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Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land Management Plan

Custer Gallatin National Forest

Summary



Custer Gallatin National Forest Title Page: Photo Credit Top left to right – Custer Gallatin National Forest Title Page: Photo Credit – Mariah Leuschen-Lonergan. Top left, going clockwise – Coneflower, Echinacea, native wildflowers, Sioux Ranger District; American Flag and U.S. Forest Service Flag displayed in winter on the Hebgen Lake Ranger District; Packing trip in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, Yellowstone, Gardiner and Beartooth Ranger Districts, photo by Terry Jones; Elk grazing on the Gardiner Ranger District with sagebrush in background, foreground; Bison grazing in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem with Arrowleaf Balsamroot in background, Gardiner and Hebgen Lake Ranger Districts; Center - Close up of Indian Paintbrush, Bozeman Ranger District; View looking into the Rock Creek drainage and Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness atop Beartooth Pass, Beartooth Ranger District; Rafting on the Gallatin Wild and Scenic River, Gallatin Canyon, Bozeman Ranger District, Calf nursing from Mother (Cow), Multiple use grazing allotments are a critical economic and social fabric of the Ashland and Sioux Ranger Districts; Holiday Christmas Tree gathering is a long-standing tradition for many Montana families, passed down from generation to generation, Bozeman Ranger District, Custer Gallatin National Forest.

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Summary

Custer Gallatin National Forest

Lead Agency: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service

Responsible Official: Mary Erickson, Forest Supervisor
10 East Babcock
Bozeman, MT 59715
406-587-6701

For Information Contact: Virginia Kelly, Plan Revision Team Leader
10 East Babcock
Bozeman, MT 59715
406-587-6701

Abstract: This document is a summary of the final environmental impact statement that discloses the effects of revising the Custer and Gallatin Plans, which were developed in the 1980s. The proposed action is to provide revised management direction in one land management plan now that the two national forests are administratively managed as one unit (the Custer Gallatin National Forest). This document contains analysis of the preferred alternative, four other action alternatives, as well as a no-action alternative (the current plans) for the programmatic management of approximately 3,046,000 acres administered by the Custer Gallatin National Forest. The Forest Service has identified alternative F as the preferred alternative.

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Introduction

The U.S. Forest Service has prepared a final environmental impact statement that describes and analyzes in detail six alternatives for managing the land and resources of the Custer Gallatin National Forest. The final environmental impact describes the affected environment and discloses the environmental consequences of the alternatives.

The final environmental impact statement is a programmatic document. It discloses the broad environmental impacts and benefits of the proposed alternatives, in contrast to analyses conducted for site-specific projects. This document describes, in general terms, the expected effects of management during the plan period, but does not predict the site-specific effects of future speculative actions each time the standards and guidelines are implemented at the project level. Those site-specific effects would be disclosed in subsequent National Environmental Policy Act reviews during the implementation of individual projects.

Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to revise the 1986 Custer Land and Resources Management Plan (approved in June 1987) and the 1987 Gallatin Forest Plan in compliance with the National Forest System land management planning rule (36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219).

The Custer Gallatin National Forest defined six geographic areas for planning purposes. Figure 1 displays the six geographic areas, and table 1 displays the acres of the national forest by geographic area.

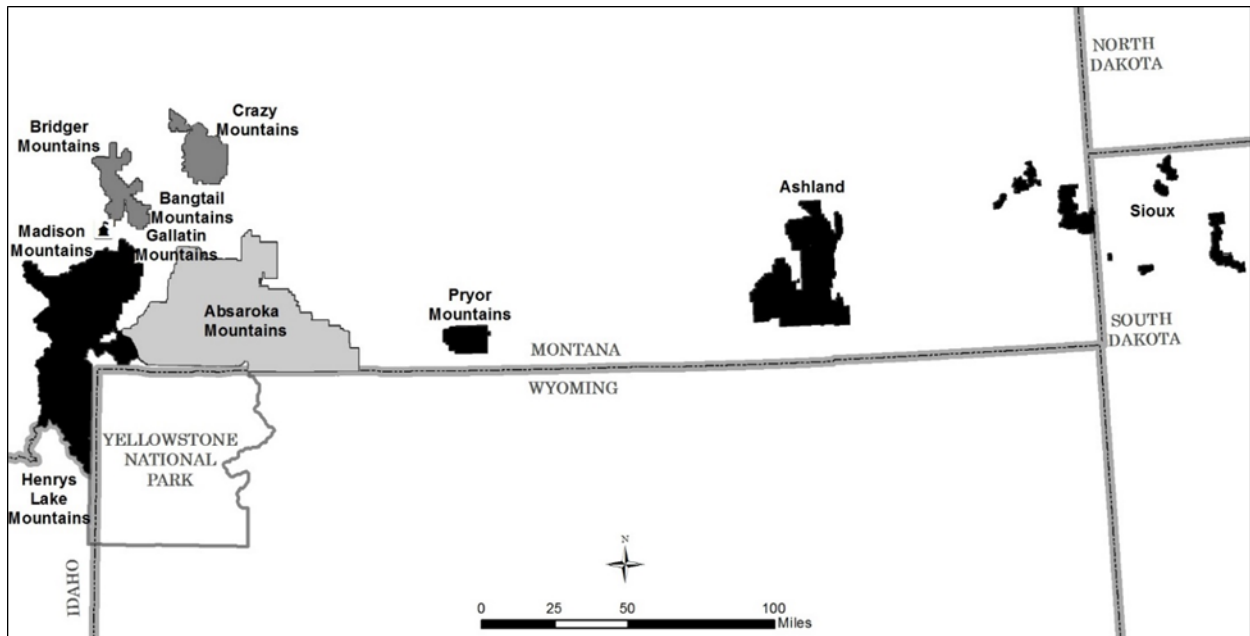


Figure 1. Location of the Custer Gallatin National Forest and geographic areas

Table 1. Acres within the six geographic areas on the Custer Gallatin National Forest

Geographic Area (GA)	Total Acres (All Ownerships)	National Forest System Acres within GA	Percentage of GA in National Forest System Lands
Sioux	176,973	164,460	93
Ashland	501,797	436,134	87
Pryor Mountains	77,944	75,067	96
Absaroka Beartooth Mountains	1,387,707	1,358,541	98
Bridger, Bangtail, and Crazy Mountains	314,598	205,148	65
Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatin Mountains	953,001	806,615	85

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to revise the 1986 Custer and 1987 Gallatin Forest Plans and to provide an integrated set of plan direction for social, economic, and ecological sustainability, and multiple uses of the Custer Gallatin lands and resources.

In the 30 years since the current forest plans were developed: (1) the two national forests have been combined administratively to be managed as a single national forest, (2) demographics have shifted, (3) new threats have emerged, (4) new Forest Service planning regulations have been adopted, and (5) new laws and policies have been adopted. Four broad categories described below relate to the need to change. Taken together, the changes related to these four categories will result in substantial changes to the current plans. The Preliminary Need to Change the Existing Custer and Gallatin Forest Plans (February 2017) describes each category, with examples, in more detail.

Revision is also needed because the current plans are beyond the 10- to 15-year duration provided by the National Forest Management Act (16 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1606(e) (5) (A)).

Public Involvement

The Custer Gallatin forest plan revision process was publicly launched in January 2016. Key milestones for engagement included:

- 2016: public launch; February 4, 2016, Federal Register notice of initiation for the Assessment of the Custer Gallatin.
- 2017: release of Final Assessment Report and final topical reports; public feedback requested on the draft eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers and the Wilderness Inventory.
- 2018: January 3, 2018, Federal Register notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.
- 2019: March 8, 2019, Federal Register notice of availability of the draft plan and draft environmental impact statement.
- 2020: July 10, 2020, Federal Register notice of availability of the draft record of decision, final environmental impact statement for the 2020 land management plan.

Issues

The following issues drove the development of alternatives:

- Different public desires for plan land allocations and the uses allowed in these allocations, such as recommended wilderness areas, backcountry areas or recreation emphasis areas
- Improve the sufficiency of plan direction for wildlife, particularly bison, bighorn sheep and connectivity
- Levels of timber harvest and timber production
- Public interest in higher or lower plan objectives
- Potential locations of new public airfields

Alternatives

In addition to the no-action alternative (A) (often referred to as the current plans) and the proposed action (B), which was modified based on public and internal comments, three additional alternatives (C, D, and E) were developed based on the identified issues. The alternatives span the range of forest management practices and uses of available resources. Alternative F was developed after consideration of comments on the draft plan and draft environmental impact statement, and represents the preferred alternative. The general theme and intent of each alternative is summarized below, in relationship to the issues that drove alternatives. Refer to Chapter 2 of the final environmental impact statement for a more detailed description of the alternatives.

Changes Between Draft and Final

Changes between the draft and final environmental impact statement were incorporated based on public and internal comments, new data and to provide analysis of alternative F. Changes in the wording of plan components occurred between the draft plan (March 2019) and the 2020 Plan (July 2020) for various reasons, including to improve clarity, and to respond to public and internal comments. Comparison of the draft plan with the 2020 Plan is necessary to fully understand all modifications. In the draft plan, some plan components varied by alternative. Refer to the descriptions of the revised plan alternatives in Chapter 2 of the final environmental impact statement for plan component variations that no longer appear in the plan. The variation in objectives by alternative is displayed in table 10 (objectives by alternative).

Following the 60-day objection period and subsequent objection response, additional changes and clarifications were made to the plan and final environmental impact statement including changes to alternative F. Changes were made to respond to the regional forester's instructions, to respond to objections and agency review, to improve clarity or consistency in plan component wording, and to make technical corrections. Comparison of the 2020 Plan with the land management plan is necessary to fully understand all modifications.

Elements Common to Alternatives.

All alternatives adhere to the principles of multiple use and the sustained yield of goods and services required by the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 219.1 (b)). All alternatives are designed to:

- meet laws, regulations, and policies
- contribute to ecological, social, and economic sustainability
- provide sustainable levels of products and services
- provide integrated direction as included in the plan components
- allow reasonable access and mineral development for private mineral rights (locatable mining claims, reserved and outstanding rights) and existing oil and gas leases on the national forest and consistent with subject laws and regulations
- retain the existing decisions for the Northern Rockies Lynx Management direction and Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy direction
- manage the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area consistent with the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (unless released by Congress) and the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (Roadless Rule)
- retain all existing permitted activities and facilities
- do not make oil and gas leasing decisions
- do not make minerals withdrawal decisions

In addition, under the revised plan alternatives:

- Plan direction would be consistent with the 2012 Planning Rule and associated directives, and emphasize adaptive management, and consider the best available scientific information.
- Plan direction would meet the purpose and need for change and address one or more significant issues.
- Plan direction would provide direction that is consistent with the travel planning rule and the existing travel plans, except where suitability for motorized recreation and mechanized recreation varies by revised plan alternatives. Site-specific travel decisions needed to bring travel plans into compliance with the revised forest plan would occur through site specific NEPA decision making subsequent to the revised forest plan decision.
- Designations and plan components would remain constant for designated wilderness; the designated East Rosebud Wild and Scenic River; Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Territory; research natural areas; special areas; national natural landmarks; the Earthquake Lake Geologic Area; national scenic, historic, and recreation trails; and the Beartooth Highway.
- Thirty eligible wild and scenic rivers and their plan components would remain constant.
- A range of options would be provided if Congress were to release the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area. Inventoried roadless area direction would continue to apply in this area.
- Plan components that provide the ecological conditions to support the persistence of species of conservation concern remain constant for all revised plan alternatives. Regional forester sensitive species and management indicator species would no longer be in place under the revised plan alternatives.

Alternative A – No Action (the Current Plans)

Alternative A (also referred to as the current plans) reflects current direction under the 1986 and 1987 forest plans, as amended, and provides the basis for comparing alternatives to current management and levels of output. Alternative A is summarized as follows:

- There are seven recommended wilderness areas totaling about 34,000 acres and three low development areas totaling about 38,000 acres.
- Existing motorized and mechanized transport is suitable in all areas currently suitable. Mechanized transport is suitable in the Lionhead Recommended Wilderness Area.
- The current Gallatin Forest Plan, Gallatin Travel Plan, and inventoried roadless area direction would apply if the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area were released by Congress.
- Eleven eligible wild and scenic rivers are managed to continue their protection of identified outstandingly remarkable values, tentative classifications, and free-flowing nature.
- Existing plans do not have any specific direction or language for bison, disease transmission to bighorn sheep from domestic sheep or goats, or connectivity.
- Lands suitable for timber production are based on the 1986 and 1987 plans, as amended, with current regulations and policies. When consistent with other plan components, harvest for purposes other than timber production could occur on a subset of unsuitable lands.
- Plan objectives reflect a mix of resource enhancement, timber and wood products volume, hazardous fuel treatment, road, trail and facility maintenance, and new recreation facilities.
- Airfields are allowed in certain areas, subject to Forest Service permitting.

Alternative B

Alternative B was the proposed action in the draft environmental impact statement and represents a mix of recommended wilderness areas, backcountry areas, recreation emphasis areas, and lands identified as suitable for timber production. Alternative B is summarized as follows:

- There would be nine recommended wilderness areas totaling about 113,000 acres; nine backcountry areas totaling about 125,000 acres; eight recreation emphasis areas totaling about 177,000 acres and a Stillwater Complex allocation for minerals.
- Existing motorized and mechanized transport and continued use of existing commercial communication facilities would be suitable in recommended wilderness areas. Uses such as existing or new use of cabins as recreation rentals, new recreation events such as races, and new commercial communication facilities would not be allowed in recommended wilderness areas.
- If Congress were to release the wilderness study area, portions of the wilderness study area would have plan land allocations of recommended wilderness area, backcountry area, and recreation emphasis areas; a portion would be managed under inventoried roadless area direction without an additional allocation.
- To address potential disease transmission to native Bighorn Sheep, permitted use of domestic sheep or goats for livestock production and permitted or non-permitted recreational goat packing would be allowed only in limited areas and with mitigation techniques. Use of domestic sheep and goats for

weed control would be allowed with mitigation techniques. Bison direction supports native habitat and access to year-round forage and presence on National Forest System lands. Key linkage areas are included for wildlife connectivity. Grizzly bear developed site guidance inside the recovery zone/primary conservation area would require the number and capacity of developed sites to be maintained at or below 1998 baseline levels.

- Approximately 19 percent of the forest would be suitable for timber production and timber harvest would be allowed on an additional 20 percent of forestlands.
- Plan objectives reflect a mix of resource enhancement, moving toward forested vegetation desired conditions, timber and wood products volume, hazardous fuel treatment, road, trail and facility maintenance, and new recreation facilities.
- Airfields would be suitable in certain areas, subject to Forest Service permitting.

Modifications to Alternative B

Alternative B of the March 2019 draft revised plan was modified so that the Bad Canyon Backcountry Area would be suitable for mechanized transport. In response to public comments, this change was made to more closely align the themes of alternatives B and C with respect to suitability of mechanized transport.

Alternative C

Alternative C also represents a mix of recommended wilderness areas, backcountry areas, recreation emphasis areas, and lands identified as suitable for timber production. The alternative reflects public input for plan land allocations and uses in a number of areas. Alternative C is summarized as follows:

- There would be nine recommended wilderness areas totaling about 146,000 acres; thirteen backcountry areas totaling nearly 300,000 acres; eight recreation emphasis areas totaling about 161,000 acres and a Stillwater Complex allocation for minerals.
- Motorized and mechanized transport and continued use of existing commercial communication facilities would not be suitable in recommended wilderness areas. Uses such as new recreation events and new commercial communication facilities would not be allowed in recommended wilderness areas. Continued rental use of the Windy Pass cabin would be suitable.
- If the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area were released by Congress, plan land allocations for nearly all of the wilderness study area would include recommended wilderness area, backcountry area, and recreation emphasis area; a portion would be managed under inventoried roadless area direction without an additional allocation.
- Plan direction for Bighorn Sheep, bison, grizzly bears and connectivity would be the same as in alternative B.
- Approximately 18 percent of the forest would be suitable for timber production and timber harvest would be allowed on an additional 19 percent of forestlands.
- Plan objectives reflect a similar mix of activities as described in alternative B.
- Airfields would be suitable in certain areas, subject to Forest Service permitting.

Modifications to Alternative C

Alternative C of the March 2019 draft revised plan was modified so that the Bad Canyon Backcountry Area would not be suitable for mechanized transport. In response to public comments, this change was made to more closely align the themes of alternatives B and C with respect to suitability of mechanized transport. In response to public comments, changes and additions were made to plan components and boundaries of several alternative C plan land allocations, as described in Chapter 2 of the final environmental impact statement.

Alternative D

Alternative D was developed to address comments and themes of emphasizing natural processes and restoration. This alternative includes the greatest amount of recommended wilderness areas, higher objectives for restoration, and less land suitable for timber production. Alternative D is summarized as follows:

- There would be thirty-nine recommended wilderness areas totaling about 711,000 acres; one backcountry area totaling about 6,000 acres; and four recreation emphasis areas totaling about 33,000 acres. There would be no Stillwater Complex allocation for minerals, yet mining would continue in the area.
- Motorized and mechanized transport would not be suitable in recommended wilderness areas. Uses such as use of cabins as recreation rentals, new recreation events, and commercial communication facilities would not be suitable in recommended wilderness areas.
- If the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area were released by Congress, nearly the entire wilderness study area is proposed as recommended wilderness area.
- To address potential disease transmission to native Bighorn Sheep, permitted use of domestic sheep or goats for livestock production, permitted or non-permitted recreational goat packing, or use for weed control would not be allowed. Bison direction would support native habitat, access to year-round forage, and a year-round self-sustaining bison population on the national forest. Key linkage areas are included for wildlife connectivity. Grizzly bear developed site guidance inside the recovery zone/primary conservation area would require the number and capacity of developed sites to be maintained at or below 1998 baseline levels.
- Approximately 18 percent of the forest would be suitable for timber production and timber harvest would be allowed on an additional 8 percent of forestlands.
- Plan objectives would emphasize resource enhancement, moving toward forested vegetation desired conditions, hazardous fuel treatment, and moving toward wilderness characteristics. Objectives would deemphasize road and trail maintenance, and new recreation facilities. This alternative proposes a lower timber and wood products volume.
- Airfields would not be suitable on the national forest.

Alternative E

Alternative E was developed to address comments and themes of higher human presence and use of the national forest, additional recreation emphasis areas, increasing timber production from National Forest

System lands, additional motorized and mechanized recreation opportunities, and not including any recommended wilderness areas. Alternative E is summarized as follows:

- There would be no recommended wilderness areas; two backcountry areas totaling about 171,000 acres; twelve recreation emphasis areas totaling about 213,000 acres; and a Stillwater Complex allocation for minerals.
- There would be no loss of existing suitable motorized or mechanized trails or areas. If the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area were released by Congress, the entire wilderness study area would become a backcountry area, and additional land would be available for motorized and mechanized recreation opportunity.
- To address potential disease transmission to native Bighorn Sheep, permitted use of domestic sheep or goats for livestock production, weed control or recreational packing would be allowed with mitigation techniques. Bison direction does not seek to facilitate bison habitat improvement projects and aims to minimize impacts to livestock operations. Vegetation treatment projects and bison-livestock conflicts would favor livestock. Forestwide plan components address connectivity; this alternative does not include key linkage areas. Grizzly bear developed site guidance inside the recovery zone/primary conservation area would require the number and capacity of developed sites to be maintained at or below 1998 baseline levels.
- Approximately 19 percent of the forest would be suitable for timber production and timber harvest would be allowed on an additional 20 percent of forestlands.
- Plan objectives would emphasize timber and wood products volume. The additional Forest Service funding needed to accomplish the higher timber volume would result in lower objectives for resource enhancement, hazardous fuel treatment, moving toward wilderness characteristics, and road and trail maintenance.
- Airfields would be suitable in certain areas, subject to Forest Service permitting.

Alternative F

Alternative F is the preferred alternative and draws from alternatives B through E. It represents a mix of recommended wilderness areas, backcountry areas, recreation emphasis areas, and lands identified as suitable for timber production. Alternative F is summarized as follows:

- There would be eight recommended wilderness areas totaling about 139,000 acres; thirteen backcountry areas totaling about 208,000 acres; ten recreation emphasis areas totaling about 229,000 acres and a Stillwater Complex allocation for minerals.
- Motorized and mechanized transport would not be suitable in recommended wilderness areas. Continued use of existing commercial communication facilities would not be suitable in recommended wilderness areas, except for continued use of the existing Sheep Mountain and Twin Peaks passive reflector sites within their current footprints and with existing types of equipment. Uses such as existing or new use of cabins as recreation rentals, new recreation events such as races, and new commercial communication facilities would not be allowed in recommended wilderness areas.
- Mechanized transport other than game carts would no longer be suitable in the Bad Canyon, Crazy Mountains and Punch Bowl Backcountry Areas and summer motorized transport would not be

suitable in the Punch Bowl Backcountry Area. In all backcountry areas where mountain biking is suitable, mountain biking would be suitable only on approved system routes. In backcountry areas that are not suitable for mechanized transport, game carts would be suitable. No new trails would be allowed in the Cook Mountain, King Mountain, and Tongue River Breaks Backcountry Areas. New mountain bike trails could not be constructed in the Chalk Buttes Backcountry Area, or constructed or designated in the Big Pryor or Lionhead Backcountry Areas.

- If Congress were to release the wilderness study area, portions of the wilderness study area would have plan land allocations of recommended wilderness area, backcountry area, and recreation emphasis area; a portion would be managed under inventoried roadless area direction without an additional allocation. A small portion of the wilderness study area would be managed as a key linkage area.
- To address potential disease transmission to native Bighorn Sheep, permitted use of domestic sheep or goats for livestock production would be allowed only in limited areas and with mitigation techniques. Use of domestic sheep and goats for weed control would be allowed with mitigation techniques. Permitted or non-permitted recreational goat packing would be allowed either with mitigation techniques or with specific conditions, depending on the area. Bison direction supports native habitat and access to year-round forage and presence on National Forest System lands in conjunction with bison herds in Yellowstone National Park, and facilitation of bison expansion into unoccupied, suitable habitat in the area that coincides with the grizzly bear primary conservation area. Key linkage areas would be included for wildlife connectivity, where mountain biking would be suitable only on approved system routes.
- Grizzly bear developed site guidance inside the recovery zone/primary conservation area would require new infrastructure designed to accommodate additional human capacity for administrative or public use to be restricted to the area within the authorized footprint of a site that existed in 1998, or the area within 300 meters of a primary road that existed in 1998.
- Approximately 18 percent of the forest would be suitable for timber production and timber harvest would be allowed on an additional 20 percent of forestlands.
- Plan objectives reflect a mix of resource enhancement, moving toward forested vegetation desired conditions; timber and wood products volume; hazardous fuel treatment; road, trail and facility maintenance; and new recreation facilities.
- Airfields would be suitable in certain areas, subject to Forest Service permitting.

Comparison of Alternatives

Table 2 through table 8 compare alternatives by issue, first at the forestwide scale and then for each geographic area. Issues that are not applicable to a given geographic area are omitted from the table (for example, if no recommended wilderness areas are identified under any alternative, or if no trail suitability is affected under any alternative, those indicators are not listed for that geographic area). Some issues are not relevant to display at the geographic area scale, such as bison management and objectives. Acreages and mileages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Alternative A represents the current plans.

Table 2. Forestwide comparison of issues by alternative

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Recommended wilderness area number	7	9	9	39	0	8
Recommended wilderness area acres	33,741	113,382	145,777	711,425	0	139,425
Backcountry area number	3	9	13	1	2	13
Backcountry area acres	38,414	124,980	299,522	5,937	171,326	207,677
Recreation emphasis area number	0	8	8	4	12	10
Recreation emphasis area acres	0	176,958	160,665	33,408	212,689	229,482
Stillwater complex acres	0	101,832	101,832	0	101,832	101,832
Miles summer motorized trail no longer suitable	0	0	4	172	0	0
Miles mechanized trail no longer suitable	0	0	34	264	0	31
Acres winter motorized transport no longer suitable	0	0	24,885	234,431	0	10,900
Forested acres suitable for timber production; percent Custer Gallatin National Forest	664,628 (22%)	573,275 (19%)	549,115 (18%)	545,274 (18%)	593,735 (19%)	560,071 (18%)
Forested acres unsuitable for timber production but where timber harvest is suitable for other purposes; percent Custer Gallatin National Forest	517,195 (17%)	595,964 (20%)	577,591 (19%)	249,141 (8%)	610,629 (20%)	602,696 (20%)
Bison	No plan direction	Proactive bison support	Proactive bison support	Most proactive bison support	Less proactive bison support	Most proactive bison support
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Permitted grazing of domestic sheep or goats.	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	No in Pryor, AB, or MHG GAs. Yes, with risk assessment elsewhere.	No in Pryor, AB, or MHG GAs. Yes, with risk assessment elsewhere.	No forestwide	Yes, forestwide with risk assessment	No in Pryor, AB, BBC or MHG GAs. Yes, with risk assessment elsewhere.

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Public and outfitter use of recreational pack goats	No plan direction	No in Pryor, AB, or MGH GAs. Yes, with risk assessment elsewhere.	No in Pryor, AB, or MGH GAs. Yes, with risk assessment elsewhere.	No forestwide	Yes, forestwide with risk assessment	Yes, with conditions in Pryor, AB, and MGH GAs. Yes, with risk assessment elsewhere. With conditions, once occupied by bighorn sheep
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Agency use of domestic sheep or goats for weed control	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	Yes, forestwide with risk assessment	Yes, forestwide with risk assessment	No forestwide	Yes, forestwide with risk assessment	Yes, forestwide with risk assessment
Connectivity	No plan direction	Plan components and key linkage areas	Plan components and key linkage areas	Plan components and key linkage areas	Plan components	Plan components and key linkage areas
Key linkage area acres	0	60,834	59,528	60,834	0	60,523
Airfield acres	1,022,282	900,261	871,614	0	924,574	896,908

GA = geographic area; AB=Absaroka Beartooth Mountains Geographic Area; BBC=Bridger, Bangtail, Crazy Mountains Geographic Area; MHG=Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatin Mountains Geographic Area

Table 3. Sioux Geographic Area (GA) comparison of issues by alternative

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Backcountry area number	0	0	0	1	0	1
Backcountry area acres	0	0	0	5,937	0	5,937
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Permitted grazing of domestic sheep or goats	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Public and outfitter use of recreational pack goats	No plan direction	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment. With conditions, once occupied by bighorn sheep.
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Agency use of domestic sheep or goats for weed control	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Forested acres suitable for timber production; percent of GA	65,959 (40%)	59,061 (36%)	59,860 (36%)	56,779 (35%)	59,061 (36%)	56,779 (35%)
Forested acres unsuitable for timber production but where timber harvest is suitable for other purposes; percent of GA	1,090 (1%)	7,811 (5%)	7,811 (5%)	10,015 (6%)	7,811 (5%)	10,015 (6%)
Airfield acres	163,269	143,627	143,627	0	143,627	143,627

Table 4. Ashland Geographic Area (GA) comparison of issues by alternative

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Recommended wilderness area number	0	0	0	3	0	0
Recommended wilderness area acres	0	0	0	37,180	0	0
Backcountry area number	3	3	3	0	0	3
Backcountry area acres	38,414	38,348	38,348	0	0	38,882
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Permitted grazing of domestic sheep or goats	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Public and outfitter use of recreational pack goats	No plan direction	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment. With conditions, once occupied by bighorn sheep.
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Agency use of domestic sheep or goats for weed control	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment
Forested acres suitable for timber production; percent of GA	196,127 (45%)	186,299 (43%)	186,299 (43%)	186,305 (43%)	186,449 (43%)	186,299 (43%)
Forested acres unsuitable for timber production but where timber harvest is suitable for other purposes; percent of GA	21,043 (5%)	30,500 (7%)	30,500 (7%)	11,567 (3%)	30,352 (7%)	30,500 (7%)
Airfield acres	402,555	379,804	367,177	0	379,804	379,806

Table 5. Pryor Mountains Geographic Area (GA) comparison of issues by alternative

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Recommended wilderness area number	1	1	1	4	0	2
Recommended wilderness area acres	6,804	6,797	6,797	43,861	0	18,830
Backcountry area number	0	3	3	0	0	2
Backcountry area acres	0	29,389	29,389	0	0	18,707
Miles motorized trail no longer suitable	0	0	4	5	0	0
Miles mechanized trail no longer suitable	0	0	6	6	0	0
Acres winter motorized recreation use no longer suitable	0	0	16,001	23,314	0	5,596
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Permitted grazing of domestic sheep or goats	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	No	No	No	Yes, with risk assessment	No
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Public and outfitter use of recreational pack goats	No plan direction	No	No	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with conditions
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Agency use of domestic sheep or goats for weed control	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment
Forested acres suitable for timber production; percent of GA	32,888 (44%)	12,628 (17%)	12,628 (17%)	11,349 (15%)	27,371 (36%)	12,522 (17%)
Forested acres unsuitable for timber production but where timber harvest is suitable for other purposes; percent of GA	6,267 (8%)	26,432 (35%)	8,218 (11%)	3,754 (5%)	15,178 (20%)	20,961 (28%)
Airfield acres	49,489	42,704	29,071	0	42,898	38,293

Table 6. Absaroka Beartooth Mountains Geographic Area (GA) comparison of issues by alternative

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Recommended wilderness area number	5	4	4	19	0	1
Recommended wilderness area acres	6,163	2,238	2,238	214,247	0	802
Backcountry area number	0	1	1	0	0	1
Backcountry area acres	0	18,712	18,712	0	0	18,712
Recreation emphasis area number*	0	4	4	2	5	4
Recreation emphasis area acres+	0	38,754	38,754	7,464	48,813	41,195
Stillwater Complex acres	0	101,832	101,832	0	101,832	101,832
Miles motorized trail no longer suitable	0	0	0	55	0	0
Miles mechanized trail no longer suitable	0	0	14	98	0	14
Acres winter motorized recreation use no longer suitable	0	0	0	98,999	0	0
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Permitted grazing of domestic sheep or goats	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	No	No	No	Yes, with risk assessment	No
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Public and outfitter use of recreational pack goats	No plan direction	No	No	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with conditions
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Agency use of domestic sheep or goats for weed control	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment
Forested acres suitable for timber production; percent of GA	98,637 (7%)	80,108 (6%)	80,108 (6%)	71,558 (5%)	85,962 (6%)	80,111 (6%)
Forested acres unsuitable for timber production but where timber harvest is suitable for other purposes; percent of GA	226,056 (17%)	247,340 (18%)	247,340 (18%)	95,975 (7%)	242,823 (18%)	247,958 (18%)
Airfield acres	172,316	153,575	153,575	0	153,974	153,969

*The Yellowstone River Recreation Emphasis Area is counted in both this geographic area and the Madison, Henrys Lake, Gallatin Mountains Geographic Area; acreage in this geographic area is reported.

Table 7. Bridger, Bangtail, Crazy Mountains Geographic Area (GA) comparison of issues by alternative

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Recommended wilderness area number	0	0	0	3	0	1
Recommended wilderness area	0	0	0	91,889	0	9,619
Backcountry area number	0	0	3	0	0	2
Backcountry area acres	0	0	115,622	0	0	35,282
Recreation emphasis area number	0	0	0	0	2	1
Recreation emphasis area acres	0	0	0	0	5,502	12,969
Miles motorized trail no longer suitable	0	0	0	27	0	0
Miles mechanized trail no longer suitable	0	0	0	36	0	4
Acres winter motorized recreation use no longer suitable	0	0	0	38,836	0	0
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Permitted grazing of domestic sheep or goats	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	No
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Public and outfitter use of recreational pack goats	No plan direction	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment. With conditions, once occupied by bighorn sheep
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Agency use of domestic sheep or goats for weed control	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment
Connectivity	No plan direction	Plan components and key linkage areas	Plan components and key linkage areas	Plan components and key linkage areas	Plan components	Plan components and key linkage areas
Key linkage area acres	0	38,661	38,661	38,661	0	38,459
Forested acres suitable for timber production; percent of GA	59,203 (29%)	51,355 (25%)	43,780 (21%)	50,528 (25%)	51,355 (25%)	50,947 (25%)
Forested acres unsuitable for timber production but where timber harvest is suitable for other purposes; percent of GA	87,674 (43%)	95,448 (47%)	102,973 (50%)	40,489 (20%)	95,448 (47%)	92,768 (45%)
Airfield acres	98,131	72,763	72,763	0	86,242	72,811

Table 8. Madison, Henrys Lake, Gallatin Mountains Geographic Area (GA) comparison of issues by alternative

Issue	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Recommended wilderness number	1	4	4	10	0	4
Recommended wilderness acres	20,774	104,346	136,741	324,248	0	110,174
Backcountry area number	0	2	3	0	2	4
Backcountry area acres	0	38,531	97,449	0	171,326	90,157
Recreation emphasis area number*	0	5	5	3	6	6
Recreation emphasis area acres*	0	138,205	121,912	25,994	158,373	175,318
Miles motorized trail no longer suitable a	0	0	0	85	0	0
Miles mechanized trail no longer suitable	0	0	14	124	0	13
Acres winter motorized recreation use no longer suitable	0	0	8,884	73,282	0	5,304
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Permitted grazing of domestic sheep or goats	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	No	No	No	Yes, with risk assessment	No
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Public and outfitter use of recreational pack goats	No plan direction	No	No	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with conditions
<u>Bighorn sheep disease prevention:</u> Agency use of domestic sheep or goats for weed control	No plan direction; risk assessment per policy.	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment	No	Yes, with risk assessment	Yes, with risk assessment
Connectivity	No plan direction	Plan components and key linkage areas	Plan components and key linkage areas	Plan components and key linkage areas	Plan components	Plan components and key linkage areas
Key linkage area acres	0	22,173	20,867	22,173	0	22,064
Forested acres suitable for timber production; percent of GA	211,814 (26%)	183,823 (23%)	167,239 (21%)	168,755 (21%)	183,538 (23%)	173,412 (22%)
Forested acres unsuitable for timber production but where timber harvest is suitable for other purposes; percent of GA	175,065 (22%)	188,432 (23%)	180,749 (22%)	87,341 (11%)	219,016 (27%)	200,494 (25%)
Airfield acres	136,523	107,785	105,398	0	118,028	108,402

*The Yellowstone River Recreation Emphasis Area is counted in both this geographic area and the Absaroka Beartooth Mountains Geographic Area; acreage in this geographic area is reported.

Table 9 portrays the relative contributions to social and economic sustainability by alternative. When relative contributions are expected to be similar, alternatives are listed in parenthesis in alphabetical order.

Table 9. Relative contributions to social and economic sustainability by alternative

Key Social Benefit from the National Forest	Relative Contributions Greatest to Smallest (left to right)
Clean air	E, (A/B/C/D/F)
Clean water, aquatic ecosystems, and flood control	D, (B/C/F), E, *A
Conservation of wildlife and rare plants, including species for fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing)	D, (B/C/F), E, A
Designated areas	(A/B/C/D/E/F)
Plan land allocations (e.g., RWA, BCA)	(B/C/D/E/F), A
Educational and volunteer programs	(B/C/D/E/F), A
Fire suppression and fuels management	D, (A/B/C/F), E
Forest products (including timber, firewood, Christmas trees, berries, mushrooms)	E, (B/C/F), D, A
Permitted livestock grazing	(A/B/C), F, (D/E)
Income (payments in lieu of taxes, secure rural schools, labor income in various industries: recreation, timber, grazing, etc.)	E, (B/C/F), D, A
Infrastructure	(A/B/C/F), E, D
Inspiration (including spiritual inspiration)	(B/C/D/E/F), A
Jobs (and induced jobs, including recreation, timber, grazing, etc.)	E, (B/C/F), D, A
Mineral and energy resources	A, E B, F, C, D
Preservation of historic, cultural, Tribal or archeological sites	D, C, F, B, A, E
Sustainable recreation	(B/C/D/E/F), A
Scenery	D, C, F, B, A, E

*Alternative A represents the current plans in this table.

Alternatives are ordered left to right, from greatest to smallest contribution to social sustainability.

Alternatives in parentheses and separated by a slash denote similar contributions.

Table 10 displays a range of objectives by alternative. The objectives for alternatives A, B, and C are based on the budget and accomplishments from 2014 through 2017. Alternatives D and E vary the objectives based on the theme of the alterative. In alternative E, the higher costs to accomplish the timber volume drive other objectives lower. The cumulative totals of all objectives in any alternative would be within the budgets from 2014 through 2017. Except where noted, partnership and external funds are not accounted for in the objectives.

Table 10. Objectives by alternative

Topic	Measure	Alternatives A, B, C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Streams	Miles restoration per decade	600	800	200	600
Lakes, Ponds, Wetlands	Acres restoration per decade	50	100	10	50
Aquatic Passage; Conservation Watershed Network priority	Number of projects installed per decade	5 to 7	7 to 10	1 to 3	5 to 7
Conservation Watershed Network roadway drainage erosion control enhancement	Road miles per year	5 to 8	5 to 8	5 to 8	5 to 8
At-risk Aquatic Species	Number of enhancement projects per decade	5 to 7	8 to 10	1 to 3	5 to 7
At-risk Plants	Number of enhancement projects per decade	2	3	1	2
At-risk Plants Whitebark Pine	Acres restored or sustained per decade	1,000	1,200	500	1,000
At-risk Wildlife	Number of enhancement projects per decade	3 to 7	8 to 10	1 to 2	3 to 7
Terrestrial Wildlife	Number of enhancement projects per decade	10	12	5	10
Bison	Number of enhancement projects every 3 years	1	3	0	3
Grizzly Bears	Number of potential relocation sites by 2022	5	7	3	5
Noxious weeds	Acres treated per year	2,500 to 4,500	4,500 to 7,000	500 to 2,500	2,500 to 4,500
Cultural Resources	Number of public outreach projects per year	10	5	5	10
Cultural Resources	Percent priority assets managed per year	20	25	20	20
Permitted Grazing	Animal Units Months (AUMs) per year	219,293	213,652	213,652	217,221
Projected Timber Sale Quantity (PTSQ) PTSQ does not include salvage harvest	Million board feet per year (mmbf)	10	6	15	10
	Million cubic feet per year (mmcf)	1.96	1.26	2.94	1.96
Projected Wood Sale Quantity (PWSQ)	Million board feet per year (mmbf)	18	13	25	18
	Million cubic feet per year (mmcf)	3.53	2.61	4.8	3.53
Projected Vegetation Treatment (fuels and timber)	Acres per year	6,000 to 7,500	8,000	5,000	6,000 to 7,500
Hazardous fuels	Acres treated per year	6,000	7,000	4,000	6,000

Topic	Measure	Alternatives A, B, C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F
Natural unplanned wildfire	Acres per decade	375,000	375,000	375,000	375,000
Hardwoods, grasslands, shrublands, woodlands	Projects to sustain or restore per decade Acres sustained or restored per decade	6 to 8 600 to 750	8 to 10 800	2 500	6 to 8 600 to 750
Roads - high clearance	Percent maintained per year	20	5	10 Priority timber access	20
Roads - passenger	Percent maintained per year	75	75	75	75
Trails	Percent maintained to standard per year	30	30	30 Priority front country	30
Trails	Percent maintained per year	80	30	30	80
Facilities (admin)	Percent maintained per year	60	40	40	60
Recreation sites or facilities in riparian management zone	Number removed per decade	5	7	2	5
Wilderness and recommended wilderness boundaries near adjacent motorized settings	Number boundary areas signed per decade	5	20	2	5
Existing travel incursions in P ROS	Number incursions eliminated per decade	5	5	2	5
Existing unauthorized motorized travel incursions in SPNM ROS	Number incursions eliminated per decade	5	0	5	5
Recreation site accessible design in RN ROS	Number sites accessibility improved per decade	3	1	3	3
Designated wilderness. Unneeded existing improvements, facilities or uses	Number removed per decade	3	3	3	3
West Pine BCA (alternatives C, F)	Number new trail connections	(C only) 1	0	0	1
Hyalite REA day use access sites	Number added per decade*	1	0	2	1
Hyalite REA new trail connections	Number new trail connections	(C only) 2	0	0	2
Hebgen Lakeshore REA dispersed sites	Number converted to larger campgrounds per decade*	1	0	2	1
Main Fork Rock Creek REA dispersed sites	Number converted to larger campgrounds per decade*	1	0	2	1
Road or trail right-of-way	Number acquired per decade	1 to 5	1 to 5	1 to 5 Priority timber access	1 to 5

*Recreation emphasis area additional facilities depend on competitive capital improvement project funds and external funds