

# Southern Rockies Canada Lynx Amendment Draft Environmental Impact Statement

USDA Forest Service  
Rocky Mountain Region

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**USDA  
Forest Service**  
*Caring for the Land and  
Serving People*



[X] DRAFT

**Lead Agency:**

United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region

**Cooperating Agency:**

Colorado Department of Natural Resources

**States Affected:**

Colorado and southern Wyoming

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**ABSTRACT**

The Southern Rockies Canada Lynx Amendment Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) documents the results of an analysis of four alternative ways to manage for Canada lynx habitat in the Southern Rockies Geographic Area. This proposed amendment would incorporate management direction for Canada lynx habitat by amending the Land and Resource Management Plans (forest plans) for the Arapaho-Roosevelt, Pike-San Isabel, Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison, San Juan, Rio Grande and Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests. The White River National Forest released their Record of Decision for their Revised Land and Resource Management Plan in the spring of 2002. The White River National Forest Revised forest plan incorporated management direction to provide habitat for Canada lynx and will not be amended as a result of the findings of this analysis.

The No Action alternative (Alternative A) was developed as a baseline for comparing the effects of Alternatives B, C and D. It does not respond to the purpose and need for action, defined for this project to establish direction that conserves and promotes recovery of Canada lynx, while preserving the overall multiple-use direction in existing plans.

Alternatives B, C and D were designed to address the purpose and need for the project. Alternative B reflects the proposed action described in scoping and would adopt the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS) recommendations; edited for clarity. Alternatives C and D would add direction similar to LCAS, but partially responds to concerns about restrictions on new snowmobile trails, providing for lynx foraging habitat in multistory forests, and precommercial thinning

restrictions. Alternative D includes standards and guidelines that may be more flexible to address local situations and new information.

Alternative D is the Forest Service Preferred Alternative and would allow reduction of lynx foraging habitat if needed to reduce fuels. The Forest Service has concluded that this alternative contributes to lynx conservation and recovery.

Public comments will be accepted through the 90-day comment period which will begin the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability (NOA) of this Draft EIS in the Federal Register. We expect the NOA to be published on January 30, 2004. Public comments concerning the adequacy and accuracy of the Draft EIS must be postmarked no later than April 29, 2004 (90 days after the NOA), and must be submitted in writing to: R2 Lynx Scoping, P.O. Box 22810, Salt Lake City, UT 84122. Alternatively, electronic mail may be directed to: r2lynx@fs.fed.us or facsimile to: (801)517-1021.

Reviewers should provide the Forest Service with their comments during the review period of the Draft EIS. This will enable the Forest Service to analyze and respond to the comments at one time and use the information acquired in the preparation of the final environmental impact statement, thus avoiding undue delay in the decision making process. Reviewers of draft environmental impact statements have an obligation to structure their participation in the National Environmental Policy Act process so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be specific and should address the adequacy of the statement and the merits of the alternatives discussed. (40 CFR 1503.3).

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# SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is intended to foster informed decision making and public participation on a proposal to amend forest plans in the Southern Rockies Geographic Area to incorporate management direction for the Canada lynx. The areas addressed in this analysis include the Arapaho-Roosevelt, Pike-San Isabel, Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison, San Juan, Rio Grande and Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests. The White River National Forest released their Record of Decision for their Revised Land and Resource Management Plan in the spring of 2002. The White River National Forest Revised forest plan incorporated management direction to provide habitat for Canada lynx and will not be amended as a result of the findings of this analysis. The DEIS discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts of implementing a proposed action and an alternative actions.

## PURPOSE AND NEED (Chapter 1)

The purpose and need for the proposed amendment is: To establish management direction that conserves and promotes the recovery of lynx, and reduces or eliminates potential adverse effects from land management activities and practices on the Southern Rockies national forests, while preserving the overall multiple-use direction in existing Forest Plans.

Adoption of this management direction is needed to comply with the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) regulations to provide for adequate fish and wildlife habitat to maintain viable populations of existing native vertebrate species. This action is also needed to assure that Forest Plans provide adequate management direction to conserve the lynx and its habitat, as required by the Endangered Species Act.

To respond more quickly and consistently, management direction is considered for the identified forests, rather than addressing each plan individually. The new management direction seeks to preserve the overall multiple-use direction in existing plans by avoiding making significant changes. Adjustments to individual plans may be considered as they are revised during the next several years.

## PROPOSED ACTION (Chapter 1)

The Forest Service proposes to amend seven Forest Plans in Colorado and Wyoming to provide conservation and recovery of the lynx, a threatened species.

The proposed amendment would add or modify management direction consisting of one or more of the following components:

- ~~/s/~~ Goals, general descriptions of desired end results;
- ~~/s/~~ Objectives, descriptions of desired resource conditions;

- ✍ Standards, management requirements designed to achieve objectives;
- ✍ Guidelines, management actions that would normally be used to achieve objectives; and
- ✍ Monitoring requirements.

The proposed action reflected during scoping is Alternative B and is described in detail in Table S-1 below. The initial proposed action was modified slightly from that presented in the initial scoping document to improve clarity and remove redundancy. See Appendix E of the DEIS for a crosswalk between the initial proposed action and the proposed action clarified. The proposed action, as referenced throughout the DEIS, refers to the proposed action clarified, which is Alternative B.

The proposed action is based on conservation measures in the *Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy* (LCAS). The measures from the LCAS were reorganized and described in forest planning language to facilitate incorporation into the forest plans. During the transformation, the original intent of the measures in the LCAS was preserved.

The amendment applies only to National Forest System (NFS) lands identified as lynx habitat or linkage areas. See Appendix F of the DEIS for a description of lynx habitat mapping procedures. This amendment would not include a site-specific decision that determines lynx habitat and linkage-area boundaries.

## ISSUES (Chapter 2)

In determining the relevant issues relating to the proposed action and the range of alternatives, the interdisciplinary team reviewed public and agency comments generated during the scoping process. Pertinent comments from these sources were used to develop the significant and key issues to be studied in detail. Three significant issues were identified and two key issues were identified. The significant issues drove the formulation of alternatives and the subsequent environmental analysis of the alternatives. The key issues did not drive the formulation of alternatives, but were considered in alternative development and the subsequent environmental analysis of the alternatives.

### Significant Issues

1. **Lynx Productivity, Mortality and Movements**—brought forward from the purpose and need discussion in Chapter 1:
  - a. Forest management activities such as timber harvest, precommercial thinning, grazing, fire, salvage harvest may impact lynx productivity by affecting denning and foraging habitat.
  - b. Human use activities resulting in snow compaction may reduce lynx productivity by reducing the prey resource as a result of allowing competing predators into lynx habitat areas during the winter.
  - c. Landscape connectivity can be affected by management activities, which can negatively impact lynx movements (and therefore productivity), and can increase mortality.

2. **Public Safety** - The proposed amendment may negatively affect public safety by limiting vegetation treatments to create defensible fuels profiles in support of the Fire Use Program.
3. **Human Uses** - The proposed amendment may negatively impact human uses of the forest by limiting winter recreation (i.e. snowmobiling, cross country skiing, ski area expansion), minerals, timber harvest, land adjustments, and lands special use activities and practices.

### **Key Issues**

1. **Management Indicator Species (MIS).** The proposed action may result in negative, beneficial or no effect to MIS found in lynx habitat.
2. **Other Threatened, Endangered, and Proposed Species.** The proposed action may affect listed species (plant and animal), other than the lynx.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL (Chapter 2)**

This section summarizes the alternatives considered in detail. The descriptions of the management direction by action alternatives are summarized in Table S-1 below.

### **Alternative A (No Action)**

Analyzing a no action alternative is a requirement of NEPA and Forest Service planning procedures. In this case, it means no change in current management (i.e., no amendment to current Forest Plans). However, this alternative may not provide for lynx persistence and recovery in the Southern Rocky Mountains Geographic Area (SRMGA).

The no action alternative is based on the management areas, standards and guidelines in the current forest plans. The no action alternative is also based on policies and analysis requirements in the current Code of Federal Regulations and Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction including the road analysis requirements.

The No Action alternative does not include the conservation measures in the LCAS. While the Forest Service has been using the LCAS to evaluate projects, in accordance with their Conservation Agreements with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the measures have not been adopted as plan direction.

### **Alternative B (Proposed Action)**

Alternative B provides for the conservation and recovery of the LCAS and includes management direction for vegetation and human use management activities and practices in lynx habitat and linkage areas. Alternative B is designed to address activities on NFS lands that can affect lynx and their habitat.

### **Alternative C**

Alternative C was designed to respond to key issues, while still providing for the conservation and recovery of the Canada lynx. Alternative C adds direction similar to LCAS, but partially responds to concerns about restrictions on new snowmobile trails, providing for lynx foraging habitat in multistory forests, and precommercial thinning restrictions.

### Alternative D

Alternative D was designed to go further in responding to the key issues than Alternative C while still contributing to the conservation of lynx. It was developed to provide a broader range of alternatives and provides greater flexibility for multiple use management. Adds direction similar to LCAS, but partially responds to concerns about restrictions on new snowmobile trails, precommercial thinning, fuel reduction projects associated with communities at risk of wildfires, and modifies standards so that they may be more flexible so as to address local situations and new information. In addition to improving management direction for lynx, this alternative best responds to Executive Order 13212 of May 18, 2001, *Actions to Expedite Energy-Related Projects*, and to *A collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: A 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy*. This alternative contributes to lynx conservation and recovery.

**Table S-1 Description of the Action Alternatives**

Southern Rockies Lynx Amendment DEIS		
<p><b>Bold words</b> are defined in the glossary.                      Differences between the alternatives are <i>italicized</i>.                      O=objective; S=standard; G=guideline</p>		
<p><b>Features common to all Alternatives.</b></p> <p>1. The following goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines would be incorporated into existing Forest Plans. Where there is a conflict between this management direction and the existing Forest Plan, the direction that is the most restrictive would apply except for the Medicine Bow National Forest. For example, if there is a conflict between a standard in this amendment and a standard in the existing Plan, the standard that would most restrict the proposed management activity or practice must take precedent. However, for the Medicine Bow National Forest, the measures listed below would supercede the management direction for lynx incorporated in the recently Revised Forest Plan regardless of whether or not it was more or less restrictive.</p> <p>2. The following goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines apply only to National Forest System lands.</p> <p><b>Goals</b> describe desired end results and are expressed in broad general terms;  <b>Objectives</b> are concise statements of measurable desired results intended to promote achievement of goals;  <b>Standards</b> are limitations on management activities that are within the authority and ability of the agency to meet or enforce. Standards are mandatory. Deviation from standards requires a Plan amendment and;  <b>Guidelines</b> are preferred or advisable courses of action. Deviations from guidelines are permissible if the responsible official documents the reasons for the deviation.</p> <p>NA indicates not applicable.</p>		
ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
<b>GOAL:</b> Conserve the Canada lynx.		
<b>ALL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES (ALL)</b> - Applies to <b>lynx habitat</b> in <b>Lynx Analysis Units</b> (LAUs), and in <b>linkage areas</b> subject to valid existing rights.		
<b>ALL O1.</b> Maintain or restore lynx habitat connectivity.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>ALL S1.</b> New or expanded permanent developments and vegetation management practices and activities must maintain habitat connectivity.	<b>ALL S1.</b> New or expanded permanent developments and vegetation management practices and activities must maintain habitat connectivity.	<b>ALL S1.</b> New or expanded permanent developments and vegetation management practices and activities must maintain habitat connectivity.

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
<p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Wildland Fire Use practices and activities that restore ecological processes.</b></li> <li>Wildfire suppression.</li> </ol>	<p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Wildland Fire Use practices and activities that restore ecological processes.</b></li> <li>Wildfire suppression.</li> </ol>	<p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Fire Use practices and activities that restore ecological processes.</b></li> <li>Wildfire suppression.</li> <li><b>Fuel treatments identified through a process such as that described in <u>A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan.</u></b></li> <li><b>Fossil fuel exploration and development practices and activities.</b></li> <li><b>Energy transmission facilities associated practices and activities.</b></li> </ol>
NA	NA	<p><b>ALL S2.</b> A project proposal that deviates from one or more lynx standards may proceed without amending the Plan, subject to ESA requirements, either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If a written determination is made that the project is not likely to adversely affect lynx; or</li> <li>If it may result in short-term adverse effects to lynx but if long-term benefits to lynx and its habitat would result.</li> </ol>
<p><b>ALL G1.</b> Techniques to avoid or reduce effects on lynx should be used when constructing or reconstructing <b>highways</b>. Techniques could include underpasses or overpasses.</p>	(Same)	(Same)
<p><b>LAU S1.</b> LAU boundaries would not be adjusted except through agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, based on new lynx habitat information.</p>	(Same)	(Same)
<p><b>VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES (VEG) - Applies to lynx habitat in LAUs subject to valid existing rights.</b></p>		
<p><b>VEG O1.</b> Manage vegetation to be consistent with historical <b>succession</b> and <b>disturbance</b> processes while maintaining habitat components necessary for the conservation of lynx.</p>	(Same)	(Same)
<p><b>VEG O2.</b> Maintain or improve lynx habitat, with an emphasis on continued availability of high-quality <b>foraging habitat</b> in juxtaposition to</p>	(Same)	(Same)

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
<b>denning habitat.</b>		
<b>VEG O3.</b> Conduct <b>fire use</b> activities to restore <b>ecological processes</b> and maintain or improve lynx habitat.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>VEG O4.</b> Design <b>regeneration harvest</b> , reforestation, and thinning to develop characteristics suitable for lynx and <b>snowshoe hare habitat</b> .	(Same)	(Same)
<p><b>VEG S1.</b> Unless a <b>broad scale assessment</b> has been completed that substantiates different historical levels of <b>unsuitable habitat</b>, limit disturbance within each LAU as follows: if more than 30 percent of lynx habitat within a LAU on NFS lands is currently in unsuitable condition, no further reduction of suitable conditions shall occur as a result of vegetation management activities or practices.</p> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Wildland Fire Use</b> practices and activities that restore ecological processes, or maintain or improve lynx habitat.</li> <li>2. Wildfire suppression.</li> </ol>	<p><b>VEG S1.</b> Unless a <b>broad scale assessment</b> has been completed that substantiates different historical levels of <b>unsuitable habitat</b>, limit disturbance within each LAU or <i>in combination with immediately adjacent LAUs on NFS lands</i> as follows: if more than 30 percent of lynx habitat within a LAU or <i>combination of LAUs</i> is currently in unsuitable condition, no further reduction of suitable conditions shall occur as a result of vegetation management activities or practices.</p> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Fire Use</b> practices and activities that restore ecological processes, or maintain or improve lynx habitat.</li> <li>2. Wildfire suppression.</li> </ol> <p>Use the same analysis boundaries for all future vegetation management projects subject to this standard.</p>	<p><b>VEG S1.</b> Unless a <b>broad scale assessment</b> has been completed that substantiates different historical levels of <b>unsuitable habitat</b>, limit disturbance within each LAU or <i>in combination with immediately adjacent LAUs on NFS lands</i> as follows: if more than 30 percent of lynx habitat within a LAU or <i>combination of LAUs</i> is currently in unsuitable condition, no further reduction of suitable conditions shall occur as a result of vegetation management activities or practices.</p> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Fire Use</b> practices and activities that restore ecological processes, or maintain or improve lynx habitat.</li> <li>2. Wildfire suppression.</li> <li>3. <i>Fuel treatments identified through a process such as that described in <u>A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan.</u></i></li> </ol> <p>Use the same analysis boundaries for all future vegetation management projects subject to this standard.</p>
<b>VEG S2. Timber management practices</b> , such as timber harvest and salvage sales, shall not change more than 15 percent of lynx habitat within a LAU to an unsuitable condition within a 10-year period.	(See VEG G7.)	(See VEG G7.)
<b>VEG S3.</b> Maintain <b>denning habitat</b> within a LAU in patches generally larger than 5 acres comprising at least 10 percent of the lynx habitat. Where less than 10 percent denning habitat is present in a LAU, defer	(Same as Alternative B)	<b>VEG S3.</b> Maintain <b>denning habitat</b> within a LAU in patches generally larger than 5 acres comprising at least 10 percent of the lynx habitat. Where less than 10 percent denning habitat is present in

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
<p>vegetation management practices and activities in stands that have the highest potential to develop denning-habitat.</p> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Wildland Fire Use</b> practices and activities that restore ecological processes.</li> <li>2. Wildfire suppression.</li> </ol>		<p>a LAU, defer vegetation management practices and activities in stands that have the highest potential to develop denning-habitat.</p> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Wildland Fire Use</b> practices and activities that restore ecological processes.</li> <li>2. Wildfire suppression.</li> <li>3. <i>Fuel treatments identified through a process such as that described in <u>A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan.</u></i></li> </ol>
<p><b>VEG S4.</b> Following a disturbance, such as blowdown, fires, insects, or pathogens mortality that could contribute to lynx <b>denning habitat, salvage harvest</b> may only occur when the affected area is smaller than 5 acres in the following situations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developed recreation sites, administrative sites, or authorized special use structures or improvements;</li> <li>2. Designated road and trail corridors where public safety or access has been or may be compromised; and</li> <li>3. LAUs where <b>denning habitat</b> has been <b>mapped and field validated</b>, provided that at least 10 percent denning habitat is retained and is well distributed.</li> <li>4. <i>Within the <b>structure ignition zone</b> (200 feet of administrative sites, dwellings and/or associated outbuildings).</i></li> <li>5. Wildfire suppression.</li> <li>6. Removal of dead or down trees for personal use (i.e., firewood collection).</li> </ol>	<p><b>VEG S4.</b> Following a disturbance, such as blowdown, fires, insects, or pathogens mortality that could contribute to lynx <b>denning habitat, salvage harvest</b> may only occur when the affected area is smaller than 5 acres in the following situations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developed recreation sites, administrative sites, or authorized special use structures or improvements;</li> <li>2. Designated road and trail corridors where public safety or access has been or may be compromised;</li> <li>3. LAUs where <b>denning habitat</b> has been <b>mapped and field validated</b>, provided that at least 10 percent <b>denning habitat</b> is retained and is well distributed.</li> <li>4. Conducted within the <b>structure ignition zone</b> (200 feet of administrative sites, dwellings and/or associated outbuildings); <i>landscape settings critical for the creation of <b>defensible fuels profiles</b> to reduce the wildland fire threat to <b>communities</b> and associated infrastructure, developments and municipal watersheds; or to facilitate fire use practices and activities that restore ecological processes, or that maintain or improve lynx habitat.</i></li> <li>5. Wildfire suppression.</li> </ol>	<p>(See VEG G8)</p>

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
	6. Removal of dead or down trees for personal use (i.e., firewood collection).	
<p><b>VEG S5. Precommercial thinning</b> may be allowed only when stands no longer provide snowshoe hare habitat (e.g., self-pruning processes or stand composition and/or stand structure do not provide snowshoe hare cover and forage availability during winter conditions with average snow pack).</p> <p>The following precommercial thinning activities may occur prior to the stands no longer providing snowshoe hare habitat:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conducted within the structure ignition zone (200 feet of administrative sites, dwellings and/or associated outbuildings).</li> </ol> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Livestock grazing practices and activities.</li> <li>2. Wildfire suppression.</li> <li>3. <b>Wildland Fire Use.</b></li> <li>4. Developed recreation sites, administrative sites, or authorized special use improvements including within permitted ski area boundaries.</li> </ol>	<p><b>VEG S5. Precommercial thinning</b> may be allowed only when stands no longer provide snowshoe hare habitat (e.g., self-pruning processes or stand composition and/or stand structure do not provide snowshoe hare cover and forage availability during winter conditions with average snow pack).</p> <p>The following precommercial thinning activities may occur prior to the stands no longer providing snow hare habitat:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Research studies and genetic tests (i.e., performance tests) necessary to evaluate genetically improved reforestation stock.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Conducted within the structure ignition zone (200 feet of administrative sites, dwellings and/or associated outbuildings); landscape settings critical for the creation of defensible fuels profiles to reduce the wildland fire threat to communities and associated infrastructure, developments and municipal watersheds; or to facilitate fire use practices and activities that restore ecological processes, or that maintain or improve lynx habitat.</b></li> </ol> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Livestock grazing practices and activities.</li> <li>2. Wildfire suppression.</li> <li>3. <b>Wildland Fire Use.</b></li> <li>4. Developed recreation sites, administrative sites, or authorized special use improvements including within permitted ski area boundaries.</li> </ol>	<p><b>VEG S5. Vegetation management practices and activities that reduce snowshoe hare habitat may occur in forest stands with a structure and species composition that provides snowshoe hare cover and forage during winter only in the following situations:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Associated with <b>research studies and genetic tests (i.e., performance tests, long-term field tests and realized gain trials) necessary to evaluate genetically improved reforestation stock.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Conifer removal within aspen clones and/or daylight thinning around individual aspen trees.</b></li> <li>3. <b>Stands identified as “replacement” or “future” lodgepole old growth in the Forest Plan to provide structural and species diversity.</b></li> <li>4. <b>When a broad scale assessment has determined that early seral stages of forested habitat exceed what would be expected under the normal range of historic conditions.</b></li> <li>5. <b>Pruning, transplants, and Christmas tree and ornamental tree harvest if done so as to not measurably reduce lynx forage habitat.</b></li> <li>6. <b>Salvage and regeneration harvests.</b></li> <li>7. <b>Precommercial thinning conducted within the structure ignition zone (200 feet of administrative sites, dwellings and/or associated outbuildings).</b></li> </ol> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Livestock grazing practices and activities.</li> <li>2. Wildfire suppression.</li> <li>3. <b>Fire use practices and activities that restore ecological processes.</b></li> <li>4. Developed recreation sites, administrative sites, or authorized special use improvements including within permitted ski area boundaries.</li> <li>5. <b>Fuel treatments identified</b></li> </ol>

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
		<p><i>through a process such as that described in <u>A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan.</u></i></p>
<p><b>VEG S6.</b> Management practices and activities in mature and late successional, multi-layered Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir stands shall provide for winter snowshoe hare habitat.</p> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Designated road and trail corridors where public safety or access has been or may be compromised;</li> <li>2. Practices and activities conducted within the <b>structure ignition zone</b> (200 feet of administrative sites, dwellings and/or associated outbuildings).</li> <li>3. Wildfire suppression.</li> <li>4. <b>Wildland Fire Use.</b></li> <li>5. Developed recreation sites, administrative sites, or authorized special use improvements including within permitted ski area boundaries.</li> </ol>	<p><b>VEG S6.</b> Management practices and activities in mature and late successional, multi-layered Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir stands shall provide for winter snowshoe hare habitat.</p> <p>This standard does not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Designated road and trail corridors where public safety or access has been or may be compromised;</li> <li>2. Practices and activities conducted within the <b>structure ignition zone</b> (200 feet of administrative sites, dwellings and/or associated outbuildings); <i>landscape settings critical for the creation of <b>defensible fuels profiles</b> to reduce the wildland fire threat to <b>communities</b> and associated infrastructure, developments and municipal watersheds; or to facilitate fire use practices and activities that restore ecological processes, or that maintain or improve lynx habitat.</i></li> <li>3. Wildfire suppression.</li> <li>4. <b>Wildland Fire Use.</b></li> <li>5. Developed recreation sites, administrative sites, or authorized special use improvements including within permitted ski area boundaries.</li> </ol>	<p>(See VEG G6)</p>
<p><b>VEG G1.</b> Where little or no habitat for snowshoe hares is currently available, vegetation management practices should be planned to recruit a high density of conifers, hardwoods, and shrubs preferred by snowshoe hares. Preference should be given to mesic sites and mid-seral stage stands. Provide for continuing availability of lynx <b>foraging habitat</b> in proximity to <b>denning habitat</b>.</p>	<p>(Same)</p>	<p>(Same)</p>
<p><b>VEG G2.</b> Where recruitment of</p>	<p>(Same)</p>	<p>(Same)</p>

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
additional <b>denning habitat</b> is desired, vegetation management practices should retain sufficient standing dead trees and <b>coarse woody debris</b> , consistent with the likely availability of such material under natural disturbance regimes. The juxtaposition of denning and foraging habitat should be maintained or improved.		
<b>VEG G3.</b> Vegetation management should provide for the retention or restoration of <b>denning habitat</b> on landscape settings with a low probability of loss from stand replacing fire events.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>VEG G4.</b> Fire management activities should not create permanent travel routes that would facilitate snow compacting activities. Construction of permanent <b>firebreaks</b> on ridges or saddles should be avoided.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>VEG G5.</b> Habitat for alternate prey species (primarily red squirrel) should be provided in each LAU.	(Same)	(Same)
(NA)	(NA)	<b>VEG G6.</b> <i>Mature and late successional, multi-layered Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir stands should be managed to provide for winter snowshoe hare habitat.</i>
(NA - See VEG S2.)	<b>VEG G7.</b> <i>Timber management practices should not change more than 15 percent of lynx habitat within a LAU to an unsuitable condition within a 10-year period.</i>	(Same as Alternative C)
(NA - See VEG S4.)	(NA - See VEG S4.)	<b>VEG G8.</b> Following a disturbance, such as blowdown, fires, insects, or pathogens mortality that could contribute to lynx <b>denning habitat</b> , salvage harvest should not occur when the affected area is smaller than 5 acres, unless denning habitat has been mapped and field validated, provided that at least 10 percent denning habitat is retained and is well distributed.
<b>LIVESTOCK GRAZING MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES (GRAZ) - Applies to lynx habitat in LAUs subject to valid existing rights.</b>		
<b>GRAZ O1.</b> Manage livestock grazing to be compatible with the improvement or maintenance of lynx	(Same)	(Same)

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
habitat.		
<b>GRAZ S1.</b> In fire- and harvest-created openings, manage livestock grazing to ensure impacts do not prevent successful regeneration of shrubs and trees.	(Same)	(See GRAZ G1)
<b>GRAZ S2.</b> In aspen stands, manage livestock grazing to ensure impacts do not prevent or inhibit sprout survival sufficient to perpetuate the long-term viability of the clones.	(Same)	(See GRAZ G2)
<b>GRAZ S3.</b> Manage livestock grazing in riparian areas, and willow <b>carrs</b> , to contribute to maintaining or achieving a preponderance of <b>mid- or later-seral stages</b> , similar to conditions that would have occurred under historic disturbance regimes.	(Same)	(See GRAZ G3)
<b>GRAZ S4.</b> Manage livestock grazing in shrub steppe habitats, in the elevational ranges that encompass forested lynx habitat (within LAUs) to contribute to maintaining or achieving a preponderance of mid- or late-seral stages, similar the conditions that would have occurred under historic disturbance regimes.	(Same)	(See GRAZ G4)
(NA – See GRAZ S1)	(NA – See GRAZ S1)	<b>GRAZ G1.</b> In fire- and harvest-created openings, livestock grazing should be managed so impacts do not prevent shrubs and trees from regenerating.
(NA – See GRAZ S2)	(NA – See GRAZ S2)	<b>GRAZ G2.</b> In aspen stands, livestock grazing should be managed to contribute to long-term viability of the clones.
(NA – See GRAZ S3)	(NA – See GRAZ S3)	<b>GRAZ G3.</b> In riparian areas and willow <b>carrs</b> , livestock grazing would be managed to contribute to maintaining or achieving a preponderance of <b>mid- or later-seral stages</b> , similar to conditions that would have occurred under historic disturbance regimes.
(NA – See GRAZ S4)	(NA – See GRAZ S4)	<b>GRAZ G4.</b> Livestock grazing in shrub steppe habitats, in the elevational ranges that encompass forested lynx habitat (within LAUs) should be managed to contribute to maintaining or achieving a preponderance of mid- or late-seral stages, similar the conditions that would have occurred under historic

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
		disturbance regimes.
<b>HUMAN USES MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES (HU)</b> - Applies to lynx habitat in LAUs subject to valid existing rights.		
<b>HU O1.</b> Maintain the lynx’s natural competitive advantage over other predators in deep-snow by discouraging the expansion of snow compaction activities in lynx habitat.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>HU O2.</b> Manage recreational activities to maintain lynx habitat and connectivity.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>HU O3.</b> Concentrate activities in existing developed areas, rather than developing new areas in lynx habitat.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>HU O4.</b> Provide for lynx habitat needs and connectivity when developing or expanding developed recreation sites or ski areas.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>HU O5.</b> Manage human activities, such as special uses, mineral and oil and gas exploration and development, and placement of utility transmission corridors, to reduce impacts on lynx and lynx habitat.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>HU O6.</b> Reduce adverse <b>highway</b> effects on lynx by working cooperatively with other agencies to provide for lynx movement and habitat connectivity, and to reduce the potential for lynx mortality.	(Same)	(Same)
<p><b>HU S1.</b> Allow no net increase in <b>groomed or designated over-the-snow routes</b> outside of baseline <b>areas of consistent snow compaction</b>, within the <b>lynx habitat matrix</b>, by LAU unless the grooming or designation serves to consolidate use and improve lynx habitat.</p> <p>This does not apply within permitted ski area boundaries, to winter logging, reroutes that reduce public risks from avalanches, access to private in-holdings, roads and trails designed and managed for non-winter use, and to other access regulated by HU S3.</p> <p>Special Use Permits, authorizations, or agreements could be allowed to expand inside baseline routes and baseline areas of consistent snow</p>	<p><b>HU S1.</b> Allow no net increase in <b>groomed or designated over-the-snow routes</b> outside of baseline <b>areas of consistent snow compaction</b>, within the <b>lynx habitat matrix</b>, <i>by LAU or in a combination of immediately adjacent LAUs</i> unless the grooming or designation serves to consolidate use and improve lynx habitat.</p> <p>This standard does not apply inside permitted ski area boundaries, to winter logging, reroutes that reduce public risks from avalanches, access to private inholdings, roads and trails designed and managed for non-winter use, and to other access regulated by HU S3.</p> <p>Special Use Permits, authorizations, or agreements could be allowed to expand inside baseline routes and</p>	<p>See Guideline HU G10</p>

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
<p>compaction.</p> <p>Grooming could be allowed to expand in side baseline areas of consistent snow compaction, and on routes that have been designated but not groomed in the past.</p>	<p>baseline areas of consistent snow compaction.</p> <p>Grooming could be allowed to expand inside baseline areas of consistent snow compaction, and on routes that have been designated but not groomed in the past.</p>	
<p><b>HU S2.</b> When developing or expanding ski areas, locate trails, access roads and lift termini to maintain and provide <b>lynx diurnal security habitat</b> if it is identified as a need.</p>	See HU G11.	See HU G11.
<p><b>HU S3.</b> Winter access for non-recreation special uses, and mineral and energy exploration and development, shall be limited to designated routes or designated over-the-snow routes.</p>	(Same)	<b>HU S3.</b> Winter access for non-recreation special uses shall be limited to designated routes or designated over-the-snow routes.
<p><b>HU G1.</b> When developing or expanding ski areas, provisions should be made for adequately sized inter-trail islands that include coarse woody debris to maintain lynx foraging habitat.</p>	(Same)	(Same)
<p><b>HU G2.</b> When developing or expanding ski areas, nocturnal foraging opportunities should be provided consistent with the ski area's operational needs, especially where lynx habitat occurs as narrow bands of coniferous forest across mountain slopes.</p>	(Same)	(Same)
<p><b>HU G3.</b> Recreational development and recreational operational uses should be planned to provide for lynx movement and to maintain effectiveness of lynx habitat.</p>	(Same)	(Same)
<p><b>HU G4.</b> Remote monitoring of mineral and energy development sites and facilities should be encouraged to reduce snow compaction.</p>	(Same)	(Same)
<p><b>HU G5.</b> A reclamation plan should be developed (e.g. road reclamation and vegetation rehabilitation) for closed mineral and energy development sites and facilities that promote the restoration of lynx habitat.</p>	(Same)	(Same)
<p><b>HU G6.</b> Upgrading unpaved roads that would result in increased speeds and traffic volume or that would</p>	<p><b>HU G6.</b> <i>Methods to avoid or reduce effects to lynx habitat connectivity should be used when</i></p>	(Same as Alternative C)

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
foreseeably contribute to development or increases in human activity in lynx habitat should be avoided. This applies to upgrading roads to higher maintenance levels (to <b>maintenance levels 4 or 5</b> ) that would result in substantially increased speeds, traffic volume or potential future use.	<i>upgrading unpaved roads to maintenance levels 4 or 5 where the result would be increased traffic speeds and volumes, or contribute to development or increases in human activity.</i>	
<b>HU G7.</b> New permanent roads should not be built on ridge tops and saddles or in areas identified as important for lynx habitat connectivity. New permanent roads and trails should be situated away from <b>forested stringers</b> .	(Same)	(Same)
<b>HU G8.</b> Cutting brush along <b>low-speed, low-volume roads</b> should be done to the minimum level necessary to provide for public safety.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>HU G9.</b> On new roads built for project-specific activities, public motorized use should be restricted. Provide for an effective closure in the initial design of the road. Upon project completion, these roads should be reclaimed or <b>decommissioned</b> , if not needed for other management objectives.	(Same)	(Same)
(NA)	<b>HU G10.</b> Where projects result in a permanent conversion of winter <b>foraging habitat</b> , a project component should be included to treat, through stand regeneration activities and practices, “other lynx foraging habitat” equal to or greater than the number of acres being affected, within the same or adjacent LAU. Focus of these activities should be within mature <b>mesic</b> and <b>mid-seral</b> lodgepole pine stands.	(NA)
(NA – See HU S1)	(NA – See HU S1)	HU G10. Designated over-the-snow reroutes or play areas should not expand outside baseline areas of consistent snow compaction by LAU or in a combination of immediately adjacent LAUs, unless designation serves to consolidate use and improve lynx habitat. This does not apply inside permitted ski area boundaries, to winter logging, or rerouting trails for public safety, to accessing

ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
		private inholdings or to access regulated by HU S3.
(NA - See HU S2.)	<b>HU G11</b> When developing or expanding a ski area and trails, access roads and lift termini should be located to maintain and provide lynx <b>diurnal security habitat</b> .	(Same as Alternative C)
<b>LINKAGE AREAS (LINK)</b> - Applies to <b>linkage areas</b> subject to valid existing rights.		
<b>LINK O1.</b> In areas of intermixed land ownership, work with landowners to pursue conservation easements, habitat conservation plans, land exchanges, or other solutions to reduce the potential of adverse impacts on lynx and lynx habitat.	(Same)	(Same)
<b>LINK S1.</b> When <b>highway</b> construction or reconstruction is proposed in <b>linkage areas</b> , identify potential highway crossings	(Same)	(Same)
<b>LINK S2.</b> Manage livestock grazing in shrub steppe habitats to contribute to maintaining or achieving a preponderance of <b>mid- or late-seral stages</b> , similar to conditions that would have occurred under historic disturbance regimes.	(Same)	(See LINK G2)
<b>LINK G1.</b> National Forest System lands should be retained in public ownership.	(Same)	(Same)
NA - See LINK S2.	NA - See LINK S2.	<b>LINK G2.</b> Livestock grazing in shrub steppe habitats should be managed to contribute to maintaining or achieving a preponderance of <b>mid- or late-seral stages</b> , similar to conditions that would have occurred under historic disturbance regimes.

Monitoring included in the action alternatives is as follows:

MONITORING		
ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
1. Map the location and intensity of snow compacting activities and designated and groomed routes that occurred inside LAUs during the period of 1998-2000 within one year and monitor every five years.	<p><b>1.</b> Monitor and evaluate annually under what conditions and extent fuels treatment projects occur in lynx habitat.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Map the location and intensity of snow compacting activities and designated and groomed routes that occurred inside LAUs during the period of 1998-2000 within one year and monitor every five years.</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Monitor and evaluate annually under what conditions and extent fuels treatment projects occur in lynx habitat.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Monitor and evaluate annually under what conditions and extent fossil fuel exploration and development practices and activities occurs in linkage areas.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Monitor and evaluate annually</p>

		<p><i>under what conditions and extent standard ALL S2 is applied.</i></p> <p><b>4.</b> Map the location and intensity of snow compacting activities and designated and groomed routes that occurred inside LAUs during the period of 1998-2000 within one year and monitor every five years.</p>
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### Environmental Consequences (Chapter 3)

This section summarizes the information from Chapter 3. A comparative summary of the environmental effects on the issues of concern associated with each of the alternatives are presented in Table S-2. The DEIS presents a comparison of alternatives by standards and key Issues in DEIS Table 2-2.

**Table S-2. Comparison of Alternatives by Issue.**

Issue	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D
<b>Lynx Productivity, Mortality and Movements</b>				
<p>a. Forest management activities such as timber harvest, precommercial thinning, grazing, fire, salvage harvest may impact lynx productivity by affecting denning and foraging habitat.</p>	<p>Leads to “Likely to adversely affect” determination in 1999 Biological Assessment on existing Forest Plans.</p>	<p>Adds regulatory direction to protect important components of lynx habitat.</p>	<p>Effects similar to Alternative B, but allows for combination of LAU’s to address unsuitable habitat standard.</p>	<p>Effects similar to Alternative B. Exceptions in standard VEG S5 and the ALL S2 standard may lead to adverse effects.</p>
<p>b. Activities resulting in snow compaction may affect lynx productivity by a reduction in the prey resource as a result of allowing competing predators into lynx habitat areas during the winter on the compacted routes and areas.</p>	<p>Contributes to “Likely to adversely affect” determination in 1999 BA on existing Forest Plans</p>	<p>Adds regulatory direction that limits new snow compaction areas.</p>	<p>Effects similar to Alternative B, but allows for combination of LAU’s to address snow compaction standard.</p>	<p>Effects similar to Alternative B. The exceptions to standards in VEG S5 and the ALL S2 may lead to adverse effects.</p>
<p>c. Landscape connectivity can be affected by Forest Service management activities, which can negatively</p>	<p>Important factor contributing to the “Likely to adversely affect” in the 1999 BA for existing Forest Plans.</p>	<p>Adds provisions for the maintenance of connectivity between patches of lynx habitat and within lynx</p>	<p>Effects similar to Alternative B.</p>	<p>Effects similar to Alternative B. The exceptions to standards in VEG S5 and the ALL S2 may lead to adverse effects.</p>

Issue	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D
impact lynx movements (and therefore productivity), and can increase mortality.		linkage areas.		
<b>Probability of Lynx Persistence</b>	Substantial decreases in probability of lynx persistence, as compared to Alternative B.	Adds management direction that would be likely to maintain lynx productivity and movements in the SRMGA.	Slightly decreases probability of lynx persistence, as compared to Alternative B, but provides management direction that maintains sufficient habitat quality/quantity, with some gaps in habitat distributions.	Decreases probability of lynx persistence, as compared to Alternative B, but greater than Alternative A. Management direction may not ensure sufficient habitat quantity, quality, distribution, and other conditions to provide for lynx productivity.
<b>Public Safety</b>				
The proposed amendment may negatively impact firefighter and public safety by limiting the construction of defensible fuel profiles around dwellings and structures, and limiting vegetation treatments to create defensible fuels profiles in support of the Fire Use Program.	Current management emphasis and direction are maintained under current Forest Plan direction.	Fire hazard thinning prohibited unless stands no longer provide snowshoe hare habitat, thereby impacting ability to create defensible space or defensible fuels profiles.	Fire hazard thinning allowed within 200 feet of dwellings or other structures and landscape settings critical for the creation of defensible fuels profiles. Allows fire use practices and activities to restore ecological processes that maintain or improve lynx habitat.	Does not limit fire hazard thinning to within 200 feet of structures, thereby allowing the creation of defensible fuels profiles.
<b>Human Uses</b>				
The proposed amendment may negatively impact human uses of the forest by limiting winter recreation opportunities (i.e. snowmobiling, cross country skiing, ski area expansion).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expansion of groomed and ungroomed trails would continue to grow by about 50%.</li> <li>- Quality winter recreation would continue to expand as increase use expands.</li> <li>- Winter recreation use for both motorized and non-motorized visitors would increase by an additional 4.4 million forest visits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expansion of total groomed and ungroomed trails would be limited to existing snow compacted areas. Some existing ungroomed trails could be converted into groomed trails, allowing the groom trail system to expand by</li> </ul>	Direction is presented as guideline HU G11, but the effects would be similar to Alternative B.	Direction is presented as guideline HU G11, but the effects would be similar to Alternative B.

Issue	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D
	<p>-Growth in the number of outfitter and special uses would continue to slow as capacities are reached.</p> <p>-Existing and potential ski areas would continue to be managed according to the direction in existing Forest Plans.</p>	<p>about 50%.</p> <p>- Winter recreation would experience additional crowding and conflict, as opportunities to expand are restricted.</p> <p>- Winter recreation use for both motorized and nonmotorized visitors would increase by an additional 4.4 million forest visits.</p> <p>-Growth in the number of outfitter and special uses would continue to slow as capacities are reached and expansions under permits or authorizations would be limited to existing groomed or designated routes but able to expand into areas of consistent snow compaction.</p> <p>-Ski area expansions would incorporate design strategies to provide diurnal lynx security habitat.</p>		
<p>The proposed amendment may negatively impact human uses of the forest by limiting timber harvest opportunities.</p>	<p>Average Annual Acres of Accomplished Precommercial Thinning Last 5 Years: 4630 Regeneration harvest average of 4000 acres annually</p>	<p>Average Annual Acres of Precommercial Thinning: 3050 Regeneration harvest acreage remains approximately 4000 acres annually.</p>	<p>Average Annual Acres of Precommercial Thinning: 3050 Regeneration harvest acreage remains approximately 4000 acres annually.</p>	<p>Average Annual Acres of Precommercial Thinning: 3205 Regeneration harvest acreage remains approximately 4000 acres annually.</p>

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Alt A</b>	<b>Alt B</b>	<b>Alt C</b>	<b>Alt D</b>
The proposed amendment may negatively impact human uses of the forest by limiting land adjustment opportunities.	Possible loss of lynx habitat through conveyance, or the acquisition of lynx habitat through purchase or exchange.	Requirement to retain NFS lands in linkage areas could affect future exchanges or limit federal parcels available for exchange	Effects same as Alternative B.	Effects same as Alternative B.
The proposed amendment may negatively impact human uses of the forest by limiting lands special use proposal options.	Current management emphasis and direction are maintained under current Forest Plan direction.	There may be some limitations or constraints on options for location of facilities (communication sites, etc).	Effects same as Alternative B.	Effects same as Alternative B.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

Alternative D is the Agency preferred alternative.

## **How the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is Organized**

### ***Chapter 1***

Chapter 1 discusses the purpose and need for the proposed amendment, describes the proposed action, as well as the scope of the decision.

### ***Chapter 2***

Chapter 2 presents the key or significant issues, and then describes alternatives to the proposed action that respond to the issues brought up during scoping.

### ***Chapter 3***

Chapter 3 describes the affected environment and discloses the environmental consequences of the alternatives.

## **Appendices**

**A – Interdisciplinary Team Members**

**B – Literature Cited and References**

**C – Glossary**

**D – Linkage Zone Descriptions**

**E – Proposed Action and Original Proposed Action Crosswalk**

**F – Canada Lynx Habitat Mapping Process**

**G – Management Indicator Species**

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