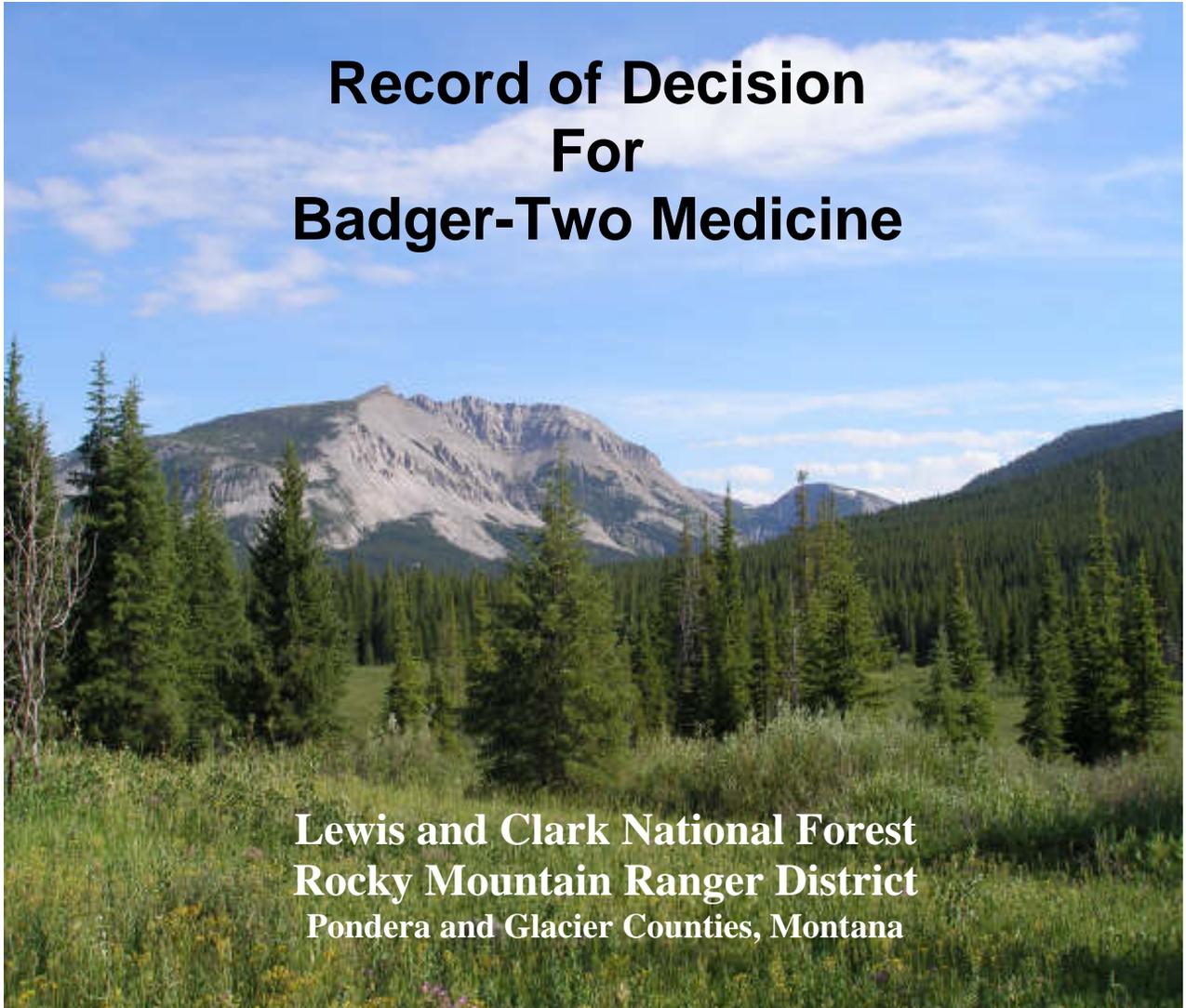


# Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan

## Record of Decision For Badger-Two Medicine



Lewis and Clark National Forest  
Rocky Mountain Ranger District  
Pondera and Glacier Counties, Montana

**March 2009**

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**Badger-Two Medicine -- Travel Management Plan**  
**Record of Decision**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Motorized and non-motorized travel on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District has been managed for the past 20 years under regulations described on the 1988 Lewis and Clark Forest Travel Plan map for the Rocky Mountain Division. In 2005, the Lewis and Clark National Forest proposed to revise and update the travel management plan for the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. In doing so, the Lewis and Clark National Forest proposed to designate roads, trails, and airfields that would be managed as system routes and comprise part of the Forest transportation system.

The analysis area encompassed approximately 391,700 acres (the entire non-wilderness portion of the Rocky Mountain Division) of the 777,600 total acres that comprise the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. Approximately 385,900 acres of designated Wilderness in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC) were not addressed in an Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) prepared for the project.

Of the 391,700 acres analyzed in the FEIS, about one-third (129,520 acres) are located in the Badger-Two Medicine area, and about two-thirds (262,180 acres) are located south of there in the Birch-Teton-South Fork Sun-Deerborn-Elk Creek area (Birch Creek South Area).

## II. DECISION

This decision covers the northern portion of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District, referred to as the Badger-Two Medicine (BTM) area. It encompasses approximately 130,000 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands that are located north of Birch Creek (that flows into Swift Reservoir). The project area extends from Birch Creek which is situated about 17 miles west of the town of Dupuyer, Montana, north about 20 miles to Glacier National Park near Highway 2 and west to Marias Pass and the Continental Divide.

It is important to note that this decision **does not** include NFS lands commonly referred to as the Birch Creek South area. A separate decision was made in October of 2007 for travel management in the Birch Creek South area.

After careful consideration of the potential impacts of the alternatives analyzed and documented in the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan FEIS (Travel Plan) issued in October 2007, **I have decided to implement Alternative 5 for the Badger-Two Medicine Area with minor modifications as follows:** Roads 8958 (Pike Creek), 9223 (Ridge Road ), and 8960 (Lubec Lake) will be open to licensed road vehicles when suitable for vehicle travel (generally May-November). Roads 9204 (Mowitch Basin) and 8987 (Whitetail) will be open to licensed road vehicles<sup>1</sup> July 1-November 30 (Refer to attached decision map). I have decided to leave these roads open so the public has access to some trailheads and limited opportunities to gather firewood.

<sup>1</sup> **Road vehicle** – (or highway vehicle) a self-propelled motor vehicle that meets the requirements of appropriate State law for registration and licensing in order to travel on public highways and Forest

development roads. The definition does not include devices moved by animal power or used exclusively upon stationary rails or tracks but may include All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV)- A type of off-highway vehicle that travels on three or more low-pressure tires; has handle-bar steering; is less than or equal to 50 inches in width; and has a seat designed to be straddled by the operator and Motorcycles - A two-wheeled motor vehicle on which the two wheels are not side-by-side but in line.

These open roads will also provide Blackfoot Tribal Members access to the area to exercise their Treaty Rights and utilize the area for cultural and spiritual pursuits. The entire BTM area will be closed to snowmobiling. Refer to Table 1.

Mitigation measures as described in the FEIS at Appendix D for this project will be implemented to minimize, reduce, rectify, avoid, eliminate, and/or compensate the potential impacts to resources identified in Chapter III (40 CFR 1508.20).

The detail of specific actions related to every segment of roads and trails is captured in an electronic database that corresponds to an electronic GIS map of the selected action. Tabular reports were inserted in appendices to this document or the project file. Most people, including Forest Service employees, will find it time consuming to read these tabular lists and locate all segments of a particular road or trail of interest to them. We published lists of the most commonly asked categories, but we may not have listed everything that is of interest to you. Copies of the datatable and GIS map are in the project files, and electronic copies are available upon request.

**ROD Table 1. Summary of Miles by Route Restriction for the BTM Decision**

Route Restriction	Miles
Open to Licensed Road Vehicles	6
Open Seasonally to Motorized Use	2
Open Seasonally to Licensed Road Vehicles	.6
Closed to All Wheeled Motorized use	182

## MANAGEMENT ACTIONS SPECIFIC TO DECISION:

### 1. Designate Routes for Hiking, Stock, and Bicycle<sup>2</sup> Travel Only (non-motorized):

All trails (Map 1), totaling about 182 miles would allow hiking, stock, and bicycle<sup>2</sup> travel yearlong. The use of motorized wheeled vehicles would be restricted yearlong on all of these trails.

<sup>2</sup>**Bicycles**- A generic term that includes all forms of pedal/gear-driven mechanized transportation powered by human muscles, such as mountain bicycles.

### 2. Adopt some Previously Undetermined Routes. Designate and Manage them as System Routes.

Prior to the analysis we inventoried as many undetermined (non-system) roads and trails as we could locate on the ground. Our analysis indicated that some undetermined routes were desirable for public use and were feasible to manage as part of the designated

transportation system. Appendix A identifies the routes that will be adopted and managed as part of the official road and trail transportation network and associated mileage. A very limited amount of spur roads would be adopted for passenger road vehicles to access existing dispersed campsites adjacent to the open road system. These few roads will be signed as open on the ground and identified as open on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).

**ROD-Table 2. Routes to be Adopted as System Routes**

<b>Type of Route to be added to System</b>	<b>Mileages (Approximate)</b>
Undetermined Roads to be added to system	<b>1.5</b>
Undetermined Trails to be added to system	<b>5.2</b>
<b>Total Miles</b>	<b>6.7</b>

### **3 Eliminate Unneeded Roads and Trails.**

During the analysis process several roads and trails (both system and undetermined routes) were deemed unnecessary for public use and/or were contributing to undesirable resource degradation. Appendix B to this ROD lists all identified routes including user created routes that would be eliminated (decommissioned) and not managed as part of the transportation system. These routes would be closed to motorized travel yearlong under this decision. They would remain legally open to the public for hiking, stock, bicycle travel, and other non-motorized uses, but the agency would not encourage nor maintain the routes for such use. The simple action of prohibiting motorized traffic yearlong may be sufficient to allow some unneeded routes to naturally fade away. Other routes may take additional action to hasten re-growth of vegetation, stabilize or repair resource degradation. The need for further actions to decommission some routes is expected to be done after additional field review on a site specific basis and addressed in separate analyses as deemed necessary by the Ranger District and resource specialists. Overall, a total of about 1.6 miles of road will be decommissioned and about 5 miles of road would be converted to trails and over 24 miles of trails would be decommissioned (Appendix B).

**ROD Table 3. Roads Decommissioned/Converted to Trails and Trails Decommissioned**

<b>Type of Route to be converted or decommissioned</b>	<b>Mileages (Approximate)</b>
Roads to be decommissioned	<b>1.6</b>
Roads to be converted to Trail	<b>4.8</b>
Trails to be decommissioned	<b>24.1</b>
<b>Total Miles</b>	<b>30.5</b>

#### **4. Allow travel off Designated Motorized Routes for parking/passing/turning around.**

Restricting motorized vehicles to designated routes has an inherent problem related to the constructed width of the travelway. Long segments of constructed roads are not wide enough to accommodate two vehicles passing one another, and most routes do not have constructed wide spots for parking or turning around. Some leeway needs to be allowed for two-way traffic to be safely and reasonably accommodated on designated motorized vehicle routes. I have decided that motorized travel off all designated motorized roads would be allowed for parking, passing, or turning around under the following criteria.

**Wheeled vehicle off-road / off-trail travel exceptions** - Motorized wheeled vehicle travel off the traveled way of designated system roads and off the constructed tread of designated system trails for **parking, passing, or turning around is allowed within the length of the vehicle and attached trailer** (unless signed otherwise) as long as:

- 1) parking/passing/turning around is accomplished within a minimum distance,  
-can be either perpendicular or parallel to the main travel-way
- 2) parked vehicles and trailers do not impede traffic on the main traveled-way,  
-parked vehicles are off the edge of the road  
-people exiting/entering parked vehicles can safely do so without stepping into traffic  
-animals/OHVs/equipment can be safely unloaded/loaded without obstructing traffic
- 3) no new permanent routes are created by this activity,
- 4) existing vegetation is not killed or removed,
- 5) no damage to soil or water resources occurs,
- 6) travel off route does not cross streams
- 7) travel off route does not traverse riparian or wet areas.

#### **5. Snowmobiling or Winter Area Restrictions within the Badger-Two Medicine Decision area:**

**Yearlong Restriction to Snowmobiling:** All National Forest System lands within the Badger-Two Medicine geographic area closed yearlong to snowmobiling under my decision. No trails or roads will be open to snowmobiling or other motorized over-snow use.

### **III. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION**

I have determined that my decision to select Alternative 5 with the specific modifications listed in Appendices A, B and ROD Tables 1-3 are consistent with all laws, regulations, and agency policy. I have considered reasonably foreseeable activities and potential cumulative effects. I believe that my decision provides for management activities that respond to the purpose and need and issues. I have attempted to address the competing interests in my decision, such as the interest for unrestricted motorized recreation and wildlife habitat protection and enhancement.

The factors I used to make my decision on this project included:

- Achievement of the project's purpose and need (FEIS, pages 3-5)
- Relationship to environmental and social issues (FEIS, pages 36 - 310)
- Public comments (FEIS, pages 313 - 388)

The analysis and decision processes for this project are based on the consideration of the best available science. The manner in which best available science is addressed can be found throughout the disclosure of rationale found within the ROD, DEIS, FEIS, Response to Comments, Biological Assessments, and the project file.

#### **A. Meeting the Purpose and Need**

The purpose and need for action in regard to travel management on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District – Badger-Two Medicine area are based on Forest Plan goals, objectives, and standards. More specifically, this project addresses the following purpose and needs.

The purpose for this Badger-Two Medicine decision is to:

1. Provide for public access and recreation travel in the Badger-Two Medicine area that considers both the quantity and quality of recreation opportunities the area offers as well as public wants and needs.
2. Bring the area, road, and trail use into compliance with laws, regulations, and other higher level management direction.
3. Provide for public understanding of the types of use and season of use allowed for each road and trail.

A comprehensive evaluation of recreational travel management has not been done since 1988. Due to recent trends in recreation use on the District, and the many resource and environmental protection issues that have emerged in the past decade, it is timely and appropriate to develop an updated travel management plan.

In general, the present road and trail system evolved incrementally over many decades based on site-specific demands for various recreational activities, and capabilities of the land to accommodate those activities. Use of roads and trails has changed substantially since the last Travel Plan was signed in 1988. ATVs, while rare in 1988, have become common on many roads and trails. Use of snowmobiles has grown in popularity, as has the demand for cross-country skiing. Advances in technology now allow motorized vehicles to travel on terrain that they could not traverse in 1988. Demand for access by people with disabilities has increased. The Travel Plan and my decision considers these changes in recreational demand and extent.

The 24 types of travel restrictions shown on the 1988 Travel Plan map for the Rocky Mountain Division are confusing. Many visitors are unable to correctly interpret the map, and the 1988 map has errors. Non-system roads and trails exist on the landscape but are not shown on the map; hence visitors don't know what rules apply to traveling on them. Visitors are also confused when they encounter different travel restrictions as they cross from one National Forest to another. A new Travel Plan is needed that is simpler with fewer categories of restrictions. A new Travel Plan is also needed to comply with National standards for mapping, and to consider consistency with adjoining National Forests.

Conflicts between different uses generally occur on trails and roads that are not designed to accommodate the types of uses allowed, or on trails and roads not designed for the level of use occurring. Also, conflicts can occur when visitors encounter other types of uses that they had not expected. A new Travel Plan is needed on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District so that the road and trail system provides safe travel routes for an appropriate mix of uses.

In 2001, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management issued a joint decision to prohibit motorized cross-country travel on all National Forest System and BLM public lands in a three state area including Montana. This decision did not address winter travel. The decision also directed all National Forests to set up a schedule for completing site-specific planning that would designate appropriate uses on all system and non-system roads and trails. The Lewis and Clark National Forest determined that the Rocky Mountain Ranger District was a high priority for completing a detailed site-specific travel management plan.

Ever since the 1988 Travel Plan was issued there have been questions about its legality. There is a need to complete an analysis of the effects of current travel management to comply with direction issued following appeal of the 1988 Travel Plan.

Since the publication of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan DEIS, the Forest Service promulgated new regulations governing OHV use throughout the National Forest System. These 2005 regulations mandate individual National Forests to complete travel plan analysis within 4 years, and designate the roads and trails where motorized vehicle use will be allowed. The Lewis and Clark National Forest expects the results of this travel planning decision to be in full compliance with the new regulations.

## **B. Consideration of Public Comments**

The Interdisciplinary Team developed a Response to Comments for the project file, and these responses are summarized in the Final EIS. In addition, I have reviewed all the public comments made on the project, and met with many groups and individuals.

One recurring theme of public comment was the value people placed on the wild, remote setting offered by the front country of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council provided a resolution emphasizing the cultural and spiritual significance of the Badger-Two Medicine area to them and requested the area be non-motorized. Many commentors emphasized the diversity of wildlife species, the presence of the grizzly bear and wolf, and asked that my decision maintain the undeveloped character of the Badger-Two Medicine area. The vast majority of public comments we received favored emphasizing traditional non-motorized modes of travel in the Badger-Two Medicine area. However, I did receive comments from individuals and community members which indicate that this area receives some motorized use in summer and winter. Nearby residents and visitors have come to ride motorcycles, ATV's and snowmobiles while hunting, camping, or sightseeing. This use is important to some who live in communities along the front and to those who occasionally visit the area.

After consultation with the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council, the Blackfeet Badger-Two Medicine Committee, reviewing the information contained in the analysis and reviewing

public comments, my conclusion is that area is very significant culturally and spiritually to the Blackfeet Tribe; it provides high quality and diverse wildlife habitat and provides excellent opportunities for non-motorized types of outdoor recreation. The Badger-Two Medicine area is adjacent to Glacier National Park on the northwest boundary and borders both the Great Bear Wilderness and the Bob Marshall Wilderness on the south. For these reasons, I have decided to emphasize non-motorized uses in the Badger-Two Medicine area. It is a magnificent area to enjoy solitude, wildlife viewing, hiking, hunting, fishing, stock use, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. There will be a very limited number of open road segments to provide access to trailheads, wood cutting and for tribal members to exercise their treaty rights.

Public comment is reflected in the issues identified and addressed in the environmental analysis. Below, I outline how I considered these issues and public comments related to them.

### **C. Consideration of the Issues**

Significant issues, as defined under 40 CFR 1501.7(a)(2), guided the range of alternatives and development of mitigation measures, and were used to incorporate into the analysis the measured effects of the alternatives. The issues focused the environmental disclosure on site-specific, direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that may occur under the alternatives. Other impacts and concerns were also analyzed and summarized as they related to the proposal as directed under 40 CFR 1501.7(a)(3). Issues identified in public scoping were similar to those identified by the Interdisciplinary Team. Similar issues were combined into one statement where appropriate. The team determined the following issues were significant issues. The following section addresses how my decision responds to these issues.

#### **AIR QUALITY / WATER QUALITY / SOILS:**

**Effects on air quality due to motorized OHV travel.** There was nothing in the analysis to indicate a significant impact on air quality as a result of the current level and extent of OHV use. The analysis indicated that all of the action alternatives may reduce the potential for effects on air quality, because all of the action alternatives reduce the mileage of roads and trails open to motorized travel. This is based on an assumption that fewer miles of motorized roads and trails equate to lower amounts of dust particles being lifted into the air. My decision reduces the mileage of roads and trails open to motorized travel.

**Effects on water quality from existing road and trail system under current levels of maintenance.** As stated in the analysis, the risks of impacts to water quality are greater at stream crossings and when roads and trails are within 100 feet of perennial streams. Research indicates impacts to water quality are caused by OHVs, livestock, hikers to a limited extent, using trails in riparian areas. Other factors such as inadequate maintenance, poor route location, and high use levels exacerbate (or aggravate) erosion problems and increase sediment delivery to streams from roads and trails. Water quality is important along the Rocky Mountain Front. My decision will change the type and

season of use allowed on many roads and trails, and should allow limited maintenance funds to be prioritized on trails causing impacts to water quality.

**Effects on water quality if human use levels or road/trail mileages increase.** My rationale for selecting a particular travel management action is based on public comments favoring non-motorized modes of transportation, my desire to maintain the undeveloped character of the Badger-Two Medicine area, to recognize the significance of the area to the Blackfeet Tribe and to better protect and enhance wildlife and fish habitats. My decision is expected to significantly decrease the amount of OHV use in the area. If there are livestock or other uses that result in detrimental effects to water quality the District Ranger may take further actions, on a site specific basis, to change route locations, eliminate stream crossings, construct bridges, or increase maintenance levels to protect water quality and aquatic habitats.

**Effects on soil quality due to motorized OHV travel.** There is very little difference between alternatives in regard to the miles of roads and trails on sensitive soil types. Cross-country travel by motorized modes of travel is prohibited under all alternatives, including the no-action alternative. The District Ranger may take actions, on a site specific basis, to change route locations or increase maintenance levels to protect soil quality

#### **HERITAGE RESOURCES:**

**Potential effects on the Blackfeet Traditional Cultural District.** This issue was analyzed in the FEIS. Consultation with the Blackfeet Tribe occurred throughout the process and two additional ethnographic studies have been completed during the environmental analysis process. This area was once part of the Blackfeet Reservation and is very important spiritually and culturally to the tribe. A large portion (93,000 acres) is currently identified as a Traditional Cultural District (TCD) and the two ethnographic studies recently completed recommend the remaining portion of the area be added to the TCD. The information provided in the analysis, the ethnographic studies, and the information provided by the Blackfeet Tribe during consultation is one of the reasons for my decision about travel management for the Badger-Two Medicine area. My decision has no effect to the eligibility for listing on the Register of Historic Places.

**Potential for effects on other identified and unidentified archaeological and historical sites.** As indicated in the FEIS, I have further considered cultural resources through the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 process in order to avoid, minimize, or mitigate effects to cultural resources. The Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has concurred with our procedures. I have chosen a stepped process. The first step was identification of properties through initial field inventory and documentation in the environmental analysis. This resulted in a finding of “no effect” for two cultural sites. These sites coexist with existing travel routes and are compatible with travel methods allowable under my decision. No mitigation is required, except for periodic monitoring in accordance with the Lewis and Clark Forest Plan. The second

step is completion of the 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act prior to any ground-disturbing activities that may be associated with route decommissioning.

### RECREATION:

**Opportunities for solitude/quiet trails.** The analysis displayed the opportunities for solitude by comparing the acreages within different “Recreation Opportunity Spectrum”(ROS) classifications. ROS is a useful means by which to compare and discuss non-motorized and motorized recreational opportunities. The following tables display acreages by ROS class for my selected action versus all of the alternatives. My decision places about 92% of the Badger-Two Medicine area in a primitive (which is non-motorized) or semi-primitive non-motorized setting, which is a significant increase over the existing condition (Alt. 1 = 51%), and a slight increase over Alternative 4 (70%). During my deliberations, I modified Alt. 5 (see ROD Table 1) by making 8.6 miles of road open either yearlong or seasonally to road vehicles. My primary reason to make these roads motorized was to provide access to trailheads, provide opportunities for cutting firewood, and to provide access by tribal members to exercise their treaty rights. Overall, my decision provides significant opportunities for someone to find solitude on a “quiet” trail, protects wildlife and fish habitat and addresses the significance of the area to the Blackfeet tribe. In addition it adds to the undeveloped character of the Rocky Mountain Front.

The ROS for the decision is very close to the ROS for either Alt 3 or Alt 5. Below is the ROS breakdown from the FEIS (page 114).

**ROD Table 4. Summer ROS Acreage**

ROS Class	Acres
Primitive	73,300
Roaded Natural	10,780
Rural	30
Semi-Primitive Nonmotorized	45,410
Semi-Primitive Motorized	90

My decision results in about 6.8 miles of “undetermined” routes being adopted as system roads or trails as detailed in Appendix A. Of the total, 5.3 miles of adopted trails would be for non-motorized travel by hikers, stock users, and bicyclists, and 1.5 miles of road would be added to the system. As shown in the analysis, these routes serve a useful purpose in accommodating public travel for recreational purposes, and can be managed by the agency as system routes. Allowing and managing designated access routes to dispersed campsites is an important step in minimizing the proliferation of new routes, and in accommodating public enjoyment of the area. My decision to designate a very limited amount of spur roads to dispersed campsites prohibits indiscriminate motorized travel to create new dispersed campsites, and allows the public ample opportunity to enjoy the dispersed campsites that have been in use for many years. This decision does

not change existing dispersed camping regulations when accessed by non-motorized means.

My decision also results in about 1.6 miles of unneeded roads and 24.1 miles of unneeded trails being closed to use under this decision. There would also be 4.9 miles of road converted to non-motorized trails. Further analysis of these unneeded routes would be accomplished at some future date to determine more specific needs to fully decommission them. My objective is to prevent any further resource degradation on these routes, and begin the process of restoration and re-vegetation to a natural landscape.

Restricting motorized vehicles to designated routes has an inherent problem related to the constructed width of the traveled-way. Long segments of constructed roads and trails are not wide enough to accommodate two vehicles passing one another, and most routes do not have constructed wide spots for parking or turning around. We received comments concerned about the provision in the 3-State OHV Decision to allow motorized travel off road 300 feet to camp. However, public comments did not advocate that vehicles, stock trailers, campers, equipment trailers, etc. only be parked within constructed road turnouts or in designated parking lots. Most people agreed with the concept of being able to choose their own parking spot alongside designated routes, and to choose their own spot to turn around. The issue is defining a “reasonable” distance to allow people to pull their vehicles off a designated travel-way in order to park or turn around. It is illegal under current law for people to park and leave their vehicle or OHV as an obstruction on the traveled-way of a trail or road. We must allow visitors the reasonable opportunity to park their car, 4x4, ATV, or motorcycle a short distance off a designated route so that they are not a hazard to other traffic, and so that they can safely stop and go about enjoying other activities. The 2005 National OHV regulations (36 CFR 212.51(b)) provides leeway to designate limited use of motor vehicles within a specified distance of certain designated routes. Consistent with the National OHV regulations, I have decided that motorized travel off all designated motorized roads and trails would be allowed for parking, passing, or turning around under the criteria specified in my decision. This allows people an opportunity to make reasonable decisions about how to best pull off the travel-way to park in a safe manner. This decision conforms to standard practice that the public has been doing for many years. We do not have any evidence that parking or turning around adjacent to main travel-ways has resulted in undue resource damage in this area. The allowance for motorized off-route travel to park and turn-around assures that visitors have an opportunity to recreate and enjoy their National Forest.

**Opportunities for diverse winter recreation.** For winter recreation, my decision places the entire area in a non-motorized setting. My decision provides 182 miles of non-motorized routes being reasonably available for day-use or extended overnight trips on cross-country skis or snowshoes. This is a substantial increase in the number of opportunities for quiet trips into the backcountry. In particular there is a substantial increase for non-motorized excursions. My decision continues to emphasize the Rocky Mountain Ranger District as the best area on the forest to provide various forms of non-motorized recreation opportunities as documented in the FEIS and the decision for the South Birch Creek Area. As I evaluated the travel management information for the entire forest, I concluded the Little Belts, Castles and Crazy Mountain Ranges provide the best opportunities for motorized recreation. However, we did identify limited motorized

recreation opportunities in the South Birch Creek Record of Decision. You may also refer to the Record of Decision for the Little Belts, Castles and Crazy Mountain Ranges for information on additional motorized recreation opportunities on the Lewis and Clark National Forest.

My decision to restrict snowmobiling is heavily influenced by public comments and consultation with the Blackfeet Tribe and the significance of the area to their culture. This area was once part of the Blackfeet reservation and they retain certain ceded rights. In addition, two recent ethnographic studies indicate the entire Badger-Two Medicine Area may be eligible for expanding the existing Tribal Cultural District. Our analysis and consultation with the Blackfeet Tribe indicate that motorized use is adversely affecting the Blackfeet Tribes traditional use of the area. In reaching my decision to emphasize non-motorized use in the winter in the Badger-Two Medicine Area, I also considered the close proximity for snowmobiling on the Flathead National Forest. There is a snowmobiling access point in the Skyland Area approximately two miles southwest of the trailhead on the Lewis and Clark National Forest at Summit. During consultation with the Blackfeet Tribe, they have offered to help offset the loss of snowmobiling in this area by permitting snowmobiling within the reservation on approximately 30 miles of trail in the Divide Mountain Area. I based my decision on all of these considerations.

**Current and potential use levels by activity.** Projected use levels did not vary by alternative. Use levels are a reflection of national and regional trends and are not likely to change because of a travel management decision.

**Opportunities for disabled access.** As stated in the analysis, about 16% of Montana's population has some type of disability. It is important that outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands be available to them. At present there is only one handicapped accessible trail on the Ranger District located at Wood Lake. My decision on the Birch Creek South area was to proceed with construction of some fully accessible trails (See Birch Creek South Decision). The district ranger may also allow disabled hunter access on some trails during hunting season as outlined in manual direction (FSM 2350, R1 Supplement 2300-2003-2).

**Cumulative effects of past closures on opportunities for motorized recreation.** Prior to the 1950's there was very limited travel by motorized recreational vehicles. As stated in the FEIS, in the early 1960s there were no management restrictions on where motorized vehicles could be driven on the Rocky Mountain Front. But as the population of our country has grown, and as technology has allowed motorized vehicles to travel over more difficult terrain, it has become necessary, because of resource impacts and user conflicts, to manage the use of motorized vehicles on National Forests. The 2001 3 State OHV Decision reduced the opportunities to drive motorized vehicles off roads and trails in the Northern Region of the Forest Service and on BLM lands in those states. The Chief of the Forest Service at the time identified unmanaged recreation as one of the four threats to our National Forests. The 2005 OHV rule directed each National Forest to designate which roads and trails are appropriate for motorized use. In addition, many private land owners and most state agencies prohibit OHV use on their lands. The result has been a reduction in the number of miles of roads and trails open to motorized use on National Forest system lands. Our challenge is to protect forest resources while allowing

motorized uses in appropriate areas. My decision will have a cumulative effect in reducing the total miles of roads and trails available to motorized travel.

### ROADLESS/WILDERNESS:

**Effects on roadless characteristics.** The FEIS displayed the effects on the two inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. The following table displays miles of roads and trails in the Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat IRA.

For the Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan IRA, my decision continues to allow motorized travel on approximately 2.5 miles of existing roads within the roadless area. The change in travel management will increase the opportunity for solitude and the opportunity for a primitive recreation experience.

**ROD Table 5. - Miles of Routes in The Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan Roadless Area**

Routes	Miles in Roadless*
System Road Closed to Motorize Use Yearlong	0.53
System Road Closed to Motorized Use Seasonally	1.98
Road miles to be decommissioned	0.26
Road miles to be converted to non-motorized system trails	3.74
Trail Miles to be Decommissioned	3.59
System Non-Motorized Trails	123.99

\*Please note: mileages and acreages are ArcGIS approximations; GIS edits to the alignments on roads and trails in the BTM between the FEIS and ROD could account for slight discrepancies in route mileages.

During the winter recreation season, my decision for the Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan IRA does not allow motorized over-snow travel in the area. This is a significant reduction from the current situation that allows motorized over-snow travel in the IRA.

**Consistency with adjacent National Forest management.** The Badger Two-Medicine area adjoins the Flathead National Forest. Consistent with this decision, no summer motorized wheeled vehicle travel is authorized on routes or areas on the Flathead Forest in areas adjoining the Lewis and Clark Forest. The Flathead Forest manages a small portion of the adjoining area for snowmobile use in the winter. The area around Badger Pass (near the head of Pool Creek) is open seasonally to snowmobiles up to the Continental Divide on the Flathead Forest, as is an area near Elk Calf Mountain. The Lewis and Clark National Forest side of the Continental Divide would be managed for non-motorized use yearlong; no snowmobile use is authorized. Compliance will be achieved through better maps and visitor contact in conjunction with law enforcement.

**Effects on Recommended Wilderness Areas.** There are no areas within the Badger-Two Medicine Area currently considered for Congressional wilderness designation. No

areas for inclusion in the wilderness preservation system have been recommended in the Forest Plan and there are currently no wilderness study areas in the BTM.

## **SOCIAL-ECONOMICS**

**Effect on the “western heritage” social value of the Rocky Mountain Division.** As stated in the Final EIS, all of the action alternatives maintain the features that are most valued in this premier landscape. My decision enhances these features by emphasizing the Rocky Mountain Ranger District, and the Badger-Two Medicine area in particular, as a primary place to enjoy hiking, horseback riding, pack trips, hunting, fishing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and wildlife viewing. The trail system will provide non-motorized access to the Wilderness via existing access points. Likewise, my decision provides about 182 miles of non-motorized trails in the Badger-Two Medicine to enjoy hiking, stock use, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, bicycling and other forms of non-motorized use. That is an increase of over 165 miles from the existing condition.

**Social conflict between motorized and non-motorized activities.** The vast majority of commentors discussed the need for quiet trails to reduce the conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users. Many favored Alternative 3 and felt motorized use should be reduced or eliminated on the RMF. Motorized users and non-motorized users have opposing view points on whether or not quality experiences are possible while sharing the same trail at the same time. Each person’s perspective determines if they enjoy their particular activity while sharing trails with others. My decision emphasizes non-motorized travel in the Badger Two Medicine Area.

To reduce conflicts, it is important to direct visitors to the type of experience they are seeking, and to forewarn visitors as to other types of people they may encounter along the trail. Most of the conflict between motorized and non-motorized recreation could be eliminated by informing people at the trailhead what they may encounter on the trail. Information goes a long way in meeting people’s expectations, and preventing surprises. Potential conflicts could be reduced by applying mitigation measures listed in the FEIS, including: (1) trailhead signing about types of uses that one may encounter on multiple-use trails, and (2) recreational maps and information emphasizing areas for non-motorized activities, and motorized activities.

Many commentors favored Alternative 3 (non-motorized Alternative), and some may be unhappy if any trails remain open to motorized travel. The Blackfeet Tribe favored Alternative 5 with some minor modifications. My decision responds to the interests expressed by many in having a predominately non-motorized area with access to 182 miles of trail to hike, ride horseback, or pedal a bicycle. Should safety conflicts arise on trails open to both bicycles and other uses, the District Ranger may determine an appropriate action to address the situation. There will be 182 miles of trail that are open only to hikers, stock travel and bicycles.

**Effects on grazing and Special Use permits.** Grazing permittees, outfitters, and other special use permit holders in the area would be granted access to the Badger-Two Medicine area under the terms of their permits. Access to private-land would be granted based on existing laws.

**Benefits to the local and State economy.** The analysis in the Final EIS indicated that none of the action alternatives would affect the local or State economy to any noticeable extent. My decision to emphasize non-motorized modes of travel and restrict motorized travel is expected to have very little influence on the local economy. It is unlikely that there will be a noticeable change in visitor use levels as a result of this decision for the Badger-Two Medicine area. There will be some displacement of snowmobile users as they will need to access the Flathead snowmobile trail system two miles to the west of the trailhead located on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Snowmobile users may also have access to the Divide Mountain area on the Blackfeet Reservation. Motorcycle or ATV users will need to utilize other areas on the forest, such as, open trails designated in the South Birch Creek ROD or in the Little Belts. Visitors who come to hunt, fish, hike, pack or ride stock, bicycle, snowshoe, or cross-country ski will have more opportunities for non-motorized recreation but their use levels are not expected to dramatically increase

#### **TRANSPORTATION:**

**Effect on management of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail(CDNST).**

As disclosed in the FEIS, a total of 41 miles of the CDNST were analyzed. 34 miles of the CDNST are located within the Badger-Two Medicine area. My decision places a yearlong restriction on motorized travel for all miles of the CDNST in the BTM area. This decision is consistent with the Birch Creek South ROD, in full compliance with the 1985 Comprehensive Plan for the CDNST, and complies with a policy memo dated July 3, 1997, from the Deputy Chief of the Forest Service emphasizing non-motorized recreation.

#### **VEGETATION:**

**Potential for spread of noxious weeds.** The analysis showed no correlation between the mode of recreational travel and the spread of noxious weeds. From the analysis, horse and foot traffic are just as likely to spread weeds as motorized OHVs. It appears that the potential for spread of noxious weeds is closely connected to the amount of infestation at the trailhead and the amount of use on the trails leading from the trailhead. If there is a large infestation of weeds at the trailhead, and there are a lot of people using the trails from the trailhead, then there is a higher potential for weeds to be spread along the trail. Management of the type of travel allowed on the trail has no relationship to the extent of weed spread. Use levels, not type of use, has the greatest potential impact on the spread of weeds. Because of this finding the potential for the spread of noxious weeds was not an influence in my decision about modes of travel allowed on roads and trails.

**Effects on sensitive plant species.** The analysis shows that none of the alternatives would affect sensitive plant species because this decision only applies to management of road and trail surfaces, an area where sensitive plant species typically do not grow. Off-road and off-trail travel is restricted by this decision, thereby eliminating the potential for motorized vehicles to affect sensitive plant populations. A separate analysis would be made before any ground disturbing activity (such as blocking, ripping, seeding, drainage control, etc.) took place to decommission and stabilize a road or trail. Mitigation measures described in the FEIS would be incorporated.

**WILDLIFE / FISH:**

**Effects on Seasonally Important Habitats for Wildlife / Potential for Disturbance and Displacement – Wheeled Travel.** My decision will reduce the miles of open motorized routes within important seasonal habitats, will increase the acreage of spring habitats that are potentially secure from disturbance by motorized travel, and will increase the overall acreage of wildlife summer and fall habitat potentially secure from motorized travel in the Badger-Two Medicine area (see tables below). My decision will retain motorized travel in a few specific areas leaving some large areas free from motorized travel, unlike in the existing situation. This change in pattern is likely to benefit wildlife.

**ROD Table 6. Miles of Open Motorized Routes Within Seasonal Habitats on NFS Lands for Badger-Two Medicine Area**

Seasonal Habitat	DECISION	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5
<b>Grizzly Bear Spring</b>	5	44	21	5	9	1
<b>Grizzly Bear Denning</b>	0	5	7	0	2	0
<b>Elk Calving</b>	0	3	0	0	0	0
<b>Elk Winter</b>	1	24	23	1	4	<1
<b>Bighorn Sheep Lambing</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Bighorn Sheep Winter</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Mountain Goat Kidding</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Mountain Goat Yearlong</b>	0	1	1	0	<1	0

**ROD Table 7. Total Acreage and % Beyond 500m of Open Motorized Routes in key Spring Wildlife Habitats on NFS Land within Badger-Two Medicine Area**

Spring Wildlife Habitat	DECISION	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5
<b>Grizzly Bear Spring</b>	44,320 (95%)	36,730 (79%)	40,490 (87%)	44,320 (95%)	43,330 (93%)	45,290 (97%)
<b>Elk Calving</b>	9,580 (100%)	8,660 (90%)	9,540 (>99%)	9,580 (100%)	9,540 (>99%)	9,580 (100%)
<b>Bighorn Sheep Lambing</b>	na	na**	na	na	na	na
<b>Mountain Goat Kidding</b>	23,560 (100%)	23,560 (100%)	23,560 (100%)	23,560 (100%)	23,560 (100%)	23,560 (100%)

\* Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 acres

\*\* Percents are the portion of seasonal habitat within the NF boundary in the BTM area that is outside a 500m buffer.

**ROD Table 8. Percent of NF Portion of Bear Management Unit (BMU) Subunits Outside 500m Buffer in Summer and Fall – Simple Buffer Method; Badger-Two Medicine Area (Table III-90 in FEIS)**

BMU Subunit	DECISION	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4		Alt. 5	
					Fall only	Summer only	Fall only	Summer only
Badger	99%	58%	63%	100%	92%	92%	99%	99%
Heart Butte	95%	84%	93%	100%	95%	95%	100%	100%
Two Medicine	96%	42%	54%	96%	66%	66%	98%	98%

The table above, although displaying results in terms of Bear Management Unit Subunits, serves as a means to estimate in general the amount of summer/fall wildlife habitat that would potentially be secure from impacts of motorized recreation.

Whether the reduction in potential disturbance from motorized travel displayed in these analyses would result in any measurable impacts to wildlife populations in terms of survival or reproduction is impossible to determine. It is important to understand that non-motorized travel may also cause disturbance and/or displacement of wildlife. The potential impacts of non-motorized travel on wildlife have not been analyzed for this Decision, and are assumed to be similar across all alternatives.

**Effects on Wildlife Habitat Connectivity.** Habitat connectivity, the term used to describe the maintenance of connections between seasonal habitats (east-west connectivity on the RMRD) and between larger areas with potentially distinct wildlife populations (north-south connectivity on the RMRD), was analyzed for Alternatives 1-5 in the FEIS. The analysis looked at the number and size of habitat ‘patches’, or areas >10 acres in size that were >500 meters from an open motorized trail or road open during the summer season (the season during which the most roads and trails would be open to motors). In general, fewer, larger patches maintain connectivity more effectively than more, smaller patches.

My decision was not numerically analyzed, but visual inspection shows that for the BTM area it will strongly resemble Alternative 3 in the size, location, and number of patches. Alternative 3 (as displayed in Table III-97 and Map 8 in the FEIS) would reduce the proportion of small patches and increase the proportion of large patches as compared to the existing situation.

My decision will provide large areas in which no motorized trails will potentially impact east-west or north-south movements of wildlife

**Effects to Threatened and Endangered Species.** Effects of Alternatives 1-5 on Canada lynx and grizzly bear were analyzed in the FEIS and in a Biological Assessment (BA) submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Impacts to grizzly bear that were analyzed in the FEIS are reviewed above in the sections on disturbance and displacement from seasonal habitats. Additional analysis carried out for the BA is

summarized below. The FEIS analysis for lynx parallels the analysis in the BA, and is summarized below. Impacts to gray wolf were not specifically analyzed in the FEIS. The analysis done for the BA is summarized below.

### Consultation.

Effects of my decision on the three federally listed species occurring on the RMRD were analyzed in a BA that was sent to the FWS for informal consultation on November 10, 2008. On December 15, 2008 the FWS concurred with the determinations in the BA and Supplement that the Decision “May Affect, But is Not Likely to Adversely Affect” the Threatened Canada Lynx, and Grizzly Bear and the Endangered Gray Wolf<sup>3</sup>. The FWS based its concurrence on the findings of the analysis in the BA as summarized below for each species.

<sup>3</sup> *Currently proposed for delisting by the FWS under ESA*

### Gray Wolf

The pack nearest to the BTM area is the Marias pack of about 6 animals (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service et al. 2008), established on the BIR to the northeast of the BTM area. Occasional track and visual observations of wolves in the northern half of the BTM are likely to be from this pack (D. Carney, Blackfoot Tribal Fish and Wildlife, pers. commun.). The Great Bear pack, of about 4 animals to the south and west on the FNF (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service et al. 2008) may also occasionally use the BTM. Other known packs in the larger area are the Livermore pack (about 10 animals, over 10 miles to the northeast), Red Shale pack (about 7 animals, over 20 miles south), and the Bennie Hill pack (possibly 4 animals, over 10 miles to the southeast). The project area does not include any known den or rendezvous sites that will be affected. My decision will not result in any impacts to the wolf prey base, and will not increase mortality risk to wolves. My decision will not affect current livestock management in the area. Because the decision covers a large area and is expected to be in place for a minimum of 10-15 years, however, impacts to individual wolves from encounters with humans could potentially occur during the life of the plan.

### Grizzly Bear

#### *Motorized Access Management*

Potential impacts to grizzly bears were analyzed in the BA by looking at route density and core area as outlined in the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) Taskforce Report on Grizzly Bear/Motorized Access Management and the Interim Motorized Access Management Direction (Interim Guidelines) for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE), applied using the Flathead National Forest (FNF) Amendment-19 (A-19) protocol. Values from the Interim Guidelines for motorized route densities and for core area, based on percent federal ownership of BMU Subunits, were applied as reference guidelines to the RMRD analysis. All three Subunits in the BTM area have less than 75% of their total area on NFS lands managed by the USDA Forest Service. Under the FNF A-19 protocol, numeric values for motorized access route density would not apply to these Subunits. Instead, objectives would be to maintain or decrease motorized

route density from existing levels. Specific numbers, definitions, and other analysis information can be found in the BA.

My decision will greatly reduce both total and open motorized route densities and increase Core area on National Forest lands in all Subunits. If the Interim Guideline or A-19 numeric values were to be applied, all three subunits would meet the numeric objectives under the Decision. My decision will not affect enforcement of the Food Storage Order or current livestock management. Because hunting and other human activity will continue to occur in the BTM area over the life of the plan, impacts to individual bears resulting from encounters with humans traveling in the area may occur.

### Canada Lynx

The Canada lynx is listed as Threatened throughout the contiguous United States. Management of lynx on lands managed by the LCNF is directed by the Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment (NRLA; USDA Forest Service 2007b), which adds specific management direction to Forest Plans, including the LCNF Forest, in the form of the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD). Additional recommendations and guidelines for lynx management can be found in the Lynx Conservation and Assessment Strategy (LCAS; Reudiger et al. 2000).

Objective HU 01 in the NRLMD is to reduce the potential for competition with generalist predators in winter “by discouraging the expansion of snow-compacting activities in lynx habitat” (USDA Forest Service 2007). My decision will remove snowmobiling entirely from lynx habitat in the Badger-Two Medicine area. This will reduce snowmobile trails from approximately 10 miles currently to 0 miles. This decision represents a large decrease in potential impacts to lynx from snowmobile travel. There are no designated snowmobile play areas on the RMRD and none will be created by the decision. The table below shows the snowmobile acres in Lynx Habitat for my decision and for the range of alternatives analyzed in the FEIS.

ROD Table 9. Snowmobile Acres in Lynx Habitat and Percent of Total Lynx Habitat

Area	Decision	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5
Badger-Two Medicine Area	0	20,704 (55%)	13,870 (37%)	0	13,130 (35%)	0

A minimal amount of snow compaction from cross-country skiing or snowshoeing may occur, generally at the periphery of the BTM area, during the life of the plan.

### Bald Eagle

The Bald Eagle has been removed from the Endangered Species list and my decision will have no effect on Bald Eagles or their habitat.

**Effects on Sensitive Species.** Impacts to Sensitive Species are summarized in Table III-84A of the FEIS. Wolverine are the only Sensitive Species that received detailed analysis. The results displayed in the FEIS showed potential impacts of snowmobiles on key wildlife habitats; no snowmobiling is allowed under this decision. Fisher have not been documented on the RMRD, but potential impacts to fisher will be similar to those described above and in the FEIS for grizzly bear, lynx, and elk. My decision will have no

impact on the remaining sensitive species due to the nature of the decision being made, the scale at which their habitat requirements occur, or the location or type of the specific habitats used.

**Potential for sedimentation of fish habitat from existing roads and trails.** Although none of the alternatives will significantly reduce the total miles of roads and trails within 100 feet of streams in the Badger-Two Medicine analysis area, my decision will result in fewer stream crossings after unneeded routes are decommissioned. Additionally, the decrease in motorized travel on some routes is expected to reduce sediment delivery to perennial streams.

**Effects on westslope cutthroat trout.** Many miles of westslope cutthroat trout habitat occurs in the Badger Two Medicine area and will not be affected by my decision. My decision is expected to reduce motorized use and associated effects on westslope cutthroat trout streams.

#### **IV. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

In 2000, the Lewis and Clark National Forest asked the public about the need to update and revise travel management across the entire Forest. A total of 211 people attended 10 open house meetings, and 90 letters were received from the public. In 2002, a Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team began developing a proposed action for travel management on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. This proposed action was released to the public for comment beginning August 22, 2002. The 30-day comment period was extended to mid-December 2002. Meetings with the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council in October resulted in additional open house meetings being held in December, and the comment period was extended to late January 2003. Seven open house meetings were attended by 192 people during the scoping period. About 6,300 comments were received from the public as a result of this process.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement was released for public comment beginning June 16, 2005. Eight open house meetings were attended by 357 people. About 35,500 comments were received as a result of this process. Comments were received from individuals, organizations, A content analysis of public comments is contained in the project file.

#### **V. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL**

The Interdisciplinary Team developed five alternatives (including the No Action Alternative) that were studied in detail. The alternatives are site specific to road and trail location and vary primarily in the mode of travel restricted and season of travel restricted.

##### **No Action Alternative**

##### ***ALTERNATIVE 1***

The No Action alternative provides a baseline for estimating the effects of other alternatives and therefore must be considered in detail (FSH 1909.15, part 14.1; 40 CFR

1502.14(d)). In cases such as this, where ongoing programs or management described within an existing plan continue as new plans are being developed, the No Action alternative means no change from current management direction (FSH 1909.15, part 14.1; CEQ's 40 Most Asked Questions, section 65.12, question 3). The 1988 Travel Plan and the 2001 Three-State OHV Decision define travel management that is currently enforced on the ground. This is the existing condition, and it would be carried forward if there were no decision made to change travel management. Therefore it is appropriately considered the No Action alternative. Analysis of current travel management also fulfills a 1989 directive by the Regional Forester to complete additional analysis of the 1988 Travel Plan.

### **Action Alternatives**

#### ***ALTERNATIVE 2***

In 2002, an interdisciplinary team (IDT) of resource specialists began developing a proposal for travel management on the RMRD, based on the need for change identified through an early scoping effort conducted in late 2000 and through detailed review of all roads and non-wilderness trails on the RMRD. The IDT considered seven criteria on which to assess the need for change on roads and trails throughout the non-wilderness portion of the RMRD: wildlife and fish habitat protection, conflict between uses, erosion control, safety, facility/resource protection, wilderness protection, and noxious weed spread. The IDT also identified and proposed corrections to travel management restrictions and ownership that were shown erroneously on the existing 1988 Travel Plan Map.

Based on field visits and knowledge of on-site conditions acquired during 2002/2003, the IDT determined that some modifications were needed to correct errors in and improve the Proposed Action. Because the majority of these modifications were minor corrections or changes that did not alter the basic characteristics of the Proposed Action, the decision was made to carry the new, modified alternative forward for detailed analysis in place of the Proposed Action. This modified alternative is now referred to only as Alternative 2, in accordance with my direction as described above. The original "Proposed Action" that was provided to the public for comment is retained in the Alternatives Not Considered in Detail section of the DEIS, along with the rationale for not carrying it forward for detailed analysis.

#### ***ALTERNATIVE 3***

Alternative 3 is based largely on comments submitted by the public requesting that travel management on the RMRD emphasize traditional foot and horse travel and eliminate motorized travel on trails.

#### ***ALTERNATIVE 4***

Alternative 4 is based both on comments submitted by the public requesting greater separation of motorized and non-motorized travel, and on efforts by the IDT to identify areas in which to focus motorized loop opportunities and other areas in which to

emphasize enhancement of other resources. In identifying areas in which to restrict motorized travel, the IDT attempted to choose areas in which more than one resource (e.g. wildlife habitat, wilderness/roadless characteristics, traditional travel, etc.) might benefit. In identifying areas in which to focus motorized loop opportunities, the IDT looked for areas in which the existing infrastructure could support a specific type of motorized use, in which loops existed or trail mileages were sufficient to create a reasonable motorized recreational opportunity, and in which other resources could be appropriately protected or impacts of motorized travel mitigated. The IDT also attempted to provide a mix of recreational opportunities throughout various geographic areas of the RMRD.

### ***ALTERNATIVE 5***

Alternative 5 was developed by the IDT in response to consultation with the Blackfoot tribal government and to address cultural issues in the Badger-Two Medicine area. The National Forest and the Blackfoot Indian Reservation share a common boundary in this area, and the Blackfeet retain specific reserved rights in the area in accordance with the 1895-96 Agreement with the U.S. Government. Much of the Badger-Two Medicine area has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural District.

## **VI. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND POLICIES**

**National Forest Management Act.** The Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan was approved in 1986 and provides integrated guidance for all natural resource management activities as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. The Forest Plan established goals and management direction for the entire Forest and identified standards for resource protection. I have determined, through the Interdisciplinary Team process, the project is responsive to applicable current laws and regulations guiding the planning and management of National Forest System lands (FEIS, Chapter I, pages 6-11).

**National Environmental Policy Act.** The NEPA provisions have been followed as required under 40 CFR 1500. The Final EIS and this ROD comply with the intent and requirements of the NEPA. The Final EIS analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives, including the No Action alternative. It also discloses the expected impacts of each alternative, and discusses the identified issues and concerns. This ROD describes the decisions I have made and the rationale for making the decisions.

**Endangered Species Act.** The project area contains 3 threatened or endangered species. A Biological Assessment concludes implementation of this decision “May Affect, But is Not Likely to Adversely Affect” the threatened Canada lynx and Grizzly Bear, and for the endangered Gray Wolf. The US Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination (Appendix D).

**Sensitive Species** – Primary concerns for wolverine, a Forest sensitive species, was snowmobiling impacts to alpine denning areas and overall habitat connectivity. My

decision does not allow snowmobiling in the Badger-Two Medicine area, thereby eliminating that concern. My decision will have no impact to other sensitive species.

**National Historic Preservation Act.** Decommissioning that includes ground-disturbance will require field review as part of the NHPA Section 106 review. The FEIS (Chapter III, page 107) states that two unevaluated prehistoric sites are located within existing “at risk” zones in the Badger-Two Medicine; one of those sites has been mitigated by re-routing the trail. Elimination of motorized use is likely to reduce potential impacts to the other site.

**Additional Laws and Regulations.** My decision is in compliance with other laws and regulations. State water and air quality standards will be met. Floodplains and wetlands within the project area will be protected from adverse impacts.

## **VII. ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

Council on Environmental Quality regulations direct the decision-maker to identify the environmentally preferable alternative. The environmentally preferred alternative is not necessarily the alternative that will be implemented and it does not have to meet the underlying need of the project. It does, however, have to cause the least damage to the biological, and physical environment and best protect, preserve, and enhance historical cultural, and natural resources (Section 101 NEPA: 40 CFR 1505.2(b)).

The Forest Service did not identify an environmentally preferred alternative in either the “Draft” or “Final” Environmental Impact Statement. On environmental issues like water quality and air quality the analysis does not indicate great differences between the alternatives. Based on the assumptions used in the analysis Alternative 3 would have slightly less negative impact on water and air quality. The effects on wildlife are similar to those of Alternative 3, which had the least negative effects on wildlife habitat and is the environmentally preferred alternative. Refer to ROD Tables 6,7,8,9. My decision has almost identical impacts to the environmentally preferred alternative.

## **VIII. APPEAL PROVISIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11. A written appeal must be submitted within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the *Great Falls Tribune*, the newspaper of record. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source.

**Paper appeals must be submitted to:**

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region  
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer  
P.O. Box 7669  
Missoula, MT 59807

Or

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region  
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer  
200 East Broadway  
Missoula, MT 59802  
Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Electronic appeals must be submitted to:** [appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us](mailto:appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us)

In electronic appeals, the subject line should contain the name of the project being appealed. An automated response will confirm your electronic appeal has been received. Electronic appeals must be submitted in MS Word, Word Perfect, or Rich Text Format (RTF).

It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project- or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why my decision should be reversed. The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. At a minimum, the appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14, and include the following information:

- The appellant's name and address, with a telephone number, if available;
- A signature, or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
- When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
- The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;
- The regulation under which the appeal is being filed, when there is an option to appeal under either 36 CFR 215 or 36 CFR 251, subpart C;
- Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
- Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;
- Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the substantive comments; and
- How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy

The decisions identified in this ROD shall be implemented as soon as allowable following opportunity for review and appeal.

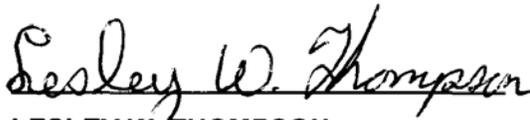
**IX. PLANNING RECORDS/CONTACT PERSON**

The planning records contain detailed information and data used in preparation of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan EIS and in selecting Alternative 5 with modifications for implementation in the Badger-Two Medicine area.

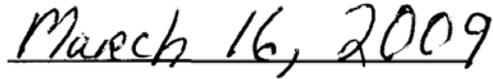
Documents are available at:

Lewis and Clark National Forest  
1101 15<sup>th</sup> Street North, Box 869  
Great Falls, MT 59403

For additional information concerning this decision please contact Robin Strathy,  
Lewis and Clark National Forest, Great Falls, Montana, (406) 791-7700.



**LESLEY W. THOMPSON**  
**Forest Supervisor**



**Date**

## **Appendices**

<b>Appendix A</b>	Disposition of “Undetermined” Routes
<b>Appendix B</b>	Decommissioned and Converted Routes
<b>Appendix C</b>	Biological Assessment (BA)
<b>Appendix D</b>	US Fish and Wildlife Service- Letter of Concurrence
<b>Appendix E</b>	Blackfeet Tribal Historic Preservation Office-Letter of Concurrence
<b>MAP 1</b>	Record Of Decision – 11”x17”