

# ISSUE 21: WILDERNESS, WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS AND RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS

## Changes from the Draft to the Final EIS

All tables were corrected to reflect changes to Alternative 7-M. Effects discussions relative to Alternative 7-M were added. Alternative 6 was changed between DEIS and FEIS to show the effects of prohibiting mountain bikes within the Lionhead RW, and the expanded snowmobile closure in Watkins Creek to encompass a more enforceable snowmobile closure boundary that would prohibit snowmobiles within the entire RW. A more detailed description of the effects of Alternative 6 was added to the discussion about the Lionhead RW. References to legislative records and hearings prior to the passage of the Montana Wilderness Study Act S. 393 were added. The cumulative effects discussion was expanded. The effects of proposed programmatic direction were revised to reflect changes in that direction in the FEIS. Figure 3.21.3 was corrected to more accurately reflect data submitted to Congress by the Montana Snowmobile Association during hearings for S. 393. Figure 3.21.1 was updated to reflect the most current DRAFT LAC opportunities class maps for wilderness. A discussion about 40 CFR 1502.22 – Incomplete or unavailable information, was added to the Methods description.

## Introduction

Travel Plan decisions regarding the use of trails and dispersed areas have the potential to affect Wilderness qualities, and characteristics of Recommended Wilderness (RW) and Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).

The public has raised concern that accreting motorized and mechanized recreation use of trails and areas in RWs and WSAs is detrimental to qualities that make them suitable for future Wilderness designation. Three specific concerns were raised:

- 1) The physical impacts that motorized vehicles are having on trails that were originally designed for hiking or stock (single-track trails becoming double track), erosion and spread of weeds.
- 2) Increasing noise and volume of traffic (affecting opportunities for solitude and a primitive recreation experience).
- 3) The precedent that establishing motorized and mechanized use in an area might have on its future “designate-ability” as Wilderness.

The Gallatin Forest is currently party to a lawsuit filed by the Montana Wilderness Association in 1996 regarding management of motorized recreation in WSAs. The case remains unresolved and demonstrates the contentiousness of this issue. Settlement discussions were initiated with MWA in the spring of 2006.

In designated Wilderness areas, issues were raised concerning the appropriateness of pack and saddle stock use on certain trails and in certain areas. Mixing stock use with heavy pedestrian traffic in some areas was voiced as a safety concern. The cross-country use of pack and saddle stock in fragile areas is also a concern, as evidenced by impacted sites, creation of unauthorized

user created trails and trail erosion. Administrative discretion about the manner in which trails are maintained or developed (maintenance levels and trail classes) is also a concern relative to maintaining Wilderness character. That is, more intensively managed and constructed trails may be inappropriate within certain zones of the Wilderness. Another issue raised during scoping was the potential for travel management decisions to affect snowmobile trespass into designated Wilderness.

## Affected Environment

The Gallatin National Forest manages significant portions of the Absaroka Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. The Forest also manages one Congressionally-designated Wilderness Study Area; the Hyalite/Porcupine-Buffalo Horn (HPBH). The Gallatin Forest Plan (USDA 1987) recommended that 22,000 additional acres of roadless lands in the Lionhead and Republic roadless units be added to the National Wilderness Preservation system. Table 3.21.1 shows the breakout of these areas (from the Roadless Final Rule 2001). Discrepancies between the acres of recommended Wilderness shown in the Gallatin Forest Plan Record of Decision (21,461 acres in Lionhead and 480 acres in Republic Mountain) and the Roadless Final Rule (USDA 2001) of 28,000 acres are primarily due to map errors between the old hand drawn maps from the Forest Plan and GIS maps produced for the Roadless Final Rule.

**Table 3.21. 1 Approximate acres of Wilderness, WSAs and recommended Wilderness on the Gallatin Forest.**

Total Forest Acres	Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness	Lee Metcalf Wilderness	Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area	Lionhead and Reef Recommended Wilderness
1,808,259	575,771*	140,594*	155,000	28,000

\* reflects only the Gallatin Forest portions of these areas.

## Designated Wilderness

### Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness

Congress designated the Absaroka Beartooth (AB) Wilderness Area in 1978 (PL 95-249). It encompasses a total of 943,626 acres. The Montana portion contains 920,343 acres, divided between the Gallatin and Custer National Forests. The Wyoming portion contains 23,283 acres (located on the Shoshone National Forest).

Active glaciers, sweeping tundra plateaus (one of the largest expanses of tundra habitat over 10,000 feet in elevation in the lower 48 states), deep canyons, sparkling streams, and hundreds of alpine lakes combine to make this one of the most outstanding Wilderness areas in America. Granite Peak, the tallest peak in Montana, towers at 12,799 feet in the middle of the A-B Wilderness.

The Absaroka Mountains (named after the Crow Indians - Apsalooka) have ample vegetative cover, including dense forests and broad mountain meadows crossed by meandering streams. Bighorn sheep and mountain goats roam about the mostly rugged country, along with elk, deer, moose, marmots, coyotes, black bears, wolves and a substantial grizzly bear population. The harsher Beartooths (named for the resemblance of a bear's tooth to some of the craggy peaks) are

characterized by rocks and ice. Fewer animals roam these rocky highlands. Trout reside in many of the lakes and streams in both ranges.

With over 700 miles of trail in the AB, this area is a hiking, backpacking and equestrian haven. Hiking and backpacking are more popular in the Beartooths, while traditional stock supported pack trips and hunting adventures are more common in the Absaroka portion. The nearly one million acres of Wilderness provide ample opportunities for primitive unconfined recreation, and solitude. Many portions of the area are trail-less and rarely traveled. All motorized or mechanized recreation activities are prohibited in Wilderness.

### **Lee Metcalf Wilderness**

Congress passed the Lee Metcalf (LM) Wilderness bill in 1983, designating a total of 254,288 acres. The entire Wilderness is in the State of Montana, on the Gallatin and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

This Wilderness consists of four separate units in the Madison Range. Landscapes vary from a huddle of high peaks rising above 10,000 feet and subalpine meadows, to the arid river corridor in Bear Trap Canyon managed by the BLM. The BLM manages all 6,000 acres of the Bear Trap Canyon Unit, a stretch of wild canyon country along the Madison River. This was the first designated Wilderness on BLM land. Because the Gallatin Forest does not manage the Beartrap Unit of the Lee Metcalf, and none of these travel management decisions would directly affect the unit, it will not be included in this analysis.

The Monument Mountain Unit lies on the northwest boundary of Yellowstone National Park. It is an isolated area lightly visited by humans, but rich in wildlife, including a robust population of grizzly bears. All 30,000+ acres are on the Gallatin Forest.

The 78,000-acre Spanish Peaks Unit encompasses steeply rugged, glaciated peaks rising more than 11,000 feet above scenic cirques and gem-like lakes. This heavily used area, a favorite of local and regional visitors, hosts a well-developed trail system and many popular destinations.

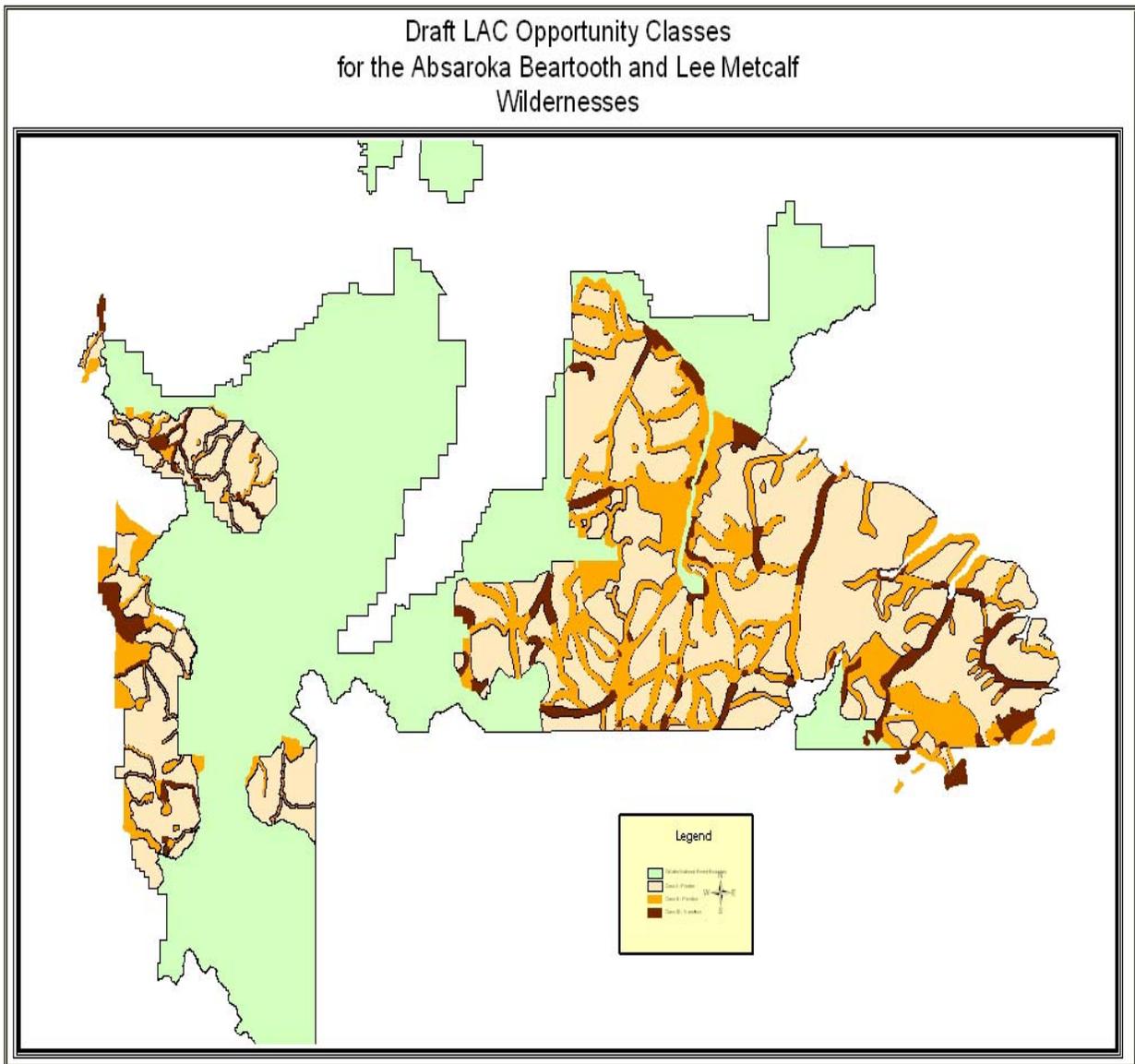
At about 141,000 acres, the Taylor-Hilgard Unit is the largest. It runs along the crest of the Madison Range, with several peaks exceeding 11,000 feet above the Hilgard Basin. High mountain meadows and lakes are surrounded by snowcapped summits. This unit is jointly managed by the Gallatin and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests.

Trails link these four units. Deer, elk, moose, mountain lions, mountain goats, black bears, wolves and grizzly bears abound. The lakes and streams are home to cutthroats, graylings, rainbows, and brookies. Day hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, hunting and fishing are the most popular recreation activities.

The Gallatin Forest Plan (USDA 1987) directed Wilderness managers to update wilderness management direction for managing opportunities for solitude and primitive/unconfined recreation opportunities in Wilderness. The process prescribed for doing this is the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) System for Wilderness Planning (Stankey et al. 1985). The Absaroka Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wilderness managers begun an agency-driven version of this planning process in the

mid-1990s. Three opportunity classes were defined and mapped for the AB and LM as an inventory (Figure 3.21.1). Inventory and monitoring work has been ongoing since to validate the original LAC polygons, and to support a final version of the LAC zones and associated standards and guidelines. The inventory of existing conditions is displayed in Figure 3.21.1 to provide the baseline of resource conditions (similar to the ROS mapping for the non-Wilderness portion of the Forest). A complete description of the three opportunity classes and draft management direction for each zone is available in the project file.

**Figure 3.21. 1 Draft LAC opportunity classes for the Absaroka Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses.**



## Hyalite/Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area

The Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (P.L. 95-150) created eight WSAs in Montana, including the HPBH. This study area is located in the roadless core of the Gallatin Range, running north to Hyalite Canyon and south to the Yellowstone National Park boundary. In the early 1980s, the Forest Service studied the suitability of the area for inclusion in the Wilderness preservation system, and recommended that it not be designated Wilderness at that time. The checkerboard ownership pattern was largely responsible for the conclusion that the area was unsuitable for Wilderness designation. Since then, nearly 37,000 acres of private land have been acquired within the HPBH boundary.

The following characterizations of the HPBH WSA are excerpts from a more extensive report that details changed resource and social conditions in the area from 1977 to 2003. For a more complete report of historic and current conditions within the HPBH, see the report (Schlenker 2003).

The Forest Service produced the initial HPBH WSA report in 1985 (USDA 1985). This was a legislative Environmental Impact Statement required by Congress. Much of the early documentation in this report comes from this study, which is referred to throughout the rest of this discussion as “the study.”

### Roads and trails

Table 3.21.2 provides a summary of existing roads and trails determined by digitizing the 1977 Travel Plan map. According to the study, approximately 21 miles of road had been constructed or proposed by private landowners within the study area. Nearly all of the roads were built to access adjacent private land for timber harvest, or were old two-tracks used to access allotments or private land. The trails shown in the table below are Forest Service system trails that appear on the 1977 map. Additional user-built trails and old stock driveways existed, but there is no inventory of them.

**Table 3.21. 2 Roads and trails in the HPBH WSA in 1977.**

Miles of Road in 1977	Miles of Trail in 1977
Roads on National Forest $\approx$ 8.4 miles	Forest System Trails $\approx$ 175.5 miles
Roads on private land $\approx$ 18.6 miles	User-built routes $\approx$ unknown
Total Roads $\approx$ 27 miles	

### Timber activities

Timber harvest, associated road construction, and subsequent stand improvement activities had taken place on over 2,100 acres of private land within the HPBH WSA boundary. A query of the current timber stand database did not substantiate that figure exactly. A review of current digital ortho-photography verifies that at least seven sections of private land located within the boundary had past timber activity, but the dates and exact acreages of harvest are not known.

According to the study, approximately 400 acres of federal land had been harvested for timber by 1977. A review of 1971 resource aerial photography indicates that all of the timber harvest within the HPBH study area, except harvest just west of South Cottonwood drainage, occurred before 1971. A small portion of the acres harvested appears to have been trespass harvest by private

loggers. Additionally, most of the roads within the WSA are associated with old harvest, most of which occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. A precise tally of acres of timber harvested before 1977 is unavailable, but all of the obvious harvest visible on current aerial photos was present in the early 1970s, except for the upper Little Bear harvest in Section 35. This harvest occurred between 1971 and 1981, and was associated with removal of right-of-way timber on a road easement granted to Plum Creek Timber Company to access their property.

## **Recreation**

The study states that the HPBH WSA received about 45,000 recreation visitor days of use annually in 1977. Visitor use at that time primarily included hiking, camping, hunting, snowmobiling, motorcycle riding, horseback riding, collecting specimens from the Gallatin Petrified Forest and cross-country skiing. The study noted that big game hunting, fishing for trout and grayling, activities provided by outfitters and guides and dude ranches (the 320 Ranch in Buffalo Horn, the Mountain Sky Guest Ranch in Big Creek, and the B-Bar Ranch in Tom Miner) were also popular.

The study stated that recreation use was probably heaviest in the Hyalite Peaks area. Information from the old unit plans (USDA 1974) suggests that the heaviest use was in the Porcupine (1,000 visitors/year) and Buffalo Horn (>1,500 visitors/year) areas.

The 1974 Unit Plan indicated that snowmobiling was a prominent use, with an estimate of > 3,000 snowmobile visitors annually in 1974. The Big Sky Snowmobile Trail bisects the HPBH WSA north to south in the Porcupine and Buffalo Horn drainages. It was designed and built in the late 1960s.

Recreation use data for the HPBH is limited. No statistically sound studies relative to use trends in the HPBH have ever been done.

Outfitters and guides were operating in the study area, both on public and private land in 1977. At that time, the Forest Service only issued permits to overnight hunting outfitters. None of the day use activities (like the horseback rides radiating from the dude ranches) were under permit in 1977. The number of permitted outfitters in 1977 is unknown. The study indicates that there were numerous outfitter camps located in Steel, Bark Cabin, Porcupine and Buffalo Horn Creeks.

The Gallatin Petrified Forest is located at the southern end of the WSA. It attracts visitors wanting to collect petrified wood samples. In 1977, the Forest Service permit system limited collectors to 25 pounds/person/day or 100/pounds/year.

## **HPBH WSA Wilderness Character – General Assessment**

The study draws general conclusions about the area's suitability for Wilderness designation and indirectly addresses the characteristics of apparent naturalness, natural integrity, remoteness and opportunities for solitude. The following are quotes from the study relating to these characteristics:

*“Most of the area is suitable for wilderness consideration. Impacts to the area's natural integrity and appearance tend to be on the area's periphery. Natural appearance of the area will be affected*

*in a few places by sight or sounds from outside the boundaries, but these disturbances would probably affect less than 5 percent of the area.”*

*“The presence of rugged mountain peaks and occupied grizzly bear habitat within the area could add an element of challenge and risk to some recreational experiences.”*

*“Natural integrity of the area has been affected in a number of places, mostly on the area’s periphery. Four sections of private land within the boundary have been clearcut and logged south of Big Creek. About 1.5 miles of road has been built within the boundaries on the east side near Steamboat Mountain, and a Forest Service permit has been issued to extend the road about 2 more miles. About 5 miles of road are planned by Burlington Northern in Porcupine Creek and a Forest Service permit has been issued for this road. Both the Rock Creek and Porcupine roading are intended to access timber on private section of checkerboard. Impacts of the Porcupine Road and related timber harvest may be avoided if a proposed land exchange is implemented for this area.”*

*“The Forest Service has granted Burlington Northern a permanent easement to access the Fox Creek drainage for timber harvest.”*

*“The Pine Creek road enters the Eightmile Creek area crossing about ¼ mile of National Forest in Section 12 and about ½ mile of private land in Section 13. At the end of this road in Section 13 is a tumbled down sawmill with rusting machinery. Section 13 was extensively logged about 20 years ago (1950s) and has several partially regenerated clearcuts. Beside this development, a new road has recently been built up to the MWSA boundary at the northeast corner of Section 13; it appears that the private owners will use this new road to conduct additional harvest activities in Section 13, and possibly in other of the private inholdings.”*

*“The instances of roading and logging within the area’s boundaries, described in the previous paragraphs, have resulted in 2,500 acres being rendered unsuited to wilderness. Concerning this development, 2,100 acres of private land have been affected and 400 acres of National Forest.”*

*“Additional evidence of humans includes a Forest Service Cabin at Windy Pass, and a private cabin near Mud Lake in the Eightmile drainage. Developed base camps used by outfitters are found in Steele and Bark Cabin Creek. There are also three electronic sites, on Twin and Eaglehead Peaks, and Packsaddle Peaks. (Note: the Packsaddle site is actually on Sheep Mountain.) The Twin Peaks electronic site is conspicuous and can be seen from most high points in the area. The others are less visually obtrusive.”*

*“The chief impediment to the manageability of the area (as wilderness) is the private, checkerboard inholdings...”*

*“Presently motorbikes are allowed on all trails in the area, creating some noise impacts...” (Note: 1977 travel map excluded motorbikes from several trails within the HPBH study area, contrary to this statement.)*

*“The experience of solitude is difficult to achieve on major trails or the most popular campsites during warm months because of the popularity of the area. Solitude can be achieved by seeking out*

*less frequented areas. The rugged character of the area contributes to topographical screening and enhances opportunities for solitude. Opportunity for solitude is high in most of the Gallatin Range except in frequented areas like trail junctions, popular camping sites or the better fishing lakes.”*

The conclusion of the study was to not recommend the HPBH WSA for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

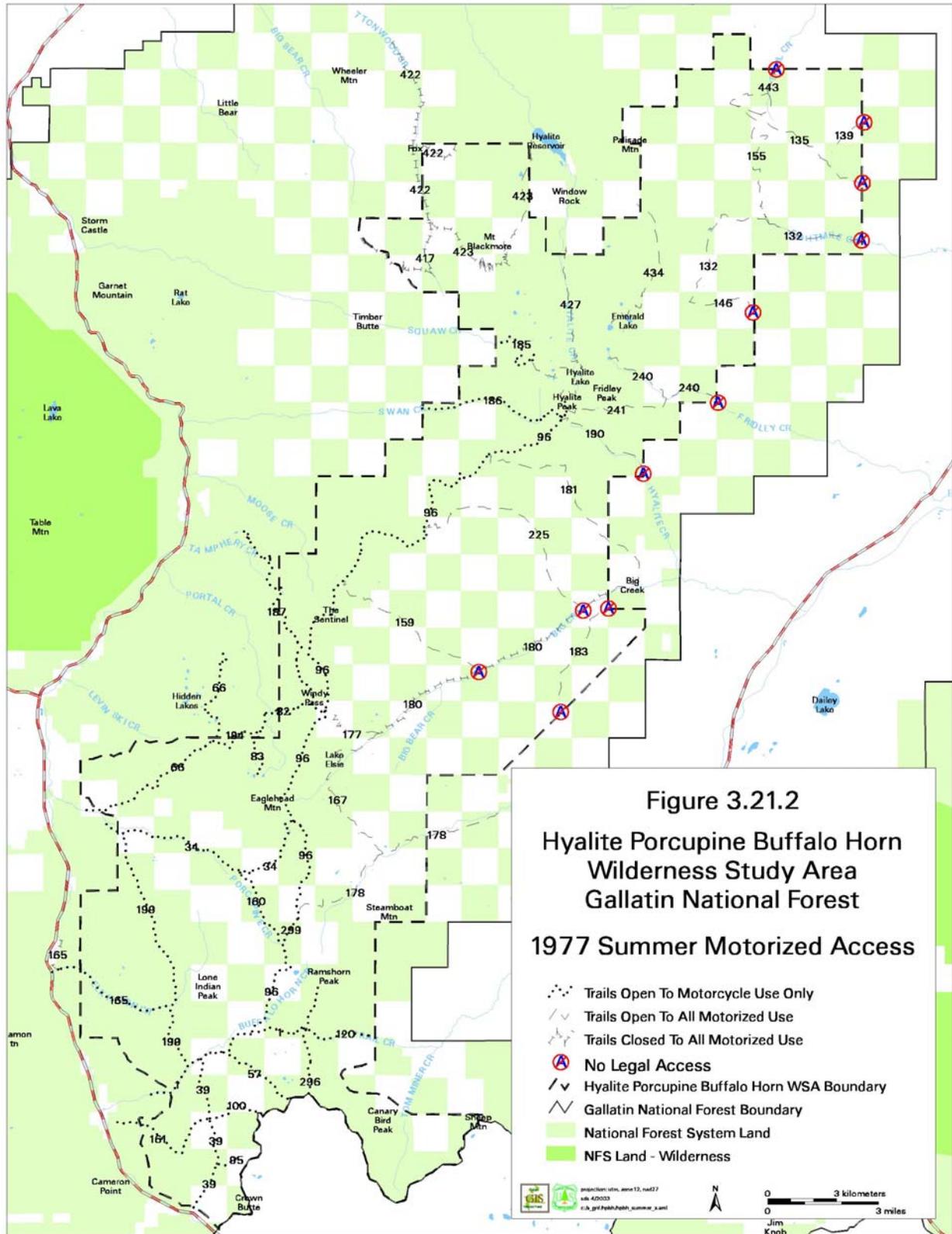
### **HPBH WSA Travel Plan Allocations in 1977**

In 1977, essentially all of the trails on the west side of the HPBH WSA, the Gallatin Crest trail, and the Tom Miner trail on the east side, were open to motorcycles or trail vehicles < 40” wide in the summer. Summer motorized use was totally restricted on three trails: the Skyline Ridge trail along the Yellowstone National Park boundary, the South Cottonwood trails, and the Big Creek trail. See Figure 3.21.2 for a graphic of open motorized routes in 1977.

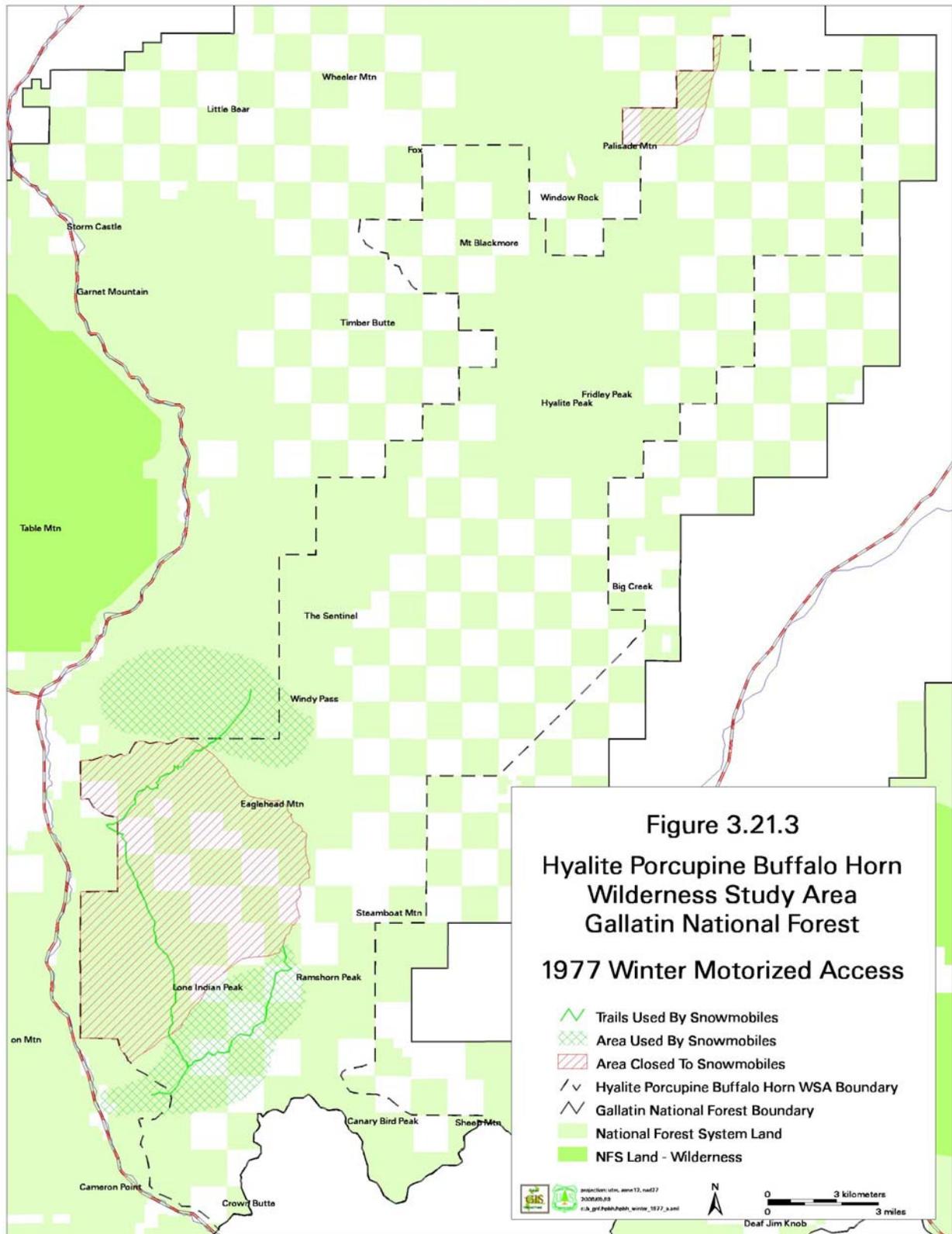
All the remaining trails on the east side of the Gallatin Divide were open to all types of summer motorized use, including jeeps and three-wheeled trikes. However, only the South Rock, Blackmore, Middle Fork of Hyalite, and East Fork of Hyalite Creek trails had legal public access. Further, they were essentially only used by motorcycles, because they are too steep and narrow for larger vehicles.

In the winter, most of the HPBH WSA was unrestricted to snowmobiles, with two exceptions. Snowmobiles were restricted to the Big Sky Snowmobile Trail in the entire Porcupine drainage and a portion of the Bozeman Creek drainage was closed to snowmobiles. About 19,313 acres were closed to snowmobiles. In spite of the fact that most of the WSA was legally open to snowmobile use, only a small portion of it was actually used (D. Michel, USDA Forest Service, personal communication). Snowmobiling on the entire east side of the WSA was extremely limited or non-existent in 1977 (J. Walker, USDA Forest Service, personal communication). Documentation provided to the Gallatin NF during the DEIS comment period from a retired MT Department of FWP Game Warden, George Hubbard, indicated that he spent the majority of his snowmobile patrol time in the HPBH in the Porcupine and Buffalo Horn areas (Hubbard, 2005). He felt this was indicative of the concentration of snowmobile use in these areas. See Figure 3.21.3 for a map depicting the approximate area of snowmobile use in 1977. This figure approximates a figure submitted to Congress by the Montana Snowmobile Association during hearings regarding WSA creation (page 192 of Ninety Fourth Congress hearings on S. 393). The map submitted to Congress was a depiction of popular snowmobile play areas in the proposed S. 393 study areas, including the Buffalo Horn and Portal Creek play areas.

Figure 3.21. 2 HPBH WSA 1977 summer motorized use map.



**Figure 3.21.3 Estimated snowmobile use areas in the HPBH WSA in 1977.**



## **HPBH WSA Current Conditions**

This discussion will focus on roads and trails, since those features are most relevant to travel planning discussions. More extensive discussions of existing conditions in the HPBH WSA may be found in the full report in the project record (Schlenker 2003).

### **Roads and trails**

No new trails have been constructed since 1977. Apparent mileage discrepancies between then and now are due to better digital trail mileage data today. There are approximately 205 miles of trail within the HPBH WSA today. The primary management objective for these trails is pack and saddle stock and hiking, though many of them are currently open to some motorized uses. The Alternative 2 map best displays which routes are legal for which uses today. This map incorporates the Montana/North Dakota (MT/ND) OHV Statewide decision into the 1999 Travel Plan map.

Table 3.21.3 provides a current summary of roads located within the WSA. A map of these roads is on file at the Gallatin National Forest Supervisor's Office. Nearly all of the roads within the WSA were built to access adjacent private land for timber harvest before 1971. None of these old timber roads are proposed for future recreational use in any alternative, except Rock Creek where it has been converted to the trail.

In 1996, there was a road restoration project on the Rock Creek road (including ripping, debris scattering, seeding and water-barring) inside the WSA. The purpose was to minimize sediment and soil movement on the road corridor, and since the road was no longer needed, to convert it to a trail. Approximately 1.5 miles were restored, though the old roadbed is still evident.

In 2001, six miles of the road in the West Pine drainage was completely re-contoured and seeded after the Fridley Creek fire. These roads were used for logging access to Section 13, before the Forest Service acquired it.

Many of the old roads that brush the fringe of the study area or that are on private sections of land within it, date back to timber harvest in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Many of these old logging roads have grown back in with trees and ground cover. Satellite imagery shows approximately 34 miles of old roads within the WSA that can still be seen. A thorough search of our records did not reveal the construction date of most of these roads, and they are not on our historic maps. Most of these roads were on private land before the Gallatin land exchanges of the 1990s.

Table 3.21.3 displays these roads and the little data we have on them. Construction dates of many of these roads and anecdotal information came from personal interviews with retired Forest Service employees John Pines and Lloyd Harris, who were forestry technicians on the Gallatin National Forest during the 1970s and were involved with timber sale activities. The pre-1971 construction dates are based on the roads being visible on 1971 aerial photography. The table includes many more old abandoned roads than appear on the alternative maps as either administrative or project roads. This data was interpreted from satellite maps for the HPBH WSA effects analysis comparing 1977 to 2003 conditions.

**Table 3.21. 3 Current condition of existing roads within the HPBH WSA.**

Road or Area	Date Constructed	Estimated Mileage	Comments/Current Condition
Teepee Creek	Pre-1971	0.94 mi Private 0.96 miles FS 1.9 miles Total	Two-track melting back to a trail. Two-track primarily on state land. Closed to wheeled vehicle travel in the 1990s during a trailhead reconstruction project.
Upper Portal Creek Road # 2686	1977 Windy Pass Timber Sale	0.22 mi FS	Small extension of larger timber sale road system. Road is grown over.
Middle Portal	1950s or 60s	0.95 mi FS	Old harvest skid trails built in the 1950s and 60s during a large timber sale era. Grown over, but still visible.
Fox Creek/Upper Little Bear	1971-1981	0.99 mi FS	This road was probably built to access timber in the adjacent Plum Creek Section 35, which was never harvested. Right-of-way timber harvested along the road between 1971-1981. Reference to the road is made in the study as a “permanent easement granted to Plum Ck. to access their timber lands.” Road prism still evident but growing in and not used (barricaded).
Blackmore	Late 1960s	0.68 mi FS	Grown in skid road, built in the late 1960s during active harvest era in Hyalite drainage. Some of the old road prism is evident, as are old burn bays and slash debris within the young lodgepole pine plantation.
Upper West Pine	1950s, 1970s and 1990s	6.0 mi FS (previously Private)	Approximately 2 miles of this old road was built in the 1950s to access Plum Creek land for timber harvest. Approximately 4 miles were built in 1999-2001 to access reserve timber ties to Gallatin land exchanges. All 6 miles were recontoured after the Fridley fire in 2001 and are now obliterated.
Pole Gulch	Pre-1971	1.15 mi FS	Appears to have been trespass timber harvest road. Old roads mostly grown over, burned in 2001, and rehabbed post-fire.
Upper Dry Creek	Pre-1971	0.1 mi FS	Old trespass harvest. Road grown over. No records.
Big Creek Road #2500 and old wagon road	Main road and trailhead around 1950	0.7 mi FS (previously Private)	0.1 miles of Big Creek road #2500 currently used to access trailhead. 0.6 miles of old wagon road used to access range improvements on Coopers Bench – nearly invisible, mostly horseback use.
Donahue	Pre-1971	12.05 mi Private	HPBH boundary diagonally bisects sections 25, 35, 3, and 9. Numerous old roads and harvest on private land harvested pre-1971. Some now used as part of Donahue trail in Sec. 3, closed to motorized use.
Rock Creek	Main road in place around 1950 when Rock Creek CG was built. Section 23 access road built in 1987 by Plum Creek.	3.0 mi FS	The exact construction date of the main Rock Creek road is unknown, but was likely sometime in the 1950s. 0.35 miles of that road are currently open inside the HPBH, accessing the Rock Creek trailhead and campground. A private road was constructed in 1987 to access Plum Creek timberlands in Section 23 for harvest that never took place. This road was partially recontoured, ripped, and seeded in 1996 and is open for motorized trail use.
Upper Tom Miner	Pre-1971	1.5 mi FS 5.0 mi Private 6.5 mi Total	1.5 miles of old two-track on FS land, not ever really constructed, likely an old stock driveway. Mostly invisible now except ATV use is evident. 5.0 miles on private access old timber harvest. Current condition unknown.
		<b>Total: 34.24 mi</b>	

### **Lionhead and Republic Mountain Recommended Wilderness**

The Lionhead RW addition straddles the Continental Divide along the Idaho/ Montana border. The roadless (and RW addition) portion of this area extends into Idaho on the Targhee National Forest. The Gallatin Forest Plan (USDA 1987) recommended adding 22,800 acres of the 32,780-acre roadless unit (Gallatin portion) to Wilderness. This recommendation has been in most of the

Montana Wilderness bills introduced as legislation in the 1990s. As yet, Congress has not acted to designate the area as Wilderness.

Land types and vegetation are varied in Lionhead RW, ranging from heavy timber to open grassy slopes. Bare rockland, talus and mountain grasslands dominate higher elevations from 9,000 to 10,311 feet. Scenic mountain vistas and high elevation grasslands along the Continental Divide dominate the area. Trails in the Mile Creek, Sheep Creek, Watkins Creek and Coffin Creek drainages access several cirque basins and small lakes. The southeast portion of the area receives some backcountry snowmobile use. The Sheep Creek trail is popular for hiking and horseback use, and receives occasional motorcycle traffic, as does the connector trail from Watkins Creek to Sheep Creek (#216). This area retains a high degree of natural integrity and appears natural to most visitors. Within the Lionhead RW addition, there are approximately 15 miles of trail (Mile Creek, Sheep Creek, Coffin Lake and West Fork trails). Currently, the Sheep Creek and West Fork trails are open to motorcycles. All the other trails within this RW are closed to motorized uses. The area is also closed to snowmobiles, though trespass in upper Watkins Creek and in the Slide Rock Creek drainage is common.

The Republic Mountain RW addition is located immediately south of Cooke City, Montana and borders the North Absaroka Wilderness to the south on the Shoshone National Forest and Yellowstone National Park to the east. This is a rugged trail-less area that is steep with numerous talus slopes, ravines and spur ridges. It retains a high degree of natural integrity, with the exception of some old mine workings along the northeast boundary. The area receives light use, mostly hiking, hunting and some backcountry skiing in the winter. The record of decision for the Gallatin Forest Plan identifies that 480 acres of this 700-acre roadless area were recommended as Wilderness. There are currently no motorized restrictions for any uses in the area though it receives little if any motorized use.

## **Direct and Indirect Effects**

### **Analysis Methodology**

Geographic Information System (GIS) spatial data was used to determine the location of Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas and IRAs relative to the proposed activities in the alternatives. The seven alternative trail management options were evaluated using GIS technology to determine mileage and acreage differences of recreation management options for roads and trails within these areas. Effects for the AB and LM Wilderness Areas and the HPBH WSA are described for those discrete areas. Wilderness units each have their own Travel Planning Areas (TPAs). The HPBH WSA spans the Gallatin Crest, Porcupine Buffalo Horn, Tom Miner and Sawtooth TPAs. All data is aggregated and displayed for the HPBH WSA discretely. Effects for RW areas are described separately (Lionhead and Republic Mountain, which include portions of the Lionhead and Cooke City TPAs).

Road and trail use allocations and associated management are evaluated for their potential effects on inherent characteristics of Wilderness. The characteristics include: natural integrity, apparent naturalness, remoteness/primitive recreation opportunities, solitude, management and boundaries. Management and boundaries are a discussion only relevant to RWs. That is, in what way might the

proposed alternative travel decisions affect the future boundaries and therefore pragmatic management of potential future Wilderness?

A Region 1 Supplement to the Forest Service Manual defines attributes of wilderness character as they apply to WSAs designated by S. 393 (FSM id2300-2005-1) :

2329 - Exhibit 01

**Definitions of Wilderness Characteristics**

**Natural Integrity**—*The extent to which long-term ecological processes are intact and functioning. Impacts to natural integrity are measured by the presence and magnitude of human-induced change to an area. Such impacts include physical developments (for example, roads, trails, utility rights-of-way, fences, lookouts, cabins, recreation developments, livestock grazing, mineral developments, wildlife/fisheries management activities, vegetative manipulation, and fire-suppression activities).*

**Apparent Naturalness**—*The environment looks natural to most people using the area. It is a measure of importance of visitors' perceptions of human impacts to the area. Even though some long-term ecological processes of an area may have been interrupted, generally the area landscape appears to be affected by forces of nature. If the landscape has been modified by human activity, the evidence is not obvious to the casual observer, or it is disappearing due to natural processes.*

**Opportunities for Primitive Recreation Experience**—*The area provides opportunities for isolation from evidence of man, a vastness of scale, feeling a part of the natural environment, having a high degree of challenge and risk, and using outdoor skills characterized by meeting nature on its own terms without comfort or convenience of facilities.*

**Opportunities for Solitude**—*Isolation from sights, sounds, presence of others and developments of man, focusing on features of the area that offer users outstanding opportunities for solitude; size of the area, presence of vegetation and topographic screening rather than focusing on amount of use.*

*Wilderness characteristics are taken from the Wilderness Attribute Rating System (WARS)—a system that was designed in 1977 to assess the capability of roadless areas for wilderness recommendation. This was the system used to rate the Montana Wilderness Study Areas in the study mandated by the WSA Act of 1977. These definitions may differ from definitions of wilderness characteristics in areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System.*

Several commentors to the DEIS recommended that effects analysis relative to wilderness character in the HPBH WSA consider changes in recreation use since 1977. The Gallatin National Forest does not have reliable (statistically valid) recreation use data available for this analysis, nor is it necessary to determine effects to the wilderness characteristics as described above. 40 CFR 1502.22 clarifies an Agency's obligations when there is "Incomplete or unavailable information" relative to evaluating reasonably foreseeable significant adverse effects on the human environment

in an environmental impact statement. Clarification of several points relative to 40 CFR 1502.22 are outlined below:

- 1502.22 (b) says that when “the information relevant to reasonably foreseeable significant adverse impacts cannot be obtained” ... because the “means to obtain it are not known” that the agency will include in the EIS a statement that such information is not available. Historic recreation use data specifically for the HPBH WSA is not available, nor is it possible to acquire such data at the present time.
- 1502.22 (b) (2) directs the Agency to provide a statement of relevance of the incomplete or unavailable information to evaluating reasonably foreseeable significant adverse effects on the human environment. Changes in recreation use have certainly occurred within the HPBH since 1977 – as they have in designated Wilderness on the Forest. However, the volume of recreation use was not a component the original WARS evaluations of these areas were conducted relative to opportunities for solitude. Rather the WARS analysis required consideration of the physical parameters of the area. Size, distance from roads, topographic and vegetative screening were the primary factors used to evaluate opportunities for solitude. Thus – discrete data that tracks changes in the volume of use over time are not necessary for evaluating the effects of proposed travel plan changes relative to WSA physical characteristics that provide opportunities for solitude.

## **Effects to Designated Wilderness**

This effects discussion is confined to travel management alternatives in the AB and LM Wildernesses. These areas are covered by five separate TPAs. In designated Wilderness, there are few changes proposed to trail management from current condition. No new trails are proposed in any alternative. Trails are presently managed for hiking and pack and saddle stock use. All motorized or mechanized recreation activities are prohibited by the Wilderness Act (P.L. 88-577).

In Alternative 1, there would be no changes to current management strategies for all trails within Wilderness. Trail maintenance would continue as in the past, reconstruction and reroutes included. Trails could be constructed in areas that are currently trail-less in this alternative. No seasonal restrictions or prohibitions to recreational stock users would be employed in Alternative 1. The lack of seasonal restrictions could perpetuate trail degradation in the spring, and allow some trails to become wider and more obtrusive from use by stock during spring breakup. In Alternative 1, there would be no prohibitions on any trails to stock, nor would stock be restricted from cross-country travel in this alternative in any location. The lack of stock restrictions in sensitive areas would perpetuate continued site impacts in sensitive high elevation areas, and lake basin destinations where stock-holding capability of the land is limited.

Alternatives 2-6 would make several changes to the way trails are currently managed. Seasonal restrictions would be employed on some trails within the Wilderness, restricting stock use during spring break up (April 1 to either May 15, June 1, June 15 or July 15). The restriction is designed to prevent damage to trails during the freeze/thaw cycle, and to protect fragile areas during times when soils are saturated and plants are in a delicate phenological growth phase. Plants and soil are most vulnerable to impacts during spring when plants are relying on stored nutrients for growth and soils are water logged (Hendee et al. 1990:461). The seasonal closure would prevent much of the early season damage to trails and minimize heavy maintenance needs. This would facilitate keeping trails

to a minimal “footprint” on the landscape, by minimizing tread creep, go-arounds, bog holes and wide muddy trails. In many portions of the Wilderness, trails are the most obvious sign of man’s presence. Minimizing the visual impacts from wet damaged trails and disturbed area around trails during spring breakup by using seasonal restrictions would maintain, and in some cases, improve apparent naturalness of the areas.

While this restriction would provide better resource protection of the facility and minimize impacts to apparent naturalness, additional user restrictions are philosophically counter to the Wilderness ideal in many peoples view. Wilderness is viewed as an area where challenge and risk are high and regulations few. Wilderness managers typically resort to additional user restrictions only where education and on-the-ground management techniques have been unsuccessful in mitigating an issue. In this case, the restrictions would be seasonal and of short duration, only affecting unconfined recreation opportunities for about six weeks on specific (not all) trails during a lightly used season. Many trails that originate in Yellowstone Park before entering the AB or LM Wildernesses have restrictions to stock use before July 1. Hiking would not be restricted in any alternative at any time.

Proposed Objectives A-3, A-4 and A-5 would apply to Alternatives 2 through 7-M. Goal J, Standard J(1) and Guidelines J(2 and 3) would apply in Alternative 7-M, and Goal N, Standard N(1), and Guidelines N(2-3) would apply in Alternatives 2-6. These goals, objectives and standards are prescriptive for trail classes and maintenance levels within each LAC opportunity class. Standard J(1) or N(1) would restrict any new trails from being constructed within the LAC opportunity class 1 areas; the currently trail-less areas within the AB and LM Wildernesses. This standard would ensure that natural integrity is not affected by system trails, and would help preserve large acreages of Wilderness in its wildest state. By not allowing new trails to be constructed in these areas, opportunities for solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities and sense of remoteness would be best preserved. This standard would ensure that the Wilderness management concept of managing Wilderness for non-degradation (Hendee et al. 1990:183) would not be affected by trail construction in trail-less zones.

Guideline J(2) or N(2) would limit trail maintenance and investment to trail classes 1 and 2 primarily, with the occasional stretch of trail class 3 (see Issue 11: Transportation System Implementability for a definition of trail classes) within LAC opportunity class II (see Figure 3.21.1 for a map of current LAC opportunity classes). The intent of this guideline is to manage trails to fit the setting through which they are passing. Trail improvements would be restricted to the minimum necessary to provide safe travel and resource protection within these lightly traveled, largely pristine areas of Wilderness. The guideline would facilitate managing Wilderness for human benefit, using the “minimum tool” principle, by providing a less developed trail in more remote areas of the Wilderness. The guideline helps ensure that future trail projects do not have an unintended consequence of degrading Wilderness character, particularly as related to apparent naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities.

Guideline J(3)/N(3) is designed similarly to J(2)/N(2) in prescribing the trail classes 2 and 3 to be the primary development level for trails within LAC opportunity class III. In these more heavily traveled zones within wilderness, it is recognized that to provide for human use, enjoyment, safety, and resource protection, more intensively managed trails may be necessary. In limited cases, trail class 4 may be the appropriate investment and management level, but never trail class 5 (paved,

highly managed trails). In all cases, trails will be managed to the lowest trail class reasonable to provide safe access. This guideline again helps ensure that future trail projects do not have an unintended consequence of degrading Wilderness character, particularly as related to apparent naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities.

In the Beartooth Plateau portion of the AB Wilderness, a pack and saddle stock restricted area is proposed in Alternatives 3-6. This restriction would prohibit the use of stock anywhere in the restricted area, which is largely trail-less. Within the restricted areas (which differ slightly by alternative, see the summer non-motorized alternative maps) Trails #573, #574 and a spur trail to Mariane Lake would also have stock prohibitions. These trails access Lower Aero, Zimmer and Mariane Lakes. The trails are extremely rugged and steep, and are not suitable for stock travel, though it is not currently prohibited.

The area restriction is designed to ensure that the increasing amount of stock use on the Beartooth Plateau does not expand into a largely trail-less, fragile tundra ecosystem, causing unacceptable resource impacts. Research has shown that even limited travel by stock in areas like the plateau with perched water tables, extremely short growing seasons and shallow soils have almost immediate and lasting impacts (McLaren and Cole 1993). Management strategies suggested for minimizing impacts from stock in these situations are to prevent the traffic in the first place, seasonally restrict travel and or to confine travel to trails. Most of the area within the proposed closure is not readily accessible to stock now. The primary trail system and popular stock campsites are all south of the proposed closure boundary. Monitoring data gathered in the mid 1990s and again in 2000 indicates that few (if any) of the known campsites within the area are frequented by stock parties, and none are suitable for overnight stock containment. The restriction would ensure that new user-created routes do not become established, and that campsites inappropriate for stock use do not accrete more damage. These high elevation tundra habitats are particularly sensitive to resource damage from stock, taking years to recover from damage accrued in a very short time. (See Issue 20: Soils for a more thorough discussion of this issue.) This proposal would ensure that we preserve natural integrity and apparent naturalness, as they relate to stock impacts in this area.

Alternative 7-M proposes a slightly different stock restriction configuration on the Beartooth Plateau. In this alternative, stock would be prohibited seasonally within the restricted area (see the Alternative 7-M summer non-motorized map) from December 2 to August 1, and overnight camping within the restricted area would be prohibited year-long. This would allow day use traffic on the trail-less portion of the plateau during the driest months of the year when these fragile areas are more resilient. There would be two small stock closures (yearlong prohibitions): one in the Zimmer Creek drainage at the Trail # 573 and 574 junctions, and one between Summerville Lake and Castle Lake. System trails that fall within the restricted area (like the trail to Mariane Lake) would only be open to stock after August 1. Only the Russell Creek Trail (the through route from the Clarks Fork Trailhead to the East Rosebud) would be emphasized for stock use. On all other system trails (except Trail # 573 and 574 above the closure) on the plateau, stock use would be allowed but not emphasized. This alternative achieves many of the objectives to protect natural integrity, and apparent naturalness as outlined in the previous paragraph, but still allows limited stock access (day use only) to the trail-less portion of the plateau, and minimizes restrictions that limit the public's opportunities for "primitive and unconfined recreation" in wilderness.

Alternatives 1 and 2 do not include any area closures or prohibitions to stock use in the AB Wilderness. Monitoring data from backcountry sites nearby, indicate that stock impacts are predictable in these fragile ecosystems with cross-country stock travel. Without the proposed stock restrictions, it is likely that some of the more accessible basins and lakes would have unauthorized user-created stock routes and campsites established in the future. These two outcomes would have a negative effect on natural integrity and apparent naturalness.

In Alternatives 5 and 7-M, recreational stock would be prohibited from the Pine Creek Trail #47 on the Livingston Ranger District in the AB. This trail receives very heavy day use hiker traffic and is not suited to pack and saddle stock use (it is a steep, winding, difficult trail). Stock containment options at the Pine Creek Lake destination are extremely limited. The proposal to limit stock traffic is largely in response to user safety concerns mixing stock traffic on a heavily traveled popular day hike route. Eliminating stock from this route would improve those safety concerns and minimize stock damage at the lake basin. In Alternative 7-M – stock would only be prohibited from this trail seasonally – from December 2 through September 15<sup>th</sup>. After September 15<sup>th</sup> – day use only stock travel would be allowed. Over night stock use would be prohibited year long in the area surrounding Pine Creek Lake in order to eliminate damage from stock containment and allow damaged areas to rehabilitate.

In Alternatives 3 through 7-M, recreational stock would be prohibited from the Lava Lake Trail #77 in the Spanish Peaks Unit of the LM Wilderness. This trail receives very heavy day use hiker traffic, and is not suited to accommodate pack and saddle stock use (it is a steep, rocky, narrow trail). Stock containment options at Lava Lake are limited. The proposal to limit stock traffic is largely in response to user safety concerns mixing stock traffic on a heavily traveled popular day hike route. Eliminating stock from this route would reduce those safety concerns, and eliminate stock damage at the lake basin, allowing damaged sites to rehabilitate.

Alternative 5 proposes to eliminate pack and saddle stock from the West Fork of Beaver Creek Trail #222 in the Taylor Hilgard Unit of the LM Wilderness. This trail passes across several steeply incised gullies and avalanche chutes in the first three miles. Heavy rains and avalanches have washed out sections of this trail in recent years. Relocation of the trail has been investigated and is not feasible. In order to keep the trail safe for pack and saddle traffic, significant gabion structures and retaining walls have been built in the gullies. These structures have also been partially washed out. Alternative 5 removes pack and saddle stock from the route, in response largely to safety concerns and how expensive and difficult it is to maintain the route safely for stock. Regardless of user types, some sort of engineered trail retaining structures would be necessary even to provide safe foot travel. These structures may be able to be scaled down if only designed to accommodate safe foot travel, and would therefore be less obtrusive on the Wilderness landscape and improve apparent naturalness in this area.

In Alternatives 3 and 4, there would be approximately four miles of marked cross-country ski trails within the AB Wilderness, on the East Dam Creek and Suce Creek trails. These trails are not currently managed as marked ski trails, but have been in the past. In Alternatives 1-4 and 6, there would be approximately two miles of marked ski trails on the Spanish Creek Trail in the Spanish Peaks Unit of the LM Wilderness. The convention for marking cross-country ski trails in winter is to place bright blue diamonds along the trail route, helping skiers locate the trails in winter. These

markers are fairly obtrusive, and an obvious sign of man's presence in Wilderness. The markers may affect some winter users' sense of remoteness, and apparent naturalness. In all other alternatives, the routes would be acceptable for cross-country ski use, but would not be marked as such on the ground. Winter trail users would have a greater sense of remoteness, challenge and risk in a winter setting where ski trails are not marked.

Snowmobile trespass into Wilderness has been raised as a travel management concern. Snowmobile closures proximate to Wilderness boundaries vary in each alternative. In several alternatives, closures were crafted on the Wilderness periphery to help minimize trespass, by creating more logical closure boundaries that could be easily marked and patrolled. They are on the East Boulder Plateau, the Cedar Mountain/Lone Mountain Ridge and at the head of Muddy Creek just south of Big Sky. On the East Boulder, a small closure was added just north of the AB Wilderness boundary, between it and the Picket Pin road. This was to facilitate marking a definable area, as the Wilderness boundary crosses an undefined open plateau in this area. This closure would be in effect in Alternatives 3-6. A small temporary closure along a prominent ridge south of Lone Mountain (the Cedar Creek divide, where "high pointing" has commonly brought riders into the LM Wilderness) would become permanent in Alternatives 2 through 7-M.

Snowmobile closures that were driven by wintering wildlife concerns or the desire to provide non-motorized winter recreation opportunities in several other areas of the Forest would have an offshoot effect of minimizing snowmobile trespass in Wilderness in the following areas.

#### Peripheral to the AB Wilderness:

- 1) Mission Creek/Livingston Peak. A small snowmobile closure that currently exists near Livingston Peak would be expanded across the Mission Creek front east to the Mill Fork in Alternatives 3-6.
- 2) Pine Creek/Deep Creek/Suce Creek. The small non-Wilderness portion of these trailhead areas would be closed to snowmobiles in Alternatives 5 and 7-M.
- 3) George Lake south to Mill Creek. This area would be closed to snowmobiles in Alternative 5.
- 4) Cooke City, south of the Beartooth Highway. This area would be closed to snowmobiles except on designated routes in Alternatives 4-6. Alternative 7-M would close only the portion south of the Bannock Trail and west of the Woody Ck Trail (the Republic Mtn. Recommended Wilderness). The proposed closure areas would be just north of the North Absaroka Wilderness on the Shoshone National Forest.

#### Peripheral to the Lee Metcalf Wilderness:

- 1) Cherry Creek, north of the Spanish Peaks. This area would be closed to snowmobiles in Alternatives 3 through 7-M.
- 2) Beehive Basin/North Fork Bear Creek, just south of the Spanish Peaks. This area would be closed to snowmobiles in Alternatives 3 through 7-M.
- 3) Muddy Creek, just west of Buck Ridge. This area would be closed to snowmobiles in Alternatives 4-6.
- 4) Sage Creek, just north of the Monument Mountain Unit. This area would be closed to snowmobiles in Alternatives 3 through 7-M.
- 5) Cache/Lightning Creek, just east of the Taylor Hilgard Unit. This area would be closed to snowmobiles in Alternatives 5 through 7-M.

Managing these snowmobile closure areas for non-motorized winter recreation opportunities would have an additional effect of minimizing snowmobile trespass into the adjacent Wildernesses, an important aspect of maintaining Wilderness integrity in winter. This would improve opportunities for solitude and a primitive winter recreation opportunity in Wilderness.

**Table 3.21. 4 Comparison of alternatives within the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness.**

	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6	Alt. 7-M
Total Trail Miles	608	608	608	608	604*	608	608
Acres of Pack/Saddle Stock Prohibition	0	0	33,561	32,770	34,506	34,506	0
Acres of Pack/Saddle Stock Seasonal Restrictions	0	0	0	0	0	0	34,576
Trail Miles of Pack/Stock Prohibited	0	0	3	3	8	4	7
Trail Miles of Marked Cross-Country Ski Trails	0	0	4	4	0	0	0
Seasonal Restrictions to Pack/Saddle Stock on Trails	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No**

- \*In Alternative 5, Wounded Man Trail #309 at the head of Slough Creek would be dropped from the trail system and no longer maintained (approximately 4 miles).
- \*\* Seasonal restrictions would only apply in the Beartooth Plateau restricted area, and on the Thompson Lake Trail in Alternative 7-M.

**Table 3.21. 5 Comparison of alternatives within the Lee Metcalf Wilderness.**

	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6	Alt. 7-M
Total Trail Miles	166	166	166	166	166	166	163*
Acres of Pack/Saddle Stock Restriction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trail Miles of Pack/Stock Prohibited	0	0	0	3	10	3	3
Trail Miles of Marked Cross-Country Ski Trails	2	2	2	2	0	2	0
Seasonal Restrictions to Pack/Saddle Stock	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

\* In Alternative 7-M, Monument trail #52 in the Monument Mountain Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness accessing the Black Butte Ranch would be dropped from the trail system and no longer maintained (approximately 3 miles within Wilderness).

## Effects to Lionhead Recommended Wilderness

In the portion of the Lionhead TPA that is recommended Wilderness, trail uses vary among alternatives. The following describes proposed uses on the four trails that fall within the Lionhead RW boundary:

- 1) Mile Creek #214 would be closed to motorized uses in all alternatives. It would be closed to mountain bikes in Alternative 6.
- 2) Coffin Lakes Trail #209 above the junction with Trail #216 would be closed to motorized uses in all alternatives. It would be closed to mountain bikes in Alternative 6.
- 3) Sheep Lake Trail #218 would be open to ATVs and motorcycles in Alternative 1, to motorcycles only in Alternatives 2-4, and would be closed to all motorized use in Alternative 5 through 7-M. This route would be closed to mountain bikes in Alternative 6.
- 4) West Fork Watkins Creek #216 would be open to motorcycles in Alternatives 1-3 and is closed to all motorized use in Alternatives 4 through 7-M. This route would be closed to mountain bikes in Alternative 6.

All trails would be open to mountain bikes in Alternatives 1-5 and 7-M. The Sheep Creek, West Fork Watkins and Coffin Lakes trails were historically managed for multiple recreation activities. In the late 1990s, Coffin Lake trail was rebuilt, and closed to motorcycles and ATVs to minimize conflicts with heavy recreational stock traffic from a local dude ranch. All of the trails are single-track trails originally designed for pack and saddle stock use, and are not currently suitable for ATVs.

Alternative 1 would allow ATVs on the Sheep Creek trail. The trail would have to be reconstructed to accommodate these vehicles. Reconstruction of this route would result in a wider trail tread, more visually obtrusive to visitors, and disrupting more soil and vegetation, creating larger scarified seed beds for weed infestation. This would have a negative effect on apparent naturalness and natural integrity. Managing ATVs in an area where they have not historically traveled would affect some users sense of remoteness and opportunities for solitude. The trail would likely be popular as there is a lake destination.

Alternatives 2-4 would manage the Sheep Creek Trail as open to motorcycles; an historic use. The West Fork of Watkins would be open to motorcycles in Alternatives 1-3. No significant trail modifications would be necessary to accommodate this use. Motorcycle traffic on these routes has historically been light, but would likely increase if an alternative is implemented that reduces the total number of open motorized routes on the Forest. Some recreationists feel that motorized use compromises opportunities for solitude because of the noise and odors, and affects their sense of remoteness.

Alternatives 5 through 7-M would prohibit all summer motorized recreation on these routes. These alternatives would best preserve opportunities for solitude, sense of remoteness, apparent naturalness and a primitive recreation experience.

In all alternatives, the bulk of the recommended Wilderness portion of this TPA is closed to snowmobiling (see the winter alternative maps). Alternatives 3 and 7-M modify the current closure boundary slightly to accommodate existing snowmobile use (trespass in a closed area) in upper

Watkins Creek. In these alternatives, several sections of land within the Lionhead RW would remain open to snowmobiles, which would affect opportunities for solitude and sense of remoteness in those areas. This portion of the Watkins Creek drainage is popular for backcountry challenge snowmobiling today. Managing the bulk of the area for non-motorized recreation opportunities best protects opportunities for solitude, a feeling of remoteness, and apparent naturalness.

Alternative 6 would expand the existing snowmobile closure to the east – dropping off a ridgeline near Lionhead Peak then following the Watkins Creek Trail #215 to the north. This expanded closure would prohibit snowmobiles in western portions of the Watkins Creek drainage, and provide a more enforceable snowmobile closure boundary that would encompass all of the Lionhead RW. This alternative would best protect opportunities for solitude, a sense of remoteness and apparent naturalness in the Lionhead RW.

Alternative 6 would prohibit mountain bikes on all trails within the Lionhead RW. All other alternatives would allow mountain bikes. Allowing mountain biking on these routes would be consistent with Forest Plan Direction, and would not be consistent with Regional guidelines to generally prohibit motorized and mechanized use in recommended wilderness. The presence of mountain bikes in Lionhead under Alternatives 1-5 and 7-M may affect some people's sense of remoteness and opportunities for solitude. Resource effects from biking may have a minor effect on apparent naturalness where trails are widened, go-arounds created to avoid water bars (increasing erosion potential), and in some cases where riders are intentionally creating obstacles for challenge riding. Prohibiting mountain bikes from these trails would improve apparent naturalness slightly for the same reasons. Several commenters expressed concern that allowing mountain bikes to become an established use in this area may jeopardize its future designation as wilderness. This concern stems from a growing constituency of mountain bikers who are opposed to additional wilderness designation in that wilderness designation precludes future mountain biking opportunities.

Nothing proposed in any of the alternatives would have a direct effect on the boundary of the Lionhead RW, nor its manageability as such.

## **Effects to Republic Mountain Recommended Wilderness**

There are no trails in the Republic Mountain RW addition. Alternative 2 through 7-M would eliminate any opportunity for cross-country summer motorized travel, which would be very limited in this area, regardless. Snowmobiling would be allowed in Alternatives 1-3, but is in reality very limited by steep timber-covered hillsides. Alternatives 4 through 7-M would prohibit cross-country snowmobiling, which would best protect opportunities for solitude, a feeling of remoteness, primitive recreation experiences and apparent naturalness.

A travel management concern in areas recommended for future Wilderness designation is the precedent of establishing motorized recreation uses, which may become so popular that the future “designate-ability” of these areas, may be politically jeopardized. This concern was raised during initial scoping for Travel Plan revision. The alternatives that do not allow motorized uses in Lionhead or Republic Mountain RW additions mitigate this concern (Alternatives 5 through 7-M).

Nothing proposed in any of the alternatives would have a direct effect on the boundary of the Lionhead or Republic RWs, nor their manageability as such.

### Effects to Hyalite/Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area

Table 3.21.6 summarizes different management options for roads, trails, and snowmobiling areas within the HPBH WSA. Alternative 1 would manage the most miles and acres of area open to motorized uses, and Alternative 6 would prohibit all summer and winter motorized uses as well as mountain biking in the WSA.

**Table 3.21.6 Approximate mileage and acres of recreational opportunities in the HPBH WSA, by alternative.**

Type of Use	Summer Motorized Uses in the HPBH WSA (Miles)						
	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6	Alt. 7-M
Passenger Car Roads	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
ATV and Motorcycles on Roads Closed	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
ATV and Motorcycles on Trails Existing	109	9	2	2	0	0	0
ATV and Motorcycles on Trails New	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motorcycles ONLY on Roads Open	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motorcycles ONLY on Roads Closed	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Motorcycles ONLY on Trails Existing	40	139	118	91	57	0	69
Motorcycles ONLY on Trails - New	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative Roads	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Project Roads	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Type of Use	Summer Non-Motorized Uses in the HPBH WSA (Miles)						
	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6	Alt. 7-M
Hiking	205	205	208	208	208	208	208
Stock Use - Emphasized	205	205	197	197	208	208	197
Stock Use - Prohibited	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mountain Biking on Trails Emphasized and Allowed	205	205	206	197	0	0	168
Mountain Biking on Trails Prohibited	0	0	2	11	208	208	40
Percent of Total Trail Miles Non- Motorized	27%	28%	42%	55%	73%	100%	68%
Type of Use	Winter Uses in the HPBH WSA (Miles)						
	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6	Alt. 7-M
Plowed Road	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Snowmobiling - Groomed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Snowmobiling - Marked	14	14	22	22	18	0	23
XC Skiing - Groomed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
XC Skiing - Marked	2	2	6	6	2	6	3

Type of Closure	Winter Closures HPBH WSA (Acres)						
	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6	Alt. 7-M
Yearlong Snowmobile Closure	42,754	42,754	70,001	106,017	134,437	143,719	127,960
Seasonal Snowmobile Closure	13,574	13,574	13,586	0	0	0	0
Percent of Area Closed to Snowmobiles Yearlong	30%	30%	49%	75%	93%	100%	89%

\* Slightly less than ½ mile of passenger car road currently exists within the HPBH WSA boundary, at the Big Creek and Rock Creek Trailheads. This would remain the same in all alternatives. The gross acres shown in the table above include sections of private and state land within the HPBH.

This effects discussion compares and contrasts Alternatives 1 through 7-M with conditions in 1977. This is done to track changes in Wilderness characteristics among the alternatives and the mandate to manage WSAs to maintain Wilderness characteristics that were present at the time of designation.

In 1977, approximately 18 miles of trail were closed to all motorized vehicles. About 80 miles of trail had no summer motorized restrictions, and on the remaining 77 miles of trails, trail vehicles less than 40” wide were restricted to designated routes. Of the 80 miles or so of trails with no motorized restriction, less than 30 miles had legal access. Access to the rest of the trails was blocked by private landowners. Approximately 19,313 acres were closed to snowmobiles. See Figure 3.21.2 and Figure 3.21.3 for maps of vehicle restrictions in 1977, and Schlenker’s (2003) analysis of changed condition for route by routed descriptions of 1977 condition. The most relevant findings from this study regarding travel planning are the fact that there were no four-wheeled vehicle trails within the WSA area in 1977, all trails were single-tracks and used by motorcycles and foot or stock. A small portion of the area was used by snowmobiles (approximately 15,000 acres), though roughly only 13% of the area was legally closed to snowmobiles through restriction.

### **Effects common to all alternatives**

Travel management decisions do not alter WSA boundaries, nor the spatial extent of WSAs. Therefore, no alternative will affect the boundaries and boundary management relationship to future designation as Wilderness.

Gauging the effects to natural integrity and apparent naturalness is accomplished by measuring the presence and magnitude of human induced change to an area (physical impacts like lost species populations, roads, fences, etc.). Apparent naturalness is tracked by how the landscape appears to people, even though there may have been some minor human modifications. Travel Plan decisions that may affect these attributes are largely confined to trail disturbances (either through reconstruction or change in use type), and accompanying weed infestations, visual impact from trails, and displacement of or negative effects to wildlife. Altering the physical engineering of trails (that is converting single-track trails to double-track) would also affect water movement, soil displacement and vegetation. Seasonal restrictions to stock, mountain bikes and motorized uses would affect the physical appearance of trails and the amount of trail damage accrued (see the previous discussion under Wilderness, and Issue #11 - Implementation). Spring seasonal restrictions would minimize trail damage, widening trails, soil compaction and erosion. Seasonal restrictions would apply on all trails restricting the use of stock and mountain bikes in Alternatives

2-6, and on specific routes in Alternative 7-M (Buffalo Horn #1, Swan Creek #186, Porcupine Creek #34, Teepee Creek #39, Rock Creek #178 and West Pine #139).

Evaluating effects to remoteness and primitive recreation opportunities are typically tracked for two different parameters: physical and social. The physical parameters of an area that foster a sense of remoteness (like an area's size, distance from roads, visibility of lights and the sights and sounds associated with civilization outside of WSAs, vastness of scale and having a high degree of challenge and risk) would not change with travel management decisions about appropriate uses of trails in any alternative. Acquisition of public access to some remote portions of the WSA would affect the sense of remoteness by making it easier to reach portions of the WSA. The Travel Plan identifies an objective to acquire public access somewhere between Dry Creek and Big Creek on the northwest corner of the WSA. This is a remote and lightly used portion of the area now, because of access difficulties. Providing improved public access would change the sense of remoteness, even though it would not physically change features of the WSA. When evaluating effects to remoteness and primitive recreation opportunities, the social aspect of how people travel within an area is an effect often discussed. When areas have historically only been accessed by non-motorized means, and then decisions are made to allow motorized access, more terrain is readily available to a new user group, which may compromise traditional user's sense of solitude, remoteness, challenge and risk.

Opportunities for solitude were originally gauged during the RARE I and II evaluations using the Wilderness Attribute Rating System, based primarily on physical features of the area: size, presence of vegetative or topographic screening, distance from civilization and so forth. Travel management decisions would not change these physical parameters relating to solitude in the WSA in any alternative. Again, like remoteness, a social assessment of effects to solitude is often included when analyzing effects to wildlands. Travel decisions do have the potential to affect peoples' perception of solitude at the time and place that they are experiencing the area. The presence, volume and type of other users and the sounds and smells associated with motorized vehicles have all been identified by the public as affecting the personal subjective sense of solitude. All of these effects are temporary in nature, and do not affect the physical attributes of an area that create a sense of solitude.

### **Effects common to Alternatives 3 through 7-M**

A short segment of existing user-created trail (about three miles) that runs from the Gallatin Crest near Ramshorn Peak west to Ramshorn Lake would be added to the Forest trail system in these alternatives. It would primarily be managed for foot and stock travel, though it would be open to motorcycles in Alternatives 3 and 4. The trail would be reconstructed to meet current pack and saddle stock standards. This work would help minimize erosion and vegetation damage by establishing a permanent location, with an engineered as opposed to haphazard design. User-created routes tend to move around due to lack of maintenance, marking and periodic natural barriers like fallen trees, creating larger disturbed areas and multiple treads. Adding the route to the trail system would minimize these additional disturbed areas by defining the permanent tread location, improving natural integrity. Apparent naturalness would be affected to a minor degree by tree blazing and any trail structures necessary to establish the route permanently.

### **Alternative 1**

Alternative 1 represents the 1999 Travel Plan map and several temporary closures that have been in place in portions of the HPBH WSA since the mid-1990s. In this alternative, about 73% of the trails would be open to ATVs and motorcycles, though not necessarily physically suited to ATV travel. Most of the existing trail system would have to be reconstructed to accommodate ATVs safely. Cross-country travel would be permissible by summer motorized vehicles where not restricted by the 1999 Travel Plan (like the Porcupine and Buffalo Horn drainages). In Alternative 1, summer motorized uses of trails would eventually change the character of existing single-track trails as more ATVs pioneered further on single-track trails. Cross-country travel would establish unauthorized user-created routes in some areas. This would result in continued trail degradation, widened trails, weed encroachment and soil and vegetation damage. All of these changes to summer trail system would negatively affect apparent naturalness and natural integrity. Summer trail vehicles would eventually be able to access significantly more terrain than was historically available, negatively affecting the sense of remoteness and solitude for some users.

Mountain bikes would be permissible on all trails within the HPBH WSA in this alternative. While mountain bikes were not in production in 1977, they are similar to motorcycles, and access essentially the same terrain. They have similar physical effects to trails, soils and vegetation as motorcycles (see Issue 20: Soils). Several popular mountain bike trails (like South Cottonwood) had no legal access in 1977, and therefore were not ridden by motorcycles except occasionally when riders got permission from private landowners. This alternative would allow mountain bike access to continue.

In winter, snowmobiles would be restricted in about 30% of the area. Modern snowmobiles are able to access significantly more terrain than was actually accessible in 1977, and would continue to expand their play areas in this alternative. Expanding the area of use in winter could negatively affect some wildlife populations (see Issue 9: General Wildlife) and therefore, natural integrity. Some recreationists' sense of remoteness and opportunities for solitude would be negatively affected by the sights, sounds and odor of snowmobiles in areas where they were not present in 1977.

### **Alternative 2**

Alternative 2 represents the 1999 Travel Plan, with the Statewide OHV decision applied (best representing current condition). All summer motorized uses would be restricted to designated routes, with designated routes for ATVs only on portions of the Rock Creek, Tom Miner, Windy Pass, Golden Trout Lake and Hidden Lakes trails. Motorcycles would be allowed on the bulk of the remaining trails in the area except Big Creek and trails, South Cottonwood and in the Eight-Mile and Dry Creek Areas. Snowmobiles would be restricted in approximately 30% of the area. This alternative better replicates 1977 conditions than Alternative 1, with the exception of allowing ATVs on what were historically single-track trails. The reconstruction of the ATV routes identified in this alternative would have a negative effect on apparent naturalness and natural integrity. By limiting trail vehicles to designated routes, the accretion of unauthorized motorized routes and their associated effects to natural integrity, remoteness and solitude would be controlled. Otherwise, effects would be similar to Alternative 1 for summer motorized uses and for mountain biking. Effects in winter are the same for Alternatives 1 and 2.

### **Alternative 3**

Alternative 3 is similar to Alternative 2, with 21 miles fewer motorcycle routes and ATVs limited to portions of the Golden Trout and Hidden Lake Trails. Mountain bikes would only be prohibited on the Grotto Falls accessible trail (about two miles) and trail #771 to the Bozeman Creek divide, but otherwise permissible on all other trails in the HPBH. In this alternative, motorcycles are mostly prohibited from the northeast corner of the WSA, from the Big Creek side trails north to Dry Creek. This would be similar to use in 1977, since this entire area had no legal access then. In this portion of the WSA, access would be by foot and horse only, and opportunities for solitude and a sense of risk and challenge would be high.

In winter, approximately half of the area would be closed to snowmobiles. The closure boundary was designed to allow snowmobiling in the most currently popular parts of the WSA, and restrict it in some of the more remote, historically lightly or unused portions of the WSA. Snowmobile use would occur in areas where no documented use was established in 1977, and in one case where use was prohibited in 1977 (Onion Basin) potentially affecting wildlife populations (see the wildlife issues) and therefore natural integrity, and some users sense of remoteness and opportunities for solitude.

### **Alternative 4**

Alternative 4 is similar to Alternative 3 for summer motorized uses, except an additional 27 miles of trail would be closed to motorcycles. These trails are all in the northeast corner of the WSA, where there was historically limited public access. Effects from summer motorized uses would be similar to Alternative 3.

Mountain biking would be restricted on an additional 10 miles of trail in this alternative in the Hyalite drainage, in response to concerns over public safety and user conflicts on Trails #434 and #437 (Heather and Emerald Lakes and the Hyalite Lake Trail). These trails have become extremely popular and heavily-used by bikes in the last decade. Resource effects from biking may have a minor effect on apparent naturalness where trails are widened, go-arounds created to avoid water bars (increasing erosion potential), and in some cases where riders intentionally create obstacles for challenge riding. Prohibiting mountain bikes on 10 miles of trail would improve apparent naturalness slightly for the same reasons.

Snowmobile prohibitions are similar in design and intent in this alternative as in Alternative 3, with 75% of the area restricted to snowmobiles. The additional closure area is primarily in the northeastern corner of the WSA, where there was no historical use of or access to snowmobiling. This alternative was designed to preserve the most popular and heavily used snowmobiling portions of the WSA, and restrict those historically unused or less suitable areas, similar to the 1977 condition. Restriction of snowmobiles in 75% of the area would mitigate potential affects to wildlife in closed areas, improving natural integrity. Restricting snowmobiling in historically unused/inaccessible portions of the WSA would return winter conditions to something more akin to 1977 status, improving natural integrity, apparent naturalness (no snowmobile tracks, sounds or odors), and opportunities for solitude in these areas.

### **Alternative 5**

Alternative 5 would increase the number of miles of trails restricted to motorcycles, with a primary goal of improving grizzly bear core habitat in the southeast portion of the WSA, and providing additional summer non-motorized recreation opportunities. ATVs would be prohibited on all trails within the WSA in this alternative, to best re-create existing Wilderness characteristics on trails circa 1977. This alternative would improve the natural integrity of the area by adding significant acreage to secure grizzly habitat in a bear subunit where motorized route densities exceed recommended levels today (see wildlife Issue #10 Grizzly Bear). Prohibiting ATVs from all routes would also remove a weed spread vector not present in 1977, and allow trails to be returned to single-tracks, also improving natural integrity and apparent naturalness. Alternative 5 would allow motorcycles on about 57 miles of trail, about 43 miles fewer than were available in 1977, negatively affecting opportunities for challenge single-track riding.

Mountain bikes would be prohibited on all trails in the WSA in this alternative. This would mimic 1977 actual use, as mountain bikes were not used in the WSA at that time. This prohibition would likely have a minor effect, improving apparent naturalness on trails by eliminating the mountain bike created go-arounds and obstacles. On some trails, eliminating mountain biking would improve opportunities for solitude, but would have no effect on the physical parameters of the landscape that create opportunities for solitude like vegetative and topographic screening. The alternative would eliminate biking on 208 miles of popular and challenging mountain bike routes. This would be a significant decrease in the total number of miles of single-track biking opportunities Forest-wide.

Snowmobiling would be prohibited in 93% of the WSA in this alternative. Snowmobiling would be allowed in the Buffalo Horn drainage to Ramshorn Lake, and on a designated route through Porcupine (the Big Sky Trail). This alternative approximates snowmobile use patterns in 1977 (D. Michel, USDA Forest Service, personal communication). This alternative would improve natural integrity in some areas by minimizing impacts to wildlife, restoring 1977 conditions. Opportunities for a non-motorized winter experience would improve, as would opportunities for solitude and a sense of remoteness.

### **Alternative 6**

Alternative 6 would eliminate all summer motorized trail uses, mountain biking and snowmobiling from this area. The net effect would be that for recreational uses, the WSA would be managed as though it were designated Wilderness. Removing ATVs, motorcycles, snowmobiles and mountain bikes from trails and would have positive effects to improving natural integrity and apparent naturalness as discussed in the previous alternatives. Opportunities for solitude and a sense of remoteness would change in the social sense, with more areas of the WSA feeling very remote to hikers and stock users. Physical parameters that create opportunities for solitude remain the same in all alternatives. Opportunities for quiet remote backcountry recreation experiences would be highest in the winter, and very good in many parts of the WSA in the summer. Popular lake destinations and scenic hikes close to Bozeman and areas proximate to dude ranches would still receive substantial hiking and horse traffic in the summer, minimizing opportunities for solitude in these most popular areas (as in all other alternatives).

### **Alternative 7-M**

Alternative 7-M is similar in effect to Alternative 5 for summer motorized use, with about 12 additional miles of motorcycle trails available (located in the East Fork of Hyalite; Heather and Emerald Lakes and along the main Hyalite trail connecting to the crest and the Moose Creek Trail which would provide the southern link to the Crest). Motorcycle use on the Heather/Emerald trails and main Hyalite trail would affect some users sense of remoteness, and opportunities for solitude. Motorized and mechanized use on the Heather/Emerald Trail would be “time-shared” in some way to provide days of the week or weeks of the month during the open season when only hiking and stock use would be allowed on the trail. The actual “time-share” system would be worked out with user group participation after the Record of Decision is published for the Travel Plan. Alternative 7-M would prohibit motorcycle use on the Windy Pass Trail #82 from the Portal Creek Trailhead to the Crest. Motorcycles would instead access the Crest trail from Portal Creek on the Moose Creek Trail #187. This change would help minimize user conflict on the popular Windy Pass trail with hikers.

Mountain biking would be allowed on trails open to motorcycling in this alternative, and on several trails that were open to motorcycles in 1977, but that are proposed to be closed to motorcycles in Alternative 7-M. Approximately 80% of the trails would be open for mountain biking. “Time-shared” use on Heather and Emerald trails for mountain bikes would provide days of the week or weeks of the month when this trail would only be open to hiking and horseback riding. Mountain bike closures would be primarily in the northeastern corner of the WSA, where motorcycle use was not common in 1977, and public access is limited. The total mileage of mountain bike and motorcycle trails taken together in this alternative is less than the total mileage of motorcycle trails that were available in 1977.

Approximately 89% of the area would be closed to snowmobiling. The open snowmobile areas would include the historic Big Sky Trail – which would be managed as a designated route through a closed area. An open area where cross country snowmobiling would be allowed would run from Windy Pass across the Crest through Rock Creek. This area would provide high quality “challenge” snowmobile opportunities within a confined area. A designated route from Hyalite through a closed area, to a small open area in the East Fork of Hyalite (Heather/Emerald) would also be open to backcountry snowmobiling. See the Alternative 7-M winter use maps. Allowing snowmobiles in these additional areas may have a negative effect to wintering wildlife, affecting natural integrity. Cross country snowmobiling would be prohibited in the historic use area of Buffalo Horn, with a designated open snowmobile route to Ramshorn Lake instead. This area closure in Buffalo Horn facilitates management of the State Gallatin Wildlife Management Area sections, and would reduce conflicts with wintering big game, improving natural integrity. Opportunities for solitude from a social sense during winter within the open snowmobile area would be reduced.

## **Cumulative Effects – HPBH WSA**

### **Net Effects of Past and Present Programs and Activities**

Please see the affected environment section of this chapter for a summary of current conditions within the HPBH WSA, and the effects of past and present program activities on wilderness character.

For a more extensive discussion of net effects of past and present programs and activities - the paper “Changes in Wilderness Characteristics since 1977” (Schlenker 2003) is available in the project record.

## **Projected Combined Effects of Reasonably Foreseeable Programs and Activities**

A number of reasonably foreseeable projects could affect wilderness characteristics within the next 5 years. Weed treatment, fuels treatment projects, range allotment improvements and management activities, ongoing trail maintenance and reconstruction, and fire suppression activities all have the potential to have minor cumulative effects, both positive and negative, to wilderness characteristics.

The final Forest Weeds Environmental Impact Statement (USDA 2005) preferred alternative identified about 50 acres of weed infestations in the WSA that are targeted for treatment. Additional patches of weeds are likely to be identified and treated in the next 5 years. Weed treatments will improve natural integrity in the HPBH by aggressively managing noxious weeds and promoting the restoration of native species. Short term effects to opportunities for solitude are likely if recreationists encounter weed control crews while working in the WSA. Apparent naturalness may also be affected in the short term where chemical odors from herbicide treatments persist, or grubbing/pulling/mechanical treatments are obvious.

Fuels treatments are proposed across the Forest, potentially including a small project in the WSA. The Paradise Valley Prescribed Burn analysis identified about 1200 acres of treatment in the Cooper Bench area of Big Creek in the HPBH. During pretreatment and burning operations, short term impacts to opportunities for solitude could be expected where recreationists encountered crews working with chainsaws, helicopters, etc. Treating fuels could result in short term exposure to weed infestations in burned areas – impacting natural integrity. Pretreatment of fuels could have a minor impact on apparent naturalness in places where slashing of fuels has occurred prior to burning. These effects would be short term (5-10 years). In the long term, fuel treatment will benefit natural integrity by restoring a more natural fire regime to areas where fires have long been suppressed.

Ongoing management of range allotments within the WSA could affect apparent naturalness and natural integrity in some areas. Portions of ten allotments currently fall within the study area boundary. Of these, two have been waived back to the Forest Service (Rock Creek South and Canyon) and one (Fridley) is being rested for several years after the Fridley wildfire of 2001. There are approximately 17,100 acres of the eight active allotments within the study area boundary (see Schlenker, 2003). All range allotment management plans all have either recently been updated, or updates are pending, per the Range Rescission Act of 1995. Revision of these plans, and associated changes in on-the-ground management will improve historic effects to wilderness characteristics in most cases through better management practices. Skilled observers are likely to notice that vegetation has been grazed in some areas and species composition affected. The presence of manure and stock trails would not appear natural to many. Range improvements like fences and watering facilities are an obvious sign of man’s work on an otherwise natural appearing landscape. Natural integrity of sites where over grazing occurs could be impacted by erosion, weed infestation, species composition changes, soil compaction, and damage to vegetation.

Administrative activities like trail maintenance, fire suppression and weed control all have the potential to have short term effects on opportunities for solitude, and apparent naturalness, while those projects are underway. Visitors may encounter work crews, camps, motorized and mechanized equipment associated with these projects that may affect opportunities for solitude. Fresh trail construction would not appear natural to some.

Road decommissioning of an historic project road on acquired lands will improve natural integrity, apparent naturalness, and sense of remoteness in the WSA. Approximately 3 miles of the Rock Creek Road #993 are located inside the WSA – a relict from Plum Creek Timber Company constructing a road to access their land. Restoration/re-contouring of this route would be a priority to restore apparent naturalness and natural integrity, as well as minimizing sediment delivery in Rock Creek which supports Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout. Though not currently proposed, this project is reasonably foreseeable within the next 5 years (personal communication, Mark Story).

In the next 5 years, growing recreation use from all user types (hikers, horsemen, bikers, etc.) will likely reduce opportunities for solitude in portions of the WSA. Despite this increase in recreation use, large portions of the HPBH will continue to provide rugged, remote opportunities for primitive recreation experiences and excellent opportunities for solitude.

None of the effects described above would significantly reduce wilderness character or irreversibly compromise the potential to designate the HPBH WSA lands as wilderness in the future.

## **Cumulative Effects of Past, Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Programs and Activities with the Travel Plan Alternatives**

### **Effects Common to All Alternatives**

Cumulative effects relative to travel plan alternatives are similar to the direct effects described in the previous sections of this chapter. Please see previous sections for more detailed descriptions of the direct and indirect effects of each alternative.

### **Alternative 1**

Alternative 1 represents the 1999 Gallatin NF travel map, without changes, and without the 2001 MT/Dakota OHV decision applied. Implementation of this alternative would essentially reverse the decisions made in the 2001 OHV decision, and continue to allow cross country summer motorized travel in all areas of the WSA where it is not expressly prohibited by the 1999 plan. This alternative would maintain the most motorized recreation opportunities on forest trails and areas in the HPBH, and would allow the continued use of ATV's – an activity not present historically, therefore inconsistent with the law and Forest Service policy. This alternative would not be responsive to WSA legislative language that mandates the Agency “maintain existing wilderness character”, nor to the growing demand for segregated non-motorized recreation opportunities, and would likely escalate user conflicts. This alternative would also not respond to the National 2005 OHV decision and direction to designate all summer motor vehicle routes. Alternative 1 taken together with other reasonably foreseeable programs and activities would have the most negative effects to natural

integrity, apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude, remoteness and primitive recreation opportunities. Wilderness character (particularly apparent naturalness) would degrade from 1977 conditions, which would make this alternative inconsistent with the law. While this alternative would not preclude future designation as wilderness, it would perpetuate impacts inconsistent with wilderness that would be difficult to rehabilitate in some areas if the area were designated.

#### **Alternatives 2-4**

Alternatives 2-4 would allow continued use of ATV's on certain trails within the WSA, on designated routes, and would allow snowmobiling and mountain bikes in various configurations (see direct effects earlier in this chapter). Continued use of ATV's on what were single track trails in 1977 would have obvious negative effects to apparent naturalness, sense of remoteness and opportunities for solitude. Alternatives 2-4 taken together with other reasonably foreseeable programs and activities would have moderate negative effects to natural integrity, apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude, remoteness and primitive recreation opportunities. Wilderness character would degrade from 1977 conditions, which would make components of these alternatives inconsistent with the law. While these alternatives would not preclude future designation as wilderness, they would perpetuate impacts inconsistent with wilderness that would be difficult to rehabilitate in some areas if the area were designated as wilderness.

#### **Alternatives 5 and 6**

Alternatives 5 and 6 would be the most restrictive alternatives in terms of recreation opportunities provided for mountain biking, ATVing, motorcycling, and snowmobiling within the WSA. Alternative 5 was designed to most closely mimic existing use patterns in 1977, and Alternative 6 was designed to prohibit motorized/mechanized use entirely within the WSA. These two alternatives taken together with other reasonably foreseeable activities would have the least negative effect to natural integrity, apparent naturalness, sense of remoteness/primitive recreation opportunities, and opportunities for solitude. In some locations, these alternatives would improve these characteristics. Neither alternative taken together with other reasonably foreseeable actions would negatively affect future designation as wilderness.

#### **Alternative 7-M**

Alternative 7-M would provide for a wide variety of recreation opportunities that were occurring in 1977, while preserving large portions of the WSA in a primitive state where only foot or horse travel would be permissible. This alternative would maintain or improve wilderness characteristics of apparent naturalness, natural integrity, opportunities for solitude/primitive recreation experiences and a sense of remoteness across a large portion of the WSA, while still allowing high quality single track motorcycle and mountain bike opportunities on trails that were managed for that use in 1977. Snowmobiling would be allowed in a concentrated area of the WSA providing high quality "challenge" backcountry snowmobiling while preserving the majority of the area for non-motorized winter recreation and preventing the continued expansion of an activity that was limited in extent in 1977. This alternative taken together with other reasonably foreseeable actions would have very minor negative affects on wilderness characteristics, but would maintain or improve wilderness

character circa 1977. No irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources that would affect future designation as wilderness would occur.

## **Cumulative Effects – Wilderness and Recommended Wilderness**

### **Net Effects of Past and Present Programs and Activities**

Please see the affected environment section of this chapter for a summary of current conditions within wilderness and RW, and the net effects of past and present program activities on wilderness character. Please see the specialist's report titled "06.04.01\_Schlenker\_wilderness\_wsa\_cumulative\_effects.doc" in the project record for a more complete discussion of cumulative effects.

### **Projected Combined Effects of Reasonably Foreseeable Programs and Activities**

#### **Designated Wilderness**

Reasonably foreseeable activities within the next five years that have the potential to affect wilderness character include:

- 1) Decisions from the Gallatin Forest Weeds Environmental Impact Statement and subsequent implementation of weed control actions (or lack of control).
- 2) The Custer National Forest Beartooth Ranger District Travel Management revision, including trails within the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness.
- 3) Prescribed fire proposed in the Lee Metcalf Wilderness.
- 4) Fire suppression activities within Wilderness.
- 5) Management of and decisions about Wilderness commercial livestock allotments (cattle, horse and sheep).
- 6) Forest Plan revision of the Absaroka Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wilderness Plans on the Custer, Gallatin and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests.
- 7) Acquisition of private land inholdings.
- 8) On-going trail maintenance work.

Administrative activities like trail maintenance, fire suppression and weed control all have the potential to have short-term effects on opportunities for solitude, and apparent naturalness, while those projects are underway. Visitors may encounter work crews, camps, or even motorized and mechanized equipment associated with these projects that may affect opportunities for solitude. Fresh trail construction or recently treated weeds would not appear natural to some.

Ongoing management of range allotments within wilderness and RW could affect apparent naturalness and natural integrity in some areas. All range allotment management plans all have either recently been updated, or updates are pending, per the Range Rescission Act of 1995. Revision of these plans, and associated changes in on-the-ground management will improve historic

effects to wilderness characteristics in most cases through better management practices. Skilled observers are likely to notice that vegetation has been grazed in some areas and species composition affected. The presence of manure and stock trails would not appear natural to many. Range improvements like fences and watering facilities are an obvious sign of man's work on an otherwise natural appearing landscape. Natural integrity of sites where over grazing occurs could be impacted by erosion, weed infestation, species composition changes, soil compaction, and damage to vegetation.

Forest Plan revision work including updating Wilderness management direction is scheduled to begin in 2007 on the Gallatin and Custer Forests. This effort would likely incorporate improved goals, objectives, and guidelines to maintain or improve wilderness character. Travel revision underway on the Beartooth Ranger District of the Custer Forest proposes to restrict recreational livestock on several trails within the AB Wilderness, with the goal of reducing stock impacts and improving natural integrity and apparent naturalness.

Treatment of fuels through a prescribed fire program is proposed for several areas within the Spanish Peaks Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness. This project may take as long as 10 years to achieve and would involve burning open grass/sage hillsides where Douglas-fir is encroaching in Gallatin Canyon. During the burns, helicopter ignitions are possible, which could affect opportunities for solitude and sense of remoteness for short periods. The project is designed to restore a more natural fire regime to the area and provide fuel breaks to improve the possibility that naturally-ignited fires could be managed under fire use strategies as opposed to suppressed automatically. The project will improve natural integrity of the area by restoring a more natural fire regime.

Efforts have been underway for many years to acquire several private land inholdings within the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness, including the Speculator Mining Strip and the Palmer and Crevice Mountain parcels. Acquisition of these inholdings would ensure wilderness characteristics would not change because of development. The Speculator Strip has already had some development, including construction of cabins and trails. If the property were acquired, these improvements would be removed and the site restored, improving natural integrity and apparent naturalness.

Fire suppression activities have the dual effect of directly affecting the natural integrity of areas where control actions are taken (line digging, etc) and a long-term negative effect to natural integrity by excluding fire from ecosystems where fire is a natural component.

In the next 5 years, growing recreation use from all user types, particularly day use, will likely reduce opportunities for solitude in wilderness in some locations.

## **Recommended Wilderness Areas**

Known projects likely to occur within the Lionhead and Republic Mountain RW areas are limited to administration and management of two cattle allotments in the Lionhead area, weed control projects, fire suppression activities and on-going trail maintenance. Effects are similar to those described in the Wilderness section above.

In the next 5 years, growing recreation use from all user types, particularly day use, will likely reduce opportunities for solitude in RW in some locations.

## **Cumulative Effects of Past, Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Programs and Activities with the Travel Plan Alternatives**

Cumulative effects relative to travel plan alternatives are very similar to the direct and indirect effects described in the previous sections of this chapter. Please see previous sections for more detailed descriptions of the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of each alternative.

The projected combined effects of reasonably foreseeable activities articulated in the previous section in combination with the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the travel plan decisions could further affect wilderness characteristics.

### **Alternative 1**

Alternative 1 represents no change from current management in wilderness or RW. Continued impacts to apparent naturalness and natural integrity would accrue where unmanaged recreational livestock use would effect trail-less portions of the AB, and where ATV's attempt to pioneer new routes in RW on historic single track trails. Lack of seasonal restrictions on critical trails for stock would allow facility deterioration and negative effects to apparent naturalness and natural integrity from trail degradation and erosion and establishment of unauthorized user created routes in sensitive trail-less areas. Taken together with effects to wilderness character from other reasonably foreseeable activities, Alternative 1 would have the most negative effect to apparent naturalness and natural integrity and would not be responsive to draft LAC standards set for the AB and Lee Metcalf nor the goal to maintain wilderness character in RW.

### **Alternatives 2-5**

Alternatives 2-5 would employ seasonal restrictions for recreational livestock in wilderness, and mountain bikes in RW (see direct effects discussion). These alternatives would all allow some summer motorized recreation use in RW as well as snowmobiling, which would have negative effects on apparent naturalness, the sense of remoteness/primitive recreation and opportunities for solitude in these areas. Taken together with reasonably foreseeable activities, these alternatives would have moderate impacts to opportunities for solitude, apparent naturalness, natural integrity, remoteness and primitive recreation opportunities within RW. While these effects are not an irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources that would preclude wilderness designation in the future, they could perpetuate resource impacts which would be difficult to reclaim if the areas were designated as wilderness. These alternatives progressively improve managing recreational livestock impacts in wilderness, and would have a positive effect on apparent naturalness and natural integrity by minimizing stock impacts when viewed together with other reasonably foreseeable actions.

## **Alternative 6**

Alternative 6 would have similar cumulative effects as Alternatives 3-5 in wilderness. Alternative 6 would prohibit all motorized and mechanized recreation in recommended wilderness entirely. This alternative when viewed together with other reasonably foreseeable actions would improve current conditions relative to opportunities for solitude, apparent naturalness, natural integrity and the sense of remoteness/primitive recreation opportunities, and best protect inherent wilderness characteristics.

## **Alternative 7-M**

Alternative 7-M would drop most of the seasonal restrictions to stock in wilderness and RW. On the Beartooth Plateau, the outright prohibition of stock in Alternatives 3-6 would be managed instead with a seasonal prohibition (no stock within the restricted area prior to August 1), with no over night stock use yearlong. This alternative relaxes regulations in Alternatives 3-6 that would negatively affect people's "primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities" improving that characteristic over Alternatives 3-6. When viewed with other reasonably foreseeable actions, it would not be as responsive as Alternatives 3-6 in protecting apparent naturalness, natural integrity, opportunities for solitude and sense of remoteness from negative effects tied to recreational stock use on the Beartooth Plateau.

Alternative 7-M would have minor negative effects to wilderness characteristics in the Lionhead RW when viewed with other reasonably foreseeable actions. This alternative would continue to allow mountain bikes and a small area of snowmobiling in the Lionhead RW, which would have negative effects to apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude and the sense of remoteness. No irretrievable commitment of resources as a result of this alternative taken together with other actions would prohibit future designation as wilderness.

## **Effects of Proposed Goals, Objectives, Standards and Guidelines**

Alternatives 2 through 7-M propose a number of goals and objectives to provide for recreation opportunity, access and to improve other resource conditions that may have been adversely affected by the Forest's transportation system. Goals and objectives, by themselves, have no environmental effect because they do not constitute final agency decisions. Environmental effect under NEPA is more appropriately addressed at such time that specific actions are proposed to achieve these goals and objectives. The proposed Travel Management Plan does include the final agency decisions for management of public travel and this reflects implementation of the goals and objectives proposed for recreation opportunity (for example Forest-wide Goal A, Objective A-1, and Travel Planning Area Goals 1 and 2 and Objectives 1-1 and 2-1). The predicted direct, indirect and cumulative effects of public travel on Wilderness, Recommended Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas and hence the implementation of these goals and objectives are addressed earlier in this section.

Alternatives 2 through 7-M also propose standards and guidelines to provide for protection of other resources during Travel Plan implementation. Standards and guidelines include protection measures within which future proposals for road and trail construction, reconstruction, maintenance

and decommissioning must take place. These are considered final agency decisions because they set limitations within which future actions must take place.

The proposed goals, objectives, standards and guidelines that are relevant to the protection and improvement of are Wilderness, Recommended Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas discussed below.

## **Designated Wilderness**

Goals A, Objectives A-3, A-4, and A-5; and Goal N, Standard N(1), Guidelines N(2) and Guidelines N(3) in Alternatives 2-6 would all have a positive effect on natural integrity, apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude and the sense of remoteness in Wilderness. See the Effects to Designated Wilderness section for a detailed discussion. Goals A, Objectives A-3, A-4, and A-5; and Goal J, Standard J(1), Guidelines J(2) and Guidelines J(3) in Alternatives 7-M would all have a positive effect on natural integrity, apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude and the sense of remoteness in Wilderness.

## **Recommended Wilderness and Hyalite/Porcupine-Buffalo Horn WSA**

Many of the proposed goals, objectives and standards which would apply to Alternatives 2 through 7-M would have beneficial effects to maintaining or restoring natural integrity and improving or maintaining apparent naturalness and the sense of remoteness in RWs and in the WSA. None of the proposed goals, objectives, standard or guidelines would have a tangible effect on boundaries or future manageability of these areas as Wilderness.

### **Specifically in Alternatives 2-6:**

**Standard A-6:** Prohibits off-route travel by summer motorized vehicles. This would significantly reduce impacts to natural integrity and apparent naturalness by the proliferation of unauthorized user-created routes. Over time, existing user-created routes would heal, and become unnoticeable.

**Standard A-10:** Prohibits certain summer motorized uses in new routes designated for that use until such routes meet applicable engineering standards. This would reduce impacts to natural integrity and apparent naturalness. By restricting traffic until the routes meet standard, trail erosion would be limited, unnecessarily widened trails avoided, go-arounds and parallel trails minimized, all improving natural integrity and apparent naturalness.

**Goal C, and Objectives C-1, C-2 and C-3:** These would greatly improve natural integrity and apparent naturalness in areas where unneeded roads and trails are restored. Vegetation would be restored, water flows and function returned to something more akin to an undisturbed site, and soils allowed to rejuvenate. Revegetating these routes with native vegetation would also reduce the likelihood of noxious weed infestations. Once restored, and naturalized, these areas would also seem more remote to users, by removing the obvious signs of man's presence.

**Goals D through Goals I, and all associated Objectives:** These would all benefit natural integrity by providing healthy habitats, restoring wildlife corridors, aiding with the recovery of threatened and endangered species, and improving native fisheries.

**Objective B-1:** This objective to acquire specific access needs displayed in Table I-4 which could have a negative effect on the feeling of remoteness in certain portions of the HPBH if new access were acquired. See the Direct Effects discussions for details.

**Specifically in Alternative 7-M:**

**Standard A-8:** Prohibits off-route travel by summer motorized vehicles. This would significantly reduce impacts to natural integrity and apparent naturalness by the proliferation of unauthorized user-created routes. Over time, existing user-created routes would heal, and become unnoticeable.

**Objective A-6 and Standard A-7:** This alternative would not allow consideration of backcountry landing strips in RW or WSA's, which would prevent any negative effects to wilderness characteristics in these areas.

**Standard A-12:** Prohibits certain summer motorized uses in new routes designated for that use until such routes meet applicable engineering standards. This would reduce impacts to natural integrity and apparent naturalness. By restricting traffic until the routes meet standard, trail erosion would be limited, unnecessarily widened trails avoided, go-arounds and parallel trails minimized, all improving natural integrity and apparent naturalness.

**Goal D, and Objectives D-1, D-2 and D-3:** These would greatly improve natural integrity and apparent naturalness in areas where unneeded roads and trails are restored. Vegetation would be restored, water flows and function returned to something more akin to an undisturbed site, and soils allowed to rejuvenate. Revegetating these routes with native vegetation would also reduce the likelihood of noxious weed infestations. Once restored, and naturalized, these areas would also seem more remote to users, by removing the obvious signs of man's presence.

**Goals E through Goals H, and all associated Objectives:** These would all benefit natural integrity by providing healthy habitats, restoring wildlife corridors, aiding with the recovery of threatened and endangered species, and improving native fisheries.

**Standard D-5:** Closes project roads not designated for open public use by the Travel Plan to public motorized use. This would improve opportunities for solitude and the sense of remoteness in some areas (though project roads such as these are very limited in the WSA and non-existent in recommended Wilderness).

**Objective B-3:** This objective to acquire specific access needs displayed in Table I-8 which could have a negative effect on the feeling of remoteness in certain portions of the HPBH if new access were acquired. See the Direct Effects discussions for details.

## **Consistency with Laws, Regulations, Policy and Federal, Regional, State and Local Land Use Plans (including the Forest Plan).**

### **Applicable Laws, Regulation and Policy**

Applicable laws, regulations and policy that govern the management of Wilderness, recommended Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas are as follows:

- 1) The Wilderness Act of 1964 (PL 88-577).
- 2) The Montana Wilderness Study Act (PL 95-150) S393.
- 3) Forest Service Manual 2320, Forest Service Handbook 1909.17.
- 4) Gallatin Forest Plan – Management Area 4.
- 5) Forest Service Manual Supplement id\_2300-2005-1
- 6) Absaroka Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wilderness Management Plans (Appendix F1 of the Forest Plan).
- 7) Region 1 Access and Travel Management Consistency Papers.
- 8) Lee Metcalf and Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness Bills.

### **Designated Wilderness**

All alternatives are consistent with laws, regulation and policy regarding Wilderness management. Alternatives 2 through 7-M are most consistent with Gallatin Forest Plan direction that prescribes an LAC planning process to protect natural integrity, opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation opportunities. These alternatives prescribe goals, objectives, standards and guidelines that provide the additional direction, using LAC principles for trail management within Wilderness.

### **Recommended Wilderness**

All alternatives except Alternative 1 are consistent with laws, regulations, and Forest Plan direction. Language found in the Forest Plan MA 4 Goal (2) states, “*Manage recommended wilderness to protect the wilderness characteristics and to allow existing uses pending congressional action on their classification.*”

Alternative 1 would allow ATV use to become established on a trail (Sheep Creek trail) within the Lionhead RW, where that use did not occur at the time the plan was signed. Allowing continued ATV use of this trail would be inconsistent with protecting Wilderness character. Alternatives that allow motorcycles on this trail would be consistent with current Forest Plan direction.

Alternatives 1-4 and 7-M would be inconsistent with Regional guidance to manage RWs for non-motorized recreational uses. Recent thinking regarding management of RW areas would prohibit motorized and uses within these areas. Alternatives 1-5 and 7-M would be inconsistent with the Regional guidance to also prohibit mechanized transportation. Forest Service Region 1 Planning staff provided “consistency papers” (USDA 2003) that provide guidance to generally manage recommended Wilderness for non-motorized and non-mechanized recreation activities. The logic behind this direction is that if Wilderness designation is the highest and best use for the land, then the area should be managed to protect those values and maximize their potential future “designate-

ability.” If there are other overriding uses that would preclude Wilderness designation, for example motorized recreation opportunities or some commodity production use like mining, then the area should not be recommended for Wilderness designation through the Forest planning process.

## **Hyalite/Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area**

The principal legal direction for managing the HPBH WSA comes from the Montana Wilderness Study Act (S. 393). A variety of management area prescriptions were assigned to the lands within the HPBH WSA through the Forest Plan, however language in S. 393 supercedes all Forest Plan direction that conflicts with the direction in the law. The law is very simple, with the most pointed direction found in Section 3(a): “... *wilderness study areas designated by this Act shall, until Congress determines otherwise, be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture so as to maintain their presently existing wilderness character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.*”

A Region 1 Forest Service Manual Supplement (FSM 2300-2005-1) provides interpretations of what sorts of activities are appropriate in a WSA. This manual supplement provides clarity on the issue of ATVs and mountain bikes, types of recreational vehicles that did not exist in their current form in 1977. It states that ATVs are appropriate on routes that were used as four-wheel drive jeep routes in 1977, but are not appropriate on what were single-track motorcycle trails in 1977. It also states that mountain bikes are appropriate on all trails that were open to motorcycles in 1977.

Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 all have some feature that could be construed as contrary to the direction in the law, or clarified intent found in the Congressional record associated with the law.

Alternatives 1-4 all would designate some trails within the study area for ATV use. There were no four-wheel drive jeep routes in the HPBH WSA in 1977. The continued use of ATVs within the WSA would not be consistent with the manual supplement interpreting the Montana Wilderness Study Act.

Alternatives 1-4 and 7-M would allow mountain bikes on two trails that were closed to motorcycles in 1977 (Blackmore/South Cottonwood, and Big Creek). This would be inconsistent with direction in the interim directive FSM 2300-2005-1 which states that mountain bikes are appropriate on trails in WSA's that had historic motorcycle use.

Alternative 6 would eliminate all motorized recreational use in the WSA, as well as mountain biking. Examination of the Congressional record associated with this law provides clarity on the intent of Congress at the time. House of Representatives Report No. 95-620 specifically addresses the use of off-road vehicles within WSAs, concluding that: “*The use of off-road vehicles, while generally prohibited in designated wilderness, is entirely appropriate in wilderness study areas, including the nine areas in S. 393. Nothing in S. 393 will prohibit the use of off-road vehicles, unless the normal Forest Service planning process and travel planning process, which applies to all national forest lands, determines off-road vehicle use to be inappropriate in a given area.*” There are no demonstrated Wilderness Study Area specific issues nor other recreation goals or objectives that would compel the Forest to eliminate **all** motorized recreation activities within the WSA, to be in keeping with S. 393, thus Alternative 6 would not be consistent with Congressional intent for the management of this WSA.