Information clipped from: R. Ghormley 2011. Lynx Habitat Model and Mapping Criteria. San Luis Valley Public Lands Center: Rio Grande National Forest and San Luis Valley BLM. October 7, 2011.

* 1. **Lynx Linkage Areas (LLAs)**

Linkage Areas are intended to provide landscape connectivity between blocks of lynx habitat. Four separate Lynx Linkage Areas (LLAs) that contribute to habitat connectivity for lynx occur on or partially on the Rio Grande National Forest. The mapping effort for these linkage areas and others in the Southern Rockies was initiated in January 2002, by an interagency team, and further refined at the local level through considerations of local information and conditions. Appendix D of the EIS for the Southern Rockies Lynx Amendment (2007) provides further definition of linkage areas including brief descriptions of the four occurring on or shared by the Rio Grande National Forest. These include:

**1.** **Poncha Pass:** This linkage area provides for movement between the San Juans to the Sawatch and Sangre de Cristo Ranges. It connects central Colorado to southern Colorado and is a very important connection. The topography pattern and vegetation results in a funneling north-south connection near Poncha Pass. It also includes Monarch and Marshall Pass as they provide a series of habitat and terrain features that provide a “stepping stones” type series of connections.

**2. Cochetopa Hills/North Pass:** This linkage area provides for north-south movements from the San Juans to the Sawatch Range. It is a well-used movement corridor by lynx. North Pass (Highway 114) is a potential barrier or impediment to movements.

**3. Slumgullion/Spring Creek Pass:**  This linkage area includes the Spring Creek and Indian Creek areas. It provides a north-south connection between Lake City to the Creede area, with threats that include highway crossing problems (Hwy 149).

**4. Wolf Creek Pass:** This linkage area includes areas on both sides of Hwy 160, and provides for north-south movement. Lynx mortality at Pass Creek on east side of pass documents use by lynx. Threats include a high-volume, two lane highway, which has recently been upgraded.

Additional information pertaining to the linkage zones that occur on or partially on the Rio Grande National Forest is displayed below in Table 4.

Table 4: Designated Lynx Linkage Areas (LLAs) that occur or partially occur on the Rio Grande National Forest.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Linkage Name | Acres  RGNF | Acres Other  Forests | Acres  SLV  BLM | Acres  Other  Ownership | Total  Acres | Mgmt  Plan  Developed | Primary  Movement  Concerns | Lynx  Mortalities |
| Poncha Pass | 2,663 | PSICC  59,173 | 285 | 26,614 | 88,735 | No | Hwy. 285 | None known |
| North Pass/  Cochetopa | 24,076 | GMUG 9,135 | 0 | 0 | 33,211 | No | Hwy. 114 | None known |
| Spring Crk Pass/ Slumgullion | 1,965 | GMUG 6,000 | 0 | 0 | 7,965 | No | Hwy. 149 | None known |
| Wolf Creek Pass | 22,606 | SJNF  7,610 | 0 | 397 | 30,613 | No | Hwy. 160;  WCV Proposal | 1 Lynx  Mortality  July 2000 |

As of September 2011, two of the linkage zones on the RGNF have been further evaluated and described at the project level (e.g. Wolf Creek Pass, North Pass/Cochetopa Hills). Both of these LLAs have also had some degree of analysis conducted in regards to lynx movement within and around them in association with project level analysis (Shenk 2005, Ivan 2011). These analyses are based on lynx monitoring data collected by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (formerly Division of Wildlife) and provide further verification that individual lynx do indeed utilize and move through them.