility for issuance of oil and gas leases.

The Forest coordinated with the Shoshone and Gallatin National Forests to insure cooperative management in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness and in roadless areas common to more than one Forest.

The timber harvest level on the Ashland Ranger District was coordinated with the plans of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Tribe to make sure there would not be competition for timber between the two agencies.

The Forest contacted all Indian Tribes that are located near or adjacent to the Forest. The Forest Plan cultural resource section (page 14) defines guidelines for dealing with cultural resources, including the proper process for dealing with human remains that may be discovered.

The Forest worked closely with the Low Hat Clan of the Hidatsa Tribe to identify and protect areas important for their religious practices.

The Beartooth Mountains are considered a part of the Greater Yellowstone Area. The concerns with overall wildlife populations in this area, and heavy use by recreationists create an opportunity for conflict. Other uses, though not intensive on the Custer National Forest portion of the ecosystem, also have a potential impact on the well-being of the area. Timber activities are very limited to date and are expected to remain near current levels in the area. Minerals activities are sporadic and at this time activity is picking up with development of the Stillwater Mine and drilling of an oil and gas well just south of the city of Red Lodge. Possible adverse impacts on the Greater Yellowstone Area will be mitigated by special stipulations to protect the integrity of the area on a permit by permit basis. If necessary, to protect the quality of the wilderness recreation experience, the number of visitors may be restricted in the future but it is not proposed at this time. The current emphasis on educating recreationists on the value of no-trace camping will be continued to help reduce adverse environmental impacts and provide for distribution of users. To improve efficiency of management of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, 6,000 acres were identified and are recommended for wilderness classification. Areas that would add to the carrying capacity for recreation or add additional features to the wilderness were evaluated and none identified. The Forest coordinates with Yellowstone National Park and other Forests that join the park on establishing campground fees. The Beartooth Highway is a scenic route to Yellowstone Park and is provided special management direction to protect the scenic value.

Overall, I believe Alternative 10 meets the combined concerns of the agencies as

well as, or better than, any other alternative. Dialogue will continue with public agencies and interested parties. The involvement of these parties is critical to the successful implementation, monitoring, and updating of the Forest Plan.

F. Summary of Reasons for Selecting the Plan

As described in the preceding pages, I believe the Plan provides a management strategy for the Forest that maximizes net public benefit. This is achieved by providing a balance among commodity outputs, thus providing for a reasonable level of local employment while protecting amenity values such as wildlife, fish, scenic quality, and diverse recreation opportunities that are important to area residents. The Forest provides a variety of recreation activities that benefit nearby communities indirectly but the Forest has little control over the total benefits to these areas. Management is within the physical and biological capability of the land.

I am confident the Forest Plan provides for demands on the Forest resources for the next 10 to 15 years. Many divergent opinions were considered in the development and selection of the Plan. It was not possible to meet all requests and desires; however, I believe the Plan achieves a proper balance between commodity and amenity values considering the range and intensity of concerns expressed by the public on the various issues.

I made the decision to adopt Alternative 10 in light of the Forest Service mission as defined by the legislative mandate of the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960, and the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. The Forest Plan, to the best of my knowledge, complies with the legal requirements and policies applicable to the Custer National Forest.

Alternatives were developed to display the array of land management options and to provide analytical data to help you and me make comparisons and to determine the relative effects of various ways of addressing the issues. Each alternative represents a technically feasible option for management of the Forest and considers multiple resource uses in both the short and long term. Alternatives 5, 6 and 7 are followed by alternatives with subscripted letters (5a, 5b, 5c, etc.) which indicate various levels of roadless or wilderness designations. Each alternative ensures that the minimum management requirements discussed in Appendix B of the Environmental Impact Statement are met.

Analysis of public comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement produced additional information that prompted us to make adjustments in Alternative 6 (the Preferred Alternative displayed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement). These adjustments, which are the result of public comment, led to the development of Alternative 10 (Selected Alternative). I considered the significance of the adjustments made and find that no significant new information has been added or substantial changes made. I conclude that the magnitude of change from Alternative 6 to Alternative 10 was within the range of alternatives discussed and environmental effects disclosed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and no supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is needed. A complete discussion of Alternative 10 is represented in the Environmental Impact Statement.

VIII. ALTERNATIVES

All alternatives are briefly discussed below. More detailed information can be found in Chapter II and Appendix B of the Environmental Impact Statement.

Alternative 1 - This alternative emphasizes wildlife management and maintains a large number of acres in a roadless condition. Wildlife habitat is protected and enhanced and the alternative calls for an active program of habitat management. Many acres are designated for roadless management.

Alternative 2 (RPA) - This alternative is designed to meet the goals assigned to the Forest in the 1980 Resources Planning Act (RPA) Program.

Alternative 3 - This alternative identifies the level of goods and services that result from maximizing the Present Net Value, or maximizing the net dollar return to the U.S. Government. To ensure feasibility and reasonable distribution of activities and outputs across the Forest, certain levels of the timber and range outputs were specified.

Alternative 4 - This alternative emphasizes the wilderness and recreation resources. All inventoried roadless areas except Tongue River Breaks (precluded from wilderness classification by the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Act) are recommended for wilderness classification. Recreation is emphasized on those areas that provide the best opportunity for a wide variety of recreation opportunities. The other outputs in this alternative are unconstrained and are seen as secondary in importance to these nonpriced benefits.

Alternative 5 - This alternative is designed to continue approximately the traditional level of outputs including those for timber. Areas to be retained as roadless are identified.

Alternative 5a, 5b, and 5c - These alternatives continue the current level of outputs (same as Alternative 5), except that there are varying amounts of roadless areas assigned for management as roadless and low development, as well as varying amounts and areas proposed for wilder-

ness.

Alternative 6 - This alternative was the *Proposed Action* in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. It provides for an increase in permitted livestock use over time, a timber harvest program of four million board feet per year, and recommends addition of 6,000 acres to the **Absaroka Beartooth** Wilderness and a 5,812-acre Lost Water Canyon Wilderness.

Alternatives 6a and 6b - provided for the same outputs as Alternative 6 but assign varying acreages and areas to wilderness or roadless management.

Alternative 7 - This alternative provides a high level of market goods and services that contribute to the national as well as the local economies. Priced market outputs, except for timber, are at relatively high levels. The current timber program was included.

Alternative 7a - This alternative is essentially the same as Alternative 7, except for the varying acres and areas that were assigned either to roadless or wilderness management.

Alternative 7b - This alternative is essentially the same as Alternative 7, **except than** 105,220 acres are specified as wilderness in addition to the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. No areas were included for roadless management.

Alternative 8 (Current Management/No Action) - This alternative is designed to reflect current management (no action). The budget was kept at a figure equal to the average budget over the past 3 years, with a 5 percent increase over time.

Alternative 9 (Departure from Alternative 6) This alternative is almost the same as Alternative 6 (Proposed Action). The only change is removing the nondeclining sustained yield constraint that allows for a decrease in timber har-

vest volume over time.

Alternative 10 - This is the *Selected Alternative*, which is the Forest Plan. This is a modification of Alternative 6 that was the Proposed Action shown in the draft. Input from the public resulted in the range management program being changed from one of having increasing animal unit months over time to one of a stable livestock program. Also, the proposed timber program was reduced from forty million board feet for the first ten years to thirty five million board feet. More areas and acreage were assigned to management that emphasizes wildlife habitat. More areas and acres are assigned to low development area management than in Alternative 6 in the draft.

The timber harvest program is composed of 3.0 MMBF of green, and recently dead, sawtimber and 0.5 MMBF as non-interchangeable component of other forest products such as firewood. This level of harvest exceeds the volume of timber that has traditionally been harvested by those mills that are located on or adjacent to the Forest. Mills that are not located close to the Forest may also compete for this timber.

To help further explain the intent of the alternatives, acres assigned to roadless and recommended for wilderness by alternative are shown in Table 8.

IX. COMPARISON OF THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

I believe Alternative 1 represents the environmentally preferred alternative. Alternative 1 protects the scenic quality of the Forest and places considerable emphasis on protection of non-priced values. It has a small timber harvest program (3.5 million board feet per year), provides for good elk and deer populations, and requires a considerable reduction in live-

stock grazing over time.

Depending on an individual's own interpretation of what is most preferred environmentally, there are other alternatives that have high environmental values also. Alternative 8 would allow the least amount of acreage to move into Existing Visual Condition Class 4 Disturbed (EVC-4). Alternative 4 calls for the most wilderness and Alternative 8 calls for management of the most roadless acres. Alternative 8 would allow the least amount of oil and gas production and therefore limit impacts from that activity. Alternative 8 would protect the present roadless character of the essentially roadless areas in the Little Missouri National Grasslands and the riding and hiking areas on the Ashland Ranger District. The long-term integrity of some of these areas may be lost in time because a significant portion of the mineral rights under some of them is in private ownership. Alternative 1 also restricts oil and gas activity. Alternative 10 provides for protection of key big game habitats and protects those areas in the Little Missouri National Grasslands where mineral ownership and lease status are such that the Forest can assign these areas to management units that prohibit development of oil and gas.

Alternative 1 has the smallest livestock management program and would result in the least impact from livestock grazing. Alternative 1 also places the most emphasis on wildlife and has the highest capacity for deer, elk, and grouse. This alternative also has the greatest opportunity for increasing dispersed recreation in the long term.

The selected alternative has a small timber harvest program. This alternative protects key wildlife areas from development by oil and gas. In the Little Missouri National Grasslands all roadless areas are assigned to management as low development areas where the government

controls the mineral ownership and leases are in a status where the area can be protected from development by oil and gas development. The selected alternative provides for implementation of more intensive livestock management systems to improve wildlife habitat and watershed values while maintaining the present number of livestock.

X. IMPLEMENTATION, MITIGATION, AND MONITORING

A. Implementation

Implementation of the Forest Plan will begin 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision appear in the *Federal Register* (36 CFR 219.10 (c) (I)).

Implementation requires moving from an existing land use management program, with a budget and schedule of activities, to the level of management outlined in the Forest Plan. In areas where management activities have already been implemented, a period of adjustment may be required to attain Forest Plan goals and objectives. As soon as practical, however, the Forest Supervisor will ensure that, subject to valid existing rights, all projects and contractual obligations are consistent with the Forest Plan. The Forest Supervisor has the authority to adjust implementation to reflect differences between proposed annual budgets and actual appropriated funds. Such implementation changes are considered an amendment to the Forest Plan. They are not considered significant and will not require the preparation of an environmental impact statement, unless the changes significantly alter the long-term relationships between levels of multiple-use goods and services projected under planned budget proposals as compared to those projected under actual appropriations (36 CFR 219.10 (e)).

If, during Forest Plan implementation, it is determined that the best way to achieve the prescription for a management area does not totally conform to a management prescription standard, the Forest Supervisor may amend that standard for a specific project. Such site specific amendments (CFR 219.10(f)) and the rationale for the changes must conform to NEPA requirements.

Deviation from standards established for threatened and endangered species conservation and protection will be approved only after consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a biological evaluation concludes that such deviation would have no adverse effect on the recovery of the species.

Implementation activities related to the key issues are:

The Forest level of permitted animal unit months will continue at about 875,000. This is to allow for improvement of vegetative conditions and also recognizes the agricultural economic situation in the nation today.

Mineral development will be facilitated where environmentally acceptable and where there are no overriding conflicts with other resource values.

In North Dakota, Twin Buttes, Horse Creek, Lone Butte, Long-X Divide and Bennett-Cottonwood will be managed as low development areas to maintain their present condition, the open spaces they provide, their undeveloped character, and their scenery. Appropriate oil and gas leasing stipulations are established for use throughout the Forest to avoid and mitigate impacts. These are especially restrictive in key wildlife habitats, riparian areas and woody draws. Areas not suitable or available for mineral development will be considered for withdrawal from mineral entry where potential re-

source conflicts cannot be adequately mitigated or the environment adequately protected.

The low development areas in Montana will be managed to enhance their values as riding and hiking areas. There will be a recommendation to add 6,000 acres to the existing Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. The 5,812-acre Lost Water Canyon is also recommended for wilderness classification. Both areas will be managed to protect their wilderness character until a classification is made.

B. Mitigation

Implementation is guided by the management standard located in Chapter II of the Forest Plan, and by the specific management area prescriptions and requirements addressed in Chapter III of the Forest Plan. The management standards were developed through an interdisciplinary effort and contain measures necessary to mitigate or eliminate any long-term adverse environmental effects. Additional mitigation measures and management standards are discussed in the various appendices to the Forest Plan. To the best of my knowledge, all practical mitigation measures have been adopted and are included in the Forest Plan.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

The management control system for the Forest Plan includes monitoring and evaluation. It will provide you and me with information on the progress and results of implementation. This information and evaluation will provide feedback into the Forest planning process for possible future change.

Table IV-1 in the Forest Plan displays the basic outline of the monitoring process. An annual monitoring program, developed in accordance with this outline, will be prepared as part of the Custer National Forest and National Grasslands annual

work program. Detailed programs will be prepared for all resources and activities requiring monitoring. These programs will be based on funds available. If funds are inadequate to properly monitor the Forest Plan goals and objectives, an analysis will be made to develop a further course of action. This may include Forest Plan amendment or revision, or dropping of projects.

The results and trends of monitoring scribed in the annual monitoring report will be evaluated and summarized annually. An evaluation report will be prepared at least every 5 years.

Data acquired by monitoring will be used to update inventories, to improve further mitigation measures, and to assess the need for amending or revising the Forest Plan.

XI. PLANNING RECORDS

Planning records contain the detailed information and decisions used in developing the Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement as required in 36 CFR 219.12.

All of the documentation chronicling the Forest planning process is available for inspection during regular business hours at:

JAMES C. OVERBAY
Regional Forester

Forest Supervisor's Office
Custer National Forest
2602 First Avenue North
P.O. Box 2556
Billings, MT 59103

These records are incorporated by reference into the Environmental Impact Statement and Forest Plan.

XII. APPEAL RIGHTS

This decision is subject to appeal to 36 CFR 211.18. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted to:

JAMES C. OVERBAY
Regional Forester
U.S.D.A. Forest Service
P.O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807

Notice of appeal must be submitted within 45 days from the date of this decision or within 30 days after publication by the Environmental Protection Agency of the Notice of Availability of the Environmental Impact Statement and Forest Plan in the Federal Register, whichever date is later. A statement of reasons to support the appeal and any request for oral presentation must be filed within the 45-day period for filing a notice of appeal.

Date

Table 1. Disposition of The Roadless Resource

ROADLESS AREA NAME	ORIGINAL RARE II ACRES	1983 ACRES	ACRES TO BE MANAGED WITHOUT NEW ROADS BY MANAGEMENT AREA		H PROPOSED WILDER- NESS	Available For Development
			J-----C			
Ash Coulee	28,560	13,040				13,040
Bennett-Cottonwood	18,240	13,760	11,840			1,920
Bell Lake	10,860	12,460				12,460
Bullion Butte	17,760	17,760		15,000		2,760
Cheney Creek	7,460	0				0
Horse Creek 1/	14,380	7,640	7,800			0
Kinley Plateau	19,360	19,360		15,580		3,780
Lone Butte	12,920	7,140	6,720			420
Long-X Divide 2/	0	0		9,760		0
Magpie	34,960	6,080				6,080
Strom-Hanson	15,320	16,760				16,760
Twin Buttes	9,000	9,000	8,000			1,000
Wannagan	5,880	5,040				5,040
Beartooth	1,180	1,180				1,180
Black Butte*	0	880				880
Burnt Mountain*	0	9,320			4,200	5,120
Cook Mountain	11,700	11,700	11,700			0
Fishtail Saddleback	20,360	16,560			500	16,060
King Mountain	11,700	11,700	11,700			0
Line Crk Plateau	20,680	20,680				20,680
Lost Water Canyon	9,800	9,800			5,812	3,988
North Absaroka	19,240	22,500				22,500
Red Lodge Creek-	28,280	14,760			800	13,960
Rock Creek*	0	200				200
Tongue River Breaks	16,600	16,600	16,600			0
State Line (new) 3/	0	0			500	0
W. of Woodbine*	2,000	2,000				2,000
Totals	334,280	265,920	84,120	30,580	11,812	149,668

* W. of Woodbine, Black Butte, Burnt Mountain and Rock Creek were originally part of other roadless areas.

1/ An additional 160 acres were added as they were available and meet the criteria for the revised boundary.

2/ Long-X Divide was not a RARE II area or identified in any previous roadless inventories. As explained later in the description of areas for North Dakota it is available for management as a low development area even though it did not meet the criteria as a roadless area originally.

3/ The addition of 500 acres to the existing Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness is to improve wilderness boundary location. The boundary adjustment will bring the wilderness boundary up to the Beartooth Highway where it can be easily defined.

Table 2. North Dakota Low Development Areas

ROADLESS AREA NAME	ORIGINAL RARE II ACRES	1983 ACRES	ACRES TO BE MANAGED WITHOUT NEW ROADS BY MANAGEMENT AREA		Available For Development
			J-----C		
Ash Coulee	28,560	13,040			13,040
Bennett-Cottonwood	18,240	13,760	11,840		1,920
Bell Lake	10,860	12,460			12,460
Bullion Butte	17,760	17,760		15,000	2,760
Cheney Creek	7,460	0			0
Horse Creek 1/	14,380	7,640	7,800		0
Kinley Plateau	19,360	19,360		15,580	3,780
Lone Butte	12,920	7,140	6,720		420
Long-X Divide 2/	0	0	9,760		0
Magpie	34,960	6,080			6,080
Strom-Hanson	15,320	16,760			16,760
Twin Buttes	9,000	9,000	8,000		1,000
Wannagan	5,880	5,040			5,040
Totals	194,700	128,040	44,120	-30,580	63,260

1/ There was an additional 160 acres added to this area as the lands were suitable for management as a low development area.

2/ Long-X Divide was not considered as a roadless areas in any of the previous inventories but is suitable for management as a low development area.

Table 3 North Dakota Roadless Area Status

ROADLESS AREA NAME	ORIGINAL RARE II ACRES	1983 Acres	Available For Development
Ash Coulee	28,560	13,040	13,040
Bennett-Cottonwood	18,240	13,760	1,920
Bell Lake	10,860	12,460	12,460
Bullion Butte	17,760	17,760	2,760
Kinley Plateau	19,360	19,360	3,780
Lone Butte	12,920	7,140	420
Magpie	34,960	6,080	6,080
Strom-Hanson	15,320	16,760	16,760
Twin Buttes	9,000	9,000	1,000
Wannagan	5,880	5,040	5,040

Some of the above areas are assigned to management areas that feature wildlife but allow for development of new roads. Others are assigned to management areas that allow for development or management that may require road building but road building will probably not occur unless oil and gas development does occur.

Table 4 Montana Low Development and Wilderness Areas

ROADLESS AREA NAME	ORIGINAL RARE II ACRES	1983 ACRES	ACRES TO BE MANAGED WITHOUT NEW ROADS BY MANAGEMENT AREA J-----C		H PROPOSED WILDERNESS	Available For Development
Beartooth	1,180	1,180				1,180
Black Butte*	0	880				880
Burnt Mountain*	0	9,320			4,200	5,120
Cook Mountain	11,700	11,700	11,700			0
Fishtail Saddleback	20,360	16,560			500	16,060
King Mountain	11,700	11,700	11,700			0
Line Crk Plateau	20,680	20,680				20,680
Lost Water Canyon	9,800	9,800			5,812	3,988
North Absaroka	19,240	22,500			800	21,700
Red Lodge Creek-	28,280	14,760				13,460
Rock Creek*	0	200				200
Tongue River Breaks	16,600	16,600	16,600			0
State Line (new)1/	0	0			500	0
W. of Woodbine*	2,000	2,000				2,000
Totals	141,540	137,880	40,000	0	11,812	85,268

* W. of Woodbine, Black Butte, Burnt Mountain and Rock Creek were originally part of other roadless areas.

1/ The addition of 500 acres to the existing Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness is to improve wilderness boundary location. The boundary adjustment will bring the wilderness boundary up to the Beartooth Highway where it can be easily defined.

Table 5 Montana Roadless Area Status

ROADLESS AREA NAME	ORIGINAL RARE II ACRES	1983 ACRES	Available For Development
Beartooth	1,180	1,180	1,180
Black Butte	0	880	880
Burnt Mountain	0	9,320	5,120
Fishtail Saddleback	20,360	16,560	16,060
Line Crk Plateau	20,680	20,680	20,680
Lost Water Canyon	9,800	9,800	3,988
North Absaroka	19,240	22,500	21,700
Red Lodge Creek-	28,280	14,760	13,460
Rock Creek	0	200	200
W. of Woodbine	2,000	2,000	2,000

TIMBER RESOURCE LAND SUITABILITY CUSTER NATIONAL FOREST

NOT SUITED		ACRES				
Not Capable & Non Forest		805,867				
Irreversible Soil and Watershed Damage		20,402				
No Assurance of Adequate Restocking		141,037				
Withdrawn from Timber Production		61,280				
Subtotal of Above		1,028,586				
				Definitions: (See Attached Sheet Figure 1)		
				Note: * Volume figures include: ~ Chargeable Volume Only ~ Non-Interchangeable Components to meet management objectives		
SUITABLE				EFFECTS		
				1st Decade		LTSY
				Acres	MMBF	MMBF
*LANDS COST EFFICIENT						
Direct Benefits Exceed Direct Costs		0				
Direct Costs Exceed Direct Benefits						
Meet Non Timber M.U. Objective		45,515	84	0.9		
Local Jobs/Income		26,845	314	2.6		
Subtotal of Above		72,360	398	3.5		6.4
				RESOURCE OPPORTUNITY		
				1st Decade		LTSY
				Acres	MMBF	MMBF
Lands Not Cost Efficient to Meet Objectives-Future Timber Production Possible		15,000	100	0.5		0.5
Multiple-Use Objectives Preclude Timber Production						
Other Uses		61,671	-	-		-
Proposed Wilderness		7,700	-	-		-
Subtotal of Above		84,371	100	0.5		0.5
TOTAL NATIONAL FOREST LANDS		1,185,317				

FORESTED and NON FORESTED

TENTATIVELY SUITABLE

TENTATIVELY NOT SUITED

Effective Period: from 1987 thru 1996

TABLE 7 Comparisons of Alternatives - Custer National Forest and National Grasslands:

(Outputs are average annual for the first ten years except for oil production which is total expected.) Outputs do not show as much variation in this table as they do when viewed for a longer period of time as displayed in the Environmental Impact Statement. As an example, in Alternative 2 the number of permitted livestock increases to 973,000 animal unit months in the seventh decade and in alternative 1 the decrease is as significant. Following are the units of measure for outputs shown in the table:

- PNV is present net value in millions of dollars
- Permitted livestock is in thousands of animal unit months
- Total oil is in millions of barrels
- Wilderness acres is in thousands of acres
- Roadless acres is in thousands of acres
- Elk is provided capacity for the shown number of elk (PC)
- Deer is provided capacity for the shown number of deer (PC)(thousands of animals)
- Timber is in millions of board feet (MMBF)
- Visual Quality is the acres that would be in a disturbed condition (M acres)

Alt.	PNV (MM\$)	Permitted Livestock	Total Oil	Recommend-ed Wilderness Acres	Roadless Acres	Elk (PC)	Deer (PC)	Timber (MMBF)	Visual (MAC)
PNV	4249	884	350	0.0	0.0	684	22.1	0.0	359
3	4120	887	345	0.0	120.4	680	23.8	4.4	277
7	4085	906	344	9.8	93.1	677	21.9	6.0	271
7A	4060	906	342	47.6	80.3	685	22.0	6.0	266
9	4042	893	338	9.8	109.0	845	24.2	3.1	269
6	4037	894	337	11.8	125.5	966	24.7	4.0	268
6A	4009	899	336	36.6	120.1	686	22.5	8.4	265
5	4001	896	334	0.0	157.5	835	24.0	4.1	253
2	4000	902	345	0.3	128.6	826	23.4	2.2	272
6B	3968	900	332	105.8	81.6	706	22.6	6.7	263
5C	3959	896	331	11.0	184.4	937	26.0	6.7	265
7B	3946	916	331	105.3	64.3	698	22.1	6.0	259
5B	3940	896	330	47.6	125.9	805	23.7	6.7	265
5A	3910	896	326	182.0	45.9	834	23.9	6.7	253
10	3806	875	316	11.8	114.7	972	27.7	3.5**	262
4	3798	887	315	241.7	16.6	845	25.5	1.0	249
1	3641	827	302	129.0	116.8	1058	30.2	3.5	219

**The volume of 3.5 MMBF includes 0.5 MMBF of a non-interchangeable component of other Forest products.

Table 8 Comparison of Roadless and Wilderness Acres by Alternative

ALTERNATIVE	Thousands of Acres Roadless	Thousands of Acres Wilderness (Recommended)
1	116.8	129.0
2	128.6	0.3
3	120.4	0.0
4	16.6	241.7
5	157.5	0.0
5a	45.9	182.0
5b	125.9	93.5
5c	184.4	11.0
6	125.5	11.8
6a	120.1	36.6
6b	81.6	105.8
7	93.1	9.8
7a	80.3	47.6
7b	64.3	105.3
8	184.8	18.8
9	109.0	9.8
10	114.7	11.8

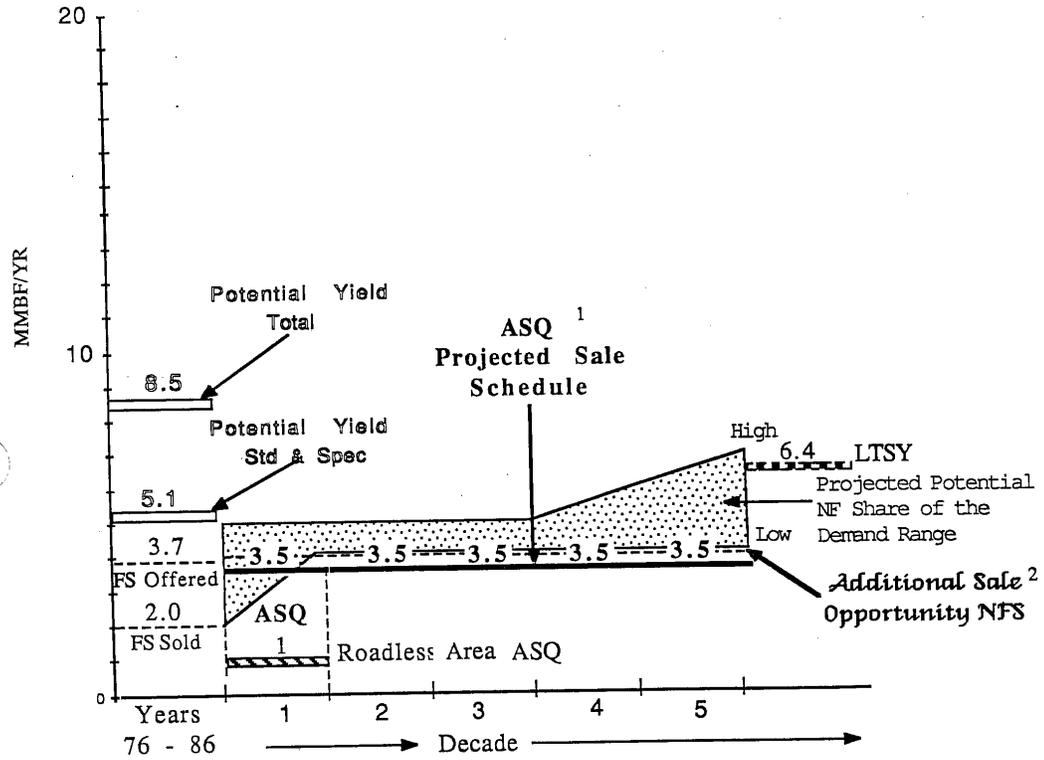
Figure 1

TIMBER RESOURCE LAND SUITABILITY DEFINITIONS

NOT SUITED LANDS	
Not Capable	Forest land not capable of producing industrial wood. Quantitatively defined as lands not capable of producing 20 cubic feet of wood per acre per year.
Non-Forest	Land that is not at least 10 percent occupied by forest trees of any size or formerly having had such tree cover and currently developed for non-forest use. 36 CFR 219.14(a)(1).
Irreversible Soil & Watershed Damage	36 CFR 219.14(a)(2).
No Assurance of Adequate Restocking	36 CFR 219.14(a)(3).
Withdrawn from Timber Production	36 CFR 219.14(a)(4).
TENTATIVELY SUITABLE LANDS	
SUITABLE PORTION	
Direct Benefits Exceed Direct Costs	Direct benefits expressed as expected gross receipts to the government. Expected receipts are based upon expected stumpage prices and payments-in-kind from timber harvest considering future supply and demand situation for timber and upon timber production goals of the Regional Guide. 36 CFR 219.14(b)(1). Direct costs include the anticipated investments, maintenance, operating, management, and planning costs attributable to timber production activities, including mitigation measures necessitated by the impacts of timber production. 36 CFR 219.14(b)(2).
Meet Non-timber, Multiple-Use Objectives	Lands where timber production is necessary to achieve non-timber, multiple-use objectives even though direct timber production costs exceed expected gross receipts to the government. These objectives are not assigned monetary values but are achieved at specified levels in the least cost manner. See 36 CFR 219.14(c) and 36 CFR 219.3 (definition of cost efficiency)
Local Jobs/Income	Lands necessary for timber production in order to maintain an appropriate level of local employment and income. (No direct basis in the planning regulations; See 36 CFR 221.3(a)(3).
Non-Interchangeable Component	Non-Interchangeable Components (NICS) are defined increments of the suitable land base and their contribution to the allowable sale quantity (ASQ) that are established to meet Forest plan objectives. NICS are identified as parcels of land and the type of timber thereon which are differentiated for the purpose of Forest plan implementation. The total ASQ is derived from the sum of the timber volumes from all NICS. The NICS cannot be substituted for each other in the timber sale program. Some conditions which may characterize a particular NIC are: (1) species marketability; (2) dead or live timber; (3) timber size class; and (4) operability.
NOT SUITED PORTION	
Lands Not Cost Efficient to Meet Objectives-Future Timber Production Possible	Lands not currently cost efficient for timber production but which could be brought into production if conditions change. These lands represent additional opportunities within the preferred alternative.
Multiple-Use Objectives Preclude Timber Production	Based upon a consideration of multiple-use objectives for the alternative, the land is proposed for resource uses that preclude timber production. 36 CFR 219.14(c)(1).

figure 2

HISTORIC & PROJECTED VOLUME FROM CUSTER NATIONAL FOREST LANDS



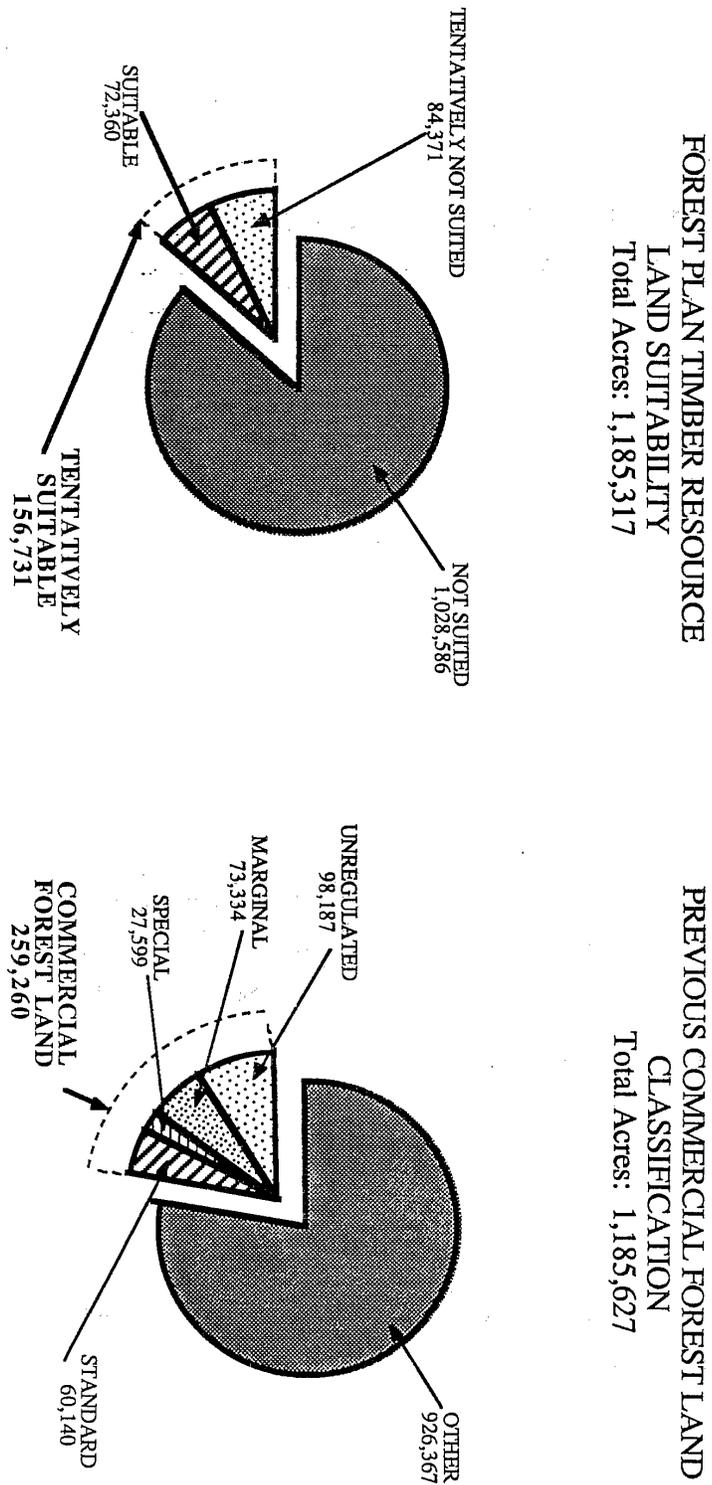
1 ASQ = 3.0 Sawtimber and .5 Other Products (Non-Interchangeable Components)

2 Opportunity available thru plan amendment

x

figure 3

CURRENT AND PREVIOUS CLASSIFICATION OF CUSTER NATIONAL FOREST LANDS



xi

