

TABLE OF CONTENTS**CHAPTER 1 - FOREST PLAN INTRODUCTION**

In almost 20 years since the original Beaverhead and Deerlodge Forest Plans were developed, things have changed and we've learned more about resource management. Our experience with Plan implementation along with significant advances in scientific thinking about land management resulted in two needs for change. First, actual management direction needed to change in the areas now referred to as Key Issues. Second, the basic framework and organization of the Plan needed to change. This chapter is designed to highlight that framework, how it differs from the 1986 and 1987 Plans and why the new framework is necessary.

This Forest Plan guides all natural resource management activities and sets management standards for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. It was developed as Alternative 5, the Preferred Alternative in the accompanying Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). It describes resource management practices, levels of resource production and management, and the availability and suitability of lands for resource management.

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA), regulations, and other documents guided the preparation of this Forest Plan. Land-use allocations, management practices, objectives, and standards are statements of the management direction in this Forest Plan. Projected activities, services, and rate of implementation depend on the annual budgets.

This Draft Plan was developed only for Alternative 5 and provides a draft of broad program-level direction for management of the land and resources. Future projects will carry out the direction contained in the final Forest Plan. The Draft or Final Forest Plan does not contain commitments to implement specific projects. An environmental analysis is conducted, when required, for all projects as they are proposed. In addition to direction found in this Draft Forest Plan, projects are also implemented through direction found in the Forest Service directive system (manuals and handbooks) and other directives.

SIX DECISIONS MADE IN A FOREST PLAN (1982 CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS)

Forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives including Projections of Goods and Services that may be produced (36 CFR 219.11(b)).

Forestwide management requirements (standards) (36 CFR 219.13 – 219.27).

Management Area direction and prescriptions, including Management Practices (36 CFR 219.11(c)).

Suitability for Timber and Grazing (36 CFR 219.14, 219.16, and 219.20).

Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements (36 CFR 219.11(d)).

Recommendation to Congress of areas eligible for wilderness designation as required (36 CFR 219.17 (a)) .and rivers eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as required by 16 USC 1271-1287, 36 CFR 297 and 47 FR 39454.]

The Draft Forest Plan consists of 5 chapters, a glossary and several appendices

Chapter 1 introduces the Forest Plan; explains the purpose, structure, and relationship to other documents; provides a general description of the Forest; and summarizes the issues and analysis of the management situation for the revision. It also outlines the Ecosystem Management Framework related to Forest Plan development.

Chapter 2 provides a summary of the Analysis of the Management Situation, including a description of the revision topics. (It will be included in the Final Forest Plan)

Chapter 3 is the actual Plan. It provides Forestwide objectives and standards and also describes Forestwide allocations and management area direction.

Chapter 4 provides the Monitoring and Evaluation direction for implementation of the Plan.

The Glossary provides definitions of terms we use regarding resource programs.

GENERAL FOREST DESCRIPTION

The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest covers 3.32 million acres, or about 42% of Beaverhead, Butte-Silver Bow, Deerlodge, Granite, Jefferson, Madison, Powell, and Broadwater counties, in southwestern Montana. Its island mountain ranges contain nationally famous trout streams and elk populations and a large amount of wilderness and roadless areas. The general area features patterns of forest and meadows in addition to expanses of sagebrush and grasslands. The culture is one of western open space traditions and customs.

The Forest Supervisor's Office is located in Dillon, Montana. There are Ranger District offices in Butte, Deerlodge, Dillon, Ennis, Phillipsburg, Whitehall, Wisdom, and Wise River. The Forest is managed for a wide range of resources and opportunities including watershed, wildlife, wilderness, range, recreation and wood products.

FOREST NICHE - DISTINCTIVE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION

The Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest is important among National Forest System Lands and within southwestern Montana for its contributions to species diversity, ecosystems, public open space, lifestyle recreation, tourism, commodity production, and to local economic opportunities.

With lands on both sides of the Continental Divide, the Forest's streams are headwaters to rivers flowing through both the western and eastern USA. The fisheries of these streams are valued for providing natural habitat and for recreational use. Water from the Forest remains important to local communities and agriculture.

Complex geology here contributes to the scenery, the variety of opportunities, and to local economics. Minerals here have attracted people looking for metals to meet their needs since prehistoric times. Mineral uses continue with minimal impact to the environment.

Advantage comes to many species from the boreal climate and four distinct seasons. About half of the native plant species found in Montana are present on the Forest. Many species of wildlife

are found within the areas both on and off of the Forest. The Forest continues to support a diverse biotic component; all native species present in 2005 are viable and supported by Forest management.

Southwestern Montana's rich cultural history is inextricably tied to the resources of the Forest. Historic features are common, from aboriginal flint collection sites to those related to European settlement into the mining and ranching heritage of today. Many present day lifestyle traditions, like hunting, camping, and pack trips, livestock grazing, and using wood products, can be traced to land-based pursuits of the distant and recent past.

A wide variety of recreation activities are common on the Forest. Opportunities for day hiking in non-motorized settings, picnicking, and OHV trail use are available within a 30 minute summer drive of Butte, Anaconda, Deerlodge, Phillipsburg, Boulder, Ennis, Whitehall, and Dillon. Hunting includes a mix of walk-in and longer drive or OHV activities. In winter area residents and visitors participate in both non-motorized cross-country skiing and snowmobiling near towns when snow conditions are favorable.

Uncrowded backcountry in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) provides non-motorized opportunities for backpacking and stock packing in Wilderness and other primitive areas. Motorized backcountry provides challenge for visitors using off-highway vehicles and bicycles. More than 240 mountain lakes are available to visitors. They occupy a variety of settings from highly developed at Georgetown Lake to walk-in lakes along the Continental Divide.

Recreation opportunities are available with services and facilities provided by the private sector including winter sports areas, recreation resorts, outfitted hunting, snowmobiling, and summer backcountry trips. Partnerships and agreements with local recreation clubs enhance a variety of experiences like cross-country skiing and snowmobiling. Infrastructure, including roads, trails, campgrounds, trailheads, and other site and routes facilitate the variety of recreation uses on the Forest.

Methods for using resources to benefit people while maintaining healthy ecosystems are employed. Forest professionals embrace and help develop advancement in land management sciences.

The Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest has a unique place in the National Forest System, the state of Montana, and counties in southwestern Montana. Our goal is to preserve unique qualities and manage for ecosystem integrity, while providing activities which enrich communities and people's lives now and into the future.

FORESTWIDE DESIRED CONDITION (VISION)

- Ecological processes, which affect the chemical, physical, and biological components of the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and fully support designated beneficial uses, are present and functioning to provide the diversity of forest, shrub land, grassland, riparian, and aquatic communities.
- Within the natural capability of the ecosystem conditions for self-sustaining or viable populations of native and desired non-native plant and animal species are supported.
- Natural disturbance processes are recognized and accepted as essential to the health of ecological communities at various spatial scales across the Forest. Fire is allowed to play its natural role where appropriate and desired. Life, investments, and valuable resources are protected using the full range of appropriate management responses to fire.
- The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, in conjunction with other federal agencies, state, county, Tribal, and city governments, are working together to identify and resolve issues involving species with needs that go beyond Forest boundaries and authority.
- People and communities benefit from programs & infrastructure that support livestock grazing and an array of forest products and services.
- People use the Forest and benefit from a variety of recreation settings and opportunities. The settings range from primitive to develop. The majority of the Forest continues to offer uncrowded backcountry opportunities (motorized and non-motorized uses).
- Mineral and energy resources are explored, developed, and produced according to national direction.
- Resources adversely affected by past management activities have been restored or the related public health and safety issues corrected.
- National Forest land ownership patterns contribute to the open rural landscape and scenery of southwestern Montana. The Forest acts as a partner with adjacent landowners to capitalize on the contribution all lands make to this unique quality.
- National Forest lands have been consolidated through land adjustments. Right-of-ways and conservation easements have been acquired to maintain the integrity of resources and provide public access.
- Heritage resources are preserved and managed for the benefit of the American public.

CHAPTER 2 - SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE MANAGEMENT SITUATION

This section will be included in the Final Forest Plan

The AMS was published as a separate publication in December 2002. It is also summarized in the Proposed Action published in August 2003.