

# **Appendix D**

## **US Fish and Wildlife Service Concurrence**

USFWS Letter of Concurrence: December 15, 2008:



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
ECOLOGICAL SERVICES MONTANA FIELD  
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United States Department of the Interior

File: M19 Lewis and Clark National Forest (I)

December 15, 2008

Lesley W. Thompson, Forest Supervisor  
Lewis and Clark National Forest  
1101 15<sup>th</sup> Street North  
P.O. Box 869  
Great Falls, Montana 59403-0869

Dear Mr. Thompson:

This is in response to your November 10, 2008 request for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) review of the biological assessment for federally listed threatened and endangered species regarding the effects of the proposed Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan, Badger-Two Medicine Area (Travel Plan). Your request was received November 14, 2008.

Travel management would be revised on the non-wilderness portion of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District north of Birch Creek in the area commonly known as the Badger-Two Medicine Area. A total of approximately 9 miles of road would be open yearlong or seasonally to motorized travel. The majority of these roads would be restricted to existing roads along the periphery of the Travel Plan area. These roads access campgrounds, trailheads, and firewood cutting areas. Approximately 3.7 miles of the Whiterock Pass Road near the eastern boundary of the area would be open only for very occasional travel by permittees to access communication sites for maintenance or emergency repairs, but would not be open at any time to the public or for routine administrative travel. No trails would be open to motorized travel of any kind. Snowmobile travel would not be allowed anywhere in the Travel Plan area.

The Service has reviewed the biological assessment and concurs with the determination that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the threatened grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), the threatened Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and the endangered gray wolf (*Canis lupus*). Therefore, pursuant to 50 CFR 402.13 (a), formal consultation on the species referenced above is not required.

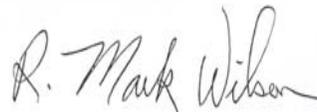
The Service bases its concurrence on the information and analysis in the biological assessment prepared by Wendy Maples, District Biologist on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. Three grizzly bear subunits occur within the analysis area. Open and total motorized access route densities would be reduced and core area would be increased on Forest lands in all three grizzly bear subunits in the action area. No trails would be open to motorized travel of any kind and snowmobile travel would not be allowed anywhere in the action area. Five lynx analysis units occur within the analysis area. Snowmobile travel would no longer be allowed anywhere in the

action area. Over-the-snow activity, such as cross-country skiing, would continue to be allowed. Vegetation changes would not occur as a result of the proposed action. Proposed lynx critical habitat would not be affected. All aspects of the proposed Travel Plan are compatible with applicable standards and guidelines in the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction. No known wolf pack occurs within the action area. However, it is likely that wolves from nearby packs use portions of the area. No known den or rendezvous sites occur in the action area and the Travel Plan would not affect the wolf prey base. A reduction in roads would occur; therefore an increase in mortality risk to wolves is not likely. The Travel Plan is a long-term plan, expected to be in place for a minimum of 10 to 15 years. During this timeframe, the potential for disturbance to grizzly bears, Canada lynx and gray wolves does exist, however we agree with the conclusions in the biological assessment that impacts related to the Travel Plan would be insignificant to grizzly bears, Canada lynx and gray wolves.

If the final project design is changed so as to have effects on threatened or endangered species other than those described in the biological assessment, a revised biological assessment will be necessary. The Service will then issue a letter of concurrence/non-concurrence on the revised biological assessment.

We appreciate your efforts to ensure the conservation of threatened and endangered species as part of your responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act, as amended. If you have questions or comments related to this issue, please contact Katrina Dixon or me at 406-449-5225.

Sincerely,



R. Mark Wilson  
Field Supervisor