CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF PAST CLOSURES ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOTORIZED RECREATION.

There is a concern that the Forest Service has significantly reduced the opportunities for motorized recreation throughout the Region. Some people believe that the agency is trying to eliminate motorized recreation on all National Forest System lands, or at the very least to concentrate motorized use onto a small fraction of existing roads and trails. They believe the Rocky Mountain Division already has plenty of places for non-motorized travel, including the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wilderness areas and Glacier National Park. They believe some areas in the Division should be available for motorized recreation travel that allows visitors to enjoy the same opportunities to view scenery, fish and hunt in remote areas, and travel through wild country. They feel this is especially true for an aging population that may not have the physical stamina to reach remote places without motorized means. They also believe this is true for citizens that do not have the financial resources to own or hire saddle horses and pack stock, or vacation time needed to devote more than a weekend to visit the backcountry. By contrast, other people believe that motorized OHVs have taken over the landscape, and there are few opportunities to enjoy National Forests in Montana in an environment undisturbed by OHVs.

1. EXISTING CONDITION

a. Natural Characteristics

The 2001 Three-State OHV decision prohibited all cross-country travel by motorized wheeled vehicles on all National Forest and BLM lands in Montana, North Dakota, and part of South Dakota. The 2001 OHV Decision also directed all Forest Supervisors to evaluate "existing" roads and trails and designate a system of roads and trails that would be open to OHVs and other types of travel. Similarly, in 2004 the Forest Service proposed to modify existing Federal Regulations to prohibit all cross-country motorized travel on all National Forests, and to also have all National Forests designate which roads and trails would be managed for OHV travel. Consequently, the issue of cumulative effects on opportunities for motorized recreation is nationwide in scope, and involves all public lands.

David Havlick (2002) summarized road mileage data from four Federal agencies as shown in the following table:

Table III-36. Road Miles on Federal Public Lands

Agency	Paved Road	Unpaved Road	Other	Total
U.S. Forest Service	28,000	357,570	60,450	446,020
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	500	5,400	3,100	9,000
National Park Service	5,140	2,990	n/a	8,130
Bureau of Land Management	1,700	81,300	n/a	83,000
Total Agency Road	**35,340**	**447,260**	**63,550**	**546,150**

Source: *"No Place Distant"*, Havlick, D., 2002, pg. 5, Island Press, Washington, D.C.

Considering that these Federal agencies are responsible for managing over 600 million acres of land (Havlick, 2002), there is an average of about 0.6 miles of road per square mile of public land across the United States. To put this in perspective, there are currently about 124 miles of road (both open and closed) on 391,700 acres of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District outside the wilderness boundary, or about 0.2 mile of road per square mile of non-wilderness land managed by the Rocky Mountain Ranger District.

b. Past Events and Conditions

In the early 1960s, there were no restrictions on motorized vehicles. Every road and trail was open to motorized travel, and a person could drive any type of vehicle cross-country on any type of terrain they chose to drive upon; but people were beginning to object to the damage caused by unconstrained motorized travel on public lands throughout the West, including Montana. In 1964, Congress passed the Wilderness Act and created the Bob Marshall Wilderness. In 1972 the Scapegoat Wilderness was added to the complex in the Rocky Mountain Division. Also in 1972, President Nixon issued an Executive Order that directed public land managers to designate areas where vehicles would or would not be permitted. In 1976 the Lewis and Clark National Forest issued its first travel plan for the Rocky Mountain Division. Specific routes and areas needing protection from motorized vehicles were identified , and restrictions on motorized travel were imposed on areas other than wilderness. The 1976 travel plan for the Rocky Mountain Division was renewed in 1977. In 1978 the Bob Marshall Wilderness Addition was created by Congress, eliminating motorized use on 51 miles of trail in the Birch-Teton area. To mitigate effects of the 1978 Wilderness Addition on motorized access, a new travel plan was developed in 1984 that removed restrictions on some trails in the Rocky Mountain Division. By 1988 the need to provide additional protection for critical resources such as wildlife habitat, water quality, and endangered species habitat again resulted in a new travel plan that imposed additional restrictions on motorized travel. In 2001 all motorized vehicles were restricted to "existing" roads and trails, and unconstrained cross-country travel by motorized wheeled vehicles was prohibited on all National Forest and BLM lands in a three-State area. By 2002 better inventories of "existing" roads and trails revealed that motorized travel was occurring on more miles of roads and trails than managers on the Lewis and Clark National Forest had thought.

c. Historical Trend on Rocky Mountain Ranger District

To help establish the historical status of roads and trails that currently exist upon the landscape, the Forest Service reviewed old maps and files to determine when roads and trails were recognized as existing. The following table summarizes the historical management of roads and trails on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. **Appendix P displays this same data by map zone.**

Table III-37. Historical Motorized and Non-Motorized Travel Opportunities On Rocky Mountain Ranger District

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT	1960's	1976 TRAVEL PLAN	1984 TRAVEL PLAN	1988 TRAVEL PLAN (Current Management)
MOTORIZED OPPORTUNITIES (OUTSIDE WILDERNESS BOUNDARY)	147 mi. road 463 mi. trail **610 mi.** total	131 mi. road 262 mi. trail **393 mi.** total	112 mi. road 315 mi. trail **427 mi.** total	122 mi. road 395 mi. trail **517 mi.** total
NON-MOTORIZED OPPORTUNITIES (OUTSIDE WILDERNESS BOUNDARY)	0 mi. road 0 mi. trail **0 mi.** total	1 mi. road 226 mi. trail **227 mi.** total	3 mi. road 151 mi. trail **154 mi.** total	2 mi. road 153 mi. trail **155 mi.** total
Total Miles Roads & Trails	**610 mi.**	**620 mi.**	**581 mi.** (reduction due to Wilderness Addition covering 51 mi. of trail)	**672 mi.**

The preceding data show there were about 610 miles of roads and trails open to motorized travel in the Rocky Mountain Division after the Bob Marshall Wilderness was established in 1964. The first attempt to manage motorized use in 1976 resulted in a 36% reduction in miles of roads and trails open to motorized vehicles. But over the next 12 years there was a gradual increase in mileage open to vehicles. Currently, there are 517 miles of roads and trails open to motorized travel, which is about 85% of the mileage available in the 1960s.

d. Desired Future Condition

The "Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960" (summarized in the project file) directs "the national forests to be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed and wildlife and fish purposes." It is the responsibility of the Forest Service, as a multiple-use agency, to determine the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these purposes to best meet the needs of the American people. In regard to recreational activities on National Forest System lands, it is the policy of the Forest Service to maintain opportunities for a variety of motorized and non-motorized activities, and to manage OHV recreational activities within the capability and suitability of the resources (FSM-2355.03). The Forest Service attempts to find a balance between competing interests to maintain a mix of opportunities to enjoy the National Forest.

e. Lewis and Clark National Forest Statistics

Mileages of roads, trails, and areas currently open or closed to motorized travel on the Lewis and Clark National Forest are displayed in Appendix H.

f. Eastside-Montana National Forest Statistics

Appendix I contains information on the:

- acreage dedicated to Wilderness management in eastern Montana,
- mileage of motorized and non-motorized roads and trails on National Forest System lands in eastern Montana,
- acreage by ROS classification on NFS lands in eastern Montana.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

a. Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

Under Alternative 1 there would be no change in the mileage of roads and trails open to motorized travel on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. About 77% of the non-wilderness road and trail system on the Rocky Mountain Division would be open to motorized use.

2. Cumulative Effects

Wilderness areas such as the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat were not established solely to provide places for non-motorized recreation. "Wilderness" is intended to provide a wide variety of benefits to the human environment, such as clean water, clean air, and landscapes undisturbed by humans. If the amount of non-motorized recreation use within a Wilderness starts to cause problems, the amount of use could be limited to protect the enduring value of

wilderness. Consequently, it would be inappropriate to expect non-motorized recreation in the Rocky Mountain Division to occur only in the designated Wilderness areas. In fact, it could be more desirable to increase non-motorized recreation opportunities outside of the Wilderness in order to lessen the amount of human use on heavily traveled corridors within the Wilderness.

The public forums to debate the appropriateness of currently designated Wilderness areas have come and gone. Likewise, the public forums for imposing existing restrictions on motorized travel have come and gone, and cannot be changed by the no action alternative under this analysis. The "no action" alternative does nothing towards adding or subtracting from the cumulative effects of past restrictions on motorized travel. There is no reasonably foreseeable legislation that may expand existing Wilderness areas. Other proposed or potential activities as listed in Appendix M would not have a cumulative effect on motorized recreation opportunities. Other National Forests in eastern Montana are engaged in travel management planning, and may affect opportunities for motorized recreation within the State of Montana.

b. Action Alternatives 2-5

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

The best data available on miles of roads and trails closed to motorized travel comes from the adjacent eastside-Montana National Forests, as well as the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Data from National Forests in western Montana are not available, and data from other public land management agencies are limited and not meaningful to the analysis.

In looking at data from the Beaverhead, Deerlodge, Custer, Gallatin, and Helena National Forests in Table III-38, it appears that about 72% of the road system is open to motorized vehicle travel, and about 36% of the trail system is open to OHV travel. By comparison, on the Lewis and Clark National Forest about 91% of the road system is open to motorized vehicle travel, and about 59% of the trail system is open to OHV travel. All of the action alternatives being assessed impose additional restrictions on motorized travel. Alternative 3 would result in the greatest reduction of motorized recreation opportunities, and Alternative 2 would have the least reduction for opportunities on the Lewis and Clark National Forest.

Table III-38. Inventoried Road and Trail Mileage on Five National Forests, the Lewis and Clark National Forest, and Project Alternatives.

AREA	Acres of NFS lands	Miles Road Open to Vehicles/OHVs	Total Miles Inventoried Road	Miles Trail Open to OHVs	Total Miles Inventoried Trail
5 National Forests* eastside-Montana	9,183,000	9,376 (72%)	12,949	3,026 (36%)	8,414
Lewis & Clark * National Forest	1,862,289	1,434 (91%)	1,580	1,071 (59%)	1,806
Rocky Mtn. R.D. **			**		**
Alternative 1	391,700 (outside Wilderness)	139 (98%)	141	378 (71%)	531
Alternative 2		122 (99%)	123	270 (54%)	499
Alternative 3		88 (73%)	120	0 (0%)	494
Alternative 4		122 (98%)	124	117 (23%)	496
Alternative 5		106 (86%)	123	65 (13%)	496

* Refer to Appendix I for data on 5 eastside National Forests and Lewis & Clark N.F.

** Inventoried road & trail mileages vary by alternative due to differences in routes being decommissioned and/or unclassified routes being adopted as "system" routes.

Other data referenced in Appendix I also indicates that the Lewis and Clark National Forest has a higher percentage of its road and trail system open to motorized vehicles. It is reasonable to conclude that all of the action alternatives would further reduce the miles of roads and trails open to motorized vehicle travel.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) acreages for all eastside-Montana National Forests are presented in Appendix I. These data indicate about 64% of National Forest System lands on six eastside National Forests are affected by motorized travel during the summer, and about 36% of the NFS lands are not open to motorized travel. This indicates that the majority of NFS lands in eastern Montana allow, and are influenced by motorized wheeled vehicles during the summer months. Similarly, 69% of the NFS lands on six eastside National Forests are affected by motorized travel during the winter months, and 31% of the NFS lands are not. These data again indicate that the majority of NFS lands in eastern Montana are open to snowmobiling.

2. Cumulative Effects

Data for the Lewis and Clark National Forest indicate a trend in imposing restrictions on motorized travel since the 1960s. It is logical to believe that similar trends occurred on the five other eastside-Montana national forests, resulting in their current restrictions. No doubt these restrictions have reduced the opportunities for motorized recreation on a state and local level. However, the public forums to debate the appropriateness of currently designated Wilderness areas have come and gone. Likewise, the public forums for imposing existing restrictions on motorized travel on public lands around Montana have come and gone, and cannot be changed nor mitigated by this analysis. The only cumulative effect that can be assessed in any meaningful manner by the Lewis and Clark National Forest occurs within the confines of the Lewis and Clark National Forest boundary.

This issue is unrelated to any other activities that may occur in the Rocky Mountain Division in the foreseeable future as summarized in Appendix M, and would not have a cumulative effect with opportunities for motorized recreation on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. This project could have a cumulative effect with on-going travel planning efforts elsewhere on the Lewis and Clark National Forest, and on other eastside-Montana national forests.

Selection and implementation of any action alternative would result in further reductions in opportunities for motorized recreation. This environmental analysis addresses the effects on various natural resources of Alternative 1 - No Action, as well as the effects of imposing further restrictions on motorized travel as prescribed by Alternatives 2-5. Most people are willing to accept restrictions on motorized travel in order to protect natural resource values such as water quality, wildlife habitat, and vegetation. However, imposing restrictions to resolve social conflict is much more debatable, and less acceptable to people whose activities are being restricted. Imposing restrictions for social reasons is one of the challenges of travel planning.

Table III-39 compares the effects on opportunities for motorized recreation on six eastside National Forests if the least additional restrictions were imposed versus the most additional restrictions. There would be about a 5% reduction in motorized trail mileage if Alternative 3 (most restrictive) were implemented. Likewise, Alternative 3 would result in about a 2% reduction in the ROS acreage classified for summer motorized recreation, and a 3% reduction in ROS acreage classified for winter motorized recreation. This suggests that reducing

motorized travel on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District by itself would not have a significant impact upon the motorized recreation opportunities in eastern Montana.

Table III-39. Potential Cumulative Effects on Motorized Recreation in eastern Montana

RMRD Travel Plan Alternative	Motorized Recreation Opportunities Available in 6 eastside Montana National Forests.
Alternative 1 No Action (no change)	9,376 mi. road (72%) open to vehicles 3,026 mi. trail (36%) open to OHVs 5,662,800 acres (64%) motorized ROS – summer 6,313,300 acres (69%) motorized ROS – winter
Alternative 2 least additional restrictions	9,353 mi. road (72%) open to vehicles 2,920 mi. trail (35%) open to OHVs 5,632,700 acres (63%) motorized ROS – summer 6,203,900 acres (68%) motorized ROS – winter
Alternative 3 most additional restrictions	9,326 mi. road (72%) open to vehicles 2,650 mi. trail (31%) open to OHVs 5,514,700 acres (62%) motorized ROS – summer 6,000,700 acres (66%) motorized ROS – winter

c. Effects Common To All Alternatives

1. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

The Lewis and Clark National Forest does not have the data needed to determine how many roads and trails have been closed to motorized travel on all public lands throughout the nation. We doubt that knowing that information would have any meaningful affect on the decision to be made for this project. Public lands are managed for a variety of resources and values, not just motorized recreation. We believe that every public agency manages their lands to fulfill their assigned responsibilities, and that agencies make reasoned decisions in regard to road and trail management.

It is beyond the scope of this analysis to assess the effects of past designations of Wilderness areas in Montana, or to assess the effects of past decisions to restrict travel on other National Forests or other public lands in Montana. Likewise, it is beyond the scope of this analysis to account for travel management plans currently under consideration on other National Forests and other public lands in Montana. Each public agency is going through a public process to reach a "reasoned" decision on how to best manage the roads and trails under their jurisdiction.

Nonetheless, motorized recreation enthusiasts would argue that the effects of Wilderness designation and a trend of restricting motorized travel on more and more routes are having a significant cumulative effect on their ability to enjoy public lands. Data on the acreage of designated Wilderness and acreage being considered for wilderness in eastside National Forests are presented in Table III-40. The table shows that about 28% of NFS lands in eastern Montana are either designated for Wilderness, or are in some category of study, planning, or recommendation for wilderness. An equal amount, or about 27% of NFS lands are not being considered for wilderness, and are not within inventoried roadless areas. There is relatively little social conflict about motorized travel in the 27% of the NFS lands that are more developed. The biggest social debate about motorized versus non-motorized recreation appears to be occurring in the 45% of the NFS lands that are within Inventoried Roadless

Areas (IRAs). The future management of roads and trails within the IRAs is likely to have the biggest cumulative effect on the opportunity for motorized recreation.

Table III-40. Acreage of Wilderness and Lands Being Considered for Wilderness on Six eastside-Montana National Forests

AREA	Acres of NFS Lands	Wilderness	Wilderness Study Areas	Forest Plan Recommended Wilderness	Further Planning	Inventoried Roadless Area
6 National Forests* eastside-Montana	9,183,000	1,778,000 ac. 19%	565,000 ac. 6%	292,000 ac. 3%	4,000 ac. <1%	4,130,000 ac. 45%
Lewis & Clark NF	1,862,000	384,000 ac. 21%	190,000 ac. 10%	52,000 ac. 3%		1,004,000 ac. 54%
Rocky Mountain Ranger District	775,000	384,000 ac.	0 ac	52,000 ac.	42,000 ac.	352,000 ac.

* Data includes the Beaverhead, Deerlodge, Helena, Gallatin, Custer, and Lewis & Clark National Forests. Source: USDA Forest Service, Eastside Forests, Analysis of the Management Situation, draft report, 2004.

There is no reliable method to predict the outcome of on-going travel management planning occurring on all eastside National Forests. It is most likely that all eastside National Forests would impose additional restrictions on motorized travel, but the extent of such restrictions is pure speculation. Table III-41 provides a range of scenarios that might occur on a broader area such as eastern Montana. It was assumed that the existing road infrastructure is needed to access the NFS lands, and relatively little reduction in miles of open road would occur under all scenarios.

Table III-41. Potential Scenarios for Motorized Recreation in eastern Montana

Potential Changes in Motorized Recreation Opportunites	Potential Motorized Recreation Opportunities Available in 6 eastside Montana National Forests.
No Change	9,376 mi. road (72%) open to vehicles 3,026 mi. trail (36%) open to OHVs 5,662,800 acres (64%) motorized ROS – summer 6,313,300 acres (69%) motorized ROS – winter
Assume 25% Reduction on six National Forests from existing condition	9,070 mi. road (70%) open to vehicles 2,270 mi. trail (27%) open to OHVs 4,247,100 acres (48%) motorized ROS – summer 4,735,000 acres (52%) motorized ROS – winter
Assume 75% Reduction on six National Forests from existing condition	8,600 mi. road (60%) open to vehicles 760 mi. trail (9%) open to OHVs 1,415,700 acres (16%) motorized ROS – summer 1,578,300 acres (17%) motorized ROS – winter

d. Effects Common To All Action Alternatives

1. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

There are no known direct, indirect, or cumulative effects common to all action alternatives.