

XII. SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

A. Inventoried Roadless

1. Analysis Area and Information Sources

Lands within the Moose Post Fire Project boundary as shown on Map 1-2 in Chapter 1 served as the analysis area to disclose the effects of the proposed action and alternatives on inventoried roadless land (also refer to Vegetation Treatments Map 2-2 to see relationship of proposed salvage treatments and inventoried roadless lands).

2. Affected Environment

Inventoried Roadless Areas were identified in 1977 for the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation process (RARE II), conducted nationwide. These are lands that possess features, such as naturalness and outstanding scenery, which would qualify them for eventual inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System. Boundaries and management direction was refined in 1985 during the development of the Flathead Forest Plan. Interim direction on inventoried roadless areas was issued on December 14, 2001 (Interim Directive (ID) 1920-2001-1). Under section 1925.05 of that directive, inventoried roadless boundaries are defined as those identified in a set of inventoried roadless maps contained in the Forest service Roadless Area conservation FEIS, Volume 2, dated November 2000.

Portions of two roadless areas lie within the project area. The 8,267-acre Standard Peak Roadless Area #1129 lies south of Big Creek with 4,680 acres within the project area. Approximately 1118 acres of this roadless area burned in the Moose Fire. The 23,683-acre Deadhorse Ridge Roadless Area #1128 lies north and west of Big Creek with 11,106 acres within the project area (all of which is within the Moose Fire perimeter). Both roadless areas are described in detail in the Flathead Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume II on pages C-44 through C-54 and C-32 through C-43, respectively. (Note: there is a slight difference in the total roadless acres shown in the FEIS and those shown above due to refinement in mapping technology.) The Deadhorse Ridge Roadless Area contains several small inclusions of previously roaded and harvested land.

The characteristics of the Deadhorse Ridge and Standard Peak Roadless Areas are quite similar:

Natural Integrity, Apparent Naturalness, and Remoteness – Both areas have many off site intrusions around the edges in the form of roads and visible harvest units. Both contain trails. Visitors to the cores of the areas, however, would feel that the greater portion retains a natural appearance.

Solitude – There are few opportunities for solitude in the areas due to the short distances from the cores to the perimeters and the generally poor vegetative and topographic screening. The Moose Fire removed a substantial amount of vegetation from the core of the Deadhorse area.

Primitive Recreation Opportunities – Few opportunities exist for a truly primitive experience due to the shape and small size of the areas.

Other Features – Both areas provide good scenic views into Glacier National Park and the surrounding area.

Manageability and Boundaries – Boundaries of both areas are irregular due to existing timber harvest and road patterns and they do not follow topographic features. Current boundaries would make the areas difficult to manage as wilderness units.

3. Environmental Consequences

Chapter 2 identified one significant issue related to inventoried roadless areas: Issue #1 regarding proposed salvage in inventoried roadless areas. The Issue Indicators for this issue are *acres of salvage in inventoried roadless area, changes to natural integrity, apparent naturalness, remoteness, solitude, primitive recreation opportunities, manageability, and boundaries.*

No effects indicators were identified.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives 1,3 & 4

No management activities are proposed in inventoried roadless areas. Therefore, there are no direct or indirect effects from any activities.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives 2 & 5

Alternatives 2 and 5 propose harvest on 434 acres within the Deadhorse Roadless Area (Units 70, 72, 73, 75, 76). These alternatives also propose approximately 49 acres of harvest in the Standard Peak Roadless Area (Units 77 and 78). No new roads would be constructed within the designated roadless areas. Harvest would be by helicopter, removing only Douglas-fir and spruce infested with bark beetles. It is estimated that between 10-60% of the unit area would be left as un-salvaged groups and patches of live and dead trees. Refer to Chapter 2 alternative descriptions and Appendix A for details of the treatments proposed within the roadless units.

Harvest activities would change the natural integrity by removing trees from 1.8% of the 23,683 acre Deadhorse Roadless Area and 0.6% of the 8,267 acre Standard Peak Roadless Area. Apparent naturalness would change for those looking into the area, as harvest areas would be visible. Harvest areas would generally not be visible from trails within the area; however, visitors traveling cross-country may encounter evidence of logging. There would be a short-term loss of solitude during the actual harvest activities; however, there would be no long-term change in solitude for the area. Since proposed harvest units are located on the edges of the roadless area, there would be no appreciable effect on the overall characteristic of remoteness. Opportunities for primitive recreation would not change substantially. Harvest activities would not significantly change overall manageability of the area or the characteristics of its boundaries. There are no other prominent features that would be affected by the proposed harvest units.

Cumulative Effects of Alternatives 2 & 5

The proposed management activities would slightly reduce the natural integrity and apparent naturalness of roadless areas on a Forest wide basis. Otherwise, as stated above, there would be no long-term effects to other roadless characteristics.

4. Regulatory Framework and Consistency

In January 2001, the U.S. Department of Agriculture published a *Final Rule for Roadless Area Conservation* in the Federal Register. The *Final Rule* amended 36 CFR Part 294 to include specific prohibitions on road construction (including temporary roads), road reconstruction, and timber harvest in areas within the inventoried roadless areas shown on maps held at the National headquarters office of the Forest Service. However, on May 10, 2001, a federal judge in Idaho preliminarily enjoined the new rule because of lawsuits brought against the rule.

Subsequently, effective December 14, 2001, the Chief of the Forest Service signed interim directives to the Forest Service Manual (FSM Interim Directive No.1920-2001-1 and 7710-2001-3). ID 1920- 2001-1 sets forth direction regarding delegation of authority and interim protection of inventoried roadless areas. With respect to decisions including road construction and timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas, the Chief of the Forest Service is the responsible official with some exceptions that are delegated to the Regional Forester.

The Flathead Forest Supervisor and Staff met with the Region one Regional Forester and Staff on several occasions regarding the Moose Post Fire Project proposal for timber salvage within inventoried roadless areas. The Region Forester approved the Purpose and Need for Action and directed the Forest Supervisor to continue analysis of activities to reduce beetle risk including removal of infested and susceptible trees in inventoried roadless areas. Alternative 2 and 5 contain proposals for timber salvage in inventoried roadless areas to remove beetle infested and susceptible trees. This salvage would not meet any of the exceptions specified in ID 1920-2001-1, which would allow the decision authority to be delegated to the Regional Forester. Therefore, the Chief of the Forest Service would be the deciding official if Alternative 2 or 5 were ultimately selected for implementation. The Flathead Forest Supervisor would be the deciding official should Alternative 1,3 or 4 be selected for implementation.

B. Other Unroaded Areas

1. Analysis Area

The effects of the proposed action and alternatives on other unroaded areas was analyzed for the project area delineated by the Moose Post-Fire Project boundary, as shown on Map 1-2 in Chapter 1.

2. Affected Environment

Within the project area there are unroaded lands that do not meet the criteria outlined above for inventoried roadless areas. Clear guidelines do not exist to identify these types of areas. Most of these lands in the project area exist in the form of small tracts of substantially less than 1,000 acres. Typically, they are located between or near roads and previously harvested areas. However, there are three areas identified that are greater than 1,000 acres in size (see project record K-1).

Two of the areas are less than 2,000 acres in size and have no particularly unique features. One is adjacent to the Standard Peak Roadless Area in the head of Skookoleel and Lakalaho Creeks. The other is adjacent to the Deadhorse Ridge Roadless Area on the ridge between Hallowat and Kletomus Creeks. No salvage treatments or temporary road building have been proposed in these two areas; therefore, there are no direct or indirect effects related to these areas of concerns and will not be evaluated further.

The third area is located in the Demers Ridge area. This isolated (not adjacent to inventoried roadless) tract is over 5,000 acres in size and is bounded by roads on three sides. Coal Creek forms the northern boundary. Demers Ridge was not identified as inventoried roadless land in the Roadless Area Reviews, nor does it meet the definition of contiguous roadless area. The entire Demers Ridge area was burned in the Moose Fire, mostly at high severity, killing over 90% of the trees.

The characteristics of the Demers Ridge area include:

Natural Integrity, Apparent Naturalness, and Remoteness – The area contains approximately 11 miles of system trail, most of which received moderate to heavy damage from the Moose Fire. Current plans are to restore these trails. As a result of the fire, off-site intrusions, in the form of roads and harvest areas, are much more visible to the west. From the core of the area, located on the top of the ridge, these intrusions would be highly visible.

Solitude – There are few opportunities for solitude in the areas due to the short distances from the cores to the perimeters and the generally poor vegetative and topographic screening. The Moose Fire removed a substantial amount of vegetation from the entire area.

Primitive Recreation Opportunities – Few opportunities exist for a truly primitive experience due to the shape and small size of the area.

Other Features – The area provides good scenic views into Glacier National Park and the surrounding area.

Manageability and Boundaries – Boundaries in the form of roads and streams are easily identified. The small size of the area makes it of questionable value as a wilderness unit.

3. Environmental Consequences

No significant issues related to other unroaded areas were identified.

The following Effects Indicators were used to focus the other unroaded areas analysis and disclose relevant environmental effects:

- Acres of salvage in other unroaded area
- Changes to natural integrity, apparent naturalness, remoteness, solitude, primitive recreation opportunities, manageability, and boundaries in other unroaded areas

Direct and Indirect Effects

Alternative 1

No management activities are proposed under this alternative.

Alternatives 2,3 & 5

Under these alternatives, salvage harvest is proposed on a total of 999 acres on the south and west faces of Demers Ridge. Of this total, 774 acres would actually have trees salvaged. The remaining 225 acres would be left as scattered patches of dead trees inside harvest units, left for forest structural diversity, wildlife habitat, and other reasons (refer to Chapter 2 alternative descriptions and Appendix A). Of the 999 acres, 588 acres would be harvested by helicopter logging systems, 40 acres would be harvested by cable logging systems and 371 acres would be harvested by ground based (skidder) logging systems. 0.9 miles of temporary road would be constructed to access portions of units 3, 8 and 9.

Natural integrity and apparent naturalness would be reduced on the southwest portion of Demers Ridge. The results of harvest would be most apparent adjacent to existing roads and system trails where ground and skyline logging systems are used. Changes in helicopter units would be less apparent. Opportunities for solitude would be reduced during active logging operations. In the long term, opportunities for solitude would remain substantially unchanged. Opportunities for primitive recreation experiences would not change. The feeling of remoteness may be slightly reduced by harvest activities. Following harvest, boundaries of the remaining unroaded area would be more difficult to manage.

Alternative 4

Under this alternative a total of 728 acres are proposed for salvage harvest. Of this, 616 acres would actually have trees salvaged. The remaining 112 acres would be left as small patches of dead trees scattered throughout the harvest units. Of the 728 acres, 482 acres would be harvested by helicopter logging systems, 12 acres would be harvested by skyline logging systems and 234 acres would be harvested by ground based logging systems. No temporary road would be constructed under this alternative.

Effects of this alternative are similar to those described for Alternatives 2, 3, and 5. The magnitude of the effects is less since fewer acres are affected and no temporary roads are constructed.

Cumulative Effects of All Alternatives

All action alternatives reduce the total amount of other unroaded areas available on the forest.

4. Regulatory Framework and Consistency

There are no regulatory requirements concerning roadless land that is not identified as inventoried roadless. All management activities are consistent with Management Area direction in the Flathead Land and Resources Management Plan.

C. Wild and Scenic River

1. Analysis Area and Information Sources

The North Fork of the Flathead River (North Fork) forms the eastern boundary of the Moose Post-Fire Project area. On October 12, 1976, Congress designated 219 miles of the Flathead River as a part of the National Wild and Scenic River System. Within the Moose Fire Project area, that portion of the North Fork above Camas Bridge is designated as a Scenic River. The portion below is designated as a Recreational River. (Note: the Congressionally designated boundary between the Scenic and Recreational River segments is slightly different than Management Units established in the Flathead Forest Plan. See Flathead National Forest Plan below.)

Management Direction for The Flathead Wild and Scenic River is found in the Wild and Scenic River Act, the Flathead Forest Plan, and the Flathead Wild and Scenic River Recreation Management Direction, which amends Management Area 18 direction in the Forest Plan.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act - Under the Wild and Scenic River Act, Scenic River areas are “free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.” Recreational River areas are “readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.”

Flathead National Forest Plan - Flathead National Forest Plan - The Flathead Forest plan designates all portions of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River as Management Area 18, Wild and Scenic River (refer to Vegetation Treatments Map 2-2 to see relationship of proposed salvage treatments and Wild and Scenic River). Goals for this Management Area are to manage the river in a manner consistent with the classifications assigned under the Wild and Scenic River Act.

In 1986, the Forest Plan was amended to incorporate more specific recreation management direction for the Wild and Scenic River into Management Area 18. In this amendment, the North Fork was divided into two management Units, the Upper North Fork and the Lower North Fork. The boundary between the two units was set at Big Creek rather than Camas Bridge since this better reflected long established use patterns. From a recreation perspective, the Upper North Fork Unit is managed as a Scenic River while the Lower North Fork Unit is managed as a Recreational River.

Relevant recreation management direction for the Upper North Fork Management Unit above Big Creek and the Lower North Fork below Big Creek:

Maintain and enhance for viewing the existing characteristic natural landscape within the designated corridor.

Require any human modification of the corridor to harmonize with the natural landscape.

Management direction for other resources within Management Area 18 is in accordance with the congressionally designated segments and is found in Appendix BB of the Forest Plan.

Relevant management direction for the Scenic River Segment above Camas Bridge includes:

Forest Cover – Permit timber harvest and vegetative manipulation where such activity can be accomplished without substantial adverse impact on the natural appearance of the classified corridor. Trees, brush and other vegetation can be removed: 1) in connection with appropriate development, 2) to reduce or eliminate safety hazards, 3) to prevent deterioration of river values, 4) to improve wildlife habitat, and 5) where economic values can be removed without significant degradation of river values.

Plan and manage timber harvest operations in a manner that meets the visual quality objectives established in this plan. Evaluate each timber sale proposal to determine that each sale follows this management plan. Design approved vegetative manipulation projects to protect the values for which the river was classified. Where possible, they would be screened from the river or designed to blend with natural lines, forms, textures, and colors. Management activities outside the river corridor would be coordinated with river management objectives to minimize impacts on views from the river.

Give special emphasis to protecting streamside vegetation.

Relevant management direction for the Recreational River Segment below Camas Bridge includes:

Forest Cover – Manage timber and other vegetation in the corridor primarily for visual and wildlife purposes.

Allow vegetative manipulation in the river corridor: 1) in connection with the construction and maintenance of appropriate developments, 2) to reduce a safety hazard, 3) when determined necessary to prevent deterioration of river values, 4) to improve wildlife habitat, and 5) to maintain a healthy, vigorous timber stand.

Where possible, management activities would be screened from the river or designed to blend in with natural lines, forms, textures, and colors. Management activities outside the river corridor would be coordinated with river management objectives to minimize impacts on views from the river.

2. Affected Environment

Scenic River Corridor

A generally undeveloped shoreline and spectacular scenic views into Glacier National Park and the surrounding National Forest system land characterize the Scenic River within the project area. Camas Bridge marks the end of the Scenic River corridor. The North Fork Road traverses through or forms the western boundary of the river corridor. Prior to the Moose fire, this heavily used route was not visible from the river. Portions of the North Fork Road can now be seen from the river. River floating occurs from early May through October with the heaviest use occurring in July and August. Trips begin at several launch sites above the project area as well as at the undeveloped Coal Creek launch site within the project area. Exit points include the Big Creek river access site within the project area as well as other points below the project area. Three commercial outfitters and one or two institutional outfitters are permitted to float the river.

Recreation River Corridor

The Recreational River, within the project area, is characterized by a generally undeveloped shoreline with the exception of the Big Creek Campground. The river flows through a much narrower valley and lacks the spectacular scenic views found above Camas Bridge. The North Fork Road traverses through or forms the western boundary of the river corridor. This heavily traveled route has become somewhat more visible since the Moose Fire. Recreational use is similar to that describe for the Scenic River. The Big Creek river access site is an important take out point for those exiting the Scenic River as well as a launch site for those beginning a trip on the Recreational River.

3. Environmental Consequences

Chapter 2 identified one significant issues related to Wild and Scenic River corridors: Issue #2 regarding potential effects to the character of the Wild and Scenic River corridor. The Issue Indicator for this issue is *acres of salvage and acres of fuels reduction within the Wild and Scenic River corridor*.

No effects indicators were identified.

Direct and Indirect Effects

Effects Common to All Action Alternatives

No management activities are proposed in the Scenic Corridor located above Camas Bridge.

Alternatives 1 and 4

No management actions are proposed in the Recreational River Corridor.

Alternatives 2, 3, and 5

These alternatives propose salvage harvest activities on 16 acres within the Recreational River corridor located below Camas Bridge. Salvage harvest activities would remove only Douglas fir infested with bark beetles, located on the upper terraces above the North Fork River, immediately adjacent to the North Fork road and outside of riparian areas. It is estimated that less than 50% of the existing trees would be removed. The anti-attractant pheromone MCH has been placed in portions of the Wild and Scenic River corridor on remaining live Douglas-fir to protect them from Douglas-fir beetle infestation (see alternative description section in Chapter 2). This should reduce the number of trees that would be salvaged in the corridor. Evidence of these activities would not be visible from the river. Visitors traveling along the North Fork Road and visitors on land within the river corridor may notice the results of management activities, primarily in the form of stumps.

An additional 39 acres within the Big Creek Campground would be treated to reduce fuels. Treatments would involve thinning of dense pockets of trees throughout the area, and removal of dead trees. This would provide long-term fire protection for the facility and would enhance the visitor's experience in the campground by opening dense timber stands. These activities would be apparent to visitors on land but would not be visible from the river.

Proposed management activities would not significantly affect the values that caused the North Fork to be included in the Wild and Scenic River System.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative Effects Common to Alternatives 2, 3, and 5

No past, ongoing or foreseeable actions were identified that would, when considered with proposed actions, result in cumulative impacts on Wild and Scenic River values. Proposed management activities would have no significant cumulative effects on the values that caused the North Fork to be included in the Wild and Scenic River System.

4. Regulatory Framework and Consistency

Information regarding Forest Plan direction and the Wild and Scenic River Act was provided earlier in this section. Proposed management activities are compatible with the Wild and Scenic River Act and the Flathead Land and Resources Management Plan. The plan allows vegetative manipulation in the river corridor to maintain a healthy, vigorous timber stand and for the maintenance of appropriate developments (Flathead National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan, Appendix BB-25)