

BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST

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Land and Resource Management Plan

**Draft** Environmental Impact Statement

# Purpose and Need

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## Purpose and Need for the Action

The Forest Service proposes to revise the 1985 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Bighorn National Forest. This Revised Plan guides natural resource management activities on the Forest for the next 10-15 years while meeting the objectives of federal law, regulation, and policy. This revision establishes a systematic process for management, to achieve integrated consideration of all forest resources at the National Forest scale, and to assure performance standards are established, monitored and, if necessary, changed during the life of the Revised Plan. The revision of the forest plan is based on a *need for change*. The *need for change* approach identifies and analyzes only those aspects of the 1985 Plan where adjustments are necessary. These changes are examined in more detail later in this chapter.

## Need to Revise the Plan by Law and Action

There is a need to revise the plan according to the objectives and legal requirements of federal law, regulation, and policy. There are legal requirements for protection of physical and biological resources, multiple use, and sustainability. The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), passed by Congress in 1976, requires that Management Plans be reviewed and, in most cases, revised every 10-15 years (36 CFR 219.10(g)). An environmental impact statement (EIS) documenting the environmental analysis for this revision effort is required by NFMA (36 CFR 219.10(b)). The current forest plan was approved on October 4, 1985.

Other laws and regulations such as the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act also require protection of the physical and biological resources on public lands.

The House Report on the Multiple Use/Sustained Yield Act of 1960 (House Report 1551, 86<sup>th</sup> Congress) provides Congressional insight into how the principles of multiple use and sustained yield are to be applied:

“Through the years and by a number of Congressional enactments, including appropriations for carrying out specific activities and functions, through court decisions, and through policy directives and statements, the management of the national forests under the principle of multiple use has been thoroughly recognized and accepted. The application of the principle

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of sustained yield management has also been thoroughly established. It is thus desirable that the Secretary of Agriculture have a directive to administer the national forests under the dual principles of multiple use and sustained yield.”

“In practice, the priority of resource use will vary locality by locality and case by case.”

Forest plan revision is conducted within an ecosystem management framework. In brief, a healthy ecosystem approach is used to achieve the Forest’s multiple-use objectives. It means blending the needs of people and environmental values in such a way that the forest provides diverse, healthy, productive, and sustainable ecosystems. The underlying assumption is that healthy ecosystems provide for multiple uses, at a forestwide scale. The Forest goal is to provide environmentally sensitive, socially responsive, economically feasible, and scientifically sound multiple use management.

## Need to Revise the Plan Based on Adaptive Management

The 1997 Committee of Scientists reviewing National Forest Planning pointed out the importance of recognizing “... the scientific uncertainty that arises from incomplete understanding of how ecological systems work ...” Their recommendation was to acknowledge this uncertainty and to develop plans that embrace adaptive management principles. Adaptive management focuses on learning produced by testing management approaches against actual results. The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976, provides for adaptive management through monitoring, amendments, and revision.

Forest plans are not static, “carved in stone” documents. Acknowledging that changes will occur and uncertainty exists, incorporating a robust monitoring strategy into the revised plan, and recognizing a 10-15 year life expectancy of this plan allows efficient completion of the revision process.

The 1985 Bighorn National Forest Plan was approved over a decade ago. Experience in implementing and monitoring the effects of that implementation show how things change over the life of a forest plan:

- ◆ A number of the goals and objectives of the 1985 Forest Plan are out-of-date. In some cases, they are not always desirable (e.g., goal of maintaining riparian areas in a mid to late seral ecological condition) or in line with current thinking (e.g., goals directing us to “satisfy requirements for local community stability”). National Forest management is dynamic. Changes in public views, resource uses, demands, and natural resource knowledge require periodic re-evaluation.
- ◆ There is no distinction between standards and guidelines in the 1985 Plan. This affects how projects are implemented and the analysis required.
- ◆ Some standards and guidelines are not achievable or measurable (e.g., maintain habitat for each species on the forest at least at 40% or more of potential).

- ◆ Our projected outputs in the 1985 Plan can't be met while operating under the current standards and guidelines (e.g., allowable sale quantity and grazing).
- ◆ Scientific knowledge of physical and biological processes has improved in recent years. For example, new and/or emerging techniques in the areas of biological diversity make revision of the 1985 Forest Plan necessary. There is a need for management activities to become more consistent with the ecology of the ecosystems present on the Forest.
- ◆ The 1985 Plan contains references, guides, and dates that are obsolete or no longer appropriate.
- ◆ Some management areas in the 1985 Plan are too small to administer for the intended purpose. Others are not being managed according to their proposed direction (e.g., Piney and Rock Creeks). Municipal watersheds are not recognized in management area allocations.
- ◆ Inventory information concerning the Forest's land and water resources is more accurate than in 1985. The Forest now has a geographic information system (GIS), which greatly enhances forest management capabilities and will improve the plan revision process.
- ◆ Public involvement has identified new information, issues, and public values. In addition, increasing levels and new types of recreational use on the Forest (e.g., 4-wheel, all terrain vehicles) call for new management approaches to address issues of public access, conflicts between uses, and protection of the environment.
- ◆ Newly created or changed laws and policies affect forest plan content and Forest management. Examples include the 1987 Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Amendments of 1990, and the new Roads Management Policy.
- ◆ Monitoring requirements for resources and programs do not address the objectives or reflect the current emphasis or needs for change.

After examining the 1985 Forest Plan, the Forest Supervisor concluded many of the existing forestwide goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, and management area prescriptions should be considered for change and therefore, recommended to the Regional Forester the forest plan be revised. A Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement to revise the 1985 Forest Plan was published in the *Federal Register* on November 10, 1999.

## The Planning Area

The planning area encompasses the entire 1.1 million acre Bighorn National Forest, located in the Big Horn Mountain Range in north central Wyoming (Figure 1-1). The Forest contains 1,107,671 acres, which includes 7,502 acres of state and private land. All of the watersheds originating on the Forest drain into the Yellowstone River through the Big Horn, Tongue, and Powder Rivers. The watersheds and water features within them are some of the biggest assets the Forest provides for biodiversity and user-

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associated values. The Forest has a diverse mixture of land, water, plants, and animals. Elevations range from approximately 4,000 feet to 13,175 feet above sea level on Cloud Peak. The Big Horns are often characterized as a forested island situated between the High Plains (Powder River Basin) to the East, and the arid Big Horn Basin to the West. The north boundary of the Forest borders Montana and the Crow Indian Reservation. The Cloud Peak Wilderness (189,039 acres) is at the core of the mountain range.

Approximately 60% of the National Forest System acres are forested. Principal species include lodgepole pine, Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir. Ponderosa pine, limber pine, and Douglas-fir are found at the lower elevations. Non-forested lands include grassy meadows, shrub lands, alpine tundra, and rocky areas. The Forest supports important populations of elk, mule deer, moose, and black bear. Many of the over 2,000 miles of streams and lakes support excellent fisheries.

The Big Horns are midway between Yellowstone and Mount Rushmore National Parks. Three highways, classified as Scenic Byways, cross the mountains. The Forest has year-round recreation opportunities and administer over 500 special use permits including communication sites, reservoirs, easements, power lines, outfitter guides, campground concession operations and lodges/resorts. We permit the grazing of approximately 28,000 cattle and 21,000 sheep. Through the end of 2000, after 15 years of implementation, the Forest has offered approximately 131 million board feet of timber and firewood. The mountains are an important water source for the surrounding agricultural lands and communities.

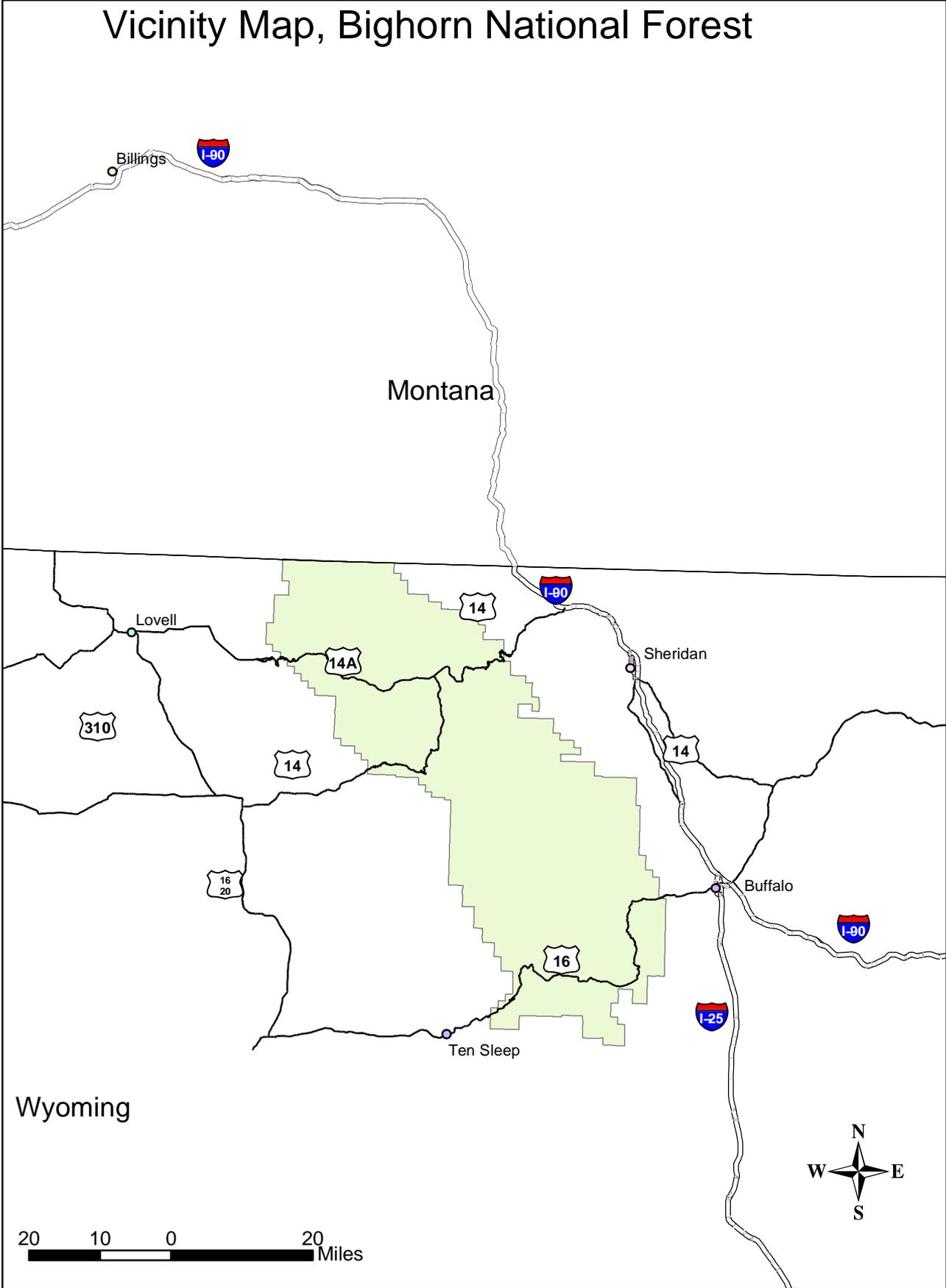
The Bighorn National Forest is subdivided into 3 administrative units, known as Ranger Districts, with offices located in Sheridan, Buffalo, and Lovell, Wyoming. The Forest Supervisor’s Office is co-located with the Tongue District Office in Sheridan.

The Forest lies within 4 counties – Big Horn, Johnson, Sheridan, and Washakie (see the following table and figure). Major towns include Lovell, Greybull, Buffalo, Sheridan, and Worland. Populations range from a high in Sheridan Country of approximately 25,000 to about 7,000 in Johnson Country. Economies are generally rural. Employment is concentrated in several major sectors including service, retail trade, and government. Mining, agriculture, and manufacturing are other important sources of income.

Table 1-1. Acres of National Forest System lands by county within the Bighorn National Forest as of September 2000.

	<b>County</b>				
	<b>Big Horn</b>	<b>Johnson</b>	<b>Sheridan</b>	<b>Washakie</b>	<b>Total</b>
Acres	351,160	326,881	393,627	36,003	1,107,671

Figure 1-1. Vicinity map of the Bighorn National Forest



## Use of Geographic Areas

A key component of the revision strategy is development and use of geographic areas to help focus management direction. Geographic areas provide a link between forest planning and project identification, and between Forest Plan implementation and monitoring. In addition, they provide a landscape view of the ecosystem that a larger or smaller scale cannot adequately address. Consequently, the planning area was subdivided into 9 watersheds or combination of watersheds (see following figure).

## The Revision Topics

Revision topics are subjects where resource conditions, technical knowledge, or public perception of resource management have created a potential "*need for change*." Simply stated, revision topics can be thought of as umbrellas covering one or more significant issues identified on the Forest. Needed changes generally are important enough to affect large areas, change the mix of goods and services produced, and involve choices in management direction where there is no public consensus on the best course of action.

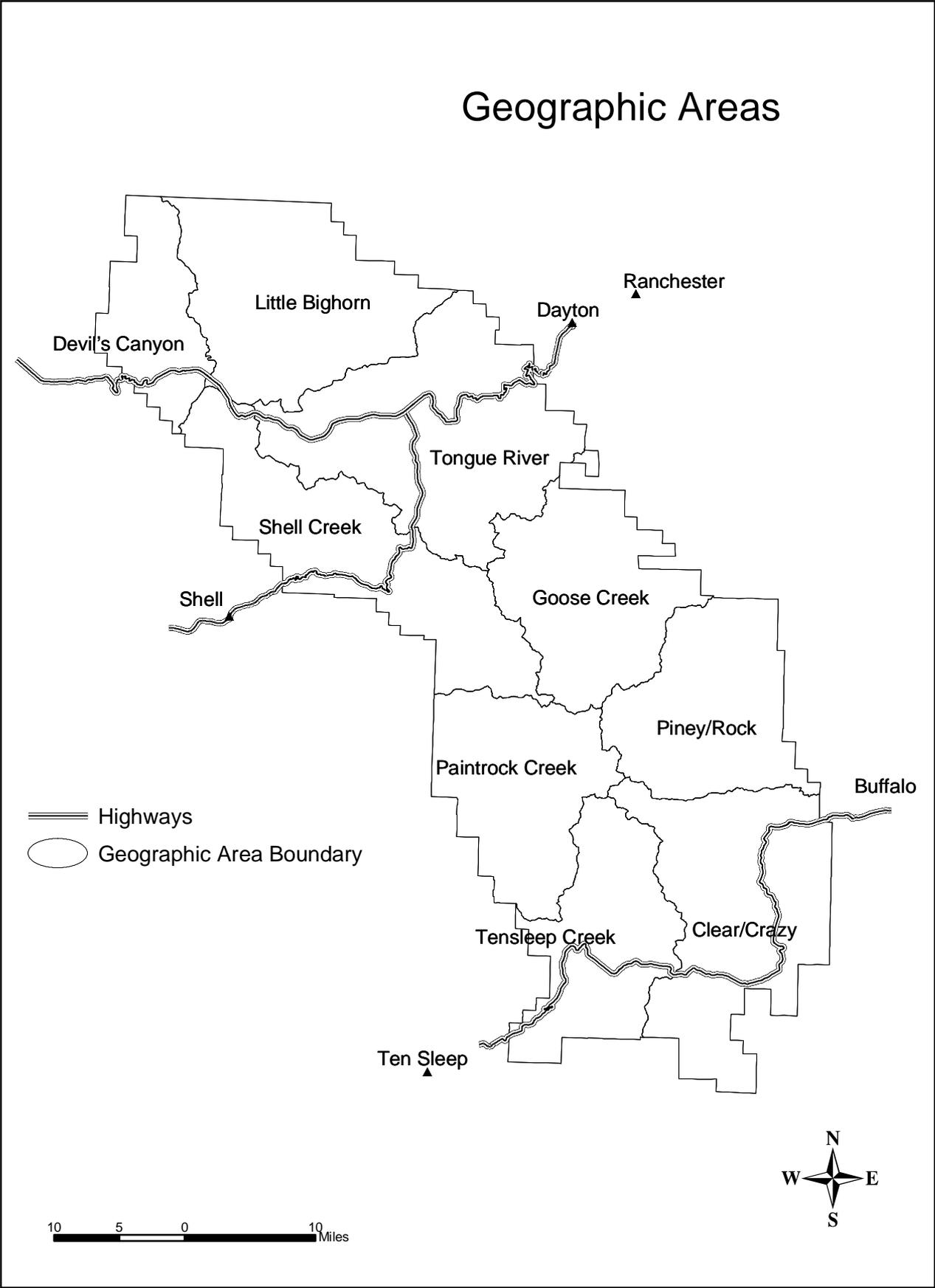
Revision topics were developed from a review of monitoring over a 13 year period from 1986 to 1998, results of an "Allowable Sale Quantity" (ASQ) Analysis, inventories/assessments, Forest Service conservation leadership initiatives, laws/regulations, and comments received during the scoping period. The 5 major Plan revision topics identified include:

- ◆ Biological and Habitat Diversity
- ◆ Timber Suitability and Management of Forested Lands
- ◆ Roadless/Wilderness
- ◆ Special Areas (e.g., Wild & Scenic Rivers, and Research Natural Areas)
- ◆ Recreation and Travel Management

Each revision topic has potential environmental, social, and economic considerations. Environmental effects relate to the fundamental integrity of the physical and biological aspects of the Bighorn National Forest ecosystems and the surrounding area. Social effects relate to the people who use the Forest or who are directly affected by resource management. Economic effects relate to the people and businesses that rely on the Forest for income or livelihood.

The revision topics, their associated environmental, social, and economic implications, and the rationale for inclusion ("*Need for Revision*") are discussed below. Each topic also contains a list of specific items or measures known as *Key Indicators*. These measures are simply tools that show the level at which a given alternative is affecting the natural/social resources of the Forest.

Figure 1-2. Geographic areas on the Bighorn National Forest.





## Biological and Habitat Diversity

Biological and habitat diversity is the variety of life in an area, and refers to the relative frequency and number of biological entities at a given scale. This includes the ecosystems, plant and animal communities, species, and the processes through which individual organisms interact with one another and their

environments, including humans (USDA Forest Service 1992a). Biological diversity is described at many levels, ranging from the molecular scale to complete ecosystems, but is most often described at the ecosystem (Bailey 1984), landscape or watershed scale in the context of forest planning.

From a total species inventory basis, it's evident that biological diversity is complex. Because of this complexity, there is no widespread agreement on how to measure biological diversity or how best to perpetuate it. Agreement does exist on the concept that reducing the number of species in a system also reduces biological diversity (Langner and Flather 1994). Whether this is positive or negative depends on individual human values. Biological diversity is perhaps best maintained by ensuring sustainability of native landscape elements and composition, biological processes, and species viability. The requirement for species viability is described in the NFMA and the 1982 planning regulations (36 CFR 219.19). Species viability is the key factor the Forest Service selects in providing for biodiversity, as it must incorporate the landscape and biological process elements. The National Forests offer a unique opportunity to maintain biodiversity due to the ability to control some aspects of human uses or demands on the environment.

For this revision, the Bighorn National Forest has adopted the Rocky Mountain Region process to evaluate and manage for species viability, which includes the elements of landscape composition and biological processes in conjunction with sustainable management (Hayward et al, 2000). Refer to the Viability Assessment described in administrative record. Limiting factors or needed management changes were identified and included in all aspects of the revised plan, including provisions for ecosystem processes and individual species conservation measures.

### **Need for Revision**

The following concerns about biological diversity indicate a need for plan revision:

- ◆ Public interest in biological diversity and how to maintain it has grown substantially since the Forest Plan was approved. There is a need to have management activities more consistent with the ecology of the ecosystems that comprise the Bighorn NF.

- ◆ Species management and protection is out-of-date and not in compliance with recent court rulings on species viability implementation, especially for Management Indicator Species (MIS) and rare plants and animals.
- ◆ Wild fire, fuels management and fire ecology goals, standards and guidelines do not reflect the best science or increased public awareness.
- ◆ Direction in the 1985 Plan does not fully reflect the latest scientific information on land management planning. Attention should be given to managing on a landscape scale, including the use of larger management areas.
- ◆ There was little direction in the 1985 Plan for aquatic and fisheries resources, including water quality.

### ***Indicators of Differences Between Alternatives***

The following indicators for Biological Diversity include:

- ◆ Changes in vegetation composition (cover types) from anticipated management activities (prescribed burning and timber harvest treatments, livestock grazing, and road building) and natural processes of growth, senescence, and mortality.
- ◆ Changes to forested vegetation structure including snags and coarse woody debris, and habitat structural stages (age classes).
- ◆ Changes in quality and quantity (when feasible) of habitat for emphasis species.
- ◆ Changes to physical (soil, water, and air) elements, including riparian resources, from anticipated management activities and natural disturbance processes.
- ◆ Management emphasis as described by category and prescription.
- ◆ Changes in road density and road/stream crossings indicative of fragmentation and connectivity of habitats.

### ***Effects of Implementation***

Environmental implications include the impact of management activities on the biological diversity of the Forest, which in turn may affect the health of the ecosystem and the organisms living there. Social and economic implications relate to how maintaining biological diversity may affect human use of the Forest. These uses would include accessibility of the Forest for various uses (e.g., hunting, plant and wildlife viewing) and production of traditional forest products (e.g., timber).



### **Timber Suitability and Management of Forested Lands**

The amount of land that is suitable and made available for timber harvest is re-assessed in this Plan revision because of regulatory requirements, the high level of public interest, and concerns over the ability of the Forest to meet timber

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outputs while maintaining the 1985 standards and guidelines. Outputs are typically expressed as “Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) and defined as the maximum amount of sustainable timber harvest allowed in a decade.

The 1985 Forest Plan allocates approximately 92% of the tentatively suited lands (those lands where technology is available that ensures timber production without irreversible resource damage and where there is reasonable assurance the lands can be adequately restocked) to management areas for timber management. Timber management is practiced across these management areas with differing management emphases and intentions. The 1985 Plan originally set the ASQ at 3.86 MMCF (149 million board feet) per decade. Actual volume sold has fallen well short of the projected levels. Less than 20% of the suited lands are outside inventoried roadless areas.

### ***Need for Revision***

The following indicates a need for change in the management of forested lands:

- ◆ Projected harvest levels in the 1985 Plan are not being met.
- ◆ Current projected harvest levels and certain prescribed standards and guidelines, particularly associated with visual/scenic quality and wildlife, are not compatible.
- ◆ Re-evaluation of the tentatively suited lands is required at 10-year intervals.
- ◆ Allocation of existing roadless areas to timber management prescriptions continues to be very controversial.
- ◆ Silvicultural prescriptions specified in various management areas are often in conflict with other multiple use objectives.
- ◆ Current forest conditions indicate treatments for products other than sawlogs are needed.

### ***Indicators of Differences Between Alternatives***

Indicators for this revision topic are:

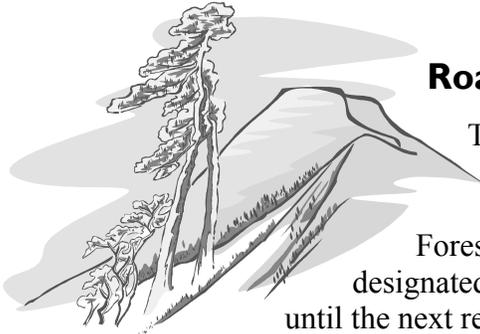
- ◆ Acres designated as suitable for timber production.
- ◆ Location of acres designated as suitable for timber harvest.
- ◆ Level of timber harvested (ASQ) and total sale quantity (TSQ).

### ***Effects of Implementation***

Environmental implications include changes to biological diversity and roadless area management. Since timber harvest is a primary tool for modifying forested vegetation, it can have impacts to wildlife and plant habitats, soil, and water.

Economic implications relate to the direct and indirect effects timber harvest has on jobs, personal income, and revenues to local communities. Those who work in the timber industry are concerned about job security and stable incomes. The same is true for other businesses and local governments affected by local sawmills and their outputs.

Additional economic implications include the financial and economic efficiencies of forest the timber harvest programs. Social implications of timber harvest include effects on recreation opportunities and visual/scenic quality.



### **Roadless/Wilderness**

The President signed the Wyoming Wilderness Act in 1984 (Public Law 98-550) designating the 189,039 acre Cloud Peak Wilderness on the Bighorn National Forest. The Act also released all remaining areas (those not designated as wilderness by the Act) to multiple-use management until the next revision of the forest plan. The 1985 Plan allocates most of these remaining roadless lands to management areas that allow road building. Approximately 56 percent of the Forest, excluding the Cloud Peak Wilderness, was classified as “roadless” in 1979 as part of a nationwide inventory process known as RARE II (Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II).

After years of local and national debate on roadless area management, the Forest Service initiated another nationwide study in the late 1990s. On January 12, 2001, final regulations were published in the *Federal Register* establishing requirements for protecting inventoried roadless areas on National Forest land. These regulations prohibited new road construction/reconstruction and timber harvest except for special circumstances. They required each National Forest to ensure that amendments and revisions consider, as appropriate, the long-term protection and management of unroaded portions of inventoried roadless areas. Litigation concerning the regulations began shortly after publication. The most recent judicial decision (July 13, 2003) was a permanent injunction against implementation of the regulations nationwide. Litigation continues.

An inventory and evaluation of roadless areas for consideration as potential Wilderness is a requirement of the forest planning process (36 CFR 219.17) and the Wyoming Wilderness Act.

### **Need for Revision**

The following indicates a need for Plan revision:

- ◆ Management of inventoried roadless areas continues to be controversial.
- ◆ The existing inventory of roadless areas (RARE II) did not reflect the timber sales, road construction, and reservoir construction and reconstruction that occurred since RARE II.

### **Indicators of Differences Between Alternatives**

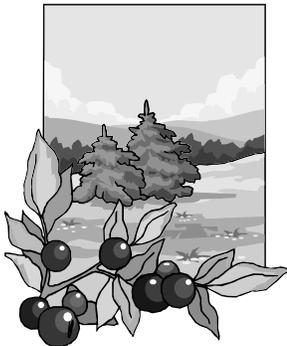
Indicators for this revision topic are:

- ◆ Roadless acres in management allocations that generally retain roadless characteristics consistent with the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.
- ◆ Roadless acres in management allocations that generally retain the potential to be capable and available for wilderness designation.
- ◆ Acres determined to be capable and available for wilderness designation.
- ◆ Areas recommended for wilderness designation.

### **Effects of Implementation**

Environmental implications are generally thought of in terms of biological diversity. Designation as a Wilderness can be an effective method of managing large tracts of land in a natural or near-natural state.

Social and economic implications include changes to recreation, travel, and timber harvest levels. Roadless areas offer excellent opportunities for primitive, semi-primitive, and non-motorized recreation. Building roads into these areas and allowing existing use of undeveloped areas would increase motorized recreation and increase the land base available for timber harvest.



### **Special Areas**

The Bighorn National Forest includes several unique areas or resources of physical, biological, or social interest. Collectively these are referred to as “special areas.” They may include Wild and Scenic Rivers, Research Natural Areas (RNAs) (an area set aside to preserve a representative sample of an ecological community) and other special areas with scenic, historical, cultural, geological, archaeological, or other outstanding characteristics.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended (December 31, 1992) and Forest Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 8 directs the Forest Service to evaluate rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System during forest planning. Federal regulations (36 CFR 2.60(a) and 36 CFR 251.23) direct the Forest Service to make recommendations for Research Natural Areas during forest planning.

In the 1985 Forest Plan, the Little Bighorn and Tongue Rivers were determined to be eligible as potential additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. For a river to be included as an addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, it must be free flowing and possess river values judged to be outstandingly remarkable. In 1989 the Little Bighorn was recommended to Congress for official designation. As of this date, Congress has not acted. Both the Little Bighorn and Tongue Rivers remain

as a wild and scenic management area, their unique qualities safeguarded by specific standards and guidelines.

The 1985 Plan also designated two RNAs; Bull Elk Park (718 acres) and Shell Canyon (730 acres). As part of the revision effort, and in cooperation with the University of Wyoming, we inventoried 9 other areas for possible additions.

The Bighorn National Forest also contains a variety of archeological sites. The mountains provided a highly favorable environment for the sustenance and development of earlier cultures. Likewise, the history of the Forest and surrounding basins presented a vivid portrayal of the life on the developing frontier. These archeological sites range from the nationally recognized Medicine Wheel National Historic Landmark (having spiritual significance to Americans Indians) to numerous lesser-known historic and prehistoric sites and properties.

### ***Need for Revision***

The following indicate a need for plan revision:

- ◆ Interest by Americans Indians and tribal governments in preserving their cultural heritage has grown substantially since the forest plan was approved.
- ◆ Public interest in our cultural history has grown substantially since the Forest Plan was approved. New laws and regulations have been adopted since 1985.
- ◆ Management of America's rivers continues to be of interest to the general public.
- ◆ Biological diversity values of RNAs.

### ***Indicators of Differences Between Alternatives***

Indicators for this revision topic are:

- ◆ Location and length (in miles) of suitable rivers recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- ◆ Size, location, and description of recommended RNAs or other special areas.
- ◆ Number of archeological sites managed and/or potentially impacted.

### ***Effects of Implementation***

Special areas are managed under standards and guidelines that protect their unique values. Wild and scenic rivers, if found suitable and recommended for inclusion in the national system, must be protected until a final decision is made by Congress. Although many multiple use activities may continue, they may only do so if they are consistent with the purpose of establishing the river as part of the system. If a river is classified as **wild**, timber cutting, diversions/impoundments, utility corridors, and roads are prohibited. If a river is classified as **scenic** or **recreational**, some vegetation management and development is permitted as long as it does not have a substantial adverse effect on the river or corridor landscape.

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Research Natural Areas are managed to maintain natural (relatively pristine) conditions by allowing ecological process to prevail with minimal human intervention. A variety of uses are allowed in RNAs as long as the activity or use does not become a threat to the values for which the area was proposed.

Designation of special areas for archeological purposes will protect the values the site represents. The impact to other resource programs and/or local economics depends on the size of the area, its significance and adopted standards and guidelines.

### Recreation and Travel Management



The Bighorn National Forest is important as both a primary destination and an “overnight” stop for travelers heading to and from Yellowstone National Park and the Black Hills of South Dakota. Principal recreation activities include driving for pleasure, camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use. Many campgrounds are near capacity during the summer and finding remote locations for dispersed recreation (recreation occurring outside developed facilities) is becoming more difficult.

Winter use (snowmobiling, Nordic skiing) is very popular. Projections of recreation demand show continued growth over the next several decades.

#### ***Need for Revision***

The following indicate a need for plan revision:

- ◆ Issues and management concerns related to travel management have increased substantially since the 1985 Plan. Motorized (e.g., ATV’s) users seek additional opportunities while other visitors participating in non-motorized recreation activities demand fewer motorized open roads and trails.
- ◆ Since 1985, changes in technology have introduced new recreational activities (e.g., mountain bikes, ATVs) and increased the capabilities of existing activities (snowmobiles).
- ◆ User conflicts have increased proportionately with increased demand. Conflicts between different forest uses (e.g., grazing) are growing.
- ◆ Resource impacts associated with many recreational activities are on the rise, including damage to riparian environments and vegetation in heavily used areas, recreational stock damage, soil compaction and widening and pioneering of new travel routes. Water quality is being impacted by improper disposal of litter, garbage, and human waste.
- ◆ Snowmobiling and skiing are more popular than originally anticipated.
- ◆ The 1985 Plan does not include allocations or standards to provide high quality scenery along the Scenic Byways.

### ***Indicators of Differences Between Alternatives***

Indicators for recreation and travel management are:

- ◆ Acres of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes
- ◆ Acres open to motorized/nonmotorized summer recreation
- ◆ Acres open to motorized/nonmotorized winter recreation
- ◆ Miles of roads on the Forest by inventory type.
- ◆ Miles of road construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and decommissioning.
- ◆ Miles of road maintained to standard.
- ◆ Existing scenic integrity (ESI)
- ◆ Concern Levels
- ◆ Scenic classes
- ◆ Scenic integrity objectives (SIO)

### ***Effects of Implementation***

Environmental considerations include the effects to wildlife species from different levels of human use and impacts of use on soil and water quality.

Social implications relate mainly to the differences between motorized and non-motorized use. New roads are often closed or restricted to achieve other multiple-use objectives, such as protecting soil resources or providing for wildlife seclusion during critical birthing and nesting seasons. Closing areas to motorized use that were historically open affects traditional access patterns for recreation, hunting and firewood gathering. On the other hand, closing roads provides opportunities for more solitude. Economic considerations include the effects on types of recreation opportunities, as well as on jobs and incomes to local communities.

## **Other Topics**

Other topics identified as important by the public, such as air quality, land ownership adjustments, minerals extraction, special uses (permitted activities on National Forest land), are addressed in this revision process, but are not considered major revision topics. Rather, they are addressed through standards and guidelines, management areas, or monitoring procedures

## **Other Topics Raised But Not Addressed**

The public and other agencies raised a number of additional topics and issues that are not addressed in detail in these revision documents. Such topics require departmental or legislative actions or come under the authority of other governmental agencies; they are outside the scope of forest land management planning decisions. These topics include, but are not limited to the following:

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- ◆ **Aerial Spraying for Noxious Weeds** – Currently, aerial spraying is not an approved control method on the Bighorn National Forest.
- ◆ **Forest Staffing** – Staffing is dependent on budgets. Although budgets by themselves are not a revision topic, they are used as a baseline in the development of alternatives. The Revised Plan is designed to be implemented. Future monitoring should assess whether the budget is affecting the achievement of goals or resource protection.
- ◆ **General Administration Issues** (e.g., office locations, signing) – These are implementation actions.
- ◆ **Grazing Fees** – Grazing fees are established by a formula approved by Congress.
- ◆ **Hunting** – Hunting is regulated by the state of Wyoming.
- ◆ **Permit System for Cloud Peak Wilderness** – There is no need for a permit system at this time. The Forest continues to monitor wilderness use and recently adopted standards and guidelines.
- ◆ **Livestock Grazing**– The Revised Plan sets goals, standards and guidelines, assessed areas of suitable and capable range, and monitoring. Allotment planning (project level work) will set seasons of use, rotations, fencing, and water improvements, etc. Livestock grazing is a recognized use of the National Forest.
- ◆ **Rest Facilities on Highway 16** – The Wyoming Department of Transportation, the Bighorn National Forest, local governments, and citizens are discussing this potential project. We recognize the need for adequate sanitary facilities for the traveling public. However, the decision to build rest facilities on Highway 16 is most appropriately made at the project level.
- ◆ **Road Maintenance Standards** – Road maintenance standards are reviewed during Roads Analysis at the project level.
- ◆ **Species Reintroductions** (Wolves and Grizzly Bears) – Management authority rests with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state of Wyoming. No reintroductions are planned at this time.
- ◆ **Summer Homes** – Summer homes are managed through existing special use permits. There are no plans to reduce the number of homes.
- ◆ **Timber Prices and New Technology** – The timber appraisal system is directed from Congressional and Washington office levels. The Forest Service Wood Products Laboratory helps develop new technologies and markets.
- ◆ **Travel Management Planning** – A Travel Management Map will be included with the Final forest plan. It focuses at the broad, forest-wide programmatic scale (See “Travel/Access Management, below). Decisions regarding individual road and/or trail routes will be made at the project level.

## The Planning, Environmental Analysis, and Decision Process

The Forest Plan revision has a number of steps that must be completed in a logical order. Public involvement is ongoing throughout the process. Copies of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and other information about specific analysis can be obtained at 2013 Eastside Second St. Sheridan, Wyoming, 82801.

### Decisions Made in Forest Plans

The key decisions made in a forest plan for long-term management of National Forests are:

1. Establishment of forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives, 36 CFR 219.11(b);
2. Establishment of Forest-wide management requirements (Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines), 36 CFR 219.13 to 219.27);
3. Establishment of management area direction (Management Area Direction and associated Standards and Guidelines), 36 CFR 219.11(c);
4. Designation of suitable timberland and establishment of allowable sale quantity (ASQ). Designation of lands suitable for grazing and browsing by livestock. Identification of lands suitable and available for oil and gas leasing. Provision for a broad spectrum of forest and outdoor recreation opportunities. 36 CFR 219.14, 219.15, 219.16, 219.20, and 219.21;
5. Establishment of requirements for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the revised Plan to meet the requirements of 36 CFR 219.11(d);
6. Documentation that we will/will not recommend any further additions to the wilderness preservation system.
7. Identification of rivers eligible for National Wild and Scenic River consideration, and recommendation to Congress of suitable rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System.

### Plan Versus Project Decision-Making

Forest plans set out management area direction with standards and guidelines for future decision-making. Plans are adjustable through monitoring and evaluation, amendment and revision. Management areas are the zoning ordinances under which future decisions are made. Forest plans establish multiple-use goals and objectives for the planning area. Plan level actions are: (1) approval (16USC 1604(d) (j)), (2) amendment (16USC 1604(f)(4)) and (3) revision (16UC 1604(f)(5)). Project decisions are not authorized, carried out or funded by Forest Plan approval, amendments or revisions except as specifically authorized in the Record of Decision.

## **Travel/Access Management**

A travel map that identifies access opportunities and restrictions for roads and trails will be included as part of the Final Revised Plan. The 1998 Forest Visitors Map is the baseline for additions and/or corrections. Changes are a result of new management direction adopted in the selected alternative or modifications made to simplify and make the travel map easier to understand. This document provides the “framework” for future site-specific travel management decisions.