

CONSISTENCY WITH ADJACENT NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT.

Some people believe that the proposed action is not consistent with management of adjacent National Forest System lands on the Helena and Flathead National Forest.

Maintaining consistency in management of wheeled vehicles and over-snow vehicles was a consideration in developing of alternatives. The analysis will compare proposed management under each alternative with management of adjacent National Forest System lands.

1. EXISTING CONDITION

a. Natural Characteristics

The following tables address possible travel plan inconsistencies between national forests. Recreation activities analyzed include motorized summer and winter access to trails, as well as cross-country travel by snowmobiles. Possible inconsistencies include the following:

Summer recreation seasons (Possible Inconsistencies):

- Motorized trails on one Forest going up to wilderness on another. This encourages motorized trespass into wilderness and makes law enforcement more difficult. Presently, most trails on the district going to a wilderness boundary on an adjacent forest are non-motorized.
- Motorized trail access on one forest to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, which is not motorized in this area. This encourages motorized trespass onto the trail.

Winter recreation season (Possible Inconsistencies):

- Areas open to cross-country travel by snowmobiles adjacent to wilderness, i.e. no area restrictions on snowmobiles in areas adjacent wilderness. This, too, encourages motorized trespass into wilderness and increases law enforcement problems.
- Snowmobile trails going to the wilderness boundary. Again, this encourages wintertime illegal trespass into the wilderness and creates law enforcement problems.
- Several alternatives eliminate the existing un-groomed snowmobile loop connection between the district and the Flathead National Forest in the Badger-Two Medicine area.

The Rocky Mountain Ranger District borders the Helena, Lolo, and Flathead National Forests. All of the Lolo National Forest to Lewis and Clark National Forest boundaries are wilderness to wilderness, are entirely non-motorized, and present no inconsistencies. Five areas on the Flathead and Helena have possible inconsistencies with the current travel plan and several alternatives and are described below:

- Flathead N.F. non-wilderness just west of Badger-Two Medicine (approx. 15 miles).
- Flathead N.F. Great Bear Wilderness against about 7 miles of Badger-Two Medicine and Bob Marshall Wilderness against about 13 miles of Badger-Two Medicine.
- Flathead N.F. non-wilderness (about 3 miles) just west of W. Fork Teton area.
- About 7 miles of Helena N.F. Scapegoat Wilderness borders non-wilderness on south end of Forest out of Falls Creek.
- About 8 miles of Helena N.F. non-wilderness borders Falls Creek non-wilderness.

Table-III-51. Summer Recreation Season Inconsistencies with adjacent National Forest Travel Management

LCNF Forest Boundary Area	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5
with Flathead NF					
Badger-Two Medicine area adjacent to non-wilderness on FNF	None	None	None	None	None
Badger-Two Medicine area adjacent to Great Bear/Bob Marshall Wilderness on FNF	Motorized Trails 104, 147 and 103 go to Wilderness boundary.	None	None	None	None
Teton Pass area adjacent to Wilderness on FNF	None	None	None	None	None
with Helena NF					
Falls Creek area adjacent to Scapegoat Wilderness on HNF	Motorized Trail 229 goes to CDNST and Wilderness boundary	None	None	None	None
Falls Creek area adjacent to non-wilderness on HNF	Motorized trails 219 and 266 go to non-motorized trails on HNF & CDNST	None	None	None	None

Table-III-52. Winter Recreation Season Inconsistencies with adjacent National Forest Travel Management

LCNF Forest Boundary Area	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5
with Flathead NF					
Badger-Two Medicine area adjacent to non-wilderness on FNF	None	None	Eliminates existing snowmobile loop	None	Eliminates existing snowmobile loop
Badger-Two Medicine area adjacent to Great Bear/Bob Marshall Wilderness on FNF	Snowmobiles on Trail 103 go to Wilderness boundary.	None	None	None	None
Teton Pass area adjacent to Wilderness on FNF	Snowmobiles on Trail 114 go to Wilderness boundary. Area on LCNF open to snowmobiles.	None	None	None	None
with Helena NF					
Falls Creek area adjacent to Scapegoat Wilderness on HNF	Snowmobiles on Trail 229 goes to CDNST and Wilderness boundary	Snowmobiles on Trail 229 goes to CDNST and Wilderness boundary	None	None	None
Falls Creek area adjacent to non-wilderness on HNF	Snowmobiles on trails 219 and 266 go to non-motorized trails on HNF & CDNST	Snowmobiles on trails 219 and 266 go to non-motorized trails on HNF & CDNST	None	None	None

b. Future Trends

Adjacent national forests will continue to update their forest plans and travel plans over time. The Flathead N.F. is working on an amendment to its forest plan, as well as a revision of its forest plan, at the present time. The Helena will be doing a travel plan update for the Lincoln Ranger District, within the next several years. Both the Helena and Lewis and Clark National Forests will be revising their forest plans starting in 2006. Each of these efforts will include coordination between adjacent national forests to provide consistency for national forest users and to avoid inconsistencies between forests.

c. Desired Condition

Adjacent National Forests will have consistent travel management direction that does not encourage motorized trespass between Forests. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST), where presently non-motorized, will not have motorized trails from an adjacent Forest dead-ending on the CDNST. The importance of the Flathead – Lewis and Clark National Forest snowmobile trail loop system in the Badger-Two Medicine area will be recognized for its importance to snowmobilers.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

a. Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

Tables III-51 and III-52 show that this alternative has more inconsistencies than any other alternative. Effects are described in the Tables and in the Existing Situation section.

2. Cumulative Effects

Future travel and forest planning by adjacent Forests will be complicated by this alternative's inconsistencies, which inadvertently encourages illegal motorized use as described in the tables.

b. Action Alternatives 2-5

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

Alternative 2 allows three snowmobile trails to go to the edge of the wilderness or non-motorized areas on the Helena NF south and west of Falls Creek. This encourages trespass by some elements of the public into non-motorized area, decreasing opportunities for a non-motorized recreation experience and increasing law enforcement needs. This same alternative does not affect the current snowmobile trail loop in the Badger-Two Medicine area, nor does it have inconsistencies with non-winter motorized travel with adjacent forests.

Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 have no non-winter inconsistencies with adjacent forest travel plans. Alternatives 3 and 5 totally eliminate snowmobile use in the Badger-Two Medicine. As a result, they eliminate the loop snowmobile trail shared with the Flathead National Forest's Challenge-Skyland snowmobile trail complex. This would greatly reduce snowmobile

opportunities for present users and eliminate the recreationally desirable loop trail system, part of which is groomed by the local snowmobile club. If Alternative 3 or 5 is selected, the only snowmobiling in the northern ends of these two national forests would be on the Flathead N.F. Their trails would likely be reduced to avoid the “cherry stems”, or short dead-end trail segments that previously accessed into the Lewis and Clark NF to create the trail loop. The resultant snowmobile trails on the Flathead NF would have less utility for snowmobiling and would not be able to accommodate the number of users, nor provide the high quality snowmobiling experience presently available that is located on both Forests. This reduction in quality and amount of snowmobile trails available will also make coordination with volunteer grooming groups more difficult.

2. Cumulative Effects

A 1999 lawsuit resolution on the Flathead NF eliminated most of the snowmobiling on the Glacier View Ranger District. Existing skiing on the Hungry Horse Ranger District adjacent to the Badger-Two Medicine area was the result of difficult compromises between various conservation/user groups. Alternatives 3 and 5 would greatly affect that compromise that allowed the snowmobiling in the Challenge-Skyland area to continue, with its groomed loop trail shared with the Lewis and Clark. These alternatives eliminate an existing loop between the two national forests and, as a result, reduce even more snowmobiling opportunities on these two districts. The existing Glacier National Park provides no snowmobiling opportunities.

c. Effects Common To All Alternatives

1. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

See the two tables above that show varying effects by alternatives, and the discussion in Existing Situation of inconsistencies and their effects on adjacent National Forests.

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.