

Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact and Designation Order for the Establishment of the Bangtail Botanical and Paleontological Special Interest Area

**Gallatin National Forest
Bozeman Ranger District
Gallatin and Park Counties, Montana**

June 15, 2007

Lead Agency:
USDA Forest Service

Responsible Official:
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DESIGNATION ORDER

By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the Chief of the Forest service (FSM 2360, FSM 2372, and 36 CFR 294.1) it is my decision to established the Bangtail Botanical and Paleontological Special Interest Area.

DECISION NOTICE

Decision

Based on the on the environmental analysis documented in the Bangtail Botanical and Paleontological Special Interest Area Environmental Assessment, I have chosen to implement alternative B (figure 1). Alternative B will establish the Bangtail Botanical and Paleontological Special Interest Area (Bangtail SIA). The Bangtail SIA will consist of 3,366 acres of land within the State of Montana, on the Gallatin National Forest, Bozeman Ranger District, Gallatin and Park Counties, as described in the Establishment Record entitled Location (EA appendix 1). The project will be implemented in August of 2007.

Purpose of and Need for Action

The purpose for the Bangtail SIA is to provide long-term protection to an area for scientific research opportunities on mountain meadow and sub-alpine ecosystems, and to provide research sites for important paleontological resources of North America (EA Chapter 1.1).

A special interest area status is needed because the area will provide an excellent opportunity for vegetative research and interpretation of important paleontological finds. The area is unique in that it is representative of landscapes that extend from central Wyoming to northern Montana, and is comparable to bunchgrass ecosystems of Asia and the Andes. It is also unique because it is accessible and has supported thirty years of research, thus providing valuable baseline data for present and future studies. Its accessibility and history make it well suited for gathering information on natural resource management issues. Designation of the Bangtail SIA will help maintain the ecological integrity of the site for present and future research studies, and will serve to protect high-quality examples of these grassland habitats (EA Chapter 1.1). The paleontological sites are very important in that recent finds indicate the area supports important and unique fossils of Paleocene animals and their evolutionary patterns. Entire skeletons are preserved here which make this site unique. The area is part of the Crazy Mountain Basin that contains rock formations preserving one of the longest continuous records of Paleocene terrestrial and freshwater life (approximately 55-65 million years ago). The basin is rich in fossil mammals including the 10 million years closely following the demise of the dinosaurs and appearance of mammals. Studying fossils in the area is critical to understanding mammalian evolution and the evolution of climate and global ecosystems through the beginning of the Cenozoic era.

It is important that the paleontological work continue without having to compete with other management activities for two main reasons. First, mapping the deposition of rock provides an accurate timeline of the evolution of fauna than what is currently available. For accurate mapping the rock needs to be undisturbed. Secondly, beyond merely increasing the number of points in time represented, the exceptional preservation of fossils in the Bangtails makes each new discovery add exponentially to the understanding of the animals from this time (Boyer and Bloch 2003).

The Gallatin Forest Plan manages the area with emphasis on forest management and livestock grazing. Some of the management areas promote forest management and livestock grazing with

emphasis on the maintaining forage and cover for wildlife. The activities of livestock grazing and forest management could alter the unique characteristics of the landscape. Logging often requires

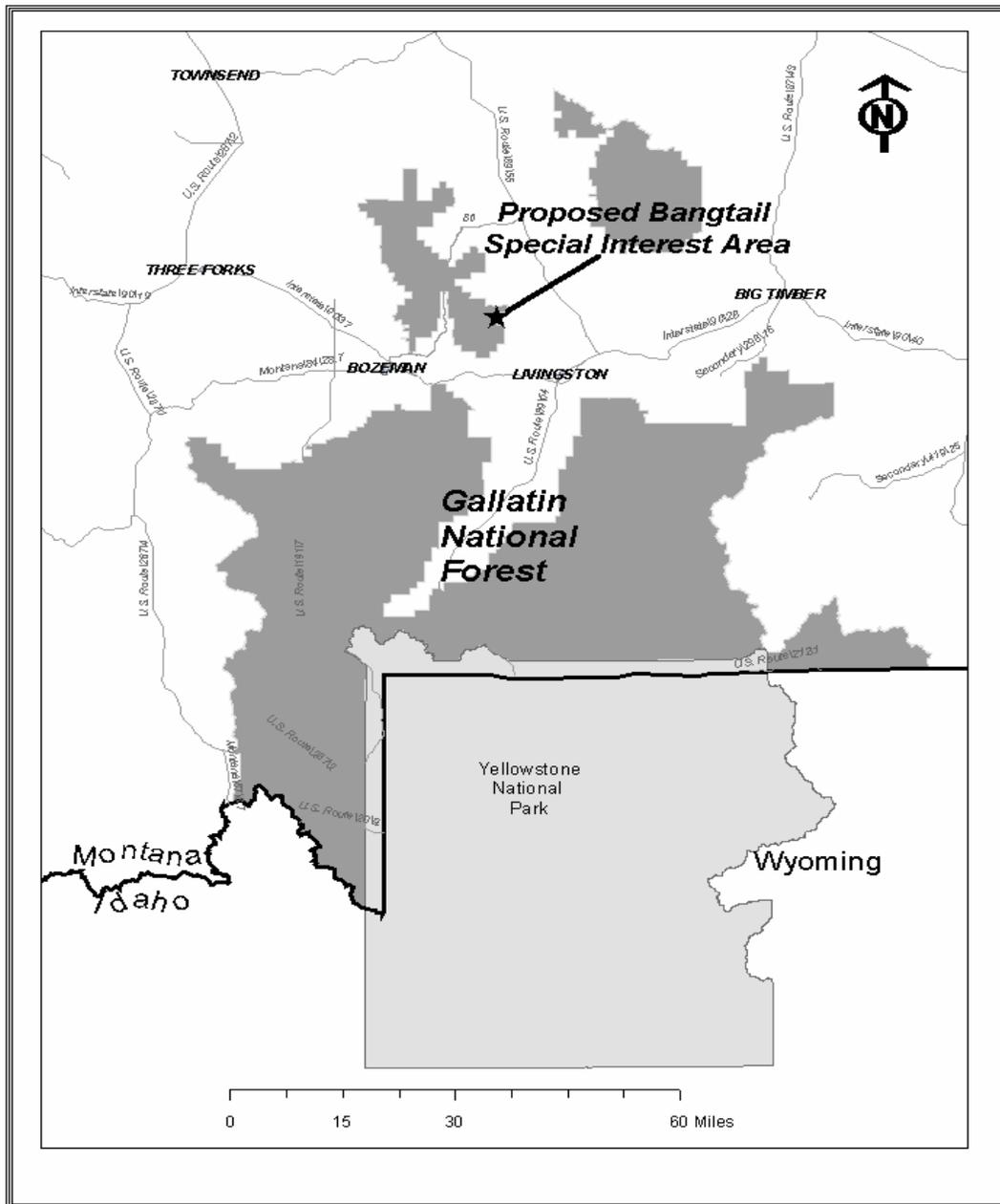


Figure 1. Vicinity Map of the Bangtail Botanical and Paleontological Special Interest Area.

ground disturbance such as building roads, skidding logs, and the construction of skid trails and landings all of which could damage paleontological sites and vegetative studies. Livestock grazing could compromise decades of scientific studies related to vegetation and could harm important paleontological resources. To protect the unique character of the area the Gallatin Forest Plan management emphasis needs to be amended to provide Special Interest Area status.

Goals and Objectives

Objectives described in the Forest Service Manual 2360 for the establishment of special interest areas include the area's protection and, where appropriate, foster public use and enjoyment of areas with scenic, historical, geological, botanical, zoological, paleontological, or other special characteristics. The objectives also include classifying areas that possess unusual recreation and scientific values so that these special values are available for public study, use or enjoyment.

One criterion for the establishment of this area is consistency with decisions in the Forest Travel Plan. The type of public access allowed in the proposed Bangtail SIA has been decided in the Forest Travel Planning EIS Record of Decision (2006).

Alternative B (selected alternative)

This decision will establish the size of the Bangtail SIA at 3,366 acres (figure 2).

Management of the area will allow a limited amount of scientific studies and associated activities to be carried out without having to prepare additional environmental assessments. This is intended to avoid having to conduct an environmental analysis every time a scientific study is proposed.

This decision will allow the use of light machinery for paleontological excavation, and some prescribed fire and removal of timber to implement scientific studies of vegetation.

Disturbances related to paleontological research will be approximately 40 feet long one foot wide and 2 feet deep. The number of trenches authorized is restricted to about five per year although it is anticipated that trenches will not be needed each year but only on an occasional basis to map the limestone formations. Areas up to 10 feet in diameter will be allowed for fossil excavations and excavated by hand. All soil disturbances will be rehabilitated including reseeding of native species of vegetation. Removal of fossils and rock for research purposes are to be permitted subject to my authorization.

Activities related to scientific studies of vegetation will allow for prescribed burning of up to three acres over a three year period and the manipulation of forest vegetation of up to 3 acres over a three year period. Exceeding these levels will require further public involvement, environmental analysis, and documentation. Documentation will include the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA), a decision memo (DM), or in the case of a large controversial project an environmental impact statement (EIS).

Project Design Features, Mitigation and Monitoring in Alternative B

The following list includes those actions that will be followed to implement the project. These are designed to reduce adverse environmental effects and facilitate the implementation of the project. They have been used successfully on a number of projects across the Forest (EA Chapter 2.5.5). As part of my decision I am committed seeing that all mitigation is implemented.

- 1) The action will be compatible with the Forest Travel Planning decision. (Responsible officials: District Ranger and District Law Enforcement Officer)

- 2) All reclamation work related to the excavation of paleontological sites will include the use a weed-free native seed mix if seeding is required. In many instances, adjacent vegetation will regenerate the disturbed site. (Responsible officials: Gallatin National Forest Rangeland Ecologist and District Invasive Species Coordinator)
- 3) All motor vehicles and heavy equipment used in association with scientific studies and used to excavate trenches, etc. for paleontological research will be washed to remove weeds and soil possibly contaminated with weed seeds prior to coming onto the Forest. (Responsible officials: Forest Geologist, District Invasive Species Coordinator)
- 4) Noxious weeds will continue to be suppressed annually under the District's Integrated Weed Management Plan (2004) and direction from the Gallatin's Noxious Weed EIS (2005). (Responsible officials: Gallatin National Forest Rangeland Ecologist and District Invasive Species Coordinator)
- 5) All trails will continue to be signed directing the public to stay on designated routes with motorized vehicles. (Responsible officials: District Ranger and District Resource Assistant for Recreation and Special Uses)
- 6) Areas identified for vegetation or paleontological or other studies will be reviewed for threatened, endangered or sensitive plants and animals prior to approval of each special use permit. If species are found, either the project will be modified to avoid adverse effects or the project will be dropped. (Responsible official(s): District Ranger, District Wildlife Biologist, and Forest Sensitive Plant Coordinator)
- 7) Areas identified for studies of vegetation and all sites excavated for inventories related to paleontology will be reviewed for historic and cultural resources prior to approval of the special use permit. If historic or cultural resources are discovered, the project will be modified to avoid damage to the site or the project will be dropped (Responsible official(s): Gallatin National Forest Heritage Program Manager, and District Ranger)
- 8) Scientific studies will typically be designed to not disturb more than one acre in any one year. There will be minor amounts of excavation associated with paleontological work of less than one acre per year. Excavations will occur over short time intervals of a few weeks to up to two months. (Responsible officials: District Ranger and District Resource Assistant for Recreation and Special Uses)
- 9) All activities associated with scientific studies in the proposed Bangtail SIA will be reviewed by the District Ranger and only authorized under the appropriate type of permit. If the District Ranger determines that proposed activities related to the SIA exceed what is documented in this environmental assessment, then additional analysis, documentation and disclosure to the public will be required. This additional analysis will be documented in an environmental assessment (EA), an environmental impact statement or a decision memo. (Responsible official: District Ranger)

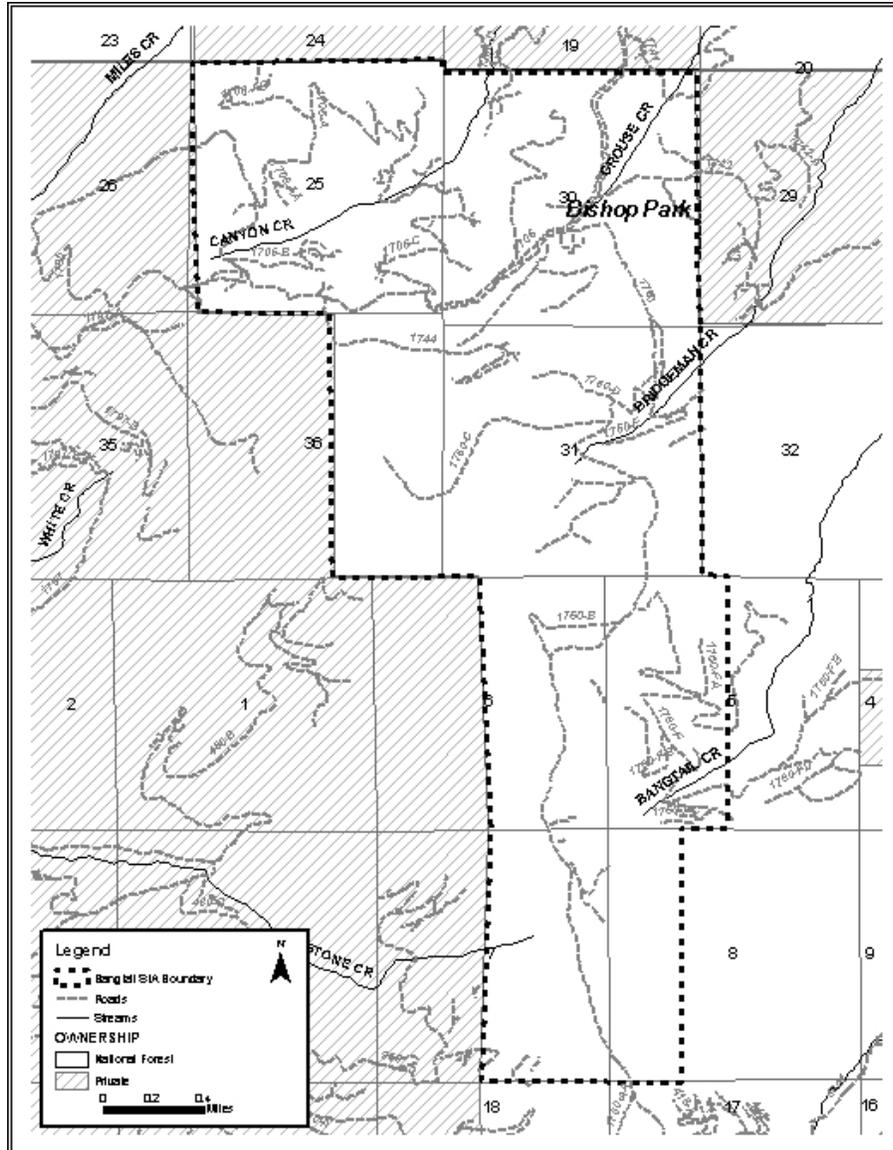


Figure 2. Map of Alternative B showing boundary of the Bangtail SIA.

General forest management activities carried out by the District will be scheduled and designed to not conflict with scientific studies in the Bangtail SIA.

Alternative B includes a non-significant Forest Plan Amendment. It will be worded as described in Appendix 1 of the EA (Establishment Record).

Travel opportunities within the proposed Bangtail SIA are identified in the Forest Travel Plan Final EIS and Record of Decision (2006). This includes a motorized ATV route through the Bangtail SIA.

Other Alternatives Studied in Detail

Two other alternatives were evaluated in detail: alternatives A and C. Alternative A proposed to create a 2,202 acre special interest area and alternative C (no action) would not have created the special interest area.

Alternative A proposed minor amounts of fencing of up to a few acres to exclude livestock use in research plots and staking and flagging to monument the plots. Limited excavation of paleontological resources were included in alternative A that proposed excavation of slit trenches by hand digging to explore for fossils and limestone formations along with allowing the excavation of fossils by hand using shovels, and other hand tools and wire mesh to sift excavated soils. Alternative A would have also required a Forest Plan amendment similar to alternative B to amend management to a special interest area. Activities related to forest and rangeland management activities would only have been compatible with the management direction of a special interest area. All activities associated with paleontological and scientific studies under alternative A would have only been authorized under special use permits. Motorized use under alternative A would have followed the Forest Travel Plan Record of Decision.

Alternative C (no action) continued current management for the area as described in the Forest Plan (Gallatin Forest Plan Chapter III). Several management areas are included in the area. Established activities such as studies related to research of rangeland and forest plant communities would have continued under annual special use permits approved by the District Ranger. Paleontological excavations would also have continued. The tentatively suitable forestlands would have continued to be scheduled for sustained yield forest management practices as directed in the Forest Plan. Livestock would have continued to be grazed at the current levels. No Forest Plan Amendment was proposed under alternative C and protection of botanical and paleontological resources would not have occurred.

Alternatives Considered but not Evaluated in Detail

Several alternatives were considered but not studied in detail. One alternative that was considered but eliminated by the ID Team was to include an evaluation of travel management for the proposed Bangtail SIA. It was determined that travel management decisions, while important to the integrity of the Bangtail SIA, are not within the scope of this analysis and was best evaluated in the Forest travel planning process. Other alternatives eliminated included several alternative boundary configurations. After reviewing the boundaries in the field and by using computerized mapping (GIS) it was determined that the boundary will be best if located along section lines and along portions of sections rather than geographic features. This is because the ID Team could not logically fit a boundary to the geographic features of the area. The ridge top location and mixed land ownerships for example did not allow boundaries to follow ridges or draws associated with watersheds (EA Figure 2).

Decision Criteria

In making a decision about this project I compared each alternative to the following criteria:

- Our legal and agency requirements to meet the Endangered Species Act;

- How well the alternatives resolves the issues;
- Whether the purpose and need of the project is being met;
- Whether there is a need to conduct any additional analysis and public review of the project;

Our legal and agency requirements to meet the Endangered Species Act:

Findings documented in Chapter 3.2.2 of the EA document there are no significant issues related to wildlife. Activities proposed under all action alternatives are expected to impact individual animals but will not contribute to a measurable adverse or beneficial affect on wildlife. Mitigation #6 will provide review of the project areas for plants and animals prior to activities. I believe the design of alternative B meets the requirements of the Endangered Species Act and for plants and wildlife not listed as threatened or endangered.

How well the alternatives resolve the issues:

Issues were identified through the scoping process. Scoping was an early and open process for determining the issues to be addressed related to a proposed action [40 CFR 1501.7]. There were three issues significant to my decision based on comments received during scoping and disclosed in the EA.

Issue #1: Reduction in Acres Suitable for Timber Production: Some of the forested land within the proposed Bangtail SIA is used to calculate the level of sustainable harvest estimated in the Gallatin Forest Plan. This is the Forest's allowable annual cut or allowable sale quantity (ASQ). Amending the Forest Plan to manage the area as Management Area 21 will reallocate those lands tentatively suitable for timber production to a non-regulated component meaning they will not be figured in as part of the ASQ. This could mean a reduction in the level of timber harvest on the Forest. It does not mean that forest management activities will be excluded but that the lands will not used to estimate the level of forest products that could be produced on a sustained yield basis. It does mean forest management activities in the area could be substantially reduced.

Among other things, current Forest Plan direction for the area includes timber and livestock production. Alternative B continues these opportunities but commercial forests will no longer contribute to the Forest's annual allowable sale quantity. Alternative B will result in only a fraction of a percent reduction in the amount of acres used across the Forest to estimate annual volume yields (EA Chapter 4.4.1). Much of this area has already been logged and near-future opportunities for harvesting timber are limited. Based on my knowledge of the area and the documentation in the EA I believe that removing these areas from the suitable timber base will have very limited effects.

Issue #2: Establishment of the Bangtail SIA and associated scientific studies could affect management of grazing allotments and visa versa: There was an issue identified that suggested the establishment of the Bangtail SIA could alter livestock management in the area. This could affect the economic livelihood of the permittees operating under Forest Service permit.

Based on the analysis documented in the EA in Chapter 4.4.2, no changes are proposed in the level, duration or timing of livestock grazing. Therefore, the establishment of the area as a special interest area will not directly affect the grazing of livestock including the operating costs to the permittee. It is possible that if areas are fenced there could be some minor amount of reduction for forage for livestock. However, based on the size of past studies this is expected to be minimal. If a more ambitious study is undertaken then grazing permittees could possibly experience increases or decreases in the number of livestock permitted. This will depend upon the type of study being

undertaken. If a scientific study is proposed that will require the permittee to reduce their livestock by more than just a few head then additional environmental analysis and public disclosure will be required as either an environmental impact statement, environmental assessment, or a decision memo (EA Chapter 4.4.2). Livestock grazing will continue as in the past since conflicts between past scientific research projects and grazing has been minimal (EA Chapter 4.4.2).

Issue #3: Noxious weeds and invasive species in general could affect how the Bangtail SIA is managed: Noxious weeds are a problem throughout the National Forest System and have been identified as a threat to the health of National Forests nationwide. The Bangtail Mountains have many infestations of plants on the Montana Noxious Weeds List. However, most infestations are only a few plants and most are located along roads. Noxious weeds could threaten the integrity of the native plant communities within the proposed Bangtail SIA.

Chapter 4.4.3 if the EA documents that overall, it is estimated weed treatments in the Bangtail SIA will continue and that the area is comparatively small, accessible, and the weed infestations are mostly along roadsides making treatment easier. Establishing the Special Interest Area will also create more oversight providing the detection of weeds and scheduling of treatment. Knowing these facts I can conclude that while weeds will be a threat to the ecological integrity of a special interest area this should not preclude establishing the Bangtail SIA.

All the alternatives adequately resolve the issues. Impacts associated with establishing the Bangtail SIA are minimal. Effects on timber production are minimal, no foreseeable changes in allotment management are predicted at this point, the noxious weed problem will not be aggravated by establishing the Bangtail SIA, and establishment may help focus efforts on weed control in the area (EA Chapter 4.4).

Whether the purpose and need of the project is being met:

Section 3.2 of the EA documents numerous past and ongoing studies of the area. Based upon review of the Establishment Record in Appendix 1 of the EA this area has very special qualities that need to be protected for future generations. Alternative C does not meet the purpose and need of establishing an SIA. Alternative A would have established the SIA but at a smaller size I do not believe adequately protects the special resources based on scientist's recommendations. The purpose for the Bangtail SIA is to provide long-term protection to an area for scientific research opportunities on mountain meadow and sub-alpine ecosystems, and to provide research sites for important paleontological resources of North America. Alternative B best accomplishes this purpose and need by providing a balance of resource protection, opportunities for scientific research, and continued and expanding knowledge of important resources in the area for the public good.

Whether there needs to be any additional analysis and public review of the project:

I do not feel there are any reasons to extend the public comment period on the project or to conduct further analysis. There has been ample public notification of this project and few persons responded. This indicates to me the project has a low level of controversy. It does not conflict with other policies, laws regulations, objectives or public needs, and, the level and extent of analysis is commensurate with the scope of the anticipated environmental effects (see following Finding of no Significant Impact).

Public Involvement and Overview of the Public Involvement Process

The project has been included in the quarterly projects list for the Gallatin National Forest since April of 2005. Letters proposing the project were sent to 45 government agencies, special interest groups and members of the public. Five letters were received all in favor of establishing the Bangtail SIA. All the grazing permittees in the area were sent letters announcing the project and none responded with any comments. This low level of response indicates to me that the project is of very low controversy.

Once the alternatives were identified, the environmental analysis was completed by the ID Team and documented in the environmental assessment (EA). Those persons that expressed an interest in receiving a copy of the EA were sent one for a 30-day comment period. Also, the EA was available on the Gallatin Website to those with computer access. The Bozeman Daily Chronicle published a legal notice notifying the public about the availability of the EA for comments on April 2, 2007.

Consideration of Public and Other Agency Comments

No comments were received during the 30 comment period. This again indicates to me the project has a very low level of controversy. It is my decision to implement the project as proposed with no modifications.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined through review of the Environmental Assessment for Establishment of the Bangtail Botanical and Paleontological Environmental Assessment (EA) that this is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. In the context of local and national significance [40 CFR 1508.27(a)], establishment of the Bangtail SIA will not be of large importance to many people and the majority of persons traveling to the area will not notice a change in the way the area is managed. Establishment of the Bangtail SIA of the area will be more relevant to the scientific community and the general public will benefit indirectly through knowledge gained from the area.

The level of intensity (severity) of the project is not significant and I base this determination on the following criteria:

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Chapter 4.4 of the EA documents minimal beneficial or adverse impacts upon the human environment.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

No public safety or health issues were identified during the public scoping or environmental analysis process (EA Chapter 2.3).

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area.

The area has unique characteristics in the form of paleontological resources and the area is unique from the standpoint of its location and utility as a research area. Both of which establishment of the Bangtail SIA are designed to protect. No roadless, wilderness or other special resources would be affected by the proposal (EA Chapter 4.4.7).

4) The degree to which the effects of the decision on the quality of the human environment are likely to be controversial.

Forty-five letters were sent out during the scoping process and only five responses were received. Of these responses only three issues were generated. During the 30-day comment period no responses were received. This indicates the project has a very low level of controversy. An editorial in the Bozeman Chronicle was very complementary of the project and drew no adverse comments that I know of. Special interest areas have been established in other areas of Region 1 and their establishment does not appear to be a highly controversial. Since there were no comments received on the EA it can be concluded that there is little or no controversy over the predicted effects disclosed within it.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Other special interest areas have been established in Region 1 of the Forest Service. Their establishment has not involved effects that were highly uncertain or involved unique or unknown risks. This project will be very similar to those special interest areas previously established.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Establishment of the Bangtail SIA does not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Based on the level of activities outlined in the EA for Alternative B, the establishment of scientific studies and excavation of paleontological specimens will not result in future significant actions.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

This action is not related to other projects occurring in the Bangtail Mountains. Very little resource management activity occurs in the Bangtails on public lands. There has been some prescribed burning in past years in the Bangtail Mountains and an ongoing road decommissioning project (EA Chapter 3.4). Neither of which cumulatively result in significant impacts. The decision to establish the Bangtail SIA would not result in other projects being proposed that may result in significant effects.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

No sites identified for potential listing in the National Register of Historic Places exist in the project area (EA Chapter 4.4.7). Mitigation #7 in Chapter 2.5.5 includes mitigation to protect cultural or historic resources in the event something is found.

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Chapter 3.2.2 of the EA documents the minimal effects on wildlife in general and no adverse effects on endangered or threatened species.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

A review of applicable Federal, Montana State and local laws required for the protection of the environment was conducted. The project complies with these laws (EA Chapter 4.4.8).

Findings Required by Other Laws, Regulations, and Policies

This project does not violate any Federal, State, or local laws or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment (EA, Chapters 1.6 and 4.4.8). This action is consistent with the 1987 Gallatin Forest Plan (as amended). Chapter 3.2.2 of the EA indicates the establishment of the

Bangtail SIA is consistent with the Endangered Species Act (1974). No effects will occur related to streams, lakes, waterways, etc. therefore the project is consistent with all laws and regulations governing protection of water quality (EA Chapter 2.4). The National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 are met by following the Forest Plan and by conducting the environmental analysis using Forest Service guidelines for implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act including a public involvement process (EA Chapter 2.2).

Finding of Non-significant Forest Plan Amendment

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) regulations contain a provision that allows for amending Forest Plans [16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), 1982]. My decision amends the Gallatin Forest Plan to change management direction within the boundaries of the Bangtail SIA to be consistent with that of a special interest area. For amendments, the NFMA regulations require the decision-maker (me) to determine whether the amendment will result in a significant change to the Forest Plan based on an analysis of the objectives, guidelines and other contents of the Forest Plan. Establishment of the Bangtail SIA follows Regional and Forest Service guidance for establishing these areas.

Based on the analysis and other information provided with the EA (Chapters 1.1-1.3, Chapters 4.1-4.5, and Appendices 1 and 2), I have determined that my amendment decision is not significant. A list of factors were considered in making this determination. These include timing: location and size: goals, objectives and outputs; and management prescription.

Timing: This Forest Plan amendment is to become effective immediately, or at such time that any stay of this decision is lifted. It also applies indefinitely.

Location and Size: Location of the area where the amendment applies is about 22 miles by road northeast of the City of Bozeman. The area is frequently used by the public for a variety of recreational activities. The area has a history of commercial and non commercial forest management activities, livestock grazing, and public firewood cutting. This Forest Plan amendment amends management on approximately 3,366 acres. Amending the management of this area is a very small portion of the Forest as a whole.

Goals, Objectives, and Outputs:

The overall goals, objectives and outputs described in the Forest Plan will not change significantly. Reductions in commodity output, including timber production, are expected to be very minimal especially when viewed across the entire Forest (EA Chapter 4.4).

Management Direction: Management Areas within the Bangtail SIA to be amended include those displayed in table 1.0. Actual changes in management direction would be minimal except for the important change of managing the area for the study, enjoyment and protection for botanical and paleontological features. It is evident from the EA Chapter 4.4 that much of the area has been logged and no logging is planned in the near future. Livestock grazing will be minimally affected and no changes in grazing strategies are planned under this decision. Therefore, the effects on the output of forest products and livestock grazing are minimal. All other activities currently allowed under the Forest Plan would continue with minimal or no change. Appendix 2 in the EA describes the amendments to the Forest Plan.

Table 1.0 Management direction being amended in the Bangtail SIA.

Management Areas	Acres	Management Area Emphasis
1	33	Visitor sites and potential developed sites
10	615	Forest management and livestock grazing
11	455	Big game forested habitat
16	245	Livestock grazing
17	62	Livestock and wildlife forage production
99	1956	Unclassified lands recently acquired by the Gallatin

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

My decision is subject to appeal under 36 CFR 217. Any notice of appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 217.9. Written appeals sent through the US Postal Service must be sent to: USDA Forest Service, Attn: EMC Appeals, Mail Stop 1104, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-1104. Appeals sent through FedEx, UPS, or a courier service must be sent to: USDA Forest Service, Ecosystem Management Coordination, Attn: Appeals, Yates Bldg., 3CEN, 201 14th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20250. Simultaneously, a copy of the notice of appeal should be sent to me: Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, MT 59807.

Appeals may be faxed to the Reviewing Officer at (202)-205-1012. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to appeals-chief@fs.fed.us. The appeal must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic appeals. Please put the project name in the “subject” line. Written appeals must be submitted within 45 days of the date specified in the legal notice of this decision published in the Missoulian (Missoula, Montana), the Great Falls Tribune (Great Falls, Montana) and the Billings Gazette (Billings, Montana).

Implementation

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day appeal period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact John Councilman, Resource Assistant, Bozeman Ranger District, 370 Fallon Street, Suite C, Bozeman, Montana 59718. Phone: (406) 522-2533.

TOM TIDWELL
Regional Forester

Date