

## Chapter 2. Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action

### Introduction

This chapter describes and compares the no action alternative and two action alternatives considered by the Responsible Official for the Blackfoot Travel Plan. It includes a detailed description of each alternative (alternative maps are provided in appendix G, and road and trail details in appendix C), how they were developed, alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study, and presents the alternatives in comparative form, sharply defining the differences between each alternative and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker and the public. Numbers such as acres and miles are approximate due to the use of GIS data and rounding.

As described in chapter 1, we developed the range of alternatives based on public comments and input we received since 2000, including the input of several collaborative groups. We used this input to develop the list of key issues shown in chapter 1 and analyzed in detail in chapter 3. Non-key issues are also discussed in chapter 3 but more briefly. Summary tables at the end of this chapter illustrate the differences between the alternatives by project objectives, key issues and effects.

Any existing route not identified as a Helena National Forest (HNF) System route in this travel plan decision would be considered an unauthorized route and would not be available for motorized use. System roads and motorized trails would also be open to people to walk, hike, bike, or ride horses.

Implementing any action alternative for this project would require a programmatic Helena National Forest Plan amendment for the project area regarding the standard for big game security index. The proposed programmatic plan amendment would establish a new standard for elk security for those herd units within the project area. Other Forest Plan amendments may also be necessary to address trails within Forest Plan Management Area N-1 (Research Natural Areas) and R-1 (Unroaded and Undeveloped Areas), as discussed later in this chapter.

Each action alternative was designed to minimize off-road vehicle impacts (per executive orders, see appendix A) and is included in the analysis. The analysis presented in this chapter focuses on the effects of the proposed *changes* to the current designated system. It does not analyze the effects of the whole designated system.

### Alternatives Considered in Detail

#### ***Alternative 1 – No Action (No Change) – Continue Current Management***

The no-action alternative is required under NEPA regulations [40 CFR 1502.14(d)]. This alternative represents the existing, baseline condition or trends by which the action alternatives are compared. Alternative 1 – no action would defer implementation of the 2005 Travel Management Rule, and would not result in a motor vehicle use map. We would not make changes to the existing system of available public motorized routes and areas within the Blackfoot Travel planning area. We provide maps of alternative 1 in appendix G, road and trail

details in appendix C and a summary of components (existing condition) in table 2. Tabular comparisons between each of the alternatives are provided at the end of this chapter.

Alternative 1 – no action is represented by the current Helena National Forest map and supporting prohibitions. Permissible motorized uses include those routes and areas not otherwise prohibited, including maintaining use by the public, in some cases, of currently unauthorized routes acquired as part of the land exchange process. There are approximately 62 miles of unauthorized routes in the project area. Under this alternative, motorized access for dispersed camping is permitted up to 300 feet from centerline of motorized routes.

The Helena National Forest Plan, as amended, prohibits wheeled, cross-country travel (2001 Tri-State OHV Decision). However, wheeled motorized use of unauthorized routes that existed at the time of that Forest Plan amendment are unaffected by this prohibition. That use is not defined as cross-country travel under the amended Forest Plan as long as the vehicle fits within the pre-existing width of the route. As discussed above, the motorized access for dispersed camping is an exception and that use is also permitted up to 300 feet from centerline of these routes. Under alternative 1 – no action, these uses would continue.

Table 2 summarizes the existing miles for each type of use for alternative 1 – no action (no change), the existing condition. Table 1 in chapter 1 (as does the glossary) provides useful definitions helpful in understanding the road and trail terminology used in this document.

To summarize the current condition, there are approximately:

- 446 miles of National Forest System roads in the Blackfoot travel planning area open to public motorized use
- 60 miles of motorized trails
- 71 miles of non-motorized trails
- 93 miles of roads acquired through land exchange (13 miles of which are currently open to motorized use)
- 62 miles of roads not previously part of the road or trail inventory (unauthorized routes) that are currently open to public motorized use
- 21 miles of roads considered to be naturally decommissioned per field investigations (roads that are vegetated to the point that they are not drivable and thus are reclaimed on their own or naturally decommissioned, see table 4)

Under the existing condition, trails would be managed as they are currently. Appendix G displays the trails of interest (CDNST, Helmville-Gould, and Stonewall) in the project area and how they are currently managed in terms of types of use permitted.

Appendix C provides a route-by-route accounting of the current condition (alternative 1- no action) compared to what is proposed under alternative 2 – proposed action and alternative 3. Appendix G provides a detailed map of alternative 1 – no action showing the existing road and trail system in the project area, using the code definitions included in table 2.

**Table 2. Alternative 1 – No Action: Miles of each type of use**

<b>Use code (corresponding designation on alternatives maps</b>	<b>Use Code Definitions</b>	<b>Alternative 1 Existing Condition (miles)</b>
01-RES	Closed to motorized use yearlong	57
02-RES	Closed to motorized use Oct 15 – December 1	8
04-RES	Closed to motorized use December 2 – May 15	2
06-RES	Closed to wheeled motorized use yearlong	104
09-RES & 10-RES	Closed to wheeled motorized use 10/15-6/30	118
11-RES & 12-RES	Closed to wheeled motorized use 9/1-6/30	15
CDNST	Indicator where the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is located on a road	3
CLOSED-AQ	Roads Acquired in 2011 - Closed	16
CLOSED-LX	Roads Acquired in 2009 - Closed	64
M-07.00	Motorized Trail - vehicles less that 50" - no seasonal restrictions	34
M-10.00	Motorized Trail - single track - no seasonal restrictions	19
NATURALLY RECLAIMED	Naturally decommissioned/reclaimed – not drivable	21
NM & NOMTR	Non-Motorized Trail	71
OPEN-HWY LEGAL	Open Highway Legal Vehicles - no seasonal restrictions	270
OPEN-LX	Roads Acquired in 2009 - Open	13
ROAD NEW CONSTRUCTION	Road New Construction (prior decision made to implement for 0.18 miles but not yet implemented on the ground)	0
UC-CLOSED	Unauthorized Road or Trail – closed	39
UC—M-07.00	Unauthorized Motorized Trail - no seasonal restrictions	7
UC-OPEN	Unauthorized Road or Trail - open	14
UC-OPEN-10	Unauthorized road seasonal restriction 10-RES, closed 10/15-6/30	2

### *Alternative 2 – Proposed Action*

We developed this alternative using current Forest transportation system maps, information from the 2004 Helena Roads Analysis Process, field verification and monitoring, and public input received since 2000. Actions common to both alternative 2 – proposed action and alternative 3 are described later in this chapter following the description of alternative 3. We provide maps of alternative 2 in appendix G, road and trail details in appendix C and summaries of components in table 3 and table 4. Tabular comparisons between each of the alternatives are provided at the end of this chapter.

Alternative 2 was developed with a focus on maintaining as much of the road and trail system as possible to meet the purpose and need for action while minimizing known site-specific resource impacts (e.g. fish or water quality concerns, achieving INFISH standards, addressing elk or grizzly bear needs). Routes with concerns such as public access through a legal easement, multiple stream crossings, continual rutting or poor location were taken into consideration for closure or decommissioning under this alternative. Some limited new road and trail construction is proposed as well to address access needs in some areas

Consistent with the travel planning regulations at 36 CFR 212 Subpart B, we would designate the resulting available wheeled motorized access routes and areas on a motor vehicle use map and public use of a motor vehicle other than in accordance with those designations would be prohibited as per 36 CFR 261.13. Each of the unauthorized roads has been evaluated and either included in the roads and trail system or identified for closure, storage or decommissioning.

Table 3 reflects the miles for each type of use for alternative 2 – proposed action in comparison to alternative 1 – no action. If alternative 2 – proposed action were implemented:

- Approximately 98 miles of roads would be closed to public wheeled motorized use (348 miles of National Forest System roads would be available)
- Approximately 30 additional miles of motorized trails would be designated (92 miles of motorized trails would be available)
- Approximately 51 additional miles of non-motorized trails would be designated (122 miles of non-motorized trails would be available)
- Approximately 2 miles of new motorized trail would be constructed
- Approximately 31 miles of new non-motorized trail would be constructed
- There would be no change to the approximately 21 miles of roads currently considered naturally decommissioned per field investigations (roads that are vegetated to the point that they are not drivable and thus are reclaimed on their own or naturally decommissioned, see table 4)
- Approximately 62 miles acquired through land exchange would be identified for closure, storage or decommissioning.
- Approximately 39 miles not previously part of the road or trail inventory (unauthorized routes) would be identified for closure, storage or decommissioning
- Approximately 133 miles of roads would be stored (see table 4)
- Approximately 8 miles of roads would be decommissioned (see table 4)

**Table 3. Alternative 2 – Proposed Action: Miles of each type of use**

Use code (corresponding designation on alternatives maps)	Type of Use (corresponding designation on alternative maps)	Alternative 1 Existing Condition (miles)	Alternative 2 Proposed Action (miles)
01-RES	Closed to motorized use yearlong	57	86
01-RES-STO	Closed roads that are stored	0	27
01-STO	Open or seasonal roads that are stored	0	106
02-RES	Closed to motorized use Oct 15 – December 1	8	0
04-RES	Closed to motorized use December 2 – May 15	2	2
06-RES	Closed to wheeled motorized use yearlong	104	96
11-RES & 12-RES	Closed to wheeled motorized use 9/1-6/30	15	14
CDNST	Indicator where the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is located on a road	3	4

Use code (corresponding designation on alternatives maps)	Type of Use (corresponding designation on alternative maps)	Alternative 1 Existing Condition (miles)	Alternative 2 Proposed Action (miles)
CLOSED-AQ	Roads acquired in 2011 - closed	16	0
CLOSED-LX	Roads acquired in 2009 - closed	64	0
DECOM	Roads that would be decommissioned	0	8
M-07.00	Motorized Trail - vehicles less than 50" - no seasonal restrictions	34	49
M-08.00	Motorized Trail – vehicles less than 50 inches – closed 9/1-6/30	0	24
M-10.00	Motorized Trail - single track - no seasonal restrictions	19	17
MT NEW CONSTRUCTION	New motorized trail construction	0	2
NM & NOMTR NEW CONSTRUCTION	New non-motorized trail construction	0	31
NATURALLY DECOMMISSIONED/RECLAIMED	Naturally decommissioned/reclaimed – not drivable	21	21
NM & NOMTR	Non-motorized trail	71	122
OPEN-HWY LEGAL	Open highway legal vehicles - no seasonal restrictions	270	248
OPEN-LX	Roads acquired in 2009 - open	13	0
ROAD NEW CONSTRUCTION	Road new construction (prior decision made to implement for 0.18 miles in alt 1)	0	0
UC-CLOSED	Unauthorized road or trail – closed	39	0
UC—M-07.00	Unauthorized motorized trail - no seasonal restrictions	7	0
UC-OPEN	Unauthorized road or trail - open	14	0
UC-OPEN-10	Unauthorized road seasonal restriction 10-RES, closed 10/15-6/30	2	0

Under alternative 2 – proposed action, trails of interest in the project area (CDNST, Helmville-Gould, and Stonewall) would be managed as they are currently; no changes are proposed (see appendix G for a map of these trail corridors and the types of uses that would continue to be permitted and a summary by trail section in appendix C). The CDNST would continue to be a mix of motorized and non-motorized sections; Flesher Pass to Stemple Pass would continue as a motorcycles-only trail and Stemple Pass to Marsh Creek would continue as a motorized trail (open to vehicles less than 50 inches in width with no seasonal restrictions). Approximately 4 miles of the CDNST would be located along a road. There would be no increase in motorized use along the CDNST.

The Helmville-Gould and Stonewall Trails (see appendix G for a map) would continue to be managed as motorized trails (open to vehicles less than 50 inches in width with no seasonal restrictions).

Under alternative 2 – proposed action, we would increase the designated motorized trail system by approximately 30 miles to a total of 92 miles. We would also increase the designated non-

motorized trail system (trails not designated for motorized use) by approximately 51 miles, to a total of 122 miles and would designate a mountain bike trail system in the project area (see appendix G for a map of proposed motorized, non-motorized and mountain bike routes and appendix C for tabular summaries). Table 6 illustrates how mountain bike trails would be delineated with other types of uses.

Implementing alternative 2 would require a programmatic plan amendment to the Helena National Forest Plan regarding the standard for big game security index. The proposed programmatic plan amendment would establish a new standard for big game security for those elk herd units within the project area. Appendix F describes in detail how the wording in the Forest Plan would change as part of this amendment and the Features Common to the Action Alternatives section later in this chapter provides more detail as well.

There may also be a need for a Forest Plan amendment for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail #440 in T 13N R7W Sections 15, 16, 21, and 22 as this trail crosses through Forest Plan N-1 Management Area. This N-1 area is a proposed Research Natural Area where the standard states that trails (motorized or non-motorized) will not be allowed. This amendment would need to exempt this trail from this standard and/or provide clarification to the standard.

There may also be a need for a Forest Plan amendment for the Helmville-Gould Trail #467 starting in T13N R7W Section 33 and ending in T13N R8W Section 33 as it crosses through and serves as the boundary of Forest Plan R-1 Management Area. This R-1 area is managed as unroaded and undeveloped land for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation. This amendment would need to exempt this portion of trail #467 in R-1 Management Area to be managed as motorized.

In order to further understand how specific routes would change under this alternative; see the route-by-route accounting provided in appendix C; the maps provided in appendix G; and the summary tables at the end of this chapter.

This alternative proposes roads for closure, storage and decommissioning. For purposes of this analysis, we assume all roads proposed for storage under alternative 2 would be stored at the 3-S level and all roads proposed for decommissioning would be decommissioned at the 4 level. Table 4 illustrates what these terms means and the various closure levels for each category.

**Table 4. Typical levels for road closure, storage and decommissioning**

Level	Typical Device (site-dependent)	Typical Treatment (as needed, depending on site)	National Forest System Road (NFSR) Status
<b>Closure</b>			
1	Gate	Blade; seed; fertilize; normal drainage using BMPs; treat noxious weeds	Remains as NFSR as either long-term or intermittent-term service with gate or other barrier
2	Gate, guardrail, concrete, earth barrier or re-contour intersection	Type III dip waterbars or outslope; scarify; seed; fertilize; treat noxious weeds; may scatter slash	
<b>Storage</b>			
3-SN	Re-contour intersection (obliterate the road entrance) or add rock/earth barrier as needed	No physical or weed treatment needed; naturally reclaimed and stabilized	Remains as NFSR as an intermittent-term stored service
3-S		Waterbar or outslope; remove corrugated metal pipes (CMPs or culverts) and restore watercourse; ditch relief pipes can remain with waterbars; lightly scarify; seed; treat noxious weeds	
<b>Decommission</b>			
3-DN	Re-contour intersection (obliterate road entrance) or add rock/earth barrier as needed	Naturally decommission (DN): No physical or weed treatment needed; naturally reclaimed and stabilized	Removed from NFSR by route status change to decommissioned; road no longer needed; monitor effectiveness
4		Waterbar, outslope or selectively re-contour; remove all CMPs and restore watercourse; rip 12-18 inches; seed; fertilize; treat noxious weeds; scatter slash on slopes	
5	Re-contour	Re-contour entire prism; remove all CMPs and restore watercourses; seed; fertilize; treat noxious weeds; scatter slash on slopes	
5-DN	Re-contour	Naturally decommission: roads are very overgrown and are of low watershed concern; however they still have a visible cut/fill slope and could be recontoured to restore them to their natural state	

### *Alternative 3*

We developed alternative 3 to respond to the following key issues: wildlife habitat and security, fisheries and water quality, and quality non-motorized trail system. It takes into account the need to minimize impacts based on input regarding water quality and fish habitat, wildlife security and wildlife habitat improvements, and enhanced non-motorized recreation opportunities while still providing for a motorized recreational experience. Features common to both alternative 2 – proposed action and alternative 3 are described later in this chapter following the description of alternative 3. We provide maps of alternative 3 in appendix G and summaries of its components in table 5. Tabular comparisons between each of the alternatives are provided at the end of this chapter.

Like alternative 2 – proposed action, alternative 3 would be consistent with the travel planning regulations at 36 CFR 212 Subpart B. We would designate the resulting available wheeled motorized access routes and areas on a motor vehicle use map and public use of a motor vehicle other than in accordance with those designations would be prohibited as per 36 CFR 261.13.

Alternative 3 meets the intent of subsequent site-specific planning as required by the ‘Off-Highway Vehicle Record of Decision and Forest Plan Amendment’ (January 2001).

Table 5 reflects the miles for each type of use for alternative 3 in comparison to alternative 1 – no action. If alternative 3 were implemented:

- Approximately 139 miles of roads would be closed to public wheeled motorized use (307 miles of National Forest System roads would still be available)
- Approximately 13 miles of motorized trails would be closed (47 miles of motorized trails would be available)
- Approximately 88 miles of additional non-motorized trails would be designated (159 miles would be available)
- Approximately 3 miles of new motorized trail would be constructed
- Approximately 0.5 miles of new road would be constructed
- Approximately 31 miles of new non-motorized trail would be constructed
- Approximately 21 miles of roads would be considered naturally decommissioned per field investigations (roads that are vegetated to the point that they are not drivable and thus are reclaimed on their own or naturally decommissioned (see table 4)
- 67 miles acquired through land exchange would be identified for closure, storage, or decommissioning.
- 54 miles not previously part of the road or trail inventory would be identified for closure, storage or decommissioning
- Approximately 75 miles of road would be stored (see table 4)
- Approximately 197 miles of road would be decommissioned (see table 4)

**Table 5. Alternative 3: Miles of each type of use**

<b>Use code (corresponding designation on alternatives maps)</b>	<b>Type of Use (corresponding designation on alternative maps)</b>	<b>Alternative 1 Existing Condition (miles)</b>	<b>Alternative 3 (miles)</b>
01-RES	Closed to motorized use yearlong	57	28
01-RES-STO	Closed roads that are stored	0	20
01-STO	Open or seasonal roads that are stored	0	55
02-RES	Closed to motorized use Oct 15 – December 1	8	0
04-RES	Closed to motorized use December 2 – May 15	2	2
06-RES	Closed to wheeled motorized use yearlong	104	97
09-RES & 10-RES	Closed to wheeled motorized use 10/15-6/30	118	0
11-RES & 12-RES	Closed to wheeled motorized use 9/1-6/30	15	76
CDNST	Indicator where the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is located on a road	3	4
CLOSED-AQ	Roads acquired in 2011 - closed	16	0
CLOSED-LX	Roads acquired in 2009 - closed	64	0
DECOM	Roads that would be decommissioned	0	197
M-07.00	Motorized Trail - vehicles less that 50" - no seasonal restrictions	34	0
M-08.00	Motorized Trail – vehicles less than 50 inches – closed 9/1-6/30	0	43
M-10.00	Motorized Trail - single track - no seasonal restrictions	19	0
MT NEW CONSTRUCTION	New motorized trail construction	0	3
NM & NOMTR NEW CONSTRUCTION	New non-motorized trail construction	0	31
NATURALLY RECLAIMED	Naturally decommissioned/reclaimed – not drivable	21	0
NM & NOMTR	Non-motorized trail	71	159
OPEN-HWY LEGAL	Open highway legal vehicles - no seasonal restrictions	270	229
OPEN-LX	Roads acquired in 2009 - open	13	0
ROAD NEW CONSTRUCTION	Road new construction (prior decision made to implement 0.18 miles in alt 1)	0	0.5
UC-CLOSED	Unauthorized road or trail – closed	39	0
UC—M-07.00	Unauthorized motorized trail - no seasonal restrictions	7	0
UC-OPEN	Unauthorized road or trail - open	14	0
UC-OPEN-10	Unauthorized road seasonal restriction 10-RES, closed 10/15-6/30	2	0

Under alternative 3, trails of interest in the project area (CDNST, Helmville-Gould, and Stonewall) would be managed somewhat differently than they are currently (see appendix G for a map of these trail corridors and the types of uses that would change under alternative 3 and a summary by trail section in appendix C). The CDNST within the project area would be managed primarily for non-motorized use; seasonal motorized use (closed 9/1-6/30) would be limited to approximately 1 mile of trail and the rest of the trail would be managed for non-motorized use. Flesher Pass to Stemple Pass would change from a motorcycles-only trail to a non-motorized trail and Stemple Pass to Marsh Creek would change from a motorized trail (open to vehicles less than 50 inches in width with no seasonal restrictions) to a non-motorized trail (over-snow vehicles allowed). Marsh Creek to Nevada Mountain would continue to have approximately 1 mile of motorized use. Approximately 4 miles of the CDNST would be located along a road.

The Helmville-Gould Trail would change as well and would also be managed for non-motorized use; motorized use would be prohibited. This trail would be designated a non-motorized trail (over-snow vehicles allowed) from its intersection with the CDNST to Dalton Mountain (see map in appendix G).

The Stonewall Trail would continue to be designated as a motorized trail (open to vehicles less than 50 inches in width) but it would be closed to wheeled use from September 1 – June 30 (there are currently no seasonal restrictions on this trail) (see map in appendix G).

Overall, under alternative 3, we would decrease the designated motorized trail system by approximately 13 miles to a total of 47 miles. We would also increase the designated non-motorized trail system by approximately 88 miles, to a total of 159 miles and would designate a mountain bike trail system in the project area (see appendix G for a map of proposed motorized, non-motorized and mountain bike routes and appendix C for tabular summaries. Table 6 illustrates how this mountain bike trail system would be delineated with other types of uses.

Like alternative 2 – proposed action, implementing alternative 3 would require a programmatic plan amendment to the Helena National Forest Plan regarding the standard for big game security index. The proposed programmatic plan amendment would establish a new big game security standard for those elk herd units within the project area. Appendix F describes in detail how the wording in the Forest Plan would change as part of this amendment.

There may also be a need for a Forest Plan amendment for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail #440 in T 13N R7W Sections 15, 16, 21, and 22 as this trail crosses through Forest Plan N-1 Management Area. This N-1 area is a proposed Research Natural Area where the standard states that trails (motorized or non-motorized) will not be allowed.

This amendment would need to exempt this trail from this standard and/or provide clarification to the standard.

This alternative proposes roads for closure, storage and decommissioning. For purposes of this analysis, we assume all roads proposed for storage under alternative 3 would be stored at the 3-S level and all roads proposed for decommissioning would be decommissioned at the 4 level. Table 4 illustrates what these terms means and the various closure levels for each category.

As can be seen from table 4, there would be changes to the existing condition if alternative 3 – proposed action were implemented. In order to further understand how specific routes would change under this alternative; see the route-by-route accounting provided in appendix C, the maps provided in appendix G and summary tables at the end of this chapter.

## Features Common to the Action Alternatives

### *Motorized Use within 300-Foot Buffers*

The 2001 OHV decision provided for motorized uses within 300 feet of a road or trail for the purpose of dispersed camping, recognizing that forest users want some allowance to get away from the dust and noise generated on open routes. The expectation was that relatively few new sites would be exploited within the 300-foot area, as most good camping/parking areas already have a road to them. The same is expected for the Blackfoot Travel Plan area as this area has a legacy of dispersed use.

Under alternative 2 – proposed action and alternative 3, we would allow wheeled motorized vehicle travel for camping (and parking associated with camping) within 300 feet of designated system routes, including roads and trails (unless signed otherwise) as long as:

- No new permanent routes are created by this activity
- No damage to existing vegetation, soil, or water resource occurs
- Travel off-route does not cross streams
- Travel off-route does not traverse riparian or wet areas

Under alternative 2 – proposed action and alternative 3, we would also allow parking safely next to the side of the road within 30 feet from the center of the road. Parking next to the road means a person could still have a picnic, set up a campsite, ride their bicycle, hike, or do any other legal activity they do now.

### *Motorized Route Management*

Under alternative 2 – proposed action and alternative 3, we would:

- Where not already restricted, restrict public wheeled motorized use to designated routes only (36 CFR 212.50(a)). If other unauthorized routes are discovered that are not currently captured in this analysis (and shown on maps in appendix G and included in summary tables in appendix C), they would be considered non-System roads and would not be open for motorized use.
- Designate all motorized trails for vehicles 50 inches wide or less, including motorcycles, unless specified otherwise for a particular trail in the description of the alternative
- Permit tracked vehicles as long as they meet the size class shown on the motor vehicle use map.
- Post signs on the ground once a decision is made in order to clarify changes to the transportation system.
- Monitor road closure effectiveness for resource concerns and resource protection.
- Notify the public of any temporary closures through news releases and signing.
- We would consider the appropriateness of motorized mixed use (designation of an NFS road for use by both highway-legal and non-highway-legal motor vehicles) following the selection of an alternative in the Record of Decision. A site-specific analysis of the suitability of routes for mixed motorized use is not part of this analysis. The Forest Engineer would perform an engineering analysis on all roads under consideration to determine the practicality and feasibility of allowing motorized mixed use. The primary consideration during these evaluations is safety, including speed, site distance, and safety for loading and

unloading vehicles. Motorized mixed use would be studied on a case by case basis and implemented over time as conditions of the engineering analysis are met.

### ***Road Storage and Decommissioning***

Road closure methods (including storage and decommissioning levels) are described in table 4.

In alternatives 2 and 3 we identified many of the unauthorized roads acquired through the land exchange process for storage as opposed to decommissioning to keep options open for long-term resource management.

The routes being proposed for storage would provide effective closures for grizzly bears. On the Lincoln Ranger District, the entire area north of Highway 200 is within the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) Grizzly Bear recovery zone. The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee manages habitat within the NCDE and guidelines have been developed to address open and total route densities, and secure habitat. Secure habitat, also referred to as core areas, is defined as areas “free of motorized access during the non-denning period.” To satisfy the requirements of secure habitat, road closures must effectively prevent motorized access. As defined, gates do not constitute “effective closures,” however, entrance obliterations do. Therefore, the storage classification would count as an effective closure only if the first 1/4 mile of the road was ripped and berms put in place. The Blackfoot travel planning area south of Highway 200 is not in the grizzly bear recovery zone, and roads proposed for storage could be closed with gates.

### ***Forest Plan Amendment for Big Game Security Index***

#### **Proposed New Standard**

Implementing either alternative 2 – proposed action or alternative 3 would require a programmatic plan amendment to the Helena National Forest Plan regarding the standard for the big game security index. Forest Plan standard 4a (described briefly in appendix A and in detail in appendix F) would be replaced with the following language in order to establish a new big game security standard for those elk herd units within the Blackfoot travel planning area. The proposed amendment applies to all portions of the herd units included in the Blackfoot Travel Plan analysis.

When security areas comprise more than 30 percent of the fall use area of an elk herd unit within the Helena National Forest administrative boundary, management activities shall not reduce the amount of security areas during the rifle season from October 15 through December 1 (approximate big game rifle season) to less than 30 percent<sup>1</sup>.

Where security areas comprise 30 percent or less of the fall use area of an elk herd unit (within the Helena National Forest administrative boundary) during the general rifle season, management activities shall not result in a further reduction.

#### **Definitions**

**Security Area:** A block of big game habitat 250 acres or larger, generally at least 0.50 mile from any open, motorized route that has administrative or public traffic during the rifle big game

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<sup>1</sup>The analysis for Elk Security was run for an elk herd unit rather than for the administrative boundary as is proposed in this amendment; however, it is adequate to discuss the intent of the amendment as proposed, in evaluating the alternatives, and to solicit public comment.

hunting seasons. Security areas are intended to reduce elk vulnerability during the elk hunting season, and to provide animals the opportunity to meet their biological needs without making large range movements (e.g., to private land where hunting is not allowed)

The background and rationale for this proposed amendment is included in appendix F.

## Discussion

Experience with the Forest Plan over the last couple decades has led Forest wildlife biologists to conclude that the big game standard 4a (HFP, p. II/17 – II/18)—does not accurately reflect the habitat needs of elk during the hunting season and have required road closures that restrict travel but often do not improve elk security.

In particular, the existing Forest Plan standard #4a (the index) indicates that six of the eight elk herd units in the Blackfoot landscape are deficient in big game security to the point that they do not meet the standard. Elk numbers have been steadily increasing since the crafting of the Forest Plan in 1986. Aerial survey data collected by Montana Department Fish, Wildlife, and Parks staff through 2011 indicate that there are at least 13,075 elk within the hunting districts that comprise the Helena National Forest. This is well above the 6400 benchmark identified in the Forest Plan. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks data indicate that elk populations in the Blackfoot landscape are either at or near population objectives of the Montana Elk Plan (2004) and elk security is adequate in many Hunting Districts. In spite of the fact that proposals under both alternative 2 and 3 would close several miles of road to vehicle access during the hunting season, implementing the current standard indicates that there would be no improvement in elk security in any unit.

This proposed Forest Plan amendment would focus on the percentage of an elk herd unit occupied by elk security areas. This measure of security, unlike the existing Forest Plan standard, is sensitive to changes in open road configuration—pointing out where management is effective and where it needs to improve. By introducing reasonably measurable criteria as part of the formula for gauging the level of security needed in a given herd unit, the new standard would provide a more realistic means of guiding travel management and enhancing elk habitat.

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks data shows that elk in the project area are doing well, and their populations are at or near population objectives. Implementing this proposed new standard would maintain objectives with a more accurate method of measuring big game security. It would meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan in a more effective way.

## *Other Forest Plan Amendments*

As stated for both alternatives 2 and 3 in their respective alternative descriptions, there may also be a need for Forest Plan amendments related to trails within the R-1 (proposed research natural areas) and N-1 management areas (undeveloped land for dispersed recreation).

There may be a need for a Forest Plan amendment for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail #440 in T 13N R7W Sections 15, 16, 21, and 22 as this trail crosses through Forest Plan Management Area N-1. This N-1 area is a proposed Research Natural Area where the standard states that trails (motorized or non-motorized) will not be allowed. This amendment would need to exempt this trail from this standard or provide clarification to the standard.

There may be a need for a Forest Plan amendment for the Helmville-Gould Trail #467 starting in T13N R7W Section 33 and ending in T13N R8W Section 33 as it crosses through and serves as

the boundary of Forest Plan Management Area R-1. This R-1 area is managed as unroaded and undeveloped land for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation. This amendment would need to exempt this portion of trail #467 in R-1 Management Area to be managed as motorized.

### *Project Design Features*

We developed the following project design features and mitigation measures to be used as part of all of the action alternatives. These features were developed to reduce or eliminate adverse impacts from project activities, and are incorporated as an integrated part of alternatives 2 and 3. Project design features are based upon standard practices and operating procedures that have been employed and proved effective in similar circumstances and conditions. Project design features are non-discretionary once approved in a decision.

### Hydrology and Soils

1. Roads that are placed in storage or are decommissioned would effectively restore the natural watercourse by removing culverts and pulling stream banks back to a natural gradient.
2. Implement and monitor applicable best management practices (BMPs, appendix G) on roads that are stored or decommissioned or for implementation of new road or trail construction.
3. All required permits would be obtained prior to project implementation, and followed during implementation. Potentially required permits include Clean Water Act section 404 permit, the Montana Stream Protection Act (SPA) 124 permit as well as the Montana Department of Environmental Quality 318 (turbidity) permit. Additionally, comments on the project were solicited from permitting agencies Montana Departments of Environmental Quality and Fish, Wildlife, and Parks as well as the US Army Corps of Engineers (details are in the project record).
4. If construction for new trails occurs adjacent to, or would cross any streams, appropriate methods to control risk of sediment delivery to streams would be used (e.g., silt fencing, straw waddles).
5. Areas of decomposed granite soil would be identified and erosion control measures planned prior to ground disturbing activities (Forest Plan page II-26) associated with storage, decommissioning or new road or trail construction.
6. To reduce sedimentation associated with road storage, decommissioning or new construction, highly sensitive granitic soils would be first priority under best management practices to minimize for soil erosion.

### Heritage

7. Any areas of proposed new ground disturbance (resulting from road and trail closures or new construction) would be inventoried for cultural resources to ensure activities comply with NEPA, the Forest Plan and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Heritage resource protective measures may be prescribed as needed and would be incorporated prior to implementation. A phased approach under the Heritage Programmatic Agreement (PA) with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (MT SHPO) would be implemented and requires consultation prior to approval
8. Currently-identified heritage properties that occur within 600 feet of roads in the Blackfoot planning area that are closed, stored, decommissioned or otherwise treated would be periodically revisited, monitored, and documented.

## Minerals

9. Alternative 3 would result in possible impacts to three currently-permitted mining projects (Butterfly lode and Horse Laugh placer projects in Poorman Creek and the Baldy Mountain lode in Humbug Creek). If alternative 3 is selected for implementation, routes into these areas would be reviewed in detail with the claimants to ensure adequate access.

## Aquatic Species and Habitat

10. New non-motorized trails would be planned and constructed to avoid sensitive areas, using all INFISH and BMPs to minimize impacts to habitat.
11. Installation, removal or replacement of any culverts would be restricted to periods when stream channels are dry or would be avoided from May 1 to August 1 to reduce the risk of affecting cutthroat trout eggs in stream gravels.
12. Road maintenance activities within 300 feet of perennial streams or scoured channels, and adjacent to or upstream of known or potential bull trout spawning and rearing areas, would follow requirements of the Programmatic Biological Assessment For Road Maintenance for Bull Trout (USDI BLM and USDA Forest Service 1999)
13. Project activities that may affect the natural or existing shape of any stream or its banks or tributaries requires a 124 permit. Any special considerations of the permit would be followed.
14. Road closure, storage and decommissioning activities would be conducted to ensure that adverse impacts to bull trout are minimized. These mitigation measures are outlined in the Biological Assessment of Road Related Action on Western Montana's Federal Lands that are Likely to Adversely Affect Bull Trout (USDA Forest Service and USDI BLM 2007), and in the project-specific Biological Assessment currently being prepared for this project

## Invasive Plants

15. Incorporate all relevant guidance from FSM 2081.2 and the Environmental Protection Measures from the Helena National Forest Weed FEIS and accompanying Record of Decision when implementing road closure, storage or decommissioning and new construction.
16. The following Best Management Practices (BMPs) are required by Forest Service Manual 2081.2 - Prevention and Control Measures (FSM 2080).
  - **Roads - Required Objectives and Associated Practices.**
    - (1) Incorporate weed prevention into road layout, design, and alternative evaluation. Environmental analysis for road construction and reconstruction will include weed risk assessment.
    - (2) Remove the seed source that could be picked up by passing vehicles and limit seed transport in new and reconstruction areas.
      - (a) Remove mud, dirt, and plant parts from all off road equipment before moving into project area. Cleaning must occur off National Forest lands. This does not apply to service vehicles that will stay on the roadway, traveling frequently in and out of the project area.
      - (b) Clean equipment prior to leaving the project site, if operating in areas infested with new invaders as determined by the Forest Weed Specialist. Reference Contract Provision C/CT 6.626.

(3) Re-establish vegetation on bare ground due to construction and reconstruction activity to minimize weed spread.

(a) Revegetate disturbed soil, except the travel way on surfaced roads, in a manner that optimizes plant establishment for that specific site, unless ongoing disturbance at the site will prevent weed establishment. Use native material where appropriate and available. Use a seed mix that includes fast, early season species to provide quick, dense revegetation. To avoid weed contaminated seed, each lot must be tested by a certified seed laboratory against all State noxious weed lists and documentation of the seed inspection test provided.

(b) Use local seeding guidelines for detailed procedures and appropriate mixes. Use native material where appropriate and available. Revegetation may include planting, seeding, fertilization, and weed-free mulching as indicated by local prescriptions.

(c) Monitor and evaluate success of revegetation in relation to project plan. Repeat as indicated by local prescriptions.

(4) Minimize the movement of existing and new weed species caused by moving infested gravel and fill material. The borrow pit will not be used if new invaders, defined by the Forest Weed Specialist, are found on site.

(5) Minimize sources of weed seed in areas not yet revegetated. If straw is used for road stabilization and erosion control, it must be certified weed-free or weed-seed free.

(6) Minimize roadside sources of weed seed that could be transported to other areas during maintenance.

(a) Look for priority weed species during road maintenance and report back to District Weed Specialist.

(b) Minimize blading and ditch work where new invaders are found.

(c) Maintain desirable roadside vegetation. If desirable vegetation is removed during blading or other ground-disturbing activities, area would be revegetated where possible according to section (3) (a), (b), (c).

(d) Remove mud, dirt, and plant parts from all off road equipment before moving into project area. Cleaning must occur off National Forest lands. (This does not apply to service vehicles that will stay on the roadway, traveling frequently in and out of the project area.)

(e) Clean equipment prior to leaving the project site, if operating in areas infested with new invaders, as determined by the Forest Weed Specialist. Reference Contract Provision C/CT 6.626.

(f) Straw used for road stabilization and erosion control would be certified weed-free or weed-seed-free.

(7) Reduce weed establishment in road decommissioning/reclamation projects. Revegetate according to section (3) (a), (b), (c) above.

17. Recommended certified weed seed free native seed mixtures can be found in the project Botany Specialist Report.

18. Where feasible for restoration of disturbed ground, cover bare soils with a thin layer of duff from adjacent sites, if available. It is important to leave some duff on adjacent sites where cover material is collected.

19. Only herbicides approved for use under the *Helena National Forest Noxious Weed EIS* (USDA Forest Service 2006) would be used. All herbicides would be used in accordance with label restrictions under that decision.
20. Inventory routes prior to new road or trail construction and treat weeds that occur adjacent to the route. Inventory new trails for weeds one and three years after construction and treat weeds that are presently adjacent to the roads or trails.

### Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Plants

21. If new occurrences of sensitive plants are discovered within the project area and could be affected by project implementation, appropriate mitigation would be followed upon consultation with a Forest Service botanist.
22. All relevant guidance from FSM 2081.2 and the environmental protection measures from the Helena National Forest Noxious Weed FEIS and Record of Decision (2006, 2007) would be followed.
23. Only herbicides approved for use under the Helena National Forest Noxious Weed Record of Decision (2007) would be applied. All herbicides would be applied in accordance with label restrictions under that decision.
24. A 100-foot buffer around any sensitive plant species would be required when herbicides are applied. Within this buffer only hand-pulling of weeds would be allowed, (Environmental Protection Measure #22 from the Helena National Forest Noxious Weed FEIS and Record of Decision 2006).
25. Sensitive plant occurrences along roadsides would be buffered from road maintenance activities.
26. Areas of ground disturbance for new construction would be restored by covering with duff or seeded with native plant seeds as needed.

### Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Federal agencies are required by NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). Public comments received in response to the proposed action provided suggestions for alternative methods for achieving the purpose and need. Some of these alternatives may have been outside the scope, duplicative of the alternatives considered in detail, or determined to be components that would cause unnecessary environmental harm. Therefore, other alternatives were considered, but dismissed from detailed consideration for reasons summarized below.

Alternative 2 – proposed action is not exactly the same as the initial proposed action that was distributed for public comment via the Notice of Intent in 2010 and 2012, although they are quite similar. Since the distribution of the proposed action in late October/early November 2010, we have made a few minor adjustments to clarify definitions, wording and otherwise edit the narrative description of the proposed action to ensure accuracy. While working with GIS coverages and in order to describe the proposed action in the level of detail necessary for analysis, we have also made several other adjustments to increase the accuracy of data for analysis. For example, the information displayed in table 3 is the same information provided during scoping in 2010 and in all subsequent NOIs; however, the miles estimates in each category for the proposed action are not the same as those provided in these prior documents.

While the intent of the proposed action is the same and only minor changes have been made since scoping in 2010, how we calculated these road and trail miles has been updated to more accurately reflect the updated codes and GIS coverage.

We addressed the unauthorized routes which were not done previously; these routes were identified on our 2010 scoping maps as part of the existing condition but we had not proposed any change to them at the time; this is addressed now in both alternative 2 – proposed action and alternative 3.

As stated previously, we identified the need to amend the Forest Plan regarding the standard for the big game security index. The proposed programmatic plan amendment would establish a new big game security standard for elk herd units located within the project area (figure 2). As a result, HNF Forest Plan Standard 4a would be amended as it relates to the Blackfoot travel planning area. This programmatic plan amendment was not explicitly stated in the original Notice of Intent or in the November 2010 newsletter describing the proposed action. The decision to amend the Forest Plan, if necessary, would be made separate from the Blackfoot Travel Plan decision.

Alternative 2 – proposed action described in this document better addresses the purpose and need for action and the public input received to date, and more accurately reflected on-the-ground conditions and incorporates the latest and most up-to-date GIS data; therefore, the initial proposed action was dismissed from further detailed analysis.

We initially explored a fourth alternative at the request of Wildlands CPR, in a letter dated July 19, 2012. They requested that we analyze an additional alternative that designates all Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) in the Blackfoot travel planning area as non-motorized, and decommissions all roads in IRAs, including many of the roads proposed for storage under alternative 3. Upon further clarification with Wildlands CPR (as documented via email during September 2012 and available in the project record), this request was rescinded. We evaluated certain separate components of this preliminary alternative for possible inclusion into alternative 3, but did not carry them forward for further analysis as part of alternative 3 because they would not adequately address the purpose and need for action related to exclusive use from private land and providing reasonable access for future resource management. For these reasons, this alternative was dismissed from further detailed analysis.

This project includes the need for a Forest Plan amendment to address Forestwide standard 4(a) for big game security [Forest Plan pp. II/17 – II/18] for Alternatives 2 and 3. The IDT considered developing an alternative that would not require an amendment; however this alternative was not considered in detail. The Forest Plan Standard 4(a) is applied at the elk herd unit scale. There are a total of eight elk herd units in the Blackfoot travel planning area. Under the current conditions (alternative 1), only two of the eight elk herd units meet this standard (Nevada and Poorman Creek) and would also continue to do so under alternatives 2 and 3. The remainders of the herd units fail to comply with the standard, yet do not support abnormally high open road densities (see table f- 2 in appendix F for amending Big Game Security Standard 4(a)). Five of the six remaining herd units would still not comply with standard 4(a), even if all open roads, both public and private, were eliminated. In the sixth unit (Beaver Cr-Lincoln), a closure of 51 percent of the roads (approximately 37 miles) would be needed to achieve compliance. The social, recreational, and economic concerns with this amount of widespread closures would not be well received.

Further, biologists on the IDT have worked closely with Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks to discuss if not meeting FS standard 4(a) is to the detriment of elk populations and habitat. Currently, MFWP population objectives for elk are being met in five of the hunting districts (HD) that cover the Blackfoot landscape (HD 281, HD 298, HD 339, HD 343, and HD 423). This coincides with the following EHUs: Arrastra Creek, Beaver Creek-Lincoln, Keep Cool, and portions of Poorman Creek, Landers Fork, Flesher Pass, and Ogden Mountain. There are no MFWP objectives for HDs 280 and 284. HD 293 is below MFWP objectives and includes Nevada Creek EHU and portions of Ogden Mountain and Poorman Creek. High rates of predation have been considered a challenge in portions of this HD rather than deficiency in security habitat.

The big game index standard 4(a), as currently formulated and stated in the Forest Plan, is insensitive to real changes in elk security and it places impractical constraints on Forest management, and on the ability of the public to use the forest (even though the allowed use is not detrimental to elk security). The standard would be impossible to meet throughout most of—and possibly all of—the Blackfoot landscape for the foreseeable future (25-50 years), not because of deficiencies in travel management, but because of natural loss of hiding cover that continues to decline as trees killed by mountain pine beetle and others begin to fall to the forest floor over the next few years.

In the past, road miles used in standard 4(a) have been weighted according to criteria established during development of the Forest Plan (circa 1981-1986) (USDA 1983, p. 12). Private routes not open to the public were not counted as open roads. Since 2009, however, a different weighting formula has been imposed due to court decisions in which all public roads (County, State, Federal) in the elk herd units are calculated at 100 percent of length and private roads at 25 percent of length. This produces higher open-road densities than in the past, and was not how the original Standard 4(a) was designed to be used.

As a result of the above discussion, this alternative was not considered in detail; this alternative would not be in the best interest of the public or elk management and an amendment to the Forest Plan to change Standard 4(a) is a component of alternatives 2 and 3.

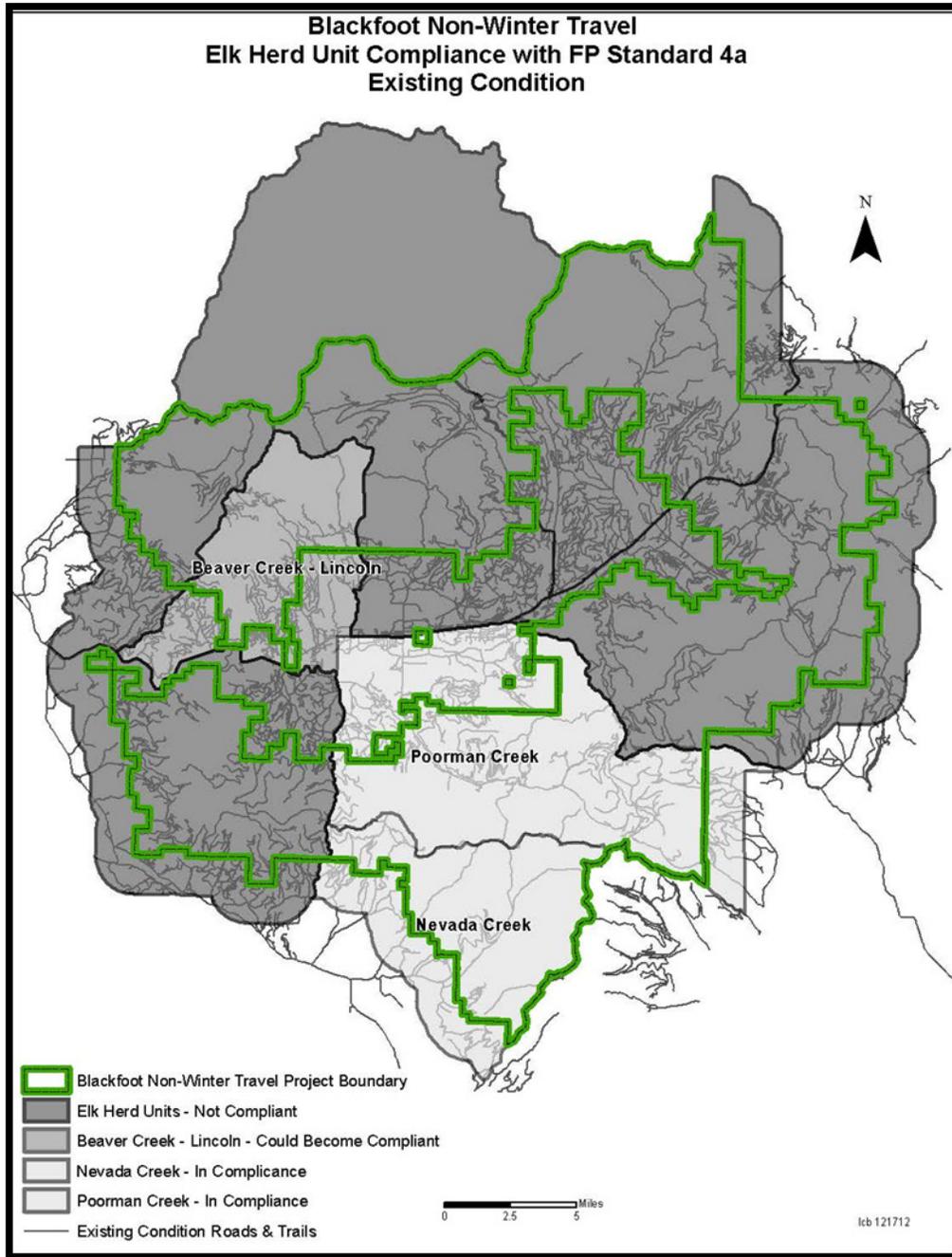


Figure 2. Existing condition – elk herd unit compliance with Forest Plan standard 4a

## Comparison of Alternatives

This section provides a summary of the effects of implementing each alternative. Information in the following table is focused on activities and effects where different levels of effects or outputs can be distinguished quantitatively or qualitatively among alternatives.

**Table 6. Alternative comparison by purpose and need, primary components and key issues**

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Achievement of Objectives and Purpose and Need			
Provide manageable system of designated public motorized access routes	Alternative 1 would continue to provide a manageable road system and access to the national forest. It would, however, leave a number of miles of road on the ground not considered necessary for the management of the national forest.	Alternatives 2 and 3 provide a manageable system of designated public motorized access routes and provide detailed analysis of every road and trail on the system to determine effective management of that road.	
Designate public wheeled motorized and non-motorized use for roads and trails	Does not designate wheeled motorized and non-motorized use. Retains existing system of roads and trails.	Designates public wheeled motorized and non-motorized use for roads and trails. Allows administrative access.	Designates public wheeled motorized and non-motorized use for roads and trails. Allows administrative access.
Mitigate resource concerns associated with certain routes and uses	Does not provide mitigation for resource concerns.	See project design features section in chapter 2.	See project design features section in chapter 2 p. 28.
Ensure route system is in compliance with Forest Plan for grizzly bear security and habitat within the recovery zone	The Forest Plan threshold of 0.55 miles per square mile of road is currently being met under alternative 1.	Open road densities were analyzed for this project. Alternative 2 would reduce open road densities and would be below the Forest Plan threshold of 0.55 miles per square mile of road.	Open road densities were analyzed for this project. Alternative 3 would reduce open road densities and would be below the Forest Plan threshold of 0.55 miles per square mile of road. Alternative 3 would result in the lowest open road density, compared to alternatives 1 or 2.
Ensure the route system provides continued access for resource management needs	Provides for adequate future resource management on the existing road system.	Provides for adequate future resource management on higher maintenance level roads. Segments of new construction are proposed where considered necessary to improve management of the national forest	Provides for adequate future resource management on higher maintenance level roads. Segments of new construction are proposed where considered necessary to improve management of the national forest.
Ensure the route system minimizes exclusive use from and to private land and mining claims (from Transportation Report)	Roads (approximately 8 miles) that fail to provide public access to the National Forest due to	Roads that fail to provide public access are proposed for storage (approximately 8 miles). Placing the roads in storage would prevent certain user groups (private land owners and miners) from having	

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
	<p>jurisdictional concerns would continue to be open to highway legal vehicles.</p>	<p>access to the forest that is not given to the public, while retaining those roads for future resource management needs.</p>	
<p>Reduce the complexity of the current travel map</p>	<p>Complexity would not change, with 12 different seasonal restrictions identified for roads. The maps would remain somewhat confusing in regard to allowable use of motorized trails, but System trails, unlike roads, currently have no seasonal use restrictions to complicate the public's understanding and compliance.</p>	<p>Alternative 2 results in a more complex travel plan in regard to trail management but simplifies it for roads. Alternative 2 would clearly show the trails open to motorized use on a MVUM and more specifically, the type of motorized use, whether 2-wheel motorized or motorized less than 50 inches in width.</p> <p>Designating motorized roads and trails on an MVUM would remove speculation by the public as to the allowable use, and dates of open use.</p> <p>This would be an improvement in comparison to the existing travel plan map though non-motorized trails would not be incorporated into the MVUM.</p> <p>Proposed management of the non-motorized trail system is more detailed under alternatives 2 and 3, therefore the Forest Visitor map would need to be updated under these alternatives to reflect the allowable non-motorized uses of the trails.</p> <p>In addition this alternative also proposes a reduction in the number and types of closure map codes which would result in a simplified motor vehicle use map.</p>	<p>Alternative 3 results in a simplified MVUM. All motorized use would be limited to one time period (July 1 - August 31), and for motorized trails, there would be only one use category (vehicles less than 50"). This would be an improvement in comparison to the existing travel plan map though non-motorized trails would not be incorporated into the MVUM.</p> <p>With respect to non-motorized use, the travel plan is more complex due to the addition of another allowable use category (foot and stock use only). Proposed management of the non-motorized trail system is more detailed under alternatives 2 and 3; therefore the Forest Visitor Map would need to be updated under these alternatives to reflect the allowable non-motorized uses of the trails. In addition this alternative also proposes a reduction in the number and types of closure map codes which would result in a simplified motor vehicle use map.</p>

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Provide for wheeled motor vehicle travel for camping and parking associated with camping near designated system routes	Motorized access for dispersed camping is permitted up to 300 feet from centerline of motorized routes.	Alternatives 2 and 3 would designate areas within 300 feet of a designated system route for off-route wheeled motorized vehicle use for camping or parking associated with camping.	
Provide for parking safely next to the side of the road	Not provided for specifically.	Alternatives 2 and 3 would provide for legal parking within 30 feet of the centerline of designated roads to conduct allowable activities such as picnicking and hiking.	
Primary Alternative Components <sup>1</sup>			
Miles of designated NFS roads (that would be shown on the MVUM (under alternative 2 or under alternative 3))	446	348	307
Miles of designated motorized trails	60	92	47
Miles of designated non-motorized trails	71	122	112
Miles of road storage	0	133	75
Miles of road decommissioning	0	8	197
Miles of new road construction	0	0	0.50
Miles of new motorized trail construction	0	2	3
Miles of new non-motorized trail construction	0	31	31
Total Miles of designated mountain bike routes:	0	89	89
Mountain bike and foot travel (hiking)	0	19	18
Mountain bike, foot travel and horseback riding	0	20	52
Mountain bike, foot travel, horseback riding and motorized trail	0	37	8
Mountain bike, foot travel, and motorized trail	0	1	1
Mixed use along existing road	0	12	10
Changes to CDNST	Mix of motorized and non-motorized use.	No change; mix of motorized and non-motorized use.	Managed primarily for non-motorized use; seasonal motorized use (closed 9/1-6/30)

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
			would be limited to approximately 1 mile of trail and the rest of the trail would be managed for non-motorized use.
Changes to Helmville-Gould Trail	Motorized use only (vehicles less than 50 inches).	No change; motorized use only (vehicles less than 50 inches).	Managed for non-motorized use from its intersection with CDNST to Dalton Mountain.
Changes to Stonewall Trail	Motorized use only (vehicles less than 50 inches).	No change; motorized use only (vehicles less than 50 inches).	Closed to wheeled ,motorized use from 9/1-6/30 annually.
Key Issues			
<b>Wildlife</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Terrestrial Wildlife)			
<b>Elk</b>			
Habitat effectiveness in all eight Elk Herd Units combined (Arrastra Creek, Beaver Creek, Flesher Pass, Keep Cool, Lander’s Fork, Nevada Creek, Ogden Mountain, and Poorman): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total miles of motorized routes and route density (mi/mi<sup>2</sup>)</li> <li>• Open roads per square mile</li> </ul>	884.0 1.1	848.0 1.1 Alternative 2 would result in a 36 mile/square mile reduction in road density and would slightly improve overall habitat effectiveness	805.0 1.0 Alternative 3 would result in a 79 mile/square mile reduction in road density and would somewhat improve overall habitat effectiveness
Summer Hiding Cover - Forest Plan standard 3	Forest Plan standard 3 for summer range hiding cover is currently not being met for all elk habitat units under current condition; this would not change with implementation of alternative 1.	No change from existing condition; alternative 2 would not reduce hiding cover.	No change from existing condition; alternative 3 would not reduce hiding cover.
Big game security (proposed new Forest Plan Standard 4(a) is: <i>When security areas comprise more than 30% of the fall use area of an elk herd unit within the HNF administrative boundary, management activities shall not reduce the amount of security areas from October 15 through December 1 approximate big game rifle season)) to less than 30%. Where security areas comprise 30% or less of the fall use area of an</i>	Proposed new Forest Plan standard for big game security would not be implemented for alternative 1.	Proposed new Forest Plan standard for big game security would be met for all elk herd units in the project area under alternative 2 and 3.  In comparison, if the existing Forest Plan standard were used and it were not changed with this decision, only 4 of the 8 herd units in the project would be in compliance with the Forest Plan under each of	

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
<i>elk herd unit (within the HNF administrative boundary) during the general rifle season, management activities shall not result in a further reduction.</i>		the alternatives, even with reductions in road densities under alternatives 2 and 3.	
Winter Range (Forest Plan Standard 4(c))	Since travel would be limited to existing designated routes under all alternatives, the availability of winter range and winter range thermal cover would remain unchanged. There would be no new road or trail construction in winter range thermal cover under any alternative.		
Average elk security habitat (percent) for all elk herd units combined (guideline is 30 percent)	38 – Guideline is met across the project area as a whole.	39 – Guideline is met and alternative 2 would increase elk security by approximately 1% across the project area as a whole	43 – Guideline is met and alternative 3 would increase elk security by approximately 5% across the project area as a whole
Average elk habitat effectiveness (percent) for all elk herd units combined (guideline is 50 percent)	59 – Guideline is met across the project area as a whole.	59 – Guideline is met and would remain the same as alternative 1 for the project area as a whole. However, habitat effectiveness would increase minimally in 7 of the 8 elk herd unit under alternative 2.	60 – Guideline is met and alternative 3 would increase overall elk habitat effectiveness for the project area by approximately 1%. However, habitat effectiveness would increase in 7 of the 8 elk units and this improvement would be greater than under alternative 2.
<b>Grizzly Bear</b>			
<p>Interagency requirements for grizzly bear: All Grizzly Bear Subunits (Alice Creek, Arrastra Mountain, Red Mountain) Combined (Average for Bear Management Unit):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open motorized route density (OMRD) guideline is less than or equal to 19% of the area.</li> <li>Total motorized route density (TMRD) guideline is less than or equal to 19 % of the area.</li> <li>Security core (CORE) habitat guideline is greater than or equal to 68% of the area.</li> </ul>	17 OMRD 21 TMRD 66 CORE	19 OMRD 18 TMRD 70 CORE	16 OMRD 16 TMRD 73 CORE
Interagency requirement guidelines met in subunits?	Guidelines for all three subunits combined are currently being met for OMRD but not for TMRD and CORE; this would continue with implementation of alternative 1.	Grizzly bear habitat would improve through reduced road densities; guidelines for all three subunits combined would be met.	Grizzly bear habitat would improve through reduced road densities; guidelines for all three subunits combined would be met and would improve over the existing condition. Alternative 3

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
			goes further than alternatives 1 or 2 in improving grizzly bear habitat.
<p>Forest Plan standard for open road density in Occupied Habitat met?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forest Plan Standard is less than or equal to 0.55 miles per square mile of road</li> </ul>	0.43 – Guideline is met.	0.39 – Guideline is met.	0.35 – Guideline is met.
<p>Grizzly Bear Summary – Forest Plan standard and interagency requirements met?</p>	<p>Open road density would remain at 0.43 miles/square mile and would continue to be in compliance with the Forest Plan; not all interagency requirements for OMRD, TMRD and CORE would be met in individual subunits or in all subunits combined.</p>	<p>Implementing alternative 2 would reduce open road density and would go further than alternative 1 in meeting the Forest Plan standard and interagency requirements; it would reduce open road density by 0.04 miles/square mile. Alternative 2 would improve TRD and CORE in all three subunits compared to the current condition (alternative 1). The least change occurs in the Arrastra subunit while the greatest change occurs in the Red Mountain subunit. The Red Mountain subunit would still have a degraded baseline but ORD, TRD, and CORE would improve.</p>	<p>Implementing alternative 3 would reduce open road density and would go further than alternatives 1 and 2 in meeting the Forest Plan standard and interagency requirements; it would reduce open road density by 0.08 miles/square mile.</p> <p>Alternative 3 does the most to improve conditions for each of the subunits, individually as well as collectively. Both action alternatives meet the guidelines but alternative 3 would result in the lowest open and lowest total road values and the highest core value compared to alternatives 1 and 2.</p>
<p><b>Mountain Goat</b></p>			
<p>Mountain goat habitat disturbance/displacement in the Red Mountain and Stonewall areas and the connecting ridgeline</p>	<p>Alternative 1 would not change the existing condition and would not minimize potential impacts to mountain goats; trail #417 would remain open without seasonal restrictions and trail U-330-B1 would remain closed allowing for some limited, infrequent single-track use.</p>	<p>Alternative 2 would reduce the potential for summer motorized use in potential mountain goat habitat but would not be substantially different than alternative 1.</p>	<p>Compared to alternative 1 and 2, alternative 3 would go the furthest in reducing the potential for negative effects from summer motorized use to mountain goats and their habitat primarily by decommissioning trail U-330-B1 from Stonewall Mtn. to Cotter Basin and closing trail #417 (accessing Stonewall Mtn.) seasonally (9/1-6/30) to</p>

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
			motorized use.
<b>Aquatic Species and Habitat</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Aquatic Species and Habitat)			
Road sediment reduction estimates resulting from road storage or decommissioning in tons per year	No reduction in sediment	Approx. 13.3 tons per year less than alternative 1.	Approx. 37.9 tons per year less than alternative 1.
Miles of road or trails reclaimed in the 150-foot buffer along streams (riparian habitat conservation areas)	0	Three of the project area hydrologic unit codes (HUCs)—Hamburg, Sauerkraut, and Upper Alice—would have reductions in the miles of road within 150 of streams for a total reduction of 3.2 miles.	Twenty-two of the project area HUCs would have reductions in the miles of road within 150 of streams for a total reduction of 34.4 miles.
Number of road stream crossings and relationship to fish bearing streams	0	Two of the HUCs in the project area (Hamburg and Sauerkraut) would have culverts removed for a total of 17 culverts removed and channels restored.	Twenty of the HUCs in the project area would have culverts removed for a total of 121 culverts removed and channels restored.
Miles of high/moderate risk roads and relationship to fish bearing watersheds	0	Decommissioning of 3.2 miles of roads including roads in Alice, Hamburg and Sauerkraut watersheds are proposed. They are rated high/moderate risk in fish bearing watersheds.	Decommissioning of 121 miles of roads including roads in all of the rated high/moderate risk watersheds and additional fish bearing watersheds.
Consistency of alternatives with Forest Plan guidance for threatened, endangered and sensitive fish and aquatic species	The current road system condition and its location have negative impacts to fisheries and aquatic species due to culverts that block fish passage and are at risk for failure, and sedimentation from roads within 150 feet of streams that reduce riparian and floodplain connectivity and function; no improvements would be made under Alternative 1 to bring the road system into compliance with the Forest Plan.	Consistent with the Forest Plan for TES fish and aquatic species	Consistent with the Forest Plan for TES fish and aquatic species.

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
<b>Quality motorized trail/route system</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Transportation and Recreation)			
Miles of roads and routes open for motorized use and relationship to currently-used or popular areas	446 miles roads 60 miles trails	348 miles roads 92 trails	307 miles roads 46 miles trails
Miles of roads available for possible motorized, mixed use	Would not designate roads for motorized mixed use.	Designating NFS roads for motorized mixed use requires an engineering analysis and must be completed by a qualified engineer. Analysis would occur on a road by road basis after completion of the planning process and implemented over time.	Designating NFS roads for motorized mixed use requires an engineering analysis and must be completed by a qualified engineer. Analysis would occur on a road by road basis after completion of the planning process and implemented over time.
Miles of new motorized trail construction	0	2	3
Overall ease-of-use of the motor vehicle use map for motorized users (level of complexity)	Visitor map complexity: See above.	MVUM and Visitor map complexity: See above	MVUM and Visitor map complexity: See above
<b>Quality non-motorized trail/route system</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Transportation and Recreation)			
Miles of routes open for non-motorized use only and relationship to currently-used or popular areas	71 miles (all mixed non-motorized use)	122 miles of non-motorized use (19 miles foot and mountain bike; 103 miles foot, stock and mountain bike)	159 miles of non-motorized trails (47 miles foot and stock; 18 miles foot and mountain bike; 94 miles, foot, stock and mountain bike). This alternative would close Scapegoat Wilderness portal trails to mountain bikers*.
Miles of new non-motorized trail construction or miles of new non-motorized routes designated on existing routes	0	31	31
Overall ease-of-use of motor vehicle use map and non-motorized trail system for non-motorized users (level of complexity)	Forest Visitor Map: See above	MVUM complexity and Forest Visitor Map: See above	MVUM complexity and Forest Visitor Map: See above
<b>Continental Divide National Scenic Trail</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Recreation)			
Miles of motorized routes within the CDNST	17	17	1

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Miles of non-motorized routes within the CDNST	32	32	48
Consistency of alternatives with the intent of the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan and the Forest Plan	CDNST: Somewhat inconsistent with national direction Forest Plan: Inconsistent (RNAs)	CDNST: Somewhat inconsistent with national direction Forest Plan: Inconsistent (RNAs)	CDNST: Somewhat inconsistent with national direction Forest Plan: Inconsistent (RNAs)
Other Resources			
<b>Socioeconomics</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Socioeconomics)			
Access to suitable timber land	No change	No perceptible change	No perceptible change
Public access for fuel wood	No change	No measurable change	No measurable change
<b>Fire and Fuels</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Fire and Fuels)			
Access for wildfire suppression	No change	Less access and increased response time	Less access and increased response time
<b>Cultural Resources</b> (See EIS Chapter 3 section on Cultural Resources)	Alternative 1 does not increase protection of cultural resources by closing numerous open roads and trails but it does provide ample access to cultural resources for purposes of monitoring, scientific investigation and potentially interpretation.	Alternative 2 would close approximately 361 miles unauthorized roads and trails, which would benefit cultural resources over Alternative 1. These closures might constrain some administrative and public access to cultural resources.	Alternative 3 would close approximately 566 miles of unauthorized roads and trails, which would benefit cultural resources over both Alternatives 1 and 2.
<b>Hydrology</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Hydrology)			
Sediment delivery from roads to streams	Alternative 1 would not result in a reduction of sediment delivery from roads to streams.	Alternatives 2 would result in a reduction of sediment delivery from roads to streams.	Alternative 3 would provide the greatest opportunity for reduction of sediment delivery from roads to streams within the Blackfoot travel planning area.

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Stream Crossings on closed or partially closed roads	0	17	121
Road miles to be closed within 150 feet of streams	0	3.2	34.4
Modeled sediment delivery reduction for closed or partially closed roads (tons/year)	0	13	38
<b>Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Invasive Species)	Alternative 1 would be expected to contribute most to the introduction and spread of invasive species /noxious weeds	Alternative 2 would be intermediate between alternatives 1 and 3 in spread of invasive species /noxious weeds	Alternative 3 would be less likely than the other alternatives to promote the introduction, establishment and spread of invasive species / noxious weeds
<b>Minerals</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Mineral Resources)	Alternative 1 is the most favorable for mineral exploration and development activities as it includes the greatest number of open motorized routes.	Alternative 2 is less favorable than alternative 1 but better than Alternative 3 because there are fewer miles of route that would be decommissioned. Specific permitted projects are negatively affected by Alternatives 2 and 3	Alternative 3 restricts the most miles of routes due to decommissioned routes. Specific permitted projects are negatively affected by Alternatives 2 and 3
<b>Soils</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on Soils)	Alternative 1 has about 224 total miles of routes open to wheeled motorized use on sensitive soils within the Blackfoot Project Area.	Alternative 2 would have about 222 road miles accessible to wheeled motorized use on sensitive soils, 2 miles less than Alternative 1.	Alternative 3 would result in an approximate reduction of 59 miles of routes open to wheeled motorized use on sensitive soils, with a total of 165 miles of road open.
<b>Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive (TES) Plants</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on TES Plants)	Alternative 1 has the highest potential impact on sensitive plants by having the largest number of miles of routes open to wheeled motorized use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May impact individuals but would not contribute toward a trend for federal listing or a loss of viability (MIIH) determination for all species</li> </ul>	Alternative 2 has more potential for adverse effects than alternative 3, but somewhat less impact than alternative 1. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MIIH determination for all species</li> </ul>	Alternative 3 has the lowest potential to affect sensitive plant occurrences by restricting motorized wheeled vehicle use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MIIH determination for all species</li> </ul>

Comparison Components	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
<p><b>Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive (TES) Wildlife species</b> (See EIS chapter 3 section on TES Wildlife species)</p>	<p>May affect, but not likely to adversely affect grizzly bear and lynx; May impact individuals of 4 sensitive species but would not contribute toward a trend for federal listing or a loss of viability (MIIH) determination for all species; would not impact 2 sensitive species</p>	<p>May affect, but not likely to adversely affect grizzly bear and lynx; May impact individuals of 6 sensitive species but would not contribute toward a trend for federal listing or a loss of viability (MIIH) determination for all species</p>	<p>May affect, but not likely to adversely affect grizzly bear and lynx; May impact individuals of 4 sensitive species but would not contribute toward a trend for federal listing or a loss of viability (MIIH) determination for all species</p>
<p><b>Roadless Areas</b> (see EIS chapter 3 section on Roadless Areas)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 76 miles of motorized routes in Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs)</li> <li>• 71 miles of non-motorized routes in Inventoried Roadless Areas</li> </ul> <p>No change to undeveloped characteristics or overall wilderness characteristics in these unroaded areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 58 miles of motorized routes in IRAs (an 18-mile decrease)</li> <li>• 89 miles of non-motorized routes (an 18-mile increase)</li> </ul> <p>Enhanced undeveloped character, opportunities for solitude and overall wilderness characteristics in these unroaded areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31 miles of motorized routes in IRAs (a 31-mile decrease)</li> <li>• 95 miles of non-motorized routes in IRAs (a 24-mile increase)</li> </ul> <p>Enhanced undeveloped character, opportunities for solitude and overall wilderness characteristics in these unroaded areas and this benefit would be greatest under alternative 3</p>

<sup>1</sup> this is the cumulative outcome of the proposed changes and past decisions

\* Closing the portal trails to mountain bikers would reduce conflict among non-motorized user groups and minimize wilderness trespass from wheeled non-motorized recreationists.