

## **Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences**

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## Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the relevant resource components of the existing, or baseline, environmental conditions and describes resources potentially affected by the alternatives. This chapter also discloses the environmental effects of implementing the alternatives and forms the scientific and analytical basis for comparing the alternatives described in Chapter 2.

This FEIS hereby incorporates by reference the Resource Specialist Reports in the Project Record (40 CFR 1502.21). These reports contain the detailed data, executive summaries, regulatory framework, assumptions and methodologies, analyses, conclusions, maps, references, and technical documentation that the resource specialists relied upon to reach conclusions in this FEIS.

### 3.2 Recreation

#### 3.2.1 Scope of the Analysis

The geographic scope for the assessment of recreation condition and potential effects includes the entire Payette National Forest (PNF) outside the FC-RONR Wilderness. For organizational reasons, the PNF is divided into 13 smaller units called Management Areas. Management Areas are organized around a combination of watershed and administrative boundaries. Recreation conditions and effects are analyzed for the PNF and for each MA.

#### Issues and Indicators

**Recreation Issue 1:** Travel management may affect opportunities for motorized and non-motorized recreation activities in summer.

##### Indicators:

- Miles of open and seasonally open NFS road.
- Miles of two-wheel motorized trail and non-motorized trail.
- Miles of ATV trail.
- Miles of OHV (full-size four-wheel-drive vehicle) trail
- Acres open to cross-country motor vehicle use

##### Background:

Roads and trails provide access to the PNF for recreationists, and Native American Indian tribal members. Roads are used to access areas for hunting, berry picking, camping, pleasure driving, firewood gathering, and to access trails for use by ATV, motorcycle, horseback, bike, and by foot. Trails access the backcountry for fishing, photography and viewing scenery, visiting lakes, exercise, and many more activities. The type, amount, and location of roads and motorized trails influence motorized recreation opportunities and the quality of the recreation experience. Miles of two-wheel (single-track) motorized use are distinguished from ATV opportunities because motorbike users desire single-track trail for the best riding experience. Areas open to motorized use are tracked to display the amount of area available for cross-country motor vehicle use (in the case of Alternative A) and limited off-road travel for the purpose of parking and dispersed camping (in the case of the action alternatives).

The amount of non-motorized trails and areas indicate opportunities available for mountain biking, horse use, and hiking/backpacking free from motorized interactions. Non-motorized trails and areas address safety concerns, and provide for solitude, and a recreational experience free from machine noise or pollution. The type, amount, and location of non-motorized trails influence non-motorized recreation opportunities and the quality of the recreation experience.

**Recreation Issue 2:** Travel management may affect opportunities for motorized and non-motorized recreation activities in winter.

**Indicators:**

- Acres open and closed to over-snow vehicles.
- Use areas with clear boundary designations.
- Miles of groomed snowmobile trail.
- Proximity of non-motorized areas to parking and access points for winter based activities.
- Approximate acres of skiable terrain (defined by slope, PNF strata, and elevation) in non-motorized areas.

**Background:**

The opportunities available for recreation with over-snow vehicles are shown by the number of acres open to over-snow travel and by the number of miles of groomed snowmobile trails. Both groomed trails and backcountry use areas are desired by snowmobilers to accommodate varying abilities of riders. The type, amount, and location of groomed snowmobile trails and over-snow vehicle use areas influence recreation opportunities and the quality of the recreation experience.

The PNF has worked with the McCall Winter Recreation Forum (a group composed of backcountry and alpine skiers, government agencies, snowmobilers and local business owners) and conducted surveys to identify winter recreation problems. These efforts have identified the need for distinguishable boundaries on the ground to delineate motorized and non-motorized areas. Past intrusions into non-motorized areas may have occurred accidentally because the boundaries were hard to identify on the ground. Distinctive man-made or physical features, such as roads, trails, ridge tops, or open meadows would assist in delineating areas open and closed to over-snow vehicle use.

Opportunities for non-motorized recreation in winter (such as snowshoeing, Nordic, and backcountry skiing) are shown by the number of acres closed to motorized over-snow travel. Although non-motorized recreation does occur in areas of motorized recreation, numerous comments and studies indicate this is less than ideal for several reasons. Non-motorized recreationists consistently refer to the importance of solitude for the enjoyment of their activities, as well as the absence of noise and fumes generated from motorized vehicles. For backcountry skiers, the primary reason both uses don't mix is the availability of untracked powder. Since snow machines have fast access to untracked powder, areas become overrun with tracks by early morning. Backcountry skiers cannot access and ski the areas before the snow has been tracked.

The proximity of non-motorized winter use areas to parking and access points was analyzed because snowshoers and backcountry skiers that do not rely on a snowmachine can travel only a limited distance from an access point and still return the same day. This distance was estimated to be approximately three miles for a typical backcountry skier traveling in good snow conditions and four miles for a typical Nordic (track) skier using a groomed route. Linear distance on a map does not reflect actual terrain on the ground that must be traveled by skiers trying to reach the backcountry. The identified distances of three and four miles were agreed to in 2004 by the McCall Winter Recreation Forum (Winter Recreation Forum map, Project Record).

The acres of skiable terrain in non-motorized areas were analyzed to determine the actual amount of backcountry area available to skiers and snowshoers. Areas of dense timber, extremely steep rocky slopes, or cliffs, or lower elevations of limited snow cover are not suitable for skiing.

**Recreation Issue 3:** Travel management may affect road and trail program costs.

**Indicator:**

- Costs to program management.

**Background:**

The Forest Service receives funding from Congress for maintaining roads and trails. In a typical year, the Forest receives funds to maintain around 15 percent of the designated road and trail system. Additional maintenance and construction is sometimes carried out through grants and cost share opportunities, although such funds are not guaranteed. The type of grants applied for often depends on the type of trail where the money will be used. Some grants are for work on motorized trails, while other grants are to address resource problems such as erosion and associated effects to fish or water quality.

**Recreation Issue 4:** Travel management may affect the safety of recreationists due to the amount and location of motorized and non-motorized areas and trails.

**Indicator:**

- Degree of public safety provided based on separation of uses.

**Background:**

The Forest Plan has several goals, objectives, and guidelines (REG005: III-62; REOB18: III-63; REGU27: III- 66) to provide a safe experience for recreationists (Forest Plan 2003). User safety was a concern voiced by the public during scoping on the Proposed Action. In winter, user safety issues focused on potential collisions of over-snow vehicles and backcountry skiers. Poor visibility, vehicle speed, and deep ruts created by over-snow vehicles are all safety concerns. In summer, safety concerns focused on the risk of collisions from multiple uses of trails by ATVs, horses, mountain bicycles, and hikers. Concerns include hazards of two-way travel on trails open to motorized use, encounters with horse and pack stock, and mountain bike encounters with people on foot and horseback.

**Recreation Issue 5:** Changes in motorized use may affect Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) settings for both summer and winter use.

**Indicator:**

- Change to Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS).

**Background:**

The Forest Plan provides an ROS objective (in number of acres) to be achieved or maintained for each Management Area. The Forest plan recognizes that: “The above numbers reflect current travel regulation. These numbers may change as a result of future travel regulation planning” (Forest Plan 2003). A change in acres could change the recreation experience available to the user. For example a semi-primitive non-motorized recreation experience changing to a roaded natural experience would introduce more than just motorized recreation into the experience. It would also result in more social encounters and developed facilities and a less primitive-type experience. Certain Management Area Prescription Categories (MPCs) do not allow degradation of the ROS. For example, in Recommended Wilderness, changes to existing settings (mapped ROS classes) are limited to only those that maintain or restore wilderness characteristics (Forest

Plan 2003: III-74: WRST01), so the ROS could not go from semi-primitive non-motorized to semi-primitive motorized without a significant Forest Plan amendment.

### 3.2.2 Changes between Draft and Final EIS

Additional concerns were expressed in response to the release of the DEIS. Responses to those concerns are included in Appendix F. Comments on the DEIS led to development of a new alternative (E).

Changes between draft and final particularly relevant to the recreation analysis include:

- A section was added to the effects analysis for all alternatives discussing trail loop opportunities available for two-wheel motorized use, ATV, and non-motorized trails.
- Recreation opportunities available in the Frank Church Wilderness adjacent to the project area were addressed.
- A short section on implementation of the travel plan was added.
- Alternative C – added analysis on maintaining the Jumbo Basin area as open, as it is in Alternative A, and opening an area to motorized over-snow use in the South Fork Salmon River.
- Alternative D – added analysis on closing the Bruin Mountain area to over-snow motorized use.
- Added a discussion of the analysis of effects on recreation for Alternative E.
- Considered the designated dispersed camping areas on the Krassel Ranger District.

### 3.2.3 Forest Plan Direction

Relevant Forest Plan direction for travel management in relation to recreation includes the following:

**Table REC-1: Forest Plan Direction for Recreation Pertinent to the Travel Management Analysis.**

Number	Direction	Page
REOB03	Update existing ROS inventories as part of project-level planning and implementation if project activities cause a change in recreation setting conditions significant enough to reclassify the affected area.	III-62
REOB06	Identify and develop motorized use opportunities in locations appropriate for motorized uses through road to trail conversion, development of new trails, and other methods	III-62
REOB18	Initiate a process of phased, site-specific travel management planning as soon as practicable. Prioritize planning based on areas where the most significant user conflicts and resource concerns are occurring. Identify and address inconsistent access management of roads, trails, and areas across Forest, Ranger District, and interagency boundaries	III-63
REOB22	During project planning and implementation, develop measures to mitigate degrading effects from National Forest System and non-National Forest System trails	III-63
REST04	On all lands outside of designated travel ways, motorized use shall be prohibited unless otherwise authorized.	III-64

**Table REC-1: Forest Plan Direction for Recreation Pertinent to the Travel Management Analysis.**

Number	Direction	Page
REGU04	Local Forest Service resource managers should facilitate and encourage involved user groups to resolve use conflicts among themselves. When the involved user groups accomplish resolution, the Forest Service should strongly consider recommendations and implement within the laws, regulations and policies that govern management of the National Forests. When the involved user groups do not accomplish resolution, the Forest Service should work to resolve the conflict based on the agency mission.	III-64
FRGU09	Travel management should be used, as needed, to accomplish the following: Provide for the safety and welfare of the users. Protect threatened and endangered species and their habitat. Protect Forest resources, such as wildlife, soil, vegetation, and water. Provide a diversity of recreational experiences and reduce user conflicts. Protect road and trail investments. Comply with Forest contracts or permits, cooperative agreements, road purchase agreements, easement deeds, or other formal documents of the Government requiring that road use be controlled. Coordinate hunting and fishing opportunities with State agencies	III-60
REGU27	Winter recreation opportunities should be managed to provide for user safety and to minimize user conflicts. Winter recreation management should recognize that some activities are not compatible in the same locations and should be separated when needed to maintain user safety and quality recreation experiences.	III-66

### 3.2.4 Existing Condition

#### Introduction

In 1988, the Payette National Forest developed a Travel Plan to address management of access to the Forest, using roads and trails. The Travel Plan was designed to identify the roads, trails, and areas open to motorized use on the Forest. The existing Travel Plan as described in the Travel Plan map of 1995 and updated by the *Backroads* map of 2004, covers more than 2,000 miles of road and 600 miles of motorized trails. The existing Travel Plan includes areas open to cross-country motor vehicle use in summer and winter and includes the following five categories:

- “A” areas are closed to all cross-country motor vehicle use year-round.
- “B” areas are closed to all cross-country motor vehicle use in the summer, but open to snowmobile use in the winter.
- “C” areas are open for cross-country travel to all types of use year-round.
- “D” and “E” areas are open for cross-country travel to all types of use year-round with the exception of a short period during the fall hunting season. Hunting season D areas dates correspond with the Elk and Deer general rifle season dates identified in the Idaho Department of Fish and Game Hunting Regulations or in the annual errata sheet. Hunting season E area dates correspond with deer only general rifle season dates.

In most places where cross-country motor vehicle use is not allowed, users may drive to undeveloped campsites within 300 feet of a designated road or 100 feet of a designated trail.

In calendar year 2002 the Payette conducted the first of several planned National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) studies. All national forests participate in these studies on a five-year repeat cycle. This study provided the Forest with site-specific recreation use and visitor data. Approximately 621,630 visits were made to the Forest in 2002 for recreational purposes. A

“National Forest Visit” was defined as the entry of one person upon a national forest to participate in recreation activities for an unspecified period of time. A national forest visit can be composed of multiple site visits. A “site visit” was defined as the entry of one person onto a national forest site or area to participate in recreation activities for an unspecified period of time.

Top activities related to travel management on the Payette NF are (in order of percent participation): hunting and fishing, viewing scenery or wildlife, hiking or walking, driving for pleasure, downhill skiing, OHV travel, snowmobiling, bicycling, cross-country skiing, backpacking and camping in unroaded areas, and horseback riding.

### **Issue 1: Motorized and non-motorized recreation activities in summer**

#### ***Roads***

Roads within the Payette National Forest fall into two general categories: classified roads and unauthorized roads (also known as non-system, unclassified, or ghost roads). Classified roads are roads needed for long-term motor vehicle access and include designated National Forest System (NFS) roads, state roads, county roads, and privately owned roads. Unauthorized roads are those not designated as part of the Forest road system and include unplanned roads, abandoned roads, and off-road vehicle tracks that have not been designated and managed as roads.

The Payette National Forest currently manages approximately 3,000 miles of NFS designated road of which 1,130 miles are open to motorized travel, 510 miles are seasonally closed, and 1,300 miles are closed to motorized travel. Open roads are open to motorized use when passable (i.e., not covered by snow). Seasonally closed roads are closed to motorized use during the big game hunting season to reduce disturbance to wildlife and during periods of wet weather to protect the road surface from rutting and subsequent erosion. Closed roads are closed to motorized use year round, although some may receive administrative or permitted use.

Unauthorized roads on the PNF were constructed for a variety of reasons including timber sales, mineral activities, range management, and fuel reduction projects. Many of these roads may no longer be needed for management and use of National Forest System lands. These roads were not intended to be retained for recreational use, but due to ineffective closures or because the roads occurred in areas open to cross-country motor vehicle use they have continued to be used by visitors to the Forest.

#### ***Trails (two-wheel motorized, non-motorized, ATV, and OHV)***

Currently the Payette National Forest manages approximately 1,160 miles of trail (not including trails within the FC-RONR Wilderness). This total does not include the unauthorized or user created trails that evolved as a consequence of past historical activity, or were created through repeated cross-country travel. The existing trail system consists of non-motorized trails; two-wheel motorized trails, ATV trails, and trails open to full-sized OHVs, and is displayed in the map and tables of Alternative A (Chapter 2).

In some cases, motorized vehicles have been used on trails not designed for motorized use, such as full sized trucks used on ATV trails or ATVs used on trails designed for two-wheel motorized use. This use has caused some trails to become rutted and eroded.

Across the PNF, motorized access is expanding where terrain allows. User trails are developed as riders take off cross-country. Use of existing trails has increased to the point that additional maintenance is needed to keep them in standard operating condition. Some trails were not designed to accommodate the amount of use they now receive.

### ***Acres Open for Motorized and Non-motorized Use (Summer)***

Outside of designated Wilderness, approximately 511,000 acres of NFS lands are open and 1,019,000 acres are closed to cross-country motor vehicle use. Some of the acres are unavailable for use because of steep terrain, rocks, and wetlands. Many of these acres contain miles of unauthorized or user created roads and trails.

Repeated cross-country travel by foot, bike, horse, or motorized vehicle causes impacts to Forest resources, but the greatest impacts have been seen on unauthorized routes created by and used for motorized travel. These user-created routes are of particular concern when they cross meadows, streams, and riparian areas where the soils are easily eroded and rutted.

A sport called “mud-bogging” has been damaging meadows in several locations across the Forest. Mud-bogging is driving and winching a 4-wheel drive vehicles through wet meadows to reach a destination, be it another road or trail, or test the abilities of the driver and vehicle.

## **Issue 2: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in winter**

### ***Developed Ski Areas***

There are two developed ski areas within the boundaries of the Payette National Forest: Brundage Mountain Resort and Little Ski Hill. There are also new alpine and Nordic ski areas at Tamarack Resort, adjacent to the Council Ranger District’s eastern boundary.

### ***Non-Motorized Winter Recreation Use***

Nordic and backcountry skiing have been enjoyed by recreationists on the Payette National Forest prior to the establishment of the Forest as the Weiser and Idaho National Forests, in 1905 and 1908, respectively. Approximately 25 kilometers of trail is groomed in the Little Bear Basin area (MA 6 and 7) by the Little Ski Hill to support Nordic skiing. This trail system is expected to grow to 30 kilometers in the near future dependent on funding. Other entities providing Nordic skiing to the public include Tamarack Resort, Ponderosa Park in McCall, and Jug Mountain Ranch, approximately 5 miles south of McCall.

In 2004, the Winter Recreation Forum, a local group of county commissioners, business owners, and motorized and non-motorized members, worked with the McCall Ranger District recreation staff to identify useable acres (including both motorized and non-motorized acres) for snowmobiles, human powered backcountry users, Nordic skiers, cat skiing and machine powered backcountry skiing (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record).

Outside of the FC-RONR Wilderness, approximately 451,200 acres are closed to motorized over-snow travel. Included in these areas are several thousand acres of critical wildlife winter range at lower, usually snow-free, elevations. Three areas are currently allocated for non-motorized backcountry winter recreation: Squaw Point, Jughandle Mountain, and North North (associated with Brundage Mountain Resort).

The most popular areas for backcountry skiing in the McCall area of the PNF are Sargent Mountain, Granite Mountain/Slab Butte/7676 areas, Brundage Mountain Resort (North North and adjacent areas outside developed runs but within the permit boundary), Lick Creek (McCall), Squaw Point and Jughandle Mountain. Depending on the amount of snow and the snow level in a particular year not all acres are usable by skiers and snowshoers. Sargent Mountain and North North can be accessed via Brundage Mountain Resort lifts and groomed snowmobile trails. Granite Mountain/Slab Butte areas are accessed by backcountry skiers using groomed snowmobile trails, who then climb on skis the last one to two miles to skiable terrain. Squaw Point requires driving in on snowmobile, then parking and skiing in two to three miles to reach

the upper elevation slopes. Jughandle Mountain requires at least four miles of skiing before the upper elevations of the mountain can be accessed for skiing.

On the Council and Weiser Ranger Districts the north face of Sturgill Peak, accessed using snowmobiles, is increasing in popularity. Backcountry skiers also enjoy the Council Mountain area, and access it by snowmobile to Desert Cabin. No developed trailheads exist specifically for backcountry skiing, but skiers may use existing snowmobile parking areas.

### ***Motorized Winter Recreation Use***

On the PNF, approximately 1,078,540 acres are open to over-snow vehicle use (70 percent of the Forest outside the FC-RONR Wilderness). In addition, Valley County, under a Cost Share Agreement with the PNF, grooms approximately 225 miles of snowmobile trails. Another 20 miles are authorized but currently not groomed under the Cost Share Agreement. Thus, the existing condition (Alternative A) for groomed snowmobile trails is 245 miles available for grooming. An additional 34 miles of trail are groomed for sole use by the Brundage Mountain Resort Snow Cat ski program, and closed by special order to all other uses, including non-motorized use, for safety reasons.

Approximately 240 miles of groomed snowmobile trails are located on adjacent areas on the Boise National Forest and are often used the same day by snowmobilers using PNF trails. The average snowmobiler can cover about 70-80 miles of trail in a day. The more advanced rider enjoys off-trail travel to explore bowls and outlying areas. Because of current technology, snow machines can reach almost all of the terrain open to over-snow vehicle use.

Over the past ten years, snowmobile use on and around the PNF has increased (as referenced by snowmobile registration rates) as the popularity of the sport and the local population has increased. In 1996, Valley County snowmobile registrations totaled 4,645. In 2006, resident snowmobile registrations for Valley County totaled 5,440. This represents a 1.7% per year increase on average. Another reason for registration increases is non-resident certificates. In the past, out-of-state snowmobilers could use the groomed trails in Idaho if they had a snowmobile registration from another state. Now they are required to have an Idaho snowmobile registration sticker.

Over the past two years the Payette National Forest has begun to give Valley County FRTA easements on several NFS roads. These easements transfer responsibility for management of the roads to the county. These roads could potentially be groomed during the winter to allow more snowmobile traffic. Trail grooming could potentially increase over-snow motorized use and backcountry skiing in open areas adjacent to the routes.

### ***User Conflicts***

Because of the difference between what skiers and snowmobilers desire in their sports, conflicts have arisen as over-snow vehicle use has increased. Areas skiers could count on to be nearly or completely snowmobile-free just five to six years ago have become favorite play spots for snowmobilers and no longer offer quality non-motorized opportunities. Shared use philosophy can equate to a single use as the more intrusive snowmobile overwhelms and displaces non-motorized recreationists. Based on numerous public comments, many skiers and snowshoers now avoid places on the Forest they used to frequent because of the impacts snowmobiles have upon the non-motorized recreation experience. The conflict occurring between motorized and non-motorized over-snow use revolves around three primary issues:

- Untracked snow is important to both motorized and non-motorized over-snow recreationists, but this snow is much more easily consumed by motorized recreation. Backcountry skiers seek

to escape packed runs offered by ski areas. A primary sought-after experience in backcountry skiing is skiing untracked snow.

- The backcountry skier experience is (for the most part) dependent on a feeling of getting away from civilization. Noise and fumes created from snowmobiles can disturb a skier's full enjoyment of the sport.
- Safety becomes a concern when there are snowmobiles traveling at high speeds in areas where there are skiers. In many conditions (i.e., during snow fall, in forests, in highly varied terrain, and in deep snow) it is difficult to for a snowmobiler to see a skier until almost directly upon them. Collisions between snowmobilers and skiers have been documented on the PNF (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). Large tracks created in the snow by snowmobiles are very difficult for skiers to maneuver around and through.

### **Issue 3: Program Management Costs**

Enjoying the year-round outdoor opportunities the Payette National Forest provides has become an ever-growing pursuit for thousands of recreationists visiting the area each year. Managing all the many opportunities is especially challenging for the Forest as budgets allocated by Congress on a yearly basis have not kept up with the increasing demands placed on the recreation areas and facilities.

#### ***Budget***

Over the past few years, Forest Service allocated funding for trails and roads has covered maintenance of approximately 15 to 20 percent of the system trails and 40 percent of Maintenance Level 3, 4 and 5 passenger car roads. Projections nationally show a flat to slightly downward trend for 2007 (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record).

Other funding sources and partners are used by the PNF to accomplish trail and road maintenance. Funds from the Federal Transportation on Roads and Trails program can be obtained through competition with other Forests. Funding also comes from watershed and vegetative management dollars, state grant funds, and special partnership grants such as Forest Service Centennial grants. These grants are never guaranteed, and only slightly supplement the maintenance accomplished.

#### ***Trail Program Costs***

The PNF's Adopt-a-Trail Program, Boy Scouts, and community service programs have historically maintained approximately 5 percent (approximately 50 to 80 miles) of the trail system each year to minimal standard (clearing and grubbing) (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). The largest outside contributor to PNF trail maintenance is the State of Idaho Trail Rangers program, which maintains about 10 percent (approximately 150 miles) of trail each year (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). State Trail Rangers maintain only motorized trails accessible by two-wheel motorized vehicles and ATVs, and clear downfall, prune vegetation, clean and install water bars, and install signs as needed. They do not conduct heavy trail maintenance such as rock wall building, realignment, turnpikes, or bridgework. Approximately 345 miles of trail (about 30 percent of the trail system) are maintained annually using volunteers and the State Trail Rangers as well as allocated Forest Service funds. These trails are usually the most popular trails on the Forest, leaving the lesser-used trails unmaintained for many years.

The Payette NF estimates the cost of trail maintenance using an average range from \$500 to \$700 per mile. This cost reflects both direct and indirect costs including wages, vehicle, flight, trail stock, program manager, and materials and supplies costs. Costs are lower for trails that require only light clearing to meet agency standards, and those which do not require flight time or pack

stock. Costs are higher for those trails that are far in the backcountry and need major rock work, or that have a high volume of trail clearing.

Approximately one to three miles of trail are constructed or reconstructed each year, depending on funding allocated to the Forest. Costs vary depending on the terrain the construction is located in, and the amount of structures needed on the trail. Costs generally are about \$15,000 per mile and \$700 per mile for reconstruction.

Over the past four years, the state trail grant program has funded about 60 percent of the projects applied for by the PNF totaling between \$100,000 to \$150,000 dollars per year (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). The state's Recreation Trail Program (RTP) requires a 20 percent match. The ATV and motorbike programs do not require a match, however, a match is strongly encouraged by IDPR, and most successful grants have at least 30 percent in matching funds.

### ***Road Program Costs***

Road maintenance on the PNF has declined over the past three years from 17 percent of the road system maintained in 2002 to 8 percent in 2004. This decline was due to changes in national priorities and a subsequent decrease in allocations to the Forest. Road maintenance costs are approximately \$3,280 per mile (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record).

### ***Recreation Use***

Coupled with flat or declining budgets, is an increased demand for recreation uses on the Forest. The 2002 Forest Service National Recreation Use Survey counted 664,000 visits to the PNF annually (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). Local population statistics project a growth in all counties on the Forest over the next 20 years (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). This PNF should expect to see an increase in use over the next 20 years.

The 2004-2005 Idaho Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment – Idaho Recreation Activities by Place of Residence - completed in the Idaho State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan displays various recreation activities and the percentage of local users who participated in the activities. The most popular activities were downhill skiing (30 percent of local users), snowmobiling (20 percent), big game hunting (28 percent), berry picking (28 percent), hiking (63 percent), ATV riding (28 percent), and firewood gathering (40 percent). (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record)

Idaho off-highway motorbike and ATV registrations increased from 2,000 in 1974 to more than 91,000 in 2004 (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). The increase in use is due to a combination of growth and better registration compliance.

The Forest Plan describes a “recreation emphasis” for each MA which is described in the individual MA affected environment sections of this resource section. Each Ranger District identified emphasis items during Forest Plan revision and travel management planning was a primary emphasis item.

## **Issue 4: Safety**

Safety becomes a concern when there are snowmobiles traveling at high speeds in areas where there are skiers. In many conditions (i.e., during snow fall, in forests, in highly varied terrain, and in deep snow) it is difficult to for a snowmobiler to see a skier until almost directly upon them. Collisions between snowmobilers and skiers have been documented on the PNF (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). Large tracks created in the snow by snowmobiles are very difficult for skiers to maneuver around and through. Summertime trail use by multiple users on

motorized trails has the potential for safety concerns, although there have been no major concerns identified to date.

### **Issue 5: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

The Forest Plan identifies a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS); a classification system in which components of recreation settings and facilities (such as access, developed sites, activities, and experiences) are organized and arranged along a continuum or spectrum. The continuum ranges from very primitive settings and experiences to highly concentrated, urbanized ones. Each class is defined in terms of its specific combination of activities, settings, facilities, and experience opportunities.

The ROS provides a framework for defining the types of outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences the public might desire, as well as the mix of the spectrum that a given National Forest might be able to provide.

Although a ROS for both summer and winter is identified in the Forest Plan, the Travel Plan analysis can modify the ROS without an amendment to the Plan (Forest Plan 2003). For this reason, it is important to understand how the current ROS was designed. To arrive at the current classifications, the land base of the Forest was inventoried and mapped by ROS class to identify areas currently providing various kinds of recreation opportunities. An analysis of the physical, social, and managerial setting components for each area led to the identification of five ROS classes based on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum publication (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). The ROS classes include:

***Primitive:*** Very high probability of experiencing solitude, freedom, closeness to nature, tranquility, self reliance, challenge, and risk. An unmodified and natural environment prevails, with low interaction between users. Restrictions and controls are not evident after entry into the area, and access and travel is non-motorized. There is no evidence of vegetation alteration.

***Semi-Primitive non-motorized (SPNM):*** There is a high probability of experiencing solitude, closeness to nature, tranquility, self-reliance, challenge, and risk. It is a natural appearing environment with low interaction between users. There are minimum of on-site controls, and access and travel is non-motorized. Vegetation alterations are widely dispersed and not obvious.

***Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM):*** There is a moderate opportunity for solitude, tranquility, and closeness to nature. There is a high degree of self reliance, challenge, and risk in using motorized equipment. The area is predominantly natural appearing and there is a low concentration of users but often evidence of other users on the trails. There are minimum site controls and restrictions are present but subtle. Vegetation alterations are very small in size and number widely dispersed and not obvious.

***Roaded Modified (RM):*** There is an opportunity to get away from others but with easy access. Some self reliance expected when building campsites and using motorized equipment. There is a feeling of independence and freedom, but there is little challenge or risk. The area is a substantially modified natural environment except for campsites. Roads, landings, slash and debris may be strongly dominant from within yet remain subordinate from distant sensitive roads and highways. There is moderate evidence of other users on roads, but little evidence of others or interaction at camp sites. There is little on site control of users except for some gated roads. Conventional motorized access including sedan and trailers, RVs, OHVs, and motorbikes are present. Vegetation alterations should blend into the landscape from a distance.

**Roaded Natural (RN):** The opportunity to affiliate with other users in developed sites is available with some chance for privacy. Self reliance on outdoor skills is only moderately important, and there is little challenge or risk. The area is a mostly natural appearing environment as viewed from sensitive roads and trails. Interaction between users at camp sites is of moderate importance. There are some obvious on site controls of users, access and travel is conventional motorized including sedan and trailers, RVs and some motor homes. Vegetation alterations are done to maintain desired visual and recreation characteristics.

In order to assign a specific ROS class to an area, resource specialists looked at components comprised of remoteness, evidence of humans, size of the area, user density, managerial regimentation (the amount of laws and regulations governing areas or sites) and motorized use (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). The following table displays the current acres in each ROS class (FC-RONR Wilderness excluded).

**Table REC-2: Acres of ROS Classes on the PNF.**

	Summer	Winter
<b>Primitive</b>	0	7520
<b>SPNM</b>	463,810	448,005
<b>SPM</b>	330,020	794,300
<b>RN</b>	378,470	47,690
<b>RM</b>	453,620	328,390

Note: due to mapping corrections made during the Travel Plan analysis, the total acres disclosed above are slightly higher than current records show (1,625,920 versus 1,528,600).

## Existing Condition by Management Area

The following discussion focuses on the affected environment for recreation by Management Area (MA).

### **MA 1. Hells Canyon**

#### **Summer**

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-2 in Chapter 2.

This area has high scenic quality, paved road access, and because of its lower elevations is used year round for camping, hiking, fishing, sightseeing, and rock climbing. The recently renovated Sheep Rock interpretive trail and lookout are located within this MA and can be reached by road. The majority of the trails are non-motorized.

The recreation strategy emphasis is to maintain existing dispersed sites and facilities, and provide appropriate levels of additional development at key sites. Interpretation and education along with trail maintenance are also emphasized. The most heavily used trails, and those with erosion and water-related resource damage, have the highest priority for maintenance and repair.

There are no existing two-wheel motorized, or ATV trail loop opportunities provided for in MA 1, because this MA has a primarily non-motorized trail network. Two long non-motorized trail loops exist primarily in this MA, crossing outside the project area into the Hells Canyon Wilderness. The Emmett Mountain loop uses trails 219 and 217 and is 10.2 miles in length. The second loop uses trails 219, 215, 216, and 217 and is 14 miles in length. These two loops provide for numerous non-motorized experiences. Since the loops travel into Wilderness, mountain biking would not be allowed once the trail enters the Hells Canyon Wilderness boundary.

***Winter***

Approximately 3,000 acres are open and 32,060 acres are closed to over-snow vehicle use. Closures are used primarily to protect wildlife winter range. Only a small area, encompassed with definable roads and trails for boundaries is over-snow motorized, so definable motorized/non-motorized boundaries in the winter months is not an issue. The majority of the acres closed to over-snow vehicle use are not conducive to backcountry skiing opportunities due to the low elevations and lack of dependable snow conditions. No groomed snowmobile trails occur in this MA.

***MA 2. Snake River******Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-4 in Chapter 2.

Dispersed recreation such as hunting, hiking, sightseeing, and camping occurs throughout the area. There are many dispersed campsites and five developed campgrounds. Many of the trails in the area are open to some form of motorized use. Recreation special uses include two annual recreation events and two outfitter/guide permits.

Due to lack of use, several of the trails in the area are difficult to locate on the ground and therefore are not used. These trails include June Creek trail 234, Smith Mountain Bypass trail 516, Ditch Creek trail 286, and Elk Creek trail 225. Other existing motorized trails have a high exposure rating because of their steep side slopes and narrow tread width, and are poorly designed, with potentially unsafe grades. These are Grouse Creek/Grizzly Creek trail 252, Crooked River trail 253, and Dukes Creek trail 254.

The recreation strategy for this MA is to emphasize dispersed recreation. Dispersed camping opportunities are maintained and resource protection measures are implemented where needed. Other types of dispersed recreation uses offer a mix of roaded and unroaded opportunities. Trail maintenance is emphasized, and the most heavily used trails and those with resource damage have maintenance priority.

Non-motorized boundaries are not well defined in the Sheep Gulch inventoried roadless area (IRA) area where cross-country motor vehicle use is prohibited, and there have been intrusions by ATVs and two-wheel motorized vehicles. Intrusions to a non-motorized area on the West Fork Brownlee ridge top (near the Cuddy Mountain IRA which is closed to cross-country motor vehicle use) have been documented.

Most trail loops in MA 2 are non-motorized trail with some portions of the trail also allowing two-wheel motorized use; therefore most experiences for non-motorized recreationists are a combination of motorized and non-motorized use along the loop. There is one potential two-wheel motorized loop on the system in MA 2, composed of trails 234, 252, and 251. This could offer a loop approximately 6.7 miles long, but trail 252 is currently in poor condition and some stretches are no longer usable. This trail also crosses private ground without a Forest Service easement. The motorized loop opportunity therefore does not exist on the ground at this time. There is one existing non-motorized trail loop in the Benton Peak area approximately 11.2 miles in length using trails 283, 273, 272, and 271.

***Winter***

Approximately 87,360 acres are open and 64,230 acres are closed to over-snow vehicle use. Closures are used primarily to protect winter range for wildlife. No miles of groomed

snowmobile trails occur in this MA, but snowmobiling does occur along the road system up to Sheep Rock (located in MA 1) and in open flat areas and ridge tops. Roads in the Brownlee area are also popular spots for snowmobiling.

The winter closure boundaries to over-snow vehicle use are not marked well on the ground, but the majority of them are below snow level, so management of the boundary has not been a problem. There are no Forest Service trailheads or parking areas for backcountry skiers or snowmobile users in this MA, but there is little demand for such facilities. There are limited ski opportunities in this MA, but some cross-country skiing does occur along the roadside in Bear, from skiers leaving directly from their homes. The majority of the closed acres do not provide backcountry skiing opportunities due to low elevations and lack of dependable snow conditions. One Outfitter and Guide provides a snowmobile operation in the Bear-Lick Creek area on snow covered roads.

### ***MA 3. Weiser River***

#### ***Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-6 in Chapter 2.

Several trails in the MA have been erased on the ground by past management practices such as timber sales or grazing activity, and the public has difficulty trying to locate and utilize them. These trails are Connector trail 214, Ferguson Basin trail 249, Big Flat cutoff trail 330, Pole Creek trail 237, Orchid Canyon trail 247, Warm Springs Creek trail 203, Little Johnson Creek trail 248, and Johnson Creek trail 244.

Easy road access, campgrounds, and fishing make the Lost Valley Reservoir area a popular summer and fall recreation destination. Dispersed recreation such as hunting, site seeing and camping occurs throughout MA 3. There are many dispersed campsites and seven developed campgrounds. The Mann Creek drainage, on the Weiser Ranger District, is heavily used during the summer months for fishing, and for dispersed and developed camping. Many trails in the area are open to some form of motorized vehicle use. Recreation special uses in the area include two annual recreation events and two outfitter/guide permits. Unauthorized motorized use is occurring on yearlong and seasonally closed roads. ATVs are causing trail and road damage by running up and down road banks and cutting switchbacks on trails. In many parts of the MA, vehicles are driven beyond the allowable 300 feet area on either side of system roads.

The recreation strategy for this MA is to maintain and emphasize dispersed camping, and implement resource protection measures where needed. Other types of dispersed recreation uses offer a mix of roaded and unroaded opportunities. Trail maintenance is emphasized. The most heavily used trails and those with resource damage have maintenance priority. There is one outfitter and guide currently conducting snowmobile tours in this MA.

Although MA 3 has many miles of trail, there are few loop opportunities. There is one 5.5 mile ATV trail loop on trail 275 near the Hitt Mountain area. There are many existing roads used by ATV riders as loop opportunities, but this discussion focuses on trails only.

#### ***Winter***

Approximately 267,600 acres are open and 32,390 acres are closed to over-snow vehicle use, primarily for winter wildlife habitat protection, in the lower elevations. A small (about 800 acres) closure occurs in the Sturgill Peak area that accommodated a ski area now abandoned. Since the ski area is no longer there, snow cats and snowmobiles are using the area to access old ski runs

for backcountry skiing. The north face of Sturgill Peak is a popular backcountry ski area. Council Mountain is heavily used by snowmobilers riding on both groomed trails and in open areas.

There are 120.0 miles of groomed snowmobile trails in this MA, making it one of the most popular MAs for snowmobiling. Hornet Creek parking lot near Council, expanded in 2003, is a popular snowmobile parking lot, as is the Mill Creek snowmobile parking lot, completed in the fall of 2004. Mann's Creek area in Weiser is also receiving moderate winter snowmobile use due to its proximity to the Treasure Valley.

Nordic and backcountry skiers can access skiing areas via Hornet parking lot, Mill Creek parking lot and West Mountain and Anderson Creek parking lot located on the Boise National Forest. They can also ski off the top of the ridge at Tamarack Resort, by using the ski area's lift system. Backcountry ski areas in this MA are open to over-snow vehicle use. Most of the acres closed to over-snow vehicle use do not provide backcountry skiing opportunities due to low elevations and lack of dependable snow conditions.

#### ***MA 4. Rapid River***

##### ***Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-8 in Chapter 2.

Rapid River is a designated Wild and Scenic River with a Wild classification along its 13.1 mile length in the MA. The adjacent Rapid River trail 177 is designated non-motorized to best match the Wild designation (see FSH 1909.12, Chapter 8 – Wild and Scenic River Evaluation). Dispersed recreation (hunting, camping, fishing, hiking and horse riding) and non-motorized trail opportunities are the recreation emphases in this MA. Both motorized and non-motorized opportunities are provided on a network of trails. Recreation experiences are primarily semi-primitive.

Two outfitter and guide operations are currently permitted to use the area. Unauthorized cross-country ATV travel is occurring in the area and causing conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreationists. Conflict is most apparent during hunting season when hunters desiring a non-motorized hunting experience, encounter unauthorized ATV use. In addition, ATV riders are inappropriately using trails designed and designated for two-wheel motorized vehicles.

Most trails in this MA tie into the primary non-motorized Rapid River trail 177. Much the same as in MA 2, most loops in this MA are a combination of two-wheel motorized and non-motorized trails. There is one non-motorized loop using trails 186, 181, 190, and 177 for a total of 11.9 miles, and one two-wheel motorized loop in the Elk Lake area on the east side of Highway 95, using trails 347, 371, and 153 for 2.8 miles. MA 4 provides no ATV trail loops.

##### ***Winter***

Approximately 38,340 acres are open and 23,800 miles are closed to over-snow vehicle use, primarily for winter wildlife habitat protection. Due to lack of roaded access, the Rapid River drainage does not receive much backcountry or Nordic ski use, and there are no formal winter parking lots. The acres closed to over-snow vehicle travel do not provide backcountry skiing opportunities due to the low elevations and lack of dependable snow conditions. No groomed snowmobile trails occur in this MA.

### ***MA 5. Middle Little Salmon River***

#### ***Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-10 in Chapter 2.

Dispersed recreation such as hunting, hiking, sightseeing, and camping occurs throughout this area. The Ant Basin trailhead is heavily used by recreationists because it provides the closest motorized access to the east side of Rapid River. Most recreation is road oriented, and there are few trails or recreation destinations. Dispersed camping and trail opportunities are the recreation emphasis in the MA. MA 5 does not have any loop trails.

#### ***Winter***

Approximately 35,580 acres are open and no acres are closed to over-snow vehicle use. A portion of the Brundage Mountain Snow Cat skiing operation, located in the Goose Lake/Granite Mountain area, occurs within this MA. Conflicts between snowmobile users and cat skiers have been occurring for years as both users vie for untracked powder.

There are 11.9 miles of groomed snowmobile trails in this MA. The new Price Valley snowmobile parking lot may increase winter use within the MA. This parking area can also be used by Nordic and backcountry skiers to access the backcountry. There is one outfitter and guide currently operating snowmobile tours in this MA.

### ***MA 6. Goose Creek/Hazard Creek***

#### ***Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-12 in Chapter 2.

This area experiences very high use levels in summer and is used extensively for hiking, ATV use, motorcycle use, mountain biking, fishing, camping, boating, rock-hounding, berry picking, driving for pleasure and fuelwood gathering. Goose Lake, Brundage Reservoir, and Hazard Lake are popular fishing and camping areas. Two eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers fall within this MA, Hard Creek and Hazard Creek. Both streams are classified as Wild. New trail projects within the area should not impact identified Outstandingly Remarkable Wild and Scenic River values (Forest Plan 2003: III-75: WWST01) (USDA Forest Service 2003a: Vol. 3: III-870 – III-886). There are three heavily used developed campgrounds in this MA.

Resource damage is occurring where ATV use is not authorized (e.g., on two-wheel motorized trails and areas closed to cross-country motor vehicle use). Prohibited ATV use is originating from the Morgan Lake/Bascom Creek trailhead, Grassy Mountain Lakes trailhead, Clayborn trailhead, and Buck Lake trailhead. In all these areas resource damage (rutting, damage to vegetation) is occurring due to ATV users pioneering cross-country trails to access new areas. User conflicts are escalating in the Buck Lake and Duck Lake area due to prohibited ATV use. Trails designed and designated for two-wheel motorized vehicles are being used by 4-wheel ATVs. The motorized Vance Creek trail 160 is rarely used since the bridge was removed several years past. Use now is primarily hiking. Two outfitter and guides have recreational use permits for the area. MA 6 has one 3.6 mile two-wheel motorized trail loop using trails 511 and 169.

Mud-bogging, where 4-wheel drive vehicles damage riparian meadow areas by driving off road, has been documented in the Bear Basin area.

### ***Winter***

Approximately 73,560 acres are open and 3,560 acres are closed to over-snow vehicles use. This MA includes ski areas at Brundage Mountain Resort and Little Ski Hill. The MA contains 51.8 miles of groomed snowmobile trails and 10 kilometers of Nordic trails (in the Little Bear Basin area).

This area is one of the highest winter recreation use areas on the Forest for both motorized and non-motorized users. Providing winter recreation opportunities is the recreation emphasis in this management area. The Brundage Mountain Resort is a year-round resort that draws over 100,000 visitors a year to the area. Little Ski Hill, a small local operation, provides Nordic and Alpine skiing winter sports opportunities.

Three winter sports parking areas serve as the primary access points for over snow vehicles and are also used minimally by Nordic and backcountry skiers. West Face parking lot was built in 1993, and then enlarged in 1996. Wallace Lane and Upper Elevation/Goose parking lot were built in 1999. The 51.8 miles of groomed snowmobile trails allow for an abundance of access for machine powered backcountry skiers, making this area popular with backcountry skiers as well as snowmobile users.

The existing non-motorized over-snow closure (at Brundage Mountain Resort) has well defined and posted boundaries. Even so, there continues to be numerous violations involving snowmobiles entering the signed non-motorized posted boundaries at the Brundage Mountain Resort. These infractions are dangerous to non-motorized users because they could be hit by an unexpected snowmobile, or could ski over deep ruts left by snowmobiles, and could result in serious personal injury. Since the areas are remote, violations are most often written after the fact, as incident reports. Snowmobiles have also been noted driving off the groomed snowmobile route to the Brundage Mountain Lookout – into Brundage Mountain’s non-motorized permit boundary.

Snowmobile and backcountry skier conflicts have been noted by participants in the Brundage Mountain Snow Cat skiing operation. In 1994 an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Brundage Mountain Co. Snow Cat Skiing was prepared. The Forest Supervisor’s decision was to provide Snow Cat skiing on the McCall and New Meadows Ranger Districts. A special use permit was issued to Brundage Mountain Resort. On June 22, 2006, the special permit was reissued to Brundage Mountain Resort allowing the continuation of the Snow Cat skiing program for 10 years. This permit was covered under a Categorical Exclusion and Decision Memo signed May 17, 2006. Snowmobile use of the area under special use permit to the snow cat ski program, ruins the fresh, untracked powder and backcountry experience that skiers are paying for (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). This use also causes safety concerns when skiers encounter snowmobiles. At present, this area is open to both motorized and non-motorized over-snow users.

The recent completion of the Brundage Mountain Land Exchange puts the base area at Brundage under private ownership, allowing for potential future growth and real estate development opportunities. The growth and development could increase recreational use in the summer and winter months in the Brundage Mountain area.

### ***MA 7. Payette Lakes***

#### ***Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-14 in Chapter 2.

The proposed Slick Rock National Natural Landmark is a popular area for rock climbing. The MA is a heavily used recreation area in the summer. Recreation use includes hunting, fishing,

hiking, mountain biking, motorcycle riding, ATV use, sightseeing, rock climbing, and camping. There are two developed campgrounds and many dispersed campsites. Recreation emphasis in this area is on providing summer developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. MA 7 has one loop trail, the non-motorized Snowslide Summit loop, which is 4.9 miles in length, using trails 104 and 135.

The Forest recently was conveyed Squaw Meadows as part of a land exchange. This area is a popular dispersed camping area. Use of the area may increase enough to warrant formal development of facilities in the area for resource protection.

### ***Winter***

Approximately, 74,030 acres are open and 26,700 miles are closed to over-snow vehicle use. There is one winter sports parking area, Francis Wallace, that was built in 1996. The acres closed to motorized over-snow use are lands within portions of the Secesh and Needles IRAs and a portion of the Squaw Point backcountry ski area. This MA includes portions of the Little Bear Basin area, where 25 kilometers of Nordic skiing trail are groomed by the Little Ski Hill.

The Squaw Point area is allocated for non-motorized recreation, primarily backcountry skiing. This area is accessed by snowmobile to the non-motorized boundary, and skiers climb on skis to access skiable terrain.

Fisher Creek Saddle, Granite Mountain, and Slab Butte, previously popular with backcountry skiers, are now heavily used by snowmobilers, causing backcountry skiers to seek out new, untracked terrain. On most days, untracked snow opportunities are difficult to find. Snowmobiling is a popular activity in the MA, in part due to 37.7 miles of groomed snowmobile trails, but also to the accessibility of terrain following numerous large fires. The Corral and Blackwell fires of 1994 and 2000 opened up dense forest on more than 150,000 acres of terrain, making it accessible to snowmobiles. One outfitter and guide conducts snowmobile tours in the MA.

## ***MA 8. Kennally Creek***

### ***Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-16 in Chapter 2.

A good network of access roads and trails has made this a heavily used recreation area. Recreation use includes hunting, fishing, hiking, motorcycling, mountain biking, ATV use, sightseeing, and camping. There are dispersed campsites and one developed campground in this MA. The recreation emphasis is on providing dispersed camping and quality motorized and non-motorized trail opportunities. There are no existing motorized or non-motorized trail loop opportunities in MA 8.

### ***Winter***

Approximately 31,970 acres are open and 2,330 acres are closed to motorized over-snow use. Closures provide for non-motorized backcountry skiing on Jughandle Mountain. No groomed snowmobile trails occur in this MA.

It is common for snowmobile tracks to be found in the non-motorized Jughandle Mountain area (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). The boundary is posted on site and physical terrain features mark the non-motorized boundary on the ground, but intrusions still occur in many areas. Because of the marked boundaries and distinguishable terrain features, snowmobile intrusions into the non-motorized area are likely deliberate rather than accidental. In the past,

when the Boulder Creek access road has been plowed, the Jughandle Mountain and Boulder Peak areas were skied frequently. When the road is not plowed, access to Jughandle Mountain is difficult requiring three to four hours of climbing on skis through private and state land to access skiable terrain.

### ***MA 9. Lake Creek/French Creek***

#### ***Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-18 in Chapter 2.

The Lava Ridge National Recreation Trail bisects the MA. Patrick Butte trail 153 is steep with numerous switch backs, and is not conducive to motorized use because of poor design. An estimated 89 percent of the area is inventoried roadless. Dispersed recreation such as hunting, fishing, hiking, sightseeing, snowmobiling, ATV use, motorcycling, and camping, occurs within the MA. The area has no developed campgrounds. A network of trails provides a variety of motorized and non-motorized opportunities. ATV use on trails restricted to two-wheel motorized use is occurring in the Partridge Creek/Upper Twin Lakes area. ATV users are pioneering unauthorized trails throughout the Patrick Butte Roadless area. These activities are causing erosion and rutting. Non-permitted outfitter and guide operations are causing conflicts with permitted outfitter and guides. Trail access problems exist along the entire Salmon River corridor, and the PNF is trying to secure trail easements when opportunities arise.

The primary recreation emphasis for this MA is providing quality motorized and non-motorized trail opportunities, with the emphasis in the Patrick Butte area on non-motorized trails. MA 9 has 2 two-wheel motorized loops for riders, one is on trails 145, 142, and 116, and is 19.2 miles long; and the other is the trails 504, 500, 501, and 116 which is 23.6 miles long. A shorter, steep two-wheel motorized 7.7 mile loop using trails 503, 348, and 504 is also available for use. Trails 506, 505, and 149 offer two-wheel motorized users a short 3.5 mile loop ride around the Lava Lakes area. While non-motorized recreationists have all loops available for use, there is no pure non-motorized trail loop experience available in this MA.

#### ***Winter***

The entire MA (approximately 83,740 acres) is open to over-snow vehicles. With no areas set aside for non-motorized over-snow use, boundary delineation on the ground is not an issue. Due to lack of winter trailheads that access upper elevations, this MA is not used to any measurable degree by backcountry or Nordic skiers. No groomed snowmobile trails occur in this MA, but numerous snowmobiles venture up into the French Creek drainage, accessing the area from the Francis Wallace Trail head.

### ***MA 10. Fall Creek/Warren Creek***

#### ***Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-20 in Chapter 2.

The northern and northeastern parts of the MA lie adjacent to the FC-RONR Wilderness. An estimated 67 percent of the MA is inventoried as roadless. Dispersed recreation, such as hunting, mountain biking, motorcycling, ATV use, four-wheel driving, and camping, occurs throughout the area. There are many dispersed sites but no developed campgrounds. There are relatively few maintained trails in the area. Portions of the Idaho Centennial Trail lie within this MA. There is

one recreation special use permit for an outfitter and guide operation in the area. The primary recreation emphasis in the area is on providing quality ATV and non-motorized trails.

The Warren area has had several reported mud-bogging incidents around the meadows adjacent to the dredge ponds. Prohibited ATV use occurs in the Warren Summit area into the FC-RONR up to Nelson Point, and ATV trails are being pioneered into Cottontail Point and Tomato Point, areas that are currently open to cross-country travel. Steamboat Ridge trail 128 lacks consistent vehicle use designation, making enforcement of the non-motorized section of trail problematic. There are no existing motorized or non-motorized trail loop opportunities in MA 10.

### *Winter*

Approximately 84,930 acres are open and 20,900 acres are closed to over-snow vehicle use. Fires in 2000 opened previously dense timber stands in the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA, making it a desirable location for snowmobiling. Snowmobile use in closed areas has been documented within the IRA. Non-motorized boundaries delineating the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA are not posted on the ground, nor are they easily distinguished by terrain features. There are 6.1 miles of groomed snowmobile trails (Warren Wagon Road) in this MA, and the adjacent lands are popular for snowmobiling. The snowmobile route to Warren is a popular winter destination spot.

The acres closed to over-snow vehicle use are not utilized by Nordic skiers. Skiers who use snowmobiles to access skiable terrain don't visit the area because of the lengthy travel time. Travel time is estimated at more than one hour by snowmobile to the site from the Francis Wallace Trailhead and then two hours to climb on skis to the upper elevations.

## ***MA 11. Upper Secesh River***

### *Summer*

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-22 in Chapter 2.

An estimated 74 percent of the area is inventoried as roadless. The Secesh River has been found suitable for National Wild and Scenic designation because of its outstandingly remarkable fisheries values. The recommended classifications are Recreational for Segment 1 (25 miles, from just below the outlet of Marshal Lake to Chinook Campground) and Wild for Segment 2 (15 miles, just past Chinook Campground to Ponderosa Campground). Segment 3 (5 miles) begins in MA 11, just past Ponderosa Campground and runs to the confluence of SFSR in MA 12. The major use area within this MA is the Loon Lake trail loop, popular with two-wheel motorcyclists, hikers, mountain bikers and horse users. Heavy use in this area has caused sanitation and trampling issues around the Loon Lake shoreline.

The area provides dispersed recreation such as hunting, fishing, ATV use, motorcycling, hiking, skiing, sightseeing, mountain biking and camping. This MA contains many unauthorized roads that could be converted to ATV trails to accommodate the expanding need to provide users this opportunity on Forest. There are many dispersed campsites and three developed campgrounds in the MA. Portions of the Idaho Centennial Trail lie within this MA. The recreation emphasis in this area is to provide a variety of motorized and non-motorized trail opportunities. Recreation managers are working on balancing dispersed recreation opportunities with fish habitat and riparian concerns.

MA 11 contains the most popular loop trail on the Forest, the Loon Lake two-wheel motorized trail loop utilizes trails 80, 81, and 84, and is approximately 9 miles in length. The trail is used equally by stock users, motorcycles, hikers, and mountain bikers. All users recognize they may

encounter other types of use along the trail. There are two short ATV trails using unauthorized roads in the Ruby Meadows area and are 2 miles in length.

The recent Burgdorf Road Management and Abandoned Mine Reclamation decision authorized the conversion of both NFS road and unauthorized road to ATV trails. The increase in ATV trails will help to accommodate the growth in ATV use in the area, although more trails are needed to fully meet demand.

### ***Winter***

Approximately 72,340 acres are open and 11,230 acres closed to over-snow vehicle use. Closures occur primarily within IRAs, recommended Wilderness IRAs, and in the Squaw Point area for non-motorized backcountry skiing. The IRA acres closed to motorized over-snow use are available for backcountry skiing and snowshoeing, but are located too far from a trailhead for most users to enjoy. A snowmobile would be necessary to access any of those areas for use, so use by Nordic skiers is limited.

There are 18.4 miles of groomed snowmobile trails in this MA. Snowmobile use is increasing rapidly in the area. Fires in 2000 opened up previously heavily forested stands in the Chimney Rock IRA located adjacent to the community of Secesh, making it ideal for snowmobiling. Non-motorized boundaries are not posted on the ground for the IRAs, but boundaries for Chimney Rock IRA are easily distinguished using existing groomed snowmobile trails and roadbeds. Prohibited snowmobile use within the IRA has been documented by Forest Service patrol. Prohibited snowmobile use has also been documented in the Squaw Point backcountry ski area, where boundaries are somewhat marked, but terrain features on the ground are difficult to locate visually.

## ***MA 12. South Fork Salmon River***

### ***Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-24 in Chapter 2.

The heaviest use season in the South Fork drainage comes during the months of July and August for sport fishing. During fishing season camping demand exceeds capacities of the dispersed sites, and the four existing developed campgrounds directly adjacent to the river. Three additional developed campsites are located within the MA. They do not receive the amount of use the four on the South Fork receive during fishing season. Sanitation issues have arisen in the dispersed campsites. Impacts to shorelines have been documented by users creating routes along the rivers banks. Portions of the Idaho Centennial Trail lie within the MA. Special Uses include three outfitter and guide operations.

Trailhead registration information in MA 12 during 2004 showed 63 percent of the trail users are hikers, 35 percent are stock (travel on horseback/mule or use pack animals) users, and 2 percent are motorcycle users (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). Many of the trails are poorly designed including Davis Road trail 76, Log Mountain trail 92, White Rock trail 303, Blackmare Creek cutoff trail 304, SF Blackmare Creek trail 305, Eagle Rock trail 290, Cougar Creek trail 98, Williams Peak trail 73, portion of Rainbow Ridge trail 71, Deadman Creek trail 75, Martin Ridge trail 301, Blackmare Creek trail 100, and South Fork Salmon River trail 77. These trails traverse steep slopes, restricting two-wheel motorized use to all but expert trail riders. Because of the steep terrain, these trails have become gullied and rutted from use, and are difficult and costly to maintain.

High alpine lakes draw backcountry users to this MA during the summer months. Users hike, horse pack and ride motorcycles to access numerous high elevation lakes. Erosion, excessive fire rings and trampling of soils along the lakeshores from camping and fishing have been recorded at all lakes.

White water boating use is increasing along East Fork Salmon River (EFSR) and South Fork Salmon River (SFSR). Recreational boating opportunities are balanced with protection of sensitive riparian corridors and fish habitat. Free boating permits are now required to float the SFSR from its EFSF confluence down to the confluence with the main Salmon River. The SFSR has been found eligible for Wild and Scenic designation because of its outstandingly remarkable values including fisheries, geology, botanical, scenic, cultural resources, and recreation. There are two recommended segments on the Payette; Segment 1 (78 miles) extends from the SFSR headwaters on the Boise National Forest to the confluence with Smith Creek, approximately 2 miles from the FC-RONR Wilderness boundary. Segment 2 (15 miles) is from the Smith Creek/SFSR confluence to the SFSR confluence with the main Salmon River corridor (outside the project area).

An estimated 84 percent of the MA is inventoried as roadless. The Forest has recommended portions of the Secesh and Needles areas for Wilderness designation.

MA 12 has a combination of two-wheel motorized, ATV, and non-motorized trails. Many loop opportunities exist for users. There are three two-wheel motorized loops; Sawpit Hill trails 90, 292, 291, and 290 for 15 miles; Lower Sawpit Hill trails 291, 292, and 290 for 10.6 miles, and the Miner's Peak trails 98, 100, and 301 for a 20.5 mile loop. These motorized loops are all steep and challenging, and popular with expert trail riders allowing them the opportunity to challenge themselves with primitive backcountry motorized experiences. There are four main non-motorized trail loops in the South Fork. They include the Smith Knob area trails 112, 122, and 126 which is 20.8 miles and goes into the Frank Church Wilderness; the North Loon Mountain loop consisting of trails 82, 81, 84, and 85 for a total of 30.2 miles; Square Top trails 302, 303, 304, and 305 for a 10.8 mile loop; and Williams Peak trails 71, 72, and 70 at 9.5 miles. The popular Teapot ATV trail is in this MA, but it is not a true loop trail because a portion of the loop utilizes the SFSR road.

The recreation emphasis in this MA is to provide trail opportunities and experiences for ATV, two-wheel motorized, and non-motorized use, with loop opportunities emphasized. Buckhorn loop is a popular novice ATV ride. Unauthorized use of ATVs has been documented in the Phoebe Creek drainage area along old logging roads.

The Forest recently received Reed Ranch as part of a land exchange. This area is a popular dispersed camping area. Use of the area may increase enough to warrant formal development of facilities in the area for resource protection.

### ***Winter***

Approximately 142,600 acres are open and 216,960 acres are closed to over-snow vehicle use. Portions of the area are closed to provide winter wildlife range habitat along the SFSR road. There are zero miles of groomed snowmobile trails in this MA. The most popular area for backcountry skiing in this MA are the areas adjacent to the Lick Creek road corridor (FDR 412), used to access backcountry ski spots such as Beaver Dam, Hum Lake and Cly Lakes. Skiers park their cars along the Lick Creek road, sometimes in the pullout located on State of Idaho land at Little Lake. The skiers snowmobile up Lick Creek road and park, then ski up to one of the lakes. Other than this area, the majority of the non-motorized areas are not used due to difficult access.

Backcountry skiers have also been seen using the Buckhorn Summit area. Some snowmobile use does occur along the plowed South Fork road when hard snowpack is available. Minimal off-trail

use by snowmobiles occurs along the SFSR, where any off-road use is prohibited. Snowmobile use into the MA comes primarily from the Landmark Summit area on the Boise NF. Winter cougar hunting brings hunters into the South Fork drainage via trucks along the plowed SFSR road. The boundaries for the winter, non-motorized areas are not posted on the ground, but are fairly easy to recognize using existing road boundaries.

### ***MA 13. Big Creek/Stibnite***

#### ***Summer***

The number of roads, trails, and open and closed areas in summer are shown in Table 2-26 in Chapter 2.

The MA lies adjacent to the FC-RONR Wilderness. An estimated 75 percent of the MA is inventoried as roadless. Recreation is a major use in the Big Creek area. Activities include hunting, fishing, sightseeing, and pack trips from several trailheads into the adjacent Wilderness. There is one developed campground in the MA. The remainder of the MA receives low to moderate dispersed recreational use. The recreation emphasis is to provide dispersed recreational opportunities.

There are opportunities, using existing roads and unauthorized roads, to provide needed ATV trails within this MA. MA 13 offers no loop opportunities for motorized or non-motorized trail users. Recreational trail users coming to this area primarily filter into the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness, offering exclusively non-mechanized trail loop opportunities.

#### ***Winter***

Approximately, 83,490 acres are open and 17,040 acres are closed to over-snow vehicles. Closed areas are primarily adjacent to the Wilderness and boundaries easily recognized by existing roads. There are zero miles of groomed snowmobile trails in this MA. Snowmobile use does occur by users traveling from Yellow Pine, over Profile Summit to Big Creek. In Big Creek users enjoy several backcountry resorts. Another favorite snowmobile ride is over Elk Summit along old mining roadbeds, but riders must be experts to maneuver the terrain. Some backcountry ski use occurs in the Big Creek area by local residents and visitors to the resort lodges. Skiers travel into the FC-RONR Wilderness via the Big Creek trail. Some prohibited wilderness intrusion by snowmobiles has been documented on the Big Creek trail. Wilderness boundaries are well signed. Non-motorized boundaries are not posted on the ground but are easily delineated using existing roads.

## **3.2.5 Environmental Consequences**

### **Effects Common to All Action Alternatives**

#### **Issue 1: Motorized and Non-Motorized Recreation Activities in Summer**

##### ***Cross-Country Motor Vehicle Use***

For all action alternatives, implementation of a designated route and area system for travel would eliminate cross-country motor vehicle use in summer under all action alternatives. Areas previously closed to cross-country motor vehicle use during the non-snow months (A and B areas) would continue to be closed to cross-country motor vehicle use in all alternatives, while areas that were previously open (C, D, E areas) would be closed.

Repeated cross-country motor vehicle use removes vegetation, leaving a trail apparent. Evidence of a trail leads to heavier repeated use, and sometimes, when people reach the end of the user created trail, they choose to push further to the next ridge, and the trail development continues. These user-created routes are of particular concern when they cross meadows, streams, and riparian areas where the soils are easily eroded and rutted.

Cross-country travel also results in the use of unauthorized roads. Unauthorized roads on the PNF were constructed for a variety of reasons including timber sales, mineral activities, range management, and fuel reduction projects. Many of these roads may no longer be needed for management and use of NFS lands. These roads were not intended for recreational use, but due to ineffective closures or lack of funds for decommissioning, these roads have continued to be used by visitors to the Forest.

Closure of motorized areas may displace motorized users to other areas for their activities. Although the level of displacement can't be quantified, it is likely many recreationists would use designated NFS roads and motorized trails on the PNF. In some cases, recreationists may visit other public lands offering more OHV experiences.

All action alternatives would provide a consistent Forest-wide policy for cross-country travel in the non-snow months. In all alternatives, cross-country motor vehicle use would not be allowed. Limited motorized access for parking (within one vehicle length of the road) or dispersed camping would continue to be allowed within 300 feet of designated roads and 100 feet of designated motorized trails, if that use would not result in resource impacts. This off-route exception would provide motorized access to parking primarily for dispersed camping but also for other uses, including firewood gathering, big game retrieval, and berry picking. Non-motorized cross-country travel would be allowed to continue in all areas across the Forest.

Hunters would no longer be able to use vehicles to travel cross-country to hunt and retrieve game. Some may choose to park and hike to hunt, while others may choose to use horses, hunt in other areas off the PNF, or not hunt at all. Some hunters experience would diminish due to these changes, while the enjoyment for others (those who dislike vehicle use and noise) would increase.

Recreationists who ride cross-country on OHVs for the sheer thrill and challenge would no longer be able to do this on the Payette National Forest.

#### ***Designation as non-motorized trail***

In MA 6, all action alternatives would close designated road 50268 (1.0 miles) and designate it as a non-motorized trail. This conversion is proposed because damage to the area is occurring from motorized users driving beyond the end of the road and pioneering trails and roads to access Duck Lake. The closure would affect the families and less mobile population who enjoy driving closer to the lake to avoid a one mile hike. It would also affect fisherman and hunters motorized access into the lake basin improving the experience for some, while negatively affecting others.

#### ***Administrative Use***

Each alternative allows for administrative use on routes closed to motorized use by the public. Each request for administrative use would be evaluated and approved on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate line officer. Exceptions to this designation are: emergencies, such as fire suppression, and search and rescue.

#### ***Road and Trail Maintenance***

All roads and trails adopted onto the designated system would be managed to established Forest Service road and trail design standards. The length of time required to improve all roads and trails to existing Forest Service standards would likely take five to ten years, depending on the amount of unauthorized roads and trails selected to become a part of the designated travel system. This

length of time is also dependent on unknown factors such as agency funding, supplemental grant and Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) funding, and natural environmental events. Project design features (PDFs) would be adopted for all new routes designated as trails or roads (see Chapter 2: Section 2.2.2). These PDFs would need to be implemented before routes are authorized for use on the MVUM.

### ***Implementation***

Although new travel restrictions may be less complex and easier to define on the ground, any change would require a period of adjustment for Forest visitors. It is reasonable to assume there would be increased violations during the initial years of implementation. Enforcement of new travel restrictions would require additional emphasis by the PNF, with assistance from other public agencies, and the public. Implementation of the Travel Plan will take several seasons of concentrated education efforts with the public via on-the-ground discussions, information at high use trailheads and campgrounds, dispersing of maps, and continued efforts on the ground to correctly sign the designated system of roads and trails.

### ***Program Costs***

All action alternatives slightly reduce the miles of designated NFS roads (Table 2-1). Reducing the miles of open or seasonal NFS roads would not affect road maintenance costs as the miles of road maintained each year are determined by the road maintenance budget. However, the percent of miles maintained would be expected to increase as roads are eliminated, and decrease as roads are added to the system. Since appropriated funds for road maintenance are not enough to perform maintenance on all system roads, only a portion of the roads are maintained each year. Roads are selected to receive maintenance based on several factors such as user safety, resource damage, number of users, previous maintenance received, current condition, assigned maintenance level, and road management objectives. The PNF performed maintenance on 12 percent of the open system roads in 2004. Reducing the miles of NFS roads and assuming the road maintenance budget remains constant, would have a net effect of increasing the percentage of roads maintained each year.

Program costs are addressed specifically for each alternative, but common to all alternatives is the cost of implementation. There will be costs associated with developing, publishing, and printing the MVUMs, updating the maps annually, and dispersing them to the public. The greatest costs, however, will be in the need for increased Forest Service patrol on the ground to help educate the public regarding the selected Travel Plan alternative, and to enforce the designations. There will also be costs associated with installing signs on the designated routes to correctly inform the public.

## **Direct and Indirect Effects by Alternative**

### ***Alternative A – No Action***

Motorized use in both summer and winter would be designated as per the existing Travel Maps of 1995, as updated yearly by the *Backroads* map (which records individual project decisions on roads, trails, and areas). The existing system of trails and roads would remain the designated system. Existing areas open to motorized use in both summer and winter months would be designated open to motorized use areas. The existing road and trail system would continue to provide numerous opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized use. Over time (10 to 15 years), the Travel Plan would be adjusted to incorporate the 2003 Forest Plan direction.

**Issue 1: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in summer*****Miles of open and seasonally open NFS road:***

Under Alternative A, the existing amount of open and seasonally open NFS roads, approximately 1,660 miles (Table 2-1), would be maintained in the short term. Over time, it is likely that the amount of roads would decrease due to Forest Plan direction to protect resources. For example, in MA 6 a mile of NFS road 50268 is proposed to be closed in alternatives B, C, D, and E due to damage from motorized users driving beyond the end of the road. If Alternative A (No Action) was selected this project might be analyzed and approved site-specifically.

Outside of designated Wilderness, the majority of subwatersheds (6th field hydrologic unit) on the Forest currently contain at least one mile of NFS designated road or motorized trail per square mile (see Figure 1-2). This indicates much of the PNF is currently easily accessible to some type of motorized vehicle. Some watersheds (5<sup>th</sup> field hydrologic unit) contain high densities of roads (above 2 miles per square mile) (see Wildlife analysis). High densities generally result in greater effects to resources. Watersheds with fewer roads and trails are usually unable to support many more roads due to topographic limitations (such as steep slopes in the South Fork Salmon River watershed).

***Miles of two-wheel motorized and non-motorized trail:***

More than 580 miles of two-wheel motorized trails would remain open on the Forest. Some of these trails have not been maintained for years and consequently do not provide a legitimate motorized trail opportunity. Even so, two-wheel motorized use needs are generally being met, with no immediate need for additional new two-wheel motorized trails. Trails are not overly crowded so users would continue to enjoy many miles of motorized opportunities, but existing motorized trails do need more maintenance than they are receiving to date for erosion control prevention and to reroute out of wet and steep areas. Selection of this alternative does not increase the Forest's ability to maintain the entire network of trails.

Seldom used trails would remain low on the priority schedule for maintenance, continuing the cycle of erosion problems, and undefined trails. Miles of trail that exist only on Forest maps, but are no longer visible on the ground, would remain on the trail system until repaired or until site specific trail projects were completed to individually remove them from the trail system. These trails have been virtually abandoned by the public because of past timber harvest, or due to the creation of multiple trails by livestock, resulting in too many trails to maintain a defined trail tread. Trails not originally designed to accommodate current motorized uses, would remain open and continue to sustain erosion problems.

An estimated 504 miles of non-motorized trails would remain open for the public. Public comment did not identify an immediate need for additional non-motorized trails. The existing non-motorized trail system seems to be providing the needed opportunities for solitude, quiet, and a primitive recreation experience.

In MA 4, existing documented user conflicts are escalating between motorized and non-motorized recreationists within the Rapid River watershed and would likely continue with no change in trail designations under this alternative. Trails designed for two-wheel motorized vehicles would likely continue to be used by ATVs. Unauthorized cross-country OHV travel would continue and cause resource damage in riparian areas and create eroded non-system trails throughout the MA.

In MA 9 (Patrick Butte trail 153) and in MA 12 (Log Mountain trail 92, White Rock trail 303, Blackmare Creek cutoff trail 304, SF Blackmare Creek trail 305, Eagle Rock trail 290, Cougar Creek trail 98, Williams Peak trail 73, Rainbow Ridge trail 71, Deadman Creek trail 75, Martin Ridge trail 301, Blackmare Creek trail 100) trails are poorly designed for two-wheel motorized

use and would continue to deteriorate under this alternative until trail maintenance was completed on these trails.

There are many trail loops on the forest that include segments of both motorized and non-motorized use. Non-motorized users are able to use all the motorized/non-motorized trail loops if so desired, but would expect to encounter two-wheel motorized trail users on the sections of two-wheel motorized trail, affecting their non-motorized experience. On these combination loop trails the non-motorized user could expect a potential for noise and motor exhaust fumes as vehicles pass. Trail loops are desirable because they enable the trail user to experience new terrain challenges, vistas, and views for the entire trip, without one-way out and back restriction.

The current designated trail system on the forest provides for approximately 122 miles of two-wheel motorized trail loops. In MA 2, trail 234 is visible on the ground but receives little use, and trail 252 is not usable in sections due to steep slopes and overgrown vegetation. The trails have not been used as a loop trail. The short loop trail in MA 4, Elk Lake loop, is not used as a loop, but the trails are crossed as riders go back and forth to the other motorized trails. The longer two-wheel motorized routes found in MAs 9 and 12 give challenging all day two-wheel motorized riding experiences, and loops like these continue to bring riders into the McCall area to recreate. The longer loops in MA 12 are for expert riders only, so use is light, but these trails are important to those expert riders to retain as riding experiences.

There are approximately 122 miles of non-motorized trail loops on the existing trail system located in MAs 1, 2, 4, 7, and 12. Users on the non-motorized loops would not expect to encounter any motorized use. These loops of non-motorized trail provide for experiences free of motorized noise and encounters. Use is low on most of these loops and many of the trails can be difficult to locate on the ground. Users should have experience reading topographical maps while traveling many of these remote loops.

***Miles of ATV trail:***

There are currently around 75 miles of ATV trail on the PNF. With the increase in ATV use across the Forest, there is a demand for additional ATV trails that is not being met under the current condition. Under the No Action Alternative, no additional ATV trails would be added at this time, but new trails might be added in the long-term. New trails could be provided when funding became available through allocated funds and grants. New trails could be developed in site-specific trail projects, but it is unlikely funding would be available for this type of new construction project, even with a potential for grant funding to supplement the project because the Forest only takes on a one mile trail construction target annually. With few ATV trail opportunities available, users would likely continue to travel off trail to find areas to explore.

There is one ATV loop opportunity available on the forest, a 5.5 mile loop in MA 3. This loop alone is not able to provide the opportunities and experiences desired by the growing ATV community. There are many existing roads used by ATV riders as loop opportunities, but this discussion focuses on trails only. If additional loops and trails are not provided, riders may continue to pioneer trails cross-country in search of places to ride and to create loop opportunities.

***Miles of OHV trail:***

There are presently 2.8 miles of OHV (full size four-wheel drive vehicle) trails available for challenging four-wheel drive recreation on the Forest. These trails are providing the public with minimal opportunities for four-wheel driving with full size vehicles. There may be more demand in the future for these opportunities, but none would be provided in the short term under this alternative. Future opportunities could be made available on a site-specific project basis. Multiple miles of 4-wheel drive opportunities occur on some of the Forest's level 2 and 3 open system

roads. Although these roads are not identified specifically as 4-wheel drive trails, their condition provides a 4-wheel drive experience.

***Acres open to cross-country motor vehicle use:***

Under Alternative A, there would continue to be approximately 510,930 acres open to cross-country motor vehicle use or about one-third of the PNF outside of designated Wilderness. The majority of these acres occur in management areas 2, 3, 5, and 6, although all management areas, except MA 1 and 13 have some open areas. Other off-road travel would continue as allowed in the 1995 Travel Map - "Where off-road travel is not allowed you can travel to undeveloped campsites within 300 feet of designated roads and 100 feet of designated trails." Site-specific projects would likely close more areas to cross-country motor vehicle use for three primary reasons: 1) to mitigate known resource damage, 2) to respond to Forest Plan direction (REST04): "On all lands outside of designated travel ways, motorized use shall be prohibited unless otherwise authorized.", and 3) to meet the new Travel Management rule (Federal Register 2005: 70FR68264) that requires designation of those roads, trails, and areas that are open to motor vehicle use and prohibits use of motor vehicles off the designated system.

While cross-country motor vehicle use may provide the motorized access and recreation experience desired by many, it often results in unacceptable damage to forest resources. Damage occurs because many unauthorized roads in areas open to cross-country travel were never designed or constructed to Forest Service standard. Ongoing motorized use could cause further resource damage in some locations and may necessitate route restrictions and/or resource mitigation in the future. When funding becomes available, unauthorized travel routes would either be redesigned to provide for public safety and improve resource conditions, or these routes would be closed.

Trails would likely continue to be pioneered in areas open to cross-country motor vehicle use, and damage to resources, particularly sensitive riparian areas would likely continue. Resource damage due to cross-country motor vehicle use has been found in all management areas. With OHV use steadily increasing, additional damage would be expected in the form of trail rutting and user created paths. These trails would extend further and further into areas that traditionally did not receive motorized use. Over time OHV users would likely consider the extensive user created trails essential to their activities.

The noise associated with cross-country motor vehicle use would continue to disturb members of the non-motorized community on approximately one third of the PNF outside of designated Wilderness. Social conflicts between ATV users and those visitors seeking non-motorized recreation experiences would continue and possibly increase. In the long-term, noise and conflicts may decrease due to sites-specific projects to close areas to cross-country motor vehicle use.

Currently closed areas totaling approximately one million acres would continue to remain closed to cross-country motor vehicle use providing solitude and more primitive recreational opportunities.

In MA 6, damage from off-road travel would continue in the short term in some popular lake basins due to the heavy dispersed camping use, primarily along the Goose Lake and Brundage Reservoirs.

Resource damage caused by ATVs entering non-motorized areas would continue if law enforcement is not elevated in areas of concern such as Morgan Lake/Bascom Creek trail 372, Grassy Mountain Lakes trail 163, Clayburn trail past Rainbow Lake 344, and Buck Lake trail 162. (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record).

Mud-bogging incidents may continue in Bear Basin (MA 6 and 7), Warren Meadows (MA 10) and the Lake Creek (MA 9) area near Burgdorf, unless law enforcement priorities are relocated to those areas (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). Bear Basin is currently open to cross-country motor vehicle use, but Forest Plan direction (Forest Plan 2003: III-65: REGU08) states that where recreation facilities or practices have been identified as potentially contributing to degradation of water quality, aquatic species or occupied sensitive and watch plant habitat, facilities and practices causing degradation should be considered for relocation, closure, changes in management strategy, alteration or discontinuance. Bear Basin would likely be closed to motorized use if this practice was not brought under control. Both Lake Creek and Burgdorf areas are already designated as non-motorized use areas, so implementation of the designation would likely require additional education and enforcement on the ground.

## **Issue 2: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in winter**

### ***Acres open and closed to over-snow vehicles:***

The Forest would continue to provide 1,078,540 acres (70% of the project area) open to over-snow vehicle use with this alternative. High elevation areas would continue to provide opportunities for unrestricted off-route snowmobile use. Existing low elevation winter range areas would remain closed to snowmobile travel off designated routes.

During the winter months, open slopes and bowls would continue to be heavily used by snowmobilers, leaving little accessible untracked powder for backcountry skiers. Conflict and safety issues between snowmobile users and backcountry skiers would continue and possibly escalate. Safety issues include potential collisions between users and snowmachine created ruts. Noise impacts caused by machines would continue. Forest Service employees would continue to work with user groups to resolve these conflicts on a localized basis, particularly as more snowmobilers and backcountry skiers come to recreate on the PNF.

About 451,200 acres of non-motorized over-snow opportunities (30% of the project area) would remain available for recreationists seeking a more primitive winter recreation experience. Of that acreage, only 160,490 acres are located on skiable terrain, which equates to approximately 10% of the project area.

In the Sturgill Peak area of MA 3 the area closed to over-snow vehicle use around the former Hitt Mountain Ski Resort is used by backcountry skiers who access the area via motorized snow cats and snowmobiles. Unless law enforcement is increased in the area, this use would likely continue under this alternative since most skiers access the upper elevation terrain using over-snow vehicles. The closure to motorized use is no longer needed for recreational purposes as the ski area has been abandoned.

No new areas for non-motorized over-snow use are proposed, so conflict in the heavily used Fisher Creek Saddle (MA 9), Granite Mountain (MA 5 and 6), and Slab Butte (MA 7) areas would continue, and likely escalate because of growing use by both snowmobilers and backcountry skiers.

In MA 8, the Jughandle area, currently designated for non-motorized uses to provide for backcountry skiing, would likely continue to have multiple violations by snowmobiles entering the area and tracking the powder (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). Unless law enforcement is increased in the area, these intrusions are likely to increase due to increased populations coming into the valley to ride. Access to the area by backcountry skiers would continue to be a challenge as no official trailhead is established in the area to accommodate parking for the skiers. Developed trailheads and parking facilities are needed to allow for the best use of this winter area by backcountry skiers.

***Use areas with clear boundary designations:***

The use areas currently designated for non-motorized over-snow use continue to be used by snowmobiles, even though many of them are adequately signed. This use would likely continue unless Forest Service patrols are increased to better educate, sign, and warn motorized users about the non-motorized use areas. Education could also be conducted by snowmobile users themselves, by sharing information on the importance of respecting and complying with the non-motorized area restrictions. This alternative does not delineate any new areas or better delineate existing areas. This alternative does not address the need for better identified non-motorized closure boundaries on-the-ground.

In MA 7 and 11, prohibited intrusions by snowmobiles would likely continue in the non-motorized Squaw Point area due to boundaries that are not readily distinguishable by terrain features recognizable to motorized users, and difficult to post and adequately sign (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). With the exception of Squaw Point, most of the area designated for non-motorized use within this MA is not used by backcountry skiers because the areas are located too far from any accessible trailhead or road.

***Miles of groomed snowmobile trail:***

In the short term, 245.0 miles of groomed snowmobile trails would remain designated under the Cost Share Agreement with Valley County and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. Not all routes approved under this agreement are groomed today. Actual groomed routes total approximately 225.5 miles, and are adjusted depending on the snow conditions throughout the season. On weekends groomed routes can be crowded until people disperse into the backcountry. With growing numbers of snowmobile users coming to the Forest, future demand could exceed the supply of trails available. In the long term, it is likely that this demand would result in changes to the current approved routes.

There are no groomed snowmobile trails within MA 13, but use would continue along existing roadbeds into the Big Creek area. Snowmobiles would likely continue to enter the Frank Church Wilderness of No Return, where motorized use is prohibited. There would be no change in use of non-motorized areas by backcountry skiers in this MA as no new access points have been identified to better access skiable terrain.

***Proximity of non-motorized areas to parking and access points:***

Under this alternative, the existing limited access to non-motorized over-snow recreation areas within three to four miles of a trailhead would remain a challenge to those backcountry users desiring accessible skiable terrain. The newly groomed Nordic trails in Little Bear Basin (MA 6 and 7) alleviate some of the need to provide additional Nordic ski opportunities within 4 miles of a parking area. These trails are located in an area open to over-snow vehicle use. During the winter of 2005 monitoring indicated little conflict between non-motorized and motorized users in the area. Private landowners could continue to provide, or begin to provide access points through partnerships with the Forest.

Lack of backcountry ski areas within three miles of a trailhead would continue to be a problem for human powered skiers until new areas are set aside for non-motorized use closer to established parking areas.

There are no developed trailheads within three miles of non-motorized over-snow recreation opportunities for backcountry skiers, making access to these 160,490 acres by human powered over-snow users difficult. To access most backcountry opportunities, skiers need a snowmobile. Due to the lack of accessible non-motorized areas with desired ski conditions, it is reasonable to

assume that non-motorized over-snow users would change their use to find ways to reach more remote areas on Forest or by visiting areas off Forest.

Under their existing special use permit, the Payette Lakes Ski Club was recently authorized to groom up to 25 kilometers of Nordic trail in Little Bear Basin (MA 6 and 7). This provides Nordic skiers with an area near town for skiing and addresses some of the need to provide for groomed Nordic trails on Forest within four miles of a trailhead. The trailhead to access this area is located on private ground.

***Approximate acres of skiable terrain in non-motorized areas:***

Approximately 160,490 acres of terrain (10% of total acres included within the project area) are available for backcountry skiers in the 451,200 acres of non-motorized areas on the PNF (outside of the FC-RONR Wilderness). These acres were identified using slope, forest density, distance from trailheads, and elevation (Recreation Specialist Report, Project Record). These areas are located in Squaw Point, Jughandle Mountain, North North (associated with Brundage Mountain Resort), and several other non-motorized areas. The demand is growing for backcountry skiing opportunities in non-motorized areas and the available acres are not meeting the need of the backcountry users, especially when unauthorized use of snowmobiles occurs in non-motorized areas. Because these acres do not provide enough opportunity, skiers continue to use terrain open to over-snow vehicles. This would likely continue to result in conflicts because of safety, noise, untracked powder, and lack of desired primitive recreation experience issues.

**Issue 3: Cost to Program Management**

There would be no large lump sum savings or costs with the implementation of the No Action Alternative. Problems with unauthorized use or resource damage would continue to be addressed through law enforcement, but this would likely be less effective as the problems continue to escalate. In the summer months, added recreation patrol is needed to control the expansion of motorized cross-country trails by OHV users. Existing system trails would continue to be maintained as budgets allowed, at about fifteen percent per year. The most heavily used trails, and those with erosion and water-related resource damage, would have the highest priority for maintenance and repair.

Volunteer programs are expected to continue to help maintain existing trails at the current amount of approximately 80 miles per year. The Forest would continue to maintain approximately 345 miles of trail per year outside of the FC-RONR Wilderness using agency appropriated dollars, grants, State Trail Rangers Program and other outside funds as secured. Applications for grants to improve trails would continue each year.

Not addressing the need to close certain trails would result in the continued cost of keeping them open and cost associated with keeping up the database management of these trails.

**Issue 4: Safety**

Summer time safety on motorized trails, while not a major problem on the PNF to date, could become a larger problem in the future due to increasing numbers of visitors. With more people using the trails, interactions between motorized users and non-motorized users would increase. Non-motorized users may choose to focus their hiking, horseback riding, or mountain biking on non-motorized trails because of potential collisions with motorized users. The potential for collisions between mechanized users (mountain bikers), hikers, and horseback riders on non-motorized trails would likely increase. This could lead to restrictions on some trails. All trails should be designed to give maximum sight visibility while providing a meandering curved design desirable trail users.

While off trail OHV use may provide the motorized access and recreation experience desired by many, unmanaged mixed vehicle use on unauthorized routes may present additional safety concerns. Because those routes were never designed or constructed to standard, they would be used at the rider's own risk.

Another safety issue revolves around trails that appear on the Travel Plan map, but that are not visible on the ground. Having these trails on the map displays a false sense of what is actually on the ground, potentially displacing people trying to locate these trails. By retaining these trails on Travel Plan maps, recreationists could become lost on the ground trying to follow unrecognizable trails.

Winter safety issues revolve primarily around the potential for collisions between skiers and snowmobile users, and the potential for injury when skiers encounter deep ruts created by snowmobiles. With no new areas set aside for non-motorized over-snow use these issues would continue. More accidents could occur, creating more conflicts between users and potential for physical harm. Snowmobile use would likely increase on the PNF, creating more snowmobile tracks for skiers to maneuver through. Snowmobile users who continue to enter areas restricted to non-motorized use would continue to endanger themselves and non-motorized users with potential collisions.

### **Issue 5: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

The existing Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) would remain the same for both summer and winter seasons as laid out in the maps and tables in the Forest Plan by Management Area (MA). Updates are needed in some of the management areas to change ROS from Roded Natural (RN) to Semi Primitive Motorized (SPM) to better reflect current management strategies in those areas. These updates could be approved using a site-specific project analysis within the next 10 years.

### ***Alternative B – Proposed Action***

Forest visitors would find it easy to learn and remember the new Travel Plan because it eliminates any off road or trail travel and there would no longer be A, B, C, D, or E areas across the project area. Users would not need to be familiar with the multiple areas, or their boundaries, because all areas would be closed to motorized off-road or trail travel. This alternative would restrict motorized travel to a well-defined network of roads and trails. This would also be more efficient from a law enforcement point of view, because the policy is the same across the entire Forest, eliminating confusion associated with "area" designation in the summer and winter months.

### **Issue 1: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in summer**

#### ***Miles of open and seasonally open NFS road:***

Alternative B would designate an estimated 1,118 miles of open and 495 miles of seasonal road resulting in a slight reduction from the existing condition. A total of 7 miles of open and 17 miles of seasonal NFS roads would be closed resulting in a small potential for displacement of motorized recreationists. Proposed changes include a number of site-specific changes to unauthorized roads as follows:

A number of short sections of unauthorized road would be designated as open NFS roads in MAs 3, 7, 8, and 11. These designations would provide for general access, and access to dispersed camping areas beyond the limited motorized access allowed within 300 feet of designated roads.

In MA 3, unauthorized road 507104000 connects the Fruitvale Road (an Adams County road) to designated NFS road 50710. The road is currently open and is used frequently by the public to access the PNF. The road was recently improved by Idaho Power under special use permit. If this road were not designated with this alternative, access would be eliminated to the Forest from the Fruitvale road. Road 507142000 connects designated NFS roads 50712 and 50714 and is currently open and used frequently by the public.

In MA 8, unauthorized road 517235000 provides access to a subdivision outside the Forest boundary. The road is currently open and is used frequently by the public. In MAs 7 and 11 the proposed conversions of unauthorized roads would provide access to dispersed camping areas or trailheads beyond the extent of the 300 foot area. Most of these roads have been improved and are currently being used as dispersed camping sites. If these roads were not designated with this alternative, then access would be lost to these dispersed use areas.

***Miles of two-wheel motorized and non-motorized trail:***

There would be 434 miles of two-wheel motorized trail designated under this alternative representing a reduction of 147 miles in available two-wheel motorized trails throughout the Forest. The reduction in mileage is due to both trail closure and trail conversion to non-motorized use. Reductions occur in MAs 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12. Some of the trails proposed for closure are no longer visible on the ground and do not represent an actual reduction in available trail opportunities. Trails currently used by motorcycle riders proposed for conversion to non-motorized use are still available for hiking, mountain biking, or horseback riding.

Forty-two miles of motorized and non-motorized trail would be closed with this alternative in MAs 2, 3, 9, and 12. Elimination of trail from the network could eliminate some trail destinations and potentially concentrate use on remaining roads and trails. Most of the trails proposed for closure are no longer visible on the ground due to past management practices, therefore the opportunity to use them has already been lost. The positive result of this change would be that these trails would no longer be shown on the Travel Plan map allowing users to focus their experience around trails actually identifiable on the ground.

With less motorized trails available, users could likely find remaining trails more crowded and may opt to go to other National Forests or public lands for their riding enjoyment. In all likelihood, the number of motorized users on designated routes would increase due to the reduction in motorized cross-country opportunities and decrease in motorized trails. However, the motorized trail closures are proposed on trails that receive little or no use, so there should be little displacement of motorized users. Potential increased use could result in additional conflicts between motorized users and with-non motorized trail users.

Where steep, narrow two-wheel motorized trails are proposed for designation as non-motorized it would impact those expert riders that used these trails. Losing this amount of motorized trail would impact riders accustomed to coming to the Payette National Forest to ride as this Forest is known for providing two-wheel motorized opportunities. These riders would be displaced to other two-wheel motorized trails but more than 430 miles of two-wheel motorized trail opportunities would still be available.

In MA 4, over time, there is likely to be reduced prohibited entry into the non-motorized Rapid River trail as some motorized entry points would have been eliminated.

In MA 6, there should be very minimal effects to motorized users by the designation of a portion of Vance Creek trail 160 to non-motorized use because non-motorized recreationists have been the primary users since the bridge over Vance Creek was removed several years ago. With law enforcement, the non-motorized designation of trail 162, leading to Buck Lake, should reduce the

conflict of motorized and non-motorized uses in the area. Currently, this two-wheel motorized trail is being used by many ATV riders (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record).

Two-wheel motorized access would be removed from Blackmare Summit (on the boundary of MAs 8 and 12). This would negatively affect motorized riders enjoyment of and access to this area. Past trail surveys conducted in 2002 as part of the Forest-wide National Recreation Use Survey show only two percent of the users in MA 12 are two-wheel motorized users (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). These riders would be displaced to the other 106 miles of two-wheel motorized trails within the MA, or the other 328 miles available on the rest of the Forest.

The change in designation of Patrick Butte trail 153 in MA 9 from two-wheel motorized to non-motorized would not eliminate any two-wheel motorized loop opportunities. The conversion of motorized trails 348 and 503 to non-motorized, in MA 9, does eliminate a motorized loop opportunity, which is popular with riders. Elimination of motorized use on a portion of French Creek trail 116 would require riders to leave trail 116 and ride out on trails 500 or 145, thereby altering previous riding patterns. The change in designation should eliminate or lessen unauthorized ATV use of the Patrick Butte area, by eliminating motorized access into the area. The change to non-motorized trail designation is consistent with the Forest Plan objective to emphasize non-motorized trails in the Patrick Butte area (Forest Plan 2003: p III-208).

Past Krassel Ranger District trail registration tallies indicated that only two percent of the users in MA 12 are two-wheel motorized users (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record). These riders would be displaced to the other 106 miles of two-wheel motorized trails within the MA, or the other 328 miles available on the rest of the Forest.

There are 596 miles of non-motorized trails proposed for designation under this alternative. This would increase non-motorized trails by approximately 92 miles. None of these would be new trails; all would result from a change in designation of previously motorized opportunities. This would increase the primitive recreation opportunities available for hikers, mountain bikers, and stock users to have a non-motorized trail opportunity, free of motorized noise and vehicle pollution.

With the proposed trail closures, and proposed conversions to non-motorized designation in this alternative, miles of two-wheel motorized trail loop experiences would decrease. The following two-wheel motorized loops would be lost. In MA 2 trail loop 234, 252, 251; MA 4 Elk Lake trail loop 371, 347, 153; MA 9 trail loops 503, 348, 504; 506, 505, 149; and MA 12 trail loops Lower Sawpit 291, 292, 290; Miners Peak 98, 100, 301. The MA 2 loop does not fully exist on the ground so it is not a true opportunity lost, since riders are not utilizing it at the present time. The loop in MA 4 is not used as a loop ride. Eliminating the two trail loops in MA 9 would not eliminate lake access but would require riders to travel in and out on the same trails. Loops eliminated in MA 12 would affect primarily expert riders because these trails are steep and full of tight turns and switchbacks. Many riders have to dismount to turn on the switchbacks. Trip lengths would be longer where motorized cutoff trails have been eliminated or designated non-motorized use only, because riders would have to double back. Trail traffic could increase on the remaining two-wheel motorized trails with more in and out travel versus loop travel. All trail users could expect more encounters on trails affected by the loop closure with this in and out travel. Most proposed loops to be eliminated in this alternative and receive low use.

In MA 11, two miles of ATV loop trail would be added to the designated system in the Ruby Meadows area. ATV's currently use these unauthorized roads because they are in an area currently open to cross-country motor vehicle use. While this is not a new opportunity for riders it would maintain and improve an existing opportunity. This brings the total ATV trail loop opportunities to 7.5 miles with this alternative. These miles of trail do not fulfill the need of the ATV community for loop opportunities, and users would continue to use existing road systems to

find their loop rides. Idaho state law dictates that riders using existing roads must be licensed drivers, therefore over the age of 15 years, so opportunities are not available for families with riders under the age of 15. Licensed riders using existing open roads must ride cautiously and slowly to avoid potential collisions with faster driving full-size vehicles.

Non-motorized users lose one trail loop opportunity in Alternative B in MA 12. The Square Top loop would be lost due to the proposed trail closures of trails 304 and 305. This trail loop is seldom traveled so would affect very few users. Plus, two new loops would be added to that area providing riders alternative loop trails. Added to the non-motorized trail system in MA 12 are the former combination two-wheel/non-motorized trail loops – White Rock loop trails 303, 304, 302, 100, and the Williams Peak loop trails 70, 73, 71. The loss of Square Top loop is offset by the gain of White Rock and Williams Peak non-motorized loops for a net gain of non-motorized loop opportunities in this MA.

***Miles of ATV trail:***

The 89 miles of ATV trail proposed for designation under this alternative represents an increase of about 14 miles from current condition, but does not include any newly constructed routes on the ground. Existing unauthorized routes would be designated as ATV trails. These trails would also be available for use by two-wheel motorized and non-motorized users, increasing the number of trail opportunities and access into additional terrain. These designations would make these formerly unauthorized roads ATV trails. Developing these ATV trails would begin to accomplish the recreation emphasis objective in the Forest Plan to develop ATV opportunities (Forest Plan 2003: III-219, III-232) (Forest Plan 2003: III-62: REG005).

Designating these unauthorized routes as trails would provide a better ATV trail opportunity to the public as the trails are brought up to standard, and would continue to provide for the recreation need. With the closure of areas to off-trail motorized use, the overall ATV opportunities would actually decrease and more trails are needed to meet current ATV and expected future demand. This alternative does not fully meet that current need.

In MA 4, Rankin Mill ATV trail 191 (3.5 miles) would become non-motorized. Currently unauthorized motorized use is occurring off this trail. With a non-motorized designation, ATVs would be prohibited from traveling into the area reducing the probability of ATV travel off-trail. ATV users would lose a popular trail that is heavily used during hunting season, but would still have access to the area on foot, horseback or by other non-motorized means.

Under this alternative, some unauthorized roads in MAs 2, 3, 8, 10, and 11 would be designated as ATV trails. These presently unauthorized roads are already being used to a great extent by ATV users. This alternative would adopt the areas onto the designated trail system.

This alternative would also designate open and closed NFS road to be managed as ATV trail in MAs 3, 8, and 11, making available additional ATV trails that are separate from passenger car routes. This would provide opportunities for recreationists looking to ride their ATVs without the presence of passenger vehicles.

***Miles of OHV trail:***

The 3.1 miles of OHV trails proposed for designation under this alternative are located in MAs 2 and 3 and represent an increase of 1.0 miles compared with the No Action alternative. This increase comes from designation of an unauthorized route that is currently used frequently by OHVs. This designation would formalize OHV use on this route.

***Acres open to cross-country motor vehicle use:***

This alternative would work toward ending the user-created trail and road development cycle by restricting OHV use to designated roads and trails. Acres available for off road motorized travel

would go from 510,930 acres to zero acres. This doesn't reflect the actual acre reduction since all of the 510,930 open acres were not drivable due to topography and vegetative cover. No areas would be open to motorized travel off designated routes, with the exception of limited motorized access for dispersed camping within 300 feet on either side of a designated road and 100 feet on either side of a designated motorized trail (except in sensitive areas including the entire Krassel Ranger District, Lake Creek, and areas with northern Idaho ground squirrels). Closure of large areas to cross-country motor vehicle use would displace this use to other public lands, private lands, or to designated trails.

People who ride ATVs cross-country for the challenges would no longer be able to do so and would have to find other places (private land, other Forests with large designated areas, other public lands) to pursue their activity. It could be more difficult to reach remote areas with motor vehicles. People who use OHVs to access areas off designated routes would have to change their activities.

Some unauthorized roads would be designated as trails with this alternative. Site specific changes are detailed in the specific management area direction sections. These roads would be used for ATV trails, two-wheel motorized trails, hiking, and mountain biking.

Acres available for purely non-motorized use would increase. This would make available new areas of non-motorized use to that user group. Hikers and stock users desiring non-motorized cross-country travel to remote destinations, free from noise and vehicle pollution would not encounter motorized vehicles unless they were in the area for official business or were violating the designation. Non-motorized recreation opportunities would improve under this alternative.

True ATV trail loop opportunities are the same as analyzed in Alternative B. Although Alternative C proposes many potential trail loops using the road system, they do not fit the trail loop definition as used in this analysis. (Analyzed trail loops are available to both licensed and unlicensed drivers.)

## **Issue 2: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in winter**

### ***Acres open and closed to over-snow vehicles:***

Motorized over-snow use would go from the current condition of 1,078,280 acres to 1,061,130 acres, a reduction of approximately 17,410 acres. While several favorite motorized areas would be eliminated, the overall snowmobile experience on the Payette National Forest would not change to a large extent, and would continue to provide many play areas and remote destinations for the snowmobile riders to enjoy. Designation of the non-motorized areas could displace some snowmobile users to other areas on Forest.

This alternative seeks to provide over-snow motorized opportunities while limiting potential conflicts between motorized and non-motorized uses by providing three new non-motorized over-snow areas. These designations are made primarily to provide non-motorized recreation users an opportunity for a safer, more primitive, quieter skiing or snowshoeing experience without the chance of a motorized encounter. It also would give the non-motorized user snowmobile free terrain, free of tracks, offering the skier untracked powder experiences they desire. Law enforcement would likely be needed to enforce the closures until the public gets accustomed to the new boundaries.

In MAs 5 and 6, the Granite Basin area would be designated for non-motorized over-snow use primarily to provide an area of untracked powder for use by backcountry skiers and snowshoers, relatively close to McCall. The exclusion of motorized use would improve safety for the non-motorized users. An existing permit for snow cat skiing would continue, under the existing special use authorization. The Granite Basin area is popular with snowmobile users, and the

change to non-motorized would require them to travel farther back into the area for their over-snow play. Snowmobile users would lose the ability to enjoy the over-snow play in this beautiful unique area.

In MAs 6 and 7, the Bear Basin area would be set aside as a non-motorized area for Nordic skiers. Nordic skiers do not traditionally ride on a snowmobile to access skiable terrain. They traditionally look for flatter groomed terrain accessible by car and parking areas. This closure would give skiers and snowshoers a place to recreate on the PNF close to town. An on-Forest parking area would need to be developed to fully implement the desired opportunity this closure strives to provide. The Little Bear Basin area is currently being groomed for Nordic skiing by the Payette Lakes Ski Club and a parking lot is provided on private land. Designating the area for non-motorized use would eliminate the potential for motorized and non-motorized over-snow interactions, safety concerns, and noise issues associated with motorized use.

Developing this Bear Basin area into an area of non-motorized over-snow use would displace snowmobilers used to traveling through this terrain. They would be displaced to the other motorized over-snow areas near-by. The biggest effect would be to local homeowners in the area. The proposed designation would eliminate the ability for some homeowners to snowmobile directly from their private land onto NFS land. These homeowners would need to load snowmobiles onto trailers and drive and park at nearby trailheads. This could potentially increase parking problems in some of the more crowded snowmobile parking lots, especially on busy weekends. Conversely, some homeowners in the area have expressed a desire to have a non-motorized area surrounding their home for a quieter subdivision experience, and to partake in the non-motorized over-snow activities. The non-motorized boundaries for this area would be easily distinguished using man-made features (roads) to mark the boundaries.

In MAs 7 and 12, the Lick Creek non-motorized area designation would provide an area for use by backcountry skiers and snowshoers, relatively close to McCall, free of snowmobile use. Under current Valley County management rules, snowmobile use would be allowed on Lick Creek road, which is under the county's jurisdiction. This would allow machine powered backcountry skiers the ability to access terrain further to the north. The area is very steep though, and use may depend on avalanche conditions.

This designation would provide the powder experience backcountry skiers are in search of, without the competition from snowmobile users to get to the slopes first. The area on the east side of the road is already designated for non-motorized use so this area could offer quiet and solitude to those users desiring a more non-motorized experience. It would also be a safer area, because there would not be the potential for skiers and snowshoers to collide with snowmobiles on the slopes.

This area is frequented by snowmobile users, although not to a high degree. Snowmobile users would lose access to approximately 7,600 acres of terrain in these two MAs.

It would take two to three seasons to get all users used to the new boundaries and non-motorized designations in these three areas, and infractions into the newly closed areas could be expected during the first two seasons. Law enforcement and public education would need to be increased to enforce these closures effectively.

***Use areas with clear boundary designations (winter):***

The three new areas designated for non-motorized over-snow use have been mapped with terrain features and man made features in mind, to limit the possibility of accidental intrusion by motorized users. Groomed snowmobile routes, visible roadbeds, and ridge tops were used to delineate boundaries.

Signing, mapping and law enforcement patrol would also be needed to educate users about the area designations and to maintain the integrity of the closures. Squaw Point and Jughandle Mountain need more signing and education among snowmobilers regarding the non-motorized designations. Non-motorized use areas near Warren and Secesh need additional enforcement and education to manage the non-motorized designations. These solutions could be provided for in any of the action alternatives, including the No Action Alternative.

***Miles of groomed snowmobile trail:***

There are approximately 226 miles of groomed snowmobile routes proposed for designation under this alternative. This mileage reflects the actual number of routes currently groomed under the Cost Share Agreement with Valley County and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. Alternative A shows the total amount of trail authorized for grooming under the Cost Share Agreement rather than the amount that is currently groomed. So, although it looks like there is a reduction in the miles of groomed trail between Alternatives A and B, the reduction is administrative rather than on the ground. Compared to Alternative A, there would be no change in the amount of groomed trail under this alternative.

***Proximity of non-motorized areas to parking and access points for backcountry use:***

The designation of the Lick Creek area as non-motorized would provide a non-motorized area for backcountry skiers with the road as an access point. Lick Creek road would remain open to snowmobile use and could facilitate the access via snowmobile far back into the area. The Bear Basin non-motorized use area would provide access for Nordic skiers, with parking provided nearby on private land.

The Granite Mountain non-motorized designation would facilitate an access point for backcountry skiers that use snowmobiles to access the area.

Only Lick Creek and Bear Basin would have parking areas within the 3 and 4 miles radius for “human powered skiers”, so those without the use of a snowmobile could access skiable terrain. Parking would be available at Lick Creek at the currently used parking turn-around at the end of the road. Human powered skiers would then need to ski up the canyon, possibly encountering snowmobiles along the roadbed. Bear Basin also offers a parking area within the 3 miles radius for Nordic skiers.

***Approximate acres of skiable terrain in non-motorized areas:***

Acres of non-motorized skiable terrain increase from 451,190 acres to 468,620 acres, an increase of more than 17,430 acres. This would increase the area available for skiers to enjoy their sport without the noise and safety issues present when motorized users share the terrain. These additional acres would provide a more primitive winter recreation experience for those desiring that type of recreation.

### **Issue 3: Cost to Program Management**

Of the 42 miles of trail proposed for closure, many miles are rarely used now and the forest is not presently using funds to maintain them. Therefore, eliminating them would not save money, although it would eliminate the need to have them on a maintenance schedule. All trails, even ones rarely maintained, are on a schedule, and if funds were available, the trails would be maintained. The re-designation of non-motorized trails to motorized could effect maintenance costs since the trails were not originally designed to accommodate motorized use. Database management costs would decrease slightly with fewer trails to manage in the system.

Closing motorized trails to motorized use would eliminate these trails from participation in the Trail Ranger Program and also make them ineligible for Off Road Motor Vehicle and Motorbike

Recreation Fund grant funding, potentially reducing the chance for regular maintenance on these trails. They would still be eligible for non-motorized state grant funding in the Recreation Trail Program (RTP) funds and OHV Program.

Additional costs would be incurred to maintain the proposed additional 14 miles of ATV trail to Forests Service trail standards. The cost would depend on the condition of the unauthorized roads where the trails would be located and could vary from \$500 per mile (average maintenance cost per mile) to \$15,000/mile, (approximate cost to reconstruct one mile of trail) for a potential total of \$330,000. These trails would also need to be added to the yearly maintenance schedule.

Current trail maintenance costs on forest average \$500 to \$700 per mile (which includes overhead management costs). The Forest historically maintains approximately 15 percent of our trails with allocated funds each year. By decreasing the total number of trails on forest, the Forest should be able to maintain a higher percentage of the trails each year. Savings could go toward bringing the new trails proposed under this alternative to standard, and signing them appropriately. The cost of bringing trails into full compliance with national trail standards would vary, depending on the work needed when designation occurs. Grant requests could supplement these figures.

#### **Issue 4: Safety**

Removing unused trails from the Travel Plan map would improve visitor safety on the ground. People would not plan trail hikes or rides, only to arrive at the destination and quickly lose the trail location, potentially becoming lost.

Designating motorized trails for non-motorized use could potentially improve the safety of non-motorized users traveling the trails by eliminating the possibility of collisions between hikers and two-wheel motorcycles, and between stock users and motorcycles. This could increase motorized use on the remaining motorized trails, potentially increasing the possibility of collisions between motorized users confined to fewer trails.

In the winter months, designating additional areas for non-motorized over-snow recreation would reduce the potential for collisions between snowmobiles and non-motorized recreation users, primarily backcountry skiers. Such collisions have been documented in the past. By removing snowmobiles from the area, the large ruts they create driving over snow would also no longer be a threat to skiers maneuvering down the slopes.

#### **Issue 5: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

The ROS has been mapped for both summer and winter on the Payette National Forest. With the implementation of Alternative B, some ROS acres may change. Areas of Semi Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) must be at least 2,500 acres in size and be located at least ½ mile from any motorized road or trail, but can cross MAs to achieve the acreage amounts. Site specific MA mapping would need to be done to calculate the exact number of acres that would change status.

Under Alternative B, changes could occur to the summer ROS in the following MAs:

- MA 4 – With the conversion of trail 279 to non-motorized, some Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) acres could be converted to SPNM acres to better fit the management of the area as primarily non-motorized.
- MA 6 – With the conversion of trail 511 from two-wheel motorized to non-motorized, acres would change from SPM to SPNM along the trail corridor.
- MA 9 – With trail 153 and trail 116 proposed for non-motorized use, several hundred acres could be converted from Roaded Natural (RN) to SPNM. The existing condition map should also be revisited to convert thousands of acres currently mapped as RN for re-designation as

SPM. This better fits the current and desired condition of the area as outlined in the Forest Plan.

- MA 11- With the proposal to designate several unauthorized roads as ATV trails there would be a slight reduction of SPNM in the Ruby Meadows area. Trails could change to RN acres or SPM acres. The thousands of acres currently mapped as RN west of Burgdorf road would be reclassified as SPM to better meet proposed management of the area.
- MA 12 – With the proposal to designate two-wheel motorized trails as non-motorized trails, several thousand acres could be classified under SPNM in the William Peak and Savage Point areas, to within ½ mile of road 50340.

There could be changes to the winter ROS in the following MAs:

- MA 5 – Acres could go from SPM to SPNM in the portion of the MA associated with the non-motorized use over-snow proposal in the Granite Mountain area (when combined with the acreage change in MA 6 there are over 2,500 acres going to SPNM). While there would be an option for the existing motorized snow cat groomer to use the areas to shuttle skiers to the top of the runs, this use is still consistent with SPNM, since it is only for short time periods and isolated areas.
- MA 6 – With the designation of the Granite Mountain area as non-motorized over-snow, several thousand acres could be classified from SPM to SPNM.
- MA 7 – Allowing for a ½ mile corridor, there would still be acres available to move from SPM to SPNM along the Lick Creek corridor.
- MA 12 – Several hundred acres could be converted from SPM to SPNM in the Burnside, Duck Lake area.

### ***Alternative C***

Alternative C would provide the greatest number of motorized opportunities in both summer and winter months. This alternative was developed to address issues raised through public comments from local governments and motorized user groups.

#### **Issue 1: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in summer**

##### ***Miles of open and seasonally open NFS road:***

Alternative C would designate an estimated 1,120 miles of open, and 516 miles of seasonal road resulting in a slight reduction in open roads, and slight increase in seasonal roads from the existing condition. A total of 7 miles of open roads would be closed. Seasonal roads would increase by about 4 miles. Proposed changes include a number of site-specific changes to unauthorized roads as follows:

In MAs 3, 7, 8, and 11, a number of short sections of unauthorized road would be designated as open NFS roads (2.8 miles). These designations would provide for general access and access to dispersed camping areas beyond the extent of the 300 foot off road allowance.

In MA 3, unauthorized road 507104000 connects the Fruitvale Road (an Adams County road) to designated NFS road 50710. The road is currently open and is used frequently by the public to access the forest. The road was recently improved by Idaho Power under special use permit. If this road is not kept open access would be eliminated to the Forest from the Fruitvale road. Road 507142000 connects designated NFS roads 50712 and 50714 and is currently open and used frequently by the public.

In MA 8, road 517235000 provides access to a subdivision outside the PNF boundary. The road is currently open and is used frequently by the public. In MAs 7 and 11 the roads would provide access to dispersed camping areas or trailheads beyond the extent of the 300 foot open area. Most of these roads have been improved and are currently being used as dispersed camping sites. If these roads were not kept open then access would be lost to these dispersed use areas. All of the above roads would be designated as Maintenance Level 2 roads.

Authorizing use on these roads would allow the Forest Service to maintain them to a level commensurate with their use making them more pleasurable for the public to use. These roads would also appear on the Travel Plan map as available for use.

***Miles of two-wheel motorized and non-motorized trail:***

There would be 573 miles of two-wheel motorized trails provided for with this alternative. This is a reduction of 9 miles from current condition. The reduction comes in trails proposed for closure due to non-use. Motorized use is expected to stay the same with this alternative, or increase slightly with the proposed changes in designation of non-motorized routes to motorized routes. Most changes in designation from non-motorized to motorized routes are proposed in MA 12.

Use on designated motorized routes could increase due to more motorized enthusiasts traveling to the area to use the system of trails, and result in a diminished recreation experience for some visitors who encounter too many other users. Some motorized users may not welcome additional use on designated roads and trails. As a result, it's possible some motorized users could be displaced to other locations, but this is not likely, since the new trail system could accommodate growth. This alternative would also provide the greatest number of motorized opportunities for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Although motorized routes are open to non-motorized travel, some non-motorized users may not wish to frequent these roads or trails for mountain biking, hiking or horseback due to safety concerns from collisions, or noise issues. Use levels on most trails are not at levels that shared use cannot be reasonably accommodated.

This alternative could discourage non-motorized publics from using the trails proposed for designation from non-motorized use to motorized use. They may choose to visit other forests, National Parks or eliminate hiking from their activities. Visitors who prefer to recreate in areas with no motorized use would still be able to find many alternative areas on the Payette National Forest.

In MAs 9 and 10, 15.7 miles of two-wheel motorized trails would be designated non-motorized. James Creek trail 132 and Steamboat Ridge trail 128 are proposed for non-motorized designation to alleviate past motorized violations into the Frank Church-River of No Return (FC-RONR) Wilderness, and maintain continuity with the rest of the non-motorized trails. Cottontail Point trail 137 and Little French Creek trail 348 are proposed because of the motorized damage occurring to wet meadows in the areas. Designating these miles of trail as non-motorized would result in a loss of motorized opportunities for those areas. The riders would be displaced to other motorized trails on the Forest.

In MAs 2, 3, 9, and 12, there are 9.2 miles of trail proposed for conversion from non-motorized to two-wheel motorized. These are proposed to offer more two-wheel motorized trail opportunities. These trails would need work to bring them to standard for use by motorized vehicles. Currently they are poorly located, unused by the public, and difficult to impossible to locate on the ground. There would be no measurable loss of non-motorized opportunities with this designation, because the trails have little to no current use, by either motorized or non-motorized users.

In MAs 2 and 3, there are approximately 16 miles of trail are proposed for closure. These trails would be closed for the same reasons and have the same effects as described under Alternative B for this section. The reduction of trail is not expected to impact the trail user to any degree because these trails are barely to non-recognizable on the ground. They are seldom used and signing is, in many places, missing on the ground.

There is one new loop proposed in MA 3, and one loop dropped in MA 9, leaving about 122 miles of two-wheel motorized loop trail available for users. MA 3 adds a trail loop with the conversion of a non-motorized connector trail to two-wheel motorized use in the Council Mountain area using trails 213, 196, and 201, offering a new opportunity for trail riders. The connector trail needs heavy maintenance to be a usable motorized route. The loss of the loop in MA 9 would not affect access to the Lava Lakes, but would concentrate use on the remaining two-wheel motorized trails remaining in the area.

ATV trail loop opportunities are the same as analyzed in Alternative B. Although Alternative C proposes many potential trail loops using the road system, they are not trail loops available to all users, licensed and unlicensed, and so are not considered in this analysis.

The number of available non-motorized loops does not change from existing condition under this alternative, and approximately 123 miles of loop trail continue to be available exclusively for non-motorized users.

***Miles of ATV trail:***

Total miles of ATV trail provided in the alternative would be about 128 miles. In MA 3, 6.7 miles of new trail would be added to the ATV trail system. Adding these trails to the designated system would add future maintenance to the annual trail maintenance schedule. Bringing these trails to standard is addressed in the cost section. The trails would add desired ATV opportunities for motorized riders, especially families wishing to stay off designated roads, moving closer to meeting growing ATV trail needs. Adding these trails would also increase the already high level of motorized use in this MA.

Under this alternative, Rankin Mill ATV trail 191 (MA 4), would become a seasonal ATV trail. This trail is proposed for designation to a seasonal use to eliminate use during the time of year when most of the known detrimental effects occur to the surrounding terrain – hunting season. Since this trail is primarily used during hunting season, the opportunity to use the trail for game retrieval and hunting access would be lost to users during its most popular time of year. There would be no cost savings with this proposal, but there would be, with compliance, less resource damage.

This alternative would designate approximately 55 miles of existing NFS roads as ATV trails in MAs 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, and 11. Designating the roads as trails would make their maintenance the responsibility of the Forest trail maintenance program. Approximately 2.5 miles of seasonal NFS roads would be designated as seasonal ATV trail, which would remain closed during hunting season. These trails would maintain existing opportunities for the growing ATV population by keeping former roads that were likely used by ATV riders open. By eliminating passenger vehicle traffic on the road, it could actually become a safer route for family riding.

In MAs 2, 3, 8, 10, and 11, approximately 22 miles of unauthorized road would be designated as ATV trails. Retaining the use of these as ATV trails preserves the ATV riding opportunity. These trails would need to be brought to standard, and maintained on a regular schedule adding to the forest's trail maintenance responsibilities.

***Miles of OHV trail:***

This proposal is the same as in Alternative B.

***Acres open to cross-country motor vehicle use:***

This proposal is the same as in Alternative B.

**Issue 2: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in winter*****Acres open and closed to over-snow vehicles:***

Over-snow vehicle areas would increase in this alternative because several non-motorized areas would be designated as over snow vehicle areas, primarily in Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs). The acreage open to over-snow motorized use increases from 1,078,540 acres in the current condition, up to 1,156,700 acres with this alternative.

The acreage open to over-snow vehicle use decreases in MAs 5, 6 and 7. The acreage increases in MA 10, MA 11, and MA 12. Over-snow vehicle users would lose opportunities for riding in portions of the Bear Basin area (MAs 6 and 7), but many homeowners would retain the ability to drive out of their yard onto the Forest because much of the area remains open to motorized use. Snowmobilers would lose the opportunity to ride in a portion of the popular Granite Mountain area (located in MA 5 and 6), and in a small portion of the Lick Creek area off McCall's Lick Creek road located in MA 7.

Fires occurred in the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA (MA 10) and Chimney Rock IRA (MA 11) in 1994 and 2000. These fires have made riding through previously dense forest stands possible. These areas are adjacent to very popular snowmobile groomed routes and the rural communities of Warren and Secesh. Opening these areas would give snowmobile users from the local communities, as well as from McCall new terrain to explore.

There is not a high demand for these non-motorized areas (Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak and Chimney Rock) by backcountry skiers, because of the time needed to travel to the area via snowmobile. The non-motorized user needs a snowmobile to access this terrain. There are areas closer to access points preferable for skiing, so the skiing community would not lose opportunities with this motorized designation.

Under Alternative C, the previously non-motorized Squaw Point area (MAs 7 and 11), would be opened to over-snow vehicle use allowing snowmobilers additional acres for snow play. Although a snowmobile is needed to access this non-motorized area, it is popular with backcountry skiers. Designating the area to motorized use would displace the backcountry skiers that use this area, as they would likely no longer ski the area if snowmobile use occurred on a regular basis.

Between the draft EIS and the final EIS the following three areas in Alternative C were added to the proposals: The Jumbo Basin area in MA 7 off Lick Creek road, which is currently open to motorized use. Neither snowmobilers nor skiers presently use this area because it is heavily timbered and flat. Keeping the area open to motorized use affords the same recreational opportunities available in Alternative A.

Also in the final EIS, two areas in MA 12 are proposed as open to over-snow motorized use. These two areas are located adjacent to recommended wilderness in the South Fork drainage. One is off the Lick Creek road, and goes south past Krassel Knob. This area would be very difficult for snowmobiles to access. Riders would need to travel up the Lick road, which is not groomed. Travel would be difficult and is through avalanche country, and the area would take hours to get to from the McCall. The other area analyzed for over-snow motorized use is in the Log Mountain area of the South Fork drainage. The area can be accessed from the Boise National Forest in the Warm Lake area, although it would be a long ride in, and snow cover is not reliable. The opportunity provided to snowmobile users by adding either of these two areas would be minimal as the snow conditions are not ideal, and access is difficult.

There are three areas proposed for non-motorized designation in Bear Basin, Granite Mountain, and Lick Creek. These areas would help alleviate conflicts of use between backcountry skiers and snowmobiles. The three areas proposed are similar to those proposed in Alternative B, but contain less acres. They would still allow for some separation of uses. Even with these designations, acres designated for non-motorized use would go down.

There would be a total reduction in non-motorized over-snow areas of 78,160 acres. Designation in MA 6 and 7-Bear Basin, MA 5 and 6 Granite Mountain, and MA 7 Lick Creek would increase the opportunity for non-motorized over-snow use in those MAs for both Nordic and backcountry skiers, but the opportunity for non-motorized use would decrease in MA 10, MA 11, and MA 12, as these areas are recommended for motorized over-snow use in Alternative C.

***Miles of groomed snowmobile trail:***

There would be 236.8 miles of groomed snowmobile trails under this alternative. This number includes proposed route changes to the existing Cost Share Agreement the Forest has with Valley County and Idaho State Parks and Recreation Department. Changes incorporate new routes to better suit the existing public need for trails on the Forest. It eliminates routes no longer groomed or needed because of lack of consistent snow, or seldom used trails. It also includes some new connector routes to the Tamarack Resort. This alternative would allow the continued use and enjoyment of many miles of groomed snowmobile trails accessing popular destination spots throughout the Forest.

***Use areas with clear boundary designations:***

In MA3, the current closed to motorized use area around Sturgill Peak would be open to motorized use, making intrusions into the area no longer an issue.

Three areas - Bear Basin (MA 6 and 7), Granite Mountain (MAs 5 and 6), and Lick Creek (MAs 7 and 12) - are proposed for designation as non-motorized use areas with this alternative. All three areas have been delineated along easily distinguished man-made and/or physical features on the ground. Accidental intrusions by motorized users should be minimized with the lay out of the non-motorized areas.

Designating large areas in MAs 10 and 11 for motorized over-snow use would eliminate the current situation of unauthorized motorized intrusions into the IRAs.

Squaw Point is also recommended for a change in over snow designation from non-motorized use to motorized use. There would no longer be an issue with motorized use intrusions into this ski area with the new designation. Jughandle Mountain remains the same as current condition (Alternative A) and there could still be some accidental intrusions into the non-motorized area by snowmobile users along some of the more forested sections. The area would need more law enforcement patrol to enforce the non-motorized use designation.

The South Fork Salmon River areas in the Krassel Knob and Log Mountain area would be difficult to map and define due to the steep terrain. It would be impossible to patrol with Forest personnel due to the distance of the two areas from McCall.

***Proximity of non-motorized areas to parking and access points:***

This alternative proposes three new areas for non-motorized use slightly improving the access points for backcountry use in the winter months. Bear Basin would improve Nordic skier access to a non-motorized area. Granite Mountain non-motorized designation would provide a non-motorized area accessed via the Brundage Mountain Snow Cat ski program or via groomed snowmobile trails. The Lick Creek non-motorized area would provide a small non-motorized ski area accessed by the Lick Creek road by skiers with or without a snowmobile.

***Approximate acres of skiable terrain in non-motorized areas:***

Skiable terrain acres would be reduced slightly from 160,490 to 159,188 acres under this alternative, a loss of 1,292 acres of non-motorized over-snow opportunities for skiers and snowshoers. The biggest impact to skiers would be the change in designation of the currently non-motorized Squaw Point ski area. With snowmobiles permitted in the area skiers would lose their more primitive non-motorized recreation experience.

There is also a loss of non-motorized acres in the Sturgill Peak area in MA3. However, skiers routinely have been accessing this area via snowmobile as it is far from any trailhead or groomed snowmobile route, and motorized access is needed to utilize this terrain. So, making the area motorized would actually benefit skiers in this situation.

Any loss of acres in the proposed open areas around Krassel Knob and Log Mountain would not affect backcountry skiers as they do not use these areas to ski because they are too difficult and remote to access.

**Issue 3: Cost to Program Management**

This alternative adds additional trails, primarily ATV trails, to the existing system. The new trails are located primarily on the west side of the forest on the Council and New Meadows Ranger Districts. It is unlikely the PNF would be able to fund their maintenance, even with potential grants and volunteer labor. Even with the help of the State of Idaho trail rangers, grants, and volunteer work, the Forest is unable to maintain all major trails yearly.

This alternative would create a net increase of approximately 35 miles of trail to the existing system. Current maintenance costs on forest are approximately \$700/mile. The Forest historically maintains approximately 15 percent of the trails on Forest with allocated funds each year. To bring these new miles of trail to standard could cost as much as \$525,000 if reconstruction is needed, based on an estimated construction cost of \$15,000/mile.

The construction and maintenance of the proposed motorized trails could be accomplished in part by securing grants from the Idaho State Department of Parks & Recreation, and the Adams and Valley County RAC programs. Idaho State Trail Rangers could help bring some of the trails to standard with their yearly maintenance program. Yearly applications would be made to take full advantage of all grant programs. Partners outside the Forest Service would be encouraged to apply for these grants, and work toward bringing all the proposed trails up to standard for use by the public.

The added yearly trail maintenance costs would be approximately \$5,000/year. New trails would need new trailheads with trail information, signing, and parking. Typically a 1 acre trailhead costs between \$10,000. - \$25,000., depending on the amount of surface reworking and shaping needed, rocks present and gravel base needed.

This alternative closes approximately 17 miles of trail, at a cost benefit to the trails program of minimal amount, because these trails are not maintained now, and the majority of them no longer exist on the ground. There would be a slight reduction to database management costs.

Designating winter over-snow motorized areas on previously non-motorized areas should have no measurable effect of the cost of the winter recreation program in MAs 10 and 11, but would increase the cost of management in MA 12 because of the patrol needed to enforce the new boundaries created by the opening of several areas to over-snow motorized use.

#### **Issue 4: Safety**

Safety of trails would improve where former roads are now managed as designated ATV routes. By eliminating passenger vehicles, the potential for vehicle collisions is minimized while users are on the ATV trails. As former unauthorized routes designated for trails under this alternative are brought up to standard, the trails would become safer to use.

Designating former non-motorized trails for motorized use could be more hazardous to both users by increasing the number of people using the trails, and increasing the potential for a motorized/non-motorized user collision.

Designating three areas for non-motorized over-snow use would make these areas safer for backcountry skiers and snowshoers by eliminating the potential for collisions with snowmobiles. Skiers would need to be extra cautious the first couple of seasons as motorized users become used to the closure areas.

#### **Issue 5: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

Summer

- MA 12 – with the designation of two-wheel motorized trails to non-motorized trails in the Williams Peak area, acres could move from Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) to Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM).

Winter

- MA 10 – There could be large scale changes in current SPNM acres to SPM acres with the implementation of motorized over-snow travel in the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak area.
- MA 11 – There could be large scale changes in acres in SPNM to SPM with the implementation of motorized over-snow travel in the Chimney Rock area.
- MA 12 – With the proposal to designate several thousand acres in the South Fork Salmon River (SFSR) for over-snow motorized travel, with the buffer needed along the edge of the motorized SFSR road boundary, the SPNM acres could all be moved to SPM acres on the east side of the South Fork road.

#### ***Alternative D***

Motorized travel throughout the Forest would be reduced in both the summer and winter months, resulting in some existing off-highway vehicle and snowmobile opportunities being displaced from the Payette National Forest. Of the three action alternatives, Alternative D is the most restrictive to motorized travel in both the summer and winter months.

This alternative drops ATV trails proposed in Alternative B and C for summer months, and closes additional areas to over-snow vehicle use in winter months. Motorized access for the elderly and persons with disabilities could be limited in some areas due to reduced motorized access in both summer and winter months.

#### **Issue 1: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in summer**

##### ***Miles of open and seasonally open NFS road:***

Under this alternative, 14 miles of open NFS roads and 18 miles of seasonal NFS road are proposed for closure resulting in 1,112 miles of open NFS roads, and 494 miles of seasonally

open NFS roads. Closure of roads to motorized use may displace motorized recreationists to other motorized routes in the area.

Several short sections of unauthorized road would be designated as open NFS roads (2.4 miles) as follows:

In MA 3, road 507104000 connects the Fruitvale Road (an Adams County road) to Forest road 50710. The public uses this road frequently to access the forest and Idaho Power recently improved the road under special use permit. If this road were not kept open access to the Forest from the Fruitvale road would be eliminated. Road 507142000 connects designated NFS roads 50712 and 50714 and is currently open and used frequently by the public.

In MA 8, road 517235000 provides access to a subdivision outside the Forest boundary and is used frequently by the public. In MAs 7 and 11 several roads providing access to dispersed camping areas or trailheads beyond the extent of the 300 foot open area would be designated as open. Most of these roads have been improved and are currently being used as access to dispersed camping sites. If these roads were not kept open then access to these dispersed use areas would be lost.

All of the above roads would be designated as Maintenance Level 2 roads allowing the PNF to maintain them to a level commensurate with their use. These roads would appear on the motor vehicle use map as available for use.

***Miles of two-wheel motorized and non-motorized trail:***

This alternative would provide approximately 408 miles of single-track two-wheel motorized trails representing a reduction of 174 miles from the current condition. The reduction is due to proposed closures and designations to a different use. Two-wheel motorized users would lose access to some primary motorized trails and destination spots and many trail loop opportunities would be removed. By curtailing motorized use on roads and trails in summer months, opportunities for people using motorized vehicles for dispersed camping, hunting, and gathering forest products such as berries, mushroom picking, and fire wood would be affected. Motorized recreationists may be displaced to other areas with greater motorized access.

In MAs 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, 147 miles of two-wheel motorized trail would be designated as non-motorized trails. Designation of these trails as non-motorized is proposed to alleviate resource damage occurring due to motorized use, and establish a more primitive, non-motorized experience in multiple areas across the forest. The change to non-motorized use would also provide more solitude and quiet along these trails.

In MAs 2, 3, 9, 10, and 12, approximately 48 miles of non-motorized trail and 24 miles of two-wheel motorized trail would be closed. Closure of 6.1 miles of French Creek trail 116 at Jenkins Crossing would not affect motorized trails riders because they usually branch off at Jenkins Crossing to make a loop trail rather than continuing down French Creek. The closure of these non-motorized and motorized trail miles is not expected to impact most users because most of the trails are seldom used and hard to follow on the ground and most access ground still accessible by other trails. The lower end of French Creek trail is seldom used because there is no legal access to the Salmon River off the end of the trail. Off-trail access to this trail is a safety concern because of the steep slopes and rocky areas that must be crossed to go around the private land.

A total of 45 miles of trail loops are available to two-wheel motorized use in Alternative D. This is a reduction from existing condition. Two-wheel motorized loops are lost in MA 2 – trail loop 234, 251, 252, and MA 4 trail loop 371, 347, and 153. The loss of the loop in MA 2 would not affect riders because the loop is not currently usable due to trail conditions. The loss of the two-wheel motorized loop in MA 6 - trails 511, 169 would affect a two-wheel motorized loop, but

riders could still travel into the Hazard Lakes area and continue to use the popular 169 motorized trail. The closure of this 511 trail loop would give the non-motorized user a trail free from motorized traffic.

In MA 9, three motorized loop opportunities are lost, trail loop 503, 504, 348, trails 505, 506, 149, and trails 116, 145, and 142 by trail restrictions to non-motorized use and trail closures. Eliminating the 505 trail loop in MA9 would not eliminate access to the Lava Lakes, but would require riders to travel in and out on the same trails. Loss of the six-mile Hazard Lake loop would eliminate the motorized experience in the area. Eliminating motorized use on trail 145 would affect one of the most popular riding areas on the forest for motorcycles, and affect access to Bear Pete Mountain two-wheel motorized trail 142. This would cause riders to travel over 15 miles to reenter the Bear trail system. Elimination of its use could push riders to other areas on the Forest, or potentially to other Forests.

Loops eliminated in MA 12 affect primarily expert riders because they are the only ones skilled enough to ride these steep, narrow, low use trails with numerous switchback turns (surveyed motorized use was 2 percent of the total). Many riders have to dismount to turn on the switchbacks. Trip length would increase where motorized cutoff trails have been eliminated or designated non-motorized use only, because riders would have to double back to return. Trail traffic could increase on the remaining two-wheel motorized trails with more in and out travel versus loop travel. All trail users could expect more encounters on trails affected by the loop closures.

Non-motorized users lose one trail loop opportunity in Alternative D in MA 12. The Square Top loop experience would be lost due to the proposed trail closures of trails 304 and 305. This trail is seldom traveled so would affect very few users. Two new loops would be added to the area. In MA 12 the following loop trails would become non-motorized: White Rock loop trails 303, 304, 302, 100, and the Williams Peak loop trails 70, 73, and 71. The loss of the Square Top loop is offset by the gain of White Rock and Williams Peak non-motorized loops for a net gain of 15.5 miles of non-motorized loop opportunities in this MA above the existing condition. Non-motorized trail loop experiences in the alternative would be approximately 138.5 miles.

***Miles of ATV trail:***

One seasonal NFS road would be designated as an ATV trail in MA 3 located along road 50209 (2.2 miles), creating an ATV opportunity without the shared use with passenger cars. The number of ATV loops would be the same as in Alternative A.

***Miles of OHV trail:***

Mileage and location of trail is the same as Alternative A.

***Acres open to cross-country motor vehicle use:***

There are no acres open to cross-country motor vehicle use.

**Issue 2: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in winter**

***Acres open and closed to over-snow vehicles:***

Acres available for over-snow vehicle use would be reduced from 1,078,540 acres to 873,740 acres, a reduction of approximately 204,800 acres. There are no MAs where the acres open to over-snow vehicle use would increase in this alternative. Implementation of this alternative would have measurable impacts on snowmobile opportunities on Forest. Acres available for non-motorized over-snow use would increase from 451,200 acres to 656,000 acres. This alternative

would decrease the existing user conflicts for the backcountry skiers and snowshoers, but could also increase animosity from the snowmobile community due to the loss of popular terrain.

Motorized over-snow users would lose popular snowmobile terrain in MAs 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, and 13 under this proposal. The Granite Basin area located in MAs 5 and 6 would be designated non-motorized to provide an area of untracked powder close to McCall for use by backcountry skiers and snowshoers. Because of the area's distance from trailheads it would still require a snowmobile to access. Skiers could also utilize the Brundage Mountain Snow Cat ski service to access the slopes. This alternative would close a larger area around Granite Mountain than Alternative B.

In MA 6 and 7 Bear Basin would offer opportunities to Nordic skiers and snowshoers to enjoy a non-motorized over-snow experience very close to town. Access to 25 kilometers of groomed Nordic trail in Little Bear Basin is currently provided by a parking area located on private land. A parking area on Forest lands is needed to fully utilize this area. This non-motorized use designation would affect both local landowners in the area and snowmobilers used to traveling through this area for snow play. Landowners would no longer be able to travel directly from their homes to the groomed trail system. They would need to trailer up and travel to a parking area, which are often overcrowded on weekends. Impacts would be felt to the existing parking lots that already over-fill on weekends and holidays. Some local owners desiring a more non-motorized experience around their homes would benefit from the closures. They may enjoy skiing directly from their homes to the non-motorized area. One groomed snowmobile trail would still pass through the middle of the area, allowing continued motorized access from the Warren Wagon road parking areas. This alternative sets aside more non-motorized acres than Alternative B.

Another area in MA 7 adjacent to Upper Payette Lake is proposed for non-motorized use to provide winter opportunities for non-motorized users. The area would be accessed by snowmobile from Warren Wagon road. Once past the Warren Wagon road area, this closure would offer a very primitive non-motorized experience. There would be no Brundage Mountain Snow Cat use of this area because it is outside their current special use authorization. The areas proposed for non-motorized designation west of Upper Payette Lake in MAs 7 are popular with snowmobilers since opened up by the Blackwell fires. If designated non-motorized, snowmobilers would lose opportunities for snow play in this area. It is recognized as an area with unstable winter snow conditions.

In MA 7, an additional non-motorized area around Slab Butte adjacent to Brundage Reservoir is also proposed. This area could potentially be utilized by the Brundage Mountain Resort Snow Cat operation for transporting backcountry skiers under their special use authorization. This area could also be accessed by skiers using snowmobiles. Both areas are too far for human powered skiers to access as they are more than 3 miles from any developed winter parking areas.

A small portion of the MA 4, and over half of MA 9 would be designated for non-motorized use. This would be a loss in opportunity to hunters, especially during the late fall November hunt, when they snowmobile out of the Upper Payette parking area to access and hunt the Patrick Butte, Hershey Point, Bear Pete Mountain area. Without the ability to use snowmobiles this area could not be accessed without miles of snowshoeing in, and could not feasibly be hunted. Due to snow conditions that time of year, hunters often use snowmobiles to help pack out game. Opportunities would also be lost to snowmobilers later in the season when they drive up into the area to explore the more remote country. While the use is not high, it would affect the more adventuresome riders.

This non-motorized designation could potentially benefit backcountry skiers by opening up another non-motorized area within 3 miles of an access point (groomed snowmobile trail to Crystal Mountain), but the area is far from town and most skiers would not travel that distance to

ski. There is a potential client base from Burgdorf Hot Springs private resort that may cater to backcountry skiers staying overnight at the lodge. Recreationists would need a snowmobile to access Burgdorf Hot Springs, but then they could experience non-motorized day ski trips using the lodge as a base point.

Non-motorized designation is also proposed for a portion of the currently motorized War Eagle Mountain area located in MAs 9 and 11. Use by snowmobile riders is moderate in the area, coming most often from the Secesh area. While there are no groomed trails, it is used by motorized riders to explore the backcountry. Backcountry skiers would not benefit to any measurable degree with this non-motorized designation as it is too far from groomed snowmobile access routes.

The closures proposed in MA 8 to enlarge the Jughandle non-motorized area would benefit human powered and mechanized skiers traveling into the area. Skiers would still need to travel approximately two miles to access the area. Access could occur off the state roads leading to Boulder Reservoir. Thousands of acres of non-motorized skiable terrain would be created giving the user a very primitive recreation experience. Extending the closure to the south could help with parking for the human powered skier, but this area does not really contain skiable terrain because of its slope. The southern closure serves more to prevent snowmobile access into the area.

Motorized over-snow users would lose access to the popular Boulder Lakes area located in MA 8, and lose access into backcountry play areas in the Kennally Creek Summit area. Snowmobilers using this area are expert riders and need to know how to traverse in steep terrain and deep snow. Motorized users would still have access to the Paddy Flat area farther to the south via the Paddy Flat road.

The Lick Creek road non-motorized use designation in MAs 7 and 12 would close thousands of acres from Upper Payette Lake south to Browns Pond State Land boundary to snowmobile riders. This designation is larger than the Alternative B proposal. Leaving the roadbed open to snowmobile use would still allow for motorized access up into the canyon, but would prevent off road use of existing play areas. The west side of Lick Creek located in MA 7 is too steep to be used to a large degree by snowmobilers. The northern boundary does eliminate the use of some snow play areas just to the east of Warren Wagon road but still leaves the Twenty Mile Lake area open for over-snow vehicle use.

This alternative proposes a designated non-motorized area to the west of the Crestline trail in the Pearl Lake Area in MA 7 utilizing the ridge top as the boundary. Snowmobilers use this area heavily and eliminating it would affect their current available play areas. For the non-motorized user, the area would provide a backcountry non-motorized area close to town for human powered skiers. Parking is available at the Crest line trailhead and users could ski from the parking area into the hills and enjoy a quiet, peaceful experience if they stayed to the west of the trail. The area would likely be utilized by both backcountry skiers and snowshoers, and would not require a snowmobile to access. Boundaries would be easy to define as they lie on ridge tops, creeks and trails.

A large area in the vicinity of Big Creek Stibnite (MAs 12 and 13) is also proposed for non-motorized over-snow use. This change in designation to non-motorized would affect snowmobile riders in the Edwardsburg area, including resort lodge owners and their clients. While the road to Edwardsburg would still be open to over-snow motorized use, the surrounding area designation would limit the ability to snowmobile into the backcountry. This could restrict potential future outfitter and/or resort lodge opportunities in the surrounding area.

The non-motorized use designation could potentially benefit backcountry skiers in the Edwardsburg area (MA 13) by opening even more terrain for use, but with the FC-RONW nearby, thousands of acres are already available for non-motorized recreation opportunities.

Between the draft and final EIS, a winter closure area at Bruin Mountain has been added to Alternative D responding to comments by Idaho Fish and Game Department requesting wolverine habitat protection in this area. The closure would be at the tip of MA9. Much of this area is densely timbered and not used by snowmobiles. However, the ridgeline to the north of Fisher Creek Saddle is used by expert riders, and the closure of this area would affect snowmobile users. Snowmobilers ride between Bruin Mountain and Black Tip. Riders go between the two areas of Hazard and Fisher Creek saddle, and drop down into the burn area to high mark and enjoy the open play area. Access into the area is via the groomed route into Fisher Creek Saddle, and from the Hazard Campground area. The trail groomer usually goes out to Hazard Campground and turns around. Some years the grooming extends to Clayburn Trailhead. This closure would not benefit backcountry skiers due to the long time required to access skiable terrain.

***Miles of groomed snowmobile trail:***

Mileage is the same as Alternative B.

***Use areas with clear boundary designations (winter):***

Not all areas set aside for non-motorized use in this alternative include easily definable boundaries. The map developed for the implementation of the designation would be a good guide to users, but signing and education would be needed on the ground to enforce the closures. The areas set aside for non-motorized use in War Eagle Mountain area would not have definable boundaries on the ground and would rely on mapping and signing to enforce the destination. Large areas set aside for non-motorized use in the Lake Creek/French Creek MAs would use Lake Creek as one definable boundary, but its southern boundary along some less prominent ridge tops could be difficult to locate on the ground. Snowmobile users would need education on the ground to delineate this boundary and avoid intrusion.

The boundary surrounding Granite Mountain and Brundage Reservoir has definable boundaries on the ground and the closure should be enforceable with public education and signing. The map would serve as a good guide to this area's boundaries. The Bear Basin proposed non-motorized designation has somewhat definable boundaries on the ground using Highway 55 on the west boundary, and private land on the east and northern boundary. The Bruin Mountain closure could be difficult to enforce because the physical boundaries are not easily definable on the ground. Ridgetops, creek drainages, and timbered sections could help to define portions of the closure to motorized use, but it would be difficult to enforce on the ground because of distance to groomed trails and riding skills needed for the Forest patrol officers.

The non-motorized designations to the west of Upper Payette Lake, across Warren Wagon Road and following the existing Secesh IRA non-motorized area, uses ridge tops for boundaries. The terrain in the area has many ridge tops and boundary delineation would be a challenge on the ground. The Pearl Lake and Box Lake areas remain open to motorized over-snow use, and accidental intrusions could occur from the open motorized corridor to Box Lake.

The expanded non-motorized designation surrounding the existing Jughandle Mountain area should be easy to find on the ground, because most of the area would be closed to motorized use from the northern end. Snowmobile riders could potentially come in from the Paddy Flat area and become disoriented, but the boundary follows stream beds and should be visible to most users on the ground.

The Big Creek non-motorized designation would be easy to delineate on the ground as it closes all the area surrounding Edwardsburg to motorized use. The area bumps up to the Wilderness boundary to the east, to existing closed motorized use areas to the north, and uses ridge tops to the south.

***Proximity of non-motorized areas to parking and access points:***

The proposed non-motorized designations offer numerous new opportunities for access points into the backcountry. The Granite Mountain/Slab Butte non-motorized area can be accessed using groomed snowmobile trails, as can the Upper Payette Lake and Secesh Area designations. The proposed area to the north of Little Payette Lake and the Lick Creek areas offer skiable terrain within 3 miles of parking and/or trailhead for human powered skiers (those without snowmobiles to access terrain).

The War Eagle non-motorized designation does not offer opportunities for skiers because of its remote location. The Lake Creek/French Creek area may open up possibilities for skier day trips off the groomed snowmobile trails leading to Burgdorf Hot Springs. The Edwardsburg area designation would offer opportunities to those non-motorized users in Edwardsburg, but is too far a destination for the average skier to travel for a day ski trip. For backcountry skiers to use the area they would need to lodge overnight in Edwardsburg. The designation would provide an opportunity for an outfitter-guide to conduct backcountry ski trips out of the community of Edwardsburg, and host overnight lodging making skiing the area more feasible.

***Acres of terrain available for backcountry skiing in non-motorized areas:***

Acres of skiable terrain would go from approximately 160,490 acres (10% of the project area) up to 222,468 acres (14% of the project area), an increase of almost 62,000 acres. This alternative provides the most non-motorized skiable terrain of any alternative, spread over a large area on the Forest. Backcountry skiers desiring a more primitive recreation experience would find many areas providing that opportunity.

### **Issue 3: Cost to Program Management**

This alternative closes 70 miles of trail, approximately 28 more miles of trail than Alternative B closes. This would have some measurable effect on the trail budget, because several of these trails were on the annual maintenance schedule (\$7,000/year savings by removing 15 percent of 70 miles of trails from the maintenance schedule at \$700/mile maintenance). Closed trails would be taken off the maintenance schedule and maintenance dollars could be focused on high use trails. It would also negate the need for database management and condition survey reports on 70 miles of trail resulting in additional cost savings to the program.

Closing numerous trails to motorized use would reduce the potential amount of trails available to maintain under the Trail Ranger Program and eliminate potential grant funding sources for reconstruction from the Off Road Motor Vehicle Fund and the Motorized Recreation Fund. Trail rangers could still perform trail maintenance on the remaining 408 miles of two-wheel motorized and ATV trails and grants could still be solicited from the non-motorized grant fund available from the State of Idaho, and other grant sources.

Designating trails from two-wheel motorized to non-motorized use would have minimal benefits to the cost of maintaining these trails. Mountain bikes, stock and hiker use can still cause rutting and erosion problems, and trails would still need to be signed. There would be no reduction in database management, as non-motorized trails require the same amount of data management as motorized trails.

Designating numerous acres as non-motorized over-snow use in the winter months would incur costs to the program, primarily for signing and patrolling the area for compliance with the new designations.

Designating seasonal NFS road 50209 (2.2 miles) as an ATV trail in MA3 would bring an additional 2.2 miles of trail onto the trail system and add approximately 0.3 miles per year to the maintenance schedule. There would be no measurable cost to the trail system once the trail has been brought up to standard. Bringing the trail to standard could cost as much as \$30,000 if major reconstruction is needed.

#### **Issue 4: Safety**

Designating numerous two-wheel motorized trails as non-motorized with this alternative would likely displace many two-wheel motorists to other remaining motorized trails on Forest. The remaining motorized trails would likely become more crowded and there could be the potential for more accidents due to the additional use.

Non-motorized trail users would likely have a benefit to their safety experience on the newly designated non-motorized trails, with less potential for motorized and non-motorized collisions on the trails.

Projected increases in snowmobile use coupled with decreased area to ride on the east side of the Forest could cause an increase in riders in the Council, New Meadows, and Weiser areas. These areas are already busy, so there would be a higher density of motorized users concentrated in a smaller area, potentially adding to accidents along groomed routes and in the backcountry.

By eliminating over-snow motorized use from many areas across the Forest, the backcountry non-motorized users would have a safer experience, free from potential collisions with snowmobiles, and skiing through the ruts created by the machines.

#### **Issue 5: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

Summer

- MA 4 – With the designation of two-wheel motorized trail 279 as non-motorized, Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) acres could revert to Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) acres.
- MA 6 – SPNM could grow, and SPM drop, with the designation of trail 511 as non-motorized use.
- MA 9 – With trail 153, trail 503 and trail 116 proposed for designation from two-wheel motorized to non-motorized use, acres could go from Roded Natural (RN) to either SPM or SPNM.
- MA 12 – With the designation of two-wheel motorized trails to non-motorized trails in the Williams Peak, Savage Point area, many acres could be converted from SPM to SPNM.

Winter

- MA 5 – Several hundred acres could go from SPM to SPNM as a part of the Granite Mountain non-motorized proposal.
- MA 6 – SPNM acres could grow, and SPM could drop, with the Granite Mountain area becoming non-motorized over-snow.
- MA 7 – Large acres would go from SPM to SPNM with the designation of the Lick Creek area as non-motorized over-snow.

- MA 8 – With the additional closures proposed around the existing Jughandle non-motorized over-snow area, SPM acres could drop and there could be large gains in SPNM acres around that area.
- MA 12 – Several hundred acres in the Burnside, Duck Lake area could be converted from SPM to SPNM with the proposed non-motorized over-snow use.

## ***Alternative E***

### **Issue 1: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in summer**

#### ***Miles of open and seasonally open NFS roads:***

In MA's 3, 7, and 11, several short sections of unauthorized road, totaling 2.8 miles, would be designated as open NFS roads. These designations would provide for general access and access to dispersed camping areas beyond the extent of the 300-foot off road allowance.

In MA 3, road 507104000 connects the Fruitvale Road (an Adams County road) to Forest road 50710. The road is frequently used by the public to access the forest and was recently improved by Idaho Power under special use permit. If this road were not kept open access to the Forest from the Fruitvale road would be eliminated. Road 507142000 connects designated NFS roads 50712 and 50714 and is currently open and used frequently by the public.

In MA 6 Alternative E designates NFS road 50268 to Duck Lake as a one-mile non-motorized trail. Users would have to hike in from the trailhead making for a four mile round trip hike, as opposed to a two-mile round trip hike under Alternative A. This will make access to the lake more difficult especially for the disabled, young children, and older adults.

In MAs 7 and 11 several roads designated as open would provide access to dispersed camping areas or trailheads beyond the extent of the 300-foot open area. Most of these roads have been improved and are currently being used as access to dispersed camping sites. If these roads were not kept open then access would be lost to these dispersed use areas. In the Ruby Meadows area two existing ATV routes on unauthorized roads (Road 530641100, 0.5 miles, and Road 503641102, 0.3 miles) would be restricted to non-motorized use. While this would close off a small area to motorized use there are alternate ATV routes proposed in the area. Road 51871 (1.3 miles) was restricted to non-motorized access with the Burgdorf Road Management decision.

All of the above roads would be designated as Maintenance Level 2 roads, allowing the PNF to maintain them to prevent erosion problems and to increase user comfort. These roads would also appear on the motor vehicle use map as open for motorized vehicle use.

#### ***Miles of two-wheel motorized and non-motorized trail***

There would be approximately 507 miles of two-wheel motorized trail and 538 miles of non-motorized trail designated under this alternative. This represents a reduction of approximately 75 miles of two-wheel motorized trail and an increase of 34 miles of non-motorized trail Forest-wide from the current condition.

The reductions occur in MAs 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 12. Some of these trails are proposed for closure and some are proposed for designation as non-motorized. Many of the trails proposed for closure are not currently usable, so their change in designation would have little effect on users. These trails would still be available for hiking, stock use, and mountain bike riding. Converting trails to non-motorized use would eliminate motorized access to some destinations, and potentially concentrate use on remaining roads and trails. However, even with the projected increase in motorized use on trails, there should still be sufficient motorized trail available to

allow users to disperse on the remaining trails. There would be some loss of expert two-wheel motorized trail, potentially displacing expert users.

Non-motorized trails and abandoned trails will not appear on the MVUM (motor vehicle use map). Non-motorized trails will appear on the Forest Visitor Use Map, sold at Forest Service offices. The removal of unusable motorized trails from the MVUM would prevent the public from being misled.

In MA 2, two-wheel motorized trails 234 and 252 would be designated non-motorized. Both trails are steep and hard to locate on the ground. On trail 252, the Forest Service does not have an easement across a private property parcel, so motorized use should not be encouraged, and the trail would need reconstruction and relocation when funds become available.

In MA3, trail 212 would be closed to protect fisheries values. Although roads still access the Poison Timber Point area, the single-track trail experience would be lost. Two-wheel motorized trails 248 and 352 would be designated as ATV trails. Motorcycle riders could still use these trails, but would lose their single-track experience, and could encounter more motorized traffic as a result of the designation. While motorized use is not eliminated from these trails, the experience would be changed for two-wheel riders, and they may decide to no longer use these routes.

In MA 4 a portion of the popular two-wheel motorized trail 279 is proposed for non-motorized designation. Under this alternative the trail would remain open to two-wheel motorized use to a scenic vista point where most riders currently turn around. The remainder of the trail, descending into Rapid River via a series of steep switchbacks, would be limited to non-motorized use. This expert-level motorized riding opportunity would be lost.

In MA 6 two-wheel motorized trail 160 would be designated as non-motorized from the junction with trail 163 north to road 50339. Motorized users have not used this section of the trail recently because the bridge that forded Clayburn Creek has been removed and because the trail has become overgrown. The bridge would be very costly to replace and funding is not currently available. If in the future the bridge is replaced, two-wheel motorized designation would be reconsidered. The northern section of the trail from road 51509 to Rainbow Lake would remain two-wheel motorized.

A short two-wheel motorized spur trail, trail 344, between Rainbow Lake and Black Lake, would be designated as non-motorized. Riders could park their bikes at Rainbow Lake and walk the one mile to Black Lake where the trail ends.

Trail 511 would also be designated as non-motorized removing motorized access around Hidden Lake. However, riders could still travel from Hazard Lake to Upper Hazard Lake past Hard Creek Lake, and over to road 50796 and the Hard Creek Trailhead.

In MA 7, the portion of trail 117 along the shoreline of Box Lake is proposed for conversion to non-motorized. The motorized section would end at the northwest corner of the lake.

In MA 9 the two-wheel motorized portions of trails 348 and 503 are proposed for conversion to non-motorized. This would eliminate a motorized loop opportunity off trail 504. A portion of two-wheel motorized trail 505 is proposed for closure and would eliminate a connector between trails 506 and 149 provide an alternate connection less than one mile north of trail 505. Motorized users coming off road 50308 would need to travel north to Lava Lakes and then turn back south to travel the still open portion of trail 505 rather than being able to travel due east as most users currently do.

In MA 10, trail 137 from Cottontail Point (a popular trail during hunting season) would be designated as a non-motorized trail. This trail drops into Houston Creek and is very steep, wet, and rocky, and difficult to maintain for two-wheel motorized use. Water currently runs down the

trail year-round. Other opportunities have been created nearby for ATV and two-wheel motorized use to provide access into this area. Two-wheel motorized trail 132 would be converted to non-motorized. The ATV portion of this trail provides motorized access in the area.

In MA 12, two-wheel motorized trails 70, 73, 71, and 75 are proposed for designation s non-motorized trails to offer a non-motorized trail system in the Williams Peak area. Trailhead registration shows few two-wheel motorized users on these trails. Current use is low and made up of primarily stock and hikers. The conversion of these trails to non-motorized use would concentrate the two-wheel motorized use in the Teapot Mountain, Sawpit Hill, and Miners Peak areas offering multiple miles of two-wheel motorized trail.

The restriction of road 50673 to two-wheel motorized from Hamilton Bar to the junction with trail 76 would affect people who currently drive full-size vehicles to the end of the road. The decision to convert this stretch of road to two-wheel motorized was made with the South Fork Salmon River Road project in 1990. Two-wheel motorized use would then continue on to trails 76 and 77. Potential hikers would leave their cars two miles sooner and hike down the road/trail to two trails 76 and 77.

Miles of non-motorized trail in Alternative E increases by approximately 34 miles Forest-wide. Although this alternative proposes a number of non-motorized trails for closure, the proposed conversion of two-wheel motorized to non-motorized trails results in a net increase in non-motorized trail Forest-wide. The trails proposed for closure are located in MAs 2, 3, and 12. In MA 2 trail 286 was obliterated by past road construction and therefore access opportunities are not actually lost with this proposed closure. Trail 225 is located in a burned-over area and cross-country foot and stock travel is still permitted in the area so opportunities for access are not lost. In MA 3 approximately 6 miles of non-motorized trail are proposed for closure. The majority of these trails are no longer locatable on the ground because of past fire activity, grazing, and timber harvesting. The closure of the 214 trail connector would eliminate a motorized cutoff between trails 213 and 201; however, the two trails connect a few miles to the south.

In MA 12, three non-motorized trails would be closed, trails 303, 304, and 305. With the closure of these trails, there would not be trail access to White Rock Peak. Hikers could travel cross-country or on the old granite trail bed that has not been maintained for years resulting in no measurable effects to users. This trail has not been used by stock. The closure of trail 305 would eliminate access to Blackmare Lake from the Square Top Lake area, but users can still use trails 99 and 100 to access the lake from the Kennally Creek area, or go to Square Top Lake and travel cross country about a mile to Blackmare Lake. The existing 305 trail gets little use and has not been maintained.

Users would have a new non-motorized trail system in the Williams Peak area free from motorized traffic, noise and exhaust fumes. The loss of non-motorized trails in the above MAs should have minimal effect to the non-motorized user because most of these trails were not locatable on the ground. Non-motorized cross-country travel would continue to be allowed in the old trail beds, and use would be similar to what it is today. New opportunities for non-motorized trail experiences would be found on the trails proposed for conversion from two-wheel motorized to non-motorized in MAs 2, 6, 9, 10, and 12.

With proposed trail closures, or conversions to non-motorized designations in this alternative, miles of two-wheel motorized loop trails would drop to approximately 20 miles. Two-wheel motorized loops were lost in MA 2 – trail loop 234, 251, 252; MA 4 trail loop 153, 347, 371; MA 9 trail loop 503, 348, 504, and trail loop 506, 505, 149. The MA 2 loop does not fully exist on the ground so it is not a true opportunity lost, since riders are not utilizing at the present time. MA 4's loop is not used as a loop ride. Eliminating the two trail loops in MA 9 would not eliminate

motorized access to nearby lakes, but would require the riders to travel in and out on the same trails.

Non-motorized trail loop opportunities are the same as analyzed in Alternative A existing condition for MAs 1 through 11, and 13. In MA 12 the Square Top loop would be lost due to proposed trail closures of trails 304, and 305. The Square Top area still provides non-motorized access into Blackmare Lake, but the non-motorized trail loop opportunity is lost, although non-motorized users could still travel cross-country along the old route. The Williams Peak loop is added as an opportunity with the designation of trail 70 as non-motorized, for a forest-wide total of 127 miles of non-motorized trail loops.

***Miles of ATV trail:***

Designated ATV trails increase by approximately 18 miles under Alternative E. These additional ATV miles are located in MA 2, MA 3, MA 6, MA 8, MA 10, MA 11, and MA 13. The greatest gains are on the west side of the Forest on the Council Ranger District. The addition of these trails to the ATV system would provide increased access to dispersed campsites. Of the 18 miles of additional ATV trail, 1.1 miles in MA 3 would need reconstruction to connect small portions of existing roads and trails proposed for designation as ATV trails. The use of closed road 50405 as an ATV trail would offer an easy ride between the Hazard Lakes, with views and places to camp. This would be a good family trail ride, as the roadbed is flat and wide.

Some ATV routes are proposed as road to trail conversions. The proposals in MA 10 and MA 13 to convert roads to ATV trails would maintain motorized access into areas on roads that have been difficult to maintain due to resource issues. Full-sized vehicles cannot easily travel on these roads at this time, so conversion to ATV would provide reasonable motorized access and would not preclude future development of the road. In MA 11 numerous road to trail conversions are proposed. These trails would provide good family ATV opportunities.

ATV access would be lost in MA 4 as trail 191 is proposed for designation as seasonal two-wheel motorized. This is a heavily used ATV trail and would be a loss to current ATV users (primarily bow hunters in the fall). All motorized users would lose motorized access after October 1, when the trail would become seasonal non-motorized. This trail management strategy was proposed to try to eliminate unauthorized ATV use occurring off the end of the trail in Paradise Flat.

ATV trail loops are the same as analyzed in Alternative A, current condition, and total 7.5 miles.

***Miles of OHV trail:***

OHV trails are more commonly known as 4-wheel drive or “jeep” trails. These trails are maintained to accommodate full-sized 4-wheel drive off-road vehicles rather than as roads. Miles of designated OHV trail would go from 2.8 miles to 7.4 miles, an increase of 4.6 miles. A new OHV trails/road is proposed in MA 3 on an unauthorized road. In MA 13, the first 1.1 miles of trail 67 are proposed for management as an OHV trail. There are many roads maintained to accommodate 4-wheel drive vehicles rather than passenger cars on the Forest (Class 2 roads) that would continue to provide recreationists with a 4-wheel drive experience, but these roads are not considered official OHV trails. Therefore, there is more opportunity for 4-wheel driving than just on designated OHV trails.

***Acres open to cross country motor vehicle use:***

See discussion for Alternative B.

## Issue 2: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in winter

### *Acres open and closed to over-snow vehicles:*

Available acres for motorized over-snow use would go from the current condition of 1,078,540 to 962,790, a reduction of approximately 115,750 acres (retaining over 63% of the Forest within the project area open to over-snow motorized use). This alternative closes areas to motorized over-snow use for two reasons, to provide a non-motorized experience for skiers and snowshoers, and for wildlife protection. Some of the areas proposed for closure to motorized use, were not used by snowmobilers in the past, and would not likely be used by skiers under the new designation, as they are too far from trailheads and access routes. Several motorized play areas would be eliminated, but the overall snowmobile experience on the Forest would not change to a large extent, and would continue to provide many thousands of acres of play areas, groomed trails, and remote destinations for the snowmobile rider to enjoy. It is not expected that the proposed area designations would alter the trip destinations of riders coming into the McCall and Cascade areas during the winter season. While popular areas would be eliminated in the Slab Butte and Granite Mountain areas, new open areas would be added to the system in the Warren area outside of McCall, and Hitt Mountain area near Cambridge, offering substitute areas to ride and explore.

This alternative seeks to provide over-snow motorized opportunities while limiting potential conflicts between motorized and non-motorized uses by providing several new non-motorized over-snow areas. While the entire forest is open to use by non-motorized users, only certain areas have provided the experience many users desire, an area free from motorized encounters, noise, and exhaust fumes. Similar to Alternatives B and D, these areas would give the non-motorized user an opportunity for a more primitive, quieter skiing or snowshoeing experience without the chance of a motorized encounter.

In MAs 5 and 7, the Bear Basin non-motorized area proposed in Alternative E, is the same as analyzed in Alternative C. It was designed to allow snowmobile riders living in the homes around Bear Basin to utilize access routes located east and west of the closure, and also access the main Goose Lake and Warren Wagon groomed routes. The non-motorized designation should have minimal effect to motorized riders as access is still available from both West Face parking lot and the Warren Wagon Road area. Riders who enjoyed play areas in and around Bear Basin would be restricted to the remaining open area losing some riding opportunities close to home. This would primarily affect those riders wanting a short ½ hour to 1 hour ride from home, such as families, and beginning riders. Riders would also lose the opportunity to explore in the popular Granite Mountain area above Goose Reservoir. They would however retain the use of the popular “Boulevard”, and the lake basins surrounding this area. A new area closure is added to this alternative known as Slab/76. This area lies northwest of Brundage Reservoir and is currently used by both snowmobilers and skiers. This alternative would close the use of this area to motorized users, making it available solely for skiing and snowshoeing during the winter months. The Brundage snow-cat program would be allowed to operate in both the Granite Mountain and Slab areas under Special Use Permit authorization. (The permittee would also continue to operate within the shared use areas covered under the permit.) Closing these areas to motorized over-snow use give skiers opportunities to have untracked snow for longer periods of time, which is especially important when there are days or weeks between fresh snowfalls.

Several areas previously closed to motorized use would be opened in this alternative. The small closure in the old Hitt Mountain Ski area in MA 3 would be open for motorized use. This would allow snowmobiles to use this area. Skiers use this area for skiing, but need a snowmobile to access it due to distance from a trailhead. Opening the area to motorized use would give both skiers and snowmobilers the opportunity to use the area. Use in the area is low, so user conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users are not anticipated.

Another area to be opened to motorized use is the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak area in MA 11. Fires occurred in the area in 1994 and 2000 opening up many play areas for snowmobilers. This area would provide a fun experience off groomed routes for snowmobilers of all abilities. This area is not utilized by skiers to any measurable degree as there are other, closer areas to ski. The Warren Highlands area in MA 10 would also be opened to over-snow motorized use. The area is along a groomed route far from McCall and likely would not get extensive use by snowmobilers, but would offer a new area for exploration. Residents and overnight visitors of Warren would benefit by being able to use the area for riding.

An additional large non-motorized designation would be added to the existing Big Creek non-motorized area. The road to Big Creek would remain open to snowmobile use, and is managed under a Valley county road easement. While this closure was designed to benefit wildlife, it could also benefit back country skiers by creating a new area for use. Skiers would have to use a snowmobile for road access and stay overnight in Big Creek due to the distance from McCall, so use would likely be low. Skiers also have the Frank Church Wilderness just to the east of Big Creek. The loss of the area off the road to snowmobile use could affect several of the residents in Big Creek who provide services to snowmobile riders coming into the Big Creek area. If the ability to travel off trail is restricted, riders may opt to not visit the area.

A small area called Crestline is proposed for designation to non-motorized use in MA 7. This restriction would minimally impact snowmobile users as it is in dense forest and is not currently heavily used by snowmobiles. The primary effect would be to local homeowners who wish to go for a short snowmobile ride. Motorized access to the area would still be available from the north, where the most use occurs. The most popular riding area north of Blackwell Lake is less densely forested and would remain open.

The designation of a non-motorized area in Patrick Butte and Hazard Creek in MAs 6 and 9 was proposed for the protection of wildlife habitat. The closure located on a ridgeline, does get use by expert snowmobile riders who explore far beyond the groomed routes and play areas. The area is steep and riders need to be very experienced. Most riders find it too far and difficult to ride. The lands proposed for non-motorized designation to the west of Hazard Creek ridge are low elevation and have unreliable snow coverage, so there should be little effect to snowmobile riders.

The Marshall Meadow non-motorized designation proposed in MAs 10 and 11 would protect wildlife habitat connectivity. Snowmobile riders currently do not use this area. The Bear Pete non-motorized designation in MA 11, is used by snowmobile riders exploring remote terrain, however the northern end of the closure is too forested for riding. This area would be unlikely to be used by backcountry skiers as it is too remote.

The Lick Creek non-motorized designation in MAs 7 and 12 is the same area analyzed in Alternative B.

***Miles of groomed snowmobile trail:***

Miles of groomed trail would be the same as analyzed in Alternative C.

***Use areas with clear boundary designations (winter):***

The Forest would need to use education and good maps to ensure motorized users are able to locate the boundaries of proposed closures on the ground. Bear Basin, in MAs 5 and 6, utilizes a highway as its southern boundary. The other boundaries would be posted and maintained by the Payette Lakes Ski Club, making accidental intrusions unlikely. The Granite area motorized closure in MA7 would have a definable boundary called the “Boulevard”, a groomed route that divides the ridgetop, the reservoir below, and ridgetops to the east and west. The Slab/76 closure in MA 7 is easy to understand because it comes directly off the Brundage Reservoir along the

lower boundary, and utilizes road 50013 (a groomed snowmobile route in the winter) as the western boundary. The Crestline South area is defined by a ridgetop trail and Blackwell Lake to the south, and by creek drainages to the east and west.

Jughandle in MA 8 would continue to be challenging to define on the ground. Most of the open meadows are easy to distinguish from a distance as the Jughandle area, but motorized users continue to ride in the area. More patrol would be needed to enforce this motorized closure.

The boundary of Patrick Butte and Hazard Creek in MAs 9 and 6 is definable by ridgetops, but may be difficult to distinguish on the ground. Bear Pete closure in MA 11 would have definable boundaries using the Burgdorf road as the eastern boundary, and ridgetops for the western boundaries.

The Marshall Meadow closure boundaries follow ridgetops on the northern Marshall Mountain boundary, and War Eagle Mountain to the south, but the east and western boundaries would be difficult to locate on the ground and may require signing to help riders locate themselves. Signing of the area would be difficult because of the distance of the closure from McCall.

Big Creek area in MAs 12 and 13 should be easy for users to recognize on the ground, as they can only travel along the Big Creek road corridor. Anything off road, on National Forest System lands would be restricted to non-motorized use from Profile Gap north on the Big Creek road. The Lick Creek closure is defined by roads and ridgetops easily visible to users.

***Proximity of non-motorized areas to parking and access points:***

Bear Basin non-motorized designation would have trailhead access from a new parking lot providing Nordic skiers and snowshoers an opportunity to ski directly from their cars. The proposed non-motorized designation in the Slab/76 area in MA 7 would give human powered skiers and area close enough to use without needing a snowmobile to access the area. It is about a 2 mile trip one way to the top of Slab. Skiers can ski over from the Brundage parking lot and skin up and ski down in a reasonable amount of time. To access the Granite closure skiers would need a snowmobile, or to use the Brundage Snow Cat program. The Squaw Point non-motorized area can be accessed by snowmobile, and the area is close enough for a ski trip to be accomplished in one day.

Jughandle skiers would continue to have access problems as there is no parking lot or road access close to the base of the mountain. Users would continue to have a two hour or longer ski to the top of the mountain before they begin their skiing down. The proposed Crestline South closure would provide a non-motorized area close to an existing trailhead. The trailhead is located on State of Idaho land and would not be closed to motorized use, but once on Forest (a mile or so up the trail) the area would be closed to snowmobiles. Human powered skiers and snowshoers could utilize this area.

Big Creek, Hazard Creek, Patrick Butte, Bear Pete, and War Eagle would all be too far from access points to be available for day use by skiers or snowshoers, even when using a snowmobile.

***Approximate acres of skiable terrain in non-motorized areas:***

Non-motorized skiable terrain acres would increase by 44,526 acres from 160,490 to 205,016 acres (13% of the project area) under this alternative. The Bear Basin area would provide non-motorized skiable terrain for Nordic skiers and snowshoers. The new area made available in the Slab/76 area provides for quality skiable terrain, as does much of the Crestline South and Granite areas. The Crestline closure would give backcountry skiers new non-motorized skiable terrain, although the skiers would likely encounter snowmobiles at the entrance trailhead located on State of Idaho lands. Lick Creek provides some new non-motorized skiable terrain, although much of it is steep and rocky.

The Bear Pete, Patrick Butte, War Eagle, and Hazard Creek non-motorized areas do provide additional acres for skiing in a non-motorized setting, but these areas would have limited benefit to skiers as they are all located far from access points. Big Creek closure would provide some skiable acres, but is located far from McCall and would not likely be used to a measurable degree unless skiers travel out to Big Creek and stay the night at one of the lodges.

### **Issue 3: Cost to Program Management**

This alternative proposes to add approximately 33 miles of new ATV trails to the designated system across the Forest. At the same time, two –wheel motorized and non-motorized trails are being proposed for closure due to lack of use or poor locations. The resulting balance is a net gain of new trail with this alternative. This slight increase is not expected to cause changes to the existing maintenance schedule. Of this net gain, 2.2 miles are reconstruction, costing approximately \$30,000 to build. Bringing the many miles of unauthorized roads up to standard for ATV trail would vary in cost, dependant on the present condition of the road to be designated as a trail. Road to trail conversions proposed in the alternative would become a new cost to the trail program, and would be funded over multiple years. These new trails would not be designated open until all project design feature requirements have been met. Some proposed trails need a great deal of work to meet trail design features, and others could be added to the system with little work. Forest staff would work with Idaho Parks and Recreation Department to request grant dollars to complete the new trail construction and maintenance.

It could take several years to bring all the proposed ATV trails up to standard and the cost is difficult to estimate. The estimated cost would be between \$23,000 (\$700/mile x 33 miles) to several hundred thousands dollar depending upon the amount of work needed to bring trails up to standard.

By dropping approximately 75 miles of two-wheel motorized trail from the system, maintenance efforts could be directed to the new ATV trails and the remaining OHV, ATV, two-wheel motorized, and non-motorized trails. Based on recent and projected future trail maintenance dollars allocated to the Forest Service by Congress it is likely the Forest would continue to struggle with maintenance of existing trails remaining on the system, and the added maintenance associated with new ATV trails. With over 1,160 miles of trail remaining on the designated system outside wilderness, and the additional 550 miles in wilderness, the Forest cannot realistically meet trail maintenance needs.

### **Issue 4: Safety**

The designation of unauthorized roads to ATV use, and associated restriction of use by other full size vehicle traffic, should improve the safety of riders using these trails. Users would not encounter full size vehicles on their routes eliminating the potential for collisions between full size vehicles and ATV users. The trails would be brought up to trail standards prior to designation making them safer to ride.

Proposed non-motorized winter use designations should make these areas safer for backcountry skiers by eliminating the potential for snowmobile collisions. It also would eliminate large deep ruts and tracks created by snowmobiles, which are difficult to impossible for skiers to cross. Non-motorized area users would need to be cautious the first couple of seasons as motorized users become familiar with new area restrictions.

### **Issue 5: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

The ROS has been mapped for both summer and winter on the Payette National Forest. With the implementation of Alternative E, some ROS acres could change based upon line officer discretion

and management strategies for the areas. Areas of Semi-Primitive Non-motorized (SPNM) must be at least 2,500 acres in size and located at least ½ mile from any motorized roads, groomed routes (in winter) or other motorized areas. Areas can cross MAs to achieve the acreage amounts. Site-specific MA mapping in conjunction with the Record of Decision (ROD) is needed before actual ROS acre changes can be estimated. Therefore only qualitative descriptions of potential broad scale changes to ROS are provided.

#### Summer

MA 4 – a small portion of trail 279 is proposed for conversion to non-motorized use as it goes into the canyon down to the river, the surrounding acres could go from SPM to SPNM since it connects to other SPNM acres. This would eliminate a portion of an SPM stem into the canyon and offer a more non-motorized recreation opportunity.

MA 6 – Slight changes are possible from RN to SPNM with the proposal to change the designation of trail 511 from two-wheel motorized to non-motorized, and with the same change proposed for a portion of trail 160. This area could offer a more primitive recreation experience.

MA 11 – The thousands of acres currently mapped as RN west of Burgdorf road should be reclassified as SPM to better reflect the recreation opportunity and experience provided for in the area, which does provide for a remote challenging recreation experience.

MA 12 – With two-wheel motorized trails 70, 71, and 72 proposed for designation as non-motorized trails, this Williams Peak area could go from SPM to SPNM. The experience users would now get in the area would fit that ROS category of challenge, risk, and solitude with no motorized use.

#### Winter

MAs 5 and 6 – Acres could go from SPM to SPNM with the Granite Mountain designation as non-motorized (when combined with the acreage in MA 6 there are over 2,500 acres), but with the permitted use of the Brundage snow cat, the area does not offer a truly non-motorized experience, and would likely remain SPM.

MA 7 – Allowing for the ½ mile corridor for snowmobile use on Lick Creek road, there would still be acres available to move from SPM to SPNM in the Lick Creek non-motorized area.

MA 6 and 9 – Patrick Butte and Hazard Creek closures to over-snow motorized use would create the potential for a large conversion of SPM acres to SPNM.

MA 10 – There could be large scale changes in current SPNM acres to SPM acres with the implementation of motorized over-snow travel in the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak area and Warren Highlands area.

MA 11 – There could be large scale changes in acres in SPNM to SPM with the implementation of motorized over-snow travel in the chimney rock area. Implementation of the Big Creek closure to motorized over-snow use could change large areas of SPM designation to non-motorized. The Bear Pete and Marshall Meadows closures are large enough that former SPM could be converted to SPNM.

MA 12 – Implementation of the Big Creek closure to motorized over-snow use could change large areas of the SPM designation to SPNM. The entire portion of the Lick Creek area proposed in MA 12 could go from SPM to SPNM.

### 3.2.6 Cumulative Effects

The following actions were considered in the cumulative effects analysis for the recreation resource:

- 1) Past Road Construction and Management: The road system designated will continue to offer multiple recreation opportunities. The closure of the Forest to off road travel may increase use of the remaining designated open road system.
- 2) Past trail construction and management: Similar to past road construction and management above.
- 3) Price Valley Snowmobile Parking Lot: This new parking area may bring additional use into a previously low use winter area, potentially bringing recreational use impacts.
- 4) Brundage Mountain Land Exchange: Future development including condominiums, single family homes, and new roads will likely occur surrounding the base area of Brundage Mountain Resort bringing with it more recreational use.
- 5) Brundage Mountain Resort – Snow Cat Skiing: New facilities proposed the Ski Area including new lifts and infrastructure will bring more recreational users to the area and resulting impacts.
- 6) Burdorf Road Management and Abandoned Mine Reclamation: New ATV trails in the area authorized under the decision may increase ATV use in the area and on adjoining trail systems.
- 7) FRTA Easement: As the counties receive road easements, future groomed over-snow trails could be managed in a different way, by increasing or decreasing the number of miles groomed.
- 8) State of Idaho Land Exchange and Tamarack Activities: This land exchange could result in trading lands in the West Mountain area to the State of Idaho. The resulting trade could bring additional recreational users into the area resulting in an increase of recreation facilities and on recreational demands on adjoining Payette National Forest lands.
- 9) Little Ski Hill Operation: The new Nordic Trail system located in the Bear Basin area could continue to grow bringing in more Nordic skiers, resulting in an increased demand for more Nordic opportunities across the Forest.

#### Introduction

Travel management decisions resulting from this project could contribute to cumulative effects of other decisions and actions on recreation opportunities in the Payette National Forest and surrounding area. Various ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions on the PNF and adjacent Federal, State and private land that are pertinent to the cumulative effects analysis for this project are identified in Appendix D.

The Travel Management Plan decision made with this project, along with other travel management decisions made on the Boise NF and other federal and state lands, will have potential cumulative effects on recreation, particularly motorized recreation activities.

Over the next four years as all National Forests across the nation begin to implement new travel regulations in accordance with the final rule for travel management, acres that were previously open to off-route motorized use will be lost as a recreation opportunity and experience. Users desiring this experience will need to find designated open areas, or restrict their use to designated roads and trails, private land opportunities, or seek opportunities on other public agency lands. Loss of previously open cross-country motorized areas in the summer months will concentrate motorized users onto a smaller trail network potentially causing crowding on some motorized trails. New winter non-motorized area designations may bring additional non-motorized recreationists into the area to utilize those areas.

Future residential subdivision and commercial development along the PNF boundary may increase user trails from private property into the Forest. Development of these lands would also restrict past uses ranging from parking, trail access, ski trails and cross county travel of many types. Multiple existing trails start, pass through, or end on private lands. Changes in land ownership could cause these trails to be difficult to keep open or access. The east side of the PNF is adjacent to Long Valley and Meadows Valley, both of which are experiencing tremendous growth, particularly in sales of second homes. Buyers of second homes often choose an area for its recreation opportunities. Current and proposed recreational and commercial development, such as Tamarack Resort, and the subdivisions proliferating in both valleys, will increase the local recreation user base. Continued subdivision growth up to the PNF boundary is foreseeable in the future.

The development of Tamarack Resort and future expansion at Brundage Mountain Resort could bring more skiers into the community in winter months. Development of additional Nordic areas, both on private and NFS lands, could potentially increase the demand for Nordic skiing.

The town of McCall, once a timber and ranching town, has become a destination recreation resort town. This has brought a different type of recreational user into the community, one with more disposable income and time for both motorized and non-motorized recreation. In summer and winter months, recent changes, and advances in technology have led to motorized machines that can go places not accessible several years ago. Increases in motorized use have led to a demand for allocated use areas so both motorized and non-motorized users can enjoy their sport.

The west side of the Forest is located proximate to large population areas including the cities of Boise, Ontario and Weiser. Many inhabitants of these urban areas visit the PNF to recreate and demand for recreation opportunities is expected to increase. Increases in demand for all recreation opportunities - both motorized and non-motorized – could increase the need for and cost of regular road and trail maintenance.

Future vegetation treatment projects may have temporary to short term effects on recreational by restricting access during operations (logging, prescribed burning, road construction). These projects could open up forest canopy and may improve scenery and increase recreational access and use in both summer and winter seasons.

### **Issue 1: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in summer**

***Miles of open and seasonally open NFS road:*** The travel plan would result in incremental changes to the miles of open and seasonally open roads under any of the action alternatives. Open road miles are reduced by no more than 14 miles (in Alternative D) representing an estimated 1.2% reduction in open road miles. Similarly, seasonally open roads are reduced by no more than 18 miles (in Alternative D) representing an estimated reduction of less than 4% of the seasonally open road miles. As such, cumulative effects on open or seasonal road motorized opportunities are expected to be small and immeasurable.

***Miles of two-wheel motorized and non-motorized trail, ATV trail, OHV trail, and acres open to cross-country motor vehicle use:*** This travel plan will result in incremental reductions in the amount of two-wheel motorized trail miles available for recreationists. Non-motorized trail miles increase in alternatives A, D and E, and are reduced slightly in alternative C. Incremental effects on ATV trail opportunities vary ranging from a reduction of 6 miles (an estimated 8%) in Alternative D and to increases of 14 to 53 miles (19-71%) in the other action alternatives. OHV trails change very little in all alternatives except E, where OHV miles more than double from the existing condition of 2.8 miles to 7.4 miles. Given the relatively small mileage compared to the entire road network available, the change in OHV miles is expected to have a minimal cumulative

impact on OHV trail users. The greatest incremental effect with the travel plan is the complete reduction in acres open to indiscriminate motorized cross-country travel.

Due to the increasing recreation population, and OHV, horse, and pedestrian trails proliferating from private property, encroachments onto Federal land are likely to increase. As more motorized users come into the area the demand for additional recreational opportunities could increase across the Forest.

The general trend in recent years has been to restrict motorized use of public lands for purposes of environmental and resource protection. Travel restrictions affect a broad range of forest users including not only ATV, motorcycle, and snowmobile riders, but also people who access the outdoors in passenger cars, vans, SUVs, and pickups. Travel decisions may preclude access to dispersed campsites, fishing holes, hunting areas, wildlife viewing sites, historic ruins, rock climbing spots, and other recreational places. Restricted access can lead to more demand for the routes and areas that remain open. Private lands are increasingly being closed to any type of public use. The closure of thousands of acres to motorized cross country travel with this travel plan will add to the cumulative loss of motorized cross country travel areas accessible and available to the public.

As public awareness increases regarding the new Travel Rule, staying on designated trails and areas may become universally expected behavior among OHV users in the summer and winter months.

## **Issue 2: Motorized and non-motorized opportunities in winter**

*Acres open and closed to over-snow vehicles:* Closing large areas to over-snow motorized travel could result in less motorized users coming into the local communities to recreate, but with all the opportunities still available on Forest, and on adjacent Forests and private land, this is unlikely. Therefore, there are only minor contributions to cumulative effects on motorized and non-motorized winter recreation opportunities in any of the action alternatives.

*Miles of groomed snowmobile trail, Use areas with clear boundary designations (winter, Proximity of non-motorized areas to parking and access points for backcountry use, Approximate acres of skiable terrain in non-motorized areas:* Decisions made in this Travel Plan have only minor contributions to cumulative effects for these indicators.

**Issue 3: Cost to Program Management:** Decisions made in the Travel Plan will contribute minimally to cumulative effects on cost to program management.

**Issue 4: Safety:** The Travel plan will minimally contribute to cumulative effects of overall safety on the Forest. In general, designations in the travel plan would result in reductions in use conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users resulting in an incremental improvement to overall user safety.

**Issue 5: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum:** Changes made to ROS as a result of the Travel Plan could contribute minimally to cumulative effects on Semi Primitive motorized and semi-primitive non-motorized areas across the Forest.

## **Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments**

Changing area and trail designations from motorized to non-motorized or vice versa are not considered irreversible or irretrievable because the trails and roads would remain on the landscape and the Forest could always change the designation in the future.

## Forest Plan Consistency

All of the proposed alternatives, including Alternative A (No Action), are generally consistent with the Forest-wide recreation and inventoried roadless area (IRA) standards for management with the following exceptions (Recreation Specialist Report: Project Record):

- While all alternatives meet goal REGO05 (Forest Plan 2003: p. III-62) which provides broad direction concerning the overall management of motorized and non-motorized travel the action alternatives best meet this goal by adopting a Forest-wide travel management plan that is consistent with the 2003 Forest Plan.
- All action alternatives are consistent with recreation and IRA standards: “On all lands outside of designated travel ways, motorized use shall be prohibited unless otherwise authorized.” (Forest Plan 2003: p. III-64) Alternative A – No Action is not consistent with this standard, since it retains over 500,000 acres open to motorized cross-country travel.
- Alternatives B and D best meet guideline REGU17 (Forest Plan 2003: p. III-66) which emphasizes management to minimize winter recreation conflicts by separation of uses when needed.
- All alternatives are consistent with Forest Plan direction regarding ROS which is: “Achieve or maintain the following ROS strategy (specific to each MA)...The above numbers reflect current travel regulation. These numbers may change as a result of travel planning”; and Objective REOB03 (Forest Plan 2003: p. III-62) – “Update existing ROS inventories as part of project-level planning and implementation if project activities cause a change in recreation setting conditions significant enough to reclassify the affected area.”

All alternatives, including to a lesser degree Alternative A (No Action), would move the Forest towards the desired condition for recreation resources found on p. III-61 in the Forest Plan (Forest Plan 2003). The alternatives would accomplish this by the designation of specific areas and routes for motorized and non-motorized users to:

- Provide a wide spectrum of recreation experiences.
- Manage recreation opportunities to provide reasonably safe experiences.
- Locate and managing dispersed recreation sites in an environmentally responsible manner.
- Reduce conflicts between recreationists.

## Project Record

The *Recreation Specialist Report* in the Project Record is incorporated into this EIS (40 CFR 1502.21). The recreation specialist relied on the detailed data, methodologies, analyses, conclusions, maps, references, and technical documentation in the *Recreation Specialist Report* to make the conclusions presented in this EIS.

### 3.3 Recommended Wilderness and Inventoried Roadless Areas

#### 3.3.1 Scope of the Analysis

The geographic scope for the assessment of effects to Recommended Wilderness and Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA) includes all IRAs on the Payette National Forest (PNF). There are no IRAs within the FC-RONR Wilderness.

#### Issues and Indicators

**Roadless Issue 1:** Increases in motorized use may affect future wilderness potential, and wilderness attributes in Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs).

#### Indicators:

- Effects to wilderness potential.
- Effects to wilderness attributes of Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs): natural appearance, natural integrity, opportunities for solitude, opportunities for primitive recreation, and special features.

#### Background

The Forest received a number of comments regarding management of IRAs during the project scoping period. Travel Plan alternatives could affect wilderness attributes and future wilderness potential of IRAs due to their differing motorized trail and road designations.

#### 3.3.2 Forest Plan Direction

##### Desired Condition

The Forest Plan (Forest Plan 2003: p. III-73) identifies the Desired Condition of IRAs as: “IRAs contribute to providing a range of uses and opportunities and do not contain classified (designated NFS) roads. Some IRAs exhibit many values associated with undeveloped landscapes.”

The Forest Plan provides a range of direction for IRAs. The Forest Plan maintains roadless characteristics on 277,500 acres of IRA and unroaded character (allows trail construction but not road construction) on 532,000 acres of IRA. Limited road construction or reconstruction is allowed on 96,300 acres and full development on 2,700 acres (Forest Plan 2003). Portions of two IRAs, Secesh and Needles, are recommended for wilderness designation. Other IRAs were assigned various Management Prescription Categories (MPCs) that guide protection or development (see Table IRA-2). Pertinent Forest Plan direction is identified in Table IRA-1 below.

**Table IRA-1: Forest Plan direction for Recommended Wilderness and Inventoried Roadless Areas Pertinent to the Travel Management Analysis.**

Number	Direction	Page
WRST01	Recommended Wilderness: Changes to existing settings (mapped ROS classes) are limited to only those that maintain or restore wilderness characteristics.	III-74
WRGU03	Non-conforming uses in recommended wilderness should not be promoted.	III-74
MPC 1.2 Recommended	No new motorized or mechanical uses will be allowed, except where these uses must be allowed in response to reserved or outstanding rights, statute or treaty.	III-82

Number	Direction	Page
Wilderness Standard		
MPC 1.2 Recommended Wilderness Standard	Road construction or reconstruction may only occur where needed: To provide access related to reserved or outstanding rights, To respond to stature or treaty.	III-82
MPC 2.2 Research Natural Areas Standard	Road construction or reconstruction may only occur where needed: To provide access related to reserved or outstanding rights, To respond to stature or treaty, or To maintain the values for which the RNA was established.	III-83
MPC 3.1 & 3.2 Restoration & Maintenance of Aquatic, Terrestrial, & Hydrologic Resources Standard	Road construction or reconstruction may only occur where needed: To provide access related to reserved or outstanding rights, To respond to stature or treaty, or To address immediate response situations where, if the action is not taken, unacceptable impacts to hydrologic, aquatic, riparian or terrestrial resources, or health and safety, would result.	III-84, III-85
MPC 4.1a & 4.1c Undeveloped Recreation	Within IRAs, road construction or reconstruction may only occur where needed: To provide access related to reserved or outstanding rights, To respond to stature or treaty.	III-85, III-86
MPC 5.1 & 6.1 Restoration and Maintenance Emphasis Guideline	Road construction or reconstruction may occur where needed, To provide access related to reserved or outstanding rights, To respond to stature or treaty, or To achieve restoration and maintenance objectives for vegetation, water quality, aquatic habitat, or terrestrial habitat, To support management actions taken to reduce wildfire risks in wildland-urban interface areas, or To meet access and travel management objectives.	III-87, III-88

### 3.3.3 Existing Condition

Table IRA-2 summarizes the amount of each MA inventoried as roadless and the roadless acres in each MPC.

**Table IRA-2. Inventoried Roadless Areas by MA and MPC\*.**

MA	IRA Name	Total acres	Acres by MPC				
			1.2	2.1, 2.2	3.1, 3.2	4.1, 4.2	5.1, 5.2
1	Hells Canyon/Seven Devils Scenic Indian Creek	26,783		0	0	26,783	0
2	Cuddy Mountain Hells Canyon/Seven Devils Scenic Indian Creek	20,973		1,820		16,483	2,670
	Rapid River	2,845				2,845	
	Indian Creek	4,820				4,820	
	Rapid River	5,450		14		5,435	
	Sheep Gulch	5,815			5,815		
3	Council Mt.	16,568		108		16,460	
	Cuddy Mt.	20,035				20,028	7
	Poison Creek	387				383	4
	Rapid River	553				553	
	Snowbank	1,518				1,518	
4	Rapid River	47,108	4,079	1,915		41,111	2
	Patrick Butte	7,033				7,032	
5	Patrick Butte	3,793			343	3,450	

**Table IRA-2. Inventoried Roadless Areas by MA and MPC\*.**

MA	IRA Name	Total acres	Acres by MPC				
			1.2	2.1, 2.2	3.1, 3.2	4.1, 4.2	5.1, 5.2
	Rapid River	4,567			4,567		
6	French Creek	11,403			1,738	9,664	2
	Patrick Butte	34,835			30,011	4,824	1
7	French Creek	20,704			18,453	2,351	
	Needles	21,934	19,107			2,827	
	Secesh	35,780	8,015		19,848	7,912	5
8	Needles	24,631	12,413		9,435	2,783	2
9	French Creek	39,647		676	38,950		20
	Patrick Butte	35,015		1,145	24,148	9,723	
10	Cottontail Pt.	61,754			36,136	25,619	
	Pilot Peak						
	Crystal Mt.	535			535		
	French Creek	3,627			3,552		75
	Secesh	5,400		1,090	4,310		
11	Chimney Rock	8,534			8,534		
	Cottontail Pt.	48			48		
	Pilot Peak						
	Crystal Mt.	12,469			12,469		
	French Creek	13,435			13,435		
	Secesh	28,308	2,851		25,457		
12	Caton Lake	45,418		1,139	44,279		
	Cottontail Pt.	27,538			19,538	7,999	
	Pilot Peak						
	Needles	87,236	62,244	23,585	1,407		
	Sesech	149,100	106,375	1,745	40,923	56	
13	Big Creek Fringe	1,083			1,066	17	
	Cottontail Pt.	3,585				3,585	
	Pilot Peak						
	Horse Heaven	13,446			13,446		
	Meadow Creek	8,015			8,015		
	Placer Creek	6,945			2,831	4,115	
	Secesh	32,684			32,513	171	
	Smith Creek	2,285			2,285		
	Sugar Mtn.	10,341			10,341		

\*Due to differences in GIS databases these numbers may differ slightly from numbers in the Forest Plan and in the other analyses in the Travel Plan. Cells with numbers less than 100 acres may be mapping errors.

## Discussion of Existing Condition

Portions of the Secesh and Needles IRAs are recommended for Wilderness designation

### *Summer*

The existing condition of the IRAs in MA 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 is not currently being negatively affected by the current Travel Plan or unauthorized access.

In MA 6, damage from motorized off-trail use is occurring in the Patrick Butte IRA, including pioneering of unauthorized ATV trails.

In the Partridge Creek/Upper Twin Lakes IRA in MA 9, unauthorized ATV use is occurring on trails restricted to two-wheel motorized use.

In MA 10, unauthorized ATV use is occurring in the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA around Warren Summit. These intrusions into non-motorized areas are affecting wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation and natural appearance and integrity.

### *Winter*

Unauthorized snowmobile use is occurring in MAs 7, 10, and 11 in the French Creek IRA, Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA and Chimney Rock IRA. Recent fires have opened forests in these IRAs and unauthorized snowmobiling in the areas is occurring. Non-motorized boundaries of the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA are not posted on the ground and not easily distinguished by terrain features. The non-motorized boundaries of the Chimney Rock IRA are not posted on ground, but are easily distinguished by groomed trails and roadbeds.

In MA 8, the Jughandle Mountain closure area in the Needles IRA is receiving unauthorized snowmobile use. MA 12 has minimal snowmobile intrusions into the Caton Lake IRA, which is closed to over-snow motorized use. All of these intrusions by over-snow vehicles are currently affecting the wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation. These intrusions also affect natural integrity because these areas provide important areas for landscape (wildlife habitat) connectivity

## **3.3.4 Environmental Consequences**

### **Effects Common to All Action Alternatives**

#### **Effects to Wilderness Potential in Inventoried Roadless Areas**

None of the actions proposed in any of the alternatives would have a measurable effect to future wilderness potential of the IRAs. Although some alternatives propose additional motorized trails in IRAs and/or additional over-snow motorized use, none of these activities would occur to a degree to detract from future wilderness potential or compromise the roadless and undeveloped character of the IRAs. No additional motorized trails or over-snow winter use is proposed in the IRAs recommended for wilderness (portions of Secesh and Needles IRAs), therefore there would be no degrade to the existing conditions of those two areas.

### **Direct and Indirect Effects by Alternative**

#### ***Alternative A – No Action***

##### ***Summer***

There are not presently notable effects to existing wilderness attributes in the IRAs in MA 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

In MA 6, damage from motorized off-trail travel would likely continue in the Patrick Butte IRA. Although recreation technicians would attempt to resolve the developing unauthorized motorized trails with additional patrol and user education, it is likely that pioneering of unauthorized ATV trails would continue throughout the IRA.

In MA 9, prohibited ATV use on trails restricted to two-wheel motorized use would continue to occur in the Partridge Creek/Upper Twin Lakes IRA.

In MA 10, prohibited ATV use occurring in the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA around Warren Summit would likely continue and possible escalate. ATV trails are also being pioneered into the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA, and this would likely continue.

For the MAs discussed above, intrusions by motorized use into non-motorized areas would affect wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation and natural appearance and integrity by creating noise, and potential pioneering of trails by motorized equipment. These intrusions also

affect natural integrity because non-motorized areas provide important areas for landscape (wildlife habitat) connectivity and security.

### ***Winter***

Unauthorized snowmobile use would likely continue in MA 10 (Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA) and MA 11 (Chimney Rock IRAs). Recent fires have opened forest in the IRA and unauthorized snowmobiling in the areas is prevalent.

Unauthorized snowmobile use would likely continue in the Squaw Point closure in MA 7 and 11 within the French Creek IRA and the Jughandle closure in the Needles IRA would continue to experience snowmobile intrusions. MA 12 has some minimal snowmobile intrusions into the Caton Lake IRA, which is closed to over-snow motorized use. All of these intrusions by over-snow vehicles affect the wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation. These intrusions also affect natural integrity because these areas provide important areas for landscape (wildlife habitat) connectivity and security.

### ***Alternative B – Proposed Action***

Under Alternative B, there would be no effects to wilderness attributes of IRAs in MA 1 and MA 13.

### ***Summer***

In MA 2, elimination of cross-country motor vehicle use would benefit wilderness attributes in the Rapid River IRA. Changing two-wheel motorized Grouse Creek/Grizzly Creek trail 252, Crooked River trail 253, and Dukes Creek trail 254 to non-motorized trails would benefit the Cuddy Mountain IRA wilderness attributes for solitude.

MA 3 contains the Council Mountain IRA and a small portion of the Snowbank and Cuddy Mountain IRAs. While the majority of the Council Mountain IRA is already closed to cross-country motor vehicle use in summer, several hundred acres remain open, at least seasonally and would be closed with this alternative. A small portion of the Snowbank IRA would be closed to motorized cross-country travel. The East Fork Pine Creek trail 263 within the Cuddy Mountain IRA would be designated for non-motorized use. These proposed changes would benefit the wilderness attributes of the IRAs; solitude, primitive recreation, and natural integrity. Natural appearance would benefit because the evidence of motorized equipment would decline. Special features would remain unchanged because no ground disturbance is proposed.

MA 4 contains portions of the Rapid River and Patrick Butte IRAs. Most of the Rapid River IRA is currently closed to motorized travel, so only a few acres would be added to that designation. Within the Patrick Butte IRA hundreds of acres would be closed to motorized cross-country travel. In addition, two-wheel motorized trails (Patrick Butte trail 153 and Hard Butte trail 344) would be converted to non-motorized trails within the Patrick Butte IRA. ATV trail (Rankin Mill trail 191) and 2-wheel motorized trail (Frypan Creek trail 279) located within the Rapid River IRA would also be converted to non-motorized use. These non-motorized use designations in the Patrick Butte IRA would improve the already high wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation and would benefit natural appearance and integrity.

In MA 6, cross-country motor vehicle use would be eliminated from several hundred acres in the Patrick Butte IRA, benefiting wilderness attributes by reducing motorized noise and promoting primitive recreation. Also the proposed designation of a portion of Vance Creek trail 160, and trail 344, from two-wheel motorized to non-motorized use would further benefit wilderness attributes of primitive recreation in the Patrick Butte IRA.

In MA 7, motorized summer cross-country travel would be eliminated from a portion of the Secesh and French Creek IRAs benefiting wilderness attributes related to solitude and primitive recreation.

In MA 8, the IRAs are primarily closed to motorized cross-country travel. The additional conversion of two-wheel motorized Needles Summit trail 101 and Kennally trail 99 to non-motorized would benefit solitude and primitive recreation wilderness attributes in the Needles IRA.

Patrick Butte and French Creek IRAs lie within MA 9. Two-wheel motorized trails recommended for conversion in the French Creek IRA to non-motorized trails are Patrick Butte trail 153, a portion of Little French/Scribner Ridge trail 348, and a portion of Little French Creek Meadow trail 503. In the French Creek IRA, 2-wheel motorized trails proposed for designation to non-motorized are French Creek trail 116, and a portion of trail 505 (between 506 and 149). These designations would benefit solitude and primitive recreation wilderness attributes in these IRAs.

In MA 10, elimination of cross-country motor vehicle use would benefit the wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation in the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA. Designation of two-wheel motorized trail 137 and a portion of trail 132 to non-motorized use would benefit wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation in the IRA.

While MA 11 contains portions of several IRAs (French Creek, Crystal Mountain, Chimney Rock and Secesh) much of the MA is currently designated as a non-motorized use area. Trail proposals to add ATV trails using existing unauthorized roads and trails on the ground would not affect existing wilderness attributes of primitive recreation where it occurs in areas currently open to cross-country motor vehicle use.

In MA 12 the following trails would be converted from two-wheel motorized to non-motorized: Eagle Rock trail 290 in the Caton Lake IRA; Cougar Creek trail 98, Martin Ridge trail 301, Blackmare Creek trail 100 in the Needles IRA; and Williams Peak trail 73, portion of Rainbow Ridge trail 71, and Deadman Creek trail 75 in the Secesh IRA. The above recommendations would benefit the wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation.

### ***Winter***

A portion of the Patrick Butte IRA (MA 6) is proposed for non-motorized over-snow use in the Granite Mountain area. If unauthorized intrusions by snowmobile users continue in the area, this use would negate many of the benefits to wilderness attributes from the non-motorized designation.

Several thousand acres in the Secesh IRA (MA 12) to the west of Lick Creek road are proposed for designated non-motorized use benefiting primitive recreation and increased solitude wilderness attributes in the IRA.

### ***Alternative C***

Discussed below are effects in MAs that differ or are in addition to those discussed in Alternative B. No additional motorized trails or over-snow winter use is proposed in the IRAs recommended for wilderness (portions of Secesh and Needles IRAs), therefore there would be no degrade to the existing conditions of those two areas.

### ***Summer***

In MA 3, trail 214 (201-213 connector) located within the Council Mountain IRA is proposed to convert from non-motorized to two-wheel motorized use. This change in designation would

slightly affect the IRAs ability to provide wilderness attributes of solitude and a primitive recreation experience.

In the Caton Lake IRA in MA 12, non-motorized Log Mountain trail 192 is proposed for designation as a two-wheel motorized trail. Wilderness attributes would not be affected to a measurable degree as motorized use currently occurs in nearby areas.

### ***Winter***

In MA 6, fewer acres are proposed for non-motorized over-snow use in the Granite Mountain area than in Alternative B. This smaller closure could slightly benefit the winter wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation in the Patrick Butte IRA. Occasional motorized use associated with the Brundage Mountain Resort Snow Cat operations could offset the slight beneficial effects.

In the Secesh IRA in MA 7 more acres would be open to over-snow motorized use than in Alternative B, but less than in the existing condition (Alternative A), so there would be some beneficial effect to wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation by eliminating motorized use.

Previously non-motorized use acres in the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA (MA 10), Chimney Rock IRA (MA 11), and a portion of terrain in the South Fork Salmon River area, within the Caton Lake IRA (MA 12) would be designated open for motorized over-snow use. Opening these IRAs to over-snow motorized use would negatively affect the wintertime attributes of solitude and primitive recreation. There would be little opportunity for a visitor seeking solitude to escape the sights and sounds of motorized use. Snowmobile tracks would be evident throughout much of the area, the sound of snowmobiles would be heard in much of the area, and the smell of exhaust could be present when snowmobiles are using the area. Because some snowmobile users enjoy “highmarking” upper elevation bowls, the signs of snowmobile use would at times be visible from many areas until new snowfall covered the tracks. These impacts are transitory in nature and cause minimal physical changes to the ground. The remoteness of the area would be less during the winter due to the presence of motorized use.

Snowmobile use has little lasting impact on the natural features or landscape. Wilderness characteristics would only be impacted during a portion of the year and some for only a temporary basis. As a transitory winter use, snowmobile use leaves few visible signs of past use. Impacts to the natural integrity are generally slight, with the exception of impacts to landscape (wildlife habitat) connectivity and security, where impacts could be much greater (see Wildlife Resources section).

### ***Alternative D***

Discussed below are effects in MAs that differ from those discussed in Alternative B. Under this alternative, which emphasizes non-motorized use, effects to IRAs wilderness attributes would be beneficial. Motorized use would be removed from many areas, positively affecting solitude, primitive recreation and natural integrity.

### ***Summer***

In the Secesh IRA in MA 7, Box Lake trail 110 and Victor Lake trail 117 are proposed for conversion from two-wheel motorized to non-motorized trails benefiting the wilderness attributes of the IRA.

In the Patrick Butte and French Creek IRAs of MA 9, all or portions of two-wheel motorized trail French Creek trail 16 (6.1 miles), Lava Lake trail 374, and Little French Creek Meadows trail 503

would be closed. These conversions are large enough in scale that as a whole they would likely have beneficial effects to wilderness attributes of primitive recreation experience and solitude.

### ***Winter***

Alternative D recommends the most acres and areas closed to over-snow motorized use of any alternative. Area closures are recommended in the Patrick Butte, Secesh, Crystal Mountain, Placer Creek, French Creek, and Needles IRAs. All designations would close previously popular snowmobile terrain in these IRAs, and would substantially change the primitive recreation and solitude available to non-motorized users. These new non-motorized areas would result in beneficial affects to the IRAs wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation.

### ***Alternative E***

Discussed below are effects in MAs that differ or are in addition to those discussed in Alternative B. No additional motorized trails or over-snow use is proposed in the IRAs recommended for wilderness (portions of the Secesh and Needles IRAs), therefore there would be no change to the existing condition for these two areas.

### ***Summer***

Elimination of motorized cross-country travel in the summer months would benefit all of the IRAs on the forest where motorized cross-country use is currently allowed. With this use evidence of motorized vehicle use would decline, improving primitive recreation experiences and natural integrity of the IRAs. MAs 6, 7, 10, and 11 are the same as analyzed in Alternative B.

In MA 2, trails 253 and 254 remain two-wheel motorized so there are no additional benefits to the Cuddy Mountain IRA as mentioned in Alternative B. In MA 3, effects are the same as analyzed in Alternative B with the exception of the East Fork Pine Creek trail 263, which remains open to two-wheel motorized use in Alternative E, offering no additional benefits to the wilderness attributes of the Cuddy Mountain IRA.

In MA 4, two-wheel motorized trails 153, 279 (majority of trail), and 344 remain open to two-wheel motorized use in Alternative E, so there would be no measurable improvements to the Rapid River IRA wilderness attributes over the existing condition.

Within MAs 8 and 9 effects would be similar to those analyzed in Alternative A.

MA 12 would have two-wheel motorized trails Williams Peak 73, portion of Rainbow Ridge 71, and Deadman Creek 75 designated non-motorized, benefiting the wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation in the Secesh IRA.

### ***Winter***

There is no change to the existing condition in IRAs located in MAs 1, 2, 3, and 4. Analysis for those MAs can be found in the Alternative A discussion.

The non-motorized designation proposed for the Granite (Patrick Butte IRA), Slab (French creek IRA), Lick Creek (Secesh IRA), and Big Creek (Secesh IRA) areas would close many acres formally open to motorized over-snow use. These new non-motorized areas would result in beneficial effects to the IRAs' wilderness attributes of solitude and primitive recreation during the winter months.

Effects of opening the Chimney Rock IRA in MA 11 and a portion of the Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak IRA in MA 10 are analyzed in Alternative C.

### 3.3.5 Cumulative Effects

In general, the alternatives considered in the Travel Plan analysis would incrementally benefit wilderness attributes of IRAs on the PNF and likely be cumulatively beneficial to these attributes when combined with other ongoing projects and reasonably foreseeable actions on the Forest (see Alternative D). The greatest benefits occur with Alternative D followed by Alternative B. One exception would be with Alternative C where increases in motorized trails (see discussion for MA 3) and motorized over-snow vehicle use (while not inconsistent with Forest Plan direction) could result in localized impacts on natural appearance, opportunities for solitude, and opportunities for primitive recreation. In the case of summer motorized use, these effects would be slight. In the case of winter use, the increase in over snow motor vehicle use would likely cumulatively contribute to negative effects on natural integrity in relation to landscape (wildlife habitat) connectivity and security.

### Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments

In general, effects to roadless resources from changes to area and trail designations (motorized to non-motorized or vice versa) would not be irretrievable because the Forest could change the designation in the future. Selection of Alternative C could have irretrievable effects to the roadless resource of natural integrity by reducing landscape (wildlife habitat) connectivity with subsequent effects on threatened or sensitive wildlife species. In either case, changes would not be irreversible, since no effects to nonrenewable resources would occur.

### Forest Plan Consistency

Forest Plan direction (Forest Plan 2003) would be met for all IRAs. All alternatives are consistent with IRA recommended wilderness areas, including MPC 1.2 Standard which states “No new motorized or mechanical uses will be allowed, except where these uses must be allowed in response to reserved or outstanding rights, statute or treaty.”

### Project Record

The *Roadless Area Report* in the Project Record is incorporated into this EIS (40 CFR 1502.21). Specialists on roadless areas relied on the detailed data, methodologies, analyses, conclusions, maps, references, and technical documentation in the *Roadless Area Report* to make the conclusions presented in this EIS.