SOCIAL-ECONOMICS

Five issues were identified that pertain to the effects of travel management on the social and economic values of the project area.

EFFECT ON THE "WESTERN HERITAGE" SOCIAL VALUE OF THE "FRONT".

The Rocky Mountain Division is nationally perceived as a gateway to a wilderness environment with a traditional history of access by hiking or horseback. Trips into the backcountry by backpack or pack string require considerable expenditure of time and effort, reinforcing the feeling that the landscape is immense and not easily overcome. Visitors and local residents value the "Front" for its untamed environment and the "Western heritage" that it represents. Except for artificial lines on a map, some people see no difference between "the Front" and the adjacent Wilderness areas. A few people view the landscape as a cathedral that should not be desecrated by anything man-made. As a group, they believe that the Rocky Mountain Division should remain a place where only natural forces and traditional muscle-powered travel are allowed to occur.

1. EXISTING CONDITION

a. Natural Characteristics

The Rocky Mountain Division is a spectacular landscape. The high mountains and sheer cliffs are an awesome contrast with the prairies. It is a landscape that has inspired books and art about life in Montana and the untamed West.

Not only is the front country a spectacular setting by itself, it functions as a gateway to one of the largest wilderness areas in the contiguous 48 states. The table below shows the miles of system trails maintained in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex to accommodate access into the wilderness. Daily treks of 10 to 15 miles by hiking or horseback are average for many people traveling into the backcountry, but vary considerably depending upon one's ability. Excursions require 5 to10+ days to visit even a small portion of the wilderness area, and it takes several such trips in order to travel the system trails in the wilderness. It is immense country. Many visitors invest a week's time to travel 100+ miles, and even then they only visit a small portion of the wilderness.

Table III-62. Miles of Trail within Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

NATIONAL FOREST	MILES OF TRAIL
Flathead N.F	1,144
Helena N.F.	101
Lolo N.F.	119
Lewis & Clark N.F.	462
TOTAL	**1,826**

Data current as of 9/1/2004.

b. Desired Condition

Aside from its natural beauty, there are two characteristics of the Rocky Mountain Division that help define its link to our western heritage. They are its immense size, and the requirement for humans to expend a considerable amount of time (and muscle-power) in order

to travel through those portions closed to motorized use. Size is a function of both the non-wilderness lands along the front range and the adjoining wilderness area. Expenditure of time to visit the area is a function of allowing only muscle-powered travel within designated areas.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

a. Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

The problem for land managers is how to assess "personal perceptions" about a landscape. In the case of Alternative 1 – no action, it appears that the public places great value on the existing landscape, and the opportunities that the Rocky Mountain Division provides in regard to access into the wilderness area. Currently, there are 10 major trailheads (road corridors) that provide jump-off points to 19 different trails that access the wilderness. All of these routes provide opportunities to take trips of over 100 miles in length via hiking or horseback, and with no chance of encountering someone on a motorized OHV.

2. Cumulative Effects

Four of the factors to consider for cumulative effects (Appendix M) are addressed as follows. The proposed oil and gas drilling in the Badger-Two Medicine area would utilize some existing roads and also develop some additional road. Management of travel on existing roads would not make the drilling project more or less viable. However, the combination of developing new segments of road and accommodating motorized travel on existing roads may affect the social value of the Rocky Mountain Division as a premier landscape. Providing motorized access to the drill site may detract from the social perception of the landscape as an undeveloped "wild" area, even though the proposed drilling is in a location already influenced by motorized traffic during the summer and winter.

Any proposed prescribed burns and fuel treatments are expected to have short-term effects on the social value of the area during burning and patrol operations. Proposed fuel reductions are intended to reduce the risk of wildfire, and are adjacent to existing roads; consequently, the proposed fuel reduction operations are expected to have only short-term effects on the social value of the area.

Alternative 1 does not have any known cumulative effects with other proposed or associated activities as listed in Appendix M that could affect the value of the area as a premier landscape.

b. Action Alternatives 2-5

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

The following table displays the changes that would occur in opportunities to take lengthy trips into the wilderness. Alternative 3 eliminates motorized travel on all trails outside of the wilderness, and therefore develops the greatest increase in opportunities to take lengthy excursions via more routes. Alternatives 5, 4, and 2 also provide more non-motorized access routes to the wilderness boundary than currently exist, but not as much as Alternative 3.

Table III-63. Trailheads Providing Non-Motorized Trail Access to Wilderness Trail System by Alternative

TYPE OF RECREATION ACTIVITY	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Access to Wilderness Trail System **Trip lengths of 1 to 100+ miles**	**Trailhead:** Highway 2 (1) Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (1) N. Fork Teton (5) S. Fork Teton (1) Sun River (1) Benchmark (4) Smith Creek (1) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (1) **10 trailheads provide access to Wilderness via 19 routes.**	**Trailhead:** Highway 2 (1) Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (1) N. Fork Teton (5) S. Fork Teton (1) Sun River (1) Benchmark (6) Smith Creek (2) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (4) **10 trailheads provide access to Wilderness via 25 routes.**	**Trailhead:** Highway 2 (11) Palookaville * (4) Sawmill* (2) Mowitch Basin* (2) Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (2) N. Fork Teton (5) S. Fork Teton (5) Sun River (4) Benchmark (9) Smith Creek (3) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (4) **13 trailheads provide access to Wilderness via 55 routes.**	**Trailhead:** Highway 2 (1) Palookaville * (1) Sawmill* (2) Mowitch Basin* (2) Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (1) N. Fork Teton (5) S. Fork Teton (5) Sun River (4) Benchmark (7) Smith Creek (3) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (4) **13 trailheads provide access to Wilderness via 39 routes.**	**Trailhead:** Highway 2 (11) Palookaville * (4) Sawmill* (2) Mowitch Basin* (2) Swift Reservoir (3) Blackleaf (1) N. Fork Teton (5) S. Fork Teton (5) Sun River (4) Benchmark (7) Smith Creek (3) Elk Creek (1) Dearborn River (4) **13 trailheads provide access to Wilderness via 52 routes.**

* Trailheads that do not have perfected public easements.
(The number of non-motorized trails from each trailhead are shown in parentheses.)

The following table displays the opportunities under the various alternatives to take non-motorized trips of approximately 100 miles outside of the designated wilderness. Alternative 3 eliminates motorized travel on all trails outside of the wilderness, and thereby represents the maximum opportunity for lengthy excursions in a non-wilderness setting.

Table III-64. Miles of Non-Motorized Trails outside Wilderness by Alternative

AREA	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
Badger-Two Medicine	17 mi.	47 mi.	173 mi.	124 mi.	175 mi.
Birch – Teton	43 mi.	42 mi.	105 mi.	90 mi.	90 mi.
South Fork Sun	62 mi.	62 mi.	136 mi.	91 mi.	91 mi.
Dearborn	29 mi.	59 mi.	63 mi.	59 mi.	59 mi.
TOTAL	151 mi.	210 mi.	477 mi.	363 mi.	415 mi.

The preceding table suggests that the Dearborn area is too small to support lengthy trips by itself, but the Dearborn trails do connect with other trails within the BMWC under all action alternatives, and would provide opportunities to visit a premier landscape in an undeveloped setting. Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 could support lengthy trips by themselves in areas such as the Badger-Two Medicine area, Birch Creek, North Fork Teton & West Fork Teton River in the Birch-Teton area, and Deep Creek in the South Fork Sun area.

Overall, all of the action alternatives maintain the features that are most valued in this premier landscape. They all increase the opportunities to take lengthy excursions into the wilderness via more alternative routes. Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 also develop opportunities for people to take lengthy trips into non-wilderness areas. All of the action alternatives perpetuate the need

for visitors to expend a great deal of muscle power in order to visit the backcountry. None of the alternatives reduce the immense size of the landscape by increasing motorized use.

2. Cumulative Effects

Four of the factors to consider for cumulative effects (Appendix M) are addressed as follows. The proposed oil and gas drilling in the Badger-Two Medicine area would utilize some existing roads and also develop some additional road. Management of travel on existing roads would not make the drilling project more or less viable. However, the combination of developing new segments of road and accommodating motorized travel on existing roads may affect the social value of the Rocky Mountain Division as a premier landscape. Providing motorized access to the drill site may detract from the social perception of the landscape as an undeveloped "wild" area, even though the proposed drilling is in a location already influenced by motorized traffic during the summer and winter.

Any proposed prescribed burns and fuel treatments are expected to have short-term effects on the social value of the area during burning and patrol operations. Proposed fuel reductions are intended to reduce the risk of wildfire, and are adjacent to existing roads; consequently, the proposed fuel reduction operations are expected to have only short-term effects on the social value of the area.

None of the action alternatives have any known cumulative effects with other proposed or associated activities as listed in Appendix M that could affect the value of the area as a premier landscape.

c. Effects Common To All Alternatives

1. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

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

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.