

## I. INTRODUCTION

Motorized and non-motorized travel on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District has been managed for the past 19 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-Dearborn-Elk Creek area.

## II. DECISION

This decision covers the southern two-thirds of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District, referred to as the Birch Creek South area. It encompasses approximately 262,180 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands that are located south 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, south about 70 miles to Red Mountain near Highway 200.

It is important to note that this decision **does not** include NFS lands commonly referred to as the Badger-Two Medicine area. A separate decision will be made at a later date for travel management in the Badger-Two Medicine area.

After careful consideration of the potential impacts of the alternatives analyzed and documented in the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel Management Plan FEIS issued in October 2007, I have decided to implement Alternative 4 for the southern two-thirds of the Ranger District with several modifications. An overview of management actions selected from Alternative 4, including the actions selected to modify Alternative 4, is outlined below. ROD Tables 1 and 2 list key features from the various alternatives that were selected for implementation under this decision. These key features will serve as focal points for discussion of the rationale involved in selecting all of the specific actions detailed in the electronic datatables. ROD Tables 1 and 2 do not list all the features of the decision.

There is a tremendous amount of detail involved in all of the specific actions related to every segment of road and trail. Literally, there are about 2,054 lines of data to describe travel management on all of the segments of roads and trails involved. This tremendous amount of detail 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. Printed copies of the datatable and GIS map are in the project files, and electronic copies are available upon request.

**ROD Table 1. Key Features of Summer Recreation Alternatives  
Selected and Modified for Implementation**

| <b>HIGHLIGHTS OF MOTORIZED WHEELED-VEHICLE TRAVEL<br/>SELECTED FOR SUMMER RECREATION MANAGEMENT:</b>   |                                     |   |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>LOCATION:</b>   | <b>SELECTED ACTION ANALYZED IN:</b> | <b>TRAVEL MANAGEMENT FEATURES:</b>  |
| Old Beaver-Willow road, & Red Lake loop Trails 277/utr 144   | Alt. 4                              | Select Alt. 4 and manage as ATV trails. Restrict all motorized wheeled vehicle travel 10/15 to 12/1.  |
| Waldron Crk Trl. 2005, Wright Crk. Rd. 8980, and other miscellaneous spurs   | Alt. 4                              | Select Alt. 4 and manage as ATV trails. Restrict all motorized wheeled vehicle travel 10/15 to 6/30.  |
| Home Gulch / Lime Gulch Trail 267 (& connector to Red Lk.), Cut Reef Creek Trail 275, Norwegian Gulch Trail 271, & Ford Basin Trl. 258 (& spurs) | Alt. 4                              | Select Alt. 4 and manage as motorcycle trails. Restrict all motorized wheeled vehicle travel 10/15 to 6/30.   |
| Fairview Crk Trl. 204 and Renshaw Lake Trl 236 (and associated connectors)   | Alt. 4                              | Select Alt. 4 and manage as motorcycle trails. Restrict all motorized wheeled vehicle travel 10/15 to 6/30.   |
| Cyanide Crk.Trl. 257 (& spurs), Hannan Gulch Trail 3305  | Alt. 4                              | Select Alt. 4 and manage as ATV trails, open yearlong.  |
| Bailey Basin Trail 253   | Alt. 4                              | Select Alt. 4 and manage as motorcycle trail, open yearlong.  |
| Lonesome Ridge Trail 154 & Route Crk Pass Trl. 108   | Alt. 2                              | Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 2 for portions of these trails, and manage as motorcycle trails open yearlong.   |
| Petty-Crown loop Trails 270/232/244 (and connectors)   | Alt. 1                              | Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 1 for these trails, relocate 0.2 miles of Crown Mtn. Trl. 270, and manage all three as motorcycle loop trail, open yearlong. |
| <b>HIGHLIGHTS OF NON-MOTORIZED TRAVEL<br/>SELECTED FOR SUMMER RECREATION MANAGEMENT:</b>   |                                     |   |
| Cow Creek Trail 191 and Mt. Frazier-Chicken Coul. Trl. 153   | Alt. 3                              | Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 3 for these trails and manage as non-motorized for stock, bicycles and hiking.   |
| Deep Crk., Lange Crk., Benchmark, and Smith Crk areas.   | Alt. 4                              | Select Alt. 4 for trails not listed separately (above) and manage trails in these areas as non-motorized trails, open to stock, bicycles, and hiking.       |
| West Fk. Teton, Middle Fk. Teton, South Fk. Sun, & Falls Crk. areas.   | Modified Alt. 4.                    | Modify Alt. 4 as discussed in the FEIS by prohibiting bicycles on trails within the four areas recommended for wilderness in the Forest Plan.               |

**ROD Table 2. Key Features of Winter Recreation Alternatives Selected and Modified for Implementation**

| <b>HIGHLIGHTS OF MOTORIZED OVER-SNOW VEHICLE TRAVEL SELECTED FOR WINTER RECREATION MANAGEMENT:</b> |                                     |  |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>LOCATION:</b>   | <b>SELECTED ACTION ANALYZED IN:</b> | <b>TRAVEL MANAGEMENT FEATURES:</b>   |
| Teton area   | Alt. 4                              | Modify Alt. 4 in the Teton area by choosing boundaries that allow for open cross-country snowmobiling during the winter south and west of the Teton River. Trail #107 would be closed to snowmobile use. Restrict over-snow cross-country motorized travel 4/1 to 12/1.  |
| Beaver-Willow area   | Alt. 4                              | Modify Alt. 4 by choosing boundaries for open cross-country snowmobiling during the winter along Beaver-Willow road in a definable area east of the West Fork of Beaver Creek; and choosing boundaries for open cross-country snowmobiling during the winter in the Benchmark area that can be easily understood and followed by the recreating public. Restrict over-snow cross-country motorized travel 4/1 to 12/1. |
| Benchmark area   | Alt. 4                              |  |
| <b>HIGHLIGHTS OF NON-MOTORIZED TRAVEL SELECTED FOR WINTER RECREATION MANAGEMENT:</b>               |                                     |  |
| Blackleaf area   | Alt. 3                              | Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 3 in the Blackleaf area and restrict snowmobiling yearlong.   |
| Jones Creek area   | Alt. 3                              | Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 3 in the Jones Creek area and restrict snowmobiling yearlong.   |
| Elk Creek area   | Alt. 3                              | Modify Alt. 4 by choosing Alt. 3 (MWA/MSA winter recreation agreement) in the Elk Creek area and restrict snowmobiling yearlong except on the main road.   |
| Deep Creek and Falls Creek areas   | Alt. 4                              | Select Alt. 4 for areas not listed separately (above) and manage for non-motorized winter recreation, open to cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.  |

**MANAGEMENT ACTIONS SPECIFIC TO DECISION:**

**1. Designate 4 Trails for Hiking Travel Only (no horses, no bicycles<sup>1</sup>):**

All or portions of 4 trails (listed in Appendix A), totaling about 7 miles would allow hiking only. The use of stock, bicycles<sup>1</sup>, and motorized trail vehicles would be restricted yearlong.

<sup>1</sup>Bicycles is a generic term that includes all forms of gear-driven mechanized transportation powered by human muscles, such as mountain bicycles.

**2. Designate 25 Trails for Hiking and Stock Travel Only (no bicycles<sup>1</sup>):**

All or portions of 25 trails (listed in Appendix B), totaling about 93 miles would allow hiking and stock only. Use of bicycles<sup>1</sup> and motorized trail vehicles would be restricted yearlong.

**3. Designate 66 Routes for Hiking, Stock, and Bicycle<sup>1</sup> Travel Only (non-motorized):**

All or portions of 56 trails (listed in Appendix C), totaling about 164 miles would allow hiking, stock, and bicycle<sup>1</sup> travel yearlong. All or portions of 10 roads (listed in Appendix C), totaling about 3 miles would allow hiking, stock, and bicycle<sup>1</sup> travel yearlong. The use of motorized wheeled vehicles would be restricted yearlong on all of these trails and roads.

**4. Designate 17 Trails and 2 Roads for Motorcycle Travel (no ATVs):**

All or portions of 7 trails, totaling about 13 miles would allow motorcycle travel yearlong. All or portions of another 10 trails, totaling about 33 miles would allow motorcycle travel after December 1 until October 15 (restricted during the rifle hunting season). Likewise, all or portions of 2 roads, totaling about 1 mile, would allow motorcycle travel after Dec. 1 until Oct. 15. Non-motorized travel by hiking, stock, and bicycles<sup>1</sup> would be allowed yearlong on all of these routes. All-terrain-vehicles would be restricted yearlong. (See Appendix D for complete list of trails and roads.)

**5. Designate 13 Trails and 10 Roads for ATV and Motorcycle Travel:**

All or portions of 8 trails, totaling about 12 miles would allow ATV and motorcycle travel yearlong. All or portions of another 4 trails, totaling about 5 miles would allow ATV and motorcycle travel after December 1 until October 15 (restricted during the rifle hunting season). One trail, totaling 1 mile, would allow ATV and motorcycle travel from July 1 until October 15. All or portions of 6 roads, totaling about 3 miles, would allow ATV and motorcycle travel yearlong; one road, less than 1 mile in length, would allow ATV and motorcycle travel after Dec. 1 until Oct. 15; and all or portions of 3 roads, totaling about 2 miles, would allow ATV and motorcycle travel from July 1 until October 15. Non-motorized travel by hiking, stock, and bicycles<sup>1</sup> would be allowed yearlong on all of these routes. Full-sized (passenger type) motor vehicles would be restricted yearlong. (See Appendix E for complete list of trails and roads.)

**6. Designate 23 Roads for Passenger Vehicle Travel on Seasonal basis:**

All or portions of 21 roads, totaling about 12 miles would allow full sized (passenger type) vehicle travel from after December 1 until October 15 (restricted during the rifle hunting season). All or portions of another 2 roads, totaling about 3 miles would allow full sized (passenger type) vehicle travel from July 1 until October 15 (restricted during the rifle hunting, winter, and spring bear seasons). Street legal motorcycles and ATVs would be allowed on these roads during the same time periods. Non-motorized travel by hiking, stock, and bicycles<sup>1</sup> would be allowed yearlong on all routes. (See Appendix F for complete list of roads.)

**7. Adopt and Designate 74 Roads for Dispersed Camping Access on Yearlong basis:**

All or portions of 74 undetermined (non-system) roads, totaling about 10 miles would be adopted as part of the official road transportation network, and managed to allow full sized (passenger type) vehicle travel yearlong to access dispersed campsites adjacent to the main access roads. Street legal motorcycles and ATVs would also be allowed yearlong on these

roads, as would non-motorized travel by hiking, stock, and bicycles<sup>1</sup>. (See Appendix G for complete list of roads.)

**8. Relocate and/or Reconstruct 2 Existing Routes:**

Approximately 1,000 feet (0.2 miles) of Crown Mountain Trail 270 would be relocated and reconstructed to single-track motorcycle trail standards. This modification in alignment at the junction of Trails 270 and 232 would divert motorcycle loop traffic away from the Wilderness boundary, and provide a loop route via the Petty-Crown trail system.

About 0.5 mile of old Beaver Willow Road (utrl48) would be relocated and reconstructed to ATV trail standards to bypass private land and connect with Road 233 at the gate/trailhead. This modification at the south end of the private inholding in Willow Creek would allow public access into the Beaver Creek drainage via the old road, and provide a loop route.

**9. Construct 5 Handicapped Accessible Trails:**

My decision is to proceed with construction of fully accessible trails as follows:

| WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TRAIL LOCATION | LENGTH   | DESCRIPTION   |
|--------------------------------------|----------|---|
| Mill Fall campground                 | 0.1 mile | Connect campground to waterfall.  |
| Elk Creek trailhead                  | 0.3 mile | Connect trailhead to Cataract Falls.  |
| West Fork campground                 | 1.1 mile | Connect rental cabin to junction with Trail 106 near wilderness boundary.                 |
| Wagner Basin trail/road              | 1.0 mile | Downstream from Hannan Gulch bridge on north side of river. View mountain sheep.          |
| Hannan Gulch Interpretive Site       | 1.0 mile | Upstream from Hannan Gulch bridge on north side of river to connect with Sun Canyon road. |

**10. 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. Therefore, several undetermined routes described in previous sections and identified by footnotes in Appendices A – G would be adopted and managed as part of the official road and trail transportation network. Overall, a total of about 1 mile of trail would be adopted for hiking only, about 12 miles of trail would be adopted for non-motorized hike, horse, or bicycle travel, about 7 miles of trail would be adopted for motorized OHV (motorcycle or ATV) travel, about 1 mile of road would be adopted for future resource management options but closed to motorized travel at this time, and about 10 miles of spur roads would be adopted for full sized passenger vehicles to access dispersed campsites adjacent to the main road system. Appendix I consolidates all of the information about undetermined routes in one location, and shows the disposition of all identified “undetermined” roads and trails.

## 11. 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 J lists all identified routes that would be eliminated and not managed as part of the transportation system. All these routes would be closed to motorized travel yearlong under this decision. They would remain legally open to the public for foot, horse, and bicycle travel, 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 or repair resource degradation. The need for further actions to decommission some routes is expected to be addressed in separate analyzes as deemed necessary by the Ranger District and resource specialists. Overall, a total of about 6 miles of trail, and about 6 miles of road would be eliminated.

## 12. 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 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. 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 and trails 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, and
- 7) travel off route does not traverse riparian or wet areas.

**Snowmobile off-road / off-trail travel exceptions** - Motorized over-snow vehicle travel off designated snowmobile roads and trails that go through a “restricted area” **is allowed within the standard width of a road right-of-way** (normally 66-feet wide, unless signed otherwise) for turning around or avoiding obstructions as long as:

- 1) no new permanent routes are created by this activity,
- 2) existing vegetation is not killed or removed, and
- 3) no damage to soil or water resources occurs.

### **13. Designate areas for Over-Snow Motorized Vehicle Travel:**

Allow motorized over-snow cross-country travel from December 1 through March 31 on about 29,170 acres as shown on the ROD Winter Decision map. Restrict all motorized over-snow cross-country travel yearlong on about 232,595 acres as shown on the ROD Winter Decision map. Motorized over-snow travel through closed areas would be allowed on designated snowmobile routes only.

## **MANAGEMENT NOT SPECIFIC TO DECISION:**

### **1. Roads and airstrip that will remain a part of the designated system, and roads that will remain open to facilitate special uses.**

We did not propose any changes in how the following roads and airstrip would be used in the future. Approximately 47 roads, totaling about 60 miles in length, that provide primary access to trailheads, campgrounds, recreation residences, dispersed campsites and other features on NFS lands. Another 11 roads, totaling about 3 miles, provide access within developed campgrounds. All 63 miles of these roads (listed in Appendix H) have been open to motorized vehicle travel, and will remain a part of the designated system as part of this decision. There are also a number of roads and trails under Special Use Permits authorizing access to recreation residences, dams and irrigation facilities, resorts, and private land. These Special Use Permit roads and trails would remain open under the authority upon which they were issued. The Benchmark airstrip will continue to be open to public use under this decision.

### **2. Subsequent determination to designate segments of some roads for “mixed traffic”.**

The issue of designating some roads for mixed traffic was considered as non-significant in the Draft EIS. Some public comment expressed an interest in this concept, and the new national OHV policy issued in 2005 recognized mixed traffic could be allowed as a management tool for recreation. To fairly address this issue, mixed traffic was discussed in the Final EIS as a new transportation issue. After considering all comments about this issue, a decision concerning specific roads to designate for mixed traffic will be made following an engineering evaluation as outlined in EM-7700-30. A separate decision will be made on a case-by-case basis as to whether or not to designate each road for mixed traffic. Providing for public safety will be the most important criteria.

### III. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

I have determined that my decision to select Alternative 4 with the specific modifications listed in Appendices A-J and ROD Tables 1 and 2 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 the best balance of management activities that respond to the purpose and need and issues. My decision also strikes a balance between competing interests 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 -- Birch Creek South area are based on Forest Plan goals, objectives, and standards. More specifically, this project addresses the following purposes and needs.

A comprehensive evaluation on the best way to manage recreational travel 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. A new Travel Plan is needed to incorporate 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 be consistent 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. 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.

The purpose for this Birch Creek South decision is to:

1. Provide for public access and recreation travel in the Birch Creek South area, considering both the quantity and quality of recreation opportunities provided.
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.

## **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. Many commenters emphasized the diversity of wildlife species, the presence of the grizzly bear and wolf, and asked that my decision help maintain the undeveloped character of the Rocky Mountain Front. The vast majority of public comments we received favored emphasizing traditional non-motorized modes of travel on the Rocky Mountain Front. However, I did receive comments from local 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, although limited, is important to some who live in communities along the front and to those who occasionally visit the area.

After reviewing the information contained in the analysis and public comments, my conclusion is this area provides the highest quality opportunities on the Lewis and Clark National Forest for non-motorized types of outdoor recreation. For these reasons, I have decided to increase our emphasis on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District as a primary place to enjoy solitude, wildlife viewing, hiking, backcountry hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and pack trips. In order to address concerns of motorized users, my decision will include limited opportunities for motorized recreation activities off designated roads or for snowmobiling. Although there will be limited motorized trail opportunities, licensed operators with street legal vehicles are welcome to use the 88 mile road system for motorized recreation, sightseeing, and dispersed camping. In addition, as we identify roads where mixed use is safe, unlicensed drivers with non-street legal vehicles will be allowed to use these roads if they comply with state laws regarding mixed use on Forest Service roads.

Public comment is reflected in the issues identified and addressed in the environmental analysis. My rationale for how my decision addresses each issue is also my rationale for how I considered various public comments.

### **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. The most likely problem that may arise in the next 10 to 20 years is dust along the main access roads. This problem is shared by all the alternatives and all recreationists. Heavy traffic by stock trucks and trailers, campers, and cabin owners would all contribute to the issue. Potential solutions may include hard surfacing, dust abatement on roads, limiting speeds, and limiting traffic. These solutions may affect a broad array of recreationists. Road dust problems can be dealt with annually as cases arise.

**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 Rocky Mountain Front and to better protect or enhance wildlife and fish habitats. My decision is not expected to increase the amount of OHV use along the Front. If there are increases in motorized use or livestock 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 Blackfoot Traditional Cultural District.** This issue was analyzed in the FEIS, and is being discussed further with the Blackfoot Tribe. It is one of the reasons for delaying a decision about travel management for the Badger-Two Medicine area. It will be an important part of my future decision for the Badger-Two Medicine.

**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 the DEIS analysis. The second included field inventory in locations common to all alternatives, site evaluations, and determinations of effect. This site-specific review resulted in a finding of “no effect” for nine (9) cultural sites, a result of allowable travel methods under my decision. These nine sites co-exist with routes; they include the three (3) sites where potential mitigation was anticipated (see table in FEIS Ch. 2). As a condition of the ‘no effect’ findings, and in accordance with the Lewis and Clark Forest Plan, archaeologists will periodically monitor these sites during the next five years.

A third step in the outlined process is the procedural review for those construction and relocation projects that I have identified in the Record of Decision (see 8 and 9 above), and for those user trails and decommissioning-related locations (identified in 10 and 11) which were not already covered in the ‘common to all alternatives’ inventory. These reviews will take place in site-specific detail, *prior to the implementation* of each of these actions. In this manner, effects to archaeological and historical resources are addressed, effects minimized, and procedural requirements met.

**RECREATION:**

**Opportunities for solitude/quiet trails.** The analysis displayed the opportunities for solitude by comparing the acreages within different “Recreation Opportunity Spectrum” 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 71% of the Birch Creek South 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. 4 (see ROD Table 1) by making Cow Creek Trail 191 and Mt. Frazier-Chicken Coulee Trail 153 non-motorized. My primary reason to make these two trails non-motorized was to protect wildlife habitat, but the effect of making this decision also increased opportunities for solitude beyond the Blackleaf trailhead. Overall, my decision provides significant opportunities for someone to find solitude and a “quiet” trail experience.

**ROD Table 3. Summer ROS Acreage - Outside Wilderness  
In the Birch Creek South area**

| SUMMER ROS CLASSIFICATION       | DECISION             | ALT. 1          | ALT. 2          | ALT. 3          | ALT. 4          | ALT. 5          |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| RURAL                           | 1,820 ac.<br>1 %     | 1,820<br>1 %    | 1,820<br>1 %    | 1,820<br>1 %    | 1,820<br>1 %    | 1,820<br>1 %    |
| ROADED NATURAL                  | 42,680 ac.<br>16 %   | 48,060<br>18 %  | 46,720<br>18 %  | 45,990<br>18 %  | 46,410<br>18 %  | 46,410<br>18 %  |
| SEMI-PRIMITIVE<br>MOTORIZED     | 29,320 ac.<br>12 %   | 80,260<br>30 %  | 60,580<br>23 %  | 4,760<br>2 %    | 27,920<br>11 %  | 27,920<br>11 %  |
| SEMI-PRIMITIVE<br>NON-MOTORIZED | 152,790 ac.<br>58 %  | 130,770<br>50 % | 129,840<br>50 % | 174,040<br>66 % | 150,470<br>57 % | 150,470<br>57 % |
| PRIMITIVE                       | 35,570 ac.<br>13 %   | 1,270<br>1 %    | 23,220<br>8 %   | 35,570<br>13 %  | 35,560<br>13 %  | 35,560<br>13 %  |
| <b>Total Acreage</b>            | 262,180 ac.<br>100 % | 262,180         | 262,180         | 262,180         | 262,180         | 262,180         |

My decision also places about 12% of the area in a semi-primitive motorized setting during the summer, which is a slight increase over the selected Alternative 4. This is due to modifying Alt. 4 (see ROD Table 1) by continuing to allow motorcycle travel on Lonesome

Ridge Trail 154, a portion of Route Creek Pass Trail 108, and the Petty-Crown loop trail 270/232/244. My primary reasons for including these as motorcycle trails is because motorized use is compatible with wildlife habitat in those drainages, and because they provided additional OHV riding opportunities near other OHV riding trails, near camping opportunities, and specific destination points. My objective is to allow OHV riding where we can provide a quality recreation experience. My decision provides some opportunities to enjoy riding a motorcycle in the backcountry while placing more emphasis on non-motorized modes of travel and enhancing the undeveloped character of the Rocky Mountain Front..

My decision results in about 35 miles of “undetermined” routes being adopted as system roads or trails as detailed in Appendix I. Of the total, 13 miles of adopted trails would be for non-motorized travel by hikers, horsemen, and bicyclists; 7 miles for motorized travel by motorcycles or ATVs; and 1 mile would be useful for future resource management of the area. 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. About 14 miles of the total would be adopted as spur roads to formally designate and manage dispersed camping opportunities along the main system roads. Dispersed campsites are a key feature of future management of NFS lands. 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 all access routes to dispersed campsites prohibits indiscriminate motorized travel to reach new dispersed campsites, and allows the public ample opportunity to enjoy the dispersed campsites that have been in use for many years.

My decision also results in about 6 miles of unneeded roads and 6 miles of unneeded trails being closed to motorized wheeled vehicle use under this decision. 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. It seemed that 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 recreationists have an opportunity to enjoy their visit to the National Forest.

**ROD Table 4. Winter Recreation Acreage - Outside Wilderness  
In the Birch Creek South area**

| <b>WINTER CLASSIFICATION</b>            | <b>DECISION</b>      | <b>ALT. 1</b>   | <b>ALT. 2</b>   | <b>ALT. 3</b>    | <b>ALT. 4</b>   | <b>ALT. 5</b>   |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>RURAL</b>                            | 415 ac.<br>0 %       | 415<br>0 %      | 415<br>0 %      | 415<br>0 %       | 415<br>0 %      | 415<br>0 %      |
| <b>SEMI-PRIMITIVE<br/>MOTORIZED</b>     | 29,170 ac.<br>11 %   | 246,720<br>94 % | 159,680<br>61 % | 0<br>0 %         | 98,440<br>38 %  | 98,440<br>38 %  |
| <b>SEMI-PRIMITIVE<br/>NON-MOTORIZED</b> | 232,595 ac.<br>89 %  | 15,045<br>6 %   | 102,085<br>39 % | 261,765<br>100 % | 163,325<br>62 % | 163,325<br>62 % |
| <b>Total Acreage</b>                    | 262,180 ac.<br>100 % | 262,180         | 262,180         | 262,180          | 262,180         | 262,180         |

For winter recreation, my decision places about 89% of the area in a non-motorized setting. This is a significant increase in solitude during the winter months in comparison to the existing condition or Alternative 4. My decision to restrict snowmobiling during the winter is heavily influenced by collaborative efforts between Montana Wilderness Association, Montana Snowmobile Association, and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. The areas open for snowmobile use are areas historically used and popular with local residents. I used the collaborative efforts of Montana Wilderness Association, Montana Snowmobile Association, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and input from Forest Service recreations specialists and law enforcement personnel to identify areas that are historically used, provide a quality experience, and have boundaries that can be easily communicated and enforced in the Falls Creek, Elk Creek, Deep Creek, Beaver-Willow, and Benchmark areas. I recognize that in some cases using an easily communicated boundary creates, on the map, larger areas open. In reality smaller portions of these open areas will actually be used. Due to dense tree cover and terrain features that naturally prohibit snowmobile use there are areas included that are not useable.

In the Sun Canyon area, we received input to allow snowmobiling on a limited amount of terrain around the cabin sites. I believe that allowing snowmobile use in small areas around the cabins is likely to be disturbing to some of the owners. Therefore, I decided to restrict cross-country snowmobile use yearlong around the Home Gulch, Hannah Gulch, and Gibson Reservoir cabin sites. People that do want to snowmobile in the Sun Canyon area, including cabin owners, would have the opportunity to snowmobile on the Beaver-Willow road to reach motorized over-snow (cross-country) recreation. [Cabin owners in Sun Canyon would be allowed to snowmobile to their cabins during times when deep snow prevents vehicle access.]

North of the South Fork Teton River area I selected Alternative 4 with some modifications (see ROD Table 2). The South Fork Teton road and area north of the road would remain open for snowmobiling on a seasonal basis. The North Fork Teton and West Fork Teton would remain as primary snowmobile areas on the same seasonal basis. These areas have a long history of snowmobile activity, and are the areas most important to avid snowmobilers.

Boundaries of open snowmobile areas follow logical landscape features to help snowmobilers stay out of closed areas. Due to the concern that a snowmobile could trespass into the Wilderness up the North Fork of the Teton, I am continuing the existing closure of Trail #107 to snowmobiles. Features such as the head of Waldron Creek have been retained as “quiet” areas to provide opportunities for cross-country skiing accessible from a plowed road, and to protect grizzly bear spring range.

In the Blackleaf area, I decided to select Alternative 3 and prohibit snowmobiling yearlong to protect important winter and spring range. Wildlife that winter in this area move up and down the slope, and move from drainage to drainage as snow conditions change. Due to the variability of snow cover, this area provides only intermittent opportunity for snowmobiling. It is more important to minimize disturbance of wintering animals in this area than to provide marginal and intermittent opportunities for motorized over-snow recreation.

In the Jones Creek area, I decided to select Alternative 3 and prohibit snowmobiling yearlong based on comments stressing the importance of the area for solitude and quiet recreation, and on the limited value of the area as a snowmobile opportunity. Like the Blackleaf area, Jones Creek provides only intermittent opportunity for snowmobiling, but provides a valuable opportunity for solitude that is easily accessible from a main access road. Selecting this alternative for Jones Creek may have the added benefit of further minimizing the potential for disturbance of wildlife that winter in the area.

In order to protect grizzly bears if they emerge early in the spring, I decided that cross-country snowmobiling would be restricted starting April 1 in all portions of the Birch Creek South area. It is important to minimize disturbance of grizzly bears when they first emerge in the spring, especially if they emerge early. Since the entire area provides habitat for these bears, I have decided to restrict all motorized over-snow travel during the period of time when the bears are in their weakest condition. On a similar note, I decided to not allow cross-country snowmobiling until after December 1. This restriction date provides protection for animals throughout the rifle hunting season in the fall, and accommodates the generally recognized start of the winter recreation season.

People that own cabins (recreation residences) in the Elk Creek area would have access with snowmobiles on the main access road if it is snow covered. The Elk Creek cabin owners would not be able to ride their snowmobiles on surrounding public lands. Cabin owners in the Sun Canyon area would have the opportunity to haul their snowmobiles to the trailhead below Gibson Dam and access the Beaver-Willow road in order to ride their snowmobiles. In the Benchmark area, my decision retains the right of cabin owners to access their property by riding snowmobiles on the snow covered portion of the road, and also provides them an opportunity to use snowmobiles to play on adjoining hillsides north of the main road. In Sun Canyon, cabin owners would be allowed to snowmobile on the main roads to their cabins during times when deep snow prevents vehicle access.

In areas where a designated snowmobile route goes through an otherwise restricted area, my decision allows snowmobilers to maneuver within the standard right-of-way width of a roadway (33-feet on either side of the centerline) to make a U-turn or to avoid obstructions. This allowance gives recreationists an opportunity to maneuver depending upon snow conditions or obstacles, and provides guidance for law enforcement officers.

Overall, my decision allows motorized over-snow travel on about 11% of the Birch Creek South area. This 11% is a significant reduction from the current 94% of the area open to snowmobiles, but is more in line with areas being used for motorized winter recreation.

**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 diverse winter recreation.** Vehicle access to snow covered terrain during the winter months is relatively uncertain due to main roads being alternately blown clear or blown shut by snowdrifts. Only two plowed roads (N. Fk. Teton and Sun Canyon) provide reliable access for winter recreation in the Birch Creek South area. Other roads offer intermittent access based upon intensity of snowstorms, and can change quickly due to drifting and melting. Although not plowed beyond the Forest boundary, the S. Fk. Teton road also offers reasonably reliable access to snow covered terrain for skiing, snowshoeing, or snowmobiling. As shown in the analysis, the existing condition provides winter access to 4 non-motorized routes for day-trip skiing and snowshoeing. My decision increases this to 16 non-motorized routes being reasonably available for day-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 in the Sun Canyon area, and in the Clary Coulee/Jones Creek/Massey Creek drainages of the North Fork Teton area.

**ROD Table 5. Miles of Trails / Roads Accessible\*  
for Non-Motorized Winter Recreation within Birch Creek South area**

| <b>Non-Motorized Trails / Roads Accessed from Plowed Roads</b> | <b>DECISION</b>               | <b>Alt 1</b>               | <b>Alt 2</b>                  | <b>Alt 3</b>                  | <b>Alt 4</b>                  | <b>Alt 5</b>                  |
|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| N. Fk. Teton Road  | 4 routes<br>14.4 mi.          | 1 route<br>1.2 mi.         | 2 routes<br>6.2 mi.           | 8 routes<br>27.7 mi.          | 2 routes<br>6.2 mi.           | 2 routes<br>6.2 mi.           |
| Sun Canyon Road  | 5 routes<br>22.1 mi.          | 1 route<br>1.0 mi.         | 1 route<br>1.0 mi.            | 6 routes<br>27.1 mi.          | 2 routes<br>10.0 mi.          | 2 routes<br>10.0 mi.          |
| S. Fk. Teton Road  | 7 routes<br>25.6 mi.          | 2 routes<br>7.0 mi.        | 7 routes<br>24.8 mi.          | 8 routes<br>27.7 mi.          | 8 routes<br>27.7 mi.          | 8 routes<br>27.7 mi.          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>16 routes<br/>62.1 mi.</b> | <b>4 routes<br/>9.2 mi</b> | <b>10 routes<br/>32.0 mi.</b> | <b>22 routes<br/>82.5 mi.</b> | <b>12 routes<br/>43.9 mi.</b> | <b>12 routes<br/>43.9 mi.</b> |

(\* Table includes approximate mileage of routes that are closed to motorized use during all or most of winter, and that are immediately accessible from plowed roads and S.Fk. Teton Rd. Trails or roads more than 5 miles distance from roads shown are not included. More miles are available for overnight cross-country skiers or snowshoers than are shown in this table.)

Reliable access to snow covered terrain for snowmobiling is also a problem during the winter due to the fact there are only two plowed roads. The analysis showed there are 19 routes available for snowmobiles to travel in the Birch Creek South area under the existing travel management plan. My decision would reduce this to 6 routes. This reduction is due to restricting snowmobiles in the Jones Creek area, and in the Sun Canyon area except on Beaver-Willow Road 233. Jones Creek was restricted to maintain solitude and wilderness character; Sun Canyon was restricted to minimize disturbance to cabin owners. Both areas represent marginal opportunities for snowmobiling. The remaining opportunity for snowmobiling on the Beaver-Willow road should accommodate the snowmobilers that visit

Sun Canyon. There remains ample opportunity for motorized winter activity in the Teton area.

**ROD Table 6. Miles of Trails / Roads Accessible\*  
for Motorized Winter Recreation within Birch Creek South area**

| Motorized Trails/Roads Accessed from Plowed Roads | DECISION                     | Alt 1 (miles)                 | Alt 2 (miles)                 | Alt 3 (miles)               | Alt 4 (miles)                 | Alt 5 (miles)                 |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| N.Fk. Teton Road                                  | 4 routes<br>8.3 mi.          | 7 routes<br>25.5 mi.          | 6 routes<br>17.0 mi.          | 2 routes<br>4.3 mi.         | 6 routes<br>16.5 mi.          | 6 routes<br>16.5 mi.          |
| Sun Canyon Road                                   | 1 route<br>5.0 mi.           | 6 routes<br>27.1 mi.          | 6 routes<br>27.1 mi.          | 1 route<br>1.0 mi.          | 5 routes<br>18.1 mi.          | 5 routes<br>18.1 mi.          |
| S. Fk. Teton Road                                 | 1 route<br>2.1 mi.           | 6 routes<br>19.8 mi.          | 1 route<br>2.1 mi.            | 0 routes<br>0.0 mi.         | 0 routes<br>0.0 mi.           | 0 routes<br>0.0 mi.           |
| <b>Total</b>                                      | <b>6 routes<br/>15.4 mi.</b> | <b>19 routes<br/>72.4 mi.</b> | <b>13 routes<br/>46.2 mi.</b> | <b>3 routes<br/>5.3 mi.</b> | <b>11 routes<br/>34.6 mi.</b> | <b>11 routes<br/>34.6 mi.</b> |

(\* Table includes approximate mileage of routes that are open to snowmobile use during all or most of winter, and that are immediately accessible from plowed roads and S. Fk. Teton Rd. 109. Trail or road miles more than 5 miles distance from roads shown are not included for ease of comparison between alternatives. More miles are available for snowmobilers than are shown in this table. Note that trails and roads open to snowmobile use may be more difficult to use than existing established snowmobile routes.)

**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 is to proceed with construction of fully accessible trails as shown in the following list, as funding allows:

**ROD Table 7. Wheelchair Accessible Trails**

| WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TRAIL LOCATION | LENGTH   | DESCRIPTION   |
|--------------------------------------|----------|---|
| Mill Fall campground                 | 0.1 mile | Connect campground to waterfall.  |
| Elk Creek trailhead                  | 0.3 mile | Connect trailhead to Cataract Falls.  |
| West Fork campground                 | 1.1 mile | Connect rental cabin to junction with Trail 106 near wilderness boundary.                 |
| Wagner Basin trail/road              | 1.0 mile | Downstream from Hannan Gulch bridge on north side of river. View mountain sheep.          |
| Hannan Gulch Interpretive Site       | 1.0 mile | Upstream from Hannan Gulch bridge on north side of river to connect with Sun Canyon road. |

The analysis considered designating two roads for motorized access by disabled hunters only. Some members of the public, including representatives of people with disabilities, did not want special privileges granted to people with disabilities, while others supported this idea. Regional policy allows district rangers to provide disabled hunters access on some closed roads during hunting season under certain circumstances. Considering the limited number of roads and motorized trails on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District it is my decision to continue allowing yearlong motorized access, rather than a seasonal restriction with an exception for handicap access, on Hannan Gulch trail (6.8 miles) and on Green Gulch road (2.1 miles) for everyone. All hunters will have the opportunity to use ATVs to drive on these two routes during the hunting season, as well as drive an ATV on Cyanide Creek Trail 257

(1.2 miles). There are 85 miles of open motorized routes during the fall hunting season, but these three trails (totaling about 10 miles) are the only ones in the Birch Creek South area that would offer motorized hunting opportunities that disabled hunters are likely to use. Four motorcycle trails (totaling about 12 miles) also would offer motorized access during the hunting season, but it is unlikely that very many disabled people would utilize these routes.

**Cumulative effects of past closures on opportunities for motorized recreation.** 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 to manage the use of motorized vehicles on National Forests. The 2001 TRI State OHV Decision reduced the opportunities to drive motorized vehicles off road and trail in the Northern Region of the Forest Service and BLM in those states. The Chief of the Forest Service 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. My decision will have a cumulative effect in reducing the total miles of roads and trails available to motorized travel.

**Opportunities for hiker-only trails.** Providing hiker-only trails reflects a need to protect resources or to limit use in a heavily congested site. There are only 4 trails that warrant such protection. My decision is to impose yearlong travel restrictions on stock and bicycles on about 7 miles of trails as listed in Appendix A. The entire length of the trail to Our Lake, and the trail by Wood Lake are popular for hiking and are congested on weekends and other times throughout the season. Both of these trails warrant the added precaution of keeping stock and bicycles off to provide a safer and more enjoyable trip for hikers. The Mount Wright trail and Mill Falls Ridge trail are quite steep and difficult to negotiate. Both of these trails warrant the added precaution of keeping stock and bicycles off to protect the trail surface and to provide a safer trip for everyone.

### **ROADLESS/WILDERNESS:**

**Effects on roadless characteristics.** The analysis displayed the effects on the two inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. Two of the following tables display miles of roads and trails in each of the IRAs, and two other tables display acreages open and restricted to snowmobiling.

For the Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan IRA, my decision continues to allow motorized travel on about 14% of the roads and trails within the roadless area. This is a significant reduction from the current situation that allows motorized travel on about 60% of the roads and trails within the IRA. The change in travel management will increase the opportunity for solitude and the opportunity for a primitive recreation experience. My decision would place about 82% of the IRA in a primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS category. Under the existing situation, only about 58% of the IRA has a semi-primitive non-motorized setting.

About 2 miles of undetermined road, and 12 miles of non-system trail would be adopted and managed as part of the designated transportation system within the IRA. Only about 4 miles of these adopted routes would be open to motorized travel, which is entirely offset by the decommissioning of about 6.2 miles of unneeded existing roads and trails. Overall, there would be an increase in opportunity for solitude and a primitive recreation experience during the summer recreation season.

**ROD Table 8. Miles of Roads and Trails In the Birch Creek South area  
Within Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan Inventoried Roadless Area**

| BEAR-MARSHALL-SCAPEGOAT-SWAN IRA                | DECISION              | ALT. 1 | ALT. 2 | ALT. 3 | ALT. 4 | ALT. 5 |
|---|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Motorized Roads                                 | 6 mi. (2%)            | 18     | 13     | 3      | 12     | 12     |
| Motorized Trails                                | 31 mi. (12%)          | 154    | 104    | 0      | 34     | 34     |
| <b>Subtotal -- motorized</b>                    | <b>37 mi. (14%)</b>   | 172    | 117    | 3      | 46     | 46     |
| Non-Motorized Roads                             | 0 mi. (0%)            | 0      | 2      | 10     | 0      | 0      |
| Non-Motorized Trails                            | 236 mi. (86%)         | 117    | 158    | 260    | 228    | 228    |
| <b>Subtotal -- non-motorized</b>                | <b>236 mi. (86%)</b>  | 117    | 160    | 270    | 228    | 228    |
| <b>Subtotal – motorized &amp; non-motorized</b> | <b>273 mi. (100%)</b> | 289    | 277    | 273    | 274    | 274    |

During the winter recreation season, my decision for the Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan IRA continues to allow motorized over-snow travel on about 9% of the area. This is a significant reduction from the current situation that allows motorized over-snow travel on about 94% of the IRA. One route about 2 miles in length would continue to be designated as a snowmobile trail in the vicinity of the Teton snowmobile trailhead.

**ROD Table 9. Winter Travel Restrictions In the Birch Creek South area  
Within Bear-Marshall-Scapegoat-Swan Inventoried Roadless Area**

| BEAR-MARSHALL-SCAPEGOAT-SWAN IRA           | DECISION                  | ALT. 1  | ALT. 2  | ALT. 3  | ALT. 4  | ALT. 5  |
|--|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Acres open seasonally to snowmobiling.     | 21,460 ac. (9%)           | 217,240 | 131,590 | 0       | 72,420  | 72,420  |
| Acres restricted yearlong to snowmobiling. | 208,910 ac. (91%)         | 13,130  | 98,780  | 230,370 | 157,950 | 157,950 |
| <b>Subtotal – IRA Acreage</b>              | <b>230,370 ac. (100%)</b> | 230,370 | 230,370 | 230,370 | 230,370 | 230,370 |
| Miles of designated snowmobile trail.      | 2 mi.                     | 2       | 2       | 0       | 2       | 0       |

For the Sawtooth IRA, my decision continues to allow motorized travel on about 97% of the roads and trails within the roadless area. This is the same level of motorized access allowed in the IRA for the past 18 years (existing condition). My decision would not change the existing opportunity for solitude and a primitive recreation experience. No part of the IRA would be classified as primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS category, which is the same as

the existing condition for the past 18 years. About 2 miles of undetermined road, and 5 miles of non-system trail would be adopted and managed as part of the designated transportation system within the IRA. About 5 miles of these adopted routes would be open to motorized travel, which is partially offset by the decommissioning of about 2 miles of unneeded existing roads and trails. Overall, there could be a decrease in opportunity for solitude and a primitive recreation experience during July-August-September. Since most of the routes are closed to motorized use from Oct. 15 through June 30, there would be a great opportunity for solitude from mid-October through the end of June.

**ROD Table 10. Miles of Roads and Trails In the Birch Creek South area  
Within Sawtooth Inventoried Roadless Area**

| SAWTOOTH IRA  | DECISION                 | ALT.<br>1 | ALT.<br>2 | ALT.<br>3 | ALT.<br>4 | ALT.<br>5 |
|---|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Motorized Roads                                     | 4 mi. (14%)              | 5         | 2         | 3         | 3         | 3         |
| Motorized Trails                                    | 24 mi. (83%)             | 21        | 21        | 0         | 24        | 24        |
| <b>Subtotal -- motorized</b>                        | <b>28 mi. (97%)</b>      | 26        | 23        | 3         | 27        | 27        |
| Non-Motorized Roads                                 | 0 mi. (0%)               | 0         | 0         | 1         | 0         | 0         |
| Non-Motorized Trails                                | 1 mi. (3%)               | 4         | 1         | 25        | 1         | 1         |
| <b>Subtotal -- non-motorized</b>                    | <b>1 mi. (3%)</b>        | 4         | 1         | 26        | 1         | 1         |
| <b>Subtotal – motorized<br/>&amp; non-motorized</b> | <b>29 mi.<br/>(100%)</b> | 30        | 24        | 29        | 28        | 28        |

During the winter recreation season, my decision for the Sawtooth IRA continues to allow motorized over-snow travel on about 10% of the area. This is a significant reduction from the current situation that allows motorized over-snow travel on 100% of the IRA. There would be a noticeable increase in opportunity for solitude and a primitive recreation experience from mid-October through June.

**ROD Table 11. Winter Travel Restrictions In the Birch Creek South area  
Within Sawtooth Inventoried Roadless Area**

| SAWTOOTH IRA                               | DECISION                     | ALT.<br>1 | ALT.<br>2 | ALT.<br>3 | ALT.<br>4 | ALT.<br>5 |
|--|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Acres open seasonally to snowmobiling.     | 1,470 ac.<br>(10%)           | 15,040    | 15,040    | 0         | 15,040    | 15,040    |
| Acres restricted yearlong to snowmobiling. | 13,570 ac.<br>(90%)          | 0         | 0         | 15,040    | 0         | 0         |
| <b>Subtotal – IRA Acreage</b>              | <b>15,040 ac.<br/>(100%)</b> | 15,040    | 15,040    | 15,040    | 15,040    | 15,040    |
| Miles of designated snowmobile trail.      | 0                            | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         |

**Consistency with adjacent BLM management of Outstanding Natural Areas.** There are four “outstanding natural areas” adjacent to NFS lands in the Birch Creek South area. The BLM manages these ONAs, totaling 13,087 acres, to protect their wilderness character. Motorized use is not allowed within them. I specifically modified Alternative 4 by making Mt. Frazier-Chicken Coulee Trail 153 non-motorized in order to prevent inadvertent trespass into the Ear Mountain ONA by motorcycles. This makes management of Trail 153 the same on both BLM and NFS lands. My decision allows non-motorized travel only on all of the trails leading into and adjacent to the ONAs. Likewise, my decision restricts snowmobile travel on any NFS lands immediately adjacent to the ONAs. Therefore, my decision is fully compatible with management on the outstanding natural areas.

**Consistency with adjacent National Forest management.** There is one area along the boundary of the Birch Creek South area that adjoins the Flathead National Forest, and two areas that adjoin the Helena National Forest. My decision in the headwaters of the West Fork Teton area is fully consistent with summer and winter management of travel on the Flathead National Forest. The Flathead NF manages their side as Wilderness, and the Lewis and Clark NF side would be managed for non-motorized travel yearlong.

Similarly, my decision in the Falls Creek area is fully consistent with summer and winter management of travel on the Helena National Forest. The Helena NF manages part of their side as Wilderness, and the remaining part for non-motorized recreation. Under my decision, the Lewis and Clark NF side would be managed yearlong for non-motorized recreation.

**Effects on Wilderness Study Areas.** My decision increases the protection of the Deep Creek “further planning” wilderness study area. Although my decision continues to allow motorized travel on about 8 miles of road and trail within the Deep Creek area, this is a significant reduction from the current 51 miles of roads and trails open to motorized use. Hannan Gulch would be the only route open to motorized vehicles in the entire 42,730 acre area. About the first mile of Hannan Gulch would be open yearlong to all motorized wheeled vehicles to allow for dispersed camping. The remaining 7 miles of Hannan Gulch would be managed as a trail open to ATVs and motorcycles yearlong.

**ROD Table 12. Miles of Roads and Trails in the Birch Creek South area Within Deep Creek “Further Planning” Management Area N**

| ROADS & TRAILS WITHIN MANAGEMENT AREA “N”  | DECISION            | ALT. 1    | ALT. 2    | ALT. 3    | ALT. 4    | ALT. 5    |
|--|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Motorized Roads                            | 1 mi.               | 8         | 7         | 0         | 7         | 7         |
| Motorized Trails                           | 7 mi.               | 43        | 38        | 0         | 1         | 1         |
| <b>Subtotal -- motorized</b>               | <b>8 mi. (13%)</b>  | <b>51</b> | <b>45</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>8</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| Non-Motorized Roads                        | 0 mi.               | 0         | 0         | 6         | 0         | 0         |
| Non-Motorized Trails                       | 55 mi.              | 18        | 18        | 55        | 55        | 55        |
| <b>Subtotal -- non-motorized</b>           | <b>55 mi. (87%)</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>61</b> | <b>55</b> | <b>55</b> |
| <b>Total – motorized and non-motorized</b> | <b>63 mi.</b>       | <b>69</b> | <b>63</b> | <b>61</b> | <b>63</b> | <b>63</b> |
| Decommissioned Roads & Trails              | 0.6 mi.             | 0         | 0.6       | 2.3       | 0.6       | 0.6       |
| Assigned as Special Use Trails             | 5.6 mi.             | n/a       | 5.6       | 5.6       | 5.6       | 5.6       |

The entire Deep Creek area would be restricted yearlong to cross-country over snow travel by snowmobiles under this decision. This is a significant increase in the protection of the wilderness character of the area during the winter months.

**ROD Table 13. Winter Travel Restrictions in the Birch Creek South area Within Deep Creek “Further Planning” Management Area N**

| WINTER TRAVEL WITHIN MANAGEMENT AREA “N”   | DECISION   | ALT. 1 | ALT. 2 | ALT. 3 | ALT. 4 | ALT. 5 |
|--|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Acres open seasonally to snowmobiling.     | 0 ac.      | 42,570 | 25,880 | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| Acres restricted yearlong to snowmobiling. | 42,730 ac. | 160    | 16,850 | 42,730 | 42,730 | 42,730 |
| Total – Deep Creek acreage                 | 42,730 ac. | 42,730 | 42,730 | 42,730 | 42,730 | 42,730 |
| Miles of designated snowmobile trail.      | 0 mi.      | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      |

**Effects on Recommended Wilderness Areas.** The Forest Plan recommended four areas totaling about 51,834 acres for inclusion in the wilderness preservation system. As shown in the following table, my decision would restrict all motorized wheeled vehicle travel within those four areas. My decision prohibits the use of bicycles on all 60 miles of trail within these recommended wilderness areas. I took this action because the area’s wilderness values would be best protected by not allowing incompatible uses to become established, and there is no discernible use of the areas by bicyclists at present.

**ROD Table 14. Miles of Roads and Trails Within Forest Plan Recommended Wilderness Management Areas Q**

| ROADS & TRAILS BY FOREST PLAN MANAGEMENT AREA “Q” | DECISION      | ALT. 1    | ALT. 2    | ALT. 3    | ALT. 4    | ALT. 5    |
|---|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Motorized Roads                                   | 0 mi.         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         |
| Motorized Trails                                  | 0 mi.         | 9         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         |
| <b>Subtotal -- motorized</b>                      | <b>0 mi.</b>  | <b>9</b>  | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>  |
| Non-Motorized Roads                               | 0 mi.         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         |
| Non-Motorized Trails                              | 60 mi.        | 51        | 60        | 60        | 60        | 60        |
| <b>Subtotal -- non-motorized</b>                  | <b>60 mi.</b> | <b>51</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>60</b> |
| <b>Total – motorized and non-motorized</b>        | <b>60 mi.</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>60</b> | <b>60</b> |
| Decommissioned Roads & Trails                     | 0 mi.         | n/a       | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         |
| Assigned as Special Use Trails                    | 0 mi.         | n/a       | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         |

Likewise, my decision would restrict motorized over-snow travel yearlong within the four areas recommended for wilderness designation.

**ROD Table 15. Winter Travel Restrictions Within Forest Plan Recommended Wilderness Management Areas Q**

| WINTER TRAVEL WITHIN MANAGEMENT AREA “Q”   | DECISION   | ALT. 1 | ALT. 2 | ALT. 3 | ALT. 4 | ALT. 5 |
|--|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Acres open seasonally to snowmobiling.     | 0 ac.      | 49,180 | 12,500 | 0      | 0      | 0      |
| Acres restricted yearlong to snowmobiling. | 55,770 ac. | 6,590  | 43,270 | 55,770 | 55,770 | 55,770 |
| Total acreage                              | 55,770 ac. | 55,770 | 55,770 | 55,770 | 55,770 | 55,770 |
| Miles of designated snowmobile trail.      | 0 mi.      | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      | 0      |

**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 as a primary place to enjoy hiking, horseback riding, pack trips, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. The following table shows that 9 trailheads would provide direct non-motorized access to the Wilderness via 29 different routes, which are 11 more routes than under the existing travel plan.

**ROD Table 16. Trailheads Providing Non-Motorized Trail Access to Wilderness Trail System within Birch Creek South area**

| TYPE OF RECREATION ACTIVITY              | DECISION  | ALT. 1  | ALT. 2  | ALT. 3  | ALT. 4  | ALT. 5  |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Access to Wilderness Trail System</b> | <b>Trailhead:</b><br>Swift Reservoir (3)<br>Blackleaf (2)<br>N. Fork Teton (4)<br>S. Fork Teton (4)<br>Sun River (4)<br>Benchmark (5)<br>Smith Creek (2)<br>Elk Creek (1)<br>Dearborn River (4) | <b>Trailhead:</b><br>Swift Reservoir (3)<br>Blackleaf (1)<br>N. Fork Teton (5)<br>S. Fork Teton (1)<br>Sun River (1)<br>Benchmark (4)<br>Smith Creek (1)<br>Elk Creek (1)<br>Dearborn River (1) | <b>Trailhead:</b><br>Swift Reservoir (3)<br>Blackleaf (1)<br>N. Fork Teton (5)<br>S. Fork Teton (1)<br>Sun River (1)<br>Benchmark (6)<br>Smith Creek (2)<br>Elk Creek (1)<br>Dearborn River (4) | <b>Trailhead:</b><br>Swift Reservoir (3)<br>Blackleaf (2)<br>N. Fork Teton (5)<br>S. Fork Teton (5)<br>Sun River (4)<br>Benchmark (9)<br>Smith Creek (3)<br>Elk Creek (1)<br>Dearborn River (4) | <b>Trailhead:</b><br>Swift Reservoir (3)<br>Blackleaf (1)<br>N. Fork Teton (5)<br>S. Fork Teton (5)<br>Sun River (4)<br>Benchmark (7)<br>Smith Creek (3)<br>Elk Creek (1)<br>Dearborn River (4) | <b>Trailhead:</b><br>Swift Reservoir (3)<br>Blackleaf (1)<br>N. Fork Teton (5)<br>S. Fork Teton (5)<br>Sun River (4)<br>Benchmark (7)<br>Smith Creek (3)<br>Elk Creek (1)<br>Dearborn River (4) |
| <b>Trip lengths of 1 to 100+ miles</b>   | <b>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 29 routes.</b>   | <b>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 18 routes.</b>   | <b>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 24 routes.</b>   | <b>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 36 routes.</b>   | <b>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 33 routes.</b>   | <b>9 trailheads provide non-motorized access to Wilderness via 33 routes.</b>   |

(The number of non-motorized trails from each trailhead are shown in parentheses.)

Likewise, my decision provides about 264 miles of non-motorized trails outside the wilderness to enjoy horse, foot, and bicycle excursions. That is an increase of over 130 miles from the existing condition.

**ROD Table 17. Miles of Non-Motorized Trails outside Wilderness within Birch Creek South area**

| AREA           | DECISION       | ALT. 1  | ALT. 2  | ALT. 3  | ALT. 4  | ALT. 5  |
|----------------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Birch – Teton  | <b>104 mi.</b> | 43 mi.  | 42 mi.  | 105 mi. | 90 mi.  | 90 mi.  |
| South Fork Sun | <b>104 mi.</b> | 62 mi.  | 62 mi.  | 136 mi. | 91 mi.  | 91 mi.  |
| Dearborn - Elk | <b>56 mi.</b>  | 29 mi.  | 59 mi.  | 63 mi.  | 59 mi.  | 59 mi.  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>264 mi.</b> | 134 mi. | 163 mi. | 304 mi. | 240 mi. | 240 mi. |

Overall, my decision enhances the Rocky Mountain Ranger District as a starting point for lengthy excursions or short trips into the Wilderness. There are additional trails to use as access routes for horse and foot trips into the wilderness, and there are additional miles of trails outside the wilderness to enjoy non-motorized excursions into the backcountry.

**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 but includes some opportunities for recreationists to share use of trails.

For the Birch Creek South area, my decision continues to allow motorized ATV and motorcycle travel on about 74 miles of trail, which is 22% of the non-wilderness trail system in the area. This is a sizeable reduction in opportunity for motorized recreation from the existing 209 miles (61%) of the trail system open currently. Motorized recreationists may feel they have lost opportunities to visit the backcountry. In my judgment, the backcountry is still open to all visitors by non-motorized modes of travel. The 74 miles of trail designated for motorized travel provides some high quality opportunities for visitors to ride motorcycles or ATVs in the backcountry. Although limited in number of miles, these motorized trails provide several loops, connect to popular dispersed camping sites, and access destination features such as Renshaw Lake.

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. My decision responds to the interests expressed by many in having a predominately non-motorized area with access to 267 miles of

trail (79% of the non-wilderness system) to hike, ride horseback, or pedal a bicycle without risk of encountering a motor. Should safety conflicts arise on trails open to both pedal bikes and other uses, the District Ranger can determine an appropriate action to address the situation. There will be 93 miles of trail that are open only to hikers and stock travel (closed to bicycles); or people can use West Fork Teton, South Fork Teton, Gibson Lake, South Fork Sun, Straight Creek, Dearborn, or Falls Creek trailheads to access 463 miles of Wilderness trails (on just the Rocky Mountain Ranger District) where they can hike or ride horseback without risk of encountering a motorized vehicle or a pedal bike.

**Effects on grazing and Special Use permits.** Main access roads to recreation residences would remain open yearlong to both motorized wheeled vehicles and snowmobiles. Permittees with cabins in the Benchmark and Sun Canyon areas would still have access to their cabins in the winter by snowmobiling on the main road. Cabin owners in the Sun Canyon area would not be able to use snowmobiles to play on the adjacent hillsides as in the past. Cabin owners in the Benchmark area would have access to snowmobile in a designated area on both sides of the main access road, in an area similar to the historic use areas. People renting the West Fork Cabin in the winter would still be able to snowmobile in the surrounding area. A local guest ranch would have to share the first 2 miles of trail with motorcycle riders when taking clients into the backcountry up the Middle Fork Teton River. If clients of the 7 guest ranch wanted to ride into the South Fork Teton River, they would have to share about 4 miles of trail with motorcycle riders. Grazing permittees, outfitters, and other special use permit holders in the Birch Creek South area would not be affected by my decision.

**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 Birch Creek South area. There will continue to be a low level of visitors that bring motorcycles or ATVs to use during their stay. Visitors who bring horses or bicycles, or who come to hunt, fish or hike will have more opportunities for non-motorized recreation but their use levels are not expected to dramatically increase. Although snowmobiling opportunities in the Benchmark and Beaver-Willow areas are limited in acreage, the areas will provide enough opportunity for the existing demand. Snowmobilers that generally seek riding opportunities in the Sun Canyon area will still find the Beaver-Willow area open, and probably won't shift their use to the Teton area. Any shifting of day-use traffic that may occur during the winter could reduce spending in Augusta and increase spending in the Choteau area.

**Effects on Blackfeet Reserved Rights – the Ceded Strip.** This issue was analyzed in the FEIS, and is being discussed further with the Blackfeet Tribe. It is another reason for delaying a decision about travel management for the Badger-Two Medicine area. It will be an important part of my future decision for the Badger-Two Medicine.

## TRANSPORTATION:

**Effect on management of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.** As disclosed in the Final EIS, only about 7 miles of the CDNST is located within the Birch Creek South area. These 7 miles were analyzed for non-motorized travel under all alternatives, including the no action alternative. My decision is to continue the yearlong restrictions on motorized travel on all 7 miles of the CDNST outside of the Wilderness in the southern two-thirds of the Rocky Mountain Division. This is in full compliance with the 1985 Comprehensive Plan for the CDNST, and also in compliance with a July 3, 1997, policy memo from the Deputy Chief of the Forest Service emphasizing non-motorized recreation.

**Designation of some Roads for Mixed Traffic.** As disclosed in the Final EIS, there are some roads that may be suitable for mixing ATV/motorcycle traffic with highway vehicles in order to provide more recreational opportunities. Likewise, there is a need to evaluate and properly sign some roads to warn motorists that they may encounter hikers, horseback riders, packstrings, and bicycle riders on the roadway. An engineering evaluation must be completed on each of these roads before a final determination can be made. Therefore, no decision will be made at this time as to which roads, if any, would be designated for mixed traffic.

## 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 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. As stated in the Final EIS, the only potential to affect three known populations of sensitive plants is associated with decommissioning of two routes. It is important that the method of decommissioning these routes is closely coordinated with plant specialists to minimize effects on the identified sensitive species. For right now, decommissioning means the routes will not be designated for motorized use, and the routes will not be signed nor managed for any type of non-motorized use. A separate analysis would be made before any more ground disturbing activity (such as barricading, ripping, seeding, drainage dips, etc.) took place to decommission 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 mileage 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 Birch Creek South 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 18. Miles of Open Motorized Routes Within Seasonal Habitats for Birch Creek South area (Table III-87 in DEIS)**

| Seasonal Habitat              | DECISION | Alt. 1 | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 |
|-------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Grizzly Bear Spring</b>    | 111      | 184    | 128    | 85     | 106    | 106    |
| <b>Grizzly Bear Denning</b>   | 1        | 7      | 2      | 0      | 1      | 1      |
| <b>Elk Calving</b>            | 10       | 27     | 7      | 5      | 5      | 5      |
| <b>Elk Winter</b>             | 35       | 89     | 68     | 25     | 56     | 56     |
| <b>Bighorn Sheep Lambing</b>  | 2        | 19     | 12     | 0      | 11     | 11     |
| <b>Bighorn Sheep Winter</b>   | 42       | 71     | 57     | 32     | 46     | 46     |
| <b>Mountain Goat Kidding</b>  | 1        | 12     | 2      | 1      | 1      | 1      |
| <b>Mountain Goat Yearlong</b> | 9        | 31     | 20     | 3      | 9      | 9      |

**ROD Table 19. Total Acreage and % Beyond 500m of Open Motorized Routes in key Spring Wildlife Habitats on NF Land within Birch Creek South area**

| Spring Wildlife Habitat      | DECISION            | Alt. 1           | Alt. 2           | Alt. 3           | Alt. 4           | Alt. 5           |
|------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Grizzly Bear Spring</b>   | 137,740*<br>(87%)** | 125,310<br>(79%) | 134,210<br>(85%) | 141,880<br>(89%) | 138,740<br>(87%) | 138,740<br>(87%) |
| <b>Elk Calving</b>           | 51,560<br>(93%)     | 47,440<br>(85%)  | 52,640<br>(95%)  | 53,400<br>(96%)  | 53,400<br>(96%)  | 53,400<br>(96%)  |
| <b>Bighorn Sheep Lambing</b> | 34,690<br>(98%)     | 28,970<br>(82%)  | 30,630<br>(86%)  | 35,140<br>(99%)  | 31,560<br>(89%)  | 31,560<br>(89%)  |
| <b>Mountain Goat Kidding</b> | 102,790<br>(99%)    | 99,010<br>(96%)  | 101,850<br>(98%) | 102,870<br>(99%) | 102,810<br>(99%) | 102,810<br>(99%) |

\* Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 acres

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

**ROD Table 20. Percent of Bear Management Unit (BMU) Subunits Outside 500m Buffer in Summer and Fall – Simple Buffer Method; Birch Creek South Area**

| BMU Subunit | DECISION                          | Alt. 1 | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4     | Alt. 5     |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|------------|------------|
|             | % of Subunit Outside 500m Buffer* |        |        |        |            |            |
| Birch       | 99%                               | 91%    | 94%    | 100%   | 94%        | 94%        |
| Teton       | 87%                               | 76%    | 77%    | 91%    | 86%        | 86%        |
| Pine Butte  | 89%                               | 59%    | 65%    | 91%    | 91%<br>89% | 91%<br>89% |
| Deep Creek  | 89%                               | 63%    | 66%    | 95%    | 95%<br>89% | 95%<br>89% |
| Route Biggs | 100%                              | 100%   | 100%   | 100%   | 100%       | 100%       |
| Lick Rock   | 100%                              | 100%   | 100%   | 100%   | 100%       | 100%       |
| W Fk Beaver | 91%                               | 90%    | 89%    | 96%    | 91%        | 91%        |
| S Fk Willow | 85%                               | 81%    | 83%    | 91%    | 84%        | 84%        |
| Scapegoat   | 92%                               | 92%    | 95%    | 97%    | 95%        | 95%        |
| Falls Creek | 100%                              | 72%    | 100%   | 100%   | 100%       | 100%       |

\* Where 2 percentages are shown, figures for summer differ from those for fall. The first figure is summer, and the second figure is fall.

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 Seasonally Important Habitats for Wildlife / Potential for Disturbance and Displacement – Snowmobile Travel.** My decision will dramatically reduce the acreage open to snowmobiles during identified seasons in key seasonal wildlife habitats as compared to the existing situation, as displayed in the table below. Results for Canada lynx are discussed in a separate section below.

Under the decision less than one mile of designated snowmobile route will enter mapped grizzly bear denning habitat, and approximately 1 mile of designated snowmobile route will enter grizzly bear spring habitat in the Birch-South Area. This is the same as in the existing situation. Results of this analysis are displayed in the FEIS.

**ROD Table 21. Total Acreage and % of Seasonal Habitat Open to Snowmobiles for Birch Creek South Area (Table III-93 in DEIS)**

| Spring Wildlife Habitat*          | DECISION           | Alt.<br>1       | Alt.<br>2       | Alt.<br>3    | Alt.<br>4       | Alt.<br>5       |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Grizzly Bear Denning</b>       | 8,150**<br>(3%)*** | 82,710<br>(29%) | 51,300<br>(18%) | 70<br>(<<1%) | 27,340<br>(9%)  | 27,340<br>(9%)  |
| <b>Grizzly Bear Spring</b>        | 8,420<br>(5%)      | 68,550<br>(43%) | 38,070<br>(24%) | 0            | 26,310<br>(17%) | 26,310<br>(17%) |
| <b>Elk Winter Range</b>           | 9<br>(<<1%)        | 42,240<br>(52%) | 33,730<br>(57%) | 0            | 28,000<br>(47%) | 28,000<br>(47%) |
| <b>Bighorn Sheep Winter Range</b> | 2,980<br>(5%)      | 48,340<br>(73%) | 37,210<br>(56%) | 0            | 31,000<br>(47%) | 31,000<br>(47%) |
| <b>Bighorn Sheep Lambing</b>      | 1,230<br>(3%)      | 28,750<br>(81%) | 18,140<br>(51%) | 0            | 15,200<br>(43%) | 15,200<br>(43%) |
| <b>Mountain Goat Yearlong</b>     | 11,350<br>(5%)     | 84,180<br>(40%) | 48,730<br>(23%) | 170<br>(<1%) | 26,710<br>(13%) | 26,710<br>(13%) |
| <b>Wolverine Natal Denning</b>    | 220<br>(2%)        | 2,580<br>(23%)  | 1,290<br>(11%)  | 0            | 640<br>(6%)     | 640<br>(6%)     |

\* Mountain goat kidding and elk calving ranges are not included because the dates of importance for those habitats begin May 1, when snowmobiling activity is generally minimal to nonexistent.

\*\* Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 acres.

\*\*\* Percents are the portion of seasonal habitat within the NF boundary in the Birch-South area that is open to snowmobiles at least 25% of the season of concern.

**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 it will strongly resemble Alternative 4 in the size, location, and number of patches. Alternative 4 (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, as in Alternatives 3-5 (see FEIS Maps 7-9), will allow motorized use in localized areas providing large areas in which no motorized trails will potentially impact east-west movements of wildlife. North-south connectivity will be maintained as well, reinforced by the relatively large expanse of designated Wilderness along both sides of the Continental Divide west of the project area.

**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.

### Consultation.

Effects of my decision on the four federally listed species occurring on the RMRD were analyzed in a BA and Supplement that were sent to the FWS for informal consultation on August 7, 2006 (Supplement sent on September 5, 2006). On September 18, 2006 the FWS concurred with the determinations in the BA and Supplement that the Decision will have “No Effect” on the Threatened Bald Eagle, and “May Affect, But is Not Likely to Adversely Affect” the Threatened Gray Wolf, Canada Lynx, and Grizzly Bear. The FWS based its concurrence on the findings of the analysis in the BA as summarized below for each species.

The decision analyzed for the BA differs very slightly from my final decision discussed in this document, through removal of wheeled and over-snow motorized travel in the Jones Creek area, and addition of over-snow motorized travel in the Benchmark area. The changes do not affect conclusions from the analysis for any of the 4 listed species. The change in mileage of wheeled travel will have a very small positive effect on the grizzly bear analysis for one Subunit compared to what was reported in the BA. The change will not result in an effect to grizzly bears that differs from that reported in the BA, and will not change the determination or the basis for concurrence by the FWS. FWS personnel indicated by telephone (1/30/07; see project file) that the described changes will not require new consultation.

The change in over-snow areas will result in an increase of approximately 4,370 acres of area open to snowmobile travel within lynx habitat over that reported and analyzed in the BA. My decision still represents a significant reduction in acres of lynx habitat open to snowmobiles as compared to the existing situation (see below). Potential effects will not be different from those reported in the BA, and will not result in changes to the determination or the basis for concurrence by the FWS. FWS personnel indicated by telephone (1/30/07; see project file) that the described changes will not require new consultation.

### Gray Wolf

One wolf pack, known as the Red Shale Pack, is known to be established on the RMRD roughly seven miles west of the Travel Plan boundary in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. 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. 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 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). 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. Only two Subunits in the Travel Plan area are above the percent federal ownership level ( $\geq 75\%$ ) for which numeric guidelines for motorized route density and core area apply. The guideline for the remainder of the Subunits is no net increase in the percent of the Subunit at specified total and open motorized route densities, and no net decrease in the percent of the Subunit in core area. Specific numbers, definitions, and other analysis information can be found in the BA.

My decision will reduce both total and open motorized route densities on National Forest lands in all Subunits, and will result in route densities within the reference guideline for the two Subunits that are  $\geq 75\%$  National Forest lands. Core area will be increased for all Subunits under the Decision, although it will remain slightly below the reference guideline for one Subunit with  $\geq 75\%$  National Forest land. When calculated by season, core area in that Subunit does not meet the guideline only during the fall season. The analysis shows that high-use non-motorized trails, which are included along with motorized trails in core calculations, are the factor that limits this Subunit's ability to meet the guideline value during the fall season.

### *CEM*

The east-side NCDE Cumulative Effects Model (CEM) for grizzly bears was run as another means of assessing potential impacts of the decision on grizzly bear habitat. The model assigns a value (Habitat Value, or HV) to grizzly bear habitat based on vegetation characteristics, and then decreases that value according to the amount and type of human activity occurring in it. The resulting value, called Habitat Effectiveness (HE), reflects the relative worth of a specific area (usually a BMU Subunit) as compared to other areas or as compared to the same area with different levels of human activity. CEM calculations are carried out separately for spring, summer, and fall.

The impact of the decision as compared to the existing situation was measured by relative amount of change from HV to HE in each Subunit. The analysis showed that the decision either does not alter or decreases the amount by which HV is reduced by human activity, effectively maintaining or improving the value of grizzly bear habitat in all Subunits over all seasons.

### Canada Lynx

The USDA Forest Service Region 1 is a signatory to the Lynx Conservation Agreement (USFS #00-MU-11015600-013). Signatories have agreed to follow specific recommendations and guidelines in the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS; Reudiger et al. 2000) that includes mapping potential lynx habitat, and establishing Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs) as the standard unit at which analyses should occur. The LCAS guides land managers to "...allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and snowmobile play areas by LAU unless the designation serves to consolidate unregulated use and improves lynx habitat" (Modifications of LCAS, August 2000 Edition- Clarifying Language; Memo to Deputy Regional Forester, August 28, 2003).

The table below shows the mileage of designated over-snow routes (trails designated on maps or other official documentation as snowmobile trails or cross-country ski trails) and the miles of road known to be used by snowmobiles in lynx habitat by LAU for both the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan. Because plowed roads also provide a compacted surface

during winter, the miles of plowed road within lynx habitat are also displayed below. There are no designated snowmobile play areas on the RMRD and none will be created by the decision.

**ROD Table 22. Miles of Designated Over-Snow Routes and Regularly Used Roads in Lynx Habitat, by LAU**

| LAU Name     | Miles of Designated Over-Snow Route |          | Miles of Road Regularly Used by Snowmobiles |          | Miles of Plowed Road |          |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|----------|---|----------|----------------------|----------|
|              | Existing                            | DECISION | Existing                                    | DECISION | Existing             | DECISION |
| <b>RM9</b>   | 1.9                                 | 1.9      | 1.5   | 1.5      | 0.7                  | 0.7      |
| <b>RM12</b>  | 0                                   | 0        | 0.2   | 0.2      | 0                    | 0        |
| <b>RM20</b>  | 0                                   | 0        | 0.2   | 0.2      | 0                    | 0        |
| <b>RM23</b>  | 0                                   | 0        | 1.4   | 1.4      | 0                    | 0        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | 1.9                                 | 1.9      | 3.3   | 3.3      | 0.7                  | 0.7      |

There will be no change in the mileage of over-the-snow routes or the mileage of road regularly used by snowmobiles between the Existing Situation and the Proposed Plan.

The LCAS does not provide specific recommendations for dispersed over-the-snow recreation, but it recommends maintaining “... a landscape of interconnected blocks of foraging habitat where snowmobile, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, or other snow compacting activities are minimized or discouraged”. The table below displays the acreage and percent of lynx habitat in each LAU in the Birch-South area that is currently open to snowmobiles and that will be open under the Decision. This table differs from Table 15 in the BA, reflecting the aforementioned changes that were made after consultation had occurred.

**ROD Table 23. Acres Open to Snowmobiling in Lynx Habitat by LAU and Percent of Habitat in LAU Open to Snowmobiling**

| LAU Name | Existing Condition (Alt. 1) |  | DECISION |  |
|----------|-----------------------------|--|----------|--|
|          | Acres                       | Open Acres as Percent of Lynx Habitat in LAU | Acres    | Open Acres as Percent of Lynx Habitat in LAU |
| RM7      | 1817                        | 19%  | 10       | <<1%   |
| RM9      | 8704                        | 99%  | 3766     | 43%  |
| RM11     | 2                           | <1%  | 0        | --   |
| RM12     | 5686                        | 72%  | 892      | 11%  |
| RM14     | 2                           | <1%  | 0        | --   |
| RM15     | 7024                        | 100%   | 0        | --   |
| RM16     | 4419                        | 36%  | 0        | --   |
| RM18     | 12                          | <1%  | 0        | --   |
| RM19     | 4722                        | 30%  | 0        | --   |
| RM20     | 13104                       | 97%  | 692      | 5%   |
| RM21     | 965                         | 5%   | 0        | --   |
| RM22     | 2402                        | 24%  | 1        | <1%  |
| RM23     | 10326                       | 100%   | 6435     | 62%  |

| LAU Name | Existing Condition<br>(Alt. 1) |   | DECISION |   |
|----------|--------------------------------|---|----------|---|
|          | Acres                          | Open Acres as Percent<br>of Lynx Habitat in LAU | Acres    | Open Acres as Percent<br>of Lynx Habitat in LAU |
| RM25     | 2709                           | 99%   | 0        | --  |
| RM26     | 1987                           | 42%   | 0        | --  |
| RM27     | 3564                           | 100%  | 0        | --  |
| TOTAL    | 67,446                         | 29%   | 11,797   | 5%  |

My decision will remove snowmobiling entirely from lynx habitat in 10 of the 22 LAUs in the Birch-South area, and will reduce the acreage open to snowmobiles in the remaining LAUs substantially. Overall the decision will result in a reduction from 29% of lynx foraging/denning habitat open to snowmobiles under the existing situation to 5% of lynx foraging/denning habitat open to snowmobiles. It is important to note that under both situations a certain percentage of area open to snowmobiles is not, in fact, available to snowmobiles due to terrain, vegetation, and other factors. Nevertheless, the decision represents a large decrease in potential impacts to lynx from snowmobile travel.

All other provisions of the LCAS are currently being met and will continue to be met under the decision.

Bald Eagle

There are no known bald eagle nests and no suitable bald eagle nesting habitat on the RMRD. Some bald eagles may winter along the eastern portion of the project area, which is also periodically used by migrating individuals. 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 are displayed in the FEIS and in Table III-84A showing potential impacts of snowmobiles on key wildlife habitats. 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 Birch Creek South 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.** The majority of westslope cutthroat trout habitat occurs in the Badger Two Medicine area and will not be affected by my decision. However, my decision is expected to reduce motorized use and associated effects on westslope cutthroat trout streams in the upper Teton drainage.