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**Draft Revised Land Management Plan and DEIS Comments  
Custer-Gallatin National Forest Plan Revision #50185**

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## Introduction

I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan and DEIS. This submittal supplements Notice of Intent scoping comments that were sent on January 23, 2018 (**Attachment A**). The following comments are mostly related to forest planning processes to provide for the integrated management of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) corridor (aka rights-of-way) a congressionally designated area. A reasonable delineation of a minimum extent of a CDNST corridor is depicted on the map in **Appendix A**. These comments also address the application of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum planning system framework, designation of Species of Conservation Concern, and other issues.

Designated areas are specific areas or features within the plan area that have been given a permanent designation to maintain its unique special character or purpose. Certain purposes and restrictions are usually established for designated areas, which greatly influence management needs and opportunities associated with them. The Interdisciplinary Team was required to identify and evaluate available information about designated areas including:

1. Types, purposes, and locations of established designated areas within the plan area. The Responsible Official should use a map to identify these locations.
2. Range of uses, management activities, or management restrictions associated with the established designated areas in the plan area.
3. Existing plans for the management of established designated areas within the plan area, such as comprehensive plans for national scenic or historic trails.

For reference and the planning record, I have attached the current version of a CDNST Planning Handbook, which addresses many aspects of planning for this National Scenic Trail (**Attachment B**) and the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan (**Attachment C**).

According to FSM 2353.44b, “the land management plan for an administrative unit through which the CDNST passes ... must [except where the CDNST traverses a wilderness area] establish a management area for the CDNST that is broad enough to protect natural, scenic, historic, and cultural features.” FSH 1909.12 describes that, “the Interdisciplinary Team should use other information to delineate a national scenic and historic trails corridor that protects the resource values for which the trail was designated or is being proposed for designation (16 U.S.C 1244(b))...,” [and] “[t]he Responsible Official shall include plan components that provide for the nature and purposes of national scenic and historic trails in the plan area.”

Land management plans shall form one integrated plan for each unit (16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(1)). The plan and developed NEPA alternatives must provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses, including outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish, within Forest Service authority and the inherent capability of the plan area as follows: ... (b)... (1) The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for: (i) Sustainable recreation; including

recreation settings, opportunities, and access; and scenic character..., and (vi) appropriate management of other designated areas or recommended designated areas in the plan area...(36 CFR 219.10(b)(i)&(vi)), FSH 1909.12 24.43. The CDNST is a congressionally designated area (36 CFR 219.19). CEQ regulations 36 CFR Part 220 do not lessen the applicability of the CEQ 40 CFR 1500 regulations (see 36 CFR 220.1(b)).

### **Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

#### **Purpose and Need for Action, DEIS Chapter 1, Page 5**

**Observation:** The Purpose and Need for Action section of the EIS must describe the need to provide for integrated resource management of congressionally designated areas to protect or achieve the purposes for which each area was established, which includes providing for the nature and purposes and related values of National Scenic and Historic Trails.

#### **Decision Framework, DEIS Chapter 1, Page 5**

**Observation:** The FEIS Record of Decision of the EIS must describe how the proposed action and alternatives address the following FSH 1909.12 part 20 planning requirements:

- The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for sustainable recreation integrated with other plan components as described in 23.21a. To meet this requirement the plan...must include desired conditions for sustainable recreation using mapped desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes. This mapping may be based on management areas, geographic areas, designated areas, independent overlay mapping, or any combination of these approaches. (FSH 1909.12 23.23a)
- The Interdisciplinary Team shall identify Congressionally designated national scenic and historic trails and plan components must provide for the management of rights-of-ways (16 U.S.C 1246(a)(2)) consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. Plan components must provide for the nature and purposes of existing national scenic and historic trails (16 U.S.C. 1246(c), FSH 1909.12 24.43).
- The Interdisciplinary Team shall use the national scenic and historic trails rights-of-way maps required by 16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2) to map the location of the trails. Where national trail rights-of-way have not yet been selected, the Interdisciplinary Team shall reference the establishing legislation (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)) as the primary source for identifying and mapping the national scenic and historic trails right-of-way. If the right-of-way has not been selected, either through legislation or publication in the Federal Register, the Interdisciplinary Team should use other information to delineate a national scenic and historic trails corridor that protects the resource values for which the trail was designated or is being proposed for designation (16 U.S.C 1244(b)). The plan (and proposed action and alternatives) must identify and map National scenic and historic trails. (FSH 1909.12 24.43)

- Plan components must be compatible with the objectives and practices identified in the comprehensive plan for the management of the national scenic and historic trail. The objectives and practices include the identification of resources to be preserved and the trail's carrying capacity. (FSH 1909.12 24.43)
- In addition, the proposed action and alternatives should be consistent with the planning guidance in FSM 2310, FSM 2353, and FSM 2380.

The EIS must address new information and ensure methodology and scientific accuracy of the analyses. The EIS should describe that the EIS will take a hard look at the environmental consequences of reasonable alternatives including disclosing and analyzing the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed action.

### **Reasonable Alternatives, DEIS Chapter 2, Page 10**

The DEIS states, "All reasonable alternatives to the proposed action must meet the purpose and need for change and address one or more of the significant issues. Not all possible alternatives were carried into detailed study, because the list of options would have been prohibitively large. Instead, the responsible official identified those alternatives that met the criteria and created a reasonable range of outputs, direction, costs, management requirements, and effects from which to choose."

**Observation:** The DEIS alternatives as presented do not protect CDNST values. Plan components for CDNST resource allocations did not vary by alternative, which resulted in constricting the evaluation of reasonable alternatives for achieving desired conditions for this National Scenic Trail. In addition, one or more alternatives should have addressed bighorn sheep and bison as Species of Conservation Concern.

### **Significant Issues, DEIS Chapter 2, Page 11**

The DEIS states, "Significant issues were defined as those directly or indirectly caused by implementing the proposed action, involve potentially significant effects, and could be meaningfully and reasonably evaluated and addressed within the programmatic scope of a forest plan. Some issues are best resolved at finer scales (subsequent environmental analysis) where the site-specific details of a specific action and resources it affects can be meaningfully evaluated and weighed. Conversely, some issues have already been considered through broader programmatic environmental analysis (such as the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD) Final Environmental Impact Statement). In these cases, the issues focus on evaluating the effects unique to and commensurate with the decisions being considered here."

**Observation:** The management and protection of National Scenic and Historic Trails must be addressed through revision processes. National Trails will affect Forest Plan outcomes if the nature and purposes of these designated areas are protected through recognizing the National Trail

rights-of-way (aka corridor) and then protecting those rights-of-way by establishing appropriate plan components to protect the nature and purpose of the National Trail.

The Proposed Action and alternatives fail to establish a CDNST management corridor with appropriate plan components to provide for the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail. This omission is inconsistent with the National Trails System Act as implemented through Executive Order 13195, the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Forest Service directives, and guidance found in a related Federal Register Notice (74 FR 51116). Furthermore, the NRLMD direction was not fully addressed in any of the alternatives for protecting an important linkage area.

The DEIS did not address reasonable plan components to protect the values for which congressionally designated areas were established. Providing for plan components that protect National Scenic and Historic Trail nature and purposes is within the scope of the EIS and must be addressed in the proposed action and alternatives.

The establishment of a CDNST corridor with an extent of 1-mile and supporting Primitive or SPNM setting plan components would benefit the Canada Lynx and other wildlife species that rely on undeveloped lands. A CDNST corridor would provide for linkage/connectivity areas in the Henrys Lake Mountains Area—see **Appendix B**.

### **Elements Common to All Alternatives, DEIS Chapter 2, Page 16**

The DEIS describes that, “All alternatives adhere to the principles of multiple use and the sustained yield of goods and services required by the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 219.1 (b)). All alternatives are designed to: meet law, regulation, and policy..., provide integrated direction as included in the plan component, and...retain the existing decisions for the Northern Rockies Lynx Management direction.”

**Observation:** The proposed management direction for the CDNST does not protect CDNST *nature and purposes* values. The establishment of an adequate CDNST corridor with appropriate plan components was not evaluated in the DEIS. This inaction is inconsistent with the National Trails System Act, NFMA, and NEPA. The DEIS should be reissued as a supplement to address the omissions.

### **Alternatives, DEIS, Chapter 3, Page 19**

The DEIS describes that, “All lands that were are not withdrawn from timber suitability due to legal or technical factors (for example, designated wilderness) would be suitable for timber production except for research natural areas, special areas, the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Territory, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, recommended wilderness areas, backcountry areas, eligible wild and scenic rivers, National Natural Landmarks, and riparian management zones. When

consistent with other plan components, harvest for purposes other than timber production could occur on other lands not suitable for production.”

**Observation:** In general, I support this direction. However, the last sentence is somewhat confusing and should be edited. Possibly, the following sentence would better describe the intent of this guidance: “All lands that ~~were~~ are not withdrawn from timber suitability due to legal or technical factors ~~(for example, designated wilderness)~~ would be suitable for timber production except for research natural areas, special areas, the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Territory, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail *corridor*, recommended wilderness areas, backcountry areas, eligible wild and scenic rivers, National Natural Landmarks, and riparian management zones. *Timber harvest may only occur in these areas for resource benefits as determined by the* ~~When consistent with other plan components that are associated with the designation., timber harvest for purposes other than timber production could occur on other lands not suitable for production.”~~”

### **Bison, DEIS, Chapter 2, Page 21**

The DEIS states for Alternative D that, “Plan components would support management of bison on the Custer Gallatin National Forest, including a year round self-sustaining bison population on the national forest.”

**Observation:** I support this element of Alternative D. In addition, for this alternative and possibly others the bison should be classified as a Species of Conservation Concern. Bison have restricted ranges, low population numbers, and restricted ecological conditions on the Custer Gallatin National Forest (and other National Forest System lands). To protect the species and ensure the viability and persistence of the species on the Custer Gallatin National Forest, plan components should be established for at least the identified Bison Management Zones (DEIS, Figure 40). Bison related plan components for the prescribed management zones should include:

#### Desired Conditions

- Native bison have access to forage, security, and movement corridors to facilitate connectivity and natural distribution of the species.
- Educational materials, including signage at trailheads and campgrounds where native bison may occur, are available to help forest users understand bison behavior and avoid potential conflicts.

#### Standard

- Provide habitat for a sustainable native bison population.

#### Objectives

- Implement livestock grazing closures to resolve conflicts in favor of native bison.
- Develop a wildlife migration corridor program to enhance landscape linkages and connectivity to habitat for native bison.

Guidelines – the following guidelines purpose are to manage bison diversity and their habitats to facilitate natural movement, linkage zones, and connectivity:

- Management actions should maintain or restore landscape linkages and connectivity for native bison to support viable populations.
- Management actions should favor native bison diversity and closure of livestock grazing allotments to prevent conflict.

### **Bighorn Sheep, DEIS, Chapter 2, Page 21**

The DEIS states for Alternative D that, “New permitted domestic sheep and goat grazing, permitted and public recreational goat packing, and use of domestic sheep, and goats for weed control would not be allowed.”

**Observation:** The description should mention the purpose of the guidance is to protect bighorn sheep, and to promote ecological integrity and habitat connectivity. In addition, Alternative D should list bighorn sheep as a Species of Conservation Concern. To restore connectivity, and conserve viability and diversity of native bighorn sheep populations, the Custer Gallatin needs to adopt a standard to not permit domestic sheep grazing allotments within bighorn sheep range.

### **Model Effects and Land Allocations, DEIS, Chapter 3, Page 631**

The DEIS describes that, “Plan components related to management of land allocations such as backcountry areas, recreation emphasis areas, recommended wilderness areas, and special areas can affect timber harvest by requiring specific design criteria and considerations for harvest operations or by restricting availability of lands to harvest. The effects of these plan components were considered in both the suitability analysis as well as the PRISM modeling and consequences are reflected in projected outputs presented above. See table 9 for a summary of which land allocations limit timber harvest and/or suitability and how this varies by alternative.”

**Observation:** A table 9 objective for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail corridor might be described as the number of acres restored from RN and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings to a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS setting.

### **Model Effects from Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, DEIS, Chapter 3, Page 631**

The DEIS describes that, “The acres allocated to summer recreation opportunity settings (ROS) by alternative are shown in table 97 for lands suitable for timber production. Recreation opportunity spectrum allocations regulate motorized and non-motorized recreation, the design of recreation facilities and may influence the design or the location of on-the-ground projects as described in the associated plan components. For example, the desired condition for semi-primitive non-motorized ROS classification is that vegetation management does not dominate the landscape or detract from the experience of visitors. Management restrictions associated with ROS are accounted for in the

PRISM model, and therefore their influence on expected timber outputs and harvest acres are expressed in the outputs shown previously.”

**Observation:** The description of the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS class is incomplete. The PRISM model must address restrictions associated with this setting, including Access, Remoteness, and Naturalness. A SPNM area is characterized by a predominantly natural environment where natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. The area may contribute to wildlife connectivity corridors. Closed and revegetated roads may be present, but are managed so as to not dominate the landscape or detract from the naturalness of the SPNM setting. Management actions must result in High or Very High Scenic Integrity—naturally occurring incidents, such as fire, insects and disease are not defined as human-caused deviations in the landscape. Vegetative management may range from prescribed fire to very limited timber harvest for the purpose of maintaining or restoring a natural setting.

The DEIS does not provide a quantitative explanation of how management of National Trails and ROS management restrictions affect timber outputs. To achieve the requirements of methodology and scientific accuracy (40 CFR 1502.24), established forest planning model tools should have been used to model timber outputs and with the Alpha version of the PRISM model being used only to supplement that information. In addition, the effects of each timber output restriction (e.g., ROS SPNM class) should be summarized and depicted in a table as part of the effects analysis.

### **Model Effects ROS and Sustained-Yield Limit, DEIS Chapter 3, Page 632**

The DEIS describes that, “Effects from Recreation Opportunity Spectrum - The acres allocated to summer recreation opportunity settings (ROS) by alternative are shown in table 97 for lands suitable for timber production. Recreation opportunity spectrum allocations regulate motorized and non-motorized recreation, the design of recreation facilities and may influence the design or the location of on-the-ground projects as described in the associated plan components. For example, the desired condition for semi-primitive non-motorized ROS classification is that vegetation management does not dominate the landscape or detract from the experience of visitors. Management restrictions associated with ROS are accounted for in the PRISM model, and therefore their influence on expected timber outputs and harvest acres are expressed in the outputs shown previously.”

**Observation:** Any timber harvest in a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS setting should be based on resource benefits to protect backcountry values as determined during site-specific analyses. As such, this setting should not be identified as lands suitable for timber production. In addition, the coefficient parameters in the PRISM model each ROS class must be day-lighted and objectively evaluated.

### **Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, DEIS Chapter 3, Page 682**

The DEIS describes that, “The Forest Service utilizes a framework called the recreation opportunity



spectrum, which describes different settings across the landscape and attributes associated with those settings. Table 106 defines the recreation opportunity spectrum. Five of the six of the recreation opportunity spectrum classes are found within the Custer Gallatin National Forest; no lands in the urban category are present on the Custer Gallatin.”

**Observation:** To understand the ROS framework, a more thorough definition of each class (aka setting) needs to be presented. ROS class components include: Access, Remoteness, Naturalness, Facilities and Site Management, Social Encounters, Visitor Impacts, and Visitor Management (FS ROS Field Guide). Each component include setting and compatibility indicators and thresholds (aka standards and guidelines). This NTSA requirement may be met if the revised Forest Plan identifies ROS class desired conditions that are supported by standards and guidelines. Identifying only ROS desired conditions without supporting standards, guidelines, and suitability determinations is inconsistent with the NTSA, Section 5(f), FSM 2310.3 and FSH 1909.12 23.23a. See the glossary section of these comments for ROS class definition recommendations.

### **Designated Areas – Regulatory Framework, Chapter 3, Page 726**

**Observation:** This standalone guidance is confusing and should be deleted from the list of laws, regulations, and policy: T S.2660 - 95th Congress (1977-1978) Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Act: A law that amends the National Trails System Act to establish the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail within Federal lands located in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Directs the secretary of agriculture to consult with relevant state and Federal officials in the administration of the lands designated under this act.

### **Designated Areas – Key Indicators and Measures, Chapter 3, Page 730**

The DEIS states that, “The differences between alternatives will be evaluated by:

- Considering effects of forest plan direction and how well it supports and protects the values associated with designated areas.
- The amount of overlap of other allocations, as applicable, and whether the overlapping allocations are compatible with the subject designation.”

**Observation:** In a general sense, I support this approach. However, the identified values for each designation must be addressed in the EIS to inform the decision as well as be adopted in the revised Plan. A recurrent theme in designated area legislation has been the mandate to preserve areas for future generations and to keep the protected resource in a condition representative of the values or conditions for which it was designated. Important land conservation legislation that is relevant to land management planning includes the National Trails System Act of 1968 (PL 90-543), which states that “National scenic trails,...will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass... National scenic or national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-

use facilities. Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted... [T]o the extent practicable, efforts be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established. The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited... (Sections 3(a) and 7(c)).” Enacted on the same day as the National Trails System Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (PL 90-542), states that designated rivers, “with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations (Section 1(b)).” Similarly, the Wilderness Act of 1964 (PL 88-577), requires managing agencies to administer wilderness areas “for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character...” (Section 2(a)).

The DEIS must be supplemented to address the omission of clear descriptions of the designated area values. These values must be fully protected in all alternatives, since designated areas did not drive alternatives. For established Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and National Trails, *wilderness character, outstandingly remarkable values, and nature and purposes* must be clearly defined and presented in the DEIS to allow for an adequate effects analysis. Plan components must support maintaining or achieving *wilderness character, outstandingly remarkable values, and nature and purposes* desired conditions.

Regarding the CDNST, the Associate Chief described that in consideration of the language in the National Trails System Act, Congressional Reports, CDNST Study Report and public comments, the nature and purposes policy for the CDNST is: “The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor” (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2353.42, and [74 FR 51116](#)).

Regarding Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers, a supplemental DEIS must describe in some detail the ORV for each listed eligible river. For example, what are the specific fish and wildlife species that is an ORV for the proposed any given river segment? What are the specific ORVs to be protected within the East Rosebud Wild and Scenic River? Understanding the ORVs is critical for describing plan components to protect those values.

### **Effects of Revised Plan Alternatives, Chapter 3, Page 758**

**Observation:** Table 160 describes the CDNST corridor as being a buffer: “*Continental Divide National Scenic Trail ½ mile buffer,*” which does not capture the intent of the allocation that is to provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST. The selected rights-of-way and management

corridor extent must be of sufficient width to encompass National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings (FSM 2353.44b and FSH 1909.12 Part 24.43). For the purpose of this and other tables, I recommend that the word “buffer” be replaced with “corridor.”

### **CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 3, Pages 802-805**

The DEIS states that, “The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is managed according to the National Trails Act, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Study Reports and final environmental impact statement, and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan (as amended) for the purpose of providing: A continuous, appealing trail route, designed for the hiker and horseman, but compatible with other land uses and access for hikers and stock into the diverse country along the Continental Divide in a manner which will assure a high quality recreation experience while maintaining a constant respect for the natural environment... The plan components would manage the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail within the parameters reached through the coordination of multiple forests and jurisdictions that the route crosses, and consistent with the Continental Divide Trail Comprehensive Management Plan, as amended... Effects from Access and Recreation Management - In all alternatives, recreation opportunity spectrum sets guidance that is appropriate for the trail corridor... Cumulative Effects - The 28 miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail on the Custer Gallatin contribute to the experience of the entire 3,100-mile trail, in coordination with other managers of the trail, as it traverses various jurisdictions across a five state route. Most of the plan components resulted from previous coordination across the various national forests, which the trail crosses... The current Forest Plan describes that, “the recreational opportunity spectrum classification for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is semi-primitive non-motorized, year-round. Approximately six miles of the route passes through the Lionhead Recommended Wilderness Area where plan components for that allocation apply... Conclusion - Plan components are sufficient to maintain the trail corridor in the designated Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, consistent with the Continental Divide Trail Comprehensive Management Plan, as amended.”

**Observation:** The Interdisciplinary Team failed to adequately address the totality of the guidance found in law, regulations, and policy when describing desired conditions along the CDNST travel route and rights-of-way (aka National Trail Management Corridor). The planning team should have noted findings reached in the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan and the 2009 amendments to [the CDNST] Comprehensive Plan and final directives (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2353.42, and [74 FR 51116](#)). Managing the CDNST corridor for Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings will normally assure a high quality recreation experience while maintaining a constant respect for the natural environment in the rights-of-way.

The adopted CDNST nature and purposes description recognizes, in part, the guidance in the National Trails System Act describing that, “*National scenic trails, ... which will be... for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities*

*of the areas through which such trails may pass.”* Instead of the Study Report sentence that is embedded in the DEIS, the following CDNST nature and purposes description should be quoted in this part of EIS and repeated in the Plan: *“The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor”*.

Federal agencies should have the same or greater respect for the land as required of private land owners that donate or convey real property for the purpose of protecting National Trail Management Corridors. The importance of providing for conservation corridors along National Scenic Trails is demonstrated, in part, in Section 7(k) of the NTSA, which states that, *“For the conservation purpose of preserving or enhancing the recreational, scenic, natural, or historical values of components of the national trails system, and environs thereof as determined by the appropriate Secretary, landowners are authorized to donate or otherwise convey qualified real property interests to qualified organizations consistent with section 170(h)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, including, but not limited to, right-of-way, open space, scenic, or conservation easements, without regard to any limitation on the nature of the estate or interest otherwise transferable within the jurisdiction where the land is located. The conveyance of any such interest in land in accordance with this subsection shall be deemed to further a Federal conservation policy and yield a significant public benefit for purposes of section 6 of Public Law 96-541.”* P.L. 96-541 defines conservation purposes as for the preservation of land areas for outdoor recreation by, or the education of, the general public, the protection of a relatively natural habitat of fish, wildlife, or plants, or similar ecosystem, and the preservation of open space where such preservation is for the scenic enjoyment of the general public.

Proposed plan components do not protect the nature and purposes of the CDNST. None of the revised Forest Plan DEIS alternatives proposes management of the CDNST as directed in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2353.4, FSH 1909.12, and as described in 74 FR 51116. The revised Forest Plan must establish appropriate management direction to guide the protection and management of the CDNST corridor. The Draft Plan and DEIS establishes Semi-Primitive Motorized and Roded Natural ROS settings in the CDNST corridor, which is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan which directs, in part, for the agencies to:

- Manage the CDNST to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and pack and saddle stock opportunities. Backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.
- Use the ROS system in delineating and integrating recreation opportunities in managing the CDNST. Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings would normally provide for the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail where activities are appropriately managed.

A sample of some specific DEIS concerns are:

- The desired condition did not describe the nature and purposes of the CDNST.
- The desired condition fails to recognize the importance of protecting middleground views and to recognize the need to protect the trail setting when passing through areas with evidence of current and past incompatible management activities. None of the alternatives establish ROS setting guidance that is appropriate for the trail corridor.
- Standards fail to protect against a wide array of activities that may degrade Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings.
- Mountain bike use should be described as being only allowed where consistent with the direction described in FSM 2353.44b(10).

The discussion of cumulative effects fails to address the cumulative impacts on the nature and purposes values of the CDNST, especially on values that are not associated with recreational experiences. The EIS discussion needs to address both: (1) visitor experience opportunities and settings, and (2) the conservation and protection of scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the corridor within the Custer-Gallatin National Forest as well as the existing conditions on adjacent National Forests.

The Caribou-Targhee National Forest has not amended or revised the Forest Plan to address the 2009 CDNST amended management direction. The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest is yet to address a revised plan appeal decision, which describes that, *“One appeal contention regarding the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) was received and is addressed in Attachment 2: Issues Reviewed and Decisions Affirmed. However, on September 28, 2009, the CDNST Comprehensive Plan was amended, with an effective date of November 4, 2009. The Revised Plan referred to an amended Comprehensive Plan, which in fact had not been amended at the time the ROD was issued. No correction to that wording is required since the effective date of the amendment is imminent. However, subsequent to the effective date of the amendment, the Revised Plan direction should be reviewed to determine whether it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan amendment (and related FSM 2350 direction), and appropriate action taken if necessary.”*

In conclusion, plan components do not protect the designated Continental Divide National Scenic Trail consistent with Forest Service policy and the CDNST Comprehensive Management Plan, as amended. The DEIS should be supplemented to address alternative CDNST plan components as presented in the following Draft Forest Plan section that follows which is titled: CDNST Plan Component Recommendations.

## Draft Forest Plan

### **Bighorn Sheep – Draft Plan, Page 60**

The DEIS describes that, “At the time this plan was written, there were no permitted grazing allotments on the Custer Gallatin stocked with domestic sheep or goats.”

**Observation:** I recommend that a Standard be added stating, “Do not permit domestic sheep or goat allotments within bighorn sheep range (and within occupied grizzly bear habitat).”

### **Bison – Draft Plan, Page 61**

The DEIS describes that, “The Yellowstone bison population is unique in that it is genetically pure (for example isolated from domestic livestock), and it contains thousands of individuals that exhibit wild behavior and roam relatively freely over a very large landscape.”

**Observation:** In addition to the Plan components listed, a desired condition and standard should be added describing: Bison are present year round with sufficient numbers and adequate distribution to provide a self-sustaining population on the Custer Gallatin National Forest. Manage for viable native bison populations in the plan area.

### **Timber – Draft Plan, Page 78**

The Draft Plan describes that, “Suitability for Timber Production – Timber production is defined as the purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of regulated crops of trees to be cut into logs, bolts, or other round sections for industrial or consumer use. The 2012 Planning Rule requires identification of lands that are suited and not suited for timber production based on factors that include legal withdrawal (for example, timber production prohibited due to statute, executive order, etc.), technical factors (non-forested lands, geology or soil conditions, etc.), and compatibility with desired conditions and objectives stated in the plan (plan components). Therefore, in lands suitable for timber production, active vegetation management and some regular flow of timber products is expected to occur. Table 15 displays the acres of timber production suitability classification for the proposed action. Unless prohibited by other plan components, timber harvest may occur on lands unsuitable for timber production to meet other resource objectives.”

**Observation:** The Plan should recognize that timber production and associated activities are inconsistent with Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes, which are ROS desired allocations for the CDNST corridor. In addition, I recommend that the planning team reevaluate allocating Semi-Primitive Motorized settings for timber production areas believing that a Roaded-Modified ROS setting would be more appropriate in areas where extensive timber production activities are expected such as around West Yellowstone (see **Appendix C**).

Timber production within the CDNST corridor would be inconsistent with providing for the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail (see **Appendix D**). To reflect ROS principles, the CDNST corridor with an extent of one-half mile on each side of the travel route should be identified as not being suitable for timber production (36 CFR 219.11(a)(1)(iii)). Timber harvest should only occur within the CDNST Management Area to protect CDNST values. Managing the CDNST corridor for Roaded Natural and Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS settings and timber production purposes would lead to management actions that substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST, which is not allowed by the National Trails System Act.

### **Recreation Settings ROS – Draft Plan, Pages 95-101**

The Draft Plan describes that, “Sustainable recreation is the set of recreation settings and opportunities on national forests that is ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable for present and future generations. The recreation opportunity spectrum in summer and winter is used in each phase of planning to assess, integrate, convey, and monitor the plan area’s social, managerial, and physical settings, including seasonal variations and associated benefits...”

**Observation:** To understand the ROS framework, a thorough definition of each class (aka setting) needs to be presented. ROS class components include: Access, Remoteness, Naturalness, Facilities and Site Management, Social Encounters, Visitor Impacts, and Visitor Management (FS ROS Field Guide). Each component include setting and compatibility indicators and thresholds (aka standards and guidelines). The glossary section of these comments describe a more complete description of each ROS class.

The Draft Plan and alternatives associate timber production with the SPM allocations. To protect the SPM setting, the SPM desired condition statement should describe that the, “*SPM natural setting may have moderately dominant alternations but would not draw the attention of motorized observers on trails and primitive roads within the area.*” All SPNM areas should be established as being not suitable for timber production (36 CFR 219.11(a)(1)(iii)). See the glossary section of these comments for additional ROS plan component recommendations.

### **Scenery Standards and Guidelines – Draft Plan, Pages 110-112**

The DEIS describes that, “Scenic integrity objectives (SIO), along with scenic character descriptions, have been developed. See the Scenery Assessment Report for scenic character descriptions. Scenic integrity objectives are a measure of the degree to which a landscape is visually perceived to be complete when compared to the scenic character of an area. Scenic integrity objectives have been assigned to all Custer Gallatin National Forest land to guide the design and implementation of land management activities to meet desired thresholds of allowable visual dominance by landscape modifications. Projects are designed to meet the scenic integrity objectives of high, moderate, low, or very low, as viewed in the foreground, middleground, and background from the identified critical

viewing platforms (travelways and viewpoints), or as viewed from anywhere to meet the scenic integrity objective of very high.”

**Observation:** Standard or guidelines would be better expressed as the minimum Scenic Integrity Level to be achieved. Scenic Integrity is a measure of the degree of visible disruption of the Landscape Character. A landscape with very minimal visual disruption is considered to have very high Scenic Integrity. Those landscapes having increasingly discordant relationships among scenic attributes are viewed as having diminished Scenic Integrity. Scenic Integrity is expressed and mapped in terms of Scenic Integrity levels: Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low, and Unacceptably Low.

The DEIS describes that, “For rivers identified as critical viewing platforms, the assigned scenic integrity objective should be met in the foreground (1/2 mile) as viewed from within the high water marks. For the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, the assigned scenic integrity objectives should be met as viewed from the trail...”

**Observation:** The guidance for W&SRs and the CDNST should state direction that is similar to that found in the introduction, “Projects are designed to meet the assigned scenic integrity objectives of high, moderate, low, or very low, as viewed in the foreground, middleground, and background from National Forest System roads and trails and identified viewpoints and camping areas, or as viewed from anywhere to meet the scenic integrity objective of very high.”

The DEIS describes that, “To provide an adequate time for germination of native seeds, uncertain precipitation, regrowth of native forbs and grasses, response of shrubs and other vegetation to increased sunlight or increased nitrogen from post-harvest broadcast burning, operational remnants of new vegetation management projects or components of new projects should achieve the assigned scenic integrity objective (as viewed from applicable critical viewing platforms, within five years after completion of all project activities). Project activities include regrading landings or temporary roads, revegetating cut and fill slopes or construction zones, scattering, chipping, or burning slash, broadcast-burning, reseeding or planting. Visible operational remnants of vegetation management projects include stumps, slash, drag corridors, rutted ground, project roads, tree markings, landings as well as edge shaping and edge transition treatments....”

**Observation:** This guideline should be deleted. This vegetation management guideline in areas that may be suitable for timber production does not support achieving SIO High or Moderate desired conditions. Reoccurring activities of timber harvest, stand tending, road construction and reconstruction would result in the endless application of the proposed five years exemption to meeting the desired visual conditions. I recommend that the ROS Roaded Modified classification and SIO of Moderate or Low be established for timber production areas.



The DEIS describes that, “To meet research natural area designation direction to facilitate research, infrastructure or landscape alterations associated with research activities in areas with a scenic integrity objective of very high may deviate from that assigned scenic integrity objective and may be discernible as seen from anywhere, but should be designed and sited to blend as much as possible with the scenic character and sense of place.”

**Observation:** This direction should be supplemented to limit this guidance to areas outside of designated wilderness.

### **Designated Wilderness – Draft Plan, Page 113**

The DEIS describes that, “Ecosystems restoration projects will comply with a minimum requirement analysis in conjunction with the currently draft Framework for Evaluating Ecological Intervention when finalized, to determine the project is the minimum necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness.”

**Observation:** Adopting a draft framework is inappropriate and this sentence should be omitted from the final plan. If any of the framework was to be adopted, the policies and processes should have been presented in the Draft Plan and DEIS for review and comment. Deciding to attempt to undo years of fire suppression effects with direct restoration intervention should be dealt with through plan amendment processes once it is ripe for a decision.

### **Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers – Draft Plan, Page 127**

The DEIS describes that, “summarizes the potential eligible wild and scenic rivers, and detailed information about the eligibility study, including maps, is found in appendix E of the proposed action, available at the following website: [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/ForestServiceE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd567793.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/ForestServiceE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd567793.pdf). “

**Observation:** Please include Appendix E as an official appendix to the Forest Plan. In addition, plan components must be modified to protect the specific identified ORVs for each river segment. For example, standards or guidelines must be added to protect scenic values where appropriate. Further direction is found in FSH 1909.12 84.3 – Interim Protection Measures for Eligible or Suitable Rivers.

### **East Rosebud Wild and Scenic River – Draft Plan, Page 162**

The DEIS describes that, “The creek is classified as wild for 13 miles in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Area and as recreational for seven miles downstream of the wilderness. The outstandingly remarkable values for both segments are for scenery, recreational, and geologic resources.”

**Observation:** Plan components must be modified to protect the specific identified ORVs for each river segment. For example, standards or guidelines must be added to protect scenic values along the recreational segment.

### **Continental Divide National Scenic Trail – Draft Plan, Pages 181 - 183**

**Observation:** The CDNST management area corridor core area is not addressed in the Draft Plan and DEIS. This inaction is not in compliance with the guidance found in FSH 1909.12 and FSM 2353. The Management Area direction needs to describe nature and purposes desired conditions that are supported by appropriate standards and guidelines. Additional CDNST plan component recommendations are found in the accompanying CDNST Planning Handbook in Chapter III.

The CDNST rights-of-way is yet to be selected by the Chief of the Forest Service, but it is expected that the existing CDNST travel route location on CG National Forest will be contained within the selected corridor (FSM 2353.04b part 4). The extent of the corridor is to encompass the CDNST resources, qualities, values, and associated settings, which are principally described through established and mapped desired Scenic Integrity Objective and ROS class allocations.

The revised Forest Plan Management Area or National Trail Management Corridor for the CDNST needs to include plan components that provide for the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail. The nature and purposes of the CDNST should recognize hiker and equestrian activities as the primary recreational use and protect the NST corridor as intended by the National Trails System Act (NTSA) and Executive Order 13195 – Trails for America. Management of activities and uses within this designated area corridor need to be compatible with the nature and purposes of this National Trail (FSM 2353.11, FSM 2353.4, and FSH 1909.12 part 24.4). The CDNST Comprehensive Plan describe the nature and purposes of the NST as providing for high-quality, scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding experiences and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the NST corridor. The Comprehensive Plan also recognized backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing as being compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Other recreation and resource uses along the National Trail may be allowed only where there is a determination that the other use would not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the NST.

The proposed action NTMC management direction needs to be modified as described in this section, since the proposed draft plan would allow uses and activities along the CDNST route and rights-of-way that would substantially interfere with maintaining or achieving the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail. The recommended modifications would benefit the National Trails and be consistent with the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) Planning Rule and NEPA CEQ regulations.

When identifying the NTMC, several location and management factors should be considered, including locating the CDNST in more primitive Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes where available and once located the management of the CDNST corridor should provide for a Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized experience where on Federal lands. The NTMC should be at least one mile in width to encompass resources, qualities, values and associated settings and the primary use or uses that are present or to be restored along the desirable (existing and potential) CDNST travel route. The extent of this NTMC recommendation is based on ROS criteria that identify remoteness for a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized setting as: An area at least 1/2-mile but not further than 3 miles from all roads, railroads or trails with motorized use; can include the existence of primitive roads if closed to motorized use. More than 3 miles would tend to classify the area as Primitive another desirable setting especially in wilderness. The Forest Service Scenery Management System identifies that the middleground begins at 1/2-mile of the travel route.

As identified in NOI scoping comments, the following *insertions* and ~~deletions~~ present plan components that strengthen the Regional Forester's CDNST plan component recommendations and may result in plan direction that provides adequate guidance to protect the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Unfortunately, the referenced Regional Forester's guidance would lead to activities and uses along the CDNST that would substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail.

### **Continental Divide National Scenic Trail**

#### Desired Conditions

- *Consistent with the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, the MA provides high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and conserves natural, historic, and cultural resources (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(A)). The corridor encompasses national trail resources, qualities, values, associated settings and the primary use or uses. This includes vistas, campsites, water sources, and other important resource values. ~~The CDNST is a well-defined trail that provides for high-quality, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities, and other compatible non-motorized trail activities, in a highly scenic setting along the Continental Divide. The significant scenic, natural, historic and cultural resources along the trail's corridor are present. Where possible, the trail provides visitors with expansive views of the natural landscapes along the Divide.~~*
- *The management of the extent of the CDNST corridor is consistent with a Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized setting. ROS class inconsistencies are managed to protect CDNST values.*
- *Viewsheds from the CDNST have high scenic values. ~~The foreground of the trail is naturally appearing.~~ The potential to view wildlife is high, and evidence of ecological processes such as fire, insects, and diseases exist. ~~Trail maintenance may include vista clearing consistent with a scenic integrity objective of high.~~*

- The trail is accessible from access points that provide various opportunities to select the type of terrain, scenery and trail length, ranging from long-distance to day use, that best provide for the compatible outdoor recreation experiences being sought. Wild and remote, backcountry segments of the route provide opportunities for solitude, immersion in natural landscapes and primitive outdoor recreation. ~~Front-country and more easily accessible trail segments complement local community interests and needs and help contribute to their sense of place.~~
- Use conflicts amongst trail users are infrequent.
- The *CDNST travel route trail* is well maintained, signed, and passable. Alternate routes provide access to the trail in the case of temporary closures resulting from natural events, such as fire or flood, ~~or land management activities.~~
- Short side trails to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail that encompass adjacent attractions enhance the experience along the main trail.
- Trailhead facilities support the uses of the trail (e.g., stock use).

#### Standards

- *Manage the CDNST route as a visual quality concern level 1 travel route. Resource management actions must meet a Scenic Integrity Level of Very High or High.*
- *Manage the CDNST to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and pack and saddle stock opportunities. Backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(5), FSM 2353.42 and FSM 2353.44b(8)). Forms of hiking include backpacking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and other similar walking activities.*
- *Resource management actions and allowed uses must be compatible with maintaining or achieving Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS class settings.*
- *Motorized use by the general public may only be allowed where such use is in accordance with guidance found in the N TSA Section 7(c).*
- New motorized events shall not be permitted on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.
- New overnight shelters, constructed and permanent, shall not be allowed.
- *New roads shall not be allowed.*
- Extraction of saleable mineral materials shall not be allowed.
- *No common variety mineral extraction (e.g., limestone, gravel, etc.) shall occur within the CDNST corridor.*
- *Other uses that could conflict with the nature and purposes of the Continental National Scenic Trail may be allowed only where there is a determination that the other use would not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (16 USC 1246(c)).*
- *Where the CDNST corridor overlaps with Wilderness designations the most restrictive measures control.*

## Guidelines

- To retain or promote the character for which the *national scenic* trail was designated, ~~new or relocated trail segments should be located primarily within settings consistent with or complementing primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum classes.~~ road and motorized trail crossings and other signs of modern development should be avoided to the extent practicable.
- To retain or promote the character for which the *CDNST* trail was designated, road and motorized trail crossings and other signs of modern development should be avoided to the extent possible.
- To promote a nonmotorized setting, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail *travel route* should not be ~~permanently~~ relocated onto routes open to motor vehicle use.
- To preserve or promote a naturally appearing setting, the minimum trail facilities necessary to accommodate the amount and types of use anticipated on any given segment should be provided ~~in order to protect resource values and for health and safety, not for the purpose of promoting user comfort.~~
- ~~To retain the character for which the trail was designated, new linear utilities and rights-of-way should be limited to a single crossing of the trail unless additional crossings are documented as the only prudent and feasible alternative.~~
- ~~To provide for a naturally appearing setting and to avoid visual, aural, and resource impacts, use of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail for landings or as a temporary road for any purpose should not be allowed.~~
- ~~To provide for a naturally appearing setting and to avoid visual, aural, and resource impacts, hauling or skidding along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail itself should be allowed only (1) where the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is currently located on an open road or to address hazard tree removal, or (2) no other haul route or skid trail options are practicable. Design criteria should minimize impacts to the trail infrastructure, and any necessary post-activity trail restoration should be a priority for the project's rehabilitation plan.~~
- *To protect the nature and purposes of the CDNST*, unplanned fires in the foreground (up to 0.5 mile) of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail should be managed using minimum impact suppression tactics or other tactics appropriate for the protection of Continental Divide National Scenic Trail values.

## Suitability (MG-SUIT-CDNST)

- The CDNST corridor is not suitable for timber production. ~~Timber harvest may be allowed for purposes such as fuels reduction, restoration or wildlife habitat enhancement.~~
- ~~The CDNST is suitable for summer motorized use only as necessary to meet emergencies, to provide for landowner access, or as allowed by administrative regulations at the time of designation, as long as such use does not substantially interfere with the nature and~~

~~purpose of the trail. National Trail System Act, Section 7c. Administrative trail maintenance equipment is authorized.~~

- ~~• The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is suitable for winter snowmobile use over and around the trail.~~
  - ~~• The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is suitable for mountain biking.~~
- ~~Alternative D: The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail is not suitable for mountain biking where the trail is within recommend wilderness area.~~

**CDNST Plan Component Recommendations**

The following are standalone recommendations for the EIS proposed action or for developed alternatives for CDNST plan component desired conditions, objectives, standards and guidelines to be applied to a described Management Area (aka National Trail Management Corridor). These components, as applied to a corridor with an extent of one-half mile on each side of the CDNST travel route, is a reasonable alternative to the management of the CDNST that must be developed and analyzed in detail in a DEIS supplement. The following describes plan components for the CDNST as applied mainly to the rights-of-way or corridor that is depicted on the **Appendix A** map.

**CDNST LMP MA Desired Conditions** – These are descriptions of specific social, economic, or ecological characteristics of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, toward which management of the land and resources should be directed. Desired conditions are the vision of what you want your forest to look like, and other plan components (objectives, standards and guidelines, and suitability), would be designed to get you there.

Descriptions
Consistent with the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, the MA provides high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and conserves natural, historic, and cultural resources (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(A)). The CDNST corridor provides panoramic views of undisturbed landscapes in a tranquil scenic environment. The corridor encompasses national trail resources, qualities, values, associated settings and the primary use or uses. This includes vistas, campsites, water sources, and other important resource values. Desired conditions are principally characterized by Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings—see the glossary for ROS class descriptions. Desired ROS class inconsistencies are managed to protect CDNST values. Furthermore, to provide for the conservation purposes of a National Scenic Trail the MA provides for natural ecological processes and not just the visual appearance of naturalness.

**CDNST LMP MA Objectives** – These are concise, measurable, and time-specific statements of a desired rate of progress toward a desired condition or conditions, based on reasonably foreseeable budgets. Objectives should be designed so that monitoring can gauge progress as well as the effectiveness of activities in moving towards the desired condition.

Descriptions
Complete the CDNST unit plan (FSM 2353.44(b)(2)) within 3 years.

**CDNST LMP MA Standards** – These are mandatory constraints on project and activity decisionmaking, established to help achieve or maintain the desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements. Standards must be complied with as written. Adaptive management direction may support the use of situation-dependent (if-then) or qualified (unless) standards. **Guidelines** – These are mandatory constraints on project and activity decisionmaking that provide flexibility for different situations so long as the purpose of the guideline is met. Guidelines should be written so that their intent is clear. If there is evidence that a different approach would be more or equally effective in meeting the intent, divergence can be justified.

Descriptions - See FSM 1110.8 and FSH 1909.12 05.1 for Degree of Compliance or Restriction “Helping Verbs” and “Mood of Verb” Definitions
<b>Scenery Management</b>
Standard: Manage the CDNST travel route as a concern level 1 travel route. Resource management actions must meet a Scenic Integrity Level of Very High or High (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(4)). (Forest-wide Plan Component)
<b>Recreation Setting Management</b>
Standard: Resource management actions and allowed uses must be compatible with maintaining or achieving Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS class settings.
Standard: The CDNST must be managed to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and pack and saddle stock opportunities. Backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(5), FSM 2353.42 and FSM 2353.44b(8)). Forms of hiking include backpacking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and other similar walking activities.
Standard: Motorized and mechanized use may only be allowed where such use is in accordance with the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(5)&(6) and FSM 2353.44b(10) and (11).
<b>Special Uses Management</b>
Standard: Activities, uses, and events that would require a permit must not be authorized unless the activity, use, or event contributes to achieving the nature and purposes of the CDNST (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(7)).
<b>Minerals Management</b>
Standard: Mineral leases are to include stipulations for no surface occupancy.
Standard: Permits for the removal of mineral materials are not to be issued.
<b>Timber Management</b>
Standard: Timber harvest is not scheduled and does not contribute to the allowable sale quantity.
<b>Vegetation Management</b>
Guideline: Vegetation may be managed to enhance CDNST nature and purposes values, such as to provide vistas to view surrounding landscapes and to conserve natural resources. The purpose of this guidance is to allow for limited vegetation management for CDNST purposes.

Guideline: Vegetation may be managed to maintain or improve threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitat. The purpose of this guidance is to recognize the conservation purposes of the CDNST.
Standard: Rangelands where affected by livestock use must be maintained in a Proper Functioning Condition.
<b>Cultural and Historic Resources Management</b>
Standard: Protect cultural and historic resources.
<b>Lands Acquisition</b>
Standard: Provide for land acquisitions to protect the nature and purposes of the National Trail. Prohibit land disposals.
<b>Travel Routes</b>
Guideline: Segments of the CDNST travel route should fall into Trail Class 2 or 3 and have a Designed Use of Pack and Saddle Stock, except where a substantial safety or resource concern exists, the travel route may have a Designed Use of Hiker/Pedestrian. The purpose of this guidance is to provide for a high quality hiking and equestrian travel route.
Standard: Road construction and reconstruction is prohibited; excepted are motor vehicle use circumstances described in the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV(B)(6) and FSM 2353.44b(11).
Standard: The CDNST travel route may not be used for a livestock driveway.
<b>Fire Suppression</b>
Guideline: Fire suppression activities should apply the Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics Implementation Guidelines. The purpose of this guidance is to protect the CDNST nature and purposes from suppression activities.
<b>Motor Vehicle Use</b>
Standard: The use of motorized vehicles by the general public is prohibited; excepted is motor vehicle use that is in accordance with the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan provisions as detailed in Chapter IV(B)(6).
<b>Other Uses Considerations</b>
Standard: National scenic or national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses that could conflict with the nature and purposes of the CDNST may be allowed only where there is a determination that the other use would not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (16 USC 1246(c)).
Guideline: Where congressionally designated areas overlap, apply the management direction that best protects the values for which each designated area was established—the most restrictive measures control. The purpose of this guidance is to protect the values for which all congressionally designated areas are established.

**Suitability of Lands** – These plan components identify areas of land as suitable or not suitable for specific uses (such as timber or range production), based on the applicable desired conditions. The identification of suitability of lands is not required for every resource or activity and does not need



to be made for every acre of the plan area and the inherent capability of the land to support the use or activity.

#### Suitability of Lands

Lands are not suitable for timber production (36 CFR 219.11(a)(1)(iii)).

#### **CDNST LMP MA Implementation Guidance**

Partnerships and volunteers are sustained or sought to lead and assist in CDNST programs. Volunteer and cooperative agreements will be developed with those volunteers and private organizations that are dedicated to planning, developing, maintaining, and managing the CDNST in accordance with Sections 2(c), 7(h)(1), and 11 of the NTSA.

The direction in the NTSA, 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2310, FSM 2353.4, and FSM 2380 are used to guide the development and management of the Trail.

#### **Integrated Planning**

The NFMA requires that the Forest Service, “form one integrated plan for each unit of the National Forest System, incorporating in one document or one set of documents....” The DEIS and Draft Plan fail to meet this requirement, which resulted in incomplete draft documents, which has resulted in incomplete reviews and the opportunity to comment. The revised Plan needs to incorporate direction from each of the following management plans where the intention is for the Plan to adopt the management guidance:

- Gallatin and Custer National Forest Noxious Weed Management Direction,
- Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction, and
- Interagency Bison Management Plan.

The direction in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan must be integrated into the NEPA alternatives and revised Forest Plan. In addition, the forest may wish to integrate the direction found in the NPNHT Comprehensive Plan depending on the status of the Comprehensive Plan revision/amendment efforts.

#### **Glossary**

I recommend the following CDNST, ROS class, National Trail, and Wilderness Character definitions. These definitions should be included as of the revised Forest Plan.

**Continental Divide National Scenic Trail** (CDNST). The National Parks and Recreation Act of November 10, 1978 authorized and designated the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) (Pub. L. No. 95-625, 92 Stat. 3467), which amended the NTSA of 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1241-1251):

- CDNST Comprehensive Plan. Statutorily required plan providing direction and guidance for the administration and management of a congressionally designated National Scenic Trail or National Historic Trail. The plan includes the identification of the nature and purposes, goals and objectives, all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved, carrying capacity, and high potential segments for the national trail management corridor. Comprehensive planning may be accomplished through staged or stepped-down decision processes.
- CDNST Corridor. A CDNST corridor is referred to on maps published in 1978 as part of the establishment of this National Scenic Trail. The selected rights-of-way and management corridor extent must be of sufficient width to encompass National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings. (FSM 2353.44b and FSH 1909.12 Part 24.43)
- CDNST Designated Area. The CDNST designated area is the extent of the selected rights-of-way. Land management plans may describe the CDNST designated area as that of a management area or national trail management corridor.
- CDNST Nature and Purposes. The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor” (2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2353.42, and Federal Register Notice on October 5, 2009 (74 FR 51116)).
- CDNST Travel Route. The CDNST travel route is normally a standard terra trail that has a surface consisting predominantly of the ground and that is designed and managed to accommodate use on that surface. A National Scenic Trail travel route is located within an established management area or national trail management corridor.

**Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**: The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum planning framework is the recognized framework for stratifying and defining classes of outdoor recreation environments, activities, and experience opportunities through land management planning. The CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV.B.5, recreation resource management direction is to use the ROS System in delineating and integrating recreation opportunities in managing the CDNST. The settings, activities, and opportunities for obtaining experiences have been arranged along a continuum or spectrum divided into six classes that are described below along with recommended plan components. The definition of each ROS class describes six setting characteristics: Access, Remoteness, Naturalness, Non-Recreation Uses, On-Site Management, Visitor Management, Social Encounters, and Visitor Impacts. The following descriptions presents plan components that link specific ROS characteristics to the appropriate ROS class.

- Primitive: Primitive ROS settings encompass large, wild, remote, and predominately natural landscapes. Additional primitive ROS settings may be scattered across the forest, often

- surrounded by SPNM settings. The setting should essentially be an unmodified natural environment. Natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. The area may provide for wildlife connectivity across landscapes. Primitive ROS settings contain no motorized and mechanized vehicles and there is little probability of seeing other groups. They provide quiet solitude away from roads and people or other parties, are generally free of human development, and facilitate self-reliance and discovery. Signing, and other infrastructure is minimal and constructed of rustic, native materials. Few if any management controls imposed on visitors on-site. Standards: (1) Motor and mechanized vehicles are not allowed in Primitive settings; and (2) Management actions must result in Very High Scenic Integrity—naturally occurring incidents, such as fire, insects and disease are not defined as human-caused deviations in the landscape. Guidelines: (1) No new permanent structures should be constructed in desired Primitive ROS settings since structures may degrade the unmodified character of these landscapes; (2) Less than 6 parties per day encountered on trails and less than 3 parties visible at campsite since an increase in the number of groups may lead to a sense of crowding; and (3) No roads, timber harvest, or mineral extraction are allowed in order to protect the remoteness and naturalness of the area. Suitability: (1) Motorized and mechanized recreation travel are not suitable; and (2) Lands are not suitable for timber production.
- **Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM):** Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings provide opportunities for exploration, challenge, and self-reliance. The area is characterized by a predominantly natural environment where natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. The area may contribute to wildlife connectivity corridors. Closed and revegetated roads may be present, but are managed so as to not dominate the landscape or detract from the naturalness of the SPNM setting. Rustic structures such as signs and foot bridges are occasionally present to direct use and/or protect the setting's natural and cultural resources. These rustic constructed features are built from native materials or those that mimic native materials. SPNM settings that are established through forest planning have plan components that provide for a SPNM setting for an extent of at least 1-mile (or at least ½ mile if adjacent to a Primitive setting). Standards: (1) Motor vehicle use by the general public is not allowed; and (2) Management actions must result in High or Very High Scenic Integrity—naturally occurring incidents, such as fire, insects and disease are not defined as human-caused deviations in the landscape. Guidelines: (1) The development scale of recreation facilities should be 0-1 to protect the undeveloped character of desired SPNM settings; (2) Less than 15 parties per day encountered on trails and less than 6 parties visible at campsite, since an increased in the number of groups may lead to a sense of crowding; (3) Vegetative management may range from prescribed fire to very limited timber harvest for the purpose of maintaining a natural setting; and (4) Timber harvest should not be conducted for the purpose of providing for trail clearing limits including hazard tree removal, since timber harvest actions may degrade access,

remoteness, and naturalness characteristics of the SPNM setting. Suitability: (1) Motorized recreation travel is not suitable; and (2) Lands are not suitable for timber production.

- Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM): Semi-Primitive Motorized settings provide motorized recreation opportunities in backcountry settings. Vegetation management does not dominate the landscape or detract from the experience of visitors. Routes are designed for Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs) and high clearance vehicles that connect to local communities, access key destinations and vantage points, provide short day trips on scenic loops or facilitate longer and even overnight expeditions. Visitors challenge themselves as they explore vast, rugged landscapes. Mountain bikes and other mechanized equipment may also be present. Facilities are rustic and are used for the purpose of protecting the setting's natural and cultural resources. Bridges are sometimes present to accommodate foot, horse and ATV traffic but are built from native or natural appearing materials that blend with the surrounding landscape and maintain the semi-primitive character of the setting.
- Roaded Natural: Potential Roaded Natural subclasses:
  - Roaded Natural (RN) - Characterized by a predominantly natural-appearing environment with moderate evidence of the sights and sounds of other humans. Such evidences usually harmonize with the natural environment. Interaction between users may be low to moderate but with evidence of other users prevalent. Resource modification and utilization practices are evident but harmonize with the natural environment. Conventional motorized use is provided for in construction standards and design of facilities. Opportunity to affiliate with other users in developed sites but with some chance for privacy.
  - Roaded Modified (RM) - Characterized by substantially modified natural environment except for campsites. Roads and management activities may be strongly dominant. There is moderate evidence of other users on roads. Conventional motorized use is provided for in construction standards and design of facilities. Opportunity to get away from others, but with easy access.
- Rural: Area is characterized by a substantially modified natural environment. Opportunities to affiliate with others are prevalent. The convenience of recreation sites and opportunities are more important than a natural landscape or setting. Sights and sounds of man are readily evident, and the concentration of users is often moderate to high. Developed sites, roads, and trails are designed for moderate to high uses.

**National Scenic and Historic Trails:** As envisioned in "Trails for America," national scenic trails are to be very special: "A standard for excellence in the routing, construction, maintenance, and marking consistent with each trail's character and purpose should distinguish all national scenic trails. Each should stand out in its own right as a recreation resource of superlative quality and of physical challenge." According to the Act, national scenic trails "will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of

nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities of the area through which such trails may pass." National scenic trails are located so as to represent desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river, forest, and other areas, as well as landforms which exhibit significant characteristics of the physiographic regions of the Nation. The corridor will be normally located to avoid established uses that are incompatible with the protection of a trail in its natural condition and its use for outdoor recreation.

Congress amended the National Trails Systems Act in 1978 to create the category of national historic trails. Like national scenic trails, national historic trails can only be authorized and established by Congress and are assigned to either the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture with most of the same administrative authorities as for national scenic trails. To qualify as a national historic trail, a route must have been established by historic use. It must be nationally significant as a result of that use—it must have had a far-reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture (including Native American culture). National historic trails are extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance. National historic trails purpose is the identification and protection of the historic route and its historic remnants and artifacts.

Corridors associated with national scenic trails and the high priority potential sites and segments of national historic trails are protected to the degree necessary to ensure that the values for which each trail was established remain intact. National scenic and national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the corresponding trail, may be permitted in limited situations.

- **CDNST:** The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) traverses along the Rocky Mountains from Canada to Mexico. It navigates dramatically diverse ecosystems through mountain meadows, granite peaks, and high-desert surroundings. The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor.
- **Nez Perce (Nee Me Poo) National Historic Trail:** The Nez Perce National Historic Trail commemorates the flight of the Nez Perce Indians from their homeland in the Pacific Northwest to Canada to escape capture by the U.S. military. Using an indirect escape route as dictated by terrain and strategy, the Nez Perce passed through four states and traveled from Wallowa Lake, Oregon, to the Bear Paw Battlefield near Chinook, Montana.

**Wilderness Character** reflects the nature of wilderness being untrammled, undeveloped, natural, and having outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

- Untrammeled—The Wilderness Act states that wilderness is “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man,” and “generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature.” In short, wilderness is essentially unhindered and free from modern human control or manipulation. This quality is degraded by modern human activities or actions that control or manipulate the components or processes of ecological systems inside the wilderness.
- Natural—The Wilderness Act states that wilderness is “protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions.” In short, wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization. This quality is degraded by intended or unintended effects of modern people on the ecological systems inside the wilderness since the area was designated.
- Undeveloped—The Wilderness Act states that wilderness is “an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation,” “where man himself is a visitor who does not remain” and “with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable.” This quality is degraded by the presence of structures, installations, habitations, and by the use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, or mechanical transport that increases people’s ability to occupy or modify the environment.
- Solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation—The Wilderness Act states that wilderness has “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.” This quality is about the opportunity for people to experience wilderness; it is not directly about visitor experiences per se. This quality is degraded by settings that reduce these opportunities, such as visitor encounters, signs of modern civilization, recreation facilities, and management restrictions on visitor behavior.

### Summary

The DEIS needs to be supplemented to correct NEPA deficiencies. Land use planning associated NEPA processes must be in compliance with the National Trails System Act and CEQ regulations 40 CFR Parts 1500 - 1508, including (1) rigorously exploring and objectively evaluating all reasonable alternatives, and (2) taking a hard look at the effects of the alternatives. The Forest Service must ensure that its analysis of the impacts of actions on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest are scientifically accurate and fully considers all of the adverse impacts of uses along the CDNST corridor.

The Draft Plan needs to be supplemented to provide for the integrated management of congressionally designated areas and to clarify and strengthen the direction presented. National Scenic and Historic Trails must be managed in accordance with the National Trails System Act of 1968, as amended. The CDNST must be protected to provide for the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail. Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings normally provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Semi-Primitive Motorized and Roded Natural ROS

allocations do not protect CDNST values; however, the CDNST Comprehensive Plan recognizes that crossing State Highways and other similar permanent developments is unavoidable. In addition, CDNST protection should include recommending the Lionhead area for future designation as wilderness and protecting the Canada Lynx Henry Lake Mountains linkage area. National Scenic Trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses that could conflict with the nature and purposes of the CDNST may be allowed only where there is a determination that the other use would not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

Recommended Wilderness areas (RWAs) must be managed to protect their wilderness characteristics and for the potential for Congressional designation in the future. RWA management can also improve the wilderness characteristics of an otherwise outstanding area, so that it may qualify for future designation. This means allowing foot and horse travel only. Recreational uses that do not conform to the Wilderness Act, including mountain biking, snowmobiling, OHV riding, and other mechanized and motorized uses should not be allowed.

The bison and bighorn sheep should be identified as Species of Conservation Concern in the Forest Plan and addressed in one or more alternatives in the Supplemental DEIS and FEIS.

Please provide with the release of a Supplemental DEIS and FEIS the following geospatial data layers:

- Designated Areas, including Recommended Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Eligible Wild & Scenic Rivers, Inventoried Roadless Areas, and the extent of the CDNST management corridor/rights-of-way to be established (FSH 1909.12 22.2 and 24)
- Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes to be established – Summer and Winter (FSH 1909.12 22.2 and 23.23a)
- Scenic Integrity Objectives to be established (FSH 1909.12 22.2 and 23.23f)
- Lands that May be Suitable for Timber Production (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 60)
- CDNST travel route as an independent data layer (FSH 1909.12 23.23I)

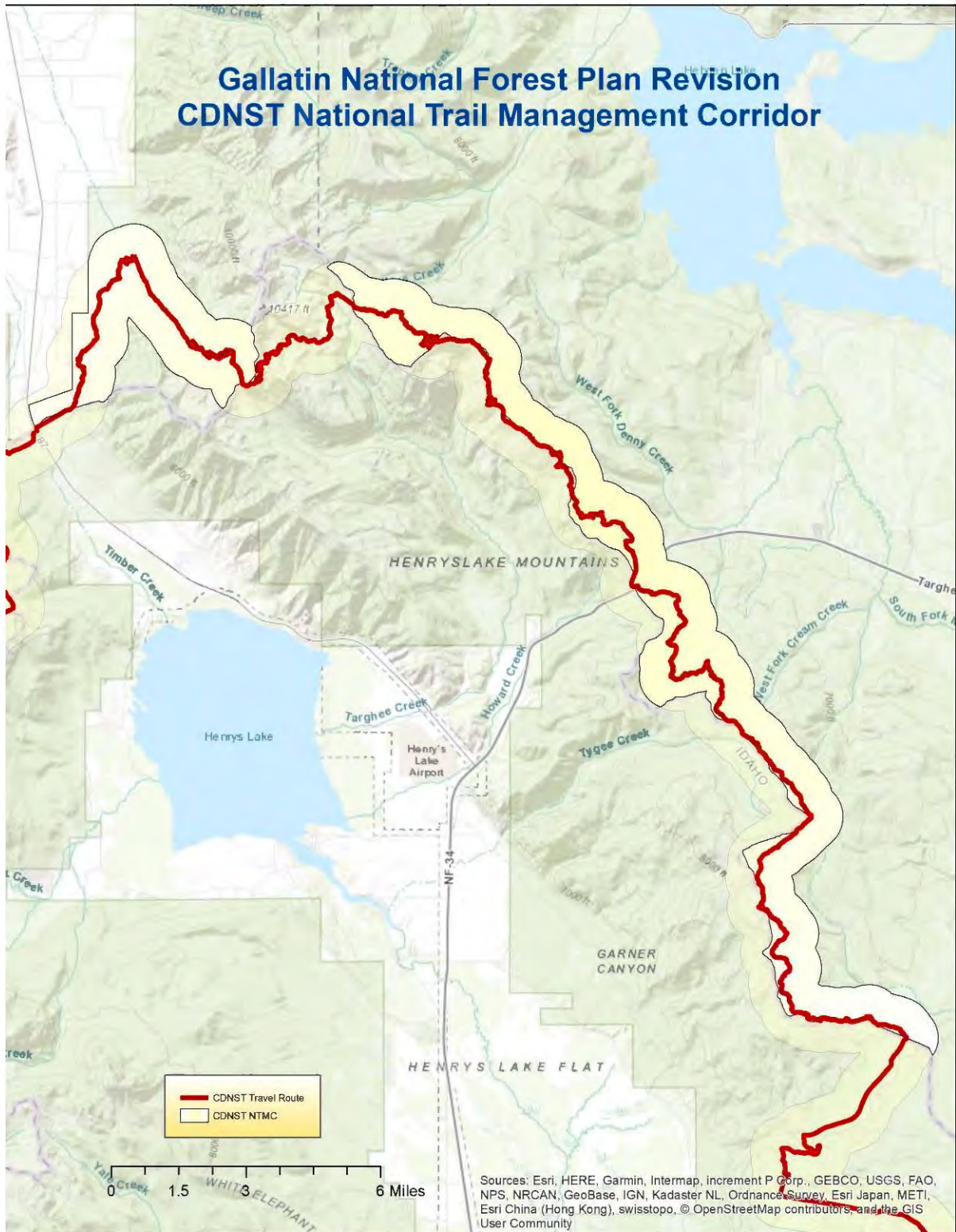
Alternative D best protects Custer-Gallatin National Forest values of those alternatives presented in the DEIS. However, the DEIS needs to be supplemented to address the concerns presented in these comments.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Plan and DEIS.

*Greg Warren*

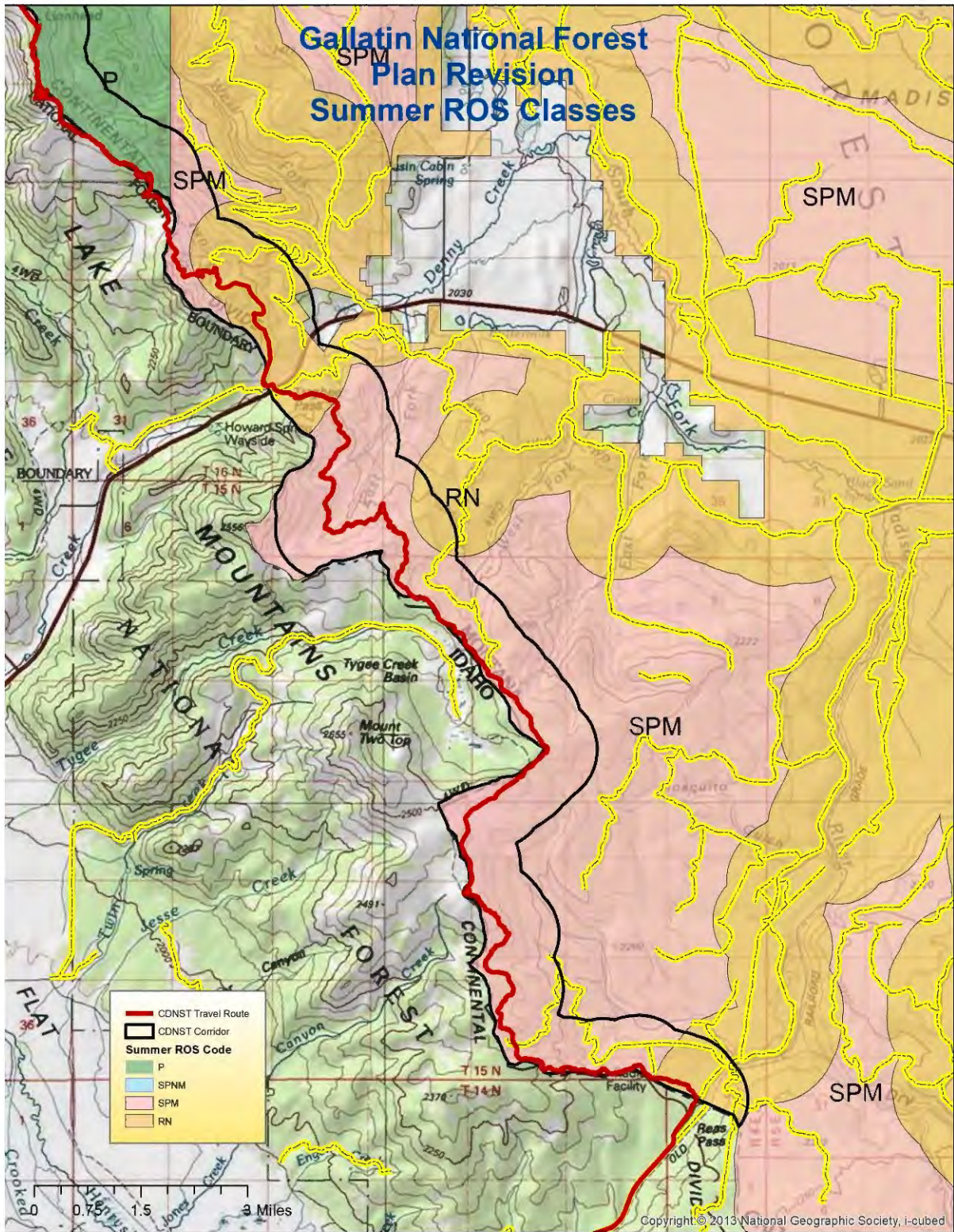
Attachments: A – NOI Submitted Comments  
B – CDNST Planning Handbook  
C – CDNST Comprehensive Plan

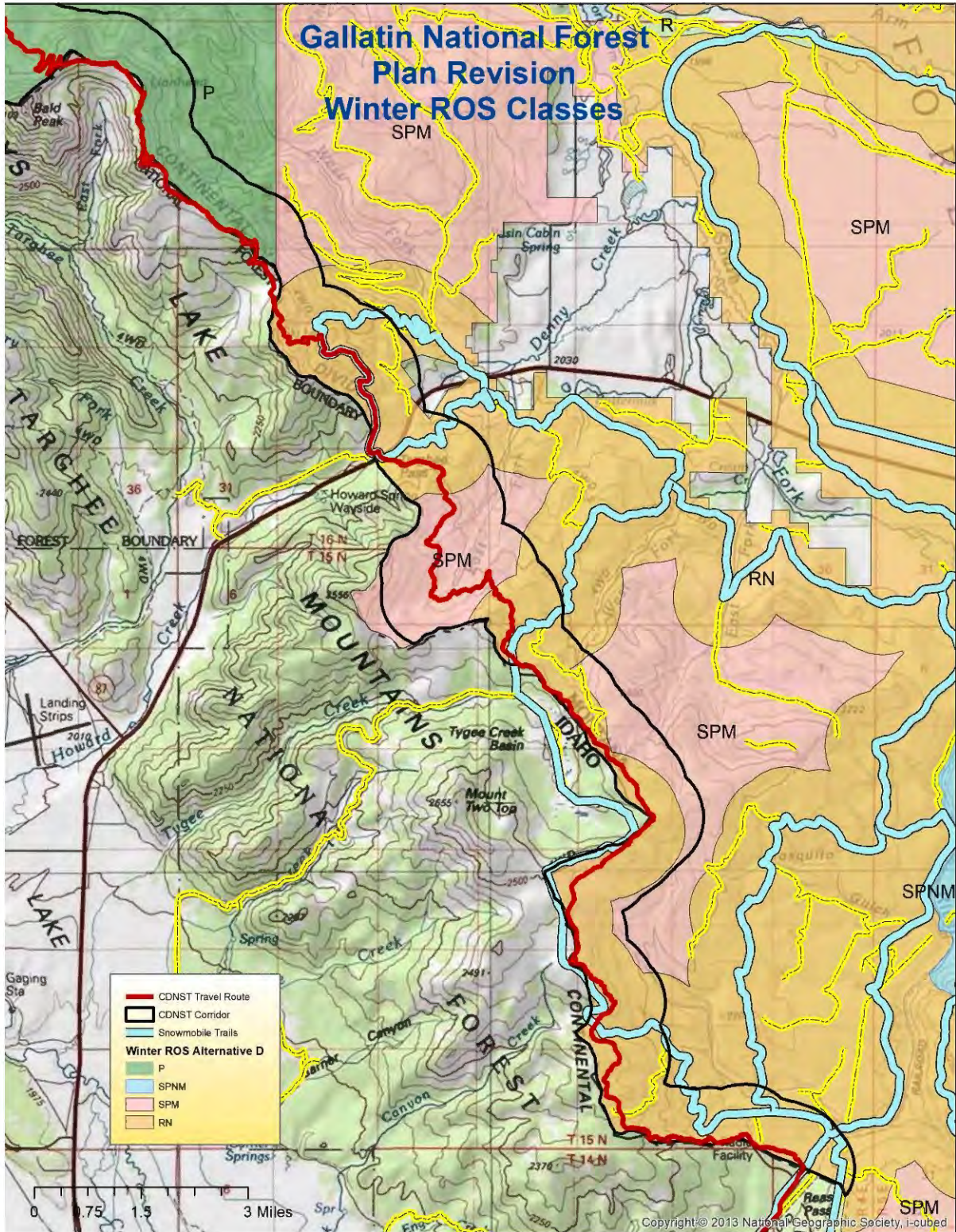
**Appendix A – CDNST National Trail Management Corridor**



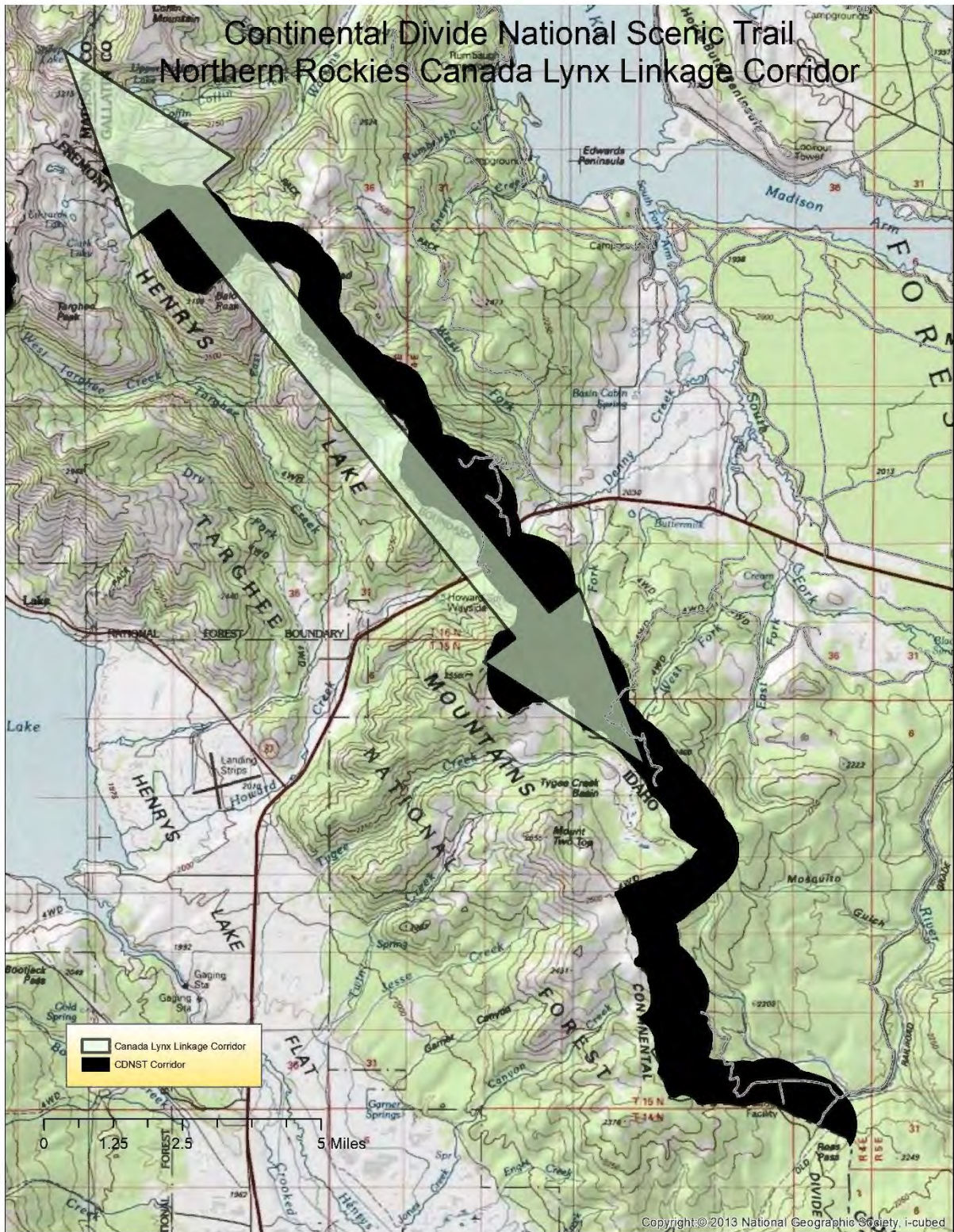


**Appendix B – CDNST Corridor and ROS Classes**

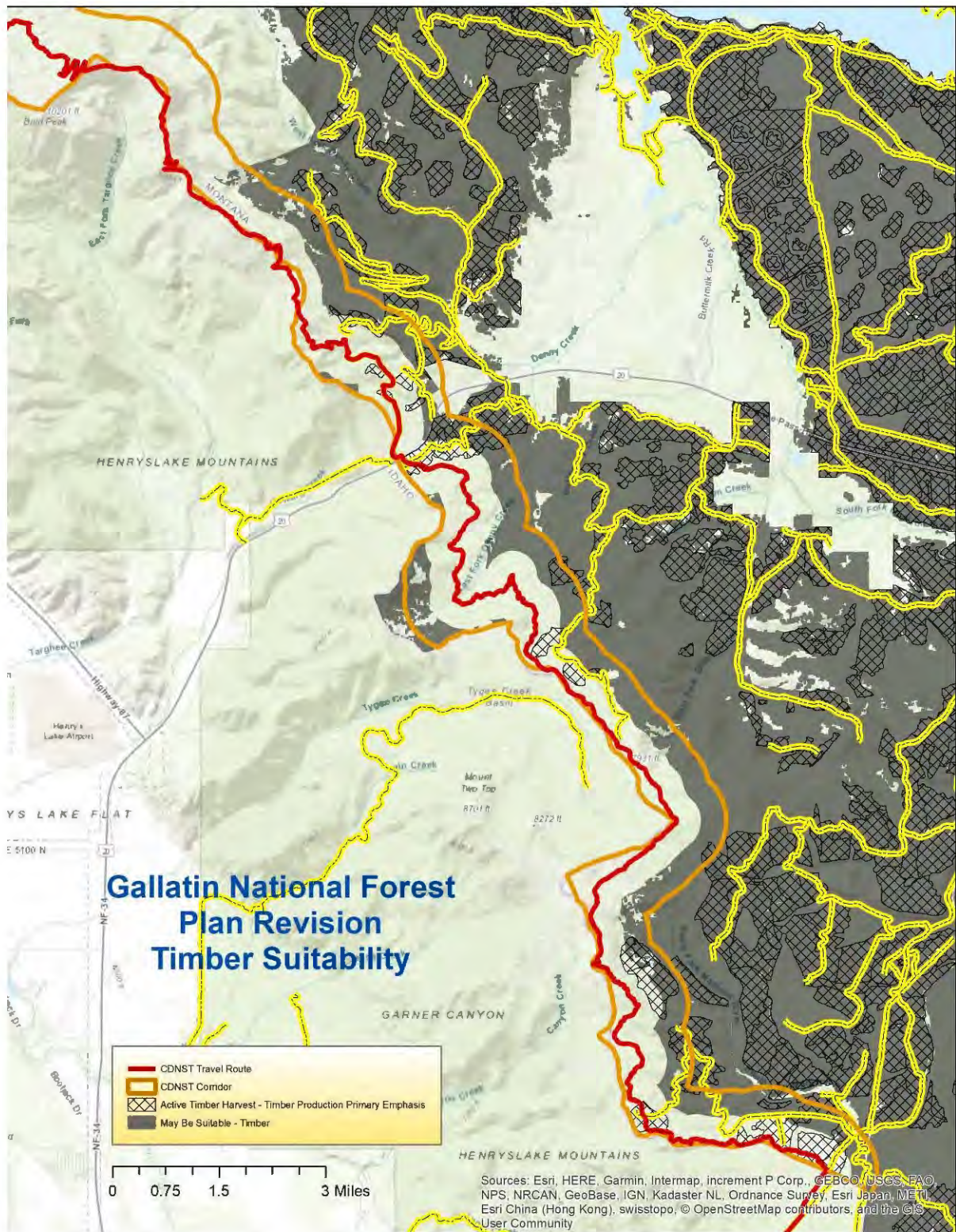




**Appendix C – Canada Lynx Linkage Corridor – Forest Plan Amendment**



**Appendix D – CDNST Corridor and Suitability for Timber Production.**



# Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Planning Handbook



National Scenic Trail Technical Paper  
April 30, 2019



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# Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Planning Handbook

Prepared by Greg Warren

[NSTrail.org](http://NSTrail.org)

## Chapter I. Introduction

### Trails for America

The Secretary of the Interior in 1965 directed the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to take the lead in conducting a nationwide trails study. This was in response to President Johnson's "Natural Beauty" message of February 1965 in which he called for development and protection of a balanced system of trails in cooperation with state and local government and private interests. In part, the President said, "we can and should have an abundance of trails for walking, cycling, and horseback riding, in and close to our cities. In the backcountry we need to copy the great Appalachian Trail in all parts of America."

The nationwide trails study led to publication of a report in 1966 entitled "Trails for America." The report called for federal legislation to foster the creation of a nationwide system of trails. Earlier that year the Secretary of the Interior had already proposed such legislation to Congress. The report and the legislation proposed three categories of trails for the nationwide system—national scenic trails and two other categories that were different from what eventually came to pass. The report heavily emphasized national scenic trails and the role that they should play in meeting the nation's needs for trail recreation. The Appalachian Trail was to be the first national scenic trail. The report proposed three other national scenic trails—Pacific Crest, Continental Divide, and Potomac Heritage—and identified five other routes that exhibited high potential—Lewis and Clark, Oregon, Santa Fe, Natchez Trace, and North Country. Congress passed the National Trails System Act and the president signed it into law on Oct. 2, 1968. The Act created two congressionally designated areas the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

As envisioned in "Trails for America," national scenic trails are to be very special: "A standard for excellence in the routing, construction, maintenance, and marking consistent with each trail's character and purpose should distinguish all national scenic trails. Each should stand out in its own right as a recreation resource of superlative quality and of physical challenge." According to the National Trails System Act of 1968, national scenic trails "will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities of the area through which such trails may pass." National scenic trails are located so as to represent desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river, forest, and other areas, as well as landforms which exhibit significant characteristics of the physiographic regions of the Nation. The corridor will be normally located to avoid established uses that are incompatible with the protection of a trail in its natural condition and its use for outdoor recreation.

Congress amended the National Trails Systems Act in 1978 to create the category of national historic trails. At the same time, it designated the Oregon, Mormon Pioneer, Lewis and Clark, and

Iditarod (Alaska Gold Rush) trails as national historic trails. Like national scenic trails, national historic trails can only be authorized and established by Congress and are assigned to either the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture with most of the same administrative authorities as for national scenic trails. To qualify as a national historic trail, a route must have been established by historic use. It must be nationally significant as a result of that use—it must have had a far-reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture (including Native American culture). It must also have significant potential for public recreational use or historic interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. National historic trails are extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance. National historic trails purpose is the identification and protection of the historic route and its historic remnants and artifacts.

Corridors associated with national scenic trails and the high priority potential sites and segments of national historic trails are protected to the degree necessary to ensure that the values for which each trail was established remain intact. National scenic and national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the corresponding trail, may be permitted in limited situations.

### **Congressional Designated Areas**

A recurrent theme in designated area legislation has been the mandate to preserve areas for future generations and to keep the protected resource in a condition representative of the values or conditions for which it was designated.

Important land conservation legislation that is relevant to land management planning includes the National Trails System Act of 1968 (PL 90-543), which states that “National scenic trails,...will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential

and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass... National scenic or national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted... [T]o the extent practicable, efforts be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established. The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited... (Sections 3(a) and 7(c)).”

Primary Value – “The primary value of the Continental Divide Trail is its emphasis on conservation of the natural beauty of our environment, and on a wise use of our environment to give the greatest pleasure and health to our citizens. Under the proposed scheme, it is my understanding that...the environment of the Trail would be kept in its natural state as much as possible. Such an investment is prudent now, before the natural beauty can be eroded through overuse and expansion of communities into the area.” Statement of Honorable Peter Dominick, U.S. Senator from the State of Colorado

Enacted on the same day as the National Trails System Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (PL 90-542), states that designated rivers, “with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate



environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations (Section 1(b)).”

Similarly, the Wilderness Act of 1964 (PL 88-577), requires managing agencies to administer wilderness areas “for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character...” (Section 2(a)).

This handbook addresses a National Scenic Trail (NST) offering guidance for understanding and preserving or enhancing the recreational, scenic, natural, and historical values of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) through land management planning that provides for the nature and purposes of this NST. The information in this handbook supplements and clarifies agency planning processes.

## **Chapter II. Nature and Purposes of the CDNST**

The National Trails System Act<sup>1</sup> (NTSA) guidance for “nature and purposes” is foundational for shaping the activities and uses to be preferred and allowed along the CDNST corridor. The adopted nature and purposes of the CDNST emboldens the Senate’s vision for this NST: “Designed to accommodate riders and hikers, the Continental Divide Trail would pass through some of the most scenic areas in the country. The trail would span spectacular, wild mountain country, rich in the early history of the West. The route affords views of perpetual ice-fields and of awesome peaks. It passes hundreds of alpine lakes and streams teeming with native trout. The high mountains are home to many species of game, including the bighorn sheep, mule deer, and bear.... The designation of the Continental Divide Trail represents an attempt to make available by trail a stretch of country which has historical interest and charm and bisects the Western United States. The...committee believes that the trail should be regarded as calling attention to the grandeur and esthetic qualities of the Continental Divide, and that it will add significantly to the Nation's appreciation of its priceless natural heritage” *Senate Report No.1233, 1968*.

The establishment of the CDNST nature and purposes policy was formed by extrapolating from the Trails for America report, NTSA, associated Congressional Reports, CDNST Study Report, and with public involvement, as described in this section.

### **A. Trails for America**

Trails for America (1966), a report prepared by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in response to President Johnson’s Natural Beauty Message of February 8, 1965, describes that, “the entire length of each national scenic trail, together with sufficient land area on both sides to safeguard adequately and preserve its character, should be protected....” The [Trails for America](#) vision for the CDNST will be achieved by providing for the “nature and purposes” values of this designated National Trail.

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<sup>1</sup> 16 U.S.C. 1241-1251: Public Law 90-543 (October 2, 1968) and amendments.

## **B. National Trails System Act**

The National Parks and Recreation Act of November 10, 1978 authorized and designated the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) (Pub. L. No. 95-625, 92 Stat. 3467), which amended the NTSA of 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1241-1251).

NTSA Sec. 3. [16 U.S.C. 1242] (a) (2). “National scenic trails, established as provided in section 5 of this Act, which will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential<sup>2</sup> and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass.”

NTSA Sec. 5 [16 U.S.C. 1244] (f) ... “Within two complete fiscal years of the date of enactment of legislation designating... the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, the... Secretary [of Agriculture] shall...submit...a comprehensive plan for the acquisition, management, development, and use of the trail, including but not limited to, the following items: (1) specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved... and...an identified carrying capacity of the trail and a plan for its implementation.”

NTSA Sec. 7. [16 U.S.C. 1246] (c). “Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted...[To] the extent practicable, efforts be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established. The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited...”

## **C. Congressional Reports**

“The Act was intended to insure that long-distance, high-quality trails with substantial recreation and scenic potential were afforded Federal recognition and protection” (S.R. 95-636). “Title V establishes new units of the National Park and National Trail Systems which the committee believes to be essential additions to these national programs. Timely action to preserve portions of our heritage, both historical and natural, within the states and insular areas is needed to assure these resources are not lost through adverse actions by special interest groups” (H.R. 95-1165).

## **D. CDNST Study Report**

The Study Report of 1976, prepared by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in response to the identification of the CDNST, under the NTSA, as a potential addition to the national trails system, describes that, “The primary purpose of this trail is to provide a continuous, appealing trail route, designed for the hiker and horseman, but compatible with other land uses... One of the primary purposes for establishing the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail would be to provide hiking and

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<sup>2</sup> BLM MS-6280 defines, “*maximum compatible outdoor recreation potential*. A criterion for determining the location of a National Scenic Trail. The recreation potential is tempered by the capacity of the area to sustain such use.”

horseback access to those lands where man's impact on the environment has not been adverse to a substantial degree and where the environment remains relatively unaltered. Therefore, the protection of the land resource must remain a paramount consideration in establishing and managing the trail. There must be sufficient environmental controls to assure that the values for which the trail is established are not jeopardized...

The trail experience on or near the Divide is an intimate one, for one can walk or ride horseback across vast fields of wildflowers and contemplate a story dating from the dawn of earth's history. This story began when a portion of the earth was thrust upward, creating the sharp precipitous peaks that were sculptured into rich land forms leaving sparkling lakes, crystal-clear streams, and myriads of cascading waterfalls. Along the way, the tranquility of the alpine meadows, verdant forests and semi-desert landscape overwhelms everyone who passes that way. The trail would provide the traveler his best encounter with the Continental Divide — its serenity and pure air — and would supply for every trail traveler some of the world's most sublime scenes...

The basic goal of the trail is to provide the hiker and rider an entree to the diverse country along the Continental Divide in a manner, which will assure a high quality recreation experience while maintaining a constant respect for the natural environment... The Continental Divide Trail would be a simple facility for foot and horseback use in keeping with the National Scenic Trail concept as seen in the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails.”

#### **E. CDNST Leadership Council**

The CDNST Leadership Council established a Vision and Guiding Principles for the development and protection of the CDNST in 2004. The Vision for the CDNST is: “Complete the Trail to connect people and communities to the Continental Divide by providing scenic, high-quality, primitive hiking and horseback riding experiences, while preserving the significant natural, historic, and cultural resources along the Trail.” The Council’s membership consists of senior Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service responsible officials.



CDNST Leadership Council, Jackson, Wyoming in 2007

#### **F. Public Involvement in the Formulation of Comprehensive Plan Policy**

The formulation of the nature and purposes direction for the CDNST was developed through a public process (36 CFR 216) and approved by Associate Chief Hank Kashdan as documented in Federal Register: October 5, 2009 ([74 FR 51116](#)). The following is the response to nature and purposes comments –

“The amendments to the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan and corresponding directives are to

ensure that the nature and purposes of the CDNST track those in the 1976 CDNST Study Report and 1977 CDNST Final Environmental Impact Statement, which were prepared pursuant to the NTSA (16 U.S.C. 1244(b)). The 1976 CDNST Study Report states:

The primary purpose of this trail is to provide a continuous, appealing trail route, designed for the hiker and horseman, but compatible with other land uses. \* \* \* One of the primary purposes for establishing the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail would be to provide hiking and horseback access to those lands where man's impact on the environment has not been adverse to a substantial degree and where the environment remains relatively unaltered. Therefore, the protection of the land resource must remain a paramount consideration in establishing and managing the trail. There must be sufficient environmental controls to assure that the values for which the trail is established are not jeopardized. \* \* \* The basic goal of the trail is to provide the hiker and rider an entree to the diverse country along the Continental Divide in a manner, which will assure a high-quality recreation experience while maintaining a constant respect for the natural environment. \* \* \* The Continental Divide Trail would be a simple facility for foot and horseback use in keeping with the National Scenic Trail concept as seen in the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails.

Thus, the 1976 CDNST Study Report states that the primary purpose of the CDNST is to provide a high-quality recreation experience for hiking and horseback riding.

Consistent with the NTSA, the 1976 CDNST Study Report, and the 1977 CDNST Final Environmental Impact Statement, the amended CDNST Comprehensive Plan states that the nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor. The amended CDNST Comprehensive Plan and final directives implementing the amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan on National Forest System lands provide that backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.... The amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan and directives ensure consistency with the nature and purposes of the CDNST in the context of right-of-way acquisition, land management planning, scenery management, recreation resource management, motor vehicle use, trail and facility standards, and carrying capacity.’

The 1983 amendment to the NTSA, which added 16 U.S.C. 1246(j), does not modify the nature and purposes of the CDNST. The added subsection simply lists uses and vehicles that may be permitted on National Trails generally.

The NTSA states that all National Scenic Trails must be so located to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and conservation of natural, historic, and cultural resources (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)). This requirement is reflected in the nature and purposes statement in the amended CDNST Comprehensive Plan, which states that the nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor. Where possible, the CDNST will be located in primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized settings, which will further contribute to

providing for maximum outdoor recreation potential and conservation of natural, historic, and cultural resources in the areas traversed by the CDNST....

The Forest Service has removed the words 'non-motorized' and 'recreational' from the nature and purposes statement for the CDNST, as these words were redundant. 'High-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding' are non-motorized recreation opportunities. The Agency has not removed the word 'primitive' from the nature and purposes statement, as it is not redundant and is not ambiguous. It means 'of or relating to an earliest or original stage or state....' Preferred recreation settings, including primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized categories, are delineated in the Forest Service's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum system (FSM 2311.1) and described in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(5).

The amendments to the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan apply throughout the document to the extent applicable, not just to the provisions that are specifically referenced in the amendments. The Forest Service agrees that this intent should be expressly stated. Therefore, the Agency has added the following statement to the amendments:

To the extent there is any inconsistency between the foregoing revisions and any other provisions in the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, the foregoing revisions control.”

### **G. Nature and Purposes Policy**

In consideration of the language in the NTSA, Congressional Reports, CDNST Study Report and public comments, the nature and purposes policy for the CDNST is: “The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor” (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2353.42, and [74 FR 51116](#)).

## **Chapter III. Land Management Planning**

### **A. Introduction**

A National Scenic Trail, “is a continuous, long-distance trail located on the ground... along the congressionally designated route... A National Scenic Trail provides maximum compatible outdoor recreation opportunity and conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources, qualities, values, and associated settings and the primary use or uses of the areas through which such trails may pass... National Scenic Trails include the tread, or the trail path, and the trail setting which is included within the National Trail Management Corridor...” (BLM MS-6280).

National Scenic Trails are administered as trail corridors. Managers should establish plan components that address (1) desired visitor experience opportunities and settings, and (2) the conservation of scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the corridor. Supporting standards and guidelines need to be established to achieve desired conditions and objectives, and monitoring methods are to be described.

The land management plan responsible official should work with adjacent landowners to establish and protect the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) corridor. However, recognize that Congress has set a limit on protecting a corridor where the CDNST crosses private land. The authority of the Federal Government to acquire fee title under the NTSA Section 5 is limited to an average of not more than 1/4 mile on either side of the trail.

The amended CDNST Comprehensive Plan (2009), FSM 2353.4 (2009), and FSH 1909.12 part 24.43 (2015) constituted new information (40 CFR 1502.9(c)). The responsible official must review the new information and determine its significance to environmental

concerns and bearing on current Land Management Plan (LMP) direction and associated EIS (FSH 1909.15 - 18). In regards to environmental documents for enacted LMPs, determine if Management Area (MA) prescriptions and plan components along the CDNST travel route and corridor provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST (FSM 2353.42 and FSM 2353.44b(1)). If not, the LMP should be amended or revised following the appropriate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to address the planning requirements of the NTSA (16 U.S.C. 1244(5)(f) and FSM 2353.44(b)(1)). The BLM has similar requirements for addressing new information (Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1). Furthermore, project proposals may bring the CDNST into the scope of a NEPA process due to potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of past actions and new proposals that may substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (40 CFR 1508.25(c)). This in turn could trigger the need for a land management plan amendment, and on National Forest System lands, the development of a CDNST unit plan. Land management plans are to protect CDNST Section 7(a)(2) potential rights-of-way<sup>3</sup> and high potential route segments<sup>4</sup> where the rights-of-way is yet to be selected and the travel route officially located (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)(3) and 1246(a)(2)). Until the CDNST rights-of-way is selected and the corridor is located, the Agencies must not undertake any major Federal action which (1) may adversely impact nature and purposes values of potential CDNST rights-of-way and corridor locations, (2) limit the choice of reasonable alternatives, and (3) prejudice ultimate rights-of-way and locations decisions (40 CFR 1506.1).

The 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan has been mistakenly characterized as being contemporary policy, which may suggest for an early era that the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan

Primacy of Congressional Designations – As a general rule, if the NTSA conflicts with NFMA’s or FLPMA’s multiple use mandate, the NTSA designating guidance will apply. Land management planning decisions for each unit must be consistent with the purposes and objectives of the designating Act of Congress. Where multiple Congressional designations overlap, the agency must comply with all applicable statutes. In order to do so, the more protective management requirements will likely apply. The establishment of the comprehensive plan for the CDNST constitutes an overlay on the management regime otherwise applicable to public areas managed by land management agencies. The NTSA (and E.O. 13195) limits the management discretion the agencies would otherwise have by mandating the delineation of the CDNST corridor and protection of the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

<sup>3</sup> A land use allocation pursuant to Section 7(a)(2) of the National Trails System Act (“rights-of-way”) for a public land area of sufficient width within which to encompass National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings and the primary use or uses that are present or to be restored.

<sup>4</sup> The term "high potential route segments" means those segments of the North Country and Continental Divide NSTs which would afford high quality recreation experience in a portion of the route having greater than average scenic values (16 U.S.C 1251(2)).

was consistent with the NTSA. Unfortunately, the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan was fundamentally flawed being inconsistent with the NTSA from its inception. The 2009 Comprehensive Plan and corresponding FSM 2353 corrected the 1985 direction by establishing baseline policy and appropriate guidance for “nature and purposes,” “visual resource management,” “recreation resource management,” “motor vehicle use,” and “carrying capacity.” In addition, the 2009 Comprehensive Plan and associated FSM policy recognize the role of substantial interference assessments and determinations when addressing other uses along the CDNST corridor.

The FR Notice of final amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and final directives states, “The final amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan and corresponding directives will provide guidance to agency officials implementing the National Trails System Act. The final amendments are consistent with the nature and purposes of the CDNST identified in the 1976 CDNST Study Report and 1977 CDNST Final Environmental Impact Statement adopted by the Forest Service in 1981 (40 FR 150). The final amendments and directives will be applied through land management planning and project decisions following requisite environmental analysis” (Federal Register, October 5, 2009 (74 FR 51116)).

The CDNST is administered by the Secretary of Agriculture. Delegation of those responsibilities to Forest Service officials is found in FSM 2353.04. The lead Forest Service official for coordinating matters concerning the study, planning, location, and operation of the CDNST is the Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region (FSM 2353.04(5)(b)). The Secretary of Agriculture has not transferred the management of any specified trail segment of the CDNST to the Secretary of Interior pursuant to a joint memorandum of agreement. (NSTA Sec. 7(a)(1)(B)).

## **B. Rights-of-Way and National Trail Management Corridor**

The NTSA states in Section 7(a)(2), “Pursuant to section 5(a), the appropriate Secretary shall select the rights-of-way for national scenic and national historic trails and shall publish notice thereof of the availability of appropriate maps or descriptions in the Federal Register; Provided, That in selecting the rights-of-way full consideration shall be given to minimizing the adverse effects upon the adjacent landowner or user and his operation...” Other sections of the Act provide additional important guidance that is associated with the selection of the rights-of-way, planning, and management of the CDNST, including direction stating: (1) Locating the National Trail corridor, “to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas;” (2) “Avoiding, to the extent possible, activities along the National Scenic Trail that would be incompatible with the purposes of the CDNST for which it was established;” and (3) “National scenic or national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted by the Secretary charged with the administration of the trail.” The selection of the rights-of-way should occur soon after a NST is authorized and designated by Congress, or as in integral part of the timely preparation of the NST Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the selection of the rights-of-way must be consonant of the implications of guidance found in NTSA Section 7(b), 7(d), 7(e), and 7(f).

The CDNST corridor, also known as a National Trail Management Corridor (NTMC),<sup>5</sup> is to be described through the delineation of a Management Area (MA) or NTMC with plan components that provide for the nature and purposes values of this designated NST. To provide for the nature and purposes of the National Trail, several location and management factors should be considered; such as and where reasonable to do so, the MA or NTMC should be located in more primitive Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes; once located the management of the MA or NTMC should provide for a Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized experiences. In addition, the CDNST travel route is a concern level-1 travel route and scenic management objectives of high or very high must be met. The boundary of the MA should follow topographic features to the extent possible, while being at least one-half mile wide on each side of the established and potential locations of the National Trail travel routes. This recommendation is based on ROS criteria that identifies remoteness for a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized setting as: An area at least 1/2-mile but not further than 3 miles from all roads, railroads or trails with motorized use. More than 3 miles would tend to classify the area as Primitive<sup>6</sup> another desirable setting. The Forest Service Scenery Management System identifies that the middleground begins at 1/2-mile of the travel route.<sup>7</sup>

The extent of the NTMC may reflect the unique qualities of the linear landscape of the area along the National Trail travel route. National Scenic Trails are so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass (NTSA Section 3(a)(2)) and significant natural, historical, and cultural resources are to be preserved (NTSA Section 5(f)). Protection of scenic landscapes and unique wildlife habitat may warrant establishing a corridor of a greater breadth than that normally provided by a semi-primitive non-motorized ROS setting. Forest plans are expected to provide for ecological conditions to contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species and to conserve species that have been proposed for listing, or are candidates for listing, under the Endangered Species Act.

### **C. Development and Management**

The development and management of National Scenic and Historic Trails (NSHT) must be based on many facets of the NTSA, a Comprehensive Plan, other applicable laws, Executive Orders, regulations, and policies. Although, the most important amendment to the NTSA for the CDNST occurred as part of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, which authorized and designated this NST. Planning guidance for the National Trails System and the CDNST has been modified several

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<sup>5</sup> BLM MS-6280 - National Trail Management Corridor. Allocation established through the land management planning process, pursuant to Section 202 of Federal Land Policy and Management Act and Section 7(a)(2) of the National Trails System Act (“rights-of-way”) for a public land area of sufficient width within which to encompass National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings and the primary use or uses that are present or to be restored.

<sup>6</sup> FSM 2310.3 – Policy. 1. Use the ROS to establish planning criteria, generate objectives for recreation, evaluate public issues, integrate management concerns, project recreation needs and demands, and coordinate management objectives. 2. Use the ROS system to develop standards and guidelines for proposed recreation resource use and development. 3. Use the ROS system guidelines to describe recreation opportunities and coordinate with other recreation suppliers.... [Policy has been in effect from 1986 to present.] FSM 2311.1 – Reference: ROS User Guide.

<sup>7</sup> [Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management, Agricultural Handbook Number 701](#)



times since the legislation was enacted in 1968. In 1976, the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) were enacted requiring integrated plans; as such, new and revised NFMA and FLPMA directed land management plans, and the comprehensive planning for NSHTs, are not predisposed by the 1968 NTSA vague statement to, "...be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for that specific area in order to insure continued maximum benefits from the land."

Development and management guidance found in the NTSA is summarized below and related to other laws and the CDNST:

(1) The NTSA, as amended, is the principal legislation that influences the development and management of the CDNST. The NTSA Statement of Policy describes the purpose of the legislation in Section 2(a), "In order to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and in order to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation, trails should be established... and (ii) secondarily, within scenic areas and along historic travel routes of the Nation which are often more remotely located."

(2) The NTSA, Section 3(a)(2) describes location criteria as, "National scenic trails, established as provided in section 5 of this Act, which will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass..." This provision is partially addressed in the Study Report through statements such as, "The primary purpose of this trail is to provide a continuous, appealing trail route, designed for the hiker and horseman, but compatible with other land uses... One of the primary purposes for establishing the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail would be to provide hiking and horseback access to those lands where man's impact on the environment has not been adverse to a substantial degree and where the environment remains relatively unaltered. Therefore, the protection of the land resource must remain a paramount consideration in establishing and managing the trail. There must be sufficient environmental controls to assure that the values for which the trail is established are not jeopardized."

(3) The NTSA, Section 5(a)(5) states, "Notwithstanding the provisions of section 7(c), the use of motorized vehicles on roads which will be designated segments of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail shall be permitted in accordance with regulations prescribed by the appropriate Secretary." This provision is addressed in the Comprehensive Plan: "Motor vehicle use by the general public is prohibited on the CDNST, unless that use is consistent with the applicable land management plan and: ... (5) Is designated in accordance with 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B, on National Forest System lands or is allowed on public lands and: ... (b) That segment of the CDNST was constructed as a road prior to November 10, 1978..." (Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(6)). Forest Service policy describes, "Locate a CDNST segment on a road only where it is primitive and offers recreational opportunities comparable to those provided by a trail with a Designed Use of Pack and Saddle Stock..."

(FSM2353.44 (b)(2)(8)). CDNST related regulations to address the guidance for motorized vehicles on roads are yet to be prescribed.

(4) The NTSA, Section 7(a)(2) is important for it directs the establishment of the CDNST designated area. “The appropriate Secretary shall select the rights-of-way for national scenic and national historic trails and shall publish notice thereof of the availability of appropriate maps or descriptions in the Federal Register.” This is an essential task that needs to be completed for the CDNST and many other National Trails. The term rights-of-way can be confusing, so the BLM has provided the following clarifying definition:

*“National Trail Right(s)-of-Way.* Term used in Section 7(a)(2) of the National Trails System Act to describe the corridor selected by the National Trail administering agency,... which includes the area of land that is of sufficient width to encompass National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings. The National Trail Right-of-Way, in the context of the National Trails System Act, differs from a Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) Title V right-of-way, which is a grant issued pursuant to FLPMA authorities. It becomes a key consideration in establishing the National Trail Management Corridor in a Resource Management Plan” (BLM MS-6280).

The NTSA Section 7(a) requirement to select a National Scenic Trail rights-of-way is similar to the Wild and Scenic River Act Section 3(b) requirement to establish a W&SR boundary. Establishing a NST rights-of-way (boundary) that includes identified NST-related values is essential as a basis from which to provide necessary protection. Where private lands are involved, the boundary marks the area within which the manager will focus work with local communities and landowners in developing effective strategies for protection of the NST corridor.

(5) The NTSA Section 7(a)(2) further expresses that, “Development and management of each segment of the National Trails System shall be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for that specific area in order to insure continued maximum benefits from the land.” The following examines this Section 7(a)(2) sentence, and reviews other planning requirements, to try to better understand the intent and legal requirements of the guidance:

(a) What is a “segment of the National Trails System?” To place this in context, it is important to recognize that the components of the “National Trails System,” includes National Recreation Trails (NRTs), National Scenic Trails (NSTs), National Historic Trails (NHT), and Side or Connecting Trails. A simple definition of a segment is, “one of the parts into which something can be divided.” The parts of the National Trails System would be each congressionally and administratively designated National Trail component as established per the requirements of the NTSA.

(b) What is intended by the 1968 guidance to, “be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for that specific area?” Forest Service policy approved by Chief J. Max Peterson interpreted the direction to be as follows:

“Development and administration of a National Scenic Trail or National Historic Trail will ensure retention of the outdoor recreation experience for which the trail was established. Each segment of a trail should be designed to harmonize with and complement any established land management plans for that specific area in order to ensure continued maximum benefits from the land. Decisions relating to trail design and management practices should reflect a philosophy of perpetuation the spectrum of recreation objectives envisioned for the trail users. Land management planning should describe the planned actions that may affect that trail and its associated environments. Through this process, resource management activities prescribed for land adjacent to the trail can be made compatible with the purpose for which the trail is established. The objective is to maintain or enhance such values as esthetics, natural features, historic and archeological resources, and other cultural qualities of the areas through which a National Scenic or National Historic Trail goes” (FSM 2353.4(1)(d) – Administration (FSM 1/80 Amend 85 – now expired).

Harmonizing and complementing benefits of an optimum location design of a National Scenic Trail corridor would include the recreation and conservation benefits resulting from: (1) locating the National Trail corridor “to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas...” (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)); (2) avoiding, to the extent possible, activities that would be incompatible with the purposes of a NST for which it was established (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)); (3) contributing to achieving historic, outdoor recreation, watershed, and wildlife and fish multiple-use benefits (16 U.S.C. 528); and (4) locating, protecting, and providing for the connectivity of a section of a congressionally designated National Scenic Trail.

Specific to the National Forest System, the NFMA of 1976 established that Land Management Plans were to provide for one integrated plan. The 1982 NFMA planning regulations directed that, “...requirements for additional planning for special areas shall be met through plans required under this subpart” (36 CFR 219.2(a) [1982], and 36 CFR 219.1 and 219.10 [2012]). By no later than 1982 with the establishment of regulations, NFMA controlled processes for integrated forest planning superseded the 1968 NTSA guidance to, “harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans.”

(c) What is intended by the guidance, “to insure continued maximum benefits from the land?” This statement reinforces the phrase, “shall be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans.” Though, this guidance is vague since “maximum benefits of the land” is not found in the definition of multiple-use as described in the Multiple Use Sustained-Yield Act (MUSYA) of 1960.<sup>8</sup> As stated above,

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<sup>8</sup> Multiple Use is defined as, "management of all the various renewable surface resources of the national forests so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people ...."

benefits of establishing a National Trail corridor would include the recreation and conservation benefits resulting from: (1) locating the National Trail corridor “to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas...” (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)); (2) avoiding, to the extent possible, activities along the NST that would be incompatible with the purposes of the CDNST for which it was established (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)); (3) contributing to achieving outdoor recreation, watershed, and wildlife and fish multiple-use benefits (16 U.S.C. 528); and (4) locating, protecting, and providing for the connectivity of a section of a congressionally designated National Scenic Trail.

In 1968 when the NTSA was enacted, the Forest Service was preparing National Forest Unit Plans. In 1978, when the CDNST was designated, regulations were being developed to provide for integrated multiple-use plans as a result of the NFMA (Forest Service) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (BLM).

The NFMA requires that a Forest Plan address the comprehensive planning and other requirements of the NTSA in order to form one integrated Plan (16 U.S.C. 1604(c) and (f) and 36 CFR 219.2 [1982] and 36 CFR 219.1 and 219.10). As such, the NTSA guidance that a National Trails System segment be, “designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for that specific area,” is not applicable to a new or revised land management plan approved after the passage of NFMA and FLPMA.

Specific to NSTs, an optimum location assessment may find that designing the rights-of-way corridor to pass through inventoried Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Recreation ROS settings, and then managing the selected corridor to maintain those ROS settings characteristics, would assure continued benefits of the land that best meet the needs of the American people.

(6) NTSA, Section 7(b) states, “After publication of notice of the availability of appropriate maps or descriptions in the Federal Register, the Secretary charged with the administration of a national scenic or national historic trail may relocate segments of a national scenic or national historic trail right-of-way with the concurrence of the head of the Federal agency having jurisdiction over the lands involved, upon a determination that: (I) Such a relocation is necessary to preserve the purposes for which the trail was established, or (ii) the relocation is necessary to promote a sound land management program in accordance with established multiple-use principles: Provided, That a substantial relocation of the rights-of-way for such trail shall be by Act of Congress.” This direction on relocations part (I) and (ii) may be useful guidance for selecting the initial rights-of-way. The extent of the initial selected rights-of-way should provide for the possibility of future relocations of the CDNST travel route.

A National Park Service example of a relocation of a selected rights-of-way is described for a section of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. “The proposed relocations set forth below are deemed

necessary to preserve the purpose for which the Appalachian National Scenic Trail was established. As a part of the program to protect and establish an Appalachian Trail corridor the Department of the Interior, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, has determined that where the Trail is now along roads, close to houses or otherwise poorly located, the National Park Service in consultation with the Forest Service will seek an alternative location. When necessary, an alternative Trail route will be located outside the existing right-of-way pursuant to Section 7 of the National Trails System Act, which established a process for necessary relocations after publication of notice-in the Federal Register and appropriate consultation” ([46 FR 191](#)).

(7) NTSA, Section 7(c) states, “National scenic or national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted by the Secretary charged with the administration of the trail. Reasonable efforts shall be made to provide sufficient access opportunities to such trails and, to the extent practicable, efforts be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established. The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited....” This section was also adopted in 1968 and has clear implications to the development and management of NSHTs. It is implicit that the nature and purposes of each designated NSHT be established to not only understand acceptable uses along a National Trail, but also for guiding the selection of the rights-of-way and the establishment of a NSHT management corridor.

In 1978, the NTSA Section 7(c) was amended adding that, “Other uses along the historic trails and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, and which, at the time of designation, are allowed by administrative regulations, including the use of motorized vehicles, shall be permitted by the Secretary charged with administration of the trail.” This guidance is not directly addressed in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, since nature and purposes substantial interference determinations was already part of the 1968 NTSA direction. However, if the other use was allowed in 1978 by explicit administrative regulations the allowance of such use may be affected by this part of the legislation.

(8) In 1978, the NTSA was amended adding Section 5(e) and 5(f) to require the development of a Comprehensive Plan directing that, “a comprehensive plan for the management, and use of the trail, including but not limited to, the following items: (1) specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved...and for national scenic or national historic trails an identified carrying capacity of the trail and a plan for its implementation; (2) the process to be followed by the appropriate Secretary to implement the marking requirements established in section 7(c) of this Act; (3) a protection plan for any high potential historic sites or high potential route segments; and (4) general and site-specific development plans, including anticipated costs.” The CDNST Comprehensive Plan is discussed further in the next section.

(9) The 1983 amendment to the NTSA, which added Section 7(j), does not modify the nature and purposes of the CDNST and the guidance in Section 7(c). The added subsection simply lists uses and vehicles that may be permitted on National Trails generally.

(10) In 1983, the NTSA was amended adding Section 7(k) to address the management and development issues associated with private land along a NSHT stating, “For the conservation purpose of preserving or enhancing the recreational, scenic, natural, or historical values of components of the national trails system, and environs thereof as determined by the appropriate Secretary, landowners are authorized to donate or otherwise convey qualified real property interests to qualified organizations consistent with section 170(h)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, including, but not limited to, right-of-way, open space, scenic, or conservation easements....” This direction is specific to private land, but identifies the importance “of preserving or enhancing the recreational, scenic, natural, or historical values” along a National Trail.

(11) In 2001, Executive Order 13195 – Trails for America – addressed development and management of NSHTs by directing in Section 1(b), “Protecting the trail corridors associated with national scenic trails...to the degrees necessary to ensure that the values for which each trail was established remain intact....” This E.O. supplements the NTSA by clearly identifying the need to protect NSHT corridors.

(12) In 2009, Omnibus Public Land Management Act (P.L. 111-11, 16 U.S.C. 7202) established National Landscape Conservation System areas on public lands. Section 2002 of this Act describes, in part, “In order to conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations, there is established in the Bureau of Land Management the National Landscape Conservation System. (b) COMPONENTS.—The system shall include each of the following areas administered by the Bureau of Land Management: (1) Each area that is designated as— ... (D) a national scenic trail or national historic trail designated as a component of the National Trails System;... Furthermore, the legislation states, The Secretary shall manage the system—(1) in accordance with any applicable law (including regulations) relating to any component of the system included under subsection (b); and (2) in a manner that protects the values for which the components of the system were designated.” The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 resulted in the comprehensive BLM manual series 6250 and 6280 that address the planning, development, and management of NSHTs for the purpose of protecting NSHT values.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (P.L. 94-579), section 102, states, “regulations and plans for the protection of public land areas of critical environmental concern be promptly developed.” In addition, Section 103 describes, “(a) The term “areas of critical environmental concern” means areas within the public lands where special management attention is required...to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards.” “In the development and revision of land use plans, the Secretary shall— (3) give priority to the designation and protection of areas of critical environmental concern; ...and (9) to the extent consistent with the

laws governing the administration of the public lands, coordinate the land use inventory, planning, and management activities of or for such lands with the land use planning and management programs of other Federal departments and agencies and of the States and local governments within which the lands are located..." (FLPMA Section 202) "The Secretary shall manage the public lands under principles of multiple use and sustained yield, in accordance with the land use plans developed by him under section 202 of this Act when they are available, except that where a tract of such public land has been dedicated to specific uses according to any other provisions of law it shall be managed in accordance with such law." (FLPMA Section 302)

National Landscape Conservation System landscapes are clearly areas where "special management attention is required" as specified in the FLPMA definition of an Area of Critical of Environmental Concern (ACEC). The Bureau of Land Management has already addressed the need for such special attention, as in MS-6250 and MS-6280 with regard to NSHTs. The recognition of NLCS components as ACECs as defined in FLPMA provides a mechanism for the identification of these areas and the protection of their values through the development and implementation of Resource Management Plans.

BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern directive describes that, "Congress has reserved the right to approve additions to the National Wilderness System, National Historic/Scenic Trails System, and National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and to congressionally designate public land areas as National Recreation Areas and National Conservation Areas. A potential ACEC may be contained within or overlap one of the above designations provided that the ACEC designation is necessary to protect a resource or value... (MS-1613, Congressional Designations, .51).

(13) In 2009, the Chief of the Forest Service amended the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan and issued conforming directives (FSM 2353.01d(5) and FSM 2353.4), which addressed development and management of the CDNST (Federal Register: October 5, 2009 (74 FR 51116)). The 2009 Comprehensive Plan and corresponding FSM 2353 directives established baseline policy and appropriate guidance for "nature and purposes," "visual resource management," "recreation resource management," "motor vehicle use," and "carrying capacity." In addition, the 2009 Comprehensive Plan and FSM policy recognizes the role of substantial interference assessments and determinations when addressing other uses along the CDNST corridor. The final amendments and directives are to be applied through land management planning and project decisions following requisite environmental analysis (74 FR 51124).

(14) In 2012, Forest Service planning directives describe that: "When developing plan components for national scenic and historic trails: The Interdisciplinary Team shall identify Congressionally designated national scenic and historic trails and plan components must provide for the management of rights-of-ways (16 U.S.C 1246(a)(2)) consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. Plan components must provide for the nature and purposes of existing national scenic and historic trails and for the potential rights-of-way of those trails designated for study." Furthermore, "... The team..., "should use other information to delineate a national scenic and historic trails corridor

that protects the resource values for which the trail was designated... The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines for a designated areas... that describe the national scenic and historic trail and the recreational, scenic, historic, and other resource values for which the trail was designated....

In the “Response to Comments on the Proposed Land Management Planning Directives,” in January 2015, the Agency mentions National Scenic and Historic Trails in a section titled, Forest Planning – General Comments – Plan Components, pages 24-25. “Respondents asked that the Agency clarify the following about plan components: clarify enforceability of each plan component; clarify ability of plan components to constrain or prohibit public activities; require documenting assumptions for plan components; provide guidance on evaluating and adopting lower tier components such as trail class, managed uses, designed use, and design parameters and identify prohibited uses for national scenic trails.” The response states, “The Agency modified the proposed planning directives by adding a new section at FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 24 on designated areas and a specific new section (sec. 24.43) on national scenic and historic trails. FSH 1909.12, chapter 20, section 24.43 emphasizes that plans are to identify and map national scenic and historic trails within the plan area. Plan components must provide for management of the trail consistent with legal authorities and the nature and purposes of existing national scenic and historic trails, and must be consistent with the objectives and practices for the management of the national scenic and historic trails as identified in the most recent comprehensive plan. Comprehensive trail plans are expected to provide for trail management compatible with the plan components of the land management plan.”

This response is somewhat unclear, since two distinct planning processes are discussed in one passage. A Comprehensive Plan is defined by the NTSA, while a National Forest System (NFS) trail plan is a resource plan, such as establishing Travel Management Objectives (FSM 2353.12). However, it appears that the Agency is committed to (1) providing for the protection of the nature and purposes of National Scenic and Historic Trails and being consistent with each National Scenic or Historic Trail Comprehensive Plan, and (2) NFS trail plans are directed to be consistent with plan components. Comprehensive Plans developed in response to the requirements of the National Trails System Act and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act are not resource plans as defined by the NFMA (16 U.S.C. 1604(i) and 36 CFR 219.15(e)).

CDNST policy and direction is found in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2353.4, FSH 1909.12 part 14, and FSH 1909.12 part 24.43, which in total provides the necessary National Trail policy and management direction for implementing the requirements of the NTSA. FSM 2350 is referenced in FSH 1909.12 part 24.43, which is necessary since the Forest Service Planning Handbook in itself does not contain substantive specialized guidance and instruction for addressing the NTSA in an integrated land management planning process. FSM 1110.3, FSM 1110.8, and FSM 1112.02 have more information about the formulation of directives.

(15) In 2016, The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) amended its regulations that establish the procedures used to prepare, revise, or amend land use plans pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and



Management Act (FLPMA). On March 27, 2017, these regulations were rescinded by P.L. 115-12 - [H.J. Res. 44](#) - Disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of the Interior relating to Bureau of Land Management regulations that establish the procedures used to prepare, revise, or amend land use plans pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. The BLM issued on December 21, 2017, a Federal Register Notice (82 FR 60554) to effect the removal of any amendments, deletions or other modifications made by the nullified rule, and the reversion to the text of the regulations in effect immediately prior to the effective date of the Planning 2.0 Rule.

#### **D. CDNST Comprehensive Planning**

The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1244(b), prepared a Study Report for the CDNST that was completed in 1976. The Chief of the Forest Service adopted the 1976 CDNST Study Report and 1977 CDNST Final Environmental Statement on August 5, 1981 (46 FR 39867). Consistent with the Study Report, the Chief amended the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan and issued conforming FSM 2353.4 policy in 2009.

A comprehensive plan for the acquisition, management, development, and use of a National Scenic Trail includes, in part, specifies objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the CDNST, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved, an identified carrying capacity, an acquisition or protection plan, and general and site-specific development plans. A comprehensive plan is completed when programmatic and site-specific planning elements have been addressed.

Comprehensive plan direction must be applied to a management corridor and be associated with measurable outcome-focused objectives that are related to maintaining or achieving nature and purposes desired conditions. These objectives need to define specific recreation opportunities (e.g., activities and experiences); management, land protection, acquisition and development needs; and conservation measures.

On National Forest System lands and BLM public lands, the Comprehensive Plan direction is implemented through NFMA and FLPMA integrated planning processes, including establishing practices to be observed:

- Forest Service practices are described in land management plans as plan components, which include standards, guidelines, suitability of lands, and possibly goals. Practices may also include potential management approaches or strategies and partnership opportunities or coordination activities. The CDNST management direction is applied to a Management Area.
- BLM practices are described in Resource Management Plans and Special Area Plans as management actions, allowable use decisions, and implementation actions that are applied to a National Trail Management Corridor.

Comprehensive plan requirements (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)) for the CDNST are addressed through staged or stepped-down decision processes: (1) the 2009 Comprehensive Plan established broad policy

and procedures including identifying the nature and purposes, (2) land management plans guide all natural resource management activities and establish management standards (thresholds<sup>9</sup> or a clear indication of binding commitment) and guidelines for the National Forest System, provide integrated resource management direction for designated areas, and address programmatic planning requirements as described in the Comprehensive Plan (Chapter IV), and (3) mid-level and site-specific plans complete the comprehensive planning process through field-level actions to protect the corridor and then maintain or construct the travel route (FSM 2353.44b(2)). Staged and stepped down decision processes could appear to support the notion that the comprehensive plans are simply resource plans that are inferior to the land management plan direction. Instead, this is an administrative approach to incrementally step through the comprehensive planning process that is required by the NTSA, while being consistent with NFMA and NEPA staged decision-making processes. The Forest Service Planning Rule PEIS discusses staged decision-making as related to NFMA and NEPA processes:

“...NFMA requires the promulgation of a planning rule that ‘set[s] out the process for the development and revision of the land management plans, and the guidelines and standards’ set out in the Act. The rule must be developed ‘under the principles of the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act’ (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)). A planning rule sets out requirements for development, revision, and amendment of land management plans. By setting out substantive and procedural requirements, it establishes the decision space within which the planning process is to be carried out and within which plan content must fit. Approval of a planning rule will guide development, revision, and amendment of land management plans...

At the second stage of decision-making, within the requirements set out in the planning rule, a land management plan sets out a framework with sideboards to guide all natural resource management activities on a NFS unit. Approval of a land management plan is a programmatic decision that identifies desired conditions, sets goals and objectives, establishes standards and guidelines, and determines what and how often to monitor certain conditions. A plan guides the choice and design of future proposals for projects and activities in a plan area but typically does not authorize projects or activities, nor commit the Forest Service to take action. A plan constrains the Agency, however, by prohibiting the authorization of certain types of projects or activities or limiting the manner in which they may be carried out, in all or part of the plan area...

As a planning rule establishes the decision space for land management planning, land management plans establish further constraints upon the decision space for on-the-ground management decisions. Yet, as the multiple-use principle necessitates a broad decision space for plans, plans will also provide broad decision space...

At the third decision-making stage are authorizations of on-the-ground projects and activities. Decisions in this third stage must be consistent with the applicable land management plan. Site-specific

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<sup>9</sup> Thresholds are minimally acceptable conditions associated with each indicator. Indicators are specific resource or experiential attributes that can be measured to track changes in conditions so that progress toward achieving and maintaining desired conditions can be assessed.

decisions on any one unit can cover a wide variety of actions. The number of such decisions, made during the life of a plan, can number into the hundreds, and vary widely by type.

At each stage—from NFMA to planning rule, planning rule to plan, and plan to project—the decision space narrows. Even so, the decision space remains broad. Every one of the plans developed to date has differed from the others, and the project decisions that have been under each plan have varied widely...

Each stage of the Agency’s decision-making process (rule, plans, and projects) is subject to the requirements of the NEPA. As the rule narrows the decision space for plans, and each plan narrows the decision space for projects, so too the NEPA analysis narrows at each stage, through ‘tiering.’ Tiering of NEPA analysis is provided for in the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, and refers to the coverage of general matters in broader environmental impact statements (such as this), with subsequent narrower statements or environmental analyses (such as those for plans) incorporating by reference discussions in the broader document ‘to eliminate repetitive discussions of the same issues and to focus on the actual issues ripe for decision at each level of environmental review’ (40 CFR 1502.20). Tiering is appropriate when the sequence of statements or analyses is: from a program, plan, or policy environmental impact statement to a program, plan, or policy statement or analysis of lesser scope or to a site-specific statement or analysis (40 CFR 1508.28)...

Finally, for each proposed project or activity, the Agency undertakes yet another environmental analysis, to determine the site-specific effects. And, it is at that project-specific stage where the bulk of Forest Service NEPA effects analysis is, and will continue to be, done. Only at the point of making project-level decisions does the Agency commit resources or funding for on-the-ground action. It is at this level of NEPA analysis that direct effects can be predicted with confidence to the constituent parts of the environment: the soil, air, water, vegetation, wildlife, social conditions, and economic costs/returns” (Forest Service Planning Rule, PEIS, pages 77-79).

“The [2009] final amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan and corresponding directives... provide guidance to agency officials implementing the National Trails System Act. The final amendments are consistent with the nature and purposes of the CDNST identified in the 1976 CDNST Study Report and 1977 CDNST Final Environmental Impact Statement adopted by the Forest Service in 1981 (40 FR 150). The final amendments and directives will be applied through land management planning and project decisions following requisite environmental analysis” (74 FR 51123).

Nature and Purposes is addressed in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan in Chapter II(A) and IV(A). “The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor.” Final Amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan states, “Administer the CDNST consistent with the nature and purposes for which this National Scenic Trail was established. The CDNST was established and designated by an Act of Congress on November 10, 1978 (16 USC 1244(a)). The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking

and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor” (74 FR 51124).

Visual Resource Management is addressed in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan in Chapter IV(B)(4). Management direction in Part c states, “(1) On National Forest System lands, the visual resource inventory will follow the procedures outlined in Forest Service Manual 2380, and appropriate handbook guidelines. The inventory will be performed as if the trail exists even in sections where it is proposed for construction or reconstruction. (2) On public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, the visual resource inventory will follow the procedures outlined in BLM Manual Section 8400. The inventory shall be conducted on the basis that the CDNST is a high sensitivity level travel route and will be performed as if the trail exists even in sections where it is proposed for construction or reconstruction.” Final Amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan states, “Scenery along the CDNST may be managed using the Scenery Management System (FSM 2382.1; Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management, Agricultural Handbook 701, 1995... The CDNST is a concern level 1 route, with a scenic integrity objective of high or very high, depending on the trail segment” (74 FR 51125).

“In general a specific integrity level or visual quality objective can be achieved by decreasing the visual contrast of the deviation being viewed. Usually the most effective way is to repeat form, line, color, texture, pattern and scale common to the valued landscape character being viewed” (Landscape Aesthetics Handbook, page 2-5). However, in landscapes where vegetation health issues exist, it may be best to assume that vegetation is ephemeral and may disappear due to factors such as insects, disease and fire. In those areas visual analysis should not consider current vegetation in establishing distance zones or the trail corridor. Another consideration is that the, “middleground is usually the predominant distance zone at which national forest landscapes are seen, except for regions of flat lands or tall, dense vegetation. At this distance, people can distinguish individual tree-forms, large boulders, flower fields, small openings in the forest, and small rock outcrops. Tree-forms typically stand out vividly in silhouetted situations. Form, texture, and color remain dominant, and pattern is important. Texture is often made up of repetitive tree-forms. In steeper topography, a middleground landscape perspective is similar to an aerial one. Because the viewer is able to see human activities from this perspective in context with the overall landscape, a middleground landscape having steep topography is often the most critical of all distance zones for scenery management” (Landscape Aesthetics Handbook, page 4-12).

Recreation Resource Management is addressed in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan in Chapter IV(B)(5). Policy is described in Part b as, “(1) Manage the CDNST to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and pack and saddle stock opportunities. Backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.” Primitive means, “of or relating to an earliest or original stage or state.” (74 FR 51116) Forms of hiking include backpacking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and other similar walking activities.

Management direction is described in the Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(5)(c), page 16.

“(1) Use the ROS system in delineating and integrating recreation opportunities in managing the CDNST. Where possible, locate the CDNST in Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes; provided that the CDNST may have to traverse intermittently through more developed ROS classes to provide for continuous travel between the Canada and Mexico borders.” All ROS classes are summarized in this section of the Comprehensive Plan to assure that identical definitions are used across administrative units; this summary is not to be construed as indicating a desirability or compatibility of managing the CDNST corridor to provide for Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roaded Natural, and Rural ROS class conditions. Management direction for Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roaded Natural, Rural, and Urban ROS classes allow uses that would substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST if the allocation desired conditions are realized. Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes generally provide for desired experiences where the allowed non-motorized activities reflect the purposes for which the National Trail was established.

Final Amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan states, “Manage the CDNST to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and pack and saddle stock opportunities. Backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Bicycle use may be allowed on the CDNST (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)) if the use is consistent with the applicable land and resource management plan and will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST...

Locate a CDNST segment on a road only where it is primitive and offers recreational opportunities comparable to those provided by a trail with a Designed Use of Pack and Saddle Stock, provided that the CDNST may have to be located on or across motorized routes because of the inability to locate the trail elsewhere” (74 FR 51125).

In some landscapes resource developments and use have degraded National Trail values and in these areas it may be judicious to adopt a non-degradation strategy for the National Trail corridor. The non-degradation concept calls for maintenance of present resource conditions if they equal or exceed minimum conditions and restoration where conditions are below-minimum levels.

The 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan direction is consistent with the guidance in the NTSA, NFMA, FLPMA, and NEPA and should be followed. Furthermore, policy found in FSM 2353.4 (Forest Service) and MS-6280 (BLM) should guide the development and management of the CDNST. The establishment of CDNST MAs and NTMCs, with appropriate plan components, could facilitate comprehensive planning, selecting and publishing the rights-of-way in the Federal Register, and meet attached NEPA requirements.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), when a federal agency does not make an “overt act,” no NEPA requirement to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) attaches. However, if some agency action was mandated under a separate statute in relation to that activity but the action was not taken, NEPA does attach and the Administrative Procedure Act applies (40 CFR 1508.18 and 5 U.S.C. 706). The NTSA presents an independent planning requirement to prepare and implement a comprehensive plan, select the rights-of-way, and in general provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

**Exhibit 1** depicts an integrated planning strategy for the CDNST. This staged decisionmaking strategy does not diminish the *discrete agency action* that is required by the NTSA Section 5(f) to prepare one Comprehensive Plan for the CDNST.

**Exhibit 1. Integrated Planning Strategy for the CDNST.**

2009 Comprehensive Plan Stage 1	Land Management Plan Stage 2	CDNST Field-Level Plan Stage 3
<p>The comprehensive plan establishes national direction (FSM 2353.01d(5)) that implements foundational provisions of the National Trails System Act, which includes establishing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Nature and Purposes of the CDNST</li> <li>• Objectives</li> <li>• Guidance for selecting the Rights-of-Way Corridor<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• Guidance for resource management practices as related to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Visual Resource</li> <li>○ Recreation Resource</li> <li>○ Motorized Use</li> <li>○ Special Use Permits</li> <li>○ Trail and Facilities</li> <li>○ Carrying Capacity</li> <li>○ Monitoring and Evaluation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Supported by the 1976 CDNST Study Report, 1977 CDNST Final Environmental Statement and E.O. 13195 – Trails for America, and was established through a <a href="#">36 CFR 216</a> process.</li> </ul>	<p>Land management planning implements the Comprehensive Plan guidance and provides for integrated programmatic direction that is consistent with the NTSA, NFMA, FLPMA or National Parks and Recreation Act, E.O. 13195, and agency specific regulations (e.g., 36 CFR 219) and policies (e.g., FSM 2353.4 and BLM MS-6280):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying objectives</li> <li>• Identifies and preserves significant natural, historical, and cultural resources.</li> <li>• Establishes the extent of the CDNST Management Area (FS) or National Trail Management Corridor (BLM).</li> <li>• Provides for protecting or achieving the nature and purposes through establishing supporting plan components:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Desired Conditions</li> <li>○ Objectives</li> <li>○ Standards (Thresholds)</li> <li>○ Guidelines</li> <li>○ Suitability of Lands</li> <li>○ Management actions,</li> <li>○ Allowable use decisions</li> <li>○ Monitoring</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Developed following programmatic Environmental Impact Statement processes that emphasize ROS and Visual Quality planning principles, and addresses <i>management actions</i> and <i>other uses</i> that may be allowed (16 USC 1246(c)).</li> </ul>	<p>Field-level site-specific planning that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and agency regulations and policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies and preserves significant natural, historical, and cultural resources (site-specific).</li> <li>• Identifies and displays the segments of the CDNST that traverse the unit.</li> <li>• Establishes the Trail Class, Managed Uses, Designed Use, and Design Parameters for the segments of the CDNST that traverse the unit and identifies uses that are prohibited.</li> <li>• Provides for development, signing, construction, and maintenance.</li> <li>• Establishes carrying capacity (LAC) for segments.</li> <li>• Establishes monitoring programs to evaluate site-specific conditions.</li> <li>• Developed following site-specific Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment processes that emphasize ROS and Visual Quality planning principles, and addresses <i>implementation actions</i> and <i>other uses</i> that may be allowed (16 USC 1246(c)). Prescribe regulations governing the use, protection, management, development, and administration (16 USC 1246(i)).</li> </ul>
<p>CDNST comprehensive planning Stages 2 and 3 may be combined if requisite programmatic and site-specific NEPA requirements are satisfied.</p>		

<sup>11</sup> The selection of the rights-of-way (Section 7(a)(2)) should occur soon after a National Scenic Trail is authorized and designated by Congress; however, this did not occur for the CDNST.

## **E. Visitor Use Management**

The Interagency Visitor Use Management Council (IVUMC) has developed a Visitor Use Management Framework<sup>12</sup> that is designed for federal managers to collaboratively develop, implement, and monitor strategies and actions to provide sustainable access to lands and waters. The intent, and ultimate desired outcome, is to provide high quality visitor experiences, while protecting natural and cultural resources. Responsive and effective visitor use management requires managers to:

- Identify desired conditions for resources, visitor experiences, and facilities/operations;
- Gain an understanding of how visitor use influences achievement of those goals; and
- Commit to active / adaptive management and monitoring of visitor use to meet those goals.

The framework can be incorporated into existing federal agency planning and decision-making processes and is applicable across a wide spectrum of situations that vary in complexity and spatial extent from site-specific to large-scale planning efforts. The framework is a legally defensible and transparent planning and decision-making process that:

- Integrates applicable laws and policy requirements;
- Provides sound rationale upon which to base management decisions; and
- Facilitates adaptive management.

The framework identifies four overarching elements with discrete steps under each. The framework is intended to be applied in a flexible manner using the sliding scale concept. The strengths of this framework are that it is iterative, adaptable, and flexible.

Providing for the nature and purposes of a National Scenic Trail should use the Visitor Use Management Framework and utilize Scenery Management System/Visual Resource Management, Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, and Carrying Capacity processes. A primary purpose of these systems is to provide for quality visitor experiences.

## **F. Scenery Management System and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Relationship**

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a system, by which existing and desired recreation settings are defined, classified, inventoried, established, and monitored. Recreation settings are divided into six distinct classes (Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, Semi-Primitive Motorized, Road Natural, Rural, and Urban). Classifications are based on physical, social, and managerial setting characteristics.

Where setting characteristics are not completely aligned with a specific ROS class, a determination should be made as to which class best represents the current specific setting. As a general rule, the physical characteristics take precedent over social and managerial characteristics. This is because social and managerial characteristics can often be altered through visitor use management

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<sup>12</sup> [visitorusemanagement.nps.gov](http://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov)

techniques (permits, closures, etc.) where as the physical characteristics (size, remoteness, and others) are more permanent.

How are ROS setting inconsistencies addressed in providing for desired settings along the National Scenic Trail? An inconsistency is defined as a situation in which the condition of an indicator exceeds the range defined as acceptable by the management guidelines. For example, the condition of the indicators for the National Trail corridor may all be consistent with its management as a semi-primitive non-motorized area with the exception of the presence of a trailhead and access road. In such a case, what are the implications of the inconsistency? Does the inconsistency benefit or interfere with the nature and purposes of the National Trail? What should be done about the inconsistency? Three general kinds of actions are possible. First, perhaps nothing can or should be done. It may be concluded that the inconsistency will have little or no effect on the area's general character. Or, the agency may lack jurisdiction over the source of the inconsistency. A second response is to direct management action at the inconsistency to bring it back in line with the guidelines established for the desired ROS class. The main point to be understood with regard to inconsistencies is that they might be managed. The presence of one does not necessarily automatically lead to a change in ROS class. By analyzing its cause, implications, and possible solutions, an inconsistency may be handled in a logical and systematic fashion.

The Scenery Management System (SMS) provides a systematic approach to inventory, assess, define, and monitor both existing and desired scenic resource conditions. Specific components of the SMS include scenic character, the degree of scenic diversity (scenic attractiveness), how and where people view the scenery (distance zones), the importance of scenery to those viewing it (concern levels), and the desired degree of intactness (scenic integrity objectives).

There are several over-arching concepts of the SMS that facilitate the inclusion and integration of scenery resources with planning efforts. The SMS is grounded in an ecological context; recognizes valued aspects of the built environment; and incorporates constituent input about valued features (biophysical and human-made) of settings.

Scenic integrity is defined as the degree of direct human-caused deviation in the landscape, such as road construction, timber harvesting, or activity debris. Indirect deviations, such as a landscape created by human suppression of the natural role of fire, are not included. Naturally occurring incidents, such as insects and disease infestations, are not defined as human-caused deviations in the landscape.

The relationship between the Scenery Management System and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum systems are discussed in the Landscape Aesthetics Handbook. Landscape Aesthetics - A Handbook for Scenery Management (Agricultural Handbook Number 701); Appendix F - 1 - Recreation Opportunity Spectrum:

“Recreation planners, landscape architects, and other Forest Service resource managers are interested in providing high quality recreation settings, experiences, and benefits for their constituents. This is accomplished, in part, by linking the Scenery Management System and the Recreation



Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) System. In addition, providing a single constituent inventory and analysis for both systems is helpful in coordinating management practices.

Esthetic value is an important consideration in the management of recreation settings. This is especially so in National Forest settings where most people expect a natural appearing landscape with limited evidence of ‘unnatural’ disturbance of landscape features...

Although the ROS User's Guide mentions the need for establishing a value for different landscapes and recreation opportunities within a single ROS class in the attractiveness overlay, there is currently no systematic approach to do so. For instance, in most ROS inventories, all lands that are classified semi-primitive non-motorized are valued equally. Some semi-primitive non-motorized lands are more valuable than others because of existing scenic integrity or scenic attractiveness. The Scenery Management System provides indicators of importance for these in all ROS settings. Attractiveness for outdoor recreation also varies by the variety and type of activities, experience, and benefits possible in each setting...

In the past, there have been apparent conflicts between The Visual Management System sensitivity levels and ROS primitive or semi-primitive classes. One apparent conflict has been where an undeveloped area, having little existing recreation use and seldom seen from sensitive travel routes, was inventoried using The Visual Management System. The inventory led to a ‘sensitivity level 3/ classification, and thus apparently contradicted ROS inventory classes of primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized or semi-primitive motorized. Using criteria in The Visual Management System, in a variety class B landscape with a sensitivity level 3, the initial visual quality objective is ‘modification’ or ‘maximum modification,’ depending on surrounding land classification. However, because of factors such as few social encounters, lack of managerial regimentation and control, and feelings of remoteness, the same area having little existing recreation use may establish an ROS primitive, semi-primitive nonmotorized, or semi-primitive motorized inventory classification. There have been concerns over the premise of The Visual Management System that the visual impact of management activities become more important as the number of viewers increases; yet, the ROS System emphasizes solitude, infrequent social encounters, and naturalness at the primitive end of the spectrum, with frequent social encounters and more evident management activities at the urban end. Value or importance are dependent on more than the number of viewers or users, and the key is that both the Scenery Management System and ROS are first used as inventory tools. Land management objectives are established during, not before, development of alternatives. Where there does appear to be a conflict in setting objectives for alternative forest plans, the most restrictive criteria should apply. An example might be an undeveloped land area in a viewshed managed for both middleground partial retention and semi-primitive non-motorized opportunities. Semi-primitive non-motorized criteria are usually the more restrictive.

The Scenery Management System and ROS serve related, but different, purposes that affect management of landscape settings. In some cases, ROS provides stronger protection for landscape settings than does the Scenery Management System. This is similar to landscape setting protection provided by management of other resources, such as cultural resource management, wildlife management, and old-growth management. In all these examples, there may be management directions

for other resources that actually provide higher scenic integrity standards than those reached by the Scenery Management System. Different resource values and systems (the Scenery Management System, the ROS System, cultural resource management, wildlife management, and old growth management) are developed for differing needs, but they are all systems that work harmoniously if properly utilized. In all these examples, there are management decisions made for other resources that result in protection and enhancement of landscape settings.” The following exhibit displays the relationship between ROS class and Scenic Integrity Objectives as describe in the Landscape Aesthetics Handbook, Appendix F-3.

<b>Scenic Integrity Objectives</b>					
<b>ROS Class</b>	<b>Very High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Very Low</b>
Primitive	Norm	Inconsistent	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Fully Compatible	Norm	Inconsistent	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Semi-Primitive Motorized	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Norm (1)	Inconsistent	Unacceptable
Roaded Natural-Appearing	Fully Compatible	Norm	Norm	Norm (2)	Inconsistent (3)
Rural	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Norm	Norm (2)	Inconsistent (3)
Urban	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Not Applicable
(1) Norm from sensitive roads and trails. (2) Norm only in middleground-concern level 2, where Roaded Modified subclass is used. (3) Unacceptable in Roaded Natural-Appearing and Rural where Roaded Modified subclass is used. It may be the norm in a Roaded Modified subclass.					

### **G. Forest Restoration – Insects and Disease**

A number of studies have addressed public perceptions toward the ecological and economic consequences of forest insect outbreaks. Yet, little is known about the influence of naturally altered conifer forest landscapes and forest management interventions and the location of the impacted forest stands (near-view to far-view) in relation to each other on forest visitors’ visual preferences.

The Forest Service publication, *Assessing Forest Scenic Beauty Impacts of Insects and Management* (FHTET 98-08) describes that, “[t]he paper discusses relationships between scenic beauty perceptions and certain forest characteristics such as the presence and dominance of large trees, tree species composition, and stand age. Stand treatments such as burning, harvesting, treating slash, and regenerating harvested stands also affect scenic beauty. Stand treatment impacts on scenic beauty may be relatively large compared to the impacts caused by insects... Forest insects attack trees, leading to defoliation, discoloration of remaining foliage, and/or tree mortality. This can lead to, in the short term, standing defoliated trees, discolored foliage, and increased ground litter. In the long term, the effects can be standing dead trees, dead and downed trees, slash, open canopies which increase sunlight, understory growth, and/or visual penetration (reduced stand density). Not all of these impacts negatively influence scenic beauty judgments. The natural process of regeneration can lead to the mitigation of negative scenic beauty impacts over time... Researchers investigated the impact of mountain pine beetle and western spruce budworm on the scenic beauty of western coniferous (predominantly ponderosa pine) forest landscapes in the Colorado Front Range. The mountain pine beetle kills the pine trees it inhabits. Western spruce budworm defoliates conifers by eating the needles; although the trees often recover, they can die in severe outbreaks. Researchers found that mid-view damages had a generally negative effect

on perceived scenic beauty. Red tops in the distant view had a negative effect on scenic beauty perceptions for those observers told of its presence, but no significant impact for uninformed viewers. Overall, insect damages in the far-view had a negative effect on perceived scenic beauty. They also found level landscapes with homogeneous vegetative cover were more negatively impacted by insect damage, while perceived insect damage on landscapes with diverse forest structures and mountainous terrain had a minimal effect on scenic beauty... Harvesting probably has the greatest potential for negatively impacting scenic beauty in the short run, and may confound all other relationships between forest characteristics and scenic beauty. Uneven-aged stands have more structural diversity, thus partially mitigating the overall impacts of harvesting on scenic beauty. Clear-cutting of even-aged stands has the greatest negative impact on scenic beauty in the short run.”

Expanded ‘salvage’ logging to prevent wildfire rarely contributes to ecological recovery in the disturbed area. Logging of dead or dying trees may be appropriate near roads where standing dead trees pose a safety hazard but should generally be avoided in areas where maintaining natural ecosystem processes is a priority. Controversial projects must have meaningful evaluation and public engagement to ensure achieving the basic principles of science-based forest management, including the use of best available science and the application of robust decision-making processes to provide for effective and beneficial management actions to address the vital need to improve the climate and fire resiliency of our national forests and the safety of our communities.

Scenic Integrity Levels of Very High and High contribute to the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Scenic Integrity Level of Moderate may degrade CDNST values. Scenic Integrity Levels of Low and Very Low are inconsistent with CDNST values and landscapes along the CDNST at these levels of integrity need rehabilitation... “Short-term” effects that last for many years would also substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

Scenic integrity is defined as the degree of direct human-caused deviation in the landscape, such as road construction, timber harvesting, or activity debris. Indirect deviations, such as a landscape created by human suppression of the natural role of fire and insect and disease infestations, are not included. In congressionally designated areas such as the CDNST rights-of-way corridor, limited or non-intervention policies are often the desired approach in order to promote natural processes and natural rejuvenation. Outside protected areas, interventions may include removal of infected and dead trees or clear cuts, associated road construction, then followed by artificial reforestation. Though, clear cuts are typically disliked by forest visitors.

## **H. Carrying Capacity**

National Trails System Act<sup>1</sup>, sections 5(e) and 5(f), direct that a Comprehensive Plan for a national trail, “identify carrying capacity of the trail and a plan for its implementation.” This is similar to Section 3(d)(1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA)<sup>13</sup> that directs federal river-administering

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<sup>13</sup> 16 U.S.C. 1271-1278; Public Law 90-542 (October 2, 1968) and amendments.

agencies to “address...user capacities” in a Comprehensive River Management Plan prepared for each component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Carrying capacity has been described as the number of organisms of a given species and quality that can survive in, without causing deterioration of, a given ecosystem through the least favorable environmental conditions that occur within a stated interval of time. In recreation, refers to the number of people that can occupy an area for a given social and experience goal. In range, refers to the maximum stocking rate possible on a given range without causing deterioration to vegetation or related resources.

The NTSA and WSRA do not define “carrying capacity” or “user capacities,” but recent litigation has focused primarily on the recreational use.<sup>14</sup> The scope of “carrying capacity” and “user capacity” broadly includes visitor use, other public use, and administrative use, but with particular emphasis on the recreational aspect.

Carrying capacities are an integral part of the management approaches identified in a Comprehensive Plan to protect and enhance a NST nature and purposes. The nature and purposes of a NST are also known as NST values. The values of NSTs include: (1) visitor experience opportunities and settings, and (2) the conservation and protection of scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the corridor. Furthermore, the NTSA goes beyond ROS descriptors requiring the protection of significant resources and qualities along the National Trail corridor.

Visitor use management practices need to be sensitive to situations where there is an asymmetric nature of a conflict, especially where there is a one-way relationship where the primary use is sensitive to a secondary use. In those situations, monitoring and adaptive management actions should ensure that the secondary use does not substantially interfere with maintaining the primary purposes and values.

Addressing visitor capacities requires managers to assess impacts from both established uses and potential new uses. It can be a challenging task because of the complex relationship between human uses and national trail values. The capacity to absorb use without substantial impacts to resources and visitor experiences is dependent on myriad interrelated factors that should be addressed through NEPA planning processes.

Forest Service special use policy requires a capacity analysis and an assessment of public need for outfitter/guide services. It is useful to have numerical capacities when managing outfitter/guides use, since outfitter/guide permits authorize use in specific amounts—expressed either as number of clients or some other similar measure. Special use authorizations allocate a percentage of total recreation capacity to outfitter/guide use. The allocation represents the balance between the amount of use by the general, unguided public and by commercial outfitter/guides and their clients. For example, an allocation of 50 percent would mean that roughly half the capacity is used by outfitter/guides.

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<sup>14</sup> *Friends of Yosemite Valley v. Kempthorne*, 520 F.3d 1024 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2008); *American Whitewater v. Tidwell*, (D.S.C. 2012).

The Final Amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan states, “Establish a carrying capacity for the CDNST that accommodates its nature and purposes. The Limits of Acceptable Change or a similar system may be used for this purpose” (74 FR 51125).

<b>GENERAL STEPS FOR ADDRESSING CARRYING CAPACITIES ON NATIONAL SCENIC TRAILS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe the NST values (nature and purposes) and the existing kinds and amounts of uses in the NST corridor.</li> <li>2. Identify desired resource and social conditions (“desired conditions”) that relate to NST values.</li> <li>3. Identify measurable indicators tied to the desired conditions.</li> <li>4. Establish thresholds (a clear indication of binding commitment) for each indicator to prevent degradation of NST values.</li> <li>5. Identify the kinds of uses that can be received in the NST corridor without exceeding the established thresholds.</li> <li>6. Identify a range of specific management actions that would be triggered under specific conditions to prevent exceeding the established thresholds.</li> <li>7. Estimate the capacities---the maximum number of people that can be received in the entire NST corridor without adversely impacting the NST values.</li> <li>8. Establish a program of monitoring and ongoing study to ensure the quantity and mixture of uses does not adversely affect NST values, and adapt management actions accordingly.</li> </ol>

**I. Substantial Interference**

Black’s law dictionary defines substantial evidence as the amount of evidence which a reasoning mind would accept as sufficient to support a particular conclusion and consists of more than a mere scintilla. BLM directive MS-6280 define substantial interference in relation to nature and purposes:

- *Substantial Interference.* Determination that an activity or use affects (hinders or obstructs) the nature and purposes of a designated National Trail.
- *Nature and Purposes.* The term used to describe the character, characteristics, and congressional intent for a designated National Trail, including the resources, qualities, values, and associated settings of the areas through which such trails may pass; the primary use or uses of a National Trail; and activities promoting the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of National Trails.

Management direction for Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roded Natural, Rural, and Urban ROS classes allow uses that would substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST if the allocation desired conditions are realized. Where the allowed non-motorized activities reflect the purposes for which the National Trail was established, the establishment of Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes and high and very high scenic integrity allocations would normally protect the nature and purposes (values) of the CDNST.

Scenic Integrity indicates the degree of intactness and wholeness of the Landscape Character; conversely, Scenic Integrity is a measure of the degree of visible disruption of the Landscape Character. A landscape with very minimal visual disruption is considered to have very high Scenic Integrity. Those

landscapes having increasingly discordant relationships among scenic attributes are viewed as having diminished Scenic Integrity. Scenic Integrity is expressed and mapped in terms of Scenic Integrity levels: Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low, and Unacceptably Low. Scenic Integrity is used to describe an existing landscape condition, a standard for management, or a desired future condition. Scenic Integrity Levels of Very High and High contribute to the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Scenic Integrity Level of Moderate may degrade CDNST values. Scenic Integrity Levels of Low and Very Low are inconsistent with CDNST values and landscapes along the CDNST at these levels of integrity need rehabilitation.

Land management plans should establish desired conditions and standards and guidelines that preserve and promote the nature and purposes of the CDNST. Specific interference thresholds should be established during the development of a land management plan. Further, the determination of carrying capacity is integral to protecting CDNST values. Substantial interference analyses and determinations need to be rigorous and be addressed as part of the cumulative impact (40 CFR 1508.7) and effects (40 CFR 1508.8) analyses and disclosure.

## **J. Forest Service Planning Considerations**

*Forest Service – The following describes common considerations and elements of what could be expected for (or lead to) locations and Plan components that would be applied to a Management Area to achieve the nature and purposes of the CDNST:*

Forest Service land management plans shall form one integrated plan for each unit (16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(1) and 36 CFR 219.10). The plan must provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses, including outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish, within Forest Service authority and the inherent capability of the plan area as follows: ... (b)... (1) The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for: (i) Sustainable recreation; including recreation settings, opportunities, and access; and scenic character..., and (vi) appropriate management of other designated areas or recommended designated areas in the plan area...(36 CFR 219.10(b)(i)&(vi)). The CDNST is a congressionally designated area (36 CFR 219.19).

On National Forest System lands, a Management Area (MA) is to be established for existing CDNST rights-of-way corridors (FSM 2353.44b(1)). For CDNST sections that pass through the planning unit, plan components must include management and use direction (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)) for the rights-of-way that provide for the nature and purposes of this National Trail (16 U.S.C. 1246). In addition to having appropriate direction in LMPs, some actions are only allowed or are dependent on the approval of a CDNST unit plan (FSM 2353.44(b)(2)) as either an independent site-specific plan or as an integrated part of a Forest Plan with the requisite NEPA analysis; this would include a decision that allows bicycle use (FSM 2353.44b(10)) and motor vehicle use (FSM 2353.44b(11)).

Forest Service directives FSM 2310 and FSM 2380 describe recreation and scenery planning policy.

- FSM 2310.3 - Policy...

1. Use the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to establish planning criteria, generate objectives for recreation, evaluate public issues, integrate management concerns, project recreation needs and demands, and coordinate management objectives.
2. Use the ROS system to develop standards and guidelines for proposed recreation resource use and development.

Forest Service directives FSM 2350 and a Federal Register Notice provides important planning direction:

- FSM 2350 - Approved by Acting Associate Deputy Chief Gregory C. Smith, July 19, 2016
- Federal Register - Notice of Final Amendments to Comprehensive Plan and Final Directives - Approved by Associate Chief Hank Kashdan, Vol. 74, No. 191, Monday, October 5, 2009

The boundary of the National Scenic Trail management corridor should follow topographic features to the extent possible, while being at least one-half mile wide on each side of the established and potential locations of a NST travel routes where there is management discretion. This is based on Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) criteria that identify remoteness for a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized setting as: "An area designated at least 1/2-mile but not further than 3 miles from all roads, railroads or trails with motorized use; can include the existence of primitive roads if closed to motorized use." The FS Scenery Management System identifies that the middleground begins at 1/2-mile of the travel route.

**Forest Plan Components**

Recommendations for CDNST plan components as applied to a MA (aka National Trail Management Corridor) are described in the following table.

**CDNST LMP MA Desired Conditions** – These are descriptions of specific social, economic, or ecological characteristics of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, toward which management of the land and resources should be directed. Desired conditions are the vision of what you want your forest to look like, and other plan components (objectives, standards and guidelines, and suitability), would be designed to get you there.

Descriptions
<p>Consistent with the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, the MA provides high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and conserves natural, historic, and cultural resources (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(A)). The CDNST corridor provides panoramic views of undisturbed landscapes in a tranquil scenic environment. The corridor encompasses national trail resources, qualities, values, associated settings and the primary use or uses. This includes vistas, campsites, water sources, and other important resource values. Desired conditions are principally characterized by Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings—see the glossary for ROS class descriptions. Desired ROS class inconsistencies are managed to protect CDNST values. Furthermore, to provide for the conservation purposes of a National Scenic Trail the MA provides for natural ecological processes and not just the visual appearance of naturalness.</p>

**CDNST LMP MA Objectives** – These are concise, measurable, and time-specific statements of a desired rate of progress toward a desired condition or conditions, based on reasonably foreseeable budgets. Objectives should be designed so that monitoring can gauge progress as well as the effectiveness of activities in moving towards the desired condition.

Descriptions
Complete the CDNST unit plan (FSM 2353.44(b)(2)) within three years. <sup>15</sup> [Example of stepped-down and staged planning and decision-making.]
Complete the CDNST travel route through the MA within five years. [Example of proposed and possible actions.]

**CDNST LMP MA Standards** – These are mandatory constraints on project and activity decision-making, established to help achieve or maintain the desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements. Standards must be complied with as written. Adaptive management direction may support the use of situation-dependent (if-then) or qualified (unless) standards. **Guidelines** – These are mandatory constraints on project and activity decision-making that provide flexibility for different situations so long as the purpose of the guideline is met. Guidelines should be written so that their intent is clear. If there is evidence that a different approach would be more or equally effective in meeting the intent, divergence can be justified.

Descriptions - See FSM 1110.8 and FSH 1909.12 05.1 for Degree of Compliance or Restriction “Helping Verbs” and “Mood of Verb” Definitions
<b>Scenery Management</b>
Standard: Manage the CDNST travel route as a concern level 1 travel route. Resource management actions must meet a Scenic Integrity Level of Very High or High (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(4)). (Forest-wide Plan Component)
<b>Recreation Setting Management</b>
Standard: Resource management actions and allowed uses must be compatible with maintaining or achieving Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS class settings.
Standard: The CDNST must be managed to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and pack and saddle stock opportunities. Backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(5), FSM 2353.42 and FSM 2353.44b(8)). Forms of hiking include backpacking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and other similar walking activities.
Standard: Motorized and mechanized use may only be allowed where such use is in accordance with the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(5)&(6) and FSM 2353.44b(10) and (11).
Guideline: If the interval between natural water sources is excessive, water sources should be developed and protected (FSM 2353.44b(9)). The purpose of this guidance is to help ensure that water is reasonably available along the CDNST travel route.
<b>Special Uses Management</b>
Standard: Activities, uses, and events that would require a permit must not be authorized unless the activity, use, or event contributes to achieving the nature and purposes of the CDNST (CDNST

<sup>15</sup> This stage of stepped-down planning step could be addressed in a Forest Plan if supported by the Forest Plan EIS.



Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(7)).
<b>Minerals Management</b>
Standard: Mineral leases are to include stipulations for no surface occupancy.
Standard: Permits for the removal of mineral materials are not to be issued.
Guideline: Mineral withdrawals should be enacted in areas with a history of locatable mineral findings. The purpose of this guidance is to help ensure that CDNST values are not degraded by mining activities.
<b>Timber Management</b>
Standard: Timber harvest is not scheduled and does not contribute to the allowable sale quantity.
<b>Vegetation Management</b>
Guideline: Vegetation may be managed to enhance CDNST nature and purposes values, such as to provide vistas to view surrounding landscapes and to conserve natural resources. The purpose of this guidance is to allow for limited vegetation management for CDNST purposes.
Guideline: Vegetation may be managed to maintain or improve threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitat. The purpose of this guidance is to recognize the conservation purposes of the CDNST.
Standard: Rangelands where affected by livestock use must be maintained in a Proper Functioning Condition.
<b>Cultural and Historic Resources Management</b>
Standard: Protect cultural and historic resources.
<b>Lands Acquisition</b>
Standard: Provide for land acquisitions to protect the nature and purposes of the National Trail. Prohibit land disposals.
<b>Travel Routes</b>
Guideline: Segments of the CDNST travel route should fall into Trail Class 2 or 3 and have a Designed Use of Pack and Saddle Stock, except where a substantial safety or resource concern exists, the travel route may have a Designed Use of Hiker/Pedestrian. The purpose of this guidance is to provide for a high quality hiking and equestrian travel route.
Standard: Road construction and reconstruction is prohibited; excepted are motor vehicle use circumstances described in the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan Chapter IV(B)(6) and FSM 2353.44b(11).
Standard: The CDNST travel route may not be used for a livestock driveway.
<b>Fire Suppression</b>
Guideline: Fire suppression activities should apply the Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics Implementation Guidelines. The purpose of this guidance is to protect the CDNST nature and purposes from suppression activities.
<b>Motor Vehicle Use</b>
Standard: The use of motorized vehicles by the general public is prohibited; excepted is motor vehicle use that is in accordance with the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan provisions as detailed in Chapter IV(B)(6). <sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> In 1978, the NTSA Section 7(c) was amended adding that, "Other uses along the historic trails and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, and which, at the time of designation, are allowed by administrative regulations, including the use of motorized vehicles, shall be permitted by the Secretary charged with administration of the trail." This guidance is not addressed in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, since

### Other Uses Considerations

Standard: National scenic or national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses that could conflict with the nature and purposes of the CDNST may be allowed only where there is a determination that the other use would not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (16 USC 1246(c)).

Guideline: Where congressionally designated areas overlap, apply the management direction that best protects the values for which each designated area was established—the most restrictive measures control. The purpose of this guidance is to protect the values for which all congressionally designated areas are established.

**Suitability of Lands** – These plan components identify areas of land as suitable or not suitable for specific uses (such as timber or range production), based on the applicable desired conditions. The identification of suitability of lands is not required for every resource or activity and does not need to be made for every acre of the plan area and the inherent capability of the land to support the use or activity.

### Suitability of Lands

Lands are not suitable for timber production.

### CDNST LMP MA Implementation Guidance

Partnerships and volunteers are sustained or sought to lead and assist in CDNST programs. Volunteer and cooperative agreements will be developed with those volunteers and private organizations that are dedicated to planning, developing, maintaining, and managing the CDNST in accordance with Sections 2(c), 7(h)(1), and 11 of the NTSA.

The direction in the NTSA, 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2310, FSM 2353.4, and FSM 2380 are used to guide the development and management of the Trail.

### K. Bureau of Land Management Planning Considerations

*Bureau of Land Management, Resource Management Plan, National Trail Management Corridor – Locating the CDNST Corridor*

CDNST corridor objectives should be addressed through the delineation of a National Trail Management Corridor (NTMC) with Resource Management Plan (RMP) components (prescriptions) that provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST. To provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST, several location and management factors should be considered, such as the CDNST corridor should be located in more primitive ROS classes and once located the management of the CDNST corridor should provide for a Primitive or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized experiences to extent

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nature and purposes substantial interference determinations was already part of the 1968 NTSA direction. However, where the other use was allowed in 1978 by explicit administrative regulations the allowance of such use may be affected by this part.

practicable (ROS classes are described in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV(B)(5)). In addition, the visual resource management objective class I or II must be met along the CDNST travel route where on federal lands. The NTMC may also be established as an Area of Critical of Environmental Concern (MS-1613, Congressional Designations, .51).

The boundary of the NTMC should follow topographic features to the extent possible, while being at least one-half mile wide on each side of the established and potential locations of the CDNST travel routes where there is management discretion. This is based on Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) criteria that identify remoteness for a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized setting as: "An area designated at least 1/2-mile but not further than 3 miles from all roads, railroads or trails with motorized use; can include the existence of primitive roads if closed to motorized use." The FS Scenery Management System identifies that the middleground begins at 1/2-mile of the travel route.

*Bureau of Land Management – The following describes common considerations and elements of what could be expected for (or lead to) National Trail Management Corridor and prescriptions to achieve the nature and purposes of the CDNST:*

### **Bureau of Land Management, RMP NTMC Theme and Setting**

The CDNST NTMC provides for a ROS setting that is consistent with the requirements of a NST. The CDNST is managed to provide for recreation opportunities in a natural appearing landscape. Furthermore, to provide for the conservation purposes of a National Scenic Trail the NTMC provides for natural ecological processes and not just the visual appearance of naturalness.

### **Bureau of Land Management, RMP NTMC Desired Conditions**

The NTMC provides high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and conserves natural, historic, and cultural resources.

A variety of compatible non-motorized recreation opportunities are provided. Concentrations of users are low and opportunities for solitude and exercising outdoor skills will be present. Improvements such as trailheads, trails, signs, and bridges that enhance the recreation opportunities could be present.

The NTMC is characterized by a predominantly natural appearing environment. Vegetation alterations could be present to enhance viewing opportunities and to maintain vegetative diversity. Ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist.

The extent of the CDNST NTMC should be at least one-half mile on both sides of the CDNST travel route, while additional management direction is prescribed for adjacent areas to assure that the CDNST NTMC VRM objectives are met.

### **NTMC Plan Components**

Recommendations for CDNST plan components are described in the following table.

<b>CDNST NTMC PRIMARY PURPOSE</b>
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1. The CDNST NTMC purpose is to address the requirements of the National Trails System Act as implemented through the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan.
2. The primary purpose is to administer the CDNST consistent with the nature and purposes for which this National Scenic Trail was established. The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor.

**CDNST NTMC OBJECTIVES**

1. Provide opportunities to experience available examples of the diversity of topographic, geologic, fish, wildlife, vegetation, and scenic phenomenon along the Continental Divide.
2. Maintain and enhance recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to the area to accommodate hiking, horseback riding, camping, wildlife viewing, and other compatible uses in prescribed settings so visitors are able to realize experiences and benefits.
3. Provide Primitive or Back Country classification recreation setting opportunities— See the glossary for BLM recreation setting descriptions.
4. Meet the VRM objective class I or II objective in the foreground area (0 - 3 miles) and the VRM objective class I, II, or III in the middle ground area (3 - 5 miles).
5. Promote and demonstrate natural resources Best Management Practices.
6. Sustain or develop partnerships and cooperative management programs with adjacent landowners and volunteers.

**CDNST NTMC RECREATION SETTING CHARACTERISTIC DESCRIPTIONS / PRACTICES**

1. The NTMC is managed to protect the CDNST corridor and user experiences as defined for Primitive and Back Country areas, while recognizing that the travel route intermittently passes across developed roads, recreation sites, and more developed areas. Forms of hiking include backpacking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and other similar walking activities.
2. The NTMC is managed to provide opportunities for trail users to experience and view the diverse topographic, geographic, vegetation, fish, wildlife, and scenic phenomena that characterize the Continental Divide and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources. In addition, scenery is managed in adjacent areas to achieve CDNST NTMC VRM objectives.

**CDNST NTMC MANAGEMENT ACTIONS AND RESOURCE USE DETERMINATIONS / PRACTICES**

1. Resource uses must contribute to meeting Primitive or Back Country recreation setting objectives.
2. Resource uses must meet the VRM Class objectives. The degree of contrast in the foreground and middleground for management actions and developments must be none or weak. The degree of contrast in the background for management actions and developments should be none, weak, or moderate.

3. If the interval between natural water sources is excessive, consider developing and protecting water sources for hikers and pack and saddle stock use.
4. The use of motorized vehicles by the general public is prohibited; excepted is motor vehicle use that is in accordance with the 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan provisions as detailed in Chapter IV(B)(6).
5. The NTMC may be open to oil and gas leasing with a NSO stipulation. Any existing oil and gas leases must be intensively managed and monitored.
6. Best Management Practices must be applied to all resource management projects and activities.
7. The NTMC must be closed to mineral material disposal.
8. Mineral withdrawals should be enacted for areas with a history of locatable mineral findings. In addition, a withdrawal should be obtained where relocation of the CDNST would not be practical if a mineral development occurred.
9. Land exchanges and rights-of-way acquisitions should be pursued with cooperative landowners to improve the continuity of the CDNST corridor and benefit the nature and purposes of the CDNST.
10. National scenic or national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other resource uses along the CDNST are only allowed where there is a determination that the other use would not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (16 USC 1246(c)).<sup>16</sup> The U.S. Forest Service (administrating agency) should concur with substantial interference determinations for major Federal actions.
11. National Scenic Trail corridors might overlap with Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River designations. Where this occurs, the most restrictive measures control.

#### **CDNST NTMC IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS / PRACTICES**

1. Trail Class, Managed Uses, Designed Use, and Design Parameters must be established and identify any Prohibited Uses of the CDNST travel route.
2. The CDNST travel route must be developed, constructed, signed, and maintained.
3. Carrying capacity for the NTMC must be established. The Limits of Acceptable Change or a similar system may be used for this purpose.
4. Preservation of any significant natural, historical, and cultural resources must occur within the NTMC.
5. Native vegetation must be restored and noxious weeds and invasive species controlled.
6. The CDNST must be relocated from roads to trails.
7. Motor vehicle travel routes should be identified and travel management decisions must be made.
8. Needed mineral withdrawals must be implemented.
9. Visitor information should be provided, especially where the CDNST coincides with National Historic Trails.
10. Monitoring programs must be implemented to evaluate the site-specific conditions of the CDNST.
11. Fire suppression activities should apply the Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics Implementation Guidelines.
12. Partnerships and volunteers should be sought to lead and assist in CDNST programs. Volunteer and cooperative agreements will be developed with those volunteers and

private organizations that are dedicated to planning, developing, maintaining, and managing the CDNST in accordance with NTSA Sections 2(c), 7(h)(1), and 11.

13. The direction in the NTSA, 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, and MS-6280 must be used to guide the development and management of the Trail.

## **L. National Park Service Planning Considerations**

Prior to undertaking an action that may substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST, the National Park Service Director must revise or amend the unit General Management Plan to recognize the CDNST as a congressionally designated area. The GMP must be in compliance with the National Park System Development Program regulations (16 U.S.C. 1a-7) and the NTSA as implemented through the direction in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan. Foundation Documents for NPS units should also address the significance of CDNST, as applicable. Once programmatic direction is established in the General Management Plan, CDNST site-specific protection and development plans should be established that provide for the values of this National Scenic Trail.

General Management Plan — “This is a broad umbrella document that sets the long-term goals for the park based on the foundation statement. The general management plan (1) clearly defines the desired natural and cultural resource conditions to be achieved and maintained over time; (2) clearly defines the necessary conditions for visitors to understand, enjoy, and appreciate the park’s significant resources, and (3) identifies the kinds and levels of management activities, visitor use, and development that are appropriate for maintaining the desired conditions; and, (4) identifies indicators and standards for maintaining the desired conditions. For wild and scenic rivers and national trails, the analogous documents are a comprehensive river management plan and comprehensive management plan, respectively. Each of these plans has requirements very similar to a general management plan, so units usually refer to these plans as GMPs. Additional requirements for river and trail studies are covered in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the National Trails System Act.” (NPS, Park System Planning, 2.2)

## **M. Rights-of-Way and Regulations Recommendations**

The Chief of the Forest Service has reserved the authority to select the final NTSA section 7 rights-of-way. Revised or amended Forest Plans, BLM Resource Management Plans, and NPS General Management Plans should result in CDNST rights-of-way recommendations (CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter III (F)). Revised or amended land management plans should identify the adopted CDNST management direction as binding, while also recognizing that the CDNST rights-of-way recommendation will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service after consultation with the BLM and NPS, if appropriate. Any change to the land management plan should be implemented through plan amendment processes. The plan should state that, “This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service. The Chief has reserved the authority to make final decisions on rights-of-way designation. Plan implementation is not dependent upon subsequent action related to recommendations for the National Scenic Trail rights-of-way.”

Revised or amended Forest Plans, BLM Resource Management Plans, and NPS General Management Plans should recommend regulations to be established that would govern the use, protection, management, development, and administration of the CDNST providing for the purposes for which this National Scenic Trail was established (16 U.S.C. 1246(i)).

#### **N. Establishing the CDNST Travel Route (1989 – 1998)**

After the adoption of the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan there were several assessments to find routes for CDNST travel routes. These assessments included the following and other efforts to establish a CDNST travel route:

- Decision Notice and FONSI for Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Montana – Idaho Section, April 1989
- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Decision Notice and FONSI, Central New Mexico Section, Cibola Planning Segment, December 1992
- Record of Decision, Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Wyoming and Colorado Segment, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Rocky Mountain Region US Forest Service, August 1993.
- Decision Notice and FONSI, Final Route Selection, Continental Divide National Scenic Trail from South Pass to Yellowstone National Park, February 1998.

These assessments did not consider optimum locations of the CDNST rights-of-way, nor did the decisions establish management direction to provide for the CDNST nature and purposes. These assessments were predominantly based on guidance found in the faulty 1985 Comprehensive Plan, which was replaced in 2009 with direction that is consistent with the NTSA, CDNST Study Report, and related Final Environmental Statement. In addition, the 2009 Comprehensive Plan recognized that the CDNST was designated by an Act of Congress on November 10, 1978 (16 U.S.C 1244(a)). As a result of the 1985 erroneous guidance, many of the assessment decisions have proven not to be beneficial to the CDNST. Additionally, the routing decisions were not transmitted to the Chief for approval (2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter III(F) – Process for Locating CDNST segments).

A National Scenic Trail optimum location assessment may find that designing the CDNST rights-of-way corridor to pass through inventoried Primitive and Semi-Primitive Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) settings would assure continued benefits of the land that best meet the needs of the American people. This would include the recreation and conservation benefits resulting from: (1) locating the National Trail corridor “to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas...” (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)); (2) avoiding, to the extent possible, activities along the NST that would be incompatible with the purposes of the CDNST for which it was established (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)); and (3) contributing to achieving outdoor recreation, watershed, and wildlife and fish multiple-use benefits (16 U.S.C. 528).

Revised and amended plans need to identify a location for the CDNST corridor that is based on an analysis of an optimum location of the rights-of-way. In addition, plan components need to establish

direction that provides for the nature and purposes of this National Scenic Trail, including identifying standards that protect scenic integrity and more primitive ROS settings. CDNST travel routes are to be located within the rights-of-way and identified CDNST management corridor.

## **Chapter IV. Legislative History and Policy**

### **A. Trails for America**

Trails for America, a 1966 report prepared by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in response to President Johnson's Natural Beauty Message of February 8, 1965, describes a vision for the Continental Divide Trail: "A Continental Divide Trail would provide a continuous route along the Continental Divide and Rocky Mountains from the Canadian border almost to the Mexican border... The concept was originated by a group of horsemen known as the Rocky Mountain Trails, Inc.... Designed to accommodate riders and hikers, a Continental Divide Trail would pass through some of the most scenic areas in the country in its 3,082-mile route. The 763 miles in Montana, 147 miles in Idaho, 506 miles in Wyoming, 614 miles in Colorado, and 1,052 miles in New Mexico span spectacular, wild, mountain country, rich in the early history of the West. The route affords views of perpetual icefields and of awesome peaks, many over 14,000 feet. It passes hundreds of alpine lakes and streams teeming with trout. The high mountains are home to many species of game, including the bighorn sheep, mule deer, and bear...

Administration of national scenic trails is complicated by the linear nature of the trails and the complex pattern of land ownership along them. Most existing or potential national scenic trails extend through or into several States. Typically they cross some lands that are administered by Federal, State, and local public agencies, and other lands that are privately owned. In the West, the trails cross lands administered largely by Federal agencies—the Forest Service, National Park Service, [and] Bureau of Land Management... In view of these considerations, administration of national scenic trails should be governed by the following principles...

4. The entire length of each national scenic trail, together with sufficient land area on both sides to safeguard adequately and preserve its character, should be protected in some form of public control..., and
9. The responsible Secretary, after agreement with the other Federal agencies involved and consultation with appropriate States, local governments, private organizations, and advisory councils, should:
  - a. locate and designate the route and width of right-of-way of each trail assigned him. The right-of-way should be wide enough to protect adequately the natural and scenic character of the lands through which the trail passes and the historic features along and near along the trail, and to provide campsites, shelters, and related public-use facilities as necessary. It should avoid, insofar as practicable, established highways, motor roads, mining areas, power transmission lines, private recreational developments, public recreational developments not related to the trail, existing commercial and industrial developments, range fences and improvements, private operations, and any other activities that would be incompatible with the protection of the trail in its natural condition and its use for outdoor recreation. Formal designation should be



accomplished by publishing notice of the route and right-of-way in the Federal Register, together with appropriate maps and descriptions. Minor changes in route and right-of-way should be handled in the same manner.

b. define the kinds of recreation use that are appropriate on the trail and in keeping with its objectives, and define the kinds of non-recreation uses, if any, that may be permitted within the right-of-way; issue the necessary regulations; and provide enforcement.

c. establish construction and maintenance standards including standards for related facilities that will adequately protect trail values and provide for optimum public use.”

## **B. National Trails System Act**

The National Trails System Act (NTSA), P.L. 90-543, was passed by Congress on October 2, 1968. It established policies and procedures for a nationwide system of trails including National Scenic Trails. The Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail were designated as the nation's first National Scenic Trails. “The Act was intended to insure that long-distance, high-quality trails with substantial recreation and scenic potential were afforded Federal recognition and protection” (S.R. 95-636).



The National Parks and Recreation Act of November 10, 1978 authorized and designated the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) (Pub. L. No. 95-625, 92 Stat. 3467), which amended the NTSA of 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1241-1251). The “Background” for H.R. 12536 states that, “Title V establishes new units of the National Park and National Trail Systems which the committee believes to be essential additions to these national programs. Timely action to preserve portions of our heritage, both historical and natural, within the states and insular areas is needed to assure these resources are not lost through adverse actions by special interest groups” (H.R. 95-1165).

### **Statement of Policy – Sec. 2 (16 U.S.C. 1241(a))**

“In order to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and in order to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation, trails should be established...within scenic areas and along historic travel routes of the Nation which are often more remotely located.”

### **National Trails System – Sec. 3 (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)) –**

“National scenic trails, established as provided in section 5 of this Act, which will be extended trails **so located** (*emphasis added*) as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass. National scenic trails may be located so as to represent

desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river, forest, and other areas, as well as landforms which exhibit significant characteristics of the physiographic regions of the Nation.”

### **National Scenic and Historic Trails –**

NTSA Sec. 5(a) (16 U.S.C. 1244(5)(a)) – National scenic and national historic trails shall be authorized and designated only by Act of Congress. There are hereby established [and designated] the following National Scenic and National Historic Trails...

“(5) The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, a trail of approximately thirty-one hundred miles, extending from the Montana-Canada border to the New Mexico-Mexico border, following the approximate route depicted on the map, identified as 'Proposed Continental Divide National Scenic Trail' in the Department of the Interior Continental Divide Trail study report dated March 1977... The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail shall be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 7(c), the use of motorized vehicles on roads which will be designated segments of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail shall be permitted in accordance with regulations prescribed by the appropriate Secretary. No land or interest in land outside the exterior boundaries of any federally administered area may be acquired by the Federal Government for the trail except with the consent of the owner of the land or interest in land. The authority of the Federal Government to acquire fee title under this paragraph shall be limited to an average of not more than 1/4 mile on either side of the trail.”

Overlay of Management Regime – The NTSA establishment and designation of the CDNST provides for the Secretaries of the Agriculture and Interior to manage the CDNST under existing agencies authorities, but subject to the overriding direction of providing for the nature and purposes of this NST. The establishment of the CDNST thus constitutes an overlay on the management regime otherwise applicable to public areas managed by land management agencies. The NTSA (and E.O. 13195 - Trails for America in the 21st Century) limits the management discretion the agencies would otherwise have by mandating the delineation and protection of the CDNST corridor.

NTSA sec. 5(f) (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)) – “...The responsible Secretary shall...submit...a comprehensive plan for the acquisition, management, development, and use of the trail, including but not limited to, the following items:

1. Specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved,... an identified carrying capacity of the trail and a plan for its implementation;
2. The process to be followed by the appropriate Secretary to implement the marking requirements established in section 7(c) of this Act;
3. A protection plan for any...high potential route segments; and
4. General and site-specific development plans, including anticipated costs.”

## Administration and Development – Sec. 7

(16 U.S.C. 1246) –

The Secretary of Agriculture is charged with the overall administration of the CDNST. Pursuant to Section 5(a), the CDNST was authorized and designated on November 10, 1978. Section 7(a)(2) states that the, “...Secretary shall select the rights-of-way for national scenic and national historic trails and shall publish notice thereof of the availability of appropriate maps or descriptions in the Federal Register; Provided, That in selecting the rights-of-way full consideration shall be given to minimizing the adverse effects upon the adjacent landowner or user and his operation. Development and management of each segment of the National Trails System [i.e., National Recreation Trails, National Scenic Trails, National Historic Trails, and Connecting and Side Trails] shall be designed to harmonize with and complement any

established multiple-use plans for the specific area in order to insure continued maximum benefits from the land...<sup>17</sup>” The legislative requirement for the Secretary of Agriculture to take action and select the CDNST rights-of-way should be addressed by establishing CDNST Management Area (MA) corridors in Land Management Plans (FSM 2353.44b); the requirement should be met on BLM public lands by establishing NTMC in Resource Management Plans. The establishment of CDNST MAs and NTMCs could facilitate CDNST comprehensive planning (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)), selecting and publishing the CDNST rights-of-way in the Federal Register (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)), and meet attached NEPA requirements.

NTSA Sec. 7(c) (16 U.S.C.1246(c)) – “National scenic or national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted by the Secretary charged with the administration of the trail. Reasonable efforts shall be made to provide sufficient access opportunities to such trails and, to the extent practicable, efforts be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established. The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any National Scenic Trail shall be prohibited... [Other uses include recreational and resource uses that may be incompatible with the nature and purposes for which the CDNST was established and designated.] Other uses along the historic trails and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, and which,

A National Scenic Trail optimum location assessment may find that designing the CDNST rights-of-way corridor to pass through inventoried Primitive and Semi-Primitive Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) settings would assure continued benefits of the land that best meet the needs of the American people. This would include the recreation and conservation benefits resulting from: (1) locating the National Trail corridor “to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas...” (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2)); (2) avoiding, to the extent possible, activities along the NST that would be incompatible with the purposes of the CDNST for which it was established (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)); and (3) contributing to achieving outdoor recreation, watershed, and wildlife and fish multiple-use benefits (16 U.S.C. 528). The rights-of-way requirement of 16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2) is directed at selecting the 5-state CDNST rights-of-way corridor and does not diminish or modify the nature and purposes values of the CDNST (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)).

<sup>17</sup> The BLM in MS-6280 describes that, “For all National Trails, the National Trail Management Corridor alternatives should consider... (d) opportunities to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for that specific area in order to insure continued maximum benefits from the land, while minimizing conflict” (Chapter 4.2(D)).

at the time of designation, are allowed by administrative regulations, including the use of motorized vehicles, shall be permitted by the Secretary charged with administration of the trail.”

NTSA Sec. 7(j) (16 U.S.C. 1246(j)). This section does not modify the nature and purposes for which the CDNST was established and created. It describes that, “the provisions of this subsection shall not supersede any other provisions of this Act or other Federal laws, or any State or local laws.”

NTSA Sec. 7(k) (16 U.S.C. 1246(k)). “For the conservation purpose of preserving or enhancing the recreational, scenic, natural, or historical values of components of the national trails system, and environs thereof as determined by the appropriate Secretary, landowners are authorized to donate or otherwise convey qualified real property interests to qualified organizations consistent with section 170(h)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, including, but not limited to, right-of-way, open space, scenic, or conservation easements....”

NTSA Sec. 7(i) (16 U.S.C. 1246(i)). The appropriate Secretary...may issue regulations, which may be revised from time to time, governing the use, protection, management, development, and administration of trails of the national trails system. In order to maintain good conduct on and along the trails located within federally administered areas and to provide for the proper government and protection of such trails, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture shall prescribe and publish such uniform regulations as they deem necessary....

### **C. Departmental and Congressional Considerations**

*Office of the Secretary, 1967:* The Departmental Recommendation discusses National Scenic Trails. “National scenic trails.—A relatively small number of lengthy trails which have natural, scenic, or historic qualities that give them recreation use potential of national significance. Such trails will be several hundred miles long, may have overnight shelters at appropriate intervals, and may interconnect with other major trails to permit the enjoyment of such activities as hiking or horseback riding.... The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to select a right-of-way for, and to provide appropriate marking of, the Appalachian and Potomac Heritage Trails, and the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to do likewise for the Continental Divide and Pacific Crest Trails. The rights-of-way for the trails will be of sufficient width to protect natural, scenic, and historic features along the trails and to provide needed public use facilities. The rights-of-way will be located to avoid established uses that are incompatible with the protection of a trail in its natural condition and its use for outdoor recreation....”

*Senate Report No.1233, 1968:* “CONTINENTAL DIVIDE TRAIL – Designed to accommodate riders and hikers, the Continental Divide Trail would pass through some of the most scenic areas in the country. The trail would span spectacular, wild mountain country, rich in the early history of the West. The route affords views of perpetual ice-fields and of awesome peaks. It passes hundreds of alpine lakes and streams teeming with native trout. The high mountains are home to many species of game, including the bighorn sheep, mule deer, and bear.... The designation of the Continental Divide Trail represents an attempt to make available by trail a stretch of country which has historical interest and charm and bisects the Western United States. The committee does recognize that no such contiguous trail has ever, in fact,

existed. However, the committee believes that the trail should be regarded as calling attention to the grandeur and esthetic qualities of the Continental Divide, and that it will add significantly to the Nation's appreciation of its priceless natural heritage.”

*House Report No. 1631, 1968:* “PURPOSE - The ultimate aim of H.R. 4865, as amended, is to lay the foundation for expanding further the opportunities for the American people to use and enjoy the natural, scenic, historic, and outdoor recreational areas of the Nation. To accomplish this objective, it establishes a national trails system composed of...National scenic trails which will be located in more remote areas having natural, scenic, and historic values of national significance....

BACKGROUND AND NEED - The proposed national trails system is the product of a general study conducted by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation at the direction of the President. That study, entitled "Trails for America," formed the basis for the recommended legislation. It recognizes the value of providing simple trails to meet a multitude of outdoor recreation uses and recommended the immediate authorization of the Appalachian Trail as the initial national scenic trail. It also suggested that the Pacific Crest Trail, the Potomac Heritage Trail, and the Continental Divide Trail should be studied promptly for early consideration for inclusion in the system.”

H.R. 4865 proposed legislation describes the selection of Routes for National Scenic Trails – “The Secretary...shall select the rights-of-way.... Such rights-of-way shall be (1) of sufficient width and so located to provide the maximum retention of natural conditions, scenic and historic features, and primitive character of the trail area, to provide campsites, shelters, and related public-use facilities, and to provide reasonable public access; and (2) located to avoid, insofar as practicable, established highways, motor roads, mining areas, power transmission lines, existing commercial and industrial developments, range fences and improvements, private operations, and any other activities that would be incompatible with the protection of the trail in its natural condition and its use for outdoor recreation....”

Congress considered these qualitative requirements for selecting and designing the rights-of-way in HR 4865, but did not enact the specific direction in NTSA Section 7(a). Instead, the enacted legislation inserts in Section 7(a) more conceptual direction for selecting and designing the rights-of-way, including (1) “consideration of minimizing adverse effects” and (2) designing each national trails system segment “to harmonize with and complement any established multiple use plans<sup>18</sup>...” (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)). The enacted legislation made other modifications to HR 4865, including (1) changing the definition of a National Scenic Trail to broaden the statement of purpose (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)) and (2) added a requirement to make efforts to avoid activities incompatible with the purpose for which such trails were established (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)). House and Senate Reports are silent on the reasons for these changes.

*House Report 95-734, 1978:* In 1968, Congress enacted the National Trails System Act, and designated the Appalachian Trail as one of the two initial national scenic trails within the system. The act was intended to insure that long-distance, high-quality trails with substantial recreation and scenic

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<sup>18</sup> NTSA Section 7(a)(2) is reviewed in the, “Development and Management” section of this paper.

potential were afforded Federal recognition and protection... At the time of enactment of the National Trails System Act in 1968, Congress recognized the unique recreational opportunities afforded by extended trails of this type. It was also recognized that changing land uses and increasing pressures for development were a growing threat to maintaining a continuous trail route. The act therefore provided for a Federal responsibility to protect the trail, including the authority to acquire a permanent right-of-way.

*Senate Report No.95-636, 1978:* “The Act was intended to insure that long-distance, high-quality trails with substantial recreation and scenic potential were afforded Federal recognition and protection.... The fourth amendment modifies section 7(g) of the 1968 act to modify the restriction on the use of eminent domain to provide that the secretary may acquire in fee title and lesser interest no more than an average of 125 acres per mile. Experience with the trail has demonstrated that additional authority is needed to insure the acquisition of a corridor wide enough to protect trail values.” This amendment to the NTSA was specific to the Appalachian NST, but demonstrates awareness of the need for a National Trail corridor even when eminent domain may be used to secure the necessary land.

*House Report No.95-1165, 1978:* “Title V establishes new units of the National Park and National Trail Systems which the committee believes to be essential additions to these national programs. Timely action to preserve portions of our heritage, both historical and natural, within the states and insular areas is needed to assure these resources are not lost through adverse actions by special interest groups.”

*House Report No. 98-28, 1983:* Section 7(j) intent is described in this report, “While the new subsection would permit the appropriate secretaries to allow trail bikes and other off-the-road vehicles on portions of the National Trail System, the Committee wishes to emphasize that this provision gives authority to the secretaries to permit such uses where appropriate, but that it must also be exercised in keeping with those other provisions of the law that require the secretaries to protect the resources themselves and the users of the system. It is intended, for example, that motorized vehicles will not normally be allowed on national scenic or historical trails and will be allowed on recreational trails only at times and places where such use will not create significant on-trail or off-trail environmental damage and will not jeopardize the safety of hikers, equestrians, or other uses or conflict with the primary purposes for which the trail, or the portion of the trail, were created.” This report underscores the importance of understanding the primary purposes for which a National Trail was established.

#### **D. Executive Orders**

Executive Order 13195 – Trails for America in the 21st Century: “By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in furtherance of purposes of the National Trails System Act of 1968...and to achieve the common goal of better establishing and operating America's national system of trails, it is hereby ordered as follows: Section 1... Federal agencies will, to the extent permitted by law and where practicable ... protect, connect, promote, and assist trails of all types throughout the United States. This will be accomplished by: ... (b)

Protecting the trail corridors associated with national scenic trails...to the degrees necessary to ensure that the values for which each trail was established remain intact....”

Executive Order 11644 and 11989 – Use of off-road [motorized] vehicles on the public lands: “...By virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States by the Constitution of the United States and in furtherance of the purpose and policy of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321), it is hereby ordered as follows: Section 1. *Purpose.* It is the purpose of this order to establish policies and provide for procedures that will ensure that the use of off-road [motorized] vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands....” (Related: 36 CFR 212.55 and 43 CFR 8351.1)

National Scenic Trail Values – (1) visitor experience opportunities and settings, and (2) the conservation/ protection of scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the corridor. Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS settings provide for desired experiences, but only if the allowed non-motorized activities reflect the purposes for which the National Trail was established. Furthermore, the NTSA goes beyond ROS descriptors requiring the protection of significant resources and qualities along the National Trail corridor. The ROS planning framework, NTSA Comprehensive Plan (Section (5(f)) components, NTSA rights-of-way (Section 7(a)), and E.O. 13195 requirements point to the need for land management plans to map the extent of the corridor and apply to the described corridor appropriate plan components (desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, and suitability of lands) to protect National Trail values (nature and purposes).

### **E. Study Report, Comprehensive Plan, and Policy for the CDNST**

The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1244(b), prepared a Study Report for the CDNST that was completed in 1976. The Chief of the Forest Service adopted the 1976 CDNST Study Report and 1977 CDNST Final Environmental Statement on August 5, 1981 (46 FR 39867). In 2009 the Chief amended the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan and issued conforming FSM 2353.4 policy.

Comprehensive plan requirements (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)) for the CDNST are addressed through staged or stepped-down decision processes: (1) the 2009 Comprehensive Plan established broad policy and procedures, (2) land management plans are to provide integrated resource management direction and address programmatic planning requirements as described in the Comprehensive Plan, including providing for the protection of CDNST nature and purposes, and (3) mid-level and site-specific plans (e.g., Forest-level CDNST unit plans (FSM 2353.44b(2))) complete the comprehensive planning process through field-level actions to construct or maintain the travel route and protect the corridor. The following direction is found in the Comprehensive Plan and Forest Service Manual:

Comprehensive Plan – Approved by Thomas L. Tidwell, Chief

Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan: “Preparation of the Comprehensive Plan for the CDNST is required by the National Trails System Act, P.L. 90-543 enacted on October 2, 1968 as amended. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the implementing regulations for each of the Federal agencies with responsibilities for the CDNST require assessment of the environmental impacts of

locating the CDNST. In addition, each of the Federal agencies is required by various Acts of Congress to prepare and implement land and resource management plans for the Federal lands over which they have jurisdiction... Because of the number of Federal and state land management agency jurisdictions and various political subdivisions traversed by the CDNST the Secretary of Agriculture intends that the Comprehensive Plan provide for a fully coordinated approach by each of the responsible Federal and State agencies for the location, development, and management of the CDNST. It is the goal of this Comprehensive Plan to provide a uniform CDNST program that reflects the purposes of the National Scenic Trail system, and allows for the use and protection of the natural and cultural resources found along the rights-of-way and located route on lands of all jurisdictions... The primary role of the Comprehensive Plan is to serve as an authority for broad based policy and direction for the development and management of the CDNST.”

Land and Resource Management Plans: “Both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management are required to develop land and resource management plans that are designed to integrate all resource management activities that may occur within a land use unit into a coordinated system that reflects the interaction of management activities in achieving long-range objectives and goals for public land management. This is will be accomplished through the development of a series of synergetic management prescriptions developed for specific management areas. The same type of integration of CDNST management direction will be used in National Park Resource Management Plans...<sup>19</sup> Land and resource management plans are to provide for the development and management of the CDNST as an integrated part of the overall land and resource management direction for the land area through which the trail passes. The management direction given in Chapter IV is to be used in the development of specific land and resource management prescriptions.”

Nature and Purposes: “The primary policy is to administer the CDNST consistent with the nature and purposes for which this National Scenic Trail was established. The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor.” Primitive means, “of or relating to an earliest or original stage or state.” (74 FR 51116)

### **Forest Service, Regulations and Policy**

#### **36 CFR 219.10 Multiple use.**

While meeting the requirements of 36 CFR 219.8 and 219.9, the plan must provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses, including outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish, within Forest Service authority and the inherent capability of the plan area as follows:

- (a) *Integrated resource management for multiple use.* The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses in the plan area. When developing plan components for integrated

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<sup>19</sup> See the [Appalachian Trail Resource Management Plan](#) for an example.



resource management, to the extent relevant to the plan area and the public participation process and the requirements of 36 CFR 219.7, 219.8, 219.9, and 219.11, the responsible official shall consider:

(1) Aesthetic values, air quality, cultural and heritage resources, ecosystem services, fish and wildlife species, forage, geologic features, grazing and rangelands, habitat and habitat connectivity, recreation settings and opportunities, riparian areas, scenery, soil, surface and subsurface water quality, timber, trails, vegetation, viewsheds, wilderness, and other relevant resources and uses...

(3) Appropriate placement and sustainable management of infrastructure, such as recreational facilities and transportation and utility corridors...

(6) Land status and ownership, use, and access patterns relevant to the plan area.

(7) Reasonably foreseeable risks to ecological, social, and economic sustainability...

(10) Opportunities to connect people with nature.

(b) *Requirements for plan components for a new plan or plan revision.*

(1) The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for:

(i) Sustainable recreation; including recreation settings, opportunities, and access; and scenic character. Recreation opportunities may include nonmotorized, motorized, developed, and dispersed recreation on land, water, and in the air.

(ii) Protection of cultural and historic resources.

(iii) Management of areas of tribal importance.

(iv) Protection of congressionally designated wilderness areas as well as management of areas recommended for wilderness designation to protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for their suitability for wilderness designation.

(v) Protection of designated wild and scenic rivers as well as management of rivers found eligible or determined suitable for the National Wild and Scenic River system to protect the values that provide the basis for their suitability for inclusion in the system.

(vi) Appropriate management of other designated areas or recommended designated areas in the plan area, including research natural areas.

#### FSM 1923.03 – Policy.

1. Unless otherwise provided by law, all areas that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System must be inventoried and evaluated for recommendation as designated wilderness areas during plan development or revision. Responsible Officials shall follow policy direction stated in FSH 1909.12, chapter 70, for this inventory and evaluation process.

#### FSH 1909.12, Part 74.1 – Management of Recommended Wilderness Areas

When developing plan components for recommended wilderness areas, the Responsible Official has discretion to implement a range of management options. All plan components applicable to a recommended area must protect and maintain the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness recommendation. In addition, the plan may include one or more plan components for a recommended wilderness area that:

1. Enhance the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designations;
2. Continue existing uses, only if such uses do not prevent the protection and maintenance of the social and ecological characteristics that provide the basis for wilderness designation;
3. Alter existing uses, subject to valid existing rights; or
4. Eliminate existing uses, except those uses subject to valid existing rights.

FSM 2310.3 - Policy. In addition to general planning policy presented in 36 CFR 219.1, FSM 1903, FSM 1920.3, FSM 1922.03, and FSM 2303:

1. Use the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to establish planning criteria, generate objectives for recreation, evaluate public issues, integrate management concerns, project recreation needs and demands, and coordinate management objectives.
2. Use the ROS system to develop standards and guidelines for proposed recreation resource use and development.

FSM 2311.1 - Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS).

Use the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) system and the ROS Users Guide (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. ROS Users Guide. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service; 1982. 37p.) to delineate, define, and integrate outdoor recreation opportunities in land and resource management planning (FSM 1922.15, item 2). Recreation integration/coordination provides for integrated management prescriptions and associated standards to deal with the recreation resource. ROS defines six recreation opportunity classes that provide different settings for recreational use: primitive, semi-primitive nonmotorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, rural, and urban. Use ROS classes to describe all recreation opportunity areas--from natural, undisturbed, and undeveloped to heavily used, modified, and developed. Apply the criteria involving the physical, social, and managerial environments found in the ROS Users Guide to delineate the different ROS classes of land. Urban class areas are not normally an appropriate management objective for National Forest lands.

FSM 2350 Policy – Approved by Acting Associate Deputy Chief Richard W. Sowa

FSM 2353.01 – Authority. FSM 2353.01d - Other Authorities...

5. The amended Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan.

FSM 2353.04b - Chief of the Forest Service. The Chief of the Forest Service is responsible for: ...

2. Approving and submitting National Scenic and National Historic Trail comprehensive management plans to Congress (16 U.S.C. 1244(e) and (f)).

3. When in the public interest, entering into an agreement with the Secretary of the Interior that transfers management responsibilities for segments of National Scenic or National Historic Trails (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(1)(B)).
4. Selecting the corridor for National Scenic and National Historic Trails and publishing notice of availability of required maps and descriptions in the Federal Register (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)).

FSM 2353.04g - Regional Foresters. Regional Foresters are responsible for: ...

3. National Scenic and National Historic Trails...

b. For trails administered by the Secretary of Agriculture: ...

(2) Approving the location of these trails within the applicable corridor and signing notices for the Federal Register of availability of maps and descriptions of the location of these trails (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2) and (b)). For trails that traverse multiple regions, the lead Regional Forester has this responsibility...

(6) Approving non-substantial relocations of National Scenic and National Historic Trails, publishing required notices in the Federal Register, and referring recommendations for substantial relocations to the Chief (16 U.S.C. 1246(b)). For trails that traverse multiple regions, the lead regional forester has this responsibility.

FSM 2353.11 – Relationship between National Recreation, National Scenic, and National Historic Trails and NFS Trails

Manage National Recreation, National Scenic, and National Historic Trails as NFS trails. Administer each National Recreation, National Scenic, and National Historic Trail corridor to meet the intended nature and purposes of the corresponding trail (FSM 2353.31).

FSM 2353.31 – Policy

1. The National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)) includes: ... b. National Scenic Trails. These extended trails are located so as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which these trails pass (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2))...
2. Ensure that management of each trail in the National Trails System addresses the nature and purposes of the trail and is consistent with the applicable land management plan (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)).<sup>20</sup>
3. TMOs for a National Recreation, National Scenic, or National Historic Trail should reflect the nature and purposes for which the trail was established.

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<sup>20</sup> A land management plan amendment may be necessary in order to provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST. See the discussions under Administration and Development and Land Management Plan Considerations.

## FSM 2353.4 – Administration of National Scenic and National Historic Trails

### FSM 2353.41 – Objectives

Develop and administer National Scenic and National Historic Trails to ensure protection of the purposes for which the trails were established and to maximize benefits from the land.

### FSM 2353.42 – Policy

Administer National Scenic and National Historic Trail corridors to be compatible with the nature and purposes of the corresponding trail. CDNST: The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor.

### FSM 2353.44b, “Continental Divide National Scenic Trail –

1. The land management plan for an administrative unit through which the CDNST passes must provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST (FSM 2353.42) and, in accordance with the programmatic requirements of the NTSA, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)), and the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, as amended, must:

- a. Except where the CDNST traverses a wilderness area and is governed by wilderness management prescriptions (36 CFR Part 293), establish a management area for the CDNST that is broad enough to protect natural, scenic, historic, and cultural features;
- b. Prescribe desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines for the CDNST; and
- c. Establish a monitoring program to evaluate the condition of the CDNST in the management area.

2. A CDNST unit plan must be developed for each administrative unit through which the CDNST passes. Each CDNST unit plan must provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST (FSM 2353.42), and, in accordance with the site-specific requirements in the NTSA, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)), and the CDNST Comprehensive Plan, as amended, must:

- a. Identify and display the segments of the CDNST that traverse that unit.
- b. Except where the CDNST traverses a wilderness area and is governed by wilderness management prescriptions (36 CFR Part 293) and except where delineated in the applicable land management plan, establish a management area for the segments of the CDNST that traverse that unit that is broad enough to protect natural, scenic, historic, and cultural features;
- c. Establish the Trail Class, Managed Uses, Designed Use, and Design Parameters for the segments of the CDNST that traverse that unit and identify uses that are prohibited on the segments of the CDNST that traverse that unit (FSH 2309.18).
- d. Provide for development, construction, signing, and maintenance of the segments of the CDNST that traverse that unit.
- e. Identify and preserve significant natural, historical, and cultural resources along the sections of the CDNST corridor that traverse that unit.

f. Consistent with the provisions of the applicable land management plan and the nature and purposes of the CDNST (FSM 2353.42), establish carrying capacity for the segments of the CDNST that traverse that unit (FSM 2353.44b, para. 1). The Limits of Acceptable Change or a similar system may be used for this purpose.

g. Establish monitoring programs to evaluate the site-specific conditions of the CDNST.”

FSM 2353.44b parts 7 and 8 contribute to defining key landscape characteristics of the CDNST Management Area corridor:

7. “...The one-half mile foreground viewed from either side of the CDNST travel route must be a primary consideration in delineating the boundary of a CDNST management area (para. 2b). [FSM 2380] The CDNST is a concern level 1 route..., with a scenic integrity objective of high or very high, depending on the trail segment...

8. Manage the CDNST to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and pack and saddle stock opportunities. Backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (FSM 2353.42). Use the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and the ROS Users Guide in delineating and integrating recreation opportunities in CDNST unit plans and managing the CDNST (FSM 2311.1).<sup>21</sup> Where possible, locate the CDNST in primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized ROS classes, provided that the CDNST may have to traverse intermittently through more developed ROS classes....”

FSH 1909.12 – Part 11.3 of the planning handbook describes the assessment report. The assessment report must be a concise public document that supports the development of a new plan or plan revision. In part, summarizes how the best available scientific information and other information informs the assessment. ROS and SMS Scenic Integrity inventories are the principle tools for obtaining the best scientific information for the condition of the recreation resource.

FSH 1909.12 – Part 13.4 of the planning handbook describes the, “focus of the assessment for recreation is to identify and evaluate available information about existing conditions, trends and sustainability of recreation settings, opportunities, uses, preferences, access, and scenic character. Conditions and trends are assessed within the plan area as well as in relation to the broader landscape... The Interdisciplinary Team shall identify and evaluate available information about recreational settings and opportunities, including seasonal variation, using the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS). The Team shall also identify and evaluate available information about the existing and potential scenic character of the plan area based on maps and other information using the Scenery Management System.”

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<sup>21</sup> “An Assessment of Frameworks Useful for Public Land Recreation Planning by Stephen F. McCool, Roger N. Clark, and George H. Stankey (PNW-GTR-705) compares recreation planning frameworks. ROS is discussed on pages 43-66. ROS is the preferred recreation planning framework for addressing Forest Service Planning Rule requirements: 36 CFR 219.6(b)(9), 219.8(b)(2), 219.10(a)(1) & (b)(1), and 219.19 definitions for Recreation Opportunity and Setting. In addition, using ROS could lead to meeting the NEPA requirement for Methodology and Scientific Accuracy (40 CFR 1502.24).

FSH 1909.12 – Part 14 of the planning handbook describes that designated areas are specific areas or features within the plan area that have been given a permanent designation to maintain its unique special character or purpose. Some categories of designated areas may be established only by statute (statutorily designated areas or often called congressionally designated areas)... Certain purposes and restrictions are usually established for designated areas, which greatly influence management needs and opportunities associated with them.

The Interdisciplinary Team should identify and evaluate available information about designated areas including:

1. Types, purposes, and locations of established designated areas within the plan area. The Responsible Official should use a map to identify these locations.
2. Range of uses, management activities, or management restrictions associated with the established designated areas in the plan area.
3. Existing plans for the management of established designated areas within the plan area, such as comprehensive plans for national scenic or historic trails.
4. In addition, the assessment report should describe the status of selecting the CDNST rights-of-way (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)).

FSH 1909.12 – Part 22.1 of the planning handbook describes each of the categories of plan components in greater detail and explains how the components should be expressed in the plan. Plan components guide future project and activity decisionmaking. The plan must indicate whether specific plan components apply to the entire plan area, to specific management areas or geographic areas, or to other areas as identified in the plan. Must be informed by the best available scientific information.

FSH 1909.12 – Part 22.2 deals with the identification of management areas and geographic areas. (Designated areas may be identified as MAs or GAs. However, a combination of GA and MA approaches may be useful. Above all, the approach must be clear about where plan components apply. The MA or GA guidance can constrain an activity to a greater degree than the unit-wide direction does.

FSH 1909.12 – Part 22.32 addresses distinctive roles and contributions of the planning area. Describe the recreation opportunities provided and the conservation area protected within the National Scenic Trail rights-of-way and management corridor.

FSH 1909.12 – Part 22.34 calls for the plan to include a list of types of possible projects for the next 3 to 5 years to move toward the desired conditions and objectives. The possible actions may be displayed in an appendix as a brief summary of the types of possible projects expected but such information is not a commitment to take any action.

FSH 1909.12 – Part 23.21b reviews ecosystem services. The Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.10, 219.10(a)(1), and 219.8(b)(3) requires that a plan include plan components including standards or guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple use. The

plan should describe the desired conditions for the key ecosystem services to be achieved from the National Scenic Trail management corridor.

FSH 1909.12 – Part 23.23a addresses recreation resources. The Interdisciplinary Team uses the recreation opportunity spectrum to define recreation settings and categorize them into the six distinct classes as the structure to describe recreational settings. At the forest scale, sustainable recreation is derived through the integrated planning process and emerges as the resultant set of desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes. Each setting provides opportunities to engage in activities (motorized, nonmotorized, developed, or dispersed on land, water, and in the air) that result in different experiences and outcomes. The Interdisciplinary Team may create desired recreation opportunity spectrum subclasses. For example, the subclass “roaded modified” was first defined in the Pacific Northwest to distinguish those settings significantly altered by past timber harvest from other roaded natural settings. Must include desired conditions for sustainable recreation using mapped desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes. This mapping may be based on management areas, geographic areas, designated areas, independent overlay mapping, or any combination of these approaches. Should include specific standards or guidelines where restrictions are needed to ensure the achievement or movement toward the desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes.

FSH 1909.12 – Part 23.23f is concerned with scenery, aesthetic values, viewsheds and geologic features. (The framework for scenery management is described in Landscape Aesthetics – A Handbook for Scenery Management. Viewsheds are specific elements to be considered because they describe areas seen from certain view locations such as trails (and, implicitly, from national scenic trails). The plan should contain standards or guidelines as needed to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects incompatible with desired scenery conditions. ... Standards and guidelines can be applied at multiple scales to specific management activities such as timber harvest, utility corridors, trail construction, facility development, or road construction.

FSH 1909.12 – Part 23.23g addresses cultural and historic resources. The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines for protection of cultural and historic resources integrated with other plan components. To meet this requirement the plan may include, in part, desired conditions describing the cultural or historic resources in the plan area. For cultural landscapes, a special set of desired conditions may be appropriate for the protection, management, and use of the resource.

FSH 1909.12 – Part 23.23i deals with infrastructure, roads and trails. As related to roads, the plan should include the desired condition for the road system based on the desired uses for the plan area. As related to recreational trails, the plan should include desired conditions. The desired condition may describe nationally designated trails and distribution and types of trails for various uses such as hiking, off-road vehicles, mountain bikes, equestrian use, or winter uses such as skiing or snowmobiling. The plan may identify the types of trails and recreational use that are suitable or not suitable in a management or geographic area, aligned with the desired recreational settings and opportunities.

FSH 1909.12 – 24.2 – Plan Components for Designated Areas...

1. When developing plan components:

b. The Responsible Official shall include plan components that will provide for appropriate management of designated areas based on the applicable authorities and the specific purposes for which each area was designated or recommended for designation. Uses and management activities are allowed in designated areas to the extent that these uses are in harmony with the purpose for which the area was designated. For recommended designated areas, the uses and activities allowed should be compatible with the basis of the recommendation.

FSH 1909.12 – 24.3 - Designated Area Plans

Planning for designated areas may be met through the land management plan, unless the authorities for the designation require a separate plan. Specific plans for designated areas must be consistent with the plan components (36 CFR 219.15(e)).<sup>22</sup> The designated area

Designated Area – The CDNST designated area extent may be defined by the selected CDNST Section 7 rights-of-way. The CDNST Management Area (FS) and National Trail Management Corridor (BLM) resides within this selected rights-of-way. The MA or NTMC extent and associated plan components must provide for the nature and purposes of this NST.

authorities may require specific plans (such as wild and scenic river plans or national scenic and historic trail plans) for a designated area with additional requirements than those of the Planning Rule. Any parts of a designated area plan that meet the requirements for land management plan components must be included in the land management plan. The entire area plan does not need to be included in the land management plan. The land management plans must also be compatible with these designated area plans or either the land management plan or the designated area plan must be amended to achieve this compatibility.

FSH 1909.12 Part 24.43 – National Scenic and Historic Trails

1. “When developing plan components for national scenic and historic trails:

a. The Interdisciplinary Team should review the assessment for relevant information about existing national scenic and historic trails in the plan area, including established rights-of-way pursuant to 16 U.S.C 1246(a)(2) and direction contained in comprehensive plans (CPs) pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1244(e) or 1244(f). For existing or study national scenic and historic trails that do not have such information published, assessments identify and evaluate other information pertinent to the location and management of national scenic and historic trails.

b. The Interdisciplinary Team shall identify Congressionally designated national scenic and historic trails and plan components must provide for the management of rights-of-ways (16 U.S.C 1246(a)(2)) consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. Plan components must provide for the nature and purposes of existing national scenic and historic

<sup>22</sup> Comprehensive Plans developed in response to the requirements of the National Trails System Act and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act are not resource plans as defined by the NFMA (16 U.S.C. 1604(i) and 36 CFR 219.15(e)).



trails and for the potential rights-of-way of those trails designated for study (16 U.S.C. 1244(b)).

c. The Interdisciplinary Team shall use the national scenic and historic trails rights-of-way maps required by 16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2) to map the location of the trails. Where national trail rights-of-way have not yet been selected, the Interdisciplinary Team shall reference the establishing legislation (16 U.S.C. 1244(a)) as the primary source for identifying and mapping the national scenic and historic trails right-of-way. If the right-of-way has not been selected, either through legislation or publication in the Federal Register, the Interdisciplinary Team should use other information to delineate a national scenic and historic trails corridor that protects the resource values for which the trail was designated or is being proposed for designation (16 U.S.C. 1244(b)).

d. The Responsible Official shall consult with neighboring Responsible Officials when developing plan components for national scenic and historic trails that cross unit boundaries and shall strive to maintain or establish compatible management approaches while recognizing diverse resource conditions and needs in the different plan areas.

e. Plan components must be compatible with the objectives and practices identified in the comprehensive plan for the management of the national scenic and historic trail. The objectives and practices include the identification of resources to be preserved and the trail's carrying capacity.

f. The Responsible Official shall include plan components that provide for the nature and purposes of national scenic and historic trails in the plan area. In doing so, the Responsible Official should take into consideration other aspects of the plan related to the trail such as access, cultural and historic resources, recreational settings, scenic character, and valid existing rights.

2. The plan must include plan components including standards or guidelines for a designated area as described in part 24.2 of this Handbook. To meet this requirement the plan:

a. Should include desired conditions that describe the national scenic and historic trail and the recreational, scenic, historic, and other resource values for which the trail was designated.

b. May include objectives for national scenic and historic trails where existing conditions (settings, opportunities, scenic character, cultural and other resources values) are different from desired conditions. These objectives can identify intended activities to improve national scenic and historic trail conditions, mitigate or enhance associated resource values, create or improve connections with communities and visitors, or other desired and measureable outcomes that will improve the national scenic and historic trail experience.

c. May include standards or guidelines to place limits or conditions on projects or activities to protect the trail and associated resource values.

d. May include suitability plan components to limit or prevent incompatible uses and activities.

e. Must identify and map National scenic and historic trails per #1c above.

f. May, to apply plan components unique to the National and Scenic Historic Trail: provide one or more management or geographic areas for a national scenic and historic trail; reference the identified national scenic and historic trail right-of-way, place a corridor around the trail, or use other means to clearly identify where the plan components apply in reference to the trail.

FSM 2350 has more information about national scenic and historic trails.<sup>23</sup>”

FSH 1909.12 – Part 24.44 requires plan components to be compatible with restrictions of road rules applicable to inventoried roadless areas.

FS-EM-7700-30 - Guidelines for Engineering Analysis of Motorized Mixed Use on Roads

Normally, the CDNST travel route is not to be located on a road unless permanently closed to motor vehicle use. However, in a situation where the CDNST travel route is to be located on an open National Forest System road, an analysis should be completed which documents that mixed use on the road allows for the safe travel of pedestrians and equestrians. Modify the mixed use analysis that is described in [EM-7700-30](#) to assess both motorized and nonmotorized use along the route.

### **Bureau of Land Management**, Planning Regulations and Policy

43 CFR Part 8350 – Management Areas.

43 CFR 8351.1–1 National Scenic Trails.

(a) Motorized vehicle use. No one shall operate a motorized vehicle along a national scenic trail except: (1) When motorized vehicular use is necessary to meet emergencies involving health, safety, fire suppression, or law enforcement; or (2) Where the authorized officer determines that adjacent landowners and land users have a need for reasonable access to their lands, interests in lands, or timber rights; or (3) On roads that are designated segments of the National Scenic Trail System and are posted as open to motorized vehicles.

BLM MS-6280, Chapter 4, Congressionally Designated Trails - Land Use Planning

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<sup>23</sup> FSM 1920.3 - 6, states, “Provide all Service-wide direction necessary for planning assessments, plan development, plan revision, plan amendment, and plan monitoring is contained or referenced in this chapter, and supplements, or handbooks thereto.” National Scenic Trail policy and direction is found in comprehensive plans for National Trails, FSM 2353.4 (referenced in the Planning Handbook as FSM 2350), FSH 1909.12 section 14, and FSH 1909.12 section 24.43, which in total provides the necessary policy and management direction for implementing the requirements of the NTSA. Fortuitously, FSM 2350 is clearly referenced in FSH 1909.12 section 24.43 for the Forest Service Planning Handbook in itself does not contain substantive specialized guidance and instruction for addressing the NTSA in an integrated land management plan. FSM 1110.3, FSM 1110.8, and FSM 1112.02 has more information about the formulation of directives.

This chapter outlines BLM land use planning requirements for congressionally designated National Trails and the National Trail Management Corridor. Through the land use planning process, where a designated trail is within the planning area, the BLM establishes National Trail Management Corridor, and will set forth allocation decisions, management actions, and necessary restrictions for resources and resource uses within that National Trail Management Corridor in order to effectively manage the nature and purposes of National Trail and the resources, qualities, values, and associated settings and the primary use or uses (MS-6280, Chapter 4).

“MS-6280 - 4.1 General Requirements

A. *Addressing Designated National Trails through Land Use Planning*

1. As soon as practical after activation, the BLM must address designated National Trails through the land use planning process.
2. Designated National Trails may be addressed through a land use plan amendment, or a Statewide Trail Management Plan or a programmatic multi-state effort which amends applicable Resource Management Plans.
3. Regardless of the type of land use planning process undertaken, the BLM shall establish a National Trail Management Corridor(s) and identify management goals, objectives, and actions for each designated National Trail.
4. National Trails shall be clearly identified as a specific resource or discipline, in its own unique section throughout the various chapters of the Resource Management Plan - not contained within and across multiple disciplines.
5. Resource Management Plan decisions should be compatible across BLM jurisdictions, as applicable, to provide for trailwide management consistency....

E. *Trail Management Guidance by Resource Program.* To the greatest extent possible, the BLM will consider the following guidance when making resource-specific decisions, subject to valid existing rights, within the National Trail Management Corridor allocation:

1. *Scenic and Visual Resources...*,
2. *Cultural and Historic Resources...*,
3. *Recreation and Visitor Services...*, and
4. *Travel and Transportation Management...*

4.2 Requirements for Designated National Trails in Land Use Planning

B. Development of Designated National Trail Goals and Objectives. Goals and objectives for the National Trail shall be identified based on the NTSA, enabling legislation, legislative history (in consultation with the Office of the Solicitor), the nature and purposes of the trail, supporting information from the National Trail Feasibility Study, trailwide Comprehensive Plan, and National Trail inventory. The nature and purposes; resources, qualities, values, and

associated settings; and the primary use or uses will be clearly described. At a minimum, the following goals and objectives should be considered for National Trails:

1. For all National Trails

- i. Safeguard the nature and purposes; and conserve, protect, and restore the National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings and the primary use or uses.
- ii. Provide premier trail visitor experiences for public benefit.
- iii. Maximize opportunities for shared National Trail stewardship.
- iv. Reduce the potential for uses that substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the National Trail (see Chapter 1, 1.6 Statement of Programmatic Policy).
- v. Avoidance of activities that are incompatible with the purposes for which the National Trail was established (see Chapter 1, 1.6 Statement of Programmatic Policy).

2. For National Scenic Trails

- i. Provide for maximum compatible outdoor recreation potential.
- ii. Maintain the continuous nature of the National Scenic Trails.
- iii. Maintain the special environments and landforms that support trail visitor.”

MS-6280, Chapter 5, 5.3 Protocol for Proposed Actions which May Adversely Impact Designated National Trails

*A. Upon Receipt of a Proposed Action*

1. Where a proposed action is found to be inconsistent with the purpose for which the National Trail was designated, the BLM shall consider rejecting applications for proposed projects or denying approval of the action pursuant to FLPMA, the NTSA, and other applicable law and policy.
2. The BLM may not permit proposed uses along National Trails which will substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, and the BLM shall make efforts, to the extent practicable, to avoid authorizing activities that are incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established (see Chapter 1.6 Statement of Programmatic Policy).
3. If the BLM chooses not to defer analysis of a proposed action, the BLM shall follow the applicable procedures and protocols outlined in this manual.

*B. Determining the Scope of Analysis*

1. The BLM shall consider the significance of the Congressional designation as a National Trail (P.L. 90-543), as a unit of the NLCS (P.L. 111-11), and public and private contributions and volunteer efforts along a National Trail when evaluating whether to approve a proposed action along the designated trail. The BLM shall manage the National Trails and the areas through which such National Trails may pass in a manner that recognizes the national significance of the trails and the individual or collective significance of National Historic Trail Federal Protection Components, including high potential historic sites and high potential route segments. The

national significance of National Trails must be considered in the local, regional, and national context under the NTSA and NHPA, as applicable.

2. If a National Trail Management Corridor has not been established in a land use plan, the BLM should undertake the following:

i. A viewshed analysis to evaluate whether the proposed action is contained within the viewshed.

ii. If within the viewshed, and likely to cause adverse impact, a BLM National Trail inventory and assessment is required, and should be broad enough to be able to identify reasonable alternative project locations with potentially less or no adverse impact. Upon inventory, the area of potential adverse impact shall be delineated, encompassing the resources, qualities, values and associated settings and the primary use or uses identified.

iii. The BLM will identify, within the area of potential adverse impact, any adverse impacts to the nature and purposes; resources, qualities, values, and associated settings; and the primary use or uses for the affected environment, alternative formulation and analysis, and environmental consequences (see chapter 3 of this manual).

iv. The BLM shall consider alternatives which support National Trail purposes in accordance with this policy. The BLM will consider alternatives which direct the proposed project outside the area of potential adverse impact or to a comparably disturbed or culturally modified area, such as areas already containing transmission lines, pipelines, highways, or improved roads.

### **National Park Service**

Prior to undertaking an action that may substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST, the National Park Service Director must revise or amend the unit General Management Plan to recognize the CDNST as a congressionally designated area. The GMP must be in compliance with the National Park System Development Program regulations (16 U.S.C. 1a-7) and the National Trails System Act as implemented through direction in the CDNST Comprehensive Plan. Foundation Documents for NPS units should also address the significance of the CDNST, as applicable. Once programmatic direction is established in the General Management Plan, CDNST site-specific protection and development plans should be established that provide for the values of this National Scenic Trail.

“The NPS will prepare appropriate planning documents to protect the resources and attributes and to provide for public use and appreciation of the national scenic and historic trails authorized by Congress and assigned to it for administration. Each trail’s comprehensive management plan (CMP) will include, at a minimum, those provisions stipulated in 16 USC 1244(e) or (f) that outline trail comprehensive plan requirements. Each CMP will also identify the minimum level of regulation necessary to protect the resources and attributes that warranted the trail’s designation by Congress. CMPs may also include such other provisions as may be needed to satisfy the intent of chapter 2, “Park System Planning,” of Management Policies 2006 and the unique circumstances of the trail. Each trail will then operate according to the CMP.” (Director’s Order #45, 3.11 – Planning)

## Chapter V. Comprehensive Planning Relationship to NEPA

This section reviews several aspects of the CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508) for addressing National Scenic Trails in land management planning. NEPA processes are reviewed in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, BLM Handbook H-1790-1, and NPS Handbook Director Order #12. Fundamental NEPA process considerations are described in a CEQ document titled, “Major Cases Interpreting the National Environmental Policy Act.” This document is found online at: [https://ceq.doe.gov/docs/laws-regulations/Major\\_NEPA\\_Cases.pdf](https://ceq.doe.gov/docs/laws-regulations/Major_NEPA_Cases.pdf)

### A. National Scenic Trail Planning and NEPA

Most federal agency actions, unless specifically exempted, are subject to the procedural requirements of NEPA. These requirements are articulated in NEPA CEQ regulations, and in each agency’s supplemental implementing policies.<sup>24</sup> Supplemental agency policies often include specific procedural direction or guidance on preparation of appropriate NEPA documents (i.e., Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), Environmental Assessments (EA), and Categorical Exclusions (CE)). Because agency guidance varies widely, this section will generally not address agency specific regulation, policy, or procedure.

NEPA is “our basic national charter for protection of the environment” (40 C.F.R. 1500.1(a)). Better analysis and decisions are the ultimate goal of the NEPA process (40 CFR 1500.1(c)). NEPA’s twin aims are to ensure that federal agencies take a hard look at the environmental impacts of their proposed actions before taking an action and to ensure that agencies provide relevant information to the public so the public can play a role in both the decision-making process and the implementation of the decision (40 C.F.R. 1502.1). By focusing the agency’s attention on the environmental consequences of its proposed action, NEPA ensures that important effects will not be overlooked or underestimated only to be discovered after an agency has committed resources (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)).

NEPA is designed to promote consideration of potential effects on the human environment (40 CFR 1508.14) that would result from proposed Federal agency actions, and to provide the public and decision makers with useful information regarding reasonable alternatives (40 CFR 1508.25(b)) and mitigation measures to improve the environmental outcomes of Federal agency actions. NEPA ensures that the environmental effects of proposed actions are taken into account before decisions are made and informs the public of significant environmental effects of proposed Federal agency actions, promoting transparency and accountability concerning Federal actions that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment. NEPA reviews should identify measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects of Federal agency actions. Environmental impact statements shall be prepared using an inter-disciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts (section 102(2)(A) of the Act). The disciplines of the preparers shall be appropriate to the scope and issues identified in the scoping process (40 CFR 1502.6).

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<sup>24</sup> 36 CFR Part 220 and 43 CFR Part 46 does not lessen the applicability of the CEQ 40 CFR Part 1500 regulations on National Forest System lands (36 CFR 220.1(b)) and BLM Public Lands (73 FR 61292).

NEPA document(s) that support a Comprehensive Plan (including staged or phased decisions) will analyze the effects of a range of alternatives, including but not limited to effects on visual quality, ROS settings, carrying capacities and natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved. A Comprehensive Plan and supporting NEPA decision documents will typically establish goals, desired conditions, allowable uses, standards (thresholds), guidelines, and the conditions under which uses are allowed for a discreet geographic area or linear landscape. NEPA decision documents should provide additional information and support the thought process used to implement, revise, or amend a Comprehensive Plan.

The CEQ regulations require that NEPA decision-making processes provide for thoughtful, rigorous evaluation of reasonable options within the scope of the proposed decisions. The decision process involves interested and affected individuals, groups, and governments. The “early and often” interactions that the NEPA suggests in establishing the scope of the proposed actions considered in a Comprehensive Plan are especially important when identifying significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved; selecting the rights-of-way; and establishing scenic integrity levels, ROS class settings, and capacities for the management corridor.

Comprehensive Plan requirements (16 U.S.C. 1244 (e) and (f)) have sometimes been addressed through staged or stepped-down decision processes: (1) a Comprehensive Plan establishes broad policy and procedures, (2) land management plans provide integrated resource management direction and address programmatic planning requirements as described in the Comprehensive Plan, and (3) mid-level and site-specific plans complete the comprehensive planning process through field-level actions to construct the travel route and protect the corridor. Staged decisionmaking and tiering is discussed in the Comprehensive Plan, Chapter III(C). The Comprehensive Plan requirements are met once all staged phases are complete. As required by laws and regulations, addressing NTSA planning requirements are to be an integrated part of developing NFMA and FLPMA directed land management plans.

When a federal agency does not make an “overt act,” no NEPA requirement to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) attaches. However, if some agency action was mandated under a separate statute in relation to that activity but the action was not taken, NEPA does attach and the Administrative Procedure Act applies (40 CFR 1508.18 and 5 U.S.C. 706). The NTSA presents an independent planning requirement to prepare and implement a comprehensive plan including identifying carrying capacity, select the rights-of-way, and in general establish management direction that provides for the nature and purposes values of this NST.

Land management plans are to protect CDNST Section 7(a)(2) potential rights-of-way and high potential route segments where the rights-of-way is yet to be selected and the travel route officially located (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)(3) and 1246(a)(2)). Until the CDNST rights-of-way is selected and the corridor is located, the Agencies must not undertake any major Federal action which (1) may adversely impact the nature and purposes values of potential CDNST rights-of-way and corridor locations, (2) limit the choice of reasonable alternatives, and (3) prejudice ultimate rights-of-way and locations

decisions (40 CFR 1506.1). The Forest Service describes that, “the NEPA and Forest planning processes must be integrated. The Responsible Official should provide direction to the Interdisciplinary team in a project initiation letter to ensure that the Interdisciplinary Team develops a strategic approach for coordinating planning and NEPA procedures” (FSH 1909.12 part 21.13).

Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 part 21.13 states, “The NEPA and Forest planning processes must be integrated. The Responsible Official should provide direction to the Interdisciplinary team in a project initiation letter to ensure that the Interdisciplinary Team develops a strategic approach for coordinating planning and NEPA procedures. The Forest Service NEPA directives are found in FSM 1950 – Environmental Policy and Procedures and in FSH 1909.15 – National Environmental Policy Act Handbook... Careful coordination of planning and NEPA procedures, particularly public participation, allows the Interdisciplinary Team to be more efficient by aligning planning tasks with the requirements of NEPA. Important opportunities to integrate planning and NEPA requirements include the following:

1. Using the results of the assessment to describe the affected environment in the environmental impact statement. If information gaps were identified during or subsequent to the assessment, additional information might be needed to effectively describe the affected environment, consistent with NEPA requirements.
2. Using the need to change the plan identified during the planning process to write the purpose and need statement for the environmental impact statement. Early in the planning phase, a preliminary need to change the plan is identified and public comment is sought to help develop the need to change the plan, which in turn helps focus plan development or revision.
3. Including both planning and NEPA requirements in the public participation strategy (FSH 1909.12 part 40.42).
4. Integrating NEPA scoping, where appropriate, into public engagement activities used to support development of plan components and other plan content. Scoping includes refining the proposed action, determining cooperating agencies, identifying preliminary issues, and identifying interested and affected persons (FSH 1909.15 part 10.11.) Early public engagement during the planning process can help to identify goals and concerns for the plan area. This phase provides the opportunity for the Interdisciplinary Team to meet NEPA scoping requirements (40 CFR 1501.7) and, therefore, gain an understanding of the following elements that will be important during the NEPA analysis:
  - a. Significant issues that will frame alternatives for considerations,
  - b. Potential alternatives for analysis, and
  - c. Potential effects of alternatives.

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA), 16 U.S.C. 6511 to 6518, as amended through P.L. 115-141, authorizes management actions to address certain vegetation issues.

- Section 104(a) describes that except as otherwise provided in this title, the Secretary shall conduct authorized hazardous fuel reduction projects in accordance with—(1) the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969; and (2) other applicable laws.



- Section 603 states that an insect and disease project may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement and exempt from pre-decisional objections. However, section 603 CE may not be used in areas where vegetation removal is restricted.
- WILDFIRE RESILIENCE PROJECTS, Section 605(c) Limitations part (4) describes that, “EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES.—The Secretary shall apply the extraordinary circumstances procedures under section 220.6 of title 36, code of Federal regulations (or successor regulations), when using the categorical exclusion under this section.
- Section 605(d) Exclusions.— This section does not apply to—
  - (1) A component of the National Wilderness Preservation System;
  - (2) Any Federal land on which, by Act of Congress or Presidential proclamation, the removal of vegetation is restricted or prohibited;
 

*[The NNTSA, Section 7(c), restricts the removal of vegetation to only those actions that would not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of a National Scenic or Historic Trail.];*
  - (3) A congressionally designated wilderness study area; or
  - (4) An area in which activities under subsection (a) would be inconsistent with the applicable land and resource management plan.
- Section 605(e). FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS.—All projects and activities carried out under this section shall be consistent with the land and resource management plan established under section 6 of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 10 1604) for the unit of the National Forest System containing the projects and activities.

## B. Establishment of the Purpose and Need for Action

The Purpose and Need for Action section of the DEIS (40 CFR 1502.13) should describe the need to provide integrated resource management, including providing for the purposes for which Congressional designated areas are established such as protecting the nature and purposes and related values of National Scenic and Historic Trails.

Special Use Permits – Separate “approving a use” from “authorizing a use.” There has been inconsistency in how NEPA is applied to special uses. In short, a NEPA decision “approves” an action/activity to take place on the landscape. A special use authorization “authorizes” a specific entity to conduct the stated action/activity in a specific location on the landscape. Recreational use decisions would normally address the allocation between private and commercial parties of the available allowed use-days (or acceptable impacts) as often seen in the allocation of use on Wild and Scenic Rivers.

The 2009 Federal Register Notice of final amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan and final directives state, “The final amendments to the CDNST Comprehensive Plan and corresponding directives will provide guidance to agency officials implementing the National Trails System Act. The final amendments are consistent with the nature and purposes of the CDNST identified in the 1976 CDNST Study Report and 1977 CDNST Final Environmental Impact Statement adopted by the Forest Service in 1981 (40 FR 150). The final

amendments and directives will be applied through land management planning and project decisions following requisite environmental analysis” (Federal Register, October 5, 2009, 74 FR 51116).

A land management plan NEPA document must provide the framework for the purpose and need for action and for the decisions to be made of identifying the management corridor and establishing scenic integrity levels, ROS class settings, and carrying capacities. A land management plan should establish desired conditions, including the nature and purposes of a National Trail as well as key resource indicators and thresholds that prevent degradation.

The described underlying purpose and need for action for programmatic and site-specific NEPA analyses must be consistent with all land use laws, Presidential proclamations, and regulations that prohibit or restrict actions. To the extent practicable avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which National Scenic Trails are established. Actions that would substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of a National Scenic Trail are to be eliminated from detailed study in NEPA analyzes.

The “need for action” (or change) is based upon a comparison of the baseline conditions and desired conditions. This comparison establishes both the “scope” of and the “need” for action. The “scope” of and the “need” for the proposed actions establish the basis for determining the reasonable range of alternatives. The purpose and need description represents the “problem to be solved.” Defining the scope appropriately (and refining as necessary through the early steps of the NEPA process) improves the overall efficacy of the NEPA document. How broadly or narrowly the scope is described affects the range of reasonable alternatives that can meet the need, which in turn affects how well the range of alternatives and the selected alternative respond to this need. There shall be an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action (40 CFR 1501.7).

Identifying conditions that are within federal control and those that require action by entities not within the decision-making agency’s control is helpful in the early stages of NEPA. A federal agency cannot necessarily eliminate options or alternatives outside of its jurisdiction from consideration in the NEPA process if the options present reasonable alternatives to meet the need.<sup>25</sup> However, an agency may only take actions that are within the agency’s legal authority (40 CFR 1508.15). Clarifying who is responsible for achieving desired conditions will help to establish early in the process the key authorities or participation by others needed to achieve the overall desired conditions.

### **C. Identify Proposed Action and a Reasonable Range of Alternatives**

NEPA requires federal agencies to include alternatives to the proposed action within an EIS (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)). The alternatives analysis is the heart of a NEPA document, and NEPA’s implementing regulations direct agencies to “rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives,” including appropriate mitigation measures to reduce the potential impacts of the action on

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<sup>25</sup> See CEQ 40 Questions

the environment (40 CFR 1502.14).

Forest Service land management plans shall form one integrated plan for each unit (16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(1) and 36 CFR 219.10). The plan and developed NEPA alternatives must provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses, including outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish, within Forest Service authority and the inherent capability of the plan area as follows: ... (b)... (1) The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to provide for: (i) Sustainable recreation; including recreation settings, opportunities, and access; and scenic character..., and (vi) appropriate management of other designated areas or recommended designated areas in the plan area...(36 CFR 219.10(b)(i)&(vi)). The CDNST is a congressionally designated area (36 CFR 219.19).

The identification and evaluation of alternative ways of meeting the purpose and need of the proposed action is critical to the NEPA analysis. Elements of a reasonable proposed action and alternatives for the CDNST corridor are presented in Chapter III of this paper. The lead agency or agencies must, “objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated.” Reasonable alternatives are those that substantially meet the agency’s purpose and need. If the agency is considering an application for a permit or other federal approval, the agency must still consider all reasonable alternatives. Reasonable alternatives include those that are practical or feasible from the technical and economic standpoint and using common sense, rather than simply desirable from the standpoint of the applicant. Agencies are obligated to evaluate all reasonable alternatives or a range of reasonable alternatives in enough detail so that a reader can compare and contrast the environmental effects of the various alternatives.

Components of a proposed action in land management planning may include the selection of the rights-of-way and/or identification of the management corridor, and will likely include the establishment of scenic integrity levels, ROS class, and carrying capacities for the National Scenic Trail. The conditions under which a variety of uses are allowed may be labeled as thresholds, standards and guidelines, or other terminology. In regards to addressing scenic integrity, recreation opportunities, and carrying capacities, this step requires that these use conditions be expressed in terms of thresholds that will prevent degradation of NST values.

Distinguish early in the process the importance of certain allowable uses or the conditions of those uses in protecting NST values (avoiding, reducing, or eliminating degradation), and/or enhancing values. Besides providing a clear logic track for the decisions made regarding scenic integrity, recreation opportunities, and carrying capacities, this will also help to identify elements that may need monitoring.

Managed and allowable uses and conditions of use may be either common to all alternatives or may vary by alternative. Managed and allowable uses or conditions of use that would be the same for all alternatives should be identified early in the NEPA process, along with a clear rationale for why those uses or conditions of use would be common to all alternatives. For example, conditions of use could protect Threatened and Endangered Species or cultural resources. Commonalities may also include

existing uses or conditions not shown to have an adverse effect on NST values or that otherwise already meet the purpose and need for action (40 CFR 1502.14(a)).

CEQ regulations also provide guidance regarding the agency’s scope of actions. Aspects of an action that are inter-related (e.g., the kinds and amounts of use and the facilities that support that use) should be considered during this process (40 CFR 1508.23 and 40 CFR 1508.25). If the purpose and need for action suggest a change from the existing condition, or if there are unresolved conflicts regarding alternative uses of resources, then a “hard look” at a reasonable range of alternatives will be needed (40 CFR 1508.25).

NEPA documents should explain the timeframe within which future actions would be taken. Be clear about whether NEPA decisions are being made to authorize certain actions when the Comprehensive Plan is completed without further decision process needed, or whether decisions about actions contemplated within the life of the Comprehensive Plan would be authorized at a later time. The latter approach is typically used in broad “programmatic” NEPA documents and subsequent site-specific documents that may be tiered to the larger document (40 CFR 1500.4(i); 1502.20).

Consider the following when determining whether visual quality, recreation setting, or carrying capacity actions identified in the Comprehensive Plan are also NEPA decisions (1) made upon Comprehensive Plan completion or (2) authorized later in time:

- Whether the action is part of an “adaptive management” decision. The term “adaptive management” is sometimes used by agencies to describe a range of different actions that managers may take resulting from one NEPA decision to respond to changing conditions during implementation or uncertain outcomes of implementing the decision. To authorize future adaptive action, the NEPA document describes when, where and how an action would take place, and when, where, and how the decision might be adapted or changed to accommodate changes in conditions or actual outcomes of the original action.
- Whether the action is ripe for decision. Actions are considered “ripe for decision” when the agency has identified a proposal it is prepared to make a decision on and the effects can be

**“Adaptive Management”**

Adaptive management is an “if this... then that” approach. If “this” condition exists (in this example for two consecutive years), then “that” action would be taken (in this case a suite of actions, with an ultimate limit on group sizes and campsite closures). To automatically authorize one or more of the actions proposed to reduce the effects of human use, the environmental impacts of those actions must be addressed in the authorizing NEPA document. The Forest Service describes, “The proposed action and one or more alternatives to the proposed action may include adaptive management. An adaptive management proposal or alternative must clearly identify the adjustment(s) that may be made when monitoring during project implementation indicates that the action is not having its intended effect, or is causing unintended and undesirable effects. The EIS [or EA] must disclose not only the effects of the proposed action or alternative but also the effect of the adjustment. Such proposal or alternative must also describe the monitoring that would take place to inform the responsible official during implementation whether the action is having its intended effect.”

meaningfully analyzed (40 CFR 1508.22). However, NEPA processes allow for emergency actions where substantial degradation is probable or occurring.

- If all or parts of the future “adaptive” actions identified in a Comprehensive Plan are not ripe for a NEPA decision, the NEPA document should discuss why they are not ripe for a decision at this time. Additionally, the NEPA document should describe the why adaptive action is needed, and the expected process used to make a final decision on those future actions.

#### **D. Affected Environment**

The affected environment consists of “the environment of the area(s) to be affected or created by the alternatives under consideration” (1502.15). Put another way, the affected environment describes the existing condition of the resources that could be impacted by implementing any of the alternatives. When applicable, the affected environment should discuss resource condition trends and identify contributing factors. Such information can provide a basis for considering how a changing, dynamic environment could affect conclusions that are reached regarding the environmental consequences of implementing any of the alternatives under consideration.

The affected environment serves as the baseline for predicting changes to the human environment that could occur if any of the alternatives under consideration, including the no-action alternative, are implemented. The affected environment is separate and distinct from the no-action alternative, which describes current management rather than the current state of affected resources, and discloses how the current condition of affected resources would change if current management were to continue.

The affected environment must describe the environment of the area to be affected by the alternatives under consideration. The affected environment section should describe the degree to which CDNST values are being protected, including the protection of desired cultural landscapes, recreation settings, scenic integrity, and providing for conservation purposes. In addition, the status of the rights-of-way is to be described (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)).

The NTSA states that, “national scenic trails, established as provided in section 5 of this Act, which will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2), and specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved...(16 U.S.C. 1244(f)).” Examples of conservation and preservation attributes that should be discussed in the Affected Environment section may include the presence of designated and recommended wilderness, roadless areas, and important wildlife habitat along the CDNST travel route.

The NEPA affected environment description, as related to forest planning, would normally be consistent with the revision assessment reports and findings that resulted from FSH 1909.12 Chapter 10 Best Available Scientific Information and other processes. However, a Forest Plan revision Environmental Impact Statement analysis would always require describing current conditions and would

likely be more robust than that found in the Forest Plan revision assessment due to specific NEPA processes such as the requirement for methodology and scientific accuracy (40 CFR 1502.24).

The spatial and temporal boundaries of the affected environment must be defined for the cumulative analysis. The components of the affected environment considered in a cumulative analysis are the same resources, ecosystems, and human communities that could be affected by the proposal. However, the spatial limits of a National Scenic Trail cumulative analysis is normally broader than the analysis of the proposal because the cumulative analysis must consider all activities that affect those environmental components, even outside the area affected by the proposal.

#### **E. Analyze the Effects of the Proposed Action and Alternatives**

NEPA reviews must take a “hard look” at impacts that alternatives under consideration would have on the human environment if implemented. This means that there must be evidence that the agency considered all foreseeable direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, used sound science and best available information, and made a logical, rational connection between the facts presented and the conclusions drawn.

Analyzing impacts means considering how the condition of a resource would change, either negatively or positively, as a result of implementing each of the alternatives under consideration. A written impact analysis that focuses on significant issues should be included in the environmental consequences section of a NEPA document. A written impact analysis should: (1) describe the impacts that each of the alternatives under consideration would have on affected resources; (2) use quantitative data to the extent practicable; (3) discuss the importance of impacts through consideration of their context and intensity; and (4) provide a clear, rational link between the facts presented and the conclusions drawn.

**Direct Impacts** - Direct impacts are impacts “which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place” (1508.8(a)). **Indirect Impacts** - Indirect impacts are impacts “which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable” (1508.8(b)). **Cumulative Impacts** - In addition to direct and indirect impacts, the agency is required to analyze the cumulative impacts of each alternative (1508.25(c)). A cumulative impact is an “impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions” (1508.7). A cumulative impact analysis must consider the overall effects of the direct and indirect impacts of the proposed action, when added to the impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions on a given resource.

In order to accurately assess cumulative impacts, the assessment will need to identify past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that affect the same resources as the proposed action or alternatives. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are not limited to agency actions, but could be actions taken or proposed by any federal, state, or local government or a private entity, and are actions that are not included in the proposal or alternatives under consideration. To be considered

under the cumulative analysis section of the EA or EIS, past actions should have ongoing impacts that are presently occurring. Reasonably foreseeable future actions include those federal and non-federal activities not yet undertaken, but sufficiently likely to occur, that a decision maker should take such activities into consideration in reaching a decision. This includes, but is not limited to, activities for which there are existing decisions, funding, or proposals. Reasonably foreseeable future actions do not include those actions that are highly speculative or indefinite. It is important to note that past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are limited to human actions, meaning they are attributable to specific individuals or entities. Naturally occurring incidents, such as insects and disease infestations, are not actions per se and therefore the effects of these types of incidents should be considered as part of the affected environment rather than as part of a cumulative impact analysis.

When describing cumulative impacts, it is generally not necessary to individually list and analyze the effects of each past cumulative action. Rather, it is appropriate to discuss them in sum. [See CEQ guidance: Guidance on the Consideration of Past Actions in Cumulative Effects Analysis.] When describing cumulative impacts in an EA or EIS, you should separate the cumulative impact analysis from the analysis of direct and indirect impacts. While the cumulative impact analysis should include the same elements of a written impact analysis discussed above, in many cases due to the nature of available information, the description of cumulative impacts may be less detailed than description of direct and indirect impacts. For more information on cumulative impact analysis, see CEQ guidance: Considering Cumulative Effects under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The U.S. Forest Service describes that, "...recreation planning and management tools that shape the recreation program include the Recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) [and] Scenery management system... These tools are used to define existing conditions, describe desired conditions, and monitor change. These tools, along with overarching guidance at the national, Department, and Agency levels, serve as the context by which individual national forests and grasslands engage with their communities. In doing so, the unit's recreation-related and amenity-based assets are considered and integrated with a vision for the future that is sustainable and that the unit is uniquely poised to provide. As the current planning rule procedures related to recreation are quite general, these tools contribute to consistency in recreation planning across NFS units. The recreation opportunity spectrum has been an effective land management planning tool since 1982. The recreation opportunity spectrum is a framework for identifying, classifying, planning, and managing a range of recreation settings. The setting, activity, and opportunity for obtaining experience are arranged along a spectrum of classes from primitive to urban. In each setting, a range of activities is accommodated. For example, primitive settings accommodate primarily non-motorized uses, such as backpacking and hiking; whereas roaded settings (such as roaded natural) or rural settings accommodate motorized uses, such as driving for scenery or access for hunting. Through this framework, planners compare the relative tradeoffs of how different patterns of settings across the landscape would accommodate (or not accommodate) recreational preferences, opportunities, and impacts (programmatic indirect environmental effects) with other multiple uses. The scenery management system provides a vocabulary for managing scenery and a systematic approach for determining the relative value and importance of scenery in an NFS unit. The system is used in the context of ecosystem management to inventory and analyze scenery, to assist in establishment of overall

resource goals and objectives, to monitor the scenic resource, and to ensure high-quality scenery for future generations” (Forest Service Planning Rule, PEIS, page 209).

The identification and selection of the rights-of-way (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2)) may lead to varying degrees of effects, but most often a National Scenic Trail management corridor would be the primary area for addressing the effects analysis. Effects on scenic integrity, ROS class conditions, and carrying capacities will generally be based on analysis of the effects of the allowable uses and conditions of use on NST values that are included in the proposed action and each alternative in the NEPA document. This outcome is also a specific decision aspect of the proposed action or alternatives. Utilizing ROS and Scenery Management/Visual Resource Management systems will help ensure that NEPA assessments are systematic and accurately describe the affected environment and expected outcomes from each alternative. The level of precision or certainty of the effects can be guided by the CEQ regulations regarding the use of “methodology and scientific accuracy” (40 CFR 1502.24) and the information needed to support a reasoned choice among alternatives (40 CFR 1502.22). Clearly document how the final decision is based on the best available science (36 CFR 219.3), scientific accuracy, and other relevant information needed to understand the reasonably foreseeable adverse effects of a choice between alternatives, the gaps in that information, and the rationale for why a reasoned choice between alternatives can be made at this time. In addition, substantial interference analyses and determinations need to be rigorous and be addressed as part of the cumulative impact (40 CFR 1508.7) and effects (40 CFR 1508.8) analyses and disclosure.

Wilderness evaluations (FSM 1923.03) and NEPA assessments should describe the positive CDNST benefits if roadless areas along the CDNST corridor are recommended for wilderness designation. Protecting wilderness values would include establishing plan components that identifies recommended wilderness as not being suitable for motor vehicle use and mechanized transport. Management of recommended wilderness to protect wilderness characteristics support the conservation purposes of this National Scenic Trail and is harmonious with providing for the CDNST nature and purposes. Another example of conservation and preservation benefits of establishing a CDNST management corridor may include the protection of important wildlife connectivity areas through establishing the extent of the CDNST corridor to reflect this conservation need. Forest plans are expected to provide for ecological conditions to contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species and to conserve species that have been proposed for listing, or are candidates for listing, under the Endangered Species Act.

One of the strongest combinations of conservation protection for undeveloped federal public lands is overlapping Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, and National Scenic Trail designations. Each congressional designation offers protections that the other does not. Overlapping designations within roadless areas would help ensure National Forest System lands are protected for current and future generations by protecting wilderness characteristics, outstandingly remarkable values of eligible wild and scenic rivers, and the nature and purposes of national scenic trails. These overlapping designations provide a complimentary framework for a high-level of protection from overuse and development of federal lands.



Specific to National Scenic Trails, the NTSA states that, “national scenic trails, established as provided in section 5 of this Act, which will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass (16 U.S.C. 1242(a)(2), and that comprehensive planning will describe specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved...(16 U.S.C. 1244(f)).” The nature and purposes policy for the CDNST is: “The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor” (2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2353.42, and 74 FR 51116—Notice of final amendments to comprehensive plan and final directives).

Management direction for Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roded Natural, Rural, and Urban ROS classes allow uses that would substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of a NST if the allocation desired conditions are realized. Where the allowed non-motorized activities reflect the purposes for which the National Trail was established, the establishment of Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized ROS classes and high and very high scenic integrity allocations would normally protect the nature and purposes (values) of a NST. See the glossary for ROS class descriptions.

Land management planning NEPA related maps, along with associated geospatial data, may assist with the understanding of the relationships between providing for CDNST corridor and other resources values. As such, public participation in the review and assessment of a land management plan NEPA proposed action and alternatives would be advanced through the public availability of the following geospatial data layers—only Forest Service planning handbook references are provided, but similar geospatial information should also be available for planning purposes for BLM public lands:

- Administrative Boundaries (FSH 1909.12 part 22.2)
- Land Ownership (FSH 1909.12 part 22.2)
- Designated Areas, including Recommended Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Suitable and Eligible Wild & Scenic Rivers, Inventoried Roadless Areas, and the extent of the CDNST management corridor/rights-of-way to be established (acres) (FSH 1909.12 parts 22.2 and 24)
- Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes to be established – Summer and Winter (FSH 1909.12 parts 22.2 and 23.23a)
- Scenic Integrity/VRM Objectives to be established (FSH 1909.12 parts 22.2 and 23.23f)
- Lands that May be Suitable for Timber Production (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 60)
- CDNST travel route as an independent data layer (FSH 1909.12 part 23.231)
- NFS roads and trails with attribute data, including existing road maintenance levels and trail travel route fundamentals such as Designed Use, Managed Use, and Trail Class (FSH 1909.12 part 23.231)
- Species-specific Plan Components for At-risk Species, including where the plan components apply—e.g., Canada lynx linkage/connectivity areas (FSH 1909.12 parts 22.2 and 23.13)

The effects analysis for the development of the revised Forest Plan NEPA proposed action and alternatives should include cross-tabular tables that explore and disclose the relationship between (1) the proposed CDNST travel route location and management corridor/rights-of-way extent and (2) the intersection and overlap with the proposed ROS Classes and Scenic Integrity Objectives allocations. In addition, the analyses need to describe the effects the establishment of a CDNST management corridor and associated plan components on outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish resources.

For each alternative, the analysis of environmental effects needs to address how the land management planning decisions will achieve:

1. Providing for the nature and purposes of the National Trail, including protecting the National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings;
2. Identifying the National Trail primary users;
3. Ensuring carrying capacity is not exceeded; and
4. Preventing other uses from substantially interfering with the nature and purposes of the National Trail.

The Record of Decision that accompanies the approved plan and NEPA selected alternative needs to clearly describe the planning decisions for the National Trail travel route and the National Trail Management Corridor. In addition, the ROD must document how the best available scientific information was used for recreation and scenery assessments to inform planning, the plan components, and other plan content, including the plan monitoring program.

## **F. New Information, Monitoring, and Modifying Decisions**

The CEQ regulations tie monitoring and enforcement of mitigation measures to implementation of the decision. The CEQ regulations state that “[a] monitoring and enforcement program shall be adopted and summarized where applicable for any mitigation” (40 CFR 1505.2). Further, “agencies may provide monitoring to assure their decisions are carried out and should do so in important cases. Mitigation and other conditions established...shall be implemented by the lead agency” (40 CFR 1505.3).

Through a discussion of when to prepare a supplemental EIS, the CEQ regulations also provide guidance about the conditions under which an existing NEPA decision might be changed (40 CFR 1502.9). This approach suggests that a supplemented NEPA document may be needed when there are significant new conditions or information relevant to environmental concerns. While the CEQ regulations indicate the kinds of situations that may suggest a change to a NEPA document, individual agency implementing regulations or policy for the NEPA or other applicable laws and regulation may also provide guidance about when decisions may be changed.

As a rule of thumb, if the proposal has not yet been implemented, or if the EIS concerns an ongoing program, EISs that are more than 5 years old should be carefully reexamined to determine if the

criteria in Section 40 CFR 1502.9 compel preparation of an EIS/EA supplement (Forty Questions, Council on Environmental Quality).

Specific to the CDNST, the amended CDNST Comprehensive Plan (2009), FSM 2353.4 (2009), FSH 1909.12 part 24.43 (2015), and BLM MS-6280 constituted new information (40 CFR 1502.9(c)). The responsible official must review the new information and determine its significance to environmental concerns and bearing on current Forest Plan direction and associated EIS (FSH 1909.15 - 18). In regards to environmental documents for enacted Forest Plans, determine if Management Area (MA) prescriptions and plan components along the CDNST travel route and corridor provide for the nature and purposes of the CDNST (FSM 2353.42 and FSM 2353.44b(1)). If not, the plan should be amended or revised following the appropriate NEPA process to address the planning requirements of the NTSA (16 U.S.C. 1244(5)(f) and FSM 2353.44(b)(1)). The BLM has similar requirements for addressing new information (Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1).

Management actions must ensure that CDNST values are not degraded during the period of CDNST comprehensive planning through staged or stepped-down decision-making processes. Project proposals may bring the CDNST into the scope of a NEPA process and affect alternatives due to potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of past actions and new proposals that may substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST (40 CFR 1508.25(c)). This in turn could trigger the need for a land management plan amendment, and on National Forest System lands, the development of a site-specific CDNST unit plan.

## Chapter VI. Glossary

The following presents key definitions that provide context for many of the discussions in this handbook:

- Conservation. The protection, preservation, management, or restoration of natural environments, ecological communities, and species.
- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST). The National Parks and Recreation Act of November 10, 1978 authorized and designated the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) (Pub. L. No. 95-625, 92 Stat. 3467), which amended the NTSA of 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1241-1251). [See National Scenic Trail.]:
  - CDNST Comprehensive Plan. Statutorily required plan providing direction and guidance for the administration and management of a congressionally designated National Scenic Trail or National Historic Trail. The plan includes the identification of the nature and purposes, goals and objectives, all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved, carrying capacity, and high potential segments for the national trail management corridor. Comprehensive planning may be accomplished through staged or stepped-down decision processes.

- CDNST Corridor. A CDNST corridor is referred to on maps published in 1978 as part of the establishment of this National Scenic Trail. The selected rights-of-way and management corridor extent must be of sufficient width to encompass National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings. [See National Trail Management Corridor.]
- CDNST Designated Area. The CDNST designated area is the extent of the selected rights-of-way. Land management plans may describe the CDNST designated area as that of a management area or national trail management corridor. [See National Trail Right(s)-of-Way and National Trail Management Corridor.]
- CDNST Nature and Purposes. The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor” (2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, FSM 2353.42, and Federal Register Notice on October 5, 2009 (74 FR 51116)). [See National Trail Nature and Purposes.]
- CDNST Travel Route. The CDNST travel route is normally a standard terra trail that has a surface consisting predominantly of the ground and that is designed and managed to accommodate use on that surface. A National Scenic Trail travel route is located within an established management area or national trail management corridor. [See FSM 2353.44b part 9.]
- CDNST Unit Plan. The Forest Service outlines the requirement of a CDNST Unit Plan in FSM 2353.44b. In general, a site-specific CDNST plan that is developed through staged (or phased) decisionmaking may serve the purpose of the Forest Service directive guidance to fulfill the National Trails System Act comprehensive planning requirements.
- Cultural Landscape. A geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or esthetic values. There are four non-mutually exclusive types of cultural landscapes: historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, and ethnographic landscapes.
- National Scenic Trail. “A continuous, long-distance trail located on the ground by the land-managing agency along the congressionally designated route, in coordination with the trail administering agency. A National Scenic Trail provides maximum compatible outdoor recreation opportunity and conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, and cultural resources, qualities, values, and associated settings and the primary use or uses of the areas through which such trails may pass. National Scenic Trails represent desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river, forest, and other areas, as well as landforms that exhibit significant characteristics of the physiographic regions of the Nation. National Scenic Trails include the tread, or the trail path, and the trail setting which is included within the National Trail

Management Corridor. National Scenic Trails may contain water sources or structures which are designed to support and provide for the safety of travelers along the trail.” (BLM MS-6280) National scenic and national historic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related-public-use facilities. Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted by the Secretary charged with the administration of the trail. Other uses include recreational and resource uses that may be incompatible with the nature and purposes for which the CDNST was established and designated. Reasonable efforts shall be made to provide sufficient access opportunities to such trails and, to the extent practicable, efforts be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established. The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any National Scenic Trail shall be prohibited.

- National Scenic Trail Values. Executive Order 13195 – Trails for America in the 21st Century describes that that agencies will, protect the trail corridors associated with national scenic trails...to the degrees necessary to ensure that the values for which each trail was established remain intact....” The values of National Scenic Trails include: (1) visitor experience opportunities and settings, and (2) the conservation and protection of scenic, natural, historical, and cultural qualities of the corridor. [See Nature and Purposes; and National Trail Resources, Qualities, and Values.]
- National Trail Associated Settings. “The geographic extent of the resources, qualities, and values or landscape elements within the surrounding environment that influence the trail experience and contribute to resource protection. Settings associated with a National Scenic or Historic Trail include scenic, historic, cultural, recreation, natural (including biological, geological, and scientific), and other landscape elements (see resources, qualities, and values).” (BLM MS-6280)
- National Trail Management Corridor. “Allocation established through the land use planning process, pursuant to Section 202 of Federal Land Policy and Management Act and Section 7(a)(2) of the National Trails System Act (“rights-of-way”) for a public land area of sufficient width within which to encompass National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings and the primary use or uses that are present or to be restored.” (BLM MS-6280)
- National Trail Nature and Purposes. “The term used to describe the character, characteristics, and congressional intent for a designated National Trail, including the resources, qualities, values, and associated settings of the areas through which such trails may pass; the primary use or uses of a National Trail; and activities promoting the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of National Trails.” (BLM MS-6280)
- National Trail Right(s)-of-Way. “Term used in Section 7(a)(2) of the National Trails System Act to describe the corridor selected by the National Trail administering agency in the trailwide Comprehensive Plan and which includes the area of land that is of sufficient width to encompass National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings. The National Trail Right-of-Way, in the context of the National Trails System Act, differs from a Federal Land Policy and

Management Act (FLPMA) Title V right-of-way, which is a grant issued pursuant to FLPMA authorities. It becomes a key consideration in establishing the National Trail Management Corridor in a Resource Management Plan” (BLM MS-6280). In addition, the selection of the rights-of-way must be consonant of the implications of guidance found in NTSA Section 7(b), 7(d), 7(e), and 7(f).

- National Trail Resources, Qualities, and Values. “The significant scenic, historic, cultural, recreation, natural (including biological, geological, and scientific), and other landscape areas through which such trails may pass as identified in the National Trails System Act.” (BLM MS-6280)
- Recreation Opportunity Spectrum: The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum planning framework is the recognized framework for stratifying and defining classes of outdoor recreation environments, activities, and experience opportunities through land management planning. The CDNST Comprehensive Plan, Chapter IV.B.5, recreation resource management direction is to use the ROS System in delineating and integrating recreation opportunities in managing the CDNST. The settings, activities, and opportunities for obtaining experiences have been arranged along a continuum or spectrum divided into six classes that are described below along with recommended plan components. The definition of each ROS class describes six setting characteristics: Access, Remoteness, Naturalness, Non-Recreation Uses, On-Site Management, Visitor Management, Social Encounters, and Visitor Impacts. The following descriptions presents plan components that link specific ROS characteristics to the appropriate ROS class.
  - Primitive: Primitive ROS settings encompass large, wild, remote, and predominately natural landscapes. Additional primitive ROS settings may be scattered across the forest, often surrounded by SPNM settings. The setting should essentially be an unmodified natural environment. Natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. The area may provide for wildlife connectivity across landscapes. Primitive ROS settings contain no motorized and mechanized vehicles and there is little probability of seeing other groups. They provide quiet solitude away from roads and people or other parties, are generally free of human development, and facilitate self-reliance and discovery. Signing, and other infrastructure is minimal and constructed of rustic, native materials. Few if any management controls imposed on visitors on-site. Inventoried Primitive settings are least 3 miles from all roads, trails, rivers, lakes and railroads with motorized use. Standards: (1) Motor and mechanized vehicles are not allowed in Primitive settings; and (2) Management actions must result in Very High Scenic Integrity—naturally occurring incidents, such as fire, insects and disease are not defined as human-caused deviations in the landscape. Guidelines: (1) No new permanent structures should be constructed in desired Primitive ROS settings since structures may degrade the unmodified character of these landscapes; (2) Less than 6 parties per day encountered on trails and less than 3 parties visible at campsite since an increase in the number of groups may lead to a sense of crowding; and (3) No roads, timber harvest, or mineral extraction are allowed in order to protect the remoteness and naturalness of the area.

Suitability: (1) Motorized and mechanized recreation travel are not suitable; and (2) Lands are not suitable for timber production.

- Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM): Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings provide opportunities for exploration, challenge, and self-reliance. The area is characterized by a predominantly natural environment where natural ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease exist. The area may contribute to wildlife connectivity corridors. Closed and revegetated roads may be present, but are managed so as to not dominate the landscape or detract from the naturalness of the SPNM setting. Rustic structures such as signs and foot bridges are occasionally present to direct use and/or protect the setting's natural and cultural resources. These rustic constructed features are built from native materials or those that mimic native materials. Inventoried SPNM areas are ½ to 3 miles from all roads, trails, rivers, lakes and railroads with motorized use. SPNM settings that are established through forest planning have plan components that provide for a SPNM setting for an extent of at least 1-mile (or at least ½ mile if adjacent to a Primitive setting). Standards: (1) Motor vehicle use by the general public is not allowed; and (2) Management actions must result in High or Very High Scenic Integrity—naturally occurring incidents, such as fire, insects and disease are not defined as human-caused deviations in the landscape. Guidelines: (1) The development scale of recreation facilities should be 0-1 to protect the undeveloped character of desired SPNM settings; (2) Less than 15 parties per day encountered on trails and less than 6 parties visible at campsite, since an increased in the number of groups may lead to a sense of crowding; (3) Vegetative management may range from prescribed fire to very limited timber harvest for the purpose of maintaining a natural setting; and (4) Timber harvest should not be conducted for the purpose of providing for trail clearing limits including hazard tree removal, since timber harvest actions may degrade access, remoteness, and naturalness characteristics of the SPNM setting. Suitability: (1) Motorized recreation travel is not suitable; and (2) Lands are not suitable for timber production.
  
- Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM): Semi-Primitive Motorized settings provide motorized recreation opportunities in backcountry settings. Vegetation management does not dominate the landscape or detract from the experience of visitors. Routes are designed for Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs) and high clearance vehicles that connect to local communities, access key destinations and vantage points, provide short day trips on scenic loops or facilitate longer and even overnight expeditions. Visitors challenge themselves as they explore vast, rugged landscapes. Mountain bikes and other mechanized equipment may also be present. Facilities are rustic and are used for the purpose of protecting the setting's natural and cultural resources. Bridges are sometimes present to accommodate foot, horse and ATV traffic but are built from native or natural appearing materials that blend with the surrounding landscape and maintain the semi-primitive character of the setting. There may also be nodes that function as portals for visitors to park their ATVs and explore adjacent Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Primitive settings. SPM areas are ½ mile from primitive motorized roads and trails, not closer than ½ mile of better than primitive roads.

- Roaded Natural: Potential Roaded Natural subclasses:
  - Roaded Natural (RN) - Mostly equal opportunities to affiliate with other groups or be isolated from sights and sounds of human activities. The landscape is generally natural with modifications moderately evident. Concentration of users is low to moderate, but facilities for group activities may be present. Challenge and risk opportunities are generally not important in this class. Opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized activities are present. Construction standards and facility design incorporate conventional motorized uses.
  - Roaded Modified (RM) - Roaded Modified has been used as a subclass of RN by several Forests and Regions for many years. Roaded Modified has typically been defined as areas exhibiting evidence of forest management activities that are dominant on the landscape. Examples of RM include heavily logged areas, evidence of mining, oil/gas, or other minerals extraction activities.
- Rural: Area is characterized by a substantially modified natural environment. Opportunities to affiliate with others are prevalent. The convenience of recreation sites and opportunities are more important than a natural landscape or setting. Sights and sounds of man are readily evident, and the concentration of users is often moderate to high. Developed sites, roads, and trails are designed for moderate to high uses.
- Recreation Setting (Forest Service). The social, managerial, and physical attributes of a place that, when combined, provide a distinct set of recreation opportunities. The Forest Service uses the recreation opportunity spectrum to define recreation settings and categorize them into six distinct classes: primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, rural, and urban.
- Recreation Setting (BLM H-8320-1). The collective distinguishing attributes (RSCs) of a landscape. Recreation settings determine the production of recreation opportunities.
- Recreation Setting Characteristics (RSC BLM H-8320-1): The RSC are derived from the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. The RSC are categorized as physical, social and operational components and are further subdivided into specific characteristics (attributes). These characteristics are categorized across a spectrum of classes that describe a range of qualities and conditions of a recreation setting, for example primitive to urban.
- Recreation Setting Characteristics (BLM H-8320-1).
  - *Primitive*: More than ½ mile from either mechanized or motorized trails and routes. Undisturbed natural landscape. No structures. Foot/horse and water trails only. Fewer than 3 encounters/day at campsites and fewer than 6 encounters/day on travel routes.



- Fewer than or equal to 3 people/group. No alteration of the natural terrain. Footprints only observed. Sounds of people rare. Foot, horse, and nonmotorized float boat travel. No maps or brochures available onsite. Staff rarely present to provide onsite assistance. No onsite posts/signs of visitor regulations, interpretive info, or ethics. Few use restrictions.
- *Back Country*: Within ½ mile of mechanized trails/routes. Natural landscape with modifications in harmony with surroundings and not visually obvious. Developed trails made mostly of native materials such as log bridges. Structures are rare and isolated. 7-15 encounters/day on travel routes. 4-6 people per group. Areas of alteration uncommon. Little surface vegetation wear observed. Sounds of people infrequent. Mountain bikes and perhaps other mechanized use, but all is nonmotorized. Basic maps, staff infrequently present (e.g., seasonally, high-use periods) to provide onsite assistance. Basic user regulations at key access points. Minimum use restrictions.
  - Scenic Character (Forest Service). A combination of the physical, biological, and cultural images that gives an area its scenic identity and contributes to its sense of place. Scenic character provides a frame of reference from which to determine scenic attractiveness and to measure scenic integrity (36 CFR 219.19).
  - Scenic Integrity Levels (Forest Service). Scenic Integrity indicates the degree of intactness and wholeness of the Landscape Character; conversely, Scenic Integrity is a measure of the degree of visible disruption of the Landscape Character. A landscape with very minimal visual disruption is considered to have very high Scenic Integrity. Those landscapes having increasingly discordant relationships among scenic attributes are viewed as having diminished Scenic Integrity. Scenic Integrity is expressed and mapped in terms of Scenic Integrity levels: Very High, High, Moderate, Low, Very Low, and Unacceptably Low. Scenic Integrity is used to describe an existing landscape condition, a standard for management, or a desired future condition.
    - VERY HIGH. (Unaltered) preservation. VERY HIGH scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character "is" intact with only minute if any deviations. The existing landscape character and sense of place is expressed at the highest possible level.
    - HIGH (Appears Unaltered) retention. HIGH scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character "appears" intact. Deviations may be present but must repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the landscape character so completely and at such scale that they are not evident.
    - MODERATE (Slightly Altered) partial retention. MODERATE scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character "appears slightly altered." Noticeable deviations must remain visually subordinate to the landscape character being viewed.

- LOW (Moderately Altered) modification. LOW scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character "appears moderately altered." Deviations begin to dominate the valued landscape character being viewed but they borrow valued attributes such as size, shape, edge effect and pattern of natural openings, vegetative type changes or architectural styles outside the landscape being viewed. They should not only appear as valued character outside the landscape being viewed but compatible or complimentary to the character within.
- VERY LOW (Heavily Altered) maximum modification. VERY LOW scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character "appears heavily altered." Deviations may strongly dominate the valued landscape character. They may not borrow from valued attributes such as size, shape, edge effect and pattern of natural openings, vegetative type changes or architectural styles within or outside the landscape being viewed. However deviations must be shaped and blended with the natural terrain (landforms) so that elements such as unnatural edges, roads, landings, and structures do not dominate the composition.
- UNACCEPTABLY LOW scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character being viewed appears extremely altered. Deviations are extremely dominant and borrow little if any form, line, color, texture, pattern or scale from the landscape character. Landscapes at this level of integrity need rehabilitation. This level should only be used to inventory existing integrity. It must not be used as a management objective.
- Substantial Interference. "Determination that an activity or use affects (hinders or obstructs) the nature and purposes of a designated National Trail (see nature and purposes)." (BLM MS-6280) Black's law dictionary defines substantial evidence as the amount of evidence which a reasoning mind would accept as sufficient to support a particular conclusion and consists of more than a mere scintilla.

## **Chapter VIII. Disclosure**

The information in this handbook supplements and clarifies agency planning processes. This handbook provides a description and summary of relevant National Trails System Act requirements that offer foundational rationale for understanding and providing for the nature and purposes of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. Nonetheless, this paper should not be seen as legal advice to address National Trails System Act and other land management planning requirements.

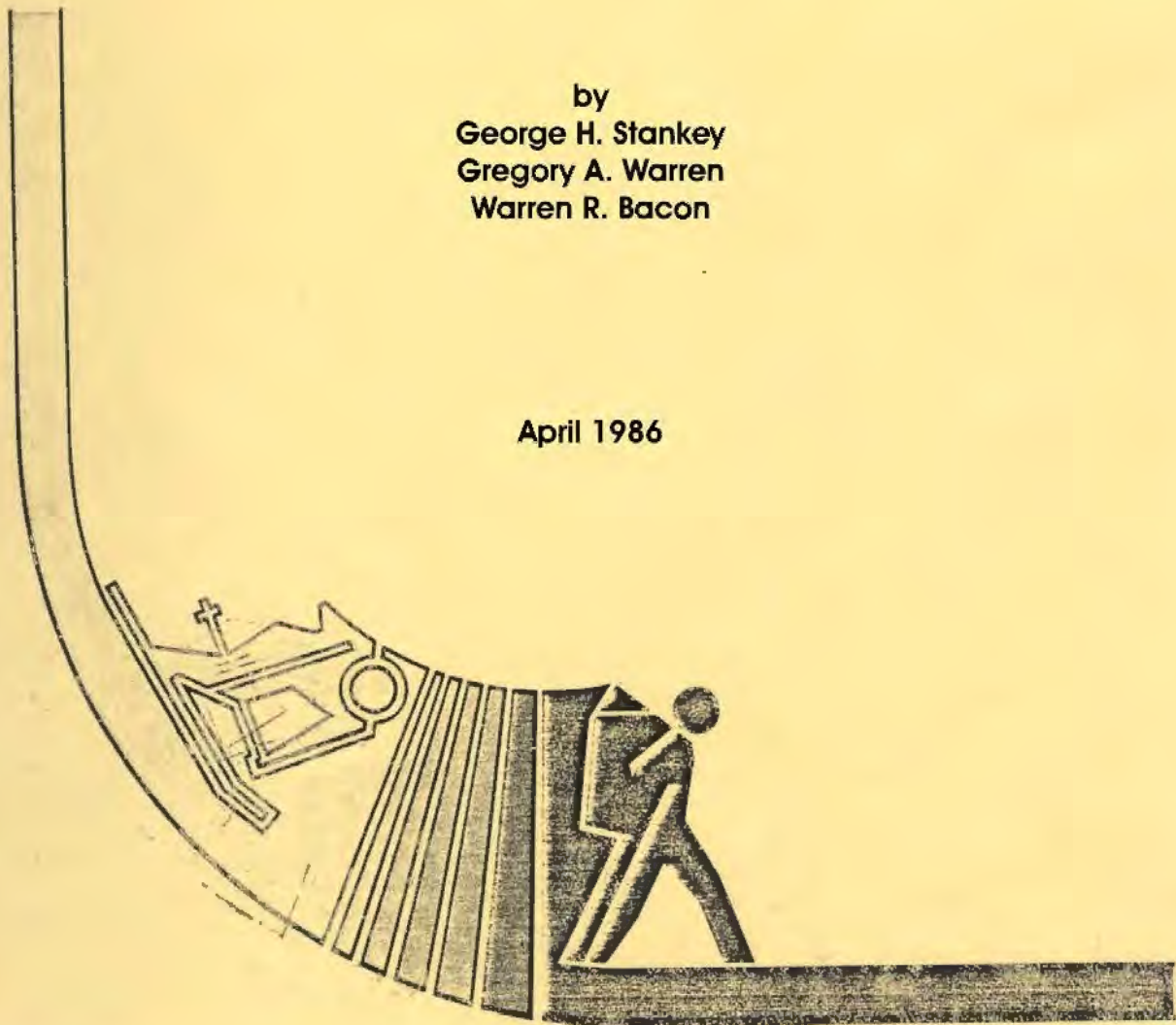
# Recreation Opportunity Setting

as a

## Management Tool

by  
George H. Stankey  
Gregory A. Warren  
Warren R. Bacon

April 1986



**USING THE ROS SYSTEM  
AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL**

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APRIL 1986

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidance for managing each ROS setting for a given set of conditions and experience opportunities. Maintaining or altering the conditions of the setting indicators to facilitate the possibly visitors gaining certain experiences is the key. The primary purpose of using the ROS system is to provide a diverse range of recreation settings so that people can realize a diverse range of recreation experience opportunities.

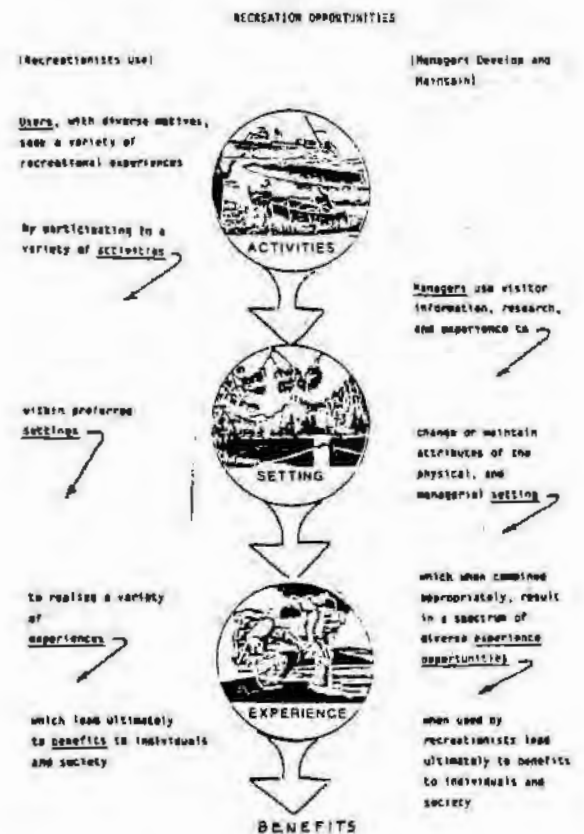
Based upon research on visitor preferences as well as professional judgments, seven indicators have been identified that represent aspects of recreation settings that facilitate certain experiences occurring and that managers can influence. Guidelines for these indicators and their underlying rationale are explained below.

The rationale for the guidelines is critical. Because it is not possible to develop specific guidelines for every possible contingency, managers often need to be able to formulate their own to deal with situations confronting them. Understanding the intent of the general ROS allocation, understanding what it is we are trying to achieve when we direct actions at an indicator should lead to the formulation of guidelines consistent with the overall goals of the ROS allocation.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ROS PROCESS

It is helpful to review the underlying concepts of the ROS. The ROS is based on the idea that visitors participate in different recreation activities in different settings in order to realize certain experiences (see Figure 1). The key component of this framework is the recreation setting; it is what managers can influence. A recreation opportunity setting is defined as the combination of physical, biological, social, and managerial conditions that give value to a place. By combining variations in these conditions, it is possible to provide a diversity of recreational settings for visitors to enjoy.

The end product of this process is the experiences that visitors receive. There are many different types of experiences. Some relate to solitude, risk, and challenge and we typically associate these with opportunities at the primitive end of the spectrum. Others relate to meeting and enjoying others or family togetherness; generally we associate these with the developed end of the spectrum. The management of a setting can only influence the likelihood that a particular experience will be achieved. It is likely that visitors will find risk in settings where natural conditions prevail and there are few facilities. Conversely, meeting and enjoying others is likely to occur in places where management has facilitated the opportunity to be around others. Both these experiences, however, can occur in other settings.



For further discussion of the ROS as it relates to management, see Roger N. Clark and George H. Stankey, *The recreation opportunity spectrum: a framework for planning, management, and research*. General Technical Report PNW-98. Portland, OR, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station; 1979. 32 p.

#### SETTING INDICATORS

The seven indicators include access, remoteness, nonrecreation uses, on-site management, visitor management, social encounters, and visitor impacts. Their definition and underlying rationale are as follows:

1. Access - Includes the type of transportation used by the recreationists within the area and the level of access development, such as trails and roads.

Access influences both the levels and types of recreation use an area receives. Improved access can lead to increased use levels and resource impacts and an increased need for management action. Access affects the way in which some recreation experiences can be realized. For example, high quality access can reduce opportunities for solitude, risk, and challenge; on the other hand, it promotes convenience and facilitates experiences associated with meeting and enjoying others. Changing the nature of access to and within an area can greatly affect the kind of recreation place it is in terms of the type and level of use it receives, the nature and extent of resource impacts that occur, and the kind of management actions needed.

2. Remoteness - The distance of an area from the nearest road, access point, or center of human habitation or development.

Remoteness concerns the extent to which individuals perceive themselves away from the sights and sounds of human activity. All other things being equal, the greater the distance, the more likely the perception of remoteness will occur. Vegetative or topographic screening can also increase this sense of remoteness and the associated experiences of solitude and naturalness. For some kinds of recreational experiences, particularly those derived from the more developed recreation settings, remoteness is of little relevance.


3. Nonrecreation uses - Refers to the type and extent of nonrecreation uses present in the area, such as timber harvesting, grazing, and mining.

Nonrecreation uses conflict with opportunities at the primitive end of the spectrum and their associated experiences, such as solitude and the enjoyment of naturalness. In other recreation settings, nonrecreation uses do not necessarily detract from the visitor's enjoyment. For example, recreationists in roaded modified areas often find grazing and logging acceptable. But these users do express concern about large clearcuts, so the scale at which the activity is conducted, as well as the activity itself, influences the visitor's experience. The lasting effects of an activity (mines, clearcuts) as well as short-term effects (logging trucks, noise) are also important.

The key to managing nonrecreation activities in each ROS setting is to use a compatible visual quality level and its corresponding guidelines. The visual quality level describes varying degrees of naturalness or levels of allowable alteration of the natural setting. The compatibility relationship of ROS classes and visual quality levels is best summarized in the following matrix (figure 2).

## COMPATIBILITY MATRIX

ROS CLASSES	Preservation	Retention	Partial Retention	Modification	Max Mod	Unacceptable Mod
Primitive	FC	MC				
SPNM	FC	FC lg ret	MC			
SPM		FC lg ret	FC lg PR	RC		
Roaded Natural		FC	FC	MC		
Modified Roaded		FC	FC	FC	FC	
Rural		FC	FC	FC	MC	
Urban		FC	FC	FC	MC	

 Fully Compatible Norm  
 FC Fully Compatible but may not exceed norm in costs  
 MC Marginally compatible only at upper end of VDD  
 RC Rarely Compatible

Achieving the desired level of visual quality must be taken into account. Other resource objectives, desired future visual character, existing character of the natural landscape and variables such as observer position and speed, distance from the activity, scale, and season of visitor use. See USDA Landscape Management Handbook Series for further guidance.

4. On-site management - The on-site management indicator refers to modifications such as facilities, vegetation management, and site design.

The appropriateness of on-site management should be considered in light of four elements:

- a. Extent of the modification. Is it limited to a few isolated locations or distributed throughout the area?
- b. Apparentness of the modification. Does the use of native materials blend the modification into the natural setting or do artificial materials make the modification readily apparent?
- c. Complexity of the modification. A bridge could be a simple log footpath or a complicated engineering effort.
- d. Facilities. Facilities can be for the convenience or safety of visitors or for resource protection. In some areas, no facilities whatsoever are appropriate; in others, all possible conveniences would be appropriate.

In general, the appropriateness of on-site modifications increases as one moves from the primitive end of the spectrum to the urban.

5. Visitor management - Includes the management actions undertaken to maintain conditions and enhance visitor experiences within an ROS class.



Recreation is a voluntary, self-selected behavior. A major reason underlying participation is to get away from the controls and constraints of the everyday world. Thus, there is a need for care and sensitivity in how visitor management is implemented. The presence of controls and the way in which they are implemented is as much a part of the recreation setting as the physical environment.

A continuum of management actions can be described, ranging from subtle techniques such as site design and providing visitors with information to strict rules and regulations on visitors. At the primitive end of the spectrum, actions should seek to influence behavior indirectly through steps such as the use of information and education programs that improve visitor behavior. In developed settings, controls are more directly imposed on visitors; site design to influence behavior may also be used. However, the "principle of minimum regulation" should apply across the spectrum; the rules and regulations that are implemented should only be those deemed necessary to protect the essential qualities of the BOS class.

In some opportunity settings, controls are expected and appropriate; for instance, people seek some developed settings for the security and safety they provide. Yet elsewhere, such on-site controls would detract from desired experiences such as independence and self-reliance.

The type and level of information provided visitors as well as where it is provided (on-site vs. off-site) facilitates some experiences, but hinders others. Where experiences such as self-discovery, challenge, and risk are important, information has the potential of adversely affecting the visitor. In other situations, information might be critical to achieving desired experiences. Generally, on-site information is appropriate at the developed end of the spectrum while off-site sources are better at the primitive end.

6. Social encounters - The number, type, and character of other recreationists met in the area, along travel ways, or camped within sight or sound.

Some recreation experiences require few if any contacts with people in other groups is important while in other situations such encounters are actively sought as part of the experience. Social encounters are a measure of the extent to which an area provides experiences such as solitude, defined as little or no contact with nongroup members as well as the opportunity for social interaction, defined as seeing and meeting others. Increasing numbers of visitors to an area changes the kind of recreational experience offered, attracting new users and causing others to leave. Party size limits are desirable to further reduce conflicts between large and small parties.

7. Visitor impacts - Includes those impacts caused by recreation use and affecting resources such as soil, vegetation, air, water, and wildlife.

Human use of resources inevitably results in impacts and recreation is no exception. Any use creates some impact; even the lightest recreation use can produce significant impacts. Thus, the relevant question confronting managers is not "how can impacts be prevented" but "what level of impact is consistent with the type of opportunity being supplied."

The effects of visitor impacts can influence the recreationist's experience. At the primitive end of the ROS, recreationists expect a natural appearing environment with impacts substantially unnoticeable. Towards the rural end of the spectrum, signs of human impact become more acceptable. Sub-elements of this indicator include air, water, vegetation, and fish and wildlife.

Air quality is important area wide in all ROS classes and it is also important at local sites. Local sites, such as camping areas where smoke from campfires can obscure views or create unnatural smells (e.g., burning plastic) should have specific air quality objectives.

Water quality is important in all classes.

Vegetation condition is a major indicator in creating the setting, with fewer impacts desirable at the primitive end of the spectrum. The guidelines are based on maximum impacts to be expected when "no trace"<sup>1</sup> practices are being used by visitors. Vegetation impacts at the rural end of the spectrum are controlled by designating and hardening sites.

Impacts on wildlife habitat is a major concern. These impacts can stem from physical alteration of wildlife habitat or from habitat modification caused by recreationists that leads to species displacement. At the primitive end of the ROS, where naturalness is a key part of the setting, maintaining the natural behavior and existence of fish and wildlife populations is essential. The human-impacted sites and trail density guidelines, under each ROS class, were derived for maintaining various degrees of naturalness for black bear populations in a high Cascades environment. Indicator species should be developed for specific areas and used to monitor recreation-related impacts on fish and wildlife.

These seven indicators comprise the material from which a spectrum of recreation opportunities are developed. Identifying and defining these indicators is only a first step. What is needed next is to specify the condition of each indicator considered both acceptable and appropriate in each recreation opportunity setting. This involves establishment of guidelines for each indicator. By specifying the range of acceptable conditions for each indicator in each opportunity setting, we identify the specific character of that setting as well as needed management actions.

#### SETTING GUIDELINES

In setting guidelines for management actions, two general notions are important. First, the overall objective is to provide a range of conditions. Thus, the condition of each indicator should show a progression from one end of the spectrum to another. This implies that it is necessary to consider the entire spectrum when establishing guidelines because it is necessary to know how the status of a particular indicator in a given ROS class relates to the condition of that indicator in another class. It is also important to appreciate that a range of conditions can be described within any ROS class; there is not a single set of conditions that areas within a class must meet. In this way, additional diversity is assured.

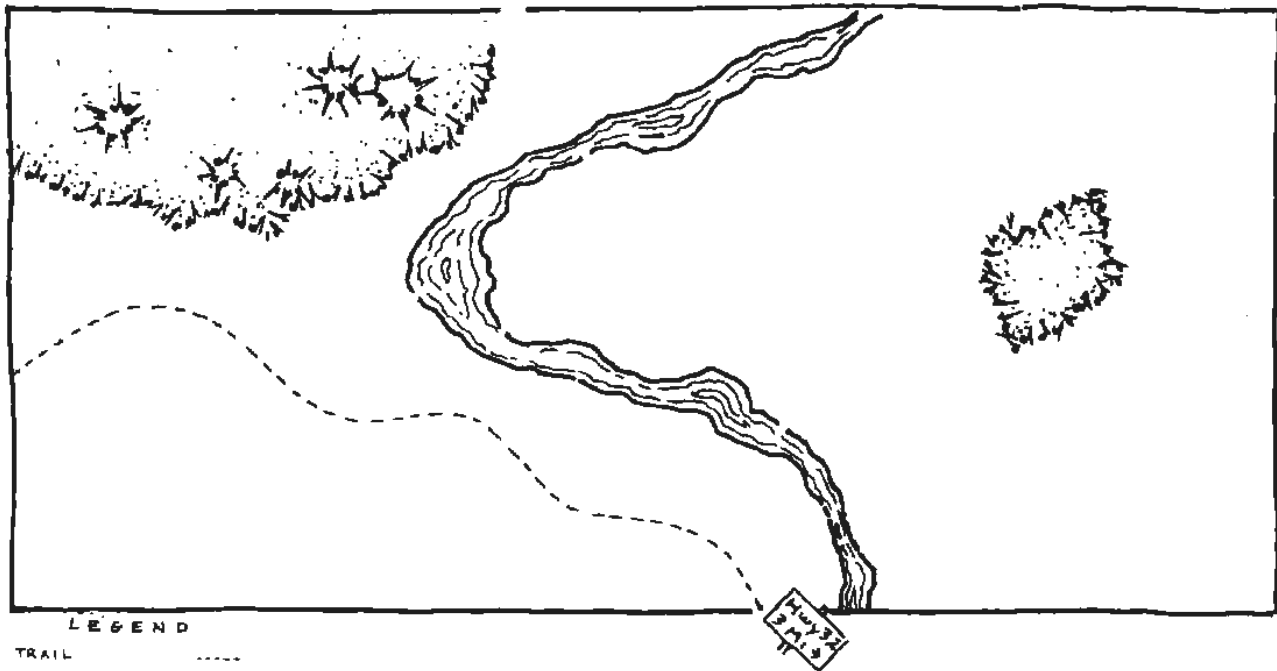
Second, it is essential to link the guidelines to the recreation experiences sought. It is the experiences that people receive from recreation that is the end product of management; therefore, we need to consider the probable effects specific actions will have on those experiences. The key words here are "appropriate" and "acceptable"; what conditions meet these criteria in each ROS class. Arriving at a decision as to what constitutes appropriate and acceptable requires judgments based upon research, management experience, and public input.

#### EXPERIENCE GOALS

For each ROS setting, a general goal as to the kinds of experiences typically associated with an area managed for this ROS class can be defined. For each ROS class description that follows an experience goal has been identified.

USE OF SKETCHES A sketch is shown for each ROS class depicting what an area might look like if managed for those conditions. The same area is shown for each class only modified to show the changing conditions. The sketches are limited to showing the indicator conditions of access, nonrecreation use, remoteness, and some on-site management.

PRIMITIVE



Experience Goal - To provide visitors with a very high probability of getting away from the sights and sounds of other people, to be independent) to enjoy nature, and to practice outdoor skills.

Setting Indicators

Guidelines

ACCESS

Access ranges from cross-country travel to providing trails for nonmotorized use that are constructed and maintained to more and most difficult standards (see FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook).

Bridges are provided only for significant resource protection needs and for extreme safety hazards. When bridges are provided, they are to be constructed of native materials and simple design to meet only minimum needs.

Road/trail management objectives should "prohibit" any motorized use of any existing primitive roads or trails.

REMOTENESS

Area at least 3 miles from all roads, railroads, or trails with motorized use, or areas where because of natural features the sights and sounds of humans are not evident.



PRIMITIVE (cont.)

Setting Indicators

NONRECREATION USES

Guidelines

Setting should essentially be an unmodified natural environment. No timber harvest or mineral extraction is allowed. Range conditions of "excellent" are appropriate. VQO of preservation is the norm. Existing primitive roads should be revegetated if not used as recreation trail. Structures should be extremely rare. Any remnants should be removed or allowed to deteriorate in place. Cultural or historic resources of state significance that are eligible for or are listed in the National Register may be stabilized and preserved.

ON-SITE MANAGEMENT

Facilities are generally not provided except in isolated cases to protect fragile resources. Must be of simple design and natural materials when used. No site modification for facilities. Compatible site development is level 1. See FSM 2331.11c.

Camping areas to be located at sites within coniferous forest areas where possible. In all cases, sites should be located to take advantage of topographic and vegetative screening. Outside of coniferous areas where no vegetative or topographic screening is available, camps to be located where possible, outside foreground view (200») from lakes, trails, other camps and key interest features. Site design (trails and campsites) should encourage maximum dispersion of visitors, without creating additional new sites.

Human activities to remain subordinate in foreground distance zones (200<sup>1</sup> - 300<sup>f</sup>). Human's activities should not be recognizable in middleground and background distance zones.

VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Controls - Few if any management controls imposed on visitors on-site. Management personnel only occasionally present. Rules and regulations communicated to visitors off-site. Use limitations can be imposed, but these limitations occur before entry into the area and are used to help avoid the institution of an unnecessary number of on-site controls. No on-site physical controls such as barriers allowed.

PRIMITIVE (cont.)

Setting Indicators

Information - No on-site interpretation. Signs should be for extreme safety situations only. No directional or destination point signs. Provide maps, guidebooks, and brochures appropriate for self-discovery at off-site visitor contact points.



## SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Emphasis is on little or no interparty contact. There is a very high probability of less than 6 other groups encountered per day while traveling along trails and less than three parties camped within sight or sound at night. Attempt to minimize conflicts between hiking and horseback groups at entry points, along travel routes, and at campsites. Party size limits range between 6 and 12 depending on the actual number of encounters, with larger size parties only being allowed in lightly used areas. Livestock limits should be based on vegetation and soil impacts. Sounds associated with mechanized activity outside the area generally not apparent.

## VISITOR IMPACTS

Air. - Air quality is maintained as per state objectives, and air quality is not degraded as a result of recreational use, such as from campfire smoke.

Soil - Displacement and erosion of soil resulting from visitor activity will be limited to a rate that closely approximates the natural process.

Soil compaction should not exceed limits which will prevent natural plant establishment and growth, except at some campsites (see vegetation), administrative facilities and in standard designated trail tread.

Water - Maintain the natural quality of streams and lakes. Activities should not degrade water quality.

Vegetation - At concentrated use sites, loss of ground cover should not exceed 100 square feet at any one site.

There should be no loss of trees, and fewer than 4 trees with exposed roots per impacted site.

There should be no long-term modification of natural plant succession as a result of visitor activities on areas outside of campsites, trails, and administrative sites. Acceptable short-term modifications are those which will recover in one growing season.

PRIMITIVE (cont.)

Guidelines

10



Setting Indicators

VISITOR IMPACTS (cont.)

All dead, standing vegetation should be left in place. Visitor use should be managed to avoid hazards from snags.

Snags and down vegetation should be managed to approximate natural conditions. Dead and down vegetation may be removed in amounts that can be replaced annually through natural accumulation.

Vegetation impacts along trails should be confined to the planned location and to meet the objectives of the trail.

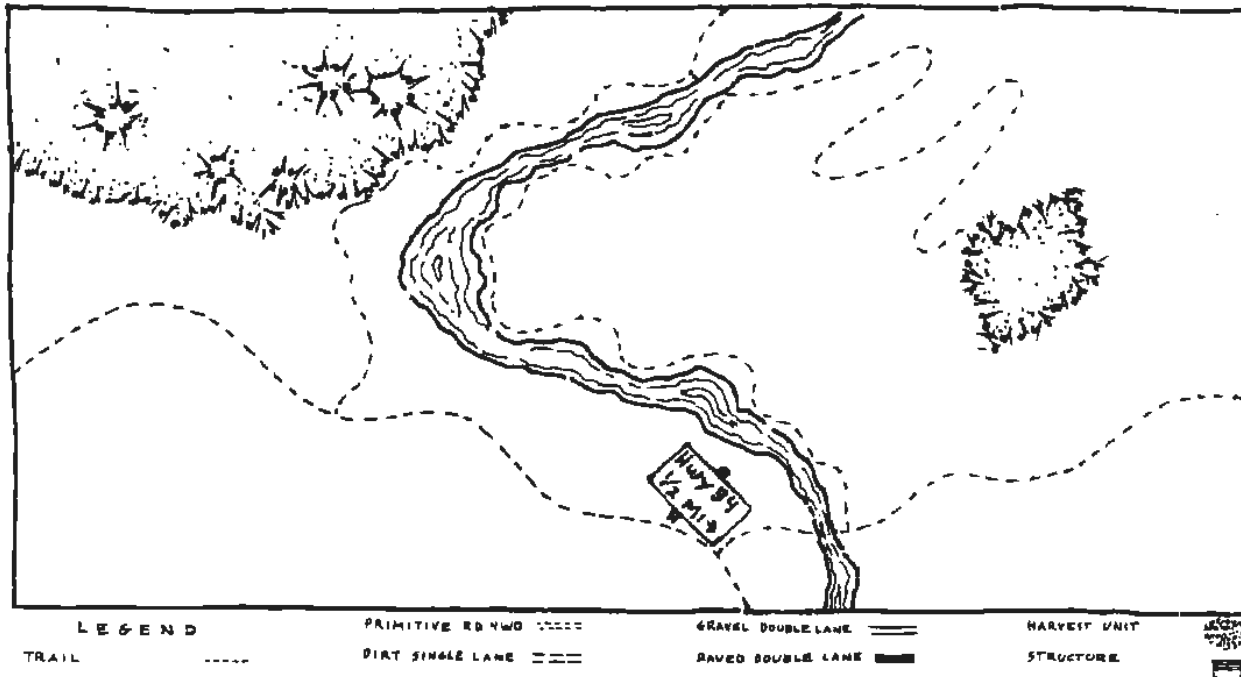
Range (recreational use): No more than 20 percent forage utilized. Overall range condition is excellent.

Fish and Wildlife - Visitor use should be managed to promote the naturalness of native fish populations.

Visitor use should not permanently displace wildlife populations, nor temporarily displace wildlife in critical areas and periods, such as fawning and winter range.

No more than 4 human-impacted sites per 640 acres. (1 square mile)

## SEMI-PRIMITIVE NONMOTORIZED



**Experience Goal** - To provide visitors with a high probability of getting away from the sights and sounds of other people, to be independent, to enjoy nature and to practice outdoor skills.

Setting IndicatorsGuidelines**ACCESS**

Trails for nonmotorized use are an integral part of this opportunity class, and are constructed and maintained to the difficulty level that best meets recreational experience objectives.

Bridges are provided for resource protection and safety. With the exception of Wilderness, bridges may also be provided for visitor convenience. They should be of rustic native materials and very simple in design (i.e., a log across a stream).

Road/trail management objectives should "eliminate" and "prohibit" any public motorized use of any existing primitive roads or trails.

**REMOTENESS**

An area designated at least 1/2-mile but not further than 3 miles from all roads, railroads or trails with motorized use; can include the existence of primitive roads and trails if closed to motorized use.

**NONRECREATION USES**

Natural setting may have subtle alterations that would be noticed but not draw the attention of an observer wandering through the area. VQO of foreground retention is the norm.





(cont.)

Setting IndicatorsGuidelines

## NOHRECREATION USES (cont.)

Vegetative management may range from no timber harvest to very limited regeneration cutting and sanitation salvage for the purpose of maintaining a healthy, attractive semiprimitive setting. Amount of regeneration cut per decade must not exceed 3-5 percent of the commercial Forest land. No new roads may be built. Motorized harvesting must be done in the low public use season and in not more than half of the decade.

Mineral extraction and other nonrecreation uses should meet the same guidelines as above.

Range condition of "very good" to "excellent" is appropriate. Range structure should meet VQO.

Structures should be rare and isolated.

## ON-SITE MANAGEMENT

Except for facilities necessary to protect fragile resources they should be limited to trail shelters, sanitary and safety needs. All should be of simple design in native rustic-like materials. Site modification for facilities should be very minimal to none. Site development level should be level 2 or less (see FSM 2331.11c).

Location - Camping areas should be located at sites within coniferous forest areas where possible. In all cases, sites should be located to take advantage of topographic and vegetative screening. Outside of coniferous forest areas where no vegetative or topographic screening is available camps are to be located outside of foreground view (200') from lakes and trails and key interest features where possible. Site design (such as trails) should remain subordinate to the natural landscape.

Visual Resource - Human activities to remain subordinate in foreground distance zones (200' - 300'). Human activities should not be recognizable in middleground and background distance zones.

Facilities should remain subordinate in foreground distance zones (200' - 300') from trails, lakes, and key interest features. Facilities, including trails, should be harmonious with natural landscape in middleground and background distance zones.

SEMI-PRIMITIVE MONMOTORIZED  
(cont.)

Setting Indicators



Guidelines

VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Controls - Emphasis is to minimize visitor management controls imposed on on-site visitors. Management personnel may be present. Use limitations rarely employed. On-site physical controls permitted but must be subtle.

Information - Interpretation through self-discovery with no on-site facilities. Provide appropriate maps, brochures and guidebooks at off-site visitor contact points. Signs at trail junctions may show destination points and mileage. All should be of rustic materials.

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Emphasis is on limited interparty contact. There is a very high probability of less than 15 other groups encountered per day while traveling along trails and less than six parties camped within sight or sound at night. Attempt to minimize conflicts between hiking and horseback groups at entry points, along travel routes, and at campsites. Party size limits range between 12 and 18 depending on the actual number of encounters, with larger size parties only being allowed in lightly used areas. Livestock limits should be based on vegetation and soil impacts. Sounds associated with mechanized activity outside the area generally not apparent.

VISITOR IMPACTS

Air. - Air quality is maintained as per state objectives, and air quality is not degraded as a result of recreational use, such as from campfire smoke.

Soils. - Displacement and erosion of soil resulting from visitor activity will be limited to a rate of natural processes.

Soil compaction should not exceed limits which will prevent natural plant establishment and growth, except at desired campsites (see vegetation), administrative facilities and on designated trail tread.

Water - Maintain the natural quality of streams and lakes. Activities should not degrade water quality except for temporary changes which are transitory in nature; i.e., the water quality returns to its previous level when the activity ceases.

SEMI-PRIMITIVE  
NONMOTORIZED (cont.)

14



SPNM

Setting Indicators

Guidelines

VISITOR IMPACTS (cont.)

Vegetation - Maintain healthy, native vegetation around campsites. Loss of ground cover should not exceed 900 square feet at any site. There should be no trees lost as the result of recreational activity.

There should be no more than 10 trees per site that show signs of visitor use associated damage.

Dead standing (snags) and down vegetation should be managed to approximate natural conditions. Most dead standing vegetation should be left in place. Use should be managed to avoid the hazard. Dead, down vegetation may be removed in amounts that can be replaced annually through natural accumulation.

Vegetation impacts along trails should be confined to the planned to meet management objectives of the trails.

Range (recreational use): No more than 40 percent forage utilized. Overall range condition is very good or excellent.

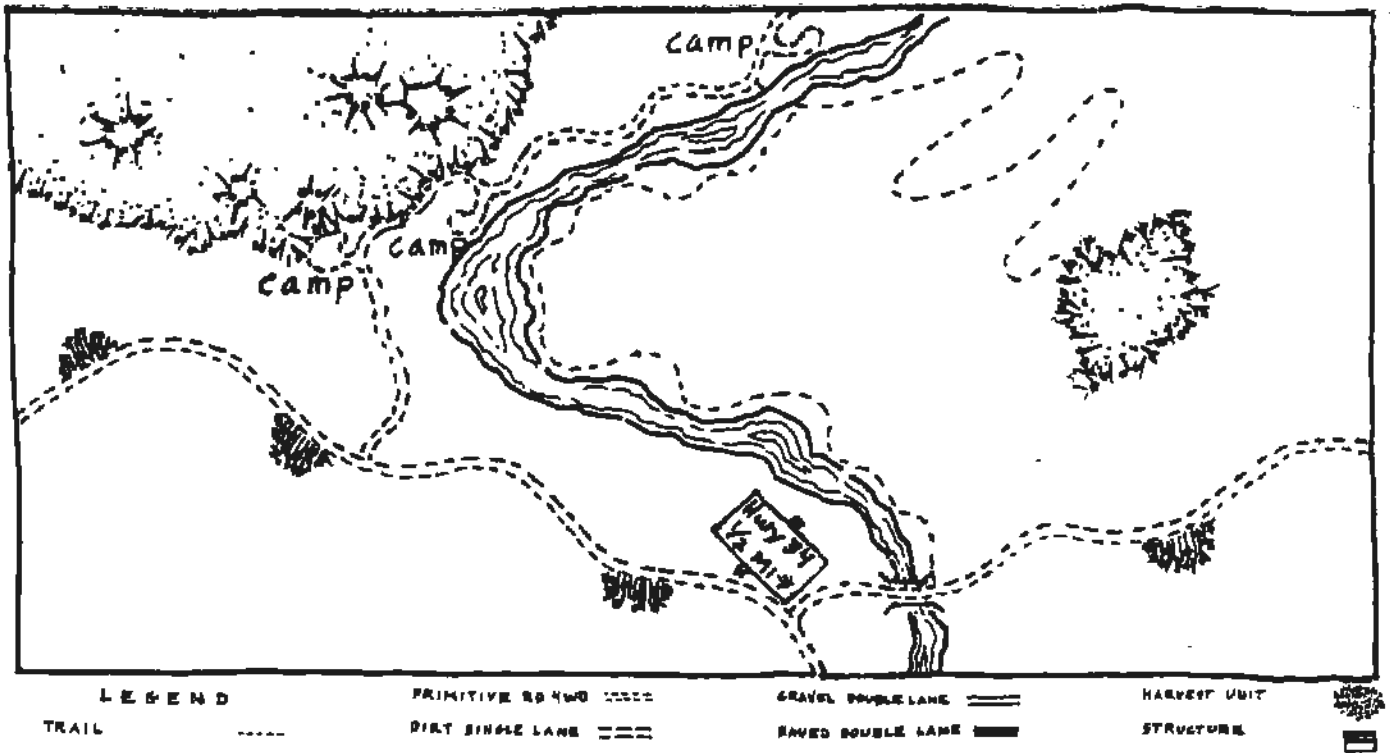
Fish and Wildlife - Visitor use should be managed to prevent a significant decrease in native fish populations.

Recreational use should not display wildlife from critical areas during critical periods, such as fawning and winter range.

No more than 8 human-impacted sites per 640 acres.

Trail density should average less than mile per 640 acres. (1 square mile)

## SEMI-PRIMITIVE MOTORIZED



Experience Goal - To provide visitors with a moderate probability of getting away from the sights and sounds of other people, to be independent, to enjoy nature and to practice outdoor skills. There is also opportunity to use motorized equipment while in the area.

Setting IndicatorsGuidelines

## ACCESS

Trails designed for motorized vehicles and four-wheel driveways (primitive roads) are provided in this opportunity class.

Bridges are provided for resource protection, safety, and to enhance recreational experiences. They should be of native-like rustic materials and simple in design.

Road/trail management objectives should "encourage" high clearance 4-wheel drive vehicles but discourage 2-wheel drive and other low clearance vehicles.

## REMOTENESS

An area designated within 1/2-mile of primitive roads or trails used by motor vehicles; but not closer than 1/2-mile from better primitive roads.

## NONRECREATION USES

Natural setting may have moderately dominant alterations to the visitor wandering through. However, from trails and primitive roads they would remain visually subordinate. VQO of Partial Retention is the norm.

Setting Indicators

NONRECREATION USES (cont.)

Vegetative management may range from no timber harvest to limited regeneration cutting and sanitation salvage for the purpose of maintaining a healthy, attractive semi-primitive setting. Harvest units must meet foreground Partial Retention. Amount of regeneration cut per decade must not exceed 5-7 percent of the commercial Forest land. Motorized harvesting and mineral exploration and extraction may be done over "Primitive"<sup>11</sup> road systems primarily in the low public use season. Other nonrecreation uses should follow these same guidelines.



Range condition of "very good" to "excellent" is appropriate. Range structures should meet VQO. Structures are rare and isolated.

ON-SITE MANAGEMENT

Except for facilities necessary to protect fragile resources they should be limited to trail shelters, sanitary and safety need. All should be of simple design in native rustic-like materials. Site modification for facilities should be very minimal. Site development level should be level 2 or less (FSM 2331.11c).

Location - Camping areas should be located at sites within coniferous forest areas where possible. In all cases, sites should be located to take advantage of topographic and vegetative screening. Outside of coniferous forest areas where no vegetative or topographic screening is available camps are to be located outside of foreground view (200\*) from lakes and trails and key interest features where possible. Site design (such as trails) should remain subordinate to the natural landscape.

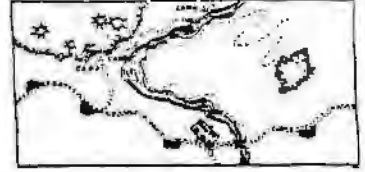
Visual Resource - Human activities to remain subordinate in foreground distance zones (200\* - 300'). Human activities should not be recognizable in middleground and background distance zones.

Facilities should remain subordinate in foreground distance zones (200\* - 300') from trails, lakes, and key interest features. Facilities, including trails, should be harmonious with natural landscape in middleground and background distance zones.

SEMI-PRIMITIVE MOTORIZED

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5 PM



(cont.)

Setting Indicators

Guideline

VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Controls - Few if any management controls imposed on visitors on-site. Management personnel only occasionally present. Rules and regulations communicated to visitors off-site. Use limitations can be imposed, but these limitations occur before entry into the area and are used to help avoid the institution of an unnecessary number of on-site controls. No on-site physical controls such as barriers allowed.

Information - Interpretation primarily through self-discovery with very limited on-site facilities to none. Provide appropriate maps, brochures, and guidebooks at off-site visitor contact points. Trail signs may show destination and mileage. All should be of rustic materials.

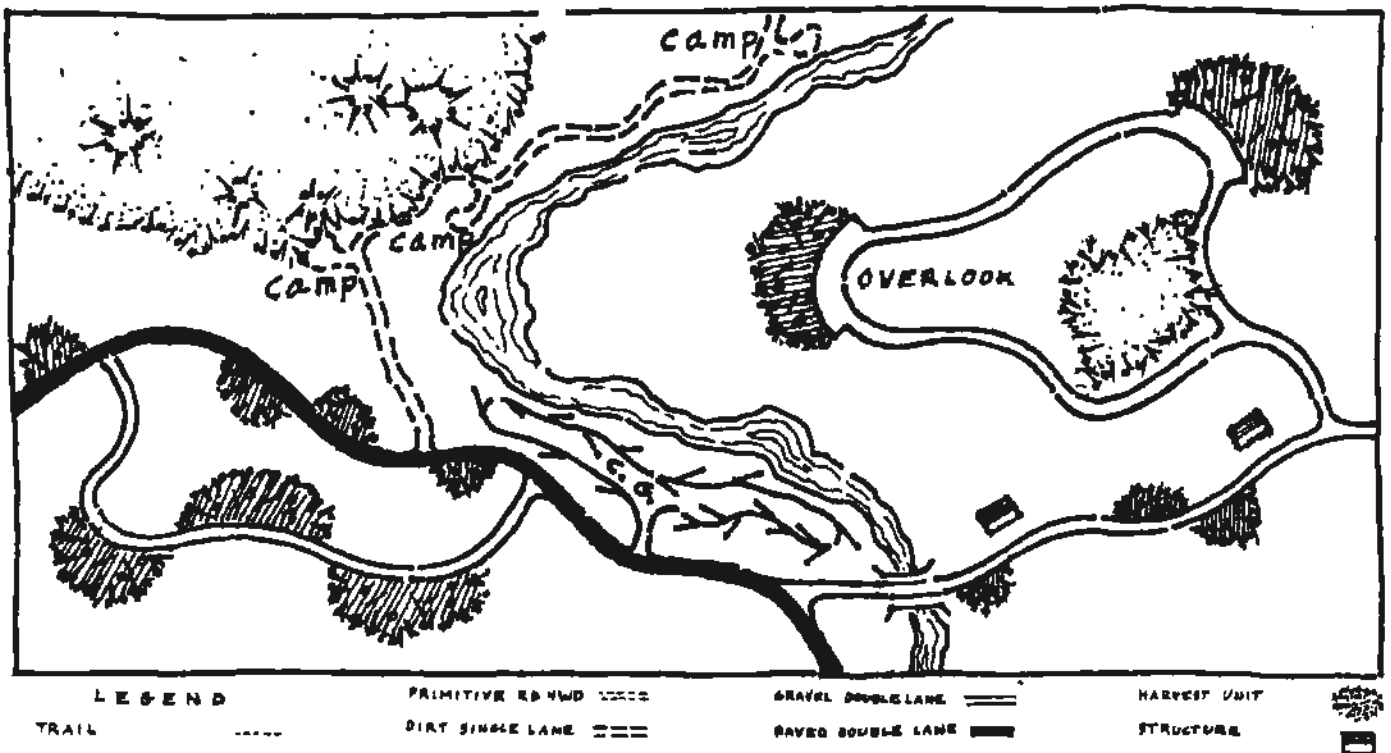
SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Same as for semi-primitive nonmotorized except that efforts are directed at minimizing conflicts between mechanized and nonmechanized users. Sounds associated with mechanized use will occur.

VISITOR IMPACTS

Same as for semi-primitive nonmotorized.

## ROADED NATURAL



Experience Goal - To provide visitors with an equal opportunity of meeting and enjoying other visitors and of being isolated from the sights and sounds of other people. Visitors have the opportunity to interact with the natural environment, but the risk and challenge associated with the previous setting is not present. Both motorized and nonmotorized forms of recreation take place.

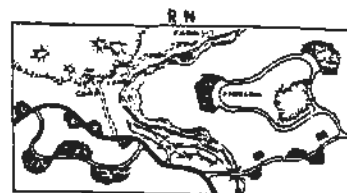
Setting IndicatorsGuidelines

## ACCESS

Roads are an integral part of these classes and provide a range of opportunities for users of high clearance vehicles on dirt roads to passenger cars on pavement. Roads may be closed to recreational use to meet other resource management objectives. In addition to roads, a full range of trail types and difficulty levels can be present in order to meet recreation objectives.

Recreational experiences are enhanced by providing bridges where necessary to meet recreation objectives. Native materials should be used but with more refinement in design.

Road management should generally "accept" or "encourage" use by dispersed recreationists in highway vehicles. There should generally be some roads and spurs where their use is "discouraged" and 4-wheel drive is "encouraged" to provide travelway diversity.



Guidelines

Setting Indicators

RENOTENESS

An area designated within 1/2-mile from better than primitive roads, and railroads.

NONRECREATION USES

Natural setting may have alterations which range from being easily noticed to strongly dominant to observers within the area. However, from sensitive travel routes and use areas these alterations should remain unnoticed or visually subordinate.

Vegetative management should be done through timber harvest and/or fire by prescription to achieve visual and recreation objectives such as providing large tree and distinctive bark character in foregrounds, spring and fall color, dispersed site and trail head access, developed site needs, opening distant views. See USDA Handbook 559 for detail.

Range condition of "very good" is appropriate. Range structures should meet VQO.

Retention to Partial Retention in foregrounds and Retention to Modification in middlegrounds. Most nonrecreation uses are appropriate if they meet the adopted visual quality objective. (See USDA Handbook M62).

Structures are generally scattered, remaining visually subordinate or unnoticed to the sensitive travel route observer. Structures may include power lines, microwave installations, minor resorts and recreation areas, small local ski areas, etc.

OS-SITE MANAGEMENT

In developed sites use moderate amount and complexity of facilities for comfort and convenience of the user. Use native materials but with more refinement in design. Site development level 3 is the norm. In dispersed sites level 2 or less is the norm. Facility guidelines are the same as SPM.

Camping areas should be located at sites within coniferous forest areas where possible. In all cases, sites should be located to take advantage of topographic and vegetative screening.



ROADED NATURAL (cont.)

Guidelines



Setting Indicators

VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Control Developed Sites - Moderate number of rules and regulations may be in effect. Controls on users may be in the form of rules and regulations governing their use of the site as well as number of users allowed in the area. Management personnel may be on-site intermittently. Use of physical controls appropriate but use native rustic-like materials.

Control Dispersed Areas - Emphasis is to minimize visitor management controls imposed on on-site visitors. Exceptions to this would include rules and regulations related to protection of resource values, fire control, and traffic safety. Some on-site physical controls may be permitted.

Information - Interpretation through simple wayside exhibits in developed areas. Use native-like materials with some refinement in design. Some casual interpretation from Forest staff. Signing should be for comfort and convenience of the user. It should be simple in design and of native-like materials. In dispersed areas use SPM guidelines.

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Contacts among groups can reach high levels along travel routes and in developed sites. Intergroup and intragroup meetings are an important part of this experience and actions that facilitate this are appropriate. Opportunities for isolated camping should also be promoted.

VISITOR IMPACTS

Air - Air quality is maintained as per State objectives and air quality is not degraded as a result of recreational use, such as from campfire smoke.

Water - Maintain the natural quality of streams and lakes. Activities should not degrade water quality except for temporary changes which are transitory in nature; i.e., the water quality returns to its previous level when the activity ceases.

Vegetation - Maintain healthy, native vegetation around campsites. There should be no trees lost as the result of recreational activity.

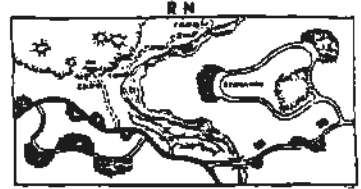
ROADED NATURAL (cont.)

Setting Indicators

VISITOR IMPACTS (cont.)

Guidelines

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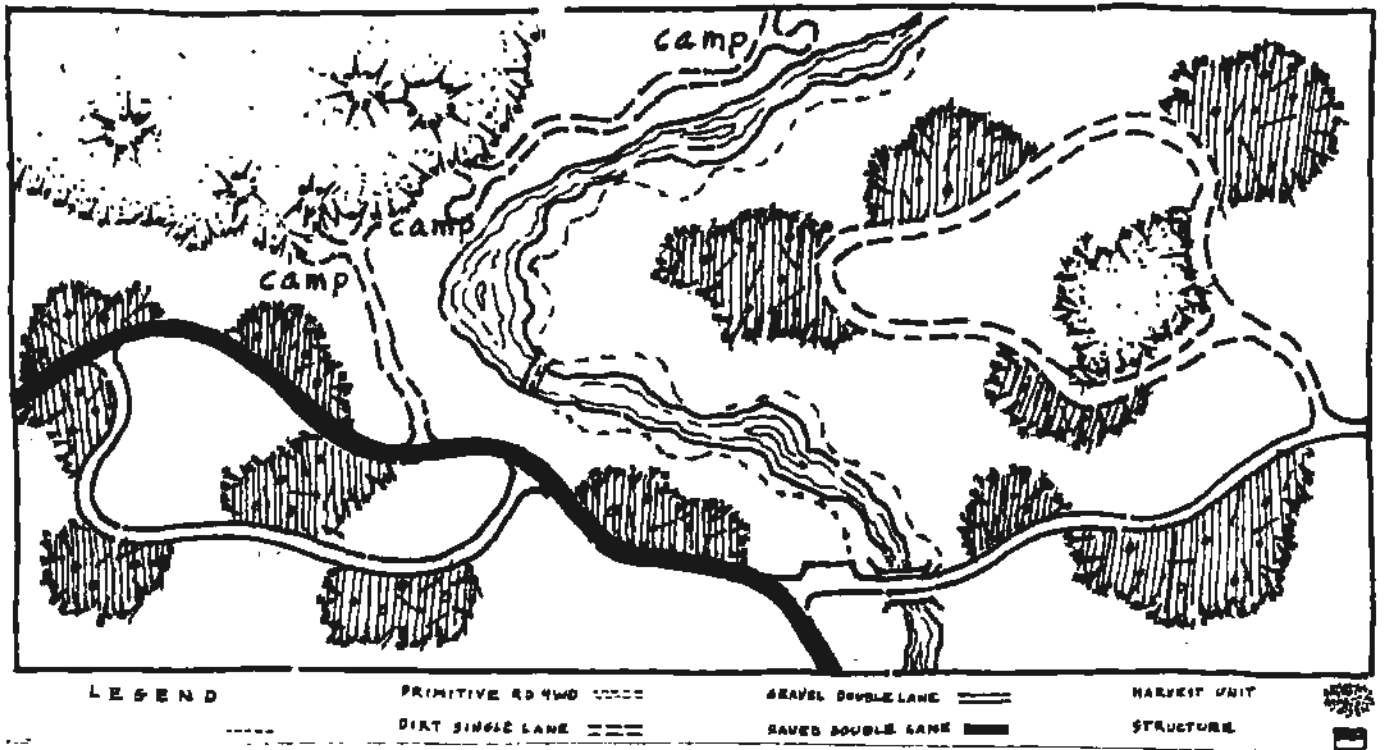


There should be no more than 10 trees per site that show signs of visitor use associated damage.

Vegetation impacts along trails should be confined to the planned location to meet management objectives of the trails.

Range (recreational use): No more than 20 percent forage utilized. Overall range condition is excellent.

Fish and Wildlife - Recreational use should not displace wildlife from critical areas during critical periods, such as fawning and winter range.



Experience Goal - To provide visitors with an opportunity to get away from the sights and sounds of other people, but in area with easy access. Provides visitors with some opportunity to practice self-reliance in building own campsite and in the use of motorized equipment. Offers feelings of independence and freedom, but there is little risk and challenge.

Setting Indicators

Guidelines

ACCESS

Roads are an integral part of these classes and provide a range of opportunities for users of high clearance vehicles on dirt roads to passenger cars on pavement. Roads may be closed to recreational use to meet other resource management objectives. In addition to roads, a full range of trail types and difficulty levels can be present in order to meet recreation objectives.

Recreational experiences are enhanced by providing bridges where necessary to meet recreation objectives.

Road Management Objectives - Access to dispersed campsites, berry fields, wood gathering areas, etc., would be "encouraged" or "accepted." Four-wheel drive and trail bike vehicles would be "encourage" on others with highway vehicles "discouraged." Use on still others by all vehicles may be "eliminated" or "prohibited" to meet wildlife, safety, or other objectives.

## ROADED MODIFIED (cont.)

Setting IndicatorsGuidelines

## REMOTENESS

Remoteness is relevant to this opportunity to some degree but often is inherent in the setting because of the tremendous size of these areas, variability of activity occurring and pockets of undisturbed sites.

## NONRECREATION USES

The natural setting is often heavily altered as this environment and access throughout are often the result of intensive commodity production. Timber harvest, for example, is constrained primarily by the NFMA regulation of shaping and blending harvest units with the terrain to the degree practicable. Harvest activities should protect user-established sites from alteration and provide access to them. It should be used to meet other recreation needs such as provide trailhead access, parking areas, and a diversity of travelway opportunities. Range condition of "good" or better is appropriate.

## ON-SITE MANAGEMENT

On-site facilities are not provided except for those needed for sanitary and safety reasons. Those provided should be of simple design and native rustic-like material. Site modification for facilities should be minimal. Site development level should be 2 or less.

Camping areas should be located at sites within coniferous forest areas where possible. In all cases, sites should be located to take advantage of topographic and vegetative screening.

## VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Controls - Emphasis is to minimize visitor management controls imposed on on-site visitors. Management personnel may be present. Use limitations rarely employed. On-site physical controls permitted but must be subtle.

Information - Interpretation may vary from no on-site facilities to simple wayside exhibits of native rustic-like materials. Directional signs should be at major road junctions only. Other signs providing safety messages are appropriate.

## SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Opportunities exist for visitors to be isolated from one another, particularly at campsites. Meeting others along travelways is common and frequent.

ROADED MODIFIED (cont.)

Setting Indicators

RM



VISITOR IMPACTS

Guidelines

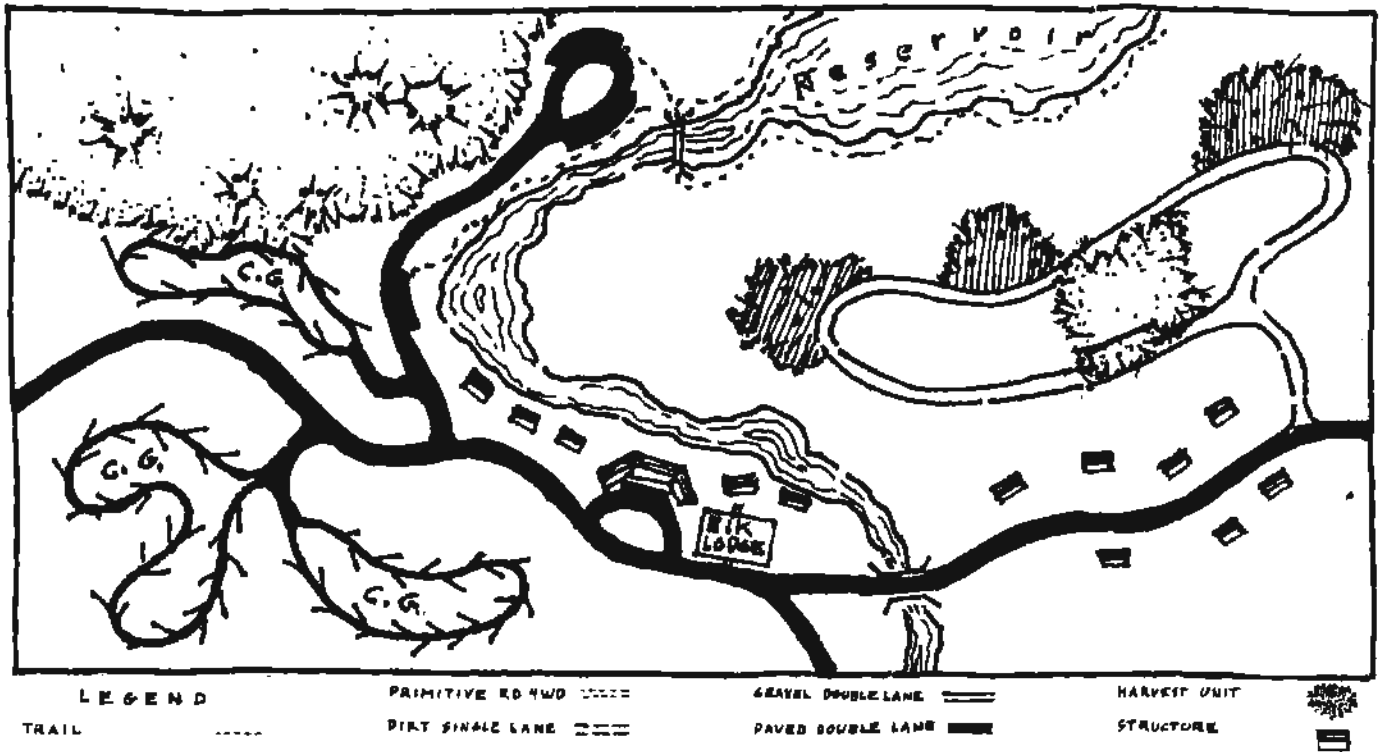
Water - Maintain the natural quality of streams and lakes. Activities should not degrade water quality except for temporary changes which are transitory in nature; i.e., the water quality returns to its previous level when the activity ceases.

Vegetation - Maintain healthy, native vegetation around campsite.

Vegetation impacts along trails should be confined to the planned location to meet management objectives of the trails.

Fish and Wildlife - Recreational use should not display wildlife from critical areas during critical periods, such as fawning and winter range.

## RURAL



Experience Goal - To provide visitors with a good probability of meeting and enjoying others. Convenience in access to, and use of, sites is important. Challenge, risk, and testing of skills are relatively unimportant, except for some specific activities such as downhill skiing.

Setting IndicatorsGuidelines

## ACCESS

Roads are an integral part of this class and provide a range of opportunities for users of passenger cars on gravel and pavement surfaces. In addition to roads, a full range of trail types and difficulty levels can be present in order to meet recreation objectives.

Bridges are provided to meet recreation objectives. Design may be more refined and complex. Some synthetic materials may be appropriate but should be in harmony with natural surroundings.

Road Management objectives should encourage highway vehicles, RV's, buses, etc., with considerable comfort and convenience.

## REMOTENESS

Not a relevant indicator.



Setting Indicators

NONRECREATION USES

The natural setting may be culturally modified to the point that it is dominant to the sensitive travel route observer. It may include pastoral, agricultural, intensively managed wildland resource landscapes or utility corridors.

Structures are readily apparent and may range from scattered to small dominant clusters including power lines, summer home tracts, microwave installations, regional ski areas, major resorts and recreation areas.

Timber harvest is often done to meet Retention or Partial Retention of foregrounds and backdrops to important facilities, pastoral landscapes, etc. In less sensitive areas, Modification or Maximum Modification may be the adopted VQO.

ON-SITE MANAGEMENT

Highly complex and numerous facilities with some synthetic but harmonious materials. Design is more refined. Many convenience facilities such as flush toilets, lighting, piped-in water, etc. Site modification for facilities may be moderate to heavy.

Camping areas should be located at sites within coniferous forest areas where possible. In all cases, sites should be located to take advantage of topographic and vegetative screening.

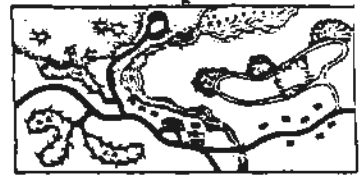
VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Control - Relatively high number of rules and regulations may be in effect. Controls on users may be in the form of rules and regulations governing their use of the site as well as on the number of users allowed in the area. Management personnel commonly on site\* Use of physical controls common, but generally using rustic materials. Some synthetic but harmonious materials may be appropriate.

Information - On-site information is important. Interpretation may be through more complex wayside exhibits including small lighted structures. Interpretive facilities such as kiosks and portals may be staffed part time.

Signing should be for comfort and convenience of the user. They may be more complex in design with some synthetic but harmonious materials.

Guidelines



Setting Indicators

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Contacts among groups is frequent and high, both along travel ways and at campsites. Meeting and enjoying others is an important part of this experience and high levels of intergroup contact are appropriate.

VISITOR IMPACTS

Air - Air is maintained as per State objectives.

Water - Maintain the natural quality of streams and lakes. Activities should not degrade water quality except for temporary changes which are transitory in nature; i.e., the water quality returns to its previous level when the activity ceases.

Vegetation - Maintain healthy, native vegetation around campsites. There should be no trees lost as the result of recreational activity.

Vegetation impacts along trails should be confined to the planned location to meet management objectives of the trails.



## INCONSISTENCIES

An inconsistency is defined as a situation in which the condition of an indicator exceeds the range defined as acceptable by the management guidelines. For example, the condition of the indicators for an area may all be consistent with its management as a semi-primitive nonmotorized area with the exception of the presence of a mining operation in the middle of the area. Such a situation has the potential of leading to the eventual conversion of the character of the area to a more developed level.

In such a case, several questions need to be answered in order that the situation can be properly dealt with. First, how did the inconsistency occur? It could have resulted from an earlier management action. Or, the impacts of the action on recreation might have been identified but judged to be unavoidable. Finally, the inconsistency could have occurred as the result of a purposeful course of action, where converting the ROS class was considered desirable.

Second, we need to ask what are the implications of the inconsistency? Here we need to trace out the likely consequences that will result from the presence of the inconsistency. Perhaps it will have little effect on the general character of the area. On the other hand, it could lead to profound changes on the area's character. It is important that these consequences be identified as carefully as possible. Many impacts may be slow to take form but by the time they become apparent, it may be too late to effectively control or prevent them from spreading. Such inadvertent changes can lead to great shifts in the character of area, departing substantially from that which is desired.

Finally, managers need to ask what should be done about the inconsistency. Three general kinds of actions are possible. First, perhaps nothing can or should be done. It may be concluded that the inconsistency will have little or no effect on the area's general character. Or, the agency may lack jurisdiction over the source of the inconsistency. A second response is to direct management action at the inconsistency to bring it back in line with the guidelines established for it, making it consistent with that ROS class. Finally, managers can respond to an inconsistency by altering the condition of the other indicators, thereby converting the original ROS class to a new one. This could occur where changing demand conditions warrant establishment of a new ROS class.

The main point to be understood with regard to inconsistencies is that they can be managed. The presence of one does not necessarily automatically lead to a change in ROS class. By analyzing its cause, implications, and possible solutions, an inconsistency can be handled in a logical and systematic fashion.

SUMMARY

The following sketches and photo series may help to summarize the Indicator conditions as they might change across the spectrum.

