

RANGE



GOAL

Manage livestock grazing land consistent with the protection and management of other resources.

STRATEGY

Complete range environmental studies analyzing present management. Prepare allotment management plans for all active allotments. (An allotment is an area of land where one or more individuals graze livestock.)

Item No. 6 - Livestock Forage Available, Range in Good Condition Per Established Allotments

Frequency of Measurement: Annual
Reporting Period: Five Years

MONITORING ACTION

Forest range personnel will annually monitor each grazing allotment for use, condition of range, forage availability and protection of other resources. Data will be entered into the INFRASTRUCTURE database generating one source of information about the Clearwater National Forest Range Program.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/FINDINGS

Range allotments are routinely monitored for use, possible resource damage and maintenance needs. Current range conditions overall are good. There are 17 cattle allotments and 19 grazing permits on the Forest. Two grazing permits were inactive this year. There were 1,320 cattle (cow/calf pairs) permitted to graze on the Forest. This amounted to approximately 6,035 head months (HMs) in FY03. A HM is the use and occupancy of the range by one animal for one month. There were also 416 horses permitted to graze on the Forest in 2003. These numbers reflect the permitted animals on cattle allotments and Outfitter and Guide Permits and do not include animals associated with recreational visitors.

NEPA was initiated on three allotments in the Palouse Drainage and will be completed in FY04.

The National Forest land within the Hatter/Flat Creek allotment is in the Browns Meadow land exchange, which will be completed in FY04. Upon the completion of this land exchange, this allotment will be eliminated.

RECREATION

GOAL

Provide a range of quality outdoor recreation opportunities within a forest environment that will meet the public needs now and in the future. Provide opportunities for a broad spectrum of dispersed activities and developed facilities.

STRATEGY

The Clearwater National Forest has developed several strategies to meet Forest Plan goals in recreation. These strategies can be summarized as follows:

Identify Recreation Areas: The Forest has been divided into seven areas with unique opportunities - the Palouse Plateau, the North Fork Clearwater River Corridor, the Lolo Trail Corridor, the Highway 12 Corridor, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, roadless areas and roaded areas. Each of these areas has identified recreation opportunities and challenges, as well as visitor use patterns and needs.

Reconstruct Existing Recreation Facilities to Standards Appropriate: Facilities at all sites will be evaluated for safety, repair and accessibility. Facilities will be maintained or reconstructed as funding and feasibility allow.

Provide for Construction of New Recreation Facilities: Add new facilities to provide a diversity of recreation opportunities if funding is available. New facilities at all sites will be constructed to meet the needs of people with disabilities if possible.

Continue to Request Funding: Funding is needed to operate, maintain and reconstruct sites to full service standards.

Item No 2: Wide Spectrum of Recreation Opportunities

Frequency of Measurement: Annual
Reporting Period: Five Years

MONITORING ACTION

The Forest recreation staff will monitor recreation opportunities. Monitoring and evaluation will:

1. Compare recreation use on the Forest with the broad range of opportunities that could occur and are supported in the Forest Plan,
2. Identify changes or conflicts in existing recreation use, and
3. Identify directions for changes and alternatives for conflict resolution.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS / FINDINGS

GENERAL FOREST AREA USE

Inquiries regarding the route of Lewis and Clark crossing the Clearwater National Forest continued to increase in number Forest-wide during FY03. Forest personnel are continuing to prepare for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, 2005 and 2006 mark the anniversary years of this observance. Planning and implementation is occurring for interpretive signing, brochures, facility upgrade and construction, road repairs, re-

source monitoring, and a lottery permit system that is being implemented to manage visitor use and protect resources along the Lolo Trail.

Recreation use within the North Fork Clearwater River corridor continued to increase in 2003. More visitors were observed throughout the Memorial Day through Labor Day summer season, particularly those fishing. Increasing impacts are apparent in disperse campsites along major rivers and streams of the North Fork Clearwater drainage. The increasing volume of carelessly treated human waste in and near dispersed campsites and beaches is of particular concern. Not only is human waste an aesthetic issue at campsites, but it can result in unacceptable resource impacts and public health issues when treated responsibly. No noticeable change in the number of boaters was observed. The low numbers of elk in the North Fork Clearwater watershed continued to reduce the number of hunters visiting this area.

Information regarding boating use on the Lochsa River is located in the Wild and Scenic Rivers section.

DEVELOPED AREA USE

Fees collected in FY03 increased about 8% at developed campgrounds. The number of visitors to campgrounds, as reported on their fee envelopes, totaled approximately 22,483, an increase over the previous year. Fee compliance checks remained low in FY03 due to a lack of availability of compliance personnel. Use of a better tracking system for campground fees (in place since 2000), is allowing more accurate trends for fee sites to be assessed for the present and the future.

Recreation Use And Fees Collected*	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02	FY03
Recreation Use (M Visitor Days)	1808	1600	1328	1347	1576	1702
Fees Collected	\$96,763	\$85,907	\$95,347	\$96,664	\$113,760	\$124,000
Recreation Use Change from Previous Year (%)	+13	-11	-17	+1.5	+17	+8

RECREATION FACILITY IMPROVEMENT

Emphasis continues to be placed on improving existing campground facilities. These improvements focus on reducing critical deferred maintenance items with emphasis on health and safety concerns such as water system upgrades and sanitation improvements. Site upgrades that improve access to recreation facilities for disabled visitors are also a priority of the facility improvement program. The Forest will be focusing on rehabilitating facilities expected to be in demand during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.

Construction was completed on a multi-year project to reconstruct the Lolo Pass Visitor Center. Lolo Pass Visitor Center construction was a joint effort between the Idaho Transportation Department, the Montana Department of Transportation and the Forest Service. This multi-million dollar project resulted in improved visitor services, convenient parking, improved road safety and improved interpretive displays. This project was completed in December 2002 with the grand opening and dedication occurring June 2003.

RECREATION SPECIAL EFFORTS

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships continue to be important to the success of the Forest's recreation program. In FY02, as in previous years, partners contributed a significant amount of labor and funding to improve recreational facilities, and help meet Forest visitor expectations by providing interpretive and "Good Host" programs.

The Forest continues to have valuable partners with the Nez Perce Tribe and the Nez Perce National Historic Park in planning for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.

Partnerships with the Forest Fee Demonstration Program, Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game enabled the Forest to initiate a statewide GIS mapping project to facilitate public knowledge and administration of the Forest's Outfitters and Guides.

NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL

The Clearwater National Forest and the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) coordinate noxious weed treatment in the Highway 12 corridor from Kooskia to Lolo Pass. For the fifth year, the ITD treated noxious weeds in the highway right-of-way from Kooskia to Lolo Pass. The Lochsa Ranger District, with assistance from the Moose Creek Ranger District, treated weeds in administrative and developed sites from Tukaytespe to White Sands campground. Noxious weed treatments on the west end of the Highway 12 corridor are in a moderate to low maintenance range while efforts on the east end are at the initial attack phase. The Powell compound was treated for the third time in FY03. Developed sites along the North Fork Clearwater River and elsewhere on Clearwater NF lands were also treated to reduce the spread of noxious weeds.

Treatment is aimed at reducing noxious weed occurrence and invasion, and include pulling, introducing biological controls, and herbicide application. Grass seeding in treatment areas helps to out-compete new weed starts. Monitoring has shown that most sites treated are exhibiting significant decline in the level of infestation. After repeated treatments, weed proliferation appears to be reduced and treatment can then be less intensive. New sites have been identified for treatment as older sites a maintenance stage.

The Student Conservation Association provided a team of students to survey portions of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness for areas with noxious weeds as well as areas without weeds on all three forests -- Clearwater, Bitterroot and Nez Perce. The surveys within the Clearwater NF were conducted on the Powell and Lochsa Ranger Districts. This will be the start of an annual survey crew for the Wilderness area combined with survey information from the wilderness rangers, trail crews and various field personnel.

FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

Revenue from the fee demonstration program continued to play a vital role in providing valued added products and services to Forest visitors.

Campgrounds

- The Clearwater NF hosted fireside interpretive programs in partnership with the Idaho Humanities Council.
- Hired hosts and workers to assist campers and maintain campgrounds.

Outfitters and Guides

- A river ranger was provided on the Lochsa River for the whitewater season.
- Two sessions of the Lochsa Guide Education Series were hosted. These sessions covered the internment camp history at Canyon Creek and local fire ecology.
- Hosted 5th Annual Partners Afloat.
- Trails 627, 649, 594 & 117: cleared trail, repaired slide damage, installed waterbars & repaired drainage and brushed
- Trail 20: cleared trail, blasted 30' of rock hazard, installed/repared 29 waterbars to limit erosion, brushed 2.5 miles
- Trails 567 & 650: cleared trail, brushed 2500', installed numerous log & rock waterbars repaired bridges & retaining walls
- Trail 651: opened: trail had not been maintained for 15-20 yrs.

Lolo Pass - The Lolo Pass winter operation was funded with the fee demonstration funds collected on site.

- Approximately \$12,000 was contributed to grooming eight miles of cross-country ski trails.
- Approximately \$3,000 was contributed to the State of Montana (MDOT) for parking lot plowing.
- About \$2,500 was contributed to the local snowmobile club for snowmobile trail grooming.
- For 95% of the days the visitor center was open, a full-time compliance/information officer was on-site.
- Contributions were given for weekly avalanche testing and reporting.

Item No. 14 - Off Highway Vehicle Use Impacts

Frequency of Measurement: Annual
Reporting Period: Five Years

MONITORING ACTION

The Forest recreation staff will prepare a report displaying the effects of off highway vehicles (OHVs) on Clearwater National Forest resources. Monitored items include complaints and conflicts between user groups, impacts to trails from motorized use, snowmobile activity in the Great Burn recommended wilderness and in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, changes in trail and campsite conditions at Fish Lake, citations for violations of closure regulations, and resource damage occurring on the Forest.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/FINDINGS

COMPLAINTS AND CONFLICTS BETWEEN USER GROUPS

Observation of recreation activity on the Forest indicates that use of OHVs continued to increase in FY03. OHVs are routinely observed on most Forest roads. Although most use occurs on roads, a significant amount of OHV use on trails and off roads has been observed, in some instances, in violation of restrictions.

The rapid growth of OHV ownership, particularly of ATVs has led to increased demands for trail facilities on which to ride them. Lack of public facilities suitable for OHV use has resulted in motorized use on trails not constructed for mechanized use. Such use has resulted in widening of tread from a single track to a double track, damage to vegetation, tread erosion and creation of unauthorized trails. Off road/trail use has also raised concerns over damage to young trees in reforested areas and soil disturbance on Forest, State and private lands.

Observations in recent years had seemed to indicate a decline in the use of trail motorcycles. However, there appears to be a recent resurgence with an increased percentage of riders seeking a "performance riding" experience. Several trails, including Trail 144 to Pot Mtn and Trail 20 along Weitas Creek, are developing banked turns and showing other effects of high speed riding.

Instances of reported conflict are still related primarily to the objection by non-motorized visitors to the presence of motorized users on the Forest. Motorized use and conflicts are most prevalent on the Palouse and the North Fork Ranger Districts.

Complaints from Forest visitors continue to be received, particularly with respect to use of OHVs on trails in the Great Burn roadless area. Visitors reported seeing motorcycle tracks on several trails where motorized use is prohibited. A number of complaints were received from the public about the presence of OHVs at Fish Lake within the Great Burn area contending use of OHVs in the area was inappropriate since the area has been recommended for wilderness classification in the Forest Plan. However, the Forest Plan does not prohibit motorized access to Fish Lake (which has been occurring for 40+ years). The Forest is monitoring use at Fish Lake to ensure that resource values are adequately protected. Each reported instance of a violation was investigated at the site of the reported violation; however, the violators could not be identified and no citations were issued. No long term effects of motorized use in the Great Burn area were identified.

Actions taken in response to complaints included increased visits by Forest administrative and law enforcement officials to confirm reported use, identify points of entry and installation of signing found to be inadequate.

Emphasis in 2003 was placed on ensuring that restrictions on use of OHVs are adequately signed and increased monitoring by law enforcement personnel. All trails in the Great Burn area where motorized use is restricted were signed.

SNOWMOBILE AND OTHER MOTORIZED ACTIVITY IN THE GREAT BURN ROADLESS AREA

Action in winter 2002-2003 was directed at ensuring that information about restrictions is available to the public and determining the extent and location of snowmobile activity in the Great Burn. The Lolo and Clearwater National Forest Supervisors' sent a joint letter to snowmobile groups and vendors discussing illegal snowmobile activities on both Forests within the Great Burn, as well as the 800 miles of trail available for snowmobile use. Safety issues, State snowmobile registration tags, and self-policing were also discussed. The Great Burn Snowmobile Closure Law Enforcement Plan was updated. The Lead Wilderness Ranger was able to patrol on snowmobile during this season with an LEO to make public contacts. The District Ranger and Lolo Pass staff also attended snowmobile club meetings to discuss the upcoming winter season.

Thirty observations were made in 2003 from January to December in the areas of Elk Summit, Blacklead at the Crooked Fork, Tom Beal, Granite Pass, Beaver Ridge, Brushy Fork, Spruce Creek, and Kooskooskia. Five overflight attempts were made with three of those successful over Elk Summit, Tom Beal, Beaver Ridge, and portions of the North Fork District. For ground observations, illegal tracks were found at the Blacklead Trail at the Crooked Fork, with six citations written in March 2003. The Crooked Fork entrance to Trail 35 had sign vandalism as in previous years, and the sign was replaced again, but much higher to prevent damage. For overflight observations, illegal tracks were found at Cedar Log Lakes. Observation and overflight reports are filed from a variety of Forest workers.

CHANGES IN TRAIL AND CAMPSITE CONDITIONS AT FISH LAKE

Monitoring of OHV activity on the trail to Fish Lake and at the lakeside campsites continued in FY03 with one or more visits to the lake during the July 4 through Labor Day holidays. Snow melt in 2003 was a little late. Trail #419 was closed through July 30 to prevent damage to meadows and other wet areas caused by riders leaving the trail to get around the remaining piles of snow.

Visitors observed at the lake during administrative visits appeared to be about the same as in previous years during the fishing season. No actual counts of persons camping or traveling to the lake were made.

RESOURCE DAMAGE AND INCIDENTS OF UNAUTHORIZED CONSTRUCTION OF A TRAIL

Resource damage to trails and other resources resulting from motorized use is still considered to be minimal and relatively easily corrected though concerns over the effects of OHV use are increasing - particularly on the Palouse Ranger District. Incidents of unauthorized creation of OHV trails by cutting vegetation and repeated use of a route continue to occur throughout the Forest, and particularly in the North Fork of the Palouse River drainage. There have also been incidents of widening of Forest system trails by OHV users. As these incidents are found they are evaluated and action taken to deter further use.

RESPONSE TO DEMANDS FOR OHV OPPORTUNITIES

Based on a FY01 Forest-wide review of all trails, those trails suitable for travel with OHVs will be designated in the Forest Access Guide as permitting travel with OHVs less than 50 inches in width. Trails not "Open" for use with OHVs are described in the 2003-2004 Access Guide as "Prohibited" or "Restricted".

The extent of OHV use on the Palouse Ranger District on public and private ownerships prompted the initiation of a "focus group" of landowners to discuss use of OHVs in that area. Discussions by the group have led to clarification of landowner and user concerns. Group discussions and involvement of user groups continued in FY03 directed at resolving land owner concerns and providing direction for future management of OHV use on the public and private lands.

One outcome of these discussions on the Palouse Ranger District is a proposal to "create" a designated, signed system of OHV routes utilizing existing roads, trails and new trails that will provide an estimated 100 mile system of connected loop riding opportunities on federal, state and private lands. Planning for this action is progressing.

Construction of an OHV system of loop routes (Deception/Cedars OHV trail) following existing and abandoned roads was begun in 2002 in the upper area of the North Fork Clearwater River drainage with completion anticipated in 2004. This system includes trailhead parking and camping facilities for OHV users. The project was funded cooperatively with State OHV grant and federal monies.

RESEARCH NATURAL AREAS

GOAL

Identify and manage unique and/or outstanding botanical, geological and historical areas of the Forest for public enjoyment and use.



MONITORING ACTION

Establish a sufficient number of Research Natural Areas (RNA) on the Forest. Each should include at least two or three examples of major habitats and at least one example of a minor habitat. Major habitats are widespread, whereas minor habitats are unique, with little occurrence on the Forest.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/FINDINGS

There are twelve RNAs identified in the Forest Plan on the Clearwater National Forest. The Lochsa River RNA was officially designated before the release of the Forest Plan in September 1987. Since then, nine additional RNAs have been designated.

AQUARIUS

CHATEAU FALLS

GRAVE PEAK

BALD MOUNTAIN

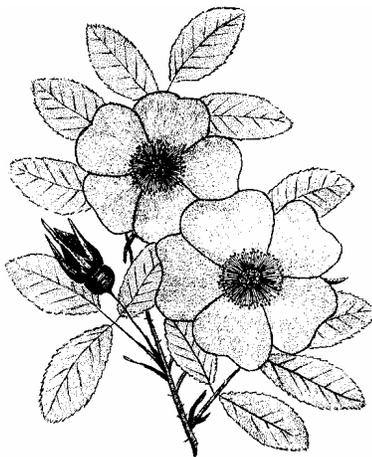
DUTCH CREEK

SNEAKFOOT MEADOWS

BULL RUN CREEK

FOUR-BIT CREEK

STEEP LAKES



Fenn Mountain and Rhodes Peak are in application process for official designation. Official designation occurs when an "Establishment Report" (a complete botanical flora and fauna report) is finished for the proposed RNA. This report should be completed when funding is available.

During FY03 no reports were prepared addressing Research Natural Area issues.

