



United States Department of Agriculture

Black Ram

Environmental Assessment



Forest Service

Kootenai National Forest

Three Rivers Ranger District

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
Location of the Project Area.....	1
Project Proposal.....	1
Purpose and Need for the Proposal.....	1
Public Involvement and Collaboration.....	3
Public Involvement, Scoping and EA Comments	3
Changes to the Proposed Action.....	4
Completion of Fuel breaks from the Davis Fire.....	4
Changes that were made to the EA.....	5
Changes that were included in the December 2019 EA.....	5
Changes that were made after the pre-decisional objection process resulting in this final EA, dated June 2022.....	6
Issues.....	6
Proposed Action and Alternatives.....	7
Alternative 2, the proposed action is described below.	7
Harvest Treatments	7
Precommercial Thinning (PCT).....	9
Non-harvest Fuels Treatments	10
Watershed Work	10
Transportation Management	10
Controlling and Managing Spread of Invasive Plants.....	10
In-Kind Replacement of Core to Conduct Harvest Activities in the BMUs.....	10
Recreation Improvements	11
Management Areas and Treatment in the Project Area	12
Alternatives.....	13
Comparison of Alternatives	13
Alternatives Considered but Eliminated	16
Design Features	17
Coarse Woody Debris (CWD) Retention Recommendations for Soils and Wildlife	17
Historic Resources	17
Noxious Weeds	17
Public Safety/ Access Management.....	18
Recreation	19
Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs)	19
Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNNST).....	19
Proposed, Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plant Species (PTES)	20
Snag Retention	21
Soils.....	21
Vegetation	21
Water Quality and Aquatic Species	22
Wildlife: General.....	22
Wildlife: Lynx.....	22
Wildlife: Grizzly Bear.....	22
Wildlife: Raptors.....	23
Resource Improvement Work	24
Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives	24
Past Actions	25
Timber Harvest	25

Wildfires and Fire Suppression.....	25
Road BMP, Stored Service, and Decommissioning Work.....	25
Road Management	26
Private Land Development.....	26
Ongoing and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions	26
Effects to Air Quality.....	28
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	28
Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis	28
Methodology	29
Affected Environment.....	31
Environmental Consequences	32
Summary	36
Compliance with the Land Management Plan	37
Effects to Aquatic Resources	39
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	39
Methodology	40
Affected Environment.....	42
Summary	54
Compliance with Land Management Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans.....	56
Effects to Cultural Resources	59
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	59
Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis	61
Methodology	61
Affected Environment.....	62
Environmental Consequences	63
Summary	64
Compliance with Land Management Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans.....	64
Other Agencies and Individuals Consulted.....	66
Economics Report.....	67
Regulatory Framework	67
Affected Environment.....	67
Existing Conditions.....	68
Environmental Consequences	74
Compliance with the Land Management Plan	77
Effects to Fire and Fuels	78
Regulatory Framework and Consistency	78
Topics and Issues Addressed by this Analysis.....	79
Methodology	80
Affected Environment.....	83
Environmental Consequences	88
Summary	97
Compliance with the Land Management Plan	97
Effects to Forest Vegetation	101
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	101
Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis	102
Methodology	103
Affected Environment.....	105
Environmental Consequences	123
Summary of Environmental Effects.....	137

Compliance with Land Management Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans.....	137
Required NFMA Monitoring	145
Effects to Inventoried Roadless Areas.....	146
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	146
Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis	147
Methodology	147
Affected Environment.....	148
Environmental Consequences	152
Summary	158
Compliance with the Land Management Plan	160
Other Agencies and Individuals Consulted.....	161
Effects to Noxious Weeds	162
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	162
Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis	163
Methodology	163
Affected Environment.....	164
Environmental Consequences	167
Compliance with Land Management Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans.....	173
Effects to Proposed, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Plant Species	175
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	175
Topics and Issues Addressed in this Analysis.....	175
Whitebark Pine (<i>Pinus albicaulis</i>)	176
Other Sensitive Plant Species.....	179
Ranks and Definitions used by the Natural Heritage Program	183
Climate change.....	184
PTES Plant Species Biological Assessment/Evaluation	185
Statement of Findings.....	185
Compliance with the Land Management Plan and Other Management Direction	185
Effects to Recreation.....	189
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	189
Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis	189
Methodology	190
Affected Environment.....	190
Environmental Consequences	193
Degree to Which the Purpose and Need for Action is Met.....	204
Compliance with the Land Management Plan	205
Effects to Scenic Resources.....	208
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	208
Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis	208
Methodology	211
Affected Environment.....	212
Environmental Consequences	214
Summary	234
Compliance with Land Management Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans.....	235
Other Agencies and Individuals Consulted.....	237
Effects to Soils.....	238
Relevant Laws, Regulations and Policy.....	238
Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis	238

Methodology	238
Affected Environment	240
Environmental Consequences	243
Summary	246
Compliance with Land Management Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans	247
Effects to Transportation System	250
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	250
Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis	251
Methodology	251
Affected Environment	252
Environmental Consequences	253
Summary of Environmental Effects	258
Compliance with Land Management Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policies	259
Effects to Water Resource	263
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy	263
Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis	264
Methodology	266
Affected Environment	271
Environmental Consequences	275
Summary	289
Climate Change	290
Compliance with Land Management Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans	291
Effects to Wildlife	295
Climate Change	296
Endangered, Threatened, and Proposed Species	296
Sensitive Species	353
Other Species or Habitats of Interest	409
Agencies and Persons Consulted	435
Appendices and Maps	1
Appendix A – Harvest and Non-harvest Treatment Tables	1
Appendix B – Road Work Tables	21
Appendix C – Timber Harvest History in the Project Area	25
Appendix D - Access Management Plan and Map	29
Appendix E - Best Management Practices (BMP)	40
KNF BMP SELECTION AND DESIGN FORM (KNF-BMP-1)	41
Appendix F – Monitoring Plan	59
Appendix G- Response to Comments	61
Comment Period Summary	61
Aquatics	66
Climate Change and Carbon Storage	66
Cultural Resources	70
EA vs EIS	70
Economics	73
Fire and Fuels Management	74
Forest Vegetation	80
Forest Vegetation – Old Growth	88
General	90
Inventoried Roadless Areas	93

NEPA	93
NFMA	94
Noxious Weeds	94
PNNST	98
Proposed, Threatened, Endangered Plant Species	100
Riparian Areas.....	100
Roads.....	100
Soils.....	102
Trails/ Vistas/ Wild & Scenic Rivers/Scenic/Wildness	105
Travel Management	108
Water Resources	109
Wildlife – general.....	113
Wildlife- birds.....	116
Wildlife- big game	116
Wildlife – grizzly bear	117
Wildlife- Canada Lynx.....	126
Wildlife – habitat connectivity.....	127
Wildlife- other species	128
Wildlife- wolverine	128
Map 1- Alternative 2.....	130
Map 2 - Alternative 3.....	131
Map 3 - Proposed Recreation Trails	132
References.....	133

List of Tables

Table 1. Proposed Vegetation Treatment Acres by Management Area in Alternative 2	12
Table 2 through Table 6 compare the proposed activities by alternative. Table 2. Proposed Harvest Treatments by Alternative.....	13
Table 3. Proposed Fuel Treatments by Alternative.....	14
Table 4. Proposed Activities in the WUI and IRAs by Alternative	14
Table 5. Proposed Activities in Old Growth and Recruitment Potential Old Growth by Alternative	14
Table 6. Proposed Roadwork by Alternative	15
Table 7. Comparison of Purpose and Need by Alternative.....	15
Table 8. Coarse Woody Debris Retention by Biophysical Settings by Unit.....	17
Table 9. Ongoing and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions within or Adjacent to the Black Ram Project Area.....	26
Table 10. Resource indicators and measures for assessing effects	29
Table 11. Resource indicators and measures for Alternative 2 Direct/ Indirect Effects	34
Table 12. Resource indicators and measures for Alternative 3 Direct/ Indirect Effects	35
Table 13. Summary comparison of treatment effectiveness	37
Table 14. Interim Riparian Management Objectives	40
Table 15. Interim Objectives for Pool Frequency.....	41
Table 16. Special Status (R1 Sensitive) Aquatic Species Found or Suspected in Watershed Streams in the analysis area or Its Area of Influence.....	43
Table 17. 2013 to 2017 Stream Temperature Summary for Black Ram Planning Area. 7-Day Average Maximum Temperatures Exceeding Specified Thresholds in the Black Ram Planning Area.....	46
Table 18. 2017 and 2018 Substrate Composition in Stream Reaches Surveyed in Black Ram Project Area.....	47
Table 19. 2017 and 2018 Habitat Survey Data	48

Effects to Inventoried Roadless Areas

This section analyzes the effects of the proposed activities on Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA) and unroaded lands contiguous to IRAs in the Project Area.

For National Forest System lands in Montana, IRAs are those mapped under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. These areas are also identified in Appendix C of the FEIS in the 2015 Forest Plan. The official set of maps is maintained at the national headquarters office of the Forest Service.

Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy

Regulatory Framework

Land Management Plan (LMP)

The 2015 National Forest provides overall guidance for the management of the lands on the KNF. The plan components that provide specific IRA resource direction relevant to this project include: GOAL-IRA-01, FW-STD-IRA-01, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA5a, b, c - DC-VEG-01, MA5a, b, c - DC-FIRE-01, MA5a, b, c - DC-AR-01, and MA5a, b, c - GDL-FIRE-01.

Federal Law

The Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-577) (78 Stat. 890) (September 3, 1964):

The Wilderness Act states Congressional policy, establishes a National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS), defines wilderness, provides administrative and management direction, prohibits certain uses and activities, and establishes a process for adding wild lands to the NWPS. This act also lists the original areas included in the NWPS and provides a study and evaluation process for additional areas.

Multiple Use, Sustained Yield Act. June 12, 1960. (74 Stat. 215, as amended: 16 U.S.C. 528-531)

Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-237) (February 24, 1978):

By passing the Endangered Wilderness Act, Congress further established that areas previously modified or influenced by man should not be precluded from wilderness designation, nor should roadless areas near major cities since they provide primitive recreation opportunities close to population concentrations. The Congressional Record for this law endorsed the Forest Service plan to conduct a RARE II evaluation.

Policy

Roadless Area Conservation Rule

The Department of Agriculture, Forest Service adopted the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2001) with the purpose “to establish prohibitions on road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting in inventoried roadless areas on National Forest System lands. The intent of this final rule is to provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas within the National Forest System in the context of multiple-use management.”

Topics and Issues Addressed in This Analysis

Resource Indicators for Wilderness Attributes

Wilderness attributes are described for each IRA in the Forest Plan FEIS and are defined in FSH 1909.12 (72.1).

Resource Indicators for IRAs

Affects to the IRAs are evaluated by the indicators listed in Table 51.

Table 51. Wilderness Attributes and Roadless Characteristics Crosswalk

Wilderness Attributes	Roadless Characteristics
Natural: Extent to which the area's ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization and generally appear to have been affected primarily by forces of nature.	High quality or undisturbed soil, water, and air. Source of public drinking water. Diversity of plant and animal communities. Habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species dependent on large, undisturbed areas of land.
Undeveloped: Degree to which the area is without permanent improvements or human habitation.	Natural appearing landscapes with high scenic quality. Reference landscapes of relatively undisturbed areas.
Solitude and Primitive Recreation: Personal subjective value defined as the isolation from the sights, sounds, and presence of others and the developments of man.	Primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes of dispersed recreate.
Special Features: Unique and/or special geological, biological, ecological, cultural, or scenic features.	Other locally identified unique characteristics, traditional cultural properties, and sacred sites.
Manageability/boundaries: Ability to manage a roadless area to meet the minimum size criteria (5,000 acres) for wilderness.	No criteria

Methodology

This analysis focuses on the potential effects of project activities on roadless characteristics and wilderness attributes.

Inventoried Roadless Areas

Inventoried roadless areas are evaluated using five wilderness attributes and the roadless area characteristics defined in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR Subpart B 294.11). Project activities are first evaluated to determine if there will be an effect. The effects are then evaluated to determine if they would improve, be stable, or degrade the wilderness attributes and roadless characteristics.

Unroaded Lands Contiguous to IRAs

Projects on lands contiguous to IRAs must analyze the environmental consequences, including irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources on roadless area attributes, and the effects for potential designation as wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964. For the Black Ram project the unroaded lands contiguous to IRAs were identified using the Northern Region policy including the following evaluation factors: 1) GIS identified unroaded polygons adjacent to existing IRAs (areas that contain decommissioned roads and level 1 roads were included), 2) Do the unroaded lands contribute to the nine roadless area characteristics of the IRA; 3) Consider the size, shape and

geographic context of the unroaded lands, and 4) Respond to public comment and identify areas that weren't accounted for in the initial GIS screen.

The project file document "20171221DocIdRdlessExpx1RiggersB1x0006.pdf" was used for analyzing for unroaded lands contiguous to IRAs.

Roadless Expanse

This analysis considers the effects to the entire roadless expanse – that is both the inventoried roadless area and the unroaded lands contiguous to the inventoried roadless area.

Actions proposed in the alternatives are evaluated in relation to their effects on each roadless expanse. The analysis discloses potential effects to the roadless character and wilderness attributes to determine if, or to what extent these effects might influence future consideration for wilderness recommendations.

The roadless characteristics can be cross-walked to the wilderness attributes (see Table 51). The analysis then describes current condition and potential effects to wilderness attributes for each roadless expanse, which indirectly describes effect to the roadless characteristics.

The analysis for the effects on other roadless resource attributes such as vegetation, water resources, soils, and wildlife habitat may be found in other sections of the Black Ram EA.

Analysis Area – Spatial and Temporal Context

The analysis area for effects to the roadless resource is the portion of the two IRAs and unroaded areas that make up the roadless expanse, located within the Project Area. The area selected for analysis is of a scale suitable for the recognition of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on the resource.

The temporal scope of the analysis is limited to the 25 to 30 years following proposed activities. This period is the length of time openings created by regeneration harvest are likely to be evident given the growing conditions of the area. The timeframe considered for short term effects would be 5 to 10 years as the activities being proposed would likely be implemented within that timeframe. Long term effects would be those that persisted longer than 10 years.

Affected Environment

Existing Condition

Northwest Peaks IRA #663 (Northwest Peaks Roadless Area), and West Fork Yaak IRA #694 (West Fork Yaak Roadless Area) are the two IRAs within the Black Ram project boundary; both located within the state of Montana. Northwest Peaks IRA #663 (Northwest Peaks Roadless Area), and West Fork Yaak IRA #694 (West Fork Yaak Roadless Area) are the two IRAs within the Black Ram project boundary; both located within the state of Montana.

Management activities that have occurred in IRAs in the Project Area include trail management, surveys for noxious weeds, wildland fire and prescribed fire, and ongoing studies for threatened/endangered species such as Canada lynx and grizzly bear.

Northwest Peaks IRA #663

The Black Ram Project encompasses 10,713 acres of the total 15,341 of the IRA.

The area has several notable destinations including Northwest Peak and Northwest Peak Lookout, Upper and Lower Hawkins Lake, Davis Peak and six maintained National Forest System Trails. The area provides visitors with several opportunities for viewing natural features and wildlife, hunting, hiking, berry picking and fishing. Over-snow motorized use is allowed on 6,872 acres of the 10,713 acres in the IRA.

Unroaded Area Contiguous to IRA Boundary

Northwest Peaks IRA has five unroaded areas contiguous to the IRA that will be analyzed due to their unroaded characteristics (Figure 21). The unroaded areas contiguous to the IRA total 925 acres (NWP#1 – 600 acres, NWP#2 -140 acres, NWP#3 – 77 acres, NWP #4 – 76 acres, and NWP#5 – 32 acres). Level 1 roads closed to vehicular traffic are included in the unroaded area. Basic custodial maintenance is performed on these roads to facilitate resource protection and future management activities. Emphasis is normally given to maintaining drainage features.

Northwest Peaks IRA Wilderness Attributes

Natural: Except for wildfire suppression, human-induced changes in the area have been minimal. Long-term ecological processes are predominately intact. Storm events, including wind, snow, rain and insect and disease outbreaks continue to reshape the vegetation and landscape. Historically, wildfires of varying size and intensities also have contributed to shaping the vegetation and wildlife that inhabit the area. The Davis Fire of 2018 was a lightning-caused fire that burned a total of 6,600 acres of which 234 were in the IRA. Evidence of fire suppression activities such as tree stumps are visible along the Northwest Peaks Trail #169. Current fire management allows for natural fires (unplanned ignitions) to burn under some circumstances. Whitebark pine studies are ongoing near Northwest Peak and cone screens in the trees may be seen from the trail.

Undeveloped: There is little evidence of manmade features and structures except the National Forest System Trails, campsites and Northwest Peaks Lookout. The District trail crew maintains the trails in this area annually. Several small dispersed campsites are present at Upper and Lower Hawkins Lake and Burke Lake. The sites have rock-ring fire pits and small areas of compacted soil from tent camping.

Opportunity to Experience Solitude: The area provides an abundance of opportunities to view and appreciate nature. Several mountains in the area are above 6500 feet in elevation. Numerous small lakes are visible from the peaks and the ridgelines between peaks. There are numerous species of birds, carnivores, rodents and ungulates to view. The area has the most visitation from June to August, primarily hikers.

Special Features: Northwest Peak Lookout is a prototype fire lookout constructed in the 1920s and ongoing restoration of the lookout will continue. The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNNST) is one of eleven congressionally designated scenic trails in the United States. The PNNST extends through the southeast portion of the Project Area on Midge/Rock Candy Trail #177 and then west along the project's southern border on Rock Candy #461. Grizzly bears and hoary marmots inhabit the area and you may see them here. Numerous geologic mountain cirques are distinctive to this area's natural setting.

Manageability: The IRA boundary is bordered by Canada to the north, NFSR #435 Spread Creek to the south, Idaho Panhandle National Forest to the west and past timber harvest units to the east. NFSRs 338 and 435 both provide trail-access to the south and west boundaries of the IRA.

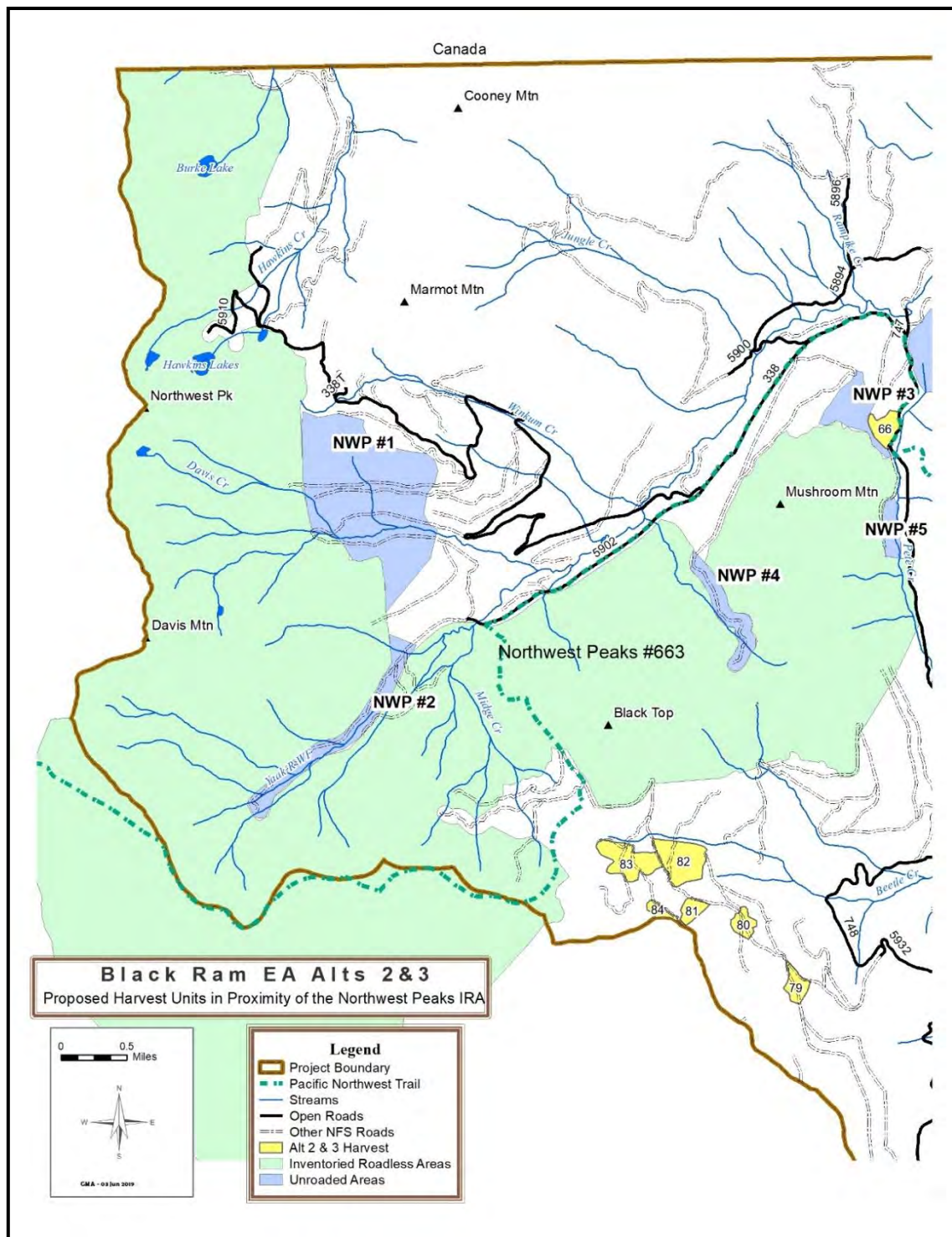


Figure 21. Unroaded Areas Adjacent to the Northwest Peaks IRA with nearby Harvest Units

West Fork Yaak IRA #694

All 8,233 acres of the West Fork Yaak IRA are located within the project boundary and the state of Montana.

Dusty Peak is the only mountain within the IRA boundary. The boundary comes close to Garver and Obermayer Mountains. There are four National Forest System Trails within the IRA boundary: French Creek #32, Mount Obermayer #33, West Fork Yaak River #318 and Garver Mountain #8. The area also provides visitors with several opportunities for viewing natural features, hunting, hiking, and berry picking. The West Fork Yaak IRA offers no opportunities for over-snow motorized use.

Unroaded Area Contiguous to IRA Boundary

West Fork Yaak IRA has five unroaded areas contiguous to the IRA that will be analyzed due to their unroaded characteristics (Figure 22). The unroaded areas contiguous to the IRA total 1850 acres (WFY#1 – 836 acres, WFY #2 -74 acres, WFY #3 – 150 acres, WFY #4 – 630 acres, and WFY #5 – 160 acres).

West Fork Yaak IRA Wilderness Attributes

Natural: Except for wildfire suppression, human-induced changes in the area have been minimal. Long-term ecological processes are predominately intact. Storm events, including wind, snow, and rain and insect and disease outbreaks continue to reshape the vegetation and landscape. Historically, wildfires of varying size and intensities also have contributed to shaping the vegetation and wildlife that inhabit the area.

Undeveloped: The trails within the Project Area receive little use by visitors. The trails lack features such as lookouts, mountain lakes, waterfalls, and distinct mountain apexes to attract visitors. The Garver Mountain Trail #8 is part of the PNNST and has the most use from mid-June to mid-July.

Opportunity to Experience Solitude: The District trail crew maintains the trails in the IRA every two to three years except for the Garver Mountain Trail, which is maintained annually. Overall, the opportunity for solitude for this IRA would rate very high. It has a dense, low elevation forest setting with little visitation. Dusty Peak is the only mountain within the boundary and no longer has a trail accessing its summit.

Special Features: The PNNST is one of eleven congressionally designated scenic trails in the United States. Garver Mountain Trail #8 is a 4.3-mile portion of the 1,200-mile PNNST. The portion of the West Fork Yaak River within the IRA has a preliminary classification of wild as an eligible Wild and Scenic River. Grizzly bears roam in and out of this area.

Manageability: The IRA is an irregular polygon that is defined by the contrast of past timber harvest activities. Pete Creek Rd #338 defines the western boundary. This roadless area has considerable variation in its boundary and becomes extremely narrow between the west and east lobes.

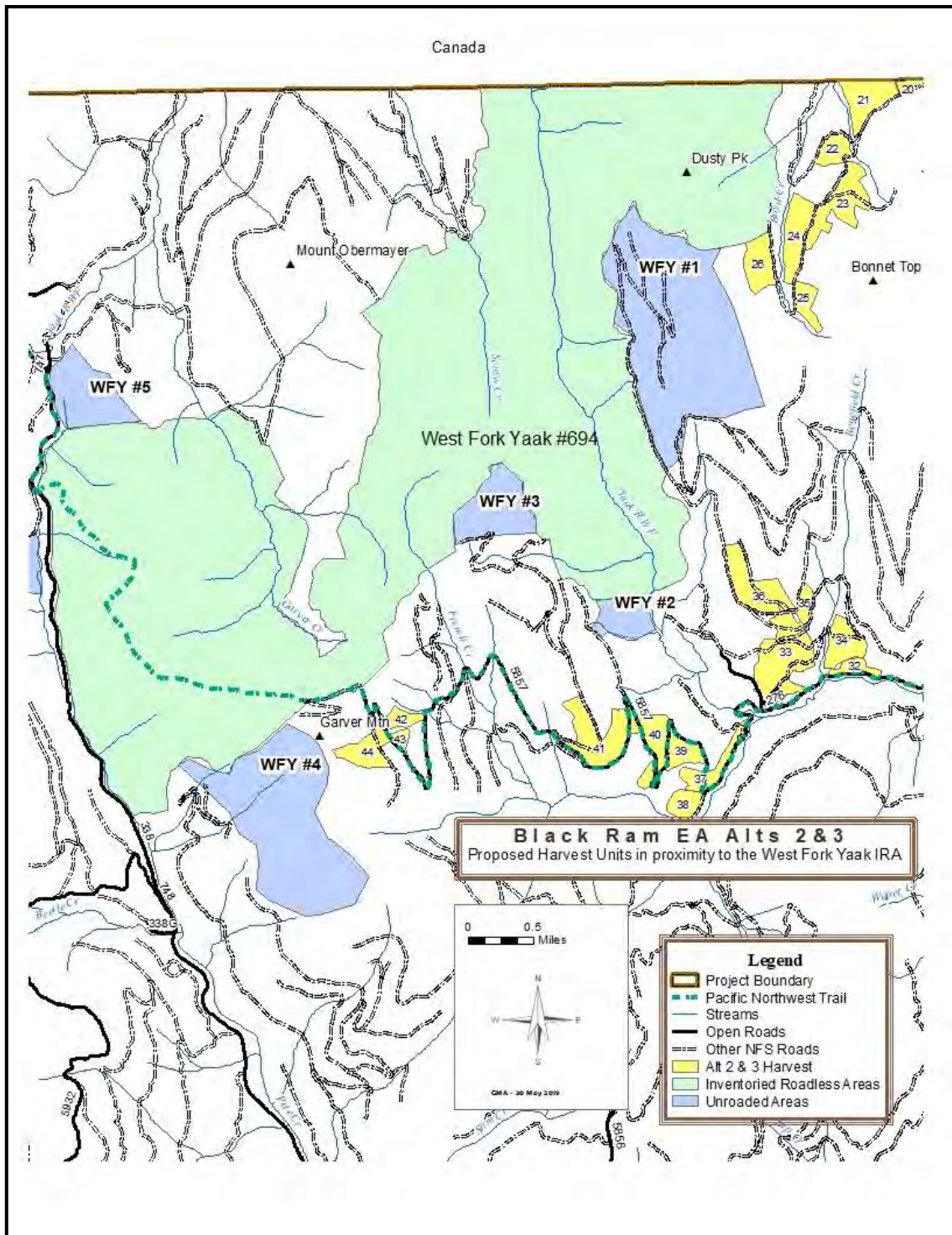


Figure 22. Unroaded Areas Adjacent to the West Fork IRA with nearby Harvest Units

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1 – No Action

A summary of direct and indirect effects for each alternative is found in Table 54.

Alternative 1 does not propose any management activities in Northwest Peaks and West Fork Yaak IRAs or the unroaded areas. On-going use by the public and potential fire suppression may occur in the IRA, but there would be no effects to the wilderness attributes and crosswalked roadless characteristics of this area.

Alternatives 2 and 3

A summary of direct and indirect effects for each alternative is found in Table 54.

Trail

A new non-motorized trail has been proposed from Northwest Peak to Midge Creek trail #461. This trail is proposed on the far west edge of the IRA. The objective for this trail is to provide a distinct GPS line to keep hikers on a specific route. The Northwest Peak Scenic Area is a desired location to visit in the Project Area. The area offers hikers some of the best scenery the KNF has to offer. As visitation to the Forest increases public recreation into pristine areas such as this would increase as well. Empirical observation and public feedback have confirmed that this area is a popular recreation destination. The Forest Service has no intent to construct a trail. The trail would follow TC 1 design parameters which include the following attributes: the tread would be intermittent and indistinct; obstacles are common, naturally occurring, and often substantial; constructed features are minimal to nonexistent; and route identification signing is limited to junctions and route markers are present when the trail location is not evident. The intent is to inform the public of the desired route to keep hikers on the correct path. Inevitably this would lessen impact from hikers creating social trails in this pristine area. This trail would not change the character of the IRA.

Harvest Unit activity near the Roadless Expanse

One harvest unit is proposed adjacent to or near the Northwest Peaks roadless expanse (unroaded area #3, Figure 21). Unit 66 is part of a greater landscape with mostly homogenous vegetation. Unit 66 is on a north/northeast-facing hillside that is bordered by NFSR 338. The unit contains no unique features that contribute substantially to the roadless expanse and harvest would not affect adjacent unroaded area #3.

One harvest unit is proposed adjacent to or near the West Fork Yaak roadless expanse (Figure 22). Unit 26 is on the opposite side of the ridge from the IRA. Unit 26 is a homogenous unit on an east-facing slope that borders past harvest units and is near several past harvest units and roads in the Boyd Creek drainage. The unit is adjacent to the IRA, but harvest would not affect any of the IRA values. Unit 26 has no unique features that contribute substantially to the roadless characteristics.

Non-Harvest Fuel Units within the Roadless Expanse

There are six proposed ecosystem burns, units A, B, C, D, E, and M within or adjacent to the roadless expanses (Table 52, Figure 23 and Figure 24).

Activities in these units would occur in spring or late summer/fall. Design features have been developed to provide for public safety during these activities. The common objective for all units is to apply fire to a fire-adapted ecosystem and capture ecosystem benefits of fire. The burns would enhance natural openings, create new openings, and stimulate the growth and production of fire-adapted forage/browse species for a variety of wildlife, including huckleberry production within core habitat to benefit grizzly bear.

Prescribed fire treatments in the roadless expanse would not greatly affect the roadless characteristics because low and moderate intensity fires are typical of the forest ecosystems in the area and

influence the development of the forest communities. Management ignited prescribed fire and associated treatments are a form of “modern human control or manipulation” and would to some extent affect the natural character within the roadless expanse. Though the appearance of the vegetation would change, it would be within the parameters of natural integrity and apparent naturalness. Using low and moderate-severity burning would mimic a wildfire within its natural regime as opposed to an unnaturally intense wildfire, thereby enhancing or helping to maintain the roadless characteristic of naturally appearing landscape. About 200 acres of fuels augmentation, which includes selective slashing of understory trees less than 7” DBH, may precede aerial and/or hand ignition to create a mixed severity fire in units A, B, C, D, E, and M. This slashing is consistent with 36 CFR 294.13(b)(2); which states that the cutting (slashing) of timber is incidental to the implantation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited

The non-harvest fuel treatments proposed under Alternatives 2 and 3 would stabilize or improve the wilderness attributes important to the roadless area expanses (**Table 53**).

Table 52. Non Harvest Fuel Unit Acres in West Fork Yaak and Northwest Peaks Roadless Expanses for Alternatives 2 and 3.

IRA	Total IRA Acres	IRA Acres in Black Ram Project Area	Acres of Prescribed burning Proposed within the IRA	Acres of Prescribed Burning Proposed Within Identified Unroaded Areas.
Northwest Peaks #663	15,341	10,731	1,000	110
West Fork Yaak #694	8,233	8,233	1,332	760
Total Acres	23,574	18,963	2,332	870

Other Activities proposed in the Unroaded Areas

- NWP #1: In alternatives 2 and 3 about 0.5 of NFSR 5914A and NFSR 338Q would be decommissioned. There are other Level 1 roads in this area that are needed for future management as determined by the Black Ram travel analysis process. These roads may be needed and would be available for future access in this area.
- NWP #2: In alternatives 2 and 3 about 2.4 miles of NFSR 5902 would be decommissioned.
- NWP #4: There is a level 1 road in this area that may be needed for future management as determined by the Black Ram travel analysis process. This roads would be available for future access in this area.
- NWP #5: In alternatives 2 and 3 about 0.9 mile of NFSR 338K would be decommissioned.
- WFY #1: There is a level 1 road in this area that may be needed for future management as determined by the Black Ram travel analysis process. This road would be available for future access in this area.

These activities are not expected to result in direct or indirect effect to the roadless expanse or the wilderness character of the associated IRAs. Those unroaded areas not listed do not have additional activities proposed.

Effects to Wilderness Attributes from Harvest and Non-harvest Fuel Treatments

Natural: The natural characteristics of the roadless expanse would be improved by introducing fire to areas where it has been excluded. Historical fire records and stand data show that the exclusion of

fire through wildfire suppression is a threat to the natural character of these areas. Many plant, and animal species found in these areas are dependent on the element of fire to maintain the habitats and vegetation they need to survive. Please refer to the wildlife and vegetation reports. Exclusion of fire allows for encroachment of fire-intolerant species and may actually reduce the biological values apparent to naturalness characteristics. Reintroducing fire would enhance the characteristic of “naturalness” throughout the area, by establishing forest characteristics that would have been more typical of this area if fire had been allowed to play its natural role in landscape processes. Fuels augmentation involving selective slashing of understory less than 7” DBH may precede aerial and/or hand ignition to create a mixed-severity fire. Low (less than 6 inch) stumps from fuels augmentation may be evident if implemented within the roadless expanses. Stumps would deter from naturalness. The stumps from thinning are expected to burn, rot and disintegrate within about 10 years. As a result, overall these burns would have minimal effects on the natural characteristics of these IRAs. The effects of successful fire suppression have likely contributed to higher fuel loadings in some of the forest types across the landscape and that tradeoff has also likely contributed to the risk of large-scale high intensity fires into the future. After prescribed burning, depending on where and when a fire does ignite in the IRAs, fire managers would have more options for engaging the fires safely, including the choice to manage the fire(s) for resource benefits with less risk to resources in and around the IRAs. The proposed prescribed burn would not require construction of fire line due to natural features and use of prescriptions that naturally contain fire through availability of fuel and moisture (see Fire and Fuels section). There would be no effect from harvest activities because there are no treatments planned in the roadless expanse.

Undeveloped: The non-motorized trail Northwest Peak to Midge Creek trail #461 would be designated as a TC 1 and would be added as an NFS trail. This trail is already being hiked during the summer. The intent of placing this trail on the trail map is to inform the public of the desired route to keep hikers on the correct path. Inevitably this would lessen impact from hikers creating social trails in this pristine area.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation: Remoteness and solitude may be interrupted for a brief time during ignition of prescribed burning by field crews or helicopter ignition. This would be a very short-term effect and overall the remoteness and solitude related to the alternatives would remain unchanged. There may be some limited noise and road dust associated with the harvest unit activities that are near the roadless expanse and no effects to the roadless expanse are anticipated.

Special Features: One of the special features listed for the IRAs is habitat for grizzly bears and other wildlife. Restoring fire to these areas would enhance those attributes and benefit this special feature by creating improved grass/shrub production including huckleberries. Other special features would not be expected to change. Hikers on the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail are unlikely to experience hiking delays when burning Units, A, C, and D. The timeframe for these treatments is when PNNST hikers have already moved through the Project Area. There would be no effect from harvest activities because there are no treatments planned in the roadless expanse.

Manageability: Actions proposed under alternatives 2 and 3 would not affect the “manageability” attribute of the IRAs. Nothing proposed would detract from the Forest Service’s ability to maintain the IRAs wilderness attributes and meet the minimum size criteria (5,000 acres) for wilderness.

Table 53. Effects to Wilderness Attributes by Alternative

Resource Element	Indicator/measure	Alt. 1	Alt. 2 &3
Wilderness Attributes	Natural	Stable	Improving

Resource Element	Indicator/measure	Alt. 1	Alt. 2 &3
Wilderness Attributes	Undeveloped	Stable	Improving
Wilderness Attributes	Solitude and Primitive Recreation	Stable	Stable
Wilderness Attributes	Special Features	Stable	Improving
Wilderness Attributes	Manageability	Stable	Stable
Will the alternative affect the areas suitability for wilderness designation?		No	No

Cumulative Effects – Alternatives 2 and 3

Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis

Timber harvest, road building, watershed restoration, and wildfire suppression are a few of the activities that have occurred in the Project Area. These activities, except for fire suppression occurred outside, adjacent to, or within short distances of the currently established boundaries of the IRAs and adjacent unroaded areas. The effects of past management have diminished over time and current conditions meet the wilderness attributes. Roadless characteristics are maintained within this project so there would be no adverse cumulative effects to roadless expanse as a result of the proposed activities. With the exception of fire suppression, natural processes would continue to influence conditions in IRAs. Trail maintenance would continue on existing trails as funding allows.

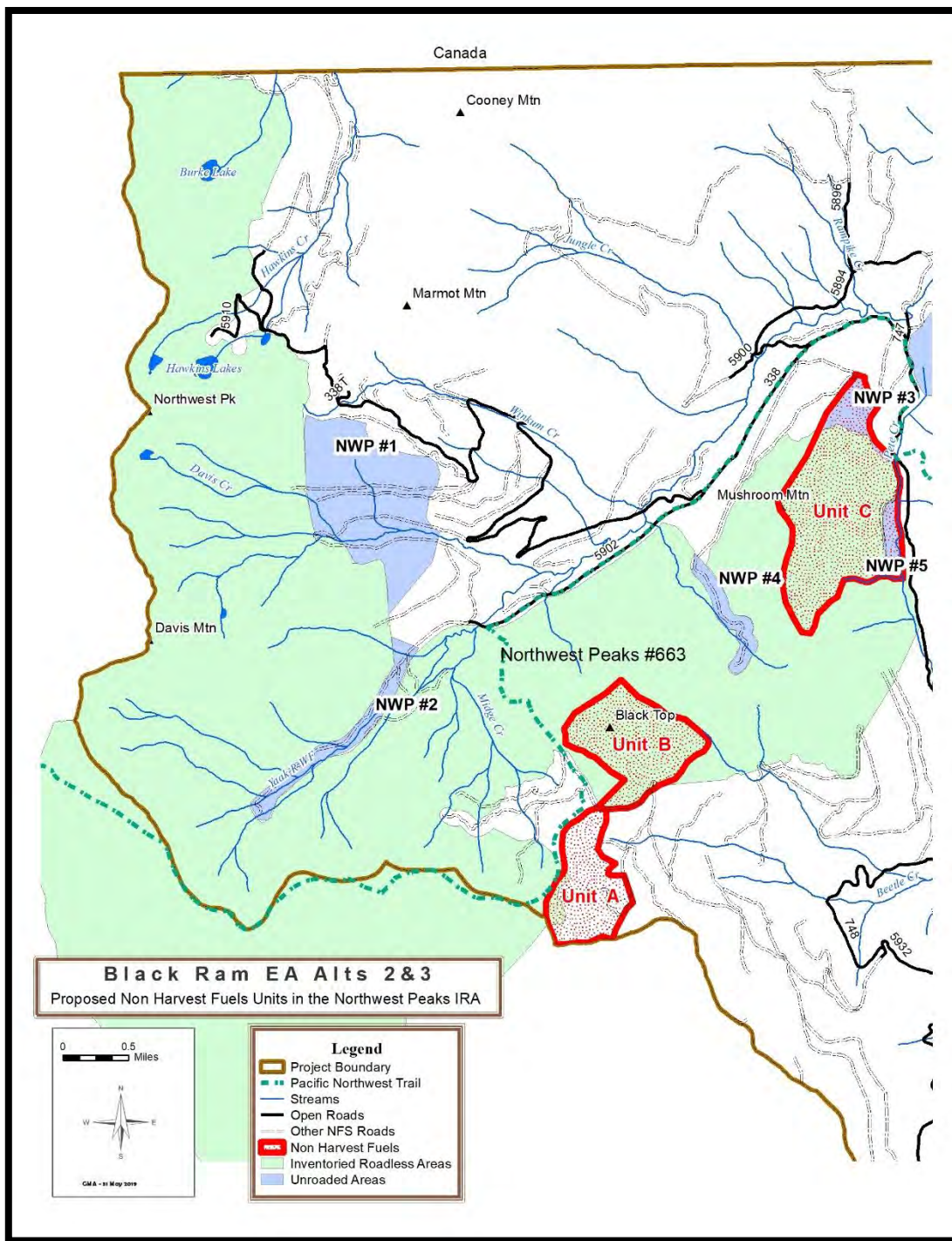


Figure 23. Proposed Non- Harvest Fuel Units adjacent to or within the Northwest Peaks Roadless Expanse

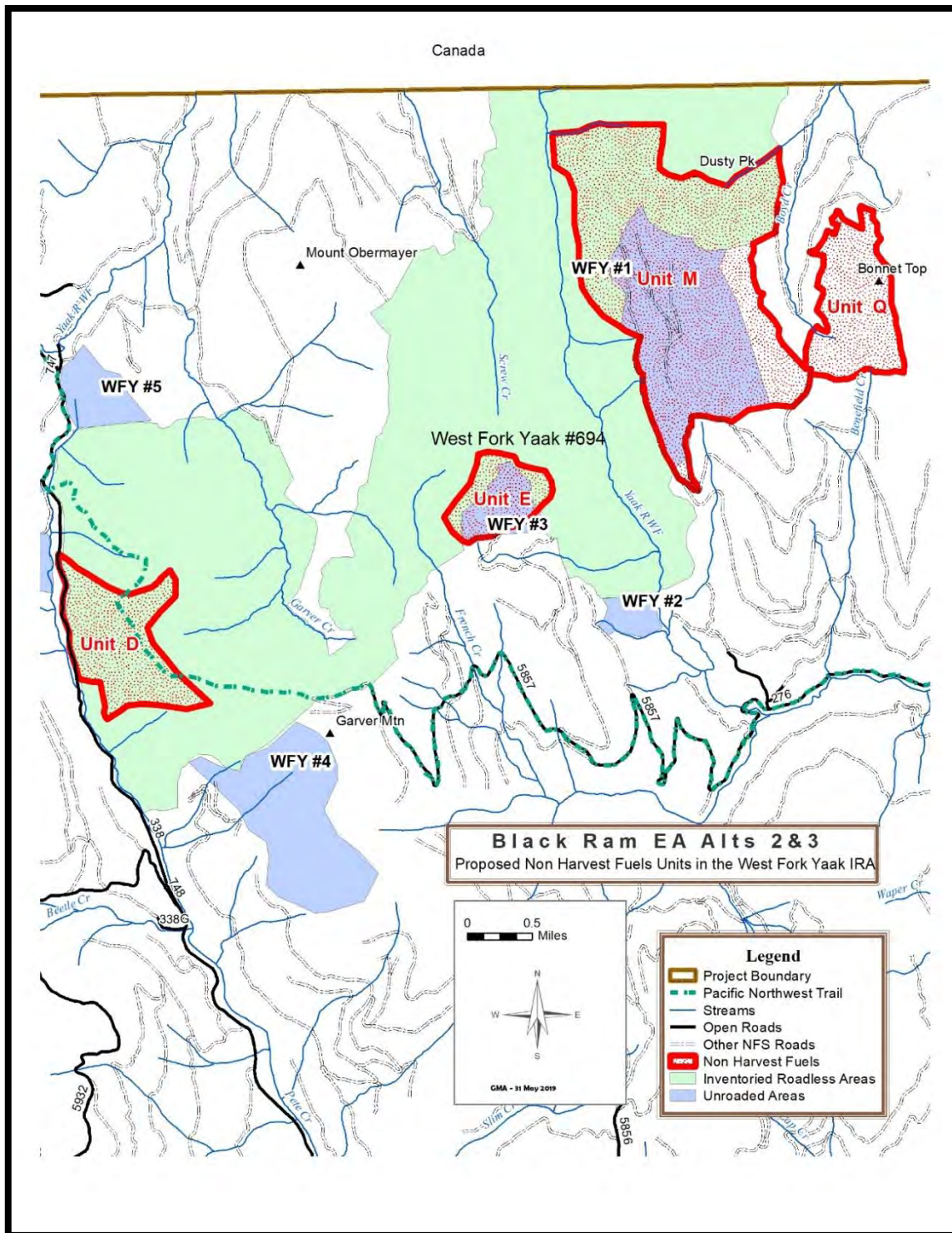


Figure 24. Proposed Non-Harvest Fuel Units adjacent to or with in the West Fork Yaak Roadless Expanse

Summary

The IRAs in alternative 1 would continue to maintain the appearance of being “Natural” and primarily affected by the forces of nature. Alternative 1 would not however, address the human-

induced changes resulting from years of fire suppression activities. Alternatives 2 and 3 would reintroduce fire and add to the natural processes in the IRAs and unroaded lands contiguous to the IRAs.

In alternatives 2 and 3 the undeveloped character of the IRAs would change slightly with the designation of the non-motorized trail Northwest Peak to Midge Creek trail #461. This trail would not change the character of the IRA.

Alternative 1 would have no direct effect on opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive recreation. Alternatives 2 and 3 could include a short-term loss of opportunities for solitude, primitive and unconfined type of recreational experiences during prescribed burning operations.

None of the alternatives would directly affect the Special Features attribute of the IRAs because all traditional cultural properties, sacred sites and other locally identified unique characteristics have been avoided or have specific design features to protect them during project implementation.

None of the alternatives would affect the Manageability attribute of the IRAs. None of the actions proposed (under any alternative) would adversely affect the Forest Service's ability to maintain the IRA's wilderness attributes or meet the minimum size criteria (5,000 acres) for wilderness.

Table 54. Summary of Environmental Effects to Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) Attributes.

Resource Element	Indicator/Measure	Alt 1	Alt 2&3
Wilderness Attribute and corresponding Roadless Characteristics	The Natural Wilderness Attribute Corresponding Roadless Characteristics: High quality or undisturbed soil, water, and air; Sources of public drinking water; Diversity of plant and animal communities; Habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and for sensitive species dependent on large, undisturbed areas of land.	Under alternative 1, the IRAs would continue to maintain the appearance of being "Natural" and primarily affected by the forces of nature. Alternative 1 would not however, address the human induced changes resulting from years of fire suppression activities.	Under alternatives 2 and 3, the reintroduction of fire would have the additional benefit of introducing more natural processes to the ecosystem. There would be localized evidence of prescribed burning operations, including fuels augmentation work such as slashing in Units A, B, C, D, E, and M and possible ignition by helicopter in all burn units. This slashing is consistent with 36 CFR 294.13(b)(2); which states that the cutting (slashing) of timber is incidental to the implantation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited
Wilderness Attribute and corresponding Roadless Characteristics	The Undeveloped Wilderness Attribute Corresponding Roadless Characteristics: Reference landscapes; Natural appearing landscapes with high scenic quality.	Under alternative 1, the undeveloped character would not change.	Under alternatives 2 and 3 The non-motorized trail Northwest Peak to Midge Creek trail #461 would be designated as a TC 1 and would be added as a NFS trail.

Resource Element	Indicator/Measure	Alt 1	Alt 2&3
Wilderness Attribute and corresponding Roadless Characteristics	The Solitude and Primitive Recreation Wilderness Attribute Corresponding Roadless Characteristics: Primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized ROS classes of dispersed recreation	Alternatives 1 would have no direct effect on opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive recreation	Under alternatives 2 and 3, impacts could include a short-term loss of opportunities for solitude, primitive and unconfined type of recreational experiences during prescribed burning operations.
Wilderness Attribute and corresponding Roadless Characteristics	The Special Features Wilderness Attribute Corresponding Roadless Characteristics: Traditional cultural properties and sacred sites; Other locally identified unique characteristics.	Alternative 1, would still require field crews to maintain the PNNST and conduct restoration efforts on Northwest Peak Lookout periodically. Monitoring of TES species would continue with need and funding.	Alternatives 2 and 3 Prescribed burning operations would not likely displace hikers due to timing of burning operations. Burning operations may displace TES wildlife.
Wilderness Attribute and corresponding Roadless Characteristics	The Manageability Wilderness Attribute There is no corresponding Roadless Characteristics.	None of the alternatives would affect the Manageability attribute of the IRAs. None of the actions proposed (under any alternative) would adversely affect the Forest Service's ability to maintain the IRA's wilderness attributes or meet the minimum size criteria (5,000 acres) for wilderness.	None of the alternatives would affect the Manageability attribute of the IRAs. None of the actions proposed (under any alternative) would adversely affect the Forest Service's ability to maintain the IRA's wilderness attributes or meet the minimum size criteria (5,000 acres) for wilderness.

Compliance with the Land Management Plan

The 2015 Forest Plan provides desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines for the recreation resource in Black Ram. The following are applicable to the IRAs in this project:

Goals

GOAL-IRA-01. Inventoried roadless areas will be managed to protect values and benefits of roadless areas.

- The proposed activities in Alternatives 2 and 3 make progress toward Forest Plan goal GOAL-IRA-01 as prescribed burning would improve plant and animal habitat.

Standards

FW-STD-IRA-01. Within inventoried roadless areas, outside of the state of Idaho, the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B, published at 66 Fed Reg. 3244-3273) shall apply. IRAs are identified in a set of inventoried roadless area maps, contained in the Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation, Volume 2, dated November 2000, which are held at the national headquarters office of the Forest Service, or any subsequent update or revisions of those maps (36 CFR 294.11). Maps of the IRAs are also found in Appendix C of the Forest Plan FEIS.

- Alternatives 2 and 3 may include about 200 acres of fuels augmentation, which includes selective slashing of understory trees less than 7" DBH. The cutting (slashing) of timber is incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited and complies with the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B, published at 66 Fed Reg. 3244-3273).

Management Areas

Desired Conditions

MA2-DC-FIRE-01. Wild/Scenic/Recreational. Fire plays an increased role as a natural disturbance agent. **MA5a, b, c - DC-FIRE-01.** The use of fire serves as the primary tool for trending the vegetation towards the desired conditions as well as serving other important ecosystem functions.

MA5a, b, c - DC-VEG-01. Natural ecological processes (e.g., plant succession) and disturbances (e.g., fire, insects, and disease) are the primary forces affecting the composition, structure, and pattern of vegetation.

- Alternatives 2 and 3 help to trend the vegetation toward the desired condition and meet the Forest Plan desired conditions. See the Fire and Fuels and Forest Vegetation sections.

MA5a, b, c - DC-AR-01. These areas provide more remote and undeveloped recreation experiences largely through the management of the various trail systems (i.e., motorized and non-motorized).

- Alternatives 2 and 3 would add the Northwest Peaks to Rock Candy trail.

Guidelines

MA5a, b, c - GDL-FIRE-01. Natural, unplanned ignitions, as well as planned ignitions, may be used to meet resource objectives

- Alternatives 2 and 3 meet this guideline for non-harvest fuel units by utilizing planned ignitions to restore ecosystem composition.

Other Agencies and Individuals Consulted

Brian Riggers the Roadless Coordinator for the Northern Region responded to emails regarding questions asked about unroaded areas and the wilderness attributes and roadless characteristics crosswalk on February 11th and March 12th.