TRAILS

GOAL

Manage trails to provide for a variety of recreation experiences. Provide for safety, minimize use conflicts and prevent resource damage.

STRATEGY

- Public safety, use and resource considerations will be used to set trail work priorities.
- Identify relocation and construction needs,
- Manage an effective trail maintenance program.
- Maintain safe bridges.
- Manage an effective trail construction/reconstruction program.

Item No. 16 – Trail Management

Frequency of Measurement: Annual
Reporting Period: Five Years

MONITORING ACTION

The Forest trails coordinator will prepare a report annually that focuses on the status of the trail system, trail bridges, and the trail construction and reconstruction program. Reports from the INFRASTRUCTURE database will be reviewed to ensure this information is current.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/FINDINGS

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Approximately 350 miles of snow trails are maintained annually. Three hundred of these miles are groomed for snowmobiles in Clearwater County using State of Idaho snowmobile funds. Two hundred of these miles are on national forest lands.

Table 31 provides information on accomplishments by maintenance level for the Forest's summer trail system. Maintenance levels for summer trails are defined as follows.

Level I: minimum clearing, minimum drainage work and no tread work

Level II: brushing with some structure and tread work

Level III: heavy clearing, tread repair, and construction of drainage structures

Table 1. Miles of Trail Maintenance Accomplished*

	1999		2000		2001		2002		2003	
	Motorized	Non-Motorized	Motorized	Non-Motorized	Motorized	Non-Motorized	Motorized	Non-Motorized	Motorized	Non-Motorized
Level I	**773.05**		**731**		**625**		**733**		**1025.08**	
	298.4	474.65	364	367	254	371	342	391	591.67	433.41
Level II	**67.5**		**45**		**32**		**53**		**45.10**	
	34.2	33.3	18	27	26	6	22	31	20.8	24.3
Level III	**31.1**		**70**		**20**		**21**		**82.87**	
	2.4	28.7	54	16	10	10	9	9	51.76	51.76
TOTAL MAINTAINED	**871.65**		**846**		**677**		**807**		**1153.05**	
	335	536.65	437	409	290	387	373	434	664.23	488.82

*Wilderness trail accomplishments are located in the WILDERNESS section of the Monitoring Report.

Trail Maintenance

Trail Maintenance Labor Type	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Force Account Maintenance (includes flood repair in 96 & 97)	329.3	254	10	113	405.35
Volunteer Maintenance	227.5	327	130	140	325.68
Contract Maintenance	314.8	265	485	554	422.02

TRAIL RECONSTRUCTION

2003 Trail Reconstruction Program

Projects Completed	Trail No.	Miles
Powell Complex portion of L&C Trail	24	4
Surprise Creek	219	5.2
Projects Started		
Wendover Ridge	25	1
Pete King Ridge	708	3
Feather Creek I	767	5
Deception OHV	complex	4
Total Trail Reconstruction		24

Again in 2003, trail construction funds were diverted to the national fire suppression effort.

However, contract work was completed on the Surprise Creek trail and the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) completed the Powell Complex trail work. MCC was then moved to the Wendover Ridge trail, but fires forced them to be withdrawn from that project after completing only a small portion of the work. The MCC crew was then moved to the Feather Creek trail and started work on that project. The Forest trail crew in conjunction with the State Trail Cat worked on the Pete King Ridge trail and continued work on the Deception OHV trail complex.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Goal

Protect and enhance the inherent values of existing designated Wild and Scenic Rivers and those being studied for possible future designation. Analyze and recommend suitability for classification of selected rivers to the Wild and Scenic system.

Monitoring Action

- Monitor ongoing projects for adherence to established protection measures.
- Manage existing scenic easements to standards defined in the Forest Plan.
- Improve access to rivers, facilities along their banks, and availability of interpretive information.
- Work with river floaters and Special Use Permittees to insure that the best available river experience is preserved.

Accomplishments/Findings

Scenic Easements

The Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests continue to share the Wild and Scenic Rivers Administrator position. This position provides scenic easement administration services to both forests for easements along the Lochsa, Middle Fork Clearwater, Selway and Main Salmon Rivers.

The scenic easement review board evaluated a variety of landowner proposals during monthly meetings in FY03. An example of project types before the board included: timber harvest, remodeling and additions to existing homes, new home construction, road construction, bare land development, barn and shop proposals, and commercial activities.

Several Forest Service projects occurring in the Wild and Scenic River corridor were also evaluated. All Lochsa Ranger District projects were in compliance with the River Plan. Suggestions were provided to address other issues such as safety.

The Forest Service has entered an era in which the challenge is to maintain the character of the landscape and river corridor while working with landowners having different desires, often more development oriented, than those traditionally found in the river corridor.

River Administration

The Forest sponsored a Wild and Scenic Rivers Workshop with Jackie Dietrich, Forest Service Program Management for Wild and Scenic Rivers. The session was attended by Forest Service, Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and other cooperators. The session discussed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in depth and reviewed case studies and legal precedent

Five outfitters operate on the Lochsa River under special use permit. One of the outfitters continues to build a kayaking school while the others emphasize rafting. One business changed ownership, one permit was re-issued without changes and one permit was re-issued with an increase in user days. Three of the five permits are priority use permits issued for 5-year terms. The other two are annually issued temporary permits required during a probationary period for new businesses.

Five outfitters operate on the Middle Fork Clearwater River under special use permit. One outfitter voluntarily relinquished their license and permit for the area; that permit has not been reissued.

Outfitted fishing on the Lochsa, Middle Fork and North Fork Clearwater Rivers is an ongoing challenge. The Forest initiated an Outfitted Fishing Needs Analysis this year.

Nearly 100 dispersed campsites along the Lochsa river corridor were inventoried. Results indicate that few new sites are being created and resource impacts at existing sites are fairly static. Some sites appear to have little use, while several receive high use. Ongoing analysis of these sites is necessary to determine if management action is necessary to control and contain resource impacts where they are occurring.

Issues, such as highway safety and congestion continue to raise hard questions for management. The FS and ITD worked together to identify and install pedestrian crossing signs at particularly congested areas. ITD continued its roadside brushing program.

The Clearwater National Forests cooperated with the Bureau of Land Management (Cottonwood Field Office) in sharing a river ranger for the Lochsa patrol season. Using fee demo funds, the Lochsa Ranger District employed a river ranger for more hours during the week than in the past.

WILDERNESS

GOAL

Maintain wilderness values both in existing wilderness areas and in those areas being recommended for wilderness classification. Provide for limiting and distributing visitor use in wilderness areas to allow natural processes to operate freely and to ensure integrity of values for which wilderness areas are created. Coordinate management of the wilderness with other national forests that share in the management of those lands.

Item No. 5: Wilderness

Frequency of Measurement: Annual
Reporting Period: Annual

MONITORING ACTION

Note changes occurring within existing and potential wilderness areas and determine if they are affecting the wilderness character of the lands. Recommend management practices to correct adverse changes.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/FINDINGS

The following report is a summary of the Clearwater National Forest's findings from the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness (SBW) "State of the Wilderness Report". The full report can be obtained from the Powell Ranger District or from the Clearwater National Forest web site. The final paragraph is a summary of the monitoring efforts for illegal snowmobile activity in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and the Great Burn potential wilderness area for 2003 only.

MONITORING USE IMPACTS

The Selway Bitterroot Wilderness spans the border of north central Idaho and western Montana. As one of the wildernesses established with the 1964 Wilderness Act, its 1.3 million acres lie within four National Forests and are managed by six ranger districts.

Based on Levels of Acceptable Change (LAC) monitoring and field inventory from field seasons, areas are identified where Forest Plan standards are not being met. These are identified by Opportunity Class Areas. Opportunity Classes are used in the Forest Plan to delineate areas with different management goals. In general, Opportunity Class I provides the most primitive visitor experience with the least social encounters while Opportunity Class IV provides the least primitive visitor experience with the most social encounters. Monitoring will continue in 2004 with the intent of the Forest Plan to move areas into compliance by their assigned Opportunity Class.

Wilderness rangers, volunteers and other personnel on each Forest monitor a variety of resource conditions and types of use in the SBW to maintain resource integrity. While in the field, personnel keep track of campsite conditions, weed occurrences, fires, airfield use, river use, trail conditions, outfitter activities, compliance with Forest Plan standards and visitor concerns.

Visitors to the SBW pursue a variety of activities including: hiking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, photography, nature study, swimming, mountain climbing, snow shoeing, and numerous other forms of recreation. Monitoring the types and amount of use that occur in the SBW is essential to preventing degradation of wilderness qualities while providing a range of primitive and unconfined recreational opportunities. Standards exist within each opportunity class for both site and social indicators in order to effectively protect the wilderness resource and trigger management action should unacceptable conditions develop.

Clearwater N. F.	
SBW Acres	268,932
# Wilderness Rangers	2
# Volunteer Hours	1,804
Total Miles SBW Trails	310.3
Miles SBW Trail Maintained	202.2
# Campsites Monitored	109

Social indicators include the # of other parties encountered each day and the number of other parties camped within site or sound of a campsite. Site indicators are measured by the number of sites per square mile and by the sites per impact rating per square mile (impacts assigned according to the Limits of Acceptable Change system).

Both site and social indicators are monitored by wilderness rangers during their time in the field. Site indicators are measured at each campsite a minimum of once every five years. Each year, wilderness rangers visit a percentage of campsites within their district and conduct official campsite inventories; however they typically visit and naturalize a number of sites in addition to those slotted for an official inventory. During 2003, rangers inventoried 109 campsites.

Visitor registration cards and field encounters provide information on social indicators. While the voluntary registration cards used in the SBW do not provide a complete picture of the number of wilderness users in the SBW, studies show a third of the visitors sign in providing a reference for a minimum level of use at a particular portal. The new Visitor Travel Log (created in 2002) focuses on a group's characteristics and destination. The new forms were distributed to portals in the beginning of the 2003 season. Visitors appeared to be recording more complete information than on the old cards. It is hoped the new cards will encourage visitors to sign in without concern over personal information questions providing better visitation data.

The SBW also began the process of integrating a new database called INFRA WILD to help organize and track use monitoring data. The SBW is one of the first wilderness areas to adopt this database and sent a number of wilderness rangers to training in the fall of 2002 to learn how to operate the database. Rangers began entering test data in 2003. This table summarizes the number of groups and individuals that wilderness rangers encountered in the field during 2003.

	Groups	Persons
Day hikers	36	117
Backpackers	20	62
Equestrian	13	41
Outfitters	9	
Contractors		
Administrative Personnel	2	5
Pilots/other	1	4
Total	**81**	**229**

Because multiple encounters with the same "Group" of Outfitters, Contractors and other Forest Service personnel were more likely than multiple encounters with the same group of private individuals in the backcountry, only the first encounter with the same Group is recorded in the table. Individuals who arrived by plane were identified as: pilots (those whose sole purpose was to drop or pick up visitors or gear), day hikers or backpackers (overnighters) depending on the length of their stay.

PROBLEM AREAS

Twelve problem areas were inventoried in FY00 with eleven remaining out of standard. Data showed that the overall trend was improving, with seven areas indicating an upward trend, three remaining static, and two indicating a downward trend. In 2003, 109 campsites were inventoried. Monitoring will continue with the intent of the Forest Plan to move areas into compliance by their assigned Opportunity Class.

The Friday Pass Trail has some extremely eroded, rocky sections as well as washouts digging into softer soils. This trail is not recommended to stock.

There is an accumulation of new stumps around Fish Lake, Wounded Doe and Pass Creek.

Opportunity Class I – One site per square mile; one light site

Crags Lakes

FY00 monitoring indicated that impact levels and sites per square mile showed a slight downward trend; there are more social trails, and more exposed mineral soil (from trampling) in some sites. There are eight campsites, where one is desired. Sites are cleaned up each year, but social encounters are recorded for only a few days each season (not enough for conclusive data). Three sites were inventoried in FY02, with the remainder in FY03. Use appeared to be low for the season and some sites had a chance for recovery. This

may have been due to the lack of access from an avalanche and blow down event over Chimney Peak. We will seek volunteers for the Crags area for 2004.

Opportunity Class II – Two sites per square mile; one light, one moderate site

California Lake

This area is out of standard with one moderate, and two light sites. The trail heading into California Lake receives moderate stock use, and was cleared by visitors in 2000. This area is indicating an upward trend. This area was not monitored in FY01, FY02 or FY03. We will strive for FY04 monitoring.

Opportunity Class III – Three sites per square mile; two light, one moderate site

Wind Lakes

Two areas within the Wind Lakes Analysis Area have conditions that do not meet the recreation standards for Opportunity Class III. These areas are along Wind Lakes Creek, and the area around Wind Lakes.

Because of severe drainage and erosion problems, poor tread, deteriorating support structures, resource damage, unsafe user conditions, and impacts to the wilderness characteristics, this area was evaluated in an Environmental Assessment (EA). Field reviews concerning this were conducted in FY95, and then again for an updated version in FY02. The EA will go out for public review March 2004.

It is hoped that through education and persuasion, the desired future condition can be met as visitors become more knowledgeable, and low impact campers will be able to use and enjoy the wilderness while traveling and camping lightly on the land. An education effort has been carried out by a partnership of the Forest Service (wilderness ranger presence, signs, low-impact schools and training centers), volunteer wilderness rangers, the National Outdoor Leadership School (developer of the Leave No Trace program), Backcountry Horsemen of America, and other groups for this area and other Forest areas.

Seven Lakes

Visitors who were not familiar with low impact camping techniques have heavily impacted the Seven Lakes area in the past. Damage caused to trees and vegetation by tethered stock is especially noticeable.

In FY02 personnel that new signing was needed to replace illegible or missing signs; therefore, all the campsites and signs in the Seven Lakes area were assessed in 2003. UV light deteriorated a number of the special site designation signs and these will be replaced in 2004. Overall, the area received less use in 2003 due to fire activity and smoke. No problems with grazing were evident for the 2003 season. Volunteers will be sought for the Seven Lakes areas for 2004.

Big Sand Lake

Big Sand Lake campsites were inventoried in 2003. During the 2003 summer, a large group created a new user trail, damaged some small saplings and enlarged the fire ring at this site on the west side of the lake, further impacting it. The East Shore campsite did not show signs of growth, but it is also heavily impacted. Sanitation was an issue at two sites this year.

Further education and visitor engagement is needed concerning lakeside camping. Stock containment, erosion from water access, increasing barren core and decreasing understory vegetation as well as encroachment of weed patches require that we put more effort into managing these sites with help from key user groups. The Big Sand Fire above the north side of the lake closed the area for approximately 3 weeks.

Opportunity Class IV – Four sites per square mile; one heavy or extreme, two moderate site

Fish Lake

The Fish Lake airstrip is meant to function as an internal portal for users pursuing wilderness dependent activities. Short visits and proficiency landings are discouraged in an effort to minimize disturbance, which is not compatible with a wilderness experience. Administrative access to the SBW is managed according to the minimum tool principle, where pack stock and foot travel are the preferred methods of access. The SBW general management direction identifies two indicators to evaluate the level of airfield use; 1) number of landings/day/airfield, and 2) number of landings/year/airfield. Standards for the SBW airfield use will be

determined from the results of 4 years of reliable data collection per airfield and a study to determine the perceptions of all wilderness user types regarding aircraft use in the SBW.

In FY02 and FY03, volunteers provided the public with information on the airstrip, SBW, and low impact camping techniques while documenting use at the lake. They also performed maintenance duties such as seeding barren areas with grass seed collected from the strip, filling gopher holes on the airstrip, staining visitor registration boxes and signposts, and developing a pilot log system. These volunteers obtained airstrip use data for FY02 and FY03. We will seek volunteers for the Fish Lake area and airstrip in 2004.

Stanley Hot Springs/Huckleberry Flats

These two areas are within the same roving square mile and are monitored together. Since 1993, impact levels have improved, but sites per square mile increased dramatically at the hot springs from 6 to 15 sites. Attempts have been made to close some of the sites by signing, blocking off, and planting, but high use means every site is taken and eventually the signs disappear.

Volunteers have been stationed at or patrol the hot springs most years since 1993 (none in 2001) discussing low impact camping practices to visitors and general site clean up. In 1999, the foot log was removed from Boulder Creek, but this has hardly affected access to this popular area. There are no plans to rebuild a bridge. Volunteers report that pets harass wildlife, and that the hot springs area does not support stock camping. Stanley Hot Springs will be part of a hot springs management plan for the Forest including Weir and Jerry Johnson Hot Springs. Half of the campsite inventories were completed FY02, and of those particular sites, all remained static. This is our most heavily used wilderness site. The immediate area is completely void of small down woody debris from people collecting firewood. Users have been felling 10" diameter snags for wood and have also been cutting live branches. In 2003, a Boy Scout Troop assisted the Wilderness Program by volunteering to clean up the Stanley Hot Springs area and helped with weed pulling, fire ring scattering, and packing out trash. All the campsites in the vicinity of the Hot Springs were inventoried for 2003. We will seek volunteers for the Stanley area in 2004.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Education programs are one tool that the Forest uses to foster appreciation for the SBW, while encouraging responsible resource use. Programs typically focus on the value of wilderness, wilderness history and "Leave No Trace" practices in an effort to reduce visitor impacts and address problems such as littering, damage to trees, overgrazing, poor sanitation practices and other actions damaging to the wilderness resource. Our education program was one of our biggest accomplishments in 2003. We conducted 16 programs, reaching 604 individuals of all ages.

Audience	# in Attendance	Message
U of M Graduate Students	15	Wilderness Management & Careers
MCC crew leaders: Training Session	51	Leave No Trace (LNT) w/ crews
4-5-6th Graders:	200	Wilderness Skills Trail
U of M Wilderness & Civilization Class	32	LNT
Attendees at 9-mile LNT Stock Masters	10	Stock LNT
Powell Employees	34 / 12	Wilderness Awareness / Defensive Horse Safety
Girl Scouts	23	LNT
Senior Citizens	19	LNT in the Front-country
Boy Scouts	23 / 8	Wilderness Values & LNT
Outfitter/Guides for Wildlife Adventure H.S.	3	Camp Inspections
MT. Natural Resources Youth Campers	30	Wilderness Awareness
Smokejumpers	8	LNT / MIST
U of I Campus Recreation	121	LNT
Penn State/Mont Alto University Students	13	Wilderness Awareness
Total Audience	**604**	

Groups targeted for a more thorough education include Boy Scouts, airplane pilots, high school students, and college students.

SBW VOLUNTEERS 2003

Volunteers contribute a substantial amount of time, energy and talent to the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness Program and accomplish a variety of work for the four managing National Forests. In addition to providing visitor information at many of our wilderness portals, volunteers help pack in project supplies, assist with trail maintenance, cabin restoration and campsite restoration projects. Volunteers also help monitor and collect data for an array of projects throughout the wilderness. All the Forests are grateful for the generous assistance provided by volunteers during 2003.

Clearwater NF	
# Volunteers	**47**
# Volunteer Hours	**1,804**

The information at left provides a synopsis of the volunteer efforts in the SBW on the Clearwater Forest during 2003.

Back Country Horsemen: North Central Chapter members built 3 wooden feed bunks with the help of a National Forest Foundation grant. They were delivered in the fall to the Powell Ranger Station for installation at the Tom Beal trailhead in July 2004 and approximately 400 hours were spent on the entire process. Roger Ingrahm assisted with stock LNT education at Elk Summit for 40 hours. Twin Rivers Chapter members (2) contributed 6 hours helping realign the top beam of a stock-unloading ramp at Kooskooskia Trail Head.

Wilderness Skills Trail leaders: 9 individuals from other programs and other districts volunteered their time to assist in leading 4-5-6th graders through the skills trail for a total of 128 volunteer hours

National Trails Day: 12 Montana Conservation Corp members assisted with a trails clearing and maintenance project around 3 miles of trail at Jerry Johnson Hot Springs for a total of 96 hours

Boy Scout Troop: A group of 8 scouts working towards their 50-miler badge assisted with weed pulling and campsite naturalization at Stanley Hot Springs for a total of 12 hours of service after attending a LNT session.

Elk Summit Guard Station: 4 individuals volunteered as station guards at Elk Summit and contributed approximately 712 hours of service. In addition to providing visitor information, they helped with routine site maintenance and trail monitoring duties. One volunteer also assisted in presenting 3 Leave No Trace programs for various youth groups.

Fish Lake Airstrip: Two separate volunteers were stationed as guards at Fish Lake from June 29 through mid August providing a presence and monitoring at the remote airstrip. Another volunteer assisted w/ trail and facilities maintenance during a 6-day trip and contributed 32 hours.

Horse Care Volunteers: District employees who showed an interest in the stock this year volunteered for horse training safety. Our program relied on 3 of these individuals to help care for the stock when they were not needed and we were either out in the field on foot, or away from the district on our weekends. A total of 42 hours were donated to the stock program.

Winter Patrol: One volunteer assisted with a winter backcountry patrol and cabin maintenance trip for 3 days (24 hours).

GREAT BURN VOLUNTEERS 2003

The Great Burn Trail Monitoring Project is a citizen-initiated project designed to gather information on off-road vehicle use in the Great Burn, and to document how and where off-road vehicles impact natural resources and conflict with non-motorized uses. With the help of the Great Burn Study Group and Friends of the Clearwater, the project utilized more than thirty-five volunteers who collectively logged hundreds of hours of trail monitoring on eighteen field outings. Volunteers conducted field monitoring by visiting trailheads and through day hikes and overnight excursions into the backcountry. They have composed a report representing data gathered from June 1 through October 15. Volunteers observed and documented both the types and levels of motorized recreation occurring within the Great Burn, as well as user conflicts, illegal activity, resource damage, user-created trails, trail and trailhead conditions, signage, vandalism and the condition of campsites.

ADMINISTRATIVE SITES

Administration of the SBW for its many established purposes requires maintenance of certain structures and facilities both within (W) and immediately adjacent (A) to the Wilderness. The following list identifies use at these sites during 2003.

1. Horse Camp: (W) Used approximately 30 days by trail contract administrators and wilderness rangers on backcountry patrol.
2. Fish Lake: (W) Used approximately 7 days by trail contract administrators and wilderness rangers on backcountry patrol. Volunteers monitoring the airstrip used the cabin June 29 - August 12, August 9 – August 15 for a total of 39 days.
3. Diablo Lookout: (W) Intact structure, staffed during fire season August 10 – September 19.
4. McConnell Mountain Lookout: (W) Deteriorating structure, not staffed.
5. Grave Peak Lookout: (W) Deteriorating structure; not staffed.
6. Hidden Peak Lookout: (W) Deteriorating structure; not staffed.
7. Bear Mountain Lookout: (A) Staffed July through August with a lookout
8. Beaver Ridge Lookout: (A) Staffed July 8 – August 9, and August 21 – October 10
9. Lochsa Historic Station: (A) Staffed by volunteers for 15 weeks in the summer at 1680 hours.
10. Elk Summit Guard Station: (A) Staffed by a volunteer from July through mid-September. Trail crew use on entry and exit of three 10-day hitches from Elk Summit.
11. Colt Creek Cabin: (A) Deteriorating cabin; not staffed.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

In addition to Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) who work on each Forest, some districts have wilderness personnel who are authorized Forest Protection Officers (FPOs) and are trained in Level II law enforcement. LEOs and FPOs record incidents that occur in the wilderness and have the authority to issue violation notices when CFRs (Code of Federal Regulations) are disregarded by visitors.

Summary of incident reports written in FY03:

Reports in the wilderness area	
Number of law enforcement personnel	4
Number of incident reports written	13
Number of warning notices written	1
Number of violation notices written	3

- Damage to live vegetation at Upper Dodo Creek
- Damage to live vegetation at Mud flats campsite.
- Chainsaw use to clear trail on Elk Summit trail #4.
- Dead horse left in a camp less than 200 feet from a creek.
- Adjacent to Wilderness, but not included in total – vegetation damage at Pass Creek and Elk Summit.
- Litter and damage to green trees at Stanley Hot Springs
- Litter at Tom Beal Park
- Warning Notices: 1 - Vehicle at Tom Beal trail head beyond time limit
- Violation Notices: 1 - Exceeding group limit out of Elk Summit, 2 - Cutting live vegetation, and 3 - Disregarding a fire closure order by building a campfire during fire restrictions at Big Sand Lake.

Powell Ranger District personnel discovered an unauthorized, user-created, trail and salt block located in the Hidden Creek Drainage in 2002. A Special Order was issued to close the trail to all travel until the area is rehabilitated. A Forest Service law enforcement investigation is pending.

AIRSTRIP MONITORING

Although motorized and mechanized means of transport are generally not allowed in wilderness areas, use of aircraft to specific airfields within the SBW predates the Primitive Area classification and was permitted by both the Primitive and Wilderness classifications, subject to certain restrictions and limitations. (Emergency landings for fire, search and rescue and law enforcement are allowed outside of the airstrips in the SBW at the discretion of managers.) The SBW contains 3 existing public airstrips; Fish Lake, Moose Creek and Shearer.

The airfields are meant to function as internal portals for users pursuing wilderness dependent activities (defined as activities requiring a setting "where the imprint of man's work is substantially unnoticeable" and which provide "opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.") As such, short term visits and proficiency landings are discouraged in an effort to minimize disturbance, which is not compatible with a wilderness experience. Administrative access to the SBW is managed according to the minimum tool principle, where pack stock and foot travel are the preferred methods of access.

2002 Monitored Landings on Fish Lake Airfield	
# of Monitoring Days	31
Private	33
Administrative for Facility	1
Other FS Administrative	1
Fire	4 landings, 5 sling loads
Outfitters	3
# of Days Not Monitored	10
# of Days Closed Due to Fire(s)	15
Total	**42**

The SBW general management direction identifies 2 indicators to evaluate the level of airfield use; 1) number of landings/day/airfield, and 2) number of landings/year/airfield. Standards for SBW airfield use will be determined from the results of 4 years of reliable data collection per airfield and a study to determine the perceptions of all wilderness user types regarding aircraft use in the SBW. Fish Lake airstrip has been monitored FY02 and FY03, and we plan to monitor in FY04.

Notes: Fire closures minimized the number of landing days this season. Due to uncertainty about when the closures would be lifted, we were unable to find a volunteer to monitor flights from August 26 through September when outfitter use is at its peak. Boulder Creek Outfitters was scheduled to pull their camp from Fish Lake by September 30. Missing an additional 33 days of monitoring undoubtedly skewed our landing numbers regarding both private and outfitted use of the airstrip. Base-line use has not yet been determined for this airstrip.

AUTHORIZATION FOR MECHANICAL USES

The Wilderness Act generally prohibits motorized equipment or mechanized transport in designated wilderness areas; however, it does allow for motorized/mechanized use "as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area…, including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area."

In accordance, the "minimum tool" principle will be applied to the management of all resources within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. This means that the minimum management actions necessary to correct a given problem will be identified and methods and equipment which accomplish the objectives with the least impact on the physical, biological and social characteristics of wilderness will be used. All decisions pertaining to administrative practices and use of equipment in wilderness will be based on this concept.

Potential disruption of wilderness character and resources and applicable safety concerns will be considered before, and given significantly more weight than, economic efficiency. If some compromise of wilderness resources or character is unavoidable, only those actions that have localized, short-term adverse impacts will be authorized. Such management activities will be conducted in accordance with all applicable regulations, policies, and guidelines and, where practicable, will be scheduled to avoid creating adverse resource impacts or conflicts with visitors' experiences.

During the FY03 fire season, the Clearwater National Forest gave authorization for 4 mechanical uses, but only used 2 of those authorizations for chainsaw and pump use, and a helicopter landing.

WEED OCCURRENCE AND SUPPRESSION

Noxious and invasive weeds continue to exist along travel routes, in suitable habitat, and along rivers and streams. Weed seed free feed is now required on all Forestlands in both Montana and Idaho. The spread of noxious weeds continues to be a concern on the Clearwater NF. This year we had assistance in monitoring, mapping and mechanical treatment by the Student Conservation Association.

Spotted Knapweed is the most common weed below 4,000 ft and is at the greatest risk of spreading to the interior of the wilderness from wilderness portals along Highway 12. A variety of thistles, Sulfur Cinquefoil, Spotted knapweed, Hounds tongue, St. John's Wort and Oxeye Daisy were also noted by Wilderness Rangers along certain trail segments and heavily used campsites. When rangers and volunteers encountered small concentrations of weeds, the patches were hand grubbed and recorded for future monitoring.

Knapweed was reported in FY03 at: Trail #198 Lone Knob, Trail #211 Boulder Creek moving to Huckleberry Flat campsite, Trail #206 Eagle Mountain extending outward from trail on south aspects, Trail #99 Storm Creek at junction with #77, Trail #49 Warm Springs near the waterfall at the cliff overlook, Big Fog trail head moving towards Selway Crags, Trail #469 Mocus scattered plants up the trail, Huckleberry Flat, Bat Hill, Trail # 2210 Rock Creek, Trail #220 Lochsa Peak, Big Flat Creek area, and Trail #50 Colt Killed Creek has less plants than last year, but still need to pull in 2004.

St. John's Wort was reported in FY03 at: Trail #211 Boulder Creek scattered along the lower reaches, seems to be coupled with knapweed, and is also located at Huckleberry Flat, Trail #2210 Rock Creek on northern exposure, Pass Creek area, Horse Camp, along Trail #205 Long Lake from the #211 junction, old burn site near trail #205, Trail #220 Lochsa Peak, Wilderness Gateway, Trail # 906 Frog Peak in lower elevations, and Colt Killed Cabin.

Sulfur Cinquefoil was reported in FY03 at: Trail #99 Storm Creek, junction of Trail #77 and Beaver Meadows, Trail #221 Grit Ridge lower 2 miles, Old Man Meadows near camp, Huckleberry flat and were pulled, Bat Hill, Trail 2210 Rock Creek, isolated small and large patches along Trail #211 Boulder Creek and seems to stay near trail, Pass Creek area, Trail #220 Lochsa Peak, and Colt Killed Cabin and trail head area.

Canada Thistle was reported in FY03 at: Trail #211 Boulder Creek at Gold Creek crossing, Stanley Hot Springs, Trail #206 Old Man Creek, satellite plants Trail #45 Friday Pass, Pass Creek area, and Trail #220 Lochsa Peak.

Houndstongue was reported in FY03 at: Trail #4 Big Sand Creek near Duck Creek and was pulled, Big Sand Lake on north shore and were pulled, and Trail #49 Warm Springs near Jerry Johnson Hot Springs.

Oxeye Daisy was reported in FY03 at: satellite plants at Trail #4 Big Sand Creek on a user trail towards Poacher Creek, east shore of Big Sand Lake, one mile before summit to Diablo Mountain Trail #18, Trail #220 within ¼ mile of trail head at wilderness Gateway, Big Flat Creek area, Trail #50 Colt Creek ¼ mile down, and Colt Creek Trail Head.

Others reported in FY03: Chamomile at Gold Meadows, Common Tansey at Wilderness Gateway, Buttercup (nonspecific) at Seven Lakes, Poison Hemlock at Trail #205 Long Lake ½ mile up and meadow off Trail #211 Boulder Creek, Trail #219 Surprise Creek, and the Pass Creek area.

Weed education programs in place consist of requirements for weed seed free hay, posted information at trailheads, BCH trailhead education efforts in the fall, and also located where information on low impact camping and weed seed free requirements are distributed at Elk Summit Cabin and Powell Ranger station. Wilderness rangers also check for weed seed free hay compliance during visits to both private and outfitter camps in the fall.

OUTFITTERS

Outfitters provide hunting, fishing, horse camping, day trips, backpacking, hiking, photography, and river rafting opportunities. They report client use days (numbers of clients x numbers of days) and pay fees accordingly. The Selway-Bitterroot on the Clearwater has 7 standing permits, as well as occasional temporary use permits with the number depending on the season. Some temporary permittees return every year, others every few years, and others never return.

Outfitter and guides pay 3% of their gross revenue in use fees. A portion of these fees comes back to the Forests in the form of Outfitter and Guide "Fee Demo" dollars. These dollars are used for trail maintenance and reconstruction, wilderness education, wilderness field presence, trailhead improvements, and other services that benefit both public users and outfitters.

In FY03, many outfitters were unable to fulfill itinerary expectations due to the fire season causing closed trails, roads, camps, and at times, Districts.

WILDERNESS TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Trail standards are linked to Opportunity Class designations. The following tables clarify terminology related to trails and trail maintenance. Detailed trail work accomplishments follow the tables.

Trail Maintenance Level	Definition
I	Minimal amount of clearing, marking and repair.
II	Intermediate level of clearing, marking and repair.
III	Significant amount of clearing, marking and repair.

Trail Maintenance Accomplishments by Opportunity Class in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area for 2003.

	Opportunity Class IV	Opportunity Class III	Opportunity Class II	Total
Level I Maintenance	9.8	158.5	5	173.3
Level II Maintenance	7	8.3	0	15.3
Level III Maintenance	0	13.6	0	13.6
Total	**16.8**	**180.4**	**5**	**202.2**
Total Miles w/in Opportunity Class	23.4	259	27.9	310.3

Note: Total number of miles will change slightly from previous years as mileage is being verified as part of the Deferred Maintenance survey effort.

Wilderness Trails Maintained in 2003

Boulder #211 @ 25 miles, Warm Springs #49 @ 4 miles, Surprise Creek #219 @ 5.9 miles, Eagle Mountain #206 @ 42 miles, Big Sand #4 @ 6.7 miles, Colt Killed Creek #50 @ 3 miles, Frog Peak #906 @ 5 miles, Long Lake #205 @ 9 miles, Split Creek #133 @ 6.8 miles, Indian Meadows #208 @ 3 miles, Lochsa Peak #220 @ 12.3, Greenside Butte #222 @ 5 miles, Gold Hill #247 @ 6 miles, Rock Creek #1210 @ 5.2 miles, Big Sand Creek #1 @ 6.1 miles, Wind Lakes #24 @ 5 miles, Pouliot #30 @ 4.5 miles, Friday Pass #45 @ 1.3 miles, Siah Lake #59 @ 9.1 miles, Army Mule #60 @ 10.3 miles, Maud-Dan Ridge #70 @ 3.6 miles, Big Flat Hidden Ridge @ 3.5 miles, Beaver Meadows #77 @ 1.9 miles, Saturday Ridge #89 @ 5.6 miles, Storm Creek #99 @ 6 miles, and Maple Lake # 939 @ 7.6 miles.

NOTE: Please see the trail's section for specific projects and result.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF FIELD REVIEWS

Snowmobile Use Monitoring

Snowmobile activity on the Forest and interest in it increases every year. A new LEO stationed at Powell increased the frequency of our snowmobile monitoring and enforcement capabilities. Six violation notices were written for snowmobiling on a trail closed to motorized vehicles.

WILDLIFE

GOAL

Manage and provide habitat that will support viable populations of all resident wildlife species. Maintain and enhance big-game winter and summer habitat to support a huntable population of elk, deer and moose. Manage habitat to contribute to the recovery of each threatened and endangered species on the Forest.

Maintain or enhance biological diversity to the extent practicable and consistent with overall objectives of multiple use so that it is at least as great as that of a natural (unmanaged) forest.

STRATEGY

Monitor the effects of Forest activities on preservation and enhancement of biological diversity and provide biological input to proposed management activities.

Each year improve approximately 2,300 acres of big-game habitat using a variety of methods such as prescribed fire, fertilization, slashing, logging, and seeding. Use road decommissioning and modification of timber sale design, layout, and scheduling to maintain or enhance elk habitat.

Review, coordinate, and consult with the US Fish & Wildlife Service on all projects that involve impacts to threatened and endangered species. Conduct biological assessments for all projects where threatened and endangered species may occur. Recommend practices to lessen or mitigate adverse effects of projects and ensure viable populations or promote the recovery of all listed species.

Provide the public with current information on the programs and status of wildlife habitat management.

Item No. 7: Provision for Plant and Animal Diversity

Frequency of Measurement: Annual
Reporting Period: Five Years

MONITORING ACTION

Monitor the effects of Forest activities to maintain and enhance plant and animal diversity.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/FINDINGS

A wide variety of plant and animal habitats currently exist and are well represented on the Clearwater National Forest. The exception is early seral and old growth or late successional habitats. Primary cause for the declines in these habitats was intensive timber harvest and large-scale fire exclusion over the past 50 years. A list of stands that have been tentatively identified as old growth habitat is available upon request. During project analysis all stands are evaluated as to whether or not they meet the criteria from Appendix H of the Forest Plan. If the stand meets the criteria it is added to the old growth habitat data base. Stands that had been previously identified as tentative old growth habitat are also field verified during project analysis. If the stand does not meet the criteria for old growth habitat it is removed from the data base.

Since 1998, 7,548 acres of "Tentatively Identified" habitat has been "Field Verified" as old growth. In addition, 2,298 acres of old growth that was previously not documented has been added. Field surveys documented 18,765 acres of habitat as not meeting the criteria as old growth habitat. No change in old growth habitat in Wilderness has been documented. The following table summarizes the old growth habitat documentation on the Clearwater National Forest lands from 1998 to January 2004:

Old Growth Data from 1998 Report Compared with January 2004 Report.

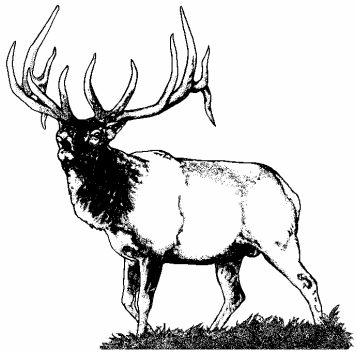
	Total Acres	Tentatively Identified Old Growth	Field Verified Old Growth	Total Old Growth Acres
1998 Non-Wilderness	1,551,478	128,760	33,840	162,600
1998 Wilderness	262,906	37,000	0	37,000
1998 Total	1,814,384	165,760	33,840	199,600
2004 Non-Wilderness	1,563,000	104,641	41,777	146,418
2004 Wilderness	262,906	37,000	0	37,000
2004 Total	1,825,906	141,641	41,777	183,418

Item No. 25 – Big-Game Habitat Improvement

Frequency of Measurement: Annual
Reporting Period: Annual

MONITORING ACTION

Areas being treated will have monitoring plans developed.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS/FINDINGS

In FY03, approximately 5,000 acres of big game habitat was improved with prescribed fire and another 30,000 acres of habitat benefited from wildfires scattered across the forest. In addition, approximately 500 acres of habitat was improved or enhanced associated with the harvesting of timber sales.

Additional information can be found in the **TIMBER** and **FIRE** section.

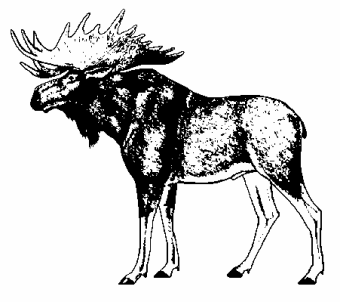
The *Middle Black and North Lochsa Face* projects were approved for implementation in FY 03. These projects were developed to improve the health of the ecosystem and habitat for elk on the North Fork and Lochsa Ranger Districts. Approximately 40 acres of brushfields were cut on critical winter habitat near Cold Springs. Field reviews indicate that this technique is extremely beneficial in producing new forage from re-sprouting shrubs. Widespread use of the method will need careful evaluation and prioritization due to costs and logistical support.

Item No. 26-35 – Population Trends of Management Indicator, Threatened and Endangered Species

Frequency of Measurement: Annual
Reporting Period: Annual

MONITORING ACTION

Information will be provided on these species focusing on population trends and effects of management of these species.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS/FINDINGS

MANAGEMENT INDICATOR SPECIES

The following species were selected for inclusion in the Forest Plan as indicator species: elk, moose, white-tailed deer, pileated woodpecker, goshawk, pine marten, and all Threatened and Endangered plant and animal species.

Elk: Based on information from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDF&G) big game surveys, the elk population on the Clearwater National Forest is estimated at 10,000. Winter conditions during FY03 were generally mild. The elk population remained static or slightly increased from the effects of the very severe winter conditions in FY97, which resulted in approximately a 50% reduction in elk population.

Moose: Approximately 1,300 moose inhabit the Forest based on IDF&G estimates. Harvest has remained stable. The Powell Ranger District continues to support habitat for approximately 75% of the moose population on the Forest. The trend in moose population over the past five years is stable to slightly increasing.

Deer: Approximately 5,500 white-tailed deer inhabit the Forest according to the IDF&G. Annual harvest has remained stable. Implementation of management practices to mitigate impacts on elk, riparian areas and old-growth habitat will benefit overlapping white-tailed deer habitat. The trend in deer population over the past five years is increasing especially on the Palouse Ranger District and other lands adjacent to agricultural areas. An epidemic of EHD (Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease) that killed thousands of deer along the Clearwater River area near Kamiah occurred during the summer of FY 03. The mortality from this disease appears to have been restricted to private lands adjacent to the forest. There appears to be little or no impact to deer on Clearwater National Forest lands.

Pileated Woodpecker, Goshawk, and Pine Marten: These three species were selected as indicator species for monitoring a variety of old-growth habitats across the Forest. Trends in population numbers are correlated with overall old-growth acres maintained on the Forest as directed in the Forest Plan. A normal population of pileated woodpeckers and goshawks were commonly observed across the Forest and coincide with maintenance of old-growth habitat. A cooperative program was initiated with Potlatch Corporation to offer a monetary reward to individuals for reporting the location of active goshawk nests that could be confirmed by a biologist. No new nest sites were reported on the Clearwater forest as a result of this program during FY03. Pine martens are very common in higher elevations and continued to be trapped with no limits or harvest restrictions being considered. The pine martin population is considered to be stable based on maintenance of high elevation old-growth habitat and annual authorization of commercial trapping by IDF&G.

Gray Wolf (Experimental/non-essential): Wolves have been reintroduced into North Central Idaho in 1997. Currently, 300 wolves inhabit Idaho with 25-50 wolves on the Clearwater National Forest. The Nez Perce Tribe is responsible for monitoring and coordinating wolf recovery efforts in Idaho. Recovery goals are being met more rapidly than expected with the process of delisting being initiated. Trends in numbers are expected to increase as young adults disperse from existing packs and populate unoccupied suitable wolf habitat. Denning sites have been confirmed on various parts of the forest.

Bald Eagle (Threatened): The bald eagle occurs mostly as a winter resident in the Clearwater basin. Approximately 60 bald eagles winter in the Clearwater basin and its tributaries. Biologists from the Forest work on the National Wildlife Federation's annual bald eagle survey each January. Most of the bald eagle habitat is found along major watercourses. Recovery goals for the bald eagle have been exceeded for the past five years and the bird was proposed for delisting in July 2000. A trend in numbers of bald eagles over the past five years is increasing based on incidental observations and annual surveys.

Lynx (Threatened): The Canada lynx was listed as a threatened species. A Conservation Strategy and Assessment has been approved. Field surveys for the presence of lynx have been conducted on portions of the forest. A multi-year research project focusing on various aspects of lynx ecology and movements associated with the construction activities in the Lolo Pass area was started in FY02. The study is a cooperative project involving various state and federal agencies. Personnel from the Intermountain Research Lab in Missoula, MT will lead the field effort.

THREATENED PLANT SPECIES

There are no listed plants on the Clearwater National Forest.