

X. FOREST HERITAGE RESOURCES

Introduction

This section focuses on heritage resources on National Forest System lands within the Red Whale Project area. The literature search considered heritage resources within the project area but actual field inventory and effects analysis will focus on the proposed treatment units. Previous inventories in the project area have occurred for approximately one third of the Red Whale proposal. Additional inventories have not been completed as of this EA but will be completed before implementation happens on the ground.

Information Sources

To gather information on heritage resources contained within the boundaries of the Red Whale Project, the Forest Archaeologist conducted a files search and review of Flathead National Forest (FNF) site database and literature sources to identify the location of both known, previously recorded heritage resources on FNF-managed lands and previous cultural resource inventories within the analysis area. The records review identified ten recorded historic-era properties in the project area and approximately three dozen inventories going back to 1982. There are no recorded prehistoric sites within the analysis area.

Of the ten heritage resource sites identified in the project area, only two are within or near treatment units. Both sites have been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Results of Survey Methodology

A complete inventory to locate and identify significant heritage resources within the project area will be completed in the spring/summer of 2007. The pre-survey file search identified the location of one heritage resource, the Toepel homestead site, within or near a treatment unit. This site has previously been determined eligible for listing on the National Register through consultation with Montana State Historic Preservation Office (MtSHPO) in 1998. One other site, Ford cabin, is located across the North Fork Road from treatment Unit C.

Consultation with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) was completed. The CSKT have no concerns regarding this project.

Analysis Area Description

The analysis area used to discuss effects on heritage resources will be the project area.

Affected Environment/Existing Condition

The Red Whale Project area includes portions of the drainage area of the North Fork Flathead River. The North Fork Flathead River is the principle watershed in the analysis area with Whale Creek, Red Meadow Creek and Hay Creek the primary tributaries. Elevations range from a low of 3,000 feet along the North Fork Flathead River to a high of 5,241 feet at Whale Butte. Overall this is an area of steep forested mountains along the tributary streams and wide benches bordering the North Fork Flathead River.

During prehistory, the watersheds were used by aboriginal groups as a travel routes between the Tobacco Plains to the northwest and the Great Plains to the east. Archaeological sites documenting Native American occupation and use of the North Fork are known but none are identified in the analysis area. Native American occupation of the North Fork probably dates to the end of the last glacial period approximately 10,000 years ago. Historically, the analysis area is part of the traditional homeland of the Kootenai people with a major travel route between the Tobacco Plains and the Northern Plains coming down Trail Creek to the north of the analysis area. The North Fork was also used by the Salish and the Blackfeet. The Hellgate Treaty of 1855 gives the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes reserved treaty rights to hunt, fish, and collect native plants on Federal lands in the analysis area.

The post-contact history of the North Fork parallels that of the Fathead Valley. The first significant activity in the North Fork is the discovery in 1887 by Frank Emerson of coal in what became Coal Creek. It was, however, the coming of the Great Northern Railroad to the valley in 1890 that prompted the first serious attempt to exploit Emerson's discovery. In 1892, Frank Talbot constructed the 75-foot sternwheeler *Oaks* to carry the coal from Coal Creek to the railroad at Columbia Falls. Unfortunately, the *Oaks* was lost in the rapids at Canyon Creek and Talbot did not develop the coal mine. The coal source would be developed and coal was produced and shipped by road from 1892 until WWII when the mine finally closed. Although there was a very brief oil boom in 1901 with one drilling operation on Kintla Lake in the then Flathead Forest Reserve, tourism, homesteading, agriculture, and logging, through the Forest Service and Glacier National Park lands would steer the future of the North Fork.

The Flathead Forest Reserve was created February 22, 1897 and included lands in the North Fork (including the west side of what is now Glacier National Park) and portions of the Kootenai National Forest. Fred Herrig and Frank Liebig were the first rangers on the reserve. Herrig was based at Moran Creek and patrolled the west side of the valley while Liebig was headquartered at McDonald Lake and patrolled what is now the Park. Ford Cabin was constructed in 1922 as a work station and was used by crews working in the upper North Fork. Before this time, Forest Service crews would set-up a tent camp at that location. It was well situated along the main north-south trail with good grass for the pack stock, water, and proximity to the trail up Trail Creek. After the fires of 1910 the Forest Service started an extensive program constructed trails into the backcountry and locating lookouts on high points. By the mid-1930s there was an extensive trail network throughout the North Fork and at least nine lookouts in the Red Whale Project area. Most of these are gone and only Coal Ridge and Cyclone still have structures.

Glacier National Park was carved out of the east half of the forest reserve in 1910. Up until that point, most homesteading was taking place east of the North Fork around Sullivan Meadows. Bill Adair built the first store at the meadow in 1904. After the creation of the park, homesteading moved west of the river. Adair moved his store to what is now Polebridge in 1912 and the west side road was built to there between 1917 and 1919. The Toepel homestead in the analysis area dates to the later 1910s. The Forest Service completed the road to the Canadian border in 1921. Ford Schoolhouse (site# 24FH919) was reportedly constructed in 1917 and was the first school in the North Fork. It operated as a school until 1950 when the property was bought by George Rockwell and converted into a private residence. The Forest Service acquired the site in 1992.

The first recorded commercial logging operations were in 1890 and 1910 but were limited by the poor roads and long distances to markets in the Flathead Valley and the railroad at Columbia Falls. Timber harvesting would expand in the 1930s with the new road but really take off in the 1960s with expanded Forest roads and improved access to the woods.

Environmental Consequences

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative 1 (No Action)

Implementation of the No Action alternative would neither directly nor indirectly affect cultural resources because there would be no change to the integrity of cultural resources listed on the National Register or eligible for listing on the National Register as a result of no activities being implemented.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives 2, 3 and 4

Cultural resource inventories for the proposed undertakings are still on-going but would be completed prior to implementation. All of the proposed activities in Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 [mechanical fuels treatments, prescribed burning units, new road construction to State land, culvert removals/up-sizing, changes in access management (e.g. gates to berms, seasonal closures, year-round road closures, etc)] occur in areas having a low to medium probability for the occurrence of cultural sites as defined in the Flathead National Forest's Site Inventory Strategy and the Region One Programmatic Agreement (R1 PA). If cultural sites are located in treatment areas the Forest Heritage and District staff would work together to determine if such sites are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and if so, to develop procedures for either avoiding adverse effects or for mitigating such effects. The MtSHPO would be consulted as required by the R1 PA. Previous inventories have identified one site, 24FH917, the Toepel homestead, in or near treatment Unit BB.

Unit BB is consistent in all action alternatives (e.g. proposed 110 acres of sapling/small tree thinning in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4). The Toepel Homestead, site 24FH917, is located in or adjacent to Unit BB. The site was recorded and evaluated in 1998 and is considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criteria "a" for its association with the early homesteading in the North Fork. The site consists of two log cabins and a log hay shed. One cabin and the hay shed were constructed by Charles Toepel, the claimant, circa 1917. The

second cabin is intrusive into the homestead being constructed by Hugh Bowman circa 1950-1960. The trees and shrubs have grown-up around the structures and are very dense. The site would benefit from fuel reductions in and around the structures. The intent of this treatment would be to provide protection from possible future fires and would likely involve thinning of the dense tree cover within a minimum 100 feet of the structures. No disturbance of the structures themselves would occur during implementation. Personnel responsible for implementation will consult with Flathead National Forest heritage staff and MtSHPO during the implementation phase. Fuels reduction treatment will enhance long-term site preservation, will not adversely effect the site and is a “no effect” under 36CFR800.

Cumulative Effects

Past, Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

There are no past, present or reasonably foreseeable future actions that could effect heritage resources that are either listed on the National Register of Historic Places or eligible for listing on the National Register.

Regulatory Framework and Regulatory Consistency

The Forest Service has obligations under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) of 1978 to "protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian" [Public Law 95-442]. The CSKT also have reserved treaty rights under the Hellgate Treaty of 1855, including hunting, gathering, and grazing rights.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Montana have been identified as a tribal group concerned about the management of heritage resources on the Flathead National Forest. The tribes were contacted in the initial planning stages of the Red Whale Project in order to establish lines of communication between the two parties, to advise them on the scope of the undertaking including potential effects, and to make their resource concerns (if any) an official part of the project file.

Besides AIRFA, the USDA Forest Service is also mandated to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) [Public Law 89-665]. "Section 106 of the NHPA requires that Federal agencies with direct or indirect jurisdiction over Federal, federally assisted, or federally licensed undertakings afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) a reasonable opportunity for comment on such undertakings that affect properties included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) prior to the agency's approval of any such undertaking" [36 CFR 800.1]. Historic properties are identified by a cultural resource inventory and are determined as either eligible or not eligible for the National Register. Eligibility is reviewed, and concurrence given, by the MtSHPO. Sites that are determined as eligible are then either protected in-place or adverse impacts must be mitigated. This process takes place prior to any decisions relative to the project. The Flathead NF participates in the Region One Programmatic Agreement (R1PA) with MtSHPO and the Advisory Council that provides for a more efficient process for conducting cultural resource

inventories and meeting Section 106 compliance. Under the R1PA, if there are no eligible properties affected by the undertaking either through project redesign or because there are no properties located within the undertaking, then the undertaking is included in an annual report to MtSHPO and compliance is completed without project consultation. On the other hand, if an eligible property is affected by the proposed undertaking, then compliance is completed in the standard way with consultation with MtSHPO.

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